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Review Article
Bodily Functions

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Davinia Caddy, *The Ballets Russes and Beyond: Music and Dance in Belle-Époque Paris*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. xvi + 237pp.

Sarah Gutsche-Miller, *Parisian Music-Hall Ballet, 1871–1913*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2015. 384pp.

Mary Simonson, *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. 304pp.

In recent decades, musicologists in general (and opera scholars in particular) have made numerous productive forays into music's entanglements with ballet, dance and gesture. This has been, in part, an offshoot of a broader disciplinary move towards acknowledging the body – once just another skeleton in the musicological closet – and thus towards addressing the physical, perhaps even carnal, elements of musical performance; the somatic aspects of the listening experience; and the crucially embodied nature of scholarly endeavour itself.[1] Out with what Suzanne Cusick once diagnosed as 'musicology's mind/body problem' (as one article title recently decreed, 'Down With Disembodiment').[2] In with scrutiny of the expressive performing body, an 'erupting' body – to borrow J.Q. Davies's memorable description of Paganini – whose unstable, sometimes disruptive presence might itself provoke us to reconstitute musicological research.[3]

Yet moving, feeling bodies are not solely an object of study for a new, newer, newest musicology in thrall to disenchantment; or for researchers excavating the axiomatically buried materiality of 'the music itself' and 'the canon'.[4] For one thing, and to come closer to home, the history of opera has always been closely entwined

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1 Major contributions to that broader disciplinary shift include Carolyn Abbate, 'Music – Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004), 505–36; Mary Ann Smart, *Mimomania: Music and Gesture in Nineteenth-Century Opera* (Berkeley, 2004); Elisabeth Le Guin, *Boccherini's Body: An Essay in Carnal Musicology* (Berkeley, 2006); J.Q. Davies, *Romantic Anatomies of Performance* (Berkeley, 2014).

2 Suzanne Cusick, 'Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem', *Perspectives of New Music* 32 (1994), 18; Holly Watkins and Melina Esse, 'Down with Disembodiment; or, Musicology and the Material Turn', *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 19 (2015), 160–8.

3 As Davies asks: 'How does music act in the cultivation of bodies?' *Romantic Anatomies*, 2.

4 For a study of operatic canonicity concerned with its rhetorical foundation in physical mortality and immortality, see my 'Phantoms at the Opéra: Meyerbeer and De-canonization', in *Oxford Handbook of the Operatic Canon*, ed. Cormac Newark and William Weber (Oxford, forthcoming).

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with developments in dance and choreography. Small surprise, then, that opera scholarship is densely populated with more or less mobile divas and divos;[5] with the large-scale organisation of triumphal marches and the smaller-scale detail of significant gestures;[6] with the hungry, noisy, rebellious bodies of audiences;[7] and, not least, with musical and archival traces of the dancing that was long integral to operatic performance.[8] Indeed, it is by no means always straightforward – or always desirable – to produce a neat demarcation between 'dance' and 'opera'. To treat opera as a multimedia art form in which the interactions and perceived hierarchy between constituent elements – music, text, staging, voice, choreography and so on – are contingent on the time and place of performance is, after all, also to accept the absence of a *cordon sanitaire* separating any one of those elements from the others. Or, to put this slightly differently, examining the place of dance in opera demands not only that we once again address opera's combination of multiple 'systems' of signification, but also that we focus our attention on the ever-permeable internal and external boundaries of the art form as a medium.

Questions of mediality are important to each of these recent contributions to the literature on music, opera and dance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Mary Simonson's *Body Knowledge*, however, the notion of mediality itself takes centre stage. More specifically, Simonson is concerned with 'intermediality': a term that at its most basic, she explains, 'refers to moments in which one medium appears in some way in another medium' (17).[9] Such a simple gloss inevitably does not do justice to the author's considerable intellectual ambition in her book, which, at its best, enquires seriously into the complex relationship between performance, artwork, reception and the media via which each is enabled and inscribed. The book's six main chapters, as well as its framing 'Prologue' and 'Finale', thus range across a variety of aesthetic and cultural vistas in turn-of-the-century America, uncovering the pathways of particular female dancers as they traverse boundaries of genre, medium and mode, gliding from musical comedy to ballet to film to opera, leaving a provocative trail of knowing mimicry and more equivocal intertextual references.

