

**Zeitschrift:** Publikationen der Schweizerischen Musikforschenden Gesellschaft.  
Serie 2 = Publications de la Société Suisse de Musicologie. Série 2

**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Musikforschende Gesellschaft

**Band:** 50 (2009)

**Artikel:** Marie Sallé and the development of the ballet en action

**Autor:** McCleave, Sarah

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-858676>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 02.04.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Marie Sallé and the development of the ballet en action

To a volume dedicated to theatrical gesture in eighteenth-century France, the dancer Marie Sallé (c. 1707-1756) is of obvious relevance. Because of her grace and expressivity as a performer, she had a profound impact on members of her audience. She was experienced in the gestural styles required to perform comic and serious theatrical genres: in her early years, she performed entr'acte dances (usually comic) and pantomimes in the playhouses of London as well as at the «foires» in Paris; the 1730s saw her dancing in serious pantomimes and operas in Paris and London; she returned to the Fair theatres in the 1740s, with occasional appearances at the French court. Her adeptness at depicting characters, passions and sentiments influenced composers such as Georg Friedrich Handel and Jean-Philippe Rameau to respond with expressive musical gestures.<sup>1</sup> These operas also saw either a more prominent or more integrated approach to the incorporation of dance in lyrical drama than had been typical. Sallé may have *influenced* as well as inspired these experiments: her abilities as an expressive performer and as a creative artist accorded her the respect of contemporaries such as the librettist Louis de Cahusac (1706-1759), and her close association with men of letters is well documented by her biographer Emile Dacier.<sup>2</sup>

Sallé's career offers several contexts for discussing gesture – we could assess its perceived function by audiences at this time, consider how gesture connects dance with other arts (especially music), or analyze the appropriate incorporation

This text is an earlier version of an article since revised and first published in the *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland*, 3 (2007-2008), p. 1-23, <<http://www.music.ucc.ie/jsmi/index.php/jsmi/issue/view>>.

I am grateful to the School of Music, The Queen's University Belfast, for financial support towards my research, and would like to thank David Charlton, Simon Davies and Melissa Furrow for their helpful suggestions concerning this text.

1 Sarah McCleave, «Marie Sallé as Muse: Handel's Music for Mime», *The Consort*, 51 (1995), p. 13-23. Rameau's writing for Sallé is briefly considered by McCleave, «English and French Theatrical Sources: the Repertoire of Marie Sallé», in *Dance and Music in French Baroque Theatre: Sources and Interpretations*, ed. Sarah McCleave, London, Institute of Advanced Musical Studies, 1998, p. 13-32; p. 32. Also from the same author's «Marie Sallé, Handel, Rameau, and the Development of Narrative Dance Music» *Die Beziehung von Musik und Choregraphie im Ballett*, ed. Jörg Rothkamm and Michael Malkiewicz (Berlin: Vorwerk, 2007), p. 107-121.

2 Émile Dacier, *Une danseuse de l'Opéra sous Louis XV: Mlle Sallé*, Paris, Plon-Nourrit, 1909.

of gesture in different theatrical genres. This «appropriateness» could be explored on a technical level (a study of the gestures themselves) – or we could consider the dramaturgical frameworks within which these gestures operated. It is this final issue, the way the stories were presented and developed in Sallé's works, which will form the focus of this present investigation.

### *Action, caractère, expression*

The sources used shaped the character of this inquiry. There are no relevant iconographical materials and Sallé herself did not describe or notate her creations. We must therefore rely on the librettos and eye-witness accounts. To appreciate Sallé's place in the development of the *ballet en action*, we will also measure her work against the criteria of two contemporaries who valued her particularly: Jean Georges Noverre (1727-1810) and Louis de Cahusac. Noverre's admiration for Sallé's expressive performance style was directly stated by him at two points in the first edition of his *Lettres sur la danse* (1760); he would seem to have respected her creative abilities as well, for most of the pantomimes which he admired were hers:

En rapprochant toutes mes idées [...] je ne puis m'aveugler au point de convenir que la danse sans action, sans règle, sans esprit et sans intérêt, forme un ballet ou un poème en danse. Dire qu'il n'y a point de ballets à l'opéra, serait une fausseté. L'Acte des Fleurs,<sup>3</sup> l'acte d'Eglé dans les *Talents lyriques*,<sup>4</sup> le prologue des *Fêtes grecques et romaines*,<sup>5</sup> l'acte Turc de *L'Europe galante*,<sup>6</sup> un acte entre autres de *Castor et Pollux*,<sup>7</sup> et quantité d'autres, où la danse est, ou peut être mise en action avec facilité et sans effort de génie de la part du compositeur, m'offrent véritablement des ballets agréables et très intéressants; mais les danses figurées qui ne disent rien, qui ne présentent aucun sujet, qui ne portent aucun caractère, qui ne me tracent point une intrigue suivie et raisonnée; qui ne font point partie du drame et qui tombent, pour ainsi parler, des nues, ne sont à mon sens, comme je l'ai déjà dit, que de simples divertissements de danse, et qui ne me déploient que les mouvements compassés des difficultés mécaniques de l'art.<sup>8</sup>

3 From Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* (Fuzelier), first designed by Sallé and performed by her and others 23 August 1735.

4 *Les Fêtes d'Hébé, ou les Talents lyriques*, opéra-ballet by Rameau (Gautier de Montdorge et al.), also designed and premiered by Sallé on 21 May 1739.

5 *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines*, ballet héroïque by François Collin de Blamont (Fuzelier); the role of Terpsichore was premiered by Sallé's teacher, Françoise Prévost (c.1681-1741) on 13 July 1723; Handel's *Terpsichore* of 1734 was based on this text and featured Sallé in the title role.

6 (1697, La Motte, Campra). Sallé is the first known dancer to perform a pantomime in this scene, on 14 June 1736.

7 Sallé premiered the role of Hébé on 24 October 1737.

8 Jean Georges Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse, et sur les ballets, par M. Noverre [...]*, Lyon, Chez Aimé Delaroche, 1760, Lettre VII, p. 126-127.

Sallé's centrality in the early development of the *ballet en action* is implied in this passage, where we are also offered some terms and concepts with which we can measure her creations. Noverre admired ballets which featured *action*, *character*, and a «connected and logical plot» («une *intrigue* suivie et raisonnée»). We will consider Sallé's creations in light of contemporaneous references to these terms. If we weigh Noverre's statement against the definitions and analyses which follow, we can appreciate that each of the dance scenes to be discussed contributed different *aspects* to the development of the *ballet en action*.<sup>9</sup> It has been found necessary to consult several sources in order to appreciate the range or nuance of meanings which could be attached to specific dramatic terms, notably the notions of *action* and *character*, as well as the changing concepts of *expression*, and its impact on how dance was featured within opera. All writers on dance here consulted, from the Jesuit-educated antiquarian Claude Méneestrier (1631-1705) to Noverre, felt that dance ought to be expressive. The objects or concepts to be conveyed reflected the genres in which the dances were performed as well as changes in aesthetic values. Méneestrier was writing at a time when the chief vehicle for dance was the *ballet à entrées*. In this particular genre, the expressive goal was to depict contrasting *character* types (many of them fantastic or allegorical beings) in the dances.<sup>10</sup> John Weaver (1673-1760), writing some thirty years later, believed that grotesque dance (depicting characters or sentiments) could imitate «actions, manners, and passions».<sup>11</sup> In the theatre, Weaver felt that dance was closely linked to its surrounding text, as it expressed what was before sung or spoken; dance could, on its own, even tell «entire stories by *action*» – here he is describing what he termed «scenical dance», a category distinct from grotesque dance.<sup>12</sup> Weaver developed his concept of scenical dance in his «dramatic entertainments of dancing», and provided precise descriptions of the gestures his performers used to depict affections such as «admiration» and passions such as «jealousy» in the text for his first such serious work, *The Loves of Mars and Venus* (London, 1717).<sup>13</sup> Some forty years

9 The term «aspects» has been preferred over the concept of «stages» (*degrés*) – as we will see, chronology does not account for all the differences between Sallé's creations. For guidance, the reader is referred to the table at the end of this article, which summarises the connections between each work considered and the critical writings discussed.

