Leading Notes

JOURNAL OF

THE NATIONAL

EARLY MUSIC

ASSOCIATION

Spring 1997

Leading Notes

Single copy price: £2.50

Issue 13

Spring 1997

Contents

Published twice a year by NEMA, and issued free to members.
Enquiries about membership or subscriptions, as well as submissions for publications, should be directed to the administrator:
18 High Street, Caythorpe, Grantham, Lincs NG32 3BS · 01400 273795 (Tel. & Fax)

ISSN 0960-6297

Registered Charity No. 297300

Produced for NEMA by Duane Lakin-Thomas
Set in Palatino, 9.5/12

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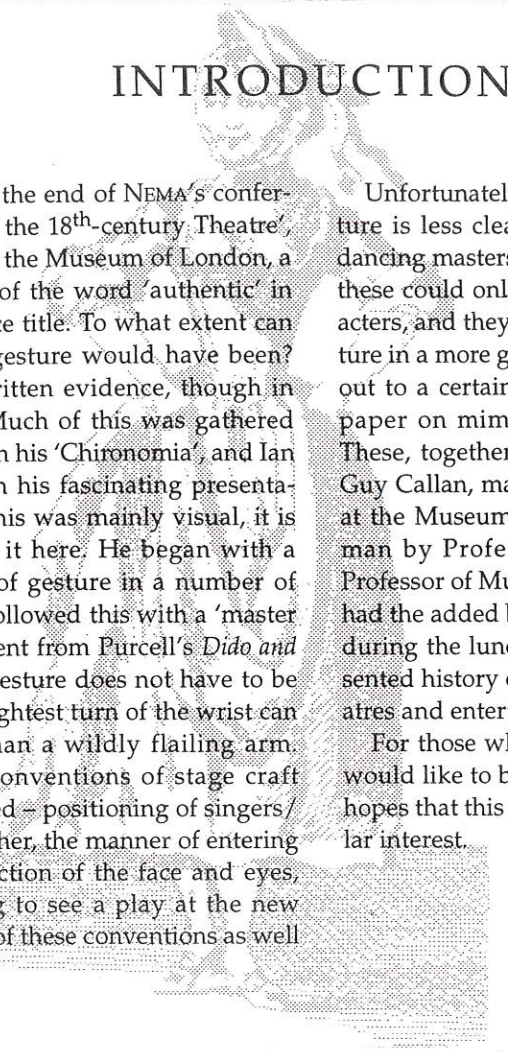
INTRODUCTION



In the discussion session at the end of NEMA's conference 'Mime and Gesture in the 18th-century Theatre', held on 23 February 1997 at the Museum of London, a debate arose as to the use of the word 'authentic' in the context of the conference title. To what extent can we know what authentic gesture would have been? Certainly there is some written evidence, though in many cases it is sketchy. Much of this was gathered together by Gilbert Austin in his 'Chironomia', and Ian Caddy illustrated its use in his fascinating presentation. Unfortunately, since this was mainly visual, it is not possible to reproduce it here. He began with a demonstration of the use of gesture in a number of extracts from poems, and followed this with a 'master class' based on Dido's lament from Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. This showed that gesture does not have to be highly exaggerated. The slightest turn of the wrist can carry greater emphasis than a wildly flailing arm. There were also certain conventions of stage craft which were strictly observed – positioning of singers/actors in relation to each other, the manner of entering and exiting the stage, direction of the face and eyes, *etc.* It would be intriguing to see a play at the new Globe Theatre making use of these conventions as well as of appropriate gesture.

Unfortunately, as far as dance is concerned, the picture is less clear. I tried to show that, although the dancing masters *did* set down rules for the use of arms, these could only really be applied to the 'noble' characters, and they make little reference to mime and gesture in a more general theatrical context. This was born out to a certain extent by Giannandrea Poesio in his paper on mime in late eighteenth-century ballets. These, together with the papers by Paul Goring and Guy Callan, made up an instructive and pleasant day at the Museum of London, skilfully guided as chairman by Professor Brian Trowell, former Heather Professor of Music at Oxford University. The delegates had the added bonus of being able to visit the museum during the lunch break, and view the splendidly presented history of the City of London, including its theatres and entertainments!

For those who were not able to be present, or who would like to be reminded of the presentations, NEMA hopes that this issue of *Leading Notes* will be of particular interest.

—Madeleine Inglehearn

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

In introducing myself as the Editor, from the next issue, of *Leading Notes*, it is only right to begin by referring to the large number of changes in the list of NEMA Officers, some of which were recorded without comment in the Autumn 1996 issue. In fact, of the names that appeared a year ago, only two remain: that of the President, Dr John Mansfield Thomson, and our Patron, Sir Richard Powell.

To my predecessor Ann Lewis, Dr Christopher Page, Terence Pamplin, Simon Hill, Julian Elloway and Annette Heilbron, NEMA owes a great deal. Our grateful thanks to all of them. For their successors, please see page 1.

I come, as some readers will know, from editing *Early Music News*. *Leading Notes* is a different kind of magazine, but I hope to transfer some of the old *News*' features: celebrating anniversaries, definitely; polemical articles, possibly; CD reviews, highly selectively. Letters are not just welcome, but positively desired, whether for publication or not.

The next issue will include another in the series of interviews by Helen Garrison; Spring 1998 will be devoted to a major topic. As they say, watch this space!

—Richard Lawrence

THE PROPER CARRIAGE OF THE ARMS

MADELEINE INGLEHEARN

In the eighteenth century new tendencies were developing in the visual arts, which were becoming more historically aware. The art of ancient Greece and Rome had become more accessible to European gentlemen with the increasing popularity of the grand tour and, from 1740 onwards, the excavation of Pompeii and Herculaneum and the publication of the first accurate drawings of the buildings and statuary of classical antiquity, particularly in Greece, opened up new visions to the cultural elite of Europe. This stimulated the development of the elegant neo-classical style. Stress was now laid on curved lines and asymmetry as opposed to the earlier fondness for geometric and symmetrical patterns. Painters sought to achieve a greater sense of movement and colours in their creations.

To the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome rhetoric and music were part of a mathematical discipline, and mathematical proportion was important in the art of oratory, which in turn affected both vocal and instrumental music. A contemporary of the composer Jean-Baptiste Lully described his Tragédies-Comiques as combining music, song and dance in a way that mirrored the tragedies of Greek antiquity. Being also an excellent dancer, Lully was naturally able to shape not only music and verse but also dance to follow as closely as possible the harmonies of Greek drama. Plutarch actually compared dance to mute poetry, and we see the influence of the desire for perfect proportion in the constant insistence of eighteenth century dancing masters on the necessity for balancing the placing of the body, arms and feet.

The artist William Hogarth believed that curved lines were the most beautiful. In 'The Analysis of Beauty' (1753), he wrote

> Let anyone chalk the line S on a flat surface, beginning at either end and he will move his hand and arm in a beautiful direction...the pleasing effect of this manner of moving is seen when a snuff-box, or fan is presented gracefully or genteely to a lady, both in the hand moving forward and in its return, but care must be taken that the line of movement must be gentle.

The beauty of the curved line was particularly relevant to dancers. The premier dance of this period, the Minuet, consists of nothing more than a series of curving and circling patterns, drawing the dancers together and apart in a sequence of sweeping lines, and the principal figure of the dance, the reverse S figure, reminds one very strongly of Hogarth's 'Line of Beauty' (figure 1).

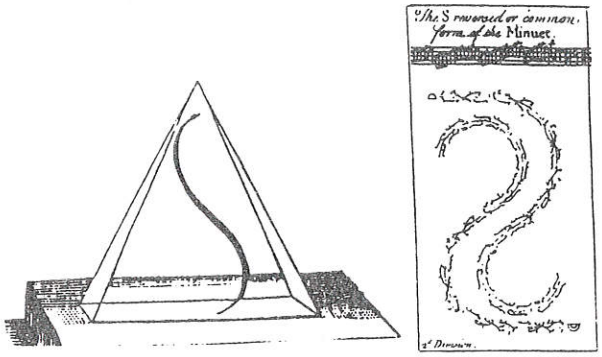


Figure 1: The S-shapes of Hogarth and the Minuet

In the mid-seventeenth century, a new dance style was emerging at the French court. Louis XIV's dancing master, Pierre Beauchamp, led the codification of this style, and Louis himself ordered Beauchamp to

> discover the means of making the art of dance comprehensible on paper

As a result, Beauchamp devised a form of notation with which to write down dances, which was later published by Raoul Auger Feuillet in 1700. This new dance style involved the use of arm movements as well as steps. In the 16th century, dancing masters were insistent that dancers should *not* move their arms excessively. The most elegant way to hold them according to Thoinot Arbeau in 1589 was

> your hands should hang down, neither lifelessly nor gesticulating wildly

Our main source of information about the use of the arms in the newly devised dance style comes from the dancing master Pierre Rameau whose book *Le Maître à Danser* was published in Paris in 1725. In Part 2 of his book Rameau gives a 'Discourse on the Arms and on the value of knowing how to move them with grace'. He describes them as 'a frame made for a picture' and goes on to say

> How well soever a Dancer may perform with his Feet, if his Arms are not easy and graceful, his Dancing will appear heavy and dull, and by consequence will have the same Effect as a Picture without its Frame.

As with Part 1 of his book on the dance steps, Rameau begins by showing how a dancer should

stand, in preparation to begin dancing, with the arms slightly raised to the side (figure 2). It is, he says, the job of the dancing master to adjust the position of the arms according to the height and build of his pupil. If he is of medium height he will hold them level with the pit of the stomach. If, however, the student is short they may need to be raised higher, and if tall then they should be lowered 'to the level of the hips', again this emphasis on balanced proportion. Referring to his illustration, Rameau says

> I have also shown the hands neither open nor closed, so that the movements of wrist and elbow can be made with all the softness and ease which one should observe in these movements; rather than the thumb being joined to one of the fingers, which will cause a stiffening in the other joints and take away that ease.

He then describes two ways of moving the arms, firstly by the turning of the wrist, – of this movement he cautions that

> care must be taken not to bend the wrist too much which would make it appear broken

The second movement is that of the elbow. Here again, we see the graceful use of the curve line in the arm, running from the shoulder to the tips of the fingers (figure 3).

These two movements are then combined with the various steps to give opposition. Rameau explains that

> If you watch different people walking you will see that when they carry the right foot forward it will be the left arm which opposes it naturally.

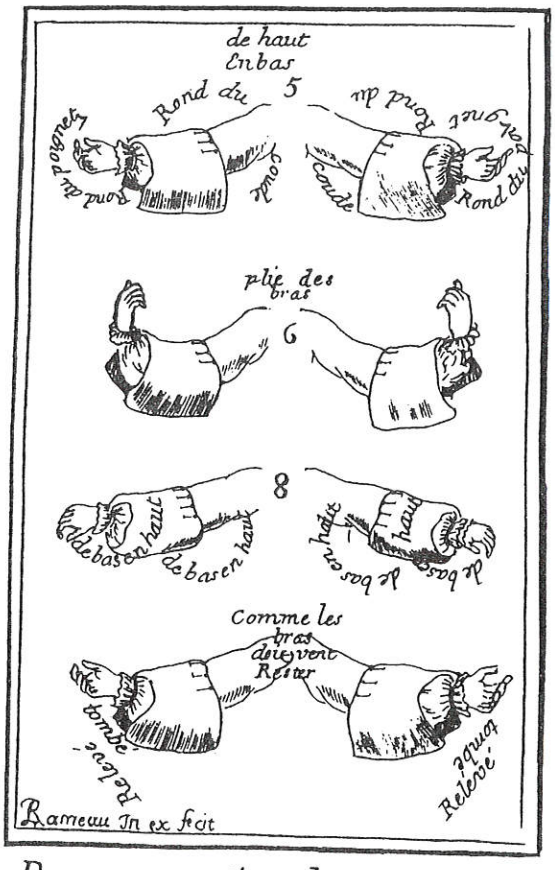
In the same way he explains, dancers should use this opposition in their dancing (figure 4).

Having explained the basic rules for the movement of the arms, therefore, Rameau then goes on to more detailed descriptions of the arms which accompany specific steps. These are not always as precise as we could wish, and in the case of some steps, he does not go into any detail about arms at all. We are left with the impression that, bearing in mind the general rules laid out by him, the dancer should be able to work out for himself the arm movements in any given dance.

