danza e ricerca
Laboratorio di studi, scritture, visioni

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Aspects of Style, Gesture, Form, and Culture in the Music of Nineteenth-century Ballets

Dicembre 2025, pp. 165-186
DOI: https://doi.org/10.60923/issn.2036-1599/23614
Section: Dossier [peer reviewed]

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Abstract

This article outlines some methods and findings from interdisciplinary scholarship of ballet music in the nineteenth-century, from the perspective of music and musicology. The intention is to summon scholarly interest as well as elucidate beyond the small audience of dance and music scholars for whom this work is already important. This essay connects the many individual threads of Ertz's research projects together for the first time, placing this work alongside that of other dance-music scholars (whose valuable work occupies much space in the notes). Select works from Italian, Danish, and French theaters are discussed as examples of European theatrical dance music's gestural style and musical approach, alongside its placement in a wider dance-music history.

Questo articolo delinea alcuni metodi e risultati della ricerca interdisciplinare sulla musica per il balletto del XIX secolo, dal punto di vista della musica e della musicologia. L'intento è di suscitare l'interesse degli studiosi e di chiarire alcuni aspetti al di là della ristretta cerchia di studiosi di danza e musica per i quali questo lavoro è già importante. Questo saggio collega per la prima volta i numerosi filoni della ricerca dell'autrice, affiancando questo lavoro a quello di altri studiosi di musica per danza (il cui prezioso lavoro occupa molto spazio nelle note). Alcune opere teatrali italiane, danesi e francesi vengono discusse come esempi dello stile gestuale e dell'approccio musicale della musica teatrale europea, insieme alla sua collocazione in una più ampia storia della musica per danza.

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Aspects of Style, Gesture, Form, and Culture in the Music of Nineteenth-century Ballets

Introduction

This article outlines some methods and findings from interdisciplinary scholarship of ballet music in the nineteenth-century, from the perspective of music and musicology[1]. The intention is to summon scholarly interest as well as elucidate beyond the small audience of dance and music scholars for whom this work is already important. This essay connects the many individual threads of my research projects together for the first time, alongside that of other dance-music scholars. The goal is to create a more complete picture of the intertwining and connected nature of topics that have traditionally interested music historians and those of interest to dance music scholars[2]. This article is an expanded version of a round table presentation given for the musicological conference *XXVIII Colloquio di Musicologia del «Saggiatore musicale»* in November 2024, as part of a panel on dance topics.

Contemporary musicologists largely agree that our discipline should be interested in an anthropological historiography, inclusive of the many ways people make and engage with music, rather than a focus on "great" composers only. Musicology as a field has expanded its traditional historiographic boundaries (especially in the past several decades) to also include dance music as more than a "side interest". Indeed, dance is intrinsic to the study of music's history. Not only should we include music for dance in a serious way in our scholarship, but musicologists are now engaging with concepts such as embodiment and evidence trails found in oral transmission, both important

1. My sincere gratitude goes to Elena Randi and Elena Cervellati, as well as the conference organizers, for the invitation and generous hospitality. My special thanks to Elena Randi in helping to prepare the Italian translation for the conference presentation.

2. Recently I have begun to compare the Italian ballets that have been my specialty to other regions, theaters, and music. Several other scholars are also moving from individual specific topics to the study of how our work is interconnected. See, for example, Irene Brandenburg – Francesca Falcone – Claudia Jeschke – Bruno Ligore (edited by), *Times of Change. Artistic Perspectives and Cultural Crossings in Nineteenth-Century Dance*, Piretti, Bologna 2022.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.60923/issn.2036-1599/23614

frameworks for musicological study of dance.

The most compelling argument for a musicological framework that fully embraces dance, is that its music was (and still is) ubiquitous in popular culture. The musicologist Lawrence Zbikowski wrote of the emergence of the waltz in the nineteenth century: «there was music to accompany the whirl and press of ballroom dance, music that called forth memories of the whirl and press of ballroom dance, and little else in between»[3]. While the composers of nineteenth century ballet works and ballroom dances alike are largely unknown to today's classical music fans (with the exception of Tchaikovsky's ballets and waltzes by Johann Strauss II), all musicians and audiences of the time engaged with dance music and danced regularly. Indeed, from the perspective of the average nineteenth-century musical consumer, dance figured *more* prominently in their social engagements and lives than the symphonies and string quartets that figure so significantly in the traditional narratives of nineteenth-century music[4]. This is because people at all levels of society danced. Ludwig van Beethoven, upon moving to Vienna, was anxious to find a dancing teacher[5]. The music proliferating from publishing houses, for parlor consumption by the new bourgeois and in the salon, was frequently dance music and often transcribed for piano[6]. The audiences reacted to dance music on a kinesthetic level while also appreciating any intertextual nuance provided by the selection of a particular social (or character) dance, whether it be a signal about class, politics, gender, and so on[7]. The transaction was not one-way, as social dancers tried out some of the moves that they witnessed on the stage. Dance music, thus, must be an important part of any nineteenth-century musical historiography.

Using this historical framing, I will discuss select examples drawn from my research on theatrical dance (ballet), with the goals of demonstrating ballet music's stylistic qualities as they relate to style, gesture, form, context, or meaning. My aim is to show the potential of rich intertextual

3. Lawrence M. Zbikowski, *Music, Dance, and Meaning in the Early Nineteenth Century*, in «Journal of Musicological Research», vol. XXXI, n. 2/3, 2012, p. 147. The waltz is a classic rags-to-riches story of a viral dance moving from the peasants to the palaces of the nobility, causing scandals at first, before becoming eventually associated with high society as it became antiquated. During the nineteenth century, the waltz and other ballroom dances infused all kinds of music that was not actually danced to.

4. Dance music has suffered in historical narratives for many reasons, some of which are explored in: Chantal Stillman Frankenbach, *Disdain for Dance, Disdain for France. Choreophobia in German Musical Modernism*, Ph.D., University of California, Davis 2012.

5. Erica Buurman, *The Viennese Ballroom in the Age of Beethoven*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2022.

6. Just a perusal of Ricordi's publications can help a scholar determine in hindsight the successes of various musical events. Many successful ballets were reduced in their entirety for piano. These and the advertisements for publishers' offerings provide evidence of the ubiquity of dance music in general, and the "hits" from ballets, operas, as well as the music from actual balls.

7. Here I recommend two studies: Eric McKee, *Dance and the Music of Chopin. The Waltz*, in Jonathan D. Bellman – Halina Goldberg (editors), *Chopin and His World*, Princeton University Press, New York 2017, pp. 106-161; Stephanie Schroedter, *Paris qui danse. Bewegungs- und Klangräume einer Großstadt der Moderne*, Königshausen und Neumann, Würzburg 2019.

relationships to all kinds of nineteenth-century topics, such as the literary trend of *fantastique*, politics and nationalism, social issues, exoticism and orientalism, gender, virtuosity, and of course other music of the nineteenth-century (in particular, opera). This essay presents just an overview of ideas and works that are thoroughly discussed elsewhere engaged in this particular field of interdisciplinarian study[8].

Ballet's shared role on the Italian theatrical stage and in the *Risorgimento*

For a specific contextual example of the importance of dance music in musicology, let us consider Italy in the mid-nineteenth century. One of my research interests has been ballet's role in Italian unification[9]. I have noted that scholarship on the composer Giuseppe Verdi, which is ample, misses important context if one ignores the dances and music that shared the stage with Verdi operas. This is true not only from the angle of audience reception, nationalism, politics, social issues, and economics, but also because of the shared ways that Verdi's music and ballet music both embody elements of style, movement, and gesture[10]. While Verdi's choruses have been a target for musicologists proposing theoretical frameworks of *Risorgimento* musical reception, more overt messaging occurred in contemporaneous Italian ballets and operas[11]. This was certainly the case for the ballet

8. In addition to the detailed topical studies cited later, I recommend two more general publications for overviews of ballet music in the nineteenth century: Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Ballet Music*, in *Oxford Bibliographies in Music*, edited by Kate van Orden, Oxford University Press, New York, October 27, 2021, *ad vocem*, online: https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199757824/obo-9780199757824-0300.xml (accessed 11/10/2025); Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Music and Dance Culture of the Nineteenth Century*, in Stephanie Schroedter – Marion Kant (edited by), *A Cultural History of Dance*, forthcoming.

9. See: Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Risorgimento Themes in Italian Ballets of the Nineteenth Century*, in Uwe Schlottermüller – Howard T. Weiner (Herausgegeben von), *Tanz in Italien: Italienischer Tanz in Europa 1300-1900, Für Barbara Sparti (1932-2013) Symposium Für Historischen Tanz, Burg Rothenfels Am Main, 25.-29. Mai 2016, Tagungsband*, Fa-gisis Musik und Tanzedition, Freiburg 2016, pp. 43-56. See also: Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Ballabile and the Italian Ball as Social and Political Discourse of the Risorgimento*, in Uwe Schlottermüller – Howard T. Weiner – Maria Richter (Herausgegeben von), *Der Ball: Geselligkeit – Macht – Politik, 1600-1900: Symposion Für Historischen Tanz: Burg Rothenfels Am Main, 15-19. Juni 2022: Tagungsband*, Fa-gisis Musik-und Tanzedition, Freiburg 2022, pp. 51-65.