10 Michel de Pure, *Idées des spectacles anciens et nouveaux*, Paris, Michel Brunet, 1668, p. 282, and Claude Méneestrier, *Des Représentations en musique anciennes et modernes*, Paris, René Guignard, 1681, p. 43-44, both refer to «des actions extérieures de l'homme».

11 John Weaver, *An Essay Towards an History of Dancing*, London, Jacob Tonson, 1712, in Richard Ralph, *The Life and Works of John Weaver*, London, Dance Books, 1985, p. 652. Méneestrier, *Des Représentations*, *op. cit.*, p. 160, suggests that passions and manners are more difficult to imitate than actions.

12 Weaver, *An Essay Towards an History of Dancing*, *op. cit.*, p. 665-667.

13 *Id.*, p. 735-761. It is possible that Sallé attended a performance or a rehearsal of this entertainment, for she was in London in the spring of 1717. Weaver is a central figure in the development

later, Noverre reflected a newer school of thought by declining to tell the performer how to depict each emotional state – instead, the performer should feel the emotions suggested in the text, and then convey these emotions to the spectators.<sup>14</sup> Thus Sallé's work fell within a period which saw a considerable shift in the approach to pantomime as a performance art.

Georgia Cowart, writing about French musical criticism from this time, identifies «one of the central themes of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century criticism [as] the struggle between what had finally become a rigid and rule-bound Aristotelian mimesis, and new critical paths which could more easily accommodate new directions in artistic thought.»<sup>15</sup> Cowart interprets her sources with reference to semiotic terminology, for she explores the relationship between the signifier (the musical sounds, or the basic material of an art form) and the signified (its meaning) within them.<sup>16</sup> This approach has some foundation in the French

of the *ballet en action*; his own indebtedness to French sources is revealed in Ralph's endnotes and commentary.

14 Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse, op. cit.*, Lettre VII, p. 125. Susan Leigh Foster would identify the difference between Weaver's and Noverre's approach to pantomime as the difference between «imitating» and «following» nature. See *Choreography and Narrative: Ballet's Staging of Story and Desire*, Bloomington-Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1996, p. 108. The writings of Noverre's contemporaries on the relationship between nature and theatrical gesture or *action* and the desirability of formulating rules about the performance of pantomime reveal some conceptual distinctions. See Louis de Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne et moderne ou Traité historique de la danse* [1754], ed. Nathalie Lecomte, Laura Naudeix, Jean-Noël Laurenti, Paris, Desjonquères/Centre National Supérieur de la Danse, 2004, Book I, p. 17; Cahusac, headword DANSE, in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une Société de Gens de lettres*, ed. Denis Diderot, Jean le Rond d'Alembert, 17 vol., Paris, Briasson et al., 1751-1765, vol. 4 (1754), p. 623-626; p. 623; this edition hereafter *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.; see also Johann Georg Sulzer, headword EXPRESSION (Art théâtral), in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences [...]*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 39 vol., Geneva, Jean-Léonard Pellet; Neufchâtel, la Société Typographique, 1777-1780, vol. 13, p. 662-664; p. 663; this edition, hereafter *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., is one of the numerous counterfeit editions, considerably expanded (notably by integrating articles of the *Supplément de l'Encyclopédie*). See also Sulzer, NATURE, (Beaux-Arts), *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 22 (1779), p. 761-764; p. 762; Charles Compañ, *Dictionnaire de danse*, Paris, Cailleau, 1787, p. 163-164; Henry Siddons, *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture and Action*, London, Richard Phillips, 1807, p. 137. The development of Feuillet dance notation at the beginning of the eighteenth century testifies to the French interest in codification at that time; the «classification of physical attitudes» in the work of René Descartes (1596-1650) and Charles Le Brun (1619-1690) is discussed in Angelica Gooden, *Actio and Persuasion: Dramatic Performance in Eighteenth-Century France*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 2. The role of sensibility in acting technique is discussed by Marian Hobson, *The Object of Art: the Theory of Illusion in Eighteenth-Century France*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 194-208.

15 Georgia Cowart, Introduction, *French Musical Thought, 1600-1800*, ed. Georgia Cowart, Ann Arbor, UMI Press, 1989, p. 1-6; p. 3.

16 Georgia Cowart, «Inventing the Arts: Changing Critical Language in the Ancien Régime», in Cowart, *French Musical Thought, op. cit.*, p. 211-238.

concept of «expression» as defined in the third edition of the *Encyclopédie*: «EXPRESSION (Beaux Arts) [...] se rapporte au mouvement de l'âme, à ses passions excitées ou représentées par des signes extérieurs. On donne ce nom tantôt au signe, comme à la cause du mouvement de l'âme, tantôt à l'effet que ce signe produit.»<sup>17</sup>

This emphasis on *signs* is not present in the first edition, although the notion of *affecting* the spectator is included: «L'expression est donc la maniere de peindre ses idées, et de les faire passer dans l'esprit des autres.»<sup>18</sup> Noverre also emphasized the *effect* of these signs on the spectators in his consideration of *action*. Expression was deemed absolutely essential for dancers who were, without this attribute, merely *sauteurs* (jumpers).<sup>19</sup>

Extant sources enable us to develop some idea of how Sallé's performances affected her audiences. As Noverre valued *action* and many of the works that he admired were designed by Sallé, we need to clarify what this term could mean. Its significance changed according to context, and over time. In the first part of the eighteenth century lexicographers do not seem to consider the effects of *actions*, but the association of emotions with specific signs was clearly established.<sup>20</sup> Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* (1690) is typical:

ACTION [...] On peut dire que toutes les passions des hommes par lesquelles l'ame se porte à quelque chose [...] sont de veritables actions [...]. Se dit plus particulièrement des gestes, du mouvement du corps, & de l'ardeur avec laquelle on prononce, ou on fait quelque chose [...]

17 [Diderot], EXPRESSION (Beaux-Arts), *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 13 (1779), p. 658-659; p. 658; Sulzer, EXPRESSION, *id.*, p. 662-664; p. 662. In the article EXPRESSION, *New Grove Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner, 34 vol., London, Macmillan, 1996, vol. 10, p. 689-692; p. 689. Stephanie Ross suggests that our understanding of this concept has not really changed: «Today "expression" indicates the outward manifestation in behaviour of an inward state of mind» (p. 689). The Chevalier de Jaucourt referred to «les signes extérieurs de ces affections», in PASSION, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 12 (1765), p. 150-152; p. 152; Jocelyn Powell discusses this phenomenon with regard to dance in «Dance and Drama in the Eighteenth Century: David Garrick and Jean Georges Noverre», *Word and image*, 4 (1988), p. 678-691; p. 678. See Gooden, *Actio and Persuasion*, *op. cit.*, p. 9, for an overview of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French attitudes towards the expression of «inward states»; Hobson, *The Object of Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 204, discusses the use and interpretation of signs by actors and spectators in French theatre at this time.

