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Jean Georges Noverre and the Music of *Iphigenia in Aulis* (London, 1793)

Roland John Wiley

Flamand: Ohne Musik würde es niemand sich einfallen lassen,
auch nur ein Bein zu heben.
(*Without music it would occur to nobody even to lift a leg.*)

Olivier: Tanz und Musik
Stehen in Bann des Rhythmus,
ihn unterworfen seit ewiger Zeit.
(*Dance and Music
stand in rhythm's thrall,
subject to it since the beginning of time.*)

Thus do the musician and the poet in Richard Strauss's *Capriccio* (1940)—as a dancer and three instrumentalists leave the stage—briefly shift their argument about the precedence of tone over word into the realm of choreography. By the year in which the action of *Capriccio* takes place—Paris, about 1775—Western music had become so eloquent in its collaboration with words that no one, save perhaps a poet, would have questioned its legitimacy as a party to such an argument. Music could enrich and transform poetry, a sister art.

By specifying that *Capriccio* be set when Gluck began his reform of opera in Paris, Strauss's collaborator, Clemens Krauss, reminded us of the goals, lofty and severe, which a striving for rationality imposed on French tragic opera in the eighteenth century. But Gluck did not pursue reform alone. Jean Georges Noverre (figure 1), an advocate of reason in ballet, had collaborated with him in Vienna in the 1760s, and worked with him again in Paris during the period in which *Capriccio* is set. It would not be too fanciful to imagine Noverre actually fashioning the steps of the *passepied*, *gigue*, and *gavotte* which Flamand and Olivier had just been watching.

Had Olivier been a choreographer rather than a poet, and the running argument of *Capriccio* a dispute which questioned the precedence of tone over gesture instead of tone over word, he would have enjoyed a distinct advantage over his opponent, the musician. As an expressive medium to enrich and transform the art of dance, ballet music in Noverre's day was in a rudimentary state, dominated by choreography in roughly the same way that music in the earliest operas was dominated by its verse. Only a century later, under Tchaikovsky's auspices, does ballet music achieve a measure of autonomous eloquence comparable to that which music *per se* enjoys in Gluck's or Strauss's operas.

For many reasons, historians of recent times who discuss Noverre and his ballets pursue these topics without ever analyzing a score. Some study Noverre from other

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Figure 1. Jean-Georges Noverre (1727-1810), engraved by J. K. Sheneu after J. F. Imbert for the frontispiece to *The Works of Monsieur Noverre* (London, 1782-1783). Harvard Theatre Collection

Noverre Ballet Master

than musical points of view.¹ Some focus on other theater genres.² Anyone seeking to study music for Noverre's ballets faces two especially vexing problems. The first is finding music to analyze. The obscurity of most eighteenth-century ballet composers and the scarcity of their music, manuscript or printed, complicate attempts to study it.³ The second is deciding what and how to analyze once some music is found. We can deal with Flamand's music to Olivier's poem because both were written down; even if we locate the music for a Noverre ballet, we shall forever lack, in the present state of knowledge, the one component critical to understanding it, namely its choreography. Thus under the best of circumstances the student of ballet music works with a serious disadvantage, much as the scholar of Beethoven's conversation books: we know what prompted a response in Beethoven, but we do not have the response itself.

While the analysis of ballet music is necessarily conjectural, it does admit of persuasive conclusions, seconded by data from additional sources. For many ballets, a printed libretto serves as a roadmap to the score, and for Noverre's works we may take counsel with the choreographer himself. Noverre's advocacy of rational ballet in his variously published *Letters on Dancing and on Ballets*⁴ was more impassioned and far more extensive than Gluck's advocacy of rational opera as we know it from his preface to *Alceste*. Indeed, so lucid and convincing are Noverre's remarks on ballet music that specialists prefer to quote him than to cope with the bibliographic and analytical problems of his scores.

Music, to be sure, was not the only topic Noverre addressed in his *Letters*. Taken together, they are a compendium of lore and opinion about the components of

¹ Deryck Lynham's pioneering *The Chevalier Noverre: Father of Modern Ballet* (1950; rpt. London: Dance Books, 1972) is a biography which deals with music only in citations from Noverre's *Lettres*. Marian Hannah Winter's *The Pre-Romantic Ballet* (London: Pitman, 1974) is especially distinguished for its contributions to the iconography of dance in Noverre's period. Vera Mikhailovna Krasovskaya, *Zapadnoevropeiskii baletnyi teatr: ocherkii istorii, epokha Noverra* [West-European Ballet Theatre: Studies in History, the Epoch of Noverre] (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1981), is a detailed biography of Noverre which includes studies of his works and chapters on his rival Gasparo Angiolini and the ballet d'action in Poland, Denmark, and Russia; her chapter entitled "Noverre and Music" is a gloss on Noverre's statements about music from the *Lettres*.

² Roger Fiske, in the second edition of his *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), makes occasional mention of Noverre, Italian opera, and the King's Theatre, but for the most part keeps within the limits of his title; Humphrey Searle, in *Ballet Music: An Introduction*, 2nd rev. version (New York: Dover Publications, 1973) discusses Noverre from the standpoint of his collaborations with Gluck.

