

Marie Sallé and the Development of the *Ballet en action*

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An assessment of Marie Sallé's influence on the Enlightenment *ballet en action* is timely, given that 2007 is the tercentenary of her birth.¹ As a performer, she had a profound impact on members of her audience because of her grace and expressivity. She was experienced in the gestural styles required to perform comic and serious theatrical genres: in her early years, she performed entr'acte dances (often comic) and leading roles in pantomimes for the playhouses of London as well as at the *foires* in Paris.² The 1730s saw her moving away from the comic style; she also performed some works of her own creation, including independent afterpieces and opera dances (the latter in both London and Paris). She returned to the *foires* in the 1740s, with occasional appearances at the French court in her late years, prior to her death in 1756. Her adept depiction of characters, passions and sentiments influenced composers such as George Frideric Handel and Jean-Philippe Rameau to respond with expressive musical gestures in operas that incorporated dance in a more prominent or more integrated manner than had been typical.³ Sallé may have inspired as well as influenced these experiments: her abilities as an expressive performer and as a creative artist accorded

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² The *foires*, or the fairgrounds of St. Germain and St. Laurent, were the home of many theatrical innovations at the time, for their productions were subject to many governmental restrictions, imposed to protect the productions of the Académie Royale de Musique. From 1714, these fairground troupes amalgamated to form the Opéra Comique. Sallé was part of the troupe of her uncle Francisque Moylin, which performed in St. Laurent, and also sometimes at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in London.

³ Sarah McCleave, 'Marie Sallé as Muse: Handel's Music for Mime', *The Consort*, 51 (1995), 13–23; also the same author's 'Marie Sallé, Handel, Rameau, and the Development of Narrative Dance Music', in Jörg Rothkamm and Michael Malkiewicz (eds), *Die Beziehung von Musik und Choregraphie im Ballett* (Berlin: Vorwerk, 2007), 107–21.

her the respect of her contemporaries; her close association with men of letters is well documented by her biographer Emile Dacier.⁴

Thus Sallé's career offers several contexts for discussing gesture: we could assess the function of gesture as perceived by aestheticians and audiences at this time, consider how gesture connects dance with other arts (especially music), or analyse the appropriate incorporation of gesture in different theatrical genres. This appropriateness could be explored on a technical level (a study of the gestures themselves), or we could consider the dramaturgical frameworks within which these gestures operated. It is this final issue, the way in the stories were presented and developed in Sallé's works, which will prove the focal point of the present investigation.

The sources used shaped the character of this inquiry. There are no surviving relevant iconographical materials and Sallé herself did not describe or notate her creations. We must therefore rely on the librettos and eyewitness accounts. To appreciate Sallé's place in the development of the *ballet en action*, I will measure her work against the criteria of two contemporaries who valued her particularly: the librettist Louis de Cahusac (1709–56) and the choreographer Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810).

Noverre, who was a student of Sallé's, indicated his admiration for her expressive performance style in his *Lettres*.⁵ He seems to have respected her creative abilities as well, for most of the ballets which he esteemed were hers:

I cannot shut my eyes to the point of admitting that dancing without action, without rules, without intelligence, or without interest forms a ballet, or a poem expressed in terms of dancing. To say that there are no ballets at the Opéra would be a falsehood.

Noverre then lists five examples, all associated with Sallé: 'The act of *Les Fleurs*' (from Rameau's *Les Indes galantes*, first designed by Sallé and performed by her and others on 23 August 1745); 'the act of Eglé in *Les Talents Lyriques*' (Rameau's *Les Fêtes D'Hébé, ou Les Talents Lyriques*, also designed by Sallé and premiered by her on 21 May 1739); 'the prologue to *Les Fêtes Grecques et Romaines*' (the role of Terpsichore was premiered by Sallé's teacher, Françoise Prévost, on 13 July 1723; Handel's *Terpsichore* of 1735 was

⁴ Émile Dacier, *Une Danseuse de l'Opéra sous Louis XV: Mlle Sallé* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1909). These references pervade Dacier's text, which is well-indexed (337–47). Perhaps the most notable connection Sallé had was with Voltaire.

⁵ Jean-Georges Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse et les arts imitateurs* (Paris: Éditions Lieutier, 1952), 130 and 288–9. This edition includes all thirty-five of Noverre's letters on dancing, and does not correspond to any of the editions which circulated during his lifetime (Paris, 1760; St. Petersburg, 1803; Paris, 1807). All French quotations from Noverre's *Lettres* are taken from this 1952 edition.

based on this text and featured Sallé in the title role); 'the Turkish act in *L'Europe Galante*' (Sallé is the first known dancer to perform a pantomime in this scene, in her performance of 14 June 1736); and 'one act among many from *Castor et Pollux*' (by Rameau; Sallé premiered the role of Hébé on 24 October 1737). The passage continues:

and a quantity of others where dancing is, or can be, easily united to action, and without any extraordinary effort on the composer's part, truly offer me agreeable and very interesting ballets; but those figure dances which express nothing, which present no story, which have no character, which do not sketch for me a connected and logical plot, which possess nothing dramatic and which fall, as it were, from the skies, are only, in my opinion...simple dancing *divertissements* which merely display the limited movements and the mechanical difficulties of the art.⁶

Sallé's centrality in the early development of the *ballet en action* is thus implied in this passage; we are also offered some terms and concepts with which we can measure her creations. Noverre admired ballets which featured action, character, and a 'connected and logical plot' ('une intrigue suivie et raisonnée'). We will consider Sallé's creations in light of contemporaneous references to these terms and criteria. Several sources have been consulted in order to appreciate the range or nuance of meanings which could be attached to each of these concepts. If we weigh Noverre's statement against the definitions and analyses which follow, we can appreciate that each of the dance scenes discussed below contributed different aspects to the development of the *ballet en action*.⁷

⁶ Jean-Georges Noverre, *Letters on Dancing and Ballet*, edited and translated by Cyril W. Beaumont (London: Dance Books, 1966, first published in 1930), 54–5. Beaumont translated the 1803 St. Petersburg edition; the 1952 modern edition (Noverre, *Lettres*, 116–7) is given here: 'En rapprochant toutes mes idées...je ne puis m'aveugler au point de convenir que la danse sans action, sans règle, sans esprit et sans intérêt, forme un ballet ou un poème en danse. Dire qu'il n'y a point de ballets à l'Opéra, serait une fausseté. L'Acte des Fleurs, l'acte d'Eglé dans les *Talents Lyriques*; le prologue des *Fêtes Grecques et Romaines*, l'Acte Turc de *L'Europe galante*; un acte entre autres de *Castor et Pollux*, et quantité d'autres, où la danse est, ou peut être mise en action avec facilité et sans effort de génie de la part du compositeur, m'offrent véritablement des ballets agréables et très intéressants; mais les danses figurées qui ne disent rien, qui ne présentent aucun sujet, qui ne portent aucun caractère, qui ne me tracent point une intrigue suivie et raisonnée; qui ne font point partie du drame et qui tombent, pour ainsi parler, des nues, ne sont à mon sens, comme je l'ai déjà dit, que de simples divertissements de danse, et qui ne me déploient que les mouvements compassés des difficultés mécaniques de l'Art'.

⁷ The term 'aspects' has been preferred over the concept of 'stages' (*degrés*): as we will see, changes in Sallé's approach to narrative are inspired more by her response to different theatrical genres rather than an accumulated experience.

