# Performing the Eighteenth Century

## Theatrical Discourses, Practices, and Artefacts

Edited by:
Magnus Tessing Schneider
and Meike Wagner

Stockholm
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Cover image: João Luís Paixão (Pygmalion) and Laila Cathleen Neuman (Galathée) in Pygmalion by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. State Castle of Český Krumlov, 2015. Photo: Libor Sváček ©. License: CC BY-NC
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## Book Description Text

- What can artists learn from theatre scholars when it comes to performing historical works on stage today?
- What can theatre scholars learn from today's artists when it comes to understanding the works and practices of the past?
- How is the experience of modern spectators affected by attending performances in historic theatres?
- How, aesthetically, do we experience the reconstruction of productions from the remote past?

The essays in the present book, written by an international group of scholars, try to answer these – and many other – questions by initiating a dialogue between academic and artistic research. Behind all the essays is a mixture of fascination and dissatisfaction with today's performances of drama and opera classics, particularly those that take place in historic theatres, and those operating within the so-called Historically Informed Performance movement. The essays reflect a desire to develop and expand the methods traditionally used by theatre historians. And they present a variety of angles on today's performances in historic theatres and on today's attempts to revive theatrical practices of the past.

   The anthology is essential reading for theatre scholars and musicologists studying eighteenth-century performance as well as for theatre and opera artists concerned with period performance practice.

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The Performers' Perspective**

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August 2016**

# List of Audio-Visual Resources

All videos listed here are accessible at the project website: https://performingpremodernity.com/anthology/

1.  Performance of *Pygmalion*, State Castle Theatre, Český Krumlov, 15 June 2015.

2.  Performance of *Pygmalion*, House of Nobility, Stockholm, 25 August 2016.

3.  Performance of *Pygmalion*, Early Music Festival Utrecht, 28 August 2018.

4.  David Wiles, 'Presenting the Theatre of Drottningholm', Keynote held at the international conference 'Presenting the Theatrical Past', International Federation for Theatre Research, Drottningholm, 15 June 2016.

# Acknowledgments

# Introduction

*Magnus Tessing Schneider & Meike Wagner*

What can artists learn from theatre scholars when it comes to performing historical works on stage today? And what can theatre scholars learn from today's artists when it comes to understanding the works and practices of the past? How is the experience of modern spectators affected by attending performances in historic theatres? And how, aesthetically, do we experience the reconstruction of productions from the remote past?

The essays in the present book try to answer these – and many other – questions by initiating a dialogue between academic and artistic research. Behind all of the essays is a mixture of fascination and dissatisfaction with today's performances of drama and opera classics, particularly those that take place in historic theatres, and those operating within the so-called Historically Informed Performance (HIP) movement. The essays reflect a desire to develop and expand the methods traditionally used by theatre historians. They present a variety of angles on today's performances in historic theatres and on today's attempts to revive theatrical practices of the past.

The book covers the findings of the research group 'Performing Premodernity: Exploring Cultural Heritage through the Drottningholm Court Theatre', which worked from 2013 to 2018, funded by the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences.[1] The core group was made up of six researchers: Meike Wagner (the project leader), Petra Dotlačilová, Maria Gullstam, Willmar Sauter, Magnus Tessing Schneider, and Mark Tatlow (the group's musical director and principal artistic researcher). The research focused on theatrical and operatic practices of the second half of the eighteenth century. This was a period of wide-ranging artistic innovation (e.g. the operatic reforms of Rousseau, Gluck, and Mozart, the theatrical manifestos

1. The name of the research group was inspired by the stated decision of the funding body to invest in 'research in premodernity' ('forskning om förmodernitet'), by which they meant the period before 1800. The historiographical problems that arose from the foundation's description of the eighteenth century as 'premodern' and the nineteenth century as 'modern' were the subject of a special issue of *Scandia: Tidskrift för historisk forskning* in 2015 (vol. 8, no. 2). See Magnus Linnarsson's introductory essay, 'Förmodernitet: Analytiskt begrepp eller kronologisk restpost?' (pp. 9–18), as well as Willmar Sauter's contribution, 'Förmodernitet – ett koncept för det ännu-inte-moderna: Estetisk historicitet som länk mellan då och nu' (pp. 50–70). The name of the research group notwithstanding, the term 'premodernity' is not used as a category of periodisation in this volume, except in chapter 1, 'Adequate Rhetorical Delivery when Staging Premodernity'.

of Diderot, Lessing, and Schiller, the various historical developments in dramaturgy, acting style, costume design, and lighting technique) as well as of the social and political transformations that culminated in the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789. These few decades also saw the establishment of several modern theatre institutions, e.g. of the Hamburg National Theatre that existed 1767–1769, of the Royal Swedish Opera in 1773, of the National Theatre in Vienna in 1776, of the National Theatre in Prague in 1783, and of the Royal Swedish Dramatic Theatre in 1788.

The group's work was initially centred on the Drottningholm theatre from 1766. This famous building, just outside Stockholm, has authentic stage sets and machinery preserved almost in their original eighteenth-century state: a fact that placed it at the centre of twentieth-century theatre historiography and that in 1991 made a significant contribution to the Royal Domain of Drottningholm attaining the status of a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a recognition of the 'outstanding universal value' of the palace, its gardens, and its theatre.[2] But Performing Premodernity also extended its activities to two other eighteenth-century theatres. The first was the similarly well-preserved theatre at the State Castle of Český Krumlov in the Czech Republic, which was also built in 1766, and therefore provided a direct point of comparison with Drottningholm. The second, set in the outskirts of Stockholm, was the Ulriksdal Palace Theatre (also known as Confidencen). It was built in 1753, turned into a royal hunting lodge in the 1860s, and restored as a theatre in the early 2000s.

From the outset, Performing Premodernity planned to combine academic and artistic research as a way of deepening and nuancing the understanding of eighteenth-century theatre practices. The academic study of historical accounts of specific productions, of visual sources, of other physical artefacts, and of philosophical and aesthetic writings from the period were set in dialogue with the dramaturgical insights and aesthetic experiences we gained from our practical *doing* in the historical spaces (see Fig. 1). Experimentation with lighting,

2.  UNESCO motivates the inclusion of the Royal Domain of Drottningholm as a World Heritage Site as follows: 'The ensemble of Drottningholm is the best example of a royal residence built in the 18th century in Sweden and is representative of all European architecture of that period, heir to the influences exerted by the Chateau of Versailles on the construction of royal residences in western, central and northern Europe': https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/559 (accessed 3 January 2023).

**Figure 1.** Performing Premodernity exploring eighteenth-century costumes. From top left: Mark Tatlow, Magnus Tessing Schneider, Willmar Sauter, Maria Gullstam, Meike Wagner, Petra Dotlačilová. Stockholm, 2020. Photo: Lenka Elbert Dotlačilová ©. License: CC BY-NC.

costumes, stage movement, vocal and instrumental practices, and the flow of energy between performers and spectators led to the investigation of topics that we might not otherwise have explored. In turn, these investigations led us to challenge long-held views of the sites, repertoires, and performance practices of eighteenth-century theatre. Each practical experiment was followed by group discussions where the aesthetic experiences of the participants were confronted with eighteenth-century sources, dramaturgical principles, and philosophical ideas, all representing different modes of knowing.

Performing Premodernity's experimental, practice-based approach to eighteenth-century theatre accords with the view of the late Enlightenment (the second half of the eighteenth century, which saw a gradual radicalisation of Enlightenment thinking) as 'a real and still unexplored laboratory of modernity'.[3] Over the past two decades this view has been central to the positive reassessment of a period when ideal and practice, philosophy and art influenced and guided each other to an unprecedented degree, and the stage was the site of both utopian visions and radical artistic changes. Any attempt at a holistic understanding of the theatrical practices of the period must take these exchanges into account. A strictly antiquarian approach that merely tries to establish 'how it really was', without considering the visionary dimension of the reforms of people like Rousseau, Gluck, and Mozart, will inevitably fail to grasp the impetus and the dynamic, communicative aspect of eighteenth-century theatre. This problem was always at the heart of the research questions and internal discussions of the Performing Premodernity group, and it was not by chance that we chose to focus on some of the most radical, or avant-garde, stage works of the period in our experimental productions and workshops.

Our most elaborate practical project was a historically informed production of *Pygmalion*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's so-called *scène lyrique* from 1762, with a musical score by Horace Coignet from 1770. Our production was premiered at Český Krumlov in 2015,

3. Vincenzo Ferrone, *The Enlightenment: History of An Idea* (Princeton University Press, 2017), xiii.

with João Luís Paixão and Laila Cathleen Neuman (two artistic researchers associated with Performing Premodernity) in the two roles. In 2015 and 2016 we performed it at the grand hall of the historic House of Nobility in Stockholm, in 2018 at the Utrecht Early Music Festival, and in 2019 in a double bill with Rousseau's 1752 opera *Le Devin du village* at Ulriksdal.[4] *Pygmalion* was staged by a team of scholars, consisting of Petra Dotlačilová, Maria Gullstam, Magnus Tessing Schneider, and Jed Wentz (also an associate member of the research group) in addition to the two performers. *Le Devin du village* was staged by choreographer and stage director Karin Modigh, with costumes designed by costume designer and researcher Anna Kjellsdotter (both associate members of the research group), while Gullstam and Dotlačilová were academic advisers.

Group members were also involved in productions of Domenico Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto* and of Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* at Drottningholm in 2013. Both operas were conducted by Mark Tatlow, and staged by two associate members of the research group: Deda Cristina Colonna (Cimarosa), and Sigrid T'Hooft (Mozart). Furthermore, two little-known one-act operas from the 1780s were performed at Vadstena Castle in 2016 in a double bill as part of Vadstena-Akademien, an annual festival devoted to the revival of unknown operas. The double bill was made up of Giovanni Paisiello's *Nina o sia La pazza per amore*, and Pietro Morandi's *Comala*, staged by Deda Cristina Colonna, and with Mark Tatlow as music director. All of these productions were chosen to explore specific issues relating to eighteenth-century performance practice. The relationship between verse declamation and the delivery of sung recitative was the topic of exploration in *La clemenza di Tito*. In *Nina* and *Comala*, it was about performance leadership, and the relationship between the orchestra and the stage, aiming to create a less hierarchical ensemble both in rehearsal, and in the public performances, which were directed without a conductor in the traditional sense.

4. Videos of the performances at Český Krumlov, at Riddarhuset in Stockholm, and in Utrecht are available on the Performing Premodernity homepage: https://performingpremodernity.com /anthology/.

The research group organised themed international conferences to coincide with the premieres of several of these productions. Proceedings from the conferences include: *Rousseau on Stage: Playwright, Musician, Spectator*, edited by Maria Gullstam and Michael O'Dea, and published in 2017 by the Oxford Voltaire Foundation; *Mozart's* La clemenza di Tito: *A Reappraisal*, edited by Magnus Tessing Schneider and Ruth Tatlow, and published in 2018 by Stockholm University Press (open access); and a special issue of *LIR.journal* focusing on *Nina* and *Comala*, edited by Magnus Tessing Schneider, and published in 2019 under the title 'Sensibility and Passion: Studies in Early Italian Opera' (open access).

The emphasis on the interrelations between aesthetic experience and historical knowledge is a common denominator between both the laboratory workshops of Performing Premodernity and the essays in this volume, in the same way that the conceptualising of the aesthetic experience was at the heart of the philosophical discourse surrounding the dramatic arts in the eighteenth century. Starting from an understanding of aesthetics (*aisthētikós*) as both sense perception and sensitive cognition, our Performing Premodernity group operates with a notion of aesthetic experience inspired by Kant and Schiller: the aesthetic experience negotiates our rational and our emotional understanding, enabling us to expand the ways in which we feel and think.[5] As academic and artistic researchers, we are interested in how the interrelations between historical knowledge and aesthetic experience can enhance our understanding of theatre history while at the same time helping us to develop holistic artistic practices. We held workshops at historical theatres with singers, instrumentalists, dancers, and other practitioners, to study the impact of the auditory and visual conditions, as well as the potential impact of the physical spaces on performers and spectators. We also allowed an interaction between the performers, the space, and the dramaturgical concepts from the period in order to study their impact on both the physical embodiment of the characters and the dynamics of the staged

5. For Meike Wagner's discussion of aesthetic experience as an epistemological practice, see chapter 2, 'On a Praxeology of Theatre Historiography'.

narrative. For example, at our first Drottningholm workshop in 2015, we used duets from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* and an excerpt from *Pygmalion*, with Paixão and Neuman on stage. The aim was to explore what would happen when the semi-circular positioning of actors (documented in visual sources and acting treatises) and the materiality of the theatre space itself (with its raked floor, symmetrical stage design, and delicate acoustics), encountered sources relating to the original performance of Mozart's operas. Our second workshop was held in 2017 at Ulriksdal. Here we used excerpts from Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, with the singer Maria Sanner and dancer Noah Hellwig on stage. The aim was to explore the interaction between choreographed stage movement and fabrics and cuts known from eighteenth-century costume designs. We also focused on the effect of candlelight, a type of stage lighting permitted at Ulriksdal, where the stage is a modern reconstruction, but prohibited at the World Heritage Site of Drottningholm.

Over the course of the research project, it became clear that as academics and as artists, we needed to avoid the extremes of what might be called 'paper-driven' and 'concept-driven' positions, both of which were, for historiographical and aesthetic reasons, found to be inadequate.

The paper-driven position is typically represented by the positivist approach to theatre historiography within the academic field (as in the traditional attempts to reconstruct stage productions from the past) and by the literalist branch of the HIP movement within the artistic field, as manifested in performances based on the theories of the twentieth-century Australian musician and scholar Dene Barnett, who claimed that eighteenth-century acting was built on 'a vocabulary of gestures each with an individual meaning known to all in advance'.[6] In short, the paper-driven position is focused on material reconstruction while it ignores the corporeality and aesthetic experience of the historical audience. This has led to the privileging of certain types of historical documents (visual documentation, rhetorical treatises, and other types of prescriptive sources) that are available in textual

6. Dene Barnett, *The Art of Gesture: The Practices and Principles of 18ᵗʰ Century Acting* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987), 10. For a refutation of the ideological premises of Barnett's historiography, see Magnus Tessing Schneider, 'Dene Barnett's Eighteenth Century, Or, What Is Historically Informed Performance?', *Performing Premodernity Online* 2 (January 2015): https://performing premodernity.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/PPO2-Schneider.pdf (accessed 23 March 2023).

and graphical formats, and to certain ways of reading those sources (attempts to establish codified rules or theatrical conventions of the past), causing other sources and approaches to be passed by, including, for example, the revolutionary programmes and ideals of the time, evidence of the aesthetic experiences of historical spectators, and the knowledge that may be gathered from experimentation in historical spaces with the use of historical practices and artefacts (lighting, costumes, stage movement). Such a selective attitude towards the historical evidence has generated a skewed image of eighteenth-century theatre, especially among the more literalistic followers of historical principles, who, in our view, have tended to put too much emphasis on courtly rules of propriety, on watertight class divisions, and on stereotyped forms of expression.[7] For example, while rhetoric certainly played a central role in eighteenth-century acting, there has been an overemphasis on codified behaviours and too little attention to rhetorical instinct, to the speaker-performer's sensitivity to the audience, and to the specific situation, all of which are central to classical rhetoric. It is, however, this standardised image of eighteenth-century theatre that has been widely proliferated through educational schemes, and which has been commodified by traditionalists within the HIP movement. Such a position tends to ignore both the experience of today's spectator and that of the historical spectator, and it is frequently used to support arguments for applying a codified system of acting, even though relying on dubious after-the-fact ideas of what the historical audience understood and experienced.

The concept-driven position goes in the opposite direction, since it identifies theatre historiography with positivism and therefore altogether rejects the historical approach to theatre. The lack of historical awareness characteristic of this approach inevitably generates a progressivist image of history, confirming that the Enlightenment was basically 'unenlightened', dominated by oppressive power politics, and permeated by contradictions and hypocrisy. We recognise this attitude from the *Regietheater* movement that prevails in today's

7. The sociological approach to theatre history, which has been dominant since the middle of the twentieth century, has tended to overemphasise the significance of social class in eighteenth-century theatre, by positing, for example, that the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie had distinctly different preferences whereas in fact eighteenth-century observers thought more in terms of different degrees of connoisseurship, that is, in aesthetic rather than in sociological terms. On this topic, see Pierpaolo Polzonetti, 'Opera as Process', in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Opera*, ed. Anthony R. DelDonna and Pierpaolo Polzonetti (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3–23.

opera houses. It rejects the past, using old stage works as decontextualised props without entering into a dialogue with the historical materials and their context. Or it enters the dialogue only to a superficial extent such as by reproducing the standard narratives about the eighteenth century. What the concept-driven position *does* take into account, however, is the eventness of contemporary performance, though this position also tends to underprivilege aesthetics. It subjects truth and beauty to morality – the values of today's ethical consensus – and underestimates the relevance of historical concepts and the critical thinking embedded in the works of the past.[8] This embedded thinking could be developed and experienced by today's audiences through a serious engagement with the works' historicity.

The artists and the historians within the Performing Premodernity group felt that both the paper-driven and the concept-driven positions were inadequate means through which to understand eighteenth-century theatre and its practices, and that a more holistic approach had to be developed. Drawing on the perspective of modern phenomenology, we placed the aesthetic experience of the theatrical event at the centre of theatre historiography, giving attention both to the theatregoers of the past and to the theatre historians of today, and, one might add, to the regular theatregoers of today. This inevitably challenged the standardised image of eighteenth-century theatre: the oppressive codes began to lose their force, and the democratic dimension of past and present aesthetic experiences began to emerge. By confronting stage works and philosophical concepts developed by the period's revolutionary artist-reformers with the artefacts and social-scenic conventions of the time, we strove to break down standardised images of the period, using the experimental productions as our means. As we engaged with the radical dramaturgy and philosophical and theatrical context of *Pygmalion*, it turned out that its uniqueness – a concept central to late eighteenth-century aesthetics and to the dramatic principles of the time – evaded the classification and codification offered by the models of traditional theatre

8. On the moralism of the so-called ethical turn and its influence on opera research, see the postscript, 'In Defence of the Operatic Work', in Magnus Tessing Schneider, *The Original Portrayal of Mozart's Don Giovanni* (London: Routledge, 2021), 213–226: https://doi .org/10.4324/9780429281709 (accessed 23 March 2023).

historiography. In order to 'save' those models it would have been necessary to treat *Pygmalion* as an anomaly. We chose instead to go in the opposite direction; to embrace the uniqueness of the work, thus allowing for the complication and diversification of the customary historical narratives. Accessing the radical or experimental aspects of old stage works through enhanced historical awareness is challenging for theatre historians and theatre artists, whether or not they identify with the HIP or with the *Regietheater* movements.

The holistic approach to theatre historiography, which bridges gaps between academic and artistic research, led to theoretical developments that are the focus of the first section. Chapter 1 is a scholarly commentary based on a paper read at one of the research group's first symposia, in 2014, by one of its associate members, musicologist and rhetorician Jette Barnholdt Hansen who passed away in 2017. Her chapter focuses on the ancient Greek concept of *kairós*, which denotes the opportune and decisive moment of performing an action, pointing to the fact that any acting practice based on rhetorical principles must take the current context, including the experience of the audience, into account. Although shorter and less developed than the other chapters, we have decided to include it, both as a tribute to our late colleague and because it is a timely reminder of the necessity of going beyond the rules of vocal delivery, derived from historical sources. The next two chapters take the 2015 Drottningholm workshop as their point of departure. 2) The *historiographic praxeology* described by Meike Wagner aims to enhance and challenge historiographical epistemologies through experimental theatre practices. 3) The *aesthetic historicity* described by Willmar Sauter directs our attention to forms of interaction between today's artists and historical artefacts and written works, which may generate modern aesthetic experiences that negotiate with historical aesthetic experiences. Inspired by practical experiments in theatre sites from the eighteenth century, *historiographic praxeology* and *aesthetic historicity* both provide theatre researchers with new methodologies that connect historical

awareness and aesthetic experience: while *historiographic praxeology* is mainly concerned with theatre historiography, *aesthetic historicity* is chiefly concerned with the analysis of performance. 4) Adapting the concept of *contemporaneity* from Jan Kott's essays on twentieth-century Shakespeare productions, Magnus Tessing Schneider argues that the revival and reimagining of specific historical performance practices may enhance rather than hamper the connection between the stage performance and the experience of today's audience. In the final contribution to this section, 5) Mark Tatlow explores the early performance history of Haydn's cantata *Arianna a Naxos*, a piece he has performed numerous times. He uses his experience to examine the meeting between historically informed performance practices, the specificity of the musical expression, and the performer's overarching aim of affecting the audience emotionally.

The second part of the book turns to the specific theatrical experiments conducted within Performing Premodernity, and to the way these were experienced both by the historians and by the artists involved. 6) Drawing on methodologies associated with Material Culture as well as Costume and Dance Studies, Petra Dotlačilová reflects on the results of the research group's 2017 Ulriksdal workshop, which focused on the relationship between costumes, lighting, and stage movement. The next two essays deal specifically with the group's staging of Rousseau's *Pygmalion*, and with the challenges of mounting a historically informed production of a work intended to break with more or less every theatrical convention of the time. While in chapter 7) Maria Gullstam focuses on the general dramaturgical principles, tracing the development in the production and in her aesthetic responses, in chapter 8) Petra Dotlačilová discusses the problems of creating historically informed costumes for what was essentially an avant-garde work. The section concludes with two interviews that focus on the artists' experience of integrating historical information and artefacts into their performance. In chapter 9) the singers Laila Cathleen Neuman and João Luís Paixão, who took part in several of the

**Figure 2.** The Performing Premodernity research group at work. Annecy, 2015. Photo: Etienne Zurawski ©. License: CC BY-NC.

group's workshops, and who performed *Pygmalion*, talk about the theatrical experiments from their practical perspective. In chapter 10) Mark Tatlow, who was the musical director of all productions organised by Performing Premodernity, describes the evolving process of his decade-long relationship with the HIP movement.

The third and final part of the anthology takes as its point of departure the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary in 2016 of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre. In August of that year, the theatre saw the premiere of a new production of *Don Giovanni*, staged by Ivan Alexandre and conducted by Marc Minkowski. In his analysis of the performances in chapter 11), Willmar Sauter reflects on the problems

that tend to arise when artists trained in the *Regietheater* style enter the historic stage of an eighteenth-century theatre. Two months earlier, the theatre department of Stockholm University had hosted a large-scale conference of the International Federation for Theatre Research with the theme: 'Presenting the Theatrical Past: Interplays of Artefacts, Discourses and Practices'. Chapter 12) is a report of a panel debate that Willmar Sauter chaired on the morning of 15 June 2016, and which featured an international group of theatre scholars, practitioners, and administrators, who met to discuss the relationship between tangible and intangible cultural heritage, specifically with regard to the Drottningholm theatre and the HIP movement. In the afternoon of the same day, all conference participants were taken from the conference location to the Drottningholm theatre where David Wiles delivered the keynote lecture from the stage, illustrated by three artistic researchers associated with Performing Premodernity: Laila Cathleen Neuman, João Luís Paxião, and Mark Tatlow. Wiles' talk – reproduced in chapter 13) – dealt more specifically with the challenges and potentials of performing on the historic site, inviting the audience of theatre researchers to think of both the Drottningholm space and of eighteenth-century theatre as 'a bundle of contradictions', in which conflicting ideologies intersect and interact, whether these are ideologies of material and immaterial heritage, conventionality and radicality, or acting and spectating.

The following mix of theoretical essays, debate articles, historical case studies, workshop and conference reports, interviews, and public lectures reflect the dialogue character of the Performing Premodernity research project (see Fig. 2). Our aim in this volume is to introduce new perspectives and concepts into the academic and artistic discourses on both theatre historiography and historical and historically informed theatre practices. We look forward to continuing the conversations with artists, scholars, and audiences.

# PART A:
# Theoretical Questions

# 1. Adequate Rhetorical Delivery when Staging Premodernity: A Combination of Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches[1]

*Jette Barnholdt Hansen*

How do we approach voice and gesture when working with the performing arts from the eighteenth century? To my mind it requires adequate rhetorical delivery. For staging premodernity to be based on a thorough interpretation of both the artistic artefact and its context, rhetorical delivery – *actio* – must be taken into consideration.

An obvious historical method is the examination of rhetorical manuals of the period in order to learn from their illustrations, explanations, and practical advice, and then to attempt to transfer and transform this historical knowledge to contemporary performances. This could be defined as a *synchronic* approach, because it leads to specific insights into the eighteenth century and to the reception of rhetoric in the period.

I consider the *synchronic* approach both necessary and constructive as a means of familiarising oneself with the rhetoric and the aesthetics of a historical period. However, I would argue that it must be combined with a *diachronic* approach, which introduces a broader and longer-lasting perspective on the rhetorical delivery and on its impact on aesthetic performance. Classical rhetoric includes a theoretical concept – *kairós* – that might help us as we try to grasp this *diachronic* approach.

*Kairós* is often defined as timing, or as saying or doing something that fits the exact time, the specific occasion, and the particular audience. The concept therefore points towards the fact that rhetoric is deeply rooted in a specific situation and, moreover, that the situation

is the speaker's greatest resource when choosing what to say or do. Words and actions can be used to embody *kairós* if they reflect the demands and potentials of the situation.

The concept of *kairós* is rooted in Sophistic thinking and is primarily connected with Isocrates (436–338 BCE), the heir of the Sophists. The concept was central both to his *philosophia* and to the ideals of his school, which was founded just outside Athens around 390 BCE. The combination of serious topics and stylistic training was devised to develop both the personalities of the pupils and their sense of individual rhetorical situations – *kairós*. In the writings of Isocrates, *kairós* is sometimes translated as 'time' or 'circumstances', and sometimes as 'situation' or 'occasion'. He uses the term in both a broad, external sense, and in a narrow, internal sense.

In general, the concept of *kairós* concerns the ontology of rhetoric, that is, its existence in the world. Rhetoric is capable of creating situations and is connected with the ancient Greek concept of *doxa* – opinion or judgement, which is embodied in practical reality – as opposed to the concept of *episteme*, that is, truth in a philosophical sense.

More narrowly defined, the concept of *kairós* concerns the particular rhetorical situation and refers to its determining role when a speaker or a performing artist either makes an utterance or performs an action. Thus, the rhetorical delivery of an actor or a singer may express *kairós* if, for example, the gestures are shaped in close interaction with the specific moment, the unique occasion, the stage, and the particular audience.

Professor Øivind Andersen has written on the definition of *kairós* as used by the Sophist Alcidamas (who lived in the fourth century BCE).[2] Unlike Isocrates, Alcidamas links the concept of *kairós* closely to oral improvisation, opining that the speech needs to be both invented and delivered at the very moment when the speaker is facing his audience. Only then will the speaker know with certainty what the right words and actions might be. Of course, he must prepare himself diligently

2. Øivind Andersen, 'Rette ord i rette tid: Kairos i klassisk retorik', *Rhetorica Scandinavica* 4 (1997), 21–27.

by developing arguments and choosing stylistic figures, gestures and suchlike that will underline his points and move the audience, but he must also remain open and shape the speech in interaction with the exact moment of performance.

At the Performing Premodernity symposium organised by the research group and held in Stockholm in December 2014, stage director Deda Cristina Colonna used the phrase 'to trust one's instincts' when reflecting on her artistic work and on her way of directing early operas. As a rhetorician, I support this statement. When staging premodernity and unveiling the immanent orality of the period, we must, of course, prepare ourselves by studying and interpreting the era, its specific artistic artefacts, and its rhetoric (including the gestures that might have been used). When going from theory to practice and transforming our knowledge of the period into contemporary staging, we have to 'trust our instincts' and not rely solely on our *synchronic* knowledge. In this transformation process a *diachronic* approach to rhetorical delivery may help us to keep focused on the symbiotic interaction between the present moment and *kairotic* communication. And this is, in fact, what persuasive rhetoricians have always done.[3]

3. Further reading: Øivind Andersen, *I retorikkens hage* (Universitets forlaget i Oslo, 1995); Tormod Eide, *Retorisk leksikon* (Universitetsforlaget i Oslo, 1990); Catherine R. Eskin and James L. Kinneavy, 'Kairos', in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik*. ed. Gert Ueding, 11 vols. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1998), vol. 4; Charlotte Jørgensen and Lisa Villadsen (eds.), *Retorik: Teori og praksis* (Copenhagen: Samfundslitteratur, 2009).

## 2. On a Praxeology of Theatre Historiography[1]

*Meike Wagner*

We were lucky. The tour guide was a well-informed, communicative young woman who had a good sense of what would be interesting to a group of theatre scholars. We were one hour south of Stockholm[2] visiting the palace theatre, created in 1782 at Gripsholm Castle, which itself dates from 1537 (Figs. 1a and 1b). We heard numerous details about the architecture of the theatre, sited in one of the towers, about the history of the Gustavian period (1771–1792), and about the purposes of the theatre at that time. Our gaze was directed towards the pigeonholes placed high above the auditorium, which allowed discreet views of the performances on stage. We also had a behind-the-scenes look at the theatre machinery. However, despite such a highly informative tour, many questions remained unanswered. We had been given access to a precious historical artefact; we had been provided with information that permitted us to understand this theatre in its historical context, and yet the emptiness of the theatre stage before us was unsatisfying. Some scholars in the group wished they could have seen a performance that would have allowed them to experience the performative potential of the theatre; others wanted to know more about the functions of the Gripsholm theatre in the eighteenth century. Personally, I had a strong desire to go onto the stage, to feel the wooden planks under my feet, to inhale the dry, dusty air, and to sense the air streams that circulate there. I would have loved to speak and to sing in the space, to explore its sound quality. And I dreamt of operating the handles and wheels of the machinery to experience the gliding of the wings, the swift changes of the scenery. My desire to be involved practically with the theatre, however, did not spring from a wish to perform as such. I am neither an actress nor a singer. I rather felt a need to have a different kind of access to this historical

**Figures 1a and 1b.** The theatre at Gripsholm Castle, stage and machinery. Mariefred, 2016. Photos: Meike Wagner ©. License: CC BY-NC.

artefact and to know more about the aesthetic potential of the Gripsholm theatre and about the historical practices of the place. What I clearly lacked was the opportunity to explore the Gripsholm stage by means of a praxeology of theatre historiography.

So, what do I mean by a 'praxeology of theatre historiography'? First and foremost, this indicates an interplay of theory and practice that allows us to gain practical knowledge of theatre history. Theatre has always been a fleeting, transitory practice that cannot be fully grasped through the textual and visual sources of the archives. Therefore, any performance analysis of contemporary theatre will remain incomplete without the theatre scholar's own performance

experience. One needs to be involved in the performative event to fully grasp the dynamics, the flow of energy, the communicative strategies of the staging. The theatre scholar must engage in a conversation with her/himself, negotiating between her/his positions as a subjective participant and as an objective evaluator.

A praxeology of theatre historiography takes account of the fact that historical theatre practices also involved this kind of energetic and communicative 'eventness'. How can a historian get access to the dynamics of performances that took place so long ago? The critical and experimental restaging of dramatic works from the past gives us an experience, perhaps not of real historical theatre practices, but at least of historically *informed* theatre practices. This practical approach to the theatre of the past can give us an idea of how the performance might have worked with respect to movement, to the impact of the historical space on the performative action, the acoustics, the energy flows, and much more. It goes without saying that this is also a pleasurable experiment for theatre historians: the historical study object suddenly comes to life and seems to speak to us on multiple levels. However, we encounter challenges similar to those that face the scholars who analyse contemporary practices. The experience of performance and the involvement in the performative practice demand self-reflection and a constant repositioning of one's scholarly knowledge and epistemology. Engagement in performative experimentation will challenge our beliefs and methodological traditions. And it requires us to find a balance between the pleasure we take in the experience of the performance and our desire to gain knowledge and understanding of what happens in the moment of the performance.

In the following, I would like to discuss both the potentials and the problems presented by the praxeology of theatre historiography as practiced within the research project Performing Premodernity, which focused on historical theatre practices of the second half of the eighteenth century. Over the years, our practical projects – workshop

productions of eighteenth-century works for the stage – provided the impulse for our reflection on methodological questions. Hence, when I refer to a praxeological method of theatre historiography, I am referring to an approach that was developed deductively. Our practical work was based on thorough discursive, dramaturgical, musical, and other types of source-related research. In the process of creating and rehearsing theatrical productions, new questions and problems arose that fed into our academic research, and which resulted in publications, conference papers, and other academic communications. And these processes have not ended; we continue to be involved in an ongoing process of thinking, practising, establishing, and reconsidering the methodological frameworks. What I present here is a first attempt to conceptualise the methodological implications of our praxeological research into eighteenth-century theatre practices. I will begin by discussing some basic issues concerning the relation between theory and practice in theatre studies. In the second part, I will argue for the usefulness of praxeology as a method within theatre historiography. And in the third and final part, I will discuss specific questions that arose during the process of rehearsing/practising in an eighteenth-century theatre.

## Practice and theory in theatre studies

In the humanities, the generation of knowledge through the combination of theory and practice has a history of its own. In European historiography, attempts to gain insight into historical events through practical projects date back to the second half of the nineteenth century when history was being established as an academic discipline. Reconstructions of historical theatre performances and theatre practices have a long tradition too. One could mention John Philip Kemble's attempts to perform Shakespearean speeches with the proper historical pronunciation around the year 1800; or the historical research of the Meiningen Court Theatre in late

nineteenth-century Germany, which explored various historical periods through theatre in order to find historically appropriate means for staging plays; or the repeated attempts of student groups within classical philology and theatre studies to revive the theatrical practices of classical Antiquity.[3] The underlying creative engagement and scientific curiosity of these cases, as well as their overt positivism can create a particular fascination and at the same time a historiographical discomfort. These projects tried to fill gaps by creating historical evidence through practice: 'Look, this is how it was! Now we know!' Entirely lacking, though, was sophisticated historiographical and methodological reflections. The staging was supposed to speak for itself – which it did, while also having a powerful impact on the historical thinking of contemporaries. This was a problematic effect, since no proper consideration was given to either the personal bias of the historian, or to the problems caused by the combination of theory and practice, and the construction of historical narratives on the basis of practice.

So how can we develop a praxeological approach that subscribes to modern notions of critical historiography while continuing to draw on the rich epistemic potential of practical performance? More than thirty years ago, the so-called 'practice turn', or 'performative turn', began to gain momentum within the humanities, including within theatre research. In the field of theatre studies, new study programmes were established that incorporated practical experimentation into the scholarly approaches, for example at Giessen University and at the University of Hildesheim in Germany, and at almost every major theatre/drama department in the United Kingdom. While these developments have fostered new thinking about the relation between theory and practice in research, it is still difficult to find specific tools and methods that can be used for academic-artistic research within theatre studies. One of the first scholars to practice, teach, and make the interplay of theory and practice in theatre and performance studies mainstream was Baz Kershaw, who recently pointed to

3. On Kemble's Shakespeare performances, see Michael Dobson, 'John Philip Kemble', in *Great Shakespeareans, Set I*, ed. Claude Rawson (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 289–338; Reiko Oya, *Representing Shakespearean Tragedy: Garrick, the Kembles, and Kean* (Cambridge University Press, 2007). On the Meininger Court Theatre, see Steven Arthur DeHart, *The Meininger Theatre, 1776–1926* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981); Volker Kern and Manfred Koch, *Das Meininger Hoftheater* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2004).

the 'vertiginous traverse' of the disciplines that followed the 'practice turn': 'A key component in the "practice turn" in the disciplines has been a vertiginous traverse between discursive and embodied ways of becoming/being, doing epistemologies and creating ontologies'.[4] This points to a profound principle of Practice as Research (PaR): its capacity to dislocate knowledge itself.

Since the 1990s PaR has developed multiple approaches within theatre and performance studies that combine practice and theory. Both PaR research and teaching are widely recognised today. However, on the methodological level, PaR scholars still have difficulties conceptualising their research strategies and tools. We need to reflect more on the role of the scholar-researcher-artist investigator that takes fully into account the phenomenological and the epistemological aspects. And even though historical topics have been explored within PaR projects, there has so far been no interest in theatre historiography. Nonetheless key elements and concepts of PaR have been an important source of inspiration for the praxeology of theatre historiography.

Linda Candy's distinction between *practice-based research* and *practice-led research* is useful for navigating this quickly expanding field. According to Candy, practice-based is an 'original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice'. A full understanding of such a research outcome can only be gained through forms that are at least partly creative or artistic. Practice-led research, on the other hand, is 'concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. The main aim of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice'.[5]

Our praxeological theatre historiography is situated more within the field of practice-led research. Its main goal is to create knowledge about theatre practices of the past through practising, negotiating between aesthetic experience, expert knowledge, and practical

4. Baz Kershaw, 'Practice as Research', in *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance*, ed. Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 63–85: 84.

5. Linda Candy, 'Practice-Based Research: A Guide' (Sydney: University of Technology, 2006), 1–19: 3: https://www.creativityandcognition.com/resources/PBR%20Guide-1.1–2006.pdf (accessed 25 May 2018).

episteme. However, certain aspects of practice-based research were also important when we staged historical works based on this complex of knowledge. Moreover, the reflection on our academic research practice became crucial when we tried to navigate the field of artistic research. The questioning of established methods and skills was part of the undertaking: practitioners and teachers of PaR often talk about 'dislocating knowledge',[6] about 'cultural unlearning',[7] and about the production of an alternative type of knowledge.

Both the critical dislocation and the creative production of knowledge are related to two discourses within academic research. The first centres on the idea that practical/artistic research is a *canonical provocation* to traditional academic research, which expands the thinking and the doing beyond well-known practices of reading and writing, and which questions established norms for academic socialisation and *Habitus*. The second discourse centres on a new understanding of *embodied knowledge*, which raises questions about the acquisition and transmission of knowledge through bodily practices. In the following, I will discuss both discourses with our praxeology of theatre historiography in mind.

## Canonical provocation

In 'Research in a Post-Normal World', published in 2015, Peter O'Connor and Michael Anderson offer a very critical view on the state of research at universities today, describing it as a business on neoliberal terms. Although they write from an Australian/New Zealand perspective, we may recognise aspects of this neoliberal research model in our own working conditions:

> [Research as business] is cut-throat, competitive and often self-serving. It is an outcome of a neo-liberal business and market model imposed on universities, one which celebrates the individual at the expense of the collective, with highly attuned accountability measures based often on the likelihood of how the research will benefit both the university and the researcher.[8]

6. Kershaw, 'Practice as Research', 84.

7. Urmimala Sarkar Munsi, 'Practice-Informed Pedagogies of Cultural Unlearning', in *International Performance Research Pedagogies: Towards an Unconditional Discipline?*, ed. Sruti Bala, Milija Gluhovic, Hanna Korsberg, and Kati Röttger (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 139–149: 140–141.

8. Peter O'Connor and Michael Anderson, *Applied Theatre: Research: Radical Departures* (Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, eBook, 2015), 3–4.

To O'Connor and Anderson, 'applied theatre' is a method that allows us to counter these business-inspired principles of research, and to break away from the market logic of academic writing. We are all familiar with principles such as the linear structures of funding schemes, the commodification of knowledge items, and the way to market a study programme successfully, and the extent to which these principles impact our research and teaching designs, and how difficult it is to 'queer' such institutional and structural demands with innovative and non-aligned research ideas. In the humanities, and particularly in the field of arts studies, art-based research can challenge traditional ways of both representing and evaluating research:

> If the world cannot be reduced to numbers or words alone, arts-based research challenges traditional research's demand for validation and verification. It rejects the notion of singular truths or clear answers, instead searching for contrasting nuances, revealing ambiguities and complex multiple truths.[9]

While it certainly seems appealing to turn to theatre practice in order to expand the scope of our scholarly research, I think there is more at stake. As German philosopher and critic Uwe Wirth insists, the progress of scholarly thinking and research relies heavily on the interplay of the canonising and de-canonising of methods, theories, and paradigms. He describes how the interplay of professional and dilettante modes might generate new thinking and new types of academic output.[10] In that sense, theatrical practice within the framework of academic theatre studies – which does not aspire to become professional – might allow scholars to operate in a non-normative (i.e. a 'dilettante') mode. Wirth claims that the dilettante mode within research flourishes when the 'intellectual mode of the frontier' interacts with theoretical and conceptual research frameworks. It follows then that the performative practice not only provides us with an emotional, unsettling experience; it also feeds back into the scholarly epistemology, enabling us to develop our field and modes of thinking.

9. O'Connor and Anderson, *Applied Theatre*, 24.

10. Uwe Wirth, 'Dilettantische Konjekturen', in *Dilettantismus als Beruf*, ed. Safia Azzouni and Uwe Wirth (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2010), 11–30: 24. My translation.

## Embodied knowledge

In a similar vein, dance historian Susan Leigh Foster advocates for the creation of a different type of knowledge when she takes the concept of 'kinaesthetic empathy' from dance practice and movement therapy and links it with historiographical perspectives on dance.[11] In her introduction to *Choreographing History*, she is critical of those types of historiography that affirm learned patterns of 'disembodied' research and writing:

> From [authorial voices] they have learned that pronouncements about the past should issue in sure and impartial tones. They have deduced that historians' bodies should not affiliate with their subjects nor with fellow historians who likewise labor over the secrets of the past. Instead, those voices within past histories teach the practice of stillness, a kind of stillness that spreads across time and space, a stillness that masquerades as omniscience. By bestilling themselves, modestly, historians accomplish the transformation into universal subject that can speak for all.[12]

Instead, historians should become aware of their own corporeal performances when writing, reading, thinking. They will then be able to activate their kinaesthetic and empathetic relationship to the historical bodies they are studying. By affiliating their own 'bodily theorics' – that is, their bodily practices, bodily knowledge, and meaning-making – with those performed by the historical bodies, they gain insight into past practices:

> Circulating around and through the partitions of any established practice and reverberating at the interstices among distinct practices, theorics of bodily practices, like images of the historical body, are deduced from acts of comparison between past and present, from rubbing one kind of historical document against others. In the frictive encounters between texts, such as those expressing aesthetic praise, medical insights, proscriptive conduct, and recreational pursuits, theorics of bodily significance begin to consolidate.[13]

11. Susan Leigh Foster, 'An Introduction to Moving Bodies: Choreographing History', in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 3–21. Foster refers to John Martin as an inspiration when using the term 'kinaesthetic empathy'; see John Martin, *Introduction to Dance* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1939).

12. Foster, *Choreographing History*, 7.

13. Foster, *Choreographing History*, 8.

When a past becomes embodied, says Foster, a dialogue emerges between the historian and the historical practices. Consequently, then, both the historian and the historical narrative undergo a transformation:

> As historians' bodies affiliate with documents about bodies of the past, both past and present bodies redefine their identities. As historians assimilate the theories of past bodily practices, those practices begin to designate their own progressions. As translations from moved event to written text occur, the practices of moving and writing partner each other. And as emerging accounts about past bodies encounter the body of constraints that shape the writing of history, new narrative forms present themselves.[14]

Foster supports a corporeal investment in historical research on past practices and performances. While her main argument concerns the imaginative affiliation of past and present, she does not take reenactments of historical practices into account. I would argue, however, that the corporeal self-awareness and imaginative creativity of the historian is enhanced when we are involved in, or directly experience, historicising performances. The kinaesthetic empathy does not then rely on textual and visual sources alone; it can draw on the aesthetic experience as well. The historian's body then acquires tacit knowledge through her/his senses.

We deal here with the fundamental concept of embodied knowledge as 'tacit knowledge'. Michael Polanyi coined this concept in the 1950s, describing it as a 'knowing how', as opposed to a 'knowing that'. The latter can be acquired and transmitted through reading and writing; the former only through corporeal practices and experiences. In our case, these practices and experiences are related to the corporeal knowledge of performance. Doing practical exercises, performing on stage, and experiencing performances can give us access to a specific knowledge of theatre, and while we perform and participate, we also demonstrate or represent our knowledge of the art form.

This transmission of knowledge through corporeal experience and performance touches on both epistemological and historiographical aspects, as Diana Taylor has emphasised in her seminal book *The*

14. Foster, *Choreographing History*, 8.

*Archive and the Repertoire*, in which she introduces the concept of 'the repertoire' as an embodied archive that needs to be explored in order to give a full picture of past and present performing practices and cultural performances. While the archive provides us with texts and objects, these are unable to tell us about performing action and corporeal aspects:

> Repertoire, etymologically 'a treasury, an inventory', also allows for individual agency, referring also to 'the finder, discoverer', and meaning 'to find out'. The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there', being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same. The repertoire both keeps and transforms choreographies of meaning.[15]

A lived and performed repertoire both preserves and changes the performance while transmitting the corporeal action. Taylor introduces a practical historiographical approach, drawing on the concept of oral history but emphasising the performing body. The concept of the repertoire as a living archive and a corporeal transmission of knowledge makes us aware of the fact that the historiography of theatre only explores the performative past to a very limited extent so long as it is restricted to the study of text- and object-based sources.

Kinaesthetic empathy (Foster), tacit knowledge (Polanyi), and the historiographical repertoire (Taylor) are the conceptual pillars of my practice-led historiography of theatre. I will now turn to a discussion of the aesthetic dimensions of these corporeal approaches and how they contribute to the dislocation and production of knowledge.

## Aesthetic epistemologies

In the following, my argument will be based on a post-Kantian epistemology that links aesthetic experience to the creation of knowledge. In his *Critique of Judgement* (1790), Immanuel Kant locates an experience of cognition (*Erkenntnis*) within the process of aesthetic judgement.[16] The experience of beauty initiates a free play of the senses that animates our cognitive abilities. However, as he includes both art

15. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 20.

16. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (vol. 4 of *Kant's Critical Assessments*), ed. Ruth F. Chadwick (London: Routledge, 1992).

and nature in his concept of beauty, Kant argues on a more general basis. Friedrich Schiller, on the other hand, in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), turns specifically to the encounter of human beings with works of art as an aesthetic practice that will lead to an aesthetic state of mind, and which harmonises the relationship between our physical senses and our cognitive abilities.[17] He embeds his concept of aesthetic education in the context of the political aim of shaping a new and peaceable humankind that will overcome violent struggles and oppression.

My praxeological approach to theatre historiography draws on the ideas of Kant and Schiller in order to promote the aesthetic experience as a methodological tool, a tool that we may use to investigate historical theatre practices. Our interest in historical practices from the second half of the eighteenth century did not focus on the formal and structural aspects of the texts, but on the reenactment of practices that embody specific cultural-historical frameworks and processes performatively. Our approach was based on the recognition that theatre and performance are human and cultural practices that may challenge our ways of thinking and living. As the German philosopher Georg Bertram has put it:

> Works of art challenge human practices either by confirming or by changing them, and in either case expanding them through these processes. At the basis of such a notion of art is the view of art as a reflexive practice: a practice that refers reflectively to other practices in life.[18]

In this way, artistic practices – in our case, theatre – are linked to the cultural-historical realities by which they are framed. Theatre practices provide orientation in our lives; we reflect and reshape our thinking and doing through aesthetic experience within a given cultural-historical framework. We should not regard this as a simple pedagogical equation – theatre teaches morals, and we adopt them – but rather understand the theatrical practice we are involved in when

17. Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, ed. and tr. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

18. Georg Bertram, *Kunst als menschliche Praxis: Eine Ästhetik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2014), 98. My translation.

we perform, participate, perceive, in terms of a performativity that shapes our identities and our modes of thinking. But how might such a notion of theatre and aesthetic experience affect our scholarly search for a better understanding of historical theatre practices? Here we need to engage in *reflecting on the reflective processes* in art practice, while we collate past and present ideas and experiences of theatre. What happens in our minds when we witness reenactments of historical theatre practices?

Reflection on the aesthetic experience of participating in practical experiments and performances occurs on at least two levels. On one level, we expand our thinking through doing; we experience an 'unlearning' of learnt certainties, and acquire new and different kinds of knowledge. As a historian, I experience how my new embodied knowledge is at odds, or rather in negotiation, with past practices and the provided historicised experiences. And I get a Kantian 'aesthetic pleasure' from experiencing the enlivening of my mind and my thinking through the aesthetic encounter. I joyfully observe myself generating new knowledge through the sensual experience. On another level, I embrace the historicity of the revived practice cognitively as well as sensually. I try to find traces of the historical-cultural and epistemological practices in my aesthetic experience. What historical reality was made tangible, confirmed, and expanded through the historical art practice? My empathetically historicising experience creates a Fosterian[19] affiliation between past and present, a friction that arises when negotiating different documents, sources – and, I should add, aesthetic experiences.

The most difficult task involved in this kind of praxeology of theatre historiography is to verbalise the research results and fit them into the academic framework. How can we even talk or write about these experiences? The concept of 'praxeology', as used today within sociology, seems helpful as we articulate the practical and aesthetic experience on the basis of theatre historiography.

19. See Foster, *Choreographing History*, 8.

## Praxeology

Andrzej Wirth provided a concept of praxeology for theatre studies when he established the Applied Theatre Studies programme at the University of Giessen in the 1980s. He stated that praxeology was a method that allows us to pass from the space of theory into the space of practice in order to verify, falsify, or cancel theory.[20] New meaning is created in that in-between where there is neither right nor wrong. Although this concept is no longer used by theatre scholars in Giessen, I would like to examine its relevance and implications for artistic-academic research.

It is worthwhile looking at how the basic parameters of praxeology have recently been reformulated by leading sociologists. They re-examine their practice theories through the lens of the performative turn by returning to the thinking of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens. From the praxeological perspective of these researchers, the cultural and everyday practices of human beings are at the core of the establishment, and even the emergence, of society. In fact, we can regard theatre as one of these cultural practices that played a role in the establishment of society. And in this case, we merely operate with a sociocultural concept of theatre, as the aesthetic dimension of theatre as an art form has not yet been taken into account.[21] However, the sociological concept of 'praxis' includes important aspects that are worth considering. Hilmar Schäfer gives a basic praxeological definition of 'practices':

> Practices are the doing, speaking, feeling, and thinking that we invariably share with others. The fact that we have them in common with others is a precondition for an understanding of the world that enables us to move and act meaningfully. Practices are established before the individual acts, and they enable, structure, and limit this acting. They are not only performed *by us*; they also exist *around us*, and in a historical sense *before us*. They circulate independently of individual subjects, though they depend on them in order to be performed and represented.[22]

20. Wirth borrowed this term from his teacher, the Polish philosopher Tadeusz Kotarbiński, and his examination of the parameters governing human agency. It combines the process of thinking and its logic (theory) with its purposeful implementation in practice. See Andrzej Wirth, 'Adepten der Giessener Schule: Die Neuen Coolen', in *Grenzgänge: Das Theater und die anderen Künste*, ed. Gabriele Brandstetter, Helga Finter, and Markus Weßendorf (Tübingen: Narr, 1998), 317–326: 317.

21. A fruitful discussion of the relation between art as a social practice and art as an aesthetic practice is found in Bertram, *Kunst als menschliche Praxis*.

22. Hilmar Schäfer (ed.), *Praxistheorie: Ein soziologisches Forschungsprogramm* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016), 11. My translation.
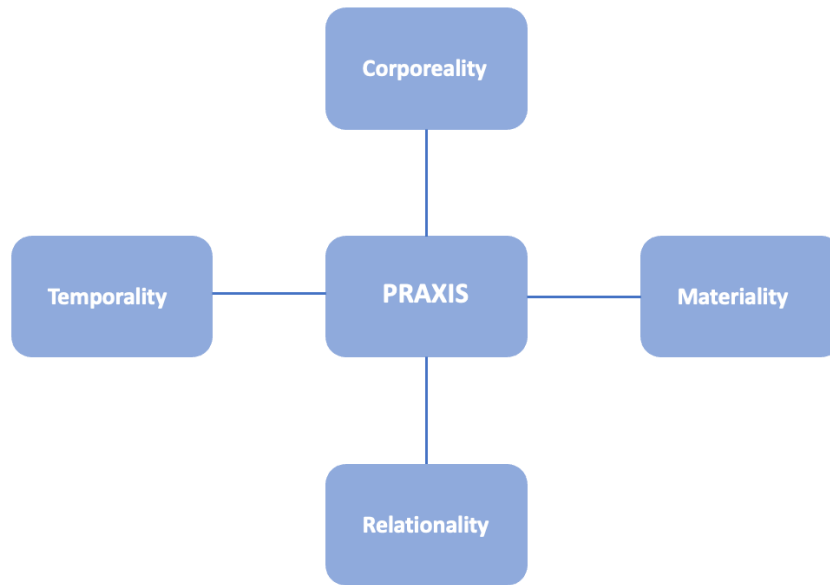
**Figure 2.** Model of Social Praxis. Graphics: Meike Wagner ©. License: CC BY-NC.

The relation between the concepts of 'performance' and 'performativity' becomes clear when Schäfer describes *relationality* (interactivity), *temporality* (process), *corporeality* (embodied knowledge), and *materiality* (relevance and use of artefacts) as the basic elements of social praxis (Fig. 2).[23]

Hilmar Schäfer writes that in constructivist materialism 'practices can never have essential sources'. They emerge through performance. Formations of praxis must therefore 'always be created materially anew from event-based practices'. And they can only be understood as 'materialisations of practices in the act, which by definition are events'.[24]

The parameters *relationality, temporality, corporeality*, and *materiality* allow for a multi-layered approach to research in historical theatre practices. *Relationality* is relevant on two levels: in the 'now'

23. Schäfer, *Praxistheorie*, 13.

24. Schäfer, *Praxistheorie*, 72. My translation. Schäfer uses the word *Ereignis* which cannot be directly translated as 'event'. *Ereignis* involves an element of 'it happens' (as in 'I am experiencing a happening'), which gets lost in translation.

of the performance (or rather, the theatre practice), and in the 'then' of the performance (or rather, occurrence) of the historical practice. On the historical level, we need to take the cultural-historical and aesthetic context into account, that is, the questions of the historical appearance, dissemination, and experience of this practice. And these questions are equally important on the contemporary level, although we can reflect on our own involvement in and experience of the practice at the same time, that is, who takes part in and enables the practice? What is their role in the practical performance?

The issue of *corporeality* also involves a negotiation between a present and a past situation. The actors and singers we work with operate with a different repertoire of implicit knowledge than the repertoire that was at work in the eighteenth century. Although the actors and singers have been trained in historical practices – which they might have learnt from a catalogue of historical gestures derived from textual and visual sources – they do not have 'natural access' to these historical acting practices. The same goes for the spectator and the theatre historian. The performance I see, hear, and feel is alien to my senses, which have been trained through watching modern performances. I can both get used to the codified gestures and even find pleasure in watching them, though this requires some adaptation, and I can derive a very specific pleasure from transforming this alien aesthetic experience into an experience of gaining knowledge on a corporeal level. In this way, I explore the embodied side of Kant's aesthetic judgement: my senses are subject to an unusual experience, but this experience creates new knowledge inside me. The 'alienness' of eighteenth-century gesturing and acting, mentioned above, no longer remains alien to me, then, but rather becomes a welcome challenge to my intellect and my emotional senses – an aesthetic experience.

A focus on *temporality* raises the issue of the practical process that continually creates the social as well as the aesthetic. Within the historiographical theatre practice, reflection on the historicising of the performance is crucial. We have no direct access to the historical performance

situation, but the distance between the 'now' and the 'then' creates an important tension, and the model narrative of theatre history emerges as problematic. Our notion of 'Baroque theatre', for example, dissolves into multiple possibilities when we start to investigate individual theatrical practices from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[25]

*Materiality* and the issue of the relevance and use of artefacts are central to my concept of a historiographical theatre practice. For me historiographical research into eighteenth-century theatre spaces involves an emphasis on material aspects, although the practical perspective is more important than approaches drawn from art history or architectural history. In the historiographical work of Performing Premodernity we have been truly inspired by the concept of *site-specificity*, i.e. performances that are 'conceived for, mounted within, and conditioned by the particulars of found spaces, existing social situations or locations both used and unused'.[26]

To take Drottningholm as an example, we regard this theatre from 1766 as an instrument that demands a specific technique from those who perform (in) it. Its wooden space is a particularly sensitive instrument, the full aural, visual, spatial, and energetic potential of which unfolds only when the practice attunes to it. For example, a director who overstuffs the stage with scenography that disconnects the movements and actions of the performers from the surrounding theatrical space will tend to disturb the performance of the space as an instrument.[27] The question is then, whether such interesting *Regieeinfälle* are really staged at the right spot. However, we should not dogmatically historicise any theatre practice. In that case, every theatre space might be regarded as a historical space that only allows for a limited number of 'correct' theatre practices. This is not the aim of our historiographical theatre practice.

To summarise the benefits and risks of our praxeology of theatre historiography, I would like to make clear that critical theatre practices of this kind can offer valuable insights into historical theatre. At the same time, praxeology allows us to reflect on our own epistemological

25. See section 3, 'Doing praxeological theatre historiography'.

26. Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2001), 23. On site-specificity, see e.g., Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000); Mike Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance* (Basingstoke NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Anna Birch and Joanne Tompkins (eds.), *Performing Site-Specific Theatre: Politics, Place, Practice* (Basingstoke NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

27. This happened, for example, in the 2016 production of *Don Giovanni*, in which the director built an extra theatre platform and wooden cage on the original stage, ignoring the material aspects of the historical space. For Willmar Sauter's analysis of this performance, see chapter 11 in this volume, 'An Aesthetics of Absence'.

and academic practices: our historical narratives are challenged through the practical experience; the doubts that praxeology raises enter our familiar ways of thinking and researching and provide intellectually stimulating impulses; and finally, praxeology demands a constant and creative repositioning of the theories and methods of the theatre historian.

## Doing praxeological theatre historiography

In the following, I will discuss three specific historiographical issues that arose during the rehearsals and staging of our experimental theatre productions: 1) the creation of sources and experiences; 2) negotiations between the Self and the Other; and 3) models of theatre history vs. the diversity of scenic practices.

## The creation of new sources and experiences

By mounting productions of historical works, we produce both historiographical sources and – as paradoxically as it may sound – historiographical experiences. Normally historians cannot experience the historical productions that they research. R. G. Collingwood first discussed 'imagination' as a source of historical narratives in the 1940s.[28] When historians are deeply buried in archival sources for weeks on end, only loosely connected to the outside world, visions of the past may emerge in their minds that provide their fragmentary findings with a coherent meaning. It is another matter altogether, though, to have a real aesthetic experience of a theatre performance that is closely linked to the historical sources that they research. In the now of a theatre performance, textual knowledge turns into a corporeal experience that feeds back into the reflection on the textual knowledge. The following example is drawn from a workshop that took place

28. Robin George Collingwood, 'The Historical Imagination', in *The Idea of History* (Oxford University Press, 1946), 232–249.

**Figures 3a and 3b.** Workshop of the Performing Premodernity research group: Laila Cathleen Neumann (Zerlina) and João Luís Paixão (Don Giovanni) rehearsing a scene from *Don Giovanni* by W. A. Mozart. Drottningholm Palace Theatre, 2015. Photos: Maria Gullstam ©. License: CC BY-NC.

at the Drottningholm Palace Theatre in October 2015, when the space revealed its potential both as a musical and affective instrument.

During the experiment, two young singers – Laila Cathleen Neuman as Zerlina and João Luís Paixão as Don Giovanni – performed the duettino 'Là ci darem la mano' from W. A. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787) (Figs. 3a and 3b). We asked them to assume different positions on the stage to explore the sound quality of the historic stage. The more they approached the backdrop, the 'duller' their voices sounded. When they sang towards the sides of the stage, their voices seemed to be swallowed by the gaps between the wings. When they finally positioned themselves in the proscenium frame, we realised that the sound was projected very strongly into the auditorium. The

proscenium functioned as an amplifier of their voices. When they sang towards the audience from this position, the whole theatre was filled with a full and brilliant sound, which reached to the very back of the auditorium.

