French Romantic Ballets

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Jean-Madeleine Schneitzhoeffer, *La Sylphide*
Adolphe-Charles Adam, *Giselle* and *Le Corsaire*

Edited and Introduced by Robert Ignatius Letellier

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Portrait of Adolphe-Charles Adam

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ABOUT THE EDITION OF *GISELLE*

The piano score of the ballet Giselle was first published in the Soviet Union on the basis of the first printed piano score, published in Paris in 1841, and the original (author's) orchestral score existing in the Bolshoi Theatre of the USSR in the form of a manuscript copy. The ballet was produced in all the theatres of the Soviet Union in accordance with this orchestral score. From the time of the first performance of Giselle the music of the ballet has undergone many changes and abridgements, supplemented by the music of other composers. Large sections of the music of A. Adam have not been used for over 80 years.

In this edition the music of Giselle is reproduced in full. As in the majority of theatres in our country Giselle appears in the choreographic edition of L. Lavrovsky, the music executed in accordance with that edition is printed in large type.

Some changes in the music should be especially mentioned.
No. 9 As a result of the withdrawal of the big scene of the hunters (*allegro* 6/8) all the music according to L Lavrovsky's edition from *Andantino* 2/4 to *Andante moderato* 4/4 is transposed a half tone higher. The composer's exposition is given in small type.
No. 13 From the start of the number to *Andantino moderato* 4/4 the author's theme has been changed, by someone unknown and for an unknown purpose. Judging by the orchestral score, where the French horn parts are written in obsolete pitches, this was done a long time ago. The composer's exposition is given in small type.
No. 16 In connection with the changes to the end of the ballet (the removal of the appearance of Bathilde, the hunters and the courtiers after Giselle's disappearance), in 1913-14 a new variation of the music of the finale was composed by B. Afanasiev, which is performed in the theatres of our country to this day. Because of the major difference in the number of bars the composer's finale is printed separately (Appendix I).
The second scene of the first act, which has not been performed for a long time (the scene of Giselle and Albert in the village cottage occupied by Albert) has also been printed separately because of its large scale (Appendix II). This scene can be inserted after No. 6.
The fairly frequent divergences between the piano and orchestral scores concerning melodic and harmonic [turns] are corrected as a result of thorough collation.
The changes to the piano edition have been done with the aim of the approximation of the sound of the piano score to that of the orchestral score.
The stage directions in the piano score, the alphabetic and numeric directions are given for ballet-masters to assist in the convenience of orientation in studying the choreographic text of the ballet.

THE STAGE DIRECTIONS FOR *GISELLE*

(The Russian translations are courtesy of Elaine Thornton.)

INTRODUCTION

Jean-Madeleine Schneitzhoeffer (1785-1852)

LA SYLPHIDE

Ballet in 2 acts
Scenario: Adolphe Nourrit
Music: Jean-Madeleine Schneitzhoeffer
Choreography: Filippo Taglioni
Sets: Pierre-Luc-Charles Cicéri
Costumes: Eugène Lami
First performance: Paris Opéra, 12 March 1832
Principal dancers: Marie Taglioni (the Sylphide), Lise Noblet (Effie), Joseph Mazilier (James), Mme L. Elie (Madge), M. Elie (Gurn)

The ballet was based on Charles Nodier's *Trilby, ou le Lutin d'Arguail* (1822). The story derives from Scotland. The young farmer James is visited by the Sylphide on the eve of his marriage to Effie. He leaves his bride and his friends and follows her to the woods. To bind her forever to him, he accepts a magic shawl from the witch Madge. When he pulls it around the Sylphide's shoulders, however, her wings fall off and she dies. In the finale one sees the wedding party on its way to the church. Effie is now marrying Gurn, whom she had previously rejected.

The story is set in a Scottish village and nearby wood.

Act 1
James is sleeping in an armchair by the fireside at dawn on the day of his wedding to Effie. From the chimney a winged spirit, a Sylphide, appears, gazes at him with love, and finally wakes him with a kiss. James tries to grasp the vision that has long been disturbing his dreams, but she vanishes, dancing. Effie, her mother, and some neighbours arrive to prepare for the wedding: with them is the young local man Gurn, Effie's disappointed suitor. Madge, an old witch, also sneaks in and tries to warm herself at the fireside. She is sent away roughly by James, and succoured by Effie and Gurn. She prophesies that the girl, who is not loved by her betrothed, will marry Gurn. Left alone, James sees the Sylphide again. This time, before disappearing, she confesses her love for James, and invites him to follow her. Gurn has witnessed the scene, and runs to call Effie, so that she can see her betrothed's infidelity. On Effie's entry, the ethereal rival hides in the big chair, and James covers her with his cloak. When Gurn whips it away, the armchair is empty, the Sylphide having disappeared up the chimney. During the wedding festivities, the Sylphide moves among the dancers, visible only to James, who pursues her in vain. Finally, she plucks from his hand the wedding ring intended for Effie, and flies off to the forest. James rushes from the feast, leaving Effie in tears. Gurn then leads the dismayed guests off in search of James.