Action itself is an obvious starting point for this study. As we shall see, its perceived significance changed according to context, and over time. In the first part of the eighteenth century lexicographers do not seem to consider the effects of actions, but the association of emotions with specific gestures was clearly established. Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* (1727) provides a characteristic definition:

ACTION... One can say that all the passions of man by which the soul is brought to a certain state...are true actions.... That refers particularly to the gestures, the countenance, and the manner by which one delivers or does something.... There is nothing more necessary to an orator than action: it contributes to his eloquence....⁸ One thinks also of intrigue, and the representation of a work of theatre.... It can also be applied to painting, to the posture and disposition of the body, or the face, when it is marking a particular passion of the soul. He is on his knees in the action of a suppliant. He paints Jupiter with a menacing action. There is plenty of action in the tableaux of Poussin.⁹

Action exists on two levels: the gestural and the dramaturgical ('one thinks also of intrigue'). The second of these meanings will be considered later. In the first sense of the term, *actions* were gestures or movements which effectively indicated different emotions or states. Michel de Pure (1634–80) and Claude Ménéstrier (1631–1705) refer to 'the exterior actions of man' ('les actions exterieurs').¹⁰ The following stage direction from John Weaver's *The Judgment of Paris* (London, 1733) demonstrates a practical application of the term: 'Paris, full of Admiration, &c. at the End of the Dance approaches Helen with all the Actions of Love, Respect, and Desire'.¹¹

⁸ Weaver's comment in the Introduction to his *The Loves of Mars and Venus* (1717) would seem to carry a similar meaning: 'I am satisfied, that the agreeable Appearance some of our best Players make upon the Stage at this Time, is as much owing to the Justness of their Action, as any other Qualification whatsoever', in Richard Ralph, *The Life and Works of John Weaver* (London: Dance Books, 1985), 741.

⁹ 'ACTION... On peut dire que toutes les passions des hommes par lesquelles l'ame se porte à quelque chose...sont de veritables actions.... Se dit particulièrement des gestes, de la countenance, et de la maniere avec laquelle on prononce, ou l'on fait quelque chose.... Il n'y a rien de plus necessaire à un Orateur que l'action: elle fait une partie de l'éloquence.... Se dit encore l'intrigue, & de la representation d'une piece de theatre.... Se dit aussi en Peinture, de la posture & de la disposition du corps, ou de visage, quand ils marquent quelque passion de l'ame. Il étoit à genoux en action de suppliant. Il a peint Jupiter avec une action menaçante. Il y a beaucoup d'action dans les tableaux de Poussin.' Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel* (The Hague: Pierre Husson et al., 1727), vol. 1.

¹⁰ Michel de Pure, *Idées des spectacles anciens et nouveaux* (Paris: Michel Brunet, 1668), 282; Claude Ménéstrier, *Des Représentations en musique anciennes et modernes* (Paris: René Guignard, 1681), 43–4.

¹¹ John Weaver's adaptation of William Congreve's *The Judgment of Paris*, in Ralph, 838–54: 851. This entertainment was first staged at London's Drury Lane Theatre in June 1733.

Noverre articulated a different emphasis on the relationship between action and passions, when he proposed that gesture's sole function was to convey sentiments to the spectator through a succession of moving pictures:

Action, with reference to dance, is the art of transmitting—through the true expression of our movements, our gestures and our physiognomy—our sentiments and our passions into the soul of the spectators. Action is nothing other than pantomime. Everything must paint, everything must speak with the dancer: each gesture, each attitude, each *port de bras* must have a different expression....¹²

The *encyclopédists* were writing at a time of considerable change in aesthetic values as applied to dance and drama. The attributes of expression itself, and the desirability of formulating rules about achieving an expressive performance in pantomime, were subject to much reflection. Georgia Cowart, writing about contemporaneous French musical criticism, describes this change as a 'struggle between what had finally become a rigid and rule-bound Aristotelian mimesis, and new critical paths which could more easily accommodate new directions in artistic thought'.¹³

Within the older intellectual tradition, emotions themselves, as well as the ways in which they were depicted, were systematized. As Angelica Goodden notes, within an Aristotelian tradition 'dramatic arts please...by allowing us to observe emotion without painfully experiencing it'.¹⁴ Descartes enumerated the passions in his 1649 philosophical treatise, *Les Passions de l'âme*; Ménéstrier (1681) adopted this approach for dance, identifying 'expressive postures', or particular positions of the body which were associated with individual states of mind.¹⁵ In the visual arts this was followed in 1698 by painter Charles Le Brun's *Conférence de M. Le Brun sur l'expression générale et*

¹² 'L'action en matière de danse est l'art de faire passer par l'expression vraie de nos mouvements, de nos gestes et de la physionomie, nos sentiments et nos passions dans l'âme des spectateurs. L'action n'est donc autre chose que la pantomime. Tout doit peindre, tout doit parler chez le danseur; chaque geste, chaque attitude, chaque port de bras doit avoir une expression différente; la vraie pantomime, en tout genre, suit la nature dans toutes ses nuances'. Noverre, *Lettres*, 187–8.

¹³ In the Introduction to Georgia Cowart (ed.), *French Musical Thought, 1600–1800* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989), 3. The influence of 'sensibility' on acting technique is discussed in Marian Hobson, *The Object of Art: the Theory of Illusion in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 194–208.

¹⁴ Angelica Goodden, *Actio and Persuasion: Dramatic Performance in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 32.

¹⁵ See Claudia Jeschke, 'From *ballet de cour* to *ballet en action*: The Transformation of Dance Aesthetics and Performance at the End of the Seventeenth and Beginning of the Eighteenth Centuries', *Theatre History Studies*, 11 (1991), 107–22: 110.

particulière, an illustrated catalogue of the facial expressions used to express each passion.¹⁶ The development of Feuillet dance notation at the end of the seventeenth century revealed the extent to which dance could be comprised of codified gestures. Although dancers working in pantomime would have performed gestures outside the vocabulary found in Feuillet notation, the notion of using codified gestures for expressive purposes is suggested in Ménéstrier. John Weaver (1673–1760), writing some thirty years later, believed that grotesque dance (depicting characters or sentiments) could imitate ‘actions, manners, and passions’.¹⁷ He provided precise descriptions of the gestures his performers used to depict affections such as admiration and passions such as jealousy in the text for his first serious work, *The Loves of Mars and Venus* (London, 1717).¹⁸ Noverre reflected a newer school of thought by declining to tell the performer how to depict each emotional state; his dancers were encouraged to feel the emotions suggested in the text, and then convey these emotions to the spectators.¹⁹ Weaver could be considered as ‘imitating’, and Noverre as ‘following’, nature.²⁰

Changing concepts of ‘expression’ enabled critics to see actions as affective. This aesthetic shift had an impact on how dance was featured within opera, and also on the way in which independent pantomimes developed. All writers on dance consulted for the present study, from the Jesuit-educated antiquarian Ménéstrier to Noverre, felt that dance ought to be expressive. The objects or concepts to be conveyed reflected the genres in which the dances were performed as well as changes in aesthetic values. Ménéstrier was writing at a time when the chief vehicle for dance was the *ballet à entrées*. These were works structured around a general theme (such as the seasons, or the different ages of man), rather than a narrative. Their sole expressive goal was to depict contrasting character types (many of them fantastic or allegorical beings) in the dances. Dance dominated the genre. Within the narrative lyric genre of the *tragédie en musique*, it has been argued, the symbolic role of the dance receded—of necessity—to a

¹⁶ For further discussion of this phenomenon, see Patricia Magli, ‘The System of the Passions in Eighteenth-Century Dramatic Music’, *Versus: quaderni di studi semiotici*, 22 (1979), 32–47; also Goodden, 36–7.

¹⁷ John Weaver, *An Essay towards an History of Dancing* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1712), in Ralph, 652. Ménéstrier (160) suggests that passions and manners are more difficult to imitate than actions.

¹⁸ In Ralph, 735–61. It is possible that Sallé attended a performance or a rehearsal of this entertainment, for she was in London in the spring of 1717.

¹⁹ Noverre, *Lettres*, 115–6.