The proscenium also functioned as a channel for the affective energy of the performers. To experiment with the representation of their social status, their emotional relationship, and the mutual manipulation of the two characters, we again tried out several positions with the performers standing within the proscenium. Following depictions in historical sources on eighteenth-century performance, they stood a little apart from each other, not facing each other, but keeping their faces turned towards each other in a 45-degree angle, while their bodies rested in contrapposto, their arms slightly bent. This certainly does not agree with modern ideas on how to stage passion and eroticism. Nowadays a couple involved in passionate seduction would tend to be very close physically, probably embracing, or looking straight into one another's eyes. When looking at depictions of performances of such scenes on the eighteenth-century stage, we often wonder how this seemingly unemotional spatial and bodily arrangement could induce the audience to shed tears, sob, cry, and even faint, as sources often report. When I felt the presence of our young singers on the stage, however, I was overwhelmed by an almost tangible energy between the two, which moved me to tears. What had happened? Reflecting on the incident, I understood that it was the energy and sound of their voices that was directed towards the sides and along the frame of the proscenium, and which returned directly to the two singers, so that their voices blended, embracing them both. No textual or visual sources would have been able to communicate the experience of the impact of the proscenium on the channelling of energy. The stage simply turned into an affective instrument. The tension between the visual distance and the aural embrace, which was due to the spatial dynamics and the power of the sound, created a deeply emotional moment.

The aesthetic experience that emerged in this experimental situation led to an extension of my epistemological approach. It became clear to me that a praxeology of theatre historiography may grant us a deeper understanding of the theatre practices of the late eighteenth century. The historic stage of the Drottningholm theatre, with its original machinery and layout, demonstrates the effect caused by the interplay of spatial structure and proscenium with sound and transmission. It becomes even clearer how crucial the instrumental function of the stage was for historical theatre practices when we compare Drottningholm to such historic theatres as Confidencen (built in 1753) at Ulriksdal Palace outside Stockholm which is the result of a historicising reconstruction, and the Margravial Opera House (built in 1748) in Bayreuth where the stage was totally remodelled in the late nineteenth century. In Confidencen, the historiographic research resulted in the construction of a historicising proscenium, which is considerably smaller than that at Drottningholm. In the Bayreuth theatre, the modernisation of the stage led to a total deconstruction of the proscenium that now appears very flat and pushed back towards the main stage. Although the historical auditorium, which is mainly a wooden structure, still provides us with an excellent acoustic, we can only imagine how strongly the proscenium would have supported the sound quality in the eighteenth century. Such aspects of historical theatre practice only become apparent through practical experimentation. Hence, any reflection on historical staging needs to take the instrumental potential of each historic theatre space into account. However, the practical conditions and means involved in historical theatre productions cannot be accessed immediately.

## Negotiations between the Self and the Other

Praxeological theatre historiography challenges our ideas of the Self and the Other, forcing us to negotiate between different contradictory

experiences, or to accept their different-ness outright. When scholars study eighteenth-century philosophical and aesthetic theories, which had a great impact on the art practices of the time, they do not find it difficult to discuss them critically or to relate them to theoretical concepts from our own time. Our academic education has trained us to engage in sophisticated thinking on an advanced abstract level. It is more difficult for us to harmonise our inner aesthetic compass with the experience of historically informed performances. When we try to translate historical notions of 'beauty', 'passion', or 'affect' into an actual historicising staging, the results are not always aesthetically convincing. In Jean-Jacques Rousseau's and Horace Coignet's *Pygmalion* (1770), for example, the expression of the artist's passion is of great significance. During the performance I attended at the Castle Theatre in Český Krumlov in 2015, I did not have access to those feelings.[29] I found the pathos-laden gestures and the sobbing declamation too alien for my modern sensibilities. Nevertheless, it did move me at certain moments, for example when João Luís Paixão as Pygmalion managed to create a musical flow in his declamation that gave full expression to his anguish, and when the transition between the actor's voice and a musical interlude appeared natural, the music blending seamlessly with the almost singing quality of his declamation.

I found the moment when Pygmalion picked up his hammer and chisel and mimicked the percussive motif in Rousseau's score – 'toc, toc, toc' – difficult to accept.[30] I felt this was a kind of ridiculously redundant acting that would be unacceptable in any modern staging. However, the illustration of the hammer motif appears to be quite demonstrative; it cannot be ignored. When I raised the issue with the production team, it turned out that other members of the group had had no difficulties accepting the synchronised action. We discussed whether the sound of a real chisel striking a stone offstage might have a better effect, and whether this was a question of historical vs. modern acting, or rather a question of good vs. bad acting.

29. For a video of the performance, see the Performing Premodernity homepage: https://performingpremodernity.com/anthology/.

30. Coignet wrote the original music for *Pygmalion*, assisted by Rousseau who wrote some parts of the score. These include the music that accompanies Pygmalion's hammering. See Horace Coignet, 'Particularités sur J.J. Rousseau, pendant le séjour qu'il fit à Lyon en 1770', 1821, quoted in English by Jacqueline Waeber, 'Introduction (English Version)', in Horace Coignet and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Pygmalion: Scène lyrique*, ed. Jacqueline Waeber (Geneva: Éditions Universitaire-Conservatoire de Musique, 1997), xv–xxi: xvii.

But then I learned that Rousseau had specifically prescribed Pygmalion's strokes in the original score, for which he had composed this particular music. There was no way around it: one simply could not ignore or delete this stage action just to make the performance more accessible to a modern audience. So how could we deal with the situation? As this production had an important experimental element, we reflected on this stage action, not accepting it as a ridiculous repetition but concluding that it was a demonstration of a connection between music and gesture that brought us back to Rousseau's central ideas about the interrelation of music, acting, and declamation, and specifically to *Pygmalion* as Rousseau's particular theatrical experiment in which he was trying to build a bridge between the art forms.[31]

As a methodology, praxeology can help us become aware of our own perceptions during a performance while providing us with a framework for articulating and reflecting on the foreignness of our aesthetic experiences. My own experience of the performance led to further research, and in the end, it enhanced my knowledge of the historical practice. Rather than leading to a depreciation of that historical practice, my initial negative reaction led to further thinking, prompted by the aesthetic experience of the historicising performance.

## A theatre history model vs. diversity of scenic practices

Praxeology distances itself from fixed models of historical theatre, focusing rather on multiple performed practices. Within today's art and theatre practices, we acknowledge a wide range of performative practices and would reject the notion of a single, dominant model, whereas working within traditional, text-based theatre history, we easily accept certain ideal models as a natural part of the historical narrative. We tend to categorise historical theatre practices as such ideal models, stating, for example, that Baroque theatre practice

31. For a full discussion of Rousseau's motives for creating *Pygmalion*, and of the relation of the piece to his theoretical writings on theatre and music, see Maria Gullstam, '*Pygmalion*'s Power Struggles: Rousseau, Rameau and Galathée', in *Rousseau on Stage: Playwright, Musician, Spectator*, ed. Maria Gullstam and Michael O'Dea (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2017), 119–137; see also chapter 7 in this volume, Maria Gullstam, 'Rousseau's *Pygmalion* as Research on Stage'.

included certain fundamental features, codified acting being one of the most prominent in theatre historiography. When we take a closer look at the historical sources and works, however, we find a great variety of theatre practices that do not fit into a single formula. One traditional solution – which allows us to save and maintain the model – is to describe these practices as deviations from the rule, or as extra-theatrical practices that do not belong to Baroque theatre. An opposing strategy is to allow for deviations up to the point when the model is no longer recognisable, but dissolves into a general idea of 'eighteenth-century theatre'. Today's idea of a dramatic work as a single, unchanged entity also plays a role in the historiographical fixation of a theatre model for the eighteenth century. Often these texts, libretti, and scores have been transmitted in a coherent published form that no longer speaks about the many adaptations, rewritings, and transformations that the work underwent during the lived practice of eighteenth-century performance. Even though scores and texts were also circulated in printed form at the time, artists and audiences alike were aware that they were dealing with works in specific performative guises. Accordingly, we should not forget that the textual sources we find in the archives today document certain staged moments rather than represent the works as such. In their contributions to this volume, both Mark Tatlow and Maria Gullstam discuss the tensions between the idea of the work and its performative transformations through the theatre practices of the time.[32]

Praxeological experimentation allows us to rethink the categories of norm and deviation and to embrace the idea of a diversity of historical theatre practices. The historiographical theatre project is a way to represent and promote the idea of a more differentiated set of historical practices. However, we need to be aware that a theatre production always entails the danger of commodification, as it turns theatre practice into a product and then fosters the reception of this product as a historical model. Our production of *Pygmalion*,

32. See chapters 5 and 7 in this volume, Mark Tatlow, 'Haydn's *Arianna a Naxos* and the Search for an Affective Practice', and Maria Gullstam, 'Rousseau's *Pygmalion* as Research on Stage'.

which was never meant to provide a model, in fact received a lot of attention from theatre scholars who wanted to purchase the production or its documentation as materials for teaching and scholarly research. To give in to these demands, however, is to run the risk of creating a model and commodifying our own work and research. We need to find a balance between these tendencies and our own attempt to communicate and distribute the results of our research. We need to insist that our research is an ongoing process, and not the creation of a product. Therefore, we will continue to create academic formats that counter and accompany the theatrical effects of our praxeological work. As for *Pygmalion*, this means transcribing the performance again and again to reopen our discussions on the piece and on the production, allowing for alternative versions of its praxeological historiography.

## Conclusion

Praxeological theatre historiography interrogates historiographical documents through practical experimentation. The historian's knowledge and epistemology are expanded and developed through the investigation of these performative formats. This approach is not invested in the 'reconstruction' of historical theatre works, but rather subscribes to a contested construction of historical practices, thereby providing the field of theatre studies with a new critical-historical narrative. The essential precondition of this historiographical method is the creative interplay of academic and artistic research, as seen in Performing Premodernity's work on theatre practices from the second half of the eighteenth century. The performative and experience-based negotiation between what theatre meant historically and what it means today is valuable for the creation of new historical narratives beyond the frame of reference of our research project, to other periods and other fields of theatre historiography.

# 3. Aesthetic Historicity

*Willmar Sauter*

At a workshop at the Drottningholm theatre, a group of scholars and practitioners had the opportunity to test various peculiarities of a stage built according to the technologies of Baroque theatres. One of the obvious points we discovered were those spots on stage, from which the vocal delivery was more effective. We observed differences between the speaking and singing voices of female and male performers. These acoustically preferential spots also indicated sightlines that drew the attention of the audience by bringing the performers more clearly into focus.[1]

Our workshop exercises became intensive learning processes for both the research group and the singers. Although every performing artist should search for these particular spots in every theatre, the Baroque construction of the stage made special demands and offered particular effects. Provided that the performer finds the perfect spot for the delivery, the large proscenium arch will function as an amplifier for the voice, and the raked floor will enhance visibility. From other positions, the six pairs of flat wings will tend to swallow the sound.

In the following, I will use our practical experiences at Drottningholm as a stepping stone to theorise about the correlations between a historic theatre, the classical repertoire, and today's practitioners. My ambition is to find a position between the two extremes of HIP advocates and the *Regietheater*.[2] Too often the HIP movement aims to reconstruct past practices which neglect the physical, material presence of performers and spectators, whereas the directors of the *Regietheater* tradition are anxious to move as far away from history as possible in order to be original, thereby missing the significance

1. See chapter 2, 'On a Praxeology of Theatre Historiography', in which Meike Wagner deals with the same workshop.

2. HIP stands for Historically Informed Performance, and *Regietheater* summarises the idea that the director's reading of a drama has priority over the author's textual concepts.

of the historical environment. I will argue for a theory of Aesthetic Historicity as a historiographical model to connect time periods in a productive way. Finally I will show how it can be both a practical and an analytical method. But let me first return to our workshop at Drottningholm.

In order to locate and demonstrate the ideal positioning on stage in a 'live' situation, we chose a scene from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* as the test case. The artists selected the recitative and duet between the Count and Susanna in act 3, scenes 1–2. João Luís Paixão performed the Count and Laila Cathleen Neuman played the part of Susanna. The singers found their own positions, as they would do in a rehearsal room. Together with Magnus Tessing Schneider, they then developed a blocking that seemed appropriate to the relationship between the two fictional characters, and which factored in the previously discovered 'sound spots' to maximise the effect of the vocal delivery. Some members of the scholarly audience noticed a slight contradiction between the behaviour of the characters of the opera and the projection of their voices. When the Count and Susanna interacted with each other as they do in many opera houses today, their dialogue in the recitatives tended to get lost in the flat wings. When they positioned their characters slightly upstage, the dialogue also tended to disappear: the Count and Susanna spoke to each other, but not to the audience; the relationship between the two characters remained intimate, almost private.

In the coffee break that followed we suggested a new strategy. What if we tried to make use of the so-called semicircle for a blocking that echoed the practices of the eighteenth century? Although there were doubts as to whether we would be able to construct such positions, we decided to give it a go. We chose to apply a few basic rules: the socially higher-ranking Count had to occupy the centre of the stage; the two characters would not touch each other during the recitative; the performers would use only the space between the

footlights and the second pair of wings; and individual bodily movements would be reduced to a minimum. Although these principles sound simple, it took a number of attempts before the artists felt reasonably comfortable in this eighteenth-century-inspired performance style. Once the scene worked satisfactorily, though, those who watched saw something revelatory.

First of all, the effect of positioning the Count centre-stage was stunning. Centre-stage in the Drottningholm theatre means the exact middle point between the first pair of movable flat wings; it is both one of the best 'sound spots' and the point from which the figure dominates the entire stage. This became even more obvious as soon as Susanna appeared on the so-called 'queen's side', i.e. seen to the left from the auditorium.[3] Standing near the curtain line, slightly closer to the footlights than the Count, Susanna was immediately understood to be a socially inferior character. The Count speaks to her from his hierarchically superior position. The centre of the stage reinforced his status. This position could be maintained without any further movements throughout the entire recitative. Moreover, we asked Susanna not to turn around to address her responses directly to the Count, but to deliver her lines in the direction of the audience. In fictional terms, this had the effect of emphasising Susanna's social inferiority – she did not even dare to look at her master. Overriding the social tension between the two characters, there was an erotic tension indicated by the rhythm of their voices, the Count's gaze, and Susanna's smile – both the Count's desire and Susanna's temptation – and this was clear without the characters moving towards each other, let alone touching each other.

The visual conditions of the Baroque-type of stage had a strong impact on the relationship between the two characters. The position in the middle of the two perspectival rows of flat wings provided a kind of 'natural' authority, commanding the entire stage. Visually, and even acoustically, Susanna's position was marginalised

3. Stage right is the term that producers use, addressing the performers on stage. Opposite the queen's side is of course the king's side, according to the location of the royal balconies.

from the very moment she entered the stage. This was also strongly experienced by the performer, Laila Cathleen Neuman, who felt quite uncomfortable and marginalised in this inferior stage position. Things changed, however, at the beginning of the duet, 'Crudel, perché finora', when the Count moved slightly to the king's side and thus gave Susanna more space on stage (Fig. 1). Immediately, the hierarchical relationship between the characters was modified. When the Count moved one step forward and Susanna took half a step backward, they were all of a sudden on the same level, not only physically on stage but also potentially in their erotic attraction. While Susanna had more room on stage, she could also manipulate the situation: the Count had to reduce his social superiority in order to get closer to the object of his desire. When the Count finally took Susanna's hand, she occupied centre stage while he approached her from the king's side.

This experiment was indeed illuminating for all who participated – the artists on stage, the musician in the orchestra pit, and the scholars in the auditorium. It became obvious that the stage itself did something to the scene. We realised that the perspectival flight of wings promoted a particular relationship between characters on the condition that the positioning on stage takes advantage of the given prerequisites of the scenic tradition. Something essential happened in this encounter between the historic theatre and today's performers: the eighteenth-century stage had the power to express relationships in a way that is not immediately obvious to modern singers. Through this experiment, we all gained insights into the expressiveness of a historic place. *Nota bene*: our experiment was not an attempt to imitate eighteenth-century acting, nor was it aimed to prove that this was the correct way of interpreting this scene from Mozart's opera. Rather, one could say that inspiration from a classical acting tradition produced insights into the functioning of a Baroque-type stage that only practising in a historic theatre could provide. There was an important bond between the

**Figure 1.** Workshop of Performing Premodernity: Laila Cathleen Neuman (Susanna) and João Luís Paixão (the Count) rehearsing a scene from *Le nozze di Figaro* by W. A. Mozart. Drottningholm Palace Theatre, 2015. Photo: Maria Gullstam ©. License: CC BY-NC.

historic building (an artefact), the classical opera *Figaro* (from an archive), and the contemporary staging in the workshop (with artists). The theory of this connectivity will be discussed as part of Aesthetic Historicity.

ARTEFACT — ARCHIVE
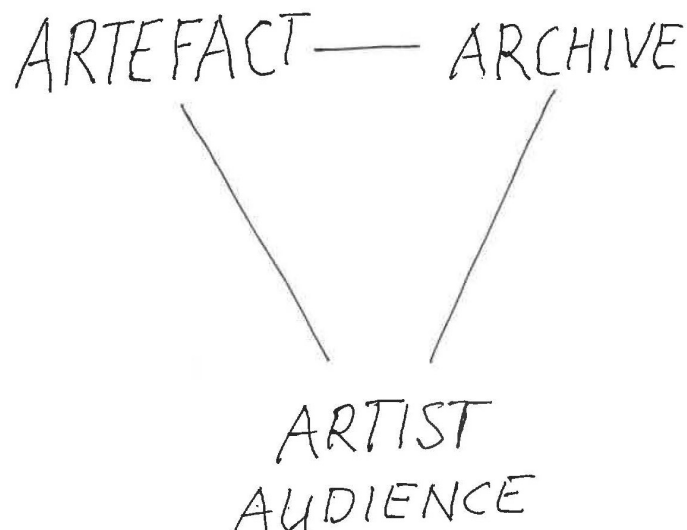
ARTIST
AUDIENCE

**Figure 2.** The triangular relation of artefact, archive, and artist/audience. Graphics: Willmar Sauter ©. License: CC BY-NC.

## Artefacts, Archives, and Artists

It is easy to envision the basic conditions of the workshop as a triangular relation between artefacts, archives, and artists: the historic theatre, in this case at Drottningholm, Mozart's work from 1786, and the artists who patiently carried out whatever the researchers had in mind. In a simplified scheme, this can be represented as follows (see Fig. 2):

Figure 2 also indicates the obvious fact that artefact and archive belong to a different time period (t1) than the artists in the workshop (t2). While we can study the boards and mechanics of the historic theatre, and the libretto and score of Mozart's opera, our knowledge about historical acting and singing is only approximate. What we saw during the workshop was today's artists. Whatever they had learned about historical movements, voice production, phrasing, etc. could only be demonstrated in the here-and-now of the performative event. However, the material they were working with in the demonstration derives from the late eighteenth century, more than two hundred

years ago. The tension between *then* – meaning the late eighteenth century – and the *now* that we experience in the twenty-first century, can be bridged in a constructive way. The historical artefacts, as well as the documents in historical archives, are accessible as historical monuments, in which sense they were available to the performers and spectators of the workshop.

Why is such a transfer interesting? Because we are in the privileged situation of having access to several well-preserved historic theatres in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe.[4] We can still perform in these spaces, bring together artists and audiences, and enjoy new productions of historical works in historic theatres. Artists, of course, have a relationship to the work, whether old or new, and to whatever category of artists they might belong: conductor, director, singer, dancer, costume designer, set designer, etc. But in the case of Drottningholm or other historic theatres, the historical artefact is added. While the relationship between the work and the artist is influenced by the presence of the artefact, the relationship between the artefact and the artist is influenced by the work from the archive – this is why only works from the period are produced on the unique historic stage of Drottningholm, a World Heritage Site. Finally, the relationship between the artefact and the work depends altogether on the view the artists take of the interaction between an opera or drama and the historic stage on which it is presented.

The object of this analysis is focused particularly on the relationship between artefact and archive on the one hand, and the artists on the other. This relationship can be described as the tension between $t_1$, which means the time of the origin of the artefact and the work, and $t_2$, today's performance by the artists. That tension became crystal clear for those who participated in the Drottningholm workshop. More broadly, though, the relationship affects performances in all historic spaces. Whether concerts are given in the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza from 1585, or modern productions are mounted in Wagner's Festspielhaus in Bayreuth from 1876, the intersection between then and now will

4. See the database of Perspectiv: Association of Historic Theatres in Europe: https://www.perspectiv-online.org/pages/en/about-us.php?lang=EN (accessed 21 March 2023).

always play a part in the theatrical events.[5] For this reason I will consider some principles of theatrical communication in the next section.

## Towards Aesthetic Historicity

Movement and voice are the means through which a performer can act; sight and sound are what the spectator experiences. Performance is as simple as that. The way in which these visual and audial elements of expression are presented is regulated in every time period by its particular aesthetic norms. An artistic style is established through repetition, which the artists emulate, embody with their skills, and eventually change. The audience appreciates it when the rules are recognisably displayed, although they also expect novelties that, to a limited extent, break the rules. These rules, conventions, and variations on expressive means can be summarised as a historical aesthetic.

The visual and audial components of stage art in the late eighteenth century were studied long before our workshop. When Agne Beijer rediscovered the Drottningholm theatre in 1921, he demonstrated that the workings of a Baroque stage and its preserved machinery could be a direct source for the study of eighteenth-century theatre practices. Although the Drottningholm theatre was meant to remain as a museum, Beijer could not resist the temptation to experiment on its stage to learn more about historical practices. His knowledge of late eighteenth-century aesthetics encountered artists of the early twentieth century on a stage that is a historical artefact. How can this meeting between such distant time periods best be described?

It is clear that the theatre itself played the leading role in the visual and auditory features of Beijer's so-called 'divertissements'.[6] The historical artefact did not remain a mere detail in these events; it constituted the very environment in which they took place. The original materiality of the Drottningholm theatre still contributes to the overall experience of both artists and spectators. The invisible machinery, which produces the dynamic visual effects, becomes part of the experience, as do

5. See David Wiles' argument in chapter 5 of Willmar Sauter and David Wiles, *The Theatre of Drottningholm – Then and Now: Performance between the 18th and 21st Centuries* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2014): http://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:756254/FULLTEXT01.pdf (accessed 23 March 2023).

6. These divertissements are described in Sauter and Wiles, *The Theatre of Drottningholm*, 143–148.

certain immaterial characteristics that complement the material visuality of the stage and auditorium. As we saw in our workshop, there are certain positions on stage that produce particular effects, such as the power relationship between the Count and Susanna described above. This shows that the stage *does* something to the actions that are performed on it. All this is inscribed in the historical artefact.

Our workshop also demonstrated the audial features of this theatre. There are some original (although not fully authentic) devices that produce sound. The wind machine makes the storm howl, and the thunder box, with its rolling rocks, has scared more than one visitor. More noticeable, however, is the fine acoustics of this place: the previously mentioned sound spots on stage, and the way in which the voices and the music of the orchestra are carried into the auditorium. These acoustics are appreciated by specialists and the general public alike, but now and then conductors encourage the orchestra to play too loudly, which harms the balance of sound and sight.[7] To prevent such disturbances, the Drottningholm orchestra uses historical instruments (or skilfully rebuilt copies) in order to take full advantage of the acoustic conditions of the house.

This description naturally needs further qualification. There is, of course, one thing that cannot be ignored. The positioning of singers on stage and the finely-tuned sounds produced by the orchestra can only be realised today by live artists. Even the most authentic eighteenth-century violin remains silent until played by a contemporary musician. Similarly, the scores and libretti of the works of the period cannot be heard unless they are performed today. This means that certain visual and audial characteristics of the historical artefact can be demonstrated only through its use in our own time. The theatre had these capacities in the *past* – they are not later additions or today's inventions – but these traits of the past can only become manifest in the *here-and-now* of performance. This delicate balance between the 'there-and-then' and the 'here-and-now' constitutes the initial step for my theory of Aesthetic Historicity.

7. Such an occasion is described in chapter 11, 'An Aesthetics of Absence', in which I analyse the 2016 *Don Giovanni* production conducted by Marc Minkowski.

To expand on the relationship between the then and the now, I will describe Aesthetic Historicity firstly in terms of its theoretical frames, then as a two-dimensional model, and finally as a practical method. As a *theory*, it starts from the assumption that the present is a continuation of the past, and therefore it makes sense to try to clarify our relationship to historical phenomena. Aesthetic Historicity is a relational theory, that is, it deals with the relationship between two periods of time. As a *model*, Aesthetic Historicity displays the components and parameters that influence this relationship. Last but not least, Aesthetic Historicity is a *method* for researching the similarities and differences between two periods of time. The method is geared towards the enquiry of how the aesthetics of past periods can be applied to today's practices.

## A relational theory

I will argue for Aesthetic Historicity as a relational theory by framing its approach with references to six scholars, deliberately picking up their relational perspectives while neglecting their overall oeuvre. I will systematically present arguments that show the feasibility of a model of Aesthetic Historicity. I will draw on the work of Hannah Arendt, Thomas Postlewait, Jacques Derrida, David Wiles, Fredric Jameson, and finally Bertolt Brecht, in this order.

'The Gap Between Past and Future' is the title of Hannah Arendt's preface to her book *Between Past and Future* from 1961. She opens her argument by quoting an aphorism by the French poet René Char:

> Notre héritage n'est prédécé d'aucun testament.

This is translated by Arendt as: 'our inheritance was left to us by no testament'.[8] What does it mean that our heritage has come down to us without any instructions of how to handle it? Hannah Arendt explains:

> Without testament or, to resolve the metaphor, without tradition –
> which selects and names, which hands down and preserves, which

8. Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin Press, 1954/1968), 3.

indicates where the treasures are and what their worth is – there seems to be no willed continuity in time and hence, humanly speaking, neither past nor future, only sempiternal change of the world and the biological cycle of living creatures in it. Thus, the treasure was lost not because of historical circumstances and the adversity of reality but because no tradition had foreseen its appearance or its reality, because no testament had willed it for the future. The loss, at any rate, perhaps inevitable in terms of political reality was consummated by oblivion, by a failure of memory, which befell not only the heirs but, as it were, the actors, the witnesses, those who for a fleeting moment had held the treasure in the palm of their hands, in short, the living themselves. For remembrance, which is only one, though one of the most important, modes of thought, is helpless outside a pre-established framework of references, and the human mind is only on the rarest occasions capable of retaining something which is altogether unconnected.[9]

Traditions are lost and replaced by new fashions which create a gap between history and the present. The treasures of the past are not remembered, but sometimes they are there, hidden away in the archives. But, Arendt writes, 'remembrance is helpless outside a pre-established framework of references', and it is a scholarly task to re-establish these references. There is also another gap that has to be addressed, namely, 'that thought and reality have parted company', meaning that our thoughts about history have lost relevance for the reality around us.[10] In Arendt's terms, this implies that '[t]he task of the mind is to understand what happened, and this understanding, according to Hegel, is man's way of reconciling himself with reality'.[11] Arendt is hinting here at a close relationship between theoretical consideration and a particular practice, to which I will return below. In summary, Hannah Arendt insists on the possibility, even the necessity, of dealing with past events in order to understand the present, in order to prepare for the future. We have treasures of the past right in front of us – the artefacts, the archives – so we are obliged to deal with them, to collect knowledge about them in order to preserve and use them. This raises a twofold historiographical problem: the

9. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 5.

10. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 6.

11. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 7.

status of historical knowledge and the understanding of historical events *per se*.

What does the awareness of historical treasures contribute to our conception of the past? This knowledge might remain as a backdrop to what constitutes the perception of history, a jewel that we might enjoy and appreciate, similar to objects exhibited in historical museums. Or, they might serve, according to various historical arguments, as the cause of a logical chain of so-called developments: because this happened, the course of history changed, and the consequences can be observed, etc. Still, another variation of historical concepts might point to historical events, occasions, or artefacts as the root of traditions and conventions, such as folklore and festivals, that have been transmitted down to our own times. However, if we want to understand our present condition as the continuation of history, we need to investigate the treasures of the past in their own context in order to grasp their significance for the generations to come.

How historical events – or in our case: artefacts – are embedded in the context of their time, is discussed thoroughly in Thomas Postlewait's *Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*, in which he elaborates on the relationship between event and context. He rejects the 'all-inclusive' background, and he argues against logic causality in the field of cultural history, offering instead an analytical model of theatrical events that takes account of the agents/artists and the reception/spectators, as well as of the artistic heritage and its implied worldview.[12] Complex patterns of shifting contexts appear at the intersection of these parameters, although the question remains whether such an interpretation fully covers the historical significance of the event. Postlewait comments on this problem:

> There is one crucial aspect of the event that such a chart fails to take into sufficient consideration: the diachronic factor. The model does not guide us to the ways that events in time, one after another, may be connected in a sequence of possible developments and causes. And of major concern, the model does not close the distance between the event and the historian. The event thus occurs at

12. Thomas Postlewait, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18.

one moment, but the historian, in a different time and place, is a displaced 'observer'.[13]

Jacques Derrida further elaborates on the distance between historical events and today's 'displaced observer'. Like Postlewait, he focuses on the relationship between the singular event – or the interpretation of an event or statement – and its historical frame, which the historian constructs. In his article 'Cogito and the History of Madness', Derrida discusses a short passage about René Descartes in Michel Foucault's book *Madness and Civilisation* (1964). Derrida writes:

> What I here call interpretation is a certain passage, a certain semantic relationship proposed by Foucault between, *on the one hand*, what Descartes said – or what he is believed to have said or meant – and *on the other hand*, let us say, with intentional vagueness for the moment, a certain 'historical structure', as it is called, a certain meaningful historical totality, a total historical project through which we think what Descartes said – or what he is believed to have said or meant – can *particularly* be demonstrated.[14]

Here, Derrida describes the meaning-making process of historical interpretation in a dialectic manner which has to consider both the singular instance in question and the more general frame the historian is attributing to it. Concerning Descartes' Cogito (ergo sum), he asks: 'does it have the *historical* meaning assigned to it? Is this meaning exhausted by its historicity?'[15] Derrida's reference to the historicity of a statement (or event) touches on an essential aspect of historical interpretation.

In a later interview, Derrida elaborates more on the historicity of history as a history of essence, rather than as an essence of history.[16] Derrida contests history as a metaphysical concept, as the construction of meaning, and while essence might have a history, history cannot be reduced to essence or quiddity. What we can find are traces. This term has been thoroughly discussed by Derrida in his *Of Grammatology* (1967). Here, it might suffice to remind ourselves that history should never depart too far from the archive, that the archive eventually is the basis on which all historical interpretation should be built.

13. Postlewait, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 19.

14. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, tr. and ed. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978/1995), 32. Italics in original. See also Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* [*Folie et Déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge Classique*, 1961], tr. Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 1964/2009).

15. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 33.

16. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, tr. and ed. Alan Bass (University of Chicago Press, 1981), 58–59.

> If the trace, arch-phenomenon of 'memory', which must be thought before the opposition of nature and culture, animality and humanity, etc. belongs to the very movement of signification, then signification is *a priori* written, whether inscribed or not, in one form or another, in a 'sensible' and 'spatial' element that is called 'exterior'.[17]

What is the exterior that Derrida is referring to here? Literally, the 'outside, "spatial" and "objective" exteriority, which we believe we know as the most familiar thing in the world'.[18] In our context perhaps this is the theatre at Drottningholm; a well-preserved historic theatre as an 'arch-phenomenon of "memory"', as a trace of the past. In my understanding of Derrida, the trace comes close to Arendt's treasure that we are obliged to take care of and interpret. But Derrida's trace leads us further in the direction of experience, i.e. how can the traces of the past be experienced?

We do not have a last will and testament that tells us how to administer the treasures of the past. In our search for these treasures, Derrida's concepts of trace and historicity will prove to be helpful pointers. They allow us to distinguish between the historicity of past events, embedded in the structural context of a time, and the traces that indicate change that occurred between then and now. However, there are problems of continuity to be considered. What can be directly related to past conditions, and which traditions have been broken? How can the historical treasures be found in the artefacts and archives of the past, and how can they be interpreted in light of the impulses that have influenced history between then and now?

The continuity between the past and the present has a double face. I claim that the present is the continuation of historical experiences, and yet we know that societies – including their intellectual and aesthetic discourses – continuously change, that one period is followed by the next in a never-ending succession. One way of resolving this seeming contradiction is to distinguish between two concepts of time: linear time that mirrors changes, and cyclic time that reflects the repetitive processes of life. The fact that the world changes needs no argument,

17. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, quoted from Peggy Kamuf, *Between the Blinds: A Derrida Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 42. Italics and quotation marks in original.

18. Kamuf, *Between the Blinds*, 42.

but how these changes can be described constitutes a major problem in historiography: how can we distinguish between one period and another, how can we account for the multiple layers and the over-lapping within one and the same period, how can we relate events to contexts, and so on?[19] I will limit my argument here to a reminder of Fernand Braudel's tripartite scheme of duration: 1) the short term of individuals and events, 2) the extended period of economy and social discourses, and 3) the long duration of infrastructures, forms of governance, religious belief systems. At any point in time, these three durations are simultaneously activated.[20] We have to be aware also that certain developments and discourses can be both terminated and broken, as well as rediscovered and reanimated.[21]

With respect to the concept of cyclic time, we have to ask ourselves whether there are constants apart from cosmic circles and ellipses, the seasons of the year, and the biological cycle from birth to death. Is human life repetitive? Or, more specifically, are there aspects of theatrical life that do not change over time? Aristotle expounded upon the imitative character of theatre: we – humans – enjoy both the imitator and the imitated when someone presents an impersonation, and I would say that this is still the case. But some people do not appreciate theatrical imitations, and, since Plato, this too has been a constant aspect of the theatre. And as theatrical performances have always belonged to the public domain, concerned society, and carried meanings, this will continue to be debated.

Another kind of continuity is encapsulated in the artefacts of theatrical history. In his book *A Short History of Western Performance Space*, David Wiles has demonstrated how various concepts of theatrical buildings have endured changes over time.[22] Theatres like the one in Epidaurus, the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, and the theatre of Drottningholm all bear witness to the past because they have not undergone (profound) changes. Costumes and wigs, musical instruments, technologies of scene change, and lighting equipment have been preserved and can still be used and experienced. In our workshop, we chanced upon treasures of the past that breathed aesthetic beauty.

19. See Postlewait, *The Cambridge Introduction*, especially chapter 5, in which the distinction between periods is dicussed further.

20. See Fernand Braudel, *On History*, tr. Sarah Matthews (University of Chicago Press, 1980).

21. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, tr. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1972/2001).

22. See David Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Is it possible to grasp the aesthetic aspects of historicity – that which history has left to us so we can relate to it in terms of first-hand experiences? In his book *Brecht and Method* from 1998, Fredric Jameson refers to Brecht's struggle with 'the most troublesome feature of the historicity problem, at least from the aesthetic perspective: the historicity of feelings and emotions themselves'. When discussing the colonial-age poets Rudyard Kipling and Arthur Rimbaud, Brecht arrives at the following conclusion:

> It is less easy, as Marx already observed, to explain the effects that such poems have on ourselves. […] Apparently emotions accompanying social progress will long survive in the human mind as emotions linked with interests, and in the case of works of art will do so more strongly than might have been expected, given that in the meantime contrary interests will have made themselves felt. Every progress cancels the previous one, insofar as by definition it moves on further from that one, in other words, it moves across and away from it; at the same time in a way it also uses its predecessors, so that this last is somehow preserved in human consciousness as a form of progress, just as in real life its results live on. We have here a process of generalization of the most interesting kind, an ongoing process of abstraction. Whenever the works of art handed down to us allow us to share the emotions of other people, of people of past ages and of other classes, we must suppose that in doing so we are sharing interests that are actually universally human.[23]

Jameson quotes this long passage to show that the Marxist Brecht has built an aesthetic bridge over the gap between poets of the past and readers of the present time. Brecht speaks of progress that divides us from earlier periods, but despite the social and political changes that have occurred, aesthetic phenomena of the past can reach us by way of their aesthetic value. Brecht has found a key to historical treasures, and this key is aesthetic experience.

Brecht speaks of poetry; our interest is theatrical performances with their visual and audial dimensions. In our search for a theory of Aesthetic Historicity, this implies that the findings in the archives –

23. Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso, 2010), 177. John Willett's translation.

texts, pictures – are relevant because these artefacts have reached our time. Since theatre performances are a live art form, historical documents and artefacts reclaim their direct function in their encounter with today's artists and audiences, allowing a direct, sensory, aesthetic experience.

Hannah Arendt's insistence on the intellectual understanding of the past is paramount also for the theory of Aesthetic Historicity, particularly since we have the treasures of the late eighteenth century right before our eyes. We are obliged to fathom their significance because these artefacts still play a role today. Following Jacques Derrida's strategy, we need to establish a reasonable relationship between the singular event – or the artefact – and its historical context, which have been exposed in interim periods to impulses and changes, due to the mobility of the structural elements. Despite the discontinuity of historical discourses, the artefacts can be experienced in the here-and-now of performance. Fredric Jameson adds an aesthetic dimension: we are able to experience the aesthetics of past periods emotionally.

Aesthetic Historicity is a relational theory that ties together a number of elements and parameters. We have access to monuments of the past in the form of historical artefacts and artistic works preserved in the archives. These represent a part of the aesthetic of a certain epoch, embedded in the wider historical context of their time. Both the aesthetics and the context change as a result of the impulses that every new period brings. These impulses affect the artistic, intellectual, and societal conditions, then as well as now. Therefore, the character and the functions of historical artefacts and works have to be subjected to historiographical (re)construction. When we use them in today's performances, their connection to our time has to be determined anew to facilitate direct, aesthetic experiences. It is exactly this relationship that Aesthetic Historicity describes and theorises. It relates the historical moment to the present experience, described above as the timespan between t1 and t2. At the same time, it also relates the works from t1

and their interpretation in t2 to the artefacts of t1. Another relationship concerns the historical practices, studied through historiography, and their aesthetic relevance for today. Finally – and in spite of the discontinuity of periods and centuries – Aesthetic Historicity theorises the presence of the past.

## A model of Aesthetic Historicity

I will now present a model that attempts to transfer the theoretical considerations concerning Aesthetic Historicity into a general scheme. Like all models, this will represent a reduction of the fine web that we must imagine as links between past and present. The model is a practical tool that translates the historian's assumptions into an applicable methodology. The theory relates Aesthetic Historicity to the world, the methodology ties it to lived experience (See Fig. 3)

Before considering the methodological consequences of the model, I will first explain the terms to be used in this scheme. Some of the terms might have an obvious meaning while others are more complex. Although the model is intended to cover the relationship between all kinds of historical periods, I will mainly illustrate its implications with examples from the time of Gustav III in Sweden (t1, i.e. 1771–1792) and today (t2). However, it might be equally interesting to investigate the relationship between the Gustavian period and classical Antiquity, e.g. how the Greek gods were perceived in the late eighteenth century, and what the discoveries of ancient Pompeii meant for the view of Antiquity in the Gustavian period. Such questions will be touched upon only marginally, but my point is that the model in no is way limited to the periods to which I refer in the following.

*Context* is a useful but also a misused term in scholarly research. As Thomas Postlewait has explained, contexts are sometimes understood as 'all-inclusive' and thus remain only loosely relevant for the phenomenon in question; occasionally, only certain features of a context are
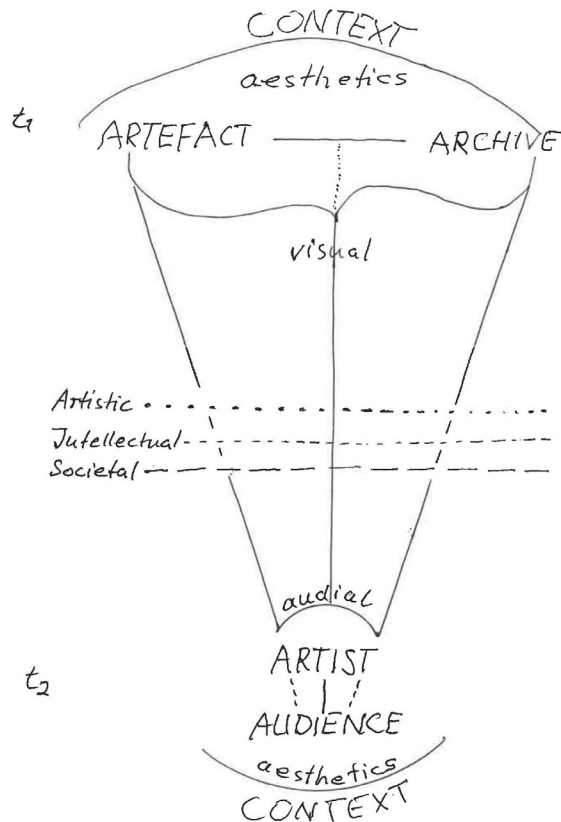
**Figure 3.** A model of Aesthetic Historicity. Graphics: Willmar Sauter ©.
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singled out as causal explanations; most frequently, context is mentioned as the unspecified 'background' to occurrences, an approximate, general picture of a period without any explanatory value.[24]
To avoid these pitfalls, I propose making a distinction between the circumstances of an event and the content of an event. By circumstances, I mean the specific conditions that were influential at the time and place under consideration, be it a particular event, a series of events, a tradition, or maybe even an entire period (neglecting here for the moment the question of what constitutes a period). In the case of

24. For further dicussion of this topic,
see Postlewait, *The Cambridge Intro-
duction*, chapter 6: 'The Idea of the
Political: Causal Contexts for Events',
196–222.

the model, it seems fruitful to consider contexts in a comparative way, i.e. contexts that are relevant both for t1 and for t2. And to ask which conditions prove to contain a great measure of similarities, and which other conditions have changed significantly over time.

As our workshop at the Drottningholm theatre showed, the acoustics of the stage obviously work in the same way today as they did two hundred and fifty years ago. The delivery of the voices of singers and actors are governed by the same circumstances implied by the architecture of the theatrical space. However, the audience that the performers address is not the same. In Gustavian times, Drottningholm was a theatre for the royal court, whereas today it is part of the public domain. This major difference has a significant impact, because today's general audience expect other things from a performance at Drottningholm than the nobles whom King Gustav III invited, or forced, to attend the operas and plays of his choice. The historical context has changed due to the artistic, intellectual, and societal impulses that will be discussed later. In a wider frame of contexts, it is necessary to relate the Gustavian era to one of the dominant discourses of the time: the Enlightenment. To what extent had these European ideas been incorporated into the thinking and writings of leading social circles in Sweden? Distinctions are necessary: are we thinking of the Enlightenment in terms of the equality of men, or of the new attitude towards nature, or of the rationality of human beings? The answers will vary according to our critical thinking and understanding of history. Discussions of this kind move the concept of contexts towards contents seen as a complement to circumstances.

What were the themes that dominated the discourses of the time? One can observe that the myths and histories of Antiquity that were central to the Baroque era were still present during the late eighteenth century. They appeared, for instance, in Gluck's operas. Gustav III loved Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. However, there were hardly any pieces that dealt with these ancient myths in the repertoire of Monvel's French theatre company that performed frequently at Drottningholm.

Who were the new heroes? The context turns to the circumstances and the content that the archives have preserved and made available to our time. The artistic and dramaturgical reading of the works of a past period requires both a broad understanding of the discourses of the time and an understanding of its principal aesthetics. This brings me to a supremely complex term – aesthetics.

*Aesthetics* as a conceptual term was revived as a philosophical aspect of the arts in the eighteenth century. Two important books about aesthetics were published during the lifetime of Gustav III: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* in 1750 and Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* in 1790. The focus of both of these is on the sensitive perception of 'the beautiful' in art and nature, experiences without specific purpose, which nevertheless can give the beholder a sense of elevation. Moses Mendelssohn observed in his *Letters on the Sentiments* from 1755 that we can experience at the same time the mixed feelings of beauty and disgust. Distinctions between various art forms and their specific ways of affecting the beholder or reader were discussed by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in his famous *Laocoon* from 1766. This was a turning point in the aesthetic debate of the eighteenth century. Lessing revised the traditional order of the arts – in which painting was the noblest art form – and he pointed to the effects that particular pieces of art or poetry have on a beholder or listener.[25] Thus, aesthetics became the platform for discussions of the ideal work of art and how it might achieve an ideal effect. In his *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (written 1767–1769), Lessing emphasised the relationship between expressions on stage and their effects in the auditorium. It is therefore useful to distinguish between a normative aesthetics of production and an experiential aesthetics of perception. In the model of Aesthetic Historicity both the norms and the experiences are included.

Although we can describe characteristics of a period, it is not possible to imagine a comprehensive aesthetics of an entire century. It is not even possible to summarise the so-called 'Gustavian epoch' under one label. Rococo, Neoclassicism, and Romanticism

25. For a more extensive discussion of the aesthetic discourses of the late eighteenth century, see Willmar Sauter, *Aesthetics of Presence: Philosophical and Practical Reconsiderations* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021), especially Part One.

overlapped – even in the theatre of Drottningholm! And while Gustav III praised the Enlightenment, he introduced strict censorship in Sweden. He was the first monarch in Europe to recognise the independence of the United States of America while only a few years earlier in Sweden he had seized absolute power in his coup d'état. Choices have to be made. In the following, I will limit my discussion to the theatrical field, i.e. performed and perceived aesthetic expressions. Of course, these expressions are also related to other art forms such as architecture, painting, poetry, and music. Referring to my argument that theatrical actions consist of movement and voice, sight and sound, it seems appropriate now to distinguish between visual and audial expressions.

*Visual* expressions first and foremost include the performer, the physical body on stage. The actors wear costumes – in the theatre, even nakedness would be a costume – and they are surrounded by a set design. The architecture of a theatre building or an open-air stage also constitutes the visual universe that the spectator becomes part of. This picture should not, however, be thought of as being static; on the contrary: the performers move, the sets change, and even the spectators seek new positions in their seats. It becomes especially obvious that we are dealing with historical artefacts when we consider visual expressions. Visiting an absolutely new theatre building is rare: most of the time we are in an auditorium from an age other than our own. And most theatre buildings have become palimpsests of various time layers through reconstructions and renovations. Only in exceptional cases – such as the theatre of Drottningholm – has the historical artefact been untouched by changes. This means that the characteristics of the space that were established at $t_1$ still exist at $t_2$. The stage machinery allows us to experience the set in a *changement à vue* just as it appeared to the court of King Gustav. The movements of the performer, however, can only be roughly (re)constructed through historical research: they can no longer be experienced in their original form, but they can be experimented with from a $t_2$ perspective.

*Audial* expressions are always temporal and therefore bound to t2. We can never hear the sound of yesterday, let alone the sound of the eighteenth century which was long before recording devices were invented. Instead, we can attempt to approximate the sounds of the past. There is no reason to believe that the Drottningholm thunder and wind machines made different noises a few hundred years ago. Some historical instruments have survived that can be played, but these require special skills that have to be learned. Here too historical knowledge can give access to the (re)construction of the sounds of the past, although we will never fully know how far today's interpretations of historical scores coincide with a composer's original intentions. As the number of unaltered historical instruments is limited, historically informed orchestras are dependent upon carefully built copies of authentic instruments, which attempt to produce sounds of the past as far as this is possible. While instruments can be copied, the human voice cannot, as it is always inside a living body; nonetheless, singers, like the instrumentalists, can learn vocal techniques of the past, adjust the volume to historical buildings, and develop the skill of projecting sound according to the score and the space. For musicians and performers alike, the techniques of the past have to be acquired through learning and training, because today's techniques are the result of several hundred years of development, or rather the result of changes of style, technology and taste, thinking and habits, and a 'modern' worldview.

As we saw in our workshop, the purpose of these visual and audial expressions is to create a fictional story that is presented by performers who play the characters in the plot. Interpreting the characters in historical dramas and libretti is a complex matter. We know that the singers and actors of the eighteenth century were still indebted to the rhetorical practices of the Baroque, and that several stylistic changes occurred between 1700 and 1800. We can turn to the writings of Lessing and Denis Diderot to learn about the extent to which acting was discussed at the time; costumes were reformed again and

again;[26] new dramaturgical ideas competed with classical ideals, and so on. To reconstruct these acting practices is an unsurmountable task, but even if this were possible it would only solve a fraction of the problem. The real problem consists in the acting practices of today, which are built on a very different view of the individual. Since the late nineteenth century, the findings of psychology have had and still have a deep impact on how a personality, whether fictional or in real life, is perceived. Add to this realism and naturalism, which developed in parallel in the late nineteenth century, and you get permanently altered acting techniques. Since Konstantin Stanislavski's experiments with psychological realism as a base for the believable stage character, hardly any performers today can free themselves from this artistic attitude. Moreover, this has also changed the audience's attitude. Any performance today needs, to a certain extent, to negotiate between the practices that informed the creators of a historical work and the demands that today's artists and audiences make. The impulses, influences, events, or trends that brought about such dilemmas will be discussed next as impulses of history.

*Impulses* that cause changes are often referred to as 'development', in a positive, progressive sense. This is exactly why I speak of impulses rather than development. While few would question the importance of electricity, the invention of the spotlight does not automatically mean that the theatre of the twentieth century was superior to the eighteenth-century stage with its dangerous open flames behind the wings. There is no development from 'primitive' to 'advanced' forms of artistic presentation, especially within the arts, but they certainly change due to the impulses that every period is exposed to.

I would like to start by differentiatiating between material impulses, such as a country's infrastructure, buildings, transportations, telephones, schools, etc., and discursive impulses that change our ways of thinking, wishing, imagining, and talking. These impulses stand between $t1$ and $t2$ and tend to blur our understanding of the past. The historian's task consists, in great measure, of recognising the impulses that shade our view of historical conditions. I hope a

26. See Petra Dotlačilová, 'Materiality in Action' (chapter 6) and 'Costume in the Age of Rousseau and the Case of *Pygmalion*' (chapter 8).

more truthful picture of the past will appear as a result of careful analyses of the changes that such impulses have caused. In order to give an overview of the major changes that affect the theatrical field, I will distinguish between three kinds of impulses; namely artistic, intellectual, and societal parameters. Other parameters might also be relevant depending upon the purpose and field of examination.

*Artistic* impulses refer to the never-ending succession of different styles that the arts have experienced throughout recorded human history. In abstract terms, this stylistic 'development' is best described as a pendulum between representative, realistic depictions, and stylised, decorative ornamentations.[27] Distinctions can be made between period styles, the styles of certain genres, and personal styles that have influenced other artists, for example those of actresses such as Sarah Bernhardt or Eleonora Duse. Stylistic features can be named traditions, trends, conventions, or fashions. Some are short-lived, while others stretch over long periods of time. Some trends dominate all artistic expressions, for instance symbolism in painting, poetry, and plays, whereas others survive through media changes, such as melodramas that meandered from theatre through film to television series and then screen games. An example of an artistic impulse that had a great influence on stage performances is the advent of naturalism in the late nineteenth century. This became a basic principle for acting, even though the fourth wall has occasionally been removed. Material changes should also be added to this list. These include the location of theatres in the urban landscape, the means of transportation to get there, the stage equipment that is available, including the spotlights mentioned above.

*Intellectual* impulses include the content of the spectacles that are performed. The intellectual discourse of a period (for example Marxism or existentialism) has many points of reference and eventually influences the worldview of generations. These philosophical systems are easily recognisable in the plays of, say, Bertolt Brecht and Jean-Paul Sartre. Again, some of these patterns of thought are short-lived, while others are slow to take effect; the Enlightenment is

27. Arnold Hauser gives numerous examples of the stylistic shifts in art history. See his *The Social History of Art*, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 1953/2011).

a good example of the latter. The democratic ideas that once ignited the French Revolution took more than a hundred years to be implemented in European politics and in a number of countries today are still being questioned. This parameter also has its material aspects. Books need to be printed, distributed, translated, and read. The aforementioned book *Aesthetica* by Baumgarten was written in Latin and in this form only accessible to well-educated intellectuals of the eighteenth century. It was not translated into German until 1907, and into English until 1974. There is no doubt that it is a document that characterises the aesthetic discourse around 1750, but how well was it distributed at the time? When was Baumgarten rediscovered, and why is there an interest in his writings two hundred and fifty years after the publication of his book? These kinds of historiographical questions have to be taken into account when we speak of intellectual impulses that have significance for understanding the past.

*Societal* impulses are so multifarious over a long period of time that a general enumeration of them seems meaningless. The historian has to ask what kind of social impulses were relevant in a certain context. It certainly matters and makes a difference if we are living in a democratic society with laws of equality implemented as human rights, or if we are the subjects of an absolute monarchy with strict class barriers. Is today's democratic society the fulfilment of the dream of the Enlightenment philosophers, or has Karl Marx spoiled that dream forever? What exactly are the implications of such differences? What kinds of dissimilarities became significant? Do the experiences of fascism in the twentieth century affect our understanding of society in Gustavian times? To be able to argue about crucial societal changes, it is necessary to specify the impact that they have had in the particular field of study.

The extent to which these impulses or layers influence each other was clearly demonstrated in our Drottningholm workshop. On the aesthetic level there was the positioning on the perspectival stage, which propelled the Count into the very centre of aesthetic attention. Here the aesthetic position immediately reflected the societal status of

the fictional characters: the Count spoke from his superior position to the inferior servant, Susanna. The successive movements brought the two stage figures onto the same level, not necessarily socially, but as human beings, as potential lovers, etc. The intellectual impulse can be seen in the equality between woman and man, master and servant, which sprang out of the Enlightenment and which was widely recognised in the late eighteenth century although not widely practiced. Thus, our little scene from Mozart's *Figaro* was a very good illustration of some of the parameters of Aesthetic Historicity.

## The model and the method

The methodological procedures that the model of Aesthetic Historicity provides need to be specified in terms of the purpose of the investigation. I can see two different applications of the model: an analytical approach to existing performances, and a practical approach to the creation of a performance. In both cases the focus lies on the relationship between the historically given conditions and today's practices. However, the direction of the methodological procedure will lead to different kinds of results.

Let us assume that we are dealing with an eighteenth-century opera that has been or will be produced in historic theatres such as Drottningholm or Český Krumlov. According to the analytical approach, the existing production, as it appears on stage in front of an audience, is the point of departure. To begin with, the procedure might not be so different from a regular performance analysis with its hermeneutical and semiotic aspects.[28] The presence of the historical environment however has to be accounted for. This is the point when specific questions have to be asked: How does the theatrical space influence the visual and audial expressions? Is there a correspondence between the movements, the vocal delivery, the musical interpretation, etc., and the aesthetic environment in which all this takes place? Has the conductor adapted the volume of the orchestra to the acoustics of the building?

28. See Jacqueline Martin and Willmar Sauter, *Understanding Theatre: Performance Analysis in Theory and Practice* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 1995).

Of course, there can never be a complete concordance between the artistic practices of the eighteenth century and what is performed on the same stage today. The many artistic, intellectual, and societal impulses, through which history has been filtered, have changed our perception of historical practices. However, through an analysis of specific impulses some light can be shed on aesthetic choices about the past. The lighting and illumination of the stage is a good example. The original practice of using candles with naked flames is not usually allowed nowadays in historic theatres. Various kinds of electrical substitutes have been installed, which are more or less successful when it comes to the brightness of the overall lighting. And this points to another physical change: today's spectators are used to bright light in their daily lives as well as in the theatre. Therefore, today the historic stages are usually illuminated with a brighter light than they were originally. The intensity of this light also brings with it the risk of overexposing the flat wings so that the brush technique of the painting becomes visible, which of course was not the original intention. The visibility that today's audiences (and artists) demand easily destroys the illusion that was key to the Baroque stage techniques. Furthermore it is worth remembering that in the eighteenth century the visual effects were enhanced through the reflective materials of the costumes and the whitish makeup of the performer. These means of expression may still be used in today's performances, provided that directors and singers are interested in practices of the past.

By contrast the practical approach would start with the artefact and the sources in the archive. What possibilities are available when an opera is staged in a historic theatre? Which sets of flat wings can illustrate the fictional places of the opera? How many musicians can be placed in the orchestra pit, and what is a reasonable size for the orchestra with the given score? The material conditions and limitations of the space are important, but the decisive questions are raised by the study of the work. The dramaturgical analysis of the libretto and the music can be more or less informed by the historical knowledge that is available. An excellent example of such an analysis is the

study of the original production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, written by Magnus Tessing Schneider.[29] Through a minute study of archival sources, Schneider concludes that the ending of the opera was a grotesque and parodic spectacle, invented by Lorenzo Da Ponte and enlarged by Mozart's music, that had very little to do with the moralistic punishment that is often seen on today's opera stages. The German Romantics distorted the story, turning it into a religious revenge drama. The examination of the opera's original meaning opens up interpretations that are more truthful to the work today, whether performed in regular opera houses or in a theatre from the time when the opera was written.[30]

Methods cannot solve scholarly or artistic problems, but they may help us find the relevant questions to ask. The answers, however, depend on the sources that are consulted, the purpose of the investigation, and on the person who asks the questions. The methodological procedure organises the process and serves as a checklist of the variety of aspects that should be considered. In this sense, Aesthetic Historicity provides a methodological model for the analysis of the interaction of artefacts, archives, and artists.

## Concluding examples

A specific example of the analytical approach can be found in the production of operas at Drottningholm in the twentieth century, in *The Theatre of Drottningholm – Then and Now*. In an attempt to summarise the dominant aesthetic norms of these productions, the lens of Aesthetic Historicity facilitated the identification of dominant features. Two parameters were decisive. The first concerned awareness of the historic space: to what extent did the artists relate to the stage as a historical artefact with its own visual and audial conditions? The second parameter concerned the archive and the production's familiarity with eighteenth-century norms of acting, vocal delivery, costume design. How did these (now historical) productions use the historic stage and its well-preserved equipment? Some were eager to

29. Magnus Tessing Schneider, *The Original Portrayal of Mozart's Don Giovanni* (London: Routledge, 2021): https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429281709 (accessed 23 March 2023).

30. Productions of *Don Giovanni* are further discussed in chapter 11, 'An Aesthetics of Absence'.

recapture the traces of the Rococo while others distanced themselves from everything that might be judged museum-like. It all started with Agne Beijer's *demonstrations* of the stage. In 1922, a year after he rediscovered the theatre, he invited a select audience and showed them what the stage machinery could accomplish. Four so-called *changements à vue* were executed by the stage hands, with no performers on stage. Even in later divertissements arranged by Beijer, the changing of the stage sets always had a demonstrative function. Because the performer always represents the present, Beijer sought to bridge the gap between then and now by excluding the human figure.

From the 1940s onward, the Royal Opera in Stockholm performed at Drottningholm during the summer. They took early operas from their regular repertoire and adjusted them to the Drottningholm stage. This *transference* of productions seemed to function very well because the non-naturalistic style of the Stockholm Opera was sufficiently traditional not to interfere with the historic space. The stage of Drottningholm was respected as an artefact, whereas the knowledge from the eighteenth-century archive was only applied in exceptional cases. One such example was the choreographer Mary Skeaping who took her *inspiration* both from the Drottningholm stage and from the libretti and descriptions of historical dances. Her combination of the artefact and the archive circumvented the classical ballet and her Preromantic ballet *Cupido* from 1956 remained in the repertoire for several decades.

A period of *playfulness* dominated Drottningholm in the 1980s, when a Mozart cycle was created by director Göran Järvefelt and conductor Arnold Östman. The original flat wings (or rather: authentic copies) were still used, not only as a backdrop but as a part of the stage actions: the performers were playing *with* the wings (see Fig. 4). Östman introduced historical instruments in order to recreate the original sound of the theatre. Thus, the performances related to the playfulness of the Rococo and at the same time appealed to the taste of contemporary audiences. The characters were psychologically credible but avoided realism in their actions and vocal delivery. For

**Figure 4.** Håkan Hagegård (Don Giovanni), Erik Saedén (Leporello), and Birgit Nordin (Donna Anna) in *Don Giovanni* by W. A. Mozart. Drottningholm Palace Theatre, 1979. Photo: Beata Bergström. Musik- och teaterbiblioteket, Stockholm. © Daniel Bergström. License: CC BY-NC.

many who saw these performances in the 1980s, this was as close to eighteenth-century standards as one could get.