10. Mary Ann Smart considers movement and gesture in Italian opera staging. See: Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2004.

11. Among the ample scholarly work concerning Verdi and *Risorgimento*, prominent musicological research includes: Philip Gossett, *Verdi, Ghislanzoni, and "Aida": The Uses of Convention*, in «Critical Inquiry», vol. I, n. 2, Winter 1974, pp. 291-334; Philip Gossett, *The Chorus in Risorgimento Opera*, in «Cambridge Opera Journal», n. 2, 1990, pp. 41-64; Philip Gossett, *Giuseppe Verdi and the Italian Risorgimento*, in «Studia Musicologica – Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae», vol. LII, n. 1/4, March 2011, pp. 241-257; Philip Gossett – Daniela Macchione, *Le «edizioni distrutte» e il significato dei cori operistici nel Risorgimento*, in «Il Saggiatore musicale», vol. XII, n. 2, 2005, pp. 339-387; Roger Parker, *Arpa d'or dei fatidici vati: The Verdian Patriotic Chorus in the 1840s*, Istituto nazionale di studi verdiani, Parma 1997; Mary Ann Smart, *Commentary: A Stroll in the Piazza and a Night at the Opera*, in «The Journal of Interdisciplinary History», vol. XXXVI, n. 4, 2006, pp. 621-627; Mary Ann Smart, *Waiting for Verdi: Italian Opera and Political Opinion, 1815-1848*, University of California

Bianchi e negri (premiered 1853) by Giuseppe Rota with composer Paolo Giorza[12]. The story, based on Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was of American slaves breaking the shackles of their bondage but was a thinly veiled allegory for Italians becoming free of foreign rule. The rhetoric utilized in various libretti support a *Risorgimento* reading, which was reinforced by a musical insertion of the *Marseillaise* for at least one performance[13]. This musical addition[14] stoked public sentiment so much that Austrian police banned it[15]. It went on to have many years of success on Italian stages.

The composer Paolo Giorza (1832-1914) wrote *Risorgimento*-themed operas and ballets as well as dance music and was openly pro-unification (he wrote the *Inno di Guerra* for the revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi in 1866). His dance music was commercially successful and a particularly notable piece in a popular style, the polka/song *Daghela avanti un passo*, became a revolutionary call to arms as powerful as *La Marseillaise*[16]. Apparently, the insertion of *Daghela avanti un passo* into a ballet as a *passo a solo*, again, caused an insurrection at the theater and the suppression of the ballet by

Press, Oakland 2018; Stefano Castelvecchi, *Commentary: Was Verdi a "Revolutionary"?*, in «The Journal of Interdisciplinary History», vol. XXXVI, n. 4, 2006, pp. 615-620; Roberto Illiano (editor), *Viva V.E.R.D.I.: Music from the Risorgimento to the Unification of Italy*, Brepols, Turnhout 2013. For *Risorgimento* and ballet see: Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Risorgimento Themes*, cit.; Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Ballabile*, cit.; Axel Körner, *Uncle Tom on the Ballet Stage: Italy's Barbarous America, 1850-1900*, in «Journal of Modern History», vol. LXXXIII, n. 4, 2011, pp. 721-752. See also: Axel Körner, *Masked Faces. Verdi, Uncle Tom and the Unification of Italy*, in «Journal of Modern Italian Studies», vol. XVIII, n. 2, 2013, pp. 176-189. For *Risorgimento* and the theater, more broadly, see: Raffaella Bianchi, *The Political Role of La Scala during the Risorgimento: Hegemony and Subversion (1814-1848)*, Ph.D., Loughborough University 2010; Carlotta Sorba, *Teatri. L'Italia del melodramma nell'età del Risorgimento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2001; Carlotta Sorba, *To Please the Public: Composers and Audiences in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, in «The Journal of Interdisciplinary History», vol. XXXVI, n. 4, Spring 2006, pp. 595-614; Carlotta Sorba, *National Theater and the Age of Revolution in Italy*, in «Journal of Modern Italian Studies», vol. XVII, n. 4, 2012, pp. 400-413; Jehoash Hirshberg, *Opera in Search of a Just Ruler for a Unified Italy*, Brepols, Turnhout 2017; Axel Körner – Lucy Riall, *Introduction: The New History of Risorgimento Nationalism*, in «Nations and Nationalism», vol. XV, n. 3, 2009, pp. 396-401; Silvana Patriarca – Lucy Riall, *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills 2012.

12. Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Risorgimento Themes*, cit., and Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Ballabile*, cit. Scholar Axel Körner found that the pairing of Verdi's *Un ballo in Maschera*, which is set in Boston, with Rota's *Bianchi e negri*, a *Risorgimento*-themed ballet also set in America, sheds light on Italian perceptions of America and race. Axel Körner, *Uncle Tom on the Ballet Stage*, cit. and Axel Körner, *Masked Faces*, cit.

13. *Ibidem*.

14. Leon Fortis "Doctor Veritas", *Conversazione*, in «L'Illustrazione italiana», n. 2, 1877, pp. 22-23. Excerpt: «Ma quel ballo aveva un altro effetto… Ad un certo punto gli schiavi neri si strappavano i collari e li sollevavano in atto di minaccia verso i loro aguzzini – in quel momento si sentiva fremere nell'orchestra quattro battute della Marsigliese. – Era Rota che le aveva volute. L'azione combinata con la musica produsse l'effetto di un fulmine. Il pubblico scattò in piedi – fa una insurrezione di applausi. – Eravamo ai crepuscoli forieri del 59. – Il successo fu tale che la polizia proibì [*sic*] il ballo per qualche tempo». Fortis fought in the Italian wars for independence in 1849, wrote plays with poorly disguised patriotic messages and in 1857 became the artistic director for La Scala. He went on to found liberal periodicals. This source became known to me through a note in a libretto left by Walter Toscanini which I verified with the sources he cites. This ballet was of great interest to him, and he left reliable notes throughout his and Cia Fornaroli's (his wife's) collections at the New York Public Library. For more information on Toscanini and the collections, see Patrizia Veroli, *Walter Toscanini, Bibliophile and Collector, and the Cia Fornaroli Collection of the New York Public Library*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. XXVIII, n. 3, 2005, pp. 323-362.

15. The *Marseillaise* had long been seen as revolutionary music (rather than specifically French patriotism). See Axel Körner, *Masked Faces*, cit., and *Uncle Tom on the Ballet Stage*, cit.

16. Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Ballabile*, cit. See also: Paolo Giorza, *Daghela avanti un passo. Polka per pianoforte*, Tito di Gio. Ricordi, Milano [undated, but 1859].

Austrian authorities[17]. These episodes happened at the very same theaters who programmed operas of Verdi, Donizetti, and others. For example, the autumn 1853 season at La Scala, when *Bianchi e negri* premiered, featured the following operas by Verdi: *Il Trovatore*, *I Masnadieri*, and *Ernani*, along with three other operas and two other ballets. Giorza's music and activism are just one example among many pointing to theatrical ballet's participation in the politics of the *Risorgimento*[18].

Findings such as these (explored in detail elsewhere)[19] suggest fruitful lines of inquiry for scholars who seek to conceptualize the embodiment of political or other concepts in ballets and dance music, including the musical choices of composers for ballets, the themes presented in their libretti, character roles, dancers' contributions, and public consumption of dance music. Nationalist sentiments are not exclusive to the Italian theaters and had both subtle and overt effects on the entire European theatrical enterprise (and beyond). Specifically, any study of *Risorgimento* politics in the theater should include the full array of theatrical music from the period, and my research on Italian ballets demonstrates the efficacy of this holistic approach. Scholars of Italian opera would do well to investigate dance music, regardless. And this is just one example of the many angles or topics of ballet music study as a benefit to musicological inquiry.

The Intertextuality of the Pastiche Score and Implications for Reception

Italian theatrical ballet was distinct in several ways from other European regions for much of the century[20]. Most generally, Italian ballets were autonomous, staged alongside (rather than within) opera, interspersed between acts. They featured much pantomime – more so than most present-day audiences would ever expect. The plots were often melodramatic rather than fantastic[21]. Italy's unique

17. *Ibidem*.

18. *Ibidem*.

19. See the *Risorgimento* scholarship listed in footnote 11 of this article.

20. As with the changes made to Verdi's operas to accommodate the expectations of French audiences when staged there, imports to Italian theaters were similarly adapted for Italian tastes.

