



Eighteenth-Century Music © 2007 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S1478570607000759 Printed in the United Kingdom

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THE GROTESQUE DANCER ON THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STAGE: GENNARO MAGRI AND HIS WORLD

Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005

pp. xiv + 383, ISBN 0 299 20354 9

Gennaro Magri (active 1758–1779) was a well travelled dancer and choreographer who bequeathed to posterity the precious gift of his *Trattato teorico-prattico di ballo* (Naples, 1779). This treatise provides a unique record of the steps of the grotesque dancing style, as practised by theatrical dancers in the later eighteenth century. Its author is believed to have acquired his early training in Naples, where he was to return as a choreographer. Magri's career (usefully outlined in a chronological table compiled by Patricia Rader, pages 49–61) also took him to important dancing centres such as Verona, Venice, Turin and Vienna. During his travels he had the opportunity to see or perform in many works associated with the reform of ballet. These works fell into two broad groups: those of the followers of Jean-Georges Noverre (with heroic or tragic storylines, featuring *terre-à-terre* French-style dancing and walked mime in alternation) and those influenced by Magri's compatriot, Gasparo Angiolini (lighter stories, told through a blending of elevated, virtuosic dance and mime). Magri, although no polemicist, was a proud advocate of the exuberant tradition of the *grotteschi*, which, he argued, deserved to be valued equally with the elegant 'serious' style of the French. The *grotteschi* were often derided by contemporaries (typically the literati, for the style was highly popular with the public) as vulgar buffoons. Nonetheless, by the 1780s this style – and the type of pantomime advocated by Angiolini – prevailed, although Magri's own career as a choreographer seems to have been curtailed in the mid-1770s by the ascendancy of Noverrian pantomime (and the choreographer Charles Le Picq) at Naples's Teatro San Carlo.

This volume features essays by prominent researchers who originally explored Magri's world in a series of conference papers and practical workshops at the 1996 annual conference for the Society of Dance History Scholars. As Rebecca Harris-Warrick explains, 'so much new material emerged from these sessions that a book pulling it all together seemed essential' (5). The concept of using different specialisms (particular sources, persons or centres) as a 'lens' through which to view Magri and his *Trattato* works quite well. At times the *Trattato* itself becomes the 'lens'. Eighteenth-century Italian theatrical ballet is the subject of Kathleen Kuzmick Hansell's contribution (Chapter One). These independent entertainments (Italians favoured detached entr'actes over the French practice of integrated *divertissements*) expanded to between thirty and seventy minutes each by about 1770. As Salvatore Bongiovanni notes while examining the lively Neapolitan dance tradition, in the Italian theatres 'ballet dancers of the time vied in prowess with castratos and female singers; to the vocal fireworks of the singers, the dancers responded with audacious technical and acrobatic displays' (97). Clearly, the full integration of dance into a genre such as opera seria was not easy to negotiate: nonetheless, Italian opera as practised in centres such as London and Hamburg (Hansell's survey only considers theatres in Italy) had a long history of opting for an irregular mixture of detached entr'actes and integrated *divertissements*.

In Chapter Two Salvatore Bongiovanni provides an overview of Magri's career that is equally detailed in its consideration of his European colleagues (both performers and choreographers). Even in his native Italy, Magri was exposed to the more restrained French style of dance, for he worked with Noverre-trained choreographer Vincent Saulnier in Florence (autumn 1764). As Bruce Alan Brown notes (Chapter Three, 'Magri in Vienna: The Apprenticeship of a Choreographer'), Magri's two separate sojourns to cosmopolitan Vienna (1759–1760, 1763–1764) enabled him to view 'high-calibre' French dancers (their style of dancing was particularly valued by impresario Count Durazzo), while also experiencing Italianate pantomime ballet in the works of Angiolini's mentor, Franz Hilverding. Although Magri is not known to have travelled to Paris, he had colleagues in common with the choreographer August Ferrère, whose 1782 manuscript includes complete choreographies of ballets and shorter 'agrément' recorded in a mixture of Feuillet notation,