²⁰ Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet’s Staging of Story and Desire* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 108.

supplemental role.²¹ The English dancing-master and theorist John Weaver saw operatic dance as closely linked to its surrounding text, as it expressed 'what was before sung or spoke'. But Weaver did not limit his ambitions for dance to according it a supplemental role within the lyric theatre: dance could, he argued, tell 'entire stories by action'.²² He developed his concept of 'scenical dance' in his 'dramatic entertainments of dancing', commencing with *The Loves of Mars and Venus* in 1717. Sallé, who may well have seen this work while in London that spring, is the link between Weaver's radical entertainments and the works of Noverre, whose career as a choreographer began some forty years after the older man's revolutionary first work had received its premiere.

Noverre's early career coincided with a transitional period regarding attitudes towards 'expression'. Rousseau, writing about expression in opera for the *Encyclopédie*, describes it as being 'the proper tone for a sentiment, situation, or character'; this 'imitation' was created through the poetry, the scenery, and the music.²³ Cahusac, writing on dance, indicated that feelings were expressed by different movements of the body and face.²⁴ In these passages, both Rousseau and Cahusac can be read as advocating a systematized approach approach to expression and gesture, along the lines discussed by both Ménéstrier and Weaver. But Cahusac then goes on to suggest that these gestures are caused by the dancer experiencing sentiments.²⁵ He is here moving towards Noverre's concept of motivated gesture. This new aesthetic is also articulated by *encyclopédist* Paul Landois:

²¹ Charles Dill, *Monstrous Opera: Rameau and the Tragic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 121. Dill is here considering the problematic reception of Cahusac's and Rameau's *Zoroastre* (1749).

²² Weaver, in Ralph, 665–7.

²³ Rousseau, 'Expression (Opéra)', in Denis Diderot, Jean Le Rond d'Alembert et al. (eds), *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris: Briasson et al., from 1751), hereafter *Encyclopédie*, vol. 6 (1756), 315–18: 315.

²⁴ 'Les sensations on été d'abord exprimées par les différens mouvemens du corps et du visage'. 'Danse (Art & Hist.)', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 4 (1756), 623–6: 623.

²⁵ 'Le plaisir et la douleur en se faisant sentir à l'ame, ont donné au corps des mouvemens qui peignoient au-dehors ces différentes impressions; c'est ce qu'on a nommé geste'. Cahusac, 'Danse', as note 24, 623.

ACTION, in Painting and in Sculpture, is the attitude or position of the parts of the face and of the body in the figures represented, by which one can judge that they are agitated by passions. One says, this figure expressed well by her action the passions by which she is agitated.²⁶

It has been noted that Johann Jacob Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (Berlin, 1785) recognized a sub-class of 'gestures of intent or motivated gestures', which were distinguished from 'gestures of imitation or analogy', and 'physiological gestures'.²⁷ While this theory about the changes in effecting gestures was being developed, a novel notion about the impact of gestures on their beholders was also formalized:

ACTION. This word generally speaking, signifies the movement of someone or something which...produces a certain effect. One says in this sense, a lively action, an ardent and passionate action').²⁸

The practical impact of this theory on dancers was articulated in the entry on 'Geste' for Charles Compan's *Dictionnaire de Danse* (Paris, 1787). To achieve an effect on

the beholder, the dancer must go beyond the conventional rules regarding arm gestures in dance, introducing sufficient variety to express the passions. The soul of the dancer, rather than a set of rules, should guide the performance.²⁹

²⁶ 'ACTION, en Peinture & en Sculpture, est l'attitude ou la position des parties du visage & du corps des figures représentées, qui fait juger qu'elles sont agitées de passions. On dit: cette figure exprime bien par son action les passions dont elle est agitée'. Paul Landois, 'Action en Peinture et Sculpture', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 1 (1751), 124. Further writings which articulate this new notion of 'expression' include: Louis de Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne et moderne ou traité historique de la danse* (La Haye: Jean Neaulme, 1754), vol. 1, 17; Johann Georg Sulzer, 'Nature, La Belle (Beaux Arts)', *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 22 (1779), 761–4: 762; Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action* (London: Richard Phillips, 1807), 137.

²⁷ Magli, 38.

²⁸ 'ACTION. Ce mot généralement parlant, veut dire le mouvement de quelque partie ou de quelque chose qui se foit qui agit & qui produit quelque effet. On dit en ce sens, une action vive, une action ardente & plein de feu'. Pierre Richelet, *Dictionnaire de la langue françoise, ancienne et moderne... nouvelle édition* (Lyon: Jean-Marie Bruyset, 1769), vol. 1, 39.

²⁹ '...tant qu'on ne variera pas d'avantage les mouvemens des bras, ils n'auront jamais la force d'émouvoir & d'affecter.... Le port de bras devant être aussi varié que les différentes passions que la Danse peut exprimer. Les règles réelles deviennent presque inutiles. Le geste puisse son principe dans la passion qu'il doit rendre; c'est un trait qui part de l'ame, il doit faire un prompt effet, & toucher au but lorsqu'il est lance par le sentiment'. Charles Compan, *Dictionnaire de Danse* (Paris: Cailleau, 1787), 164.

Sallé's creative career fell at the beginning of this period which saw a considerable shift in the attitudes towards expression, and expression in pantomime as a performance art. The rational approach of Menestrier and Weaver was supplanted, later in the century, by that of 'sentimentalists' such as Noverre, who would have identified with the definition of 'Expression' offered in the *Supplément* to Diderot's *Encyclopédie*:

EXPRESSION (Arts)...refers to a change of the soul, to passions excited or represented by exterior signs. One gives this name sometimes to the gesture which is the cause of the change to the soul, sometimes to the effect which the gesture produces.³⁰

The definition of 'Expression' provided in the *New Grove Dictionary of Art* suggests that the *encyclopédistes* formulated a recognizably modern concept of 'expression': 'Today "expression" indicates the outward manifestation in behaviour of an inward state of mind'.³¹ While for Descartes 'what is a passion in the soul is usually an *action* in the body',³² by the latter half of the eighteenth century the *actions* of an actor or dancer could give rise to passions in the beholder (or audience). Hobson attributes this change in the relationship of audience to play as 'the spectator's participation mov[ing] from the interpersonal to the private...his experience must be unmediated...tak[ing] on...the feelings of the actor.'³³ Arguably, this change could only be effected if the approach to gesture itself became less systematized. Jocelyn Powell has described this motivation for reform in eighteenth-century drama, dance and opera as the desire 'to bring the outward phenomena of the stage into a satisfactory relation with the inner expressiveness of drama, and the stylised expression of emotion into line with the outward phenomenon of existence'.³⁴ We can detect indications of practice-based

³⁰ 'EXPRESSION (Beaux Arts)...se rapport au mouvement de l'ame, à ses passions excitées ou représentées par des signes extérieurs. On donne ce nom tantôt au signe, comme à la cause du mouvement de l'ame, tantôt à l'effet que ce signe produit', [Denis Diderot?], 'Expression (Beaux Arts)', *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 13 (1779), 658–9: 658; also [Johann Georg Sulzer], 'Expression (Art théâtrale)', *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 13, 662–4: 662.

³¹ Stephanie Ross, 'Expression', *The New Grove Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (London: Macmillan, 1996), vol. 10, 689–92: 689.

³² René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul* (1649), in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 325–404: 328.

³³ Hobson, 140.

³⁴ Jocelyn Powell, 'Dance and Drama in the Eighteenth Century: David Garrick and Jean Georges Noverre', *Word and Image*, 4 (1988), 678–91: 678.

evidence of these emerging notions of expression in several of Sallé's creations dating from the mid-1730s.

It is appropriate to start this analysis by considering her title-role in Handel's *Terpsichore* (1734), an opera prologue which he wrote specifically for her. *Terpsichore* was closely modelled on the prologue for *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines* (Paris, 1723), a work which Noverre esteemed as one the earliest examples of *ballets en action*.³⁵ The subject (or substantial idea of which the action was its development)³⁶ was a celebration attended by the muses and Apollo. The sung airs of Apollo and the muses (which largely considered the different aspects of love) were posed as if they were outlining the action for Terpsichore's following dance. Thus the prologue featured a series of contrasting affects, or characters.