21. A selection of foundational Italian ballet scholarship by others is listed here: Ornella di Tondo, *Archival Sources for the Study of Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Dance in Italy*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. XXXVI, n. 2, 2013, pp. 243-251; Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell, *Theatrical Ballet and Italian Opera*, in Lorenzo Bianconi – Giorgio Pestelli (edited by), *The History of Italian Opera*, vol. V, *Opera on Stage*, translation by Kate Singleton, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2002, pp. 177-308 (I ed. *Storia dell'opera italiana*, vol. V, *La spettacolarità*, EDT, Torino 1988); Ivor Forbes, *L'Italia e il balletto romantico*, in «La Danza italiana», n. 8-9, inverno 1990, pp. 7-25; Claudia Celi, *The Arrival of the Great Wonder of Ballet, or Ballet in Rome from 1845 to 1855*, in Lynn Garafola (edited by), *Rethinking the Sylph. New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet*, University Press of New England [for] Wesleyan University Press, Hanover-London 1997, pp. 165-80; Manuela Jahrmärker, *Themen, Motive Und Bilder Des Romantischen: Zum Italienischen Musiktheater Des 19. Jahrhunderts*, LIT, Münster 2006; Elena Ruffin, *Il ruolo del ballo nelle vicende del Romanticismo a Venezia*, in «La Danza

approach to ballet relates in part to the *coreodrammas* by Salvatore Viganò from the opening decades of the century. One aspect that was similar to the French ballet-pantomime, Danish Romantic Ballet, and many other European theaters of the same era, was the pastiche score, which compiled known music into a collage to illustrate the action. With these ballet scores, we can investigate the intertextual musical-dramatic connections between works[22] as well as the way that musical style creates meaning. This helps us to understand the later topical nature of music newly composed for theatrical purposes. Furthermore, the use of pre-existing music is essential to anyone interested in reception study. These aspects are key to a musicological framework of ballet music analysis.

To illuminate these points, let us consider examples of intertextuality in Viganò's scores, which drew from a broad array of composers and music types, from Beethoven to Rossini, with many less-known pieces also. Selections from Rossini operas were often used in Viganò's ballets. Rossini's famous overture for *La gazza ladra* (1817) was employed during a tense scene between two lovers in the widely successful *La Vestale* (premiered 1818 at La Scala)[23]. Of course this famous overture would go on to be used for many pastiche scores and beyond, but Viganò was an early adopter, eager to capitalize on the appeal and suitability of the overture's animated style. Earlier in this ballet, another number from *La gazza ladra* is featured during a slow and grave group dance (*ballabile*) of the vestal virgins, resembling a religious procession. The aria has a tranquil and somber opening before giving way to string accompaniment with ornamental passages in the woodwinds. The opening plea in the opera – *Oh nume benefico* – relates topically to the vestal virgins' religious ceremony. It is thus a fitting intertext and musically apt, as shown in fig. 1[24]. Was Rossini's opera as a whole referenced for rea-

italiana», n. 8-9, inverno 1990, pp. 27-44; Debra H. Sowell, *A Plurality of Romanticisms: Italian Ballet and the Repertory of Antonio Cortesi and Giovanni Casati*, in «Dance Research Journal», vol. XXXVII, n. 1, 2005, pp. 37-55; José Sasportes – Valentina Bonelli (a cura di), *La danza italiana in Europa nell'Ottocento*, Aracne, Roma 2013.

22. The examinations I have made of Viganò's use of music are interesting in and of themselves, as a matter of historic record of theatrical music in the early nineteenth century, but they also yield a few elements that inform my framework for ballet music analysis. Other scholars who have studied Viganò are: Rossana Dalmonte, *"Une Èxriture corporelle": la musica e la danza*, in Ezio Raimondi (a cura di), *Il sogno del coreodramma: Salvatore Viganò, poeta muto*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1984, pp.145-240; Roberta Albano, *Salvatore Viganò e l'attività al teatro del Fondo di Napoli*, in «Danza e ricerca. Laboratorio di studi, scritture, visioni», vol. X, n. 10, dicembre 2018, pp. 11-36; Donatella Ferrari, *I balletti comici di Salvatore Viganò*, in «La Danza italiana», n. 7, primavera 1989, pp. 79-97; Elizabeth Terzian, *Salvatore Viganò: his ballets at the Teatro La Scala (1811-1821)*, Master of Arts thesis, University of California 1986. Also, see the entire volume José Sasportes – Valentina Bonelli (a cura di), *La danza italiana in Europa nell'Ottocento*, cit. The French pastiche scores are more well-studied. See: Marian Smith, *Borrowings and Original Music: A Dilemma for the Ballet-Pantomime Composer*, in «Dance research. The Journal of the Society for Dance Research», vol. VI, n. 2, 1988, pp. 3-29, online: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1290734 (accessed 11/10/2025); Stephanie Jordan, *The Role of the Ballet Composer at the Paris Opéra: 1820-1850*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. IV, n. 4, 1982, pp. 374-388; Mark Everist, *The Music of Power: Parisian Opera and the Politics of Genre, 1806-1864*, in «Journal of the American Musicological Society», vol. LXVII, n. 3, 2014, pp. 685-734. The nineteenth-century French *comédie-vaudeville* also used *airs connus*. See Richard Sherr, *The Memory Man: Jacques Offenbach, Le Bonhomme Jadis and the Origin of an Air Connu*, in «Nineteenth-Century Music Review», vol. XXI, n. 3, 2024, pp. 460-491; Clair Rowden, *Opera and Parody in Paris, 1860-1900*, Brepols, Turnhout 2020.

23. See: Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Revisiting Viganò's "La Vestale" with the Manuscript Musical Score*, in José Sasportes – Patrizia Veroli (a cura di), *Ritorno a Viganò*, Aracne, Canterano 2017, pp. 253-284.

24. Imagine this scene with the libretto in hand while listening to one of the numerous recordings made of this terzetto.

sons beyond its recent fame and accessibility? The plot parallels between the opera and ballet are too obvious to ignore: both involve a young female protagonist falsely or unjustly accused and sentenced to death. Of course, one is a comedy and the other is a tragedy and their endings differ[25].

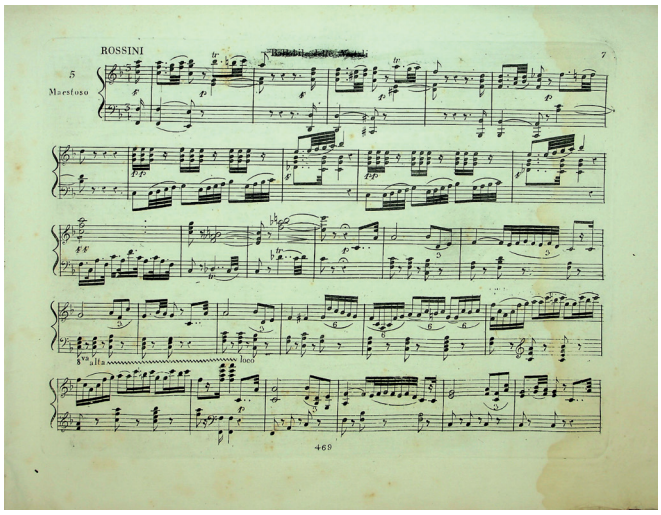

Figure 1. Pastiche score piano reduction for *La Vestale*, Rossini's "O nume benefico". Salvatore Viganò, *La Vestale, gran ballo tragico inventato […] dal Sigr. Salvatore Vigano. Ridotto per cembalo solo dall' editore, etc. [A pasticcio]*, Gio. Ricordi, Milano 1818, p. 7, from the Ricasoli Collection at the Dwight Anderson Music Library, University of Louisville[26].

Pragmatically, pastiches scores employed music that was suitable and often known to the audience – not always in topical relation. Yet even the choices that did not create an obvious intertext are of interest to musicologists because they relate to the reception of musical works and their suitability for dance. For example, in a lengthy group dance for Act I of Viganò's ballet *Giovanna d'Arco* (1821), it might have seemed old-fashioned that he chose music from Giovanni Paisiello's 1788 opera *La Molinara*[27] unless we note that the opera had been successfully restaged in Vienna where Viganò had worked previous to La Scala, and that Beethoven had selected the aria *Quant'è più bello* for a variation set[28]. Viganò, who had worked with Beethoven in Vienna[29], uses the same aria to create a

25. Gaspare Spontini's opera *La Vestale* (1807) was also a source for musical quotation, but it was likely less familiar to the audience than the Rossini selections, as it had premiered at the Paris Opéra.

26. Note that the image from this particular score, shows the title *Ballabile delle Vestali* crossed out by a user.

27. Paisiello's *La Molinara* premiered in Naples, Teatro dei Fiorentini, autumn 1788 and was thereafter widely successful in Europe and especially in Vienna where it played from 1790 to 1809.

28. Beethoven also composed a set of variations on the duet *Nel cor più non mi sento* from Paisiello's opera. The aria *Quant' è più bello* was not actually by Paisiello and was likely heard by Beethoven in 1795. Cf. Gordana Lazarevich, *La Molinara*, in «Grove Music Online», *ad vocem*, 2002, online: https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O009564 (accessed 12/10/2024).

