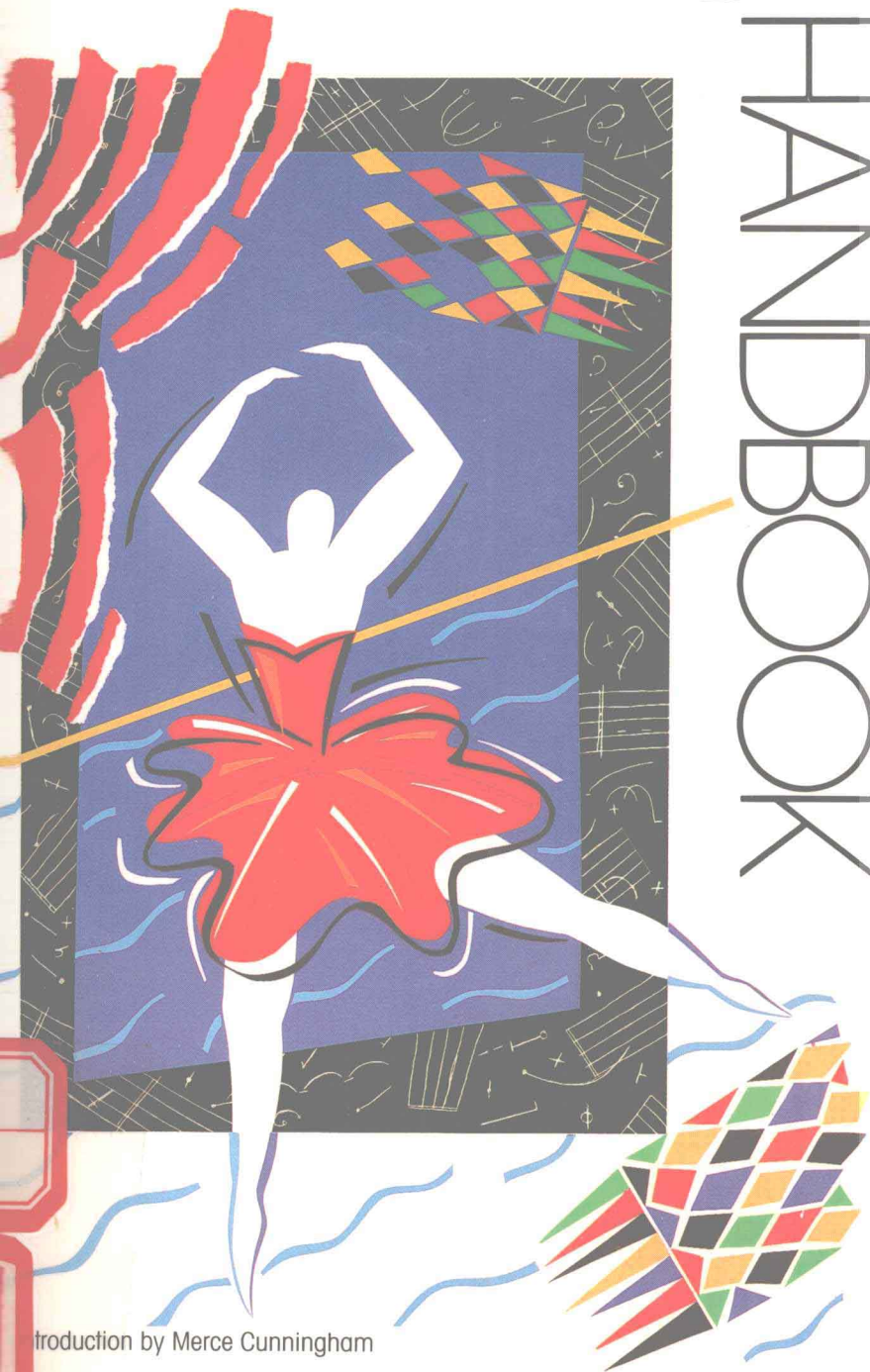


Allen
Robertson &
Donald
Hutera

THE DANCE HANDBOOK



Introduction by Merce Cunningham

THE DANCE HANDBOOK

Allen Robertson
Donald Hutera



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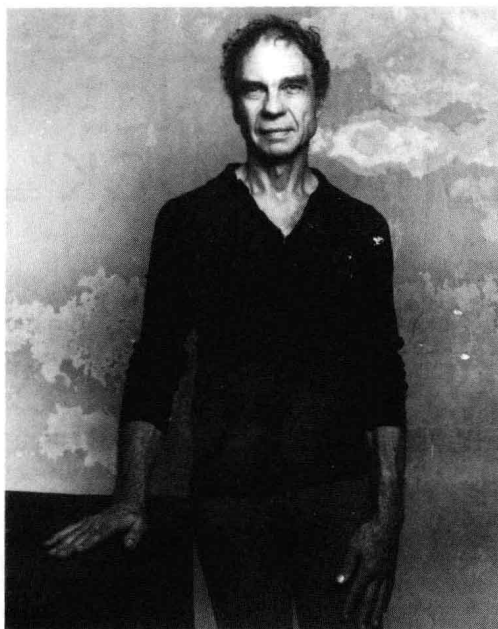
TO THE MEMORY of Else Aschengreen, and for Erik Aschengreen in Copenhagen and William Mowat-Thomson in Edinburgh, first and still ideal European hosts.

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THE PRESENT VIGOUR of dance, and the enthusiasm for it by a more general and larger public than previously, makes a Handbook handy, especially if it conveys information clearly and easily to anyone reading it. What it can convey further is a view of the wide variety and multiplicity of directions that dance has taken in recent decades.

Dance is of course for everyone to do, but since most people are less likely to do it than see it – and that section of the populace seems to be growing – if they can read about it (preferably *after* seeing a dance, from my point of view, but as many will prefer, before seeing it) in a form that straightforwardly describes dancers and dances and the different approaches choreographers have used, a Handbook, like the dictionary, can help.

Dance is an elusive art. It slips through your fingers and toes. But a formidable one, as evidenced by its influence on twentieth-century arts. It is also constantly around us in its various guises – folk, popular, serious, from strict traditional classical ballet and the myriad individual modern dance approaches to the most recent innovations of the young. The output is enormous; gives one pause to look at a Handbook.

Merce Cunningham

HOW TO USE THE DANCE HANDBOOK

The Dance Handbook is a compact guide offering a structured approach to the extensive – and sometimes daunting – range of ballet and dance currently on offer. It starts from a framework of major choreographers, companies, dancers and danceworks, and aims to encourage you, through a system of cross-references, to encounter as wide a variety of dance as possible.

The Handbook's role is to prepare the groundwork for building up an overall view of ballet and dance in the context of their history, and to encourage you to develop your own personal tastes. The different routes you can take are clearly marked; it is up to you whether or not you choose to pursue them.