In the *Encyclopédie*, character is defined as 'the inclination or dominant passion which illuminates all the proceedings and discourses of the persons...and which is the principal and first motivation of all their actions'.³⁷ Sarah R. Cohen suggests that the term 'character' at this time was largely synonymous with 'emotion'. She argues that painters such as Watteau excelled in the presentation of character, and were not concerned with narrative as such.³⁸ *Terpsichore* and its model were also about character rather than narrative. Sallé presumably defined each character through a distinctive posture and appropriate gestures. This technique can be seen in the 1716 treatise of dancing-master Gregorio Lambranzi, where Lambranzi himself posed for the plates which illustrate different characters found in *entr'acte* dances, such as Dutch sailors, harlequins, acrobats, and moors.³⁹

But how did dance and music actually present character? In the Paris prologue, Terpsichore's *sarabande* caused a follower of Apollo to advise young beauties to sing and dance in order to subdue ('domptez') hearts. Thus the sinuous triple-metre of the

³⁵ This *ballet héroïque* was set to music by Colin de Blamont, and featured Sallé's teacher Françoise Prévost as the muse of the dance. In the Paris prologue, the dance generally preceded the air which was connected to it. Different aspects of the connection between these two works are explored in Chapter 5 of Sarah McCleave's *Dance in Opera: Handel on the London Stage* (forthcoming).

³⁶ Jean François Marmontel, 'Fable (Belles Lettres)', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 6 (1766), 349. There is no separate entry for 'Fable (Opéra)', or 'Fable (Pantomime)'.

³⁷ Denis Diderot, 'Caractère dans les personnages', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 2 (1756), 667–8: 667.

³⁸ Sarah R. Cohen, 'Body as "Character" in Early Eighteenth-Century French Art and Performance', *Art Bulletin*, 78 (1996), 454–66.

³⁹ Gregorio Lambranzi, *New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing*, trans. Derra de Moroda, ed. Cyril W. Beaumont (New York: Dover, 2002, first published London, 1928).

sarabande was connected, appropriately, with seduction.⁴⁰ The contrasting musical character of the *rigaudon* (a robust, lively dance in duple time) celebrated the exploits of heroes in the following dance. The next portion of this entertainment saw the muse of the dance expressing the music through the variety of her steps and attitudes.⁴¹ Music had character, but did not express specific dramatic content.⁴² Cahusac, for example, suggested that each piece of music will have its own ‘spirit’ from which the dancer could determine the character to be portrayed.⁴³ *Terpsichore* and its model were effective because they featured a series of broadly contrasting states or affects; the sung text provided the necessary context for appreciating the specific states being evoked.

For example, in *Les Festes grecques et romaines*, Terpsichore’s performance in an *Air Rondeau* won praise from Erato and Apollo for ‘painting for our eyes the transports of lovers, their tender cares, flattering hope, jealous despair, and cruel revenge’.⁴⁴ The god and muse even describe her steps as sentiments (‘Tous vos pas sont des sentiments’).⁴⁵ However, as Edithe Lalonger cautions in her study of J. F. Rebel’s *Les Caractères de la danse*, we should not assume that these texts outlined literal pantomimic scenarios.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ For the passionate character of the seventeenth-century *sarabande*, see Patricia Ranum, ‘Audible Rhetoric and Mute Rhetoric: the Seventeenth-Century French Sarabande’, *Early Music*, 14 (1986), 22–36.

⁴¹ ‘Erato & Apollon célèbrent les louanges de Terpsichore dans une Cantate. Et la muse de la Danse *en exprime les Symphonies & les Chants*, par la variété de ses pas & des attitudes’. *Les Festes grecques et romaines, ballet héroïque...*, in *Recueil général des opéra* ([Paris]: Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, 1734), vol. 13 (emphasis added).

⁴² See Jane R. Stevens, ‘The Meanings and Uses of *Caractère* in Eighteenth-Century France’, in Cowart, 23–52; also Edithe Lalonger, ‘J. F. Rebel’s *Les Caractères de la danse*: Interpretative Choices and their Relationship to Dance Research’, in Sarah McCleave (ed.), *Dance and Music in French Baroque Theatre: Sources and Interpretations*, IAMS Study Text 3 (London: King’s College, 1998), 105–23.

⁴³ Cahusac, ‘Entrée (Danse)’, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 5 (1755), 730–1: 731.

⁴⁴ ‘Peignez à nos yeux les transports des Amants, les tendres soins, la flateuse esperance, le Desespoir jaloux, la cruelle Vengeance’.

⁴⁵ For a very thoughtful and informed consideration of how steps and gestures were integrated to represent sentiments and suggest narrative, see Moira Goff, ‘Steps, Gestures, and Expressive Dancing: Magri, Ferrère, and John Weaver’, in Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Bruce Alan Brown (eds), *The Grotesque Dancer on the Eighteenth-Century Stage: Gennaro Magri and his World* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 199–230.

⁴⁶ Lalonger (as note 42) is here addressing the tendency of modern performers to take a *parodie* of Rebel’s work published in the *Mercure galant* (July 1721, 64–72) as a literal scenario of what the dancer should convey. As she points out, ‘A dancer who mimes an old man in love, bent over with cane in hand...would convey a grotesque character and not that of the noble courante’ (114).

Indeed, Johann Georg Sulzer (1720–79) maintained that the dancer’s imitation would not have involved ‘natural’ gestures:

It is not possible [for a dancer] to imitate nature, except from a distance; and to render it completely different from what it itself would indicate. All his steps, all his movements belong to art; nature bears no similarity to this [kind of representation], nevertheless he must convey the character of nature. With each gesture of the dancer, one must be able to read the sentiment which moves him; *his steps are as words* which—we remark—have passed into his heart.⁴⁷

Despite Noverre’s clearly articulated ambitions, his peers such as *encyclopedist* Jean François Marmontel suggested that dance could only allude to general emotional states:

Dance in general is a living painting. ...and therefore in its attitudes, ...in the ensemble of the action, there is an analogy with such kinds of sentiments and thoughts, which induce the soul and the imagination of the spectator to search for a defined intention in the vagueness of this mute expression...⁴⁸

Even earlier in the century, many writers had become convinced that neither dance nor music could carry the precise ‘meaning’ of a story. Indeed, Blamont’s rather bland dance music for *Les Festes grecques* (1723) suggests that he was relying on the sung text to convey the meaning of the work, for the triple-metre *Air Rondeau* which ‘paint[s]... the transports of lovers, their tender cares, flattering hope, jealous despair, and cruel revenge’ maintains a stable, lilting and pleasant character throughout;⁴⁹ it is in the singers’ music only that we find rapid and erratic rhythms suitable to the affects being described. Although the dancer Françoise Prévost was called upon to represent

⁴⁷ ‘Il ne peut l’imiter [la nature] que de loin; & rendre d’un maniere toute différente ce qu’elle lui aura indiqué. Tous ses pas, tous ses mouvements tiennent à l’art; la nature n’en a point de semblables, & cependant ils doivent porter le caractere de la nature. Il faut que dans chaque mouvement du danseur, on puisse lire le sentiment qui le meut; *ses pas sont autant de mots* qui nous disent ce qui se passe dans son coeur’. Sulzer, ‘Expression (Art théâtrale)’, *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 13 (1779), 663 (emphasis added).

⁴⁸ ‘La danse en général est une peinture vivante. ...& pourvu que dans les attitudes, ...dans l’ensemble de l’action, il y ait assez d’analogie avec telle espece de sentimens & de pensées, pour induire l’ame & l’imagination du spectateur à chercher dans le vague de cette expression muette une intention décidée’. Marmontel, ‘Pantomime (Art. Dramatique)’, *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 24 (1779), 419–23: 422.