Act 2
The witch Madge is in a dark cave, weaving magic spells by night, surrounded by demon familiars. She slips into her cauldron a filmy scarf. The scene now changes to dense woodland, through which the sylphs lightly flit. James enters followed by the Sylphide, with whom he is now desperately in love, even though she continually evades him, although showing tender feelings towards him. Meanwhile Gurn, Effie and the others have given up the hopeless search for James. The latter is still baffled by the capricious Sylphide. Madge now hobbles in, and gives James the scarf she has enchanted, with which, she explains, he can hold on to his elusive love. When the Sylphide diffidently approaches him again, he succeeds by trickery to encircle her with the magic scarf. Immediately her wings fall to the ground, and she dies in the arms of her despairing lover. A procession of sylphs descends: they lift up their dead sister and carry her to the treetops. James, overcome with grief, falls to the ground, in the distance sounds from the marriage feast of Gurn and Effie can be heard, while the witch exults over her revenge.

Romantic ballet, already foreshadowed in the style and subject matter of many works in the 1810s and 1820s, found its first full realization in *La Sylphide*. The Romantic ballet had been inaugurated by Meyerbeer's opera *Robert le Diable* (21 November 1831) with its ghostly Ballet of the Nuns, risen from their graves and dancing in

the moonlight, led by their spectral Abbess, a role created by Marie Taglioni to her father's choreography. *La Sylphide*, however, inspired by this situation, was the first fully fledged Romantic ballet. It introduces the spirits and elemental beings which dominated ballet scenarios for the following decades. Filippo Taglioni's creation provided the fullest realization of the Romantic ideal, especially in the leading character of the story, and its perfect incarnation in the original interpreter, Marie Taglioni, whose stage personality seemed to be made for the part of the Sylphide.

The scenario was suggested to Taglioni by the tenor Adolphe Nourrit, who created the role of Robert the Devil in Meyerbeer's opera. His scenario was in turn inspired by Charles-Emmanuel Nodier's novel *Trilby, ou Le Lutin d'Arguail* (1822). Nodier is famous for his romantic tales that tell how the lives of mortals are affected by the visitation of elves and goblins, a motif that had been very popular since the appearance of Baron Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's famous novella *Undine* in 1811. In 1821 Nodier had visited Scotland with Baron Taylor. Trilby is the story of a Scots fisherman and his wife whose happiness is destroyed by the intrusions of a handsome male sprite who begins to obsess the wife by his declarations of whispered love. Nourrit brought his own interpretation to bear, with a sprite protagonist, but female this time, who appears from the chimney, but otherwise presides over a different tale of haunting, obsession and dark magic.

Dr Louis Véron, the director of the Paris Opéra, was immediately struck by the power and simplicity of Nourrit's scenario, and showed it to Filippo and Marie Taglioni, both of whom were enchanted by it. The first act with its realistic farmhouse, contrasted most effectively with the poetic forest setting of the second, with its light elemental beings and dark witchcraft. A scene of sorcery preceded the fairy activities for which stage machinery for a circling flight of sylphides was devised.

The first violinist of the Opéra orchestra, Jean-Madeleine Schneitzhoeffer, wrote the crisp and elegant music, with its Scottish reel in act 1 and more poetic evocation of nature and magic in act 2. This has a direct congruence with the ballets of Meyerbeer's *Robert*, with the national realism of the Sicilian inflected *Pas de cinq* in act 2, and the supernatural elfin music for the famous moonlit scene of act 3. The score of *La Sylphide* was in its turn to be a major influence on the shape of Romantic ballet music.

The ballet became the source of theatrically romantic fantasies centred around the hopeless and fatal love between a human being and a supernatural creature. In Filippo Taglioni's ballet, the theme acquired additional poetic and psychological overtones in the ambiguous personality of James, oscillating between his normal love for Effie, his obsessive fascination for enchanting romance, and his pursuit of a fatally alluring and elusive dream, destined to end tragically.

Although the dramatic thrust of the story is fixed on James's psychology, the Sylphide provides the artistic and choreographic heart. To express this unearthly Romantic ideal of womanhood, Marie Taglioni adopted the technical device of dancing on point. She did not invent this stylistic technique, but her use of it in this ballet definitively established its widespread use.

The corps de ballet in act 2, representing insubstantial feminine beings dressed in white tutus lit by the moon (as in *Robert le Diable*), became the prototype of the *ballet blanc*, a choreographic convention of huge import, that survived and developed into the 20th century. The white, semi-transparent tutu reaching to just below the knee, designed for *La Sylphide* by Eugène Lami, established itself as a permanent ballet costume, almost the uniform of the Romantic dance. This was similarly accompanied by the headdress of pink roses favoured by Taglioni, which has also become another standard balletic convention.

Filippo Taglioni's masterpiece was revived many times by its creator, and always starred Marie. In this form it was also seen in:

—London, Covent Garden, 26 July 1832
—the Theatre Royal, Berlin in 1832
—the Bolshoi Theatre, St Petersburg on 6 September 1837
—La Scala, Milan on 29 May 1841.