³ The printed ballet music we have is mostly in the form of piano arrangements, precluding any consideration of orchestral sonority. This complaint might at first be thought trivial, but a few pieces by Noverre's collaborators have been recorded, and they suggest that distinctive sonority—especially a striking combination of wind instruments—was a conscious goal. See (and hear), for example, ten dances, all unpublished, by Josef Starzer (1726-1787), taken from three Viennese ballets of Noverre—*Diane et Endimion*, *Roger et Bradamante*, and

Gli Orazi e gli Curiazi—and performed by the Ensemble Eduard Melkus on Archiv Produktion 2533 303, "Tanzmusik des Rokoko" (1975).

⁴ The *Lettres sur la Danse et les Ballets* were first published in 1760 at Stuttgart, "Et se vend à Lyon," by the printer Aimé Delaroche. A much expanded version, including a number of scenarios of Noverre's ballets, was published in St. Petersburg in four volumes (hereinafter cited as *Lettres*, 1803-4) by the printer Jean Charles Schnoor with the following titles and dates: *Lettres sur la danse, sur les ballets et les arts*, vols. I (1803), II (1803), and IV (1804), and *Observations sur la construction d'une salle d'opéra, et programmes de ballets, oeuvres de M. Noverre*, vol. III (1804). The first volume of the St. Petersburg edition was translated by Cyril W. Beaumont (hereinafter cited as "Beaumont") as *Letters on Dancing and Ballets* (London: C. W. Beaumont, 1930; rpt. New York: Dance Horizons, 1966); I have employed his translation for the passages cited in this article. Another version, published three years before Noverre's death, is *Lettres sur les arts imitateurs en général, et sur la danse en particulier, dédiées à Sa Majesté l'Impératrice des Français et Reine d'Italie*, 2 vols. (Paris: Léopold Collin; and The Hague: Immerzeel, 1807). In large part the materials of the St. Petersburg edition (except for front matter) are reprinted, re-ordered, and sometimes heavily edited. The most important differences between the two editions are as follows: that of 1807 contains five libretti not printed in 1803-4, while 1803-4 contains ten libretti not in 1807; letters about the artists of the Paris Opéra in the 1803-4 edition are significantly revised and expanded in that of 1807; and 1803-4 contains six letters about music and musicians (in vol. IV, letters I-VI) which were not reprinted in 1807.

ballet: music, costumes, scenarios, performers, dance, and pantomime. Noverre composed ballets in all styles, but left no doubt as to which he considered best: "The style most suitable for expression in terms of dancing is the tragic; it offers fine pictures, noble incidents and excellent theatrical effects; moreover, the imitation of them is easier and the pantomimic action more expressive, more natural and more intelligible."⁵

In the Preface to his *Letters*, Noverre described the stages in which he composed a ballet: "My poem once conceived, I studied all the gestures, movements and expressions which could render the passions and sentiments arising from my theme. Only after concluding this labour did I summon music to my aid. Having explained to the composer the different details of the picture which I had just sketched out, I then asked him for music adapted to each situation and to each feeling. . . . I composed, if I may so express myself, the dialogue of my ballet and then I had music written to fit each each phrase and each thought."⁶

With remarks like these, Noverre, who refers to himself throughout the *Letters* as the composer of a ballet, illustrates the classic subordination of the score to the balletmaster, which he assumed as a working principle, and which continued to define collaborations on ballet as recent as those of Tchaikovsky and Stravinsky. And yet he makes clear in other passages that music cannot be an insipid accompaniment; it can and must inspire: "It is the time and tone of the music which fix and determine all the dancer's movements. If the playing of the airs be expressionless and devoid of taste, the ballet, like its model, will be dull and uninteresting. . . . Well-composed music should paint and speak: dancing, in imitating its sounds, will be the echo which will repeat everything it articulates. If, on the contrary, it be mute, it will tell the dancer nothing and he cannot respond to it: thence all feeling, all expression, is banished from the performance."⁷

Elsewhere Noverre described music in a ballet with an analogy worthy of Flamand and Olivier. It was to dancing "what words are to music; this parallel simply means that dance music corresponds, or should, to the written poem and thus fixes and determines the dancer's movements and actions. He must therefore recite it and render it intelligible by the force and vivacity of his gestures, by the lively and animated expression of his features; consequently dancing with action is the instrument, or organ, by which the thoughts expressed in the music are rendered appropriately and intelligibly."⁸

Composer and balletmaster had to know each other's craft. At one point Noverre contended that it would be desirable for a balletmaster to write his own scores. If that were impossible, he at least must know something about music, for if he does not, he "will ill-phrase the melodies and understand neither their spirit nor their character. He will not combine the movements in the dance with the measure of the music with that precision and acuteness of hearing which are absolutely necessary."⁹ And for his part the composer of the music had to be well versed in "knowledge of dancing, or at least be familiar with the time and possibilities of the movements proper to each kind, to each character and to each passion, in order to employ features appropriate to the various situations which the dancer must successively present."¹⁰

⁵ *Letres*, 1803-4, I, 17 (Beaumont, 21).

⁶ *Ibid.*, I, viii (Beaumont, 5).

⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 38 (Beaumont, 36-37).

⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 70-71 (Beaumont, 60).

⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 37-38 (Beaumont, 36).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 80 (Beaumont, 66).

