3

Dance at the Royal Courts

ON OCTOBER 15, 1581, an audience of nobles gathered in the Salle Bourbon near the Louvre Palace in Paris to witness what promised to be a most splendid entertainment. The occasion was the marriage of Marguerite de Lorraine, sister of Queen Louise, to the duc de Joyeuse. The monarch of the time was Henri III, but the important power behind the throne, the one who influenced all political affairs, was the king's mother, Catherine de Medici. Years before she had left her native Italy as the bride of the duke who eventually became Henri II.

Catherine was shrewd, strong-minded, unscrupulous, and autocratic. A force to be reckoned with in politics, she also liked to set styles in manners and the arts. She brought with her from Italy into France the fashion for cosmetics and face powder, and by covering the walls of her Paris mansion with 119 mirrors, she helped create a fashion for large wall mirrors. A lover of opulence, she wanted to make sure that Marguerite de Lorraine's marriage would be a grand occasion. She sought assistance from one of her valets, a fellow Italian named Baldassarino da Belgiojoso, who was known in France as Balthasar de Beaujoyeulx.

A musician and dancing master, Beaujoyeulx was also what we today would call a choreographer, a maker of dances, and for Catherine he staged an entertainment that surely met her requirements: the *Ballet Comique de la Reine* (originally called *Balet Comique de la Royne*), which has come to be regarded as the most important early attempt to create an extended choreographic spectacle. Although it was termed a "ballet," it only vaguely resembled anything we now associate with that term.

There was no stage. The action took place on the floor of the hall itself. The audience sat above the performers in galleries along three walls and the royal family on a dais at one end of the room. Despite the word *comique* in its title, the work was not funny, for *comique* in this case derives from *comédie*, the French word that can refer to drama in general. In addition to dances, this ballet contained recitations and songs with music by Lambert de Beaulieu and Jacques Salmon. The plot concerned the attempts of the enchantress Circe to conquer nature with her witchcraft and proclaim herself queen of the seasons. However, the gods vanquish her, and Minerva, goddess of wisdom, pays tribute to a greater queen—the queen of France. Louise, the object of this flattery, actually participated in the production, making an entrance accompanied by court ladies on a moving float adorned with sirens and tritons that spouted water like a fountain. At the conclusion of the ballet—which lasted nearly six hours—symbolic medals were exchanged; the one Queen Louise gave her husband bore the image of a dolphin. Since the royal couple did not have a son and since, in French, *dauphin* can refer both to the sea creature and to an heir apparent, the medal's Latin inscription, *Delphinum ut delphinem rependat*, was a matrimonial pun: "A dolphin is given to receive a dauphin."

In addition to such specifically personal and political references, the *Ballet Comique* contained general moral significance, for Circe represented the base passions of humanity and the divinities who defeated her included not only Minerva but also Pan (symbolizing the power of nature) and Jupiter (the ruler of the gods).

The *Ballet Comique* must have lived up to Catherine's expectations. She certainly wanted the rest of Europe to know about

it, for she distributed illustrated descriptions of it across the Continent. It was the most lavish of the theatrical entertainments she loved to produce, but other spectacles at her court had also attracted attention—for example, *Le Ballet des Polonais*, an entertainment presented in honor of the Polish ambassadors in 1573. Beaujoyeulx devised the choreography, which emphasized geometrical patterns, and among the collaborators on the production were the composer Orlando di Lasso and the poet Pierre Ronsard.

Le Ballet Comique and other such works were inspired by theories promulgated by the Académie de Musique et de la Poésie, an organization founded in 1570 by the poet Jean-Antoine de Baïf and the composer Thibault de Courville. They and their followers announced that they wished to revive the poetry, music, and dance of the ancient world. Their actual knowledge of Greek and Roman history might seem inadequate to today's scholars, but they were important for envisioning theatre as a composite art form uniting the separate disciplines of poetry, music, dance, and stage design.

Many plots of Renaissance stage spectacles derived from literary sources and contained spoken or sung verses known as *récits*. Booklets containing their words as well as explanations of the ballet's symbolic content were frequently distributed to the audience.

Renaissance court spectacles could often be ornate indeed. Nevertheless, all in a sense were amateur theatricals because they were performed by nobles, rather than professional entertainers. The steps in these ballets differed little from those of the era's ballroom dances; the theatrical form was simply more polished and studied.

Among the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century dances, many are known to us and can be reconstructed from dancing masters' notations and descriptions. One popular dance was the ceremonious pavane, which, in the ballroom, was often coupled with the galliard, a lively dance with leaps and kicking steps. Other dances were the swift courante, which contained running and gliding steps; the volta (or lavolta), in which, assisted by the gentleman, the lady leaped and turned in midair; and the

slow-paced sarabande, which some moralists branded lascivious. These and other dances could all be incorporated into ballets. When they were, the female roles were customarily played by men or boys, although women were free to participate in them in the ballroom. Men were assigned jumps and the fancy steps, while the steps for women stressed grace, lightness, and restraint. However, as the Renaissance proceeded, steps grew increasingly intricate and, to facilitate the learning of some of the more complex ones, dancing masters often recommended that their pupils practice them by hanging on to the backs of chairs or to a tightly stretched rope for support. From this custom developed the *barre*, now a standard feature of every ballet classroom.

In addition to teaching ballroom dances and staging ballets, the dancing master was expected to set standards of etiquette and deportment. An example of such a linking of art and manners is found in a charming dance manual of 1588 called *Orchésographie.* Written by Thoinot Arbeau, the pseudonym of a benign, worldly French priest named Jehan Tabourot, *Orchésographie* consists of dialogues between Arbeau and his young pupil Capriol, and discusses several popular dances as well as military marching, flute and drum playing, seemly behavior, and proper grooming. Thus Arbeau warns Capriol, "Spit and blow your nose sparingly, or if needs must turn your head away and use a fair white handkerchief. . . . Be suitably and neatly dressed, your hose well secured and your shoes clean. . . . "

Another important dancing master was Fabritio Caroso, whose *Nobiltà di Dame,* published in 1600, is now considered an invaluable document because it contains examples of completely choreographed dances. Like Arbeau, Caroso offered advice on etiquette and on the various social situations that might arise during the course of a ball, including the problem of "What the Lady is to do if she is *not* invited to dance."