18 Abbé Mallet, EXPRESSION, (Belles-Lettres), *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 6 (1756), p. 315; Hobson, *The Object of Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 140, attributes this change in the relationship of audience to play as «the spectator's participation mov[ing] from the interpersonal to the private [...] his experience must be unmediated [...] tak[ing] on [...] the feelings of the actor.»

19 Abbé Mallet, EXPRESSION (Belles-Lettres), *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 6 (1756), p. 315.

20 Patricia Magli credits this association, initially, to Descartes. See «The System of the Passions in Eighteenth-Century Dramatic Mime», *Versus: quaderni di studi semiotici*, 22 (1979), p. 32-47; p. 39.

ce qui est le plus requis en un Orateur, c'est *l'action* [...].<sup>21</sup> Se dit aussi en Peinture de la posture & de la disposition du corps ou du visage, quand ils marquent quelque passion de l'ame. Il étoit à genoux en *action* de suppliant. Il a peint Jupiter avec une *action* menaçante. Il y a beaucoup *d'action* dans les tableaux de Poussin.<sup>22</sup>

All the definitions supplied above have some relevance to the development of the *ballet en action*. «Actions» were signs which effectively indicated different emotions or states, as this stage direction from Weaver's *The Judgment of Paris* (London, 1733) suggests: «*Paris*, full of Admiration, &c. at the End of the Dance approaches *Helen* with all the Actions of Love, Respect, and Desire». <sup>23</sup>

In Charles Batteux's *Principes de la littérature* (1747), the definition of *action* is helpful when we are considering dramaturgical issues: «The action will serve only as a kind of canvas designed, to bear, support, bring together, and join the different passions, that the artist has a mind to express». <sup>24</sup> Thus we learn that *action* is associated with passions (Furetière), even linking them together (Batteux); we find *action* in the gestures and manner of an orator or in the *intrigue* of a theatrical work; the posture and disposition of a body in a painting is also known as *action*. <sup>25</sup> In Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* Landois clarified the link between the materials of an art and their expressive purpose: «ACTION, *en peinture et en sculpture*, est l'attitude ou la position des parties du visage et du corps des figures représentées, qui fait juger qu'elles sont agitées de passions. On dit: cette figure exprime bien par son *action* les passions dont elle est agitée». <sup>26</sup>

Noverre emphasized the role of *action* in signifying emotions even more strongly, for he equated it with the art of pantomime, where the sole function of gesture was to convey sentiments to the spectator through a succession of moving pictures:

21 John Weaver's comment in the Introduction to his *The Loves of Mars and Venus* (1717) would seem to carry a similar meaning: «I am satisfied, that the agreeable Appearance some of our best Players make upon the Stage at this Time, is as much owing to the Justness of their *Action*, as any other Qualification whatsoever». Weaver, *An Essay Towards an History of Dancing*, *op. cit.*, p. 741.

22 Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel*, 3 vol., La Haye-Rotterdam, Chez Arnout & Reinier Leers, 1690, vol. 1, non paginated. Presumably this is what Ménestrier, *Des Représentations en musique anciennes et modernes*, *op. cit.*, meant by his reference to «des actions extérieures» being expressed in ballet (p. 43-44).

23 John Weaver's adaptation of William Congreve's *The Judgment of Paris*, in Weaver, *An Essay Towards an History of Dancing*, *op. cit.*, p. 838-854; p. 851; emphasis added. This entertainment was first staged at London's Drury Lane Theatre in June 1733.

24 Charles Batteux, *A Course of the belles lettres: Or the Principles of Literature* (1747), trad. Mr Miller, London, B. Low & Co. et al., 1761, p. 175.

25 Abbé Mallet, ACTION EN POÉSIE, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 1 (1751), p. 120-122; Mallet quotes Fénelon's *Discours sur le Poème épique, et sur l'excellence du poème Télémaque* (1719).

26 Paul Landois, ACTION EN PEINTURE ET SCULPTURE, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 1 (1751), p. 124.

*L'action* en matière de danse est l'art de faire passer par l'expression vraie de nos mouvements, de nos gestes et de la physionomie, nos sentiments et nos passions dans l'âme des spectateurs. *L'action* n'est donc autre chose que la *pantomime*. Tout doit peindre, tout doit parler chez le danseur; chaque geste, chaque attitude, chaque port de bras doit avoir une expression différente; la vraie *pantomime*, en tout genre, suit la nature dans toutes ses nuances.<sup>27</sup>

Although the concept of *action* as a gesture or stance which conveyed a mood or passion was present in the earlier sources, it was not until the later part of the eighteenth century that we find an emphasis on the *effect* of *actions* on their spectators. As Noverre was a student of Marie Sallé, it is certainly possible that his expectations and values were shaped, in part, by his contact with her.<sup>28</sup>

### The expressive function of dance in Fuzelier's and Blamont's *Les Festes grecques et romaines*

Noverre admired Louis Fuzelier's *Les Festes grecques et romaines* (Paris, 1723), which was set to music by Collin de Blamont. Sallé's teacher Françoise Prévost premiered the role of Terpsichore, muse of the dance. Handel's *Terpsichore*, with Sallé in the title role, was closely modeled on this prologue. We will consider the French prologue in the context of writings about *character* at that time, while noting an apparent change in the expressive function of dance between the two works. In both prologues, the *subject* which occasioned the different passions expressed was a festival attended by the muses and Apollo. The sung airs of Apollo and the other muses developed the story, providing the *action* for Terpsichore's preceding or following dance.<sup>29</sup> In the Paris prologue, Terpsichore's sarabande caused a follower of Apollo to advise young beauties to sing and dance in order to win hearts. Thus the sarabande, appropriately, was connected with seduction. The contrasting musical *character* of the rigaudon celebrated the exploits of heroes. The next portion of this entertainment saw the muse of the dance expressing the *character of the music* through the variety of her steps and attitudes:

27 Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse, op. cit.*, Lettre x, p. 262-263; emphasis added. See also Pierre Richelet, *Dictionnaire de la langue françoise, ancienne et moderne [...], nouvelle édition*, 3 vol., Paris, Aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1769, vol. 1, p. 39: «ACTION. Ce mot généralement parlant, veut dire le mouvement de quelque partie ou de quelque chose que ce soit *qui agit et qui produit quelque effet*. (On dit en ce sens, une action vive, une action ardente et pleine de feu [...]); emphasis added.

28 Noverre would have studied with Sallé at the Opéra-Comique in 1743; he evidently saw her dance frequently in her own home.