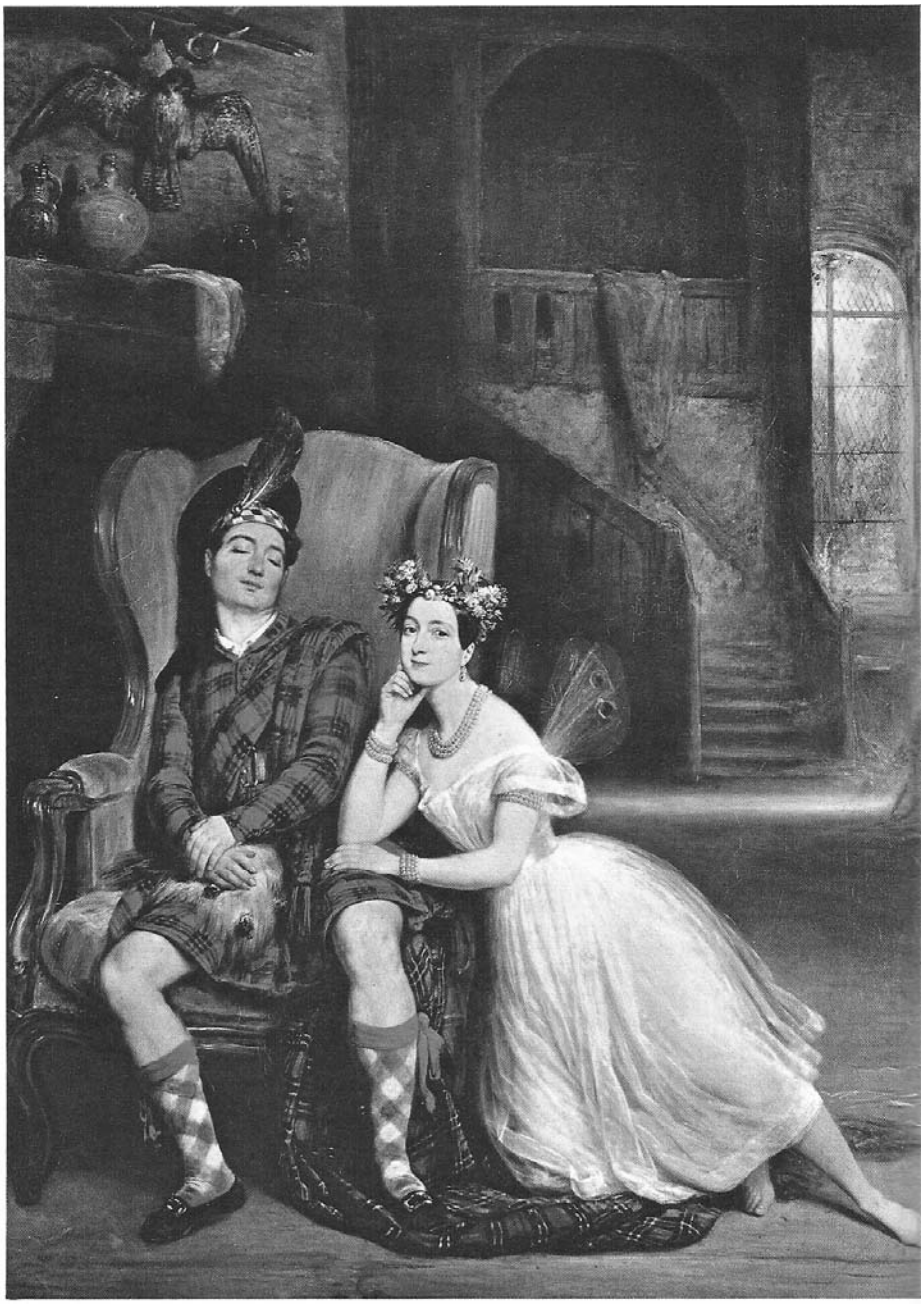
The ballet was reproduced by Paolo Taglioni at the New York Park Theater on 22 May 1839. It was performed some 146 times in Paris until 1860, when the original version of the work was abandoned.

The ballet became known through the re-creation of the work by Auguste Bournonville of the Theatre Royal in Copenhagen in 1836, using the same scenario, but with new music by Herman Løvenskjold. It entered the repertoire of the Royal Danish Ballet, and was widely performed around the world in the second half of the 20th century.

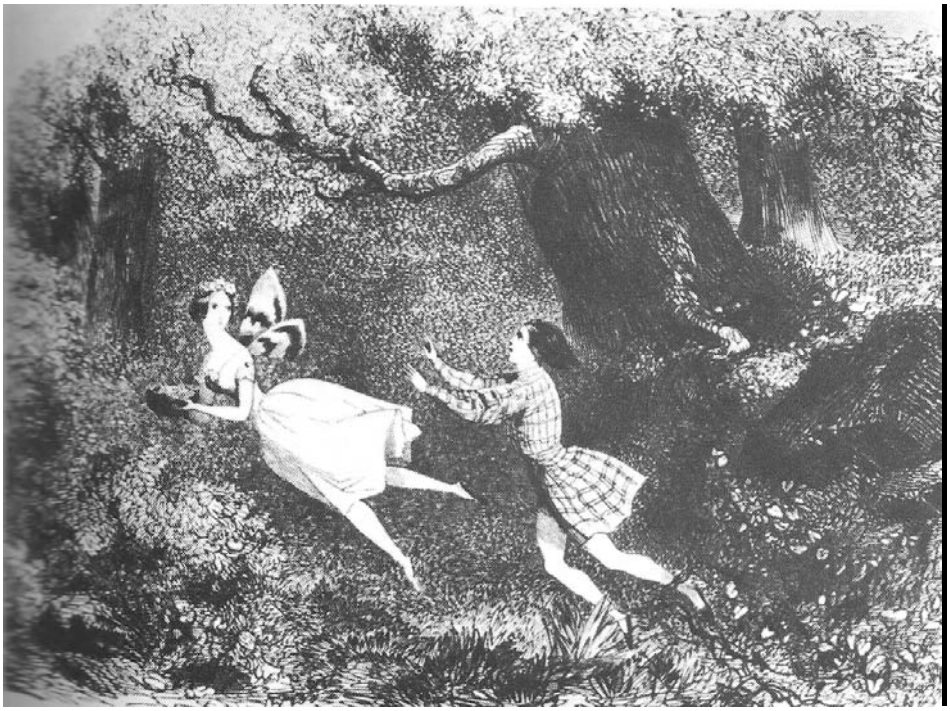
Only in the late 20th century was Taglioni's original version revived in Paris in a literal reconstruction by Pierre Lacotte. Schneitzhoeffer's music was interspersed with fragments from *L'Ombr*e by Ludwig Maurer. The scenery was by Marie-Claire Musson (after Cicéri), the costumes by Michel Fresnay (after Lami), and it was transmitted on French Television on 1 January 1972. The dancers were Ghislaine Thesmar, Michael Denard, with the Ballet de l'Opéra de Paris. It was then staged at the Paris Opéra on 7 June 1972, where it was danced by Noela Pontois and Cyril Atanassoff.