[5] See Susan Rutherford, '"La cantante delle passioni": Giuditta Pasta and the Idea of Operatic Performance', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 19 (July 2007), 107–38; Karen Henson, *Opera Acts: Singers and Performance in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2015).

[6] See Roger Parker, 'Reading the Livrets, or the Chimera of "Authentic" Staging', in *Leonora's Last Act: Essays in Verdian Discourse* (Princeton, 1997), 126–48; Cormac Newark, 'Ceremony, Celebration, and Spectacle in *La Juive*', in *Reading Critics Reading: Opera and Ballet Criticism in France from the Revolution to 1848*, ed. Roger Parker and Mary Ann Smart (Oxford, 2001), 155–87; and Smart, *Mimomania*.

[7] The foundational musicological text on changing audience behaviours during the nineteenth century remains James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1995).

[8] See, for example, Marian Smith, *Ballet and Opera in the Age of Giselle* (Princeton, 2000); Rebecca Harris-Warrick, *Dance and Drama in French Baroque Opera: A History* (Cambridge, 2016); Ellen Lockhart, *Animation, Plasticity, and Music in Italy, 1770–1830* (Berkeley, 2017).

[9] For a more in-depth examination of the term's meanings outside media studies (a guide cited by Simonson herself), see Irena O. Rajewsky, 'Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality', *Intermedialities* 6 (2005), 43–64.

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Some of Simonson's dancers – Isadora Duncan, Loie Fuller, Anna Pavlova – remain well known today. Others are less familiar: Rita Sacchetto, for instance, whose once-celebrated *Tanzbilder* (tableaux vivants) Simonson reads intriguingly as both a form of criticism and as a form of replication in the dawning age of mechanical reproduction. One of the pleasures of the book is undoubtedly its varied cast of heroines, especially those who have previously, as Simonson puts it, 'fallen through the cracks of musicological narratives' (2).[10] She maintains that the very concept of intermediality enables her to retrieve and foreground such performers, arguing for the term's considerable value as a historiographical tool. And she also suggests that the concept itself was at work at the turn of the twentieth century – which is to say that intermediality might have some particular historical traction on her period of interest alongside its historiographical uses. Yet in the same way that Simonson's introductory definition undersells her project's sophistication, the sheer size of these claims – and the overwhelming frequency with which the word 'intermediality' itself appears, where other, more musicologically established terms might have done the job – risks detracting from what is most valuable and most historically specific in her book. That value is, to my mind, to be found in her sustained interrogation of a series of local encounters between performers and audiences at a time when, as she puts it in her opening paragraph, not only musical works but also performers 'moved across genre boundaries, experimenting with various media forms and performance strategies, referencing contemporary shows and events, and even mimicking fellow performers' (1).

It is symptomatic of such widespread border crossing in turn-of-the-century cultural production that several of Simonson's protagonists – Loie Fuller and Isadora Duncan most importantly – also appear in Davinia Caddy's book. Indeed, these two volumes, read in parallel, constitute a stimulating dialogue, offering a stereoscopic view of the performers and preoccupations that crossed the Atlantic, intermingled and were voraciously exchanged in the years around the turn of the century. All three books under review, though, are situated in the cultural life of self-consciously 'modern' urban centres. Although Simonson doesn't expressly define a geographical location more specific than 'America', *Body Knowledge* is largely concerned with performances and performers based in New York City: Broadway is at the centre of the book's sphere of operations, with only brief excursions to Chicago, Berkeley, Los Angeles and Washington, DC. Caddy's and Sarah Gutsche-Miller's projects, by contrast, are rooted deeply in Paris – a city where, as Caddy reminds us, the Opéra's full institutional title was the Académie Nationale de Musique et de Danse and where, by the final decades of the nineteenth century, dance was featured on the stages of theatres on all rungs of the aesthetic hierarchy as well as at a litany of alternative venues, from music halls and cabarets to 'circuses, salons, *cafés-concerts* and museum galleries' (3). This profusion of Parisian dance – and corresponding

[10] Even soprano Lillian Nordica gets a cameo: she featured on the billing for a Hellenistic pageant, *Suffrage Allegory*, to be staged in Washington DC on the eve of President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration, though in the event was replaced by the German actress Hedwig Reicher; see Simonson, 59–61.