29 In the Paris prologue, the dance preceded the air which described it; Handel's prologue had the dance following its descriptive text. I have adopted the use of the terms «subject» and



«Erato et Apollon célèbrent les louanges de Terpsichore dans une cantate. Et la muse de la danse *en exprime les symphonies et les chants*, par la variété de ses pas et des attitudes.»<sup>30</sup> Writers at this time clearly felt that dance relied on music for depicting *character*. Cahusac suggested that each piece of music will have its own «esprit» from which the dancer could determine the *character* to be portrayed.<sup>31</sup>

As Edith Lalonger cautions in her study of *Les Caractères de la danse*, we should not assume that these texts outlined literal pantomimic scenarios.<sup>32</sup> Terpsichore's performance in an *Air Rondeau* won praise from Erato and Apollo for «peignez à nos yeux les transports des Amants, les tendres soins, la flateuse esperance, le Desespoir jaloux, la cruelle Vengeance.» By describing her sentiments *as* steps («Tous vos pas sont des sentiments»), signified and signifier have become one. The dancer's imitation, however, would have been removed from nature:

«action» as distinguished by Jean François Marmontel, FABLE (Belles-Lettres), *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 6 (1756), p. 349: «Le sujet du poème est l'idée substantielle de l'action: l'action par conséquent est le développement du sujet [...]». Marmontel acknowledged that many of his contemporaries equated *sujet*, *action* and *intrigue* without making any finer distinctions.

30 *Les Festes grecques et romaines, ballet héroïque par monsieur Collin de Blamont* [...] in *Recueil général des opéras représentés par l'Académie royale depuis son établissement*, 16 vol., Paris, Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, 1703-1746; R Geneva, Slatkine, 16 vol. in 3 vol., vol. 3, p. 276-277; emphasis added. The character-bearing properties of music are discussed by Jane R. Stevens, «The Meanings and Uses of *Caractère* in Eighteenth-Century France», in Cowart, *French Musical Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 23-52. See also Edith Lalonger, «J. F. Rebel's *Les Caractères de la danse*: Interpretative Choices and Their Relationship to Dance Research», in McCleave, *Dance and Music in French Baroque Theatre*, *op. cit.*, p. 105-123; Friedrich Melchior Grimm, POÈME LYRIQUE (Littérature), *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 12 (1765), p. 823-836; p. 835.

31 «Dans toute *entrée* de danse, le danseur, à qui on suppose de la vigueur & de l'habileté, a trois objets principaux & indispensables à remplir. Le premier, les contrastes perpétuels de la force & de la grace, en observant que la grace suive toujours les coups de vigueur. Le second, l'esprit de l'air que ses pas doivent rendre; car il n'est point d'air de danse, quelque plat que le musicien puisse le faire, qui ne présente une sorte d'esprit particulier au danseur qui a de l'oreille & du goût. Le troisieme, de former toujours sa danse de pas, & de ne les sacrifier jamais aux sauts [...]». Cahusac, ENTRÉE, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 5 (1755), p. 730-731; p. 731. See also L'abbé Mallet, CARACTÈRE DANS LES PERSONNAGES, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 2 (1751), p. 667-668; p. 667: «Caractère [...] est l'inclination ou la passion dominante qui éclate dans toutes les démarches et les discours de ces personnages, qui est le principe et le premier mobile de toutes leurs démarches et les discours de ces personnages, qui est le principe et le premier mobile de toutes leurs actions.»

32 Lalonger, «J. F. Rebel's *Les Caractères de la danse*», *op. cit.*, p. 114, addresses the tendency of modern performers to take a *parodie* of Rebel's work published in the *Mercure galant* (July 1721, p. 64-72) as a literal scenario of what the dancer should convey. As she points out, «a dancer who mimes an old man in love, bent over with cane in hand [...] would convey a grotesque character and not that of the noble courante.»

Il ne peut l'imiter [la nature] que de loin; et rendre d'une manière toute différente ce qu'elle lui aura indiqué. Tous ses pas, tous ses mouvements tiennent à l'art; la nature n'en a point de semblables, et cependant ils doivent porter le caractère de la nature. Il faut que dans chaque mouvement du danseur, on puisse lire le sentiment qui le meut; *ses pas sont autant de mots* qui nous disent ce qui se passe dans son cœur.<sup>33</sup>

The perceived distance between dance and nature alters our interpretation of Fuzelier's 1723 prologue, which described the dancer's steps as signs equally as meaningful as words. Indeed, Jean François Marmontel's viewpoint (which was still in circulation in 1779) considered dance's communicating role in general, rather than specific, terms:

La danse en général est une peinture vivante. [...] & pourvu que dans les attitudes, dans le caractère des têtes, dans l'ensemble de l'action, il y ait assez d'analogie avec telle espèce de sentiments & de pensées, pour induire l'âme & l'imagination du spectateur à chercher dans le vague de cette expression muette une intention décidée [...].<sup>34</sup>

These writers suggest that dance itself could not carry the entire meaning of a story. Blamont's music for *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines* reinforces this aesthetic stance, for the danced «air en rondeau» mentioned above maintained a consistent lilting and pleasant *character* in 3/4 metre; it was not until the vocal music which followed that its *character* changed as the affects «Les tendres soins, la flauteuse esperance, | Le Desespoir jaloux, la cruelle Vengeance» were reintroduced.<sup>35</sup> Thus the music itself suggests that *specific emotions* were conveyed only in the texted portion of the drama. Marmontel's limited view of dance as a vague or general expressive agent would seem to be supported by the musical structure of this prologue. Although the dancer was expected to represent different *manners* (seductive, admiring, fleet of foot),<sup>36</sup> the concept of expressing and conveying passions (*pace* Noverre) themselves was confined to the vocal music which followed the «air en rondeau».

The anonymous adaptor's revisions to *Terpsichore*, however, strengthened the implied function of the dancer (Sallé) as a communicator of passions. It is worth considering the possibility that these revisions were done to account for Sallé's particular skills and to accommodate her vision of how this prologue could

33 Sulzer, EXPRESSION, *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 13, p. 663; emphasis added.

34 Marmontel, PANTOMIME (Art Dramatique), *id.*, vol. 24, p. 419-423; p. 422.

35 *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines, ballet en musique par monsieur Collin de Blamont*, in *Recueil général des operas*, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

36 Weaver does not provide a concise definition of what he meant by the term «manners», but from his defense of the educative value of dancing (Weaver, *An Essay Towards an History of Dancing*, *op. cit.*, p. 425-437) we may infer that «confidence», «assurance», «boldness», and «diffidence» are representative of this concept.

function. Terpsichore's first solo dance, a sarabande, was introduced by Erato telling us that the muse «all to Joy and Mirth excites».<sup>37</sup> For her next dance, a *gigue*, «Terpsichore, with expressive *Action*, shews the Transports of a Lover» after being commanded by Apollo to «paint all the Transports ardent Lovers feel, When the Belov'd a mutual Flame reveal».<sup>38</sup> In an untitled dance, «Terpsichore changing her Movements, represents those Passions» – «those passions» being the «Hope and Fear» experienced by a lover, as explained in Erato's introductory recitative. Terpsichore then «shews the Force» of jealousy after being commanded to do so by Apollo; as in the French prologue, she concluded by «imitat[ing] the Rapid-ity of the Wind.» It can be argued that *Terpsichore* (1734) was closer to Noverre's concept of *action*, where every gesture had expressive significance, than was the prologue to *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines* (1723).