The score has never been published, apart from some arrangements. Two different sets, both printed in London, are reproduced here, one largely Act 1 and the other from Act 2. The first collection is of particular

interest because it is the work of Adolphe Adam, who apart from writing his own music, was very active as an arranger of other composers' operas and dances. His work included selections from both Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* and Schneitzhoeffer's ballet. The music of both must have played a part in shaping Adam's own ballet music which is seen to its greatest advantage in *Giselle* (1841) and *Le Corsaire* (1856). The second set of arrangements, from the publishing house of Antoine Aulagnier in Paris (particularly famous for bringing out Rossini's *Stabat Mater*), contains the famous scenes for the flying sylphides.



James and the Sylphide, act 1 (Paul and Marie Taglioni)



James follows the Sylphide to the forest (contemporary print)

Marie Taglioni as the Sylphide (lithograph)

Adolphe-Charles Adam (1803-1856)

GISELLE, OU LES WILIS

Fantastic Ballet in 2 acts
Scenario: Henri-Jules Vernoy de Saint-Georges, Théophile Gautier and Jean Coralli
Choreography: Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot
Music: Adolphe Adam
Sets: Pierre-Luc-Charles Cicéri
Costumes: Paul Lormier
First performance: Paris Opéra, 28 June 1841
Principal dancers: Carlotta Grisi (Giselle), Lucien Petipa (Albrecht), Adèle Dumilâtre (Myrtha)

Inspired by Heine's *Zur Geschichte der neueren schönen Literatur in Deutschland*, the story is set in the Rhine Valley.

Act 1
Giselle, a peasant girl, loves Albert (Albrecht in many versions), unaware that he is a Prince (a count in many versions) and engaged to Bathilde, daughter of the Duke of Courland. Albert loves Giselle in turn, and this arouses the jealousy of the gamekeeper Hilarion whose love for Giselle is unrequited. At a hunting picnic of the Duke and his entourage, Hilarion exposes Albert's identity and betrothed status, whereupon Giselle goes mad and kills herself with Albert's sword.

Act 2
Both Hilarion and Albert come to pray at Giselle's grave. At the stroke of midnight the Wilis appear, led by their queen, Myrtha. They are the embodiment of the spirits of dance-loving brides who have died before their wedding day. They perform their ghostly rites, discover Hilarion, and drive him into the lake. Albert too nearly meets his death, but Giselle intervenes by dancing with him until dawn breaks, when the Wilis must return to their graves. Albert is saved, as Giselle sinks back into her resting place.

Giselle is considered the very essence of the Romantic ballet. The work is central to the ballet repertory all over the world. It is regarded as the absolute masterpiece of Romantic dance theatre, a wonderful synthesis of style, technique, music and dramatic feeling, because of its exceptional score. The ballet was devised in 1841 from the collaboration of some of the major talents in literature, choreography and music in the Paris of the time.

The original idea came from the author, critic and poet Théophile Gautier, who played a formative role in the defining ideas behind the French Romantic ballet. He was overwhelmed and personally ravished by the person and art of the ballerina Carlotta Grisi, and discovered what he felt would be the perfect theme for her while reading a translation of Heinrich Heine's book on German legend and folklore, *D'Allemagne*. Gautier was fascinated by the legend of the *wilis*—maidens who die before their wedding day and who come out of their graves at night in bridal dress to dance until dawn. Should any man be caught in the forest while the *wilis* are about their rituals, he is doomed to dance on and on until he drops dead from exhaustion. From Heine's account of the legend, Gautier saw the potential for a Romantic theme of beautiful women, white gauze and German moonlight.

With the help of the famous librettist and playwright, Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges, an authority on musical theatre, the legend of the *wilis* was fashioned into a ballet scenario. Jean Coralli, the ballet master at the Paris Opéra, created the overall choreography, although the prima ballerina's dances were to be devised by Grisi's friend, the great dancer Jules Perrot. Perrot had in fact taken an active role in the writing of the story.