This impression is borne out by Rameau's English contemporary, Kellom Tomlinson, who published a similar book in London in 1735 entitled *The Art of*

Elevation des bras pour Dancer

Figure 2: From Rameau's Le *Maître à Danser*, 1725



Representation des mouvements des poignets Coudes et de l'epaule

Figure 3: From Rameau's *Le Maître à Danser*, 1725

Dancing. In his paragraph entitled 'Of the Movement of the Arms in Dancing', he appears to excuse himself from going into details by saying that

> I shall...only observe what I apprehend to be material, without tiring the Reader's Patience on a Subject which cannot be compleated without the very best Masters.

Tomlinson uses illustrations of specific students to underline certain movements in a dance. Here is his equivalent to Rameau's dancer standing, which shows a very much lower position of the arms (figure 5). This difference between the French and English style shows up also in the illustrations used by John Essex in his translation of Rameau published in 1728. In this translation Essex used plates produced by George Alsop Delin, but in later reissues new plates were created by George Bickham. Here is Rameau's illustration of Opposition, together with Delin and Bickham, showing a gradual widening of the arms in England, and I think, rather sadly, the loss of that beautiful curve (figure 6). It is also interesting that while Rameau feels that pressing the thumb against one of the other fingers causes stiffness of the hand, Bickham shows his dancer doing exactly that.

In his book *Chorégraphie*, explaining the system of dance notation, Feuillet also includes a section headed 'Des Port de Bras et de leurs Mouvemens'. He tells us that

> Because the carriage of the arms depends more on the taste of the dancer than on any that one can give, I will give here only some Examples, from which you can see by characters the different movements the arms can make in dancing.

He elaborates slightly on this in his later book *Receuil de Contredances* published in 1706 and many of the contredance notations in this book make use of his hand symbols (figure 7). This illustration of the dance La Jalousie shows the man ⊽ and the woman ⩒ clapping both hands four times –(IIII)– then clapping once and wagging the finger of their right hand four times –(•••• . They repeat this and then take both hands ⧖ and circle each other, changing places, before finally letting go hands ⧗ .

Apart from these contredances, however, in almost 400 extant notations the only symbols regularly used are those for taking and releasing the hands. This is understandable in the case of all the ballroom dances where a certain restraint would be expected, but what of theatre dances? Surely such formality was not sufficient for drunken *bacchantes*, crude peasants, simple shepherds, and exotic Turkish potentates. And yet,

Figure 4: From Rameau's *Le Maître à Danser*, 1725

Figure 5: From Tomlinson's *The Art of Dancing*, 1735

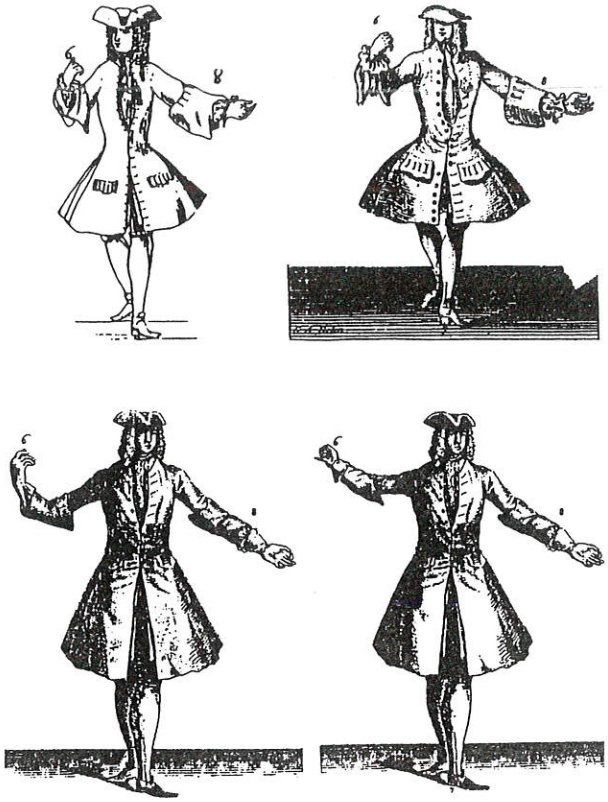


Figure 6: Comparison of arm position in Rameau, 1725; Essex, 1728 (first edition); and Essex, later editions

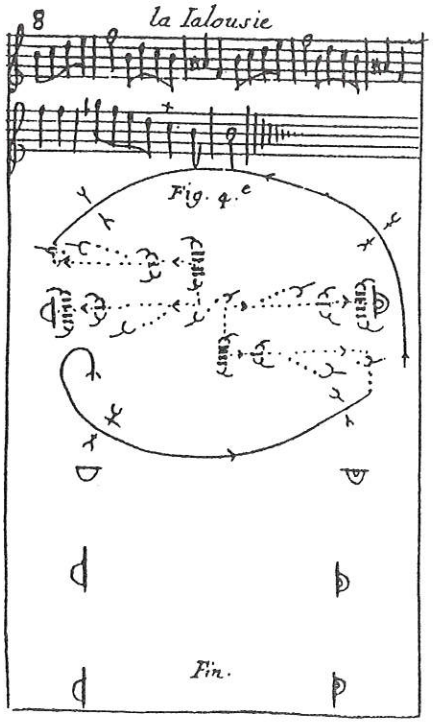


Figure 7: From Feuillet, *Receuil de Contredances*, 1735

none of the notations for these characters show us what the dancers did with hands and arms let alone torso and head. There are only three notations which attempt to develop a character. These are the three versions of an Entrée for a Harlequin.

Figure 8 shows the first plate of the Entrée choreographed by de la Montayne. The music is from Lully's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. As you can see, de la Montayne gives brief instructions for certain actions involving bowing.

Another anonymous notation to the same music uses both words and symbols (figure 9). Again the actions are mainly to do with raising the hat and bowing, but the use of the symbols shows more precisely how this is done. It indicates the hand being raised to the hat and the hat being lifted in the air. Then the character waves the hat backwards and forwards towards the audience in front of him. He then turns first to the right and then to the left, doing the same, and finally replaces his hat on his head with a flourish. Apart from these pages, however, most of the remaining plates of these two notations are standard step and floor patterns, although plate four of the anonymous dance has the instruction 'the left hand on the baton and the right on the hat', and plate five shows four circles of the whole arm.

The most detailed notation of the three is, without doubt, the dance by F. le Roussau to music by an unknown composer. This shows, not only the hand and arm symbols, but movements of the head and, on each page, a drawing of the Harlequin figure suggesting the gesture and position of the dancer at the beginning of that plate (figure 10).

Here then is a small clue to the use of gesture and mime in eighteenth-century theatre dances. An even more important source of ideas, however, is found in Gregorio Lambranzi's *New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing*, published in Nuremberg in 1716. Little is known about Lambranzi except that he was a Venetian dancing master who claimed to have danced 'In the most distinguished theatres of Germany, Italy and France.' Although on his title page he shows a piece of Feuillet notation which indicates that he knew of it, Lambranzi does not use the system, but says

> My aim is not to describe in detail the choregraphy of these dances or any particular step, still less to depict all their possible variations; this would be too ambitious a work and, moreover, would necessitate a large volume. But, by means of the illustration and its accompanying air...I shall portray a principal character in appropriate costume, the style of his dance and the manner of its execution. I shall also explain the essential matters in such illustrations and indicate what step should be employed.

However, it is not my intention to restrict anyone to my method but to leave each dancer free to adapt it as he pleases.

Lambranzi then presents his dances in the form of illustrated plates drawn and engraved by Johann Georg Puschner. Being an Italian, he was, of course, particularly familiar with the Commedia characters, and Part I of his book contains many illustrations of them. Here, for example, is Harlequin dancing a chicona with his wife (figure 11). As you see, the music for the dance is given at the top of the page, as was customary in all the Feuillet dance notations. The two characters are shown in the act of dancing, and underneath we have an explanation of the scene. In this case we are told

> Harlequin and his wife step forward as shown above. Now he runs round her with his usual movements and then she round him. Afterwards Harlequin goes to the extreme back of the stage and the woman to the extreme front, where she dances alone facing the audience with her back to the man. Then Harlequin beckons to the woman as if intimating they should go off, but she turns round and shows that she has no intention of doing so. Harlequin runs towards his wife and she to where he formerly stood. Afterwards Harlequin dances alone as she did, and now she beckons to him in the same manner. Finally they approach each other, hold each other's left hand, draw their swords or bats, strike each other on the shoulder and exit.

This description sets the scene vividly, but gives us no indication of what Harlequin's 'usual movements' were, or what exactly each of them danced.

In a few of his illustrations Lambranzi does suggest the steps his character might perform, though not the sequence or the floor pattern, and in general, he observes the rules of opposition in even his most grotesque poses. For example,

> Scapino dances alone executing, among other steps, his ballonnés, chassés, contretemps and pas de rigaudon, with his arms twisted from side to side.

But, apart from these Commedia characters, Lambranzi shows us some of the other typical demi-

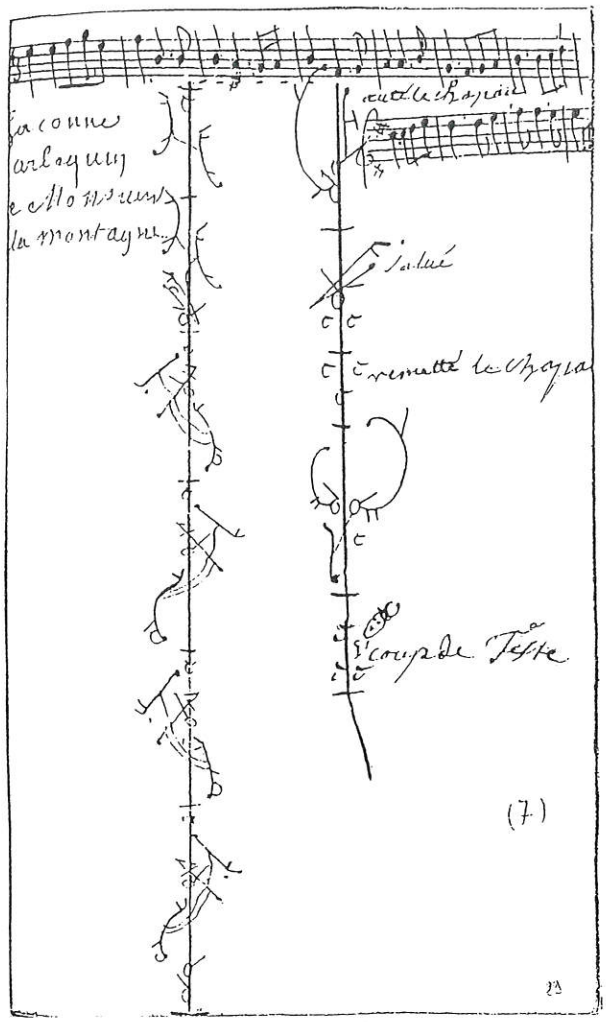


Figure 8: *Entrée* from de la Montayne

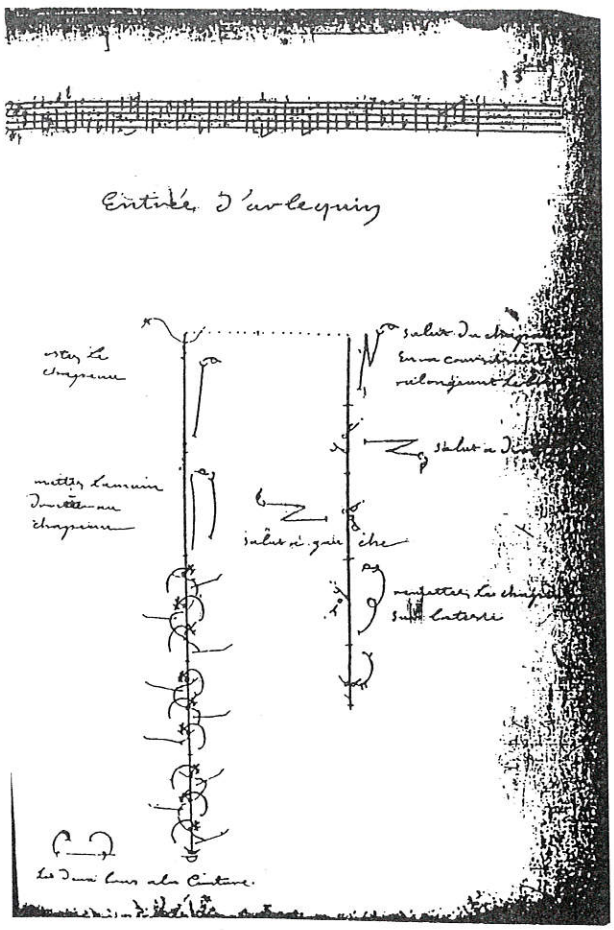


Figure 9: Anonymous notation of the same dance

caractère figures which abound in the Feuillet notations but are undefined and shadowy. For example, a peasant, who is descibed as

> performing the first peasant step, which is followed by contretemps and pas de rigaudon with drawing to and fro of the arms, knees and legs, but in divers manners in peasant style.