Since the turn of the millennium, the use of the Drottningholm stage has oscillated between two extreme attitudes. There were a number of directors representing the *Regietheater* approach who explicitly announced their *neglect* of the historical stage conditions, anxious not to be caught up in 'reconstruction'. Instead of bridging the gap between the work and the performance, they treated the stage as if it were no artefact. An extreme case of such anti-museal staging is discussed in chapter 11 in this book, in which I deal with the 2016 production of *Don Giovanni*, 'An Aesthetics of Absence'. However, for some years, directors were invited to Drottningholm because they were known to work within the tradition of HIP. They were striving to create the same *harmony* on stage that characterised the orchestra in the pit. Although these attempts to recapture the sensibility of the place were appreciated, these productions also showed that much more research and training are required if the necessary balance between then and now is to be found.

Aesthetic Historicity allows for an analysis of these productions with respect to their relationship to the historical artefacts and archives. Impulses from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have, to some extent, been taken into consideration. The relative impact of historical preferences and trends is not the same as measuring the value of a production, but it certainly demonstrates the performance's relation to the historic space and to the original concepts of the work that is presented. Aesthetic Historicity as an *analytical approach* is, however, not to be understood as a normative critique. The value judgements must be left to the artists, the critics, and to the audience.

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Our workshop at Drottningholm was described at the beginning of this chapter. It serves as an example of the *practical approach* of the methodology inspired by Aesthetic Historicity. We wanted to avoid the pitfalls of HIP productions which, in their ambition to come as

close as possible to the original staging practices, tend to get stuck in imitation, in particular as far as the movements are concerned. As in dance, where the choreography has to be enlivened by the dancer, the 'historical' movement patterns are difficult to reconstruct, and rhetoric is an altogether marginalised knowledge, both for artists and audiences, so the result of such movement and voice training can easily become lifeless reproductions.[31] The *Regietheater* attitude, which I also mentioned in this chapter, frequently moves in the opposite direction. The delicate stage of Drottningholm is used as if it were a black-box theatre, with respect paid neither to its material nor to its aesthetic qualities. An analysis based on Aesthetic Historicity might be able to create a balance between the extremes of HIP and *Regietheater*.

In the preparatory phase of the workshop, we deliberately allowed ourselves to neglect the libretto of *Le nozze di Figaro*. Detaching the duet from its dramatic context, one can imagine that the erotic tension between the Count and Susanna is mutual. At the same time, the scene can be interpreted as an expression of the Count's social power, and thus his attack on Susanna would appear as a molesting encroachment rather than as an erotic invitation. Is Susanna loyal to the Countess, thus only pretending to be interested in the Count's advances? This kind of interpretative questions have to be solved on the basis of the archive, i.e. the libretto. What do we know, or what can we assume about the intentions of the librettist, what does Mozart's music 'say' at this point, how does the choice of actions affect the characters and the overall plot of the opera? Once the encounter between Susanna and the Count has established Susanna's pretence, the staging needs to bring out this tension in an adequate way. I have already described how we experimented with various positions and movements on stage. It turned out that the stage itself contributed crucially to the outcome of this scene.

Authority emanating from the Count's appearance was possible because of the visual harmony of the stage that was offered by the deep perspective of the wings. The strict symmetry of the flat wings prompts

31. See chapter 1, Jette Barnholdt Hansen, 'Adequate Rhetorical Delivery when Staging Premodernity'.

this central point. Such a focal spot would hardly be observable in a modern stage setting, even if it happened to be symmetrical. It is a fundamental characteristic of Baroque illusion, painted on perspectival wings, that provides this central position. Another observation that we made was of great interest. The dramaturgical analysis opened up various interpretations of the relationship between the Count and Susanna in this situation. The tension between them activates psychological emotions, and these emotions have to be displayed in the performers' actions. In applying a traditional positioning of the two characters that followed the practice of the eighteenth century, the psychological impact of the scene did not disappear; on the contrary: the subtlety of their emotions became as strong as it would have been with a psychologically realistic acting style. The impulses that the model of Aesthetic Historicity points to bring to contemporary productions an awareness that the relation between the artefact, the archive, and the artist can be appropriated or avoided. Either way, they absolutely make a difference.

Therefore, our research group was immensely lucky in having the opportunity to arrange workshops at Drottningholm, far away from the business of regular performances. In our workshops we had ideal conditions for studying Aesthetic Historicity in practice. It was possible to isolate certain components of eighteenth-century aesthetics, to single out some visual or audial elements, and to study their effects. The workshops allowed us to alternate between the position of the artists and that of the spectator, to apply Aesthetic Historicity both as a practical and as an analytical tool, to repeat, vary, and alter a phrase, a movement, or a position. Thereby, we discovered that Aesthetic Historicity is not only a model and a method; it is also an effective scheme of learning. We are grateful for the insights we gained, and wish that others, too, may discover the beauties of Aesthetic Historicity.

# 4. Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance

*Magnus Tessing Schneider*

*Theatre is first of all the actor, and it is contemporary bodies that embody the Antigones and the Phaedras, the Orestes and the Hamlets, the Don Juans, the Sganarelles, and the Ophelias.*

*Even if the stage director seeks to faithfully reconstruct the past, even if one pushes the historical verisimilitude of the costumes and props as far as possible, even if one plays Shakespeare in an auditorium that is an exact replica of the Globe Theatre, still the faces remain to resist the principle of imitation. The faces remain naked, and it is modern sensuality that traces the contours of their lips and shines in the sparkle of their eyes.[1]*

*At its most successful, Early Music does not return to the past at all but reconstructs the musical object in the here and now, enabling a new and hitherto silenced subject to speak.[2]*

## The turn towards representation

This chapter explores ways in which historical acting principles can enrich today's opera performances. I will start by suggesting that we turn away from theatre semiotics once and for all, which does not seem an adequate way either to account for theatrical communication or to generate productions that are able to engage the audience aesthetically and philosophically.[3]

I would argue that the emergence of theatre semiotics was linked closely to the emergence of postmodernism. In *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* from 1995, Dutch literary scholar Hans Bertens listed 'the return of representation' as one of several 'postmodernisms' that began to emerge in the 1970s.[4] What he had in mind was a turn towards the figurative (illusion, narrative, modelling) in the visual arts, away from the abstraction and formalism of the modernist

1. Jan Kott, 'Théâtre: Les Classiques Aujourd'hui', *Mosaic* 1, no. 4 (July 1968), 53–60: 53–54. Unless otherwise stated, translations are my own.

2. Laurence Dreyfus, 'Early Music Defended Against Its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century', *The Musical Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (summer 1983), 297–322: 304.

3. Willmar Sauter's phenomenological approach to theatrical performance, as presented in his book *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception* (University of Iowa Press, 2000), has provided an important alternative to theatre semiotics. See also his chapters in this volume, chapter 3, 'Aesthetic Historicity', and chapter 11, 'An Aesthetics of Absence'.

4. Hans Bertens, *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* (London: Routledge, 1995), 65–67.

avant-garde. But it is possible to understand the postmodern turn towards representation in a broader sense to include theatrical trends and theories about theatrical communication. One of these was theatre semiotics, which was first launched in 1968 by Polish theatre scholar Tadeusz Kowzan in his article 'The Sign in the Theatre: An Introduction to the Semiology of the Art of the Spectacle'.[5] In theatre semiotics the text, the actor, and all the auditive and visual aspects of the performance constitute a complex system of signs in which dramatic and scenic signifiers *represent* meanings, or values. It is then up to the spectator to decode and analyse them. Semiotic thinking gained prominence in the mid-1970s and flourished in the 1980s and into the 1990s, and some of its basic tenets and assumptions are still influential within theatre studies today.

Within theatrical practice, the postmodern turn towards representation can be exemplified by two, seemingly very different, artistic movements: the revival of historical acting styles and postmodern *Regietheater*. These flourished during the late twentieth century, at the same time as theatre semiotics.

A pioneering figure in the revival of eighteenth-century acting principles was the Australian musician and scholar Dene Barnett, whose work has had a momentous impact on the theatrical branch of the HIP (Historically Informed Performance) movement. However, Barnett was heavily influenced by the linguistic theories of his time. In 1974, for example, he wrote the article 'A New Semantical Theory of Egocentric Particulars', which displays his conception of human behaviours as revolving around signs.[6] And, unsurprisingly, this view also informed his systematic account of eighteenth-century acting, published in articles between 1977 and 1980, and then in a monograph, *The Art of Gesture: The Practices and Principles of 18th-Century Acting*, published in 1987. That the theatre historian Barnett remained true to his training in semiotics and logical positivism is clear from the following claims: eighteenth-century actors 'used a vocabulary of basic gestures, each with an individual meaning known to all

5. Published both in French and in an English translation by Simon Pleasance, Kowzan's article first appeared in *Diogenes* 16, no. 61, 52–80.

6. In *Synthese* 28, no. 3/4, special issue on Logical Semantics (November 1974), 533–547.

in advance', and their basic function was 'to create for the eyes of spectators a concrete picture of the ideas expressed by the words. Indicative and imitative gestures especially can have the vivid effect of *bringing before the eyes* events and things which are not on stage – events past, things distant, imaginary or abstract'.[7]

This concept of acting builds on a view of theatrical communication and emotional expression as basically revolving around signs. What is absent from Barnett's theory of gesture – and from Kowzan's theatre semiotics – is a conception of both the aesthetic experience and of the theatrical spectator as a creative agent who generates his or her own meanings.

The turn towards representation also characterises another theatrical trend that began in the mid-1970s. I reserve the term *Regietheater* for the postmodern type of directorial theatre, to distinguish it from the modernist type that emerged during the first half of the twentieth century. This distinction has not been sufficiently appreciated by theatre scholars, who tend to approach it from a polemical rather than a historical perspective, often acting as the movement's advocates. This means that they tend to treat performance and work as opposites, operating with a rigid dichotomy between the 'progressive' (i.e. performance-oriented) champions of *Regietheater* and the 'reactionary' (i.e. traditional musicological or literary) champions of *Werktreue*. German opera scholar Ulrich Müller has criticised these polemics and tried to take a more objective stance in his 2014 chapter on '*Regietheater*/Director's Theater' in the *Oxford Handbook of Opera*, but even he ends up presenting *Regietheater* as the only alternative to the 'mirage' of *Werktreue*.[8] Given the parallel developments in the concept of the operatic work, what we are still missing is a historical account of the continued developments in directorial theatre that moves beyond clichéd notions of *Werktreue*.[9]

Consequently, Müller is unable to give a credible account of the difference between the directorial theatre of the mid-twentieth century and the later *Regietheater*. He defines the latter as 'productions in

7. Dene Barnett, *The Art of Gesture: The Practices and Principles of 18th-Century Acting* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987), 7, 10. Barnett's emphasis. For a detailed critique of his system, see my article 'Dene Barnett's Eighteenth Century, Or, What Is Historically Informed Performance?', in *Performing Premodernity Online* 2 (January 2015): https://performing premodernity.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/PPO2-Schneider.pdf (accessed 23 March 2023).

8. Ulrich Müller, '*Regietheater*/Director's Theater', in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed. Helen M. Greenwald (Oxford University Press, 2014), 582–605: 591.

9. I have addressed some of the issues, specifically focusing on the rise of the concept of the operatic work in the second half of the eighteenth century, in the postscript, 'In Defense of the Operatic Work', to my book *The Original Portrayal of Mozart's Don Giovanni* (London: Routledge, 2021), 213–226: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429281709 (accessed 23 March 2023).

which the director and his team present the drama or musical theater in what is often a surprisingly new and often provocative manner, specifically the director's personal interpretation of the drama to a modern audience'.[10] While postmodern *Regietheater* certainly puts more emphasis on a 'provocative manner' than the modernist brand of directorial theatre, it is much less obvious that it also puts more emphasis on 'the director's personal interpretation'. In fact, the opposite is the case, since the decline in the *status* of the work has coincided with an inevitable decline in the personal *interpretation* of works: in today's postmodern theatre, plays and operas tend to be seen less as works of art with their own internal logic (which therefore call for interpretation) than as textual materials that the director can make use of. The rise of this concept of the work-as-material has in turn coincided with that of a new dichotomy between *presentation* (referring to the physical dimension of the performance) and *representation* (referring to its intellectual dimension when its meanings are conceived as *signs*). It is here that we recognise the similarity between postmodern *Regietheater* and Barnett's equally postmodern understanding of eighteenth-century acting principles, both of which reflect a fundamentally semiotic conception of theatrical communication.

As postmodernism, with its turn towards representation, remains a highly influential ideology today, it is no surprise to find the same conception in twenty-first-century academic criticism of eighteenth-century operas, such as Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. For example, in *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, published in 2001, some of the volume's authors speculate on Mozart's soprano arias: 'How does the act of performance endorse, undercut, or relate in any way to the dramatic and social *content* of the work? And ultimately, what is the responsibility of those who put on Mozart's operas to take and "perform" a position on their *values*?'[11]

The writers assume that Mozart's opera *represents* certain outdated social values in the manner of a sign system. This leaves the critic with only two options: either to admire or reject its ideological

10. Müller, '*Regietheater*/Director's Theater', 586.

11. Wye Jamison Allanbrook, Mary Hunter, and Gretchen A. Wheelock, 'Staging Mozart's Women', in *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, ed. Mary Ann Smart (Princeton University Press, 2001), 47–66: 47. Emphasis mine.

'content'. It is this ultimately semiotic work-concept that provides the ideological justification for the postmodern *Regietheater*: if musical and dramatic forms are mere sensory *signifiers* for fixed ideological *signifieds*,[12] a politically aware director is obliged to deconstruct, parody, or otherwise frame the work to make it palatable for today, which is widely presumed to be a more enlightened age. This explains why theatrical provocations and scandals occupy such a central place within this movement: the *Regietheater* has turned the focus from the spectator's individual aesthetic experience to his or her outward signs of approval or disapproval. The decline in the interpretation of works corresponds both to a decline in the interpretation of the past, which contributes to the production of simplistic narratives of historical progress, and to a decline in the philosophical reflection on our own aesthetic responses.

As an alternative to the concept of performance-as-representation, I propose a return to the concept of *contemporaneity* promoted by the twentieth-century Polish dramaturge Jan Kott, who was one of the principal theorists of directorial theatre during the 1960s and 1970s and a prominent detractor of postmodern *Regietheater* during the 1980s and 1990s. As Kott wrote in 1968, the contemporary faces of the actors always 'resist the principle of imitation', by which he apparently referred not simply to traditional stage realism, but to the principle of representation as such. A person's face can never be a sign.

## In the theatre, contemporaneity and beauty are the same

In his essay about Polish *Hamlet* productions from the 1950s, published in his seminal book *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, Kott insisted that 'we ought to get at our modern experience, anxiety and sensibility' through Shakespeare's text, and that the ideal *Hamlet* production would be one 'most true to Shakespeare and most modern at the same time'.[13] He also famously stated that the play, like a sponge, 'immediately absorbs all the problems of our time', unless it is produced

12. I am using this term in the structuralist sense, to denote a concept or idea evoked by a sign.

13. Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, tr. Boleslaw Taborski (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1964), 59, 64.

'in a stylized or antiquarian fashion'.[14] In other words, revealing the contemporaneity in a classic presupposes a personal interpretation of the text, without which the work remains dead. In an essay from 1968 about modern productions of classics, Kott returned to the topic with a challenge to the stage directors of his time, confronting the prejudice that a hermeneutic interpretation is a mere explanatory exegesis: 'what we demand from the classics is that they enter *our* world to speak of *their* experiences, but we are the ones asking the questions. And if they give no answer, they stop existing in the theatre: they are only revived to be buried'.[15] Yet 'contemporaneity' in a performance is not achieved by simply adding references to topical political events; it must be a relationship between the time inhabited by the actors and the time inhabited by the audience. As Kott defined it in a panel debate in the late 1980s, that relationship is 'what finally establishes whether Shakespeare is considered to be a contemporary or not. When the two times are closely connected, then Shakespeare is our contemporary'.[16] However, in an essay written shortly before his death, Kott added the further qualification: 'contemporaneity is never given to us: it is asked of us – and of our theatres'.[17]

Kott's concept of contemporaneity was directly opposed to the *topicality* promoted by postmodern *Regietheater*, in which the work is often used to stage a coded representation of topical trends, events, or ideological formations. Unlike topicality, contemporaneity is by nature aesthetic and dialogic, engaging both the artists and the audience in a creative exchange with the text and with the past evoked by the text. It is therefore more closely related to the concept of *kairós* discussed in chapter 1 of this volume.[18]

It may seem odd that Kott distinguished between the time inhabited by the audience and the time inhabited by the actors, because, at least on the specific, physical level, both audience and actors undeniably inhabit the same time, whereas only the dramatic characters inhabit a different time. Elsewhere, Kott maintains that theatrical communication features three interlocutors: the spectator and the actor, who are

14. Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 64.

15. Kott, 'Théâtre: Les Classiques Aujourd'hui', 59. Kott's emphasis.

16. In John Elsom (ed.), *Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary?* (London: Routledge, 1990), 12.

17. Jan Kott, 'Last Words', *Theater* 32, no. 3 (2002), 25–26: 26.

18. Chapter 1, Jette Barnholdt Hansen, 'Adequate Rhetorical Delivery when Staging Premodernity'.

contemporaries, and the text, which is a voice from the past.[19] Nonetheless, his statement seems consistent with his reluctance to distinguish between the time of the author and the time of the text, which I interpret as a refusal to distinguish between poetic form and dramatic content, that is, between the language of the author and the actions of the characters, as the semioticians do. These are all encapsulated in the words of the play, the 'text' encompassing the time of the author and the time of the drama. When we say that Shakespeare is our contemporary we are therefore referring both to his dramatic characters, and to his poetic language. Contemporaneity is an experience of presence that allows us to enter a space-time unique to that theatrical moment. In this sense it is the actor who breathes life into the language and inhabits a verbal world from the past, into which the audience is invited.

It seems to me that this experience of contemporaneity – which Kott sees as the principal aim of theatrical communication – is identical with what we might describe as *beauty* in the theatre. That is, if, as Danish philosopher Dorthe Jørgensen proposes, we understand beauty as an *experience*, and not as 'a quality of objects':

> Furthermore, it is not about experience of beauty understood as something being nice and neat. On the contrary, it is about the experience of something having *value in itself*, and of us being *part of something larger*. The experience of beauty is therefore an experience of cohesion and meaningfulness. According to Kant it is about something as fundamental as our 'feeling of life' (*Lebensgefühl*) and what this feeling says about us, including our relationship to each other and to the world.[20]

Just as Kott defines contemporaneity as a special relationship between the audience, the actor, and the text, Jørgensen defines beauty as a special relationship between the beholder and the object. As that relationship is aesthetic and experiential, in both cases it is bound to a place and a moment in time, and what it generates is 'an experience of cohesion and meaningfulness'. When we feel that the dead playwright and his characters are our contemporaries it is exactly because we

19. Kott, 'Théâtre: Les Classiques Aujourd'hui', 55.

20. Dorthe Jørgensen, *Poetic Inclinations: Ethics, History, Philosophy* (Aarhus University Press, 2021), 45. Jørgensen's emphasis.

feel that we are part of something larger, because our contemporary moment is expanded to include a past world. In the rare moments of theatrical contemporaneity, we experience, aesthetically, a connectedness to other people and to another time that permits us to understand our relationship to ourselves, to each other, and to our world in a way that invites deeper philosophical reflection.

## The shock of the image

Unlike the classical concept of beauty, which is defined by the object's organic unity and harmonious proportions, Jørgensen's philosophical concept of beauty is defined by the experience of something having value in itself. It does not have to be 'nice and neat', as she puts it. Indeed, the experience of beauty is often unsettling, just as the experience of contemporaneity can be unsettling.

I had such an experience when Galathée came to life in Performing Premodernity's production of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's and Horace Coignet's *Pygmalion* from 1770, first mounted at the theatre of Český Krumlov Castle in 2015.[21] The forty-minute performance constituted one long build-up to that moment. Such a moment is hard to imagine on the basis of a mere reading of the play. The sequence of short orchestral interludes that accompanied the sculptor's silent gestures throughout his monologue culminated with the triumphant music when the statue of Galathée – performed by Laila Cathleen Neuman – dismounted her pedestal and walked around the stage with fragile hesitancy. Trying out the movements of her legs and arms as if for the first time, she absorbed everything with newly awakened senses and marvelled at her own graceful gestures, the softness of her skin, the acuteness of her sensations. After she spoke her first word, 'Moi', the music was heard no more. She laid eyes on her creator, and the curtain descended on a silent stage. The absence of an actual musical climax at the end of the *scène lyrique* was aesthetically startling in a way that is hard to put into words. The frozen representation dissolved in warm contemporaneity. The staged performance too dissolved as the immobile

21. For videos of this production, see the Performing Premodernity homepage: https://performingpremodernity.com/anthology/.

figure realised herself as a woman. This was literally the 'pygmalion-ism' that Felicity Baker has described as 'the eighteenth-century crite-rion of aesthetic success', the goal of eighteenth-century art being 'its own abolition, its replacement by "the real thing"'.[22] It was through the very breakdown of organic unity and harmonious proportions that the unique beauty of the theatrical moment came into being.

The acclaimed British voice coach and stage director Patsy Rodenburg describes a far more shocking experience of contempo-raneity-as-beauty. It was related to her by a stranger she met when she was doing a book signing in a theatre in Adelaide in Australia:

> I was lecturing on voice and text to an audience of mostly theatre practitioners. I was discussing release, sound purging us, all the is-sues involved with seizing the right to speak, the words we need and the sounds that free us. I noticed in the audience a man who was evidently not an actor. He was sitting very rigidly, looking down. His body language was tight and held. He wore a business suit. He was very out of place. It crossed my mind, 'Why is he here?'
>
> At the end of my lecture I was answering questions and I noticed he was hovering, waiting to speak to me. Somehow I knew this conversation would be difficult, but I was sure I would have to face him. When everyone had gone, he moved slowly towards me. Throughout most of our conversation he refused to look at me. He said, 'My wife and I once went to a play. A Greek play. About women in Troy'. '*The Trojan Women*?' I offered. 'Yes, that's it'. Pause. 'There was a woman in the play who lost her son. He was thrown from a wall. The actress made a sound. She made this awful, embarrassing sound'. Pause. 'When we left the theatre my wife and I said that sound wasn't real. It wasn't real'. Silence. In the silence I thought, is he saying that to release sound with passion is unreal? I didn't speak because he was struggling with something. After maybe two minutes he continued, his voice now flat and over-controlled: 'Two years ago a policeman came into my office at work and told me that my daughter's body had been found. She had been raped and murdered'. Pause. 'I made that sound. I made the same sound the actress had made. I've never told my wife that I made that sound'. Suddenly he looked me in the eyes. 'That actress was real and we didn't understand reality at the time because it hadn't touched us yet'. He smiled. 'Not a good way finally to understand truth in art. Thank you'. He turned and walked away.

22. The concept of 'pygmalionism' is borrowed from Jean Starobinski. See Felicity Baker, *Don Giovanni's Reasons: Thoughts on a Masterpiece*, ed. Magnus Tessing Schneider (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021), 91.

> The great lesson for actors is surely that the truth they are com-
> municating is not only for the now but for the future. An audience
> might not understand yet but perhaps one day they will. Equally true,
> you have to remember that there is every likelihood that at every per-
> formance there is a member of the audience who understands more
> about a given situation than you do. Again, the responsibility is to
> endeavour to communicate truth without in any way patronizing
> those who really have lived situations and know. It is said that the
> great act is to comfort the distressed and distress the comfortable.[23]

The theatrical experience of contemporaneity, which requires humil-
ity on the part of the performer, can connect us to the future as well
as to the past. In this Australian performance of *The Trojan Women*
(415 BCE) by Euripides, the actor inhabited a different time than
the spectator who only entered her time when tragedy had struck
for real. Whether we conceive of the actor as inhabiting the past or
the present, the experience of contemporaneity expands the present
moment. And, as Rodenburg suggests, its beauty can be distressing
as well as comforting, connecting us to other people who may be real
or fictive, who may be seated right next to us, or who may be dead.

   The sound that had stuck in the spectator's memory was what
American literary theorist Brenda Machosky describes as an 'allegor-
ical image', since it resembled (as opposed to represented) the sound
he would later make himself. Unlike the mimetic representation, the
image 'is a resemblance, something that cannot be conceptualized
because it cannot be grasped'; and unlike the sign, which must be
transparent, it is 'uniquely opaque; something remains inaccessible'.[24]
It was the ungraspability and opaqueness of the theatrical image – its
'having value in itself' – that made the performance he had once seen
resurface when he lived through the most painful moment of his life.
When the grieving father made the sound of the grieving Andromache,
both the performance and the ancient tragedy became contemporary.
He was, in that moment, Andromache, the image of all helpless and
despairing parents whose children have been murdered.

   The example shows how inadequate a concept 'representation' is
when it comes to describing and understanding the real significance of

23. Patsy Rodenburg, *The Actor Speaks: Voice and the Performer*, second edition (London and New York: Methuen Drama: 1997/2020), 248–249. A few years before the Australian book signing Rodenburg had recorded her advice on how to achieve maximum emotional effect with the bereaved Andromache's speech from Euripides' *Trojan Women*, the scene in question; see *The Need for Words: Voice and the Text*, second edition (London and New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 1993/2018), 228–231. She has also told the story about the grieving father in the filmed lecture she gave at Michael Howard Studios in New York City on 17 April 2008: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9jjhGq8pMM (accessed 12 January 2022).

24. Brenda Machosky, *Structures of Appearing: Allegory and the Work of Literature* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 30.

a theatrical event. It underlines that contemporaneity is never found in signs. Contemporaneity is an aesthetic experience that occurs when the spectator realises that the theatrical image resembles something he or she has experienced before, and which suddenly becomes present in his or her imagination.

## Interpreting the cry

Moments such as the one described by Rodenburg do not only occur in the spoken theatre. They may occur in opera as well. Joseph von Sonnenfels described a moment in the premiere production of *Alceste* (1767), an adaption of Euripides' *Alcestis* (438 BCE) with music by Christoph Willibald Gluck and text by Ranieri Calzabigi, which resembles the moment described by Rodenburg in the modern production of his *Trojan Women*. In 1768 Sonnenfels was particularly struck by the singer Antonia Bernasconi's performance of the aria at the end of act 2, when Alceste, who has vowed to die in her husband's place, bids a final farewell to her children with the following words:

| | |
|---|---|
| È il più fiero di tutti i tormenti | It is the fiercest of all torments |
| lo staccarsi da' dolci suoi figli; | to separate from one's sweet children, |
| e lasciarli fra tanti perigli, | and to leave them in such perils, |
| e lasciarli nel pianto così.[25] | and to leave them in tears like this! |

Sonnenfels described Bernasconi's performance of the aria as follows: 'The ending is a high, piercing tone: the true accent of maternal feeling strained to the utmost, in which the voice leaps, as it were, and emits a jarring sound that is painful to the ear but thereby wounds the heart of the spectator, leaving its sting in the wound for a long time'.[26] We can see how that uncomfortable sound, the cry of a mother taking leave of her children one last time, resembles the 'awful, embarrassing sound' of Andromache in the Australian production who lived through a similar moment. Sonnenfels also described Bernasconi's acting in this moment:

25. Ranieri de' Calsabigi, *Alceste: Tragedia per musica* (Vienna: Stamperia di Ghelen, 1767), act 2, scene 6.

26. 'Der Schluss ist ein hoher, schneidender Ton; der wahre Accent der auf das höchste gespannten mütterlichen Empfindung, wo die Stimme gleichsam überspringt, und einen Misslaut giebt, welcher dem Ohre peinlich fällt, aber eben dadurch das Herz des Zuschauers verwundet, und den Stachel in der Wunde noch lange zurücklässt'. Joseph von Sonnenfels, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 10 vols. (Vienna: mit von Baumeisterischen Schriften, 1783–1787), 5: 175.

27. 'Ihre Gebehrde folget nur den Bewegungen des Herzens, und ihr Herz führt sie beständig auf den angemessensten, und nicht selten auf den feinsten Ausdruck. Sie hat bei der dritten Wiederholung Alcestens einen von diesen glücklichen Zügen in der Schlussarie des zweyten Aufzugs bei den Worten: diess ist der Quaalen grösste Quaal, von süssen Kindern sich zu trennen, angebracht. Das erste und zweytemal machte sie bei dem Worte *Trennen* die Bewegung der gewaltsamen Entfernung. Es war eine der malenden Gebehrden, die für das Aug eben so deutlich, als die Worte für das Ohr sind: aber auch ein allgemeiner Schauspieler, oder allenfalls der Dichter, so der Schauspielerinn einen Unterricht gäbe, würde auf so etwas verfallen seyn. Das drittemal, ohne Zweifel, da ihre Einbildung von der hervorstehenden schmerzlichen Trennung lebhafter gerührt, und ihre Empfindung heftiger angegriffen war, schoss sie einen wilden, gefühlvollen Blick auf Aspasien, liess ihn eine Weile unbeweglich an ihr hangen; dann aber, als der Begriff der Trennung nahte, warf sie sich dem Kinde plötzlich an dem Hals, umschlang es mit beiden Armen, gleich als wäre der Augenblick der Trennung itzt vorhanden, und gleich als wäre sie diesen grausamen Augenblick durch ihre Widersetzung zu entfernen fähig. Nichts ist wahrhafter, als dieser Ausdruck. So würde auf einem Gemälde des französischen Raphaels Clytemnestra ihre Tochter umfassen, wann sie der grausame Calchas an den Schlachttisch Dianens zu schleppen bereit steht; so würde den Bräutigam, seine Braut umschlingen, die ihm die wütende Wollust brünstiger Söldner zu rauben, sich nahte.

Her gesture follows only the stirrings of the heart, and her heart invariably leads her to the most appropriate, and not seldom to the subtlest expression. At Alceste's third performance she added one of these happy strokes to the concluding aria of the second act at the words: 'It is the fiercest of all torments to part from one's sweet children'. The first and the second time, at the word 'to part' [i.e. 'staccarsi', ed.], she made a movement of forcible removal. It was one of the painting gestures, which are just as clear to the eye as the words are to the ear: but even a common actor, or at best the poet instructing the actress, would have thought of something like that. The third time – no doubt because her imagination was stirred more vividly by the painful separation that was about to occur, and her sensibility was more violently affected – she threw a wild, emotional glance at Aspasia and kept it fixed on her for a while; but then, as the idea of their separation approached, she suddenly threw herself around the neck of the child, embracing her with both arms, as if the moment of separation had now come, and as if she were able to remove the cruel moment through her resistance. Nothing is truer than that expression. Thus would Clytemnestra, in a painting by the French Raphael [i.e. Nicolas Poussin, ed.], embrace her daughter when the cruel Calchas is about to drag her off to Diana's slaughter-table; thus would the bride embrace her groom as the furious lust of wanton mercenaries threatens to ravish her.

I only saw this trait that one time, though I paid eager attention to it in the following performances. I am convinced that if someone asked Bernasconi to give the reason, she would not think long before answering: 'It was a natural impulse'.[27]

No doubt, it was the concurrence of the 'jarring sound that is painful to the ear' and the passionate embrace that created the truthful expression of parental grief in this performance of *Alceste*, which made such an impression on the eighteenth-century spectator. 'Truth', which was an acting ideal of the Enlightenment,[28] also happens to be the word used by Rodenburg's grieving spectator when describing the performance by the Andromache in *The Trojan Women*.

Inevitably, in an opera performance, such rare moments of truthful resemblance entail a seamless unity of musical form and theatrical expression. This was implicit when Bo Holten, the opera composer,

told me once that his ultimate goal is to make the audience forget that the performers are singing. It is also implied in the statement by a German opera critic, writing in 1823, who declared that the character and music of Max in Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821) demand 'simple, powerful acting, in the music as well, so that one forgets, just as in a spoken play, that one is looking at a theatrical stage. It is not unreasonable to demand this illusion from singers, for it is possible'.[29]

These are all examples of 'pygmalionism' as described in the previous section: in the moment of contemporaneity, there is no distinction between form and meaning, and art is replaced by 'the real thing'.

## Contemporaneity and style

Gluck was long seen as a composer who kept emotional expression tightly corseted, unlike later masters such as Richard Wagner or Alban Berg: a view that has more to do with what David Wiles calls 'the standard eighteenth-century package', developed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, than it does with what people actually envisioned and heard in the eighteenth century.[30] Such progressivist narratives thrive and proliferate in line with the postmodern decline of interpretation, including the decline of historical hermeneutics, and thus prevent the works of the past from becoming contemporary. It is up to the dramaturge, the director, the conductor, and the performer to demolish these narratives and liberate the contemporaneity that lies hidden as potentials in the old scores.

One of my great operatic experiences was a performance in 2002 of Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Macbeth* (1847) at the Berlin State Opera, directed by Peter Mussbach. This production, inspired by the aesthetic of the expressionists, seemed to have taken its cue from Jan Kott's statement that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* shows the struggle for power as a nightmare that 'paralyses and terrifies' (see Fig. 1).[31] In act 1, scene 5,

Ich habe diesen Zug nur das einemal gesehen, ob ich gleich bei den folgenden Vorstellungen begierig darauf Acht hatte. Ich bin versichert, hätte man Bernaskoni om eine Ursache angegangen, sie würde sich nicht lange bedacht haben, zu antworten: Es war ein Trieb der Natur'. Sonnenfels: *Gesammelte Schriften*, 5: 182–184.

28. See chapter 8 in this volume, Petra Dotlačilová, 'Costume in the Age of Rousseau and the Case of *Pygmalion*'.

29. '[…] der übrige Theil der Rolle, wie der Gesangsparthie will durchaus nur durch einfaches, kräftiges Spiel auch in der Musik gefallen, so dass man, wie im Schauspiel vergisst, dass man vor der Bühne steht. Es ist nicht unbillig, diese Täuschung von Sängern zu verlangen, denn sie ist möglich'. *Originalien aus dem Gebiete der Wahrheit, Kunst, Laune und Phantasie* 7 (1823), 688 [696].

30. David Wiles, chapter 4, 'Presenting the Theatre of Drottningholm', 278. See, for example, Michel Poizat's characterisation of Gluck in the subsection '*Prima le Parole?*' in *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, tr. Arthur Denner (Ithaca NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 55–58.

31. Kott: *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 76.

**Figure 1.** Lucio Gallo (Macbeth) and Sylvie Valayre (Lady Macbeth) in *Macbeth* by Giuseppe Verdi. Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin, 2000. Staging: Peter Mussbach. Set design: Erich Wonder. Costumes: Andrea Schmidt-Futterer. Photo: Ruth Walz © picture 009. License: CC BY-NC.

Lady Macbeth – sung by French soprano Sylvie Valayre – rushed forward from the back of the stage to stand right in front of the first row of the audience, where she performed her aria, 'Vieni! T'affretta', an ecstatic summoning of the infernal spirits of political ambition. She sang it as a rousing battle song, hurling her coloraturas into the auditorium like fatal javelins. Delivering the entire part in a husky, shrill,

and screechy voice that proudly renounced all claims to *bel canto*, Valayre's singing resembled the blood-crazed cries of some kind of fantastical vulture. This was a Lady Macbeth devoid of humanity, seemingly derived from the nightmarish visions of Goya or Fuseli. It was an excessive portrayal, but it was also a performance beyond clichés or caricature. Lady Macbeth's music communicated a crude and exuberant sense of purpose and superiority, which enthused the audience while transporting us into her terrifying inner world. After the warlike cabaletta, the singer – still in character as Lady Macbeth – acknowledged the thunderous applause with deep, self-conscious bows: knowing that she had fully earned the obedient adulation of the multitude, she held all of us under her spell.[32]

No recording or video could have done justice to this performance: not only was Lady Macbeth's idiosyncratic timbre an acoustical effect created by the singer through her way of projecting the voice into the auditorium; the aesthetic effect of the sound was virtually inseparable from her acting and the visual design.[33] It was characteristic of my experience of contemporaneity in this *Macbeth* that the 'pastness' in both the action with its medieval power struggles and in Verdi's music was transcended. The performance defied ingrained performance traditions and observed no distinction between form and meaning. The lush timbres and emotional pathos associated with Romantic opera gave way to an expressionistic rawness, as if Verdi had been a contemporary of Alban Berg and Kurt Weill, or even Tom Waits. And yet Valayre's 'modernist' style of singing remained true to a composer who once insisted that Lady Macbeth should be 'ugly and evil', and that her voice should be 'harsh, stifled, and hollow' and have a 'diabolical quality'.[34] Refusing to offer what we might call the standard nineteenth-century package, the production chose another nineteenth century as its model, one that was at the same time true to Verdi and to the modern audience. For me, its contemporaneity was embodied by the vulture's cries that resembled the enthusing but dehumanising craving for power lurking beneath the

32. Watching an online interview with the singer years later, I saw that she strove to create a diabolical sound: https://www.peter-mussbach.de/film-buehne/macbeth (accessed 17 January 2021).

33. I had a similar experience when I heard Joyce DiDonato perform the title role in Jules Massenet's 1899 opera *Cendrillon* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York in 2018. The contrast between the veiled, shadowy voice of the poor stepdaughter Cinderella and the clear, radiant voice of the brilliant queen of the ball was created by the singer's vocal projection and could not have been captured on a recording.

34. Letter from Giuseppe Verdi to Salvatore Cammarano of 23 November 1848, quoted from Andrew Porter and David Rosen, *Verdi's* Macbeth: *A Sourcebook* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 67.

veneer of civilisation. But the beauty of the allegorical image also depended on the unique aesthetic qualities of the work, on the specific *tinta musicale* (musical colouring) that Verdi has given to each of his operas.

## The pitfalls of objectivism and exoticism

This is an example of how today's directorial theatre can generate experiences of contemporaneity, when directors refrain from letting the productions represent topical events or trends in the manner of signs. This was not a postmodern production. The centrality of hermeneutic interpretation and aesthetic contemporaneity in Mussbach's *Macbeth*, in addition to the evident refusal to adhere to the semiotic work-concept and treat the score as a mere 'material' for performance, suggests that this director had continued in the mid-twentieth-century modernist tradition of directorial theatre. In fact, inspired as it was by the indications found in Verdi's letters, one might even regard his and Valayre's depiction of Lady Macbeth as both *werktreu* and as belonging to the HIP movement – though obviously not in the standard sense, as the Berlin production under no circumstances could be described as a 'period production'. Rather, the production was an example of what I like to call 'historically informed dramaturgy'.

My non-dogmatic use of the term 'historically informed' comes close to American musicologist Laurence Dreyfus' discussion of the potentials and pitfalls of the Early Music movement. Back in 1983, he stated that the best period performances succeed in reconstructing the musical object in the here and now, thereby 'enabling a new and hitherto silenced subject to speak'. This matches Kott's definition of theatrical contemporaneity as a unique relationship that momentarily bridges the gap between past and present.

However, as he was writing at the time when Barnett was launching his positivist sign system of eighteenth-century gestures, Dreyfus aptly identified 'objectivism' as a widespread ideological bias within

the Early Music community. He defined this ideological bias as 'the epistemological proposition that knowledge is assured by accurately describing things in the world without taking stock of the biased vantage point from which the (human) observer perceives the phenomena'.[35] Following Theodor Adorno, he argued that adherents of the objectivist stance both ignore 'crucial nonempirical considerations – such as emotional expression or the meaning of the work', and tend to 'relegate questions of aesthetic value and critique to a secondary, if not meaningless, status under the guise of furthering rigorous scholarship'.[36] Not only do such practitioners share the false conviction that 'proper application of the rules guarantees accurate "period style"', but in order to 'maintain equilibrium in a mythical kingdom of the past, replete with courtly values and (palpably) harmonious relations', they 'forcibly [repress] every sign of the present'.[37]

From his modernist standpoint, Dreyfus accused the objectivist branch of the HIP movement of the forcible repression of the present. The latter suggests a turning away from contemporaneity as an aim for performance, which brings Kott's criticism of 1980s *Regietheater* to mind. Both HIP and *Regietheater* were accused of neglecting aesthetic contemporaneity and hermeneutic interpretation, which, again, is an indication of the high extent to which they were influenced by the same ideological currents of semiotics and postmodernism at the time of their emergence. Postmodern HIP and postmodern *Regietheater* both operate with a conception of the work as a representation of historical 'values'. The movements only differ in their attitude towards the representations. While the HIP objectivists aim to communicate them faithfully, maintaining equilibrium 'in a mythical kingdom of the past', the *Regietheater* directors and the theatre scholars and musicologists supporting the movement (such as the Mozart scholars cited above)[38] reject the underlying 'values'.

Kott anticipated this development as early as in 1964 when he maintained that a 'stylized or antiquarian' staging of *Hamlet* would curb the ability of Shakespeare's text to become contemporary. What

35. Dreyfus, 'Early Music', 299.

36. Dreyfus, 'Early Music', 300–301.

37. Dreyfus, 'Early Music', 319, 305.

38. See p. 84.

Kott refers to as 'antiquarian' is what Dreyfus calls 'objectivism'. It is less immediately evident what Kott means by 'stylized'; but he might be referring to the way stylisation and antiquarianism both emphasise the general at the expense of the particular, that is, fitting the drama into a model in which the uniqueness of the characters and situations are lost.[39] Moreover, stylisation and antiquarianism both tend to draw attention to the form in a way that is likely to hamper the spectator's emotional engagement, so essential to the achievement of contemporaneity. In other words, we are unlikely to forget that Alceste sings when she says goodbye to her children.

Stylisation was central to Barnett's concept of eighteenth-century acting, which he declared was 'highly articulate and capable of both Baroque intensity and grandeur, and the legendary subtleties of body language', while it 'displayed a beauty, nobility, clarity and ceremony which matched that of the verse, and the music, which it accompanied, reflected and sometimes duplicated'.[40] The execution of Barnett's sign system of gestures was meant to be pleasant to behold, but it was also fundamentally exotic in its reliance on a lost language supposedly known to the eighteenth-century audience. In a definition by cultural theorist Graham Huggan, 'exoticism', is 'a particular mode of aesthetic perception' that 'renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery'.[41] Exoticism has been appropriately described as 'the aesthetics of decontextualisation'.[42] Huggan, drawing on Tzvetan Todorov, also gives the following definition: 'Knowledge is incompatible with exoticism, but lack of knowledge is in turn irreconcilable with praise of others; yet praise without knowledge is precisely what exoticism aspires to be. This is its constitutive paradox'.[43] If exoticism in objectivist period productions is 'a kind of semiotic circuit that oscillates between the opposite poles of strangeness and familiarity',[44] the strangeness of exoticism tends to take the form of an alienation of the audience while the familiarity may be described as the reproduction of

39. On the importance of uniqueness, or specificity, in historically informed performances, see my interview with Mark Tatlow in this book, chapter 10, 'From the General to the Specific'.

40. Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 7.

41. Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), 13.

42. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, 16.

43. Quoted in Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, 17.

44. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, 13.

fetishised images of e.g. the 'Baroque period', often carefully copied from prints and paintings. As in the *Regietheater*, the focus is on signs rather than interpretation.

A related problem is that Barnett's acting theory completely ignores the issue of character, which may partly be because his background was as a musician, and not an actor. Consequently, his aesthetic criteria tended to be musical rather than dramatic, which means that his focus is on musicalised stage movement and on the scenic expression of the emotions conveyed by the music. Music, however, has no equivalent to dramatic character. When we refer to the 'character' of a musical piece we are really referring to its *mood*, and hence the word denotes something entirely different to a character in a play. In Aristotle's definition, character (*êthos*) is 'that which reveals the moral purpose of the agents',[45] and while music is certainly capable of any conceivable emotional appeal (*páthos*), it is unable to tell us whether the person expressing that emotion is good or bad, at least not without the assistance of another art form, such as poetry or dance. Theatre is able to convey moral qualities, however, because tragedy, as Aristotle says, is the 'imitation of an action' (*drâma*), and character is revealed above all through the actions of the agent.[46] Ultimately, Barnett's failure to deal with the performance of character on the eighteenth-century stage accounts for his neglect of the moral and political issues with which the theatre artists of the time were deeply concerned.

This is not to say that the HIP movement has not developed since the 1980s. In fact, many of today's artists and theatre pedagogues who are concerned with the revival of historical acting principles have distanced themselves from the formulaic austerity of Barnett's vision, focusing more on the technical insights that may be derived from the study of historical treatises.[47] Italian stage director and choreographer Deda Cristina Colonna, who prefers to refer to her practice as historically informed 'acting' rather than 'gestures', describes one way of avoiding the pitfalls of this kind of antiquarianism, or exoticism, in order to give space to personal interpretation:

45. Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, tr. Ingram Bywater (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), part 6.

46. Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, part 4.

47. See e.g. Jed Wentz's chapter, '"Mechanical Rules" versus "*Abnormis gratia*": Revaluing Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia* (1806) as a Source for Historical Acting Techniques', in *Theatrical Heritage: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Bruno Forment and Christel Stalpaert (Leuven University Press, 2015), 41–58, which contains a critique of Barnett's system, as well as his collected volume *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, in the series European Drama and Performance Studies (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2022), especially the introduction, '"I Was Just Saying the Lines"', 11–54. For a discussion of today's different approaches to HIP acting, see also David Wiles, 'Eighteenth-Century Acting: The Search for Authenticity', in Willmar Sauter and David Wiles, *The Theatre of Drottningholm – Then and Now: Performance between the 18th and 21st Centuries* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2014), 184–213: https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:756254/FULLTEXT01.pdf (accessed 23 March 2023).

> I regard the lessons I get from the sources as answers that were given in the past to certain problems or technical issues. Many of these questions remain crucial to staging or choreographing, even today: they belong to the *métier*. So, I try to ask myself the same questions and use the answers of the past to orient my vision, or my method. I try to detect paths, or to understand the function behind a 'rule'. What I never like to do is copying a shape; I try to start from my spontaneous reaction to what seems – according to my artistic sensitivity – the most relevant aspect of the piece, dance, or text.[48]

While Barnett's antiquarianism, or exoticism, is problematic mainly for aesthetical reasons, his objectivism, or positivism, is also problematic for historiographical reasons. We see his positivist bias reflected in his decision to study only prescriptive sources (e.g., books about acting technique or rhetorical manuals) while ignoring descriptive sources (e.g., reviews and memoirs), because, as he admits, it is less easy to extract general rules from these.[49] By ignoring all accounts of specific performances, however, he ignores all evidence of the historical relation between artistic practice and aesthetic effect. One could argue that a comprehensive and holistic study of historical acting principles must take the aesthetic dimension into account – for example, a source like Sonnenfels' reaction to Bernasconi's vocal and bodily gestures – rather than just the specific details of the physical movements divorced from their communicative context. Again, we recognise here the basically semiotic concept of theatre that we know from Kowzan. Moreover, it was not only the spectator's experience that Barnett passed over. He also ignored the eighteenth century's philosophical debates on dramatic and theatrical aesthetics, which includes Diderot's and Rousseau's influential rejection of the dramaturgy and acting style associated with French Classical theatre, and Gluck's prefaces to his scores.[50] By disregarding the dramatic and intellectual context of the theatre, Barnett was also ignoring the ideological implications of the practices, which were of crucial significance to the theorists and reformers of the time. By fitting the works of these

48. Email interview of 23 November 2017.

49. Barnett, *The Art of Gesture*, 10.

50. For discussions of how to remain true to Rousseau's reformist vision, see Maria Gullstam's, Petra Dotlačilová's, and David Wiles' contributions to this volume, 'Rousseau's Pygmalion as Research on Stage' (chapter 7), 'Costume in the Age of Rousseau and the Case of Pygmalion' (chapter 8), and 'Presenting the Theatre of Drottningholm' (chapter 13).

artists into a stereotypical conception of eighteenth-century performance, they are bound to be identified with the artistic, intellectual, and social restrictions against which the artists very often reacted.

Next, I will propose an alternative way of studying eighteenth-century acting principles, which takes account of the communicative and aesthetic dimensions. While not rejecting the study of prescriptive sources, I suggest that they be complemented by the study of historical accounts of performances or portrayals that describe their effects on the audience. This requires us to reject Barnett's rigid positivism and deceptive objectivism in favour of a contextualisation of the sources and a more holistic conception of acting. Such an approach serves as a challenge to both Barnett's historiography, and to his aesthetic views, including his postmodern conception of performance as a semiotic representation of values.

## Individualised acting in the eighteenth century

One of the most admired singer-actors of the late eighteenth century was the Italian baritone Luigi Bassi (1766–1825) who created the title role in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in 1787, and whose portrayal of that role I have studied in depth (see Fig. 2).[51] Among the several contemporary descriptions of his portrayal, the most revealing from a technical point of view are the anecdotes that can be traced back to the singer Luigia Sandrini-Caravoglia (1782–1869) who had sung Donna Anna to his Don Giovanni in Prague in the early nineteenth century. Sandrini-Caravoglia later told her daughter about Bassi's portrayal, and she, Marie Börner-Sandrini (1808–1890), eventually wrote down and published some of her mother's stories. In an article from 1888 she offered a detailed account of what Bassi did on stage, derived from her mother's oral account, which must have been supported by dramatic facial and gestural expressions. In her memoirs, Börner-Sandrini mentions that her mother was a brilliant mimic who would sometimes copy the behaviour of others in her comic performances:[52]

51. See Schneider, *The Original Portrayal*.

52. On the Sandrinis and the transmission of the anecdotes, see Schneider, *The Original Portrayal*, 22–24.

**Figure 2.** Medard Thönert: 'Don Giovanni performed by Signor Bassi'.
Engraving, 1797. License: CC-PD.

My mother always spoke with the greatest gratification of [Bassi's] performance of that most charming of rakes, especially highlighting the contrast in Don Giovanni's behaviour towards the three female characters. With Donna Anna, Bassi's Don Giovanni thus always sported a certain kind of suppressed tenderness coupled with veneration; towards Donna Elvira, on the other hand, he always behaved as a perfect gentleman who still treats his erstwhile mistress with chivalrous charm, but who at appropriate moments clearly exhibits a certain impatience, which is always suppressed, to be sure, as quickly and prudently as possible. Towards the coquettish and rather bigoted Zerlina he behaved with that overwhelming gallantry that shows itself in all sorts of exaggerated flatteries whose meagre worth a more prudent girl soon recognises, but which this one takes at face value. – Moreover, my mother highlighted Bassi's peculiar and almost buoyant stateliness in the role in certain, even tragic, moments, e.g. already in the first scene, after the killing of the old Commendatore, to which he is virtually half compelled, however. As Don Giovanni, Bassi exhibited a sort of human affectedness and commiseration at the sad outcome of this adventure, though with a fast transition to the role's easy-going, buoyant mood at the hasty escape with his waiting servant Leporello (splendidly portrayed by [Felice] Ponziani). The performance of the final scene with the Commendatore's ghost was always magnificent. Quite unlike many other holders of the role of Don Giovanni, Bassi never displayed dread and horror at the beginning, or gave himself Dutch courage along with Leporello by drinking champagne, even attempting to threaten the ghost with the dagger and so forth. As Don Giovanni, he still utterly remained the perfect gentleman here, from whose mind fear of the spectre is quite far at first, but who rather suspects an assault on his person and therefore never lets the ghost out of his sight and clearly appears extremely annoyed by the whole scene. Here Bassi was able to darken his features in a perfect manner and splendidly suggest the increasingly eerie situation. This made the escalation magnificent at the moment Don Giovanni gives the ghost his hand, and despair finally descends on the reckless rake due to the icy coldness of the 'stone guest's' hand; his hair literally stood on end, and he writhed in horror, clasped by the ghost's powerful hand. Back then, the tragic scene ended with Don Giovanni falling lifeless to the floor (as if he had suffered a stroke) and disappearing into the ground like the ghost.[53]

53. Marie Börner-Sandrini, 'Eine Erinnerung an Luigi Bassi, Mozarts ersten Don Juan', *Dresdner Anzeiger* 159, no. 259 (15 September 1888), 17–18. The English translation is quoted from Schneider, *The Original Portrayal*, 61–62, 72–73, 195.

Due to the anecdotal nature of this account and its lack of references to general 'rules', this is the type of source that Barnett would, no doubt, have discarded. However, it contains information about eighteenth-century acting that could never be derived from the prescriptive sources on which he focused. The detailed description of the effect that Bassi's performance had on the young Luigia Caravoglia, and even on certain highlights of his portrayal that stuck in her memory – and which must therefore have served to capture the spectator's attention – provides valuable insights into the relationship between acting principles and dramatic effects and aims, and between spectator, character, and actor, which we must take into account if we want to develop a technical system inspired by eighteenth-century practices.

What struck Caravoglia in Bassi's performance was his ability to capture the *uniqueness* of Don Giovanni's character. Nothing suggests that he adhered to any stereotype, or stylised, representation of, say, eighteenth-century noblemen, or at least, this was not what captured the attention and imagination of his young colleague. Moreover, nothing in Börner-Sandrini's account suggests that Bassi's portrayal of this role would be difficult for us to understand or appreciate today, just as the daughter was able to appreciate her mother's descriptions, or reenactments, in the late nineteenth century of a portrayal that had debuted one hundred years earlier. We find nothing of the exotic strangeness cultivated by Barnett, in other words. Bassi's Don Giovanni was not a type (notably, Börner-Sandrini points to his '*peculiar* and *almost cheerful* stateliness'), though it might be appropriate to describe his portrayal as *idealised*, since that stateliness seems to have been maintained consistently throughout the opera ('even in some of the tragic moments of the role'), patently at the expense of any hint of gloom, arrogance, or vulgarity. The subtle but crucial distinction between stylisation and idealisation has often been overlooked by HIP practitioners as well as by historians of late eighteenth-century theatre.[54]

54. On this distinction, see also Maria Gullstam's discussion of Rousseau's acting advice to Antoine Le Texier in the title role of *Pygmalion*, in chapter 7 of this volume, 'Rousseau's *Pygmalion* as Research on Stage', 173–174.

Most notably, the effect of Bassi's portrayal on the audience was one of seductiveness and, in the scene where he dies, compassion, rather than of moral rejection. Such theatrical effects connect directly to the conception of Mozart's opera as a 'problem drama' of the late Enlightenment, in which the audience is challenged to consider moral questions, such as the interaction between the characters and the fairness of the hero's punishment.

## The finesse as a historical acting principle

As Börner-Sandrini's anecdotes suggest, the acting principles followed by actors associated with the Enlightenment reforms, such as Bassi, cannot be reduced to a formulaic system as conveniently as the figurative language of gestures can. To understand these principles, it is not sufficient to reconstruct a set of rules for gesturing; we need to approach the history of acting from an entirely different perspective.

I would like to turn to the study of eighteenth-century acting, *Classical Acting: Stable Conventions in the Art of Acting, 1700–1900* from 1975 by Danish theatre historian Svend Christiansen. In contrast to Barnett, who treated the historical acting techniques as an abstract sign system beyond any historical context, Christiansen chose to focus on theatrical conventions that were 'caused by basic acting conditions'.[55] And whereas Barnett treated the actor's gestures as a means of representing 'the ideas expressed by the words', Christiansen states that the actor's means will always be 'directed towards the creation of effect'.[56] Furthermore, the extent and force of these effect-actions depend on the circumstances: 'the predominant tradition, the size of the theatrical space, the type and composition of the audience, the degree of complicity with the audience, and the distance between the stage and the spectators'.[57] Naturally, these circumstances are often dictated by the plays performed: is the actor standing on a bare stage surrounded by flat wings, or does he find himself in a realistic environment with furniture and props? Is he alone on stage, or is he

55. Svend Christiansen, *Klassisk skuespilkunst: Stabile konventioner i skuespilkunsten 1700–1900* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1975), 8–9.

56. Christiansen, *Klassisk skuespilkunst*, 11.

57. Christiansen, *Klassisk skuespilkunst*, 11.

part of an ensemble? Christiansen describes the difference between the classical (rhetorical) and the naturalistic actor as follows:

> When the actor is supposed to forget the presence of the audience, and when he is required above all to identify with a naturalistic environment, then the character will usually be revealed little by little, detail by detail. If the acting is directed towards the spectators, on the other hand, the main features of the role have to be outlined immediately.[58]

While the naturalistic actor is expected to refrain from improvisations, which would disturb the carefully created milieu and the developmental line of the character, the classical actor is required to capture and show the character the moment he enters the stage. The *idealising* actor of the late eighteenth century, however, stands somewhere between those two: his character does not develop in the course of the performance, he builds his portrayal on certain stable characteristics, and he may also improvise during the performance; however, his improvisations need to be contained and restricted by the general outline of the character, whereby he differs from the stylised types of, say, the *commedia dell'arte*.

Significantly, Christiansen did not see the classical acting conventions as simply obsolete, even if we rarely encounter them in the so-called 'serious' drama today. As he points out, they survive in various popular forms, such as circus, revue, and farce, suggesting that today's audience is perfectly capable of grasping and appreciating the virtues of the classical actor immediately. In some cases, these acting conventions are even reintroduced into the serious dramatic repertoire, which may astound us – because it breaks with the dominant naturalistic conventions – but may also be refreshing. For example, in Mussbach's *Macbeth*, an apron stage had been built into the auditorium, similar to the one in Shakespeare's Globe, which allowed Lady Macbeth to address the audience much more directly than is common in opera productions. It also enabled her to interact with the spectators in a playful manner during her aria. This revived theatre convention was immediately accessible to the modern spectator

58. Christiansen, *Klassisk skuespilkunst*, 22.

who might otherwise associate such direct audience contact with the Berlin Kabarett, and its cynical gallows humour, political satire, and boisterous dance tunes.

A central concept in Christiansen's book is the so-called 'finesse', or 'subtlety'. In German, the concept was often translated as *Feinheit*, as when Sonnenfels refers to Bernasconi's 'feinsten Ausdruck'. This word also recurs, with the same meaning, in assessments of Bassi's acting from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[59] We first meet this concept, which was of central importance to the acting ideals of the Enlightenment, in the 1747 treatise *Le Comédien* by playwright Pierre Rémond de Sainte-Albine. Finesses were physical actions, or vocal colourings, that the actor applied at various moments throughout the performance, and especially at emotional highpoints. While they had no direct equivalent in the dramatic text, they nevertheless showed that the actor had made a close study of the drama.[60] Sainte-Albine associated it with the 'truth' of the character, and it often seems to have encapsulated the character's relation to another character, in agreement with the emphasis on social drama, ensemble acting, and the spectator's empathy in late eighteenth-century theatre. Since the use of finesses had to be appropriate to the specific character in the specific situation, it could not be reduced to a conventional sign (unlike the 'movement of forcible removal' mentioned by Sonnenfels, which was *not* a finesse), and it was more difficult to turn it into a general technical rule. Consequently, Barnett ended up ignoring one of the most fundamental eighteenth-century acting principles.

Bernasconi's cry and embrace of Aspasia in act 2 of *Alceste*, and Bassi's acting in the opening scene of *Don Giovanni* are both examples of finesses. Furthermore, Bassi in *Don Giovanni* is an example of how a classical actor could draw the main outlines of his character from the very outset of the performance, instead of revealing the character little by little, as a naturalistic actor would do. With the swift transition from 'human affectedness and commiseration' to his regular 'easy-going, buoyant mood', Bassi captured Don Giovanni's peculiar mixture of intense presence and flighty carefreeness, which is

59. On dramatic idealisation and the concept of the finesse in late eighteenth-century acting, specifically with regard to Luigi Bassi, see Schneider, *The Original Portrayal*, 31–34.

60. Christiansen, *Klassisk skuespilkunst*, 102–103.

mercurial and capricious without being callous. While this transition is already suggested by the text and the music, with its transition from closed number to recitative, Bassi magnified the transition and turned it into a dramatic point. A similar finesse occurred in the supper scene where Bassi's Don Giovanni went from being 'extremely annoyed' at the encounter with the presumed assassin until finally expressing his 'despair' and 'horror' when realising that he is holding the hand of a walking statue: a change coinciding with Mozart's change of tempo from *andante* to *più mosso*.[61]

It is worth noting that Börner-Sandrini, who was writing about Bassi's portrayal during the period of theatrical naturalism, nowhere suggests that Bassi gave a depth to the character, or depicted a psychological development, of which there is no hint in the libretto. Bassi's Don Giovanni remained the same character from beginning to end, the variety and interest of his portrayal deriving from a series of carefully placed finesses, which took their cue from the text or the music, and by which means he revealed his relationship with the other characters. Apparently, the performer's idealising portrayal of the seducer served as a context that threw the finesses into relief.