The music was commissioned from Adolphe Adam, famous for his operas, and also the foremost composer of ballets in Paris. His score, composed in two months (between 11 April and 8 June 1841), responded deeply to the emotional content of the scenario, and closely followed the dramatic dictates of the dance situations.

The muse behind it all was the protagonist herself, the young Italian dancer Carlotta Grisi. She had been discovered by Perrot, who recognized her formidable talent which was seen to unite the contrasting abilities of the ethereal Marie Taglioni and the more earthy Fanny Elssler. Grisi's co-star was the brilliant dancer Lucien Petipa, who had established himself as the leading male dancer at the Paris Opéra.

Then there was the legendary artist Pierre Cicéri, a consummate master of stage design, with his special technique of "realism in fantasy", who had produced some of the most famous, indeed legendary, *mise-en-scènes* of the Paris Opéra, and hence established himself as a major figure in the development of French Romantic music from the mid-1820s.

The most obvious preceding stage inspirations for *Giselle* were the ghostly Ballet of the Nuns in Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* (1831) and the whole of *La Sylphide* (1832), both choreographed by Filippo Taglioni. The fundamental similarity with these works is seen in the construction of two complementary and successive spheres of action, respectively representing realistic/national and imaginative/spiritual aspects of the Romantic sensibility (cf. the *Pas de cinq* and Ballet of the Nuns in *Robert le Diable*). The first act is on a realistic level, with an evocation of a medieval rusticity centred around the vintage, and an emotional-sentimental intrigue between noble and peasant. The second act conjures up the supernatural, an ethereal world of magic symbolism and destructive fantasy. The plot thus provides a perfect structural balance and dramatic framework of powerful inspirational value, underpinning the whole ethos of the Romantic ballet as a vector for sentimental and tragic atmosphere unified by dance design.

The choreography of *Giselle* shows Romantic ballet at the early high point of its maturity. An academic style is maintained in purity of line and balanced composition of steps and figures that never degenerates into mere virtuosity. The dance is closely tailored to dramatic exigency, as are the mime passages. The whole of the action is expressed in dance with a minimum of numbers, so that an essential unity is maintained throughout, lending a peculiar unity to narrative, dramatic and lyrical episodes, and including the *divertissements*.

The challenge for Albrecht is to partner the overwhelmingly dominant role of the ballerina, and to allow his own ambiguous psychological complexity (similar to that of James in *La Sylphide*) to have a life of its own. (A new sense of dynamism in this assumption was initiated by Serge Lifar's interpretation of 1932.)

The central role remains one of the most formidable and complete in the repertory. Giselle must range through a smiling innocent candour, through suspicion and growing dread, to confrontation with betrayal and the tragedy of madness and death. Then she is required to show a fragile wraith-like spirituality, still sorrowing for love lost. Each of these aspects is reflected on the technical and stylistic levels, with the brilliant variations and incisive mime of the earthly character in the first act contrasted with the aerial effects and detached purity of the lyricism required in the white ballet of the second.

Giselle has been one of the most demanding and rewarding roles for so many of the great ballerinas, from Carlotta Grisi onwards: Lucile Grahn (1843), Fanny Cerrito (1843), Fanny Elssler (1843), Amalia Ferraris (1859), Carolina Rosati (1862), Ekaterina Vazem (1878), Emma Bessone (1887), Olga Preobrajenska (1899), Carlota Zambelli (1901), Anna Pavlova (1903), Tamara Karsavina (1910), Olga Spessivtseva (1924), Galina Ulanova (1932), Alicia Markova (1934), Margot Fonteyn (1937), Tamara Toumanova (1939), Yvette Chauviré (1944), Svetlana Beriosova (1956), Carla Fracci (1959), Ekaterina Maximova (1960), Natalia Makarova (1961), Natalia Bessmertnova (1965), Merle Park (1967), Gelsy Kirkland (1975), Elisabetta Terabust (1976).

The ballet was performed in France until 1868, but then disappeared from the repertoire. Only much later, in 1924, was it to return and become part of the permanent repertoire of the Paris Opéra. By 1965 it had reached 381 performances. Outside France the ballet spread rapidly all over the world. It was produced in London, St Petersburg and Vienna in 1842, in Berlin and Milan in 1843, and in Boston in 1846. (In Milan it was given in a 5-act version, with additional music by Giovanni Bajetti, and choreography by A. Cortesi.) It became the display piece *par excellence* for ballerinas of all future generations.

The original Paris production was last performed in 1868. Modern versions are based on the St Petersburg tradition. This began in 1842, a year after the première in Paris, when Antoine Titus staged the work in the Russian capital. Jules Perrot mounted his own version in 1848, with his own revision of the choreography.

The ballet has come down the years in a more-or-less unbroken tradition. Periodically there have been phases of reconstruction that have sought to remove accretions, and have established the choreography more firmly. The trend was set by Perrot himself who emphasized his own special creative imprint in the productions he supervised in London (1842) and St Petersburg (1848, 1856). Marius Petipa made his own reconstruction of the ballet in 1850, based on Perrot's indications for Carlotta Grisi, and also adding new choreographic elements of his own (especially to the last scene). Petipa produced it again in 1866, and nearly 20 years later, in 1884, produced his definitive revival of the ballet, repeated in 1887. He revived it again in 1903 for Anna Pavlova. The artistry of the latter revealed afresh the timeless quality of the ballet.

