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## Textual Evidences

### ORGANIZING AND NARRATING DANCE'S HISTORY

#### DANCE'S ORIGINS

In 1682 Claude François Menestrier, a Jesuit writing on the history of dance, summarized its origins as follows:

The dance that today serves as entertainment for all peoples and persons of quality was in its origin a kind of mysterious ritual and ceremony. The Jews, to whom God himself gave his laws and the ceremonies that they observe, introduced dance into their festivities, and the pagan peoples following them worshiped their gods in dance.<sup>1</sup>

Seventy-two years later Louis de Cahusac, author of several entries on dance and gesture for Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, proposed this alternative beginning:

Man had sensations at the first moment that he breathed; and the tones of his voice, the play of his features, the movements of his body, were simply expressions of what he felt. . . .

The body was peaceful or agitated; the eyes flamed or smoldered; the arms opened or closed, rose toward heaven or sank to the earth; the feet formed steps slow or rapid; all the body, in short, responded by postures, attitudes, leaps, shudders to the sound with which the soul expressed its emotions. Thus song, which is the primitive expression of feeling, developed from itself a second which is in man, and it is this expression that we have named dance.<sup>2</sup>

For Menestrier, dance's murky origins are embedded in the social practices that constitute ritual and religion. His description evokes a group dance, both ceremonial and celebratory, and weighted with a symbolic significance passed down from one generation of performers to the next. The first records indicate that it was performed by Jews and subsequently by Egyptians and then Greeks, whose civilizations developed dancing over centuries. For Cahusac, dance's origin is both psychological and universal. His portrait of originary dance depicts a solo, a moment of discovery by a sensitive and responsive everyman moved by the power of feeling.

Dance thereby existed as an innate human response prior to any social conventions that came to govern it. For Menestrier the connection between dances past and present resides in the fact of their performance at both moments in history. Cahusac attributes such continuity to the enduring structure of the human psyche.

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Menestrier, whose work is widely acclaimed as the first extant history of dance, continues his description of dance's origins by listing the various instances of dance — by Moses and Miriam at the parting of the Red Sea, by the daughters of Silo, by David before the Ark of the Covenant — known to scholars through references in ancient texts. With the seeming spontaneity of a raconteur, Menestrier discovers each new topic or feature of dance nestled close to its predecessor. David's dance at the Ark reminds Menestrier of sacred Spanish dances, which remind him of something Lucian said about dance, and so forth. Each topic inspires the next by sharing some attribute of the dance with it.

Cahusac, who had studied Menestrier's text, describes these same dances, including much of Menestrier's commentary about them, but not before categorizing them with respect to their nature and function. In his history these dances occupy a particular place within a much larger taxonomic organization: first, they are examples of "Sacred Dances," and, within that broad category, they are instances of "Sacred Dances of the Jews." In much the same way that Cahusac's description of dance's origins segments the body, vividly cataloguing its repertoire of movements, so his history itemizes dances insofar as they conform to one of several main types. Thus he describes sacred dances of Jews, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Christians, and Turks, followed by an examination of the "Profane or Secular Dances" of these same peoples, and then concludes with a treatment of their "Theatrical" dance forms. The arrangement of the chapters on the pages renders the body of Cahusac's book as clearly jointed as the ordinary dancer he describes. White spaces and centered titles frame each chapter at predictable five- to seven-page intervals.

No such exoskeletal organization supports Menestrier's history. A glance at a section of the table of contents is sufficient to violate all categorizing sensibilities:

- On harmony.
- On paraphernalia.
- On machines.
- On costumes.
- The Crowning of Petrarch.
- Horse ballets.