Above all, the Handbook is intended to be an active reference book: it has been designed for ease of use, and ease of access. The ideal way to use it is to follow the recommendations and suggestions, and experience dance in performance whenever you have the chance.

To support you, the Handbook provides back-up facts and information; although compact, it is crammed with data.

The entries

At the core of the Handbook are the two hundred main entries. They have been deliberately chosen to cover a wide and relevant spread of starting-points. These range from Romantic ballets (for example *La Sylphide* and *Giselle*) and the great Imperial works (such as *Swan Lake* and *The Sleeping Beauty*) to contemporary innovators like Twyla Tharp and Pina Bausch. We have not intended to cover every choreographer, every ballet or every dancer. The Handbook is not a comprehensive

encyclopedia, but rather a stimulus and a springboard for further exploration. Omission is by no means meant to imply lack of importance. For the purposes of this book, we have taken dance to mean Western theatrical dance, as opposed to ethnic or social dance.

The entries have been grouped into eight broadly chronological sections to create an immediate framework, which helps when you are dealing with what may appear at first to be the amorphous world of dance. You should note that:

- The Handbook opens with a brief chapter called Origins, which explains the development of what we now call ballet.
- A two-page spread begins each chapter with a summary of the salient features and trends of each era.
- Clearly some companies, dancers and choreographers will straddle one or more of the chapters, but we have placed them in the chapter where they had their first or most important impact.
- Three major subjects have two entries, such is the length and consistency of their contributions: Frederick Ashton, George Balanchine and Ballet Rambert/Rambert Dance Company.

Within the chapters, choreographers, companies and dancers are listed in alphabetical order. Individual works are grouped after the relevant choreographer in chronological order of first performance. For example:

FREDERICK ASHTON
Façade (1931)
Symphonic Variations (1946)
Cinderella (1948)
GEORGE BALANCHINE
Serenade (1934) etc.