This staging of the Imperial Russian Ballet in turn served as the basis for the version used by Sergei Diaghilev's company which brought the ballet back to the West in the early 20th century. Petipa's version in fact became the model for later revivals in Russia, as well as for Mikhail Fokine's production for the Ballet Russes in Paris (1910). Similarly, when Nicholas Sergeyev was working at the Paris Opéra in 1924, he reproduced Petipa's version as it was danced in the old Maryinsky Theatre in St Petersburg. All subsequent productions of *Giselle* in Europe and America were based on this version.

Most of the later productions make reference to Diaghilev's—not only those of the Paris Opéra of 1924, but also the Vic-Wells Ballet in 1934, and the various productions of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, the Royal Ballet, and the London Festival Ballet. A ballet play *The World of Giselle* was staged by the Royal Ballet in 1963. There have been various films of the complete ballet, the most noteworthy being the Bolshoi production with Ulanova and Fadeyechev in 1956, and one of the American Ballet Theatre productions with Fracci and Bruhn in 1969.

Carlotta Grisi as Giselle (act 1)

Lucien Petipa as Albrecht (act 1)

Giselle as a Wili (act 2)

Both the public and the critics who attended the first night of *Giselle* in 1841 greeted the work as a triumph. Three weeks later a whole page of *La France musicale* was devoted to it. Léon Escudier, the editor, provided a long analysis of the score, and praised it especially for its "elegance, the freshness and clarity of the melodies, the vigour and novelty of the harmonic combinations, and the vivacity that pervades the musical texture from start to finish". Unlike many ballet scores of the period, Adam's music is characterized by complete originality: in *Giselle* the only borrowings are deliberate quotations—eight bars of a song by Loïse Puget, and three from the Huntsmen's Chorus in Weber's *Euryanthe.* The recurrent love theme, always wishful, but subjected to a variety of melodic and symphonic variation with the intensifying drama, makes this the first ballet score to use Leitmotif as a narrative device (the model, as in the concept of the Mad Scene itself, is probably Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835) where several of the earlier melodies are summoned up in reminiscence, and used with pathetic variation and intensity). There is rich flow of melody throughout, coupled with a symphonic sureness and grasp of construction (no doubt learnt from Adam's teacher, Luigi Cherubini).

The first part of the score, as it approaches the dramatic climax of the first finale (the Mad Scene), provides music of tragic density. The style changes radically in act 2, when the diurnal solidity dissolves into a vague nocturnal mood, with its sprung accompaniments evocative of the lunar landscape and dreamlike events. This culminates in the Grand Pas de Deux with its extended *adagio* for solo viola, and sequences of faster variations.

The score underwent some alterations that became permanent features.

1) **Friedrich Bergmüller** (1806-1874)
The Peasant Pas de Deux in act 1 was written by Johann Friedrich Bergmüller, the composer of the successful Romantic ballet *La Péri* (1843), another great triumph for Carlotta Grisi. The Peasant Pas de Deux was included from the first performance, danced by Louise Fitzjames and Mabille.

2) **Ludwig Minkus** (1827-1917)
The revivals of *Giselle* in Russia also had consequences for the score.
—For the 1866 revival with Adèle Grantzow, Ludwig Minkus composed Giselle's Waltz Variation in the *Grand Pas de Deux* based on the love theme for act 1;
—For the 1884 revival Minkus was asked to edit and re-orchestrate Adam's score, and to compose a new extended *pas de deux* alternative to the *Pas des vendanges* for Giselle and Albrecht in act 1;
—For the 1887 revival with Emma Bessone, Minkus composed a new variation for the ballerina, Giselle's *pas seul* in act 1. Olga Spessivtseva re-introduced this into her performances in the early 20th century, since when it has always been used.

The Pas Seul and the Waltz Variation have become famous, and are integral to the performing score of *Giselle*. Minkus grasped the style and ethos of Adam's score completely.

In Russia most companies, including the Bolshoi and the Maryinsky Theatres, use Minkus's revised and re-orchestrated version of 1884. The Russian piano score reproduces the act 1 alternative *Pas de vendanges* as an appendix. The music is extended into a substantial scene for Giselle, Albrecht and the Villagers, with an embedded duet where the music is arranged in the very formal structure of the classic *pas de deux*. It is distinctly in the style of Minkus, revealing an obvious affinity with the famous Grand Pas de Deux from his *Don Quixote* (1869), with the extended beautiful writing for the solo violin, and with all the customary verve of the Austrian composer. Once again, though, Minkus captures the delicacy and emotional pathos of the protagonist, especially in the Female Variation, an exquisite little character sketch of Giselle's vulnerable personality. This music is not often heard, but was used by Gerard Arpino for his *L'Air d'Esprit* (Joffre Ballet, 1978).

3) **Boris Vladimirovich Asafiev** (1884-1949)
Asafiev provided a variant of the final bars of the ballet for Russian productions in 1913-14. This allows the ballet to end quietly, instead of the vigorous closing bars that follow on Albrecht's collapse in the original score. The Asafiev version is now included as an alternative in published versions of the score (as in the arrangement by Henri Busser and the Pas de Deux edited by Daniel Stirn). In the Russian version it is given as the preferred ending, with the original conclusion somewhat incongruously provided as the first appendix. The Asafiev conclusion is by no means typically used in most productions.