Neither of these prologues, however, developed *actions* in a successive manner, as described by Louis de Cahusac in *La Danse ancienne et moderne* (1754):

Dans une action [...] tout l'art de la danse [serait] employé à peindre par gradation et d'une manière successive [...]. Toutes les circonstances [...] demeureraient gravées dans l'esprit du spectateur, échaufferaient son âme par degrés, et lui feraient goûter tout le plaisir que produit au théâtre le charme de l'imitation.<sup>39</sup>

Noverre considered how a dancer could depict the «successive stages» of a passion:

Lorsque les danseurs animés par le sentiment, se transformeront sous mille formes différentes avec les traits variés des passions; lorsqu'ils seront des Protées, et que leur physionomie et leurs regards traceront tous les mouvements de leur âme; lorsque leurs bras sortiront de ce chemin étroit que l'école leur a prescrit, et que, parcourant avec autant de grâce que de vérité un espace plus considérable, ils décriront par des positions justes les mouvements successifs des passions [...].<sup>40</sup>

Cahusac's description of the «action épisodique» which Sallé introduced in a 1736 revival of André Campra's *L'Europe galante*, suggests that she may well have had a role in shaping his expectations, as expressed nearly twenty years later:

37 *Il Pastor fido* [...] the third edition, with large Additions, London, T. Wood, 1734.

38 The wording of Apollo's command and the stage direction here are strongly reminiscent of Furetière's definition of *action* in the context of painting, quoted above, p. 179-180.

39 Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne et moderne*, *op. cit.*, Seconde partie, Livre troisième, IV. «Vices du grand ballet», p. 197. The marks of omission refer to illustrative passages concerning the *actions* of a group of furies.

40 Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse*, *op. cit.*, Lettre VII, p. 122. In his *Discours sur la poésie dramatique* (1758), Diderot also favoured a gradual development of passions and characters: see John Hope Mason, *The Irresistible Diderot*, London, Quartet Books, 1982, p. 144.

Mademoiselle Sallé cependant qui raisonnait tout ce qu'elle avait à faire, avait eu l'adresse de placer une action épisodique fort ingénieuse dans la passacaille de *L'Europe galante*. Cette danseuse paraissait au milieu de ses rivales avec les grâces et les désirs d'une jeune odalisque qui a des desseins sur le cœur de son maître. Sa danse était formée de toutes les jolies attitudes qui peuvent peindre une pareille passion. *Elle l'animait par degrés: on lisait, dans ses expressions une suite de sentiments: on la voyait flottante tour à tour entre la crainte et l'espérance; mais, au moment où le sultan donne le mouchoir à la sultane favorite, son visage, ses regards, tout son maintien prenaient rapidement une forme nouvelle. Elle s'arrachait du théâtre avec cette espèce de désespoir des âmes vives et tendres, qui ne s'exprime que par un excès d'accablement.*<sup>41</sup>

We can see the series of sentiments and the opportunity to display varied *characters* or states which would have aroused Noverre's admiration, and the *successive* development of *passions* valued by Noverre, Cahusac, and Diderot. This scene also offered a more sophisticated treatment of *action* than we find in *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines*, for we experience two opposing plans (the aspirations of Sallé's odalisque *versus* the desires of the Sultan and his favorite) which the abbé Mallet suggested are essential causes of an *action*.<sup>42</sup>

### Marie Sallé's dances for *L'Europe galante*

We are especially indebted to Cahusac for his description of Sallé's performance, for the text of the 1736 ballet merely indicated that «des Sultanes forment plusieurs Danses pour plaire à Zuliman».<sup>43</sup> Zuliman was the Sultan whose love-life featured in the fifth *Entrée* of *L'Europe galante*, «La Turquie». The function of dance as suggested in the text for this ballet reflected the design of the poet, Antoine Houdar de La Motte (1672-1731). The *action* of the entire *Entrée*, the Sultan's change of favourite from Roxane to Zaïde, was intensified in the sung portions of this scene, where all the *Sultanes* reveal their love for their master («Que l'Amour dans nos cœurs fasse naître | Mille ardeurs pour nôtre auguste Maître»); Zuliman then declared his love for Zaïde («Vous brillez seule en ces retraits»). We have no evidence that earlier stagings of this ballet (first performed on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1697, it was revived in 1703, 1715, and 1724), which featured the dance at the very beginning of the scene, ever treated it as anything other than a conventional court entertainment. Indeed, critics at the time commented on the

41 Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne et moderne, op. cit.*, Livre quatrième, XI. «Des actions épisodiques en danse», p. 236; emphasis added.

42 L'abbé Mallet, ACTION EN POÉSIE, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 1 (1751), p. 121. This phenomenon can be seen even more clearly in the «Ballet des Fleurs»; see the discussion below.

43 Antoine Houdar de La Motte, *L'Europe galante*, Paris, Jean-Baptiste-Christophe Ballard, 1736, p. 38. The musical score has a chaconne at this point.

general lack of connection between dance scenes and the *action* of the larger works to which they were attached; dance was viewed by them as an interruption, given the way in which the poets (and particularly La Motte) situated it within their works.<sup>44</sup> Although Cahusac identified *L'Europe galante* as being amongst the best ballets in the repertory, he noted a particular fault: «Les danses n'y sont que des danses simples; nulle action relative au sujet ne les anime; on danse dans *L'Europe galante* pour danser».<sup>45</sup> Presumably, before Sallé, *character* was conveyed in this particular ballet more by the costumes than by the *action* of the dancers.

Cahusac's use of the phrase «une action épisodique» suggests that Sallé's performance formed «une action complète»: although joined to the principal subject, the latter would be complete without the danced episode.<sup>46</sup> Sallé embellished the design of the poet by choosing an *action* which mirrored that of the *Entrée* as a whole; her scene was all the more significant for *anticipating* Roxane's tempestuous reaction to her rejection – this *Sultane* subsequently threatened her rival with a dagger. Sallé did not enact Roxane's *action* precisely, but she painted a vivid picture of the character's passions and her state of mind, conveying these to Cahusac as a spectator in a highly effective manner.<sup>47</sup> The description by l'abbé d'Aubignac of *action* (quoted in a 1769 source) as an intense and engaging experience, would also seem to apply to Sallé's creation:

C'est-à-dire, que depuis l'ouverture du théâtre, jusqu'à l'ouverture de la catastrophe, il faut que les principaux personnages soient toujours agissants, et que le théâtre porte continuellement, et sans interruption, l'image de quelques desseins, attentes, passions, troubles, inquiétudes, et autres semblables agitations qui ne permettent pas aux spectateurs de croire que l'action du théâtre a cessé.<sup>48</sup>

44 See Toussaint Rémond de Saint-Mard, *Réflexions sur l'Opéra* (1741), in *Ceuvres de Monsieur Rémond de St. Mard*, 5 vol., Amsterdam, Pierre Mortier, 1749, vol. 5, p. 213; Friedrich Melchior Grimm, POÈME LYRIQUE, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 12 (1765), p. 833; Marmontel, PANTOMIME, *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 24, p. 422; the role of dance in opera is questioned by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, OPÉRA (Belles-Lettres), *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 23 (1779), p. 750-757; p. 757.

45 Cahusac, BALLET, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 2 (1751), p. 42-46; p. 45. Cahusac also commented on La Motte's preference for *danse simple* in his episodes; see *La Danse ancienne et moderne*, *op. cit.*, Livre quatrième, III. «Obstacles au progrès de la danse», p. 225, note, and XI. «Des actions épisodiques en danse», p. 236.

46 Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne et moderne*, *op. cit.*, Livre quatrième, XI. «Des actions épisodiques en danse», p. 236.

47 This was not the only time when Sallé was associated with a scene linked so closely to the *action* of the ballet, for she had a leading role in the dance scene featuring Hébé in Rameau's *Castor et Pollux*. The connection between this pantomimic scene and the *intrigue* of the opera itself was recognised by the *Mercure* in its review of the 1754 revival (February 1754, p. 189), as cited in Dacier, *Une danseuse de l'Opéra*, *op. cit.*, p. 197-198.