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profusion of music-and-dance scholarship centred on the city – leads both Caddy and Gutsche-Miller to position their research against prevailing narratives: the historiographical dominance of the Ballets Russes to the exclusion of other contemporary ballet in the former; and the institutional dominance of the Opéra over music-hall ballet in the latter.

Musicologists working on nineteenth-century Paris are all too habituated to a hierarchy of theatres that starts with the Opéra, reaches sideways to the Opéra-Comique in one direction and the Théâtre-Italien in another, and then quickly falls away into musicological oblivion. Sketching a radically different theatrical topography, Gutsche-Miller's *Parisian Music Hall Ballet* offers a provocation-cum-corrective to musicology's established sense of the *fin-de-siècle* French capital. It focuses on ballets created and performed at three prominent Parisian music halls between 1871 and 1913: the Folies-Bergère ('an English-style music hall that ultimately became a symbol of Parisian pleasures', 7), the Casino de Paris ('closer in look and feel to a café-concert than to a music hall', 23) and the Olympia, described by a critic in 1893 as 'half theater, half concert … conducive to digestion, with the freedom to come and go, and with the freedom to drink and smoke cigars as one likes'.[11] It was from venues such as these, rather than from the Opéra, Gutsche-Miller argues, that a 'vibrant French ballet culture' emerged in the nineteenth century's final decades (1).

The hefty number of works produced for these institutions forms its own persuasive argument for the importance of balletic activity at theatres outside Paris's operatic triumvirate. In the 1890s alone, Gutsche-Miller reports, the Folies-Bergère created a total of thirty new pantomime-ballets, the Olympia eighteen and the Casino sixteen – with each work performed nightly for several months (1). What is more, almost two hundred composers, writers and choreographers were involved in producing new works for the three venues during her period of interest – with many of the choreographers simultaneously working in more elite venues in Paris and elsewhere. Such genre-defying figures built on what she calls 'an extensive network of influences', producing works that combined traditions from English music-hall ballets to Italian *ballo grande*, from Opéra ballets to the *féeries* staged at boulevard theatres (55).

That explicitly transnational, aesthetically diverse mix is thought-provoking, placing music-hall ballet on a continuum (potentially even in dialogue) with the international, genealogically complex networks of operatic culture of the same period. Similarly striking is the fact that the overall experience on offer at these music halls (offstage as well as on) was understood by contemporary commentators to be contiguous with – perhaps even equivalent to – that of other media or art forms. Gutsche-Miller quotes the 1900 *Guide des Plaisirs de Paris*, which enthused of the Folies-Bergère:

[11] Un Monsieur de l'Orchestre, 'La Soirée Théâtrale', *Le Figaro* (12 April 1893), quoted by Gutsche-Miller, 28.

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> one is entertained, one is amused, as much by the scenes that play themselves out in the boxes, in the promenades, and in the garden as by the varied show taking place on the stage … The intermissions are themselves like a succession of tableaux vivants, a sort of cinematography in which parades Paris's gallantry and nightlife. (16)

Such a capacious, scopophilic frame of reference surely speaks not only of the venue's status as 'the quintessential Parisian symbol for erotic enchantment' (16), but also of a mode of *fin-de-siècle* spectatorship that was at once long-established – the stop-start dynamic of the tableau vivant, the by-then venerable cliché of the auditorium as social theatre – and self-consciously modern. The fact that late nineteenth-century music-hall ballet was embedded in an international, generically diverse network of dance production is important, if in some sense unsurprising. However, the question of how Paris's aesthetically and socially promiscuous music halls were figured in relation to the production and consumption of other art forms and other media (the newly emergent medium of film in particular) seems harder to answer, and all the more stimulating for it.