Noverre composed ballets for London during sojourns there in the 1750s, the 1780s, and from 1793 to 1795. *Iphigenia in Aulis*, his last tragic pantomime, was first performed at the King's Theatre, London, on 23 April 1793 (figure 2). Observers responded to it with hyperbole. Michael Kelly, the manager of the King's Theatre, recalled it in his memoirs: "The splendour of the spectacle, the scenery, the richness of the decorations and dresses, could not have been surpassed: the dancing was of the first order, and the acting of D'Egville, in Agamemnon, inimitable; the triumphal cars, with horses; the grand marches, processions, and above all, the fine grouping of the corps de ballet, all was *vrai* classicality, and proved Noverre to be the greatest master of his art."¹¹ For one newspaper critic the effect of the ballet was "impossible to convey any idea of by description; and it possesses the strong recommendation of very admirable acting. D'Egville (figure 3), in Agamemnon, is entitled to share the laurels of the first Performer on the English Stage. In saying this, it will be readily understood that we allude to Mrs. Siddons—no English Actor can compete with D'Egville."¹² Between 23 April and 30 June, the end of the season at the King's Theatre in 1793, *Iphigenia in Aulis* was given seventeen times. It has never been revived.

A printed libretto¹³ and a printed piano arrangement¹⁴ of *Iphigenia*, the only sources for the ballet which are in some degree comprehensive and also linked to realization of the work on stage, provide the materials for an analysis of music and choreography.

The libretto contains a dedication by Noverre "To the Ladies" in recognition of the virtues they share with Iphigenia, a list of performers, a short précis of the tale, and a detailed account of the action of the ballet. In *Iphigenia*, as in most other libretti that Noverre conceived on subjects from antiquity, he made free adaptations of history or myth.

Noverre advises us at one point in the *Letters*: "Regard the poet as the father, and the dance as the child."¹⁵ The poet Noverre, by his vivid description of the emotions the characters experience in this ballet, provides a sense of what the stage action was like, and gives proof of his belief that the tragic ballet must deal in extreme passions. Act I of *Iphigenia in Aulis* is a solo pantomime of Agamemnon (figure 4). He is distracted by the thought of sacrificing Iphigenia to Calchas, the High Priest, and writes a letter instructing his daughter to turn back to Argos. No sooner does he hand it to a messenger than a triumphal march is heard: Iphigenia and Clytemnestra have already arrived in Aulis. Act II is spectacle: Iphigenia's arrival is marked with a grand procession and dances. Achilles arrives, is presented to Iphigenia, and the two fall in love. Act III is pantomime again. Iphigenia is offering devotions in the sacred grove of Diana. The other principals enter, and, after an affectionate reunion, Agamemnon's reason seems disturbed: he insists that Clytemnestra return to Argos so that he, unchallenged, can lead Iphigenia to the altar. Achilles arrives, and learns that the altar to which Iphigenia will be led is not

¹¹ Kelly, *Reminiscences*, ed. Roger Fiske (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 196.

¹² "The Italian Opera." *The True Briton*, no. 102, 29 April 1793, p. 2.

¹³ *Iphigenia in Aulis, A New Heroical Pantomime Ballet, Composed by Mons. Noverre, as Represented at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket* (London: Printed by J. Hammond, No.

12, St. Martin's Lane, near Charing Cross, n.d.).

¹⁴ *Iphigenia in Aulide. A Grand Pantomime Ballet As Performed at the Opera House in the Haymarket, Composed Expressively by M. Millard. Composer to the Opera at Paris*, 2 vols. (London: Printed by Longman and Broderip, No. 26 Cheapside and No. 13 Haymarket, n.d.).

¹⁵ *Letters*, 1803-4, I, 79 (Beaumont, 65).



H. Jones del.

H. Cook sculp.

PROSCENIUM OF THE OPERA HOUSE.





Figure 2 (opposite page). "Proscenium of the Opera House," drawn by G. Jones, engraved by H. Cook, and published by Robert W. Kinson on 11 October 1816. Harvard Theatre Collection.

Figure 3 (left). James Harvey D'Egville (fl. 1782-1827) in the ballet of Achilles and Deidamia, published by Anthony Cardon in 1804. Harvard Theatre Collection.

IPHIGENIA in AULIS.

Part the First.

THE Scene represents the Tent of Agamemnon, with his Guards at some distance, and part of the Grecian Camp—Night—the inside of the Tent is lighted by a lamp, two lustres are placed near the Table.

Agamemnon peruses with great anxiety various plans for carrying on the war. He resolves in his mind all the measures that can determine the success and the glory of Greece.

But while he is combining and weighing all his resources, he remembers that he has inconsiderately promised to devote his Daughter Iphigenia to the axe of the iron-hearted and bloody-minded Priest Calchas. He reflects on the atrocious purpose, and challenges himself for his credulity, he rises a thousand furies in his looks, a crowd of anguishing thoughts distract his soul, but being again struck with the panic of superstition, he kneels, and humbly implores the assistance of the Eternal Powers; he invokes the precious influence of Mercy, the darling attribute of Heaven, then he returns to his Tent, and writes a letter which he directs for Argos, countermanding the departure of Iphigenia; unsatisfied with this letter, he destroys it, and writes a different one, which he peruses with complete satisfaction: he calls one of his Confidants, orders him to set out immediately for Argos, and to stop the journey of Iphigenia, in case he should meet her; the moment he charges the messenger with the letter, the distant sound of a triumphal march strikes him with confusion, the letter drops from his hands, and the effect of sudden grief clouding at once all his faculties, seems even to suspend the powers

B

of

Figure 4. *Novene*, Iphigenia in Aulis (London, [1793?], p. 5. Harvard Theatre Collection.

that of marriage, as he and Clytemnestra had believed, but that of sacrifice. Achilles confronts Agamemnon, and they are at the point of drawing swords when the women intervene. The combatants exit, then Agamemnon returns with soldiers and takes Iphigenia away, after which Achilles returns to free Clytemnestra from the guards who hold her captive.