Unfortunately he does not explain what the 'peasant step' is, or what he considers the 'peasant style' to be.

Another popular character in the English theatre was the sailor, and there are frequent references to dancing 'in the manner of a sailor' on the London stage. Here is Lambranzi's version of an English sailor and his wife, who are described as being 'hung with wooden spoons' (figure 12). What the significance of the wooden spoons is I do not know, or what connection they have with English sailors. By contrast, figure 13 shows a Roman sailor dancing with his wife and turning his partner under his arm in a manner reminiscent of the later eighteenth-century Allemande.

Lambranzi presents us with a wide and vivid picture of other characters such as blacksmiths, tailors, cobblers, tennis players etc., and we should bear his illustrations in mind when looking at some of the notated dances. Many of these notations are, of course, intended to be performed in the 'noble style', and Rameau's rules for the arms would certainly be applied to them. But, perhaps those of us involved in reconstruction of baroque dances should be more adventurous in our approach to eighteenth century theatre dances and incorporate a greater use of mime and gesture to bring them to life, particularly in the case of obvious demi-caractère roles. I hope that the other papers will give us some new and stimulating ideas for this. ❖

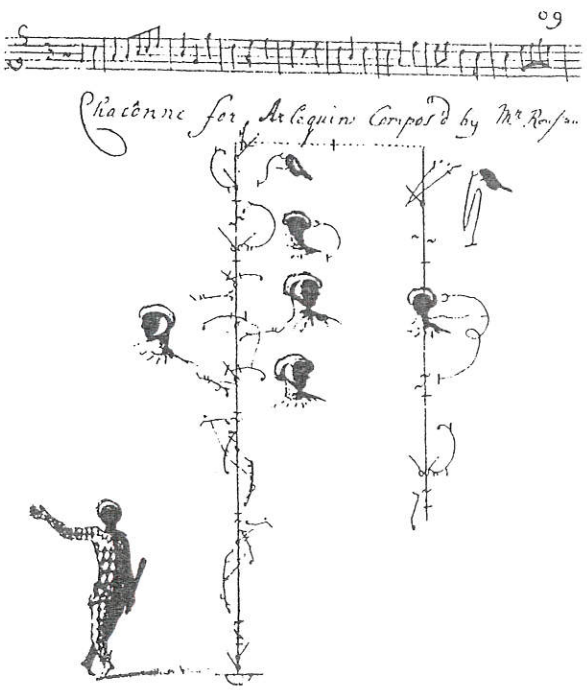


Figure 10: Harlequin dance from le Roussau

Madeleine Inglehearn *studied ballet in Bradford, Yorkshire, and later early dance with Wendy Hilton in London, since when she has devoted herself to research into European social and theatrical dance from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and is director of The Companie of Dansers, a group specialising in performances of these dances.*

She is Professor of Early Dance at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, and from 1994 to 1996 was principal tutor and academic advisor for the dance history course at the Turku School of Arts and Communications, Finland, where she still lectures. She has conducted workshops and summer schools in England and at many centres throughout Europe, and is Secretary of NEMA *and a British representative for the European Association of Dance Historians.*

Her professional work includes choreography for films, television, theatre and opera. She has published numerous articles and reviews, and is currently collaborating on a translation of a sixteenth-century Italian treatise as well as preparing a reprint of an eighteenth-century dancing master's book on the Minuet.

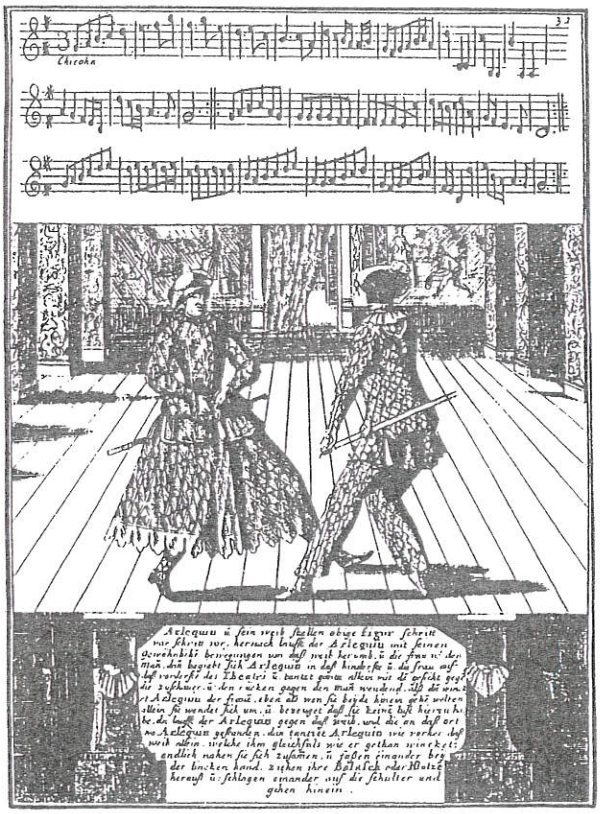


Figure 11: Harlequin chicona from Lambranzi's *New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing*, 1716

Figure 12: English sailor's dance from Lambranzi's *New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing*, 1716

Figure 13: Roman sailor's dance from Lambranzi's *New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing*, 1716

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THE COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE AS BAROQUE CULTURE: *CONCEZIONE E FIGURA*

GUY CALLAN

This paper will discuss two closely interconnected aspects of the commedia dell'arte that I think lie at its core as a creative process, remembering that the commedia dell'arte was a means of producing theatre in all its elements, rather than simply a style of acting or a technical skill.

I will give the Italian names of *concezione* and *figura* to these two aspects, which I have chosen because of the resonances that they have within the aesthetics of the Baroque. By *concezione*, I would mean the idea or concept underlying a work of art, in this case a work of theatre, or any of its constituent parts, perhaps an individual character or speech or scene or moment and drawing on the extensive reading that commedia dell'arte actors were supposed to do, according to the manuals of the time and that many, at least the more culturally serious, certainly did do. By *figura*, I would mean the development of a theatrical language – verbal, corporeal, scenic, aural, rhythmic, etc. – that was metaphoric, figural and highly patterned, with a predominance of the signifier. This combination of deep conceptual meditation and a highly evolved figural theatrical language made it as suitable a vehicle as any other Baroque art form for the articulation of desire and instinctual drives (I am using these terms in a Freudian sense), bypassing or transforming language as precise, socially communicating and integrating.

The Baroque, which I would like to take in the broad sense of José Antonio Maravall as being from *c.*1580 to *c.*1715, was a period that saw economic crisis in its early years, a drift of people from the countryside into the towns to create a kind of urban underclass that could and did riot, and central governments that became increasingly centralised and developed increasingly effective bureaucracies to exert a greater and greater control over their countries. The idea of a mid-seventeenth century crisis is a well–known one in historical studies. There was a general shift in economic, social and political structures from a still rather feudal and traditional society to the beginnings of modern bourgeois states. There was also an interconnected shift in power from the Mediterranean to northwestern Europe.

At the same time, in superstructure/base terms, culture and religion reflected this. Themes of melancholy, death, the inconstancy of fortune, virulent satire against the courts, complex erotic explorations, the grotesque and the caricatured, residual folkloric material in high culture, mysticism and intense spirituality abound. There is a connected development of figural language in the arts, although the exact nature of this figurality does somewhat change in the course of the period, in terms of poetic language, for example, from the overtly metaphoric (*concettismo, marinismo, préciosité*, etc.) in the earlier part of the seventeenth century to an extensive use of phonemic and/or syntactic patterning by the end of the century. The commedia dell'arte is very much a part of Baroque high culture of this type, in terms of both its verbal and non–verbal aspects and also as an overall concept, at least in so far as one bases oneself on the work of such post–war Italian scholars as Roberto Tessari, Ferdinando Taviani, Mirella Schino and Siro Ferrone.

This is where a very basic problem in relation to any discussion of the commedia dell'arte comes to the fore: which commedia dell'arte or which interpretation of the commedia dell'arte are we talking about. In my experience, both in the theatre and academic worlds, there are a number of distinctly different underlying assumptions about what the commedia dell'arte is. This is not really an academic versus theatre practitioner divide, but more to do with different perspectives shared by different groups of academics *and* theatre practitioners.

For example, the work of the post–war Italian scholars I mentioned just now has a great deal in common with the attitude to the commedia dell'arte of modern Italian theatre practitioners in the area of the *teatro della ricerca*, that is, experimental theatre: the *scuola romana*, Pontedera, Teatro Ravenna, CRT in Milan and so forth. I do not really have the time to discuss the different modern perspectives on the commedia dell'arte and their relative merits – in all fairness they probably do correspond to different strands within the original commedia dell'arte and are therefore all justified historically to a certain degree – remembering of course that theatre practitioners do not necessarily need to justify themselves historically, although academics presumably do – but I do feel I should define my own position, as it will help to clarify what I wish to explore today in relation to the commedia dell'arte.

It must already be evident that I follow what we might call the Baroque/experimental/avant–garde line. As a theatre practitioner – I am mainly a performer, but I also teach, direct and have translated – I was classically trained, but my interest in the commedia dell'arte is mainly connected with work I have done with members of the Grotowski company (especially Ryszard Cieslak), with Pawel Rouba, with Italian avant–garde companies, with Gennadi Bogdanov, one

of the main teachers of Meyerhold's biomechanics, and with African performers. It is what I would call an Artaudian corporeal theatre orientation, with an emphasis on what in French would be called the *second niveau* of theatre texts, that is their pre-concious side, and an evolution of a hermetic and figural language to communicate this *second niveau* in performance.

As I have shown in relation to Italian theatre, the linking of this kind of orientation with the commedia dell'arte is fairly common, especially in countries that have well developed experimental theatre sectors. This approach has the merits of dealing well with the commedia dell'arte as a complete theatre system, including especially the *innamorati*, essential to the classical period of the commedia dell'arte, with the specifically Baroque aspects of its aesthetics and with the cultural aspirations of its more serious practitioners, above all the Andreini and the Riccoboni. It also deals better with the southern European and pre–bourgeois origins of the commedia dell'arte.

I would say that there are broadly two other approaches to the commedia dell'arte: the street theatre/rough theatre/ carnavalesque and classical theatre/up market period entertainment with a mask. Both of these approaches have a historical validity, although it is a bit generalised, as they tend to deal only with the mask characters and also slightly confuse their rôle in the commedia dell'arte as a theatre system with the part they played in popular culture before the commedia dell'arte, alongside it and after its great days were over. In terms of modern theatre, these approaches can be very interesting, as in the case of Jacques Copeau, who really initiated the modern French mask tradition and among other things notably renewed the *mise–en–scène* of Molière's plays in the 20th century by the use of the commedia dell'arte. One could also mention Giorgio Strehler's famous production of Goldoni's *Arlecchino, servitore di due padroni* and the best work of TAG Teatro in Italy. (To be fair, all three of these examples have been distinctly influenced by the avant–garde approach to the commedia dell'arte I mentioned earlier.)