Adolphe-Charles Adam

LE CORSAIRE

Ballet-pantomime in 3 acts and 5 scenes
Scenario: Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges and Joseph Mazilier
Choreography: Joseph Mazilier
Music: Adolphe Adam
Sets: Martin, Edouard Despléchins, Charles Cambon and Joseph Thierry
Costumes: A. Albert
Machinery: Victor Sacré
First performance: Paris Opéra, 23 January 1856
Principal dancers: Carolina Rosati (Medora), Domenico Segarelli (Conrad), Claudina Cucchi (Gulnare), Louise Marquet (Zulmea), M. Dauty (Saïd Pasha)

The story is based on Lord Byron's long poem *The Corsaire* (1814), and centres on a Greek girl Medora who is sold into slavery.

Act 1
Medora is sold to the besotted Saïd Pasha by the slave dealer Isaac Lenkadem who cannot resist the high price offered. Medora is rescued from the slave market by the pirate Conrad who becomes her lover.

Act 2
Conrad declares his love for Medora in the subterranean hideout of the pirates. Birbantino, Conrad's next-in-command, is jealous of his chief, drugs Conrad, and sends Medora back to Isaac.

Act 3
Medora, through this treachery, is taken back into captivity in the harem of the Pasha. Conrad, arriving in the palace with his men in disguise, is recognized, captured, and condemned to death. To save his life, Medora pretends to consent to marriage with the Pasha, while secretly plotting escape with the slave Gulnare. The latter impersonates Medora during the wedding ceremony so that the ring is placed on her finger. That evening, Medora, taking back her identity, dances before the Pasha, after having induced him to lay down his pistol and sword. On the stroke of twelve Conrad enters through a window, and escapes with Medora, while Gulnare, showing the ring, declares herself to be the Pasha's lawful wife.

Epilogue
Conrad and Medora escape by sea. In the serene evening, festivities are held on board. But a storm blows up, and the lovers are caught up in tempest and shipwreck. They are miraculously saved by landing on a rocky island.

Byron's famous narrative poem inspired several ballets, notably by Giovanni Galzerani (Milan 1826), and by Francois Decombe Albert with music by Robert Bochsa (London 1837). Joseph Mazilier's was the most important version. Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges's scenario was of a superior quality, and so was the score by Adolphe Adam, his last, since he died a few weeks after the première.

Mazilier was one of the most distinguished choreographers of the period, and *maître de ballet* at the Paris Opéra between 1853 and 1859, the years of his fullest creativity. His choreographic style was academic, according to contemporary taste, but the solo parts were infused with an intense dramatic expressiveness, born out of his own experience as a character dancer. The solos and *pas de deux* showed great imagination, with less invention in the grouping of the ensembles. This weakness was compensated for by splendid *mise-en-scène* and technical ingenuity. The great success of the work was due firstly to the quality of the principal performers. The role of the Corsair, originally not a danced part, was interpreted brilliantly by the famous Italian mime, Domenico Segarelli. The prima ballerina Carolina Rosati, educated in Carlo Blasis's Milanese school, excelled in her variations (the Fan Dance, the Seduction Scene, the Dance of the Odalisques) and brought a unique characterization to the part of Medora. The ballet was performed 43 times in 1856 alone. When Rosati left the Opéra, the ballet was not given for 8 years. The other great reason for the success of the work was the spectacular shipwreck that ended the ballet, a sensational feat engineered by the chief mechanist of the Opéra, Victor Sacré, and his crowning glory as a theatre technician.

Adam's score is a masterly creation, consistently rich in melodic inspiration, engaging in the set dances (like the *Pas de nations* in act 1), imaginative in the many extended mime sequences, more richly symphonic than ever before in his work. The Epilogue is a *tour de force*, providing a beautiful evocation of the sunset over the

Black Sea, the ebullient celebration of the Bacchanale on board ship, the menace of the gathering storm, the unleashing of the tempest, the violence of the shipwreck, and the supreme rapture of the salvation of the lovers. The quiet opening theme, capturing the beauty of the sunset, is thematically transformed into tumultuous salvific thanksgiving in the closing bars of the ballet. Adam reached a height of inspiration in the last music he ever wrote for the stage.

There was a major revival of *Le Corsaire* in Paris in 1867. Mazilier, by now an old man, came out of retirement to stage the work for Adèle Grantzow. On this occasion music by Léo Delibes (1836-1891) was inserted into the Harem Scene in act 3 scene 2 to create a *divertissement*, the *Pas des fleurs*. The music earned the composer praise, but it is in a broader sentimental style, and sits awkwardly amidst Adam's harmonically and structurally more incisive music. By the last performance in 1868, the ballet had been performed 81 times at the Opéra.