⁴⁹ *Les Festes grecques et romaines, ballet en musique par monsieur Collin de Blamont* (Paris: Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, 1723).

different manners (seductive, admiring, fleet of foot) throughout the prologue,⁵⁰ the expression of actual passions (as described by Noverre) seems to have been confined to the singers.

The anonymous adaptor's revisions to the text of Handel's *Terpsichore*, however, suggest that the dancer (Sallé) was accorded a more ambitious role in expressing the passions in this work than her teacher had been in its model.⁵¹ It is reasonable to suggest that these revisions were done to account for Sallé's particular skills, perhaps accommodating her vision of how this prologue could function. The affective character of Handel's dances reinforces this perception. *Terpsichore's* first solo dance, a *sarabande* (with rare dynamic markings), is introduced by Erato telling us that the muse 'all to Joy and Mirth excites'.⁵² For her next dance, a *gigue*, 'Terpsichore, with expressive Action, shews the Transports of a Lover' after being commanded by Apollo to 'Paint all the Transports ardent Lovers feel, When the Belov'd a mutual Flame reveal'.⁵³ In an untitled dance, 'Terpsichore changing her Movements, represents those Passions', those passions being the 'Hope and Fear' experienced by a lover, as explained in Erato's introductory recitative. *Terpsichore* then 'shews the Force' of jealousy after being commanded to do so by Apollo (Handel's dance begins with a riveting series of *tirades*, reiterated within a collage of rhythms and textures which suggests the instability of the passion being depicted); she concludes by 'imitat[ing] the Rapidity of the Wind' (Handel writes a *passepied* without a bass line for this). It can be argued that *Terpsichore* (1734) was closer to Noverre's concept of action (in which every gesture has expressive significance⁵⁴) than was the prologue to *Les Festes grecques et romaines* (1723). Yet this work was still a product of its time: the text provides a necessary framework within which to appreciate and interpret the creative efforts of Handel, and of Sallé.

⁵⁰ 'Manners' is a term employed by Weaver. He does not provide a precise definition of what he meant by 'manners', but we may infer that 'confidence', 'assurance', 'boldness', and 'diffidence' are representative of this concept; see *Essay*, in Ralph, 425–37.

⁵¹ See Chapter 5 of McCleave, *Dance in Opera*.

⁵² *Il Pastor fido...the third edition, with large Additions* (London: T. Wood, 1734), 4–12. All quotations here are taken from the English version of this bilingual text, as originally published (London opera librettos typically included an English translation of the sung Italian text on the opposing page).

⁵³ The wording of Apollo's command and the stage direction here are strongly reminiscent of Furetière's definition of action in the context of painting, cited at the beginning of this article.

⁵⁴ See note 12.

Moreover, the festive nature of the prologue as a genre put limitations on its ability to act as a vehicle for a more sustained type of narrative. Dill's study of Rameau's operas concludes that the French were finely attuned to the differences between theatrical genres, and to the appropriate balance between, and functions of, their individual components (poetry, music, dance).⁵⁵ It is therefore not surprising that Sallé's first collaboration with Rameau, the 'Ballet des Fleurs' for his *Les Indes galantes* (1735), was designed in the characteristically dance-dominated genre of the *opéra-ballet*. Sallé's dance scene readily met the expectations attached to that genre, which were (within the framework of a characteristically simple action) to deliver some impressive visual effects, a celebration, and an opportunity for contrast between its different *entrées*.⁵⁶ According to the descriptive passage from the *Mercure* reproduced below, Sallé's 1735 ballet offered a stunning tableau at the start, with a clever design where the festival itself generated both action and intrigue:

In the middle of the theatre is a rose-tree, which on separating reveals the illustrious Dlle Sallé sur un gazon, being crowned by Cupids. Six young Asians, representing other flowers, accompany her, and form with her and the décor which surrounds them the most beautiful spectacle which has ever appeared on the lyric stage. The ballet is a picturesque representation of the fate of the flowers in a garden. They are personified, as is Boreas and Zephyrus, to provide the soul for this gallant depiction. The Rose, their Queen, dances alone; her dance is interrupted by a storm which introduces Boreas; the flowers endure his anger. The Rose resists for a longer time the enemy which persecutes her; the steps of Boreas express his impetuosity and his fury. The attitudes of the Rose depict her sorrow and her fears. Zephyrus arrives with renewed energy, reviving and raising the flowers beaten by the storm; he concludes their triumph and his by the homage which his tenderness renders to the Rose.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Dill, especially 17–21.

⁵⁶ Marmontel, 'Opéra (Belles-Lettres, Musique)', *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 23 (1779), 740–50: 749; Goodden (as note 14) discusses the role of stage action in different genres (121–3) with a specific consideration of dance in opera and its development as an independent spectacle (133–8). This account does not, however, include any reference to Sallé, or to works in which she was involved.

⁵⁷ 'Au milieu du Théâtre est un Rosier, qui en séparant laisse voir l'illustre Dlle Sallé sur un gazon, couronnée par les Amours. Six jeunes Asiatiques, représentant d'autres fleurs, l'accompagnent, et forment avec elle, et la decoration qui l'environne, le plus brillant spectacle qui ait jamais paru sur la Scene Lirique. Le Ballet represente pittoresquement le sort des fleurs dans un jardin. On les a personifiées ainsi que Borée & Zephire, pour donner l'âme à cette peinture galante. La Rose, leur Reine, danse seule; sa danse est interrompuë par un orage qu'amene Borée; les fleurs en éprouvent la colere. La Rose resiste plus long temps à l'ennemi qui la persécute; les Pas de Borée expriment son impetuosité et sa fureur. Les attitudes de la Rose, peignent sa douleur et ses craintes. Zephire arrive avec la clarté renaissante, il ranime et releve les fleurs abatuës par la tempête; il termine leur triomphe et le sien pas les hommages que sa tendresse rend à la Rose.' *Mercure*, Sept. 1735, 2045–6.

The interior mimed sections (the interactions between Rose, Boreas, and Zephyrus) were preceded and followed by formal dances;⁵⁸ in this sense, the work was a prototype for Noverrian pantomimes, where dance and mime alternated (Italian pantomimes of the later eighteenth century integrated dance with mime).⁵⁹ The contrast between the characters of Boreas, Zephyrus, and the Rose would have determined the theatrical effectiveness of this scene; it surely helped to develop Noverre's noted appreciation for 'the significance of contrasted physical attitude'.⁶⁰ Although the reliance on character to convey much of the action places this scene firmly within a baroque aesthetic, it was appreciated over forty years later by *encyclopédist* Marmontel as an example of a danced interlude which was appropriate to its situation and to the character of the poem.⁶¹ The audience's understanding of this scene would have been enhanced by the unprecedented appearance of a scenario concerning the dance (an account similar to that from the *Mercur*, cited above) in the libretto for the opera.⁶²

Sallé's next creative endeavour was in another *opéra-ballet*, a revival in 1736 of André Campra's *L'Europe galante*. Cahusac's admiration for her, both as a performer and as a creative artist, is evident from this account:

Mlle Sallé, who had, always, a sound reason for whatever she did, had the skill to introduce a most ingenious episodic action into the passacaglia of *L'Europe Galante*. In it we see her portraying a young odalisque or concubine. She is surrounded by her companions and rivals, and shows all the grace and passion one could expect from a young girl with designs upon her master's heart. Her dancing has all the pretty mannerisms which betray such a desire, a desire which we actually see *forming and developing*. Into her expression one can read a *whole range of feelings*. We see her hovering in turn between fear and hope. But when at last the moment arrives for the Sultan to make his choice and he awards the handkerchief to the favourite her face, her looks and whole bearing take on a *wholly different aspect*. She hurls herself off the stage in utter

⁵⁸ For a consideration of how the dances were correlated with the music for this scene, see Sarah McCleave, 'English and French Theatrical Sources: The Repertoire of Marie Sallé', in McCleave, *Dance and Music in French Baroque Theatre*, 13–32: 22–6.