Yet Menestrier leads the reader with ease from costumes to "The Crowning of Petrarch" to "Horse ballets": Petrarch's coronation made use of exemplary costumes and, as a procession, recalls other similar processions, some using horses, which in turn invites comments on horse ballets in general. And he moves just as convincingly through the entire history of dance from its earliest occurrences to the invention of the ballet to an analysis of different aspects of the ballet, with descriptions of specific ballets interspersed throughout. The chapter titles, appearing in the margins of an otherwise seamless text, simply add another level of commentary, marking noteworthy people, features of dance, or dances rather than junctures in a developing logic.<sup>3</sup>

## STAGING HISTORIES OF DANCE

Menestrier's and Cahusac's histories, so deliciously, excruciatingly different from one another, frame the historical period in which European theatrical dance undergoes the processes of both professionalization and narrativization. During this period theatrical dance loses its cast of amateurs and promotes instead the highly skilled accomplishments of professional dancers trained in a codified and delimited repertoire of steps and gestures. Selected and salaried at the king's behest, these master dancers exert enormous influence over pedagogical, stylistic, and evaluative procedures. Their designation as specialists and the sheer number of hours they can devote to dance training set these performers apart. The skills they demonstrate, while clearly issuing from the aesthetic matrix of the social dance lexicon, increasingly exceed the amateur's grasp. The same period witnesses the first experiments with dance movement as a vehicle through which a coherent narrative can be conveyed. In these danced stories, characters enact soliloquies and dialogues using gesture, dramatic posture, and facial expression. Unlike the opera-ballets, where singing characters move the plot forward and danced interludes establish a corporeal and emotional ambiance for the story, these new story ballets attempt to shift

- On figures in the ballet.
- On movements.
- Criminals exposed to suffering and death in performance.

from mimetic movements to the virtuoso vocabulary of ballet steps and back again. These experiments eventually allow theatrical dance to separate from opera and develop as an autonomous genre of spectacle.

The two dance histories likewise document the changing conceptions of the body which ensue from the challenge to absolutism undertaken during the Enlightenment. Menestrier's history, written at a moment of supreme monarchic control by Louis XIV, presumes a world of physicalized sociability which the king has helped shape. All social classes, but especially aristocrats, rely on systems of corporeal signification to convey status and identity. Louis's issuance of the patents that authorize a professional cadre of dancers only extends his authority over bodily discipline, a domain he has begun to regulate as early as the 1640s through his prescriptive behavior for proper comportment at court and his insistence on social dance occasions as performances. Cahusac's history, in contrast, participates in the Enlightenment privileging of the category of the individual human being over political and religious social formations. Enlightenment concern with expressive gesture, with gesture that depicts the intimate feelings of each character in a story, stems from its capacity to portray individual sensibilities rather than social standing. Gestural expression has the status of a kind of universal language to which all humans have equal access. Even the story ballet's use of gesture grows out of the fair theatre productions that were specifically designed as an affront and challenge to royal authority.

The shift from Louis XIV's absolutism to an Enlightenment humanism encumbers the body with a new and distinctive expressive function, and it also specifies a new relation between writing and dancing. In Menestrier's time both practices are conceptualized as forms of inscription. Each medium is equally capable of articulateness; each can represent many different things. Both forms of inscription circulate within a rigidly fixed social and political hierarchy. The chain of meaning that descends from god to king to social classes enables but also requires the body to speak. Its corporeality must be cultivated so as to ensure control over the contents of its communications. By the time Cahusac writes his history, words and movements, while each forming the vocabulary of a kind of language, are apprehended as unique in their expressive abilities. Words can translate directly into movements, as the scenarios for the story ballets demonstrate, yet movement's message appeals to heart and soul in a way that words cannot. The body's expressive movements thereby secure a private place, an incipient interiority for the individual, over which that individual exerts control.

Even though construed as a language in Enlightenment thought, the body's gestures begin to signify that which cannot be spoken. This unique role for gesture prepares the way for a complete separation between dance and text that occurs in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Dance becomes imbued with a dynamic charisma, and text is assigned the ability to interpret and theorize about the ephemeral yet magnetizing presence of the dance. So powerful is this attribution of mutually exclusive functions for dancing and writing throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that its historical specificity has only recently been questioned. But what if we allow movement as well as words the power to interpret? What if we find in choreography a form of theorizing? What if in learning to choreograph, the choreographer learns to theorize, and in learning to dance, the dancer assimilates the body of facts and the structuring of discursive frameworks that enable theorization to occur? What if the body of the text is a dancing body, a choreographed body?