In Arbeau's time dancing, like riding and fencing, was considered one of the arts of a gentleman. Sometimes these skills were combined, as when it was discovered that horses could be taught to dance. The horse ballet, which enjoyed a certain

popularity from the sixteenth century onward, consisted of horses dancing in complicated formations, their trainers serving as both riding masters and dancing masters. A descendant of these horse ballets is what is known today as *haute école* riding, and among the attractions of Vienna are the white Lippizaner stallions of the Spanish Riding School, which dance with great refinement in an elegant ballroom built for them in 1729.

Like the *Ballet Comique de la Reine,* many productions were designed for halls in which spectators sat above the action. This led dancing masters to stress geometrical floor patterns with dancers forming figures, such as squares, diamonds, ovals, and triangles. The age delighted in allegory, and symbolical meanings could be assigned to some of these figures. According to an account of 1619, triangles symbolize Justice, three circles conjoined mean Truth Known, a square within a square indicates Virtuous Design, and three circles within one another represent Perfect Truth. By means of choreographic patterns, dancers could also form letters of the alphabet or words. Thus, in Sir William Davenant's *Salmacida Spolia,* an English masque of 1640, an ensemble of nymphs spelled out "Anna Regina," a reference to Anne of Denmark, mother of Charles I. The philosopher Francis Bacon scoffed that "Turning dances into figures is a childish curiosity," and sobersided adults might agree with him. Yet the child in us ever welcomes such curiosities: witness such comparable twentieth-century phenomena as football half-time drills or the precision chorus routines of Busby Berkeley movies.

Dancing may have been an art of the gentleman. Nevertheless, in one community, Seville, Spain—that city where choirboys danced in the cathedral—women achieved considerable importance as choreographers during the sixteenth and the first two-thirds of the seventeenth centuries. Seville celebrated occasions such as religious feasts, royal births, and the arrival of visiting dignitaries with elaborate processions during which dancers marched from the cathedral through the city streets. On their return, they performed both before the cathedral and on specially built stages in public plazas. Their offerings ranged from

suites of theatricalized versions of ballroom dances to dramatic works on religious, historical, and mythological themes.

Although all women in these troupes were required to be married, they possessed great artistic freedom. From the 1570s to the 1660s, among those who had careers as choreographers were Leonora Rica, Germana Ortiz, Ana de Medina, Josefa de Céspedes, Juana Valentín de Medina, and Felipa de San Francisca.

Dancing became the vogue at virtually all the courts of Renaissance Europe. England's Queen Elizabeth I loved to dance, and the story has come down to us that every morning she leaped through six or seven galliards as a setting-up exercise. Theatrical spectacles containing dancing were popular in Great Britain from the time of Henry VIII. However, they attained their most elaborate form in the seventeenth-century masques written by Ben Jonson and designed by Inigo Jones. The masque was an aristocratic entertainment in which poetic declamations, songs, and dances—often on serious allegorical themes—were interspersed with contrasting grotesque interludes known as antimasques. At the conclusion, the audience was invited to join with the performers in a dance, and thus theatregoing merged with partygiving. More than conviviality was involved in such minglings. The sight of everyone dancing together could be interpreted as an image of social harmony and stability. During the 1630s, Charles I played leading roles in some masques. But in *Salmacida Spolia*, the last of the court masques, he portrayed the king of a troubled realm, a piece of casting that suggested his own political troubles as a monarch.

Although English masques contained many dance sequences, the way their authors stressed literary content over choreography has made them ultimately more important to the history of theatre than to the history of dance. Nevertheless, the masque did exert some influence on the development of dance on the British stage. The grotesque and fantastical dances that occurred in the operas and theatrical spectacles composed by Henry Purcell between 1689 and 1695 can be seen as an outgrowth of the masque tradition. Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* received its premiere in 1689 at a boarding school run by a

dancing master, Josias Priest, who choreographed the work. In addition to showing off the singers, it displayed the dancing ability of Priest's pupils. Priest and Purcell collaborated on several subsequent works.

It was in France that ballet became particularly important. The French looked to Italy because it was the source of so many remarkable developments in art, music, and dance; and as the splendor of the French court increased, Italian artists, composers, and dancing masters sought positions in France. Adopted by the French court as a result of this interest in Italian culture, ballet soon took root and flourished. French aristocrats admired fine manners and made social encounters as intricate as choreography. Dance prospered in such an environment and, consequently, balletic deportment is aristocratic in nature and ballet steps retain French names. Today, ballet remains an art whose skilled practitioners can attain all the airs and graces of French aristocrats, a rank earned through talent and discipline, rather than through mere accident of birth.

Louis XIII danced in court ballets, for which he occasionally also wrote the scenario and the music. As one might expect of a monarch, he often appeared in dignified roles, as when, in 1617, he portrayed the spirit of fire—a cleanser of impurity—in the *Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud*, a work inspired by Torquato Tasso's epic poem, *Gerusalemme Liberata (Jerusalem Delivered)*. The scenario concerned a man's deliverance from an evil sorceress. The combination of that plot and the king's casting of himself as a cleansing force might have made the audience interpret the action as an allegory, for Louis had just freed himself from various political factions and conspiracies.

Yet the production was not entirely solemn. It contained spectacular magical scenes in which the sorceress conjured up demons in the form of crayfish, tortoises, and snails, all of which were transformed into comic old people. Nor was Louis always sedate as a performer. Indeed, he enjoyed playing comic roles and was particularly fond of portraying women.

A popular form of entertainment in this time was the *ballet à entrée*, a series of independent scenes ranging from the serious to the fantastical, linked together by a broad general theme. The

episodic construction of these ballets made possible works that could be as simple or as lavish as circumstances required, and they contained roles for a wide variety of character types. Thus, the cast for the *Ballet des Fées de la Fôret de Saint-Germain* of 1625 included roulette players, Spanish dancers, warriors, doctors, and headhunters. The grotesque scenes in such works often called for performers far more agile than even the most well-rehearsed dancing courtier. Therefore, after 1630, professional entertainers began to be hired, and as choreography grew more demanding the number of professionals increased.

Whereas the clergy in some countries disparaged dancing, in France the Jesuit order encouraged it. Two leading academic schools of seventeenth-century Paris, the Collège d'Harcourt and the Collège de Clermont, were run by the Jesuits, and at both dancing was prominently featured in their annual school plays. A priest, Père Ménéstrier, even became an influential writer on dance in the 1680s.