⁵⁹ See Harris-Warrick and Brown, especially Chapter 9: Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Carol G. Marsh, 'Putting Together a Pantomime Ballet', 231–78.

⁶⁰ Powell, 685.

⁶¹ Marmontel, 'Pantomime (Art. Dramatique)', *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 24 (1779), 419–23: 422–3.

⁶² *Les Indes galantes...représenté pour la première fois, par l'Académie Royale de Musique* ([Paris]: [Jean]-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, 1735); also *Les Indes galantes*, in *Recueil général des opéra, représenté par l'Académie Royale de Musique* ([Paris: Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, 1745), vol. 16; and *Les Indes galantes...remis avec la nouvelle Entrée des Sauvages* (Paris: Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, 1736).

despair, despair of the kind felt only by the most sensitive people, people who in the space of a second can be plunged into the deepest despondency.

One must praise all the more this most artistic performance, full of feeling, because it was entirely devised by the dancer. She has filled out and improved upon the framework laid down by the poet. In this she has far surpassed the talents of the ordinary performer, and shown herself to possess a rare creative talent.⁶³

We are especially indebted to Cahusac for his description of Sallé's performance, for the ballet's 1736 text merely indicates that 'The *Sultanes* formed several dances to please Zuliman'.⁶⁴ (Zuliman is the Sultan whose harem is the subject of the fifth *Entrée* of *L'Europe galante*, 'La Turquie'.) The function of dance as suggested in the text for this ballet reflects the design of the poet, Antoine Houdar de la Motte (1672–1731). The action of the entire *Entrée*, the Sultan's change of favourite from Roxane to Zaïde, is intensified in the sung portions of this scene, where all the *Sultanes* reveal their love for their master ('That Love in our hearts has given birth / To a thousand ardours for our august master'); Zuliman then declares his love for Zaïde ('You alone shine in this retreat'). We have no evidence that earlier performances of this ballet,⁶⁵ which featured the dance at the very beginning of the scene, ever treated it as anything other than a conventional court entertainment. Indeed, critics at the time commented on the general lack of connection between dance scenes and the action of the larger works to which they were attached; dance was viewed by them as an interruption, given the

⁶³ 'Mademoiselle Sallé, ce pendant qui raisonnait tout ce qu'elle avait à faire, avait eu l'adresse de placer une action épisodique fort ingénieuse dans la passacaille de *L'Europe galante*. Cette danseuse parraissait au milieu de ses rivales avec les grâces & les désirs d'une jeune odalisque qui a des desseins sur le coeur de son maître. Sa danse était formée de toutes les jolies attitudes qui peuvent peindre une pareille passion. Elle l'animait par degrés: on lisait, dans ses expressions une suite de *sentimens*: on la voyait flottante tour à tour entre la crainte et l'espérance; mais, au moment où le sultan donne le mouchoir à la sultane favorite, son visage, ses regards, tout son maintien prenaient rapidement une forme nouvelle. Elle s'arrachait du théâtre avec cette espèce de désespoir des âmes vives et tendres, qui ne s'exprime que par un excès d'accablement.' Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne*, book 1, vol. 3, 154–5, as translated by Stanley Vince in "'With Entertainments of Dancing", A Life of Marie Sallé, Dancer at the Paris Opera in the time of Louis XV' (MSS, c1970, to be deposited in the British Library, London, and the Public Library, New York), 240 (emphasis added).

⁶⁴ 'Les Sultanes forment plusieurs Danses pour plaire à Zuliman'. *L'Europe galante, ballet...remis au théâtre le jedy quatorze Juin 1736* ([Paris]: Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, 1736), 38. The musical score has a chaconne at this point.

⁶⁵ This work was first staged on 24 October 1697, with revivals in 1703, 1715 and 1724.

way in which the poets (and particularly la Motte) situated it within their works.⁶⁶ Although Cahusac identified *L'Europe galante* as being amongst the best ballets in the repertory, he noted a particular fault: 'The dances are nothing but simple dances; no action related to the subject animates them; one dances in *l'Europe galante* to dance'.⁶⁷

Audience members such as Cahusac were able to apply a precise meaning to Sallé's action in *L'Europe galante* because it was, effectively, a danced version of the preceding sung text (see Weaver's views on opera dance, as discussed above). Thus the relationship between text and dance was similar to that already seen in the prologue to *Les Fêtes grecques*. Sallé's action would have been pleasing to the critics as it addressed an acknowledged fault in the design of *opéra-ballets* in general (and *L'Europe galante* in particular). It did so without making any fundamental changes to the genre's characteristic structure or the balance of components (poetry, music, dance) within it. The innovation to the design of the *opéra-ballet* was modest; the more radical innovation was Sallé's performance, which conveyed more than a single character or affect.

Indeed, what is particularly significant about this scene is the way in which Sallé developed the actions in a successive manner, as described by Cahusac in his *La Danse ancienne et moderne* (1754):

In an action...all the art of the dance is employed to depict [it] by gradual intervals and in a successive manner.... All the circumstances [of the action]...are engraved in the spirit of the spectator, inflaming his soul by degrees, and giving him all the pleasure which the charm of theatrical imitation affords.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ See Touissant Rémond de Saint-Mard, *Réflexions sur l'Opéra* (1741), in *Oeuvres de Monsieur Rémond de St. Mard* (Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1749), vol. 5, 213; Grimm, 'Poème lyrique (Littérature)', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 12 (1765), 823–36: 833; Marmontel, 'Pantomime (L'Art Dramatique)' *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 24 (1779), 419–23: 422. The meaningful role of dance in opera is questioned by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Opéra (Belles-Lettres)', *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 23 (1779), 750–7: 757.

⁶⁷ 'Les danses n'y sont que des danses simples; nulle action relative au sujet ne les anime; on danse dans *l'Europe galante* pour danser.' Cahusac, 'Ballet', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 2 (1751), 42–6: 45. See also Cahusac's observation that la Motte preferred *danse simple* in his episodes (*La Danse ancienne*, book 1, vol. 3, 153).

⁶⁸ 'Dans une action...tout l'art de la Danse employé à peindre par gradation & d'une manière successive.... Toutes les circonstances...demeuroient gravées dans l'esprit du Spectateur, échaufferoient son ame par degrés, & lui feroient goûter tout le plaisir que produit au Théâtre le charme de l'imitation.' Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne*, book 1, vol. 3, 47. The ellipses here show the omission of illustrative passages concerning the actions of a group of furies.

Noverre considered how a dancer could depict the ‘successive stages’ of a passion:

When dancers are animated by their feelings, they will assume a thousand different attitudes, according to the varied symptoms of their passions; when, Proteus-like, their features and glances betray the conflicts in their breast, when their arms break through the limited movements prescribed by the laws of technique, to move with grace and judgement in every direction, they will express in their appropriate positions the successive stages of their passions.