This essay responds to these questions by reading two historical texts, two classic dance histories, as a choreographer might, looking for evidence of theories of relationships between body and self and one body and another body that could be choreographed. What permits this reading is a general assumption that theories of representation can translate, even if imperfectly, from one form of discourse to another. That is, literary conventions that enable such maneuvers as the framing and organization of an argument, the delineation of a subject, or the indicating of an authorial presence have choreographic equivalents. Such conventions theorize relationships between subject and surroundings or between subject and mode of expression in the same way that choreographic conventions theorize the body's relation to subject and to the expressive act. For a given historical period, the contents of these forms often, although not always, move in unison alongside one another.

In order to express choreographic equivalents from these two historical texts, to press the texts for live and moving versions of themselves, I have treated them as if they were scores for dances. The act of comparing two such different textual forms with two such similar contents foregrounds the places where theory operates, and thus where a translation to choreography(-as-theory) could occur. The righthand column of text represents the effort at one such translation. In that column the textual stances taken in the two histories toward their subjects find choreographic articulation in sets of parameters for two dances, one corresponding to Menestrier's text and the other to Cahusac's. The abstract guidelines for dance-making that are set forth in the righthand text convert as literally as

possible the text-making procedures discussed in the analysis of two histories conducted in the lefthand column of text.

Of course my interpretation of the histories as "scores" relies heavily on yet another set of "texts." These texts are the imaginary dances I have fabricated in response to fragmentary historical evidence that documents dances from the time of Menestrier and Cahusac and also in response to live concerts by choreographers attempting to reconstruct historical dances for performance in the present. Out of these texts, some written and some performed, I have developed my own imagined versions of the court ballets that Menestrier saw and directed and of the action ballets that Cahusac watched emerge during his lifetime. These imagined dances impinge on my efforts to detect the theoretical moves made in the histories, and they also influence profoundly the shaping of the corresponding choreographic directives. The righthand column thus responds choreographically to the histories but also performs as an intertext, a kind of choreographer's notebook filled with ideas that coalesce past and present images of dancing into the general features of two distinct dances, one choreographed in response to Menestrier's world and the other to Cahusac's.

SUBJECT-ING DANCE

CONSTRUCTING THE SUBJECT

*Des ballets anciens et modernes* recounts the actual history of dance in only 30 pages. The rest of the 332-page treatise is taken up with an examination of the ballet, using citations from classical and contemporary philosophers as well as descriptions of actual performances to illustrate the arguments. The text proceeds at a lively pace, shifting imperceptibly from theory to description to citation to opinion. Rarely is there any marking of the different kinds or levels of analysis. Comments of theoretical preeminence, such as the criteria for an adequate subject or the relationship between dance and painting, are often found buried, mid-paragraph, undistinguished from the descriptions

An evening-length dance incorporating various kinds of sources and involving different levels of abstraction. It presents surreal sequences of images, seemingly magical transitions from one landscape or set of characters to another. The performance progresses without developing toward an obvious climax; nor does it offer a summary, celebratory conclusion.

which surround them. Nor does Menestrier offer any summary or conclusion. The manuscript ends abruptly with the description of a newly invented Italian card game, part of the discussion of literary and other sources of subjects of ballets.

Cahusac's history, although equivalent to Menestrier's in length, is more ambitious historically and cross-culturally. He discusses dances of Mediterranean antiquity, including those of Egypt and Turkey, as well as Greece and Rome, and his treatment of ballet occupies only half the book. Chapters typically conclude with a few summary sentences or with Cahusac's opinions about the relative merits of the particular type of dance. The history follows in precise segments the development of dance until the last few chapters, where Cahusac considers briefly the main elements of ballets, in general—their actions and characters. He concludes with a summary plea for continued improvement in dancing and dance-making.

DEFINING HISTORY

Prefaces to the two histories place distinctive frames around their project. Menestrier's preface is taken up with lengthy descriptions of two ballets—one reprehensible for its indiscriminate presentation of profane and gaudy images, and the other, his own *L'Auteil de Lyon* (1658), meritorious for the restraint and appropriateness with which it develops a single theme. Cahusac's preface, instead of examining dances or choreographic principles, refutes the aesthetic theories found in other dance histories, in particular that of Abbé du Bos's *Réflexions critiques sur la*

The performance is conceived and produced for a singular occasion. Because of its commemorative function, it draws members of the community into the dance and even the dance-making. They actively interpret the dance as it is composed, embedding its form with symbolic structures and deciphering their meanings while it is performed.