29. Beethoven and Viganò collaborated for the ballet *The Creatures of Prometheus* in 1801.

similar variation set by an unnamed arranger[30]. Viganò had close involvement with music adaptation (notably, he was a skilled musician). *Giovanna d'Arco*, which remained in the ballet repertory well after Viganò's death, furthered the life of an *aria*, likely via Beethoven, that was several decades old. This also demonstrates the shifting of music to new venues and purposes, a musical recycling that is interesting in and of itself.

These examples demonstrate both early adoption and staying power of music when maintained in the "repertoire world" of professional musicians, amateurs, theaters, and private spaces. A reviewer of Viganò's *Giovanna d'Arco* had this to say: «In the music one can easily recognize some melodies by Paesiello [*sic*], Mozart, Weigl, Generali, Rossini and other masters, and the choice seems to me a happy one»[31]. Indeed this particular reviewer preferred that the arrangers not change the music too much, continuing, «except that sometimes they are barely hinted at, and those that replace them are too far from the original for a fine ear to be able to be satisfied by them»[32].

The pastiche score was appreciated for what it was: for its known tunes and how it functioned in the *coreodramma* (and beyond, in many European ballets of the period). Exploring these scores on their own terms helps us envision a lively and dynamic musical ecosystem of recycling music that was well-known or obscure[33]. Certainly, reception studies for famous composers such as Rossini, Beethoven, and others should make note of the interplay of theatrical, concert, salon, and domestic music-making with ballet as an essential part of the reception network. Pastiche scores were common in European theaters during the first two decades of the century, and rather than passing these off as "unoriginal derivative" works, scholars should study these important artifacts of musical intertext, meaning, and reception with an open mind.

30. In the case of *Giovanna d'Arco* and *La Molinara* there appears no obvious intertext. One is a historic *coreodramma* and the other a comedic opera. Of course, the music must be suitable for dancing and attractive to the ear.

31. Francesco Pezzi, *Lo Spettatore Lombardo: o Sia Miscellanea Scelta d'Articoli di Letteratura, di Filosofia*, Pei tipi di Giovanni Pirotta, Milano 1823, vol. V (*Classe II*, *Teatri*), pp. 46-47. The author describes the 1820-1821 theatrical offerings in detail. In Italian: «Nella musica si ravvisano facilmente alcune melodie di Paesiello, di Mozart, di Weigl, di Generali, di Rossini e d' altri maestri, e la scelta me ne sembra felice».

32. Francesco Pezzi, *Lo Spettatore Lombardo*, cit., vol. V, (*Classe II*, *Teatri*), p. 46. In Italian: «Se non che talvolta sono appena accennate, e quelle che vi suppliscono stanno a troppa distanza dalle prime, perché un fino orecchio se ne acqueti».

33. More scholars have researched French pastiche scores (cf. footnote 22 of this article) and including Marian Smith, *Borrowings and Original Music*, cit.; Stephanie Jordan, *The Role of the Ballet Composer at the Paris Opéra*, cit.; Mark Everist, *The Music of Power*, cit.; Richard Sherr, *The Memory Man: Jacques Offenbach*, cit.; Clair Rowden, *Opera and Parody in Paris*, cit. Everist demonstrates the network and power relations of Parisian theaters of the period.

Style: shifts from quotation to topical music, pastiche to original scores

In the 1820s and 1830s, the theatrical world saw the rise of one of the most influential dancers of the century, Marie Taglioni[34]. While she and others endeavored to dance *en pointe*, newly installed gas lighting and fantastic topics revolutionized ballets in Paris and beyond (as well-captured in Elena Cervellati's scholarship and others)[35]. Ballet's music underwent changes as well, moving from the intertextual pastiche score to more original music – or so it seemed. Composers kept the notion of internal coherence with signifying music or mottos that accompanied various characters and topics, a practice still kept today in film scores[36]. In many cases, composers may even have purposefully imitated the style of works with similar topics, reinforcing meanings in much the same way as the direct quotations of the pastiche score.

Sometimes the shift to a completely newly composed score was pragmatic: Filippo Taglioni, working with the composer Peter Josef Lindpaintner on the ballet *Danina, oder: Joko, der brasilianische Affe* for Stuttgart in 1826 (and beyond), arrived at a newly composed score out of frustration at the inadequacy of the thirty-some odd scores brought in to create the pastiche[37]. August Bournonville, unable to use the Parisian music for his 1836 staging of *La Sylphide*, hired the Danish composer Herman Severin Løvenskiold to write a completely new score[38]. In Paris, meanwhile, the shift can be traced through Ferdinand Hérold's 1827 ballet-pantomime *La Somnambule* and Schneitzhoeffer's score to *La Sylphide* (1832) alongside the weakening of legal obligations to include known tunes[39].

In both of these French examples the composers drafted scores with more quoted materials

34. Marie Taglioni, *Souvenirs. Le Manuscrit inédit de la grande danseuse romantique*, édition établie, présentée et annotée par Bruno Ligore, Gremese, Saint-Denis-sur-Sarthon 2017.

35. Elena Cervellati, *Incorporare il fantastico: Marie Taglioni*, Bulzoni, Roma 2013. See also Joellen Meglin's three-part-study on the *fantastique* in France: Joellen A. Meglin, *Behind the Veil of Translucence: An Intertextual Reading of the "Ballet Fantastique" in France, 1831-1841. Part One. Ancestors of the Sylphide in the Conte Fantastique*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol XXVII, n. 1, 2004, pp. 67-129; *Part Two: The Body Dismembered, Diseased, and Damned: The "Conte Brun"*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. XXVII, n. 3, 2004, pp. 313-371; *Part Three: Resurrection, Sensuality, and the Palpable Presence of the Past in Théophile Gautier's Fantastic*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. XXVIII, n. 1, 2005, pp. 67-142.

36. Scholars who first researched musical borrowing in the French pastiche scores for ballets include Marian Smith and Stephanie Jordan: Marian Smith, *Borrowings and Original Music*, cit., Stephanie Jordan, *The Role of the Ballet Composer at the Paris Opéra*, cit.

37. See Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Music in the Ballets of Filippo Taglioni*, in Bruno Ligore (a cura di), *Filippo Taglioni: Padre del Ballo Romantico*, Aracne, Canterano 2023, pp. 307-342.

38. Original scores were already the norm for the Royal Danish Ballet under previous choreographer Vincenzo Galeotti who partnered with Antonius Schall for his lengthy career. See Knud Arne Jürgensen, *The Bournonville Heritage: A Choreographic Record, 1829-1875: Piano Scores*, Dance Books, London 1991.

39. In addition to Stephanie Jordan, *The Role of the Ballet Composer at the Paris Opéra*, cit. and Marian Smith, *Borrowings and Original Music*, cit., see also Sarah Hibberd, *"Dormez Donc, Mes Chers Amours": Hérold's "La Somnambule" (1827) and Dream Phenomena on the Parisian Lyric Stage*, in «Cambridge Opera Journal», vol. XVI, n. 2, 2004, pp. 107-132.

before moving towards more newly composed music. In keeping with the tradition of the pastiche score, Schneitzhoeffer borrowed (and reused) a known theme in the French *La Sylphide* for Madge the witch. In fact, this music originally came from the pastiche score for Viganò's *Il Noce di Benevento* (the number is by Franz Xaver Süssmayr)[40]. It was then popularized by Nicolò Paganini's virtuosic variations for solo violin and piano/orchestra before being brought back to the theater in a new ballet in Paris. The theme appears throughout the ballet at appearances of Madge in various iterations, acting to identify the character or topic, rather than as an isolated number in the score. While originating with the pastiche score approach, this music becomes effective even without the knowledge of its source. It is topical and the style is updated from Süssmayr's cheery dance, via Paganini, to be more sinister. It matches the mid-century musical approach to the *fantastique* and is reused as a motto, adapting to the dramatic situations of the ballet that involve Madge, the witch.

The Parisian fascination with *fantastique* fueled the musical-stylistic topic of witches, devils, trolls, and elves[41]. Schneitzhoeffer's borrowed witch theme fits into this category, as do the dances of the witches' Sabbath in *La Sylphide*, the undead nuns in Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* of 1831[42], and in Berlioz's programmatic *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830). Outside of Paris, there are countless more examples that could be called upon. In all of these instances, a particular sound quality and orchestration is employed, usually in minor, with dissonant harmonies, often featuring bassoons, *sforzandi*, piercing motives, rarified timbres from the orchestra, imitations of cackling or screeching, storms and wind, and so forth. To the modern ear, these are stereotypical sounds, but in the middle decades of the nineteenth-century, they were special and evocative. Audiences were primed to envision the theatrical and even balletic representations even if attending concerts of program music[43].

Outside of Paris, this topical music appears, of course, in the Danish version of *La Sylphide* (1836) but also for the trolls in Bournonville's *Et Folkesagn* (1854, music by Niels Wilhelm Gade and Johan Peter Emilius Hartmann), among many others. In Italy, the consistent use of allegorical characters, *rather* than the sylph or willi, is a distinct national feature but the musical style for these

40. Schneitzhoeffer's score to *La Sylphide* is an excellent example of a hybrid since it still includes some known music – such as the Witches' Dance *Le Streghe* – but treats it as a motto for Madge. For a thorough accounting of this ballet's music see: Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Schneitzhoeffer's Music for "La Sylphide"* and *Comparison of Three Manuscript Scores for "La Sylphide"*, in Marian Smith (edited by), *"La Sylphide" Paris 1832 and Beyond*, Dance Books, Alton 2012, pp. 57-90 and 337-347.