Several changes in ballet occurred during the seventeenth century. The most important of them was that ballet moved out of ballrooms and halls and into proscenium theatres. The rich scenic possibilities of the proscenium theatre became evident when Cardinal Mazarin, who sponsored Italian opera in Paris, invited Giacomo Torelli, one of the greatest Italian stage designers of the era, to work for him. The proscenium theatre proved to be ideally suited for dance presentations. Because most members of the audience now faced the stage straight-on, choreographers could emphasize individual human figures as well as massed ensembles. This factor further hastened ballet's professionalization. The proscenium theatre stressed ballet as something to be seen by others, whereas it had been something seen and done by the same people: a performance by courtiers for their fellow courtiers. Now, the proscenium arch helped to separate doer and watcher. At first, that separation was not great. In early proscenium theatres, ramps extending from the stage to the auditorium floor permitted performers and spectators to dance together at the end of the ballet. Furthermore, until well into the eighteenth century, members of the audience were permitted to sit on the stage.

French court ballet reached its peak under Louis XIV, who reigned from 1643 to 1715. Dance was always part of his life. Even his birth was celebrated by an entertainment called the *Ballet de la Félicité.* Louis began to dance as a boy and Cardinal Mazarin, who supervised his education, was accused of stressing dancing lessons over grammar lessons. Louis first danced in public in 1651 at the age of thirteen, and by the time he was a young man he was appearing several times a week in ballets. He took ballet very seriously. Indeed, it was in a ballet that he was able to become the living embodiment of one of his most famous epithets, the "Sun King." Louis was always associated with the sun. With their gilt bronzes and golden curtains and embroideries, his palatial quarters glowed as brightly as the sun. A medal struck at his birth proclaimed him *Orbis Solis Gallici* (The Risen Sun of Gaul). In 1653 he portrayed the Rising Sun in the *Ballet de la Nuit,* a symbolic account of the times of day. During its penultimate episode, thieves in the night try to loot a burning house, but in the conclusion Aurora enters, bringing with her the Rising Sun accompanied by Honor, Grace, Love, Riches, Victory, Fame, and Peace. This was no simple, harmless allegory. Only two years before, a mob had invaded the Palais Royal to protest high taxes and poor living conditions. But since then dissent had been stamped out; France was not to be a burning house: the Rising Sun, the absolute monarch, would reign triumphant—yet his reign would be accompanied by virtue. The *Ballet de la Nuit* gave its audience a moral lesson to ponder.

The self-proclaimed incarnation of *gloire,* Louis tried to make his entire life a theatrical spectacle. Frequent royal visits and processions placed him in full view. Even dining, getting up, and going to bed were ceremonial occasions that others might behold. The course of Louis's day became as regular as the sun, as measured as a dance. Art and life were virtually one and the same for him and his court. No wonder ballet was admired. Its formality must have made it seem the apotheosis of the social structure and the triumph of order. In ballets, courtiers could portray gods and heroes, and offstage they could model themselves on such balletic characters as Apollo or Alexander the

Great. It is not surprising that the Greek gods appealed to aristocrats. Not only were these mythological deities larger than life, they were also human in their physical features and endowed with the virtues of courage, strength, elegance, and mental acuity. Although their powers exceeded those of ordinary mortals, they were not so otherworldly as to be beyond a capacity for wit and playfulness. Customarily masked as they danced their roles, courtiers were in a sense playing roles offstage as well, for they displayed to the world artfully designed facades of fine manners. Since court life was artifice, personality was impersonation.

French public life began to resemble a theatrical spectacle. People felt a need to see and to be seen. Architects and city planners rebuilt Paris, making it a city of handsome squares and parks—all of which might be likened to stages on which people could present themselves. City squares—the meeting points of several streets—were also social meeting points, gathering places in which people could assemble. (Today, centuries later, city squares still serve that purpose.) Outside Paris, the gardens of the great royal palace at Versailles had their own imposing avenues and promenades.

Louis XIV chose some of the finest talents of his day to collaborate on ballets. The poet Isaac de Benserade contributed scenarios; Jean Bérain designed lavish scenery and costumes. Through ingenious stage machinery, Bérain could create the illusions of storms, flying gods, and collapsing palaces. His costumes of brocade or velour features pearls, diamonds, plumes, and gold and silver embroidery. All that glitter was not entirely for ostentation. In candlelit theatres, shiny surfaces—be they jeweled necklaces or mere buttons and shoe buckles—picked up light and helped make figures more visible. So, too, in ballrooms the reflection of candles in wall mirrors helped brighten the space.

Many costumes of the period were inspired by the heroic styles of the Roman Empire, but little scholarly research was involved in designing them and consequently they suggested an antique world of the imagination, rather than any specific historical period. Certainly no ancient Roman ever wore a *tonnelet*, the wide hooped skirt of midthigh length that served as the standard costume for male dancers until well into the eighteenth century.

Productions at the court of Louis XIV could be lavish indeed. However, the only surviving notated record of a complete theatrical entertainment of that time is a modest piece: *Le Mariage de la Grosse Cathos (Fat Kate's Marriage)*, a comic *ballet-mascarade* of 1688. Somewhat similar to a *ballet à entrée* in form, a *mascarade* was a little work in which songs, dances, and spoken texts were held together by a slender dramatic pretext. *Mascarades* were often performed during masked balls, particularly in the carnival season just before Lent.

Le Mariage concerns a village wedding during which a gargantuan young woman is married off to a country bumpkin. The entire cast was male, and the arias for its obese heroine—who sang as well as danced—are in the baritone range. The complete score by André Danican Philidor *l'aîné* (the elder) and the choreography by Jean Favier, as recorded in notation, were preserved in the royal library. However, whereas the music was easily readable, Favier's personal notation system was considered totally unintelligible until it was deciphered in the 1980s by two American scholars, Carol G. Marsh and Rebecca Harris-Warrick.

Many musical scores for court ballets were composed by Jean Baptiste Lully, who came to France as a child from his native Florence, where he had been a comic dancer. In Italy, he had also become familiar with commedia dell'arte, a robust, popular form of drama that flourished from the mid-sixteenth century onward. Members of commedia dell'arte troupes had to be versatile, able to act, sing, dance, and play musical instruments. The vigorous, fast-paced commedia shows, featuring character types such as Arlecchino, Pulcinella, Pantalone, Brighella, the meddling Dottore, and the braggart Capitano, greatly influenced French ballet and theatre, particularly French comedy.

Lully entered the service of Louis XIV in 1653. A fine comedian, he was said to be able to make Louis weep with laughter.

Although Lully danced in some thirty ballets, his greatest importance was as a composer of elegant, sophisticated music. A ruthless schemer in his private life, he dominated the French musical scene and, because of the power he wielded, he was hated as well as respected. Therefore it is easy to understand why he once feared that a rival was trying to poison him by mixing arsenic with his tobacco. Although a husband and a father, Lully was also a homosexual whose behavior was considered so scandalous that the king occasionally found it necessary to chide him for his excesses. Lully died in 1687 after a freak accident. He pierced his foot with the staff he used to beat time during concerts and, as a result, a fatal gangrenous abscess developed.