*poésie et sur la peinture*. Cahusac's critique of his predecessor situates his own work within a tradition of inquiry whose purpose it is to reflect on the continuing failures and successes of dance. Where Menestrier sees in history the opportunity to reinterpret and restate a set of aesthetic principles of interest to both historians and choreographers, Cahusac casts himself as one of a group of specialists capable of evaluating "objectively" the intention of a given dance. In doing so, he sets history apart from choreography as an impartial documentation of its accomplishments and errors. History, an indispensable reference for choreographers who, because of the practical nature of their work, cannot take time to reflect on their own aesthetic decisions, creates a picture of dance's development for choreographers to evaluate.

Early in his first chapter Menestrier sets forth the principles of his historical method—to determine the origins of things with brevity and exactness through an examination of the names things have been given. A thorough consideration of these names, Menestrier argues, will establish the foundation of the art so that its various parts can be studied and related to the whole. Menestrier then proceeds to outline not the contents of the book but the source materials for this study. He proposes to treat with clarity and order the names given to dance by the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans as well as the definitions offered by Aristotle, Plato, and others. These very definitions will lead to an understanding of choreographic practice.

*The performance occurs as part of the institutionalized art offerings of the society, for general edification but not for any specific occasion. Dancers perform for viewers who are set apart in a related but separate sphere. Rather than interpret the performance, viewers evaluate its success using clearly specified aesthetic criteria. Just as dancers train to perform, so viewers educate themselves as to the levels of perfection a dance can attain.*

*Dance movements, like costumes, scenery, music, and dialogue, are selected for their metaphorical appropriateness. They should all relate harmoniously by each emblemizing the most essential elements of the subject being represented. Dance movement has the status of a name—a referent with a history and usage that are open to explanation.*

Cahusac, in contrast, assumes that the origins of dance are common knowledge, its history a set of incontestable facts. Historical research, the organization and comparison of facts about the past, needs no methodological justification. What does require comment, in Cahusac's estimation, is his own aesthetic evaluation of the dances he writes about. Where the Abbé du Bos argued that dancing in his time achieved complete perfection and also that it was different in every respect from dances of antiquity, Cahusac is concerned to show the continuity between classical and contemporary forms and also the superiority of the most recent developments in ballets. Cahusac thus separates, in a way that Menestrier does not, "historical" information about dances of the past from his own "didactic" views on the relative merits of dance in his own and earlier times. And he advises his readers that he has supplemented the facts with his own judgments, which are, he admits, the specific product of his own time.

RE-VIEWING THE DANCE

Differences in the overall structures of the two volumes are reinforced by the authors' distinctive approach to the description of a specific ballet. Both historians make detailed references to several of the same performances, always with consistent differences in emphasis. Where Menestrier is concerned to point up the symbolic significance of characters and acts, Cahusac focuses on the way things looked. Take, for example, their accounts of the ballet *Les montagnards* (1631), which, both argue, was sig-

*Taxonomies constituted by the simple and complex and the true and false organize all dance movement. The selection of steps conforms to the guidelines for tasteful proportion and lively yet clear rhythmic and spatial articulation. Selection of gestures—detailed schemata for the representation of human attitudes and feelings—is based on how well the movements look like, even as they perfect, their quotidian referents. Gestures and steps, distinct categories of movement, all have the status of facts. They are incontestable; only their use can be evaluated.*