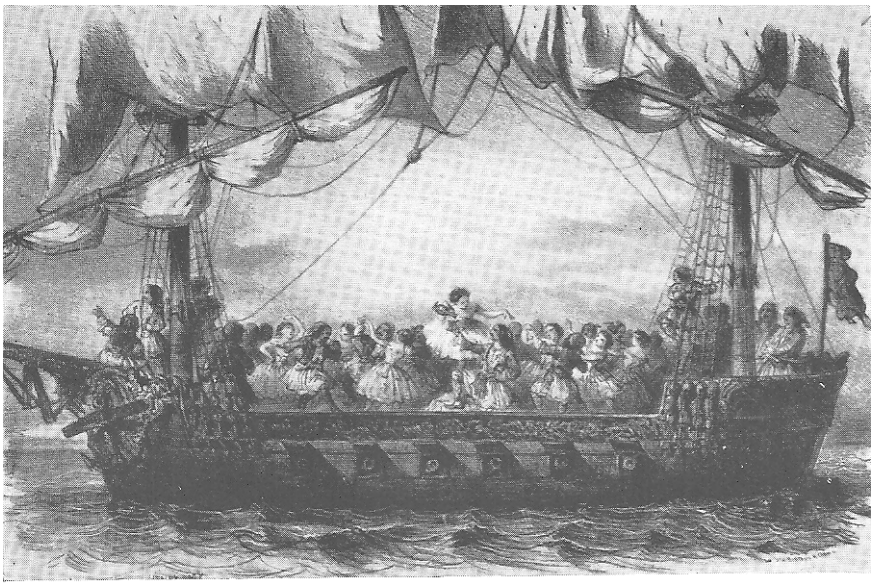
Mazilier's ballet gained a world-wide popularity, became a favourite of the leading ballerinas for decades, and continued to be revived until the beginning of the 20th century, particularly in Russia. In 1858 Jules Perrot, the choreographer of *Giselle*, introduced a new production of *Le Corsaire* at the Bolshoi Theatre, St Petersburg, with Marius Petipa in the role of Conrad. In the scene of the shipwreck Andrei Roller, master of theatrical special effects for the Bolshoi, used electro-galvanic discharges for lightning. This version incorporated new music by Cesar Fists, Ludwig Minkus and Prince Oldenbourg for a new *pas de deux* in Act 1 by Petipa.

On the basis of this, Marius Petipa produced his own version in 1868 with additional music by Cesare Pugni and Léo Delibes (the dream sequence in act 2, the *Le Jardin animé*), with Adèle Grantzow dancing Medora. On 13 January 1899 Petipa revived the ballet again for the Maryinsky Theatre in St Petersburg, this time completely re-choreographing it for Pierina Legnani, with additional music for a new *pas de deux* in Act 2 by Riccardo Drigo (1846-1930). Performances in the USSR and contemporary Russia derive from this version. Through the touring of Russian companies since the 1980s, this has now become known in the West, and has seen new productions in Europe and the United States.

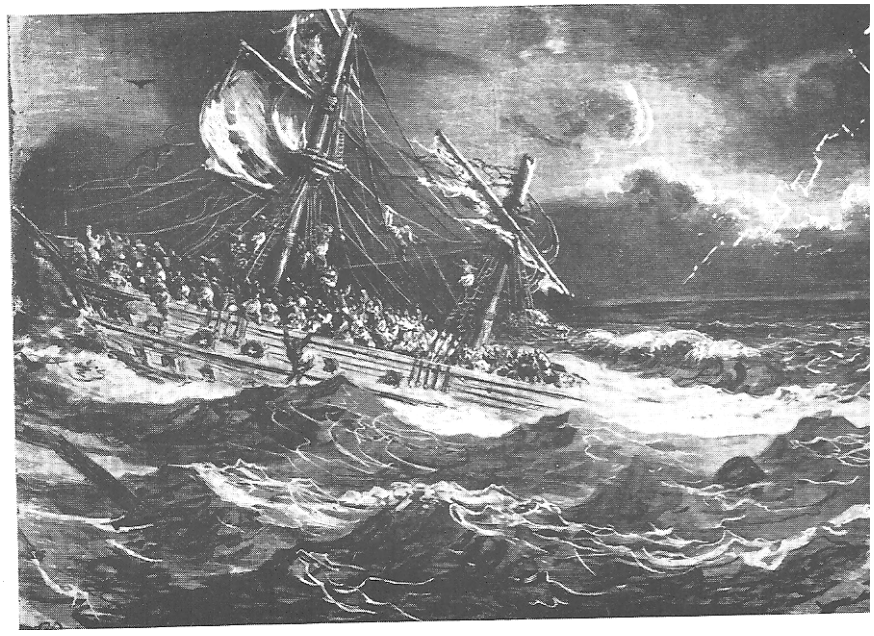
In the first half of the 20th century *Le Corsaire* was represented almost exclusively in Russia. Vakhtang Chabukiani created a new version of Petipa's choreography, lengthening the parts for the male dancers. He transformed Drigo's *pas deux* into a *pas de trois*. Drigo's extrovert and ebullient music for this spectacular *pas de deux* in act 2—langorous, brassily energetic, and sensuously harmonic—is still performed as an independent piece. It is danced throughout the world as one of the most testing trials of virtuosity possible for two dancers. Famous couplings have included Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev, Ekaterina Maximova and Vladimir Vassiliev, and Gelsy Kirkland with Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Carolina Rosati as Medora

Domenico Segarelli as Conrad



The Bacchanal on board (act 3)



The Shipwreck (engraving by Gustave Doré)

Filippo Taglioni

Jean Coralli

Jules Perrot

Joseph Mazilier

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PAS DE DEUX danced by Mlle. Taglioni and Mr Paul Taglioni. 3
Andante con Espre
No 2.
pp
cres.
ppp
pp
1220