However, these approaches can also result in the most facile kinds of bourgeois theatre: sloppily trained 'subversive' street performers in masks, who are not even credible in a genuinely popular sense, or twee, mildly balletic imitations of commedia dell'arte in period costume productions, without any real sense of hard–earned corporeal and gestural research, or rather facile Lecoq–derived work, which may be technically skilful, but is not very interesting, either in terms of form or content. It is however a sad fact that much of the commedia dell'arte that one sees in Europe today is like this, and it is very hard as a performer not to end up slipping into this kind of work, since that is to an extent what audiences expect, and it is a fairly easy way of making money. This is definitely something I have found in myself, and I have not really used commedia dell'arte in performance for some years now, although I still find the training to have been invaluable.

I should now like to go back to the two aspects of *concezione* and *figura* in the commedia dell'arte with which I started this talk. (By the way, it is probably evident that my *second niveau* and evolved hermetic and figural theatre language to communicate it correspond quite well to what I mean by *concezione* and *figura*.) I will discuss *figura* first as at least the physical side of it really comes first in the training process of the commedia dell'arte.

As regards the verbal side of the commedia dell'arte, we know a fair amount about this, as the theatre manuals on the commedia dell'arte discuss how a performer should prepare for improvisation and give examples of dialogue, there are many other textual sources for the linguistic side of the commedia dell'arte and from very early on plays were written for the major companies. As one might expect the language is very Baroque, saturated with *concetti*, learned references and latinate elements, linguistic expressionism, a great deal of phonemic and syntactic patterning and extensive use of dialect, all aspects that one regularly finds in the literary, poetic and dramatic languages of the time, as to be fair one would expect. What is interesting is the use of improvisation, which I do not really have time to explore here, but it would seem to relate both to the use of orality in folk literature and also to the rhapsodic in Renaissance rhetoric (see particularly the work of Walter J. Ong). It may also have had an 'experimental' side, in that it would certainly have provided a rhythmic, intonational quality that would have been a kind of unifying interface between the evolved figural body language of the performer and his dialogue, helping to transform it from being precise, socially communicating language. There may also have been an element of surrealist automic drawing in this improvisation, that is a device for unlocking the unconscious, but this is much more speculative. Obviously, improvisation was used in other arts in the period, especially music, but also in certain ways in literature and the visual arts.

We have very little information about the physical training of commedia dell'arte actors, although visual and verbal sources obviously show that they had overtly physical skills, such as dance and acrobatics, but clearly we do not have much evidence as to the more subtle, expressive use of these skills, and they can be very subtle and expressive, or to expressive physical skills more closely related to normal human body language, although the writings on theatre of Luigi Riccoboni do indicate a very subtle awareness of human body language, gesturality and the use of spatial dynamics in human relationships, but this is late commedia dell'arte from the eighteenth century, and some might say it is really leading to modern natural-

ism – Stanislavki was an after all admirer of the writings of Riccoboni – although the issue is in fact quite a complex one.

Nevertheless, I think one can explore the physical language of the early-seventeenth century commedia dell'arte by reference to certain fundamental aspects of modern physical theatre training and to aspects of the plastic arts of the Baroque period, but as artistic process, not as visual documentation. (It is worth noting *en passant* that theatre can have as much to with the plastic arts as it does with literature.)

The key concepts that underlie the training of the body in modern physical theatre are displacing the conciousness and centre of energy to the torso and extensive use of isolation work. The importance of the first can best be exemplified by the joke that the most important thing in physical theatre is to be able to stand on your head, that is place your torso above your head, which ultimately alters your sense of centre and helps you to achieve total body conciousness. This emphasis on the torso is shared with dance, and there is a good little essay about this called *Concerning the Dance* by Rudolf Arnheim, which can be found his *Towards a Psychology of Art*. The use of isolation work is more peculiar to physical theatre – dance tends to concentrate more on suppleness and extension – and this may be in part because of the use of dialogue, at least in the commedia dell'arte, its greater proximity to natural human movement and its greater use of movement in the extremities, especially the head and hands, although they must still be centred in some way in the torso. The relationship between dance and physical theatre is an interesting one, with subtle continuities and distinctions, but it is too complicated for me to discuss it now – dance was of course an integral part of the commedia dell'arte.

Isolation work also helps the performer to achieve total body conciousness, and it helps to root the more 'cerebral' movements of the head, arms and hands in the torso. However, it is also the life drawing class, as it were, of the physical theatre performer. It gives him the building blocks for constructing expressive form based on natural movement and also an ability to perceive natural movement in detail and break it down. Like life drawing, it is as much about learning to see as gaining representational skills. Perhaps even more importantly, it is about acquiring an awareness of the movement in precise detail of one's muscles. Ultimately, you feel with your torso and muscles in physical theatre. This does have a real basis in physiology, in that muscular contraction and expansion does affect blood flow, which does alter mood – you smile because you are happy, but the muscular movement of the smile makes you happy.

I think that this relates very well to Meyerhold's ideas on acting. He felt that the most important thing

an actor should have was a natural aptitude for responding to the stimulation of his reflexes – I am loosely quoting from the first line of *L'acteur et son emploi* of 1922 by Meyerhold, Beboutov and Aksenov. This process of the actor responding to the stimulation of his reflexes is described in *Sur moi–même*, a book written in 1961 by Igor Ilinski, an actor who had worked with Meyerhold. If an actor is to represent fear, he must not begin by being afraid (that is 'living it') and then running – he must first run (the reflex) and only become afraid afterwards because he finds himself running. (Both citations are from Meyerhold, *Le théâtre théâtral*, translated and edited by Nina Gourfinkel in 1963, hence my titles in French, rather than the original Russian.)

This is the technical basis for obeying the common injunction in Continental physical theatre that one must not psychologise a character. What is very important is that this formal, figural, gestural, plastic, kinesic research is not only a language for the expression of feeling but also a tool for discovering, exploring and experiencing feeling. In fact in a certain sense it *is* feeling. Undoubtedly, this type of approach gives a real access to what one might call the more non–individualistic, less controlled by the personal ego sides of man, call it the *second niveau*, mythic conciousness, the archetypal, the Freudian drives of life and death, the preconcious or the pre–verbal, Plato's cave, Goethe's region of the Mothers or what you will. This is particularly true of Grotowski work where the precise execution of the precise physical task is absolutely necessary before anything else is possible, but that achieved, a great deal is then possible.

It is also worth mentioning that isolation work is also important in African dance, which frequently has the function of creating solidarity within a group or society or of establishing contact with a spiritual world, both of which are processes in which the individual is transcended in order to gain access to greater realities. (By the way, Copeau made use of mask work to achieve many of these objectives, at least partly basing himself on the use of masks in the commedia dell'arte, which has helped to establish a slight division in physical theatre and commedia dell'arte training: broadly whether you start from the body or from masking the face.)

I said earlier that I was going to explore these fundamental aspects of modern physical training in relation to the plastic arts of the seventeenth century, and with this in mind it is very interesting to look at the use of preparatory drawings by the more academic artists of the Roman and Emilian Baroque, that is painters like the Carracci, Guido Reni, Domenichino, Guercino and the sculptor and architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

For the moment I would like to concentrate on this last artist, whose art is often described as 'theatrical', but who in fact had a considerable professional association with the Roman theatre of his day, as designer, director and even as playwright (a *canovaccio, Li due Covielli* and a play which has been given the name *La Fontana di Trevi* are both by him). However, it is more his use of preparatory drawings for his sculpture that will concern us here. Like many artists of his day Bernini devoted considerable study to Hellenistic statues when he was a young man. Then, as now, there were excellent examples of such statues in the Vatican and Borghese collections. Bernini continued to use these Hellenistic sources throughout his career as a first idea for figures in his sculpture, but he would usually transform the source so completely in a series of preparatory drawings that it became unrecognisable in the finished product.

In one instance these preparatory drawings survive: five in all, four in red and one in black chalk, for the figure of *Daniel* in the Chigi Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome, which was executed from 1655–7. All of the drawings are in the Leipzig City Library. The first drawing is a fairly early one from about 1620. It is a study of only the torso (from the neck to the groin) of the father in the famous sculpture of the *Laocoön*. About 35 years later Bernini made use of this figure for his Chigi Chapel *Daniel*, adapting it in a series of four drawings, whose order of execution seems fairly clear and which roughly divide into two pairs. The first pair (one of which is the black chalk drawing) both contain a larger figure and a rather smaller version of it. The *Laocoön* has been reversed in a mirror image in all four of these figures, a very common process in Roman and Emilian preparatory drawings of the period, and Bernini has begun to add the bases of the extremities to the torso: the shoulders and the beginnings of the upper arms and the upper legs, and the movement of these extremities is starting to give life to the figure.

In the second pair of drawings we have more or less full arms and legs and the head has been added – in fact there are three separate studies for the head on the verso of the first drawing of this pair – and the overall figure is becoming much clearer. The energy of the torso is still central, and the extremities are either flowing with this energy or breaking against it – to an extent these are *contrapposto* effects – but there is still a slight sense of separation between torso and extremities, which is perhaps still present in the final sculpture, which has again reversed the figure in a mirror image and changed certain details. (Reproductions and academic analyses of these drawings can be found in either H. Brauer and R. Wittkower (eds.), *Die Zeichnungen des Gianlorenzo Bernini*, Berlin, 1931, Text: pages 57–8, Tafelband: page 8 and plates 42–7; or K.–H. Mehnert (ed.), *Kataloge der Graphischen Sammlung – Museum der bildende Künste Leipzig – Band 5 – Gianlorenzo Bernini – Zeichnungen*, 1981, catalogue entries 1 and 34–7, pages 11 and 28–9.)

If I had more time, I could explore the use of preparatory drawings by Bernini and his Roman and Emilian contemporaries more fully. One would find extensive use of classical or sixteenth and early seventeenth century models as the initial starting point for figural research, frequent use of mirror reversal as a device for a full exploration of a given figure (particularly common in the work of Ludovico Carracci and Guercino), an awareness of the torso as corporeal motor and the manipulation of extremities as building blocks around it to create expressive form.

One could also explore the development of more complex patterns in multi–figure compositions, as for example in the series of very powerful drawings by Guercino leading to the 1628 commission of *The Assassination of Amnon at the Feast of Absalom* (the whereabouts of the actual painting is at present unknown). Such development is of course a continuation of the process for the exploration of individual figures. It would also be interesting to consider the relationship of the fuller, more, let us say, visual than corporeal, compositional studies by a painter like Poussin to aspects of the creative process in Baroque theatre.

Nevertheless, to limit oneself for the moment, the process of figural research for a character, masked or unmasked, in the commedia dell'arte was probably very similar to that described in the series of drawings by Bernini in Leipzig, especially if one substitutes the use of the *tipi fissi*, that is the stock characters of the commedia dell'arte – performers tended to specialise in one such character – for the classical prototypes used by the visual artists as the basis for starting their figural research. The use of different sorts of mirror exercises is very common in modern physical theatre training, and I have already discussed the importance of the torso as centre and isolation work for this type of training in some detail. For me, there is a remarkable similarity between the process of figural, gestural, kinesic and formal exploration in the work of the plastic artists of the Baroque and what I was personally taught to do by my modern commedia dell'arte and physical theatre teachers. I could well investigate this relationship in far more detail, and I also feel that it would be an indirect, but very useful, way for us to understand the physical side of the creative process of commedia dell'arte performers of the classical period, especially since there is very little serious documentation for this area of their work.

It is also worth mentioning that the great visual artists of the Roman and Emilian Baroque were putting this figural research at the service of very serious moral, religious, political or erotic themes. It is not a trivial or decorative art, and it deals very profoundly with many of the central intellectual and spiritual issues of the period, which was, among other things, the period of the Catholic Reformation.

Many of the major Baroque artists who dealt with what were considered the more prestigious genres at the time were at least very visually learned, as in the case of the Carracci, Rubens, whose brother was also a humanist, or indeed Bernini, or seriously learned in a downright intellectual sense, as were Poussin, Domenichino and Salvator Rosa. (Rosa is particularly interesting, as he was also an important writer of satires, using a very learned and latinate type of Baroque language.) Bernini's comment upon seeing Poussin's painting *The Ashes of Phocion* in Chantelou's collection in Paris (the painting is now in Liverpool) is very illuminating here. He said that Signor Poussin works from up here and pointed to his forehead. (By the way, we should not necessarily make too strong a distinction between intellectual and visual learning here – both could be perfectly valid ways to refine the creative imagination and to enrich it culturally.)