*All events and actions in the performance take place under the auspices of an unquestioned, overarching set of relations that reference a moral order of cosmic proportions.*

nificant because it introduced a new kind of subject matter—concerned with peasant life—into the courtly tradition. Both texts begin their descriptions of the ballet with the same sentence: “The theatre depicted five large mountains” (Menestrier, 79; Cahusac, 3:5), and both continue by explaining that each mountain symbolized a type: windy; resonant because inhabited by Echoes; wooded; luminous; and cloudy. Cahusac adds to this observation that the middle of the stage constituted a field of glory recently seized by the inhabitants of all five mountains. According to both authors, Foolish Rumor, costumed as an old woman, then entered, riding an ass and carrying a wooden trumpet. Cahusac provides a footnote explaining her trumpet as an allusion to an old proverb; Menestrier notes the allusion in the text itself. Cahusac describes the old woman delivering a speech that revealed the subject of the ballet. Menestrier notes instead that the first part of her recitation was delivered to the animal she was riding and the second part to the audience. Menestrier then goes on to quote her speech in its entirety:

At this point the styles of the two narratives diverge dramatically. Menestrier proceeds as follows:

After this pleasant speech, the Winds came forth from the windy mountain carrying windmills on their heads and bellows in their hands that whistled like the Winds. Echo then gave a speech and led in the inhabitants of the resonant mountain, all dressed like bells. (80)

*Events elaborate the logic of human reaction and interaction. Each action requires motivation and, in turn, provokes a response. The full sequence of actions creates a moving portrait of life.*

*All features of the production—dancing, text, music, costumes, scenery—carry equal weight, and all are sublimated to the project of representing a larger moral, political, and aesthetic order. Movement, sound image, texture, and mass all convey their messages equivalently.*

Cahusac describes the same action in these terms:

Then one of the mountains opened and a whirlwind sprang forth. The quadrilles that composed this act were dressed in the color of flesh; all of them carried windmills on their heads and, in their hands, bellows that when shaken produced the whistle of the winds.

The nymph Echo made the opening speech for the second act and led in the inhabitants of the resonant mountains. They carried tamborines, a bell as a head ornament, and their clothes were covered with small bells of varying pitches that together created a joyful and lively harmony. The ensemble adapted itself to the meter of the songs played by the orchestra, in following the cadences of the dance movement. (3:6)

Whereas Menestrier only provides information that would be helpful in interpreting the identity of the characters and the meaning of their actions, Cahusac emphasizes the visual appearance of the performance. His description contains many more phrases portraying the characters and also more active verbs indicating the quality of the movement. Furthermore, Cahusac is concerned to delineate structural features of the ballet—Echo’s speech commences the second act.

The same kinds of differences reappear throughout the rest of the descriptions. Menestrier completes his report in three long sentences, one for each act; Cahusac requires five short paragraphs. Menestrier

*The visual impression of the dancing, the way it looks, takes primacy over kinesthetic or aural forms of information. The visual has factual rather than hermeneutic value. Dancing illustrates, makes visible, both music and text.*

*Dancers work to fit into the ensemble, to make the overall statement evident through their careful and astute execution of the choreographic directions.*

mentions only the main characters and actions and concludes with a comment on the new reputation for mountain people created by the ballet. Cahusac methodically lists first the act and then the principal characters, costuming, and actions. As his description proceeds, he also begins to introduce evaluative phrases: "ingenious steps," "this grand spectacle," and even a footnote commenting that "the wooden leg and dark lantern, props of the Lie, are two ideas quite new and amusing" (3:7).

Menestrier's version of the ballet records its main features in order to educate viewers as to the relationship between the ballet's subject, the enactment of that subject, and its moral impact. After quoting the opening *récitatif* as an overview of the ballet's intent, he seems concerned only to explain key symbolic figures and phenomena so that viewers can augment their understanding of the principles of representation. Cahusac, in contrast, replicates his history's functional division of information into chapters in his precise classification into acts of all the action. His description assembles the distinct elements presented onstage into vivid, discrete images. The meaning of these images is self-evident. Once they have been described in all their detail, it remains for the narrator to evaluate their originality and effectiveness. Menestrier offers a set of codes so that readers/viewers can live out and through danced ideas; Cahusac provides visual information so that his audience can compare and improve upon images of life.

Dancers show themselves aware of performing before others. Their actions are shaped so as to be viewed from one perspective, and they deliver those actions with daring showmanship to the viewing eye.

Bodies have sculptural presence. They are round and dripping with emblems; they create masses of potential energy that release into kinetic trajectories that modulate between fast and slow, high and low, and quick and sustained.