diagrams and description. As Rebecca Harris-Warrick and Carol G. Marsh argue (Chapter Seven, ‘The French Connection’), ‘Ferrère’s ballets seem largely consonant both with what Magri has to say and with what [ballet] scenarios suggest he did in his own works’ (189). We are introduced to the manuscript (and the mutual colleagues) in this chapter; the source is mined further by the same authors in Chapter Nine (‘Putting Together a Pantomime Ballet’), where general principles concerning the structure of ‘lighter’ pantomime ballets (the type of storyline choreographed by Magri), and the spatial orientation of their performers, are extracted from it.

Financial contingencies precluded attaching a video to this book, although we are told that the practical sessions at the conference had an important impact on it. Indeed, three of the contributors are accomplished dancers. Moira Goff harnesses the experience of working with English dance sources of the earlier eighteenth century to her advantage, exploring the connections between dancing master John Weaver, Magri and Ferrère (Chapter Eight). Weaver was a prolific writer on the aesthetics and practice of dance, whose first ‘dramatic entertainment of dancing’, *The Loves of Mars and Venus* (1717), is a unique source detailing the ‘speaking gestures’ and ‘expressive signs’ referred to by Angiolini. While Weaver gives no indication of what his dancers did with their feet, Magri’s *Trattato* details how the same step could be performed in the restrained serious style by courtly dancers, or in an exaggerated manner by the theatrical *grotteschi*. As Goff notes, Magri ‘associated certain steps with particular characters, providing glimpses of the meaning and expressive content attached to a vocabulary too often seen as wholly abstract by modern writers on dance’ (204). Goff has ample authority to claim that the steps should be seen as ‘expressive in themselves, because their particular qualities made them appropriate to a specific dramatic context’ (206). Sandra Noll Hammond’s ‘International Elements of Dance Training in the Late Eighteenth Century’ (Chapter Five) situates Magri’s *Trattato* within a long tradition of Italian, French and English dancing manuals dating from 1700 to 1859. Hammond argues for a common European dance technique; she supports this interpretation by pointing out that the peripatetic existence of Magri and his colleagues would not have been practical otherwise. Nonetheless, reception documents cited in other chapters (one also thinks of the numerous poems contrasting the styles of rival *danseuses* Sallé and Camargo in the 1720s and 1730s) suggest that spectators were attuned to noting the stylistic differences that undoubtedly existed on individual and ‘national’ (French versus Italian) levels.

Scholar-dancer Linda Tomko provides the sole theoretical contribution to the volume (Chapter Six, ‘Magri’s *Grotteschi*’), where Magri’s *Trattato* is considered for its illumination of how ‘dance strategies compose vivid codes for regional and cultural identities’ (165). She also argues for an intersection between Magri’s work and the ‘broad cultural shift that Mikhail Bakhtin has termed the struggle between the grotesque and classical bodies’ (161). Although the exaggerated gestures of the eighteenth-century *grotteschi* undoubtedly belonged to the former phenomenon, the legendary versatility of the Italian dancer suggests that this shift was, as Tomko observes, ‘far from a sudden or total change’ (165).

Music for dance is not a central consideration, although Brown indicates that the rich collection of part books for Vienna’s theatres warrants further study, and a preliminary investigation has revealed that much of it is expressive through gestural suggestiveness and evocative scoring. The music written for the Kärntnertheater, Brown notes, is more inclined to show a sense of dramatic continuity. Harris-Warrick and Marsh consider some basic musical issues regarding the Ferrère manuscript, which evidences no standard repeat structure: many of the pieces are expanded considerably by reiterated repetition of a limited amount of musical material. The authors suggest this practice might have extended to Rameau or Gluck; the performance scores for Handel’s ‘Sallé’ operas (1734–1735) certainly demonstrate a limited use of this kind of repetition. Harris-Warrick and Marsh conclude that a precise matching of the action to the music was important to Ferrère, although expressive concordances were more on the level of a general mood, rather than a bar-by-bar musical response to the dance gestures. They comment that more expressive dance music was written by Gluck and Rameau, although it could be noted that these composers normally would have been writing ballets in the heroic or tragic vein, whereas the Ferrère scenarios are comic.