To a modern viewer, theatrical productions of Lully's time might seem hybrids: operas contained dancing, ballets contained songs and poetic recitations. If dance was not regarded as an autonomous art, the mixing of arts could lead to productions of great sumptuousness. For example, *Les Plaisirs de l'Ile Enchantée* of 1664 was a three-day festivity at Versailles that involved ballet, drama, fireworks, mock combats, and banqueting. The mixing of arts also occurred in a lighthearted manner in the *comédie-ballet*, a form developed by Lully and the great comic playwright Molière. Consisting of spoken dialogue interspersed with danced interludes, this theatrical genre can be considered a distant ancestor of the musical comedy. One of its finest examples, Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, continues to amuse audiences today. Molière's story tells of how gullible, middle-class Monsieur Jourdain tries to ape the aristocracy by taking singing, dancing, and fencing lessons and then is fooled into believing that he has been made an Oriental potentate. Good comedians have loved acting in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* ever since its premiere in 1670, when it was staged with music by Lully, and its balletic finale still provides roles for dancers.

The foremost dancing master of the era was Pierre Beauchamps, teacher of Louis XIV and one of the highest paid of the king's servants. He came from a family of dancing masters and violinists and was distantly related on his father's side to Molière's family. Beauchamps's ballets, like those of many other once-celebrated choreographers, are now forgotten. Yet one can gain a sense of the technique of his time from prints and writings.

Beauchamps stressed some of the fundamentals of ballet, including the five positions of the feet. He would probably be astonished by the amount of turnout today's ballet performers bring to classical steps. Professional dancers are now able to turn out their legs from the hips at a 180-degree angle. In Louis XIV's day, when dancers wore heeled shoes and bulky costumes, the amount of turnout was less. Turnout was first introduced into ballet technique as a theatrical adaptation of the fashionable fencer's stance. Dancing masters discovered that turnout helps the dancer to increase flexibility and balance while permitting the body to open outward toward the audience. Therefore, because of the way it facilitated clarity and visibility of movement, turnout became one of ballet's cardinal principles, although choreographers have always retained the freedom to ignore it in order to achieve special effects—as choreographers in fact did in the seventeenth century when they assigned turned-in movements to grotesque or comic characters.

Louis XIV stopped dancing in ballets in 1670. Perhaps he had noted, and taken to heart, the lines in Racine's play *Britannicus* that criticized a monarch for flaunting himself in public. Racine's specific reference was to Nero, but Louis may have detected a message between those lines. In any case, though only in his thirties, Louis was growing noticeably stout. Yet he continued to love ballet and desired the art to survive. Even before his retirement he took pains to ensure ballet's stability as an art. In 1661 he founded the Académie Royale de Danse, an association of teachers who were given quarters in the Louvre, but who preferred to meet at a nearby inn. Although this organization eventually disbanded, its establishment was a sign that official recognition was being given to dance. In 1669 Louis took a more decisive step: he founded the Académie Royale de Musique, which survives today as the Paris Opéra. Since dancers appeared in its productions from the start, the Paris

Opéra Ballet can boast of being the world's oldest ballet company. The Académie's inaugural production, the opera *Pomone*, was staged in 1671 in a converted tennis court. However, managerial quarrels almost caused the Académie to collapse. Lully reorganized it and wielded power there for the rest of his life.

Louis's retirement as a dancer and the opening of the Opéra hastened the development of totally professional dancers. Moreover, although women had occasionally performed in some of the otherwise male-dominated court ballets, it was now possible for women to have careers as dancers at the Opéra.

Among the women to appear on the Opéra stage was one listed in programs as Mlle de La Fontaine. She is said to have made her debut leading three other women in a dance sequence of Lully's *Le Triomphe de l'Amour* in 1681, and this prominent role makes it possible to call her dance history's first prima ballerina. Mlle de La Fontaine continued to dance until 1693, when she apparently retired. Little is known about her dancing or her life. Yet her presence is a sign that the noble amateur, the dancing courtier, was about to bid farewell to the stage.

4

The Professionalization of Ballet

WITH the opening of the Paris Opéra and the emergence of the professional dancer, ballet developed rapidly as an art. Even though the proscenium theatre had replaced the galleried hall, no rigid distinctions were made between theatrical and purely social dances. As in the court theatres of the past, the dances one saw on stage were still likely to be complex variants of the dances one performed for pleasure in the ballroom.

The period's most popular ballroom dance, the minuet (or menuet), turned up in ballets. Even in its ballroom form, it possessed a measure of theatricality, for it was intended to be seen as well as done. Each couple danced alone before the eyes of their peers, and was then succeeded by the next couple. The way the lady and gentleman continually moved apart and together again suggested flirtation—always within the bounds of decorum—and made the minuet a dance that could resemble a courtship ritual. Moreover, during the performance of a minuet, dancers could scrutinize one another to determine who had mastered the fine points of deportment, posture, and technique, while flaws in dancing could be taken as signs of flaws in character. Thus Sarah, duchess of Marlborough, once remarked of an

acquaintance: "I think Sir S. Garth is the most honest and compassionate, but after the minuets which I have seen him dance . . . I can't help thinking that he may sometimes be in the wrong."

During the early 1700s a new theatrical form, the *opéra-ballet*, came into existence. This form was related to the old *ballet à entrée*, for it consisted of detachable scenes joined by a common theme and utilized singing, dancing, and many of the splendid stage effects made possible by the proscenium theatre. Louis de Cahusac, who wrote scenarios for *opéra-ballets*, tried to define the form by comparing it to painting, likening the *entrées* of *opéra-ballet* to the exquisite miniatures of the painter Jean-Antoine Watteau: "*Opéra-ballet* is a composite spectacle of several different acts, each of which represents a distinct action, with divertissements, songs and dances intermingled. These acts are beautiful Watteaus, spicy miniatures demanding graphic precision, gracefulness of the brush and superior brilliant coloring."

Opéra-ballet reached its height in the works of the composer Jean Philippe Rameau. A late arriver on the theatrical scene, Rameau was fifty-one when he had his first creation staged at the Paris Opéra. But that work, *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1733), made him famous overnight. One of his best-known *opéra-ballets* is *Les Indes Galantes*, which—complete with a dancing flower garden and an erupting volcano—enjoyed immense popularity both at its Paris premiere in 1735 and when it was revived at the Opéra in 1952. *Les Indes Galantes* exemplified the curiosity about foreign, and particularly exotic, lands and peoples that had begun to develop during the eighteenth century. Each of its scenes, or *entrées*, was a love story that took place in a different corner of the world. The first episode occurred in Turkey, the second was set among the Incas of Peru, the action switched to Persia in the third scene, and the fourth concerned Indians in a North American forest.