48 François Richelet, ACTION, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

In this *action* of 1736, we can see Sallé fulfilling aesthetic criteria which were circulating some 30 years later. Noverre, when drawing on the same story for his *ballet en action*, *Les Jalousies du sérail*,<sup>49</sup> provided a more developed *intrigue* with a greater number of incidents. The scene opened with a grand banquet, complete with food-bearing eunuchs and an entire harem of dancing *Sultanes* expressing their desire for their master. The Sultan's choice was not made in song, but rather in a mimic display where he remained undecided, for quite some time, between his two favorites. The reaction of all the rejected *Sultanes* was followed by a scene in which they were ordered to honor the new favorite (*Zaïre*); the lovers dance, then retire; the rejected favorite (*Zaïde*) expressed her rage in a thwarted suicide attempt. *Zaïre* returned, and the rivals then engaged in an armed combat, but were separated by the *figurantes*; the eunuchs then alerted the absent Sultan of the problem, whose arrival effected a sudden shift of mood. All participated in a festival honouring *Zaïre* and the two women were reconciled in a *pas de trois* where the Sultan showed a marked preference for *Zaïre* throughout.

This fully-fledged *ballet en action* admitted a more expansive *intrigue* than could have been realised in Sallé's single dance. As clarified by Marmontel, the *intrigue* developed the subject through a series of incidents which «nouent» (knit) and «dénouent» (unravel) the *action*.<sup>50</sup> Sallé's *action* only had one incident, the Sultan's selection of his favourite. So her «action épisodique» was less complicated than Noverre's, but did fulfill Diderot's criteria – published twenty-nine years after Sallé's *action* was staged:

Dans le poème dramatique, l'*intrigue* consiste à jeter les spectateurs dans l'incertitude sur le sort qu'auront les principaux personnages introduits dans la scène; mais pour cela elle doit être naturelle, vraisemblable et prise, autant qu'il se peut, dans le fond même du sujet.<sup>51</sup>

Sallé's scene stemmed from the *subject* of the poem itself, was natural in its context, and would have effected uncertainty in its spectators. Cahusac's description of her performance, however, does not reveal a «combat des passions» which should be the cause of this uncertainty:

Dans la tragédie moderne l'*intrigue* résulte non seulement du choc des incidents, mais du combat des passions; et c'est par là que dans l'attente de l'événement décisif, l'espérance et la crainte se succèdent et se balancent dans l'âme des spectateurs.<sup>52</sup>

49 Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse*, *op. cit.*, Lettre XIV, p. 419 *sq.*

50 Marmontel, FABLE, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 6 (1756), p. 349.

51 [Diderot], INTRIGUE (Belles-Lettres), *id.*, vol. 8 (1765), p. 845-846; p. 846. See Richelet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, *op. cit.*, for a comparable definition of *action*.

52 Marmontel, INTRIGUE (Belles-Lettres), *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 18, p. 982-986; p. 984.

We can observe a «combat» in the scene between the Rose and Borée in Sallé's «Ballet des Fleurs» for Rameau's *Les Indes galantes*:

Au milieu du théâtre est un rosier, qui en séparant laisse voir l'illustre Mlle Sallé sur un gazon, couronnée par les Amours. Six jeunes Asiatiques, représentant d'autres fleurs, l'accompagnent, et forment avec elle, et la décoration qui l'environne, le plus brillant spectacle qui ait jamais paru sur la scène lyrique. Le ballet représente pittoresquement le sort des fleurs dans un jardin. On les a personnifiées ainsi que *Borée* et *Zéphire*, pour donner l'âme à cette peinture galante. La Rose, leur reine, danse seule; sa danse est interrompue par un orage qu'amène Borée; les fleurs en éprouvent la colère. La Rose résiste plus longtemps à l'ennemi qui la persécute; les pas de Borée expriment son impétuosité et sa fureur. Les attitudes de la Rose peignent sa douleur et ses craintes. Zéphire arrive avec la clarté renaissante, il ranime et relève les fleurs abattues par la tempête; il termine leur triomphe et le sien par les hommages que sa tendresse rend à la Rose.<sup>53</sup>

Here the combat was set up by the *characters* of the protagonists, for no motives were given for Borée's anger – this *passion* was merely a fundamental part of his being, just as the Rose's softness was part of hers. Although «softness» is a *manner* rather than a *passion*, the contrast between the *characters* of Borée and the Rose was what would have made this scene effective as a piece of theatre.<sup>54</sup> The concept of two opposing plans setting up the *action* can be seen in the opposition of the flowers' desire to have a festival with the destructive tendencies of Borée; his intention to ruin their celebration was, in turn, thwarted by the intervention of Zéphire.

This scene represented a transitional period as far as the treatment of *action* is concerned. Although the very poses detailed by Furetière in his definition of this term («Il était à genoux en *action* de suppliant. Il a peint Jupiter avec une *action* menaçante»<sup>55</sup>) would have been demonstrated in the encounter between the Rose and Borée, it is difficult to appreciate this scene as one where the dancers instilled («faire passer») their emotions in the spectators, as it relied on characterization and replication for its effect rather than providing an exposition of the protagonists' motives.<sup>56</sup> We may empathize with the Rose's fear, but we are unlikely to *feel* Borée's anger.

53 *Mercur de France*, September 1735, p. 2045-2046. This text is taken from Fuzelier's libretto, Paris, Ballard, 1736, p. 46.

54 Sarah R. Cohen suggests that the term «caractère» at this time was largely synonymous with «émotion». Cohen argues that painters such as Watteau excelled in the presentation of character, and were not concerned with narrative as such; «Body as “character” in early eighteenth-century French art and performance», *Art Bulletin*, 78 (1996), p. 454-466.

55 See note 22 for Furetière's definition of «action».

56 Sulzer, *BALLET*, *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 4, p. 284-288; p. 284. Marian Hobson, *The Object of Art*, *op. cit.*, has suggested that «illusion» in spectacular opera at this time was based on a «notion of likeness [which was] in fact shifting from representation to replica.» (p. 145-147).

Despite this limitation, we can be fairly certain that many contemporaries would have admired the way in which the *action* was treated in the «Ballet des Fleurs». Indeed, this scene is cited as late as 1779 as an example of a danced interlude which was appropriate to its situation and to the *character* of the poem.<sup>57</sup> Sallé's scene clearly contained a beginning (the festival itself), a middle (Borée's destructive actions) and an end (Zéphire's intervention and the resumption of the festival).<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the expectations attached to the genre which we now term *opéra-ballet*, were fairly modest:

L'avantage de ces petits poèmes lyriques, est de n'exiger qu'une action très simple, qui donne un tableau, qui amène une fête, et qui par le peu d'espace qu'elle occupe, permet de rassembler dans un même spectacle trois opéras de genres différents.<sup>59</sup>

Some forty years after the «Ballet des Fleurs» was staged, this opera was defined as a simple *action* which provided some impressive visual effects, a celebration, and an opportunity for contrast between its different *entrées*. According to the descriptive passage from the *Mercur*e reproduced above, Sallé's 1735 ballet offered a stunning tableau at the start, with a clever design where the festival itself was the centre of the *intrigue*.