## Mozart and Verdi our contemporaries

Truly ground-breaking productions of classics involve the rethinking of the works in their original historical context. The success of Mussbach's production of Verdi's *Macbeth* therefore involved more than a radically modern approach to the score; the contemporaneity of the performance depended on the revival of a specific vocal-dramatic practice that Verdi had fought to introduce but which had been erased from the performance tradition. As Valayre's performance showed, what must have unsettled operagoers in the middle of the nineteenth century had lost none of its ability to unsettle the audience at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Likewise, the theatrical finesses, including the use of vocal colour, was an essential means in the eighteenth century to engender

61. The tempo marking *piu mosso* might itself be considered a finesse, as it is not an absolute measurement like *andante* (a walking pace), but rather depends on the situation and the tempo it modifies. Hence, its application could have implications for the delineation of character. I would like to extend my thanks to the anonymous reviewer from Stockholm University Press for this observation.

profound audience experiences: Alceste's incisive cry and Don Giovanni's sudden change of mood when he takes the hand of the Commendatore are examples of how two outstanding performers, Antonia Bernasconi and Luigi Bassi, made use of this acting principle. Moreover, since the finesse is non-stereotypical by definition, it does not require today's audiences to have any prior knowledge of historical theatre conventions. As a historical acting principle, it is just as accessible for us today as the vocal colour required by Verdi. In fact, the 'awful, embarrassing sound' made by the Andromache actress in *The Trojan Women* was also a finesse, which took the form of a particularly expressive vocal colouration.

In contrast to the stylised and generalised portrayals characteristic of Barnett's approach to historical acting, the 'cheerful stateliness' peculiar to Bassi's Don Giovanni suggests an idealised (i.e. heightened yet individualised) portrayal. This conception of the character is also what Mozart's music communicates, which explains why Bassi's dramatic expression was perceived as being seamlessly integrated with the musical expression. This conception of the role also went to the heart of the opera's general emotional impact and thereby to its social significance. The finesses of Bassi's performance served the overall dramatic purpose of facilitating the musical seduction of the audience in a manner that was analogous to Don Giovanni's seduction of the women on stage.

As Kott stresses, the theatrical experience of contemporaneity is something that happens in the encounter between the actor, the spectator, and the text. Contemporaneity is asked of the theatre and of the audience alike, and so it cannot be deliberately conceived and staged: it requires sensitivity on both parts. It requires that we approach the old plays and operas with open minds, rejecting the postmodern conception of the works as fixed representations of social values and rejecting the timeworn performance traditions of the mainstream. It is paramount that we interpret and reinterpret the works, attentively and intuitively, and that we study a broader range of sources in order to understand the historical contexts that gave rise to them.

# 5. Haydn's *Arianna a Naxos* and the Search for an Affective Practice[1]

*Mark Tatlow*

How is it possible for performers of late eighteenth-century vocal repertoire to encourage a strong degree of affective identification in their audience? And how can performers do this without discarding historically informed performance practices, which preserve the intimate connection, implied in the compositions and in contemporary reports, between word, music, and performing body? As a performing musician and artistic researcher I am interested in finding ways of connecting historical and analytical insights with today's practices of artistic creation and performance, and ways of bringing the eighteenth-century world of embodied performance into creative dialogue with today's social and existential issues.[2]

This chapter provides an account of the short dramatic cantata *Arianna a Naxos*[3] by Joseph Haydn (1732–1809), from its conception and composition to its first performances by five of its original singers. My aim is to find out how this information might support performative flexibility, and how such flexibility might have been expressed at the time. I will consider the libretto, the music, and how they correspond with each other, and ask what kind of composition a cantata like *Arianna* was thought to be. I conclude with a new set of questions, that lead beyond the scope of this chapter. The questions suggest a direction for future research towards an affective practice for the performance of late eighteenth-century vocal music: a concern that lies at the heart of the Performing Premodernity research project.

3. *Arianna a Naxos*, HXXVIb:2. Julian Rushton, 'Viennese Amateur or London Professional? A Reconsideration of Haydn's Tragic Cantata *Arianna a Naxos*', in *Music in Eighteenth-Century Austria*, ed. David Wyn Jones (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 232–245. This is the only substantial study which places *Arianna* in the overall context of Haydn's output, presents the surviving evidence surrounding the autograph and first editions, and provides an analysis of the music. Rushton does not discuss in detail the performance of the cantata in relation to its early singers.

4. For the origin of these three expressions, see footnotes 25, 6, and 30 respectively.

5. For details of Haydn's employment at Eszterháza, and his relations with Porpora, see James Webster, 'Haydn, (Franz) Joseph', Section 3: 'Esterházy Court, 1761–90', and Section 2: 'Vienna: c1750–61' respectively, in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 25 January 2023).

6. Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* [London, 1776–1789], ed. Frank Mercer, 2 vols. (London, 1935, repr. 1957), quoted in Ian Woodfield, *Salomon and the Burneys: Private Patronage and a Public Career* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 62.

7. The autograph was sold in 1872 and cannot be traced. See Rushton, 'Viennese Amateur', 233n5.

8. The full title is *Arianna a Naxos Cantata a Voce Sola con accompagnamento del Clavicembalo o Forte-Piano.*

9. Bland had visited Haydn in Vienna in 1789. See Ian Woodfield, 'John Bland: London Retailer of the Music of Haydn and Mozart', *Music and Letters* 81 (2000), 210–244: 223. His edition was published in June 1791.

## 'My favourite *Arianna*', 'a little drama entire' that 'touched and dissolved'[4]

Although better known for his many symphonies and string quartets today, Haydn in fact composed eighteen or more operas, as well as Masses and other sacred vocal music. While in the employ of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy (1714–1790) he prepared on average around eighty-five opera performances a year for the Castle Theatre in Eszterháza during the period 1776–1790. He was an experienced vocal coach, a skill he developed while a pupil of, and accompanist for, one of the most famous singing teachers of the day, Nicola Porpora (1686–1768).[5]

In the words of Charles Burney (1726–1814), a cantata 'contains a little drama entire, having a beginning, a middle, and an end, in which the charms of poetry are united with those of Music, and the mind is amused while the ear is gratified'.[6] Haydn's *Arianna a Naxos* is one such. It concentrates on a single episode in the well-known mythical story of the Cretan princess Ariadne: the moment when she awakes blissfully on the shore of the island of Naxos, expecting to see her lover Theseus whom she had helped slay the Minotaur, but instead finding he has left her and sailed away on his next adventure. When I first encountered *Arianna*, I was immediately captivated by the power and intensity of its musical conception and the simplicity and immediacy of its text.

The autograph is lost, but evidence suggests that the cantata was written in Vienna in 1789.[7] It was printed by Haydn's Viennese publisher, Artaria, in August 1790.[8] A London edition was published the following year by John Bland, under Haydn's supervision, during his first trip to London.[9] *Arianna* was then published many more times throughout Europe during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[10]

Haydn provided the cantata with an accompaniment, for either harpsichord or fortepiano, although its character suggests that it was conceived for the sonorities of the piano. There is evidence that he planned to orchestrate the accompaniment, but of the extant orchestral versions, none is by Haydn.[11]

For the final concert of his second stay in London (1795) Haydn wrote another solo cantata, this time with orchestra, the *Scena di Berenice*, which again sets a text centring on the despair of a woman who was unlucky in love.[12] The two pieces have much in common, not least furious final movements in F minor.

It is regrettable that more is not known about the origins of the anonymous libretto, nor how Haydn came across it.[13] He was well acquainted with the legend of Ariadne, a fact borne out by his ownership of an edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in Latin and German.[14] The Italian libretto he used strips the mythical story of much of its detail, preserving just one character, one place, and one continuous episode. Those already familiar with the story could place it in its classical context. Haydn's exploration of emotion in the music, though, created a new context for the affective meaning of the story.

Another famous setting of Ariadne's lament is Claudio Monteverdi's 1608 *Lamento di Arianna*. Susanne G. Cusick claims that it demonstrates Monteverdi's sensitivity to the plight of women, but – ultimately – reveals his inability to escape from the patriarchal gaze.[15] Almost two hundred years later, at a time when Enlightenment values were leading inexorably towards the emancipation of women, *Arianna* provides a further example of a (male) composer's view of Ariadne. Haydn's life spans a period in which the roles of both women and musicians were undergoing fundamental change. Haydn's remarkable social journey took him from liveried servant to touring international superstar. He knew from personal experience the difference between composing what would please others (because he had to) and composing what would please others (because he wanted to). *Arianna* was written at a stage in his career when he was free from the exigencies of a commission, and able to set texts that interested him. This raises several questions: how and why was Haydn engaged by the text of *Arianna*? How far does he go to enable an audience to enter the mind and emotions of its sole protagonist, and empathise with her plight? And how might the cantata be performed today to elicit these effects?

10. Later editions in chronological order include: Pierre Jean Porro (Paris, 1792); Imbault (Paris, 1794); Breitkopf & Härtel (Leipzig, 1799), in a volume also containing Haydn, *XV Airs et Chansons*; August[e] Le Duc (Paris, 1807), with text in both Italian and French; R. Birchall (London, 1811), in Italian; an anonymously arranged orchestral version for strings, woodwind, and horns published by Simrock (Bonn, 1811), with text in both Italian and German; Ricordi (Milan, ca.1820); Veuve Launer (Paris, 1840); R. Mills (London, 1850); G. Flaxland (Paris, 1865); Jouve (Paris, n.d.); Hoffmeister & Kuhnel (Leipzig, n.d.); Breitkopf & Härtel (Leipzig, n.d.).

11. In an earlier letter to Bland dated 2 April 1790 (cited by Marianne Helms in the preface to the Henle *Urtext* edition of the cantata published in 1990) Haydn promised to orchestrate the cantata. For the letter in its entirety, see H. C. Robbins Landon (ed.), *Haydn schreibt Briefe* (Vienna: Doblinger, 1993), 30–31. Early orchestrations include that by Sigismund von Neukomm (1778–1858), who had been a student of both Joseph Haydn and his younger brother Michael. Neukomm's orchestral transcription, *Arianna a Naxos Cantata a Voce sola, con accompagnamento de Clavicembalo composta dal Sign: Giuseppe Haydn accomodata per l'orchestra dal suo discepulo Sigismundo Neukomm* (1808), was, according to Rudolph Angermüller, authorised by Haydn; see Rudolph Angermüller, 'Neukomm, Sigismund Ritter von', in *Grove Music Online* (accessed 25 January 2023). In '*Arianna travestita*: Haydns Kantate *Arianna a Naxos* in geistlichem Gewand', in *Haydn-Studien* 7 (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1998), 384–397: 397, Berthold Over

suggests that the version with a Latin text, performed at the Ospedale dei Mendicanti in Venice in 1792, was orchestrated by Simon Mayr (1763–1845). Over also mentions the existence of a string quartet version made by Giuseppe Sigismondo (1739–1826) in Naples in 1798. More recently a set of parts for strings has been discovered in the library of the Ospedale and published online: https://imslp.org /wiki/Arianna_a_Naxos%2C_Hob. XXVIb:2_(Haydn%2C_Joseph) (accessed 3 February 2022).

12.  Hob XXIVa:10. Unlike the stand-alone text for *Arianna*, the text for this aria is taken from act 3, scene 9 of Metastasio's popular libretto *Antigono* from 1744.

13.  Over, '*Arianna travestita*', 397, briefly discusses the possibility that it was written by Giuseppe Maria Foppa (1760–1845).

14.  See Pierpaolo Polzonetti, 'Haydn and the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid', in *Engaging Haydn: Culture, Context, and Criticism*, ed. Mary Hunter and Richard Will (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 211–239: 216, especially footnotes 12 and 19. Polzonetti develops the thesis that Haydn's practice of thematic transformation is closely related to Ovid's concept of metamorphosis. On pp. 226–227 he writes: 'In the *Metamorphoses* both the themes and the underlying large-scale form [of symphony no. 103 in E-flat major], with its strategic shifts of voice, are organised in such a way that a symphonist like Haydn and his listeners would have been able to walk through Ovid's narrative labyrinth secured to a sort of Ariadne's thread'. Haydn may also have known the German poem *Ariadne auf Naxos*, written by Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg (1737–1823) in 1765,

## Music or theatre?

Before discussing these questions I need to take up a foundational issue is a cantata, as described by Burney, something to listen to only, or is it also to be watched? Burney terms a cantata 'a little drama entire' in which 'the mind is amused while the ear is gratified'. For the eighteenth-century listener for whom music could only be performed live, there was no option but to see a performance. In his *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Dr Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) defines drama as 'A poem accommodated to action; a poem in which the action is not *related*, but *represented*; and in which therefore such rules are to be observed as make the representation probable'.[16] I suggest therefore that the visual aspect is implicit in Burney's description. This implication is also contained in the text describing the setting, published in the preface to both the anonymous libretto and Bland's London edition:[17]

| | |
|---|---|
| L' Azione si rappresenta in una spiaggia di mare circondata da scogli. Si vede la nave di Teseo che a vele spiegate s'allontana dall' Isola, ed Ariana che dorme. Ella indi và risveglandosi a poco a poco. | The action takes place on a seashore, surrounded by rocks. We see Theseus' ship in full sail moving away from the isle, and Ariadne, who is asleep. She then slowly wakes up. |

While it is impossible to retrieve moving images or sound recordings from the eighteenth century, surviving examples or reconstructions of Baroque theatre machinery demonstrate that rolling waves, ships in full sail, and floating clouds, enlivened by the action on stage, create impressions reminiscent of the early forerunners of today's motion pictures. Thomas Tolley assembles persuasive evidence that Haydn had developed an interest in the visual aspects of musical performance, which was no doubt based on his extensive experience of musical theatre while living at Eszterháza, and working in the Castle Theatre (1768–1790).[18] We know that he was greatly excited

to see an *Eidophusikon* in London in 1794.[19] Invented by Philip James de Loutherbourg in 1781 and adapted to the presentation of *pièces à machines*, the Eidophusikon was essentially a miniature theatre. In a contemporary depiction of the London Eidophusikon, a hammerklavier is clearly visible on one side.[20] The setup resembles the silent movies of a later generation, and suggests one reason why Haydn prefaced the cantata with the text mentioning a backdrop with action: 'We see Theseus' ship in full sail moving away from the isle'.

The material documentation surrounding eighteenth-century theatrical performances is considerable. In addition to theatres (especially those with preserved stage sets), and other performing spaces, it includes images of stage productions, scores, and libretti containing stage directions, a large number of other written sources (both prescriptive and descriptive) such as instruction books and reviews, letters, and diaries, as well as costumes and costume sketches. Even if contemporary reports distinguish between the immaterial (playing, singing, and acting), and the material (costumes, lighting, stage décor, and machinery), the eighteenth-century theatre audience would have experienced a multimedia performance in which there was no disconnection between these elements. They co-existed in a symbiotic relationship, creating a complex whole. Words and music in particular were bound in an indissoluble unity, constantly reactualised in the moment of performance through the acting of the singers. To learn how any individual element functioned, it has to be considered in relation to the others; only then does the whole 'work' affectively.

This is, however, only one way of thinking about the relationship between the visual and the aural, the material and the immaterial. In the abstract of a section on Historically Informed Performance (HIP) in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera* (2014) Mary Hunter argues the following:

> [T]he concept of a 'historically informed performance' is necessarily different for opera from what it is for instrumental music. Unlike most instrumental music, opera tells a more or less historically grounded story and represents a more or less historically specific time and place, where there are modern human beings in character

which was set as a chamber cantata by Johann Adolf Scheibe, and later adapted by Johann Christian Brandes for Georg Benda's melodrama *Ariadne auf Naxos, ein Duo Drama* (LorB 476), first performed on 27 January 1775 in Gotha (Schloss Friedenstein).

15. Susanne G. Cusick, '"There Was Not One Lady Who Failed to Shed a Tear": Arianna's Lament and the Construction of Modern Womanhood', *Early Music* 22, no. 1 (February 1994), 21–44.

16. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. (London: Knapton, Longman, Hitch, and Hawes; Millar, Dodsley, 1755). My italics.

17. The libretto (*ARIANA A NAXOS CANTATA A VOCE SOLA posta in musica Dal. Sig. Maestro Giuseppe Haydn*) in the library of the Florence Conservatorio Statale di Musica 'Luigi Cherubini' is reproduced in Over, 'Arianna travestita', 392.

18. See Thomas Tolley, *Painting the Cannon's Roar: Music, the Visual Arts and the Rise of an Attentive Public in the Age of Haydn* (Aldershot and Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2001).

19. Tolley, *Painting the Cannon's Roar*, 294. For a full description of the Eidophusikon see chapter XXI, 'De Loutherbourg's Eidophusikon', in Ephraim Hardcastle, *Wine and Walnuts; or, After Dinner Chit-Chat* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1823), 284–290.

20. For a reproduction, see Tolley, *Painting the Cannon's Roar*, Fig. 19.

on the stage, and the sympathies of the audience need to be actively engaged if the performance is to be successful. Because of these parameters, the question of historicity in opera performance can only usefully be examined by taking the visual (including gestural), sonic, and ideological domains as separate systems.[21]

This is based on the notion that it is possible to disconnect the 'visual (including gestural), sonic and ideological domains' and consider them as 'separate systems'. She continues:

> The combination of rigorously researched playing on historical instruments and strikingly modern and imaginative – and often highly physical – staging is, as of this writing, increasingly normal [...]. *The arguments for this juxtaposition of historicities are a rich mixture of commercial realism, historical justification, and 'timeless' performative contextualizing.*[22]

While agreeing that 'the sympathies of the audience need to be actively engaged', I would argue that Hunter's premise has more to do with the way in which early opera culture has developed over the last fifty years than with her understanding of historically informed early opera performance. She implies that it is not only possible (which it certainly is) but also desirable (which it may not be) to separate the visual, the sonic, and the ideological. As a performer, I would argue the contrary, that these three domains are intimately connected: specifically, that it is the fundamental interdependency of word and music that bridges them, and renders them inseparable. Divorcing the sonic from the visual and the ideological leads to the following negative consequences:

1. The interpretation of the music would no longer be intimately connected with the action; its practical relevance for the artists on stage may even be reduced to basic questions of tempo and dynamics.
2. The action on stage would no longer necessarily take account of the specificities of musical dramaturgy.

It could be argued that, since the words are sung, the resulting vocal line itself should primarily be considered as part of the music. In

21. Mary Hunter, 'Historically Informed Performance', in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed. Helen M. Greenwald (Oxford Handbooks Online), 606–626.

22. Hunter, 'Historically Informed Performance', 615. My italics.

Hunter's terms the ideological domain would then be located in the acting of the singers, in the staging, and in the scenography. The acting of the singers, however, cannot but influence the character of the music, in terms of both outward vocal declamation and inner psychological motivation, which together affect the choice of dynamic and dramatic nuance, musical tempo and timing, etc. This means that the elastic connection between word and music also links the word with the body, via action, gesture, and movement. Ultimate decisions about tempo, dynamic, and character have to be made in the very moment the singer acts and the instrumentalists play, in the presence of an audience.

Performing early opera will always involve the juxtaposition of historicities, such as accepting the fact that a story may originate from one period of history, be set to music in a second, and performed in a third. Reflecting on twenty seasons working at Drottningholm, I realise that I was disturbed, in certain productions, by something else: a complex disjunction of temporalities, and this is more difficult to negotiate. What happens if today a stage action or musical interpretation negatively influences the original entwinement of word and music? To avoid this, the *sonic* must include both word and music, the *visual (including the gestural)* both the staged action and the scenography, and the *ideological* all of the above, plus contextual insights gained from the time and circumstances of the original composition. Even when performing in an eighteenth-century theatre such as Drottningholm there is no reason, however, why a related contemporary issue should not influence one or more of these domains. In this case the integration of word and music by the performers would take account of both the original ideology and today's social and existential issues. Is this perhaps what Hunter means by a '"timeless" performative contextualizing'? If so, the juxtaposition of historicities should result in *social* (rather than 'commercial') realism, require historical *knowledge* (rather than 'justification'), and performative contextualising (without the descriptor 'timeless').

Might this be possible through the flexibility of historically informed performance practices, which would become a means

of enabling performances of early vocal music (both on stage and in concert) to be tuned to today as well as to the past? This is not primarily a question of whether performers of early vocal music have a developed sense of engagement with contemporary issues. Rather it is to ask how these can be brought to the fore in a 'liminal' rehearsal space, where performance preparation would involve an examination of both the words of the libretto in their original ideological context, and the use of historically informed performance practices (musical and theatrical) to emphasise and communicate them today. Might it be possible to develop a way of working with this flexible interdependency of word and music to create a performative praxis where the jarring juxtaposition of historicities, enriched by performative action, powerfully communicates with today's audiences?

I now turn to the story of *Arianna*, as told in the anonymous libretto, and the historical sources surrounding some of the early performances of the cantata.

## The story: Haydn's starting point

Ariadne is asleep on the shore. In the initial recitative (which is in the style of an *accompagnato*) she wakes up, dreamily believing that her lover Theseus is still by her side. Dawn has just broken. Noticing that Theseus is not there, Ariadne assumes that he has gone hunting. Her thoughts go back to her beautiful surroundings, but she is impatient for Theseus to return, and she calls for him. In an aria ('Dove sei, mio bel tesoro') Ariadne sings of her loneliness and of the strength of her love, declaring that she will die if Theseus does not come back. She prays to the gods to bring him back to her. At the end of the aria the music seems to lose its way before merging with the opening of the next recitative which mixes *accompagnato* and *semplice* styles. Ariadne realises that a lonely echo is the only response to her cries. She decides to go and look for Theseus, and, after climbing some rocks, sees him on the prow of a Greek ship far away at sea. Suddenly everything is clear: he has betrayed her and

will never return. She screams in despair that the gods are unjust if they don't punish him. She almost faints, and in the first part of the next aria ('Ah che morir vorrei') declares that she wants to die, asking why destiny is so cruel. In the second part of the aria ('Misera abbandonata') she erupts into a furious rage, and as the music increases in tempo she curses Theseus violently for his unfaithfulness. Blissful happiness turned to anger, outrage, and suicidal despair: nothing but death awaits her.

This short episode in the life of Ariadne has universal resonance. Ariadne and Theseus are Everywoman and Everyman disguised in the trappings of myth. Their breakup could easily take place today: Ariadne waking up in a luxury penthouse, looking out of the floor-to-ceiling window only to see Theseus leaving in his Porsche. Or perhaps the story is told against the backdrop of today's horrendous refugee situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is a story with gender stereotypes that could easily be altered.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Haydn's musical telling of the story of Ariadne was considered particularly powerful, even though it was located in classical Antiquity, told in eighteenth-century formal Italian, sung by a voice trained in European classical vocal techniques, and accompanied by a solo hammerklavier. Today it still seems to have the potential to move an audience deeply.

## Five early Ariadnes: Haydn's singers

### 1. Fräulein Peperl, the teenage amateur

*Arianna* is mentioned several times in Haydn's letters to Marianne von Genzinger (1754–1793), a Viennese amateur pianist, who became a close friend. Haydn had met her in 1789, and on 9 February 1790 he wrote to her from Eszterháza:[23]

> My good friend Fräulein Peperl will (I hope) be reminded of her teacher by singing the Cantata frequently; she should remember to have a distinct articulation and a correct vocal production, for it would be a crime if so beautiful a voice were to remain hidden in

23. Haydn was in the employ of the Esterházy family from 1761 until his death, and he lived for much of the time at one of their palaces, either Schloss Esterházy in Eisenstadt, or the newer palace Eszterháza in Fertőd (a name invented in the mid-twentieth century), situated in the countryside, ninety kilometres from Vienna.

her breast; so therefore I ask her to smile frequently, lest I be disappointed in her.[24]

The sixteen-year-old Fräulein Peperl, whose real name was Josepha (1774–after 1807), was Marianne's elder daughter, one of Haydn's pupils, and a gifted young singer. Haydn again mentioned her singing the cantata in a letter written on 14 March: 'That my favourite *Arianna* has been successful at Schottenhof is delightful news to me, but I recommend Fraulein Peperl to articulate the words clearly, especially "chi tanto amai"'.[25] The Schottenhof was the family residence of the eight von Genzingers: Marianne, her husband Peter Leopold (1737–1797, one of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy's physicians), and their six children. Haydn was a regular guest there. Despite its musical complexity, *Arianna* has a limited vocal range (just an octave and a fifth), which suits a young voice in training. One can imagine the many hours' work this cantata would have entailed, and the great sense of achievement Josepha would have felt at mastering it, almost as if it were a rite of passage into the world of more demanding opera arias. We cannot know why Haydn mentions the words 'Chi tanto amai' ('whom I loved so much'); perhaps because they are among the most frequently and expressively repeated words of the cantata's final movement, and for this reason needed to be carefully crafted, and maybe varied at each repetition.

Earlier in the letter of 9 February Haydn had written:

> Well! here I sit in my wilderness; forsaken, like some poor orphan, almost without human society; melancholy, dwelling on the memory of past glorious days. Yes; past, alas! And who can tell when these happy hours may return? those charming meetings? where the whole circle has but one heart and one soul – all those delightful musical evenings, which can only be remembered, and not described. Where are all those inspired moments? All gone – and gone for long.[26]

Could it be that Haydn, back at Eszterháza, unhappy in his marriage, felt abandoned, like Ariadne? He who enjoyed the society

24. Letter from Haydn to Marianne von Genzinger, 9 February 1790. English translation based on that given in J. Cuthbert Hadden's biography *Haydn* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1902), 97. For the original German, see Robbins Landon, *Haydn schreibt Briefe*, 26–27.

25. Letter from Haydn to Marianne von Genzinger, 14 March 1790. English translation based on that in Hadden, *Haydn*, 99. For the original German, see Robbins Landon, *Haydn schreibt Briefe*, 28–29.

26. See note 24 above.

of the von Genzinger household so much, whose correspondence with Marianne suggests that he found her company especially congenial?[27]

It is not known whether Haydn wrote *Arianna* specifically for Josepha von Genzinger. It has been suggested that he wrote it for Bianca Sacchetti, the Venetian contralto, for whom the range and tessitura would have been particularly suitable.[28] Perhaps he had no specific singer in mind, and was inspired to compose the cantata by the qualities of the story encapsulated in the anonymous libretto, and its potential to move an audience.

### 2. Gasparo Pacchierotti, the middle-aged castrato

In December 1790, Haydn travelled to London, taking with him the still un-orchestrated *Arianna*.[29] Extensive reports of public and semi-public performances reveal that the cantata was a great success. The first report was published in the *Morning Chronicle* of Wednesday 23 February 1791. It gives a full account of an event that had taken place five days earlier, on 18 February, an occasion that seems to have been designed as a kind of teaser to promote a forthcoming concert at the Pantheon:

> The Musical World is at this moment enraptured with a Composition which HAYDN has brought forth, and which has produced effects bordering on all that the Poets used to feign of the ancient lyre. Nothing is talked of – nothing sought after but HAYDN's Cantata – or as it is called in the Italian School – his Scena.
>
> This Scena was first brought out at the Ladies' Concert on Friday night, which, as we have said, was at Mrs BLAIR's, in Portland Place – It is written for the Harpsichord or Harp only without any other accompaniment – and it was performed by HAYDN himself, and sung by PACCHIEROTTI.
>
> It abounds with such variety of dramatic modulations – and is so exquisitely captivating in its larmoyant passages, that it touched and dissolved the audience. They speak of it with rapturous recollection, and HAYDN's Cantata will accordingly be the musical desideratum for the winter.[30]

27. Haydn's letters to Marianne contain a rich source of information about his life and activities from 1790 until her untimely death in January 1793 at the age of thirty-eight.

28. See section 3 'Bianca Sacchetti, the invisible Prioress' below.

29. See note 11 above.

30. 'Haydn's Cantata', *Morning Chronicle* (London), issue 6775, 23 February 1791. Mary Blair (1749–1827) was a society hostess; her non-conformist husband, Alexander, was a wealthy merchant from Birmingham.

This description is amplified a few days later, on 26 February, after the concert at the Pantheon:

> We have already made some mention of this very surprising novelty in Musical composition […]. The words are happily expressive. The accompaniment on the *Piano Forte*, without any other instrumental parts, is undescribably [*sic*] charming – and the modulation is so deep and scientific, so varied and agitating – that the company was thrown into ecstasies. – Every fibre was touched by the captivating energies of the passion, and PACCHIEROTTI never, in his most brilliant age, was more successful.[31]

Several of the words and phrases used by the *Morning Chronicle* deserve further consideration as their meanings differ from modern usage. Johnson's *Dictionary* gives the following definitions:

- *To feign*. The first definition is 'To invent', citing Ben Jonson's *Discoveries Made Upon Men and Matter and some Poems* (published posthumously in 1640). For clarity's sake I have included the sentence prior to the one cited by Dr Johnson:

  [A poem, as I have told you, is the work of the poet, the end and fruit of his labour and study. Poesy is his skill or craft of making; the very fiction itself, the reason or form of the work.] And these three voices differ, as the thing done, the doing, and the doer; the thing feigned, the feigning, and the feigner; so the poem, the poesy, and the poet.

- *Lyre*. 'A harp; a musical instrument to which poetry is, by poetical writers, supposed to be sung'.
- *Charming*. 'Pleasing in the highest degree'.
- *Modulation*. 'Sound modullated [*sic*]. Agreeable harmony'.
- *Scientific*. 'Producing demonstrative knowledge; producing certainty'.
- *Ecstasy*. The first definition is 'Any passion by which the thoughts are absorbed, and in which the mind is for a time lost'.

31. 'Haydn's Cantata', *Morning Chronicle* (London), issue 6778, 26 February 1791.

Likening the effects of *Arianna* to those engendered by the classical poets (when they feigned on their ancient lyres), even allowing for the evident hyperbole of the language, is to place the performance of the cantata by Pacchierotti and Haydn on the borders of myth. Moreover, to link Haydn's choice of harmonies with profound scientific knowledge which at the same time caused the company to lose their minds, is to suggest that the myth had come true. The passion of Pacchierotti's singing was undoubtedly the catalyst.

The Pantheon was a recently opened opera house, converted from the Pantheon Exhibition Hall on Oxford Street. It was one of the most fashionable locations in London, described by Richard, Earl of Mount Edgcumbe (1764–1839) as 'one of the prettiest, and by far the most genteel and comfortable theatre I ever saw, of a moderate size and excellent shape, and admirably adapted both for seeing and hearing'.[32] The stage was not large, although the 'glamorous but […] very small'[33] auditorium seated over 1200. There must have been considerable excitement that *Arianna a Naxos* was to be performed by two of Europe's greatest musical stars, Haydn at the hammerklavier, and his new colleague, the Italian mezzosoprano Gasparo Pacchierotti (1740–1821) (Fig. 1), one of the greatest of all the castrati. Both were experienced gentlemen performers in their fifties. I have not come across any evidence that the stage setting described in the Bland edition was ever created in the Pantheon, or anywhere else, but it would have been perfectly possible to do so. The description of the locus of the 'action' is nonetheless given form and character by Haydn's music, which conjures up its every detail.

Pacchierotti's singing style was documented by many contemporaries, including Mount Edgcumbe:

> Pacchierotti's voice was an extensive soprano, full and sweet in the highest degree; his powers of execution were great, but he had far too good taste and too good sense to make a display of them […], conscious that the chief delight of singing […] lay in touching

32. Richard, Earl of Mount Edgcumbe, *Musical Reminiscences, Containing an Account of the Italian Opera in England from 1773*, fourth edition (London: J. Andrews, 1834), 67. For a full discussion of the architecture and history of the Pantheon, see Curtis Price, Judith Milhous, and Robert D. Hume, 'A Plan of the Pantheon Opera House (1790–92)', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3, no. 3 (November 1991), 213–246.

33. Price, Milhous, and Hume, 'A Plan of the Pantheon Opera House', 244.

**Figure 1.** Unknown painter: Gasparo Pacchierotti. Oil on canvas, 1790s.
License: CC-PD.

expression and exquisite pathos. Yet he was so thorough a musician that […] he could sing […] all songs of the most opposite characters, not merely with the facility and correctness which a complete knowledge of music must give, but entering at once into the views of the composer, and giving them all the appropriate spirit and expression. Such was his genius in his embellishments and cadences, that their variety was inexhaustible. […] As an actor, with many disadvantages of person, for he was tall and awkward in his figure, and his features were plain, he was nevertheless forcible and impressive: for he felt warmly, had excellent judgment, and was an enthusiast in his profession. His recitative was inimitably fine, so that even those who did not understand the language could not fail to comprehend, from his countenance, voice, and action, every sentiment he expressed. […] I have often seen his auditors, even those the least musical, moved to tears while he was singing. […] I have more than once heard him sing a cantata of Haydn's, called Arianna a Naxos, composed for a single voice, with only a piano-forte accompaniment, and that was played by Haydn himself; it is needless to say the performance was perfect.[34]

Charles Burney sent a copy of the cantata to his daughter Susan (1755–1800), who had extensive experience of London musical life and shared her father's high estimation of Pacchierotti. She wrote in her diary on 23 March 1791, just a month after the Pantheon performance:

> My dear Father has sent me a beautiful Cantata of Haydn's, the subject is Ariadne betrayed & forsaken by Theseus – Norbury [Susan's son, aged six] was extremely desirous of understanding the words, & at last I told him & Fanny [his older sister, aged nine] the story, translating a part of the poetry – It affected my poor Boy most sensibly, tho' he made the most manly efforts to restrain his tears – 'Theseus was a cruel wretch!' he exclaimed – '*killing wild beasts when he was like a wild beast himself to poor Ariadne!*' – his emotion was so great, that I was obliged to think of twenty ridiculous stories to tell him before I let him go to bed, to drive the impression from his mind. Yesterday in the midst of the most folâtre gaiety it occur'd to him again – He asked me if *Mrs Billington c^d sing that song about poor Ariadne, of Haydn's?*[35]

It is noteworthy that (according to his mother, at least) even the six-year-old Norbury (1785–1814) was moved to tears, despite his

34. Mount Edgcumbe, *Musical Reminiscences*, 12–15.

35. Quoted in Woodfield, *Salomon and the Burneys*, 63. The original is in the New York Public Library, Berg Collection, Susanna E. B. Philipps, holograph diary for 1786–1792. See also Philip Olleson, *The Journals and Letters of Susan Burney: Music and Society in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 2016). Elizabeth Billington (1765–1818) was an acclaimed British opera singer.

'manly' effort to maintain his composure. Presumably Susan had played (and sung?) the cantata for her children.

Although well-known as historical data, the descriptions of Pacchierotti's *Arianna* performances in London are not normally used to shed light on historical performance practice, or as a means of rediscovering how the music of the late eighteenth century might once again 'touch and dissolve' an audience.[36] Here is a summary of the essential details of the first of these 1791 performances as reported in the *Morning Chronicle*:

1.  The feelings of a young girl were communicated by a voice emanating from the rather plain, tall figure of a middle-aged castrato.
2.  Audience members were touched in every fibre of their beings, and they dissolved in tears; some experienced ecstasy.
3.  There was weeping, perhaps even by those who had little musical experience or skill.
4.  Women (it was, after all, a Ladies' Concert) were enabled to identify deeply with Ariadne's plight, despite the obvious disparity between Pacchierotti's physique and that of the mythical Ariadne.
5.  The music was said to contain dramatic modulation: 'deep and scientific, […] varied and agitating'.

If we could travel back in time to that eighteenth-century performance, would we be touched and dissolved? What caused the vivid reaction in the audience? Could it be because of what is *not* written down on the page? If so, how did Pacchierotti achieve it?

Several aspects of his performance can be adduced from Mount Edgcumbe's description:

1.  *Voice quality*: he had a good voice: 'full and sweet'.
2.  *Understanding*: he performed with 'facility and correctness' but always entered into the 'views of the composer' with 'appropriate spirit and expression'. He 'had excellent judgement'.

36. In addition to those performances already mentioned, Pacchierotti and Haydn performed *Arianna* at a Nobility Concert arranged by Count Cholmondeley, and on 16 May at the Hanover Square Rooms at a benefit concert for Haydn. See Stephen Willier, 'The Illustrious *musico* Gasparo Pacchierotti: Final Triumphs and Retirement Years', *Studi musicali* 38 (2009), 409–443: 409.

3. *Technique*: he had great 'powers of execution' but did not vaunt them, owing to his 'good taste and […] good sense'. He had 'genius in his embellishments and cadences', whose 'variety was inexhaustible'.

4. *Expression*: he was mostly concerned to sing with 'touching expression and exquisite pathos' and could move people to tears. He 'felt warmly'.

5. *Acting skills*: he was a 'forceful and impressive' actor (despite not being handsome). He expressed Italian recitative not only in word, but also by means of his 'countenance, voice, and action' in such a way that everyone could understand, even those who could not understand Italian.

6. *Attitude*: He 'was an enthusiast'.

Even assuming some bias in Mount Edgcumbe's judgement, this is a catalogue of song-craft that tells us much about which aspects of performance were appreciated by a contemporary commentator. What seems to have impressed him above all is that Pacchierotti combined faithfulness to the text (both musical and literary) with an exquisite freedom of expression and embellishment.

Once Pacchierotti had fully retired from the life of an active performer in 1797, he entrusted a selection of his embellishments to the theorist and composer Antonio Calegari (1757–1828). The resulting 1809 manuscript was published in 1836 by Ricordi.[37] It would be instructive to try and apply some of the examples given in the treatise to *Arianna*. As Vernon Lee wrote in 1880:

> [I]n that day of artistic strength and riches, the genius spent in an extemporised vocal ornament which was never transmitted to paper, in the delivery of a few notes which lasted but a second; the genius squandered in the most evanescent performance, the memory of which died with those who had heard it – all this seemed no waste, and indeed it could well be afforded.[38]

Such an experiment might enable us to re-enter a world where performing according to 'the views of the composer' involved performing what was *not* on the page. This is not new to those familiar with the

37. *Modi generali del canto premessi alle Maniere parziale onde adornare o rifiorire le nude o semplici Melodie o Cantilene giusta il metodo di Gaspare [sic] Pacchiarotti [sic]* (Milan: Ricordi, 1836). Further editions were published in 1853 and 1878. For more details about Calegari and his links with Pacchierotti, see Stephen A. Willier, 'A Celebrated Eighteenth-Century Castrato: Gasparo Pacchierotti's Life and Career', *The Opera Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (1995), 96–102.

38. Vernon Lee, *Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* (London: Satchell and Co., 1880), 120, cited in Willier, 'A Celebrated Eighteenth-Century Castrato', 95.

39. See Alberto Zanatta, Fabio Zampieri, Giuliano Scattolin, and Maurizio Rippa Bonati, 'Occupational Markers and Pathology of the Castrato Singer Gaspare Pacchierotti (1740–1821), *Sci Rep* 6, 28463 (2016): https://doi.org/10.1038/srep28463 (accessed 3 February 2022).

40. Rushton, 'Viennese Amateur', 233–234. In note 8 he gives Hoboken's *Werkverzeichnis*, 299, and *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 2, (1799), col. 336, as the source of this information, citing J. L. Baldauf-Berdes, *Women Musicians of Venice: Musical Foundations, 1525–1855* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 123–124. I am grateful to Dr Ruth Tatlow for pointing out that the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* reference in both Rushton and Baldauf-Berdes should refer to vol. 2, no. 19, published on 5 February 1800 (not 1799), col. 366. The confusion stems from the fact that vol. 2 covers 1 October 1799 to 24 September 1800.

41. See Over, '*Arianna travestita*', 384–397.

42. See Caroline Giron-Panel, 'Entre Église et théâtre: La fugue de deux musiciennes vénitiennes en 1783', *Clio: Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 25 (2007), 93–113, and 'Gli ospedali: Luoghi e reti di socialità femminili': paper for the conference 'Donne a Venezia. Spazi di libertà e forme di potere (sec. XVI-XVIII), Venezia, 8.–19. Mai 2008': http://www.storiadivenezia.net/sito/donne/Giron-Panel_Ospedali.pdf (accessed 14 January 2023).

practices of HIP. What is unusual is Lee's emphasis on the affective result on members of the audience, at an ephemeral event that existed only in the memory, whose effects became almost mythical.

As far as his acting style is concerned, there is evidence that Pacchierotti used his arms extensively, presumably for gestural expression. Research on Pacchierotti's skeleton, published in 2016, states:

> Both scapulae had a marked infraglenoid tubercle due to a strong insertion of the long head of the triceps brachii muscle, which acts on the shoulder joint and is involved in retroversion and adduction of the arm. Probably Pacchierotti was using a lot his arms to act during his performances.[39]

Although Mount Edgcumbe's description contains few details about Pacchierotti's acting when performing in concert, the size of the Pantheon would suggest that he did act, at least to the extent of using gesture and facial expression.

### 3. Bianca Sacchetti, the invisible prioress

There is a report in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, mentioned by Rushton, stating that *Arianna* was written for the Venetian singer, flautist, harpist, and organist Bianca Sacchetti (1768–before 1818), the last prioress of the Ospedale dei Mendicanti in Venice, and a well-known alto soloist.[40] As Berthold Over discovered, Sacchetti sang a parodied Latin version of the cantata in 1792, entitled *Maria Quaerit Christum Filium* (Maria Searches for Christ Her Son).[41] Exactly how *Arianna* found its way to Venice is not clear, and while the early part of Sacchetti's life has been documented by Caroline Giron-Panel, I am not aware of any direct reports of her Haydn performance.[42] There are, however, many travellers' reports of her singing, which took place behind the standard grating, separating musicians from the listeners. Goethe visited the Mendicanti on 3 October 1786, and the contralto he heard was in all likelihood Bianca Sacchetti:

> An alto sung the part of King Saul, the chief personage in the poem. Of such a voice I had no notion whatever; some passages of the

music were excessively beautiful, and the words, which were Latin, most laughably Italianized in some places, were perfectly adapted for singing.[43]

### 4. Anna Ascher, an indifferent soloist

On 28 June 1798, Anna Ascher (1775–1803), the second soloist at the Kärntnerthortheater in Vienna, sang *Arianna* 'rather indifferently' at a morning concert at the Augarten. Her fortepianist was the composer Ignác Václav Rafael (Wenzel Raphael, 1762–1799). This is noteworthy, mainly because it shows that an 'indifferent' performance of the cantata was possible, i.e. the music needed a particular kind of performance to trigger a powerful effect on the listener.[44]

### 5. Emma Hamilton, the pregnant superstar

Lady Emma Hamilton (1765–1815) rehearsed and sang the cantata with Haydn at Eisenstadt in September 1800 while on her way back to London together with her husband Sir William (1730–1803), who had just left his post as British Ambassador in Naples, and with Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758–1805), the father of her as yet unborn child. Haydn learnt of her forthcoming visit earlier in the month, and heard that she was interested in singing *Arianna*. He sent a message to Artaria in Vienna to despatch a copy of the music to him as soon as possible.[45] Haydn had possibly met Emma in London in 1791, and would have certainly known about her through reports of her well-known 'Attitudes', a new kind of performance art she had developed with the help of Sir William. It consisted of a series of fluid dramatic poses imitating well-known classical sculptures and paintings. During her time in Naples Emma had trained seriously as a singer, receiving lessons from, among others, the famed castrato Giuseppe Millico (1737–1802). Fredrik Silverstolpe (1769–1851), a musician as well as an architect and diplomat, reports in a letter of 20 September:

> She is now forty-six and the fattest woman I've ever laid eyes on, but with the most beautiful head. A voice such as hers excelled all my expectations and I don't think I shall ever again hear anything

43. *Goethe's Travels in Italy*, tr. Alexander James William Morrison and Charles Nisbet (London: George Bell and Sons, 1885), 63.

44. The incident is quoted in H.C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: Chronicle and Works: The Years of* The Creation: *1796–1800* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 325.

45. See Robbins Landon, *Haydn*, 557.

46. Quoted in Robbins Landon, *Haydn*, 560.

47. The Hungarian name for Eisenstadt.

48. 'Nelson, Milord Hamiltonnal jött Kis-Martonba, ki is negyven esztendeig lakott Nápolyban Anglus Követ fővel. Már meg-haladta a' hetven esztendőt. Ott vette feleségül a' mostani Grófnéját, vagy is Miledijét, egy harmintz öt esztendős, magos, igen kellemetes képű 's maga alkalmaztatású Anglus Aszszonyságot. Több ritka tulajdonságai közzül való a' tiszta hangos szava, mellyel ama' híres Heyden-nek társaságában, olly szívre ható módon gyönyörködtette a' hallgatókat, hogy tsak nem el ragadtatásba hozta mindnyájokat. Sokaknak Dido, 's Calipso Isten-Aszszonyoknak; nem külömben Aeneásnak 's Telemáknak képei forgottak szemeik előtt. – Nagy nevet szerzett magának a' Miledi néma Játékaival, (Pántomimiájával) mellyet a' leg nagyobb tökélletesgre vitt, kivált a' magános, és másokkal együtt való állásokat, az úgy nevezett attitudes, és gruppokat. Nem lehet különös érzékenység nélkül nézni azokat. Sok illyen gyönyörködtető állásai, 's mozgásajai le vannak rajzolva, 's rézre metzzett képekben világ eleibe botsátva'. *Magyar Hírmondó*, no. 22 (12 September 1800), 343–344. I am very grateful to Dr Gergely Fazekas for his help in locating this and the following report, and for his translations from the Hungarian.

49. 'Miledi Hamilton meg-kérte *Haydn* Jós'ef Urat, Hertzeg Esterházy esméretes tökelleteségű Musika-Directorát, hogy némelly Anglus versekre tsinálna mu'sikát. Admirális Nelsonnak vitéz tettei, tárgya a' verseknek. Tegnap érkezett meg ide Heydn Úr Magyar Országból, a' kész – gyönyörű mu'sikájával, azoknak, a' kiket illett, igen nagy örömökre'. *Magyar Hírmondó*,

so heavenly. In her are combined voice as well as method, sensitivity and musical knowledge, so as to bewitch the listener.[46]

It should not be forgotten that Emma, who was actually thirty-five, and not forty-six, was probably five months pregnant when Silverstolpe met her, and this may have increased the impression of her size. But there is no reason to doubt his judgement of her singing. The well-known painting of Emma as Ariadne from 1790 by Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun suggests that she would have been well-versed in the legend (see Fig. 2).

While Emma's lifestyle was considered by many as scandalous, she nevertheless had many admirers. A report of her performance at Eisenstadt in the *Magyar Hírmondó* stated:

> Nelson came to Kismarton[47] with Milord Hamilton, who has been living in Naples for forty years as English ambassador. He is over seventy years old. He married his present countess, or milady, there, a thirty-five-year-old, tall, pretty-faced, independent English woman. One of her several rare qualities is her clear and loud voice, and she delighted the listeners in the company of that famous Heyden [*sic*] in such a heartwarming manner, that all of them were ecstatic. A lot of them saw whirling pictures of goddesses Dido and Calypso in front of their eyes, and of Aeneas and Telemachus too. The Milady won great renown for her silent acting (pantomime), which she took to the utmost perfection, above all the solo and ensemble moves, the so-called attitudes and groups. It is impossible to watch it without special feelings. Many of these moves of hers were drawn and passed on to the world in engravings.[48]

It is interesting that she is complimented for the clarity and strength of her voice (the word 'loud' here has no negative connotations) and for her acting. So it is not surprising that Haydn acceded to her demands to write another cantata for her:

> Milady Hamilton asked Mr. Joseph Haydn, Prince Esterházy's music director of well-known perfection, to make music for some English poems. The subject of the poems is the heroic deeds of Admiral Nelson. Mr. Heydn [*sic*] arrived here yesterday from Hungary with the finished, beautiful music, to the great delight of those who are concerned.[49]

**Figure 2.** Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun: Lady Hamilton as Ariadne. Oil on canvas, 1790. License: CC-PD.

## A catalogue of differences

This survey of five early Ariadnes shows that the cantata was sung by a wide range of voices and personalities. There was no single stereotypical singer. One can only imagine the differences in accompaniment style that Haydn might have used to support and encourage the three singers he worked with (Peperl, Pacchierotti, and Emma Hamilton), developing their highly individual vocal styles; and, had he been given the chance, how he might have transformed the 'indifferent' performance of Anna Ascher. In his article for *The Cambridge Haydn Encyclopedia* (2019), Erin Helyard paints a revealing picture of Haydn as a vocal coach, stressing both his interest in clear diction and musical 'correctness', but – once he was at the keyboard – a desire to foster healthy (Italianate) singing skills.[50] Helyard also cites an entry in Haydn's first London notebook in which he describes the emotional power of four thousand children singing in St. Paul's Cathedral. Using terms such as 'uneasy, heart-breaking', 'like a floating breath', and 'gained in life and strength, took on light and shadow', Haydn accesses a non-technical vocabulary that shows what moved him when he listened to the human voice.

This historical material is by no means exhaustive, but it strongly suggests that Haydn, his singers, and other contemporary performers would have been used to a high degree of performative flexibility. The different sizes and characters of performance venues, as well as the widely diverging vocal and acting styles of the singers, mean that similar differences would have been evident in the playing of the piano part. I now need to study the relationship between the piano and the voice, and the role of the piano in the narrative. Who or what, if anything, is it representing? And what does Haydn's instrumental music do or add to the words and the character of Ariadne?

no. 25 (23 September 1800), 372–373. The occasional cantata Haydn wrote for Emma is *Lines from the Battle of the Nile*, Hob.XXVIb.4. Although not one of his finest compositions, it nevertheless demonstrates what Haydn considered Emma Hamilton could achieve vocally.

50. See Erin Helyard, 'Vocal Coaching and Rehearsal', in *The Cambridge Haydn Encyclopedia*, ed. Carol Clark and Sarah Day-O'Connell (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 399–403.

## Haydn's music

Just as there are no clues as to how Haydn came across the anonymous libretto, there are no known reasons why he chose to lavish so much care and attention on the creation of the resulting cantata. *Arianna* is a compendium of compositional technique placed at the service of dramatic story-telling, and the music therefore lends itself to close analysis. Every small musical gesture can be clearly related to the text and to Ariadne's emotional responses.

The overall structure of *Arianna* reflects the form of the libretto: a single monological flow of words sung from Ariadne's point of view. We, the onlookers, hear her thoughts, both voiced and unvoiced, which are addressed (in recitative form) either to herself, the absent Theseus, or the gods. On three occasions the monologue becomes more self-reflective, self-conscious perhaps, and Ariadne expresses herself in words (set as arias) that Haydn uses to prise open her deepest feelings and reveal them to us more slowly. Recitative and aria, and their inbuilt possibilities for overlap, were the stock-in-trade of composers' vocal story-telling from Monteverdi onwards. Haydn uses them in conjunction with what the *Morning Chronicle* termed as 'dramatic action', and 'deep', 'scientific', 'varied', and with 'agitating modulations' (i.e. harmonies). It is these performative aspects of the composition that threw the company – at least when Haydn and Pacchierotti performed – into ecstasies, which 'feigned of the ancient lyre'. This can best be illustrated in a short analysis of *Arianna's* opening scene.

The cantata begins with a long and slow prelude which sets the scene for the drama to come. There is no hint of tragedy nor of what is to come. Theseus' escape from the labyrinth after killing the monster, and the nearly three-hundred-kilometre journey by sea from Knossos… all is forgotten. Nothing disturbs the peaceful atmosphere. Haydn achieves this through the creation of a musical landscape,

which mimics what might well be the experience of imagining the description that heads the music. Haydn's music slows down attentive listeners' responses. It is possible to concentrate on only one musical gesture at a time, with silence before the next. The music invites the listener to meditate on the beauty of the Naxian shore just as dawn is breaking. It is of course the pianist who initiates the meditation, and it is his or her inner eye that leads the listener. The pianist's right hand paints the foreground details, while the left brings a sense of stability, the ground on which Ariadne is sleeping. One can feel the gentle swell of the Aegean Sea, maybe sense some of the islands' rich bird life awakening to a new day. It is a paradise. Once this sense of concentration is established, through slow breathing and relaxation, the audience becomes aware of a single sail on the horizon. But then a voice is heard… Ariadne awakes, and calls for Theseus. Already familiar with the musical landscape the listener places her within it and understands that its peacefulness is also hers; that musical reminiscences of the prelude, now with words in the place of the earlier silences, reveal that she has been there all along, albeit lost to the world. At the moment Ariadne dreams that Theseus is beside her, the music darkens: 'Un lusinghiero sogno fallace m'ingannò' (A flattering dream deceived and misled me). This phrase might remind an English audience of John Fletcher's poem *Sleep* from 1606, which itself provides an apt commentary on this moment: 'Sleep, and with thy sweet deceiving / Lock me in delight awhile'. Ariadne falls back to sleep, but then notices the arrival of the dawn, which the audience first glimpse (aurally) in the music, and which is then described in words, drawing the attention of the mind's eye to the early golden rays of the sun. 'Where is Theseus? Perhaps he has gone hunting'. Ariadne imagines that she could satisfy his hunter instincts more gratefully than his prey. The music returns to the key of the deception (A-flat major) and Ariadne engages in more daydreaming, speaking of 'my faithfulness' and 'our love'. She tries to regain the peacefulness of the opening, but the music loses its anchoring and her desperate longing leads it to a pathetic full close in a related minor key.

So far the music has acted like the lens of a movie camera, enabling the listeners/onlookers to concentrate their attention on the landscape as if seen in a painting or on a postcard. Imperceptibly, however, the camera lens becomes the gaze of Ariadne, and we, the onlookers, see as she does, experience what she experiences, and feel what she feels. This is predicated on the notion that we allow the voice we hear to penetrate our bodies and lodge at the source of our perceptions. It is within this conceptual framework that the audiences at Mrs. Blair's and the Pantheon in 1791 would have 'seen' and heard Ariadne herself, rather than two middle-aged gentlemen performing *Arianna*. Or, as we might say today: that we all meet as one Ariadne in the liminal space of musical experience.

## Releasing the affective potential of eighteenth-century music drama today: *Arianna* in performance

What was *Arianna* about in 1789 and the early 1790s? Male unfaithfulness? Unfairness? Injustice? The failure of love? The messiness of human relationships? Men choosing war over peace? Which, if any, of these or other themes were unlocked by Pacchierotti's performances, allowing them to lodge in the hearts of the audience? Had any of the ladies at Mrs. Blair's soirée heard of, or read Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), whose influential *Vindication of the Rights of Men* had been published in London in 1790, to be followed up in 1792 by her even more influential *Vindication of the Rights of Women*? It is surely unlikely that Wollstonecraft's ideas would not have been discussed in these Ladies' circles; perhaps they even awakened emancipatory longings. I also wonder about the men present at the later concert in the Pantheon: did they feel any pity or compassion? And what about the audience at Eisenstadt?

Because of these questions, I am compelled to be sensitive to the world around me today in my research and performances. I want to find a way of reconnecting eighteenth-century music to a hurting humanity, by making it more emotionally accessible. Rather than relying on a narrow view of historically informed performance

practices, or discarding them and thereby losing the integrity of the original compositions, I prefer a third approach, one that relates to what my colleague Willmar Sauter terms aesthetic historicity: the creation of a-historical-work-of-art-in-performance-today, not despite, but because of, our temporal distance from its composition.[51]

My conclusion is that the wealth of material available to the student of *Arianna* indicates a hitherto overlooked dimension within the practices of historical performance: their suitability as means of 'tuning' performances to today. The evidence I have adduced for performative flexibility could lead to radically different results, ones that are deeply rooted in the burning issues of our own time.

## Epilogue

John Rice writes: 'Eighteenth-century musicians in general shared with the *philosophes* ideals of clarity, elegance, accessibility, and optimism'.[52] Haydn's cantata is certainly clear and elegant, and it is not inaccessible. But is it optimistic? The cantata's final cadence is unexpectedly in the major. Had it been in the minor, it might have signified that Ariadne leaps from the rocks to her death. Haydn's music suggests that at the very last moment she changes her mind, and decides to give life a second chance. A message we could well heed today!

51. See chapter 3 in this volume, 'Aesthetic Historicity'.

52. John A. Rice, 'Expression of Enlightenment Values in Viennese Instrumental Music of the 1780s' (conference paper, University of Alberta, 23–24 September 2011): https://sites .google.com/site/johnaricecv/enlighten ment (accessed 4 February 2022).

# PART B:
# Practical Questions

# 6. Materiality in Action: Costume and Light on the Eighteenth-Century Stage

*Petra Dotlačilová*

Together with sets and props, costume and light are among the main components that create the aesthetic effect of a performance. When it comes to historical research, though, they have traditionally been treated only as visual elements, while their materiality has been almost entirely forgotten. This is largely because of the iconographical nature of the evidence that is available for the study of these scenographic elements: paintings, engravings, sketches, drawings, preserved designs, and actual sets. These sources tend to invite an iconological analysis, which, although contributing to our understanding of the practice and general visual appearance of the performances, rarely contributes to our understanding of their materiality.

Within the Performing Premodernity project, we focused on the corporeal, material, temporal, and relational aspects of the historical performance, as connected to its practice, both then and now. The practice of HIP (Historically Informed Performance), both in the experimental setting of the workshops and in actual performances, offers the possibility of creating *historiographical sources* as well as *historiographical experiences*. Through these experiences, however, we are also made aware of the differences between then and now, requiring us to negotiate the perception of *the Own* (of our time) and of *the Other* (of the past). Our research is an open process; it never claims to create a definite model of historical theatre practices.[1]

The focus of this chapter is a two-day (19–20 September 2017) experimental workshop in which the research group examined

the material and visual aspects of historical performance. In their respective chapters, Meike Wagner and Willmar Sauter describe our investigations focusing on the positioning of the performers on stage.[2] This remained an important aspect of our experiments and observations, but in the workshop in September 2017 the investigations were expanded to include candlelight and costumes.

The workshop took place in the eighteenth-century Ulriksdal Palace Theatre (also known as Confidencen) sited in the outskirts of Stockholm. The Performing Premodernity research group was joined by cutter, tailor, and costume designer Anna Kjellsdotter, dancer Noah Hellwig, and singer Maria Sanner. Using our knowledge and training, we generated new historiographical sources, i.e., material objects and aesthetic experiences that might serve as sources for further historical research. These included costumes and lighting, dancing and singing, which were then performed in this historic space. Through our practice, we created experiences that made us reconsider our ideas and understanding of the historical artefacts and practices.

We focused specifically on:

1)  the effect and aesthetic experience created by the candlelight;
2)  the interaction between the lighting, the materials of the costumes, and the performance on stage; and
3)  the materiality of the costumes in relation to the performer's movements.

The knowledge, skills, and experience that our collaborators brought to the workshop were of crucial importance. Anna Kjellsdotter is a specialist of period costumes, who also worked as a cutter at the Royal Swedish Opera;[3] Noah Hellwig is a former member of the Nordic Baroque Dancers with long experience in this dance style;[4] Maria Sanner is an opera and concert singer (contralto). She has played leading roles in several early operas, including Handel's *Giulio Cesare*

2. See chapters 2 and 3 in this volume, 'On a Praxeology of Theatre Historiography' and 'Aesthetic Historicity'.

3. Kjellsdotter has created historically informed costumes for the following productions, among others: *Don Juan* (Drottningholm Palace Theatre, 2011), *The Magic Flute* (Ulriksdal Palace Theatre, 2011), *Beatrice and Benedict* (Läckö Summer Opera, 2015), *Così fan tutte* (Ulriksdal Palace Theatre, 2016), *Orfeo ed Euridice* (Ulriksdal Palace Theatre, 2017). See also Anna Kjellsdotter, 'The Royal Swedish Opera Costume Collection and Gustavian Dress', in *Dance Body Costume*, Prospektiven 2, ed. Petra Dotlačilová and Hanna Walsdorf (Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2019), 187–212.

4. He has collaborated with Karin Modigh (*Kärlek med förhinder* at Varberg Teater in 2013) and Marie-Geneviève Massé (*Don Juan* at the Drottningholm Palace Theatre in 2011 and *Renaud et Armide* at the Opéra Royal de Versailles and the Opéra-Comique in Paris in 2012).

*in Egitto*, Cavalli's *Il Giasone*, and Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Another participant was Kateřina Cichrová, the curator of the costume collection at the 1766 theatre built into the State Castle of Český Krumlov. She contributed her expertise on historical materials and fabrics used for theatre costumes.[5] The general manager of Confidencen, Fredrik Forslund, and stage technician Christer Nilsson also contributed their practical experience of lighting the space with candlelight and with working the machinery and sets.