Where a ballet or dancework has been choreographed in a number of different stagings, we have selected the first or the best known version. The alternative stagings are listed at the end of the entry.

Main entries contain the following elements:

- 1 A block of **factual information**. For choreographers/dancers this contains:
 - Date and place of birth and death

For dance companies:

- Year of formation

For ballets and danceworks:

- Number of acts
- Choreographer, librettist, composer and designer
- The date and place of first performance

- 2 The **main critique** sets the subject of the entry in context, identifying what is important and individual about it, and what to look for. References to other main entries are indicated in **bold**: people and works are always cross-referenced; companies are usually, but not necessarily cross-referenced. At the first appearance in the book of ballets which are not main entries, the year of production is also given.

- 3 **Lineage** is the part of the entry which actively suggests links and new directions to follow. These links can range from the straightforward to the adventurous, encouraging you to cut across the different styles of dance rather than getting locked into any particular one. References to other main entries are again picked out in **bold**.

- 4 The **Follow-up** section gives pointers to other background materials available which focus on the particular person, company or work: for example, books, films or videos (an increasingly important source) with date of publication/release where known.

- 5 Entries on specific works may also have a set of alternative **Stagings**. This may simply list companies with the year they took the work (in the version described by the entry) into their repertoire, eg:

1 **New York City Ballet**/1979

2 **Dance Theatre of Harlem**/1986

Alternatively, where the score or subject matter has been interpreted by a number of different choreographers, or where stagings have been remounted after the choreographer's death, the name of the person who staged the individual versions is also given, eg:

1 **Rudolf Nureyev**/Vienna Ballet/1964

2 **Erik Bruhn**/National Ballet of Canada/1966.

The Databank

Following the main chapters is a Databank of additional information, including:

- A **glossary** listing dance-related terms in the Handbook which may require further clarification or amplification.
- **Dance books**: includes titles which will give further background or detail on dance in general, and provide an additional entrée to the world of dance.
- A country-by-country listing of **information sources**: magazines, festivals, dance companies and other bodies which can supply useful information and act as contact points.
- **Index**: an A-Z of choreographers, dancers, composers, designers, librettists, entrepreneurs, companies and works mentioned in the Handbook.

The Dance Handbook is the third title in a series of Longman Handbooks on the arts; see the back cover for further details.

ORIGINS

It began as magic. Like his cave paintings and his stone circles, dance linked prehistoric man to the awesome realm beyond everyday existence where ritual could attempt to define and control what could not be explained. The urge to dance, one of the forces of nature buried deep in the human psyche, is a universal impulse.

Today we watch dance being performed by youthful, svelte and beautiful bodies who act as our surrogates. Most of us no longer feel free enough to express our emotions in maypole or morris dances – let alone fertility rites. We do not summon the gods with our dancing; instead, we sit watching in the dark where, on rare occasions, we are lucky enough to experience vicariously that core of true magic at the heart of dance.

What we call dancing was born in the courts of the Italian city states, where it was used as a political tool, as a show of splendour and an exhibition of wealth and power. These entertainments were something like an indoor parade, a refined and elaborate version of the popular public fairs and festivals.