...Each movement will be expressive, each attitude will depict a particular situation, each gesture will reveal a thought, each glance will convey a new sentiment...⁶⁹

Cahusac’s use of the phrase ‘une action épisodique’ (see note 63, above) to describe Sallé’s contribution to this opera suggests that her performance formed ‘une action complète’: although joined to the principal subject, the latter type of action would be complete without the danced episode.⁷⁰ Sallé embellished the poet’s design with an action which mirrored that of the *Entrée* as a whole; her scene was all the more significant for anticipating Roxane’s tempestuous reaction to her rejection (this *Sultane* subsequently threatened her rival with a dagger). Sallé did not enact Roxane’s action precisely, but she painted a vivid picture of the character’s passions and her state of mind, suggesting these to the spectator Cahusac in a highly effective manner.⁷¹ The subject of this scene, the interactions within a Sultan’s harem, admitted ‘passions, troubles, [and] anxieties’ which were complemented by intrigues, or a series of incidents which ‘knit’ (‘nouent’) and ‘unravel’ (‘dénouent’) the action.⁷²

Noverre himself thought of *ballets en action* in these terms, having declared that they should feature ‘a connected and logical plot’ or intrigue (see the passage from his

⁶⁹ ‘Lorsque les danseurs animés par le sentiment, se transformeront sous mille formes différentes avec les traits variés des passions; lorsqu’ils seront des prothées, et que leur physionomie et leurs regards traceront tous les mouvemens de leur âme; lorsque leurs bras sortiront de ce chemin étroit que l’école leur a prescrit, et que, parcourant avec autant de grâce que de vérité un espace plus considérable, ils décriront par des positions justes les mouvements successifs des passions...tout parlera, chaque mouvement dictera une phrase; chaque attitude peindra une situation; chaque geste dévoilera une pensée; chaque regard annoncera un nouveau sentiment....’ Noverre, *Letters* (1803), trans. Beaumont, 52–3.

⁷⁰ Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne*, book 1, vol. 3, 152.

⁷¹ This was not the only time when Sallé was associated with a scene linked so closely to the ballet’s action, for she had a leading role in the dance scene featuring Hébé in Rameau’s *Castor et Pollux* (1737). The connection between this pantomimic scene and the intrigue of the opera itself was recognized by the *Mercur* in its review of the 1754 revival (February 1754, 189), as cited in Dacier, 197–8.

⁷² Marmontel, ‘Fable (Belles Lettres)’, *Encyclopédie*, vol. 6 (1766), 349.

Lettres cited at the beginning of this article). With his *ballets en action*, Noverre was aspiring to a sophisticated genre, which could bear at least some of the attributes of spoken or sung drama.⁷³ This ambition was shared by *encyclopédist* Friedrich Melchior Grimm (1723–1807), whose article on the ‘Poème lyrique’ suggested that ‘the dance or ballet poem must be followed, tangled, and untangled like the lyric poem’.⁷⁴ A good sequence of intrigues will function like a ‘chain’.⁷⁵ In Sallé’s action in *L’Europe galante*, the first of the linked intrigues—where she exposes the feelings of her character for her master—is followed by the actual selection of the favourite, which causes the odalisque to express her desolation upon being rejected. Unlike Noverre’s later ballet on the same subject and action, however, there does not seem to have been a *dénouement*, or ‘calming of the [spectator’s] agitation’,⁷⁶ for the scene ends on a note of despair.

Sallé’s artistic vision, which saw the tragic potential in a scenario drawing on one character’s reaction to a love triangle, enabled her to develop an action which was radical—and yet firmly grounded in the aesthetic of the genre to which it was attached. Her despairing performance as a rejected lover made no attempt to expand on the characteristic concerns of the lighter lyric genre of the *opéra-ballet*, but identified a situation which could be developed into an affecting piece of drama.

In the action considered above, Sallé’s creative talents were complemented by her acclaimed skills as a performer, for she doubtless drew on her earlier portrayal of an abandoned Ariadne in her London *ballet en action*, *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1734). This work, along with her *Pigmalion* (also London, 1734), were independent entertainments, substantial enough in duration to be billed as afterpieces. The cast lists for both (all dancers) suggest that these were entirely danced, with no sung or spoken text. No

⁷³ Goodden, 129–30. For a detailed consideration of his thoughts regarding the structuring of a ballet en action, see Noverre’s ‘Lettre 13’, ‘Règles à suivre dans la composition des ballets’, *Lettres*, 93–8; see also the anonymous translation of Francesco Algarotti’s *An Essay on the Opera* (London: L. David and C. Reymers, 1767), where it is stated (68–9) that ‘a dance, moreover, should have its exposition, its intricacy, and it ought to be the quintessential abridgement of an *action*’, as cited in Jeffrey Giles, ‘Dance and the French Enlightenment’, *Dance Chronicle*, 4 (1981), 245–63: 254.

⁷⁴ As cited (in English translation only) in Giles, 254.

⁷⁵ L’abbé Edme-François Mallet, supplemented by Marmontel, ‘Intrigue (Belles Lettres)’, *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 18 (1779), 982–6: 982.

⁷⁶ For *dénouement*, see D.J., ‘Noeud (Poésie dramatique & épique)’, *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 23 (1779), 46–5: 45. Noverre’s *Les Jalousies du serail* is detailed in his *Lettres*, 243–5. It provided a more developed intrigue than Sallé’s action, with a greater number of incidents. The *dénouement* sees the Sultan dancing with his favourite and the rejected odalisque; his new union is celebrated by the remaining odalises.

score or text survives for either of these works; indeed, it is possible that scenarios were not issued, for no advertisement for them has been detected in the London newspapers of the time. It is not known whether the productions had recourse to banners with explanatory text, but this seems unlikely: such a detail would not have escaped the pens of the local journalists, who delighted in effects which were open to satiric treatment.

Thus Sallé seems to have created two works which were entirely without text; however, her choice of universally-known stories with love at the foundation of their intrigues ensured that her viewers would have had a context in which to appreciate her creations. Here we shall consider the second of these to be staged, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, as the *Mercure's* anonymous correspondent suggests it was the more affective:

Do not expect me to explain *Ariadne* to you as I have *Pigmalion*: this has beauties which are both more subtle and more difficult to describe. These beauties are feelings and portrayals of the deepest sorrow, despair, fury and prostration. In a word, every action and emotion of a woman abandoned by the man she loves is shown, perfectly, by means of steps, attitudes and gestures.

You may rest assured, Monsieur, that Mlle Sallé has now become the rival of Journets, Duclos and Le Couvreur.⁷⁷ The English retain fond memories of the famous Mrs Oldfield⁷⁸...and they are saying that she is re-incarnated in the person of Mlle Sallé when she performs in *Ariadne*.⁷⁹

It is significant that the anonymous correspondent felt compelled to identify the passions—sorrow, despair, and fury—which were depicted. In the *Mercure* at this time, other descriptions of dance in opera inevitably focused on the intrigue and the staging devices (see the report concerning the ‘Ballet des Fleurs’, above.) This departure from the normal style and content of a *Mercure* review is telling. Of all the events

⁷⁷ Dacier (240) identifies Anne-Marie de Chateauneuf (Duclos) (1664–1748) as an actress at the Comédie-Française; Adrienne Lecouvreur (1664–1730) was a well-known tragic actress who featured in Voltaire’s correspondence. It has not been possible to confirm the identity of Mlle Journets.

⁷⁸ Anne Oldfield (1683?–1730) was a prominent English actress who made her début at London’s Drury Lane Theatre in 1699.

⁷⁹ ‘N’attendez pas que je vous décrive *Ariane* comme *Pigmalion*: ce sont des beautés plus nobles et plus difficiles à rapporter; ce sont les expressions et les sentimens de la douleur la plus profonde, du désespoir, de la fureur, de l’abattement; en un mot, tous les grands mouvemens et la déclamation la plus parfaite, par le moyen des pas, des attitudes et des gestes, pour représenter une femme abandonnée par ce qu’elle aime; vous pouvez avancer, Monsieur, que Mlle Sallé devient ici la Rivale des Journets, des Duclos et des Le Couvreur. Les Anglais qui conservent un tendre souvenir de la fameuse Oldfields, jusqu’au point de l’avoir mise parmi les grands hommes de l’Etat dans Westminster, la regardent comme ressucitée dans Mlle Sallé lorsqu’elle représente *Ariane*.’ *Mercure* (April 1734), 772, as translated in Vince, 202–3.

which may have occurred in this entertainment, the *succession* of actions depicted by Sallé during the *noeud* or crux of the intrigue (when Ariadne is abandoned by Theseus) was what the writer felt compelled to convey. The description offered by the *Mercuré's* correspondent certainly suggested that she engaged the emotions of her spectators in a manner which both Noverre and Cahusac would have admired.