Bodies look like two-dimensional cutouts frozen in picture-perfect tableaux that depict a touching scene. Then they suddenly exhibit extraordinary plasticity, darting through space as they display intricate coordinations of hands, feet, and head.

Characters reiterate a set of static structural relationships

three types of plot structure for ballets—philosophical, poetic, and romantic—and pivots the narrative into a comparison between dance and painting (for which there are also three types). Cahusac mentions the ballet in his chapter titled "Festivals in which dancing played a major part given at the French court between 1610 and 1643." He attests to the low aesthetic standards that had developed at court during this period as a result of the assumption that French ballets were superior to all others. For him the ballet's greatest significance lies in its reception—the initial denisive response of the snobbish nobility and the subsequent triumph of a ballet composed in the Italian style. His analysis of the ballet ends the chapter; it is followed in the next chapter by a discussion of similar festivals at other courts in Europe.

DANCE'S FACTS AND FICTIONS

In Menestrier's history, *Les montagnards* exists as one among many stories of dances, some good and others inadequate, which can be told about this fine art. In Cahusac's history the ballet occurs at a particular moment in the narrative trajectory that follows the decline and subsequent regeneration of dance. The quality of dances, Cahusac points out, had deteriorated during the reign of Henry IV to the point where "pleasantries of the vilest and worst taste took undisputed possession of the Palaces" (3:4). *Les montagnards* signals the coming of a new era of choreographic genius which officially begins as Louis XIV takes the throne. This dramatic story replicates on the larger scale

ships among types of characters. Individual actions link to evoke a harmonious balance between lively and sedate moods and good and evil presences. Characters' actions do not cause change in circumstances; rather changes occur as the action reaches designated moments in a preordained plan. Their form is lyric.

The dancer's identity resides in the interstices between the local choreographic moment and the larger moral, aesthetic, and political order of which it is a part.

Individual phrases of movement that rise and fall nest within larger sections of dance which likewise reach toward and then fall away from climaxes. Characters' aspirations and struggles reveal the unfolding plot. The overall narrative structure conforms to that of tragedy or comedy. Suspense is followed by resolution

of dance history: the initial glory of classical Greek and Roman dance is followed by the fall into decadence during the Middle Ages and the rise toward greater glory witnessed by the author and his contemporaries. Unlike Menestrier's history, extending seemingly without end into the flat, continuous terrain formed by past and present, Cahusac's history delineates epicycles of refinement and vulgarity as part of the single dramatic progress of civilization.

The epistemological assumptions that enable Cahusac to separate facts from opinions and to verify facts on the basis of visual appearance also permit him to posit a universal rather than a particular origin for dance. The fact of dance exists prior to the various social forms it has assumed. For Cahusac, dance results from a natural correspondence between gesture and all the feelings of the soul. Along with song, dance paints in an unequivocal though clumsy manner all the situations of the soul. The soul's feelings, although they dictate what the gesture will be, do not motivate the gesture. Instead Cahusac suggests a metonymical relationship between body and soul—they exist side by side. The body's gestural representations of the soul can thus be compared one with another and with an abstract visual image of the soul itself. The act of comparison takes place on the two-dimensional framed canvas, the site of the body's paintings, analogous in structure to the proscenium stage itself.

For Menestrier, dance does not originate in the individual soul but in the social body. Dance as it was known in Mene-

repeatedly. Variations on the simple plot trajectories show the choreographer's inventiveness, just as innovations in vocabulary usage demonstrate choreographic skill.

Whether the dancer transforms into the character and lives out the character's actions or, instead, learns to approximate perfectly the look of those actions becomes a question of acting technique.

strier's time developed out of ancient group practices, with their inherent political and religious as well as aesthetic connotations. The body's gestures thus represent aspects of social life rather than individual feeling. They reenact, rather than paint, life's events. They exist as social facts in a world to be interpreted by all who witness them. The body does not display the world but alludes to it in ways that can be likened to, but not measured against, one another.