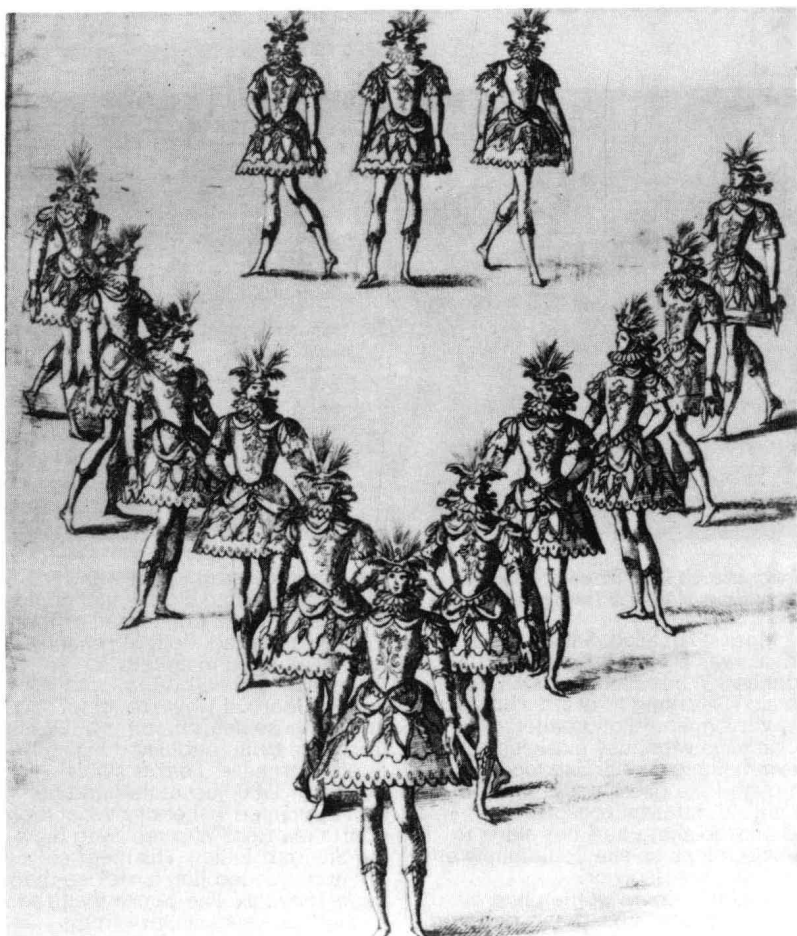
Dance, as it began to be codified in the late sixteenth century, was a hobby for aristocratic amateurs happy and eager to take part in the glorification of their monarchs. Like all of the arts of the Renaissance, dancing expressed its political messages through allegories drawn from the ancient gods and goddesses of Greek and Roman mythology. In fact, the most ardent of all royal dancers, the French king Louis XIV, could trace his nickname of the Sun King to a performance where he played Apollo, the god of the sun. Four hundred years later, the great choreographer George Balanchine would depict the young Apollo infusing the muses with the divine spark of poetic inspiration. The Sun King would have been mightily pleased.

It was Catherine de Medici who had brought the Italian ballet with her from Florence to France. Her grandson Louis XIII was another enthusiast who knew the power of these court spectacles to impress foreign ambassadors, visiting monarchs and even his own mother. The 1617 *Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud* used its allegorical story to inform his mother that Louis was now old enough (at sixteen) to do away with her regency and assume control of the kingdom himself.

In 1670, when his son Louis XIV retired from performing in court ballets, the age of the noble amateur came to an end. The ballets had become so elaborate that even the most ambitious of courtiers anxious to impress their Sun King were hard pressed to live up to the steps devised for them by the likes of dancer-composer Jean-Baptiste Lully. In any case, Louis XIV had already taken the momentous step of establishing the Académie Royale de Danse, which would become the first professional training school and lead in an unbroken lineage to today's Paris Opéra Ballet.

Women were not admitted into the Académie until 1681. Before that, all the female roles had been danced by boys in feminine disguise. Women had taken part in some of the court ballets, but when dance moved from the private to the public sphere, it was initially considered unseemly for them to continue performing.

With Lully now officially in command, and Molière working in collaboration with him, the ballet began to take on a more cohesive



shape. All of these performances, both at the court and in public, involved much more than dancing. They were a mix of poetry, music, dialogue and sumptuous design as well. Modern opera-goers would be more immediately at home with these spectacles than the average dance fan.

The same could be said of the masque, the English version of the French court ballet. Its two most celebrated London exponents were playwright Ben Jonson and his designer, the architect Inigo Jones. The masque, like its Continental counterpart, was a court entertainment; it was abruptly cut off by Cromwell along with the head of Charles I. An indigenous ballet would not flower again in

'Danse Générale et Dernière', a scene from the 1617 *Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud* performed at the court of Louis XIII

British soil until the 1930s, although an important London figure, John Weaver, did have an impact with his pantomime ballets in the early 1700s, and the first female choreographer, Marie Sallé, came from Paris in 1734 to premiere her ballet *Pygmalion* in London. She created an uproar by choosing to appear in a diaphanous muslin tunic rather than in the voluminous gowns of the day. Sallé's penchant for loose garments, prefiguring Isadora Duncan by almost 175 years, caused the same sort of scandalised titillation as would Isadora.