Act IV begins with pantomime and ends with dances. Preparations for the sacrifice are being made. At the end of another procession Iphigenia approaches the altar. The High Priest is about to deliver the fatal blow when Clytemnestra snatches her daughter away. Achilles and his soldiers seek out Agamemnon, who seizes Iphigenia and threatens to kill her. He is disarmed, and Iphigenia returns to the altar voluntarily. But as Calchas wields his axe a second time Diana herself intervenes. Phoebus appears in a brilliant car and raises a breeze to fill the sails of the Greek ships, which obviates the need for any sacrifice. General rejoicing is expressed by "various Heroic Dances suited to the subject."

The music of *Iphigenia in Aulis* was written by “M. Millard. Composer to the Opera at Paris.” His original name was presumably Ernst Ludwig Müller or Ernst Ludwig Krasinsky; he settled in Paris in 1776, the year Noverre became balletmaster to the Opéra. Possibly through the good offices of the dancer Pierre Gardel, who married Millard’s stepdaughter in 1795, Millard began to write ballets for the Opéra soon before composing *Iphigenia in Aulis*. “Madle. Miller” performed the role of Clytemnestra in this ballet.¹⁶

The piano arrangement of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, which takes up thirty-four pages in two volumes, was one of the most extensive prints of music for a single ballet issued in eighteenth-century London. As fortunate as we are to have it, this music does not tell us all we would like to know about the ballet as performed at the King’s Theatre. The score does not indicate which instruments played, and it may be incomplete, for it seems to lack music for some of the action. In addition, the print contains few rubrics which can be linked with the libretto, and it is filled with errors of orthography. We cannot know with certainty, but it looks like the work of a publisher’s hack, laboring in haste, possibly from orchestral parts.

These difficulties aside, the score enables us to see how Millard rose above the level of interest and ingenuity set for ballet at the King’s Theatre by house composers like Cesare Bossi and Joseph Mazzinghi. He aspired to a dignity of utterance which at its best recalls Gluck, and he lavished care on details of thematic recurrence and architectural span. If, as Noverre claimed, “dance music corresponds, or should, to the written poem,” matching the somewhat puzzling piano score with the richly detailed libretto of *Iphigenia in Aulis* may cast some light on aspects of the ballet not otherwise recoverable.

To do this, we shall take some of Noverre’s remarks as principles of analysis, and apply them to representative passages of pantomime and dance music. We shall assume that Millard was in fact “familiar with the time and possibilities of the movements proper to each character and to each passion,” that Noverre did “combine the movements of the dance with the measure of the music with that precision and acuteness of hearing which are absolutely necessary,” and that “dance music corresponds . . . to the written poem and thus fixes and determines the dancer’s movements and actions.” For their parts, the artists would render the music “intelligible by the force and vivacity of their gestures.” Given Noverre’s admiration for David Garrick, his pantomimes for D’Egville and the others likely owed

¹⁶ Millard is typical of specialist ballet composers in his obscurity. Under the name “Miller” or “Millard” he is known for composing *Iphigenia in Aulis*, opera dances, and military marches (see RISM, A/1/5, M2792-M2795). Ernst Ludwig Müller (1740-1811), composer of the ballet *Télémaque*, produced in Paris in 1790 (RISM, A/1/6, M7853; and *The New Grove Dictionary*, XII, 769), is presumably the same person, because both Miller and Müller were reportedly the stepfather of Marie Elizabeth Anne Millard, the dancer who married the choreographer Pierre Gardel in 1795. Müller was also an important composer of flute music, some of which he published under the surname Krasinsky (RISM, A/1/6, M7854-7877). Choron and Fayolle in their *Dictionnaire historique des musiciens* (Paris, 1810-11) contend that “Krasinsky” was not only a pseudonym, an assumption accepted by many later lexicographers, but that there was another composer of flute music who was named Krasinsky. No source for

Müller makes any reference to *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and the only reference book that links the composer “Mr. Millard” with the “Madle. Miller” who performed Clytemnestra in *Iphigenia in Aulis* (i.e., the same dancer who married Gardel), is Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973-), X, 225. For Müller, see also *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, XI (1961), 853-854; Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens*, VI (1878), 253-254; Eitner, *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Quellen-Lexikon*, 2nd ed., VII (1959), 104; *Dizionario enciclopedico universale della musica e dei musicisti*, ed. Alberto Basso, Le biografie, V (1980), 284; and *The British Union-Catalogue of Early Music*, ed. Edith Schnapper (1957), I, 579, and II, 676.

much to the actor's art.¹⁷ To Noverre, Garrick's gestures were the perfect mirror of nature, although present-day eyes might find them melodramatic, even exaggerated (cf. figure 5).¹⁸

The first act of *Iphigenia*, an extensive pantomime, is a large piece made up of several smaller bits, which is to say that no more than fourteen of its 158 bars go by without a pause, a sudden dynamic contrast, or a change of key, tempo, or meter. From the composer's point of view this would be perfectly reasonable, as pantomime music must continuously express the story and may therefore have to change character frequently, as required by the action on stage.