This book lacks a bibliography, but each chapter offers richly detailed footnotes, and the several appendices reproduce primary sources (selected ballet scenarios from northern Italy, Paris, Vienna's Kärntnertheater, and Naples's Teatro San Carlo), or extremely useful tabulations (a preliminary list of known 'Grotteschi in Italy, 1750–1800', a Table of Contents and an index of 'Steps, Other Dance Terms, and People' for Magri's *Trattato*). This last is meant to complement Mary Skeaping's English translation of Magri's *Trattato* (London: Dance Books, 1988), which was not indexed. As a result of the cumulative expertise of its authors, this volume is a useful (indeed essential) resource for researchers interested in eighteenth-century dance and mime.

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Eighteenth-Century Music 4/1 © 2007 Cambridge University Press
doi:10.1017/S1478570607000784 Printed in the United Kingdom

LEWIS M. HOLMES

KOSEGARTEN'S CULTURAL LEGACY: AESTHETICS, RELIGION, LITERATURE, ART, AND MUSIC

New York: Peter Lang, 2005

pp. x + 218, ISBN 0 8204 7924 1

This broadly interdisciplinary study brings to the attention of English-speaking scholars a writer and thinker whose eclectic interests reflect the cultural richness of German romanticism. As such, it complements Holmes's earlier biographical monograph, *Kosegarten: The Turbulent Life and Times of a Northern German Poet* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004). Ludwig Gotthard Theobul Kosegarten (1758–1818), a prolific author of poems, novels, essays and sermons, also wrote a treatise on aesthetics (*Ueber die wesentliche Schönheit*, 1790) and a doctoral dissertation on theology. He was a keen art collector, to whom Goethe sent some landscapes in 1818 and who, Holmes suggests, 'influenced the works of two of the most important artists of the Romantic era: Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840) and Philipp Otto Runge (1777–1810)' (115). He was also an amateur pianist and flautist, whose poems were set to music by a wide range of contemporaneous composers, documented by Holmes in the 'Music Appendix' (185–192). The breadth of Kosegarten's interests was shared by many of his friends and professional acquaintances, including Goethe, Schiller and the Schlegel brothers; and his ideas and intellectual concerns were characteristic of the age dominated by Kant's critical philosophy.

Holmes's book is subdivided into four parts: 'Aesthetics and Religion', 'Poetry and Fiction', 'Reception by Artists' and 'Reception by Musicians'. The first part comprises two chapters – 'Beauty in Nature' and 'Nature in Religion' – and is especially thorough in its examination of Kosegarten's thought in relation to contemporaneous developments in the history of ideas. In Chapter One, 'Beauty in Nature', Holmes situates within the broader context of eighteenth-century aesthetic thought the central tenet of Kosegarten's *Ueber die wesentliche Schönheit*, namely that 'beauty is godliness in nature' (3). Acknowledging the seminal influence of Plato on his essentially neoclassical concept of beauty, and his indebtedness to the ideas of Hamann and Herder, Holmes presents Kosegarten as 'an innovative pre-Romantic scholar' (12) whose aesthetic bears similarities to that of Wackenroder. In so doing, Holmes identifies some interesting continuities in the development of eighteenth-century thought, in particular regarding the close kinship of art, nature and religion, but fails to acknowledge that the aesthetic category of the sublime had effectively supplanted that of the beautiful in many early romantic writings. In Chapter Two, 'Nature in Religion', Holmes likens the sermons given by Kosegarten on the island of Rügen to the Chautauqua assemblies (first held in New York State in 1874) on the grounds that an egalitarian spirit and didactic purpose is common to both. Less idiosyncratically, Holmes presents Kosegarten as 'a pre-Romantic theological scholar' (24), whose