Our second source concerning this entertainment is a portion of a poem published shortly after the premiere of *Bacchus and Ariadne* in 1734, written by one Pierre Bordes de Berchères:

I speak of Sallé, the ornament of the scene...
The dreams, the awakening, the fears, the horror
Of the tender Aridane, cast 'way on Naxos's shore.
Strikingly shown in naïve hue,
All her transports, her languish true,
Her plaints, her furies...to a tenderness repents,
For a smitten god of amorous intents.⁸⁰

When Berchères described Sallé's *Pigmalion*, some narrative detail concerning the *action* which took place in the sculptor's workshop was offered. *Ariadne*, however, inspired the poet to detail the strong emotions which Sallé portrayed: fear, languor, and fury. Nonetheless, the extensive cast-list for this entertainment (Bacchus, Ariadne, Theseus, Phaedra, four Fawns, four Bacchantes, and four Grecians⁸¹) suggests that a rather elaborate story, with several incidents, could have been depicted. It is particularly suggestive that Ariadne's sister Phaedra, who was the catalyst for Theseus's deplorable behaviour, was included.⁸² For her audience to have appreciated Ariadne's depiction of despair, a full exposition of the events which caused this

⁸⁰ 'Je fais partir SALÈ, l'Ornement de la Scene... / Les Songes, le Reveil, les Craintes, le Naufrage / De la tendre Ariane au Naxique Rivage, / Représenter en Beau de Naives Couleurs / Tous ses Emportemens, ses Mourantes Langueurs, / Ses Plaintes, ses Fureurs, ...se rendre a la Tendresse / D'un Dieu pour elle épris d'une Amoureuse Yvresse.' Pierre Bordes de Berchères, *Le jardin de delos ou Terpsichore a Londres. Idylle sur la demoiselle Salé [sic]...sur ses danses d'Ariane et de Pygmalion...dans Crane-Court, ou le Nouveau Temple d'Apollon a Londres, Ode a Messieurs de la Societé Royale de Londres* (London, 1734), 12.

⁸¹ Emmett L. Avery et al. (eds), *The London Stage 1660–1800* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960–68), part 3, vol. 1, 371 (26 February 1734).

⁸² Phaedra is not featured in earlier theatrical works (staged in Paris) which told Ariadne's story, including *Les Amours des Dieux* (1727), *Ariadne* (1672), *Ariadne et Bacchus* (1696) and *Ballet des Saisons* (1695); see Claude Parfaict and François Parfaict, *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris* (Paris: Lambert, 1756).

passion must have been incorporated into this ballet's design.⁸³ A closer look at Berchères's poem offers a plausible structure for the intrigue with an exposition built around Ariadne's 'dreams' (presumably her memories of happy times with Theseus, followed by some more disturbing images of him together with her sister) and the shipwreck—a *noeud* featuring her 'awakening' (to find herself on the island where she was abandoned) and her 'fears' (her reaction to her abandonment, as described in the account in the *Mercure*)—concluding with a *dénouement* involving Bacchus and his followers. If we consider the structure of other eighteenth-century pantomime entertainments,⁸⁴ we could imagine that both the exposition and the *dénouement* could have featured formal dances. The exposition could have begun with a *pas de deux* between Ariadne and Theseus, followed by a *pas de trois* where they are joined by Phaedra; the groupings and interactions of the dancers could have been manipulated to suggest the straying of Theseus's interest. The *dénouement* could have been marked by a *pas de deux* for Ariadne and her immortal lover, followed by a celebratory group dance for the bacchantes. By using our knowledge of the familiar mythological story as a basis for our interpretation of the poem, we are able to furnish a plausible intrigue while appreciating Cahusac's description of this work as 'a complete dramatic action'.⁸⁵ Berchères's poem (and indeed the myth itself) also suggests a 'crescendo of emotions'—from languor to complaints to furies—where Ariadne's initial incomprehension, rising grief, and attempted suicide are overturned by the arrival of the enamoured Bacchus.⁸⁶ The happy resolution of the story suggests that this action afforded a more significant catastrophe (the event upon which the resolution of the drama revolves) than we find in Sallé's other works, for Bacchus's courtship of Ariadne would have offered her a change of fortune characteristic of a *catastrophe compliquée*.⁸⁷ Although this last is acknowledged as a poetic device, it works perfectly

⁸³ Sulzer suggests that a good ballet will provide a clear exposition of the protagonists' motives, in 'Ballet', *Encyclopédie, Supplément*, vol. 4 (1778), 284–8: 284.

⁸⁴ See Harris-Warrick and Brown, which includes selected scenarios for ballets performed in Northern Italy (Appendix 2), Vienna's Kärntnertortheater (Appendix 3), Naples's Teatro San Carlo (Appendix 4), and Paris (Appendix 5); see also Chapter 9 in this volume, Harris-Warrick and Marsh, 'Putting Together and Pantomime Ballet'.

⁸⁵ '[Une] action dramatique complète'. Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne*, book 1, vol. 3, 136.

⁸⁶ I am indebted to David Charlton for this interpretation; see his discussion of stage works based on the Ariadne myth in 'Storms, Sacrifices: the "Melodrama Model" in Opera', Chapter 10 in his *French Opera 1730–1830: Meaning and Media* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

⁸⁷ L'abbé Edme-François Mallet, 'Catastrophe, en Poésie', *Encyclopédie*, vol. 2 (1751), 772–3. The change of mood of the *Sultane* from hope to despair in Sallé's action for *L'Europe galante* also marked a

well in this type of entertainment—with the right sort of story-line.⁸⁸ Indeed, Sallé's choice of story was very apt,⁸⁹ for the tale of Ariadne's abandonment lent itself to an innovative treatment of genre, and to an inspired and affecting performance.

Its distinction as Sallé's only *ballet en action* to be considered in this present investigation doubtless accounts for some of the significant features observed in *Bacchus and Ariadne*. The choice of subject was ideal for the newly-evolving genre of the *ballet en action*. Once again, Sallé demonstrated her ability to choose and develop an inspiring scenario, which would have permitted the presentation of a chain of intrigues that climaxed in her mimed lament. This *noeud* or crux was so effective that it moved both writers to comment on the powerful emotions which they identified during its presentation.

The extant sources for Sallé's works suggest that she excelled in devising scenarios where her ability, as a performer, to depict passions and characters were highlighted. Her skill as a creative artist was esteemed by fellow professionals such as Cahusac and Noverre, both of whom acknowledged her ability to design actions which accorded with the exacting aesthetic criteria being articulated in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Sallé's work enabled critics and theatrical professionals to formulate new expectations concerning action, intrigue, character and expression. Her performances in her own creations offered a foundation for Cahusac's and Noverre's novel concepts concerning the way in which dance could function as an expressive agent. Thus a woman born into a family of itinerant fairground performers enabled, through her prodigious talent, a new aesthetic to emerge.

change of fortune, but the way in which this scene functioned is complicated by its close links to the lyrical portion of the drama. A *catastrophe simple* forms part of an intrigue which is merely 'a simple passage from trouble and agitation to tranquillity'; we can see this type of catastrophe in the 'Ballet des Fleurs'.

⁸⁸ As Powell notes (682), Noverre (*Letters*, ed. Beaumont, 21) recognized the particular potential of tragic stories when developing his *ballets en action*.

⁸⁹ We do not actually know whether she chose the story herself, or was responding to a request or commission from a patron. Ariadne also featured in two operas premiered in London during the 1733–34 season: Porpora's *Arianna in Nasso* (King's Theatre) and Handel's *Arianna in Creta* (Lincoln's Inn Fields).