Notwithstanding the historiographical potential of such broader issues, *Parisian Music Hall Ballet* does precisely what it says on its cover. It is a richly documented, assiduously researched study of a genre generally overlooked by musicologists. Gutsche-Miller traces the emergence of music-hall ballet in the 1870s at the Folies-Bergère; she examines its subsequent development and reception at that venue and, from the 1890s, at the Casino de Paris and the Olympia; she analyses aspects of the formal construction of a number of music-hall ballets; and she explores elements of the genre that, she suggests, afforded its popularity – indeed, shaped it explicitly as a 'popular' genre (5). The popular/elite binary is taken here as axiomatic, its impact on modes of attention a foregone conclusion: 'Music-hall scores were not intended for concert-hall performance or intellectual contemplation but rather as supports for pantomime and dance' (134). The material that the author brings to light in her nine chapters and seventy-five pages of appendices will nevertheless prove a valuable and provocative resource for any musicologist interested in Parisian dance culture, music's place in popular theatre and still larger issues of cultural capital in late nineteenth-century Paris.

Davinia Caddy's *The Ballets Russes and Beyond* is as keenly aware of the relationship between its subject and alternative disciplinary vistas as Gutsche-Miller's book is tightly focused on its single genre. Caddy explains that her project 'may read as a recovery effort'; one that 'seeks to resituate the company [the Ballets Russes] within a variety of contexts – theatrical, intellectual, aesthetic, even scientific – specific to the period' (16). Those carefully historicised contexts include the generic markers of the *ballet-pantomime*, a 'double-barrelled species' popular during the July Monarchy (39); visual traces of the psycho-physiology practised by the clinician Jean-Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière, a Paris hospital famous for its development of psychiatry in the later nineteenth century (107–13); conceptualisations of the diplomatic and artistic relations between France and Russia in the century's final decades; and even a brief encounter with germ theory ('the medical discourse on bacteria bore a remarkable

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semantic similarity to contemporary press reception on Paris's foreign artists'; 152). Caddy's company of historical actors, meanwhile, encompasses not only the usual Ballets Russes suspects – Diaghilev, Debussy, Nijinsky and so on – but also an impressive roster of less directly implicated artists, critics, composers, writers and businesspeople. Throughout the study, Caddy is tireless in suggesting connections: seeing historical convergences, arguing via analogy. Yet even this centrifugal line of enquiry seems to respond knowingly to a historical tendency of commentators *c.*1900. As Caddy explains early in her book: 'If Paris was a metaphor for the stage – and if Parisians were actor-observers in the grand narrative of the belle époque – then dance was a symbol of the contemporary way of life' (5).

Caddy's aim is to challenge and then move beyond a propensity to position the Ballets Russes as a 'turning point' in the history of dance (14). Aligning herself with the revisionism of recent histories of the Belle Époque, she proposes to adopt a 'relational and dialogic approach' in the hope of challenging 'outworn assumptions' about Diaghilev and his company (17–18). In each of the book's four main chapters, she addresses one ballet from the years 1910–14, reading music, choreography and reception in parallel with sometimes unexpected, always striking aspects of its historical context. Thus she suggests a 'thick description' of *La Fête chez Thérèse* (a 1910 ballet commissioned by the Opéra, with libretto by Catulle Mendès and music by Reynaldo Hahn) as a means of uncovering continuities between the supposedly conservative tradition of French national ballet and the supposedly revolutionary Ballets Russes; or she revisits the celebrated 'audio-visual dissonance' (25) of Nijinsky's 1912 *L'Après-Midi d'un faune* in relation to the angular gestures of Charcot's psychiatric patients, reimagining the ballet's choreography as 'pure symptom' produced in response to music that 'functions like a hypnotist's voice' (111); or she reads the reception of *Le Sacre de printemps* in 1913 not as proof of the Ballets Russes's impeccable avant-garde credentials but rather in light of widespread contemporary anxieties in Paris about foreign invasion; or she addresses the premiere and reception of Rimsky-Korsakov's opera-ballet *Le Coq d'Or* (1914) as a means to home in on issues surrounding musical and choreographic meaning and the relative status of opera and ballet in the early years of the new century. The multi-stranded, multi-layered narrative that emerges from the book as a whole is an invigorating mixture of the recognisable and the quirkily refreshed: this is the Ballets Russes, but not – for the most part – as musicologists know them.