## Lighting up the stage

The space itself was of course another invaluable contributor. We were privileged to work in Confidencen, constructed in 1753, which, in the words of its former director Kjerstin Dellert, was the 'oldest rococo theatre in Sweden'.[6] It was not used after the death of Gustav III in 1792, however, and in 1860 the stage and machinery were ripped out when it was converted into a hunting lodge. After the death of Charles XV in 1872, the space was used variously as a storehouse, a school, a telegraph station, and as a military facility until the 1980s when Kjerstin Dellert and the association Confidencen Rediviva (Friends of the Ulriksdal Palace Theatre) invested a great deal of energy and money to restore the theatre to its original state. The reconstruction of the eighteenth-century stage, machinery, and sets were based on sources from the period and from the surviving eighteenth-century theatres at Drottningholm Palace and Gripsholm Castle. The reconstruction was complete in 2003. While the space of the auditorium has not been altered since 1753, the staging equipment is reconstructed on the basis of available historical evidence. The overall visual and material appearance, the sets, the machinery below the stage, and the stage floor look and feel much like a theatre would have done in the eighteenth century, while its more recent reconstruction allows the managers to use real candlelight in their

5. See her articles 'The Wardrobe of the Baroque Theater', *Czech Theater* 7 (1994), 27–31, and 'The Wardrobe of the Baroque Theater', in *The Baroque Theater in the Chateau of Český Krumlov: Miscellany of Papers for a Special Seminar, 27.9.–30.9.1993*, ed. Věra Ptáčková (Prague and České Budějovice: Divadelní ústav Praha and Památkový ústav České Budějovice, 1993), 56–64.

6. Kjerstin Dellert and Inger Marie Opperud, *Confidencen: An Old Theatre Resurrected*, tr. Louise Hadorph (Solna: Confidencen Rediviva, 1999), 4; see also the official website of the theatre: http://www.confidencen.se (accessed 21 March 2023).

productions of eighteenth-century operas without endangering a historical heritage site. Certain spatial aspects, such as the size of the proscenium, the height and depth of the stage, and the placement of the orchestra – which has an impact on the acoustics of the theatre – may not have been accurately reconstructed. For this reason, it was ideal to focus on the visual and material aspects of performance in this workshop, and not on the acoustic-musical aspects, which had been the focus of our 2015 workshop at Drottningholm discussed in Wagner's and Sauter's chapters.

The positioning of the sets was based on the floor plan designed by Carl Fredric Adelcrantz in 1783. This shows six pairs of flat wings on the stage that is 6,8 metres wide and 9 metres deep. However, the placement of candles and chandeliers had to be recreated on the basis of general knowledge of the practice in the period, as no further visual sources from Confidencen have survived. Today, the six pairs of flat wings on the sides of the deep wooden stage can be illuminated by up to four pairs of candles each. The footlights consist of 17 pairs of candles (34 candles), and the illumination is completed with four chandeliers, each containing four candles (16 candles), hanging within the proscenium frame above the footlights. The chandeliers seem to be a modern solution as they are relatively small, and have screens on one side, which impedes the spread of the light into the auditorium. When we compare this to images of other European theatres from the period, including Drottningholm, we can see that normally the cartwheel chandeliers were a prominent feature, with four or five chandeliers each carrying up to ten candles (Fig. 1).[7] The positioning of these chandeliers would have contributed significantly to the brightness of the proscenium from above, in combination with light coming from the footlights, the orchestra pit, and the auditorium.

The lighting of Confidencen can be compared to that in historic theatres of a similar size, or smaller. Several inventories held in the French National Archives and in the archive of the Comédie-Française detail expenses for candles for rehearsals and performances

7. See as examples the etchings from the Stadsschouwburg in Amsterdam, by Simon Fokke, 1768 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam); the painting *Les Farçeurs français et italiens depuis soixante ans* from 1670 (Comédie-Française); the etching *Le Turc généreux: Ballet Pantomime executé à Vienne sur le théâtre près de la cour, le 26 Avril 1758*, by Bernardo Bellotto (Canaletto); the etching *La Fête* Les Plaisirs de l'Ile Enchantée *donnée par Louis XIV à Versailles*, by Israel Silvestre, 1664 (RMN – Château de Versailles).
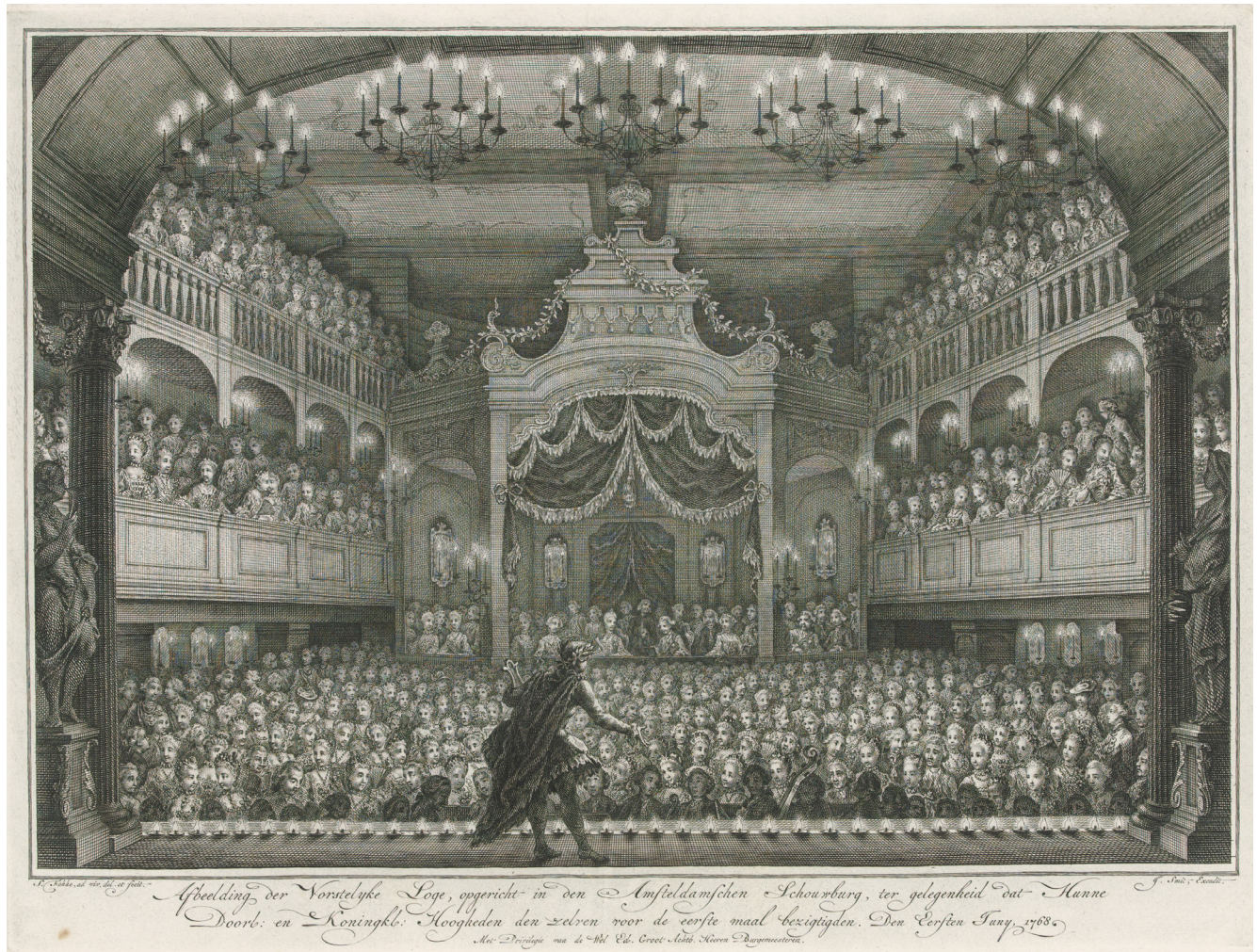
**Figure 1.** Simon Fokke: Stage of the Stadsschouwburg in Amsterdam. 1768. © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, object no. RP-P-OB-84.694. License: CC BY-NC.

at the Paris theatre and at the court where artists from the Comédie-Française, the Comédie-Italienne, and the Opéra appeared regularly. For instance, the meticulous records of a performance in October 1749 by the company of the Comédie-Italienne at the theatre of Fontainebleau Palace offer insights into the illumination of this space,

8. *État de la bougis blanche, bougis jaune, flambeau jaunes et terrines fournis pour les officiers de la fruiterie du Roy du quartier d'octobre 1749 pour les Comedies representées devant leurs Majestés aux Fontainebleau*; F-Pan O/1/2986.

9. Piganiol de la Force, *Description de Paris, de Versailles, de Marly, de Meudon, de S. Cloud, de Fontainebleau et de toutes les autres belles maisons et châteaux des environs de Paris* (Paris: Poirion, 1742), 125.

10. Vincent Droguet and Marc-Henri Jordan (eds.), *Théâtre de Cour: Les spectacles à Fontainebleau au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2005), 37–50.

11. The stage was illuminated by six chandeliers with eight *bobeches* (candle holders), therefore holding 48 white candles, ten *girandoles* with five *bobeches* each (holding 50 candles) and two other *girandoles* with three *bobeches* each (six candles). Behind the scenes they used five 'plates' (*plaques*) with two *bobeches* on each side, which perhaps means that they had five sets of wings and six 'wing-ladders' (*porteurs*), each holding five plates with two candles, altogether 60 candles. These carriers were probably portable lights that could be placed behind the wings according to the requirements of the play. The 'heaven' was equipped with three triangles and four plates with two candles each, i.e. with 24 candles in total, and the footlights consisted of 52 candles. The auditorium was illuminated with six *girandoles* with five *bobeches* each, i.e. 30 white candles in total.

which was located at the time in the Salle de la Belle cheminée.[8] Before its reconstruction of 1753–1754, this theatre was rather small – 'low and narrow' according to Piganiol de la Force[9] with only four pairs of wings, but with a large proscenium that was bordered with three boxes on each side.[10] The theatre itself was built in a room that was just 30x10 metres. While we do not know the exact placement of the candles, the impressive lists tell us that the proscenium was lit from below (52 candles in the footlights) as well as from above (48 candles in six chandeliers). Additional sources of lights were the *girandoles*, placed on stage, and the 80 candles on wing-ladders behind the scenes. When compared to this luminous weaponry, the auditorium must have appeared rather dark, with only 30 candles illuminating the entire space.[11] Unfortunately, the inventory does not mention the lighting in the orchestra pit, but we can estimate that the orchestra was made up of between ten and 25 players, each of whom would have had one or two candles to read his music by, and this would have added, from below, to the illumination of the stage.[12] The situation seems to have been very similar at the Comédie-Française where the stage, which was only five metres wide, had six pairs of wings.[13] In 1757, this theatre, the auditorium and proscenium, were lit by four chandeliers (48 candles), the footlights had 32 oil lamps, and the sides of the stage had 116 candles carried by wing-ladders and *girandoles*.[14]

These inventories confirm the research of Swedish theatre scholar Gösta Bergman.[15] His extensive historical studies show, among other things, the change in stage lighting that occurred in France at the middle of the eighteenth century. While French theatres formerly tended to be lit both on stage and in the auditorium, more and more people called for an intensification of the light on stage and a darkening of the rest of the space. Later in the century, the use of moveable sources of light from the sides, like *girandoles* or *porteurs*, or even early forms of reflectors (*reverbères*) from the top, were preferred to the chandeliers, which blocked the sightlines of the audience.[16] In addition, the eighteenth-century stage used various lighting

techniques for special effects: the candles could be placed behind transparent cloths, waxed paper, or glass; the use of open fire (torches) and explosives such as lycopodium powder was also common.[17] While the theatre makers were able to create intense light on the stage, they were also able to darken it by turning the *porteurs*, or by playing with shades and transparencies.

For our evening experiments at Confidencen, we had a very dark auditorium (lit only by two chandeliers in the front) and a limited amount of light from above the stage: 16 candles, while there were 37 candles in the footlights. On the other hand, only half of the candles in the wings were lit (48 candles), so the stage seemed equally lit in the front and in the back, with enhanced lighting from below when the performer approached the footlights. With only one exception, we did not use any additional light on the stage, nor did we use the torches. But although we used only one third of the lights proposed by the Fontainebleau inventory, the stage was quite well lit. The tone of the light was warm and yellowish when compared to electric light, and, as one participant remarked, it was very quiet compared to the background hum of electricity. Another inimitable effect of the candlelight was its flickering, which added movement to the scenic picture.[18] However we used modern wax candles, rather than experience the smoke and smell of tallow candles and oil lamps mentioned in historical sources. In the following, I will discuss what the lights did when in contact with the action on stage and the costumes.

## Sets and positioning on the stage

We chose excerpts from the second and third acts of C. W. Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762) for our work on stage. The first excerpt from the beginning of act 2 was a shortened version of the dance of the Furies in Hades followed by Orfeo's aria, in which he tames the Furies and gains access to Elysium. It was performed in a set with a

12. The iconography and the plans from the eighteenth century show that players were seated in the pit, on benches and facing each other, around a long orchestra desk, on which they had their music sheets and candles. For iconography and photographs of reconstructions of the orchestra seating at the Castle Theatre of Český Krumlov, see Petr Pavelec and Pavel Slavko (eds.), *Metodika pro přípravu a realizaci historicky poučených festivit v prostředí hradů a zámků* – I (Prague: Národní památkový ústav, 2015), 89–91: https://www.npu.cz/cs/e-shop/18472-metodika-pro-pripravu-a-realizaci-historicky-poucenych-festivit-v-prostredi-hradu-a-zamku-i (accessed 21 March 2023).

13. The small performance space at the Comédie-Française described in 1752 was caused by the benches for spectators placed on the stage, abolished in 1760. By comparison, the stage of the Académie Royale de musique (the Opéra) at the Palais Royal (refurbished in 1673) was 9,5 metres wide and 17 metres deep, and the Royal Opera at Versailles (built 1770) was 12 metres wide and 29 metres deep. See Jacques-François Blondel, *Architecture françoise ou Recueil des plans, élévations, coupes et profils des églises, maisons royales, palais, hôtels & édifices les plus considérables de Paris*, vol. 2 (Paris: Jombert, 1752), 33.

14. The lighting journal of the Comédie-Française is quoted in Gösta M. Bergman, *Lighting in the Theatre* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977), 170–172.

15. Bergman, *Lighting in the Theatre*, 144–219.

16. The *Lanterne à reverbères* was invented in 1744 by Dominic-François

Bourgeois de Châteaublanc. This was an oil lamp with several wicks and with a reflective device made of metal mirrors. Bergman, *Lighting in the Theatre*, 171, 183–184.

17. Bergman, *Lighting in the Theatre*, 175–183. Cf. the bills of purchase of *licopede* and *esprit de vin* for 'the fires' during the performance of *Orphée et Eurydice* at the Opéra in 1775; F-Pan-AJ/13/4-273. However, quite complex stage lighting techniques were used for poetic and dramaturgical purposes in Italy already in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; see Francesca Fantappiè, 'The Poetics and Dramaturgy of Light in the Italian Renaissance and Baroque Theatre', in *Staging and Stage Décor: Perspectives on European Theatre 1500–1950*, ed. Bárbara Mujica (Malaga and Wilmington DE: Vernon Press, 2023), 3–28.

18. The Drottningholm theatre uses specially designed electric candles that imitate the flickering of candlelight. The effect, though, is not quite the same.

19. For a detailed analysis of the dance of the Furies, see the practical experiments devised by dance historian and choreographer Edith Lalonger in Paris in 2017, not long after our workshop: Edith Lalonger, *Les exigences dramatiques requises pour les danseurs dans les ballets infernaux de Jean-Philippe Rameau: L'exemple du quatrième acte de* Zoroastre, Aide à la recherche et au patrimoine en danse 2017 (Paris: Centre national de la danse, 2019): https://www.cnd.fr/fr/file/file/1149/inline/Edith_Lalonger.pdf (accessed 1 December 2021).

green forest and rocks. The second excerpt was Orfeo's famous aria 'Che farò senza Euridice', set at the exit of the caverns of Hades using a replica of a backdrop from Drottningholm. The performance was accompanied by Mark Tatlow on the hammerklavier.

Noah Hellwig had prepared a vigorous dance solo for a Fury (normally, the scene would have involved several dancers) for the first of the two scenes. During Orfeo's aria he played, silently, the threatening chorus of infernal demons who gradually succumb to the charm of Orfeo's singing. While Maria Sanner as Orfeo entered from the middle wings, and moved slowly from downstage towards the middle of the stage during her aria, Noah Hellwig filled the entire stage with his dancing. During the scene, he would come closer to the singer, dancing around her, and as she was advancing towards the middle of the stage, he gradually yielded the front stage area to her before disappearing.[19]

Maria Sanner had performed several times in the same candlelit set during the summer of 2017, in the professional production of *Orfeo*, so she knew that a positioning around one metre from the footlights provided the best lighting conditions.[20] If she came just a few centimetres closer to the footlights, her face was barely visible, as it was overshadowed by the rest of her body. After she had whitened her face and hands for the second try-out of the scene, however, her visibility was enhanced. Magnus Tessing Schneider noted that, when standing in the front, the singer needed to perform slight movements with her head and arms in order to play with the reflective quality of the light; otherwise, the image became too static.

For the second scene, the backdrop with the exit from the cave divided the stage into halves, creating a more intimate atmosphere. The dead Euridice lay on a slab of rock placed on stage right, between the second pair of wings. It was a practicable podium towards which Orfeo directed his singing. Although it was quite far from the front stage, a powerful visual effect was created by the combination of light coming from the footlights, the chandeliers, and the sides, and by a

portable set of lights placed between the two canvases of the backdrop that illuminated the exit from the dark cave.

## Image-based and material-based approaches to costume recreation

When preparing the costumes for the workshop, we intended to compare the effect of different approaches to historical costume-making on the candlelit stage. In the wardrobe of Confidencen, we found some costumes from a 1971 production of *Orfeo ed Euridice* created by tailors from the Royal Opera for performances at Drottningholm. This production, directed by Bengt Peterson and with costumes designed by David Walker, belonged to what Willmar Sauter has called a period of 'transference', which was characterised by the historical positioning and gesturing of the singers ('not yet affected by Stanislavskian realism and psychological ideals') and by the 'stylistic mishmash' of the costumes, which were vaguely reminiscent of the eighteenth century.[21]

Some of Walker's costumes did in fact copy the visual appearance of costumes from the period, using breeches, heavily decorated tops, silver fringes, and *tonnelets* for some of the male performers.[22] However, the materials (which were heavy and synthetic), the cuts and sartorial techniques, the decoration, and the choice of colours were more reminiscent of the late twentieth century, the period in which they were created. The costume of the Fury (Fig. 2) was made of heavy, synthetic black velvet, with orange and golden applications on the shoulders, the belly, and the *tonnelet*. While the sharp edges of the shoulder piece and the grotesque visage on the belly area were more in line with eighteenth-century designs, they had been sewn directly onto the costume, which created a too neat and flat effect. Moreover, the dull black velvet did not reflect the candlelight but rather absorbed it, the arms almost disappearing while the golden and orange application on the front of the Fury's body (together with the red stocking which

20. The production, which was conducted and directed by Arnold Östman, choreographed by Bétina Marcolin, with costumes by Anna Kjellsdotter, premiered at Confidencen on 15 July 2017.

21. Willmar Sauter and David Wiles, *The Theatre of Drottningholm – Then and Now: Performance between the 18th and 21st Centuries* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2014), 157: https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:756254/FULLTEXT01.pdf (accessed 23 March 2023).

22. The *tonnelet* is a kind of stiff knee-length (or shorter) skirt worn by male performers as part of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *habit à l'antique* or *à la romaine*. Also called the *bas de saye*, the *tonnelet* would imitate the lower part of the Roman military uniform with its pleated skirts, and it would be covered with striped leather *lambrequins*.

**Figure 2.** Noah Hellwig (Fury) and Maria Sanner (Orfeo) in a costume *héroique* designed by David Walker (1971), rehearsing a scene from *Orfeo ed Euridice* by C. W. Gluck, at a workshop with Performing Premodernity. Ulriksdal Palace Theatre (Confidencen), 2017. Photo: Petra Dotlačilová ©. License: CC BY-NC.

23. It should be noted that, although velvet was not a material used for the costumes of Furies in the eighteenth century, it was used for other characters. However it was silk velvet, which is lighter and reflects light much better than its modern synthetic version, that was available at the time.

we added) became the focus of attention.[23] His presence became less visible and effective especially when he moved upstage and turned his back to us. With the exception of the trousers, the entire costume was sewn in one piece, with the long sleeves cut straight, which turned out to be rather limiting for the movements of the dancer.

In her role as Orfeo, Maria Sanner first wore an unidentified heroic costume *à la romaine*, with an imitation of Roman pteruges on the *tonnelet* (Fig. 2), its construction resembling that of the Fury. Apart from the white shirtsleeves, it was made of a dull black and orange fabric with golden fringes on the *tonnelet*.

The second costume (Fig. 3) was created for Orfeo in 1971. Bright yellow and orange were the dominant colours. It consisted of a short coat fastened diagonally across the chest, completed with a long, draped cape, but without a *tonnelet*. Both the striped sleeves and the cape were made of a synthetic, glittering orange fabric, while the yellow coat and breeches, the main parts of the costume, were made from non-reflective materials. As Willmar Sauter noted, it 'turned greyish in the candlelight'. Though the breeches and draping of the cape vaguely recalled eighteenth-century stage dress, the approach to costume-making is best described as 'image-based', that is, taking inspiration from the iconographic sources, but applying modern sartorial solutions and colour combinations.

However, when we compare the costume to a painting by Pehr Hilleström, which documents the production of Gluck's *Orfeo* at the Drottningholm theatre in 1773, it is clear that neither the choice of colours nor the combination of patterns on the fabrics were based on eighteenth-century sources.[24] In Hilleström's painting we can see Orfeo dressed in a long red satin coat, breeches, and shoes, the costume decorated with golden ornaments on the edges and golden *amadis* sleeves, all of which would have shone in the candlelight. Furthermore, Hilleström painted the same scene from the opera in 1786, which allows us to see the changes in costume design during the intervening years: Orfeo now wears a greyish knee-length tunic with short sleeves (in wool or linen), a darker sash and cape, and sandals, while his legs are bare.[25] This undecorated costume was made of non-reflective fabrics, representing the changes in aesthetic thinking that had been developing since the mid-eighteenth century, as well as highlighting the new concept of the Greek stage costume.[26]

24. Sauter and Wiles, *The Theatre of Drottningholm*, 96–98; Pehr Hilleström, *Spelbild ur Orfeus och Euridice*, 1773; S-Ssm DTM 1995–0056.

25. Pehr Hilleström, *Spelbild från Orphée och Euridice*, 1786; S-Ssm STM 2009-0320.

26. See chapter 8, 'Costume in the Age of Rousseau and the Case of *Pygmalion*'.

**Figure 3.** Maria Sanner in the costume of Orfeo by David Walker (1971), at the workshop with Performing Premodernity. Ulriksdal Palace Theatre (Confidencen), 2017. Photo: Petra Dotlačilová ©. License: CC BY-NC.

For the second part of our experiment, we decided to create one costume on the basis of a variety of historical evidence, applying what I call a 'material-based' approach to costume-making. We made a costume for the Fury based on my research on the appearance of these infernal characters.[27] The Fury was chosen because it is one of the most peculiar and enigmatic characters in the ballets and operas of the time, and its costume is typically theatrical, and the farthest removed from everyday eighteenth-century clothing. Apart from costume designs and other iconographic evidence, I had examined descriptions of the costumes of the Furies in French inventories and in other records of their performance on stage.

During the experiment, we focused on the affects that the Furies were supposed to evoke through their movement and the materiality of their costumes: horror, fear, and disgust. This has been recorded, for instance, by Joseph Uriot, librarian to the court of the duke of Württemberg in Stuttgart, who described a performance choreographed by Jean-Georges Noverre in 1763:

> [Armide] passes from desperation to fury; she invokes the Demons and Furies who, on her order, come running, armed with daggers and snakes. Vengeance and Rage are at her side. The *entrée* they dance makes us tremble with horror. Armide orders them to destroy the palace and the gardens. They are all armed with torches that they light from the torch of Vengeance, performing a ballet that presents the most frightening spectacle due to its fast and furious movements and to the spatial distribution of the characters.[28]

The Furies were monsters, typically armed with daggers, torches, and snakes, and their appearance and 'fast and furious' dance scared the audience who, it is said, even heard the snakes hissing.[29] Costume designs by Louis-René Boquet suggest they made a strong visual impact. Boquet designed the production in Stuttgart, and productions in France, at the Paris Opéra, and at the French royal court.

27. See my article 'Picturing Horror: Costume for Furies on the French Stage from 1650 to 1766', in *Terpsichore and Her Sisters: The Relationship between Dance and Other Arts*, conference proceedings of the Early Dance Circle, ed. Trevor Williams and Barbara Segal (Cambridge: Victoire Press, 2017), 53–68. Because of external limitations, we were only able to create one costume before the workshop.

28. 'Du dèsespoir, elle passe à la fureur; elle invoque les Démons & les Furies qui accourent à son ordre, armés de poignards & de serpents. La Vengeance & la Rage sont à ses côtés; l'entrée qu'ils dansent fait frémir d'horreur. Armide leur ordonne de détruire son Palais & ses Jardins. Tous s'arment de torches qu'ils allument au feu des flambeaux de la Vengeance; & forment un Corps de Ballet qui par ses mouvements précipités & furieux, comme par la distribution de ses figures offre le Spectacle le plus effrayant. Ils se dispersant de tous côtés, & dans une confusion artistement réglée, ils mettent le Feu au Palais'. Scene from the *ballet héroique Renauld et Armide*, in Joseph Uriot, *Description des fetes donnés pendant quatorze jours a l'occasion du jour de naissance de Son Altesse Serenissime Mr. Le Duc Regnant de Wurtemberg et Teck* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1763), 146–147. My translation.

29. Uriot, *Description*, 49–50.

30. Cf. the Fury from *Renauld et Armide*, in *Desseins des habits de costumes pour les ballets de Mr. Noverre*, 1766; P–Wu Inw.zb.d. 20818-20828.

31. *Inventaire Général des habits des Ballets du Roy fait au mois de Décembre 1754 et distribué par Chapitres suivants les différentes sortes de Charactéres*; F-Pan O/1/3234.

32. 'Un habit, corps, manches, tonnelet de satin feu, armure de satin noir; grand mascaron de relief brodé en glacé argent, le tout orné de mosaïque et milleret argent, une juppe sous le tonnelet de toille feu, armure de toile noire en pointe garnie de milleret argent'. *Inventaire Général des habits des Ballets du Roy*. The *armure* is a fabric decoration on the costume, usually in the form of broad stripes in contrasting colours on the borders of a mantle, a drapery on an *habit à la greque*; it is often embroidered or painted with ornaments or symbols, e.g. the *vêtement d'or avec armure pourpre brodé* worn by Egée in the opera *Thésée*, designed by Boquet: F-Po D216 VI-83. My translation.

33. 'Flame red' was very popular at the time, and it was even part of the Swedish national costume designed by Gustav III. Comparing textual descriptions of the national costume with preserved examples, we get a rather exact idea of this particular shade. See Eva Bergman, *Nationella dräkten: En studie kring Gustaf III:s dräktreform 1778* (Stockholm: Nordstedt & söner, 1938), 320–322; Lena Rangström, *Kläder för tid och evighet* (Helsingborg: Livrustkammaren, 1997), 165–178.

Some of Boquet's designs are quick pen sketches (Figs. 4 and 5), which are more expressive than detailed: though depicting the main attributes of the Furies, such as the torches and snakes, they focus more on the general effect that the costumes were supposed to create. Some of his other designs, such as those in the so-called Warsaw Manuscript (Figs. 6 and 7), are more detailed when it comes to the individual parts of the costume, the decorations, and the colours.[30] Here we are able to see the main elements of the Fury's costume, such as the *tonnelet*, the face depicted on the chest, the sagging breasts (which remind us that the Furies are infernal goddesses), the sharp edges of the fabric on the *tonnelet*, the shoulder pieces that resemble bat wings, and the snakes that are wound around the arms and waist and are held in the hands of the performer, as well as the general colour combination: flame red, green, black, and skin colour.

Entries in the general inventory of ballet costumes in Paris provide further details about the materiality of the costumes.[31] For example, the Fury Alecton in the *tragédie en musique Alceste*, which was performed by the dancer M. Besche in 1754, wore the following:

> A costume, bodice, sleeves, a *tonnelet* in flame red satin, an *armure* in black satin, a large mask embroidered in silver *glacé*, everything decorated with a mosaic and silver sequins, a skirt under the *tonnelet* in red canvas, an *armure* in pointed black canvas decorated with silver sequins.[32]

Here we can see that all the main parts of the costume (the bodice, the sleeves, and the *tonnelet*) were made of the same material, silk satin, and were of the same bright red colour (*feu*), with applications of black satin and silver sequins, and with an embroidered *mascaron*, the relief face, on the chest.[33] The document contains another very important piece of information: all the elements of the costume are listed separately, which suggests that they were also attached to the body of the dancer separately, rather than sewn together as in modern examples. The separation of the sleeves from the bodice was indeed standard practice in the everyday dress of earlier periods, particularly

**Figure 4.** Louis-René Bouquet: 'Zoroastre / 1769 / Furie M. Muguet'. Ink drawing. © Bibliothèque nationale de France, BMO D216 VII-91. License: CC BY-NC.

**Figure 5.** Louis-René Bouquet: 'Zoroastre / Xbre / 1769 / Mlles Duplan Devaney / Furie'. Ink drawing. © Bibliothèque nationale de France, BMO D216 VII-92. License: CC BY-NC.

in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it would not be surprising to see this technique reflected in the dance costumes of the eighteenth century.[34] This theory receives further support from the costume books in the archives of the Castle Theatre of Český Krumlov, which list all the costume parts individually, emphasising their separation.[35] Such a composition of the garment might have had

34. See Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Men's Clothes: 1600–1900* (London and Boston MA: Faber & Faber, 1964); Janet Arnold, *Patterns of Fashion 3: The Cut and Construction of Clothes for Men and Women c. 1560–1620* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

**Figure 6.** Louis-René Bouquet: Tisyphone from Noverre's ballet *Orphée et Euridice*, 1763–1766. Ink drawing and watercolour on paper. © Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie, Inw.zb.d. 20824/81. License: CC BY-NC.

**Figure 7.** Louis-René Bouquet: La Fureur from Noverre's ballet *Renauld et Armide*, 1763–1766. Ink drawing and watercolour on paper. © Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie, Inw.zb.d. 20825/60. License: CC BY-NC.

practical reasons, for instance the parts could be easily exchanged and combined. And more importantly, it would have consequences for the movements of the performer.

In summary, the dance costumes of the Furies were usually made of highly reflective materials such as silk satin, taffeta, or *glacé*; their effect was enhanced through the use of silver sequins, glittering glass,

and gilding.[36] Furthermore, there is an emphasis on the layering of the materials, probably in order to create a three-dimensional effect: the *armure*, the *mascaron*, the embroidered flames, the cut-outs of the fabric with sharp edges, and, most importantly, the green, gilded snakes of papier-mâché all of which expanded the costume and followed the movements of the dancer, perhaps in order to contribute to the spectral effect. As Kateřina Cichrová noted, the effect of plasticity might also have been enhanced through the combination of contrasting materials like smooth silk and coarse canvas, as seen in the costume collection at Český Krumlov. The main colours for the basic costume were often flame red, green, and black, with which visualisations of 'Perfidy' and Hell were also associated in early modern art.[37] Moreover, these colours always seem to have been combined, so that even if the base was black, it was complemented with red *armure*, breeches, green bat wings, and silver sequins.[38] The inventories and drawings also suggest that the character of the Fury, although originally a female goddess, could be performed by men as well as women. Hence the designs sometimes feature *tonnelets*, sometimes skirts, or even both, as in the earlier-mentioned costume of M. Besche.

In our workshop, we chose to work with flame red silk taffeta (close to the colour *feu*) for the main parts of the costume and with green reflective fabric for the other elements. The bodice and sleeves were made by Anna Kjellsdotter based on eighteenth-century patterns and surviving original garments (see note 34). Her work emphasised the curved line of the sleeves, which fitted the historically informed movements of the dancer's arms. The lacing of the bodice was placed at the back: this was unusual for male garments, which were usually fastened at the front, but we took inspiration from the eighteenth-century dance costume from Meleto Castle in Tuscany (now held in the Victoria and Albert Museum) and from *carrousel* costumes in the Royal Swedish Armoury. The bodice of these male costumes is fastened in the back with lacing, similar to women's stays and bodices (Fig. 8), which leave the entire front part of the bodice free for ornamental decoration, undisturbed by fastenings with buttons or hooks.

35. *Inventarium Uiber die beim Krummauer Schlosse sowohl zum Theater, als zum tanzsaale gehorig, befindlichen Garderobe und die darin vorgefundenen Masken, im Jahre 1807*, ed. Jiří Záloha (Siegen: Universität-Gesamthochschule, 1991).

36. In Český Krumlov, waxed linen was often used for stage costumes as well, which prolonged the life of the material while it also reflected the light better than regular linen. See Cichrová, 'The Wardrobe of the Baroque Theater' (1993).

37. According to Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia overo Descrittione dell'Imagini universali cavate dall'antichità et da altri luoghi, da Cesare Ripa Perugino: Opera non meno utile, che necessaria a Poeti, Pittori, & Scultori, per rappresentare le virtù, vitij, affetti, & passioni humane* (Rome: Heredi di Gio Gigliotti, 1593), 392. Green often had negative connotations in the eighteenth century; see Michel Pastoureau, *Le petit livre des couleurs*, with Dominique Simonnet (Paris: Du Panama, 2005).

38. Cf. another costume for a Fury in *Alceste*: 'M. Laval. Dans Alceste. Furie. Un corps, manches et tonnelet de satin noir, armures de satin feu, grand mascaron sur la poitrine et des monstres dans les basques; le tout brodé argent, et très garni de pailletes, une coeffure surmontée d'un mascaron, les ailes forme de viperes, une culotte de taffetas feu'. *Inventaire Général des habits des Ballets du Roy*; F-Pan O-1-3234.

**Figure 8.** Anonymous: 'En vildes klädning' ('Costume of a savage') –
back (1778). White, cherry, and printed satin, linen, taffeta cut-outs
in the shape of leaves. Livrustkammaren / Statens historiska museer,
14868_LRK. Photo: Petra Dotlačilová ©. License: CC BY-NC.

At the same time, the lacing makes the costume more flexible, allowing it to adapt to the body of the performer while keeping the body straight. This type of construction – lacing in the back, curved and separate sleeves attached to the bodice with a set of ribbons, and a separate *tonnelet* – seems particularly apt for performers who need great freedom of movement. The costume was completed with upper sleeves in green reflective fabric, which covered the lacing on the shoulders, cut in the sharp shape of bat wings, as seen on Boquet's designs, and with drapery made of the same fabric. The *tonnelet*, provisionally attached to the bodice with a couple of stitches, was covered by green drapery and cut with sharp edges. In accordance with some sources, we did not add a skirt. Additionally, we created bags of red taffeta that represented the bare breasts of the Fury, a *mascaron* for its belly (although made of rubber rather than embroidered), and a couple of green snakes made of coloured and gilded papier-mâché and rope. These snakes were attached to the costume so that they encircled the dancer's arm, neck, and waist. Due to lack of time, we used the dull black velvet breeches from the modern costume used in the previous experiments, which also emphasised the differences in the way the reflective and the dull materials responded to the candlelight. In addition, the body of the dancer was equipped with a mask, a headdress with black and red feathers, and red silk stockings (Figs. 9a, 9b, and 10).[39]

The final presentation of the costume took place at the 2018 conference of Performing Premodernity, 'Aesthetics in Late Eighteenth-Century Theatre: Living, Performing, Experiencing the Enlightenment'. For this we added breeches in red taffeta and red shoes, so that the lower part of the dancer's body was kept in one colour, as some sources suggest.

Despite the quick and rather provisional assemblage of the costume, which by no means constituted a final product, the 2017 workshop, in which we strove to make and use a costume under conditions close to those of the past, gave us several important insights into the aesthetic

39. We focused on making the costume during these experiments, and not on the mask, which was taken from the accessories stock of Confidencen. However, the mask was an important part of the Fury's costume in the eighteenth century, which would require a research project and experiments in its own right. This topic was partly explored in the Lalonger project; see Lalonger, *Les exigences dramatiques*, 16–19.

**Figures 9a and 9b.** Anna Kjellsdotter: Costume of a Fury, 2017. Photo: Petra Dotlačilová ©. License: CC BY-NC.

**Figure 10.** Noah Hellwig (Fury) in the costume designed by Anna Kjellsdotter on the left, Maria Sanner (Orfeo) on the right. Photo: Petra Dotlačilová ©. License: CC BY-NC.

effect of eighteenth-century costumes of this type. Since we worked with a candlelit stage equipped with copies of eighteenth-century sets, we were able to explore issues of visibility and theatrical effectiveness.

Firstly, the reflective quality and colour of the silk taffeta, the cut-outs, and, especially, the sequins on the costume all contributed to its animation and to the striking visuality of the performance. The dancer was equally visible and compelling downstage and upstage: though the front of the stage was brighter due to the footlights, he was not disadvantaged when moving upstage. In fact, the sequins reflecting the candlelight made him shine even more upstage because he remained in continuous movement when there. At the same time, the soft, flickering light, which highlighted the sequins and the red silk, obscured the artificiality of the *mascaron* and the snakes, which contributed greatly to the theatrical effect although not looking particularly frightening in closeup or in normal electrical light. When he danced, these three-dimensional elements of fabric, sequins, rubber, papier-mâché, and rope seemed to come alive and act together with the dancer, even to multiply the actual number of infernal creatures that threaten Orfeo.

Moreover, the structure and cut of the costume, which was rather light (being made of silk taffeta) and only loosely attached, enabled the dancer to move freely, which affected his performance. Noah Hellwig described the costume as 'playful', allowing him to move his arms freely in all directions and to 'isolate the movements', that is, to move other parts of his body, such as the torso and hips, separately. He also commented on the comfortable cut of the breeches, which allowed him to raise his legs and move around without any restrictions. This enabled him to experiment with gestures appropriate to an eighteenth-century Fury, including high positions for the arms and legs, exaggerated, 'non-noble' postures, and acrobatic elements.

Our costume was also used in an experimental research project, conducted by Edith Lalonger in Paris and presented at the Centre

**Figure 11.** Romain Arrenghini (Fury) in the costume designed by Anna Kjellsdotter, with a mask by Marina Donadoni. Video still: Petra Dotlačilová ©. License: CC BY-NC.

national de la danse on 17 January 2019 (Fig. 11). Lalonger's research was focused on corporeal expressivity in the dances of Furies and Demons in Jean-Philippe Rameau's operas. Her choreography included high jumps and arm gestures, pirouettes and lifts. While these movements were even more physically demanding and extensive than those employed in our workshop at Confidencen, the cut of the costume allowed the dancer to perform them without any restrictions. Furthermore, Lalonger added an expressive leather mask, which contributed to the terrifying effect.⁴⁰

40. The masks were made by professional mask maker Marine Donadoni. See Lalonger, *Les exigences dramatiques*.

## Conclusion

Even with limited time and resources, the workshop provided important insights into historical theatre practices through the creation of new historiographical sources. Our experiments enabled us to generate new knowledge about performances of the past, from the point of view of both spectators and performers.

We experienced the intensity of candlelight on the eighteenth-century stage, and the way it influenced the visual appearance of the performers. Though they had to be particularly aware of their position in relation to the footlights, the lighting conditions were otherwise sufficient everywhere else on the stage. However, it is necessary to differentiate between the kinds of visibility that are required. It is important for the gestures and facial expressions of the main singers and actors to be seen, for which they need the enhanced lighting of the proscenium area, a position they would rarely have moved away from in the eighteenth century. It is similarly important for the dancers, who communicate with their entire body assisted by their costumes and masks, to be seen as they venture into the whole space of the stage without endangering the clarity of expression.

Furthermore, the construction of the costume has important effects on the movement of the performers. By dressing our performers in a variety of costumes, we were able to observe the different visual effects as well as their relation to the body of the performer. When creating the costume of the Fury, we sometimes felt that the colours, sequins, masks, and snakes made it more ridiculous than scary, possibly due to the different aesthetic perceptions and associations then and now. Some mentioned that the combination of red and green reminded them more of Christmas than of Hell. However, when the dancer began to move on the eighteenth-century stage, the costume also began to perform its part. The strong colours and sharp cuts matched the agitated movements and music of the Fury's dance. While the frightening effect of the

Furies on the eighteenth-century stage is suggested by the designs and occasionally by accounts of performances, it was only through practical experimentation that we could understand how the costume contributed to the overall effect. We saw how the costume enabled the performer to create the exaggerated movements that impressed the spectators with their 'strangeness' (when compared to the familiar and disciplined character of *la danse noble*), and how its visuality and materiality directly affected the spectators. The costume not only signalled which character had entered the stage; it also embodied and co-created everything that the character communicated theatrically.

Finally, we got a physical sense of the risks associated with eighteenth-century theatre. The presence of so much open fire added to both the excitement and the temperature – and this was even without torches, explosives, or flying machines equipped with candles. Presumably, the physical experience of the smoke and smell from these would have contributed to the aesthetic effect of the historical theatre performance. The sources and performances we created in our workshops enriched our understanding of eighteenth-century theatre and made us aware of many alternative options that need further consideration and exploration.

# 7. Rousseau's *Pygmalion* as Research on Stage: From Theory to Practice and Back Again

*Maria Gullstam*

In the Performing Premodernity project we proceeded by combining academic and artistic research, by letting practice and theory communicate while allowing for exchanges of different forms of knowledge. One of our subprojects that involved all our members was the research-based production of *Pygmalion* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). We performed it first at the eighteenth-century theatre of the State Castle of Český Krumlov in 2015, then at the House of Nobility (Riddarhuset) in Stockholm in 2015 and 2016, then at the Utrecht Early Music Festival in 2018, and finally at the Ulriksdal Palace Theatre (Confidencen) in 2019. My primary research area was Rousseau's performance aesthetics and so I acted as the producer and dramaturge of the production. Mark Tatlow was the musical director; Petra Dotlačilová was in charge of the costumes;[1] Magnus Tessing Schneider was the co-dramaturge; while Willmar Sauter and Meike Wagner functioned as expert spectators. The project also involved three associate members of Performing Premodernity: the actors and artistic researchers João Luís Paixão (Pygmalion) and Laila Cathleen Neuman (Galathée, the statue), and the acting coach Jed Wentz.[2]

We were attracted to *Pygmalion* partly because its genre, the *scène lyrique*, seems foreign to a modern audience. This genre was also new to the eighteenth-century spectators: Rousseau used *Pygmalion* to invent this new form of music theatre. Today *Pygmalion* is often referred to as a melodrama or monodrama.[3] The dialogue in *Pygmalion* is spoken prose. This is interwoven with short instrumental interludes, or *ritournelles*, that accompany the stage actions, all of which are described in detail by Rousseau. This mixture of declamation,

1. See chapter 8 in this volume, 'Costume in the Age of Rousseau and the Case of *Pygmalion*'.

2. For videos of the performances at Český Krumlov and at Riddarhuset in Stockholm in 2015 and in the Utrecht Early Music Festival in 2018, see the Performing Premodernity homepage: https://performingpremodernity.com/anthology/.

3. On the genre and its development, see Jacqueline Waeber, *En musique dans le texte: Le mélodrame de Rousseau à Schoenberg* (Paris: Van Dieren, 2005). The different names for the genre are discussed in the introduction, pp. 9–16. See also Kirsten Gram Holmström, *Monodrama, Attitudes,* Tableaux Vivants: *Studies on Some Trends of Theatrical Fashion 1770–1815* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967).

4. Parts of this summary have been published, in different forms, in chapters 4 and 5 of my dissertation, *Rousseau's Idea of Theatre: From Criticism to Practice* (Stockholm University, 2020), especially pp. 169–172, 180–184, 189–193 (https://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1430104/FULLTEXT01.pdf (accessed 23 March 2023)), and in my chapter '*Pygmalion's* Power Struggles: Rousseau, Rameau and Galathée', in *Rousseau on Stage: Playwright, Musician, Spectator*, ed. Maria Gullstam and Michael O'Dea (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2017), 119–137.

5. Two of the twenty-six *ritournelles* are by Rousseau. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Horace Coignet, *Pygmalion: Scène lyrique*, ed. Jacqueline Waeber (Geneva: Éditions Université-Conservatoire de Musique, 1997).

6. The following subsection largely draws on Gullstam, *Rousseau's Idea of Theatre*, 180–184.

7. 'In this century, when every effort is made to materialize all the operations of the soul and to deprive human feelings of all morality, I am mistaken if the new philosophy does not become as fatal to good taste as to virtue'. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages, in Which Melody and Musical Imitation Are Treated*, tr. John T. Scott, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, 14 vols. (Hanover NH and London: University Press of New England, 1990–2012), 7: 324–325.

pantomime, and mimetic music can appear exaggerated and almost comical to modern eyes and ears, especially as the orchestra often emphasises the movements of the characters when they display extreme emotions, such as violent rage, or deep sorrow. We wondered if it would be possible to perform *Pygmalion* in a way that remains true to Rousseau's vision and at the same time communicates well to twenty-first-century spectators.

The staging of our production was informed by 1) our study of Rousseau's theories about music and theatre, 2) our close reading of the work itself, and 3) the performance skills of the artists. Rather than finding the 'correct' way of performing *Pygmalion*, we wanted to try out various solutions to the problems it poses. In the following, I will provide an overview of the written sources on which we drew and examine how our work influenced my understanding of the piece.[4] My emotional response to *Pygmalion* grew stronger over the years we performed it. By studying video recordings of our different performances, I will try to discover why my emotional response developed, and how the collaboration with the artists and refinements in the production helped create that effect.

## A genre for the most violent passions

Rousseau's *Pygmalion* was first performed in 1770 in the semi-private setting of the Hôtel de Ville in Lyon. Rousseau had written the text in 1762, but in 1770 he persuaded Horace Coignet (1736–1821), a local musician, to set it to music, with a few shorter sections composed by himself.[5] Rousseau had developed the theories about the relationship between language, music, and gesture that underlie the creation of *Pygmalion* over a decade earlier, in his *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, written in the mid-1750s.[6] In this conjectural history of the origins of humankind, he stated that the first words or sounds uttered by humans were expressions of the passions of the soul, and that this soul, the original source of their expressiveness,[7] had not yet

been corrupted by the human will to structure thinking and communication according to rules, systems, and formulas. He proposed that at this point in pre-history there was still no difference between language and music: 'the first discourses were the first songs'.[8] Language and music were later separated and forced into different categories, however, due to our striving for organisation and structure, and this gradually caused language and music to lose their close relation to the human soul. This argument is repeated in various guises throughout his essay. He states about the development of language that: 'Writing, which seems as if it should fix language, is precisely what alters it; it changes not its words but its genius; it substitutes precision for expressiveness'.[9] And about the development of musical expression, he writes that 'by thus shackling the melody, [harmony] deprives it of energy and expression, it eliminates passionate accent in order to substitute the harmonic interval for it'.[10] About body language he writes: 'Ever since we learned to gesticulate we have forgotten the art of pantomime'.[11] These three statements follow the same argumentative structure: when linguistic, musical, and gestural expressiveness developed into written language, harmonic theory, and the language of gestures respectively, they began to be dominated by their own description.[12] Thus, the emergence of the systems that we use to describe and understand our own modes of self-expression has smothered their expressiveness. In his writings on aesthetics, Rousseau points to French opera, music, and theatre as examples of this development.[13]

These ideas were important for our project because in *Pygmalion* Rousseau deliberately detached music, language, and pantomime from one another, and then combined them in new ways.[14] Pygmalion's intense emotions are conveyed by his pantomimic actions and their accompanying *ritournelles*, which anticipate or follow his speeches.[15] As Jacqueline Waeber explains:

> The suspension points that usually begin and end the declamation of the actor, the unresolved cadential gestures that end the instrumental *ritournelles*: these gestures function as invisible sutures

8. Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 318.

9. Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 300.

10. Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 322.

11. Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 290.

12. For example, he writes that 'as enlightenment extends, language changes character; it becomes more precise and less passionate; it substitutes ideas for feelings, it no longer speaks to the heart but to reason'. Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, 296.

13. On the importance of this principle for Rousseau's theatre and music aesthetics, see Gullstam, *Rousseau's Idea of Theatre*, especially chapter 2.

14. See Gullstam, *Rousseau's Idea of Theatre*, 180–183, and Gullstam, '*Pygmalion's* Power Struggles', 123. On the links between the *Essay on the Origin of Languages* and *Pygmalion*, see Waeber, 'Rousseau's *Pygmalion* and the Limits of (Operatic) Expression', in Gullstam and O'Dea, *Rousseau on Stage*, 103–115. The following parts of this subsection follow Waeber's writings on *Pygmalion*.

15. Waeber argues that 'the refusal of song' in *Pygmalion* 'should not be taken as a mere "return" to speech. It is the refusal of the artificiality of modern operatic song that has traded its expressive accent for gratuitous virtuosity. The return to speech in *Pygmalion* attempts to uncover the original vocalic emanation prior to articulated language that is at the very origin of melody, thus music'. Waeber, 'Rousseau's *Pygmalion*', 112.

between music and declamation, in order to create the illusion of a continuous discourse between both.[16]

In other words, the separation of music and words in *Pygmalion* really marks an attempt to reunite them. The connections between the different forms of theatrical expression were therefore central to Rousseau's vision of how he wanted it performed. At the same time, these connections also hark back to his earlier criticism of contemporary French opera. For in his works on music theory, he repeatedly emphasised the close relationship between words and music, and between pantomime and music. For example, in the article 'Acteur' in his *Dictionary of Music*, he stressed that an opera singer has to be a good actor because it is his/her task

> not only to make others feel what he says himself, but also what he allows the symphony to say. The orchestra does not depict one sentiment that does not emerge from his soul: his steps, his glances, his gestures, all must constantly agree with the music, without him appearing to think about it; he must always interest us, even when he is silent and even when he is occupied with playing a difficult role; if he for a single moment forgets his character in order to take care of the singer, he is merely a musician on stage; he is no longer an actor.[17]

When we view Rousseau's music theory as a precursor of his *scène lyrique*, we see that such statements are more than a call for better acting in opera. He wanted the merging of music with stage action, of *melos* with *drama*, to be the basis of an entirely new form of music theatre.

Another important step in his development towards the *scène lyrique* was the *récitatif obligé* ('obligatory recitative'), which he first referred to in 1753 in his *Letter on French Music*. Later he describes *récitatif obligé* as a recitative that unites stage action with orchestral music, and which is appropriate for scenes of intense passion.[18] In the *Dictionary*, it is defined as

> that which, interspersed with *ritournelles* and symphonic passages, [...] forces the reciter and the orchestra towards one another, in

16. Waeber, 'Rousseau's *Pygmalion*', 113.

17. '[...] il ne doit pas seulement faire sentir ce qu'il dit lui-même, mais aussi ce qu'il laisse dire à la Symphonie. L'Orchestre ne rend pas un sentiment qui ne doive sortir de son ame; ses pas, ses regards, son geste, tout doit s'accorder sans cesse avec la Musique, sans pourtant qu'il paroisse y songer; il doit intéresser toujours, même en gardant le silence, et quoiqu' occupé d'un rolle difficile, s'il laisse un instant oublier le Personnage pour s'occuper du Chanteur, ce n'est qu'un Musicien sur la Scène; il n'est plus Acteur'. 'Acteur', in *Dictionnaire de musique*, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, 5 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade: 1959–1995), 5: 637. If nothing else is indicated, translations are my own.

18. See *Letter on French Music*, in Rousseau, *Collected Writings*, 7: 167. Here, 'récitatif obligé' is translated as 'accompanied recitative'. On the *recitatif obligé*, see David Charlton, *Opera in the Age of Rousseau: Music, Confrontation, Realism* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 46–50, and Waeber, *En musique dans le texte*, 31–37.

such a way that they must be attentive to and listen to each other. These alternating passages of recitative and melody [...] are the most touching, entrancing, and energetic in all modern music. The agitated actor, carried away by a passion that prevents him from saying everything, interrupts himself, stops and hesitates while the orchestra speaks for him; and these silences, filled out in this way, affect the listener infinitely more than if the actor himself had said all that the music lets us hear.[19]

Rousseau is said to have introduced the term *récitatif obligé* into French, deriving it from the Italian *recitativo obbligato* (also known as *recitativo accompagnato*). In France the 'label stuck immediately'.[20] It is possible that he introduced this alternative name for the form that was already known in France as *récitatif accompagné* in order to claim authorship of a more dramatic type of recitative. As Waeber has pointed out, he appears to create a 'dramatic gradation' between the different forms of recitative that he lists in the *Dictionary of Music: récitatif, récitatif accompagné, récitatif mesuré*, and *récitatif obligé*.[21] Listing them in this order suggests 'that the ultimate emphasis is achieved with the last definition, that of the *récitatif obligé*'.[22] He believed that the orchestra should 'speak' for the singer/actor in the *récitatif obligé*, helping her/him communicate intense passions where words do not suffice. Instead of seeking a separation of words and music, though, he treats the orchestra and the singer's declamation 'as two vectors of expression of one single language that in a utopian way reunites music and speech'.[23] This is precisely what Rousseau tried to achieve in *Pygmalion*. In the *Dictionary of Music*, the *récitatif obligé* is presented as a form of operatic recitative that can be used to express intense emotions. Whereas in *Pygmalion*, the technique of alternating between the 'two vectors of expression of one single language' is applied throughout, and song is omitted completely. Although this might appear to deepen the divide between text and music, it should rather be understood as a merging of the two, through the use of pantomime.

To show how this new merging of text and music materialised in our production of *Pygmalion*, it is necessary to take a look at the

19. 'C'est celui qui, entremêlé de Ritournelles et de traits de Symphonie, *oblige* [...] le Récitant et l'Orchestre l'un envers l'autre, en sorte qu'ils doivent être attentifs et s'attendre mutuellement. Ces passages alternatifs de Récitatif et de Mélodie [...] sont ce qu'il y a de plus touchant, de plus ravissant, de plus énergique dans toute la Musique moderne. L'Acteur agité, transporté d'une passion qui ne lui permet pas de tout dire, s'interrompt, s'arrête, fait des réticences, durant lesquelles l'Orchestre parle pour lui; et ces silences, ainsi remplis, affectent infiniment plus l'Auditeur que si l'Acteur disoit lui-même tout ce que la Musique fait entendre'. Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique*, 1012–1013.

20. Charlton, *Opera in the Age of Rousseau*, 48.

21. Waeber, *En musique dans le texte*, 31–37.

22. Waeber, *En musique dans le texte*, 31. My translation.

23. Waeber, *En musique dans le texte*, 35.

dramatic content of the piece and how our understanding of its dramatic construction developed through our practical work.

## The emotional curve

*Pygmalion* is structured around a steady flow of alternating passions that depict the emotional reality of the title character.[24] The sculptor's monologue about the statue of Galathée, his most beloved creation, makes up almost the entire action. Venting his doubts, his terror, and his love as he dreams about her and looks at her, Pygmalion invites the spectators into his thoughts, allowing them to experience his inner world. As spectators we cannot know what 'really' happens and what springs from Pygmalion's inner reality. When we first encounter Pygmalion, he has hidden Galathée behind a veil: he wants to unveil and admire her anew, but he is fearful of his reaction when he sees her again. When he eventually gathers sufficient courage to uncover the statue, he is struck by a series of conflicting emotions, which he expresses in a stream of consciousness articulating his deep wish to animate the stone figure through his own soul:

> Such arrows of flame seem to fly out of this statue to make my senses blaze, then fly back with my soul to their source! Alas! She's still cold and motionless, while her charms set my heart on fire, as if it would leave my body to warm hers. In this delirious fever, it's as if I can fling myself out of my body, as if I can give her my life, breathe my soul into her. Oh, let Pygmalion die, to live in Galatea!… What am I saying? Heavens! If I were Galatea, I would no longer see her, no longer be the one who loves her! No, let Galatea live, and may I not be Galatea. Oh! may I always be another, so as to want to be her forever, so as to see her, love her, be loved by her…[25]

While most of the drama centres around Pygmalion's reactions, thoughts, and feelings as to the beauty of his own creation, his wildest dreams finally come true: Galathée comes to life; she walks down from her pedestal and exclaims: 'Me!' ('Moi!').

   We understood from the outset that the role of Pygmalion would be demanding for the actor, as a large part of the forty-minute drama

24. The following subsection draws on Gullstam, *Rousseau's Idea of Theatre*, 169–172, 189–193.

25. 'Quels traits de feu semblent sortir de cet objet pour embraser mes sens, et retourner avec mon ame à leur source! Hélas! il reste immobile et froid, tandis que mon cœur embrasé par ses charmes, voudroit quitter mon corps pour aller échauffer le sien. Je crois, dans mon délire, pouvoir m'élancer hors de moi; je crois pouvoir lui donner ma vie, et l'animer de mon ame. Ah! que Pygmalion meure pour vivre dans Galathée! … Que dis-je, ô Ciel! Si j'étois elle, je ne la verrais pas, je ne serois pas celui qui l'aime! Non, que ma Galathée vive, et que je ne sois pas elle. Ah! que je sois toujours un autre, pour vouloir toujours être elle, pour la voir, pour l'aimer, pour en être aimé…' *Pygmalion*, in Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, 2: 1228. The quotations in English come from an unpublished translation by Maria Gullstam, Felicity Baker, and Magnus Tessing Schneider.

is a 'one-man show' without any opportunity to interact with other actors. As we began to perform the text, it became clearer that, to hold the attention of the spectators, Pygmalion's emotional energy could not be kept at the same high level all the time. The actor had to create a gradation, a curve of changing emotion with gradually increasing intensity. The performer of Galathée could be of no assistance as the statue remains immobile until the very end.[26]

The play starts out with a low level of intensity. Pygmalion is in a state of depression and hopelessness. The curve of intensity rises slightly when he starts dreaming about unveiling Galathée. This is slowly heightened by several moments of suspense: he approaches the statue, then withdraws, he goes closer again and starts lifting the veil only to let it fall again, until he finally finds the courage to uncover the statue. Seeing her, he is instantly filled with intense love. But this passionate state soon gives way to growing uneasiness intermingled with eager anticipation: Pygmalion wants to make one final change to his creation and places his chisel on her body. This long hesitation before striking her with the hammer leads up to a discharge of energy. Sensing that his chisel has met human flesh rather than stone, he emits a fearful scream and lets his tools drop to the floor. He then 'steps down from the pedestal' where Galathée is placed, and this descent to the stage floor where he then stands 'trembling and confused' creates an instantaneous drop in the energy level.[27] His feelings of love soon return as he admires the statue, wishing 'tenderly' – and then 'even more tenderly' – that she possessed a soul that might match her perfect physical form.[28] Then follows a long silence as Pygmalion sits down at his table 'in a state of deep dejection', realising that he has fallen in love with a woman made of stone. But he soon climbs up the curve of intensity again: he realises, 'impetuously', that he has nothing to be ashamed of; perhaps his love is simply directed towards a being who has the same physical form as Galathée the statue?[29] He exclaims that he would want to give his own soul to Galathée, and he turns to the gods 'in transports of desire', asking for their assistance.[30] This brief moment of self-acceptance quickly gives way to

26. I do not wish to diminish the significance of the role of Galathée, however, which is demanding in other ways, as I will explain later.

27. 'Il redescend, tremblant et confus'. Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 1227.

28. 'Tendrement'; 'avec plus attendrissement encore'. Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 1227.

29. '[…] dans un profond accablement'. 'Impétueusement'. Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 1227.

30. 'Transport'. Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 1228.