The music of this act, reproduced in figure 6, is divided into three parts, the first of which comprises thirty-nine bars of music which fit the libretto's description of how the action begins: "Agamemnon peruses with great anxiety various plans for carrying on the war. He resolves in his mind all the measures that can determine the success and the glory of Greece." It is a calm night, and the king is alone except for "his guards at some distance." We are not given the details of his war plans, but know only that he is anxious, and that his meditation culminates in thoughts of glory.

Part I begins with an *adagio*, the musical components of which, it is proposed, precisely match the actions described in the libretto. Four bars of dignified expression serve as a curtain raiser to set the mood (figure 6, m. 1-4).

Next come four bars whose affective dissonances convey Agamemnon's anxiousness. Then six bars of *crescendo* lead to a dissonant halt. The *crescendo* within an *adagio*, at first suggesting an increase of emotion and then a sudden gasp, seems perfectly appropriate for the king's pondering of his strategies. Four bars complete the cadence at the end of the *crescendo*. In most music an interior cadence like this would be unremarkable, but here much is happening: two dramatic pauses, a fermata over one of the important chords of the progression, and a sudden dynamic change after that, from double *forte* to *piano*. Surely these devices accompanied rhetorical gestures of D'Egville (m. 9-18).

Millard now writes out the *crescendo* with its cadence again. At first one takes this music for padding, but logic suggests that even Agamemnon might wish to ponder his war plans a second time, if only to assure himself of his campaign's glorious outcome. The striking changes of meter and tempo that follow doubtless expressed Greece's success and glory as the king foresaw them (m. 28-39).

¹⁷ Of Garrick, Noverre wrote, in part: "He was so natural, his expression was so lifelike, his gestures, features and glances were so eloquent and so convincing, that he made the action clear even to those who did not understand a word of English. It was easy to follow his meaning; his pathos was touching; in tragedy he terrified with the successive movements with which he represented the most violent passions. And, if I may so express myself, he lacerated the spectator's feelings, tore his heart, pierced his soul, and made him shed tears of blood" (*Lettres*, 1803-4, I, 104; Beaumont, 82). For a recent study, see Jocelyn Powell, "Dance and Drama in the Eighteenth Century: David Garrick and Jean Georges Noverre," *Word & Image*, 4 (1988), 678-691. Noverre also affirmed a direct connection between acting and pantomime: "Action is simply pantomime. In the dancer everything must depict, everything must speak: each gesture, each attitude, each *port de*

bras must possess a different expression. True pantomime follows nature in all her manifold shades. If it deviate from her for an instant, the pantomime becomes fatiguing and revolting" (*Lettres*, 1803-4, I, 130-131; Beaumont, 99).

¹⁸ For some spectators in Noverre's time, pantomime was exaggerated: "It is too much the fault of all Pantomimical Performers to overstrain their action. It becomes a habit, and they distort their bodies in their attempts to give energy to illustration. This is their general fault; but [Sebastian Gallet's] *Pizarré* was painfully violent: —he took from the grace and eloquence of the expression by the force of his emotions. He apologises himself, indeed, for his defects; but we assure him, that by struggling less he will accomplish more, and the Piece is so truly beautiful that we wish it to be as perfect in the performance as it is in the composition" ("King's Theatre: Pizarré, or The Conquest of Peru," *Morning Chronicle*, 9 February 1797, p. 3).



We are now a quarter of the way through the act. There has been no dancing. One character has been on stage. And in thirty-nine bars the music has changed meter and tempo, made two crescendi, stopped four times, and changed dynamic five times. Such is the well-composed music which to Noverre should paint and speak, music written to fit each phrase and thought. If, as he wrote, the dancer's movements did "echo everything the music articulates," we can at least imagine what some of D'Egville's gestures may have been like, and how long they took to perform.

Having plotted his strategy against Troy, Agamemnon now thinks of Iphigenia, and his elation turns to guilty thoughts. In Part II of the scene, he anguishes, prays, and resolves to keep Iphigenia from coming to Aulis, then writes a letter to this effect, destroys it, and writes another. The music continues to be constructed in bits. An *andante* of nineteen bars in a new key—full of melodic sighs and punctuated with dynamic contrasts—corresponds to Agamemnon pondering Iphigenia and her fate (m. 40–58). Then an *adagio con espressione*, eight bars in the manner of Gluck's Iphigenia operas, accompanies the king as he "kneels, and humbly implores

Figure 3. Gaetano Vestris (1720–1808) in *Jason and Medea*, engraved by Francesco Bartolozzi (1727–1815), possibly after Nathaniel Dance, and published by John Boydell on 3 July 1781. The music is the opening of the overture to Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* (Paris, 1774). Harvard Theatre Collection.

5

Pantomime M. Degvile.

Adagio

cres. *f*

p *cres.*

p *f* *Allegro*

3 6

Figure 6a. Millard, Iphigenia in Aulide (London, [1793?]), I, 5, m. 1-39. Reproduced by kind permission of The British Library

6

Andante

p *f*

Adagio con espressione

f Allegro *p* Andantino

Figure 6b. Millard, Iphigenia in Aulide, I, 6, m. 40-77.

The musical score consists of eight systems of piano accompaniment, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second system features a forte (*f*) dynamic marking and the instruction "Brings a Letter". The third system is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth system is marked "March, at a distance" and "Allegro". The fifth system continues with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The sixth system is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and "Allegro". The seventh system is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The eighth system concludes with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and articulation marks.