41. Cf. *Parts One, Two and Three* of Joellen A. Meglin*, Behind the Veil of Translucence*, cit.

42. For more on *Robert le Diable* and dance see: Ann Hutchinson Guest – Knud Arne Jürgensen, *"Robert le Diable". The Ballet of the Nuns. Labanotation and Performance Notes, ballet by Filippo Taglioni, notated by August Bournonville, music by Giacomo Meyerbeer*, Noverre Press, Binsted 2016; Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, *Meyerbeer and Ballet Music of the Nineteenth Century: Some Issues of Influence with Reference to "Robert le Diable"*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. XXI, n. 3, 1998, pp. 389-410; Gunhild Oberzaucher-Schüller – Hans Moeller, *Meyerbeer und der Tanz*, Ricordi University Press, Feldkirchen bei München Paderborn 1998.

43. For Italian adoption of this topic for Italian ballets see Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Scoring the ballo fantastico*, cit. See also Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Filippo Taglioni's Ballet Music*, cit.

characters matched that of sylphs and willis: ethereal floating violins, harp arpeggios, and fluttering flutes accompany the allegorical figures in *Bianchi e negri* and *Excelsior* (1881) as if they were elves or sylphs. In other words, topical music helps us understand characters and situations in ways that libretto study may not elucidate.

Looking more closely at Bournonville's *Et Folkesagn* (fig. 2) we can see not only another perfect example of the witch-devil-troll musical topic (here, for trolls, by Hartmann) but also further loose connections to topical music for enchantment, more generally, in Niels Gade's contributions (fig. 3)[44]. Here it is important to know the ballet's tale, which is of frustrations of love between seemingly bad matches: Junker falls for a troll woman Hilda, instead of his fiancé Birthe, until it is revealed that Hilda is human and Birthe is actually a troll. The entanglements are resolved amicably with more than one marriage union, and the ballet ends in a mid-summer celebration[45]. If this story reminds of a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Gade and Bournonville thought similarly. As is well known by scholars, Bournonville was a skilled musician, and worked closely with leading Danish composers in creating new ballets during his long career[46]. Indeed, Gade strongly imitates his friend and mentor Felix Mendelssohn's music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1826), creating a loose intertextual asso-

44. These points are made more generally in a section on this ballet in the forthcoming chapter, Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Music and Dance Culture of the Nineteenth Century*, cit.

45. More specifics about this story: in Act I the protagonist Junker Ove ignores his fiancé Birthe at dinner. He stays behind and meets Hilda (a changeling, they fall in love) but is then captured by elf maidens at the behest of a troll woman. In Act II Hilda is with her troll community in an underground hall. She is supposed to become engaged to an arranged suitor but escapes in the middle of the party. In Act III Hilda and Viderik (a dwarf and one of her suitors) emerge into the human world of the village. Junker arrives on this scene, winning over Hilda from Viderik. Hilda is then discovered as a good human and Birthe is revealed as a troll woman.

46. For detailed studies of Bournonville and his ballet music, look to the following scholars: Eric Aschengreen, Knud Arne Jürgensen, Particia McAndrew, Ole Nørlyng, and Nils Schiørring. Specific studies include: Erik Aschengreen – Ole Nørlyng, *Balletbogen*, Gyldendal, Copenhagen 1982; Erik Aschengreen – Ole Nørlyng, *"La Sylphide": The Ballet, the Music, the Composer*, Chandos, London 1986; Erik Aschengreen – Ole Nørlyng, *"Et Folkesagn": Ballet af A. Bournonville, Musiken af N. W. Gade og J. P. E. Hartmann*, Det Kongelige Teater og kapel, Copenhagen 1984; Knud Arne Jürgensen, *The Bournonville Heritage: A Choreographic Record, 1829-1875: Piano Scores*, cit.; Nils Schiørring, *Bournonville and the Music to His Ballets*, in Institute for Theatre Research (edited by), *Theatre Research Studies*, Institute for Theatre Research University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen 1972, vol. II, pp. 84-98. Patricia McAndrew began a multipart series of published translated Bournonville scenarios in «Dance Chronicle». See Patricia McAndrew, *The Ballet Poems of August Bournonville: The Complete Scenarios. Part One*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. III, n. 2, 1979, pp. 165-219; *Part Two*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. III, n. 3, 1979, pp. 285-324; *Part Three*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. III, n. 4, 1979, pp. 435-475; *Part Four*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. IV, n. 1, 1980, pp. 46-75; *Part Five*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. IV, n. 2, 1980, pp. 155-193; *Part Six*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. IV, n. 3, 1980, pp. 297-322; *Part Seven*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. IV, n. 4, 1980, pp. 402-451; *Part Eight*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. V, n. 1, 1981, pp. 50-97; *Part Nine*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. V, n. 2, 1981, pp. 213-230; *Appendix One*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. V, n. 4, 1982, pp. 438-460; *Appendix Two*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. VI, n. 1, 1983, pp. 52-78. See also Rebecca Schwartz-Bishir, *Musical Expression in the Bournonville-Løvenskjold "La Sylphide" Variation*, in Melanie Bales – Karen Eliot (edited by), *Dance on Its Own Terms: Histories and Methodologies*, Oxford University Press, New York 2013, pp. 341-362.

ciation between his ballet score and Mendelssohn's well-known music for the Shakespearean drama[47].

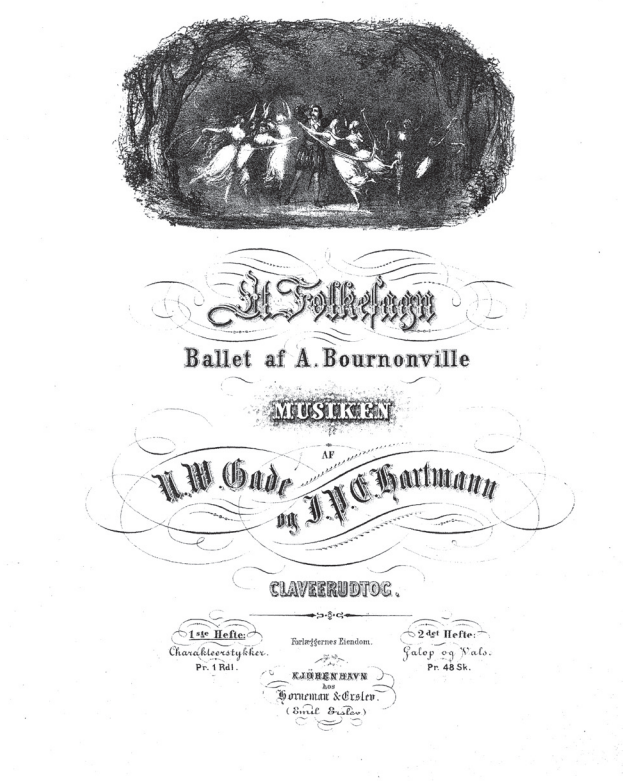

Figure 2. *Et Folkesagn* (1854) vignette from the piano score: Niels W. Gade – Johan Peter Emilius Hartmann, *Et Folkesagn: ballet*, Horneman & Erslev, Kjøbenhavn [undated, but 1896]. The image and score are public domain, available on International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP), online: https://imslp.org/wiki/Et_Folkesagn_(Gade,_Niels) and Wikimedia Commons, online: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Folk_tale.jpg (accessed 8/11/2025).

Thus, *Et Folkesagn* features music tinged with folk flavor alongside that in the orchestral style of Germanic composers. As for the topic of trolls and elves, the music is typified by a minor key entrance in the lower orchestral registers, bassoons, an infectious rhythmic motive iterated by staccato strings, and punctuated by woodwinds. As Junker enters the world of supernatural beings, the troll's rhythmic motive establishes the soundscape. It will reappear in later parts, just as with Madge the witch in the French *La Sylphide* and, more broadly, the motivic development techniques of many nineteenth-century composers outside of the theater[48]. Rather than an exact quotation, the score more broadly demonstrates the loose intertextual stylistic associations that are involved in mid-century ballet scores

47. Mendelssohn wrote the famous overture in 1826 and further incidental music later in his career. His music was well-known by the time *Et Folkesagn* was scored by Hartmann and Gade.

48. Modern audio and video recordings of *Et Folkesagn* provide an excellent rendition of this scene.

as ballet composers sought, still, to draw on known styles or known music. This occurs in Italy also with the ballet *Faust* (choreography by Antonio Cortesi in 1849 with music by Luigi Maria Viviani)[49]. Viviani overtly imitates Verdi's opening witch scene from *Macbeth* (1847). Likely, there are many more types of loose connections waiting to be discovered in ballet scores of the period.