For Menestrier, dance's history consists of a body of stories, and the historian's art lies in the appropriate arrangement and interpretation of these stories so as to achieve a balanced and judicious account of the past. Cahusac's history, in contrast, adorns a body of facts with a refined set of opinions. More sociological than hermeneutic in orientation, the historian's project is one of comparing life and its images and presenting the best organization of images possible by selecting and arranging an existing body of knowledge. Although Cahusac might discover new facts, he would never admit responsibility for having created them. Facts remain neutral, aestheticized, and amoral within a past that separates the evidential from the evaluative so as to provide objective criteria for the ordering of historical events.

For Menestrier, the original dancing body cannot be separated from the dances it performed. In ancient times, as in his own, the dance, and not the body, is the medium of expression. Through the dance, all participants reinterpret their own life situations. In contrast, Cahusac's

The dance provides a map to assist the viewer in navigating through the rest of life. The dance surrounds viewers as much as they surround it. The dance is a commentary.

The production impresses and inspires with its brilliance, cleverness, and virtuosity. The dance's proscenium frame both isolates and factualizes the performance. The dance is an appraisal.

The dance reconfigures images of life.



original dancing body learns to inter-act, to dance, with others so as to exhibit dance, which in turn provides society with a model for refined and decorous conduct. Menestrier's history, like Menestrier's dancing body, offers to choreographers, viewers, and readers the opportunity to peruse endless stories, some meandering and some coherent, in an effort to comprehend the rules that transform bodies into ideas and life into dance. Cahusac's conception of history offers instead a method for evaluating dance, one that sensitizes readers to the degenerate and enlightened elements of which it has been composed over the years. Cahusac's readers are thereby inspired to attain the sensibility necessary to distinguish between an imaginative performance and a lifeless one.

*The dance re-presents images of life. The dance relies on a universal code to create images appropriate to a particular context.*

*The dance employs a universal language to portray a particular situation.*

DANCING THEORY

Bodies of texts, like dancing bodies, are subject to disciplinary actions that cultivate them in specific ways. These two dance histories and the dancing bodies they describe take shape in response to distinct distributions of power that impel their presentations' structure and content. Menestrier envisions his own role and that of dance as extensions of both religious and royal authority. The free play of interpretations invited by his text and its dances is enabled by the absolutist control of a king who embodies divine authority and a divinely inspired system of interpretation. Cahusac, in contrast, imbues artists and scholars with an individual ingenuity consonant with Enlightenment values, yet this emphasis on individual initiative is accompanied by new configurations of disciplining control. Individuals must internalize values of fact and fiction which authorize their visuals must internalize values of fact and fiction which authorize their distinction-making. It is as if the proscenium itself supplants the royal figure watching the dance and individual audience members use this prosthetic device to guide the organization of their viewing labor. The story ballets that they see displayed onstage, like the taxonomized treatment

of dance's history, replace the opera-ballets' endlessly similar commentaries on dance and text. The segmented, carefully shaped body with its hierarchies of accomplishment takes over from the body capable only of innumerable analogies to other moving things.

In each of these choreographies of power the body retains a certain integrity. It functions neither as a sentimentalized disappearing act nor as an awesome source of magical inspiration. Both Menestrier and Cahusac evoke a body that has agency and that can participate actively in the production of meaning. Yet in the reduction of the body to fact Cahusac's history initiates a distinction between the verbal and the bodily in which bodies lose their capacity to theorize. For Cahusac, bodies cannot theorize relationships between time and space or individual and group; they can only pronounce the fact of those relationships. Cahusac's approach to history thus establishes grounds on which text can claim exclusive rights to theory.

The body of this text teaches itself to choreograph through its interactions with both dance histories. It throws itself into dancing alongside them and returns, ambidextrous, fragmented, replete with fantasized limbs and unusual boundaries. It has learned some new moves, the most intriguing of which is the ability to turn, to trope, from fact into metaphor and back again. In this turning it performs as evidence of theory and at the same time as evidence for theory. The choreography for this double-bodied dance, this dance by bodies of facts and bodies of fictions, gives theory new explanatory power just as it makes dancing theory more evident.

NOTES

1. Claude François Menestrier, *Des ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre* (Paris: Chez René Guignard, 1682), pp. 8-9 (my translation).