Figure 6c. Millard, Iphigenia in Aulide, I, 7, m. 78-113.

8 M^r Degville

Second Act. Figurants bringing offerings to IPHIGENIA.

Andante Grazioso

Figure 6d. Millard, Iphigenia in Aulide, I, 8, m. 114-159.

the assistance of the Eternal Powers." A number of changes ensue in quick succession: Agamemnon decides to write a letter during 4 bars of allegro; he writes the letter during two short strophes, of six and eight bars, each in a new meter and a new key; and another change of meter and key occur as the king "brings a letter" to a messenger and then expresses delight and relief at his decision. Noverre's dramaturgy of extreme passions is at work here: Agamemnon suffers anguish, puts himself at the mercy of the gods, is answered, and resolves to act. Knowing this helps us make sense of the mercurial changes in Millard's pantomime music, beginning with the prayer (m. 59-95).

We have come to Part III of the scene. The moment Agamemnon gives the messenger the letter, according to Noverre, "the distant sound of a triumphal march strikes him with confusion, the letter drops from his hands, and the effect of sudden grief clouding at once all his faculties, seems even to suspend the powers of life, till news are brought him of the arrival of Iphigenia and Clytemnestra, which ominous event calls forth the energy of his senses, but only to make him feel the torturing agonies of rage, horror, and despair. He runs to his sword to end the misery of his existence, but his attendants disarm him, and he retires betraying, by the wild distracted fierceness of his countenance, the canker feasting on his heart."¹⁹

The music of Part III begins, appropriately, with an eight-bar "March, at a distance," as it is designated in the score. Agamemnon's response to it—sudden grief clouding all his faculties—is expressed in yet another striking change of meter, key, tempo, and dynamic (m. 96-113).

This brings us to the dramatic high point of the scene. The remaining forty-five bars (m. 114-159) are fast and volatile in terms of dynamics, passing from *forte* to *piano* every few bars. There is one pause, on a dissonance (m. 141).

It is easy to imagine here the king's "torturing agonies of rage, horror, and despair." But what of the fermata over the diminished seventh chord?

Judging from the number of suicides, murders, or sacrifices in his tragic pantomimes, Noverre was fascinated by the life-threatening moment. Having a weapon poised either to strike or to be diverted at the last moment was certain to increase dramatic tension. In the *Letters*, he wrote of the effect of the musical pause, when "the spectator's ear suddenly ceasing to be struck by the harmony, his eye took in with more attention all the details of the pictures."²⁰ Surely the pause in this scene accompanied that moment when Agamemnon raised his sword against himself, to be saved by the intervention of his dutiful guards.

The music after this pause is a drive to the final cadence, quickly paced so as to give Agamemnon a last opportunity to show his anguish without attenuating the effect of his attempt to end his life (m. 142-159). Pacing and well-timed coordination of gestures were of fundamental importance to Noverre, who at one point in the *Letters* declared that the different effects of ballet "only impress and astonish in proportion as they follow in quick succession; those combinations and sequences of figures, those movements which follow rapidly, those forms which turn in opposite ways, that mixture of *enchaînements*, that *ensemble* and that harmony which presides over the steps and the various developments—do not all these afford you an idea of an ingeniously contrived machine?"²¹

¹⁹ *Iphigenia in Aulis*, pp. 5-6.

²⁰ *Letters*, 1803-4, I, 207 (Beaumont, 149).

²¹ *Ibid.*, I, 33 (Beaumont, 33).

Pantomime lay at the heart of Noverre's efforts to bring drama into ballet. Yet it represents only one component of his work. Throughout the *Letters*, he was less concerned with dances, and wrote about them with less vigor than about pantomime. In the libretto of *Iphigenia* the word "dance" occurs but three times in seven pages, while nearly half the score is taken up with what appears to be dance music for which no details are given in the libretto.

Because the *Letters* were a manifesto advocating pantomimic ballet, Noverre rarely mentioned figured dances without narrative content. When he did it was usually with condescension, for he saw them as remnants of the superficially dramatic ballets he was trying to dislodge.²² If anything, they were fit for concluding divertissements. By contrast, Noverre made clear that in his conception of a ballet all dances must have character and action, even *pas de deux* and *pas de quatre*.²³ In the heat of polemic (though not in practice) he scorned the dance types of earlier ballets—*passepieds*, *musettes*, *tambourines*, *chacottes*, and *passacailles*—as antiquated; to him they were leftovers of an unenlightened repertoire which artists, dulled by force of habit, were reluctant to give up.²⁴ In the case of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, Noverre's philosophy must be taken with a grain of salt when dealing with so many dances so little accounted for by the story.