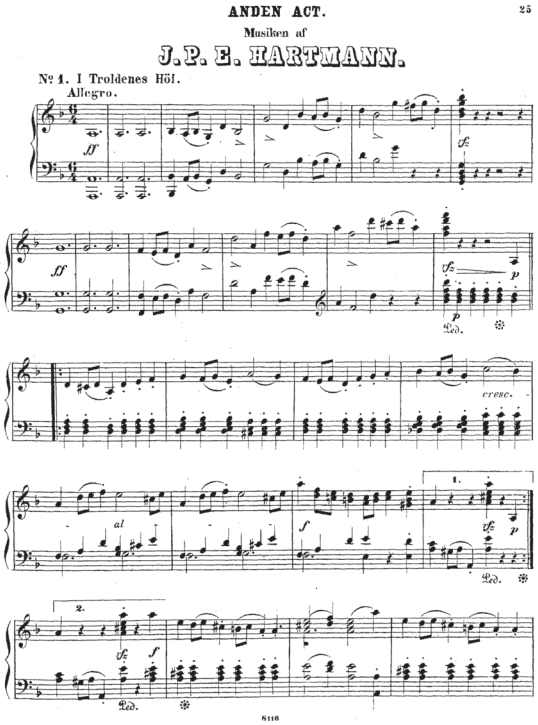

Figure 3. Act II of *Et Folkesagn*, music as troll archetype: Johan Peter Emilius Hartmann – Neils Gade, *Et Folkesagn*, Wilhelm Hansen Edition, Copenhagen [undated, but ca. 1885], p. 25. The image and score are public domain, available on International Music Score Library Project (IMSLP), online: https://imslp.org/wiki/Et_Folkesagn_(Gade,_Niels) (accessed 8/11/2025).

Thus, I propose that we theorize an evolution from the pastiche or direct quotation to more loose imitation alongside the development of signifying, topical, or motto music (rather than the simple emergence of a new, original scoring technique for ballets). This transition began in the 1830s, well before Richard Wagner developed his *leitmotif* technique, which signifies in much the same way. In other words, as we see ballet music scores enter into the realm of more newly-composed work, they actually retained methods of recurring motifs, gestural vocabulary for pantomime, and strongly topical nature (as demonstrated by the witch and troll music discussed here). The nature of inter-

49. Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Scoring the Ballo Fantastico*, part II, cit.

textuality has changed from borrowing and quotation to sibling resemblance among musical-stylistic topics, but the implications for musicologists to study reception and intertextuality remain[50]. Famous works such as Mendelssohn's overture, Berlioz's symphony, and Verdi's opera are then part of a connected ecosystem of stylistic overlap when we consider the topical music present in the ballets that were an essential part of that ecosystem (especially from the audience's point of view).

The ubiquity of national, social, and character dance music

The mid-century witnessed a noticeable rise in the use of national dances anywhere and everywhere, from salons to ballrooms to the stage[51]. Across Europe, national dances were an essential ingredient to ballet and almost any libretto sought ways to justify them. This facet has been established by dance and music scholars alike[52] and is confirmed in my study of numerous Italian ballet scores or libretti, from Viganò to Marenco[53]. We can see this in every theater, especially as the libretti and published sheet music listed the group dances (or *ballabile*) as a selling point. It is a trend that encompassed all of theatrical dance in Europe, with little exception. Musicology and dance scholars alike have been able to explore correlating aspects of gesture or choreography in national dance, partly because these have the strongest embodied traditions both as folk dances and in their stylized balletic versions[54].

From the angle of reception, these dances also flourished in sheet music sales and associated imagery. Searching for any of the top dancers, one will often find images of them specializing in a

50. Relatedly, Marian Smith has investigated correlations between ballet and opera scene types. See Marian Smith, *Ballet at the Opéra: Frequency of Performance, Scene Types Shared with Opera*, in Michel Noiray – Solveig Serre (sous la direction de), *Le Répertoire de l'Opéra de Paris (1671-2009). Analyse et Interprétation*, Publications de l'École nationale des chartes, Paris 2010, pp. 321-336.

51. An early example, pre-Bournonville, of Norwegian folk dance is in Anne Margrete Fiskvik – Egil Bakka, *Vincenzo Galeotti's Norwegian springdance: stereotype or fantasy?*, in Uwe Schlottermüller – Howard T. Weiner – Maria Richter (Herausgegeben von), *Vom Schäferidyll zur Revolution: Europäische Tanzkultur im 18. Jahrhundert; 2. Rothenfelser Tanzsymposion, 21-25 Mai 2008; Tagungsband*, Fa-gisis Musik- und Tanzedition, Freiburg im Breisgau 2008, pp. 53-70. Ornella di Tondo has reconstructed ballroom dances from revolutionary Milan. See Ornella Di Tondo, *Brevi note sulla riproposta dei ballabili del carnevale ottocentesco a Milano*, in «Recherches en danse», n. 5, 2016, pp. 1-13.

52. For example, see Lisa C. Arkin – Marian E. Smith, *National Dance and the Romantic Ballet*, in Lynn Garafola (edited by), *Rethinking the Sylph. New Perspectives on the Romantic Ballet*, cit., pp. 11-68.

53. Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Ballabile*, cit.

54. McKee asserts that the swirling motives in waltzes correlate to the circles made by the couple. Cf. Eric McKee, *Dance and the Music of Chopin: The Waltz*, in Halina Goldberg (edited by), *The Age of Chopin: Interdisciplinary Inquiries*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2004, pp. 106-126. See also Maribeth Clark, *The Quadrille as Embodied Musical Experience in 19th-Century Paris*, in «The Journal of Musicology», vol. XIX, n. 3, 2002, pp. 503-526.

national dance – Fanny Elssler's Cachuca[55], Marie Taglioni's mazurka from *La Gitana*[56], Sofia Fuoco's Tarantella[57]. Cultural appropriation and exoticism were rampant and audiences enjoyed the stylized versions of professionals and participated themselves, with lively interchange between. The wider point here and at the start of this essay is that musicological narratives of the nineteenth century that ignore or sideline dance are blind to the impact and reach of its music. Particularly important in my view, is the response of nineteenth-century populations, who experienced the embodied, kinesthetic enjoyment of theatrical dance, but who also understood any implicit cues it embedded (such as international relations, gender, or class).

In Denmark, Bournonville's ballets capitalized on Danish nationalism alongside a wide array of national dances from elsewhere. Character and national dances were profuse and wide-ranging, from the halling to the seguidilla, to the ubiquitous waltzes, polonaises, and galops. These served to reinforce what was local and what was foreign. For example, Bournonville's ballet *Napoli* (1842) captures Southern Italy and exploits the internationally "viral" tarantella. Likewise, *La Ventana* (1854) does the same for Spanish locale and dance types, participating in the European fascination with Spain[58]. While *Et Folkesagn*'s ballet score is imbued with the Danish folk elements related to the ballet's narrative it also features characteristic dances such as polkas, polonaises, galops, and even a bolero (perhaps used to signify an exotic otherness of the character who dances it, as a subtle cue that she does not belong)[59].

In Italy, *Bianchi e negri* and *Excelsior* exemplify the Italian use of national dances in a format that included allegorical *tableau*, themes of struggle and progress, and a potpourri of national and character dances, alongside ample action and mime scenes[60]. In fact, *Excelsior*'s vivid musical

55. Imagery is viewable here: Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library, *La cachucha as danced by Madlle. Fanny Elssler*, New York Public Library Digital Collections, online: https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/ec30fd90-98de-0131-12cf-58d385a7b928 (accessed 16/6/2025).

56. Imagery and piano sheet music are here: Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library, *La mazurka danced in "La Gitana", by Madame Taglioni*, New York Public Library Digital Collections, online: https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/b76949e0-b1a1-0133-9fd3-00505686a51c (accessed 16/6/2025).

57. Image is viewable here: Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library, *Sofia Fuoco nella Tarantella*, New York Public Library Digital Collections, online: https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-0c1e-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 (accessed 16/6/2025).

58. An excellent analysis of the mania of all things Spanish – Hispanomania – is found here: Claudia Jeschke – Gabi Vettermann – Nicole Haitzinger, *Les Choses Espagnoles: Research into the Hispanomania of 19th Century Dance*, Epodium, München 2009, pp. 37-57.

59. Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Music and Dance Culture of the Nineteenth Century*, cit.