Commedia dell'arte actors were also supposed to be very well read, according to the manuals of the period, in part to help them with the creation of complicated dialogue via improvisation, but also to provide a more general cultural background for the creation of their work, and in at least a number of cases this was undoubtedly true in reality. The learning of the Andreini and the Riccoboni is evident in their published work, but the two most famous Arlecchinos of the Italian pre-1697 expulsion company in Paris, Domenico Biancolelli and Evaristo Gherardi, were both very well educated: Biancolelli was well known for his extensive library, and Gherardi had completed his studies in philosophy before he entered the theatre. This list of well educated and highly intelligent commedia dell'arte actors is by no means exhaustive. (One should mention however that contemporary actors in other types of theatre companies could also be well educated – Molière and Dancourt are obvious examples.)

These learned performers also had quite complex, what one might also call 'Baroque' creative personalities: one thinks of Luigi Riccoboni, who thought of leaving the stage for a monastery when he was a young man and was described by Nicolas Boindin (in a work from 1717–19 on the Nouvelle Comédie–Italienne) as having a heavy quality not very suitable for comedy, but good for depicting feelings of sadness, and not expressing joy or tenderness very well, but being very good at depicting feelings that were more extreme. One cannot help thinking of a latter–day touch of Baroque melancholy here in the early eighteenth century, and it is of great interest for the work of Marivaux, most of whose *jeunes premiers* from the 1720s were created by Riccoboni. (By the way, it is worth noting that Copeau became a very serious convert to Catholicism in the course of his career, involving a number of monastic retreats, which had a very real impact on his theatrical development.) Francesco Andreini, who created the mask of Capitano Spavento,

had an equally complex creative personality, and there are many other such performers whose rôles were genuine, highly intelligent creations, based on complicated personalities and an extensive culture, although it is important to remember that however individual these rôles might be they were still the creations of performers who remained actors and were not clowns or seventeenth century stand-up comedians. (To an extent, in our own day, Dario Fo and Steven Berkoff have done a similar kind of thing – Fo's relationship with the commedia dell'arte is direct and based on a great deal of knowledge on his part, while its influence on Berkoff is much more indirect, mostly via Lecoq, and much less important to his work. Again, both have basically remained actors.)

Obviously, I am not talking about a pedantic kind of learning here, nor am I only referring to the acute critical comments on theatre by some of the actors I have mentioned, but I also mean a sort of moulding of creative consciousness by means of the psyche being saturated with cultural prototypes, so that they are so well internalised, preconsciously, subconsciously and semi–consciously, that one can freely create in their spirit. Clearly, this is related to Renaissance and post–Renaissance artistic theory concerning the rediscovery and use of the antique, but what interests me for the moment is the way in which this process enabled the culture of the Baroque and the commedia dell'arte to give a kind of voice to the preconscious and create the element of *concezione* that I mentioned at the beginning of this talk and have also related to the modern term *second niveau*.

A distinctive aspect of Baroque theatre texts, which can also be found in other literary texts of the period, is a kind of double layer structure, with a written text on the surface, often using the very figural language I mentioned earlier in this talk, and a *second niveau* underneath this surface. In the greatest works of the period, such as for example *Hamlet, As You Like It, El Caballero de Olmedo, La vida es sueño, Le Cid, Le Misanthrope, Phèdre* or *Le Triomphe de l'amour*, there are two parallel levels which are both dynamic and follow each other, always remaining distinct, but always reinforcing each other. Basically, it is a question of two superimposed planes, a pre-conscious one and a conscious one, where each plane is unusually self–contained and complete: there is an unusually full and logical mapping out of the pre-conscious level and an unusually linguistically and psychologically unified conscious level. (It is worth remembering that according to Louis Racine his father wrote out each act in prose and fully linked the scenes together before he put his tragedies into verse.) Clearly, in the best works there is an interactive sympathy between the two layers, and it is perhaps at root because of this that we are dealing with the great classics of Western theatre: they manage to integrate the pre-conscious and the conscious, something very deeply satisfying to man as a speaking being, but with a pre–verbal, pre-conscious side that is a pre-condition for his being a speaking being. Lesser plays from the period also often have this double layered quality: they simply have a more fragmentary *second niveau* or access to it is in some way blocked by the language of the text, which is partly why they are lesser plays. It is probably because of this aspect of Baroque plays that it is possible to do extensive dramaturgy on them in terms of cutting, adapting or contaminating them as texts and still be doing the play – the Wroclaw Mime Company's production of Marivaux' *La Dispute* in 1979, where the entire text was cut, is an extreme example of this.

These productions of Baroque classics by modern companies or directors with highly evolved corporeal and visual theatre vocabularies, whether they radically alter the text as in the case of Tomaszewski's Wroclaw Mime Company or they more or less retain the text as in the case of Patrice Chéreau, who has also mounted a famous production of *La Dispute*, can give us insight into the commedia dell'arte as part of Baroque culture, in that the extent to which the integrity of a literary text is maintained is far less important than a shared artistic objective to deal with the *second niveau*. The somewhat simplistic notion that one often finds in the twentieth century of the commedia dell'arte as part of a 'subversive' street performers versus the Comédie–Française or RSC mechanism, although there is an element of this in the late seventeenth-century Parisian company, obscures the fact that there was a great deal of continuity between the work of the major commedia dell'arte companies and other contemporary theatrical companies, both in terms of the type of theatre they created and the producing structures they had for doing so. The major commedia dell'arte companies always did text–based work, either established classics or plays actually written by members of the company, and a company such as that of Molière, admittedly very influenced by the commedia dell'arte, is not that radically different in many ways from a commedia dell'arte company.

What *was* distinctive about commedia dell'arte companies was their use of improvisation as a creative and probably downright compositional practice. (The comments concerning improvisation by Gherardi in the *Avertissement* to his *Recueil* and by Riccoboni in his *Histoire du théâtre italien* from 1728 are of great interest in relation to this, although they must both be interpreted, rather than simply be taken at face value.) To this improvisation must be added the very evolved non–verbal, in particular corporeal, theatre skills that commedia dell'arte actors had, which is why their work had distinct affinities with aspects of the plastic arts. Evidently, such skills would have been very useful for gaining access to the pre–verbal and preconcious and for creating the *second niveau* of Baroque

theatre. To a great extent, the commedia dell'arte was constructing this same *second niveau* from the floor of the theatre, rather than via the pen of the writer, two types of process which were indeed different from each other, but whose 'opposition' should not be romanticised. (One of the most perceptive modern discussions of the commedia dell'arte as a process for producing theatre can be found in the generally superb book by Taviani and Schino, *Il segreto della commedia dell'arte.*)

Before I conclude I would like to consider briefly the very complex problem of how the extensive internalisation of cultural material gives a kind of voice to the pre-conscious, because this is basically what I mean by *concezione* or the *second niveau* is. By pre-conscious, I do *not* mean subconscious, that is I mean the area of the psyche that is pre–verbal, rather than an area of the psyche that is contingent with the verbal but where repression can take place. The problem therefore with the expression of what lies in the preconscious is that the pre-conscious exists in the human being before the existence of language. Melanie Klein is particularly perceptive about the pre–verbal, in part because of her concentration on the very earliest moments of infancy, due mainly to her desire to push back the establishment of Freudian structures to this time. She found that her patients sometimes had problems with articulating certain feelings, not because they were repressing them, but because they had initially taken place within (or were conditioned by experiences from) the pre–verbal (or the pre-conscious) and were therefore literally felt outside the confines of language, that is also by the way outside the confines of a representing subject.

I think that what is happening in the Baroque, in a process that perhaps has some affinities with the use of construction in Freudian psychoanalysis (see the interesting chapter on this in Janine Chasseguet–Smirgel's *Creativity and Perversion*), is that cultural material penetrates through to the pre-conscious, where it is at least temporarily integrated, and then returned to the surface, as it were, but now imbued (or indeed invested) with the desires and instinctual drives of the pre-conscious, so the pre-conscious does not directly speak as such, but there is a conduit for its messages to act upon the language that we use in socially communicative discourse. This is of course where figurality of expression comes in, and indeed *concezione* and *figura* are completely interdependent, since the poetic language (or in general terms artistic language) must be sufficiently developed to do at least some of the work in transmitting the messages of the preconcious (or at least not get in their way). (Obviously, the Baroque is not the only period where this sort of process is very dominant – see especially Julia Kristeva's *La Révolution du langage poétique* and Jean–Pierre Richard's *Poésie et profondeur* for the nineteenth century.)

This therefore is the Baroque nature of the commedia dell'arte, a process for creating total theatre that expresses preconscious desire and instinctual drives through the synthesis of independently cultivated *concezione* and *figura*. It is also a type of theatre where the performer had a very high degree of creative autonomy – not something I necessarily idealise – but because I happen to be a performer who wishes to have at least some level of creative responsibility in a theatre that deals with the preconscious, the model of the greatest commedia dell'arte performers, with their immense cultural integrity and seriousness, and the process they evolved as performers for making complex and valuable theatre has always been a profound inspiration to me and to many others. It is only through an attempt to understand the commedia dell'arte as a process for creating theatre that, although extremely rich in more general possibilities, is deeply rooted in a very specific culture – that of the Baroque – that one can avoid trivialising it as series of picturesque details or as a rather facile form of rough theatre. ❖

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B FOR BROOMSTICK?

PAUL GORING

A consideration of Aaron Hill's 'revolutionary' acting theory[1]

There is a familiar and enduring debate within the practice and theory of acting between the benefits of performance produced by a conscious application of learnt movements and the alternative possibilities and advantages of a 'natural' technique emerging unconsciously through an emotional identification with the character being played. The purpose of this article is to describe some of the complicating nuances of a version of this debate as it was played out in early eighteenth-century London, both on the stage itself and in the pamphlets and tracts of acting theorists. Involving argument not only over alternative *methods* of performance, but also over associated styles, this eighteenth-century cultural contest pivoted upon the friction between a tightly-controlled, 'classical', 'oratorical' technique, prominently exemplified by Thomas Betterton and authorised by his powerful cultural legacy, and a more 'liberated' type of acting which eschewed the grandeur of classical precedent and sought inspiration in emotional identification. After considering accounts of Thomas Betterton and the association of his name with particular instructive tracts for the stage, I shall examine the challenge to his style and technique which was posed by the theoretical work of Aaron Hill. Hill put forward a self-consciously revolutionary approach to acting – his early essays on the theatre are signed with a 'B' for 'Broomstick', asserting his desire to sweep old-fashioned methods and principals from the stage – and modern accounts of Hill have tended to uphold his revolutionary status.[2] However, by considering reworkings of his acting theory, which appeared between 1733 and 1753 in various prose and verse forms, I shall be proposing a new inflection of Hill as a performance theorist. I shall suggest that, while his antipathy towards classical constraints upon the body remains, his later work reveals a growing adherence to the type of method he had earlier set out to criticise. A principal focus here, then, will be the refinement of assumptions concerning this aspect of Aaron Hill's varied career, but it will be important first to outline the practices against which his volatile theory was initially reacting.

Between the Restoration and his death in 1710, Thomas Betterton built a phenomenally successful stage career, during the last thirty years of which he was respected as the theatre's 'leading actor'. He was admired as an exponent of what was a traditional style inherited from the Shakespearean stage, and he was distinguished by the dignity and skill with which he acted these inherited roles.[3] Together with his frequent stage colleague Elizabeth Barry, Betterton set a standard for an acting style characterised by the restraint and modulation of its movement, and praised for its ability to express the passions. An account by Anthony Aston gives an impression of Betterton's bodily presence and of the type of gestures he employed. He was, Aston writes, 'a superlative good actor', despite labouring 'under an ill figure':

> [he] had short fat arms which he rarely lifted higher than his stomach. His left hand frequently lodged in his breast between his coat and waistcoat, while with his right he prepared his speech. His actions were few but just. [...He] kept his passion under and showed it most.[4]

Bodily movement is limited, but the value of those actions which are employed apparently gives an emotional depth to the visual event. With hand gestures which derive from classical prescriptions for oratory as laid out by Quintilian and Cicero, Betterton focuses his efforts upon 'preparing his speech' – his acting aims to produce the most appropriate rendering of the playwright's words. Other accounts of Betterton, such as that given in the autobiography and theatrical memoir, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (1740), reinforce an impression of Betterton as a majestic and stately performer who would deploy gesture with a controlled and steady reserve.