Although the description in the *Mercur*e of the «Ballet des Fleurs» conveyed the visual effects of this scene, we must turn to surviving eye-witness accounts for Sallé's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (London, 1734) to appreciate the emotive impact which Sallé appears to have had on her audience. The description offered by the *Mercur*e's correspondent certainly suggested that she engaged the emotions of her spectators in a manner which both Noverre and Cahusac would have admired:

N'attendez pas que je vous décrive *Ariane* comme *Pigmalion*: ce sont des beautés plus nobles et plus difficiles à rapporter; ce sont les expressions et les sentiments de la douleur la plus profonde, du désespoir, de la fureur, de l'abattement; en un mot, tous les grands mouvements et la déclamation la plus parfaite, par le moyen des pas, des attitudes et des gestes, pour représenter une femme abandonnée par ce qu'elle aime; vous pouvez avancer, Monsieur, que Mlle Sallé devient ici la rivale des Journets, des Duclos et des Le Couvreur.<sup>60</sup> Les Anglais qui

57 Marmontel, PANTOMIME, *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 24, p. 422-423.

58 Abbé Mallet, ACTION EN POÉSIE, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 1 (1751), p. 121.

59 Marmontel, OPÉRA (Belles-Lettres, Musique), *Encyclopédie*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 23, p. 740-750; p. 749; Gooden, *Actio and Persuasion*, *op. cit.*, discusses the role of stage action in different genres (p. 121-123) with a specific consideration of dance in opera and its development as a independent spectacle (p. 133-138).

60 Dacier, *Une Danseuse de l'Opéra*, *op. cit.*, identifies Anne-Marie de Châteauneuf (Duclos; 1664-1748) as an actress at the Comédie-Française; Adrienne Lecouvreur (1691-1730) was one of the greatest tragic actresses of the eighteenth century. It has not been possible to identify Mlle Journets.



conservent un tendre souvenir de la fameuse Oldfields,<sup>61</sup> jusqu'au point de l'avoir mise parmi les grands hommes de l'État dans Westminster, la regardent comme ressuscitée dans Mlle Sallé lorsqu'elle représente Ariane.<sup>62</sup>

It is significant that the anonymous correspondent reacted most strongly to the passions depicted. In the *Mercure* at this time, other descriptions of dance in opera inevitably focused on the *intrigue* and the staging devices. This departure from the normal style and content of a *Mercure* review is telling. Of all the events which may have occurred in this entertainment, the *succession of actions* depicted by Sallé during the «nœud» of the «intrigue» (when she was abandoned by Theseus) were what the writer felt compelled to convey.

Our second source is a portion of a poem published shortly after *Bacchus and Ariadne's* premiere in 1734, written by Pierre Bordes de Berchères:

Je fais partir SALLÉ, l'Ornement de la Scène ...  
 Les Songes, le Reveil, les Craintes, le Naufrage  
 De la tendre Ariane au Naxique Rivage,  
 Représenter en Beau de Naïves Couleurs  
 Tous ses Emportements, ses Mourantes Langueurs,  
 Ses Plaintes, ses Fureurs, ... se rendre à la Tendresse  
 D'un Dieu pour elle épris d'une amoureuse ivresse [...].<sup>63</sup>

When Berchères described Sallé's *Pigmalion*, some narrative detail concerning the *action* in the sculptor's workshop was offered. *Ariane*, however, was described in terms of the strong emotions which Sallé portrayed: fear, languish, and fury.

The extensive cast-list for this entertainment (Bacchus, Ariadne, Theseus, Phaedra, four Fawns, four Bacchantes, and four Grecians<sup>64</sup>) implies that a rather elaborate story, with several incidents, could have been depicted. It is particularly suggestive that Ariadne's sister Phaedra, who was the catalyst for Theseus's deplorable behavior, was included.<sup>65</sup> A closer look at Berchères's poem offers a plausible structure for the *intrigue* with an *exposition* built around Ariadne's

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

62 Anon., *Mercure de France*, April 1734, p. 772, as cited in Dacier, *Une danseuse de l'Opéra*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

63 Pierre Bordes de Berchères, *Le jardin de Delos ou Terpsichore a Londres. Idylle sur la demoiselle Salé [sic] [...] sur ses danses d'Ariane et de Pygmalion [...] in Crane-Court, ou le Nouveau Temple d'Apollon a Londres, Ode a Messieurs de la Societé Royale de Londres*, London, Idibus Maii, 1734, p. 12.

64 *The London Stage 1660-1800*, ed. Emmett L. Avery et al., 5 parts in 11 vol., Carbondale, Ill., Southern Illinois University Press, 1960-1968, vol. 1, Part III, p. 371 (26 February 1734).

65 Phaedra is not featured in *Les Amours des Dieux* (1727), *Ariadne* (1672), *Ariadne et Bacchus* (1696), and *Ballet des Saisons* (1695); see Claude and François Parfait's *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*, 6 vol., Paris, Lambert, 1756, vol. 1, p. 133, 169-172.

«dreams» (presumably her memories of happy times with Theseus) and the «shipwreck» – a «nœud» featuring her «awakening» (to find herself on the island where she was abandoned) and her «fears» (her reaction to her abandonment, as described in the *Mercure*) – concluding with a «dénouement» involving Bacchus and his followers. By using our knowledge of the familiar mythological story as a basis for our interpretation of the poem, we are able to furnish a plausible «intrigue» while appreciating Cahusac's description of this work as «[une] action dramatique complète.»<sup>66</sup> Berchères' poem, and indeed the myth itself, also suggests a crescendo of emotions – from «langueurs» to «plaintes» to «fureurs» – where Ariadne's initial incomprehension, rising grief, and attempted suicide are overturned by the arrival of the enamored Bacchus.<sup>67</sup> The happy resolution of the story suggests that this *action* afforded a more significant «catastrophe» (the event upon which the resolution of the drama revolves) than we find in Sallé's other works, for Bacchus's courtship of Ariadne would have offered her a change of fortune characteristic of a «catastrophe compliquée».<sup>68</sup>

The eye-witnesses's emphasis on the «nœud» could suggest that Sallé's performance as the rejected Ariadne was the most powerful part of this *ballet en action*. It is possible that this scene formed a central part of Sallé's design, for we know that her contemporary, John Weaver, experienced considerable difficulties when staging his own pantomimes. When creating *The Loves of Mars and Venus* (1717), Weaver noted: «I have not been able to get all my Dancers equal to the Design.»<sup>69</sup> He addressed this problem in his later entertainments by focusing on the interaction of the two chief protagonists, played by himself and the actress-dancer Hester Santlow. Noverre, working forty years later, did involve his

66 Cahusac, *La Danse ancienne et moderne*, *op. cit.*, Livre troisième, VI. «Preuves de la possibilité de la danse en action», p. 229.

67 I am indebted to David Charlton for this interpretation: see also his discussion of stage works based on the Ariadne myth in «Storms, Sacrifices: the "Melodrama Model" in Opera», *French Opera 1730-1830: Meaning and Media*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, chapter x.

68 Abbé Mallet, CATASTROPHE, en Poésie, *Encyclopédie*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., *op. cit.*, vol. 2 (1751), p. 772-773. The *Sultane's* change of mood from hope to despair in Sallé's *action* for *L'Europe galante* also marked a change of fortune, but the way in which this scene functioned is complicated by its close links to the lyrical portion of the drama. A «catastrophe simple» forms part of an «intrigue» which is merely «un simple passage du trouble et de l'agitation à la tranquillité» – we can see this type of «catastrophe» in the «Ballet des Fleurs». The prologue to *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines* lacked both «intrigue» and «catastrophe».