The dance music in *Iphigenia* is nevertheless regimented in various ways, and reveals a consistent stylistic profile. Like music for pantomime, it consists of pieces which comprise various bits, though the bits are in all respects simpler. Dances clearly divide into sections which vary by theme, key, or mode, and sometimes by expressive character; the contrasts between them suggest their propriety for entrées, episodes, or other discrete choreographic events. Like poetry, dance music has, as Olivier reminds us, to rhythm's thrall submitted since the beginning of time. Its phrases tend to be regular and set out in hierarchies based on units of two or four bars. Most of the dances in *Iphigenia* contain numerous and distinctive dynamic inflections which occur on a moment-by-moment basis. The artistic justification for these does not, for the most part, seem to flow from the musical premises of a given dance. The dynamics appear instead to be inflections imposed on the music by the dance, designed to coincide with and thus to highlight a dancer's gestures. As regards pattern, two types of dance music may be distinguished. The first consists of short pieces, normally twelve to fourteen bars, which are through-composed and may indeed not be formal dances, having instead the look of music to accompany entrances of dancers or transitions from one dance to another. The

²² In a letter to Voltaire dated 1 September 1763, Noverre wrote: "It is more than six years since I applied a new form to dance, when I sensed that it was possible to construct poems in ballets: I abandoned symmetrical figures, I joined the mechanical movements of the feet and arms with the movements of the soul and the varied and expressive character of the physiognomy; I abolished masks and I pledged myself to truer and more exact costumes" (*Letters*, 1803-4, II, 1). On Noverre's precedence as inventor of the ballet d'action, see Friederika Derra de Moroda, "The Ballet-Masters before, at the time of, and after Noverre," *Chigiana*, 29-30 (1972-1973), 473-485.

²³ Describing *Les Fêtes, ou Les Jalousies du Sérail*, Noverre indicates at one point that the beautiful Zaïde, confused and in despair, expresses in an *entrée seule* the most terrifying rage and spite. Later she and her rival Zaïre are

reconciled in a *pas de deux*. The Sultan dances with them a *pas de trois*, in which he always displays a preference for Zaïre (*Letters*, 1803-4, I, 210-211; Beaumont, pp. 151-152).

²⁴ "The majority of composers follow, I repeat, the time-worn laws of the *Opéra*. They compose *passepieds* because Mlle. Prévost executed them so elegantly; *musettes* because Mlle. Sallé and M. Dumoulin danced them with both grace and voluptuousness; *tambourins* because it was the style of dance in which Mlle. Camargo excelled; and lastly *chacottes* and *passacailles* because the celebrated Dupré was strongly attached to these movements so adapted to his taste, his style, and the nobility of his person; but all these excellent dancers are dead, they have been succeeded by others" (*Letters*, 1803-4, I, 81; Beaumont, 67).

second includes more substantial pieces, twenty-four bars or more, in which subsections are in clearly contrasting styles and one or more reprises of the opening theme occur—a formal pattern which may owe as much to choreographic as to musical considerations.

The dances of Act II illustrate these characteristics. The “Cosaque Allegretto” (figure 7) is not mentioned in the libretto, but would appear to be part of the festivities which greet the arrival in Aulis of Iphigenia and Clytemnestra. The importance of the dance may be gauged from another standpoint, namely that it was performed by Mr. Gentili, an important dancer in the company who warranted separate mention on the playbill.

This music is characteristic of the style and structure of Noverre’s dances. It opens with two repeated strains of eight bars, each divided into four-bar phrases. The repetition of these strains at the end will round out the dance thematically. In the middle, two more strains, of sixteen and twelve bars, move from the prevailing G-major to the contrasting keys of G-minor and B-flat major. Slightly longer note-values prevail in these strains, and they provide the effect of lyric contrast with the beginning. Throughout the dance, but especially in the opening eight bars, distinctive dynamic markings inflect the music in a way which seems to originate in choreographic gesture. Given the exotic connotations of “Cosaque” in an ancient Greek setting, dare we imagine this piece enlivened with so-called Turkish percussion? And if we do, is the expression of the piece, choreographic considerations aside, so distant from Clementi and the young Mozart?

The menuetto poco adagio for Madle. Hilligsberg presents a different situation (figure 8). Whereas Mr. Gentili was greeting Iphigenia and Clytemnestra, the menuetto is a dance for Iphigenia herself, the leading character of the ballet. While the libretto refers to “a noble Pas de deux” between Clytemnestra and Iphigenia, this dance, like the one which follows for Madle. Miller, seems to have been a *pas seule* (figure 9).

The chromatic opening phrase, especially when its dynamic markings are taken into consideration, produces an extraordinary effect. It begins *piano*, moves to a diminuendo on the downbeat, then is followed by a *subito forte* on the weak third beat that continues through the downbeat of the second bar. Then the phrase is repeated. The musical idea is so strongly gestural that it seems crafted for dance, its repetition a signal for the repetition of the dance phrase fitted to it, perhaps to the opposite side.

The contrast between the first strain and the second, in dynamics and phrasing (by four bars instead of two), and then the long hushed musical paragraph from bar 19 to bar 42, argue further for the influence of dance on music, as this continuation was not predictable from what came before. And yet this passage clearly achieves a measure of autonomous expression, capable of producing a telling effect as it stands, even without dancing. Perhaps the most striking device in the entire dance comes in the second half, after the opening strains have been reprised in bars 43-59. The remaining thirty-four bars comprise two strophes, each beginning with a gradual crescendo, and the first culminating with a *dolce* recall of the opening melody. This entire complex of musical devices—the subsections, the varied expression of each one, and the expansion of the phrase lengths—is surely conditioned by Noverre’s choreography, yet is attractive as music. It demonstrates the enriched music that began to transform choreography, a sister art, in the decade before Beethoven composed *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus*.

9

Cosaque Allegretto

Sig. Gentili

dol

fp

2a

Minore

fine

p

h

sf

Da Capo al fine

Figure 7. Millard, Iphigenia in Aulide, I, 9.