For the purposes of the debate I want to describe, however, it is more significant to recognise how such an acting technique was transformed into a cultural legacy with a continuing impact upon performance practices. Betterton's death clearly did not put to an end the significance of his acting style for the early eighteenth-century stage – alongside the continuing practice of actors indebted to his techniques (notably James Quin in the 1730s),[5] his reputation was perpetuated and shaped not only by published reminiscences such as Aston's or Cibber's, but furthermore by the publication of instructive works for the stage which invoked the name of the celebrated actor. Indeed, one work, Charles Gildon's *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton, The Late Eminent Tragedian* (1710), not only maintained Betterton's posthumous impact upon the London stage, but firmly anchored his acting techniques with a strict association of his methods with those of classical

oratory. Gildon's work, *Wherein*, the subtitle promises, *The Action and Utterance of the Stage, Bar, and Pulpit, are distinctly consider'd*, is a pseudo-biography, in which a classically-based tract offering instruction to orators is plagiarised and its tenets ascribed directly to Betterton. The source used by Gildon was the recent *An Essay Upon the Action of an Orator* (1702?), an English translation of a French treatise on oratory by Michel Le Faucheur, which itself is largely indebted to the work of Quintilian and other classical writers on the subject.[6] The extent to which the technical prescriptions reproduced by Gildon correspond to Betterton's actual practice is obviously open to debate, but that such prescriptions informed Betterton's posthumous 'appearances' is clearly more certain, and the text warrants some consideration.

Gildon makes Betterton the mouthpiece for a theory of acting which recognises gesture as a natural and universal language of the passions; which promotes a judicious application of such a language for the affective appeal to the passions of the audience; yet which, at the same time, seems to be dictated by particular strictures dictated by notions of decorum. It, in fact, presents a curious combination of instruction: occasional stresses upon the value of emotional involvement in acting (for example, p. 68, p. 113) punctuate a doctrine, of which the main tendency is to prescribe a rigidly fixed pattern of appropriate gestures and facial expressions. These gestures, Gildon's Betterton insists, 'must appear purely Natural, as the genuine Offspring of the things you express, and the *Passion*, that moves you to speak in the manner' (pp. 53–4). Yet many of the manual's carefully defined rules point to the clear cultural construction of nature which is taking place through such prescription. Some principles seek seemingly to limit the display of the body's fleshliness: 'The *Mouth* must never by writh'd, not the *Lips* bit or lick'd, which are all ungenteel and unmannerly Actions' (p. 72). Others aim, particularly for the acting of tragedy, to maintain the actor's stateliness – shrugging the shoulders is allowed, but Gildon's Betterton suggests: 'it seems more adapted to Comedy, than Tragedy, where all should be great and solemn, and with which the gravest of the Orators Actions will agree' (p. 73). There is a general tendency in the manual to curb gestural extravagance, so as to maintain the level-headedness of the actor: 'tho the Passions are very beautiful in their proper *Gestures*, yet they ought never to be so extravagantly immoderate, as to transport the Speaker out of himself [...] [into] Madness' (pp. 86–7). More specifically, particular attention is given to circumscribing the movement of the hands, and Gildon reproduces, directly from Le Faucheur, a traditional oratorical rule (one which Aston's description suggests Betterton followed) which favours the right hand: 'If an Action comes to be used by only one Hand, that must be by the *Right*, it being indecent to make a gesture with the *Left* alone' (p. 74). Prescribing limits upon gesture more precisely, Gildon's manual insists that to preserve 'Grace, you ought not to raise [...] [your hands] above the Eyes' (p. 76); and, later, that 'Your Arms you should not stretch out sideways, above half a Foot from the Trunk of your Body' (p. 77).

According to the demands of such somatic detailing, methods of training are suggested which depend upon the conscious manipulation of the body's parts, and the refinement of movements through an attention to external features – that is, looking rather than feeling. For the purposes of practising movements, Gildon's Betterton suggests that 'a Glass may prove very advantageous' (p. 55); without this rehearsal tool, 'some Friend, who is a perfect Master in all the Beauties of Gesture and Motion' (p. 55) is recommended as an equally effective means of correction. As a visual source for models of gestural eloquence, the manual suggests that actors should study figures in history painting and sculpture, and should appropriate the expressions represented there for their own performances (p. 63, p.139). *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton* itself serves as a similar source of gestures for actors, albeit using a different medium; and Gildon's text was not the only work to promote a use of restrained, classical gesture in just this way. Betterton's name is used to authorise a further manual on acting techniques, Edmund Curll's *The History of the English Stage* (1741), which again reproduces Le Faucheur's doctrine, having gleaned its instructions via Gildon's text. In this work, the opportunistic Curll borrows large passages on gesture from Gildon, and he too invokes the authority of Betterton to whom the work is actually attributed on its title-page.[7] Such texts, then, developed and dispersed a method of acting the movements of which were characterised stylistically by restraint and dignity, and methodologically by their capacity to be *learnt* from predefined patterns of physical expression.

Together with the stage practice of performers such as James Quin, Curll's *History of the English Stage*, appearing some three decades after Betterton's death, indicates a residual currency of Bettertonian style, but this mode was also subject to questioning and critique. Charles Macklin and David Garrick are well-known for bringing to the stage a boldly new, 'naturalistic' approach to acting from the early 1740s; but before their revolutionary styles had been seen, Aaron Hill had become prominent as a fierce critic of 'oratorical' acting. In a varied literary career, pursued alongside other commercial interests, Aaron Hill wrote both for and about the theatre, and he expounded a theory of acting, among writings on many other theatrical concerns, in *The Prompter*, a journal he jointly published with William Popple from November 1734 to July 1736.[8] His statements on dramatic theory urge explicitly that the craft of the actor be divorced from that of

the orator. Writing of actors who, with Bettertonian gravity, apply strict oratorical laws to their performance, he complains that 'instead of examining nature, they look into Quintilian, not reflecting that the lessons he teaches his orator were directed to the *bar*, not the *stage*'.[9] He insists that such rules are inappropriate for the stage, since a character is likely to express in ways different from the lawyer who is influenced by particular demands of decorum.

In his *Prompter* essays, Hill maintains that the actor should summon bodily expression through the willed application of those stimuli which cause physical responses through the body's natural mechanism. As Joseph Roach has demonstrated, his acting theory functions within a Cartesian paradigm of human physiology, depicting the body as a machine which can be animated by the will.[10] Hill outlines the principal rules for acting as

> no more than a connected deduction of these plain and natural consequences:
> 1st. – The imagination assumes the idea.
> 2ndly. – Its marks and characteristical impressions appear first in the face, because nearest to the seat of the imagination.
> 3rdly. – Thence, impelled by the will, a commissioned detachment of the animal spirits descending into the dependent organisation of the muscles, and swelling and adapting them in its progress, bends and stimulates their elastic powers into a position apt to execute the purpose (or to express the warmth of) the idea.
> 4thly. – Thus the look, air, voice and action proper to a passion, preconceived in the imagination, become a mere mechanical necessity, without perplexity, study or difficulty.[11]

The process internalises the act of imitation so as to generate 'genuine' external signs. Unlike Gildon's Betterton, Hill recommends the reproduction of the emotional stimulus itself, which, through 'mechanical necessity', will cause the body's physical response. The actor is regarded as the operator of a machine which moves when impelled by the imagination, and so the actor's skill lies in the process of imagining:

> The whole that is needful in order to impress any passion on the *look* is first, to *conceive* it by a strong and intent imagination. Let a man, for instance, recollect some idea of sorrow, his eye will, in a moment, catch the dimness of melancholy, his muscles will relax into languor, and his whole frame of body sympathetically unbend itself into a remiss and inanimate lassitude.[12]

For performance dependent upon such inevitable consequence, the role of instructor becomes that of encourager, and in *The Prompter* Hill avoids the giving of practical advice because the physiological attitude that informs his theory renders it redundant. In fact, he takes issue with other instructive works which recommend specific techniques for developing passionate expression, because the internalised imitation demanded by his theory cannot benefit from the external training of actual looking. He dismisses those who 'have formed tedious and laborious schemes of adjusting their gesture at looking-glasses', and is equally critical of the study of painting as a source from which to copy expression.[13] What he does recommend is that the actor should cultivate the imagination and gain a thorough knowledge of the passions. Again drawing upon Descartes' work, he enumerates 'six dramatic passions which are capable of being strongly expressed by the *look*'. Through acquaintance with the feeling of 'joy, sorrow, fear, scorn, anger, and amazement', the actor should be able to call upon these passions and let the body respond automatically. Other 'auxiliary' passions, he maintains, are able to be expressed 'by a mixture of two or more of the six capital dramatics'.[14]

The doctrine Hill laid out in his *Prompter* articles was expanded and revised in various versions, including his 'Art of Acting' (1746), a long verse treatment of the subject, and was given its final expression in his 'Essay on the art of acting', posthumously published in *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill* (1753).[15] Comparing the later essay with his articles indicates the occurrence of a shift in his methods of training, as though the ideal of his imaginative technique had been found somewhat impractical. In the 'Essay', he still maintains that imaginative empathy with the character is the best method for generating expression, but it is accepted that it might prove difficult actually to achieve in performance. The four stages of gestural production are revised and no longer offer the actor a technique 'without perplexity, study or difficulty'. The possibility that actors may not possess the necessary pliability of imagination is allowed, and the 'Essay' offers the actor an alternative technique for generating gesture. The actor who is unable properly to imagine the feeling

> may help his defective idea, in a moment, by annexing, at once, the *look* to the *idea*, in the very instant, while he is bracing his nerves into springiness: for so, the image, the look, and the muscles, all concurring, *at once*, to the purpose, their effect will be the same, as if each had succeeded another, progressively. (IV, p. 362)

Rather reluctantly perhaps, the passage declares the worth of a technique which undermines the doctrine of acting controlled by the imagination. The principle of applying the '*look* to the *idea*' is slipped in, as though under cover of the description of a nervous activity, and, as such, the methodological reversal which this represents is understated. But in fact, the revised method is demanding the external imitation of expres-

sion, which is precisely the process criticised in the articles in *The Prompter*. Without apparently wanting to expose such a radical shift, the 'Essay' ushers in its practical advice, whilst still declaring the ideal of acting to be purely imaginative.

According to the pragmatic needs of external imitation, the pedagogic method is altered so as to present specific instruction in the actual signs with which the passions manifest themselves. As a source for the actor's reference, the 'Essay' contains descriptions of the body's activity when possessed by the principal passions, the number of which is increased from six to ten. When a man is possessed by joy, for example,

> his forehead appears open, and rais'd, his eye smiling, and sparkling, his neck will be stretched, and erect, without stiffness, as if it would add new height to his stature; his breast will be inflated, and majestically backen'd; his back-bone erect, and all the joints of his arm, wrist, fingers, hip, knee, and ancle, will be high-strung, and brac'd boldly. And *now*, if he attempts to speak *joy*, all the spirit of the passion will ascend in his accents, and the very tone of his voice will seem to out-rapture the meaning. (IV, p. 361)

This describes supposedly genuine passionate control, with the action occurring as an imperative event and the tone of voice following the body's possession by way of 'mechanical necessity'. The imitative actor's task is to ensure that 'when natural impressions are imitated, exactly, by art, the effect of such art must seem natural' (IV, p. 361). This, of course, is a requirement that Le Faucheur and his copyists also demanded, but while a methodological shift occurs between Aaron Hill's early and late acting theory, he is consistent in his antipathy towards rigid oratorical devices, and this is demonstrated by the type of gestural instruction which is offered in his descriptions. His version of the 'natural' does not have the same limitations of decorum which are apparent in Le Faucheur's and Gildon's type of instruction. Both techniques require the performer to appear 'natural', but the clear distinctions between recommended actions point to the pliability of attitudes to nature. Aaron Hill's doctrine apparently allows the actor a greater bodily 'freedom' than can be found in a system which, for example, prescribes that only the right hand should be used to gesture. This is suggested by Hill's description of joy, quoted above, and also, for example, by that of astonishment, which acts upon the body by

> arresting the breath, eyes, gesture, and every power and faculty of the body, occasions an interruption of their several uses, that wou'd bring on an actual *cessation* – but, that the reason, struggling slowly to relieve the apprehension, gives a kind of hesitative articulation to the utterance, and gradual motion and recovery to the Look, the Limbs, and the Countenance. (IV, p. 385)

The passion expresses itself through the whole body, which is freed from the restraining strictures prescribed by Quintilian and his followers.