The productions of Rameau and his contemporaries could be extremely ornate. But they involved more than frills. Their composers and choreographers were concerned with serious issues and they believed that one way to inspire the mind was first to

stimulate the senses. Composers and choreographers alike sought to express the emotions. Characters in eighteenth-century ballets and operas may have been allegorical figures or mythological personages such as the gods and heroes of antiquity, yet through their actions they depicted desires, passions, and feelings known to human beings throughout history. If they seemed larger than life, that was so that the aspect of life they represented would be unmistakable.

Rather than totally immersing themselves in the emotions that they sought to reveal—or "living the part," as we might say today—eighteenth-century dancers took conscious care to shape their steps and gestures to serve as images of states of feeling. Given such pictorial concerns, it is not surprising that many eighteenth-century dancing masters advised their students to study painting. Thus, in his *Theoretical and Practical Treatise on Dancing* of 1779, Gennaro Magri described dancers' stances and movements almost as if they were elements in the composition of a painting: "The true theatrical attitude does not consist of a single and simple gesture but is a union of several poses, being an accompaniment of the arms, the legs, the head, the eyes, which must express in which emotional state the person is found."

Technique developed rapidly, and rival factions of balletgoers arose: those who relished increasingly complicated feats of virtuosity and those who favored qualities such as grace, elegance, and nobility.

There were three basic categories of dance styles. The *danse noble* was considered the highest and, as the term itself suggests, the most noble form of dance. An exponent of this style was serious and dignified on stage and was usually cast as a hero from history or mythology. *Demi-caractère* dancing was much livelier and more extroverted. Those who did this type of dancing were technically agile and tended to portray everyday (but not boorish) people or, in mythological works, lesser gods. Dancers who exemplified the *comique* (or *grotesque*) style played comic or rustic roles; although they were often required to be rough in manner, they could also be genuinely charming.

The eighteenth century saw the rise of the star dancer, and the Paris Opéra Ballet School, which opened in 1713, ensured that well-trained dancers would always be available. Individual dancers achieved fame for their personal style. Claude Balon (sometimes called Jean Ballon) was blessed with good looks and dazzling technique. Louis Dupré was called "le grand Dupré" because of his majestic presence and "the god of the dance" because of the Olympian breadth of his gestures. He continued to dance until he was sixty, his stateliness increasing yearly, although his detractors whispered that this "god" was in danger of becoming a bore.

Giacomo Casanova, the Italian adventurer, libertine, and memoirist, was certainly not impressed when he saw Dupré perform in Paris. Indeed, the experience mystified him for, after taking a few steps and striking some poses, the aging star received thunderous applause. A friend declared that Dupré was exactly the same as he had been forty years earlier—at which the astonished Casanova exclaimed, "What! He never danced differently?" Then the friend, with the zeal of a fan, replied, "He cannot have danced better; for the performance you saw is perfect. Is there anything above perfection? He always does the same things, and we always find it new."

One of Dupré's pupils, Gaetan Vestris, was a member of a dancing family that dominated the Paris Opéra for more than a half-century, from the time of Mme de Pompadour through the French Revolution and into the Napoleonic era. Like Dupré, Gaetan Vestris was nicknamed "god of the dance," and he appears to have inherited his teacher's arrogance as well as his noble bearing. Gaetan passed on his pride to his son, Auguste Vestris, but whereas Gaetan exemplified the *noble* style, Auguste was a *demi-caractère* dancer. Instead of specializing in majestic gestures, he was a virtuoso famed for his jumps and turns. Gaetan once smugly declared of him that "It is through pity of his comrades that my son consents to touch the earth." Like some of his predecessors, he continued to dance past his prime. However, as he grew older his dramatic powers developed and because of his ability to combine virtuosity with expressiveness, he did much to make the old *noble* style obsolete. After his retirement in 1816, Auguste Vestris became one of the most distinguished teachers of the nineteenth century.

Women as well as men achieved stardom. In addition to being a brilliantly light, precise dancer with a dramatic flair, Françoise Prévost was a choreographer, her most famous work being *Les Caractères de la Danse*. Created in 1715, this was a suite of solos, each of which showed someone asking a favor of the god of love and doing so in the manner of one of the popular dance forms of the day. During the course of the work, Prévost portrayed male as well as female characters.

Two pupils of Prévost, Marie Anne de Cupis de Camargo and Marie Sallé, were particularly admired; each seems to have developed a different aspect of Prévost's own talents. From the standpoint of the historian, Camargo and Sallé constitute an instructive pair: they exemplify rival artistic viewpoints that continue to exist. These ballerinas were quite unlike, both onstage and off. Camargo was worldly. The toast of Paris at the height of her career, she retired from the Opéra in 1751 with the largest pension ever given a dancer up to that time and lived for the rest of her days surrounded by her beloved pet dogs, cats, parrots, and pigeons in a well-furnished house known for its wine cellar.

Sallé, in contrast, was quiet, reserved, even somewhat secretive about her private life. She was also the century's leading dramatic ballerina and, although she was technically able, "it was not by leaps and frolics that she went to your heart," as the choreographer Jean Georges Noverre wrote of her. Applauded in Paris, she enjoyed an unusual success in London. There she created the dance scenes in several operas by Handel, and thus must be regarded with Prévost as one of history's first female choreographers.

At various times, to heighten the dramatic intensity of a work, Sallé instituted reforms in staging and costuming. She choreographed her own version of *Les Caractères de la Danse*, which she conceived as a love duet, and when she performed it in 1729 she created a sensation by dancing without a mask. Even more startling was *Pygmalion*, which she choreographed in London in 1734. In this ballet based on a Greek fable, Sallé

portrayed a sculptor's statue that magically comes to life. To look appropriately Grecian, she discarded some of the cumbersome costumes of the day, including the wig and the *panier*, a hooped petticoat that was the female equivalent of the *tonnelet*. Instead she wore a simple, draped muslin robe that made her resemble a marble statue, and her natural hair, without a jewel or ornament, fell loosely to her shoulders. People fought in the streets to obtain tickets for her performances at Covent Garden.