'bitter irony', however, as the sculptor says to himself: 'look up, you miserable wretch. Be bold! Dare to stare at a statue'.[31] This is the moment when the statue comes to life, which first shocks Pygmalion, then fills him with terror and finally with delight.

The dramatic structure of *Pygmalion* and its performance depend on this curve of intensity. As the play lacks any verbal exchange between the two characters until the final moments, the actor must find other ways of creating the dramatic variety and tension that this might have provided. A series of contrasting passions conveyed by a codified system of affective signs would be unable to maintain the attention of the spectator for such a long time. This is the acting style that has been understood as typical of the eighteenth century, especially since the publication of Dene Barnett's *The Art of Gesture* in 1987.[32] Rousseau's drama rather requires the actor to work the curve of intensity with emotional autonomy; it requires him to use his own sensibility to interpret and convey the role. Clues to how Rousseau expected the actor to do this in practice can be found in his ideas about the relationship between text, music, and stage action, which again reflect his criticism of humanity's tendency to systematise thoughts and modes of communication. In 1770, the same year as *Pygmalion* was premiered, Rousseau discussed both the *récitatif obligé* and his new genre of music theatre in the *Letter to Mr. Burney*. He repeats that on stage only the combination of declamation and music can convey an intensely emotional state:

> The silence of the actor then says more than his words; and these reticences, well placed and well-handled and filled on the one side by the voice of the Orchestra and on the other with the mute acting of *an actor who feels both what he says and what he cannot say*, these reticences, I say, produce an effect superior even to that of declamation, and they cannot be removed from it without removing from it the greatest part of it[s] power.[33]

Here, the actor's well-placed pauses in the declamation and his emotional involvement in the words and the stage actions emerge as central features of Rousseau's scenic vision. This may seem obvious,

31. 'Ironie amere'; 'regarde, malheureux! deviens intrépide, ose fixer une statue'. Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 1229.

32. See chapter 4 in this volume, Magnus Tessing Schneider, 'Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance'.

33. Rousseau, *Letter to Mr. Burney and Fragments of Observations on Gluck's* Alceste, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, 7: 497. Emphasis added.

or even banal, to a modern reader, but if we read this account in conjunction with how Rousseau instructed the amateur actor Antoine Le Texier (1736–ca.1814) when he created the role of Pygmalion in Lyon in 1770, it turns out that the theoretical ideas about acting agreed with the directorial style of the author.[34] This realisation both informed our practical work with *Pygmalion* and helped me understand the development of the production over time.

## Emotional autonomy, then and now

The original performance of *Pygmalion* was prepared in a short time. It took six to nine days to mount the double-bill production of Rousseau's *scène lyrique* and his one-act opera *Le Devin du village* (from 1752) at the Hôtel de Ville in Lyon.[35] Le Texier received the text of *Pygmalion* in an envelope on which was written: 'This work is by me; one will recognise that without difficulty. The only favour that I ask is that nothing is changed'. Rousseau appears to have followed this rule himself, Le Texier describing how the author expressed his dissatisfaction after a performance by telling the actor that: 'Ah! […] You said "pas" in this sentence, and it was supposed to be "point"!'[36]

According to Le Texier, Rousseau had a good sense of declamation when listening to others, though he confessed that he was not a gifted reciter himself. He refused to indicate specific tones of voice when directing the actor, insisting on letting the actor search for the right tone himself. 'I was thus forced to try out various versions before finding the one that would please him. […] He was listening to me while sitting in his armchair and announcing my limited success with his silence'.[37] Interestingly, when directing Le Texier in the role of Colin in *Le Devin du village*, Rousseau seems to have put similar emphasis on the personalised delivery of the words, telling him that previous performers had merely *sung* the role 'even though I asked them to *speak* to me; because it is not music that I have created, it is *the sense of my words* that I wanted to indicate, even in my arias'.[38]

34. Published in *Le Publiciste* in 1803. I would like to express my gratitude to Jacqueline Waeber for sharing this source with me. See also Waeber's comments on Le Texier's account in the forthcoming English translation of her book on melodrama, *The Musical Origins of Melodrama: From Rousseau to Schoenberg*.

35. See Waeber's introduction to Rousseau and Coignet, *Pygmalion*, viii–xxi.

36. 'Cet ouvrage est de moi; on le reconnoîtra sans peine. La seule grâce que je demande est qu'on n'y change rien'; 'Ah! […] vous avez dit PAS dans cette phrase, et il falloit dire POINT'. Le Texier, in *Le Publiciste* (24 thermidor an XI = 12 August 1803).

37. '[…] j'étois donc obligé d'en essayer souvent plusieurs, avant d'arriver à celui qui lui plaisoit, et qui, conséquemment, étoit le meilleur en raison de la justesse et de la finesse de son goût. Il etoit sur son fauteuil à m'écouter, et de son silence m'annonçoit mon peu de succes'. Le Texier, in *Le Publiciste* (24 thermidor an XI).

38. '[…] ils ont toujours eu la rage de me chanter, je leur demandois de me parler; car ce n'est pas de la musique que j'ai faite, c'est le sens de mes paroles que j'ai voulu indiquer même dans mes airs'. Le Texier, in *Le Publiciste* (25 thermidor an XI). Emphasis added.

On the one hand, Rousseau expected Le Texier to be faithful to the letter of his text: the difference between the negations 'point' and 'pas' is indeed minor. The author's insistence on the correct wording hints at his interest in the musicality of language and reveals a view of the text as a poetic entity with an autonomous value in itself, and importantly, this contributes to creating the curve of intensity. On the other hand, Rousseau did not want to show Le Texier *how* to say the words: he rather expected him to make the text his own. The autonomy of the text and the autonomy of the actor were interdependent: instead of an imitation, Rousseau was looking for the actor's individual, emotional response, his directorial style reflecting the philosopher's search for an expressiveness that he believed we have lost due to the systems and rules prescribed by our culture.

This acting technique is reminiscent of the 'thinking artist' of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781): a concept launched a few years later, in 1772, in the German playwright's tragedy *Emilia Galotti*. This meant that the rhetorical acting style, with its formalised gestures and established types, and the realistic acting style, with its imitation of nature, ceded to an idealising acting style, in which the character was filtered through the individual sensibility of the actor.[39] These distinctions become relevant again today, in the context of the historically informed performance which risks reproducing generalised ideas about historical theatre practices (the well-known 'Baroque gestures', for example), while the specific aesthetic of the individual work is forgotten. At the same time, the work's 'contemporaneity' – which can bridge the gap between the old drama and the modern audience – will hardly be revealed if the performance is 'historically *un*informed'.[40]

With all this in mind, we wanted to stay true to the aesthetic specificity of the piece when staging *Pygmalion*, without letting the historical contextualisation overshadow the work of art.[41] Nonetheless historical performance practice and the philosophical context were

39. See Magnus Tessing Schneider, *The Original Portrayal of Mozart's Don Giovanni* (London: Routledge, 2022), 31–32: https://doi.org/10.4324/978042 9281709 (accessed 23 March 2023).

40. See the chapters by Meike Wagner and Magnus Tessing Schneider in this volume, 'On a Praxeology of Theatre Historiography' (chapter 2) and 'Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance' (chapter 4).

41. On the concept of 'specificity', see Magnus Tessing Schneider's interview with Mark Tatlow in this volume, chapter 10, 'From the General to the Specific'.

crucial to us: the complex background of the piece was the main reason we had wanted to stage *Pygmalion*. And so, we discussed the historical sources at length with the artists involved, and decided to direct the production as a group rather than having a single director, to avoid the imposition of an artistic 'vision'. This seemed to agree with Rousseau's directorial technique (or rather, with his refusal to direct); it allowed room for the actor of Pygmalion to develop his own 'autonomous' conception of the role over the course of subsequent performances. If our *Pygmalion* had only been performed once, the production would have remained an interesting historical experiment, but the absence of a unifying directorial vision meant that our aim to remain true to the historical sources would have partly overshadowed the work of the imagination, causing the loss of the specificity of the work. However, this only became clear to me later as I compared the video recordings of the different performances.

Willmar Sauter describes his experience of João Luís Paixão's first performance as Pygmalion, at Český Krumlov in the summer of 2015:

> The text was spoken in Rousseau's original French and delivered in a stylised, declamatory manner. Reading the text in a naturalistic way, as contemporary actors might do in a regular production, would probably render the passions as ridiculous, even phony. João Luís Paixão's declamation kept close to the original rhythm of each exclamation and each sentence that was uttered. At times, his delivery reminded me of recordings of Sarah Bernhardt's voice. The interplay with the short musical interludes was delicately managed by the actor and the conductor. The music emphasised the vocal delivery, preparing and extending the passions expressed by the voice and it also gave the actor the possibility to expand on the pantomimic movements that Rousseau was so anxious to describe in the manuscript.[42]

As Sauter suggests, Paixão's acting was inspired by eighteenth-century sources relating to the art of acting, and his historically informed gestures reinforced the passions expressed by the music (Fig. 1). In this

42. Willmar Sauter, 'A Theatrophobic Dramatist: J.-J. Rousseau's Position in Theatre Historiography and on Today's Stage', in Gullstam and O'Dea, *Rousseau on Stage*, 227–253: 249.

**Figure 1.** Laila Cathleen Neuman (Galathée) and João Luís Paixão (Pygmalion) in *Pygmalion* by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. State Castle of Český Krumlov, 2015. Photo: Libor Sváček ©. License: CC BY-NC.

first performance, the historian in me was overwhelmed to see and hear the text complemented by the music and the gestures in a full performance of a work I had known only from reading. Returning to the video recording several years later, however, I was struck by how much Paixão's performance changed over the years. At Český Krumlov, his tone appeared grand and courtly, his gestures sweeping and almost ceremonial, and the words were directed upwards and outwards – somewhere between 'the gods' and the audience seated in the parterre.

When I compared this to the final performance, given at Ulriksdal Palace Theatre in 2019, I noticed that the 2019 performance had a generally warmer expression, and the register of passions was greater. Pygmalion's positive feelings were more developed, which made the curve of intensity more varied and alive, and nuances of his movements and facial expression gave a different flow to the performance, because the historically informed gestures and positions had become integrated into a single organic movement. The statuesque grandeur had faded away, and the lines more often seemed directed towards the actor himself, which also appeared from changes in his body language and from the lowering of his gaze. In the first performance, he mostly placed the silences that Rousseau requested between spoken sections; but at Ulriksdal, he also made small breaks within the lines, which created an inward expression closer to ordinary speech. Finally, the transitions between text and music had become more fluid. At Český Krumlov, the speeches and the musical interludes were often separated by gaps that lasted around a second, and at times Paixão's delivery sounded almost like singing when he took over from the orchestra. In the final performance at Ulriksdal, however, voice and orchestra tended to overlap for a few seconds, and the gap between verbal and musical expression was often bridged by tone and rhythm, without the actor's voice approaching song. This gave an impression of seamlessness, it being hard to say where the words ended, and the music began.

The video recordings of the performances confirm the developments that happened between 2015 and 2019. They also help explain why I was moved to tears only in the third performance, given in the House of Nobility in 2016. It was in this performance that I had the impression that the lines seemed to come from within Paixão, rather than just being delivered impeccably: the actor appeared to be one with the words and the music. Although there is no doubt that his work had developed technically by this point, as a result of his continued work on the text and his collaboration with music director Mark Tatlow, my strong emotional reaction seemed to coincide with

Le Texier's comments about Rousseau's directorial approach: the author's silent waiting for the actor to find the right tone through his own emotional experience. Paixão's own account of his process of understanding the links between music, stage action, and declamation in the role also points to the close connection between his development of technical command, and the development of what might be called his emotional autonomy:

> The weaving together of pathetic expression through pantomime and through declamation, looking for the same palpitations, the same beating heart in both visual and aural impulses, has been one of the most striking realisations of this project. After performing Pygmalion, it became impossible for me not to notice the declamatory dimensions of other repertoire from the same period. Music has effectively come closer to speech. And because my body has repeatedly attuned itself to the movements of the passions demanded by Rousseau and Coignet, I find myself moved while listening to similar music in a way that I had not experienced before. I believe my bodily perception of music has changed irreversibly, and a certain sensibility has started to develop. Such an altered state might in turn facilitate the bringing together of declamation and music in melodrama. Declamation can then introduce the music in all its dimensions: rhythm, metre and melody.[43]

This statement is also an example of how the artistic and the historiographical aspects of the production team's work with *Pygmalion* had become aligned, as the actor actively incorporated Rousseau's ideas about the different types of theatrical expression (text, music, gestures) into his work. The reason I was moved in the third performance was no doubt because Paixão had found a balance between the inner structure of the piece and the information from historical sources on both an emotional and a corporeal level. His emotional autonomy in relation to the piece created a balance between the striving for historical accuracy and the specificity of Rousseau's *scène lyrique*. This is not to say that we had found 'the right way' to perform *Pygmalion*; rather, we had found a direction in our work that allowed us to explore different aspects of the piece.

43. João Luís Paixão in a performance lecture with the title 'Research on Stage: Rousseau's *Pygmalion* (A Performing Premodernity Production)', presented together with Laila Cathleen Neuman and myself at a conference in Stockholm in 2018. See also the interview with Paixão and Neuman in this volume, 'Swimming in the Water of Theatrical Conventions' (chapter 9).

## Galathée's silent presence

Finally, I would like to mention how the development in the performance of Galathée contributed to my understanding of Rousseau's work, even though she stood still and remained silent throughout most of the performance. In Rousseau's text, the statue of Galathée is present only in Pygmalion's words, as the object of his desire, until she comes to life in the very last moments. It is therefore difficult to grasp the power of her physical presence without having seen *Pygmalion* in performance. It was not surprising that her concluding 'awakening' would have a strong dramatic effect, but what I had not foreseen was the way my compassion for Galathée would build until this moment. While we were staging the work, it became clear that a woman standing completely still on a pedestal at the centre of the stage for thirty-five minutes is not perceived as passive. In her silent immobility, Galathée seemed to manifest herself louder and louder throughout the performance, until the moment when she says 'Moi!' This growing energy seemed to have been caused partly because Pygmalion's emotions, words, and movements all revolved around her, giving the impression that he was 'charging' her with his passions by focusing all his energy on her, and partly because of the increasing discomfort of the actress, which Laila Cathleen Neuman described as follows:

> Indeed, Galathée has been one of the most difficult roles I have had to perform, both physically and mentally. The body wishes to protest, the muscles try to find different solutions to the position that they are forced into, or become so tight that moving afterwards is quite painful. Moreover, in the historical theatres, the raked stage adds to the height of the heel, putting even more pressure on the toes. I had decided to keep my eyes low, so the blinking would not disturb the public. I also decided that breathing was the only thing I would not compromise for the role.[44]

In the final performance, at Ulriksdal in 2019, I could not see her trembling, blinking, or breathing at all, and it became clear to me that the stiller the actress managed to remain the more powerful the energy was that emanated from her. Paradoxically, it was only when I

44. Laila Cathleen Neuman in the performance lecture 'Research on Stage', Stockholm, 2018.

**Figure 2.** Laila Cathleen Neuman (Galathée) and João Luís Paixão (Pygmalion) in *Pygmalion* by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. Ulriksdal Palace Theatre (Confidencen), 2019. Photo: Eva Frykevall ©. License: CC BY-NC.

could not see her struggling that I sensed how painful and unnatural it must have felt to stand still for so long. This contributed to the mounting energy of the character, which was released when she finally abandoned her frozen state.

When Galathée has come down from her pedestal, the piece ends with the following lines:

> (*She [Galathée] lays her hand on him; he shivers, takes her hand and lays it on his heart, then covers it with ardent kisses.*)

GALATEA (*with a sigh*.) Ah! This is me, once more.

PYGMALION Yes, dear and charming object; yes, masterpiece worthy of my hands, of my heart, and of the gods, it is you, it is you alone. I have given you my whole being. From now on, I will live only through you.[45]

The dramatic structure of *Pygmalion* centres on the curves of intensity created by both characters, which reach a common point of culmination at the end of the drama. While Pygmalion's curve fluctuates upwards in waves, Galathée's increases gradually during the performance. When the two characters finally meet on the same level and symbolically unite with Galathée's hand on Pygmalion's heart (Fig. 2), a sudden calm appears. The development of the two curves of intensity is over, as is the play.

45. '*Elle pose une main sur lui; il tressaillit, prend cette main, la porte à son cœur, puis la couvre d'ardents baisers.*
GALATHÉE *avec un soupir*. Ah! encore moi.
PYGMALION Oui, cher et charmant objet; oui, digne chef-d'œuvre de mes mains, de mon cœur et des Dieux… c'est toi, c'est toi seule: je t'ai donné tout mon être; je ne vivrai plus que par toi'. Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, 1228.

# 8. Costume in the Age of Rousseau and the Case of *Pygmalion*[1]

*Petra Dotlačilová*

Costumes make an important contribution to the aesthetic experience of a performance. And when they are created in a historically informed way, they can enhance our sense of the eighteenth-century aesthetic in an eighteenth-century opera. This chapter will focus on such a process, using as a case study the making of the costumes for Performing Premodernity's production of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1712–1778) *Pygmalion*.[2] This *scène lyrique* was revolutionary in the eighteenth century: it introduced a new genre, which manifested Rousseau's ideas about the relation between speech, gesture, and music in the theatre.[3] At the time of its premiere (1770), theatrical costume was experiencing a period of reform that made increasing demands on the faithful representation of the historical and geographical origins of a character. The original production of such a revolutionary piece as *Pygmalion* is unlikely to have been untouched by these reforms. In his model of Aesthetic Historicity, Willmar Sauter points to how, throughout history, such impulses were a main factor in the creation and perception of theatre.[4] His model provides a tool for the analysis and interpretation of the material and visual evidence of the theatrical past within its artistic, intellectual, and societal contexts. It also suggests how historical pieces can be staged today. While Sauter's model can be applied to performance as a whole, including its visual and auditory expressions, I will focus on the visual and material, and specifically on the agency of the costume and the theatre stage. Both elements are closely connected to the past (t1, in Sauter's model):[5] the historic theatre with its flat wings is a historical artefact, and the costumes, although created in modern times (t2), were based on

historical costumes and cuts preserved in the archives. The perception and thinking of spectators have changed since the eighteenth century, influenced by the many 'impulses' that have occurred since then, and therefore our relationship with the historical/historicised artefacts needs to be considered when we stage a historical piece.

In my analysis of the historical sources, I applied approaches drawn from studies of visual and material culture. These included the careful observation and description of images and objects, which allowed the form, meaning, and agency of the costumes to unfold.[6] As my analysis of the material was situated within the larger framework of historical and aesthetic developments, it helped reveal the social and aesthetic significance of the costumes in performance. This analysis led to the creation of the costumes for the two characters (Pygmalion and Galathée) in our staging of *Pygmalion*, performed five times between 2015 and 2019 in the Czech Republic, Sweden, and the Netherlands. This chapter will focus on the historical research that preceded the creation of the costumes and on how the historical/historicised artefacts influenced the contemporary performance of the piece. I will answer such questions as: How did the different artefacts interact? How did the use of the historically informed costume contribute to the experience of seeing the historical piece on stage? And how might this approach lead to a specifically 'historical' aesthetic experience?

## Visual evidence: costume and fashion

Two images showing the performance of Rousseau's *Pygmalion* in France in the 1770s have survived: the first is a painting by Louis Carrogis Carmontelle (1717–1806) from around 1775, which shows two amateur actors, Monsieur Messer as Pygmalion and Madame Boissier as Galathée, and the second is an engraving by an unknown artist of two famous actors of the Comédie-Française, Jean Mauduit *dit* Larive (1747–1807) and Françoise Marie Antoinette Saucerotte *dite* Mademoiselle Raucourt (1756–1815), as they performed the *scène lyrique*, also in 1775 (Figs. 1 and 2).[7]

6. The method of object-based research was coined by Jules David Prown in 'Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method', *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982), 7–10. Art historian Ludmilla Jordanova mentions the method of careful looking in historiographical research in *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15–35.

7. The date and place of the original publication of this print is unknown. Reproduced in Adolphe Jullien, *Histoire du costume au théâtre: Depuis les origines du théâtre en France jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Charpentier, 1880), 263–265.

**Figure 1.** Louis Carrogis Carmontelle: 'Monsieur Messer et madame Boissier, deux amateurs jouant dans Pygmalion'. Ca. 1775. Musée Condé.© RMN-Grand Palais (domaine de Chantilly) / Martine Beck-Coppola. License: CC BY-NC.

**Figure 2.** Anonymous: 'Larive et Raucourt en Pygmalion'. Ca. 1775, in: Adolphe Jullien, *Histoire du costume au théâtre: Depuis les origines du théâtre en France jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Charpentier, 1880), 263. © Bibliothèque nationale de France, dép. Philosophie etc., SMITH LESOUEF R-3596. License: CC BY-NC.

These two images seem to record the visual experience of a moment in the performances, and details of the costumes that the actors wore, but there is a remarkable difference between the garments of the two couples. What lay behind this difference in the visual representation? And how should we approach this pictorial evidence?

Pioneering scholars of dress history, such as Aileen Ribeiro and Lou Taylor, have written extensively on research methods and particularly on how to study visual materials.[8] Painters and sculptors of the past frequently reproduced garments of their time, and specialists in dress history have often been asked to date a painting based on the depicted garments. However, as Ribeiro says, 'it is important to stress that the dress historian should never look at only one aspect of the subject – whether art object, surviving garments, documentary sources or theory – in isolation'.[9]

The theatrical costume combines aspects of dress and fashion, fine arts, and dramaturgy. Throughout history, the theatrical costume has reflected artistic movements, sartorial techniques, and even fashion trends of its period, as well as the specific dramatic work for which it was made. To a greater or lesser extent, it reflects the time in which the drama is set, the character wearing it (his or her status or profession, age, gender, etc.), and the situation in which the character finds him- or herself.[10] Furthermore, the costume reflects the genre of the piece and the theatre in which it appears, e.g. whether it is a play, an opera, or a ballet, a comedy or a tragedy. The mode of movement required by the genre and the character inevitably influences the form of the costume, just as movements are affected by the materiality of the dress, its cuts and fabrics. In eighteenth-century costumes, we can see remarkable differences between ballet and opera costumes, and even between costumes for different dance genres, between the serious, half-serious, comic, and so on.[11] The actors themselves might also adjust their costumes according to the norms of decency of the period: each genre and theatre had different customs regarding the appearance and the acquisition of the costumes. The look of the

8. Aileen Ribeiro, 'Re-Fashioning Art: Some Visual Approaches to the Study of the History of Dress', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 2, no. 4, special issue: Methodology, ed. Anthea Jarvis (December 1998), 315–325; Lou Taylor, *Establishing Dress History* (Manchester University Press, 2004), 115–149.

9. Ribeiro, 'Re-Fashioning Art', 316.

10. For the more recent research on theatre costume history, see Anne Verdier, *Histoire et poétique de l'habit de théâtre en France au XVIIe siècle* (Vijon: Lampsaque, 2006); *Art et usages du costume de scène*, ed. Didier Doumergue, Olivier Goetz, and Anne Verdier (Vijon: Lampsaque, 2007); *Le costume de scène: Objet de recherche* ed. Didier Doumergue and Anne Verdier (Vijon: Lampsaque, 2014); Veronica Isaac, *'Dressing the Part': Ellen Terry (1847–1928) – Towards a Methodology for Analysing Historic Theatre Costume*, PhD thesis (University of Brighton, 2016); Donatella Barbieri, *Costume in Performance: Materiality, Culture and the Body* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); Mickaël Bouffard, 'De Berain à Boquet: Comment habiller les vieux opéras?' and 'Les habillements de l'Académie royale de musique: Une chasse-gardée bien française', in *Un air d'Italie: L'Opéra de Paris de Louis XIV à la Révolution*, ed. Mickaël Bouffard, Jean-Michel Vinciguerra, and Christian Schirm, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux and Bibliothèque national de France, 2019), 128–129, 130–143.

11. See Petra Dotlačilová, 'Costuming Musical Theater: Louis-René Boquet's Work for Opera and Ballet in the Second

costume depended to a great extent on who wore it, who bought it, who designed it, and who watched it on stage.

In the mid-eighteenth century, theatrical costumes for tragedies, including those set in classical Antiquity, tended to be influenced by the fashions worn by the contemporary nobility, because the tragedies mainly featured noble or royal characters who needed to dress according to their status. But it was still 'historical' attire *à l'antique* or *à la romaine*, a type of costume that, in various forms, had appeared on the stage since the sixteenth century, when the court spectacles started to represent Greek and Roman myths. The costume *à la romaine* included an imitation of the Roman armour in fabric or papier-mâché, with stripes (*lambrequins*) in place of the leather pteruges, a circular skirt called a *tonnelet*,[12] a shirt, breeches, shoes with lacing up the calf, and, most importantly, a helmet adorned with tall plumes.[13] The costumes for the heroines followed contemporary court dress more closely, and were more strictly bound by the rules of decency. A few garments of this type have survived from the middle of the eighteenth century, mainly from operas (Fig. 3). They were made of silk, velvet, and linen, with the bodice, sleeves, and *tonnelet* created in one piece, heavily embroidered with silver thread and sequins, and decorated with semiprecious stones or glass.

The Roman inspiration that we recognise in these garments demanded historical verisimilitude, one of the basic requirements in the arts since Aristotle and reformulated by French theorists in the seventeenth century. Historical verisimilitude was not necessarily the same as a *truthful* representation; by the early eighteenth century it just meant that history was presented to the contemporary spectators in a believable or probable way.[14] The accurate imitation of historical dress, found in paintings and sculptures of the period, was not the main objective of the costumes. The sumptuous and glittering decorations reflected both the candlelight and the high status of the character. Moreover, as the actors and actresses of spoken drama usually had to buy their own costumes – unless they were lucky enough to receive them from a noble patron – they were the ones who literally

Half of the Eighteenth Century', in *Dance Body Costume*, ed. Petra Dotlačilová and Hanna Walsdorf, Prospektiven 2 (Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2019), 103–160.

12. For a definition of the *tonnelet*, see my previous chapter, 'Materiality in Action', 147n22.

13. On the Baroque stage costume, see Diana De Marly, *Costume on the Stage, 1600–1940* (London: BT Batsford, 1982), 20–23.

14. For a discussion of the various interpretations of the concept of verisimilitude, see my dissertation, *Costume in the Time of Reforms: Louis-René Boquet Designing Eighteenth-Century Ballet and Opera* (Stockholm University, 2020), 53–57.

**Figure 3.** Anonymous: Costume for an *opera seria*, 1740s. Red satin, yellow and white taffeta, red and black velvet, sequins, silver gallons, silver net, linen lining. State Castle of Český Krumlov / The National Heritage Institute, CK 5067. Photo: Jana Koubová, NPÚ České Budějovice ©. License: CC BY-NC.

15. Paula von Wachenfeldt, 'Fashioning the Self in Pre-Modern and Post-Modern Society', in *Cimode 2012: 1º Congresso Internacional de Moda e Design*, ed. Ana Cristina Broega, Kathia Castilho, and Joana Cunha (Guimarães: Universidade do Minho, 2012), 1362–1371: http://repositorium.sdum.uminho.pt/handle/1822/29259 (accessed 22 March 2021).

16. See Valeria De Lucca, 'Costumes for *balli* in Seventeenth-Century Italian Opera', in *Dance Body Costume*, ed. Dotlačilová and Walsdorf, 79–102.

17. On the aesthetics of propriety, which informed the early modern theatrical costume, see Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms*, 57–107.

18. On the question of the propriety of dress in the period, see Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality* (London: Batsford, 1986), 95–118.

19. Pascale Gorguet-Ballesteros and Hadrien Volle, 'Andrienne et panniers ou l'argument de la scène dans la circulation des modes féminines au début du XVIIIe siècle', in *Modes! À la ville, à la scène*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Catherine Join-Diéterle, Sylvie Richoux, Pascale Gorguet-Ballesteros, Mathias Auclair, and Joël Huthwohl (Paris: Centre national du costume de scène and Somogy éditions d'art, 2017), 25–27.

20. Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe: 1715–1789* (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 97.

fashioned their appearance on stage. As Paula von Wachenfeldt states, the complex societal relations of *l'ancien régime* were often 'performed' through the clothes. Individual appearance was decisive when it came to social status at the court and in the city.[15] While on stage, the actors were also performing their 'real-life' societal roles, striving for the audience's admiration and favours. The audience in turn were often influential people able to provide advantages and protection. In the opera, the sumptuous costumes reflected the wealth and status of the aristocratic patron who usually sponsored the production.[16] In this way, the theatrical costume was steered by what I refer to as the aesthetics of propriety: the social and sartorial codes of contemporary society were more important than the historicity of the performance, and the imitation of historical dress might even be considered improper.[17]

The customs and morals of the mid-eighteenth century dictated the shape and composition of the dress for women. They wore a close-fitting bodice with boned stays that emphasised the slimness of the waist, elbow-length sleeves, a long petticoat, voluminous underskirts, and dressed hair or a wig. It was considered inappropriate or even indecent to lack any of these garments because the constraining bodice, the coverage of certain parts of the body, and the carefully maintained appearance all indicated one's social station and virtue.[18] Loose clothes without a clearly defined shape, especially the absence of stays, were considered too revealing and therefore indecent. The same was true for loose hair or an undressed wig.

A wide hoop or side-hoops (*paniers*) were placed beneath the skirts, which by the 1750s reached enormous proportions, especially at the court and in aristocratic circles.[19] The width of the hoop required more material for the gown. This served to show off the beauty of the design and signify the wealth of the lady. Its pretext was to keep the men at a greater distance.[20] In the 1770s, one could still see some hoops at court (and on stage), but mainly the volume was moved towards the woman's rear parts. The development of the hoop was

by this stage mostly replaced by the new craze of the extravagant upward growth of the hairdos and wigs. These reached exaggerated heights and were decorated with everything from plumes to models of boats.[21] The dresses were further decorated with three-dimensional trimming made of ribbons, ruffs, garlands, and feathers, in place of the large, embroidered decorations from the 1750s.

This historical overview will help us analyse and interpret the two images of *Pygmalion*. We immediately see that they are recording historical events, with actual people performing specific roles. They do not pretend to represent the story in its ancient Greek setting, as many other engravings, paintings, and sculptures from the period do, including some that are directly related to Rousseau's play.[22] Our two pictures depict Galathée fully dressed, wearing a bodice with a pair of stays, a petticoat, long sleeves, and dressed hair. The figure is not naked or covered just with a light piece of cloth, which is how the statue was usually depicted. This shows us that the female figure refers to a real woman performing a role, with the general shape of her costume reflecting the dress of the 1770s, the period *Pygmalion* was first performed. However, although the shape of her costume is similar to contemporary dress, it lacks decorative elements; it is not wide as a court dress would have been, and the dress in Fig. 1, at least, is made entirely of white fabric which would have been rather unusual in a court dress. The fabric is carefully draped. The woman in the picture is playing a Greek statue. While her costume respects the rules of decency of contemporary dress, covering all the important body parts, its colour and drapery reflect the historical context of *Pygmalion*. This differs from earlier female theatre costumes, which related more directly to the court dress.

The man's costume gives away the period of the 1770s as well, though less obviously. The male dress of the French upper classes from this period consisted of a knee-length (or slightly shorter) coat, a waistcoat without sleeves, close-fitting knee-length breeches, and coloured or white silk stockings. Bright colours, including yellow and

21. For details on contemporary clothing, see the chapter '1740–1770: The Triumph of Rococo', in Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, 89–115; James Laver, *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 127–153; Juliette Trey, *La mode à la cour de Marie-Antoinette* (Château de Versailles: Gallimard, 2014).

22. For instance, the engravings by Jean-Michel Moreau that accompany the print edition of Rousseau's *Pygmalion* from 1773, or Étienne Maurice Falconet's statue from 1763.

pink, were fashionable, as were elaborate embroidery and lace decorations on the coat and waistcoat. The wigs, which could be dressed, decorated, and powdered, were part of 'decent' attire. However, in Figures 1 and 2 both Larive and Messer wear a loose, knee-length robe with a sash around the waist and a mantle, which creates an association with the Greek tunic known from contemporary history paintings. The main features that indicate the century are the wigs, the longer sleeves, and the breeches.

These images record a breaking point in the history of the theatrical costume, with the transition from the aesthetics of propriety towards what I call the aesthetics of truthfulness. The latter related less to the social realities of the time of the performance and strove instead for a closer imitation of the visual models from the past. This caused the ever-present concept of verisimilitude to acquire a new meaning, and above all, to be manifest in a new way in the costumes. In the following, I will take a closer look at this shift in thinking about costumes, and at some of the people who contributed to the development.

## Costume in painting and on stage: the eighteenth-century approach

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the trend of applying elements of contemporary fashion to theatre costumes began to fall out of favour, being opposed first in writing and later in practice. Criticism of over-decorated costumes was inspired by ongoing aesthetic debates, particularly in poetry and painting, about the role of truth and nature.

In 1719, Jean-Baptiste Dubos (1670–1742) raised the question of whether artists should conform to the 'truth' of the historical and geographical circumstances.[23] In painting, Dubos demanded a poetic verisimilitude, 'une vraisemblance poétique', which means depicting the expressions and attitudes appropriate to the temperament, age, and status of the characters. He also insisted on what he called

23. Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, 2 vols. (Paris: Jean Mariette, 1719).

*il costume*,[24] a term he borrowed from Italian, meaning the 'particular manners, dress, buildings and arms of the people that one wants to represent'.[25] He expected artists to 'represent the places where the action takes place in the way it was, as far as we know', including the plants, animals, and costumes of various nations.[26] In short, he wanted as much historical and geographical authenticity in painting as possible, naming Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) and Charles Le Brun (1619–1690) as the principal masters of this practice.

He also called for poetic verisimilitude in tragedy, asking poets to conform to the historical and geographical context, although he thinks mainly about the facts treated by the plot. The representation of specific customs and styles of dress may be suggested, but these should respect the society in which the performance takes place. In a French play with a Turkish theme, for instance, Turkish manners should not be fully represented on stage, even though well known to the author, because they were not common knowledge.[27] To create a semblance of reality, Dubos asks that respect be given to foreign customs, but the plot and the actions of the characters have to be adapted to French manners and rules when it comes to tragic dramaturgy and the theatrical representation. The same goes for the costumes. An image of dignity and elevation was required in tragedy, while comedy came closer to the reality of the spectators:

> Hence these personages are commonly dressed at present in robes of our own invention; the first idea of which was borrowed of the military habit of the ancient Romans, a habit noble of its nature, and which seems to have been suited to the glory of the people that wore it. The dresses of our actresses are the richest and most majestic that fancy can invent. On the contrary, we employ the town-dresses, that is, such as are used in common life, in the representation of comedies.[28]

These were the ideological and aesthetic impulses that determined the theatre costume in the early eighteenth century. His argument about the form of the costume would soon be contested, while his

24. In this period, the French word used for clothes on and off the stage was *habits* or *vêtements* (in Italian *abiti*, and in English *habits*).

25. Dubos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music*, 3 vols., tr. Thomas Nugent (London: John Nourse, 1748), 1: 212.

26. Dubos, *Critical Reflections*, 1: 212.

27. [W]e are better acquainted with the customs and manners of the Turks by the verbal relations of such of our friends as have lived amongst them, than we are informed of the customs and manners of the Greeks and Romans by the narratives of deceased authors […]. Wherefore a tragic poet cannot violate the general notion, which the public has of the customs and manners of foreign nations, without prejudicing the probability of his piece. Nevertheless, the rules of our stage, and the customs of our tragic scenes, which require that women should have always a great share in the plot, and that the intrigues of love be treated agreeably to our own manners, obstruct our conforming to the customs and manners of strange nations'. Dubos, *Critical Reflections*, 1: 129.

28. Dubos, *Critical Reflections*, 1: 340–341.

observations on verisimilitude in painting were taken up by theatre theorists and artists as their inspiration for costume reform.

French literary scholar Pierre Frantz sees Dubos's promotion of the visual arts as a crucial shift in aesthetic thinking that led to the establishment of the *tableau* as a central theatrical concept. Frantz characterises the *tableau* as a revalorisation of the visual aspect of performance, as opposed to the privileged position given to the text by theorists of French Classical theatre.[29] Although Dubos did not propose that all aspects of painting on stage were imitated, we find an intensified comparison between the stage and the visual arts in his *Critical Reflections*. Commentators started to ask why theatrical costumes were so different from those worn in paintings, and they suggested a closer connection between the two art forms. These reflections led to the new aesthetics of truthfulness in costume design.[30]

An early attempt to apply the new concept of the *tableau* on stage was made by the dancer Marie Sallé (1707–1756) in her ballet *Pygmalion*, performed in London in 1734. She combined dance and pantomime with an emphasis on feelings and action, in an attempt to emulate the art of the Roman pantomime so acclaimed by Dubos, the choreographer John Weaver (1673–1760), and by many others.[31] Her costume consisted of a simple muslin dress draped like 'a model of a Greek statue', without *paniers*, and she wore neither a wig nor a mask.[32] Although her acting style and her costume aroused a great deal of interest no picture of Sallé in that production has survived. Moreover, she received no support and had no direct followers in France, where pompous and artificial decorations were still much preferred. She was way ahead of her time.

The Enlightenment *philosophes* Voltaire (1694–1778) and Denis Diderot (1713–1784) both developed Dubos's concept of the imitation of nature, and as they both used the theatre as a platform for the dissemination of their ideas, the costume was inevitably affected.

While Diderot created a new dramatic genre, the *genre sérieux* (later known as the *drame bourgeois*), which dealt with ordinary

29. Pierre Frantz, *L'esthétique du tableau dans le théâtre du XVIIIᵉ siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998).

30. On the development of this new aesthetics, see Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms*, 108–165. The following pages are based on that chapter of my dissertation.

31. Richard Ralph, *Life and Works of John Weaver: An Account of His Life, Writings and Theatrical Productions, With an Annotated Reprint of His Complete Publications* (London: Dance Books, 2008).

32. Judith Chazin-Bennahum, *The Lure of Perfection: Fashion and Ballet, 1780–1830* (London: Routledge, 2005), 44.

people, rather than princes and gods, and therefore required costumes that were truthful copies of everyday dress with their social connotations,[33] Voltaire remained within the sphere of political history and mythology. He used themes from classical tragedy and applied to this his take on the imitation of nature. These attempts to develop a more natural expression led in his later tragedies to an emphasis on clarity and simplicity in the vocal delivery, reportedly inspired by English theatre. Additionally, Voltaire strove for enhanced verisimilitude in the visual representation of foreign cultures.[34]

One of the pioneers of the so-called costume reform was the French choreographer and dance theorist Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810). Drawing on the aesthetic ideas of the time, he announced a new approach to theatrical costume in various versions of his famous *Letters on Dancing and Ballets* (first published in 1760).[35] Noverre criticised the capriciousness of the prevailing fashion, which imposed itself on the theatrical stage and spoiled the imitation of nature:

> Every actor has made a fantastical being out of a Turk, a Chinese, a Greek, and a Roman, dressing them according to his caprice. As a result, the genres have been confused and sacrificed, propriety was despised, the painters were not consulted, the poets were not listened to, the ancient authors were not read, but the fashion traders supplied everything.[36]

He accused both the tailors, the fashion merchants who created the everyday dress and the theatre costumes, and then the actors themselves of ignoring the subject of the plays, giving first priority to the trends of fashion.

Noverre adapted Dubos's definition of *costume* (quoted above), which he defined as 'the character, the laws, the morals, the uses, the religion, the taste, the genius, the customs, the arms, the dress, the buildings, the plants, the animals, and the wealth of a nation',[37] and which had only been used in the context of visual arts so far, applying it to ballet and theatre in general.[38] This is the first time we see a demand for truthfulness in costume and other aspects of the theatrical

33. Denis Diderot, *De la poésie dramatique* (1758), in *Œuvres complètes: Revues sur les éditions originales: Études sur Diderot et le mouvement philosophique au XVIIIᵉ siècle*, 20 vols. (Paris: Garnier frères, 1875–1877), 7: 375–377.

34. On vocal delivery in Voltaire's tragedies, see Marvin Carlson, *Voltaire and the Theatre of the Eighteenth Century* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1998), 31–32. Several of Voltaire's plays used exotic settings (Turkey/Arabia in *Zaire* (1732) and *Mahomet* (1741), Peru in *Alzire* (1736), and China in *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (1755)) as a way of separating universal human virtues from the Christian European context, and he was interested in the accurate representation of the foreign cultures. Such endeavours were already familiar from comic stage works, as reflected in the popular *turqueries* and *chinoiseries*, but Voltaire was the first to apply it to tragedies. It seems as if tragedy needed to adapt to the trend, since the visual appearance of the Turks had become so commonplace within the other genres and in the visual arts. However, there were still limits on the accuracy: Voltaire felt restricted by the anticipated reactions of the spectators whom he did not consider ready to accept a radically different image of a foreign nation on stage. As he wrote to César Chesneau du Marsais: 'If the French were not so French, my Chinese would have been more Chinese and Genghis even more Tartarian. I had to impoverish my ideas and embarrass myself in my costume so as not to frighten a frivolous nation that laughs foolishly and thinks it is laughing merrily at everything that is not according to its morals or rather according to its fashions'. 'Si les Français

n'étaient pas si français, mes Chinois auraient été plus chinois et Gengis encore plus tartare. Il a fallu appauvrir mes idées et me gêner dans le costume pour ne pas effaroucher une nation frivole qui rit sottement et qui croit rire gaiement de tout ce qui n'est pas dans ses mœurs ou plutôt dans ses modes'. 'Lettre À M. Dumarsais', 12 October 1755, in Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Louis Moland, 52 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1877–1883), 38: 482. Translation mine.

35. First edition: Jean-Georges Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse, et sur les ballets* (Lyon and Stuttgart: Aimé Delaroche, 1760); the last edition published by Noverre was *Lettres sur les arts imitateurs en général, et sur la danse en particulier*, 2 vols. (Paris: Léopold, 1807).

36. 'Chaque Comédien a fait d'un Turc, d'un Chinois, d'un Grec et d'un Romain un Etre de fantaisie, et l'a déguisé selon son caprice; dès lors les genres ont été confondus et sacrifiés; les choses de convenances ont été méprisés; les Peintres n'ont point été consultés; les Poëtes n'ont pu se faire écouter; les Auteurs anciens n'ont point été lus; mais les marchandes de modes ont supplée à tout'. Jean-Georges Noverre, *Théorie et pratique de la Danse simple et Composée; de l'art des ballets; de la Musique; du Costume et des Décorations*, 11 vols. (manuscript, 1766), 1: 223–224; PL–Wu Zb. Król. 795. Translations from Noverre are mine, unless otherwise stated.

37. '[…] le caractére, les loix, les mœurs, les usages, la religion, le goût, le génie, les habitudes, les armes, les vêtemens, les bâtiments, les plantes, les animaux, et les richesses d'une nation'. Noverre, *Théorie et pratique*, 1: 224.

setting. Like Dubos, Noverre says nothing about the nobility of appearance. He banned from the ballet the *tonnelets*, the *paniers*, and the masks, also for practical reasons because they restricted the dancer who was 'busier taking care of the movement of her *paniers* than of her arms and legs'.[39] Both dancers and actors should be able to move freely in order to concentrate on the correct and emotionally charged interpretation of their roles.

Noverre drew his inspiration for the Greco-Roman style from paintings of mythological and historical scenes, such as those depicted by Charles Le Brun and Charles-André van Loo (1705–1765). He did not want to copy the paintings literally bur rather preferred to adapt draperies and cuts from the paintings to suit the nation, age, and social station of the characters that the performers had to represent. He argued that the theatre, like the fine arts, had its own rules and its own ways of creating the right effect.[40] And like Voltaire, he would not breach certain sartorial conventions.

Reforms that continued to respect the rules were also introduced by other famous costume reformers, including the actors Claire Josèphe Hippolyte Leris *dite* La Clairon (1723–1803) and Henri Louis Cain *dit* LeKain (1728–1778), both of whom were major stars at the Comédie-Française.[41]

Like Noverre, Clairon would not tolerate fashionable garments on stage. She called for the removal of accessories, feathers, jewels, chiffons, and flowers, and she did not approve of the modish tall hairdos. Importantly, she also added the character of the role into her costumes, that is, the costume would represent the character's inner emotions and motivation, which would prepare the audience for her portrayal: 'An actress, in arranging her dress, should pay particular attention to the situation of the person she represents. Age, austerity, and grief do not fit well with the decorations of youth, gaiety, and happiness'.[42]

While creating their new costumes, Noverre, Clairon, and LeKain were still very aware of the limitations imposed by the rules of decency.

They had no intention of imitating the history paintings and sculptures literally. As Clairon put it, 'to adopt the dress of past ages, in every respect, would be indecent and ridiculous. The dresses of antiquity display too much of the figure'.[43] According to Damien Chardonnet-Darmaillacq, LeKain's and Clairon's efforts are defined by a 'double negative: it was not about imitating the fashions of the city, and not about the launch into realism. […] It was about proposing a costume that would shock neither by its too close aesthetic proximity to every-day clothing, nor by going too far away from the customary'.[44]

This moderate approach marked an important period of transition in the thinking about stage costume – it was the first stage of the reform. Through the practical efforts and writings of these influential artists, and through the support of other authors and the work of the Parisian costume designer Louis-René Boquet (1717–1814), the ground was gradually prepared for a more radical approach to the imitation of the visual arts on stage, finally realising fully the aesthetics of truthfulness. This second stage of the reform occurred in the 1780s, through the work of the visual artist Jean-Michel Moreau (1741–1814), the playwright and critic Jean-Charles Le Vacher de Charnois (1749–1792), the singer Antoinette Saint-Huberti (1756–1812), and the actor Francois-Joseph Talma (1763–1826), among others.[45]

## Rousseau's costume

Jean-Jacques Rousseau had a peculiar relationship to fashion and dress, acknowledging both their importance and criticising their misuse. In his youth he was keen on quality clothing: his *Confessions* include many examples of how he appreciated elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen, and descriptions of his own collection of fine clothes, even though limited by his modest finances.[46] He was well aware of the significance that society ascribed to clothing, including establishing the status and character of other people, and he manipulated his own image accordingly, although only for as long as he was in the

38. Louis Jaucourt's 1754 article 'Costumé' for the *Encyclopédie* adopts Dubos's definition, referring only to the visual arts: 'The costume is […] the exact observation of what is, according to the time, the genius, the customs, the laws, the taste, the wealth, the character, and the habits of a country where the scene of a painting is placed. The costume also contains everything that concerns chronology and the truth of certain facts known to everyone; finally, everything that concerns the quality, nature, and essential propriety of the objects represented'. 'Le costume est […] l'observation exacte de ce qui est, suivant le tems, le génie, les mœurs, les lois, le goût, les richesses, le caractère & les habitudes d'un pays où l'on place la scène d'un tableau. Le costumé renferme encore tout ce qui regarde la chronologie, & la vérité de certains faits connus de tout le monde; enfin tout ce qui concerne la qualité, la nature, & la propriété essentielle des objets qu'on représente'. Louis Jaucourt, 'Costumé', in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, 17 vols. (Paris: Briasson, 1751–1772), 4: 298–299. Translation mine.

39. '[…] que le mouvement de son panier l'affecte & l'occupe quelquefois plus sérieusement que celui de ses bras & de ses jambes'. Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse* (1760), 185. Translation from 1782 by Parkyns MacMahon, *The Works of Monsieur Noverre, Translated from the French: Noverre, His Circle, and the English Lettres sur la Danse*, ed. Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp (Cambridge: Pendragon Press, 2014), 312.

40. Noverre, *Théorie et pratique*, 1: 235.

41. Their ideas about costume as well as their concrete suggestions were published in the following publications: Clairon, *Mémoires d'Hyppolite Clairon et réflexions sur l'art dramatique publiés par elle-même* (Paris: Buisson, VII/1798–1799); LeKain, *Matériaux pour le travail de mon repertoire tragique, historique, anecdotique et géographique* (a preparatory work) and *Registre de LeKain* or *Cahiers de mises en scène*. None of these manuscript documents is dated, but it is reported that LeKain worked on them from 1760 until his death. For a detailed study of this material, see Damien Chardonnet-Darmaillacq, *Gouverner la scène: Le système panoptique du comédien LeKain*, PhD thesis (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre la Défense, 2012).

42. Clairon, *Memoirs of Hyppolite Clairon, the Celebrated French Actress: With Reflections upon the Dramatic Art, Written by Herself: Translated from the French* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1800), 85.

43. Clairon, *Memoirs*, 83.

44. Damien Chardonnet-Darmaillacq, 'Repenser la réforme du costume au XVIIIᵉ siècle: Quand les enjeux pratiques priment sur les enjeux esthétiques', in Doumergue and Verdier, *Le costume de scène*, 129–138: 138. My translation.

45. On the second wave of the costume reform, see Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms*, 157–164, 286–296; Frantz, *L'esthétique du tableau*, 101–111; Chazin-Bennahum, *The Lure of Perfection*, 93–116; Marc-Henri Jordan, 'Décorations et habits à l'Académie royale de musique vers 1780: Nouvelles identifications de dessins', in *Le Dessin et les Arts du spectacle: Le geste et l'espace*, ed. Pierre Rosenberg and

service of others.[47] As soon as he decided to embark on a free career in literature and music – after the success of his *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (1750) – he changed his dress. He abandoned luxury and began to wear simple clothes and fabrics, to sport a beard, use a simply cut and undressed wig. This conversion is also recorded in the *Confessions*: 'As soon as my resolution was completely formed and completely confirmed [...] I began my reform with my adornment; I gave up gilt and white gloves, I put on a round wig, I took off my sword, and sold my watch'.[48]

This simplicity was meant to express the purity and freedom of his profession: freeing his mind of changing fashions, superficialities, the 'vanity of luxury', and proving his constancy and lack of interest in material wealth. At the same time, the simple garments relieved his body from the artificial constraints of fashionable clothes, which was a process he later perfected by adopting a loose, oriental-style caftan. This 'natural' appearance, however, did not mean that he stopped taking care of himself; on the contrary, he stressed the importance of cleanliness and hygiene. All aspects of his new attire, including the beard, recalled the appearance of ancient philosophers or religious men (e.g. Franciscan friars or Islamic muftis); and so, Rousseau could be said to have fashioned himself as a learned and spiritual person. Furthermore, the clean, modest, and simple appearance was in accordance with the ground rules of good manners promoted by Christian preachers.[49] He was well ahead of his time with such use of dress: his clothes represented his inner state, beliefs, and aspirations rather than his social status – which of course became a problem in social interactions. Eighteenth-century dress represented a strict set of codes, which Rousseau deliberately blurred, and therefore his transition was not easy; it required a great amount of courage and self-assurance to break the norms and appear in these garments in public, both in the countryside and at the court.

In the eighth book of his *Confessions*, Rousseau describes the moment he entered the royal court for the first time after his 'conversion'. It was to attend the premiere of his opera *Le Devin de village* in 1752:

That day I was in the same carefree outfit that was usual for me; unshaven and in a rather poorly combed wig. Taking this lack of propriety for an act of courage, in this manner I entered the room into which the king, queen, the royal family, and all the court were to arrive shortly afterwards. […] When it was lit up, I began to be ill at ease seeing myself in this outfit in the midst of people who were all excessively adorned: I asked myself whether I was in my place, whether I was suitably dressed? And after several minutes of anxiety, I answered myself, Yes, with an intrepidity that perhaps came more from the impossibility of withdrawing than the force of all my reasons. I told myself 'I am in my place, since I am seeing my piece played, since I was invited, since that is the only reason I composed it, and since after all, no one has more right than I to enjoy the fruit of my labour and my talents. I am dressed in my ordinary clothes, neither better nor worse. If I begin to be enslaved to opinion in something, I will soon be enslaved by it in everything all over again. To be always myself, wherever I am I must not blush at being dressed according to the station I have chosen; my exterior is simple and untidy, but neither dirty nor improper, in itself the beard is not improper because it is nature who gives it to us, and because according to time, place and fashions it is sometimes an ornament. I will be found ridiculous, impertinent; ah what does it matter to me? I ought to be able to endure ridicule and blame, as long as they are not deserved'.[50]

From 1762, Rousseau reportedly went one step further and started to appear in the Armenian costume he became famous for, which was not only unconventional, but almost dangerous in certain situations. People in the countryside could react violently to such an appearance, threatening him verbally and sometimes even throwing stones at him. Gradually, however, he found a modicum of acceptance and could wear his 'intellectual uniform' more confidently in all situations:

> A little time after my establishment at Môtiers-Travers, since I had all possible assurance that I should be left tranquil here, I put on an Armenian habit. This was not a new idea. It had come to me in the course of my life, and it often came back to me at Montmorency […]. The convenience of an Armenian tailor, who often came to see a relative he had at Montmorency, tempted me to take advantage of it to take this new outfit at the risk of what people would think about it, about which I cared very little. […] Thus I had a little

Michèle Sajous d'Oria, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions L'Echelle de Jacob, 2019), 2: 57–72.

46. E.g. in Book VIII: 'On Christmas Eve, whilst the women-folk were at vespers, and I was at the spiritual concert, the door of a garret, in which all our linen was hung up after being washed, was broken open. Everything was stolen; including forty-two of my shirts of very fine linen, and which were the principal part of my stock'. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions and Correspondence, Including the Letters to Malesherbes*, vol. 5 in *The Collected Writings*, ed. Christopher Kelly, Roger D. Masters, and Peter G. Stillman (Chicago IL: Dartmouth College Press, 1995), 305.

47. 'Madam de Beuzenval was a very good kind of woman, but of limited understanding, and too full of her illustrious Polish nobility: she had little idea of the considerations owed to talents. On that occasion she even judged me by my bearing rather than by my outfit, which, although very simple was extremely neat, did not represent a man made to dine with servants'. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, Book VII, 243.

48. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, Book VIII, 305.

49. Such as Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, *Les régles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (Troyes, 1703), quoted in Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the* Ancien Régime (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5–6.

50. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, Book VIII, 316–317.

> Armenian wardrobe; but the storm it excited against me made me put off its use to calmer times, and it was only several month later, that, being forced to have recourse to catheters again by new attacks of my disorder, I believed I could take up this new form of dress at Môtiers without any risk, above all after having consulted the pastor of the place, who told me I could even wear it to the temple without scandal. Thus, I put on the coat, caftan, the fur cap, and belt; and after having assisted to the divine service in this outfit, I did not see any unsuitability at all in wearing it to the Lord Marshal's.[51]

Although Rousseau's new dress was inconvenient for the social interactions in the eighteenth century, he persisted in following this practice, and portraits of him in his Armenian costume show that he succeeded in making this his signature garment.[52]

The philosopher's gradual abandonment of fashionable dress went hand in hand with the development of his ideas about man in the state of nature, first expressed in his *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (1755). One of the main arguments in this work is that people have lost the immediate contact with nature and therefore have found comfort in material goods. He saw luxury, with its artificiality and emphasis on abundance and technical development, as one of the negative effects of civilisation, separating man increasingly from his natural state while at the same time creating inequalities. Paula von Wachenfeldt concludes her analysis of the second *Discourse* in relation to luxury: 'Fashion and luxurious lifestyle create a master and slave morality, which increases moral and political inequalities in the society'.[53] Rousseau's attempt to rid himself of his dependence on luxuries might therefore also be seen as an attempt to come closer to the ideal natural state.

As much as Rousseau paid attention to clothing and its meaning in society, he did not, unfortunately, leave behind many comments about theatre costumes either generally or for his own plays. One rare exception is found in his novel *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), where he criticises the interference of fashion in scenic illusion:

> The comedians [...] paste French fashion over the Roman costume; you see Cornelia in tears caked with rouge, Cato powdered

51. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, Book XII, 502–503.

52. See the portraits by Allan Ramsay (1766, today in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery) and Étienne-Maurice Gérard (1778, today in the Public and University Library of Geneva).

53. Paula von Wachenfeldt, 'The Language of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century France', in *Fashion in Popular Culture: Literature, Media and Contemporary Studies*, ed. Joseph Hancock, Toni Johnson-Woods, and Vicki Karaminas (Chicago IL: Intellect/University of Chicago Press, 2013), 207–223: 217.

in white, and Brutus in a panier […]; since they only see the Actor in the character, they likewise see only the Author in the play, and if the costume is neglected that is easily forgiven; for they know full well that Corneille was no tailor and Crébillon no wigmaker.[54]

This remark is reminiscent of the criticism of the Parisian fashion and costumes aired by theatre artists Noverre and Clairon, and other contemporaries. Taking Rousseau's preference for a simple and modest style of dress into account, we can probably conclude that he would have been in favour of the costume reform described above, and that he might even have pushed it further.

## Dressing Pygmalion and Galathée – then

The previous sections show the complex social and aesthetic motivations that lay behind the cuts, draperies, and decoration of theatre costumes at the time of *Pygmalion*. Amidst the tensions between the striving for social prestige, the contemporary moral codes, and the call of the *philosophes* for more authentic theatrical costumes, the garments of the actors had to be made one way or another. In the case of *Pygmalion*, the contexts of each production affected the design of the costumes, and their potential effect on the public.

Rousseau had written the text of *Pygmalion* in 1762, but the music was not composed until 1770 when it would have its premiere at the Hôtel de Ville in Lyon. Maria Gullstam describes the circumstances of the premiere in chapter 7, 'Rousseau's *Pygmalion* as Research on Stage', but she found no information about the costumes worn by the first performers of Pygmalion and Galathée, Antoine Le Texier (1736–ca.1814) and Madame de Fleurieux. We therefore have to turn our attention to the two images from 1775, when *Pygmalion* was performed in both a private and a public setting in Paris.

In both images, the costume of the male protagonist is close to the period's understanding of 'historical' dress, with its turning away from contemporary dress and from the ornate 'Roman' costume traditionally worn in tragedies. This is clear from his loose tunic called

54. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie or the New Heloise, Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, tr. Philip Stewart and Jean Vache (Hanover NH and London: University Press of New England, 2010), 208.

*à la grecque*, possibly made of a simple, non-embroidered fabric, from the sash he wears around the waist, and from his sandals. However, both actors have long sleeves and white wigs, as was appropriate for contemporary noblemen. Messer's costume is perhaps more pompous than Larive's, with its rather old-fashioned fringes on the *tonnelet*. Larive, an actor at the Comédie-Française, was a protégé of Clairon, a disciple of LeKain, and a friend of Voltaire, and he is therefore likely to have followed the endeavours of his mentors more closely than the amateur Messer who preferred a more decorative look. An image of Larive in the role of Pygmalion from 1787 (Fig. 4) shows that he later progressed towards an even more truthful Greek costume, overcoming Clairon's concern that naked skin should not be shown on stage. In the 1787 image he has naked arms and short hair (possibly not a wig), and he wears a casually draped tunic, a dark mantle, and a headband similar to the one on Étienne Maurice Falconet's (1716–1791) sculpture of Pygmalion from 1763.

However, his partner on stage, Mademoiselle Raucourt, had a different agenda. As was noticed by Jean-François de La Harpe (1739–1803), a sharp-witted commentator from the time, who wrote about their performance in a letter to Count Schouwaloff in 1775:

> It is impossible to imagine a more seductive sight than this actress standing in posture on her pedestal in the moment when the veil that is hiding her is drawn aside. Her head was that of Venus, and her leg, half uncovered, that of Diana. […] A Greek would have advised her to sacrifice it to the Graces; good taste would have had to advise her to not play the statue in a *panier*: a *panier* is not ancient.[55]

Raucourt did not fashion herself as a nymph but as a 'goddess', aiming to show off her beauty and status as a principal actress; she even revealed part of her leg (which can also be seen on the engraving), perhaps in order to entice the audience. The desire to impress the spectators with her looks seems to have been stronger than the desire to represent a Greek statue, as suggested by her choice to wear a *panier* under her dress, as well as a tall hairdo, feathers, and flower garlands. The comment by La Harpe shows that such a costume

55. 'Il est impossible d'imaginer une perspective plus séduisante que cette actrice en attitude sur son piédestal, au moment où l'on a tiré le voile qui la couvrait. Sa tête était celle de Vénus, et sa jambe, à moitié découverte, celle de Diane […]. Un Grec lui aurait conseillé de sacrifier aux Grâces; le bon gout devait lui conseiller aussi de ne pas jouer la statue en panier: un panier n'est pas antique'. Jean-François de La Harpe, 'Lettre XXXIV, au Comte Schouwaloff', in *Œuvres De La Harpe, de l'Académie française, accompagné d'une notice sur sa vie et ses ouvrages*, ed. Pierre Tiffon de Saint-Surin, 16 vols. (Paris: Verdière, 1820), 10: 245–247. My translation.