Precisely why Aaron Hill should have revised his acting theory is difficult to determine, but that limitations should be perceived in his early theory seems particularly likely when it is considered that in the practice of so-called 'natural' acting, much more was demanded of the actor than a pure exercise of deeply felt emotions. Garrick was famously celebrated for his emotional 'transformations' into other characters, and in his own statements on performance he himself proclaimed the importance of acting 'from his feelings'.[16] His emotional input, however, was anchored to thorough technical preparation involving incredibly detailed textual analysis, and a knowledgeable application of very particular techniques of stagecraft. His own *An Essay on Acting* (1744), in which an analysis of both tragic and comic acting is framed within a satirical attack upon his own practice, exhibits the careful study of character from which his performances derived. Considering the comic role of Abel Drugger, in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, Garrick describes how this character should appear when he drops a valuable urinal:

> [his eyes] must be reversed from the object he is most intimidated with. By dropping his lip at the same time to the object, it throws a trembling languor upon every muscle, and by declining the right part of the head towards the urinal, it casts a most comic terror and shame over the upper part of the body that can be imagined; and to make the lower part equally ridiculous, his toes must be inverted from the heel, and by holding his breath give himself a tremor in the knees, and if his fingers, at the same time seem convuls'd it finishes the picture.[17]

This punctilious description of a fleeting but crucial comic moment suggests that Garrick was acutely conscious of the minutiae of gestural language, and that the 'inspiration' involved in his acting was supported by a rigorous craftsmanship and a deep knowledge of how certain effects might be achieved by the body on stage. It is, I believe, unsurprising that Aaron Hill should come to acknowledge the importance to the actor of such carefully and consciously practised techniques.[18] ❖

Footnotes:

1 Sections of this article are derived from my recent PhD thesis, 'The eloquent body and the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility' (University of Wales, 1997). I am very grateful both for the opportunity I was given to deliver this as a paper at NEMA's conference, and for

the willingness of the editors of this musically-oriented journal to publish my theatrically-focused article.

2 For the signing of Hill's early essays see Aaron Hill and William Popple, *The Prompter: A theatrical paper (1734–1736)*, selected and ed. by William Appleton and Kalman A. Burnim (New York: Blom, 1966), p. xv. Hill's acting theory is represented in *Restoration and Georgian England, 1660–1788*, ed. David Thomas, compiled and introduced by David Thomas and Arnold Hare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), a valuable critical anthology in the series: Theatre in Europe: a documentary history. The compilers stress Hill's emphasis upon 'the importance of emotional involvement' (p. 169), and choose extracts from his early writing in *The Prompter* (pp.170–73), and so do not reflect the methodological changes in his later work which I wish to outline. Joseph Roach's discussion of Hill, in *The Player's Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (London: Associated University Presses, 1985), is also based upon Hill's early writings.

3 David Thomas states that the beginning of Betterton's pre-eminence occurred with 'the retirement of the leading actors of the pre-Commonwealth era in the early 1680s (notably Hart and Mohun), and with the uniting of the two acting companies in 1682', *Restoration and Georgian England*, p. 143. The link between Betterton and the Shakespearean stage is described by Alan S. Downer in 'Nature to Advantage Dressed: Eighteenth-Century Acting', *PMLA*, 58 (1943), 1002–37 (pp. 1002–03), which remains a useful study.

4 Antony Aston, *A brief supplement to Colley Cibber Esq, his lives of the famous actors and actresses* (1747), in *Restoration and Georgian England*, p.144.

5 The restrained tragic style of Quin is commented upon and represented through contemporary accounts in *Restoration and Georgian England*, pp. 159–160.

6 Charles Gildon, *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton* (London: 1710); subsequent references to this work appear parenthetically within the text. The work by Michel Le Faucheur is his *Triatté de l'action de l'orateur, ou de la Pronunciation et du geste* (1657). The full title of the English translation is *An Essay Upon the Action of an Orator; As to His Pronunciation & Gesture. Useful both for Divines and Lawyers, and necessary for all Young Gentlemen, that study how to Speak well in Publick. Done out of French* (London: N. Cox); neither the translator nor the publication date is known, but evidence for a 1702 date is proposed in Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 165–68. As the title of the translation suggests, it was not originally intended to apply to the stage, but a 2nd edition appeared in 1727 with a new title declaring its usefulness for actors. A 3rd edition, again with a new title, appeared in 1750.

7 *The History of the English Stage, From the Restauration to the Present Time. Including the Lives, Characters and Amours, Of the most Eminent Actors and Actresses. With Instructions for Public Speaking; Wherein The Action and Utterance of the Bar, Stage and Pulpit are Distinctly considered. By Thomas Betterton. Adorned with Cuts.* (London: Printed for E. Curll, 1741).

8 References to *The Prompter* are to the edition cited above. The fullest account of Hill's career appears in Dorothy Brewster, *Aaron Hill: Poet, Dramatist, Projector* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1913). A new biography is being prepared by Christine Gerrard.

9 *Prompter*, 64, 20 June 1735; in Appleton and Burnim, p. 82.

10 *The Player's Passion*, pp. 58–92, esp. pp. 78–82.

11 *Prompter*, 118, 26 December 1735; in Appleton and Burnim, p. 140.

12 *Prompter*, 66, 27 June 1735; in *ibid*, p. 84.

13 *Prompter*, 118, 26 December 1735; in *ibid*, p. 141.

14 *Prompter*, 66, 27 June 1735; in *ibid*, p. 84.

15 *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq; in Four Volumes. Consisting of Letters on Various Subjects, and of Original Poems, Moral and Facetious. With an Essay on the Art of Acting* (London: Printed for the Benefit of the Family, 1753). Later references appear within the text. The poetic versions are considered in Leo Hughes, 'The Actor's Epitome', *Notes and Queries*, 20 (1944), 306–07.

16 For example, in a letter answering criticism of his sudden dramatic pauses, Garrick analyses a line from Hamlet, justifies why he suspends his voice ('by which Your Ear must know, that the sense is suspended too'), and explains, 'I really could not from my feelings act it otherwise', ((24 January 1762), *The Letters of David Garrick*, ed. David M. Little and George M. Kahrl, 3 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), I, pp. 350–351).

17 Quoted in George Winchester Stone, Jr. and George M. Kahrl, *David Garrick: A Critical Biography* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), p. 43.

18 Both Ian Caddy and Guy Callan in their papers/performances at the conference stressed the necessity for the actor to develop and practise the techniques of physical movement, and so emphasised the importance of the doctrine which Hill came to endorse. The idea of effective acting resulting *purely* out of an emotional commitment would appear from the examples of these modern practitioners to be, as Hill perhaps discovered, rather over-simplified.

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MIME IN LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BALLET

GIANNANDREA POESIO

Despite the recent developments of dance research, the increasing number of new areas investigated by dance scholars and the few excellent publications on the topic, such as Ivor Guest's *The Ballet of the Enlightenment*, eighteenth-century theatre dance remains a grey, elitist area. In addition, this rich, vital period of dance history has often been misrepresented by a rather superficial, if not dismissive, historiography that preferred to focus on the allegedly more accessible nineteenth-century ballet. According to most dance history manuals, the 'ballet d'action', which developed during the second half of the eighteenth century, represents the application of the rediscovered art of classical mime at its best. Moreover, the ballet master Jean Georges Noverre is often considered as the man who introduced expressive, story-telling mime gestures into eighteenth-century ballet, in order to provide the danced action with a narrative framework and to enhance the dramatic content of the performance. Still, in assessing Noverre's contribution to dance and, more in particular, to the development of the ballet d'action, researchers have frequently overlooked several significant factors.

Firstly, Noverre was neither the first nor the only ballet-master to promote a new form of theatre dance, based on the interaction between the art of mime and that of dancing. Secondly, the rediscovery of the art of mime and the conviction that the use of expressive gestures could provide the theatre arts with new life and new formulae, involved a long experimental process of which the creation of the 'ballet d'action' was only one of the culminating points. Finally, not all the gestures performed within the then innovative dance works derived directly from a well-established theatrical tradition that found its roots in the movement vocabulary of the Commedia Dell'Arte. Dance historians, in fact, have often claimed a commonality between mime movements used in drama and those used in ballet, relying on the rather simplistic assumption that the principles expounded in the various acting manuals of the period had been adopted by the creators of the new choreographic genre.

In order to demonstrate and to understand the fallacy of these notions, it is necessary to consider, although briefly, the history of the 'ballet d'action'. The first example of 'pantomime ballet' is conventionally considered to be a performance of the third act of Corneille's tragedy *Horace* at a reception given by the Duchesse du Maine in 1714 at Sceux. On that occasion, the drama was interpreted without words by two dancers, to the accompaniment of instrumental music. It can be safely affirmed that this performance stemmed from and embodied the obsession people of the period had for rediscovering the artistic modes of a much idealised antiquity. Throughout the eighteenth century, dance theorists insisted in trying to revive the ancient art of pantomime – seen as the perfect and purest form of theatrical dancing. It is from this obsession that sprung the 'ballet d'action'. Soon after the 1714 performance, the new theories spread throughout Europe, influencing the works of several ballet-masters. In 1717, John Weaver's most celebrated ballet, *The Loves of Mars and Venus*, was premiered in London. In the ballet's libretto the English ballet-master listed and described a series of mime movements used in the dance. It can be affirmed that that brief list of prescribed gestures, as well as their succinct description, constituted the first and, arguably, the only written technical source of eighteenth-century ballet mime.

Another forerunner of the 'ballet d'action', often overlooked in most dance history manuals, was the Viennese Franz Hilverding von Weven who, between 1742 and 1752 staged at the Court Theatre in Vienna several pantomime ballets in which he attempted to render the dramatic action accessible and readable by creating a balance between pure dancing and mime passages. In other words, it was Hilverding who devised the distinctive layout of the 'ballet d'action', namely a series of closed numbers, where the danced scenes alternated with mime ones. His formulae influenced those of the Italian born Gasparo Angiolini, another important ballet-master who has been long ignored by dance historians. It is only recently that the man and his factual contribution to eighteenth-century dance have been rediscovered and reinstated within the context where they belong. Biographical information about Angiolini is scarce, though. Born in Florence in 1731, he came from a family of theatre artists and received his first dance training under the guidance of his father Francesco. In 1758, he went to Stuttgart where he met Franz Hilverding and was inspired by him to experiment and to create new forms of theatre dance. Before leaving Vienna to go to St. Petersburg, Hilverding recommended Angiolini as his successor in the post at the Court theatre. Angiolini's Viennese period (1758–1766) was an important one, for it was in that town that the Florentine ballet-master met and started a collaboration with Christoph Willibald Gluck, the outcome of which were the ballets *Don Juan* (1761), *Semiramis* (1765) and the dances for *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762).

The lack of academic interest in Angiolini might be explained by the fact that, as a consequence of a confrontation with Jean Georges Noverre, the Florentine ballet-master remained for a long while overshadowed by the fame of the French theoretician and choreographer. The artistic 'querelle' was that, on the one hand, Noverre claimed to be the innovator of ballet theories, while, on the other, Angiolini argued that the invention of the same theories and their translation into theatrical practice had to be ascribed to his teacher, namely Franz Hilverding. A less cultured and educated man than Noverre, Angiolini never managed to gain the fame he probably expected through the publication of his *Lettere a Monsieur Noverre* (1773), in which he refuted point by point Noverre's more popular and known *Lettres sur la Danse* (1760). This rivalry overshadowed an important aspect of Angiolini's art, namely his theories on mime.

An investigation of all the written sources mentioned in so far reveals that, with the exception of Weaver's list in the libretto of the *Loves of Mars and Venus*, and the sporadic references to mime to be found in Angiolini's written works, primary source material on the practice of mime is non-existent. Noverre's letters, hailed as the manifesto of the ballet d'action, do not provide any technical instruction on the use of mime movements. Similarly, Hilverding's libretti do not cast any light on the nature of mime movements performed in his works.