Camargo was a dancer of a totally different sort. A virtuoso famed for her brio, her technical abilities became apparent so early in her career at the Opéra that Prévost, afraid of having a rival, relegated Camargo to the last row of the ensemble. However, one night a male dancer missed his entrance and Camargo leaped forward to complete his solo with verve and assurance. Thereafter she was seldom out of the public eye. Voltaire said that Camargo was the first ballerina to dance like a man, by which he meant that she was the first woman to master the dazzling steps that had previously been associated solely with male dancers. She was particularly celebrated for her *entrechat*, a flashing jumping step in which the feet are repeatedly crossed while in the air. So that audiences could see her *entrechats*, Camargo shortened her skirt by several inches. She was not the first or the only dancer of her time to do so, but because of her fame and brilliance, this costume reform has become particularly associated with her.

Both Camargo and Sallé encouraged costume reforms, but for different reasons. Whereas Camargo wished her technical accomplishments to be visible, Sallé desired to portray specific dramatic characters as convincingly as possible. Therefore these two ballerinas have come to exemplify two approaches to the art of dance: Camargo personifying dance as beauty of outward form, Sallé symbolizing dance as an expression of inward feeling.

(Curiously, comparable pairings occur in other periods of dance history: two of the leading ballerinas of the nineteenth century were the ethereal Taglioni and the passionate Elssler, and among the celebrated ballerinas of the early twentieth century were the classical Pavlova and the romantically ardent

Karsavina. Both approaches can be valid, and taste often swings like a pendulum from one ideal to another. When the Camargo-dancer's formal perfection starts seeming academically dull or degenerates into meaningless acrobatics, there tends to be new interest in the expressive power of the Sallé-dancer. But should a Sallé-dancer start offering nothing but overwrought gesticulations, then the formal virtues of the Camargo-dancer may once again be treasured.)

The successor to Sallé and Camargo in the affection of Parisians was Barberina Campanini, who was known by the stage name of La Barberina. Trained in Italy, where the schools emphasized speed and agility (as they would for more than a century to come), Barberina delighted audiences with her turns and *entrechats*. Her offstage life was equally lively. She was installed by Frederick the Great as his mistress in Berlin, where he wined and dined her, commissioned artists to paint her portrait, and vociferously applauded her performances. And that, perhaps, was all he did. Frederick was not romantically attracted to the opposite sex and Barberina may have been his mistress in name only—to forestall any scandal that might have been created by the existence of a circle of intimates that was otherwise totally male. All the while, Barberina formed romantic attachments with other young men. Yet at the time of her death in 1799, at the age of seventy-eight, she was the abbess of a convent.

Such a progress from theatre to nunnery was by no means atypical and it suggests much about the period's moral climate. Officially, the Church condemned the theatre and refused to marry or bury actors and dancers. At the same time, high-ranking clergymen often hired dancers to entertain at their banquets. A few even took dancers as mistresses. It was widely assumed that female dancers would have well-to-do men as lovers and, because many of these young women came from poor families, it is hardly surprising that they welcomed the jewels, gold, banquets, and other gifts their lovers lavished upon them.

Condemned by conventional moralists, dancers nevertheless seemed to be indispensable as providers of amusement for

respectable society. Therefore many dancers were simultaneously carefree and shrewd, living loose lives when young and officially repenting in old age. Under such circumstances, their loose living can even seem an outburst of hearty paganism defying the frowns of pious hypocrites. Occasionally such paganism could take almost riotous forms. Some dancers even participated in erotic shows held at private theatres frequented by courtiers, intellectuals, and clergymen in disguise. One theatre of this sort was on the estate of Marie-Madeleine Guimard, a ballerina known in her heyday for her dramatic stage presence, her extravagance, and her charity to the poor. However, she was to die in 1816 forgotten and penniless, the wife of an impoverished poet.

With the increased popularity of dance in the eighteenth century came a concern for dance notation. In fact, it is not until our own century that one encounters a comparable interest in recording movement by means of written symbols. Beauchamps had devised a notation system of his own during the seventeenth century and, although he never published it, scholars think it may have had an influence on the notation system that Raoul-Auger Feuillet published in 1700 under the title of *Chorégraphie, ou l'Art de Décrire la Dance*. Feuillet's notation was capable of recording the dances of his time in a manner that was both ingenious and detailed, and it became enormously popular throughout Europe. Professional and amateur dancers alike prided themselves on their ability to read dance notation, and clergymen even complained that too many young ladies were keeping dance manuals, rather than Bibles, on their bedside tables. However, notation declined in popularity as steps in ballets grew more complex and difficult to notate; at the time of the French Revolution, it also seems to have been regarded as one of the aristocratic fashions that had to be abandoned.

As dancers developed the intricacy of ballet technique, innovative choreographers made use of it in their early works. One of the leading choreographers of the early eighteenth century was Guillaume-Louis Pécour, who, at his death in 1729, was described in an obituary as a worthy successor to Beauchamps

with "an admirable and versatile genius." He both choreographed ballets for the Opéra and arranged dances for fashionable balls, and he was especially praised for his musicality and inventiveness. Because many of his works were recorded in Feuillet notation and studied by dance lovers in other countries, the French style of dancing spread throughout Europe.

The most significant new form of ballet to develop in the eighteenth century was the *ballet d'action*, which, unlike the episodic *ballet à entrée*, aimed at dramatic coherence and concision. The early eighteenth century witnessed several experiments in this genre. Responsible for one of them was the duchesse de Maine, who was a wit, an intellectual, a dwarf, and an insomniac. Insomnia made her seek ways to while away her sleepless nights, and her wit and intellect helped her to devise nocturnal entertainments at her château at Sceaux. There, one night in 1714, some dancers from the Opéra, including Prévost and Balon, mimed an act of Corneille's *Les Horaces* to music. The experiment was deemed successful, but regarded more as an eccentric lady's latest novelty than as an important new way of making ballets. A more ambitious production was John Weaver's *The Loves of Mars and Venus*, which was staged in London in 1717. This is often cited as the earliest complete ballet to convey its dramatic content entirely through movement, without the use of speech or song, yet it had little immediate impact. Because it appears to have been vaguely similar in style to Sallé's *Pygmalion*, created seventeen years later, there are scholars who believe that Sallé, when young, saw Weaver's ballet in London.

Among the exponents of *ballet d'action* were Jean-Baptiste de Hesse and Franz Hilverding. The former, working in Paris, filled his works with characters drawn from many social classes. Hilverding, a Viennese choreographer who sought to make the entire body expressive, created several works based on love stories from mythology (including those of Orpheus and Eurydice, Venus and Adonis, and Diana and Endymion).