French ensemble Ris et Danceries in their reconstruction of *Bal à la Cour de Louis XIV*

Marie Camargo, Sallé's great rival, was a very different sort of dancer. While Sallé in her 'Greek' tunic was trying to bring some sort of verisimilitude into ballet, Camargo was busy exploiting her own technical skill. She too violated the dress code, but for entirely different reasons. Camargo shortened her skirts to ankle length so she could show off her dazzling footwork.

Until this point, women had simply glided, posed and paraded round the stage while men did all the intricate steps. Camargo (despite the weight of her fashionable gown) was strong enough to match the men step for step and wanted to make certain that audiences could see this. To improve her technique even further, she began to take the same class as the male dancers. Maya Plisetskaya, who became one of the powerhouse stars of the Bolshoi Ballet in the 1940s and 50s, also polished her technique by taking classes designed for men.

Together, Sallé and Camargo represent the two poles of ballet thought. Camargo stood for spectacle, for ballet as virtuososo display. Sallé was a reformer searching for an emotional depth of expression. She and other in-

novators believed ballet was capable of telling stories that could be unified, even poetic, rather than merely diverting. Both approaches have continued to hold sway throughout dance history.

Jean-Georges Noverre, chief among those searching for a fuller theatrical truth, published his influential treatise, *Lettres sur la Danse*, in 1760, just at the time he was appointed ballet master at the court theatre of Württemberg (now the Stuttgart Ballet). His theories about dance led him to devise the *ballet d'action*. The genre featured a single, consistent story from beginning to end and used pantomime (as had Weaver in London) to further the plot. This differed considerably from the dominant approach found in the court ballets with their loosely linked set pieces, known as *divertissements*.

The oldest ballet that can still be seen owes much to Noverre's theories. Vincenzo Galeotti's *The Whims of Cupid and the Ballet Master* was choreographed in 1786 for the Royal Danish Ballet; the company has continued to perform this comic gem ever since. Another Copenhagen attraction evoking bygone eras can be seen on summer evenings at Tivoli, where pantomime ballets have been performed in the outdoor theatre since 1847.

A more majestic past is conjured

up in the historically accurate performances in the Court Theatre at Drottningholm, outside Stockholm. Built in 1766, this 350-seat theatre (abandoned throughout the nineteenth century) has, since 1922, given summer performances of ballets, pantomimes and operas from the eighteenth century. Members of the Royal Swedish Ballet often take part, and the Ingmar Bergman version of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* was filmed there.

What makes Drottningholm such a marvel are the theatre's original stage settings. These ingenious creations, operated by counterweights, are made up of sliding panels set in tracks in the stage floor; it takes less than ten seconds for the stage to change from a city street to a forest, from a palace interior to a rocky seascape complete with rolling waves and miniature sailing ships in the distance. Here, we get a wonderful glimpse of what pre-Romantic ballet looked like in court theatres throughout Europe.

The current interest in historically authentic performances of works by Lully, Rameau and others is matched by an equal interest in the appropriate dance styles of their times. Several companies who specialise in seventeenth and eighteenth-century dance are now meeting this demand. Their research is exhaustive and their performances illustrate the art which European monarchs fostered. *Ris et Danceries*, based in Paris, where professional dancing first began, and the American group known as the New York Baroque Dance Company are just two of the most popular of these troupes.

With the exception of *The Whims of Cupid*, all of their dances are modern reconstructions. It is only

with the advent of the Romantic era that we begin to encounter ballets which have passed down in a continuous chain from one generation of dancers to the next.

One important work whose original choreography has been lost is *La Fille mal gardée*. This ballet's story was one of the very first to deal with real-life folk in everyday situations, a significant shift of emphasis away from the nobles and the Arcadian gods and goddesses who had until then been the chief characters of ballet. Choreographed by Jean Dauberval, *La Fille mal gardée* premiered in Bordeaux just two weeks before the outbreak of the French Revolution.

By the time Europe had finished with Napoleon and begun the Industrial Revolution, the artistic climate had switched to a new sort of otherworldliness. Leading creative artists no longer looked up to the classic gods on Mount Olympus; instead, they were plunging into the misty and mysterious forests of the Romantic era.