**Figure 4.** [Janinet]: 'Costume de Mr. de La Rive / Rôle de Pygmalion'.
Engravings from *Costumes et annales des grands théâtres de Paris*, n.2,
1787. © Musik- och teaterbiblioteket, Stockholm, Litt. RAR 269:1–8.
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was already considered inappropriate: as he put it, the play takes place in ancient Greece, and 'the *panier* is not ancient'. Apparently, the absence of *paniers* for roles of this type was common: costume historian Diana de Marly mentions that, according to contemporary English stage practice, the representation of statues (e.g. the statue of Hermione in Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*) was the only occasion for actresses to abandon the hoop and perform in a loose skirt without support.[56] And yet, English and French approaches to everyday dress seem to have been quite different: the English preferred less formal, less decorated, and more practical attire.[57] Stage practice might therefore differ as well, the English being perhaps more tolerant of alterations (we recall that it was in London that Marie Sallé succeeded with her lightly dressed statue in *Pygmalion*, while the Parisian public could not accept it). Noverre, too, appreciated the 'truthfulness' of the English approach to stage costume, though he sometimes found it a bit too simple:

> The English are attached to a *costume* that is far more faithful than ours; their exactitude in this regard is extreme and their plays generally so well staged that the effect carries us away and the illusion is so perfect that it seems to concur with the truth. However, I have remarked that in some regards, they lack that of which we have too much; their costumes in some genres are too simple, too plain, and they don't make an effect at all.[58]

The costume of Madame Boissier, however, is in a much simpler style: a white dress with irregular drapery and a looser hairdo, which is more in line with the reform's idea of ancient costumes, while still respecting the rules of propriety. The general shape of her dress, with its traditional waistline, follows eighteenth-century fashion, and we cannot know if she wore a *panier* or not as we have no other evidence from the performances.

Another visual source that shows a costume for Pygmalion's statue, albeit not created for Rousseau's *scène lyrique*, is a costume design by Louis-René Boquet (Fig. 5), from a collection of drawings created

56. Diana De Marly's example is a painting by Robert Edge Pine from 1765, which shows Hannah Pritchard (1711–1768) as Hermione. See De Marly, *Costume on Stage*, 60.

57. Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, 100–101.

58. 'Les Anglois s'attachent à un costume bien plus fidéle que le nôtre; leur exactitude à cet égard est extreme; et il est des pieces généralement si bien mises, que l'effet en transporte et que l'illusion est si parfait, qu'elle semble se disputer à la verité. J'ai remarqué cependant qu'à certains regards il leur manqué ce que nous avons de trop; leur habits dans quelques genres sont trop simples, trop dégarnis, et ne font point d'effet'. Noverre, *Théorie et pratique*, 1: 243–244.

**Figure 5.** Louis-René Boquet and workshop: 'Statue de Pygmalion'. Ink drawing and watercolour on paper. 1791. © Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm, MS S254.2. License: CC BY-NC.

for the ballets of Jean-Georges Noverre.[59] This design for a ballet costume was probably made in the 1770s or 1780s. As discussed earlier, Noverre promoted a moderate reform of the costume: in his view, the ancient style should be suggested through the choice of colours and drapery. He fought against excessive decorations with garlands and ribbons and, most importantly, against the wide *paniers* that destroyed the illusion and obstructed the movements. But while he emphasised simplicity and lightness, he did not want to abandon the traditional silhouette of the female dress entirely. All this is reflected in Boquet's design: the loosely draped skirt and loose hair reveal the ideal of simplicity that Noverre strove for, and of which Rousseau would also probably have approved.[60]

## Dressing Pygmalion and Galathée – now

It was on the basis of this historical analysis that we created the costumes for our production of *Pygmalion* in t2: the twenty-first century. Taking into account Rousseau's aim for simplicity and naturalness, we worked towards costumes that were in line with the reform, and we were thus drawn to the 'Greek' style of Pygmalion's costume in the picture of Larive from 1787, with its avoidance of excessive decorations and the stiff-looking shapes and fabrics. However, we wanted to maintain the longer sleeves that were more typical of the 1770s. We avoided the powdered wig as the dark, short-haired wig for the ancient Greek sculptor corresponded to the eighteenth-century ideal of naturalness. The dress of Galathée, however, had to conform to the silhouette typical of the 1770s, with stays and skirt, which would have been unavoidable at the time of the premiere. But obviously without the *panier*. Only two small cushions (bum rolls) on the sides added volume to the skirt. She would also wear elbow-long sleeves that covered her shoulders and arms, in accordance with the rules of decorum. Galathée also wore a wig, which was only slightly dressed,

59. This collection was created in order to present Noverre's work to the Swedish King Gustav III in 1791, as the ballet master hoped to get a position at his court, and it is preserved in the Swedish Royal Library: *Habits de costume pour l'exécution des ballets de Mr. Noverre, dessinés par Mr. Boquet*, MS, 1791; S–Sk S254 2.

60. The daringly high slit and the bare feet of Boquet's figure should be understood as artistic licence, as they would not have been permitted on stage.

and decorated with simple flowers rather than feathers, garlands, or ribbons. Classical poetry and paintings provide nymphs – and Galathée is supposed to be a nymph – with flower garlands as an attribute of their idyllic pastoral milieu. On eighteenth-century images, we see the garlands in Galathée's hands and on her garment. We opted for the latter and placed the garland across her chest, as on Boquet's drawing. The aim was to make her appearance as simple as possible, dressed in white silk taffeta and with the drapery on her skirt imitating the drapery on Greek statues.

However, just as in the eighteenth century, the twenty-first-century production faced various organisational and financial challenges, necessitating compromise. For the first performance, at Český Krumlov in 2015, we needed to borrow the costumes from other institutions. Pygmalion's costume came from the deposits of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre, and while the shape of the tunic and the mantle suited our purposes, the short sleeves were too revealing for the period, and for the moderate approach to the costume reform that we were aiming for. The shape of Galathée's costume, however, which we borrowed from the Hartig Ensemble in the Czech Republic, perfectly suited our purposes: even if it was not executed according to historical sartorial practices (the bodice was not boned), it was made of light white silk with the drapery on top of the skirt.

The meeting between the historical stage set and the historically informed costumes finally occurred in the Český Krumlov theatre, constructed in 1766. The colours and shapes of the costumes fitted harmoniously into the setting: the painted flat wings and backdrop represented a sumptuous salon in yellow, brown, and grey, with touches of rose and green, equipped with pilasters, doors, and windows, and richly decorated with elegantly curved ornaments, including even a figural mural on the backdrop. Although this room seemed a little too grand for a sculptor's workshop, the placement of Galathée's white pavilion in the foreground limited the playing

area to a smaller space. Now Galathée's white and modestly draped costume emanated purity, its colour pointing to her being a statue similar to the actual stone statues that we had placed on the stage. The curves of her dress corresponded both with the draped curtains of her pavilion and with the ornamental decorations of the set. Pygmalion, in his simple tunic, did not stand out in this setting: the simplicity of his costume instead enabled the spectators to concentrate on his expression and gestures, its darker colour making him visually distinctive, as he was (through most of the performance) the only person moving on the stage. In this eighteenth-century theatre the performance demonstrated the value of the interconnection between the sets and the costume. The two artefacts, one from the past and one from the present (although based on historical sources), contextualised and supplemented each other, the curved shapes and carefully matched colours creating the visual harmony praised in numerous eighteenth-century sources (Fig. 6).[61]

Later, for the performances that took place at the House of Nobility and at Confidencen in Stockholm, we were able to make new costumes for the actors, thanks to the collaboration with tailor and designer Anna Kjellsdotter who specialises in eighteenth-century sartorial practices. She created Pygmalion's tunic in sand-coloured wool, shaped according to Larive's second picture (Fig. 6), but with long sleeves that had been rolled up casually (which seemed appropriate for a sculptor at work), brown woollen breeches and mantle, and dark sandals which laced up his calf. She added a cream-coloured silk *dupion* to the lining of the tunic's hem, a cordon, and two sashes of the same fabric to enhance the effect of the drapery. Galathée's costume consisted of a white, boned bodice made after eighteenth-century models, with folding sleeves made of very light, semi-transparent fabric (silk organza) in place of a shirt, a white petticoat of crisp taffeta, and an underskirt. The bodice was modestly decorated with one flower garland, and the skirt adorned with light organza drapery to underscore her Greekness. We also decided to

61. See e.g. William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (London: Reeves, 1753).

**Figure 6.** *Pygmalion* by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. State Castle Theatre of Český Krumlov, 2015. Photo: Libor Sváček ©. License: CC BY-NC.

keep the detail of the slightly raised front hem of the skirt, playfully revealing the ankles of the actress, which is a feature in all the visual and textual records of the costume. Given the erotic undertone of the play, this coquettish gesture on the part of the actress might contribute meaningfully to the performance.

The setting of the second performance, the grand hall of the historic House of Nobility from 1660, lacked the visual unity we had

experienced on the eighteenth-century stage in Český Krumlov, as this was not a theatrical stage. On the other hand, it may have been closer to the setting of *Pygmalion*'s premiere in 1770, Lyon's Hôtel de Ville, which is also a non-scenic space. Galathée's pavilion stood out in its whiteness and immediately attracted attention in the grand hall in Stockholm, with its small raised stage surrounded by dark walls covered with metal plates carrying the coats of arms of Swedish noble families. Pygmalion, in his sand-coloured tunic, was also visually distinctive in the dark surroundings (Fig. 7).

Our production of *Pygmalion* returned to the setting of an eighteenth-century theatre in 2019 at Confidencen. Even though this stage is a reconstruction from the twenty-first century, the period costumes matched with the painted flat wings and the soft lighting, again creating a harmony of colours and shapes. The set represented a salon with pilasters, doors, and an alcove crowned by an elegant curve, in the shades of beige and brown. It was similar to the set of the first performance at Český Krumlov although with a far more modest decoration of the walls, the effect suggesting the simplicity sought after by the reformers of the mid-eighteenth century. Furthermore, the depth of the stage was limited by a backdrop after the third pair of wings. This created a more intimate atmosphere after the grandeur of the House of Nobility. The pavilion was now placed towards the right-back corner of the stage, which gave Pygmalion more space and allowed him to direct his acting towards one side (Fig. 8). The different positioning of the pavilion in the various spaces offered the performer new possibilities to experiment with his placement and movements.

This performance was the final destination of a long journey that had started with looking at two old pictures over five years earlier. After reading about the fashions, costumes, and aesthetics of the period, and interpreting the visual and textual sources on the *scène lyrique*, we created actual costumes worn by actors on stage. The case of *Pygmalion* serves to demonstrate both the multiplicity of the theatrical meanings

**Figure 7.** *Pygmalion* by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. House of Nobility, Stockholm, 2016. Photo: Maria Gullstam ©. License: CC BY-NC.

**Figure 8.** *Pygmalion* by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. Ulriksdal Palace Theatre (Confidencen), 2019. Photo: Eva Frykevall ©. License: CC BY-NC.

and subtexts of a costume, and the importance of looking beyond the iconographical sources to understand them. This method has implications both for our understanding of the particular aesthetic of a historical work, and for the physical experience of the actors involved in a historically informed performance.[62] Historically informed costumes, particuarly when the performance is in a historical theatre, allow the audience to partake in a historical aesthetic experience that enriches their understanding of both the work and its period.

62. See chapter 6, 'Materiality in Action'.

# 9. Swimming in the Water of Theatrical Conventions: The Performers' Perspective

*Laila Cathleen Neuman & João Luís Paixão in conversation with Willmar Sauter & Magnus Tessing Schneider*

*The Performing Premodernity research project included several practical theatre activities, such as full operatic productions, workshops, and courses for singers and musicians. Two young artists participated in these activities: the baritone João Luís Paixão and the soprano Laila Cathleen Neuman, both of whom are based in the Netherlands. Their involvement with the project led them to continue their artistic research at PhD level. This interview was conducted online in December 2017.*

## Pygmalion

*The production of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's and Horace Coignet's* Pygmalion *from 1770 was the first time that Paixão and Neuman were involved in the project. The team that curated* Pygmalion *included costume researcher Petra Dotlačilová, Rousseau scholar Maria Gullstam, tailor Anna Kjellsdotter, dramaturge and theatre historian Magnus Tessing Schneider, conductor Mark Tatlow, and rhetoric teacher and theatre historian Jed Wentz. The production premiered in June 2015 in the Czech Republic, at the well-preserved theatre originally built in 1766 as part of the State Castle of Český Krumlov. In August 2015* Pygmalion *was revived for a performance in the grand hall of the historic House of Nobility in Stockholm, and again in 2016 as part of the annual conference of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR). In 2018 it was performed in the Utrecht Early Music Festival.[1]*

**Willmar Sauter (WS):** João, as a performer how did you process and respond to the historical information that Magnus, Maria, and Jed gave you concerning the original production of the work?

1. For videos of the performances at Český Krumlov and at Riddarhuset in 2015, and in Utrecht in 2018, see the homepage of Performing Premodernity: https://performingpremodernity.com/anthology/.

**João Luís Paixão (JLP):** In line with the work we had done with Jed on rhetorical *actio*, I tended to approach the action of *Pygmalion* from the outside, while at the same time trying to identify internally the causes behind every given expression. This is an ongoing process, of course, since we are not experts on eighteenth-century acting, though we are perhaps beginning to become more expert on some eighteenth-century acting techniques. The preliminary work on the piece also allowed me to try out various hypotheses regarding acting. Magnus' insights and views on eighteenth-century performance helped shape *Pygmalion*'s larger sections, and his eye for variety and contrast proved fundamental: it is dangerously easy, while handling unfamiliar acting skills, to fall into some kind of heavy and monotonous declamation style… Also, the original music for the piece proved to be an unsettling factor. The music fixes the pantomime and anchors the whole narration at certain key moments. We know that Rousseau put emphasis on the pantomimic passages, and on how they reveal certain intense, pathetic moments where words are insufficient. Since Mark, Jed, and I are all musicians, we are very susceptible to stimuli provided by the music, and the music sometimes highlights a specific passion over another, and sometimes surprisingly so, in a way that changed our vision and understanding of the text. Moreover, some particularly charged concepts, that are only graspable to those who have delved deeply into Rousseau's thought, turned out to change the course of the way we interpreted some scenes. For example, Maria's attentiveness to Rousseau's concept of *amour-propre*, with its negative connotations, radically affected the emotional tone in one of the scenes, from pity and self-indulgence to shame and aversion.

**WS:** Laila, how did the music make you react? Although as Galathée you were standing in a fixed position, you were nevertheless part of the performance, and you heard the music.

**Laila Cathleen Neuman (LCN):** It was a peculiar process of simultaneously trying both to be a part and not to be a part of the

**Figure 1.** Laila Cathleen Neuman (Galathée) and João Luís Paixão (Pygmalion) in *Pygmalion* by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. Ulriksdal Palace Theatre (Confidencen), 2019. Photo: Eva Frykevall ©. License: CC BY-NC.

performance. The music for Galathée's 'awakening' (Fig. 1) has a very light quality. It was difficult not to open my eyes, or to step down from the pedestal in the same rhythm as the music. This would have created a doll-like effect, which would have disturbed the emotional effect of João's performance. We rehearsed that scene many times so as not to destroy the effect of what went before. In every single performance, throughout the whole piece, the way João spoke, the way

the music was played, and the way he would strike me with the hammer, affected my internal motion, and the way that Galathée came alive. Was our short final dialogue a kind of marriage scene, in which Pygmalion and Galathée look into the future together, or is it their first encounter? Is the moment she comes alive the moment she wakes up, or is it the moment she is created?

**JLP:** In opera, the music and the text form a coherent whole, so one of the great challenges in *Pygmalion* – which must also have been a challenge in the eighteenth century – was to bring music and declamation into agreement. It took a long time to apply the musical parameters onto the text, such as making use of the whole range of my voice, giving the right length to certain syllables, using the monotone, emphases, or rhythm to intensify certain moments.

**WS:** You had to deal with many formal aspects when working on *Pygmalion*, but how did you arrive at your character?

**JLP:** My representation of the character may have been a bit superficial, admittedly, due to the necessity of searching for specific passions for each moment, and to the nature of the transitions from passion to passion, which took up most of my attention. I based some of my views of Pygmalion's character on mythological accounts such as those in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: the events preceding the action, Pygmalion's vows and subsequent moral struggles, his age and social status, etc. However, I am not sure whether Rousseau would have approved of this modern approach to character, where it is provided with more details than are given in the text. Also, there are some indications that the character of Pygmalion might have called for a single dominant passion throughout the play, or throughout larger sections. For example, one might be able to perform the entire role in a melancholy state while adding many nuances of passion, as opposed to performing the role in a kind of neutral state that allows for greater

contrasts between the passions. This interaction of Pygmalion's temperament and his passionate states is something that could be investigated further.

**WS:** Laila, how did Galathée become a character, given that her position was so different from Pygmalion's?

**LCN:** Practical circumstances – such as whether the stage is raked or not – end up influencing the way the character is performed. No matter what you may have thought about your character in advance, any performance should be allowed to create its own version of the character, in interaction with the audience. The most important thing was to figure out whether Galathée is alive before she wakes up. However, even that might change according to the way João's performance affected me. During the rehearsal process, I decided that I would not pretend that she doesn't breathe or blink, though I looked down as much as I could so that people would see my blinking less.

**WS:** Meike [Wagner, ed.] felt that the moment Pygmalion strikes the stones with his hammer was ridiculous, since the music simply repeats the sound of the strokes. I remember that people were laughing at this point, especially at Český Krumlov, although this effect is something Rousseau himself prescribes. Yet it created an interesting contrast to the moment when Pygmalion wants to strike the statue with his hammer, which he then drops (Fig. 2). This made a lot of noise, which gave me goose bumps. I don't think I would have experienced that contrast so strongly if it had not been for the 'ridiculous' hammering at the beginning.

**LCN:** The moment Pygmalion strikes Galathée is a moment when he loses control, and in the performance that moment might go wrong – he could strike her for real! – so I felt it much more strongly than it might have seemed from the outside. It was a moment when anything could happen.

**Figure 2.** João Luís Paixão (Pygmalion) and Laila Cathleen Neuman (Galathée) in *Pygmalion* by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. State Castle of Český Krumlov, 2015. Photo: Libor Sváček ©. License: CC BY-NC.

**JLP:** The combination of music and pantomime was probably the pinnacle of the art of acting in opera in the eighteenth century! Whereas today we associate pantomime with cartoons and clownery, and when we perform eighteenth-century operas, we tend to deliberately avoid these caricatures. Pantomime is an old tradition that was originally associated with more serious forms, but now has trickled down to what we regard as childish slapstick genres far removed from the

sublime passions. I think of the sublime passions as the door into eighteenth-century theatre. They call for emphatic body language. They are the only way to reach those peaks of expression.

**WS:** Let us go on to discuss the differences between performing at Český Krumlov and in the House of Nobility, with their different audiences, spaces, acoustics, and historical environments. What were your experiences, and what were the advantages and disadvantages of the two places?

**JLP:** Although Český Krumlov is a historical horseshoe theatre with an intimate acoustic, the visual and auditory experience did not seem to be in synch. The auditorium was darkened, which tended to make the audience disappear, and this led me more in the direction of fourth-wall acting. In the House of Nobility, on the other hand, we were trying to make a theatre out of a non-theatrical space, which perhaps was closer to that of the Hôtel de Ville in Lyon where *Pygmalion* was first performed. My gaze sometimes met that of a spectator, even when I was just scanning the audience. There were moments when I gained a lot from addressing the public directly.

## Drottningholm

*The two artists also collaborated with the research team in October 2016 during a workshop in the Drottningholm theatre (see chapters 2 and 3 in this volume, 'On a Praxeology of Theatre Historiography' and 'Aesthetic Historicity'). Instructed by Mark Tatlow, their first task was to test positions on stage in order to see and hear how various points in this theatre amplified or reduced the acoustics of the space. Two scenes from Mozart's operas* Le nozze di Figaro *(1786) and* Don Giovanni *(1787) were used to experiment with acoustic and visual effects, both for the performing artists and for the spectators attending*

*the workshop. In June 2016 the two artists illustrated stage effects during a lecture-performance by David Wiles, which was part of the conference of the IFTR (see chapter 13 in this volume, 'Presenting the Theatre of Drottningholm').*

**LCN:** The power of the 'magical' spot at Drottningholm, in the middle of the stage, where the acoustic, the light, and the visual angle are all perfect, is not to be underestimated. When I was not standing there, I immediately felt less important, less powerful.

**WS:** I was surprised by the scene with the Count and Susanna from *Le nozze di Figaro*, in which you moved to different positions, even if we know from the historical sources that it was done this way. I was stunned by the effect it had on me as an audience member: the difference was much greater than I had expected. The books suggest that it solely had to do with social standing – the highest-ranking character standing in the middle, etc. – which sounds somewhat mechanical. I always found it difficult to understand how such a positioning of the actors on stage, when they might not even be looking at each other, could move the audience to tears in a love scene. However, I felt the erotic tension instantly, even though you were standing quite far from each other. It was illuminating to see what the stage itself does to the characters appearing on it.

**LCN:** In eighteenth-century France and Holland there were few or no rehearsals before a performance of a piece from the standard repertoire, but since the performers mostly used staging positions in a semicircle, based on the ranking of the characters, it was possible to substitute an actor at short notice as they all knew where to stand. On the other hand, I learned that at Drottningholm, with its raked stage, and with its mechanical waves and thunder and lightning effects, you need to rehearse. One's singing, for instance, cannot be heard during an overlap with the thunder, and so one must choose the right moment for the sound effect.

**JLP:** I tend to think about these issues in terms of language. For example, you would never accuse German of being a less eloquent language because it lacks Portuguese words. Sometimes our demands on the theatrical conventions are unfair. I think the eighteenth-century audience would have felt very strongly if a certain duet was performed with the artists not standing in their usual positions. The actors worked instinctively: the conventions were the water they were swimming in. They would swim now in one direction, now in another, and they would do so gracefully.

**WS:** That is an interesting metaphor! The conventions are there to be altered, developed, and used in a dynamic way in the specific situation. Although they were fixed, they were dynamic: there was always room for the performer.

**JLP:** The dining room at the back of the theatre made a deep impression on me, and I always returned to it when I had the opportunity. Just imagine a whole family of actors, servants, and invited guests in that room, people who live and sleep in the building, while the sets are being carried inside through the big windows. And this happening with the courtiers attending all performances, and with Gustav III dropping by every day to check how the children's dance lessons were going, how that fencing scene was developing, etc. It must have been a very special experience to perform at home for your friends and masters, people you rubbed shoulders with every day, and going from your dining room to the set just ten metres away. You would not practice in some dry, uninspiring room before entering the illusion machine: you practised within the illusion machine itself! That sort of familiarity with the space and the court is inaccessible for us today, but it must have been an important aspect of the building for any dramatic artist at Drottningholm.

**WS:** It would have made a big difference for the audience as well, of course. We have to make that the topic of another workshop!

## Historically Informed Performance

*The principles and pitfalls of the Historically Informed Performance movement are discussed in chapter 4, 'Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance'. The artists next responded to their responses and experiences to this mode of production.*

**Magnus Tessing Schneider (MTS):** What are the advantages of historical acting principles for you as modern performers communicating with a modern audience?

**LCN:** I use my knowledge of the stage and the historical gestures in each of my performances. It involves an extended knowledge of one's body and the reactions of the public to what you express. Once you practice the effect of what you express – the use of your eyes and your gestures – you will know better how the audience may react, and it gives you the tools to learn a text easier. Even when rehearsing an oratorio, I use small aspects of historical acting techniques, for example in the way I enter the stage, or the way I bow in a certain dress. I can also see that it helps the students when they learn singing. It has to do with bodily awareness, but it's more than that: it is about practising the thoughts that come before you speak, and about the interconnections of your thoughts and your bodily expression. One of the problems with historical stagings is that the people who are asked to perform in them often lack the tools or the time to practise on the stage itself, or to work with the props, or to get to know the theatre, etc. If you practise these principles, they become natural, which is ultimately what the public wants. 'Naturalness' on stage has been an ideal throughout history, but the idea of what looks natural has changed.

**JLP:** What looks natural to someone who has been raised among kings and queens might look forced and unnatural to others.

**MTS:** So, are you trying to initiate the audience into a different version of naturalness?

**JLP:** Hopefully, people won't notice. It should not be forced on them too explicitly.

**WS:** Naturalness depends on what is natural in relation to what you do, what you think, and on what your character and your environment are like, even offstage.

**JLP:** It can look very awkward if we ignore the acting principles that are inscribed into an eighteenth-century, or even a nineteenth-century, opera. The declamation is prescribed by the composition, and I find it sadly lacking to regard it simply as 'touching music'. I think it is possible to turn these conventions into a language that speaks freely to us.

# 10. From the General to the Specific: The Musical Director's Perspective

*Mark Tatlow in conversation with Magnus Tessing Schneider*

*Mark Tatlow is one of the co-founders of Performing Premodernity, and its main artistic researcher. He has worked with historically informed performance practices for many years in his career as an opera conductor, pianist, and harpsichordist. He was artistic director of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre from 2007 to 2013. The interview was conducted in October 2021.*

**Magnus Tessing Schneider (MTS):** You were the only practising artistic member of the Performing Premodernity research, which was otherwise made up of theatre scholars. Could you try to sum up what you learned or took away from working with the group?

**Mark Tatlow (MT):** I have always been interested in how opera can find its voice within today's matrix of social and existential questions. And I have always felt that using historically informed performance practices enables the music to communicate more strongly. Others in the research group, though, were more accustomed to discussing the reaction of the audience. This caused me to think more about how communicating with the audience might become part of *preparing* as well as performing opera. Many singers think this way, but it had not been a central part of my musical background and experience. At Drottningholm, I never really felt that the audience grasped the powerful ideological statements contained within the works we performed. In *La clemenza di Tito*, for example, the qualities of compassion, mercy, and *pietà* are not always taken seriously.[1] I wanted the audience to be confronted with the fact that it *is* possible to forgive people; and that punishment is not the only solution. Performing

1. W. A. Mozart's 1791 opera was produced at Drottningholm in 2013 (ed.).

Premodernity gave me the desire to use historically informed performance as a means of reaching an audience dynamically, rather than as a way of recreating historically 'authentic' results.

**MTS:** Could you tell me more about your training and early experience as a performer, and about your professional path and the choices you have made, including how you became attracted to the Early Music and Historically Informed Performance movements?

**MT:** My early training was as a pianist and organist, then as a viola player, and I became interested in Baroque music through playing in string orchestras. At school I also founded a small Baroque ensemble, which I conducted. I studied musicology at university, concentrating on the whole of music history, but finding myself once again attracted to Baroque music. I remember feeling overwhelmed when listening for the first time to the opening of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*. I was about seventeen at the time and looking back I can see that this experience was an important part of my continued interest in early music, particularly in questions of performance practice. I found it exciting to hear the huge differences in recordings of early operas.

I then trained as a piano accompanist at the Royal Academy of Music, but I missed the intellectual stimulation and so as a complement to my practical studies I decided to do a Master's degree in musical analysis. I was still thinking in terms of performance, but from another angle: 'how does musical structure work on paper, as the composer wrote it down', rather than 'how does the musical structure work in time, as the performer realises it'. A friend then drew me into opera, and I trained as a répétiteur. After that there was no turning back. Working with opera brought together interests I didn't know I had. It combined language, theatre, teamwork, and the valuable experience of working on a wide repertoire, including of course early music. I was never attracted to pursuing the career of a 'twentieth-century conductor', because I was fascinated by too many different things.

I tried instead to choose musical environments where there was an opportunity to develop the sort of performances that I was interested in. Many of the ideas that I'm still developing today come from my time at Kent Opera and at Drottningholm. What attracted me to Kent Opera (the first company I worked with) was the fact that all the conductors there – people like Iván Fischer, Roger Norrington, and Arnold Östman – were interested in opera as a theatrical as well as a musical whole. There was a close working relationship between them and their stage directors, an approach emphasised by the vision of the founder of the company, Norman Platt. He had three tests that he applied to each opera he considered performing: 1) Could the written text be performed as a play? 2) Could the music be listened to as a concert? And 3) Could the conventions of the opera be recreated for a modern audience? Kent Opera always performed in English. We toured, and we did educational work with young people who had never attended opera before. There was a pioneering spirit in the company, and an egalitarian sense that those behind the scenes were no less important than those on stage or in the pit. All were interested in realising Platt's vision, and though the singers were excellent actors, few were international stars. At Drottningholm, where I became Östman's assistant, first working as répétiteur and later as chorusmaster, I found a similar attitude to the relationship between acting and singing, text and music, and to the flexibility of the music, even though there was an extra level of complexity as a result of performing in the original language.

**MTS:** As a musician who has been active for many years within the Early Music movement, you have inevitably worked with a lot of different types of historical sources. Could you tell me about how your relationship with historical sources has developed over the years, and about what types of historical sources you draw on as a performer?

**MT:** It is an ever-increasing list. Having started out by learning the basics of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century performance practice,

I gradually became interested in more specific areas and have now begun to focus on how to be informed historically about individual pieces. I began by thinking of 'historical sources' as what could be contained in an *Urtext*[2] and its critical commentary. I imagined that if I used an *Urtext* everything else would fall into place, an approach that I quickly realised was simplistic and ineffectual. Firstly, when I started working with Italian language coaches, I began to understand that the way in which you pronounce the language alters the way in which you play the music, even if the changes are very small: the colour of a vowel here, a double consonant there… Slowly but surely I realised that working on the text in this way transformed the singing, and in turn altered the way I understood the music. Secondly, when I attended a performance at Drottningholm for the first time, I suddenly understood the meaning of the word *Verwandlung*[3] which I had seen in my German-language Mozart scores: the transformation of the sets was visible right in front of me, and it even fitted with the music! Even now I can feel the excitement of that moment, as I realised: 'This theatre is a historical source'. These realisations built on earlier moments too. During my training in London, a movement teacher had introduced me to other material aspects of theatrical performance, such as the relation between costume and music. And then I did a research project on Gluck in Paris, where I became interested in sources that described both how people sang and the effect of their singing on the audience. Most recently within Performing Premodernity, it was your work on librettos, Magnus, which contextualised my earlier interest in pronunciation. I became more interested in the ideology, the values, the notion of the uniqueness of a particular work – for example, the matter of compassion (*pietà*) in relation to *La clemenza di Tito*, which I mentioned earlier.

**MTS:** Speaking of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre as a historical source, could you tell me some more about what you have learned about eighteenth-century performance practice from working there?

2. That is, a printed edition of a work of classical music, which is intended to reproduce the original intentions of the composer as exactly as possible (ed.).

3. That is scene change, literally 'transformation' (ed.).

**MT:** The theatre and its stage machinery – including its sounding machinery, such as the wind machine – are not unlike instruments in the orchestra, although they contribute to the overall spectacle in a different way, creating a complex physical environment that demands a response from the performers. When singers come to work at Drottningholm, they often find that they need to choose a different set of nuances to those they use in a modern theatre. At first these seem to restrict them, for example: 'Don't sing so loudly! The room won't take it!' But the softer nuances open up areas of expression that singers seldom have the chance to explore in standard theatrical acoustics. While we were rehearsing an aria in *La clemenza di Tito*, for example, Richard Croft[4] – who had a great deal of experience in Drottningholm in the 80s and early 90s – said to the orchestra: 'Look, in this theatre I can sing extremely quietly, and know I will be heard'. After demonstrating how quietly he could sing, he added: 'You can also play that quietly!' This was to insist on choosing a dynamic for the sake of the sound of the emotion, an emotion that required a particular dynamic – and it was the theatre that enabled it. The acoustic conditions also affect the staging, requiring the director to take account of how the sound reaches the audience; you could say that the stage picture becomes a sound picture. This is where the historical books on staging with information about the direction of the face, gestures, lighting, etc., begin to make sense as practical guidelines to enable singers to communicate with the audience. The orchestra often serves as an essential accompaniment rather than as the chief focus of attention. As conductor, I have also learned not to insist when the theatre suggests something else: I follow and see what works best. You find out where this leads and you take the consequences of what you discover; it usually gives rise to interesting and valuable artistic results. Ultimately, these are things you have to explore and experiment with in rehearsal and even in performance.

**MTS:** In the 1980s Dene Barnett drew on eighteenth-century manuals in gesturing and public speaking when he attempted to establish

4. The American tenor who sang the title role in 2013 (ed.).

his principles of eighteenth-century acting. You mention how such historical books on staging can provide 'practical rules' for modern performers working in historical theatres. Could you tell me about how you conceive of the relation between musical and bodily expression?

**MT:** When I went to the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis[5] for a few weeks in the mid-1980s to study vocal performance practice, I worked through Dene Barnett's articles on gesture. I wanted to find out if there was a historical connection between how the music sounds, how it 'looks' on the page, and the gestures that were used by the singers. Some scholars locate musical meaning in sound alone, but for me the sounds create visual images that connect to the movements of the singers, and even those of instrumentalists. I find this to be particularly the case in works from the late eighteenth century. Haydn, for example, intended visual images to be evoked by his music, often in relation to the text or to the title of the composition. These images, or rather qualities of images, especially in vocal music, relate to the forms of physical gesture that naturally accompany a particular word or musical shape. I have often felt that today's operatic singing is too undifferentiated: even individually beautiful voices tend to sound the same; maybe this is because singers do not always respond with their voice and their gesture to the particular moment, the specific word, or the explicit musical shape, but rather tend to concentrate on more general emotions.

**MTS:** You have worked with many opera directors and choreographers from within the Historically Informed Performance movement, at Drottningholm and elsewhere, particularly during the last ten years or so. You have also worked with more 'traditional' directors. Do you see differences between them?

5. The Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Basel focuses on early music and historically informed performance (ed.).

**MT:** I don't place the divide between stage directors who are 'historically informed' and those who aren't. But I do feel a difference

between directors who are interested in what it means to *act* a particular moment, and those more interested in which *gesture* to add. For example, I think that in the productions of Göran Järvefelt,[6] historically informed movements were placed at the service of the contemporary communicative moment. This contrasts with the notion that 'the opera will communicate better if we perform it with historical gestures since that is the way it was done at the time'. I have always looked to work with directors, performers, and musicians who see the 'surface' aspects of the performance as proceeding from the inner motivations of the character. In the rehearsal room I also look for a correspondence between the way in which the singers sing and move on stage and the way in which the music 'moves'. It is possible to phrase and articulate the music in a way that aims to reflect how artists sang and moved on stage in the eighteenth century. It has to do with how they acted. In this sense, musical expression becomes a result of musical acting, just as bodily expression is a result of bodily acting, and the two are intimately connected. This is one reason why I find the art of so-called 'concert singing', in which 'acting' doesn't figure, increasingly unsatisfactory. A singer can choose to remain still or to move more vigorously even when singing something as dramatic as Schubert's *Erlkönig*. What is important is that in every circumstance, both body and voice are engaged in expressing the text as well as in singing the notes.

**MTS:** You mentioned earlier that your relationship with the sung text, the opera libretto, has evolved during your career. Can you tell me more about what working on specific works within Performing Premodernity caused you to realise?

**MT:** As I mentioned earlier, I have been interested in the musical declamation of words for a long time, but only recently become more interested in the quality of the libretto as a whole. A well-constructed libretto, and even the words of a particular aria, can inspire the

6. Göran Järvefelt (1947–1989) directed numerous opera productions at Drottningholm in the 1980s (ed.).

dramaturgical instincts of the composer. Composers seem to write better music when they work with a well-constructed libretto. Our study of specific works within Performing Premodernity – such as Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto*, Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, Gluck's *Paride ed Elena*, Morandi's *Comala*, and the arias written for the original performer of Don Giovanni, Luigi Bassi, by composers other than Mozart – made me realise that the musical formulation of the composer's ideas is completely dependent upon the words and structure of the libretto. I find this important because it is the opposite of how such repertoire has often been taught. 'Listen to the music first, learn the melody, and then put the text to it'. It made a huge impression on me when I heard Barbara Bonney say in a masterclass that she never listened to a song or aria before she had analysed the text and learned it by heart. Only then did she listen to the music to find out what the composer had done with the text. This is to follow how composers work: they read the text, speaking it, and trying to understand it before writing the music. Singers of the past too would have read the libretto first, often because the music had not yet been written! When they then received the music there may have been some wonderful moments of surprise: 'Wow, there is so much more in this text than I had realised!' Singers were then free to add their own nuanced understanding of the words by ornamenting them or employing special vocal colours.

**MTS:** And this takes us back to the communicative aspect of opera…

**MT:** It is often said that opera is a hybrid, consisting of different elements. But in the theatre, I believe you should experience it as a unity, not just as a piece of music with other things added. The performers should encapsulate the meanings they wish to communicate with the audience in a rich, moment-by-moment flow. As I have implied, I was taught to work on the words last. The director seldom discussed the pronunciation and precise meaning of the words: that was

**Figure 1.** Mark Tatlow rehearsing at the Drottningholm Palace Theatre. Photo: Bo Ljungblom ©. License: CC BY-NC.

the role of the language coach. Within Performing Premodernity I learned that the words really are a central part of the way the eighteenth-century repertoire was both put together and performed. Since leaving Drottningholm, I have tried this out in a completely different context, on classes of late-teenage music students from Musikskolan Lilla Akademien in Stockholm.[7] In my lessons, we regularly study the text and its translation before we listen to the music of a song or an aria. We ask simple questions such as: How might a composer set this text? Major or minor key? Slow or fast? Duple- or triple-time? What images in the text do you think the composer might have used? When we finally listen to the original music there are always some who say: 'But how could the composer have written *that*?' Or: 'That was amazing! I would never have thought of that solution!' Immediately, they are thinking creatively as a composer would, and responding to the text idiomatically rather than simply accepting what's on the page. Their next step is to understand that the composer presents the

7. https://lillaakademien.se/gymnasium (accessed 23 March 2023).

performer with a first interpretation of the text, and the performer needs to grasp this before adding his or her own interpretative insights to further enrich the performance. The challenge is to learn how to move from a general to a more specific and personal interpretation.

**MTS:** And that takes us finally to the question of the 'uniqueness' of the work…

**MT:** In our discussions within Performing Premodernity I was concerned to try to define the common style of late eighteenth-century music, whereas you often spoke about the concept of uniqueness. And the more I have thought about this, the more I agree with you. It is all about trying to move away from the general towards the specific. For example, to move away from the stock stylistic features that concern the basis of singing in duple- or triple-time, how to use *portamento*,[8] how to perform an *appoggiatura*,[9] etc. towards an understanding of how each of these features can enrich a particular context. Working on these things builds an expressive toolbox that can be used in ways that are unique for each musical moment.

8. That is, to carry the voice from one note to another (ed.).

9. That is, a note that leans on the penultimate, stressed syllable of a word (ed.).

# PART C:
# Performing on the
# Drottningholm Stage

# 11. An Aesthetics of Absence: *Don Giovanni* at Drottningholm, August 2016

*Willmar Sauter*

Expectations are usually high when an audience takes their seats in the 'candlelit' auditorium of the Drottningholm theatre from 1766. The candles are of course not real candles, but the famous electric Drottningholm candles with flickering flames, invented in the 1960s specifically for this theatre. Irrespective of the kind of performance they have come to see, the atmosphere of this historic room holds the audience in its grip. They watch the curtain with the portrait of Queen Louisa Ulrika, represented as the goddess Minerva and combined with the queen's name cipher; they observe the musicians in the orchestra pit, eagerly awaiting the knocking on the stage floor that will announce the beginning of the performance.

In August 2016 the spectators entering the auditorium to see Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* noticed that the curtain was already up – they immediately saw performers on the stage. The performers were sitting at four dressing tables placed along the sidewalls of the proscenium arch. The tables were equipped with antique mirrors and candles, thus alluding to the time when this theatre first was used. The costumes of the performers too were reminiscent of the late eighteenth century, marking the period during which this opera was written (1787). The performers moved about, spoke to each other, adjusted small details of their costumes in the same way that Ariane Mnouchkine had let her actors create an atmosphere of theatricality in the 1980s. We, the audience, understood that the singers on stage were not there as private persons but were rather performing the performers. I was wondering what kind of performers I had in front of me: were they representing themselves in today's world or were they acting as singers from the time of Mozart, or were they maybe acting

as travelling performers of a *commedia dell'arte* troupe? The latter association was brought to mind because of the movable podium or box that occupied the entire stage of the Drottningholm theatre.

## The box on the stage

Instead of the usual perspectival set of flat wings, the spectators saw a podium, about one metre high, with stairs on each side of the front (Fig. 1). The depth of the podium stretched from the first to the fourth pair of wings and was almost as wide as the proscenium. On the podium was some scaffolding made of 14 beams about four metres high and connected with a horizontal construction, from which movable curtains were hanging. These hangings were meant to indicate night – they were dark blue with signs of stars in the manner of a Baroque sky map.[1] The curtains could be pulled aside and several times during the performance they were torn down and carried away by the singers. There were two opening sliding 'doors' at the front of the podium that enabled the performers to creep in under the podium and hide from other characters.

In some ways, this podium was reminiscent of the stage that travelling *commedia dell'arte* troupes would have brought along. And this indeed was part of its stated purpose: it was to be moved to Paris for performances in Versailles. The original Drottningholm stage could not be seen. The designer Antoine Fontaine did not even make use of the wings and/or the backdrop as a background; absolutely nothing of the Drottningholm stage was visible except for the flies that were hanging high above the box on stage. Initially the box was closed by a whitish-grey curtain that could be opened in the middle.

The prelude came to an end when the conductor Marc Minkowski appeared in the orchestra pit. He wore a black shirt, as all the musicians did. This made them 'invisible', i.e. not part of the stage action, as the musicians tend to be when dressed in colourful coats and

1. According to the programme notes.

**Figure 1.** Act 1 finale from *Don Giovanni* by W. A. Mozart. From left: Chiara Skerath (Zerlina), Marie-Adeline Henry (Donna Elvira), Jean-Sébastien Bou (Don Giovanni), Krystof Baczyk (Masetto), Robert Gleadow (Leporello), Stanislaus de Barbeyrac (Don Ottavio), Ana Maria Labin (Donna Anna). Director: Ivan Alexandre. Stage design and costumes: Antoine Fontaine. Drottningholm Palace Theatre, 2016. Photo: Mats Becker ©. License: CC BY-NC.

powdered wigs. Nevertheless, this conductor was very visible. He stood with his back right in front of the royal chairs and his fierce gesturing demanded the attention of the audience.

All the characters disappeared, except for Leporello, played by Robert Gleadow, who waited for the emphatic chord that opens the

overture. In fictional terms, Leporello is waiting for Don Giovanni who, somewhere behind the curtains, has his rendezvous with Donna Anna. Gleadow's enactment of Leporello's impatience and boredom created more associations with the *commedia dell'arte*. He treated the audience to a special *lazzo* when he placed two chairs in front of each other and tried to find a lying position on them in order to get some sleep. At the end of the overture, he fell off the chairs, and still stretched out on the floor began his grumbling aria, 'Notte e giorno faticar'. The Canadian baritone Robert Gleadow proved to be the real entertainer of this production.

Don Giovanni appeared through the curtain of the podium, followed by Donna Anna, and finally by the Commendatore. The duel that, according to the libretto, Don Giovanni initially refuses to fight, occurred behind another curtain, invisible to the audience, so that we could not know whether Don Giovanni was acting in self-defence, or if he murdered the Commendatore in cold blood when he was challenged. The recitatives were sung within the stage box until Don Giovanni jumped down onto the proscenium and disappeared from the stage with Leporello.

## Box effects

Already at this early point of the performance the effects of this 'box on stage' were observable, and they would become increasingly noticeable as the evening progressed. The box clearly disturbed the visual experience of the stage as well as impacting the audial conditions of the theatre. In other sections of this anthology the different options offered by conservative, historically informed (so-called HIP) productions, and by the director-dominated *Regietheater* are discussed, and some theoretical tools offered.[2] The model of Aesthetic Historicity directs historiography and practice towards the differences between the then and the now. It enables traces of the past to be used to create contemporary performances that take advantage of historical knowledge

2. See 'Aesthetic Historicity' (chapter 3), and Magnus Tessing Schneider, 'Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance' (chapter 4).

to revive artefacts and works from earlier periods. Well aware that there are no ideal solutions, it is obvious that every period has to find ways of reconciling the past with the present as a particular gift to artists and audiences. The 2016 *Don Giovanni* production provides a useful illustration of the difficulties that arise when the given conditions of a historical theatre are ignored.

The original preserved eighteenth-century stage machinery and thirty complete sets of flat wings and backdrops make the Drottningholm theatre unique in the world, which raises the question of whether one can feasibly mount a production in which neither the wings nor any *changement à vue* are displayed. There have in the past been directors who have treated the Drottningholm stage in ways that are hardly in concord with the historicity of the theatre. In recent years we have seen a stage stripped bare of the flat wings,[3] or the original wings substituted by black- or white-painted wings,[4] or practicable doors that have been screwed right onto the stage floor,[5] or the backdrop and the wave machine removed to allow for a view of an empty corridor.[6] There is probably a temptation for modern opera directors to prove that productions at Drottningholm need not follow the given historical stage arrangement, and to transform it into a 'postmodern' conundrum. Whatever we might think of these experiments – some applauding the fresh attitude, others finding it an inappropriate use of the old theatre – there was in these earlier productions at least some nod towards the history of the existing stage. Even though the directors were anxious not to create a 'museum' they were aware of the specificities of the space they were working in. This awareness was lacking in the construction of the box that Marc Minkowski, stage designer Antoine Fontaine, and director Ivan Alexandre had created. The Drottningholm stage in this production was completely invisible.

There were two motivating reasons for constructing this box. Over three consecutive years the same set was to be used for the production of the three operas with Lorenzo Da Ponte's librettos set to music by Mozart. In 2015, the box for *Le nozze di Figaro* was decorated with

3. The second act of Mozart's *Mitridate*, 2014.

4. The beginning of Mozart's *Idomeneo*, 2014.

5. Domenico Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto*, 2013.

6. Jean-Philippe Rameau's *Zoroastre*, 2006.

white curtains, in the 2016 *Don Giovanni* the curtains were changed to night-blue, while in the 2017 *Così fan tutte* they featured motives of playing cards. In effect this meant that the Drottningholm stage was hidden for three years, including the anniversary of the theatre in 2016.[7] The other reason for the box was its mobility. Marc Minkowski wanted to travel with the production to the Royal Opera of Versailles, where he conducted his own orchestra. All three productions were moved to Paris and other locations. They were designed and intended for global commercial consumption and became an enormous financial success. The box stage was a packaged commodity containing a homogenised opera product, stripped of any character and differences that a local stage might require. The Drottningholm stage paid the price. To me the box was a poor solution to both the three-year cycle of the Mozart-Da Ponte operas and to the question of mobility. Any theatre space other than Drottningholm would have been more suitable and preferable for such a 'boxed' production.[8]

The visual unity of the Drottningholm theatre relies on an exact balance between stage and auditorium. The chairs for the king and the queen constitute the absolute centre of the house. During the reign of Gustav III (1771–1792), the court aristocracy sat in hierarchical order behind the king, while the stage displayed the fictional order of the world, strictly symmetrical with a perspectival point in the distance. The stage mirrored the auditorium. Today, the hierarchical order is decided by the price of the tickets, but the harmony between stage and auditorium is still experienced by spectators and artists. The box weighed down the stage and unbalanced the distinct symmetry of the room.

The Drottningholm theatre is famous for its sightlines. These depend in part on the unusual seating arrangement – with benches parallel to the footlights on the raked floor – which allows all spectators an unimpaired view of the stage. No columns, no balconies, no seats to the sides of the auditorium, from where only half of the scenery would be visible. This exceptional seating has its equivalent on stage, where the flat wings create the dynamic perspective of fictional

7. The Friends of the Drottningholm Theatre valued the anniversary sufficiently to commission and finance a new opera, *Rokokomaskineriet* (The Rococo Machinery), in which the theatre plays the leading role. The text was written by Tuvalisa Rangström and the music by Jan Sandström.

8. As Per Feltzin mentioned in his radio review (15 August 2016), the same production could just as well have been given at Södra Teatern, a Stockholm theatre from 1852 that has been modernised numerous times.

spaces, whether it is a hall in a castle, a pleasant garden, or a cave in the Underworld. The harmony of the stage decorations implies an amazing potential for the positioning of characters. The symmetry of the sets empowers the performers and their fictional characters; it both directs their relationships and enhances the attention of the spectator.[9] The eighteenth-century stage conventions took advantage of such powerful positionings. Although we would not wish to slavishly imitate these historical arrangements, it seems mandatory for any director to take time to find the particular spots on stage that give the best projection into the auditorium.

It is clear that the 'Da Ponte box' gave extremely limited access to the advantages and potential of the original Drottningholm stage. The singers had two basic acting areas: the floor of the proscenium arch and the upstage podium. The acoustic differences between these spaces will be commented on below. Because of the box, the blocking and the singers' positioning on stage created numerous problems; the singers were constantly climbing up and down the stairs that connected the two areas – some more agile singers even jumping down – which involved movements away from the footlights, up onto the podium, further back on the podium and its textiles, and back again down to the footlights. While the theatre was built for movements running parallel with the footlights, in this production the main direction of the blocking was upstage and downstage. Furthermore, as most of the movements were carried out at a high speed, the main impression of the performance was a continuous, exhausting 'up-and-down'. Mozart's characters were not even allowed to stand still during their arias; instead, they moved from one place to another. The space under the podium, reached through the sliding doors, added to the up-and-down impression of the movements.

Regarding the colours of the costumes, the set designer had chosen to restrict the colours to black, grey, brown, and white. The exception to these 'natural' colours was Don Giovanni's brownish-red coat, although he rarely wore it. In addition, the materials of the dresses

9. For a more extensive report on the research group's workshop at Drottningholm, which exemplifies these characteristics of the stage, see chapters 2 and 3 in this volume: Meike Wagner, 'On a Praxeology of Theatre Historiography', and Willmar Sauter, 'Aesthetic Historicity'.

were predominantly cotton and wool, i.e. materials that absorb the light rather than reflect it. Consequently, the stage light had to be bright, requiring added spotlights, despite the nocturnal setting of much of the plot. Even in this respect the historical balance was lost, with the gentle candle-imitating light of the auditorium and the now stark light beams on stage.[10]

## Space and resonance

The box on the stage also had serious consequences for the vocal delivery of the singers. The Drottningholm stage is itself an extremely sensitive sound system. Any experienced singer who has worked at Drottningholm will immediately confirm this. There are so-called sound spots from which the voice carries out into the auditorium, whereas other positions on stage are difficult. The proscenium arch functions as an amplifier of the voice, while the flat wings swallow the sound before it reaches the audience. This means that the further back the singer stands, the louder the voice has to become to compensate for the inherent acoustic. If the singer is unaware of these conditions, the voice will sound weaker. Similarly, when a singer turns to another person on stage the sound ends up in the wings. When a singer – or an actor, for that matter – moves too close to the footlights, the amplifying effect of the proscenium arch is lost, and the voice drops into the orchestra pit.

The box at Drottningholm further complicated these given material conditions of the stage. While the wooden podium could function as an extra resonance chamber, this was counteracted by the textiles of the box. And although we could not see the flat wings on the stage, they were still there, absorbing the sound waves. Thus, the positioning of the singers on stage would become essential for the acoustic success of the production.

The singers were placed by the director in one of four or five positions. The best position was definitely in the middle of the proscenium

10. In chapter 6, 'Materiality in Action', Petra Dotlačilová presents the results of the project's workshop devoted to costumes and candlelight.

arch, approximately where the stage curtain would go down. Here the singer could make full use of the proscenium's amplifying effect. If the singer got closer to the footlights, the voice became weaker. When Leporello began the opening aria in this position, he spoke almost privately to the audience. Don Giovanni, performed by Jean-Sébastien Bou, moved into this position during one of his arias and as a result his voice changed colour completely. The effect was even more difficult for the audience when the performer stood on the side of the proscenium rather than in the middle. All in all, the proscenium was the preferable position when compared to singing from the podium.

As long as a singer stood right at the front of the podium, the sound projection was fairly satisfactory. Don Ottavio, sung by Stanislas de Barbeyrac, took up this position where he remained standing throughout his long aria in the second act and therefore managed to stay in contact with the audience. Donna Anna, performed by Ana Maria Labin, likewise sang her arias from this point, receiving enthusiastic applause. In line with the first pair of movable wings, this position usually guarantees high sound quality and direct contact with the auditorium.

Clearly the situation became more complicated the further back on the podium the singer appeared. This was made especially difficult because the voice was muffled by all the surrounding textile curtains and by the painted wings to the side, and because the performer could not hear the orchestra properly. This made the singer utterly dependent upon the conductor. This lack of coherence between singer and orchestra was often audible, and it was visible throughout in the conductor's exaggerated gestures towards the stage.

Mozart's opera is full of ensembles which are extremely sensitive to the positioning of the singers. Several duets used a constellation with one singer standing on the proscenium, and the other one standing on the box. During the duettino 'Là ci darem la mano' and its preceding recitative, Don Giovanni began on the proscenium, while Zerlina remained on top of the podium. There was no contact between them

and their voices had very different sound qualities. Don Giovanni then moved up to the podium, the voices became more equal, but there was still no contact between them. Don Giovanni moved down to the footlights, where his voice dropped, but then he returned to the podium to hold Zerlina's hand.[11] A similar discrepancy between various sound qualities could be observed in trio sections where the singers were placed on and off the podium, both far upstage and very close to the footlights. In these scenes, the orchestra tended to play too forcefully, which meant that the upstage figures were marginalised acoustically as well as visually.

These examples serve to illustrate the visual and audial difficulties caused by the boxed stage. The choice of putting a box on the Drottningholm stage was not only a matter of taste. It significantly disrupted and reduced functions embedded in this particular theatrical space.

## Stage equipment

The sliding doors in front of the podium enabled characters to crawl under the podium and hide from other characters on stage. This raised the questions of which characters should crawl in there and what they were doing there.[12] The first time the sliding doors were opened, Don Giovanni and Zerlina were hiding there because Donna Anna and Ottavio were looking for him. We do not know what Don Giovanni and Zerlina were doing in their hideout, but they were there for quite some time. Two different considerations seem to be relevant here. Firstly, the space under the podium was a confined room with no exits other than through the sliding doors. This was in sharp contrast to the eighteenth-century stage: the spectator has no idea where the character is going when a person exits between two flat wings; we do not know what happens behind the wings. Whereas in the case of the podium and the sliding doors it was obvious that Don Giovanni and Zerlina had to stay close to each other. Leporello and Donna Elvira

11. See chapter 2, 'On a Praxeology of Theatre Historiography', for Meike Wagner's analysis of a performance of the same duettino during one of Performing Premodernity's workshops.

12. I am following the actions on stage, not Da Ponte's libretto.

were involved the next time the sliding doors were opened. Leporello, who very much wished to be like his master – something he states several times in the course of the story – had exchanged coat and hat with Don Giovanni. In order to get rid of Donna Elvira, Leporello had to pretend to be her lover, her Don Giovanni. When she came down from the podium and threw herself into Leporello's arms, he was quick to open the sliding doors and disappear with her. Again, the couple spent a long time in the confined room.

The sliding doors were therefore not a simple device for hiding characters; they added strongly to the characterisation of the persons who disappear. This is not the place for an analysis of the characters of this performance. Let these examples suffice as a pointer towards the significance of the podium's construction for the interpretation of the opera's characters. What was implied as ambiguous erotic games behind the flat wings of a historical theatre, were now turned into trivial statements by the box.

As a stage figure Don Giovanni was rather marginalised in this production. It is no wonder, therefore, that both the ending with the stone guest and the final scene proved to be very conventional: the 'bad guy' Don Giovanni was punished for his sins. In his pre-performance introduction, Magnus Tessing Schneider had spoken about the parody of church music at the opera's conclusion, but in this production, there was nothing grotesque about either the music or the marble statue. The only grotesque aspect of the ending, albeit unintentional, was Don Giovanni's descent into hell: in a theatre full of trapdoors, Don Giovanni on the podium had to be hidden away behind a large grey-beige cloth.

## Aesthetic choices

Mozart's music was certainly a sensuous experience for many listeners. Some of the arias in *Don Giovanni* have become hits in the world of classical music. The story of Don Juan has fascinated

writers and composers ever since the early seventeenth century. Modern research suggests that Mozart and Da Ponte were aiming at a new interpretation of the myth, away from sins and punishment and towards the bright vision of the Enlightenment.[13] The music speaks of this light, Don Giovanni dreams/sings of liberty, and Zerlina breaks the ties of rural conventions.

Very little of the enlightened venture of *Don Giovanni* was to be found in the box that the French team had placed on the Drottningholm stage. What kind of aesthetics did this stage represent? As mentioned above, the podium stage with its textile curtains was reminiscent of the mobile stages taken from place to place by travelling *commedia dell'arte* troupes. There are paintings from the seventeenth century that depict this type of provisional stage in the marketplaces of rural towns. There were other elements in the performance that strengthened the association with Italian comedy. First and foremost, Robert Gleadow, who turned his Leporello (i.e. 'little hare') into an entertaining Arlecchino figure, full of life, quick, and constantly on the move. He also moved the plot forward. Another *commedia* aspect was the mobility of the stage actions, the climbing of stairs, the crawling under the podium, the jumping and fighting on stage. Although these continuous movements might have been tiring at times – for both performers and spectators – they linked the performance to a *commedia* tradition (which, as far as we know, Da Ponte disliked). However, *commedia dell'arte* was colourful, whereas *Don Giovanni* at Drottningholm was colourless.

The black-brown-grey-white colour scale was as far away from *commedia* as it is possible to go. It was like a print rather than a watercolour. The French production was eclectic when compared to the *commedia* tradition. Elements of travelling theatre were also brought to mind in the curtains with the star maps and a sketch of Don Giovanni's castle. The costumes to some extent related to eighteenth-century fashion – maybe this was intended to reflect Mozart's

13. See for instance Magnus Tessing Schneider, *The Original Portrayal of Mozart's Don Giovanni* (London: Routledge, 2021): https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429281709 (accessed 23 March 2023).

time, but it turned out to contribute little to the characterisation of the persons wearing them. The production was neither historically informed nor did it historicise the myth.

Contemporary elements were mainly accounted for by Leporello. He had the catalogue of Don Giovanni's 2065 lovers tattooed on his body. To show this he had to strip naked, even showing his buttocks to the audience. Later, when he attempted to quit his employment at the beginning of the second act, he had changed into contemporary jeans, sneakers, and a bright T-shirt. When he came back to continue in the service of Don Giovanni, this gave him another opportunity to strip down to his underpants before he redressed in the historical costume. The loose hairstyles of Donna Anna and Zerlina were a concession to the twenty-first century – historically, the loose hair would indicate that they were insane. Maybe even the sessions under the podium and their lack of ambiguity could best be understood from a modern conception of morality, although I find this a dubious argument. Did these elements of today's lifestyle turn the production into a modern performance? I would say, on the contrary. Aesthetically I was mostly reminded of what was not there – an aesthetics of absence.

We saw a traditional, storytelling opera which, in an eclectic way, combined elements from various times and styles. Was this merely a matter of taste? Was it up to the spectators to judge? I would say: yes and no. Every spectator could of course make up her or his mind – like it, like parts of it, or even dislike it. The audiences of the three performances of *Don Giovanni* that I attended behaved as one might expect. They laughed at Robert Gleadow's *lazzi* as Leporello from the very start when he skilfully tumbled down between the two chairs in full accordance with the music. Yes, this was funny, indeed, and nobody could resist his charming performance. There was some mumbling on the benches close to me when he turned his tattooed buttocks to the auditorium, but it was still nice entertainment. That his striptease in front of Donna Elvira could be regarded as a kind of molestation

was probably missed by the majority of the spectators. The *commedia*-inspired actions concealed a number of interpretative complications, not least from a feminist point of view, but it created a 'feel-good' atmosphere in the auditorium. In the end, the audiences applauded with enthusiasm – but to put that applause in context, I have never seen a Drottningholm audience that did not applaud a performance enthusiastically. The happiness and gratitude for having experienced a performance in this historic theatre always moves, often overwhelms, the spectators.