By the mid-eighteenth century, *ballet d'action* had established itself as a major form and its popularity furthered the artistic

autonomy of dance. The choreographer acquired considerable creative power, whereas in court ballets or *opéra-ballets* he might be only one member of a team dominated by a playwright or composer.

(Despite the importance of *ballet d'action* in dance history, one should not rashly assume that everything before it was somehow inferior, or that any dance form that no longer seems significant to us today must therefore have been inherently inconsequential. The *ballet d'action* emphasized unity and drama; the *ballet à entrée* emphasized variety and display. Throughout dance history, taste has continued to vacillate between a concern for movement for its own beauty and a concern for movement as a revelation of emotional states, and great choreographers can make both concerns seem equally valid.)

The leading advocates of *ballet d'action* were Gaspero Angiolini and Jean Georges Noverre. Personal rivals in their own day, they now seem aesthetic allies when viewed from the perspective of history. A pupil of Hilverding, Angiolini collaborated with the composer Christoph Willibald Gluck in Vienna, staging the dances in the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* and choreographing the ballet *Don Juan*. Gluck's music for this work is perhaps the best ballet score of the eighteenth century and the story of Don Juan's philandering and eventual damnation rushes along with great excitement, in accordance with Angiolini's belief that ballets should not be overburdened with complicated subplots. Nothing survives of his 1761 choreography, but his scenario is so soundly constructed that choreographers to this day have employed it for their own versions of *Don Juan*.

Noverre first attracted attention in 1754 for *Les Fêtes Chinoises*, a ballet on Chinese themes created for the Paris Opéra-Comique. Chinese culture was in fashion at the time—pagodas were set up in gardens, and silks and porcelain were in demand—and Noverre's balletic *chinoiserie* seemed so delightfully exotic that the English actor David Garrick invited him to produce it at Drury Lane in London the following year. It was an ill-timed invitation. England and France were on the verge of the Seven Years' War and there was strong anti-French sentiment in London. Though Garrick tried to persuade audiences

that Noverre was really Swiss (a half-truth; he was half-Swiss), he nevertheless seemed much too suspiciously French to Londoners, and his ballet occasioned rioting.

Traveling through Europe to stage his ballets, Noverre amused Frederick the Great with comic impersonations of ballerinas and traded naughty stories with Voltaire. In what was probably the high point of his career, he was appointed director of the fine company in Stuttgart. He was also ballet master to companies in Lyons and in Milan, where Angiolini's epistolary polemic against Noverre's concept of *ballet d'action* began. In Vienna, where among his other duties Noverre gave dancing lessons to the young Marie Antoinette, he walked in one day on a rehearsal of Gluck's *Alceste* just as the composer exploded with rage and threw his wig to the ground in despair because he could not get the singers of the chorus to move expressively. To solve the problem, Noverre put the singers in the wings and had dancers mime to the music—an expedient that satisfied both Gluck and the audience.

Noverre continued to be important because of his *Letters on Dancing and Ballets*, a 1760 treatise on dance aesthetics that remains one of the most influential dance books ever published. Here he argues that ballets should be unified works of art in which all aspects of the production contribute to the main theme, that technical display for its own sake should be discouraged, and that such impediments to movement as heeled shoes and bulky skirts should be discarded. Many of Noverre's proposals are directed toward the specific ballet conventions of his time, yet his overall concern for ballet as a unified and coherent art makes his book still relevant. Noverre put his theories into practice in several ballets, including *Jason and Medea*, a ballet based on Greek mythology that caused such a stir following its 1763 premiere that an account of 1780 described it as a "*Ballet Terrible*, ornamented by dancing, suspicion, darkness, pleasure, horror, gaiety, treason, pleasantry, poison, tobacco, danger, *salade*, love, death, assassination, and fireworks."

In their day some of Noverre's ballets were considered fine examples of psychological realism. However, since notions of what is realistic or expressive on stage often change from cen-

tury to century, action that Noverre's audiences considered realistic might seem stilted to audiences of another time. Moreover, Noverre did not always achieve the goals his *Letters* championed. He could not persuade every dancer with whom he worked to adopt his costume reforms, and while the dramatic power of *Jason and Medea* caused some spectators to faint, other balletgoers accused his choreography of containing too much stately parading about. Mozart, who composed *Les Petits Riens* for him, also charged that Noverre lacked musicality. Nevertheless, because of his high-mindedness and his ability to articulate the theories of the *ballet d'action*, Noverre remains a key figure in ballet history.

Noverre lived to see many of his costume reforms adopted. In the three decades following the French Revolution of 1789, costumes approached his ideals of "light and flowing draperies" and the heeled dancing shoe was replaced by the soft heelless slipper. Not until Isadora Duncan adopted Greek robes at the beginning of our own century would dancers again be so scantily clad. Though corsets and fancy costumes eventually returned during the nineteenth century, the *tonnelet* and *panier* were banished forever.

By the time of the French Revolution, ballet had begun to attract a wider public and choreographers were experimenting with new subject matter. In addition to ballets based on Greek mythology, which continued to be prized as a source for choreography, there were ballets about ordinary country life. If some of these rustic ballets may have been as fundamentally unrealistic as the little dairy farm that Marie Antoinette built just for herself so that she might indulge her fantasies of playing milkmaid, their existence is nevertheless a sign of changing tastes.

What any of these ballets were really like no one can say, for they were forgotten long ago. Not a step remains of any choreography by Angiolini or Noverre. However, in 1786 Vincenzo Galeotti, a pupil of Angiolini, created *The Whims of Cupid and the Ballet Master* in Copenhagen for the Royal Danish Ballet (the Danes continue to dance it to this day). It is the world's oldest

surviving complete ballet. As now performed, some of its steps possess technical embellishments that would have been impossible in Galeotti's time; nevertheless, it can serve as a reasonable example of eighteenth-century comic choreography. Best of all, the ballet still seems comic to us. It shows Cupid mischievously mixing up pairs of lovers from several nations and taking delight in these misalliances. Just as *The Whims of Cupid* can easily make dancegoers smile, so it can also make dance historians sigh with relief: the reputations of so many old ballets have to be taken on faith because those ballets have vanished, but here at last is a ballet that was considered charming by its first audiences and proves to be genuinely charming still.