Figure 8. "M. de Hilligsberg in the Ballet of Ken-si & Tao, Performed for Her Benefit the 14th of May 1801," drawn by H. de Janry, engraved by Condé, and published by Thompson on 18 May 1801. Harvard Theatre Collection.

*M^{DE} HILLIGSBERG. in the Ballet of KEN-SI & TAO
Performed for her Benefit the 14th of May 1801.*

Published by Thompson, Great Newport Street, May 18, 1801.

10 Mad^{le} Hilligsberg

Menuetto
Poco
Adagio

The musical score is presented in eight systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system includes the title 'Menuetto Poco Adagio' and dynamic markings 'p' and 's'. The second system features a complex texture with many beamed notes. The third system includes 'pp' markings. The fourth system continues the melodic and harmonic development. The fifth system shows a change in texture with more sustained notes. The sixth system features a more rhythmic pattern. The seventh system includes 's' and 'p' markings. The eighth system concludes the piece with a final cadence.

Figure 9. Millard, Iphigenia in Aulide, I, 10.

The collection of dances at the end of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, beginning on page 10 of Volume II with the "March Lento," makes the same case in a more varied way over a longer span of time. Here the musical units are short when compared with Madle Hilligsberg's menuetto. "All the principal Dancers" are called upon to perform the march, which is thirty-two bars long and doubtless an *entrée* for the artists involved in the festive divertissement that ends the ballet. Three short pieces—of fourteen, fifteen, and twelve bars—follow, and only the first, labelled "Madle Hilligsberg," recalls in its style the delicacy of the opening of Iphigenia's menuetto. Here and throughout the divertissement, the same kinds of dynamic inflections and changes of tempo and key are encountered as in earlier dances, and with the same implication—that they are a musical reflection of the dancers' gestures. Then comes an allegro for "Madle Beddini," possibly, since this dancer was not listed in the cast, a dance omitted in the late stages of production, after the music had been sent to press. The following allegro and maestoso are unspecified as to dancer, but return to the heroic style of the opening march. Then Clytemnestra performs a chaconne, richly seasoned with dynamic inflections and distinctive changes of expressive character. Next comes a duet for the young lovers, an adagio with long-contoured themes full of melodic sighs. But it is short, sixteen bars with no repeats, and in a thematically non-rounded binary pattern. These factors lead one to suspect that it serves as an introduction to the ensuing gavotte, which is in the same key, and was perhaps for the same characters, Iphigenia and Achilles, though no assignment is made to them in the score. The gavotte is followed by another duet, for Madle Miller and Monsr. D'Egville, who by their presence together suggest that Agamemnon, smiled upon by Apollo, has been reconciled with his wife. Millard made it a *cantabile maestoso*, and filled it with dotted rhythms appropriate to regal characters. After nineteen bars the music is marked *più presto*—another change inexplicable without recourse to choreographic considerations. This *pas de deux* leads directly into the "Finale Chaconne" of eighty-seven bars, in which all participants surely took part.

Noverre thus constructed his divertissement from discrete units of differing lengths and musical characters, a versatile method adaptable to any stage situation—many dances or few, any setting, and any number of participants. Petipa and Fokine still followed a similar procedure in their divertissements, a fact immediately recognizable, in the absence of choreography, from the structure of the music.

What then, in summary, do we learn from matching the libretto and score of *Iphigenia in Aulis*? We learn that Millard's music can be analyzed in terms of the libretto and of Noverre's principles of choreography, and, when this is done, that the music makes sense. Because of the close interaction of music and gesture, which Noverre insisted was essential in his ballets, we also gain some insights, even if rudimentary ones, into his choreographic style, especially in pantomime scenes. We know something of their pacing, something of the way that gesture was handled—sometimes abruptly, sometimes with smooth transitions. With the help of a detailed libretto, we can learn, with reasonable probability of accuracy, what kinds of music were suited to what kinds of dramatic gesture—an insight of some consequence if we accept Noverre's claims about the reciprocal influence of music and gesture.

From the dances we begin to appreciate the music of a Noverre ballet as music in its own right. While it is still (as ballet music will continue to be) intimately dependent on choreography for many of its characteristics, the music of *Iphigenia*

speaks in many passages with self-contained eloquence. Given the state of preservation of production sources for the ballets of Noverre's era, the printed score of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, whatever its faults of orthography, is of singular importance in bringing us into the expressive world of Noverre's ballets. It is a piece of aesthetic material which points to that world, giving us a more substantial artistic impression of a Noverre work than do press reports or libretti. To realize this we need only ask ourselves, if we lacked any idea of the choreography of *Swan Lake*, how much of the expressive sense of that work we could derive from a reading of the libretto and a study of its music. With *Iphigenia in Aulis* the situation is no different. The libretto and score bring us as close as documents can to the balletic ideal about which Noverre wrote in the *Letters*:

Expressive, harmonious and varied music . . . suggests to me a thousand ideas, a thousand details; it transports, exalts and inflames me, and to the different impressions it has made me experience and which have entered my soul, I owe the harmony, homogeneity, superiority, novelty, passion and that multitude of striking and singular characters which impartial judges have been able to observe in my ballets. These are the natural effects of music on dancing, and of dancing on music, when two artists are attracted to each other and when the two arts blend, unite and mutually exchange their charms to captivate and please.²⁵

²⁵ *Lettres*, 1803-4, I, 198-199 (Beaumont, 144).