In the theatre this yearning for fantasy was aided by one of the Industrial Revolution's important inventions: gas lighting. The impact on ballet and theatre design in general began to be felt in 1822, when gas was installed at the Paris Opéra. Designers quickly discovered how helpful the new lighting could be in generating illusion. The most dramatic advantage over candle-power was that gas could simulate the eerie effects of moonlight in a manner never before imagined. Since midnight was the favoured hour of the Romantics, this proved to be a major turning point. It can still be seen (and felt) in the spell of moonlit magic which hovers over the Romantic ballet's first masterpiece, *La Sylphide*.

ROMANTIC BALLET

12th March 1832. The premiere of *La Sylphide* marked the resounding capitulation of ballet to the ideals of Romanticism, and catapulted Marie Taglioni to fame. She became the luminary of the era, a woman who used all of her strength to convince audiences that she was an ethereal, evanescent vision from another world. Even today, her image of airy delicacy holds sway as a universal picture of ballet dancing. Taglioni was, in all senses, the first modern ballerina.

Taglioni's style, aided by her new-fangled toe shoes, ushered in an age where Woman, perfect and unattainable, was too good to be true, too good to love in the real world. Choreographers, composers, writers and painters including Berlioz, Byron, Scott and Delacroix led a host of hot-blooded dreamers who concocted visionary worlds populated with sylphs, ondines, dryads, naiads and all manner of unearthly creatures.

Alluring, amoral and (literally) soulless heroines dominated the Romantic stage. These enchantresses gave each hero a taste of the sublime while destroying his ability to cope with real life and 'mere' mortal women. The basic duality of the Romantic ballet was of an absolute love devoid of sexual fulfilment. Sanctity of the kind reserved for mothers and sisters was subliminally sanctioned through a passion of enforced chastity. The ballets of the era accommodated this double standard to perfection.

The archetypal image of a creature in gauzy white, floating just out of reach in the moonlight, was reinforced by Taglioni's ability to hover on the tips of her toes. She was not the first dancer ever to balance on point, but she was the first to transform the feat from gimmick to artistry.

This illusion of lightness and freedom did not come easily; the stamina required of the Romantic ballerinas was prodigious. Today's toe shoes, built of alternating layers of fabric and glue, are actually small platforms on which

to stand. Taglioni and her sister sylphs only darned the tips of their shoes for traction and padded the ends with cotton wool: they really were dancing on their toes. Small wonder that a group of St Petersburg aristocrats celebrated the final night of Taglioni's first Russian tour by eating a pair of her shoes.

The excessive adulation poured upon dancers like Taglioni, Carlotta Grisi, Lucile Grahn and others initiated the cult of the ballerina. This was the first time in the history of dance that women had taken centre stage. Their prominence produced an excess of fervour in audiences, who showered them in affection, celebrity and diamonds. It was only with the advent of Rudolf Nureyev – over a century later – that they would find their male consorts beginning to achieve equal prominence.

The passions of Romanticism quickly burned themselves out. In less than twenty years, opera had become the dominant art in both London and Paris, although the French continued to demand that their operas include a ballet. In Copenhagen, August Bournonville rode over the decline of Romanticism with sunny equanimity, but hardly anyone outside Denmark was aware of his work. The Royal Danish Ballet was like *The Sleeping Beauty*. A hundred years of seclusion lay ahead before the company made its first international tour in 1956.

As European ballet slipped back towards secondary status, the



talents of the Romantic era and their successors travelled to Russia. Coddled, nurtured and cherished under the tsars, ballet steadily grew in expertise and magnificence. By the end of the century, the Imperial spectacles devised by the Frenchman Marius Petipa had become the most elaborate and lavish events the dance world has ever known.

The scarf scene from a London City Ballet production of August Bournonville's *La Sylphide*

August Bournonville

Born: 21st August 1805/
Copenhagen

Died: 30th November 1879/
Copenhagen

The son of a French dancer who was a member of the Royal Danish Ballet, August Bournonville made his debut there when still a child. As a young man he journeyed to Paris on a court scholarship to study with the greatest teacher of the day, Auguste Vestris (see **Konservatoriet**), and, after performing in Paris and London, returned to Denmark an exceptionally accomplished dancer. In 1830, he was appointed company director and also continued as leading dancer for the next twenty years. During the half century he was in charge of the Royal Danish Ballet, Bournonville was able to produce an unprecedented stream of works. Only a dozen of them survive, but they constitute our single largest legacy from the nineteenth century.