60. *Ibidem*. *Excelsior* has received much scholarly attention, in part because so much archival material is available, including detailed scores and rehearsal notes from its export to England and France and a filmed version has been available from the La Scala ballet and orchestra since 2002. See Concetta Lo Iacono, *Manzotti & Marenco: il diritto di due Autori*, in «Nuova rivista musicale italiana», n. 3, luglio/settembre 1987, pp. 421-446. See also: Flavia Pappacena, *Analysis and Reconstruction of the Pas De Deux in the Third Scene of Luigi Manzotti's Gran Ballo "Excelsior" (1881)*, in Michael Malkiewicz – Jörg Rothkamm (Herausgegeben von), *Die Beziehung von Musik dnd Choreographie im Ballett Buch*, Vorwerk 8, Berlin 2007, pp. 171-186; Flavia Pappacena (a cura di), *"Excelsior". Documenti e saggi*, Di Giacomo, Roma 1998; Gavin Williams, *"Excelsior" as Mass Ornament: The Reproduction of Gesture*, in David Trippett – Benjamin Walton (edited by), *Nineteenth-*

depictions, allegory, and grandiose action can be traced to ballets like *Bianchi e negri*, and even the earlier *Giovanna d'Arco*. The collective action of the *corps de ballet* achieves a similar effect of embodiment of national sentiment, brought forth in a collective action of synchronized dance usually occurring as the ultimate scene of each act[61].

Not only were national, folk, or character dances a selling point, they could also be signals of status, including class, politics, or gender. A group of dances at the open of *Et Folkesagn* show how musical features illustrate social groups: the *bondedans* (peasant dance) and other numbers evoke village life with open fifths and fiddle tunes but with sparkling and vibrant orchestral writing. This is, again, akin to the villagers in *La Sylphide* who dance Scottish country dances, or Giselle, who is German and thus dances a waltz, and so on. These "peasant" dances all make an obvious contrast to the elegant minuet of the nobility, spooky music of witches and trolls, or ethereal music of enchanted winged creatures. But importantly, this music also marks class distinctions of the characters. This is a well-recognized scoring technique in operas of the nineteenth century, but it is especially important for ballet where the only cues outside of the music for a modern scholar might come from the libretto (because much choreography and staging have been lost). Modern ears might not hear the "ethnicity" or class distinctions (or even gender) in a musical selection the same way a historic audience would[62]. These cues, specific to theatrical music and especially to ballet, are another key to our understanding of music's signifying power of music to nineteenth-century audiences.

A final example of this type of musical characterization relating to class or identity appears later in *Et Folkesagn*, when Birthe (actually a troll) struggles to "pass" as a human, and it is revealed that she is a troll. This music is also gestural, as it accompanies a pantomimed scene. The music guides us, beginning with a style befitting her elegance, then subtly hinting to the truth, vacillating between that of a noble woman and that of an erratic troll woman. Birthe bullies her servants as she loses control and soon reveals her true nature (as a troll). This scene is also a great example of the formal-gestural

Century Opera and the Scientific Imagination, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2019, pp. 251-268.

61. Mary Ann Smart and Marian Smith are exemplars of scholars who address the gestural elements in theatrical music. Smart explored how Verdi's (and others') operas incorporate musical gesture aligned with stage direction in a purposeful way. Smart shows also how Verdi's approach evolved as he embraced realism. She also finds intertexts between Viganò and Rossini, similar to my approach in the opening of this essay. This facet of theatrical music is obvious to the dance scholar who has surveyed the ample evidence of pantomime-music's gestural style, but much remains to be explored in the crossbreeding between opera and dance siblings. Cf. Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera*, cit. Marian Smith's *Ballet and Opera in the Age of "Giselle"* is another notable study: Marian E. Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of "Giselle"*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2000. These studies are a major basis for my framework of ballet music study.

62. Marian Smith discovered that the Willis, who are now all uniformly outfitted in white tutus, were at one point supposed to be of different nations, with costuming to match. Their ethnicity is hidden in the music of act II. Cf. Marian Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of "Giselle"*, cit.; Doug Fullington – Marian Smith, *Five Ballets from Paris and St. Petersburg: "Giselle", "Paquita", "Le Corsaire", "La Bayadère", "Raymonda"*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2024; Ralph P. Locke, *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009.

approach to music in mid-century ballet action scenes more generally: music enfolds in a seamless way, each new snippet and idea transitioning to the next, whether it be the regular-metered dance music or the erratic shifts of style, tempo, and content which accompanied action and pantomime[63].

Form and gesture

The form (large scale organization of acts, numbers, scenes) and gesture (micro-level musical ideas that might embody choreography) of ballet music works on a continuum similar to opera's organization of recitatives, arias, ensembles, and choruses. The music ranges from highly illustrative pantomime to abstract dances (which may have little justification in the narrative but are fully expected and appreciated for their aesthetics and technical prowess). These stylistic distinctions are musically obvious to any dance music scholar and help us investigate the form of danced works. These aspects have been studied extensively for the ballets for which the documentation allows in-depth research but not for a critical mass of works to the same extent as other genres of interest to musicologists. There are several key areas of intersection with traditional topics in musicology. Avenues of intersection for musicologists include semiotics and correlations with opera staging, to name a few. Mary Ann Smart, a scholar who has paid attention to ballet in her studies of Italian opera, quotes the famous stage manager Louis Véron, who called for opera's «dramatic action to be understood by the eyes alone, as can the action of ballet». Part of ballet's visual power, of course, is music's ability to make dramatic action clear. We have no excuse to deny the evidence of embodiment in ballet music, and of course, further explore musical connections and relations between opera and ballet[64].

When approaching nineteenth-century ballets, readers and scholars should be aware that many contemporary versions of these works are relatively unreliable as historic reconstructions for a few reasons: many cuts and/or additions are made to the original scores and libretti, the ballets often include far less of pantomime, and incorporate later "classical" approaches to dance technique and format. Rather than viewing videos or live performances, a musicologist or dance scholar must consult full scores, rehearsal scores (*violin répétiteurs*), and piano reductions of full ballets for music's historic role. With fewer recordings of complete ballets available, much of the music must be imagined or tried from the piano reductions. Indeed, this very approach brings a scholar closer to

63. This is captured quite well in a recent video recording of the Royal Danish Ballet. The transition to the next scene, which also shows the gestural qualities of the scoring, vividly painting the fluttering of elven wings, and the swirling patterns as they intoxicate Junker Ove. Formally, this scene ends the act in typical style with a large and sometimes lengthy group dance.

64. Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera*, cit., pp. 132-162, and footnote 30, where Smart cites Véron tracing the quote to the scholarly work of Anselm Gerhard.

the nineteenth-century secondary market for theatrical music: the piano in the home. Finally, since the full-length ballet was rarely choreographically notated in its entirety, dance scholars have had to rely on annotated musical scores, libretti, staging manuals, and many other sources, including the passed-down oral traditions of dancers[65]. Musicologists who understand dance history and scholarship are an excellent asset when it comes to historic reconstruction.

It is here that formal and gestural aspects of the scores are revealing. I have already mentioned scenes where topical music is essential, so that it may be juxtaposed against other types in quick succession to illustrate action and pantomime. We also know that choreographic gestures of national dances are embodied in music: the displaced accents of the mazurka, the swirl in the waltz, the dancer's counting and phrasing (which are different from musical scoring of time signatures and musicians' counting schemes)[66] can all be found in the national and folk-dance music. Here we will entertain just a few more, brief revelations of ballet music's gestural or formal qualities (for a full discussion of structural principles of full ballets, look to the scholarly work on ballets such as *La Sylphide*, *Giselle*, many of Bournonville's ballets, and others, especially considering scholarly reconstructions). An important aspect revealed in many scores is worth reiterating here: the prevalence of pantomime and its ratio to "pure dance" was much higher in most nineteenth century ballets, especially those in Italy.

One of the first techniques of the ballet composer, unique to the genre, was rendering dialogue through orchestration. A solo instrument or instrument group of the orchestra often represented the characters seen on stage as they "speak". This happened across the continent and the century and was also a way to provide orchestral players with virtuosic solos, at times. In Italy, one reviewer complained of the practice, asserting that the solo trombone used for the voice of the dark knight in Viganò's *Giovanna d'Arco* cannot possibly express the dialogue taken from Schiller and included in the libretto:

> The knight, to express his feelings, always uses the sole instrument of a trombone, and the instrument of Professor Bernardi, who plays this part very well, believing in good faith that tru tru tru tru tru is equivalent to Schiller's concepts, is an instrument that explains more or less like one who claims that in pantomime one can express *phrases*, *expressions*, *words*, *images*, *concepts*, etc., as one would do when speaking.[67]

65. See Ornella di Tondo, *Italian Opera Staging Manuals (Disposizioni Sceniche) and Ballet. An Example: Arrigo Boito's "Mefistofele"*, in Michael Malkiewicz – Jörg Rothkamm (Herausgegeben von), *Die Beziehung von Musik und Choreographie im Ballett Buch*, cit., pp. 157-170.

66. A rudimentary example is the two-bar gesture of the minuet or waltz.

67. Francesco Pezzi, *Lo spettatore Lombardo*, cit., p. 45. The full passage reads: «La scena fra il cavaliere della nera armatura e la donzella d'Orleans nell'atto 4.º, riesce fredda, e direi anche intempestiva. Il loro dialogo è tratto da Schiller, ed è riferito parola per parola nel programma. Il cavaliere, per esprimere i suoi sentimenti, si serve sempre dell'unico apostrofo dritto ministero d'un trombone; e l'istromento del prof. Bernardi che disimpegna benissimo questa parte, credendo in buona fede che tru tru tru tru tru tru equivalga ai concetti di Schiller, è un istromento che si spiega presso a poco come quello, il quale pretende che in pantomima si possano esprimere, *frasi*, *locuzioni*, *parole*, *immagini*, *concetti*, ecc., come si farebbe parlando».

These scenes of mute dialogue have implications for the study of musical signification, gender, and other topics of interest to musicologists, beyond how the instrumental passages might relate to stage gesture[68].

A related task for the composer of opera and ballet was the rendering of stage actions, which has an obvious relation to musicological fields, such as film score studies. Topical music often appears in these portions of the score, as mottos for characters, as emotions, or depicting the locales. Schneitzhoeffer's witch-theme in *La Sylphide* re-appears in her action scenes, for example. Viganò's Vestale virgin is condemned to death by burial and disappears into her tomb to music by Lichtenthal that graphically depicts both the emotional distress and visual imagery of her descent, while also recalling lament bass lines often used for theatrical depictions of sorrow dating back to the Baroque[69].

Bournonville's composers used similar approaches to action scenes as the Italian ballet composers. For example, the 1868 ballet *Thrymsqviden* scored by Hartmann is loaded with action and dialogue scenes. In just one action number that ends the first act (number 8 in the piano reduction), there are twelve discrete stage actions distributed across 194 measures of music, each accompanied by suitable music. The number is bookended by an opening and closing theme that signifies Thrym and his warriors and helps to give a feeling of musical closure to the scene. Within this number there is music for rallying the troops, for Loki's advice and secret plotting, the distant hoofbeats of an approaching messenger, dialogue between Thrym and Skirner, which shifts from a gift of love to wrathful anger, and so on[70].

Let us consider one final example drawn from the Italian ballet *Bianchi e Negri* in a scene portraying unwanted love advances of a slave master on a «beautiful Creole» slave woman. In the ballet he is more of a Don Giovanni-like character drawn from melodrama than the cruel slave owner of Stowe's novel. He forces everyone to leave, in order to be alone with the woman. At this moment the music shifts to an *Andante sostenuto* in 12/8, as he uses begging and threats to declare his ardent love[71]. As shown in the musical example shown in fig. 4[72], a lyrical melody over the chordal accompaniment is developed much like an aria, but with twinges of alarm. Chromatic inflections (repeated flat sixths) initially unsettle the melody before it grows more and more emphatic to conclude with soft tremolos. Ta-

68. Beyond the trombone's lower range as an appropriate choice for the knight's voice, the gender-typing of instrumental timbres and also of acceptability in performance on certain instruments for certain genders are certainly aspects at play here.

69. Matilda Ann Butkas Ertz, *Revisiting "La Vestale" with the Manuscript Score*, cit.

70. Johan Peter Emilius Hartmann – August Bournonville, *Thrymsqviden, Op. 67*, Wilhelm Hansen, Kjøbenhavn 1868, pp. 24-28.

71. The annotations tell us: «He is enamored, he declares to her his ardent love, but his begging and threats are not effective in moving the virtue of the slave».

72. Cf. the piano score preserved at the John Milton and Ruth Neils Ward Collection of the Harvard Theatre Collection: Giuseppe Rota, *Bianchi e negri: azione coreografica*, musica di Paolo Giorza, Marco Aurelio Marliani, Cesare Dominiceti e Niccola Olivieri, libretto di Harriet Beecher Stowe, Francesco Lucca, Milano 1857, pp. 20-22.

ken out of context the piece would serve as an expressive salon piece – perhaps a nocturne. Yet this is not entirely a pleasant situation dramatically. The music operates as creepy seduction music and offers a duality. First is the male authority figure's point of view: he, after all, *loves* her ardently, and the *pas de deux* is a dance already associated with romantic love. It is set up with music stylistically fitting that topic and dance type (as my research has shown). But the accented chromatic inflections create discomfort, illustrating the female slave's repeated refusals of the unwanted advances in this action scene. Thus, the music fits the "love" archetype, but its use here is haunting and ironic, and to illustrate an action rather than act as an abstract, aesthetically pleasing dance for a couple. The music is mimetic as it grows in intensity, but it does not illustrate a string of various pantomimed actions like the other scenes of the ballet. Rather, it represents of a focused emotion, like an opera aria, to which the characters could easily have danced or mimed or both. Likely, a pantomime *pas de deux* could have been staged here. Much like the Sylphide's capture with the enchanted scarf, the Vestal maiden's death by live burial in *La Vestale*, Hilda's bolero and Birthe's self-realization of trollhood in *Et Folkesagn*, and countless other examples, the music and action combine in a hybrid of heightened emotion, much as Verdi's *solita forma* aria sought to advance the narrative[73]. By the end of this number in the ballet *Bianchi e negri*, the moral superiority and virtue of the enslaved woman are well established[74].

73. Harold S. Powers, *"La Solita Forma" and "the Uses of Convention"*, in Pierluigi Petrobelli (a cura di), *Nuove prospettive nella ricerca verdiana. Atti del convegno internazionale in occasione della prima del "Rigoletto" in edizione critica, Vienna, 12-13 marzo 1983*, Istituto di studi verdiani, Parma 1987, pp. 74-109.

74. Giuseppe Rota, *Bianchi e negri: azione coreografica*, cit. For an exploration of the prevalence of virtuous female characters in ballets, see: Selma Jeanne Cohen, *Virtue (Almost) Triumphant*, in «The Dancing Times», March 1964, pp. 297-301; Debra H. Sowell, *"Virtue (Almost) Triumphant" Revisited: Of Sylphs and Silfidi*, in «Dance Chronicle. Studies in Dance and the Related Arts», vol. XVIII, n. 2, 1995, pp. 293-301.

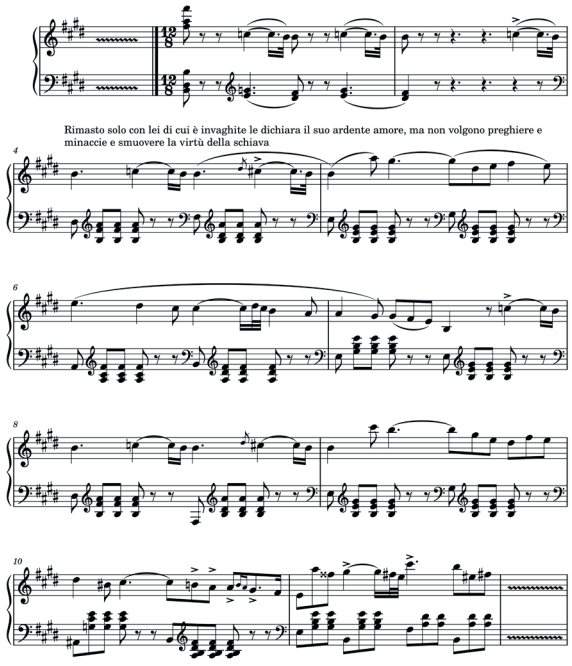

Figure 4. *Andante sostenuto* from *Bianchi e negri* as action music, transcribed by the author from the piano score held at the Harvard Theatre Collection: Giuseppe Rota, *Bianchi e negri: azione coreografica*, musica di Paolo Giorza, Marco Aurelio Marliani, Cesare Dominiceti e Niccola Olivieri, libretto di Harriet Beecher Stowe, Francesco Lucca, Milano 1857.

Conclusions

It is clear that the study of music for theatrical dance has much to offer musicology when the questions asked by historians shift from great composers and great works to a holistic understanding of musical ecosystems in which the theater was vastly important[75]. Theatrical music history need not be the domain of specialists only. The theater was an important locus of public life for increasing numbers of patrons during the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century musical experiences, tastes, and cultural knowledge was shaped by theatrical music and dancing in important ways. The points made in this essay about intertextuality and reception relate directly to the lived experiences of

75. In light of the movement over the past fifty years to investigate and perform music in historically informed ways (Historically Informed Performance, HIP), we might also endeavor to include ballet music in our historiography more authentically, or to present theatrical ballet performances in a more authentic manner. We might utilize music as a window into the lost aesthetics, choreography, action, and formats that were present on the nineteenth-century stage.

audiences, dancers, choreographers, and composers. Discussions of form and gesture help us understand danced works on their own terms, and hint at what we might learn about lost choreography. As for cultural trends, audiences who consumed opera, ballet (and danced themselves), understood the musical manifestations of *fantastique*, national or folk dance, or nationalism (e.g. the Italian *Risorgimento*) through musical-visual-emotional spectacles. While the individual points made in this essay are not new to scholars of music and dance, they are combined here in one essay and in a way that captures glimpses of practices across time and region, newly linking them, and newly including Italian ballets into the wider picture of European theatrical dance music. Entertainment has always had the ability to provide subtle and overt propagandic and cultural messaging, in part because of the power of emotion and storytelling. The multivalence of a theatrical experience and specifically the embodied response to ballet and pantomime in their many forms, was intrinsic to nineteenth-century musical life and thus is essential to musicological and cultural study of the period.