Born at Lyon in 1631, Menestrier became a member of the Jesuit College as a scholar specializing in religious heraldry and ceremony. Like other Jesuits who recognized the educational opportunities afforded by performances, he became heavily involved in their study and production. He traveled widely throughout France and Italy, witnessing many ballets, weddings, festivals, banquets, tournaments, entries, and pageants of all kinds and, as a close friend of those Jesuits who had worked with Count Filippo D'Aglié San Marino at the Savoy court in Turin, heard about even more. Menestrier documented these performances in some 160 books and pamphlets, including two major theoretical works, *Des représentations en musique anciennes et modernes* (1681) and the companion volume considered here, *Des ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre*. An authority on ceremonial symbolism, Menestrier was also in demand as a choreographer and composed numerous processions, ceremonies, and ballets, many of which are described in his writ-

ings. For a concise summary of Jesuit involvement in ballet, see Margaret McGowan, *Lair du ballet de cour en France, 1581–1643* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1963).

2. Louis de Cahusac, *La danse ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Chez la Haye, 1754), p. 17 (my translation).

More a devoted critic of dance than a practitioner or philosopher, Louis de Cahusac was born in 1706 at Montauban. He studied both law and literature before moving to Paris at the age of twenty-seven. Once there he began to write librettos for opera and dance. His most successful productions were collaborations with the composer Jean-Philippe Rameau: *Les fêtes de polynie* (1745), *Les fêtes de l'hymen* (1747), *Zaïs* (1748), and *La naissance d'Osiris* (1754). His history of dance, *La danse ancienne et moderne* (1754), and his entries for the *Encyclopédie* are his only known scholarly works.

3. Exceptions to this general format are the chapter titles "On figures in the ballet," "On movements," "On harmony," "On paraphernalia," and, much later in the text, "On the number of parts in a ballet" and "On games and divertissements." These titles appear in capital letters, centered on the page, and have the effect of segmenting and emphasizing those portions of the text. They are not consecutive, however; nor do they seem more significant than other chapters, whose titles appear in the margins.

### Narratives of Nostalgia Oriental Evasions about the London Stage

In the period between 1916 and 1921, during and immediately after World War I, a wave of Orientalist narrative and spectacle claimed great popularity in London's West End theatres. Of course, this was by no means the first manifestation of Oriental images, motifs, and clichés on the London stage; indeed, as Edward Ziter has traced, Orientalist themes, characters, and scenic spectacles were pervasive throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Especially because of the enormous popularity of W. S. Gilbert and A. S. Sullivan's *The Mikado* (1885), followed by a series of long-running musical comedies by George Edwardes, including *The Geisha* (1896), *San Toy*, or *The Emperor's Own* (1898), *The Messenger Boy* (1900), and *The Cingalee* (or *Sunny Ceylon*) (1903), Oriental topics, characters, costumes, and spectacular scenery were hardly an occasional fad in the West End theatres but in fact were one of their most distinguishing features. Some of these Orientalist productions regularly clocked up uninterrupted runs of nearly two years at their first outing, such as George Dance's *The Chinese Honeymoon* (1900) that surpassed the 1,000-performance mark. While dominating the theatre scene on both sides of the Atlantic, some of these productions even toured the world of the British Empire to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and India.

Orientalism triumphed. Indeed, it is easy to trace a continuous and quite various evocation and representation of the Oriental world in British society and sensibility, from the Renaissance forward. Versions of the Near and Far East gained great popularity on the stage, such as Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* and several of G. F. Handel's early operas. And from the eighteenth century onward, as Daniel O'Quinn has pointed out,<sup>2</sup> as British commercial interests spread eastward, Oriental images, themes, artifacts, and styles entered British culture. From early in the century Alexander Pope's poetry included teasing Oriental motifs, while the spreading market for *chinoiserie* in ceramics, furniture and textiles, and "Persian" rugs grew apace. Later *japonisme* emerged as fashions changed, and a fascination for the geisha in drawings, prints, and costumes developed. Both Lord Byron's poetry and the costumes he wore to evoke distant and dangerous