Bournonville was a staunchly bourgeois family man, and his ballets reflect his faith in the good things in life. A generous, at times cosy, sense of community pervades his ballets every step of the way. Like his close friend Hans Christian Andersen, Bournonville's works express a belief in man's essential goodness. He eventually turned his back on the excesses of French Romanticism and, working in Copenhagen away from the mainstream, fostered a style of dancing overflowing with warmth and a good-humoured optimism.

Bournonville single-handedly managed to preserve the role of the male dancer during the Romantic era's ballerina mania. Demanding the same standard of skills from all his dancers, he

championed an (on-stage) equality of the sexes at the very time when audiences in Europe's major capitals were throwing themselves at the feet of Marie Taglioni and the other Romantic goddesses.

His style is noted for its fleet, fluid footwork. The choreography never stops moving: each phrase of dancing is linked up with the next in one long interwoven skein of unbroken steps. Rarely does a dancer stop to strike an impressive pose. Another Bournonville hallmark is the use of big, arcing leaps that come straight at the audience in bounding ebullience. The radiant enthusiasm infusing Bournonville's style is his unique and lasting contribution.

Lineage

Of all the companies in the world, the Royal Danish Ballet retains the most direct link to the past. In addition to its preservation of the Bournonville heritage, the company still performs the earliest of all extant ballets, Vincenzo Galeotti's *The Whims of Cupid and the Ballet Master* (1786). And while it is not unusual for a major dancer to become the director of a company, it is worth noting that three of the most exceptional dancer/directors of the twentieth century – **Erik Bruhn**, **Peter Martins** and **Peter Schaufuss** – are all Copenhagen-born performers who started life in the Bournonville school of the Royal Danish Ballet.

Follow-up

Bournonville's memoirs, *My Theatre Life*, were translated into English in 1977. A biography by Walter Terry, *The King's Ballet Master*, appeared in 1979 and Knud Arne Jürgensen's *The Bournonville Ballets: A Photographic Record 1844–1933* (1987) includes nearly five hundred photos of Copenhagen dancers in more than two dozen ballets. *The Royal Danish Ballet: 1902–1906* is a 1979 compilation of rare film footage including nine excerpts (five of which are still in the repertory) and offers an exceptional opportunity to see what dancers once looked like.

La Sylphide

Two acts

Choreography: August Bournonville, based on the 1832 Paris version by Filippo Taglioni
Music: Herman Løvenskjold
Premiere: 28th November 1836/
Royal Theatre, Copenhagen

The earliest major ballet to survive in anything like its original form, *La Sylphide* helped kindle the vogue for Romanticism that swept across Europe. The Paris production immediately established Marie Taglioni (the original Sylph) as an international personality. Idolised from London to St Petersburg, her unprecedented stardom marked the frenzied beginnings of the ballerina cults which persist even today. Bournonville's 1836 version (closely linked to the original, which he had seen in Paris) led to the same fame for his Sylph, Lucile Grahn, and it is Bournonville's staging which is most often seen today.

The scene is set in the remote Scottish highlands. For early nineteenth-century cosmopolitans this was foreign terrain, shrouded in mists and magic. The curtain rises on James asleep in a chair; a winged Sylph, her white tulle skirts billowing round her, is poised beside him (this image, endlessly reproduced as a lithograph, achieved picture-postcard popularity). Startled awake, James is instantaneously captivated by this otherworldly vision. Coily eluding his touch, she flies away – up the chimney.

Villagers arrive for the wedding of James and his fiancée Effie. Among them is Gerd, her rejected suitor. Their highland fling is interrupted by Madge, an old witch (traditionally performed by a man). When James evicts her, she hobbles away, swearing vengeance. As the festivities continue, the Sylph (visible to James alone) returns to lure him off to the forest. Unable to control his

irrational longings, he dashes after her.

The second act opens with Madge and her coven huddled over a steaming cauldron. As Madge draws an enchanted scarf from the bubbling brew, the witches hop round the fire in a drunken stomping spree. Meanwhile, in her forest glen, the Sylph entrances James with her delicate charms. Then she presents her sister Sylphs who perform a suite of charming dances highlighted by some of the first sustained examples of ballerinas *en pointe*.