The relationship between dance and music is nonetheless foundational to *The Ballets Russes and Beyond*, and is crucial to its implications for opera scholarship. It is a relationship that Caddy describes initially as a 'juxtaposition' before immediately introducing the notions of 'mimeticism' and synchronisation to explain the choreographer Fokine's recollection of working with Stravinsky on *L'Oiseau de feu* – a scene in which

> Stravinsky played, and I interpreted the role of the Tsarevich, the piano substituting for a wall … Stravinsky, watching … playing mysterious tremolos as background to depict the garden of the sinister Kashchey the Deathless. (18)

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According to Caddy's reading of Fokine's reminiscence, the 'close coupling of music and dance' described here is characterised by 'creative interplay' and (in another of her memorable turns of phrase) 'musical-gestural latticework' (18–19). Yet elsewhere the music–dance relationship is also the catalyst for one of the few puzzling turns in a book that oozes theoretical sophistication. Comparing the hermeneutic challenges posed by dance to those of opera, Caddy suggests that, in the latter, 'music is mediated by words – concrete, tangible nodules that help to join the dots connecting sound and sentiment'. By contrast,

> compared to discursive language, [dance] has no concrete meaning. Moreover, and also unlike opera, dance tends not to exist in notated form, but only in the memories of the choreographers and performers who created it … As a result, and without the crutch of a text, scholars face immediate hurdles. How are we to describe, let alone to conceptualise, physical movement? And what of its interaction with music – famously indeterminate? (23)

These claims raise various questions: less about the challenges posed by the slippery dancing body than about Caddy's assumptions about the comparative hermeneutic stability of other media. We might well prefer to follow Caddy in overlooking the theoretical vortex opened by querying language's 'concrete' meaning; but the equivalence she implies between language and musical notation – a system whose limited capacity to communicate certain performative parameters is hardly controversial – seems more problematic.

To repeat: such slippages are rare. Caddy's book demonstrates far more regularly the imaginative intelligence of its author and (perhaps above all) her eye for piquant details, whose capacity to bear historiographical weight is subsequently measured to sometimes provocative, always stimulating effect. She makes clear early on that her intention is ultimately to pursue 'a variety of perspectives', with each chapter striving 'to raise more questions than it answers' (24). That this open-ended, teasing project largely succeeds is testament to Caddy's instinct for the unexpected. One dangling thread above all, though, may tantalise and challenge opera scholars: Caddy's discussion in the final chapter of the operatic basis for the Ballets Russes's 1914 production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le Coq d'or*. 'What does it mean', Caddy asks, 'to turn an opera into a ballet, to sideline (literally) a singing component and foreground a newly designed dancing one?' (163) And what should we make of the fact that one of the production's critics mused that 'Progress in art is always accomplished by means of combination, not by elimination. That is why the theatre of the future has every chance of drawing near to this new genre of sung or spoken ballet' (168) – a future that Caddy suggests may be predicated on 'the demise of sung lyric drama' (169)? The death of opera has, of course, been a venerable future predicted in many eras. But that critic's perception of a drive towards combination surely stimulates further thought; as does the notion that ballet might have appeared to some as the theatre of the future (a 'drift towards dance', Caddy calls it elsewhere: 180); as does Caddy's own delineation of what might be entailed by the transformation of an opera into a sung ballet. Underpinning each of these pieces of unfinished business is, once

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again, the issue of medial boundaries. To begin to attempt to answer more fully any of the questions that Caddy raises – both in relation to *Le Coq d'or* in 1914 and, more generally, as opera intersects with her project – we must first find ways to address more precisely, with bolder couplings of theory and history, the subtle, complex combinations of media that opera always already entails.

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