Was the audience cheated and deprived of the unique qualities of the Drottningholm stage? I can only refer to those friends and ac-quaintances who told me that they steered clear from these perfor-mances. This is especially true of those who had attended the previous production in this series the year before. These were not necessarily conservative 'museum' people. On the contrary, they love this theatre and enjoy performances when the stage machinery is put to work, displaying the wonders of another epoch. This is what makes the Drottningholm theatre so special to the majority, whereas theatrical experiments of the recent *Don Giovanni*-type can take place in many other locations.

The reviews tell their own story. Usually, the music critics of Drottningholm performances are predominantly interested in the interpretation of the music, the work of the conductor, and the qual-ity of the singers. Some of them were impressed by Minkowski's 'fat' rendering of the score, a fashionable term applied to a recent interna-tional trend within the Early Music movement. They appreciated the singers in this ensemble which had been brought to Sweden from all corners of the world. But – and this is as exceptional as it is justified – they also criticised the performance on stage and in particular the box that prevented any view of the original sets. *Don Giovanni* was the second summer they saw this construction. This was too much, even for music critics. A few examples follow.

Erik Wallrup opened his review with these lines: 'To begin with the double-edged final verdict: *Don Giovanni* at Drottningholm could have taken place on whatever stage around Europe. The unique opera house turns 250, but instead of using the fabulous stage machinery, instead of opting for an opera that is related to this site, this is the second part of a Mozart trilogy with libretti by Da Ponte, in which a wooden stage erected on the middle of the stage conceals all the old treasures'.[14]

His colleague at *Dagens Nyheter*, Johanna Paulsen, also commented on the stage. 'The stage designer Antoine Fontaine's simple street-theatre stage has its charm. But not when one has access to a fully functioning stage machinery which is not used at all. Furthermore, this makes a shallow and whimsy impression'.[15]

Hanna Höglund in *Expressen* wondered whether the French team wanted 'to get free from the "idea" of the Drottningholm theatre',[16] Claes Wallin in *Aftonbladet* mentioned 'the big wooden box, a stage on the stage',[17] and, as cited in note 8 above, Per Feltzin remarked on the radio that it would have been better to perform this *Don Giovanni* at Södra Teatern.

International voices also observed the difficulties of matching the two scenic spaces. Guy Dammann of *The Financial Times* remarked on the uneven acoustic quality in the delicate sound environment that Drottningholm offers. He wrote that 'his [Don Giovanni's] voice is matched by Robert Gleadow's Leporello. The other soloists, perhaps partly through intention but also on account of the acoustic vagaries of the ancient theatre (which Alexandre seems worryingly ignorant of) are much less vividly drawn'.[18] These are just some voices among the many music critics who raised their voices against the negligence of the uniqueness of the Drottningholm theatre.

The reviews also made it obvious that productions such as the *Don Giovanni* in August 2016 were not just a scholarly problem; they had far-reaching artistic consequences. This concerned both the

14. Erik Wallrup, 'Lika många skratt som rysningar', *Svenska Dagbladet* (15 August 2016), 20.

15. Johanna Paulsen, 'Skitig tyngd: Musikalisk glöd i sparsmakad *Don Giovanni*', *Dagens Nyheter* (15 August 2016), 7.

16. Hanna Höglund, 'Naket på slottet', *Expressen* (16 August 2016), 6.

17. Claes Wallin, 'Onödigt rolig förförare', *Aftonbladet* (15 August 2016), 5.

18. Guy Dammann, '*Don Giovanni*, Drottningholm Opera, Stockholm, "Thrilling"', *Financial Times* (17 August 2016), 27.

spatial alienation of the stage and the uneven acoustics that the singers had to struggle with. The interplay between an artefact such as the Drottningholm theatre and a well-known opera from the archive of the eighteenth century requires a delicate balance from today's artists and audiences. It would be wrong to measure the creative liberty of a director against a museum-like reconstruction; the latter is neither possible nor desirable. But the creative imagination of some directors seems to reach a limit when their production concepts fail to fit the stage. The Performing Premodernity research project attempted to combine academic and artistic research as it experimented with what makes sense and what fails when we go onto the stage of an old theatre. The sensitive environment of the Drottningholm theatre should be used only for productions that take advantage of its uniqueness – other productions should be shown elsewhere.

# 12. Performing in Historic Theatre Sites: Frames, Potentials, Challenges

*Meike Wagner*

The two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre fell in 2016, coinciding with the Performing Premodernity research project. In June of that year the team organised a panel debate about performance paradigms, and about how different approaches and practices represent alternative ways of 'realising' cultural heritage. A group of theatre scholars and theatre practitioners were invited to talk about the challenges and potentials of performing in historic theatre sites, as part of the International Federation for Theatre Research conference, with the theme 'Presenting the Theatrical Past: Interplays of Artefacts, Discourses and Practices'. Theatre scholar Willmar Sauter (Stockholm University) and theatre historian Marvin Carlson (New York) chaired the discussion. The panel was made up of dance historian and practitioner of historical dances Mark Franko (Philadelphia); managing director of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre, Sofi Lerström (Stockholm); singer and president of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music, Susanne Rydén (Stockholm); president of Perspectiv, the Association of Historic Theatres in Europe, Carsten Jung who is also project manager of the European Routes of Historic Theatres (Berlin); architect Erland Montgomery who is responsible for the maintenance of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre (Stockholm); and choreographer and opera director Sigrid T'Hooft, a specialist of historically informed performance (Ghent).

When preparing the panel discussion, the research group based their questions on an issue that had been central to the Performing Premodernity project from the outset, that is, the relationship between the historical past and the performative present. How do the past of

**Figure 1.** Panel debate at the conference of the International Federation for Theatre Research, 'Presenting the Theatrical Past: Interplays of Artefacts, Discourses, and Practices'. Stockholm University, 2016. From left to right: Willmar Sauter, Marvin Carlson, Susanne Rydén, Sigrid T'Hooft, Sofi Lerström, Mark Franko, Carsten Jung. Photo: Petra Dotlačilová ©. License: CC BY-NC.

history and the present of performance collide, coincide, or collate when historical spaces and artefacts are brought to life through practice? Historic artefacts have to be preserved for a future past – but how about historical practices? Nowadays performance practices tend to be discussed mainly in terms of their novelty, relevance, and impact, but what if we regard them as living history, or as oral traditions? If we do that, we need then to consider the ways in which those oral traditions are altered and modified when passed down through the generations. This applies to a lesser degree to the theatrical artefacts involved in the performance practices, because dramatic texts and scores remain the same in their printed or written forms, and historical theatre sites continue to exist in the same form as in the past, even though they are subject to the tear and wear of time. Due to these different kinds of historicity, it can be difficult to connect performance practices to historical artefacts. However, historiographical discourses enable us to bridge the gaps, making performative encounters possible, as the interplay of historical artefacts and practices have the potential to enhance our understanding of the theatrical past.

These were the questions we put to the panellists:

- How can we preserve historic theatres as artefacts for the future and, at the same time, use them for today's performances?
- What are the challenges of performing in historic theatres?
- What kind of performances should historic theatres present?
- What is best practice for exploring the theatrical past?
- How should commercial, educational, and artistic interests relate to each other where historic theatres are concerned?
- What can scholars and artists learn from performance in historical spaces?

Carsten Jung presented the Perspectiv[1] database of historic theatres in Europe in which between 3,000 and 3,500 historic buildings are registered. Immediately, the question as to what defines a historic theatre was raised. The association Perspectiv decided to regard as 'historic' all theatre buildings that are more than one hundred years old. As is well known, most of these theatres have a long history of renovation and modernisation, and so Marvin Carlson wondered whether we shouldn't reflect on the history of these theatres, rather than investing in attempts to treat them as 'original'. Carsten Jung replied that, of course, theatre buildings are changed by the wear and tear of continued use, and therefore decisions regarding safety measures and modernisation must be made when renovations are planned. The theatres that are part of the European Route of Historic Theatres, though, do represent a specific historical period.[2] Marvin Carlson emphasised that there needs to be a distinction between different categories of historic theatres. Whereas experimental architecture like Shakespeare's Globe in London constitutes a 'mere fantasy', other buildings such as the Semperoper in Dresden or the theatres in Warsaw have been faithfully reconstructed after being razed to the ground in wartime. These meticulous reconstructions were possible because of the availability of copious detailed documentation and archival sources.

1. https://www.theatre-architecture.eu/en/ (accessed 21 March 2023).

2. http://www.perspectiv-online.org /pages/en/european-route.php?lang=E (accessed 21 March 2023).

Sofi Lerström pointed to the impact of daily wear and tear for the Drottningholm Palace Theatre, where 40,000 visitors attend guided tours annually, and where forty performances are held, each attended by 450 people. Every year, there is an inspection and assessment of the building and its spaces, after which decisions are made about restoration work. According to Erland Montgomery, today's safeguarding of cultural heritage is based on a principle of preservation rather than restoration. From today's perspective, we see it as a major loss that in the 1920s, when the theatre was reopened, Agne Beijer decided to remove the theatre's nineteenth-century wallpapers and to replace them with wallpapers with the 'original' eighteenth-century designs. Recently, there has been much more focus on the material aspects of preservation. When the windows were repainted, for example, the preservation team chose a colour close to the original and even created window paint using original eighteenth-century recipes. The idea was to preserve the material quality of the window paint, not just its visual resemblance.

Turning to the question of performance, Susanne Rydén insisted that it is also important to treat the Drottningholm Palace Theatre as a 'living space'. On the one hand, the repertoire should be guided by the fact that eighteenth-century works were written for specific spaces, including for the Drottningholm theatre itself. Not all works fit in here. On the other hand, each performance in the historic theatre is always a moment in the present that involves different levels of communication: the performing body communicates with the historical space, and it communicates with an audience. Mark Franko elaborated on this issue, stating that within present-day performance we are in fact dealing with the paradox of a 'historical experience'. The performance articulates the historical space for an audience in the now.

But historians also constitute a specific type of audience for such performances. What can a historian learn from attending historically informed performances in historic theatres? Speaking from personal experience, Marvin Carlson mentioned that, even though we are

aware today that we experience things differently from the historical audiences, we are nonetheless sensitive to both the visual and the audial conditions of the historical space. For example, a performance lit by candlelight was a completely new experience to him, whereas for the historical audience these were the regular visual conditions. However exciting this experience is for the historian, we must stay attuned to the historical dimension. In other words, rather than giving us real access to those historical theatre practices, such situations teach us more about our own preconditions and assumptions.

The second part of the panel discussion focused on the challenges of performing in historic theatre sites, and specifically on the relationship between historical sources and the process of performing. Mark Franko started out with an example from a dance workshop he had organised, devoted to Jean-Georges Noverre's ballet *Agamemnon vengé* (1772). He found that the greatest challenge of the historically informed performance was to negotiate between focusing on the narrative aspects of the *ballet d'action* and on making Noverre's reform ideas accessible to a modern audience, i.e. on the dancer's ability to 'paint the movements of the soul with gesture'. The historical representation (or reconstruction) should not be an end in itself: the overall aim is rather to find ways of enabling today's audience to grasp the experimental dimension of the historical work. In the case of the Noverre ballet, musical phrasing helped create an affective language for the bodies of the dancers.

Sigrid T'Hooft agreed about the negotiation between historical sources and the practice of rehearsing and performing. When directing historically informed productions, she always begins with extensive historical research, and the documents she studies then have a very important influence upon the rehearsal approach. On the other hand, as an artist, she wants to animate, rather than reanimate, the past. At some point the books need to be closed, and the communication with the performers, the musicians, and then with the audience, must begin. For the director, this is a process of translating historical

knowledge into performative expertise and into an experience that is accessible for the audience. If the rehearsal and the performance are well balanced something new will happen, albeit in a very old language. At this point Mark Franko referred back to the experimental aspect of performance, commenting that enticing moments in a performance can work as a trapdoor through which the audience falls into the experience of the historical experimentation.

Marvin Carlson said that in recent decades there has been more focus on finding adequate means of relating to the experimental as well as to the affective dimensions of historical theatre works. There has been an interest in historical performance since the nineteenth century, but nowadays we demand more than attempted reconstructions of the past: we want the contemporary performance to create an affect identical or akin to the affect created in the historical performance. German director Thomas Ostermeier has tried to find ways of translating affective moments of the past into the present: for example, how today does one stage Ibsen's Nora slamming the door adequately? And Branden Jacobs-Jenkins has adapted Dion Boucicault's melodrama *The Octoroon* from 1859 into a contemporary drama: what is today's affective equivalent of the spectacular scenes of nineteenth-century melodrama?[3]

Sofi Lerström talked about the challenges of performing in the historic site of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre from the perspective of a managing director. She demands that the invited artists think in terms of site-specific performances. The fact that both the repertoire is restricted to works from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that the orchestra plays on period instruments has an impact on the artistic decisions. The productions should be inspired by historical practices; they should not be required to follow strict rules dictated by historical sources. Historical knowledge provides the stage director with the means to communicate in a satisfactory way with the audience.

Willmar Sauter raised another issue relating to historically informed performance. The practices of the Early Music movement are well

3. *An Octoroon* was performed in 2010 in a workshop production at Performance Space 122, New York. The first fully staged modern production was at Soho Rep in New York in 2014.

established, but is there a theatrical equivalent when it comes to the visual aspects of performance? Is there something like an 'Early Staging' movement? Sigrid T'Hooft responded that she did not feel acknowledged as a historically informed practitioner. People often want to know if she feels inhibited as an artist when working with historical sources as a basis for performance, a question she assumes is never asked of conductors within the Early Music movement, such as Nikolaus Harnoncourt and John Eliot Gardiner who are always regarded as artists in their own right. When it comes to the theatrical side of the Historically Informed Performance movement people tend to engage more in fact-checking, searching for errors in the interpretation of the historical sources, and looking for the culprit. Sometimes it is a shortcoming of the musical performance, and sometimes it is because the time for stage rehearsals is too limited, and in such cases, it is not the historically informed staging per se that is the problem, but general challenges that face all theatre productions. One big difference between the practice of early music and historically informed productions, however, is the basic absence of education in historical acting. While Early Music departments at the conservatories do attempt to stage Baroque operas with their students, there are no regular courses or workshops that teach students eighteenth-century acting. Sigrid T'Hooft teaches regularly at academies in Leipzig, Karlsruhe, and The Hague, but none of these institutions has a complete study program in historical acting. When working as a stage director, therefore, she often has to act as a teacher. Moreover, of the six weeks allocated for rehearsals, four do not take place in the historical site, which means she always needs to reassure performers that the odd gestures will feel natural once they are on stage. Of course, such logistical and institutional limitations have an impact on the work.

Susanne Rydén said that as a singer she has always striven for a holistic approach that relies on the interaction between the music, the text, and the performance to tell one story rather than multiple stories. Also, the audience should not be underestimated: one has to

decide whether to provide mere entertainment or to pose an aesthetic challenge. She sees a potential in composing new works for historic theatre sites. As most of the works performed in the eighteenth century were newly composed, some of them written specifically for the space, why should we not create new works for the historical site today, showing the same respect, and using our knowledge of the space?

Sigrid T'Hooft said that the world of Baroque performance was dominated by rules. She explained that she is fascinated with the potential of the mechanical rules to create an emotional impact. When one knows these rules well, playing with them can contribute to the performance. For example, one can create comical effects by deliberately breaking the rules. In the eighteenth century, knowledge of the rules made it possible to mount productions after very few rehearsals, and enabled actors, musicians, costume designers, and set designers to adapt quickly to different spaces and contexts, such as those of a court theatre or of a commercial theatre. As an example of this, Willmar Sauter pointed to the year 1786 when the French acting troupe residing at the Drottningholm theatre produced eighty different plays between March and December. Under such working conditions it was convenient to have some rules to rely on, not forgetting that the prompter's box was an important tool as well.

The organisational context of historic theatres had and still have a major impact on what is produced and performed within them. It makes a difference whether a theatre is run by the state, whether it receives some limited state funding, whether it is run on a completely private basis, or whether the reigning monarch is involved, as is still the case with the Drottningholm Palace Theatre. As Sofi Lerström explained, Drottningholm is run by permission of the Swedish king. The royal family has been very satisfied with the productions so far, but if they changed their minds, it might not be possible to continue to use the theatre as a performance space. The theatre has the status of a national institution, which means that it receives subsidies from the Swedish Cultural Department on a par with the Royal Opera and the

Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm. This status brings with it the obligation to follow certain rules and national cultural policies, including on accessibility, diversity, intercultural exchange, interaction with civil society, etc. The government has little understanding of the significance of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre as a historic theatre site. While they have fully endorsed the concept of cultural heritage, they have no grasp of what it means to maintain an orchestra of freelance instrumentalists playing on period instruments. It is a major challenge to raise the necessary funds for the orchestra, to retain the performers, and to maintain a high quality of performance. The present working structure does not allow for sustainable development nor for the education of the next generation, so the orchestra struggles to transmit their expertise to young musicians. As the annual state subsidies cover the costs for only one production per year, and for the guided tours of the theatre, the other productions and activities of the theatre rely on external funding and collaboration with sponsors and associations, such as the Friends of the Drottningholm Theatre, which enabled the commissioning of the anniversary opera, *Rokokomaskineriet*.[4]

This illustrates yet again how performances in historic theatre sites claiming to be 'living theatres' always involve a negotiation with the historical conditions of any given time.

4. *Rokokomaskineriet* (The Rococo Machinery), with a libretto by Tuvalisa Rangström and music by Jan Sandström, premiered on 7 June 2016.

# 13. Presenting the Theatre of Drottningholm

*David Wiles*

*Edited transcript of the keynote address to the International Federation for Theatre Research, given during the conference 'Presenting the Theatrical Past: Interplays of Artefacts, Discourses and Practices' from the stage of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre on 15 June 2016.[1]*

[Initial greeting delivered from the box adjacent to the stage on the king's side, following an orchestral prelude conducted by Mark Tatlow.[2]]

Welcome to the theatre of Drottningholm, on its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary… It would be odd to give an 'academic' lecture in a space like this. So think of it as the building delivering the keynote address. And I am here just to perform the introductions, and do a little bit of translation – ably assisted by Mark down here and his team. We are less concerned with pre*sent*ing the old theatre of Drottningholm than *pre*senting it, for our purpose today is to try to make the eighteenth century present for you on the stage. This is a World Heritage Site, and the word 'heritage' carries a lot of baggage, so let's start with that: what does the word 'heritage' imply? Ownership perhaps. We could quantify the theatre's financial yield for the Swedish tourist board. Heritage is a comfortable way of wrapping the past up for you to consume. Mark, if you you wouldn't mind standing up… Look at Mark's wig. The wig to me, forgive me Mark, is a perfect symbol of heritage; in Roland Barthes's terms it's a pure signifier of eighteenth-century-ness.

Let me introduce you first to Queen Louisa Ulrika there on the stage curtain, aka the goddess Minerva, goddess of education and

2. 'Entrée de Pluton' in act 2, scene 2 of Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* (ed.).

3. Louisa Ulrika of Prussia (1720–1782), queen consort of Sweden 1751–1771 (ed.).

**Figure 1.** David Wiles' keynote lecture. Drottningholm Palace Theatre, 2016. Screenshot from video. © Stockholm University. License: CC BY-NC.

war.[3] And then direct your eyes to the auditorium. An earlier theatre of 1754 burnt down. It was built on the German imperial model, curving round the stage. And instead of this long rectangle reaching back, you had a huge imperial box, a stage for the monarch as goddess, creating two foci of attention: the monarch there, the play here – the audience can look at either. So why replace it with *this* in the 1760s? In eighteenth-century terms, it's an extraordinary design (see Fig. 2). Heritage discourse doesn't much care to talk politics, but the fact is, Queen Louisa Ulrika carried out a coup a couple of years

Plan av bottenvåningen (bakom scenen = mellanbotten).
Uppmätt av H. Möller och E. Rockström, ritad av I. Wærn-Bugge.
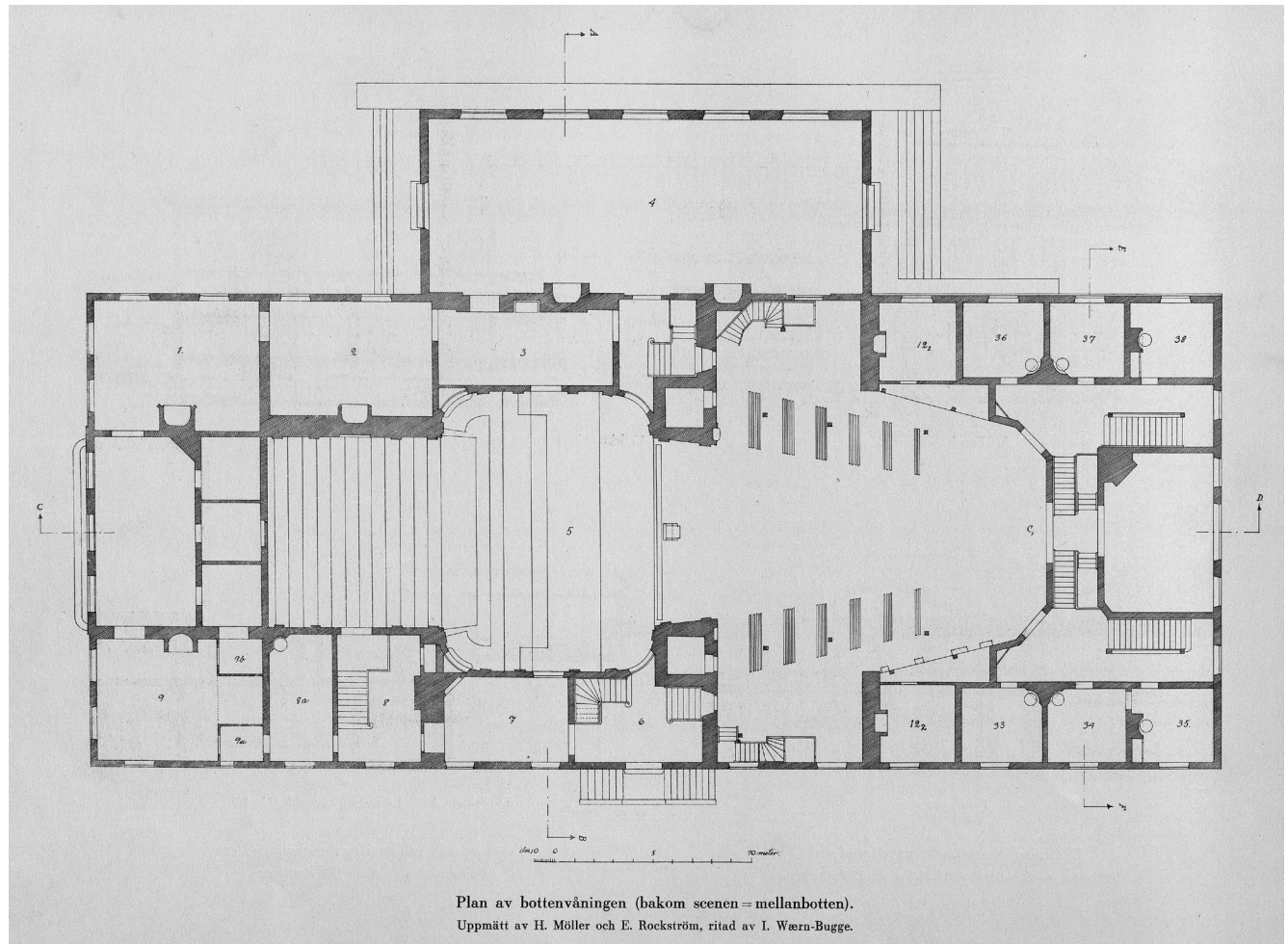
**Figure 2.** Ingeborg Wærn Bugge: Ground plan of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre. In Agne Beijer, *Slottsteatrarna på Drottningholm och Gripsholm* (Stockholm: Lindfors, 1937), 174. No current holder of the copyright has been identified. License: CC BY-NC.

after building her first theatre. She wanted to wrest power away from parliament, and it all proved very ignominious – she failed, and was consigned to her royal playground. So she couldn't plausibly play Minerva any longer. The monarch now had to sit here at the front. Much more modestly.

But then again, this seat at the front is where Louis XIV would have sat for a court entertainment, and you may have spotted how the grounds outside are modelled on Versailles. Yet this isn't quite France. In a French rectangular theatre you had a balcony going all the way round, creating a dynamic of spectator-looking-at-spectator. What this theatre actually offers us behind its frivolous Rococo trimmings is a prototype modernist auditorium. It puts you in neat straight rows, you've got to behave yourselves, you've got to face forward, you've got to concentrate on the play, or in this case, on a quasi-lecture. So, that's interesting to me. But then again, you have to add a metaphysical dimension. As you came in you may have noticed that curtain there halfway up the rectangle. Imagine an axis line between the two boxes: you get a complete mirror relationship, perfect symmetry. So, if the monarch stands up and turns around, she or he can see all the plebs (in your case the people who arrived on the last bus) back there in the recess, dressed in Swedish national costume, playing roles in the political show that the monarch has orchestrated. So, there you have another dimension of the space.

Then again, focus on the lovely sensuous curves of this oval formation here in the middle. It's very odd, because from this box I can't see the stage properly. And my eyes are drawn to the middle of the oval, not to you plebs at the back. And from the king's box next to me you can't see all of the audience, which is why I decided not to speak from there. The best explanation is that opera houses regularly converted into temporary ballrooms, so the seats could be removed to turn this central area into a dancing space. But Crown Prince Gustav couldn't dance, he'd got a dodgy leg, so the layout was redundant. Gustav is a crucial figure.[4] As king he staged a successful coup, unlike his mother; he suppressed parliament, brought in socially liberal legislation along with expensive wars, and was eventually assassinated in the opera house in town. After this presentation you will be entertained in something like a banqueting area that was added on by Gustav in the 1790s. It reflects a completely different ideology, one

4. Gustav III (1746–1792), king of Sweden 1771–1792 (ed.).

related to the abutting English park which is laid out in the style of Capability Brown.[5] It makes a statement that monarchical power is part of the order of nature, not part of the metaphysical mysteries that the Baroque garden and French-style architecture celebrate.

You have grasped the general idea that I refuse to talk about this space as a beautiful unified whole. I think of it as essentially a bundle of contradictions. Elements that don't stack up. To me as an historian that's much more interesting than a slice of heritage. But enough on the space and its layers of political meaning: it is the *stage* that people get most excited about. We talk of this as a 'Baroque' theatre because the stage technology had been going strong for some hundred and twenty years, first devised by the Italians. This old technology had an exceptional shelflife because it was so powerful, as I hope you will soon understand for yourselves.

[DAVID LEAVES THE BOX. THE CURTAINS OPEN TO MUSIC. DAVID WALKS ONTO THE STAGE.]

No applause. If it's for the theatre, well that's OK, but not for a dry historical lecture. So, as far as theatre history goes, there are, if I may put it crudely, first 'the boys' version of theatre history'… The boys' version gets very excited about the technology, the thunder machine for example. And these flats which roll in on little railway lines using the chariot and pole system – the hidden lead-covered railway is just here. And then there is what one might call 'the girls' view of history' which gets much more interested in story, in imagination, in another world that's more in the head and in the feelings. I tend to gravitate, as you may guess, more in the girly direction.[6] That's a segue to mention that the role of women in eighteenth-century theatre became increasingly important, because women were taken to be experts in embodied feeling. As your first treat, we are going to give you an extract from a cantata by Handel from the early eighteenth century, a sort of operatic monologue.[7] It will be performed by Laila Cathleen Neuman who is a specialist in eighteenth-century performance. The

5. Capability Brown (1716–1783), English landscape architect (ed.).

6. These remarks caused some intakes of breath and a subsequent complaint. Humour doesn't travel well across cultures. I haven't edited out these remarks from the record, however ill judged, because I was seeking to make the serious point that historiography through its priorities has long been a gendered practice.

7. George Frideric Handel, *Armida abbandonata* (1707), HWV 105 (ed.).

story, very briefly: Armida is a Muslim sorceress, and her young gen-
tleman is a crusader knight. He escapes her charms and sails hell for
leather towards the horizon. On she comes in great distress, calling
upon the waves and winds to drown him. That's the storyline. You are
going to experience the thunder machine and the cloud effect, but try
to think of these not just as technical gizmos, but as metaphors that
create continuity with the feelings expressed through movement and
voice. Costume-wise, we've got the best we could find, possessing at
least volume and movement. What you would have seen would have
been far more exotic and sumptuous. When you listen to some of the
ornamental twirls and repetitions in the aria that follows the initial
recitative, try to relate them to the architectural ornamention around
you. OK, Laila, over to you.

[Laila Cathleen Neuman as Armida sings the Italian text,
moving and gesturing in a historically informed and fluid
Baroque style.]

| *Recitativo* | |
| --- | --- |
| Per te mi struggo, infido, | I yearn for you, faithless man; |
| per te languisco, ingrato; ah! pur lo sai | I pine for you, ungrateful man; ah, you know |
| che sol da tuoi bei rai | that your fair eyes alone |
| per te piagato ho il seno, | pierced this bosom of mine, |
| e pur tu m'abbandoni, infido amante. | and yet, faithless lover, you abandon me… |
| *Accompagnato – interspersed by sounds of the wind* | |
| O voi dell'incostante | O horrid monsters of the inconstant |
| e procelloso mar orridi mostri, | and stormy sea! |
| dai più profondi chiostri | Ascend from the cloistered depths |
| a vendicarmi uscite, | to avenge me |
| e contro quel crudel incrudelite. | and offer cruelty to that cruel man. |
| Sì, sì! sia vostro il vanto, | Yes, yes! You and your severity |
| e del vostro rigore, | may boast of having |
| un mostro lacerar di voi maggiore; | lashed a monster greater than yourselves. |
| onde, venti, che fate, | Waves and winds: what are you doing since |
| che voi nol sommergete? Ah no! fermate! | you are not drowning him? Ah no! Stop…! |

| *Aria – clouds descend* | |
| --- | --- |
| Venti, fermate, sì, | Yes, stop, winds: |
| nol sommergete; | do not drown him; |
| è ver che mi tradì, | it is true that he betrayed me, |
| ma pur l'adoro. | yet I adore him still. |
| | |
| Onde crudeli, no, | No, cruel waves: |
| non l'uccidete; | do not kill him; |
| è ver che mi sprezzò, | it is true that he scorned me, |
| ma è il mio tesoro. | yet he is my darling. |



**Figure 3.** David Wiles (right) and Laila Cathleen Neuman (left) on stage. Drottningholm Palace Theatre, 2016. Screenshot from video. © Stockholm University. License: CC BY-NC.

Thank you, Laila. That was beautiful. Now we are going to try an exercise in a different historical style, namely the style of the late twentieth century. We thought that was important because most directors who come in here develop their show in a rehearsal room somewhere far away. And they come here, they do their show the normal way you do an opera show. The method always involves a search for sincerity. Gestures are a tricky one, though: how do you find a gestural language that's operatic but not quite everyday-life, and is perceived as truthful. The actress will probably be encouraged to 'inhabit the space', because psychological interiority is tied up with spatial interiority. If the boat and the beach are there [I.E. UPSTAGE], then you've got to be on the beach, you've got to go to the boat and play it that way. [To LAILA] So if you want to, head upstage. And, we'd better have some more light, because in a consumer society people like to see what they've paid for. It's true, people always turn the lights up. And Mark is always complaining about it.

[LAILA DELIVERS THE CANTATA IN A LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY STYLE.]

Thank you, Laila. Just go back upstage a minute… Notice the incompatibility of scale when we are working on a raked perspectival set: see how her proportion breaks the optical illusion. And twenty-first-century people are too big anyway compared with eighteenth-century people. When Laila retreated upstage I hope you picked up on the acoustical differences as well as the visuals. In case you didn't, we will do a quick replay in a historically informed style. Notice now, as Laila does it again, a rhetorical antithesis in the first two lines between 'struggo', a yearning that reaches out, and 'languisco', a languishing that directs us in to the heart. Then the shift of mood, first into love, then mounting anger. Compare this emotional palette with the late twentieth-century search for inner truth, which tends to yield only a single emotional colouring.

[Final reprise. Applause.]

There is one other small anachronism I should call your attention to… that's Mark here, who entertained you so much in the warm-up, and in his wig that looks so eighteenth-century. There wouldn't have been a conductor. So, Laila would have engaged directly with the instrumentalists facing her. In the eighteenth century, the woman was in charge. Today, when almost all conductors are male, we have patriarchy. A small historical point of comparison, with apologies to Mark…

OK, let us pursue history and authenticity. If we take an eighteenth-century theatre like this and eighteenth-century instruments and an eighteenth-century text and throw in what we can glean about eighteenth-century acting methods, what is the resultant chemistry? To address the problem, our case study is going to be Rousseau's *Pygmalion*. The play, conveniently, was written just before this theatre was built, and it was first performed just afterwards, so historically it's a nice match.[8] And some of you are going to see a full performance this evening in Stockholm. For now, you just get a five minute extract.

Pygmalion… I am sure you know the story of the sculptor who falls in love with his beautiful statue and brings it to life. Rousseau is an interesting figure, though. He was a republican, who became the darling of the French Revolution, and there is nothing Rousseau hated more than French court theatre. So how do we make sense of that text on this stage? If heritage is allowed to erase politics, the problem of course disappears. Rousseau handed the text, eventually, to amateurs to perform in Lyon because he thought that amateurs could produce the necessary sincerity while Parisian professionals would kill it absolutely. That's an interesting challenge for any attempt at historical reenactment: how do we historicise sincerity?

I should also say something about the problem of language. Rousseau believed – as actually most linguists now believe – that

8. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Pygmalion*, text from 1762, music by Horace Coignet from 1770 (ed.).

language started as a vehicle for musical expression, that it was related fundamentally to feeling, with its propositional content being largely incidental. He preferred Italian singing to French, judging Italian to be the language of feeling. Laila gave us some of those wonderful Italian vowels – 'infido', 'sommergete', 'amante' – they make you want to gesture. But turn them into French – 'infidèle', 'submergez', 'amoureux' – you can feel the work my English mouth has to do to catch the French. French is a fantastic language for philosophical analysis – and, if you get the timing right, it's pretty good for spoken tragedy. But from Rousseau's point of view, a disaster for opera. So that led him to the particular form of this play, where Pygmalion talks about his emotions, expressing or rather describing them in the French language as best he can. And then, when his feelings become too overwhelming, he moves into mime, and all the feelings are expressed by the orchestra. It was a remarkable experiment, pointing the way to nineteenth-century melodrama. Rousseau innovated in almost every medium he tackled, and is often seen as inventor of the modern self. He wrote his *Confessions* in an effort to describe his own personal uniqueness. And so, this piece is also an exploration of selfhood: 'I make a statue. The statue is part of me'. Until the statue becomes someone else, at which point, is that someone else also part of me? Which leads him into metaphysical stuff about the merging of human selves and the pain of separateness.

I should add a word about the conundrum of costume. I've indicated that this theatre sits on a historical cusp, marking the end of the Baroque era. According to Baroque practice, the actor or actress comes in wearing the most sumptuous courtly dress of the day that they can muster, never mind the social and historical context. And then in the second half of the eighteenth century came a shift to historical authenticity, so the costume had to reflect the cultural context of the story. That proved quite a problem on this stage, because once King Gustav got into writing new-style operas, out went all these

perspective sets because he needed scene painting that captured a specific social milieu. So what do you do about costume in *Pygmalion*? If you go for fashionable Baroque outfits, then we have to forget that this is a dusty sculptor's workshop. And more pressingly, what about the statue, if the actress is dressed up in mountains of expensive fabric? The emergent ideal was historical authenticity, which implies that a Greek statue should be semi-nude with scanty Greek drapes. The Pygmalion story became an excuse in the nineteenth century for pornographic dramas where the near-naked actress was consumed by the male gaze – but this problem did not present itself so starkly in the 1760s. Rousseau's play almost revels in the danger, pulling in contradictory directions.

So let me now introduce João Luís Paixão who is going to perform our extract from *Pygmalion*. In rehearsal costume, so that your imaginations can be open to all possibilities. As we can see, he has put on a bit of makeup to create the energetic brow that was so important in Baroque expression. And then there's the set. To catch the idea of a historical cusp I toyed with the thought of having a classical set on one side to suggest the world of Ovid, the ancient city of Tyre; and on the other side the realist milieu of a lower-class dwelling. Rousseau was proud that his father was an artisan. Fortunately perhaps, the theatre refused to be subverted, because the ropes linking these flats are all intertwined, so we settled for the plebeian setting.

So, if we may, we'll have the change to the peasant's cottage.

[Extended spectacle of the set changing.]

Can I just remind you, this doesn't simply happen by magic. There are about twelve people, doing summer jobs mostly, and all paid minimum wage, toiling away invisibly for your pleasure. Royal power in the eighteenth century also depended on the toiling masses. Please give a round of applause for these people down below.

(*Il lève le voile en tremblant, et se prosterne. On voit la statue de Galathée posée sur un piédestal fort petit, mais exhaussé par un gradin de marbre, formé de quelques marches demi-circulaires.*) [**Un petit nombre de notes exprime le désir, l'effroi, enfin le mouvement rapide et comme involontaire par lequel Pygmalion découvre la statue.**]

Ô Galathée! recevez mon hommage. Oui je me suis trompé: j'ai voulu vous faire nymphe, et je vous ai fait déesse: Vénus même est moins belle que vous.

Vanité, faiblesse humaine! je ne puis me lasser d'admirer mon ouvrage; je m'enivre d'amour-propre; je m'adore dans ce que j'ai fait… Non, jamais rien de si beau ne parut dans la nature; j'ai passé l'ouvrage des dieux…

Quoi! tant de beautés sortent de mes mains? Mes mains les ont donc touchées? Ma bouche a donc pu… Pygmalion! Je vois un défaut. Ce vêtement couvre trop le nu; il faut l'échancrer davantage; les charmes qu'il recèle doivent être mieux annoncés.

(*Il prend son maillet et son ciseau*, [**Une musique fréquemment coupée par des soupirs et des demi-soupirs, peint l'irrésolution de l'artiste, sa démarche incertaine, son agitation, son effroi.**] *puis s'avançant lentement, il monte, en hésitant, les gradins de la statue qu'il semble n'oser toucher. Enfin, le ciseau déjà levé, il s'arrête.*)

Quel tremblement! quel trouble! Je tiens le ciseau d'une main mal assurée… je ne puis… je n'ose… je gâterai tout.

(*Il s'encourage, et enfin, présentant son ciseau, il en donne un seul coup, et, saisi d'effroi, il le laisse tomber, en poussant un grand cri.*)

Dieux! je sens la chair palpitante repousser le ciseau!...

(*Il redescend, tremblant et confus.*)

(*Trembling, he lifts the veil away, and bows low. We see the statue of Galatea placed on a pedestal that is very small, but set on a marble platform made up of steps in a semi-circle.*) [**A few notes to express the desire, the fear, then the quick and almost involuntary action whereby Pygmalion uncovers the statue.**]

Galatea! Receive my homage. Yes, I made a mistake. I meant to make you a nymph, but I made you a goddess. Even Venus is less beautiful than you.

Vanity, the human weakness! I cannot tire of admiring my creation. I'm drunk with amour-propre. I adore myself in the object I've made. No, nothing so beautiful ever appeared in nature. I have surpassed the creation of the gods…

Really? Have so many beauteous aspects emerged from my hands? My hands have touched them?… Could my mouth have… Pygmalion! I see a flaw. This garment covers the nude too much. It must be cut lower. The charms it hides must be better prefigured.

(*He picks up his hammer and chisel*, [**Music often interrupted by sighs, and half-sighs, depicting the artist's indecision, his hesitant movement, his agitation, his fear**] *then slowly moves closer. Hesitantly, he climbs the steps of the statue, but he seems unable to dare touch it. Finally, with the chisel already raised, he stops.*)

What turmoil! I can't stop trembling! I can't hold the chisel in this unsteady hand… I cannot… I dare not… I'll spoil everything.

(*He summons his courage and finally strikes the statue just once with his chisel, but then overcome by fright, he drops it and utters a loud cry.*)

Great gods! I feel the chisel pushed away by palpitating flesh!

(*He steps down from the pedestal, trembling and confused.*)

…Vaine terreur, fol aveuglement!… Non, je n'y touche-rai point; les dieux m'épouvantent. Sans doute elle est déjà consacrée à leur rang.

(*Il la considère de nouveau.*)

Que veux-tu changer? regarde; quels nouveaux charmes veux-tu lui donner?… Ah! c'est la perfection qui fait son défaut…. Divine Galathée! moins parfaite, il ne te manquerait rien.

(*Tendrement.*) [**Une douce mélodie peint le sentiment d'une âme tendrement pénétrée.**]

Mais il te manque une âme: ta figure ne peut s'en passer.

(*Avec plus d'attendrissement encore.*) [**La musique devient plus expressive.**]

Que l'âme faite pour animer un tel corps doit être belle!

(*Il s'arrête longtemps.*) [**Sans perdre le caractère précé-dent, elle prend une nuance de trouble et d'agitation.**]

---

Vain terror, mad blindness! No, I shall not touch it. The gods terrify me. She's no doubt already consecrated among them.

(*He considers her once more.*)

What do you want to change? Look! What new charms do you want to give her?… Ah! Her perfection is her flaw… Divine Galatea! Less perfect, you would lack nothing…

(*Tenderly.*) [**A soft melody depicts the feeling of a soul imbued with tenderness.**]

But you have no soul. Your features must have a soul.

(*Even more tenderly.*) [**The music grows in expressivity.**]

How beautiful must be the soul fit to give life to such a body!

(*He pauses for a long time.*) [**Without losing its earlier qualities, the music hints at anxiety and turmoil.**]

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What I want to talk about first is the method. João was coached in period gesture by Jed Wentz who is here today. Jed is a specialist in period movement and made a very fine practice-based PhD on the subject. In essence, today's standard Stanislavskian approach – leaving aside the MPA[10] – implies that you start with the intent. You do not play the emotion, the emotion follows from the intent. The eighteenth-century, nineteenth-century, seventeenth-century assump-tion is that the job of the actor starts by analysing the emotions and then you play those emotions for all you are worth. Actually, the old method is not so different, because by the time you've analysed the text into its different emotions, you need to have a sense of narrative, with implications about intent, and you're carving the text into useful units or 'bits' of action. In the era of cognitive science, we've all been

9. These instructions accompany the score published in 1772. They are not in Coignet's original score of 1770 created with Rousseau's participation and collaboration. How far Rousseau should be regarded as the author of these instructions is disputed, but there is no reason to doubt that they catch his intentions.

10. Konstantin Stanislavski's (1863–1938) later 'method of physical actions' (ed.).

taught to recognise that we act first, and then we feel, and then we formulate the intention retrospectively. So the eighteenth-century method makes a lot more sense to me than it did, say, twenty years ago.

Let's try to illustrate how the text has been carved up. First of all, we start with wonder: 'Not just a nymph! Wow! A goddess!' And then we cut to guilt: 'Oh heck, I did that, it's all self-love!' And then we cut to pride: 'Oh wow, no one else could have done that!'… So, just give us those three.

[João DEMONSTRATES: j'ai voulu vous faire nymphe, et je vous ai fait déesse: Vénus même est moins belle que vous. = WONDER Vanité, faiblesse humaine! = GUILT je ne puis me lasser d'admirer mon ouvrage; je m'enivre d'amour-propre; je m'adore dans ce que j'ai fait = PRIDE.]

That's a rather crude demo, and there are all sorts of complications. How do you play mixed emotions? Whose taxonomy of emotions do you follow? What's the difference between an emotion and a passion? There's lots of room for debate and refinement. The real peak to aim for was romantic love. Every eighteenth-century play had to deal with romantic love – and yet, in the twenty-first century, I've never met a student who can do it: we do relationships; we don't do *love*. [To João] I wish I could have a week to work with you and Jed and see if we could study the textbooks and crack it, but… ah well…

The next big issue is the perennial inside-outside debate. Classical rhetoricians offer both ways: either you start from working the imagination, letting the imagination, the 'soul', tell the body what to do, *or* you do it the other way round. I think you like starting from the body best?

[João REPLIES: I would say that we have to work in this reenactment 'outside-in', because we don't know the vocabulary, and we first need to establish that on the body, so that the body can articulate the words, because 'inside-out' they can't be spontaneous.]

It's the endless conundrum in the history of acting… I want to flag another issue, now, and that is 'declamation', declamation being a

mode of speech that was particular to the stage. It eliminated all the detritus of individuality and social context and aspired to catch the quintessence of the emotions embodied by the actor. No one can tell you exactly how actors declaimed because they spent so much time arguing, saying: 'No that old way of speaking is wrong, it's died the death! Let's bring it to life this way!' What João went for in his demo was musicality, a lot of cadence, pushing the voice in the direction of the music, speaking Rousseau's prose as if he was performing alexandrines on the French tragic stage. [To João] So I suggest now, try to follow the style of Garrick.[11] All the documentation on Garrick indicates – and Rousseau had a very happy encounter with Garrick, by the way – that he cut out a lot of the modulation, concentrated on rhythm and timing, in order to catch in those micro-pauses, the feeling that lay behind the words. So the handover will be different between you and the orchestra: it's not so much a continuum of sound as a continuum of the feeling underlying the sound. I don't know if it'll work or not. See what happens. Go for clarity, lose much of the Italian *bel canto*; find the head resonators, to let in that French intellectual clarity.

[João tries to declaim in the style of Garrick.]

OK, we could pursue it. It's an example of the kind of historical investigation that you can only really perform in a space like this, to say: OK, does it *work* for you in the front? Does it work for all you people up the back? Can you make the voice as big as before? We can only find answers by experimentation.

Let's go on to the last example we're going to give you, and that's a piece of Rameau. When Rousseau picked up the Pygmalion story, he did it in part as a riposte to the man he hated most, Rameau. Rameau was a writer of fashionable court opera in Paris. We can't do Rameau's *Pygmalion* because João's voice isn't right for it, so we are going to take a climactic moment from Rameau's most famous tragedy. It's his version of the Euripidean Hippolytus story, you probably all know it.[12] Towards the end, Theseus has been down in the Underworld, comes back up, learns that his beloved son Hippolytus

11. David Garrick (1717–1779), English actor celebrated for the 'naturalness' of his acting (ed.).

12. Jean-Philippe Rameau, *Hippolyte et Aricie* (1733). His *Pygmalion* is from 1748 (ed.).

has had an affair with Theseus' young second wife, Phaedra, and in fury he calls on his weapon of mass-destruction given him by his divine parent, and a sea-monster comes to destroy Hippolytus. In Rameau's version, Theseus is about to commit suicide by throwing himself into the water when Neptune appears in the nick of time to prevent him. The entry of gods is what this theatre does best, using the laws of perspective to create a god of superhuman scale: an emblem of monarchical power. So you know the story. What is hard for us to grasp when we parachute in from the twenty-first century is the way one show got its meaning from contesting the previous. Rousseau was trying to give his audience something more authentic, more real and less royalist than they had got from Rameau. Rameau, in his turn, was taking that classic of the French stage, Racine's *Phèdre*, and saying, 'OK, Racine was using poetry, but I'm going to take the resources of music and dance, and I'm going to make those emotions work even more powerfully for this privileged audience'. The difficulty can be ironed over if we say, 'OK, let's generalise the eighteenth century, cut out all the politics and artistic debate – we'll put on our wigs and give you the standard eighteenth-century package'. Much more comfortable, because we know where we are.

So, now as I wind up I'd like you to think about spectatorship. We always say about exercises in historical reenactment: 'unfortunately you can't recreate the audience'. But you can at least think about your own spectatorship. Rousseau was pretty much the first person to come up with the concept of 'identification'. He formulated it; and now it's common sense. Rousseau wanted the spectators to reach out in sympathy towards the protagonist on stage, to share their feelings, even identify, as if saying: 'You, ordinary human beings out there, watch a mere artisan, an ordinary person, having noble feelings on stage'. It was a deeply democratic – or I should rather say, bourgeois – way of thinking about the actor-audience relationship. Rameau is in another place – and emphatically not today's consumer society. He is not putting a product on stage to sell it, but seeing performance as a social transaction.

**Figure 4.** João Luís Paixão (left) and David Wiles (right) on stage. Drottningholm Palace Theatre, 2016. Screenshot from video. © Stockholm University. License: CC BY-NC.

Materialism was a popular philosophy in the mid-eighteenth century, so let's think about spectating in material terms. There [POINTING TO THE ORCHESTRA] we have the violin, and the bow setting up vibrations on the strings. Here we have João's voice, his breath is setting up vibrations on the cords in his larynx. So what happens now if we think: successful acting is the ability to transmit those vibrations to you. Think historically and imagine your bodies as a web of nerves transmitting messages to and fro, so success becomes a matter of the performers down there [I.E. IN THE ORCHESTRA], and up here [ON STAGE] making vibrations happen in you. One test of whether the scene works will be whether you feel a sort of tingling on top of the scalp, because the key emotion is going to be horror. And if it doesn't work for you, well… that may be due to the performers, but it may be because your own instruments haven't been properly tuned. Once this piece starts, I'm not going to say anything else. I think you have got my drift: that this is a very special place for experiment, that although you can't put the

eighteenth century back on the stage, it is worth trying, because working with the body is an important way of practicing the art of being a theatre historian.

[DAVID LEAVES. JOÃO SINGS THESÉE'S RÉCITATIF FROM RAMEAU'S *HIPPOLYTE ET ARICIE*, ACT 5, SCENE 1.]

| THÉSÉE | THESEUS |
|---|---|
| Grands dieux! De quels remords je me sens déchiré! | Great gods! Such remorse tears me apart! |
| Que d'horreurs à la fois! J'ai vu Phèdre expirer. | So many horrors at once! I have seen Phaedra breathe her last. |
| Quel mystère odieux, quel amour détestable, | What vile secret, what hateful love |
| L'inhumaine en mourant vient de me déclarer! | did that inhuman woman relate to me as she died! |
| Mon fils… Ô douleur qui m'accable; | My son… Grief overwhelms me – |
| Il était innocent! Dieux! Que je suis coupable! | he was innocent! Gods! And the guilt is mine! |
| Rentrons dans les enfers: qui peut me retenir, | Let me return to the Underworld – the place to hold me, |
| D'un monstre tel que moi délivrons la nature. | to spare nature from a monster such as myself. |
| De la plus horrible imposture, | For their terrible fraud, |
| Les perfides auteurs viennent de se punir. | the treacherous culprits have punished themselves. |
| Mes parricides vœux ont consommé le crime; | My internecine invocations are the consummation of that crime, |
| Et je dois à mon fils sa dernière victime. | and I owe my son one last victim. |
| Dieu des mers, aux mortels cache-moi pour jamais. | God of the seas, hide me from mortals forever. |
| (*Il veut se précipiter dans les flots.*) | (*He is about to leap into the waves.*) |
| *Scène II: Neptune, Thésée.* | *Scene II: Neptune, Theseus.* |
| (*Neptune sort du sein des mers.*) | (*Neptune arises from the bosom of the ocean.*) |
| NEPTUNE | NEPTUNE |
| Arrête! | Wait! |

[THE FIGURE WHO RISES THROUGH THE TRAP-DOOR BRANDISHING A TRIDENT IS IN FACT DAVID. FROM THE PIT MARK SHOUTS THE 'ARRÊTE!']

# Biographies

**Petra Dotlačilová** gained a PhD in Dance Studies in 2016 from the Prague Academy of Performing Arts with a thesis on the works of Gasparo Angiolini and Jean-Georges Noverre. She also earned a PhD in Theatre Studies from Stockholm University with the thesis *Costume in the Time of Reforms: Louis-René Boquet Designing Eighteenth-Century Ballet and Opera* (2020). Her research focus is European dance history and theatrical costume from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. She was a researcher on the 'Performing Premodernity' project at Stockholm University and on the 'Ritual Design on the Ballet Stage (1650–1760)' project at the University of Leipzig. She is co-editor with Hanna Walsdorf of *Dance Body Costume* (Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2019). She is currently working as a postdoc on the research project 'The Fabrication of Performance: Processes and Politics of Costume-Making in the 18th Century', funded by the Swedish Research Council (2021–2024) and conducted in collaboration with the Centre de musique baroque de Versailles. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5118-1222. Email: petra.dotlacilova@teater.su.se.

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writings on aesthetics can be read as a response to the problems he saw in contemporary theatre. She is co-editor with Michael O'Dea of *Rousseau on Stage: Playwright, Musician, Spectator* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2017). https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4885-7148. Email: maria.gullstam@lrz.uni-muenchen.de.

**Jette Barnholdt Hansen** (1966–2017) was Associate Professor in Rhetoric at the University of Copenhagen. As a scholar of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian opera, including Monteverdi, Handel, and Mozart, as well as of the twentieth-century Danish revue tradition, she researched the relationships between rhetoric, ethics, and aesthetics, between social context and musical-dramatic form, between speech and song, between oral performance and vocal writing. Trained as a musicologist, as a rhetorician, and as a singer, she taught oral performance and public speaking to students of rhetoric as well as to actors, pastors, and politicians. She was the author of *Den klingende tale: Studier i de første hofoperaer på baggrund af senrenæssancens retorik* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2010). She was co-editor with Hanne Smith Pedersen of *Stemmen og tilhørerne: Taleundervisning i retorisk perspektiv* (Ödäkra: Retorikförlaget, 2016), and co-author with Jens E. Kjeldsen, Amos Kiewe, and Marie Lund of *Speechwriting in Theory and Practice* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

**Willmar Sauter**, Professor Emeritus in Theatre Studies at Stockholm University, has written on theatre history in Sweden and outside Sweden, from rock carvings to digital performances. His longstanding interest in audience and reception research has resulted in empirical and theoretical studies of contemporary as well as historical audiences. His theories of theatre are presented in *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of Performance and Perception* (University of Iowa Press, 2000) and summarised in *Eventness: A Concept of the Theatrical*

*Event* (Stockholm: STUTS, 2008). He is co-author with David Wiles of *The Theatre of Drottningholm Then and Now – Performance Between the 18ᵗʰ and 21ˢᵗ Centuries* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2014). The focus of his most recent book, *Aesthetics of Presence: Philosophical and Practical Reconsiderations* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021), is performance aesthetics seen as a reception strategy, with historical roots in the eighteenth century. His present project concerns Yiddish theatre, both in Sweden and in the world. Willmar Sauter has been the President of the International Federation for Theatre Research and has served Stockholm University as both Dean of the Humanities and Chair of the Research School of Aesthetics. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9623 -6725. Email: willmar.sauter@teater.su.se.

**Magnus Tessing Schneider** is a Docent in Theatre Studies from Stockholm University and currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Southern Denmark within the research project 'Histories: Assessing the Role of Aesthetics in the Historical Paradigm'. His research interests include seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European theatre, Shakespearean dramaturgy and performance practice, the intertwined histories of singing and acting, the opera composers Monteverdi, Cavalli, Gluck, Mozart, and Verdi, and the librettists Giovan Francesco Busenello, Ranieri Calzabigi, and Lorenzo Da Ponte. He was a cofounder of the Nordic Network for Early Opera, and his practice-oriented research has inspired opera productions across the world. He is the author of *The Original Portrayal of Mozart's Don Giovanni* (London: Routledge, 2021). He is co-editor with Ruth Tatlow of *Mozart's* La clemenza di Tito: *A Reappraisal* (Stockholm University Press, 2018), and the editor of Felicity Baker's essay collection *Don Giovanni's Reasons: Thoughts on a Masterpiece* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021). https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8903-7739. Email: magnus.tessing.schneider@teater.su.se.

**Mark Tatlow** is a conductor, harpsichordist, and pianist. While Artistic Director of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre from 2007 to 2013 he cofounded the 'Performing Premodernity' research project together with Willmar Sauter. At Drottningholm he conducted Sweden's first Monteverdi opera cycle, as well as works by Cavalli, Handel, Martín y Soler, Haydn, and Mozart. 2002–2012 he served as Professor of Musical Studies at the University College of Opera, Stockholm. He is currently undertaking doctoral research at the University of Gothenburg with the project 'Assaggio: Experimenting with the Performance of Early Modern Vocal Music at a Time of Crisis'. In 2019 he was commissioned by the Buxton Festival to compile and conduct *Georgiana*, a new eighteenth-century opera *pasticcio*, which received the UK Theatre Award for Achievement in Opera. In 2022 he was awarded the Gustavian Scholarship from the Swedish Academy. Beyond his interest in historical theatres, Mark has been artistically responsible for several new concert halls, including the Wathen Hall at St Paul's School in London and the Queen Silvia Concert Hall at Lilla Akademien in Stockholm. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0388 -2187. Email: mark.tatlow@gmail.com.

**Meike Wagner** is Professor and Chair of Theatre Studies at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. From 2014 to 2022 she was Professor of Theatre Studies at Stockholm University. She is Secretary General of the International Federation for Theatre Research and a member of its Theatre Historiography working group. Her research interests include theatre history with a focus on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, contemporary theatre and performance, especially puppet theatre and object performance, theatre and media, and curatorial dramaturgy. She holds an advanced grant from the European Research Council for her research project 'Performing Citizenship: Social and Political Agency in Non-Professional Theatre Practice in Germany, France, Britain, Sweden and Switzerland (1780–1850)' (2021–2026). She is the author of *Nähte am Puppenkörper:*

*Der mediale Blick und die Körperentwürfe des Theaters* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2003) and *Theater und Öffentlichkeit im Vormärz: Berlin, München und Wien als Schauplätze bürgerlicher Medienpraxis* (Berlin: Akademie, 2013). https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1003-3979. Email: meike.wagner@lmu.de.

**David Wiles** is Emeritus Professor of Drama at the University of Exeter, having spent much of his career at Royal Holloway University of London. As a theatre historian he has published extensively in the fields of Greek and Elizabethan theatre, and also on the themes of mask, space, and time. He is the author of *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (2003), and with Christine Dymkowski he edited the *Cambridge Companion to Theatre History* (2013). He first ventured into the eighteenth century with his *Theatre and Citizenship: The History of a Practice* (2011). In an enjoyable collaboration with Willmar Sauter, he then co-authored *The Theatre of Drottningholm – Then and Now: Performance Between the 18th and 21st Centuries* (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2014). All that he learnt in Drottningholm led him onto his next project, *The Players' Advice to Hamlet: The Rhetorical Acting Method from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (2020). Unless otherwise stated, his books have been published with Cambridge University Press to which he has just submitted the manuscript of his forthcoming book *Democracy as Theatre: From the Greeks to Gandhi*. https://orcid .org/0000-0003-2226-7622. Email: d.wiles@exeter.ac.uk.

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# Index

**Theatrical venues**

What can artists learn from theatre scholars when it comes to performing historical works on stage today? What can theatre scholars learn from today's artists when it comes to understanding the works and practices of the past? How is the experience of modern spectators affected by attending performances in historic theatres? And how, aesthetically, do we experience the reconstruction of productions from the remote past?

The essays in this anthology try to answer these questions by initiating a dialogue between academic and artistic research. They reflect a desire to develop and expand the methods traditionally used by theatre historians, presenting a variety of angles on today's performances in historic theatres and on today's attempts to revive theatrical practices of the past.

*"I was delighted to read this collection concerning historically-informed theatre experiments, as this praxis-based theatre research is original and insightful and should be shared with the world."*

Leslie Ritchie, Queen's University, Canada

*"Exploring the very timely theme of contemporary performance of historical pieces in historical theatres, the present chapters are highly interesting and informative, well-written, and based on original, well-executed research.*

*Although the focus is on eighteenth-century theatrical performance practice, the book opens up vistas beyond theatre: how we think about the cultural past, how we relate to the past in our own time."*

Anne Kauppala, University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland