6 Ballet

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During the eighteenth century, a night at the opera almost always included ballet. Such a fundamental fact of life in the eighteenth century is so far removed from our own experience of opera that its reality is easy to overlook, yet it was the case across Europe, even in Italy. Opera audiences anticipated spending part of every evening watching dancers, but depending on where they lived, they had differing expectations as to what they would see and how the dancing fit (or not) into the opera. In France dancing was structured into every act of every opera. In Italy ballets were performed between the acts and only rarely made connection with the plot of the opera. England and the German-speaking areas tended to follow the Italian model, but with local variations. The presence of so much dancing meant that opera houses supported dancers as well as singers. Even today, many European opera houses have a dance troupe, although the functions of ballet and opera have increasingly grown apart.

France

The French operatic model was created in the late seventeenth century by Jean-Baptiste Lully and his primary librettist, Philippe Quinault, who wrote twelve works together between 1672 and 1686. The conventions they established, including the integration of dance into each opera, prevailed throughout the eighteenth century as well. In Lullian opera the dancers function in essence as part of the chorus, some of whom sing, others of whom dance. Every act includes at least one scene that brings large groups of people on stage, in musically and visually sumptuous scenes that came to be called "divertissements."

Jean-Philippe Rameau's first work for the Académie Royale de Musique (familiarly known as the Opéra), the *tragédie lyrique* of *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1733), may serve to illustrate how the integration of the divertissements into the plot works in practice. In Act 1 Aricia is being forced to become one of the goddess Diana's chaste priestesses, even though she has fallen in love with Hippolytus, son of Theseus, the King of Athens. The priestesses who sing and dance make visible Diana's peaceful realm, which, if it lacks the

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pleasures of love, also lacks its pains. This idyllic interlude, already juxtaposed against Aricia's sorrow, is shattered by Phaedra, Theseus's young wife, who has developed an illicit love for her stepson, Hippolytus. Act 2 takes place in the Underworld, where Theseus has gone to rescue his friend Perithous. But Pluto takes Theseus prisoner as well; in song and dance the demons prepare their vengeance for Theseus's effrontery. He himself is rescued only by appealing to his father, the god Neptune, but before leaving the Underworld, he is warned by the three Fates that another kind of hell awaits him at home. In Act 3 Phaedra offers Hippolytus both the throne and herself; he refuses, but their tussle over his sword leads Theseus, who returns from the Underworld at this very moment, to believe that his son has attacked his wife's honor. In agony over this betrayal, Theseus finds himself obliged to watch lengthy celebrations offered by his subjects in song and dance in gratitude for his safe return. When he finally finds himself alone, he prays to Neptune again, this time for the death of his son. In Act 4 Hippolytus realizes he must leave Athens and asks Aricia to join him. Their sorrowful deliberations are interrupted by a troupe of hunters, men and women alike, who are joyfully hunting for love as much as for game. In the midst of their festivities a sea monster suddenly carries off Hippolytus. Phaedra confesses the guilt she feels for causing his death. In Act 5 Theseus tries to throw himself into the sea, having learned that his son was innocent. But Neptune reveals that Diana has intervened to save Hippolytus, although Theseus will never again be allowed to see him, as punishment for his hasty revenge. The opera ends in a divertissement celebrating the union of Hippolytus and Aricia and presided over by Diana.

Of the five divertissements, two of them (in Acts 1 and 3) juxtapose the agonized psychic state of a main character against joyful surroundings – much as does the chorus in Act 1 of Verdi's *Aida* that ends with the words "Ritorna vincitor." The divertissement in Act 4 also operates by way of contrast, in that it sets up the striking reversal of the monster's emergence from the sea to swallow Hippolytus. The one in Act 2 intensifies the horrors of the Underworld and evokes in advance the psychological hell that Theseus will face when he returns home. The celebrations in Act 5 arise naturally from the restoration of order provided by Hippolytus's ascent to the throne and his marriage to Aricia. All of the divertissements also serve to emphasize the ties that bind the main characters to the larger society within which they live and act. The social aspect of French opera thus stands in stark contrast to the norms of Italian opera seria, in which the main characters may be generals or rulers, but whose soldiers or subjects rarely appear on stage.

In their structure, the divertissements intermingle singing and dancing; often the same or very similar music serves both for a vocal

Examples 6.1a and b Rameau, *Hippolyte et Aricie*, score ed. Sylvie Bouissou, in Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Opera Omnia*, Series IV, vol. 1 (Paris: Gérard Billaudot, 2002), Act 2, scene 3; (a) "2ᵉ Air infernal," mm. 389–95; and the chorus "Pluton commande," mm. 426–32(b)

piece and for an instrumental dance performed in alternation (see Example 6.1a and b). As a general rule, singing and dancing do not occur simultaneously, except inside some of the choruses. This was the model Lully had established; by the time of Rameau, the divertissements had started to lengthen, mainly through the addition of more independent dance music. *Hippolyte et Aricie*, like other *tragédies lyriques* from this period, exhibits both tendencies. The divertissements in Acts 1 and 2

Table 6.1 *Two divertissements from Rameau's* Hippolyte et Aricie *(1733), the first on the Lullian model, the second with a more expansive construction*

II/3: *Pluton, the three Fates, troupe of infernal deities*	**V/8**: *Diane, a Shepherdess, Hippolyte, Aricie, troupe of inhabitants of the forest of Aricie*
Pluton and chorus: "Que l'Averne, que le Ténare … vengent Proserpine et Pluton"	**Marche en musette** Chorus: "Chantons sur la musette … Dansons" **The march is repeated**
P^r **Air [pour les Divinités infernales]**. Gravement	Diane: Recitative and Air, "Que tout soit heureux" Chorus: "Que tout soit heureux"
2e **Air [pour les Divinités infernales]**. Vite Chorus: "Pluton commande, vengeons notre roi"	**Chaconne**
	A Shepherdess: Ariette (Air du rossignol)
	P^{re} **Gavotte**. Vite 2e **Gavotte**. Vite **Repeat of P^{re} Gavotte**
	Repeat of chorus: "Que tout soit heureux"

Note: The instrumental dance pieces are indicated in bold; the brackets indicate close musical connections.

adhere closely to the Lullian model of a small number of dance pieces that are closely related to the vocal music and interwoven with it. In the other three, however, the connection between the dances and the vocal music loosens and the structure grows more diffuse. The number of dance pieces increases from two or three to five or six. Given that the number of vocal pieces does not increase, this reverses the earlier ratio of dances to vocal airs. (See Table 6.1 for a comparison of the divertissements in Act 2 and Act 5.) And whereas each of these three longer divertissements has at least one paired dance and vocal piece, all contain a series of dance pieces that are completely independent from their vocal surroundings. Not surprisingly, these divertissements take up more time; in Acts 4 and 5 of *Hippolyte et Aricie* they occupy about half of the elapsed time of each act. In the genre of opéra-ballet, in which every act has its own plot,[1] or in the works bearing generic descriptors such as *acte de ballet*, *pastorale héroïque* and the like, the divertissements tend to adhere to the more expansive model, rather than the restrained Lullian one and there may even be more than one divertissement per act. The expansion of dancing within works gradually led to an expansion in the size of the dance troupe employed by the Paris Opéra, which had 22 members in 1714 and 91 in 1770, of whom nineteen were soloists.

Whereas many of the dances performed inside of operas belong to identifiable musical types such as menuets, rigaudons, and gavottes, many others were simply identified as "air" or "entrée," followed by the type of character dancing. For example, Rameau's comic opera *Platée* contains a frenetic "Air pour les Foux gais" and a melancholic "Air pour les Foux tristes" (dances for happy and sad crazy people, respectively). In dances

such as these, musical and choreographic characterization assumes prime importance, but even the generic dances were choreographed individually for each opera, the dancers' movements being affected by the type of role and the dramatic context. Some dances tended to be associated with certain types of characters – tambourins were often, although not exclusively, danced by sailors – whereas others, such as the menuet or gavotte, could appear in many different contexts. Most dance pieces are either binary or in rondeau form; of the two continuous variation types, the passacaille was used only occasionally, often in conjunction with seductive female characters, whereas the chaconne appeared in many contexts and lasted throughout the century, albeit in declining frequency after 1750. Chaconnes and passacailles exist in two guises: as purely instrumental dances, and as large structures with interpolated choral and solo vocal passages. The received notion that all French operas end with chaconnes is not accurate; many operas have no chaconnes at all, chaconnes may appear in any act, and fewer than 10 per cent of them end an opera. Operas more commonly end with a chorus or, increasingly as the century progressed, a group *contredanse*.

Just as the vocal music inside a divertissement generally includes either solo airs or duets on the one hand and choruses on the other, so the dancing consisted both of solos or *pas de deux* and of group dances. In Rameau's day the number of dancers participating in a typical divertissement varied from around eight to 25. When the group was at the larger end of the spectrum, the divertissement generally contained more than one set of dancing characters. In Act 3 of *Platée*, for example, the dancers consist of ten satyrs and driades (wood nymphs), three followers of Momus disguised as the Graces, and twelve inhabitants of the countryside. The way the names of the dancers are printed in the libretti allows us to identify the soloists and make some inferences about who danced to which pieces of music. Male dancers account for slightly more of the roles than do the women.[2] Accounts of performances, most notably in the monthly *Mercure de France*, often single out the leading dancers of the troupe, such as (in Rameau's era) Marie-Anne Cupis de Camargo, Marie Sallé, Mlle Puvigné, Louis Dupré, Jean-Barthélémy Lany, and Gaétan Vestris. The stars of the troupe danced as soloists, in mixed couples, and in same-sex duets. *Pas de trois* (dances for three) are not uncommon, but group dances are likely to have an even number of dancers (often eight), which allowed for the kind of symmetrical floor plans that characterize the choreography of this period. In *pas de deux*, whether for a mixed or same-sex couple, the dancers generally performed the same steps in mirror image. (The radical differentiation between the movements of the ballerina and those of her partner within a *pas de deux* was a product

of the nineteenth century.) When pantomimic dancing became more common as the century progressed, conventions of symmetry could yield to the demands of the action, but the dancing done as celebration or otherwise for its own sake remained symmetrical.[3] Divertissements, especially the celebratory ones, tended to end with group dances, often integrated into a chorus.

Whereas mimed, non-dance actions such as battles had always been a part of a dancer's movement vocabulary, starting in the 1730s interest began growing in dancing that gave a greater role to pantomime, or even narrative. Rameau's opéra-ballet *Les Indes galantes* (1735) included as one of its divertissements a "ballet of the flowers," in which a personified rose is besieged by the north wind (Borée) and rescued by the west wind (Zéphyr). Its sequence of nine instrumental dances is framed inside the opéra-ballet as an entertainment that the on-stage singing characters watch; it could be (and has been) performed as a free-standing miniature pantomime ballet. Louis de Cahusac, author of ten libretti for Rameau, was particularly active in incorporating dance scenes that he called "ballets figurés." In Act 1 of *Naïs* (1749), for example, he called for an athletic competition involving wrestling, boxing, and running, which Rameau set to a long chaconne. Cahusac's 1754 book, *La Danse ancienne et moderne*, lays out his aesthetic principles, which also found expression in the numerous articles about dance that he wrote for Diderot's ground-breaking *Encyclopédie* (1751–80).

The genre of opéra comique, whether performed at the theater bearing that name or at the Théâtre-Italien, also included dancing as part of every work. In both these theaters, the performers were generally capable of acting, singing, and dancing, although specialization among them increased as the century progressed. The dancing was sometimes integrated into the storyline, sometimes loosely connected to the plot and done between the acts, or both. Works tended to end with a strophic *vaudeville*, sung by the individual members of the cast, and interleaved with, or followed by a *contredanse générale*, a figure dance for the entire group. During the 1730s the Théâtre-Italien also started performing independent pantomime ballets, both comic and serious. The genre was soon adopted by other theaters and became increasingly popular as the century advanced. In 1754 the Opéra-Comique had fourteen men and sixteen women in its dance troupe, the Théâtre-Italien twelve men and ten women.[4] The style of dancing in these theaters, while still recognizably French, included more Italianate pantomime and comic routines than did the dancing at the Opéra; visiting Italian dancers appeared regularly on these stages. The two theaters merged in 1762, under the name of the Opéra-Comique.

Italy

Italian audiences were no less appreciative of ballet than were the French, but they preferred it as a complement to an opera, not as part of the work. Even in seventeenth-century Venetian opera, where the dancing often still had tenuous connections to the plot, it tended to occur at the end of an act, not within it. By the start of the eighteenth century the connections between opera and ballet had been severed, and it was not unusual to find comic dances performed between the acts of an opera seria. The three-act structure preferred in Italy meant that there would normally be two *entr'acte* ballets, each one independent from the opera and from each other, plus, sometimes, a third at the opera's conclusion. Even during the period from approximately 1715 to 1740, when comic *intermezzi* such as Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* became another option for *entr'acte* entertainment, ballets remained on the stage in many theaters. According to Kathleen Hansell, sung *intermezzi* "constituted but a short-lived historical parenthesis … The rule for 200 years, even during the period 1710 to 1735, was that *entr'acte* entertainments with Italian opera consisted of ballets."[5]

Italian dancing was built on French technique, as the use of French vocabulary for dance movements attests, but it tended to be more athletic, with more leaps and difficult caprioles. When Italian dancers such as Barbara Campanini and her (then) partner Antonio Rinaldi (known as Fossano) appeared in Paris, they dazzled French audiences with their brilliant technique. A category of dancer known as the *grottesco* was particularly cultivated in Italy; these dancers, men and women alike, performed comic roles such as those from the *commedia dell'arte* or exotic ones such as gypsies, pirates, Laplanders, or Chinese characters. Gennaro Magri's *Trattato teorico-prattico di ballo* (Naples, 1779), which focuses on the highly developed step vocabulary of the *ballerino grottesco*, is the best surviving source for technical information about this style.[6] Whereas in the early part of the eighteenth century the dance troupe attached to an opera house might have only six or eight dancers, by the 1770s the numbers had grown to as many as 45 in Naples and Milan. During this late period, opera libretti generally distinguish between the "serious" and "grotesque" dancers, and although dancers did tend to specialize, it is clear that many were capable of performing in both styles, and that for both, pantomime was part of their training. During the same period, some libretti began including an intermediate stylistic category for the dancers of "mezzo-carattere" (*demi-caractère*), one which mirrors the division of vocal types in opera buffa.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the relationship between the opera and the ballet had come to rest upon several conventions. The ballet

performed after the first act of the opera was based either on a mythological subject, such as the loves of Cupid and Psyche, or on another relatively serious story, expressed in dance and pantomime and performed by dancers trained in the noble style. The second *entr'acte* ballet was generally performed by the *grotteschi* and was of a lighthearted, episodic nature, such as "A village in Germany with its inhabitants occupied in various rustic pursuits" (Milan, 1758) or "A Chinese festival" (Mantua, 1770). In some theaters, especially in Milan and Turin, a third ballet would be performed, one growing out of the celebrations that concluded the opera, in which case the dancers would have roles consistent with the members of the chorus, as in French opera. But the closing ballet could also simply be tacked on to the end of the opera, as an exercise in decorative dance that was frequently called a "ciaconna." Long dances of this type tended to alternate passages for the entire group with ones for soloists or couples. Or the opera might end, as did some French operas, with a *contredanse* for all the dancers.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the opera libretti sold at the door of the theater came increasingly to include the scenarios for the *entr'acte* ballets.[7] These reveal that the kind of spectacular staging effects that had been removed from the history-based opera seria could nonetheless be indulged on the same evening as the opera via mythological *entr'acte* ballets that incorporated magical or fantastical elements. Following the first act of Johann Christian Bach's *Artaserse*, as performed in Turin in 1761, a ballet based around the loves of Venus and Adonis showed, among other spectacular effects, Venus descending from the heavens in a cloud machine and a thunderbolt thrown by Jupiter that transforms Adonis from a flower back into a man. Following the second act, however, the ballet offered a different kind of visual pleasure: a gala ball featuring a series of colorful national dances done by the *grotteschi* costumed as Poles, Spaniards, Germans, and other exotic characters. The concluding ballet tied into the opera's Persian setting and made use of the set for the third act, the temple of the sun:

> At this point we introduce as subject of the ballet a grandee of the realm with his large retinue of people of both sexes, who hasten to the temple in order to worship the tutelary god of Persia [the sun], and then, after various acts of veneration and respect, the ballet of Persians will begin, in which will be intermingled the *pas de deux* of a grotesque couple, another one of a *mezzo-carattere* couple, and finally the chaconne of the first serious couple, and this will be followed by the *contredanse* for all, with which the spectacle will come to a close.[8]

For ballets such as these, the music was only rarely provided by the composer of the opera. Occasionally the libretto mentions the ballet

composer's name, along with the names for the choreographer and the dancers; sometimes composers can be identified from theatrical records, which reveal that they were often violinists in the theater's orchestra. Although a collection of ballet music from operas performed in Turin between 1747 and 1762 survives in Rome, and another for the years 1776 to 1816 in Padua, little other Italian ballet music has been located to date.[9] The Turin ballets each have around twenty individual numbers of varying lengths. Providing ballet music seems to have involved arranging at least as much, or possibly even more, than composing: in Italy as elsewhere in Europe, Rameau is but one of the composers whose dance music was frequently appropriated, while later in the century Gluck's operas were mined for their dancing potential, as were instrumental compositions such as symphonies by Joseph Haydn.

Other traditions

The German-speaking countries tended to cultivate Italian or Italian-style operas more than French, but when it came to ballet, dancers from both France and Italy performed on their stages. Substantial treatises about dance published in Germany by Johann Pasch (1707), Samuel Rudolph Behr (1713), and Gottfried Taubert (1717) concern themselves mostly with the French style, but during the same period Gregorio Lambranzi's *Neue und curieuse theatralische Tantz-Schul* (1716) illustrated the Italian grotesque style of dancing for a German-speaking audience. In the early decades of the century, composers such as Telemann and Keiser, both working in Hamburg, wrote operas that reflect a mixture of styles and sometimes incorporate dance. But more often, ballet was performed between the acts, rather than within them. The ballet music that does survive for operas performed in German-speaking areas – for example, the *entr'acte* dances for Holzbauer's *Hypermnestra* (Vienna, 1741) – is only beginning to be studied.[10]

In England *entr'acte* dancing was the norm, in spoken plays as in musical theater, but several of Handel's operas for London (e.g., *Admeto*, 1727 and *Ariodante*, 1735) included dance within the acts that was related to the plot, sometimes in innovative ways. Moreover, Handel composed his own, very effective, dance music, rather than delegating it to someone else, as was the general practice in Italy. Act 1 of *Admeto* opens with a choreographic realization of the ill Admeto's nightmare of ghostly spirits threatening him with bloody daggers. At the start of Act 2, dancers incarnate the furies that are tormenting Alceste, recently arrived in the Underworld. *Alcina* (1735) mixes French and Italian practices: in Act 1,

the dancers are associated with the chorus as members of the sorceress Alcina's court. In Act 2, however, the dancers figure at the end of the act as good and bad dreams that visit Alcina. In Act 3 they participate in the concluding celebrations; one of the dances is musically connected to the final chorus, as would have been the case in France. Just as Handel imported Italian singers and wrote operas to feature them, so he sometimes worked dance into opera with an eye to similar commercial advantage. When one of the star dancers of the Paris Opéra, Marie Sallé, came to London in 1733–4, Handel added a prologue entitled "Terpsichore" to an opera he had composed in 1712, *Il pastor fido*, as a showcase for her facility in expressing a wide variety of choreographic characters.[11] Handel took as his model the prologue to Colin de Blamont's *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines* (1723), which features a long expressive set of dances for the Muse of the dance, Terpsichore.

The era of reformed opera

Even before Christoph Willibald Gluck and his librettist Raniero de' Calzabigi published their famous manifesto in favor of reforming opera seria in the 1769 score of their opera *Alceste*, several attempts at combining French and Italian practices began impacting the role of dancing in opera. In the French-allied duchy of Parma, Tommaso Traetta experimented with incorporating dances and choruses within the acts of his opere serie; his first such effort, *Ippolito ed Aricia* (1759), drew upon Pellegrin's libretto for Rameau's opera on the same story (discussed above), and even borrowed some of Rameau's dance music, including the "Air infernal" shown in Example 6.1. His *I Tindaridi* of 1760 was also based on a work by Rameau, *Castor et Pollux*. But even while embracing French practices, Traetta did not abandon Italian conventions; *Ippolito ed Aricia* includes dancing both within each act and at its end, and the opera concludes not with a chorus, but in the Italian manner, with a *ciaconna* and two gavottes. In Stuttgart, where Duke Carl Eugen had a taste for the choruses and dances of French opera, the Italian composer Jommelli worked in conjunction with French choreographers (including Jean-Georges Noverre) to produce operas such as *Pelope* (1755) and *Fetonte* (Ludwigsburg, 1768) that incorporated spectacular choreographic elements modeled on French practices. It was also in Stuttgart that Noverre first produced his most popular pantomime ballet, *Médée et Jason*, to a score by Johann Joseph Rudolph; at its premiere in 1763 this ballet was performed between the acts of Jommelli's opera *Didone abbandonata*. Ballet was also welcomed with enthusiasm in Mannheim, where composers such as Cannabich, Toeschi,

and Vogler provided the music for a number of pantomime ballets during the 1760s and 1770s.[12]

The most influential reforms, however, took place in Vienna, where theaters showcasing German, French, and Italian theatrical practices all flourished.[13] Starting in the 1740s the innovative choreographer Franz Hilverding and, subsequently, his student Gasparo Angiolini developed a new, more natural style of ballet that was set to music by composers such as Stolzer and Gluck. In 1761 a team made up of Angiolini, librettist Calzabigi, and composer Gluck produced the ground-breaking panto-mime ballet *Don Juan*. Angiolini said of Gluck's music that "he has perfectly realized the frightful essence of the action. He has undertaken to express the passions that are in play and the terror that governs the catastrophe." A year later, the same team produced the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*, a work that already incorporated some of Calzabigi's reforms. When the curtain rose, the audience beheld the protagonist surrounded by a chorus that, as in France, included both singers and dancers: "while one group burns incense, winds the monument with garlands, and sprinkles flowers around the tomb, the other intones the following chorus …" Next follows a *ballo*, which, the *argomento* published in the libretto tells us, was intended to represent "the funeral rites that the ancients celebrated around the sepulchers of the dead." In the second act, dancers portray demons attempting to frighten Orpheus away from the Underworld, and, in its second scene, spirits welcoming him to the Elysian Fields. After Cupid sets everything aright, the opera concludes with dances and a celebratory chorus. One measure of how well Calzabigi succeeded in incorporating French ideas into his libretto is that when Gluck revised the opera for performance in Paris in 1774 (where it was sung in French), the amount of dance music expanded, but its dramatic function did not change.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Italian composers such as Piccinni, Sacchini, and Salieri followed the path Gluck had opened for foreign composers to work at the Paris Opéra. Notwithstanding the two seasons of opere buffe that Piccinni was invited to arrange for the French capital (1778–80), the Italian composers working in Paris adapted them-selves to French practices not only by using French libretti, but by inte-grating dancing and choruses into the storyline. Some even reset texts from the seventeenth century by Lully's librettist Quinault; these include Gluck's *Armide* (1777) and Piccinni's *Atys* (1780), both of which provided fodder for the aesthetic battles between the partisans of French vs. Italian styles of opera. One of the most interesting operas to come out of this mixed Italo-French tradition is Salieri's *Tarare* (1787), set to a libretto by Beaumarchais, whose ideologically progressive plays had already provided the basis for Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (St. Petersburg, 1782) and

Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (Vienna, 1786). Set in Hormuz, on the Persian Gulf, *Tarare* performs a politically charged reversal on the typical exotic divertissement of the type that featured Turkish, Persian, African, American Indian, or other "exotic" dancers. In Act 3 the Sultan invites "Europeans" of various stripes – French lords and ladies, old folks of both sexes seeking youthful lovers, and shepherds and peasants dancing with their farming tools – to entertain the women in his harem.

In Italy, there were occasional examples of operas that emulated the French model by integrating the dances (such a divertissement was referred to as a "ballo analogo"[14]), one such being Niccolò Jommelli's *Armida abbandonata* (Naples, 1770). In general, however, Italian theaters retained the tradition of *entr'acte* ballets that were independent of the opera and whose music was written or arranged by other composers. These ballets had grown to such great length, often themselves having more than one act, that an evening at an Italian opera house might last six or seven hours. San Carlo in Naples, even more than other Italian houses, became a site where followers of the dance reformer Jean-Georges Noverre such as Charles Le Picq tried to replace the comic ballets performed by the *grotteschi* with high-toned *ballets d'action* such as *Rinaldo e Armida* (1773). This power struggle, in which the French side was favored by the intellectual elite of Naples, took place not only on the stage, but in a pamphlet war. Followers of Noverre retained control over the choreography at San Carlo through the end of the eighteenth century.[15]

Opera houses in German-speaking areas, although mostly producers of Italian-style opera, remained somewhat more open to incorporating French approaches. Mozart's *Idomeneo*, composed for Munich is 1781, is based on a French libretto first set in 1712 by André Campra. Although in today's performances they are generally cut, Mozart's score incorporates dances in each of the three acts, including mimed actions performed by the populace terrified by the arrival of a sea monster at the end of Act 2, and a long celebratory chaconne that ends the opera. Annotations in the score of the chaconne indicate which passages were performed by all the dancers, which by the soloists.

Two of Mozart's operas with Lorenzo Da Ponte incorporate dance into the plot in more subtle ways than a large-scale divertissement. In Act 3 of the *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), during the wedding ceremonies for the two couples, a fandango provides the one bit of local color for the Spanish setting of the opera and, more importantly, serves as a diversion during which Susanna passes the crucial letter of assignation, sealed with a pin, to the Count. The Act 1 finale of *Don Giovanni* (1787) takes place during a masked ball in the protagonist's palace. Here the dance music, played by three different on-stage orchestras, serves to delineate the social classes of

the dancers: the masked aristocrats, Donna Anna and Don Ottavio, dance to the sounds of a courtly minuet; Don Giovanni leads Zerlina in a *contredanse*, a dance type that transcended class boundaries; and Leporello obliges the jealous Masetto to dance a "Teitsch," a triple-meter German peasant dance, done in close embrace, which in the nineteenth century was to come up in the world and turn into the waltz.

These familiar examples from Mozart's opere buffe show that the role of dance in eighteenth-century opera was not confined to the function of a diverting decorative tableau. More often than not, dance plays a relevant role in both plot development and definition or problematization of characters' psychology and social class. It is in this context that even Figaro's famous cavatina, "Se vuol ballare, Signor Contino" ("If you wish to dance, my little count, I'll play the tune"), by merely evoking an aristocratic dance, the minuet, immediately functions as political metaphor. Even in those cases in which the relationship between opera and dance seems more tenuous, we cannot ignore the central position of dance in eighteenth-century society: both the practice of dance and the enjoyment of it as spectacle provided crucial moments during which the social, the personal, and the political intermingled.