69 Weaver, *The Loves of Mars and Venus*, in Weaver, *An Essay Towards an History of Dancing*, *op. cit.*, p. 739. We should note that Weaver's first such entertainment, was also his most ambitious in this regard.

«figurantes» in the «action».<sup>70</sup> Although sources for *Bacchus and Ariadne* provided no information concerning the supporting parts, we should not therefore assume that they were of no consequence. Sallé was definitely the most prominent performer in the cast – she would have been the motivation for the *Mercur*'s report, for this review was not in the habit of publishing detailed accounts of foreign productions. And she was the *subject* of Berchères' lengthy laudatory poem, which explains the emphasis in that source. At present we simply lack sufficient information to determine how the supporting dancers were featured.

Its distinction as the only *ballet en action* to be considered doubtless accounts for some of the significant features observed in *Bacchus and Ariadne*. The particular story chosen afforded the opportunity to develop a passionate ballet which moved two of its spectators to comment on the powerful emotions it conveyed to them. The subject and the extended time scale (as compared with a single dance in an *opéra-ballet*) also would have permitted the inclusion of all the necessary characteristics of an «intrigue». The two eye-witness accounts suggest that the particular concept of «expression» developed subsequently by Noverre and the *Encyclopédistes* could already be seen in this work. The evident expressive power of *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1734) as compared with the less emotively engaging «Ballet des Fleurs» (1735) suggests that chronological factors were not *the* determining force in the development of Sallé's work.

Distinctions of genre partially accounted for the dramaturgical differences encountered. The two prologues examined notably lacked several of the concepts discussed – a successive development of a continual *action* formed by two opposing plans, and an «intrigue» where events raveled and unraveled in a «combat of passions» which was resolved by a pivotal «catastrophe». Although their celebratory nature precluded such features, these prologues did provide ample opportunity to display a range of *characters* and the *actions* appropriate to depicting these. Yet the greater emphasis on actual (rather than abstract or generalized) expression and communication implied in the wording of the text for Sallé's *Terpsichore* (as compared with its model) hinted at the beginning of a new aesthetic, where the mime of the dancer was meant to move its spectators.

70 Noverre's discussion on how the «figurantes» could be used in a «ballet en action» is to be found in the St Petersburg edition of his *Lettres sur la danse, sur les ballets et les arts*, 2 vol., St Petersburg, Schnoor, 1803; vol. 2, Lettre XV, and the Paris edition, *Lettre sur les arts imitateurs en général, et sur la danse en particulier*, 2 vol., Paris-La Haye, Collin-Himerzeel, [1807]; vol.1, Lettre XXIV. However this point is not discussed in the 1760 first edition of the *Lettres*. The 1952 edition of the *Lettres sur la danse et les arts imitateurs*, Paris, Lieutier, based on the Paris edition, provides this passage on p. 164-178 [Note de l'éditeur: Nous remercions Nathalie Lecomte pour avoir clarifié plusieurs points relatifs aux éditions successives des Lettres sur la danse de Noverre].

An attempt to compare the «Ballet des Fleurs» with Sallé's scene from *L'Europe galante* (revived in 1736) reveals several distinguishing factors despite their shared generic context. The different types of subjects – a rather quaint scenario involving personified natural elements as opposed to a human tale of love aspired and lost – would account for the arguably greater expressive impact of the latter. Of all Sallé's works, *L'Europe galante* also provided the clearest example of a *successive* development of an *action*: we could reasonably assume that the conflict between the Rose and Borée intensified as it progressed, but we have no actual authority for making this assumption. Nonetheless, the «Ballet des Fleurs» would have been regarded as an effective piece of theatre by the writers cited above, with its cleverly designed «canevas», the varied *actions* embedded in an engaging conflict, and the contrasting *characterization* of its protagonists which was used to generate the mimic portion of the scene.

The extant sources for Sallé's works suggest that she excelled in devising scenarios where her ability, as a performer, to depict *passions* and *characters* were highlighted. Her skill as a creative artist was acknowledged by fellow professionals such as Cahusac and Noverre, both of whom acknowledged her ability to design *actions* which were meaningful and moving. Her work arguably enabled critics and theatrical professionals to formulate new expectations concerning *action*, *intrigue*, and *character*, as well as developing new concepts concerning the way in which dance could function as an expressive agent – both within a larger entertainment and on its own. Although we do not have the type of evidence for Sallé that we do for reformers such as Weaver and Noverre, we can come to appreciate her contribution to the *ballet en action* by further in-depth contextual study, of which this investigation only forms the beginning.

SIGNIFIER*	FG	T	EG	IG	BA
Steps	XX			XX	XX
Dance				XX	
Face			XX		
Bearing			XX		
Attitudes	XX		XX	XX	XX
Gestures					XX
Action		XX			
Declamation					XX
SIGNIFIED**					
Character	X	X	X	X	X
Sentiments	X	X	X	X	X
Actions	X	X	X	X	X
Intrigue			X	X	?
AESTHETIC RESPONSE***					
Generic expectation opera: tableau & fête (n. 59)	X	X		X	
Dance vague expression of sentiment (n. 34)	XX	XX			
Character favoured over narrative (n. 52)	X	X			
Dance expresses <i>character</i> of music (n. 30, 31)	XX				
<i>Action</i> : manner and posture (n. 25, 26)	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Action</i> : reveals sentiment (n. 23)	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Action</i> : canvas connecting the incidents (n. 24)	X	X	X	X	X
Entire story told through <i>action</i> (n. 29)			XX	X	XX
Character motivates <i>action</i> (n. 31)			X	X	X
<i>Action</i> : two opposing plans (n. 42)			X	X	X
<i>Action</i> developed successively (n. 39, 40)			XX	?	
Danced <i>action</i> appropriate to poem (n. 57)				XX	
<i>Intrigue</i> : exposition, nœud, dénouement (n. 50-52)			X	X	X
<i>Intrigue</i> features a <i>catastrophe simple</i> (n. 68)				X	
<i>Intrigue</i> causes uncertainty (n. 51)			X	X	?
<i>Intrigue</i> formed by a combat of passions (n. 52)			X	X	X
Combat established by <i>character</i> (n. 54)				X	
Combat: <i>character</i> and motivated <i>actions</i> (n. 52, 54)			X		X
<i>Intrigue</i> features a <i>catastrophe compliquée</i> (n. 68)				?	X
<i>Expression</i> : affects spectators (n. 17-19, 27)			XX		XX

Table A. Summary review of dance scenes discussed.

- FG *Les Fêtes grecques et romaines*  
 T *Terpsichore*  
 EG *L'Europe galante*  
 IG «Ballet des Fleurs», *Indes galantes*  
 BA *Bacchus and Ariadne*  
 XX Term or attribute noted in primary source (libretto, score, critical account)  
 X or ? Author's application of values in eighteenth-century critical writings to primary sources.  
 \* The basic material or «signs» used in an art form (see n. 14, 15).  
 \*\* The message or meaning of a work of art (see n. 14-17).  
 \*\*\* This concept is found in the work of the structuralist semiologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez, but seems appropriate to the referential analysis attempted in this particular investigation. See Naomi Cumming, *SEMIOTICS, The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, London, Macmillan, 29 vol., 2001, vol. 23, p. 66-69.