Curiously, few of the eighteenth-century treatises on the art of mime provided a clear explanation of what the language of gesture was like within the ballet d'action. Curiously, I say, for the works on mime were numerous and quite detailed.

It is worth remembering here that between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries several attempts were made to give the language of gesture a definitive 'grammar' and that, by the end of the eighteenth century the literature on the 'silent idiom' was abundant.

Although references to the language of gesture and to its meaning can be found in various dancing treatises of both the early and late Renaissance, the first work devoted entirely to an analysis of the 'metaphorical', therefore 'expressive' gesture, entitled *L'arte dei cenni* is dated 1625. Its author, Giovanni da Bonifacio, was a jurist of the northern Italian town of Vicenza who, like many other cultured men of his time, had a wide range of interests. Among them, the use and the signification of arm and hand movements particularly drew his attention. Although *L'arte dei cenni* was not a manual dealing with the practice and the technique of theatre arts, the description of each gesture is accurate and fully detailed in terms of dynamics, body parts involved and use of space. This analytical, almost scientific approach to the language of gesture was to inform subsequent treatises, and Italian ones in particular. Among these, important ones are *Il Corago*, an anonymous manuscript rediscovered in 1983 which focuses on the work of a specific person in charge of staging dramatic performances, where an entire chapter is spent on the appropriate use of gestures on stage, along with detailed directions; Andera Perrucci's *Dell'arte Rappresentativa* (1699), a tome devoted to the craft of the actor, Luigi Riccoboni's *Dell'arte Rappresentativa* (1728), another acting manual in the form of a poem, and Vincenzo Requeno's pamphlet on the rediscovery of *Chironomia* (1797), the first treatise

on the language of gesture where one can find a small section on the revival of the ancient art of pantomime to be seen in contemporary dance works.

As I have said before, neither these publications, nor the non-Italian ones published in the same period, provide specific directions for dancers. Hence the dance historians' assumption that the language of gesture had been derived from the existing acting manuals. Indeed there are many similarities between the precepts expounded in the eighteenth-century acting treatises and the rules of the later nineteenth-century ballet mime – namely that system of conventional signs generally referred to as 'ballet mime'. Yet, an analysis of the many visual sources available demonstrates that none of the Romantic and post Romantic codified ballet-mime gestures corresponds to the ones illustrated in eighteenth-century works. In addition, in none of his writings, Gasparo Angiolini who, unlike Noverre dealt more with the practical side of his art in his Lettres, mentions any of the standard rules constantly prescribed throughout the eighteenth century for the correct execution of dramatic – namely to match the kind of mime gesture to the status and the rank of the character, to avoid the use of any movement that can hide the face of the performer and to avoid generally those mime actions that involved the left part of the body. By traditional belief the left was considered to be the side of the devil, hence the implication of the adjective sinister derived from the Italian 'sinistra'. Angiolini, moreover, criticised all those mime movements derived from the repertoire of the Commedia Dell'Arte, the same ones that most dance historians regard as the primary source for inspiration in the creation of ballet mime. In one of his Letters he stated clearly that dancing should be different from:

> those barbarian things, indecent, not belonging to nature, which were called dances of Pulcinella, Giangurgolo, Harlequin, Piero Dottore Pantalone, dances which dishonoured the stage with their inappropriate mime gestures.

Angiolini's disapproval of the insertion of characters from the Commedia Dell'Arte in the context of a ballet reflects and summarises the general opinion that theorists and supporters of the ballet d'action had of the art of dancing. Dance, being a noble art stemming from antiquity, should not deal with elements of coarse or vulgar nature. None of the theorists who formulated the rebirth of pantomime, however, had taken into account that in ancient Greece and, most of all, in ancient Rome, the theatrical genre of the 'pantomimus' was characterised by plebeian components, very similar to the 'lazzi' or jests of the Commedia Dell'Arte. The pantomime that eighteenth-century men longed to revive was a very much idealised example, far from its original model.

If the canons of the drama tradition looked inappropriate to the fathers of the ballet d'action, art works such as paintings and sculptures were, on the contrary, ideal sources for inspiring the correct expressive movements. As such, they were recommended in almost every treatise or dissertation on the topic. As the eminent scholar Richard Ralph has pointed out in his study on John Weaver, even the English ballet master, who was a fond admirer of the Italian Commedia, derived the mime movements for the *Loves of Mars and Venus* from Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo's treatise on painting, dated 1584, and not from the movement tradition of the Italian Harlequins. It can be affirmed, therefore, that eighteenth-century ballet mime superseded the mime idiom of the Commedia. Quick, direct mime became more hieratic and characteristic movements from the everyday were turned into statuary poses. It is not surprising that, according to several dance theorists the ballet d'action, dancers:

> ...must know how to express passions and the impulses of the soul and must know how to derive from Painting and Sculpture the different positions.

Although the passage is from Angiolini's *Dissertation sur les ballets pantomimes* (1765), the same concept can be found in almost every other eighteenth-century written work on the same topic.

It would be erroneous, however, to consider the language of gesture in the ballet d'action as a range of rigid, decorative statuary poses. A distinctive feature of the eighteenth-century ballet mime was that, in spite of some commonalties, the movement vocabulary differed form individual to individual, according to the skills of the performers. Unlike its nineteenth-century counterpart, based on a strict set of rules and a universally accepted system of conventional signs, eighteenth-century mime relied more on improvisation, namely on the particular way a particular dancer responded to the nuances of the dramatic action.

The existing literature on the topic provides a considerable amount of supporting evidence. It is clear, from the various treatises on the ballet d'action, including Noverre's celebrated letters, that the performers were granted a great deal of freedom in

adjusting the choreographer's requirements to their personal response and understanding of the dramatic nuance of the plot. How would a dancer like Marie Sallé have surprised the audience and taken entire towns by storm with her highly dramatic rendition of *Galatée*, had the mime vocabulary been a constraining set of conventional signs? Why then should a great expert on mime such as Johan Jacob Engel have complained about the poor 'imagination' of a dancer who resorted to the wrong gestures to narrate a particular event, as he did in his 1785 *Ideen zu eine Mimik*? Indeed, the wide range of art works unanimously recommended by the fathers of the ballet d'action as the ideal sources to imitate provided each dancer with a great variety of mime gestures, which differed according to specific contextual factors, such as the dancer's cultural, racial, social and artistic background. As the core of the ballet d'action was, according to the theories of its creators, to imitate reality – namely that of pre-existing art works, it can be said that the ballet d'action was based on the imitation of imitation.

Still, such a statement would diminish the artistic quality of the mime language in the ballet d'action. Although the dancers had to follow specific directions in terms of symmetry, purity of lines, cadenza and rhythmical phrasing, their mime actions were always permeated by a great deal of expressive freedom. Unlike eighteenth-century actors, the dancers of the ballet d'action did not use their mime movements to accompany a speech or to underline a particular emotion. In other words, their gestures were not merely expressive but also narrative, for it was through the various mime movements that the plot of the ballet unfolded, not from the dancing. Dancers were thus asked to 'act' using an acting technique that did not share much with the contemporary drama tradition. Their freedom is an interesting feature of eighteenth-century ballet mime, for it clashed vividly with the strict formulae of theatrical dancing. It can be affirmed, therefore, that the ballet d'action consisted of two contrasting components: the well regulated danced sections, labelled 'technical dance' or 'danza materiale' by Gasparo Angiolini and the less constrained mime sequences. It was in the last named that the performer's individual contribution superseded that of the choreographer, thus hinting at a sort of political subversion of a well-established theatrical regime. In a sense, the dancer's freedom in creating narrative mime devices was a characteristic aspect of ballet at the eve of the French revolution which mirrored the political ideas of the time. It was not pure coincidence that the mime vocabulary was eventually codified, that is subjugated to a strict set of rules, during the second decade of the nineteenth century, namely when the old monarchic regime was reinstated in Europe after the Napoleonic era. ❖

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In 1990 he moved to England where, in 1993, he completed a PhD in dance history at the Department of Dance Studies, University of Surrey, and since January 1994 has been Lecturer and Research Fellow at the Department of Dance Studies, Froebel College, Roehampton Institute, London.

He has been a dance and ballet critic since 1981, having contributed to several Italian newspapers and magazines. He is now dance critic for The Spectator *and a regular contributor to* The Dancing Times, *as well as London Editor for* Chorégraphie, *a magazine of studies in dance history, published in Italy.*

Obituary: Carl Dolmetsch, 1911–1997

The following appears by kind permission of The Guardian.

The name Dolmetsch is indelibly associated with the recorder and it was on this instrument that Carl Dolmetsch, who has died aged 85, became best known in the world of early music. He was a master craftsman in the Dolmetsch family workshops and became director (1947–96) of the Haslemere Festival, founded in 1925 by his father, Arnold.

Carl Dolmetsch was born in Fontenay-sous-Bois, France, the youngest of four children. In 1914 the family moved to London and later to Haslemere, Surrey. Everyone in the family played an instrument, so even at the age of three Carl could play a little on both recorder and treble viol (he was instructed in all the instruments of the viol family by his father and later studied violin with Antonia Brosa and Carl Flesch). He appeared in his first family concert when he was seven and the following year went on his first tour.

It was also at that time that a moment of forgetfulness changed the face of musical history. Arnold Dolmetsch had acquired a fine Bressan recorder at Sotheby's at an auction in 1905; at that time, almost certainly the only one being played in this country. In November 1919, returning home after giving a concert at the Artworkers' Guild, Carl left the recorder in a bag on a platform at Waterloo station.

Arnold, having fortunately taken all the measurements, experimented with making a replica. He finally succeeded in 1926 when the full family of recorders (descant, treble, tenor and bass) were played at the second Haslemere Festival.

It was from this beginning that the Dolmetsch workshop subsequently exported recorders. In 1945 Carl Dolmetsch produced the first successful plastic recorder, after which the sales amounted to 30 million worldwide. The original lost recorder was later discovered in a junk shop in Waterloo Road and returned to the family by the purchaser, Geoffrey Rendall, the distinguised organologist. It resides today in the Dolmetsch Collection at London's Horniman Museum.

Dolmetsch's performing career spanned some 75 years. In addition to playing with the Dolmetsch (family) Consort, he formed a recorder and harpsichord partnership with Joseph Saxby which lasted for 60 years. They toured throughout Europe and the Americas, visiting Australia in 1963 and Japan in 1971, and made many recordings for the BBC. Dolmetsch made his US solo debut at Carnegie Hall, New York, in 1925, and his London debut at the Wigmore Hall in 1939, giving annual recitals there with Saxby.

He gave numerous first performances of works, many of which were written especially for him. For 60 years the Dolmetsch Recorder Consort participated in the Epiphany service and procession in Chichester Cathedral. Dolmetsch also lectured extensively all over the world.

In addition to his concert activities, Dolmetsch supervised the workshops at Haslemere where they produce recorders, viols and keyboard instruments based on authentic originals. He also made many arrangements of music from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century from the Dolmetsch private collection.

He wrote for a variety of journals, both on music and on the technical aspects of the instrument. He published many editions of music for recorder, and was the general editor of *Il Flauto Dolce*, a series of tutors and music for the instrument.

In 1948 Dolmetsch started an annual summer school devoted to the recorder. This was expanded in 1971 to include viols and keyboard studies and was renamed the Dolmetsch International Summer School. An integral part of this course is that Dolmetsch 's daughters, in-laws and grandchildren all participate. Having played himself as a small child, Dolmetsch encouraged his own children – and many others – to carry on the tradition.

Dolmetsch played in all 72 Haslemere festivals and succeeded his father as director. He constantly endeavoured to present new music from the Dolmetsch library, much of which had not been performed since the seventeenth or eighteenth century. He retired in 1996, handling over the directorship to his daughter, Jeanne.

He was appointed director of the Society of Recorder Players in 1927 and was made a fellow of Trinity College of Music, London, in 1950. He was awarded the CBE in 1954. Dolmetsch was a good and loyal friend, was always eager to help me in my research. He was a great walker, and loved birdwatching and natural history.

Originally Swiss, he took British nationality in 1931. His first marriage ended in divorce and he is survived by his second wife, Greta; a son, François; twin daughters, Jeanne and Marguerite; and six grandchildren.

—Margaret Campbell