

## Mime, Music and Drama on the Eighteenth-Century Stage

### The Ballet d'Action

The 'ballet d'action' was one of the most successful and controversial forms of theatre in the early modern period. A curious hybrid of dance, mime and music, its overall and overriding intention was to create drama. It was danced drama rather than dramatic dance, musical drama rather than dramatic music. Most modern critical studies of the ballet d'action treat it more narrowly as stage dance, and very few view it as part of the history of mime. Little use has previously been made of the most revealing musical evidence. This innovative book does justice to the distinctive hybrid nature of the ballet d'action by taking a comparative approach, using contemporary literature and literary criticism, music, mime and dance from a wide range of English and European sources. Edward Nye presents a fascinating study of this important and influential part of eighteenth-century European theatre.

EDWARD NYE is Fellow of Lincoln College and Lecturer in French at the University of Oxford. His research centres on the eighteenth century and on artistic aesthetics in particular, and he is also interested in the history of ideas across centuries and national borders. He is the author of *Literary and Linguistic Theories in Eighteenth-Century France* (2000), the editor of a volume of literary reflections on dance, *Sur Quel Pied Danser? Danse et Littérature* (2005) and the editor of a scholarly anthology on the literature of cycling, *À Bicyclette* (2000).

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Edward Nye

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*For Fanny*

## Contents

*Acknowledgements* [page ix]

*A note on references* [xi]

Introduction [1]

PART I. THE BALLET D'ACTION IN HISTORICAL  
CONTEXT [7]

1. The voice and the body in the Enlightenment [9]

Sign language and the dogma of the voice [11]

L'Épée's innovations [17]

Theories of the origin of language [22]

Warburton and hieroglyphs [24]

Condillac's action language [27]

Rousseau's language of the passions [30]

Herder, hearing, and the gateway to the soul [34]

2. A revival of ancient pantomime? [38]

Differences and misunderstandings [39]

The balance between mime and dance [43]

The appeal to heart and mind [49]

Thematic affinities [53]

Origins [59]

3. No place for Harlequin [62]

Generic differences [63]

The French *foire* [69]

The 'arte' of expressive body language [72]

The influence of reformed Commedia [76]

The mixed backgrounds of choreographers [81]

4. Decroux and Noverre: Distant cousins? [84]

Eighteenth- and twentieth-century renewal [84]

Use of the body [87]

Mask and face [89]

Mime and dance [92]

Mime and language [95]

Deprioritising language	[100]
Objective and subjective mime	[102]
Towards a vocabulary of the passions	[106]
PART II. THE BALLET D'ACTION IN CLOSE-UP:	
DRAMATIC PRINCIPLES	[113]
5. Character and action	[115]
An early innovator: Françoise Prévost	[116]
Weaver, Sallé, and connected character	[120]
Later developments and problems	[123]
Literary reflections of dance and character	[127]
The poverty of instruction books	[132]
6. Dialogues in mime	[140]
The challenges	[141]
The expectations	[144]
The methods	[147]
Performative language	[150]
Operatic ensemble singing	[154]
7. Choreography is painterly drama	[162]
'Chorégraphie': a metaphor for drama	[163]
'Die Corographie': a plot synopsis	[168]
Angiolini and Noverre's quarrels	[170]
From painterly to graphic	[177]
8. The admirable consent between music and action	[185]
(CO-AUTHOR RUTH D. ELDRIDGE)	
Synchronising music and movement	[188]
Beyond synchronised music	[193]
<i>Médée et Jason</i>	[194]
<i>Médée et Jason</i> in context	[204]
9. Putting performance into words	[208]
Programmes are controversial	[209]
Multi-purpose programmes	[211]
Programmes as paratexts	[216]
Programmes are inherently controversial	[225]
<i>Conclusions: What is dance? What is mime?</i>	[229]
<i>Appendix</i>	[233]
<i>Select bibliography</i>	[305]
<i>Index</i>	[324]

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Reference to Noverre's *Lettres sur la Danse* are either to the first edition, *Lettres sur la Danse, et sur les Ballets* (Lyon: Delaroche, 1760), or, when quoting from later editions that Noverre published during his lifetime, to the modern edition, *Lettres sur la Danse et les Arts Imitateurs* (Paris: Lieutier, 1952).

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