One other comic ballet of the eighteenth century also survives, after a fashion: *La Fille Mal Gardée*. It was staged in Bordeaux in 1789 by Jean Dauberval, a choreographer famous in his time for being both a womanizer and a creator of sweet, witty ballets. One day in the street, Dauberval passed a shop window, where he saw a print of an old woman throwing a hat at a young man fleeing from a cottage while a peasant girl weeps. Dauberval concocted a story around the scene in the print and developed it into a ballet about the way two young lovers thwart the attempts of the girl's crotchety mother to marry her off to a wealthy fool. Dauberval's choreography has been forgotten. But his sunny scenario has never stopped inspiring choreographers.

(A Russian version of *La Fille Mal Gardée* called *Vain Precautions* was popular throughout the nineteenth century. This, in turn, became the basis of a production staged by American Ballet Theatre. Frederick Ashton, England's foremost contemporary choreographer, has choreographed an entirely new production for the Royal Ballet, and his adaptation of a great comic ballet of the eighteenth century has been proclaimed by some critics as one of the great comic ballets of our own century.)

Pierre Gardel, who became ballet master of the Paris Opéra in 1787, held power at that organization until the early nineteenth century. As a choreographer, he believed, along with the proponents of *ballet d'action*, that productions should possess unity and dramatic coherence. However, because he felt that

too many examples of *ballet d'action* degenerated into tedious miming, he took care to choose stories that easily adapted themselves to dancing, and he was fond of stage spectacle.

He staged ballets in a variety of genres. *La Dansomanie* (1800) was a comedy about a father so obsessed with dancing that he even requires his daughter's suitors to dance for him in order to win his approval. *Achille à Scyros* (1804), one of Gardel's many mythological creations, told how the mother of Achilles disguises him as a woman to protect him from the dangers of a warrior's life. However, Ulysses arrives, seeking soldiers to fight the Trojans, and the true identity of Achilles is revealed when he shows an interest in military arms rather than finery. This scenario enabled Gardel to devise lyrical dances for women, fiery dances for warriors. Achilles, who was required by the choreography to suggest both masculine and feminine character traits, was portrayed by Louis Duport, a virtuoso said to rival Auguste Vestris.

By the 1820s, some balletgoers had started to call Gardel's works stuffy. Because none of his works has survived and we have no real idea of what they might have been like on stage, this judgment should be regarded with caution. Gardel may very well have had faults. But that adverse criticism may also indicate that balletic tastes were changing. Certainly, for much of his long career, Gardel was admired by audiences and critics alike.

Influenced by a renewed interest in the passionate dramas of Shakespeare, Romantic poets such as Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, and painters and sculptors such as Jacques Louis David, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, and Bertel Thorvaldsen, many choreographers in addition to Gardel began to create heroic ballets during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The leading exponent of this genre was Salvatore Viganò, an Italian choreographer who was also the nephew of the composer Luigi Boccherini. Viganò's ballets, which he termed *coreodrammi*, were on a grand scale, and titles such as *Richard Coeur de Lion, Joan of Arc, Otello,* and *Coriolanus* suggest the sort of subjects he favored. What made these ballets particularly exciting was their dramatic momentum: instead of alternating mime scenes with dancing, as some choreographers did, Viganò blended them in passages of continually developing expressive movement and often contrasted statuesque groupings inspired by classical sculpture with sweeping ensembles. Viganò's opponents claimed that he relied too heavily on mimetic movement and that his works contained too little real dancing.

Because similar charges are occasionally raised against dramatic ballets throughout dance history, this objection is worth examining. Sometimes it is justified, as when a ballet consists of virtually nothing but agitated gestures that presumably are intended to express much, but that in reality manage to convey little. In such cases, movement is vainly trying to do the work of speech. Yet there are times when those who argue that a dramatic ballet is deficient in dancing are merely revealing their own preference for decorative or abstract movement; considered on its own terms, the dramatic dance may be both genuinely expressive and eloquent. Moreover, in recent years, experimental choreographers have refused to make rigid distinctions between "dance" and "nondance" movement and, when seen in this light, certain aspects of Viganò's practice and the critical arguments for and against it may seem surprisingly contemporary.

So, too, are the implications of Viganò's use of music. Although Beethoven composed *The Creatures of Prometheus* for him, Viganò occasionally composed his own music for his ballets and, like other choreographers of his time, also assembled scores that were medleys of themes by several composers. These medleys were put together to fit the dance, just as medleys were assembled to accompany the action of silent films. Because of this, some theorists might find Viganò musically weak. But others—those for whom movement alone is the paramount ingredient in a dance production—could claim him as spiritually akin to those early modern dancers who deliberately kept their musical accompaniments spare so that the focus of a production would always be the stage action.

Audiences in Viganò's time may have welcomed medleys of tunes by various composers. Living long before the invention of the radio, the phonograph, or the tape recorder, they had

only limited opportunities to hear music. Consequently, a score that was a medley might have been a way to make people better acquainted with these themes. Some scores of this type contained orchestral versions of well-known songs or operatic arias; knowing the original words to these songs helped viewers follow the ballet's gestural action because the songs were placed so that their lyrics would be relevant to the dramatic situation being expressed. Such potpourri scores continued to be assembled on occasion throughout the nineteenth century.

Though his theories continue to interest us, Viganò's choreography has not survived. Like Noverre and Angiolini, he must have possessed real gifts. He once declared, "It is not enough to please the eye; I wish to engage the heart." And, for his devoted admirers, he did just that. Among those admirers was the novelist Stendhal, who proclaimed Viganò "the Shakespeare of the dance," an honor that Garrick had earlier bestowed upon Noverre.

Charles Didelot was also concerned with dramatic expression. This French choreographer, who was born in Stockholm, staged ballets throughout Europe, notably in St. Petersburg, where he helped influence the course of Russian ballet. Like Viganò, he often based poses and groupings on paintings and sculpture, and he, too, was praised by a great writer. The Russian poet Pushkin declared that there was more poetry in Didelot's choreography than in all French literature of the period, a compliment Didelot returned by basing a ballet on Pushkin's *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*. Didelot was also fascinated by innovations in stagecraft. He once put mirrors on a stage so that the audience could see the same dancer moving from several angles. By his advocacy of tights, he contributed to the simplification of costuming. And in 1796, in *Flore et Zéphyre*, which became his most celebrated ballet, he devised a remarkable system of rigging that permitted dancers to be raised aloft and suspended on wires, giving the illusion of flight. The effect was spectacular and so frequently imitated that zephyrs and nymphs were soon flying on wires across the stages of Europe.

Again by means of wires, Didelot could lower a ballerina to the ground so that she appeared to be poised on tiptoe. Eventually, ballerinas would discover how to balance on their toes without the assistance of wires—a discovery that inaugurated a whole new era of ballet history and profoundly affected the development of the art.