When the villagers come searching for James, the Sylphs vanish. He hides, and when they are gone, Madge reappears to tempt James with the scarf. The Sylph, flying back to James, is captivated by this pretty thing. Hoping to please (and capture) her, James winds the scarf around her arms. Madge's spell works instantly, and as her wings fall from her back, the Sylph's immortality is destroyed. She collapses into his arms and dies – significantly, this is the one and only time the two of them actually touch. Her saddened sisters assemble to bear her heavenwards. This aerial tableau, of the Sylph rising supine into the skies, cradled by her mourning sisters, was a stunning *coup de théâtre* which helped ensure the ballet's popularity.

As a wedding party for Effie and Gerd passes in the distance, Madge gloats over the prostrate body of James, who has lost not only his dream but also his claim to human love.

Lineage

The most influential dancework of the century, *La Sylphide* forever altered the art form. Its introduction of point work helped the ballerina create a vision of a spirit wafting across the earth. This notion of an unobtainable feminine ideal hovering just out of reach was to become one of Romanticism's most cherished tenets.

Thanks to *La Sylphide* and its many offshoots, ballet reached a

height of popularity that would remain unequalled until **Serge Diaghilev** brought his Russians to Paris in 1909. It was in honour of this Romantic classic that Diaghilev changed the name of **Michel Fokine's** ballet from *Chopiniana* to *Les Sylphides*.

Follow-up

In 1972, following exhaustive excavations in the library of the Paris Opéra, Pierre Lacotte staged a historical reconstruction of the 1832 Taglioni version. This was originally commissioned by French television: the production features Ghislaine Thesmar (Mme Lacotte) and Michaël Denard, the Paris Opéra's most impressive star couple during the 1970s. Lacotte's reconstruction was also staged for the Kirov Ballet in 1981. Dances from the second act of the Bournonville version can be seen in Rudolf Nureyev's film *I Am a Dancer* (1972) with Carla Fracci as the Sylph.

Stagings

- 1 **Harald Lander**/American Ballet Theatre/1964
- 2 **Erik Bruhn**/National Ballet of Canada/1964
- 3 **Hans Brenaa**/Scottish Ballet/1973
- 4 **Peter Schaufuss**/London Festival Ballet/1979
- 4 **Pierre Lacotte**/Kirov Ballet/1981 (recreation of original 1832 version)

Napoli

Three acts

Choreography: August Bournonville

Music: Niels W. Gade, Edvard Helsted, Hans Christian Lumbye and Holger Simon Paulli

Premiere: 29th March 1842/Royal Theatre, Copenhagen

Subtitled 'The Fisherman and His Bride', *Napoli* is an ideal illustration of Bournonville's light approach to the darker aspects of Romanticism. This joyous travelogue of a ballet is designed

in three distinct sections. The first act, set in the bustling Neapolitan harbour, is a comedy of local colour filled with inventive pantomime and clever characterisations, including a love-sick lemonade seller, a puppeteer, a buffoon who mimes a street song and even a priest to bless the fishermen's catch. The hero, Gennaro, and his love, Teresina, searching for a moment's privacy, set sail in his boat. A sudden storm sweeps her overboard.

The second act moves to the famous Blue Grotto on Capri, and brings in the otherworldly aspects so loved by all Romantic era audiences. Golfo, a sea god, has saved Teresina from drowning. Struck by her beauty, he turns her into one of his attendant naiads. This stage trick is a fine illustration of nineteenth-century theatricality. In the twinkling of an eye, Teresina's dress vanishes to reveal a new gown identical to that of the other naiads. (Actually, her first dress is pulled off by wires and disappears through a tiny trapdoor in the stage floor. If you aren't expecting it to happen, it really does seem to be magic.)

Gennaro, still searching for signs of Teresina, rows his boat into the grotto. At first she does not recognise him, but with the aid of a holy medallion she is brought back to her senses and the sea god is forced to release her from her watery living death.

Back on dry land, Act Three is a wedding celebration of dancing which includes the exhilarating Tarantella, complete with tambourines, handclaps and buoyant high-flying jumps, Bournonville's single most famed piece of choreography.

Napoli is a prime example of Bournonville's domestication of Romanticism's more exotic tendencies. His sense of community, his ideal of ballet as a microcosm for society, give his works an honest and earthy reality which many nineteenth-century ballets so conspicuously lacked. The mystical aspects of Romanticism are transformed in a harmony of high spirits and