

A BALLET WITH A PEDIGREE

LA FILLE MAL GARDÉE

La Fille mal gardée is the oldest ballet that has survived up to the present day. The original Jean Dauberval version was first presented in Bordeaux in 1789, shortly before the French Revolution. In 1960, Sir Frederick Ashton created for The Royal Ballet in London an

adaptation of the ballet in a “very British style”. Set in the English countryside, his version was inspired by the traditional customs and folk dances. After *Swan Lake*, Ashton’s *La Fille mal gardée* is the most frequently performed ballet title worldwide.



Foto: S. Gherciu

The exhibition *A Ballet with a Pedigree* marks the Czech National Ballet premiere of *La Fille mal gardée* in Prague on 19 April 2018. It is installed on the dress circle of the National Theatre historical building.

Exhibition creator: JANA HOŠKOVÁ
Curator: KATEŘINA HANÁČKOVÁ

Graphic design: Václav Machurka, Formata v.o.s.
Translation: Hilda Hearne



1. People dancing in the street, celebrating the Storming of Bastille on 14 July 1789.

In the 18th century, the gentry savoured noble arts, with dancing having been a crucial aspect of good breeding. At the time, renowned choreographers and ballet creators were employed at aristocrats' courts, where they were also responsible for entertainment. Highly popular among the nobility was "playing at peasants", as was the pastoral style, which also served as the basis for *La Fille mal gardée*. The ballet premiered in 1789, the very year of the French Revolution, following which the Paris Opera ballet artists fell into disfavour and subsequently fled in different directions all over the world. In 1793, Queen Marie Antoinette was executed by guillotine. Her dance teacher, Jean Georges Noverre, moved to London, and would live out the final years of his life in poverty.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION CHANGED THE WORLD

DANCING IN THE STREETS



2. Auguste Vestris performed at the Paris Opera even while he was imprisoned. The Royal Guards accompany him, in costume, on the way from the jail to the theatre.



5. Maria Theresa's children dancing at Joseph II's wedding in Hilverding's choreography. From right to left: Archduchess Antoinette, Archdukes Maximilian and Ferdinand. Vienna, 1765.



3. Marie Antoinette, the Queen of France, was taught dance by Hilverding and Noverre.



4. Marie Antoinette and her maids of honour enacting French shepherdesses.



6. Aristocrats in Bohemia liked entertainment in folk costumes. A masked ball at the Český Krumlov Castle.

English version



Česká verze



NOVERRE'S LEGACY

IN JEAN DAUBERVAL'S WORK

Jean Georges Noverre (1727–1810) is generally considered the creator of *ballet d'action*, a genre aiming to communicate motives and emotions. He purged ballet of the ostentatious stereotypes of aristocratic nobleness, its drawing inspiration from mythological and Anacreontic subjects, rendered on the stage in opulent costumes, with the dancers wearing masks. The artists with whom he worked as a maître de ballet and compositeur at numerous theatres in Europe, including in Paris, Berlin, Dresden, Stuttgart, London, Lyon, Vienna and Milan, went on to pursue his legacy, even though in the wake of the French Revolution their teacher had fallen into disfavour. His followers included Jean Dauberval, the founder of the *ballet comique* genre and creator of *La Fille mal gardée*. Of great significance for the development of ballet is Noverre's treatise *Lettres sur le Danse*, first published in 1760, in which he presented his conception of ballet as an independent, cogent dramatic form. Since 1982, upon the instigation of the Conseil International de la Danse, a UNESCO partner NGO, Noverre's birthday, 29 April, has been annually observed as International Dance Day.



1.

From 1767 to 1774, Noverre served as a dance teacher at the court of Empress Maria Theresa in Vienna, where he created his famous works at the Burgtheater and the Kortnertor Theater.



2.

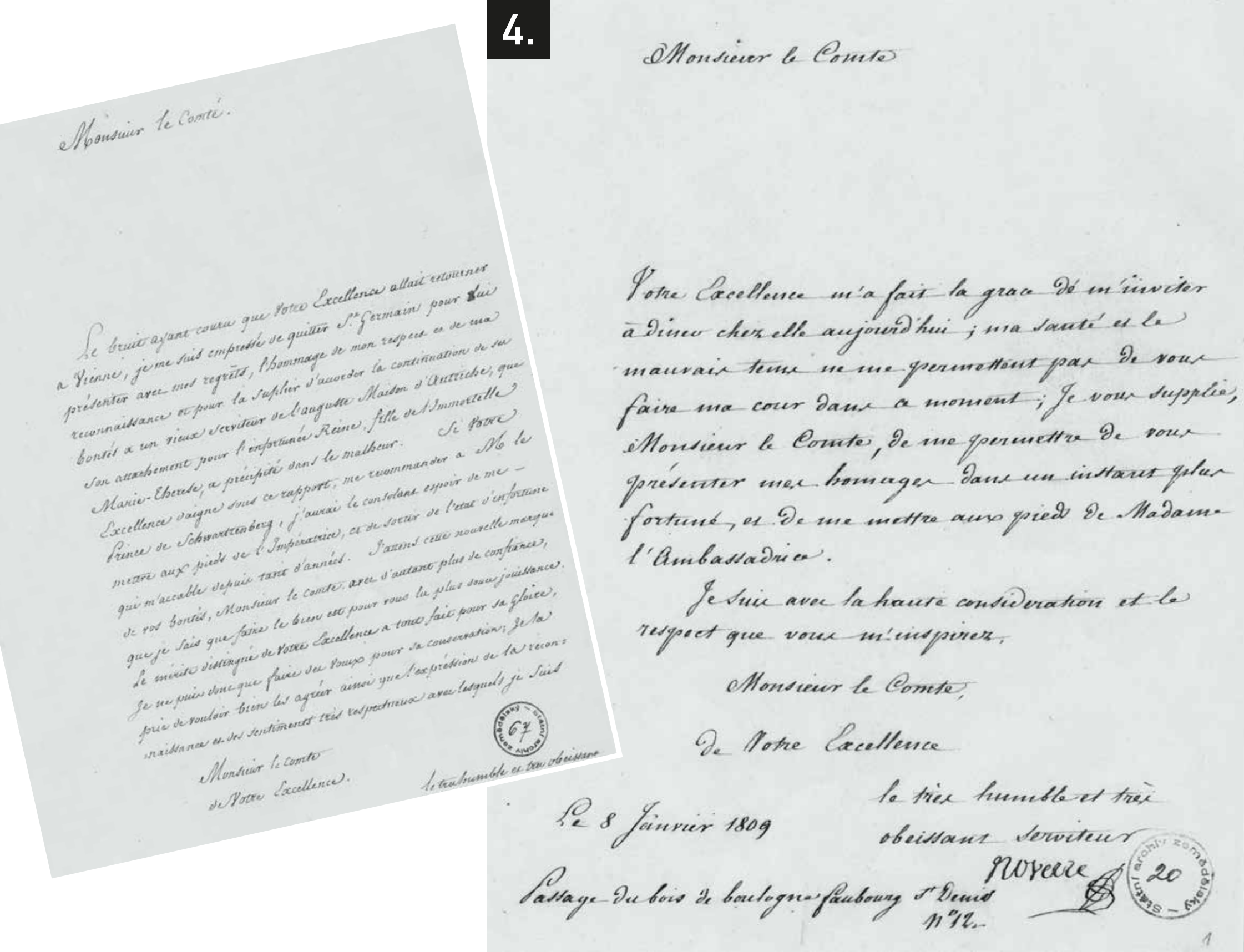
Noverre's ballet tragique *Médée et Jason* (1763) was staged throughout Europe in the 18th century (in 1777 in Brno).



3.

Jean Dauberval, in the Pas de deux tire with Melle Allard in *Sylvia*, Paris, 1767.

4.

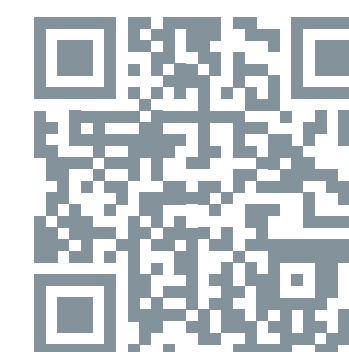


The sad end of Noverre's life is documented by his final letters, written in 1809 and 1810 to Klemens von Metternich, the Austrian Empire's Foreign Minister, today maintained at the National Archives in Prague.

"... Your Excellency, I have been honoured to have been invited to a lunch with you; yet my ailing health does not allow me to faire ma cour at that time..."

The letters are dated 8 January 1809, 16 April and 18 September 1810. Noverre died on 19 October 1810 at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

English version



Česká verze



1. J. G. Noverre, a portrait by: J. K. Sherwin, 1782, The New York Public Library / Družstvo Dílo přátel umění a knihy, Praha 1945
2. J. Hošková's archive
3. Enciclopedia dello spettacolo, 1954
4. The National Archives, Prague-Chodovec, Metternich Family Archive, Acta Clementina 10, ř. č. 549, fol. 1–6



DAUBERVAL'S DANCE MORALITY PLAY ABOUT A POORLY GUARDED GIRL

1.

Jean Dauberval (1742–1806), a pupil of Jean Georges Noverre, developed his teacher's legacy, founding the *ballet comique* genre. Following his illustrious career at the Paris Opera as a danseur, he became a ballet master, choreographer, mime artist and educator. He brought to the stage stories from the lives of ordinary people, which by means of dance and mime he retold with a comical tint. Dauberval's *La Fille mal gardée* premiered on 1 July 1789 at the Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux, under the title *Le ballet de la paille, ou Il n'est qu'un pas du mal au bien*

(The Ballet of the Straw, or There is Only One Step from Bad to Good). Although not directly related to the tumultuous events in Paris, the piece corresponded with the atmosphere of the time. Following the French Revolution, numerous dance artists moved to London, which would become a true ballet superpower. Besides Noverre and Dauberval, those who lived and worked in the British capital included Charles Louis Didelot (1767–1837), who in 1816 was appointed the premier maître de ballet at the Imperial Ballet in Saint Petersburg, and the famous danseur Auguste Vestris. Dauberval's pupils Charles Louis Didelot, Jean Aumer and Salvatore Viganò continued to stage *La Fille mal gardée* worldwide.



2.

Jean Dauberval in a Pas de trois with Marie Allard and Marie-Madeleine Guimard, Paris, 1779.



3.

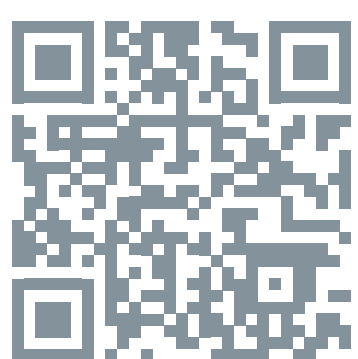
Charles Didelot, Mme Rose and Mlle Parisot, London, King's Theatre, 1796. The scene reveals changes in the style and development of costumes, as well as the dance technique.

Marie-Madeleine Guimard performing a village woman. In 1789, after 27 years at the Paris Opera, she joined Noverre in London, as did Auguste Vestris.

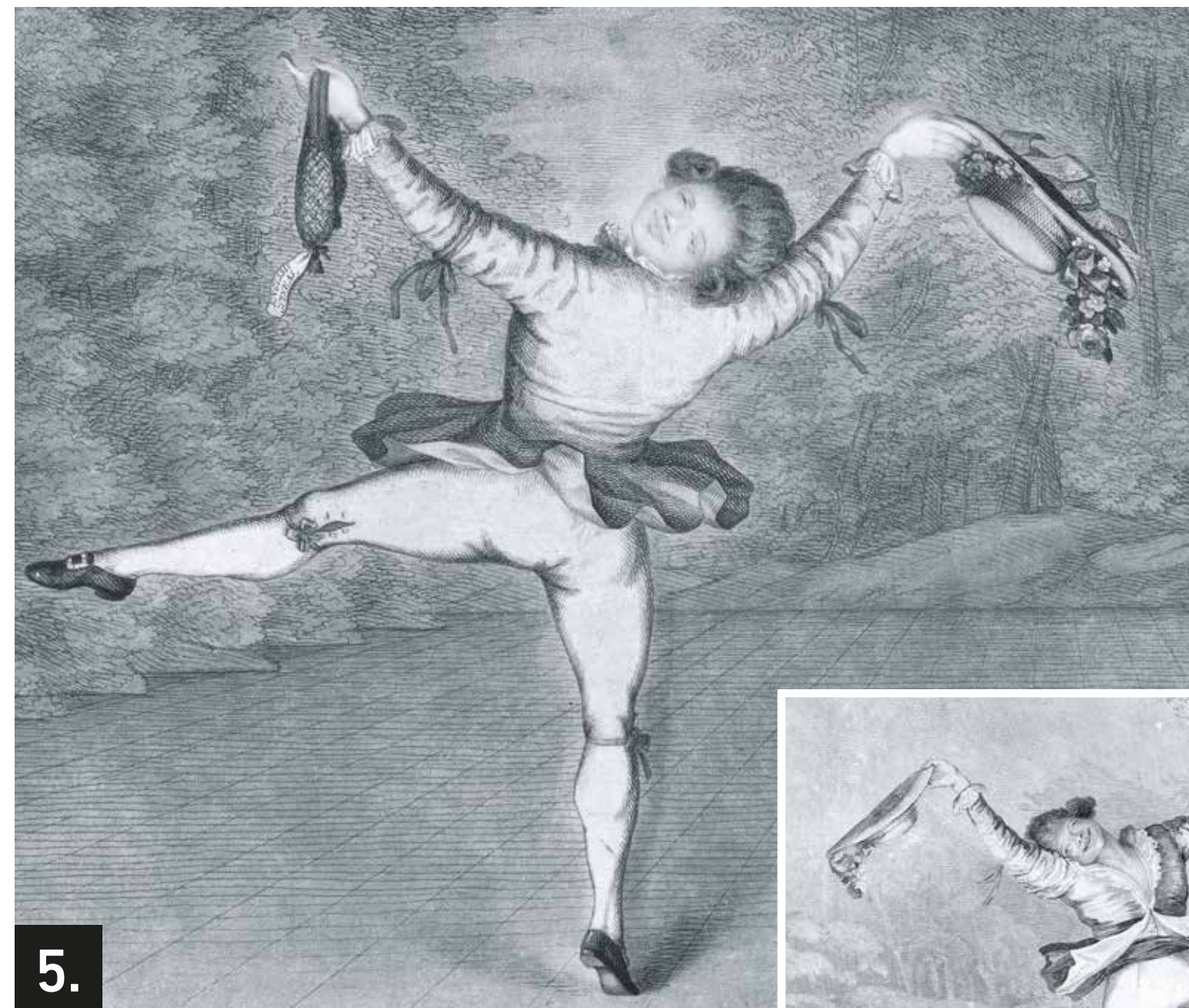


4.

English version



Česká verze

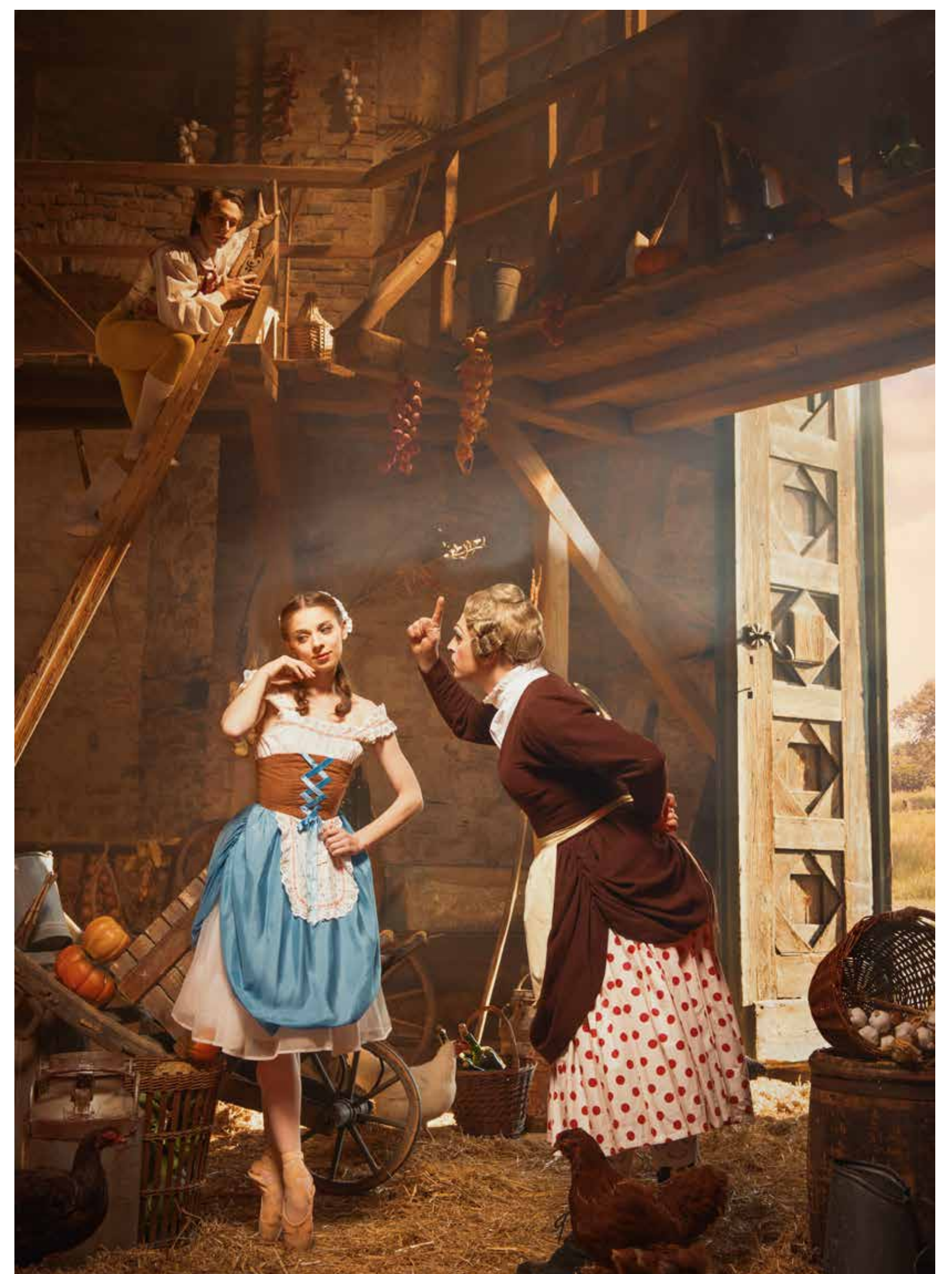


5.

Auguste Vestris dancing Colas in 1815 in London (he was 55 years of age).



1. Jean Dauberval, New York Public Library
2., 3., 5. New York Public Library
4. J. Hošková's archive



DAUBERVAL'S INSPIRATION

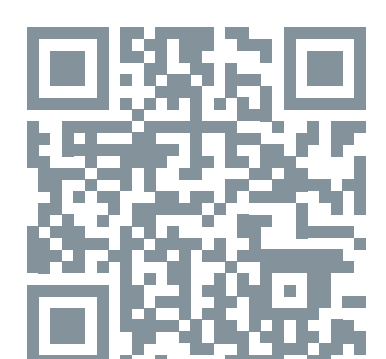
FOR THE LE BALLET DE LA PAILLE

The inspiration for the original *La Fille mal gardée* (Le Ballet de la paille): An engraving by Choffard, after the painting titled *Le Réprimande / Une Jeune Fille querellée par sa mère* (The Reprimand or A Young Daughter Scolded by her Mother) by Pierre Antoine Baudouin (1723–1769).

This ballet is said to have originated in a curious manner. Charles Maurice, in his *Historie Anécdotique du Théâtre*, asserts that Dauberval happened to stop one day in front of a glazier's shop. Glancing at the window he saw "a crude coloured print depicting a village youth fleeing from a cottage, with an angry old woman throwing his hat after him, while a peasant girl sheds tears. At the end of a very short interval, the ravishing ballet *La Fille mal gardée* was evolved".

The engraving also inspired the visual presentation for the current Czech National Ballet production (pictured: Alina Nanu, Alexandre Katsapov and Dmytro Tenytskyy).

English version



Česká verze



Musée Cognacq-Jay / Roger-Viollet
Ch. Maurice: *Historie Anécdotique du Théâtre*,
Paris, 1856
Photo by The Queens:
Mario Bakuš – Alexandre Katsapov

SALVATORE VIGANÒ AND MARIA MEDINA

THE EMPIRE STYLE IN BALLET



1.

Marie Medina
as Terpsichore
(Vienna, 1794).

The Italian dancer, choreographer and composer Salvatore Viganò and the Spanish ballerina Maria Medina brought Dauberval's *La Fille mal gardée* to theatres throughout Europe, making tours of the continent. From 3 to 10 October 1796, the couple appeared in Prague, where at the Nostitz Theatre (today's Estates Theatre) they presented Viganò's adaptation, titled *La figlia malcustodita*, which had received its premiere at the Gran Teatro la Fenice in Venice in 1792. The popularity of the production of *La Fille mal gardée* in Prague is attested to by two unique invitations to a ball at the Konvikt hall, dating from the late 18th century.



2.

The Kotzen Theatre and the Nostitz Theatre, late 18th century.

The invitations to a ball at the Konvikt hall in Prague capture Viganò and Medina, and the scene of Widow Simone playing a tambourine and Lise learning how to dance at home.



3.



4.

Salvatore Viganò and Maria Medina. They were married from 1789 to 1799.



5.

The empire style in ballet: Medina and Viganò.

English version



Česká verze



Salvatore Viganò staged choreodramas, grand ballets treating historical themes. In 1801, Ludwig van Beethoven composed for him the full-length ballet *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* (The Creatures of Prometheus).

1. Maria Medina as Terpsichore (Vienna, 1794), a drawing by Joseph Dorfmeister, New York Public Library
2. J. Hošková's archive
3. B. Dušek's collection, the National Museum Archive
4. J. Lanzedelly der Ältere
5. Drawings by G. Schadow (1796)

FANNY ELSSLER

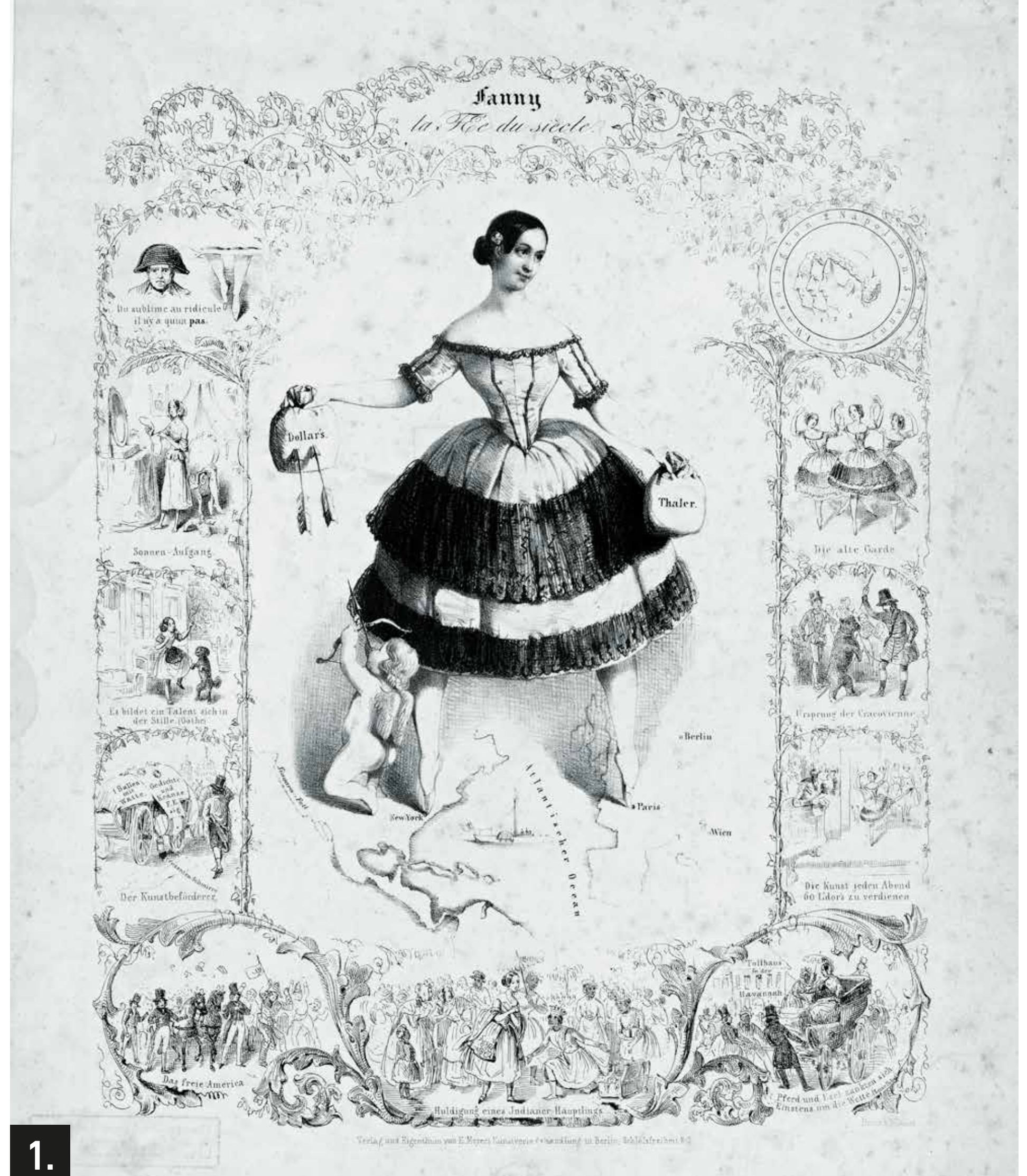
ALL OVER THE WOLRD

As it was subsequently presented throughout Europe, *La Fille mal gardée* was given different names in theatres in different countries. While the original title was mainly used in the west, companies in Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia opted for *La Précaution inutile* (Vain Precautions), *Vergebliche Vorsicht* and *Tshchotnaya predostorozhnost*.

Straw, as a symbol of rural life in the previous centuries, had disappeared from the ballet's title – perhaps owing to its pejorative meaning – yet it has been retained in the action, for bundles of straw play a significant role in the story.

Fanny Elssler (1810–1884), a renowned Austrian ballerina from the Romantic period, dazzled audiences across Europe and in America as Lise in *La Fille mal gardée*. She chose to portray the role at the final show of her American trip in New York. The tour, originally scheduled to last three months, was extended to two years. From 1 May 1840 to 1 July 1842, she gave some 199 performances in the USA and Cuba. In 1851, Fanny Elssler performed in Olomouc, Moravia.

The Pas de deux, which had been included in the production of *La Fille mal gardée* following Fanny Elssler's show at the Paris Opera in 1837, accompanied by an aria from Gaetano Donizetti's opera *L'elisir d'amore*, has been retained in Frederick Ashton's version of the ballet.



1.

Fanny Elssler.



2.

Fanny Elssler dancing Cachucha in 1851. That year, she also performed in Olomouc, Moravia.



3.



4.

A playbill for a performance of *La Fille mal gardée* in Moscow.

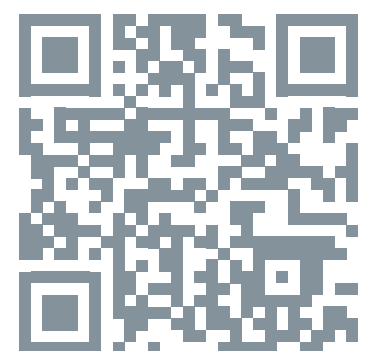
A unique lithograph featuring the Harvest Dance from *La Fille mal gardée*, as performed by Mlle Weiss's Viennese Children in the USA (1844).



5.

The Fanny Elssler Pas de deux. Alina Nanu and Ondřej Vinklát.

English version



Česká verze

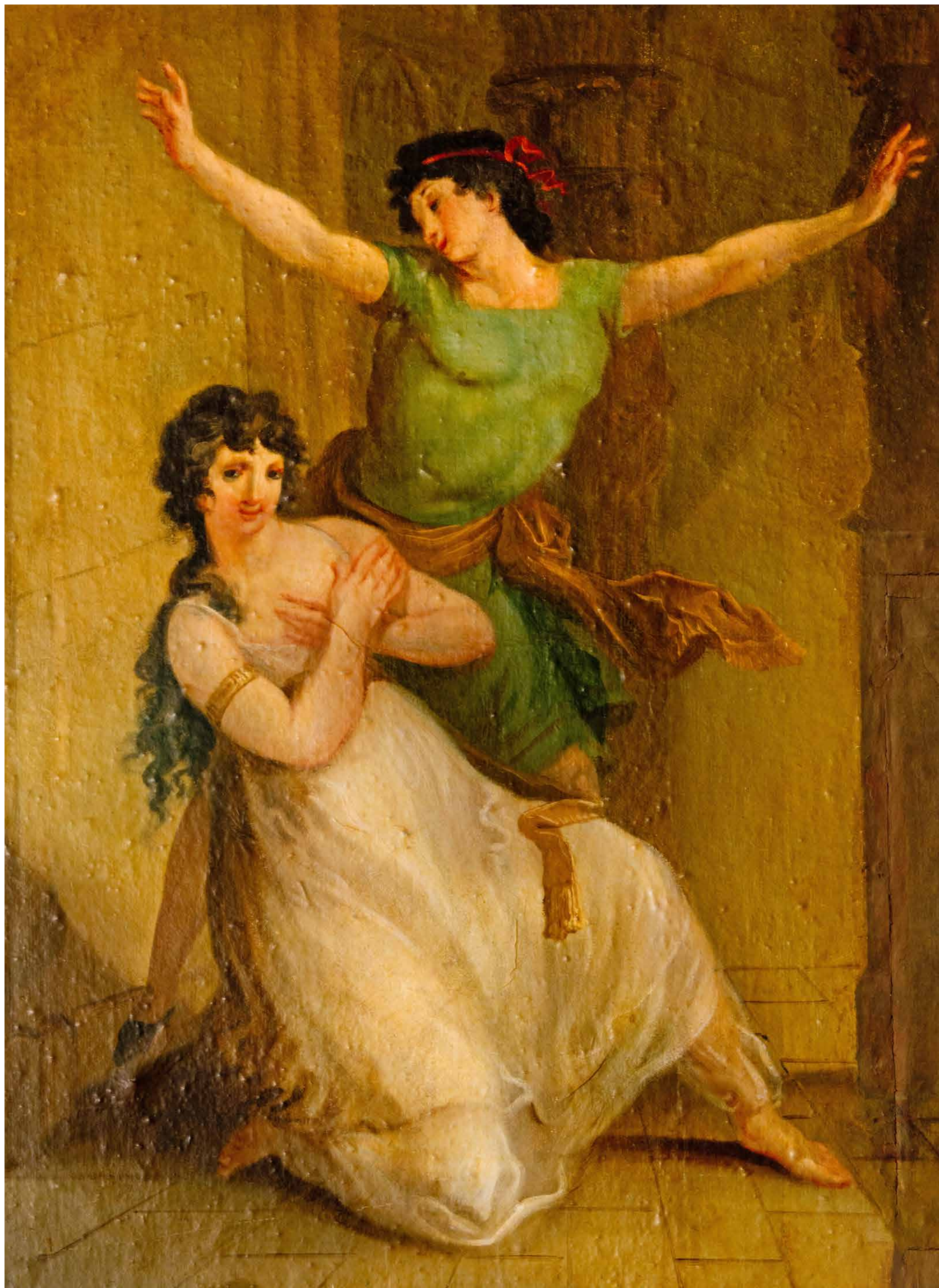
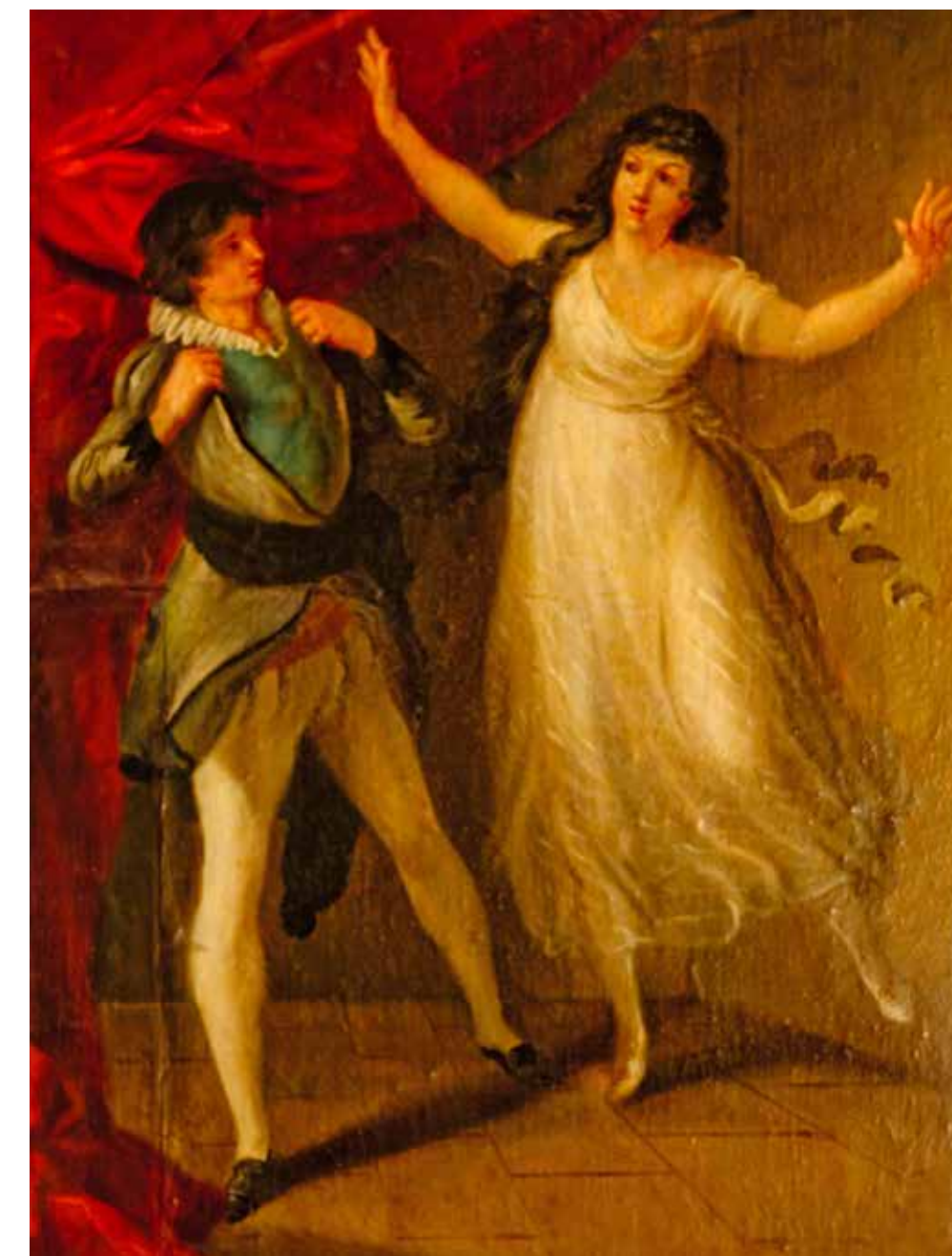


1. New York Public Library
- 2., 4. J. Hošková's archive
3. New York 1847, New York Public Library
5. Photo: S. Gherciu

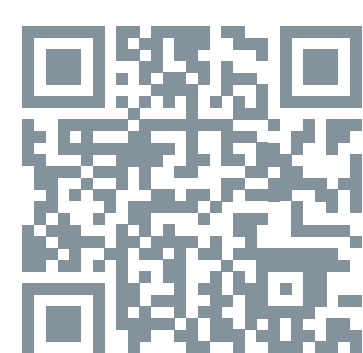
UNIQUE PAINTINGS IN LITOMYŠL

SIGNIFICANT CONNECTIONS

The celebrated Vigano – Medina couple is depicted on four oil paintings, hanging in a box at the chateau theatre in Litomyšl. Capturing the pair's performances, they evoke the period atmosphere and inebriation by dance. One of the pictures represents the famed mime scene from *La Fille mal gardée*, with Maria Medina holding a baby in her arms.

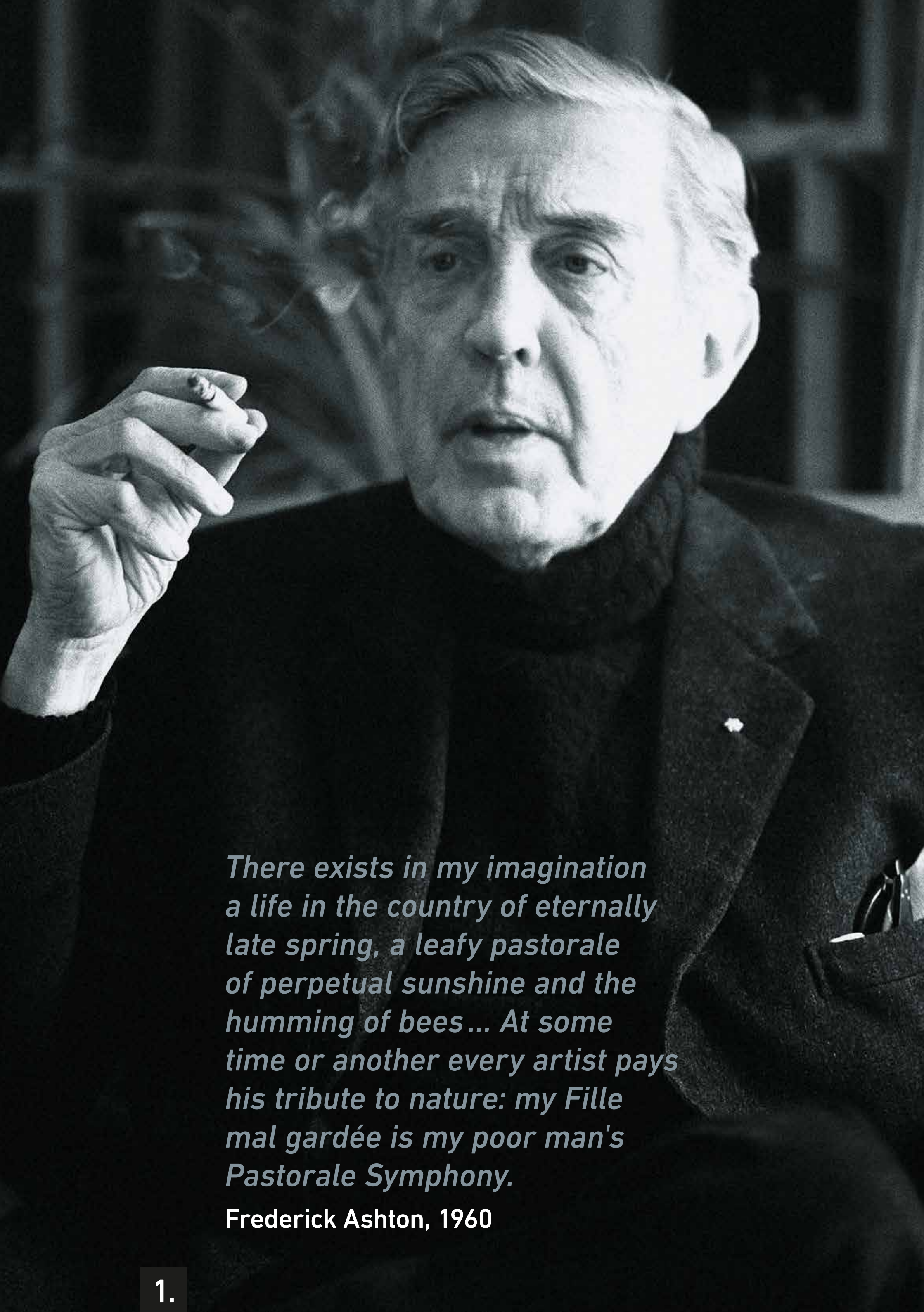


English version



Česká verze





There exists in my imagination a life in the country of eternally late spring, a leafy pastorage of perpetual sunshine and the humming of bees... At some time or another every artist pays his tribute to nature: my Fille mal gardée is my poor man's Pastorale Symphony.

Frederick Ashton, 1960

1.

Frederick Ashton.

SIR FREDERICK ASHTON

THE VERY BRITISH STYLE

The British dancer and choreographer Sir Frederick Ashton, one of the founders of The Royal Ballet, was the holder of state honours from the UK, including the CBE, Knight Bachelor, Companion of Honour and Order of Merit, as well as from other countries. The most English of the British choreographers, he was born on 17 September 1904 in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and grew up in Lima, Peru, where in 1917 he saw the Russian prima ballerina Anna Pavlova. Her artistry engrossed him so much that he decided to become a dancer. In 1923, he moved to London, where he would take classical ballet lessons from Leonide Massine, Marie Rambert and Margaret Craske, pupils of Enrico Cecchetti. In 1926, Ashton created his first choreography, *A Tragedy of Fashion*. In 1931, he began working with Ninette de Valois's Vic-Wells Ballet, which would later on be renamed Sadler's Wells Ballet and, in 1956, The Royal Ballet. Ashton, the creator of the English ballet style, died in 1988. Ashton staged more than 80 ballets of a variety of styles. The sheer diversity of his works attests to his versatile erudition and proficiency within manifold stage forms and genres, ranging from classical ballet, ballroom, folk, historical and character dance, to vaudeville and mime.



3.

Frederick Ashton rehearsing the Pas de deux with Nadia Nerina and David Blair, who performed in the premiere in London of his *La Fille mal gardée*.



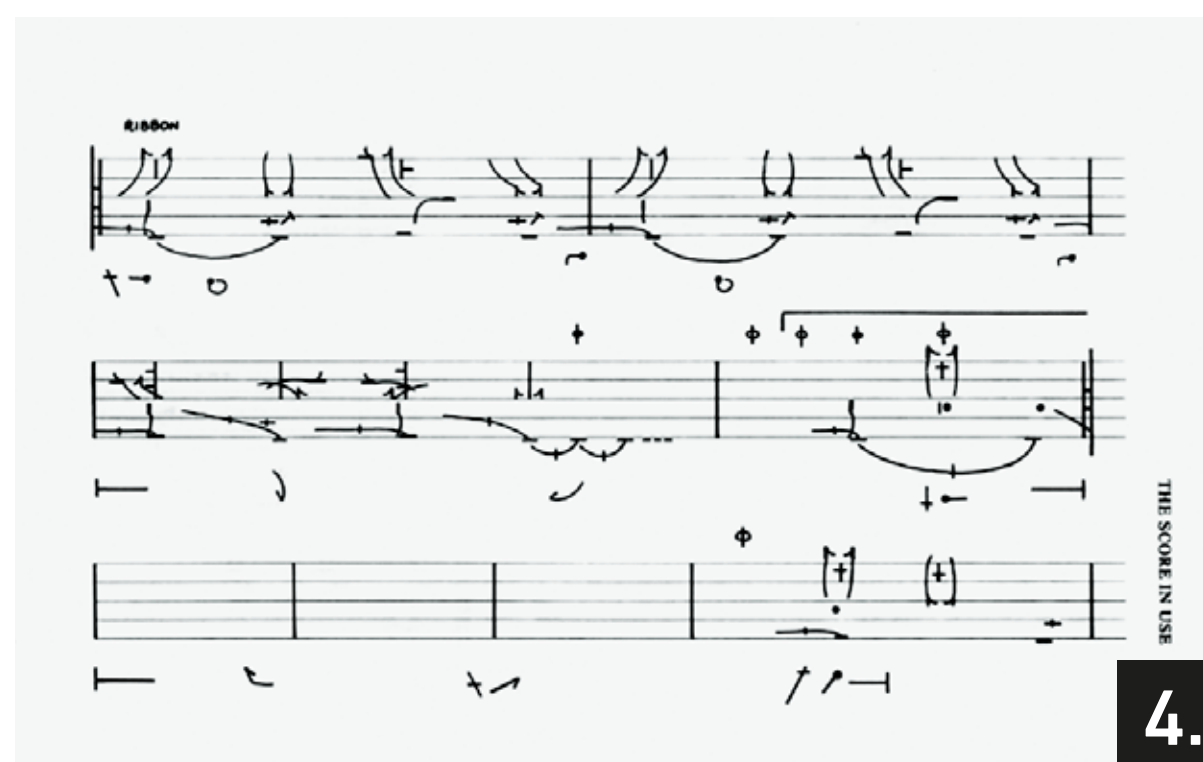
2.

Ashton's ugly stepsister in *Cinderella*. The travesti tradition has been pursued in ballet.



5.

Jiří Kodým (Widow Simone), Ashton's *La Fille mal gardée*.



4.

A ballet score (Benesh notation), documenting the movement of Lise's arms when dancing with a ribbon.

- 1. Photo: Roy Jones (ArenaPAL)
- 2., 3., 4. J. Hošková's archive
- 5. J. Hošková's archive. Photo: M. Divíšek.

English version



Česká verze



ZUCCHI, KARSAVINA, PAVLOVA

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

When creating *La Fille mal gardée*, Sir Frederick Ashton worked with the legendary Russian prima ballerina Tamara Karsavina (1885–1978), who had performed as Lise at the Imperial Ballet in Saint Petersburg and Sergey Diaghilev's *Les Ballets Russes*. In 1918, she married a British diplomat and settled in London, where she worked with The Royal Ballet until her death in 1978. She was a founding member of the Royal Academy of Dance in London. In 1908 and 1909, Karsavina appeared as a guest at the National Theatre in Prague. She was loved by the Czech audience, while Anna Pavlova performed for the German community in the city, at the Neues deutsches Theater (today's State Opera).



1. Tamara Karsavina and Achille Viscusi, the artistic director of the Czech National Ballet.



2. Tamara Karsavina and Anna Pavlova, in the role of Lise.

*The story of *La Fille mal gardée* lends itself admirably to ballet treatment; there is not a dance in it that does not flow directly out of a real situation. It is a charming period-piece singularly compatible with current artistic trends — artistic reaction to contemporary life.*

Tamara Karsavina on *La Fille mal gardée*

The mime scene “When I am married” in the ballet’s second Act is related to Virginia Zucchi, an Italian ballerina who possessed a great talent for expression. In 1885, she portrayed Lise in Petipa and Ivanov’s version of *La Fille mal gardée*, to Hertel’s music, at the Imperial Russian Ballet. Her take on of the role would be adopted by Anna Pavlova, Tamara Karsavina and other prima ballerinas. In 1882, Zucchi appeared in Prague as Fenella in Daniel François Auber’s opera *La muette de Portici*. Václav Reisinger, the first Czech choreographer of the Provisional and National Theatres, conceived for her a ballet titled *Lesní panna a cikán* (The Wood Nymph and a Gypsy Youth).



Virginia Zucchi



Tamara Karsavina rehearsing with Margot Fonteyn, The Royal Ballet, London, 1961.

English version



Česká verze





THE TRAVESTI TRADITION IN BRITISH BALLET

1. The British comedian Dan Leno (1860–1904), who gained fame as a child for dancing a clog dance. Alexandre Katsapov as Widow Simone.

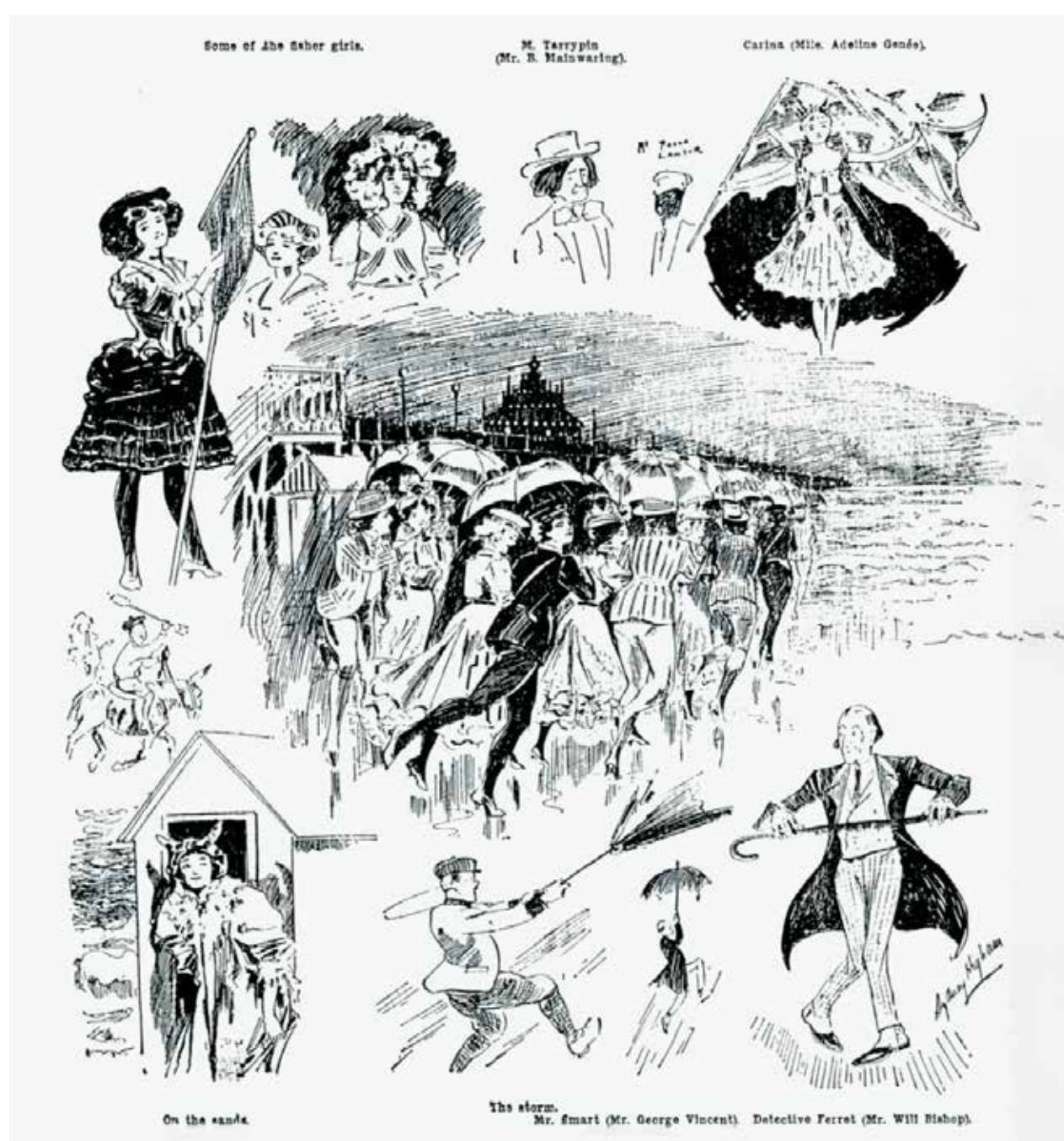
The characters and humour in Ashton's *La Fille mal gardée* are of an entirely English nature. Widow Simone is performed by a man, in line with the tradition of harlequinades and Shakespearean theatre. In his conception, Ashton paid tribute to the leading Victorian music-hall comedian Dan Leno. According to the travesti principle, comic female roles were portrayed by male artists, while handsome youths were rendered by women. The expressive mimic gestures were codified by a dance idiom linked with the musicality of movement.



2. Mother Goose, a traditional vaudeville travesti number.

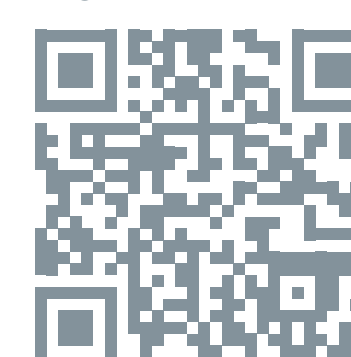


3. Storm scenes have often been on stages in a country with heavy rainfall. The Alhambra in London – *Sea Side* (1900) and *On the River* (1892).



4. It's raining! The storm scene, in front: J. Kodym and M. Deneux.

English version



Česká verze

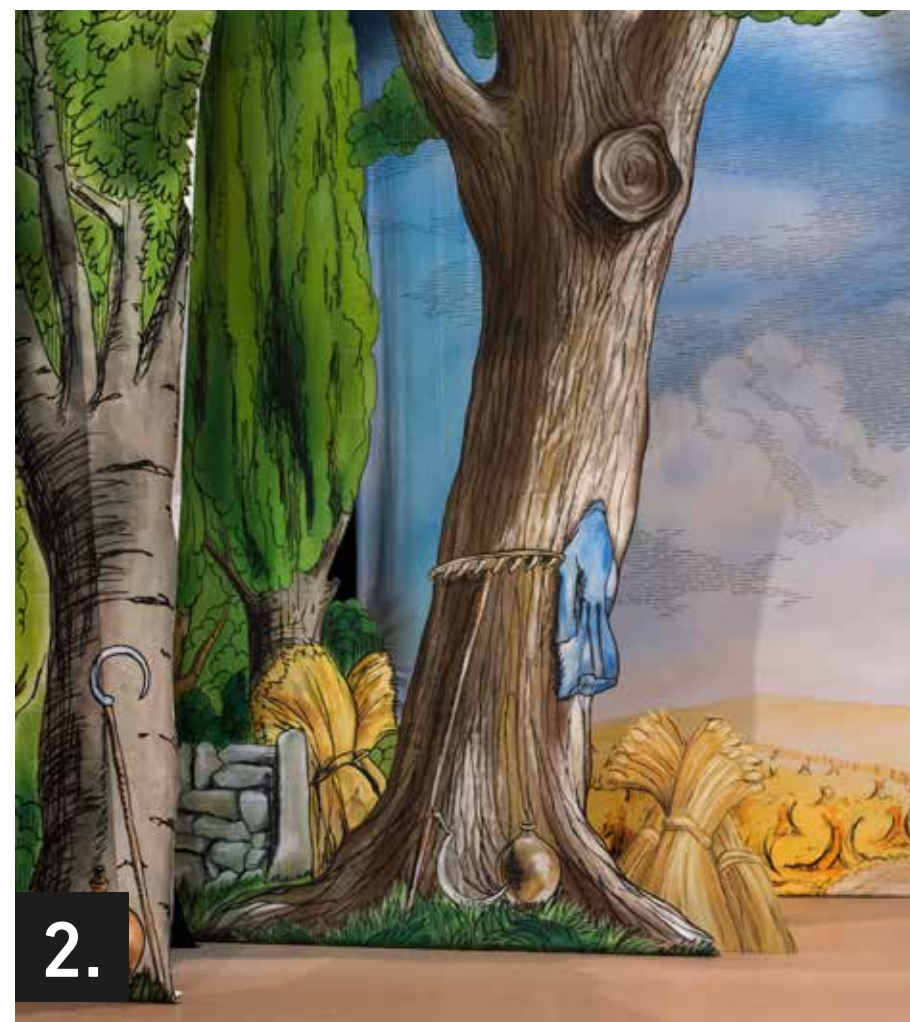


1., 2., 3. J. Hošková's archive
1. Photo: D. Wharton
4. Photo: S. Gherciu



1.

A Cottage in a Cornfield (1817), John Constable.



2.

Osbert Lancaster's colourful set designs.



3.

The Clog Dance (A. Watanabe, M. Drastíková, A. Katsapov, A. Pera, M. Wenzelová).

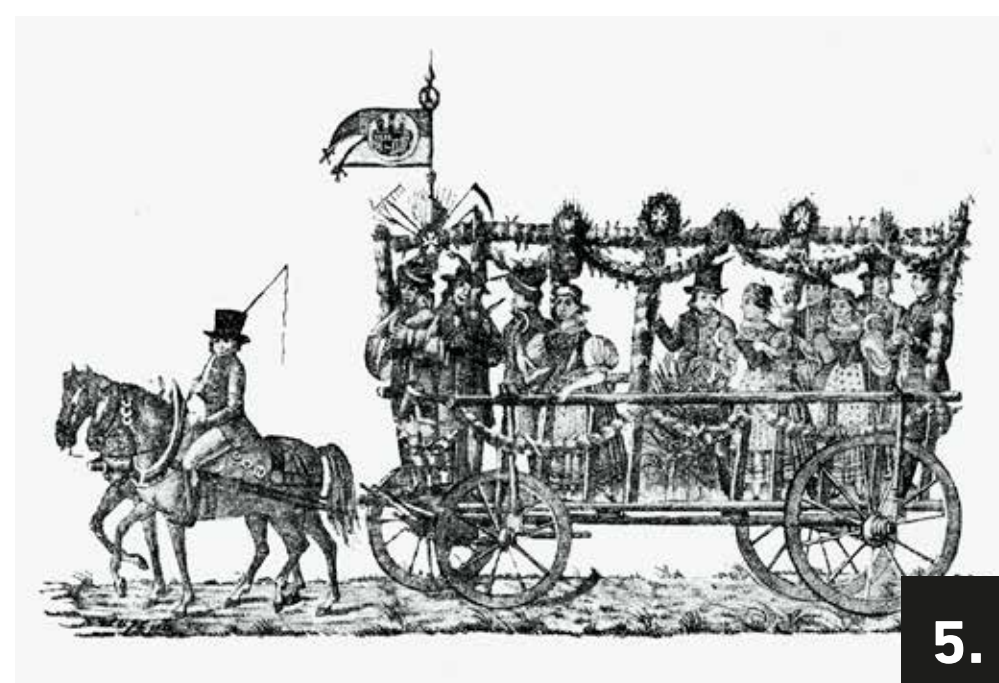
INSPIRATION BY FOLK DANCE

In his version of *La Fille mal gardée*, set in the English countryside, Ashton applied stylised folk dances and customs. The mosaic of his gentle “poetic realism” features the Chicken Dance, the Clog Dance, the Ribbon Dance (Pas de Ruban), the Reaping Dance and the Maypole Dance, as well as a pony with a cart. Frederick Ashton was inspired by his beloved Suffolk landscape, as well as the paintings of John Constable. The rural atmosphere is aptly rendered by the scenography, created by the English stage designer and cartoonist Osbert Lancaster. All the props (including those at the National Theatre in Prague) are painted by hand.



4.

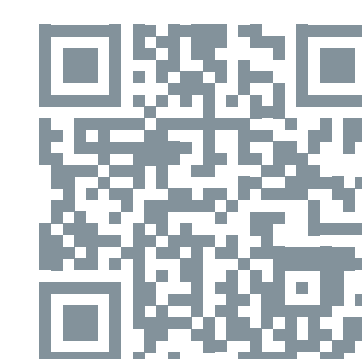
The reapers, Czech National Ballet.



5.

A live pony is an integral part of the production (during the harvest festival). Compare with the historical picture of a cart at the Strakonice manor, in a gala performance marking the coronation of Ferdinand as King of Bohemia in 1836 in Prague.

English version



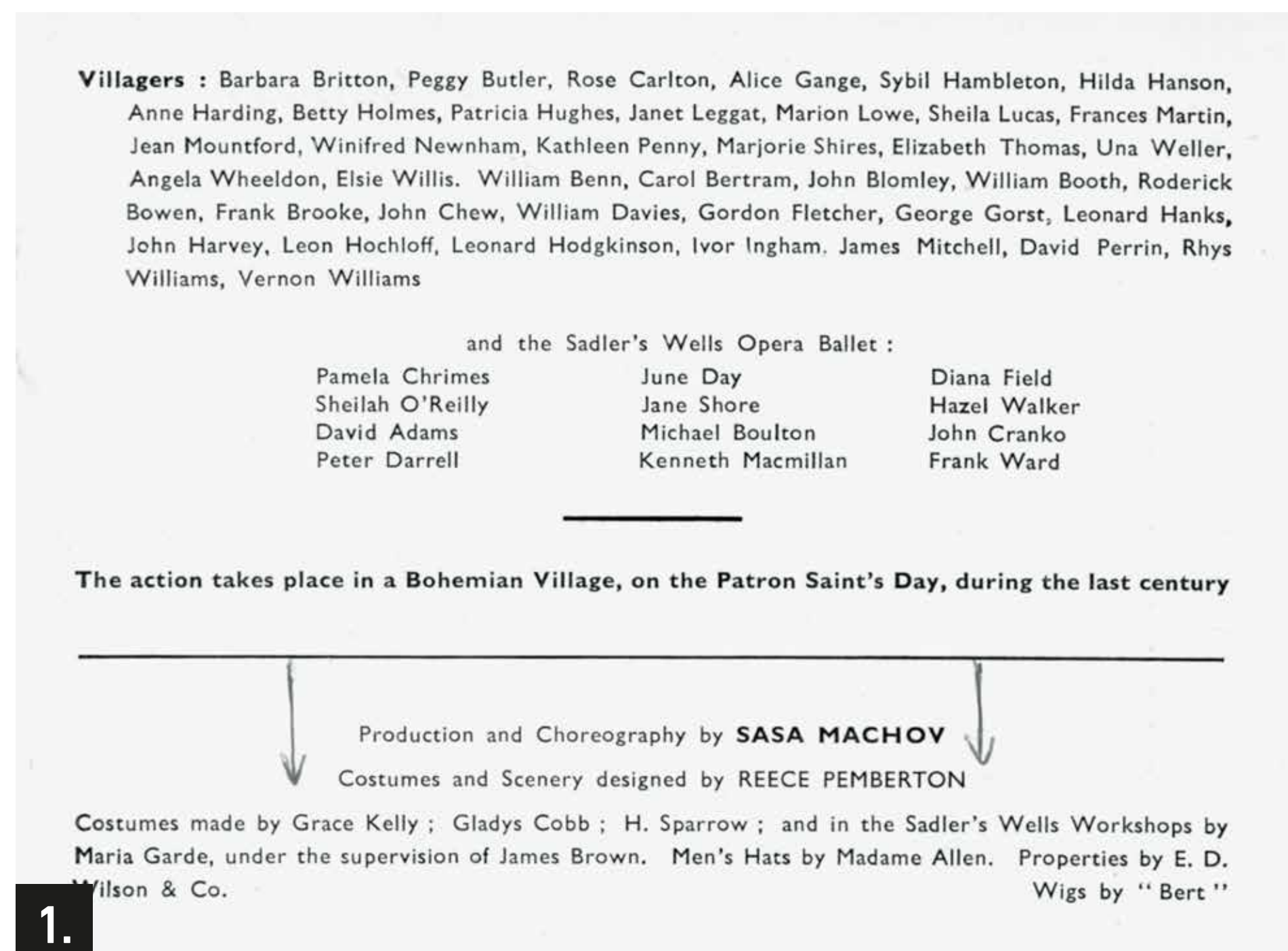
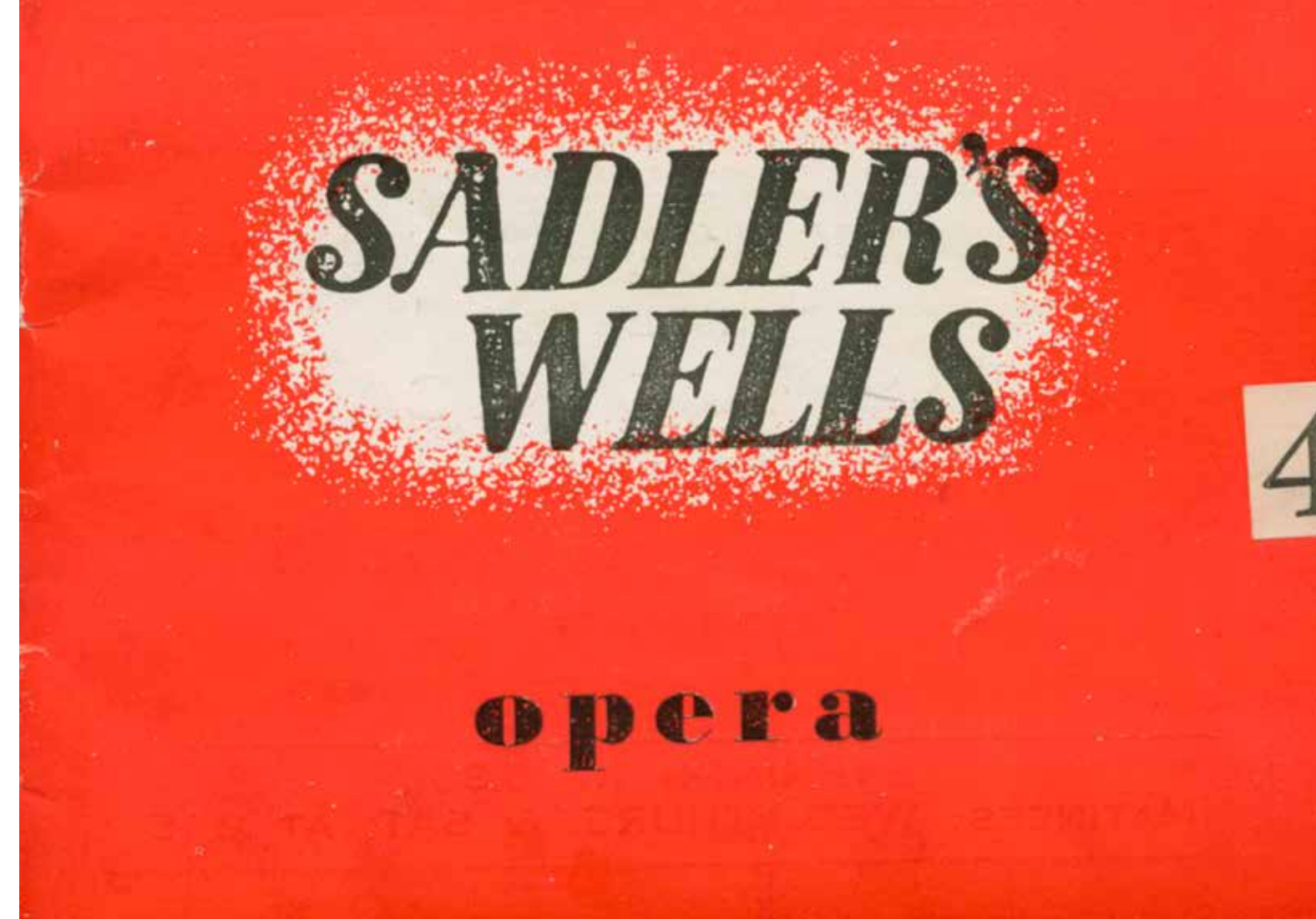
Česká verze



- 1. National Museum and Gallery of Wales, Cardiff / Bridgeman Art Library
- 2., 5. Photo: S. Gherciu
- 3., 4. Photo: M. Divíšek
- 5. J. Hošková's archive

THE CZECH FOOTPRINT

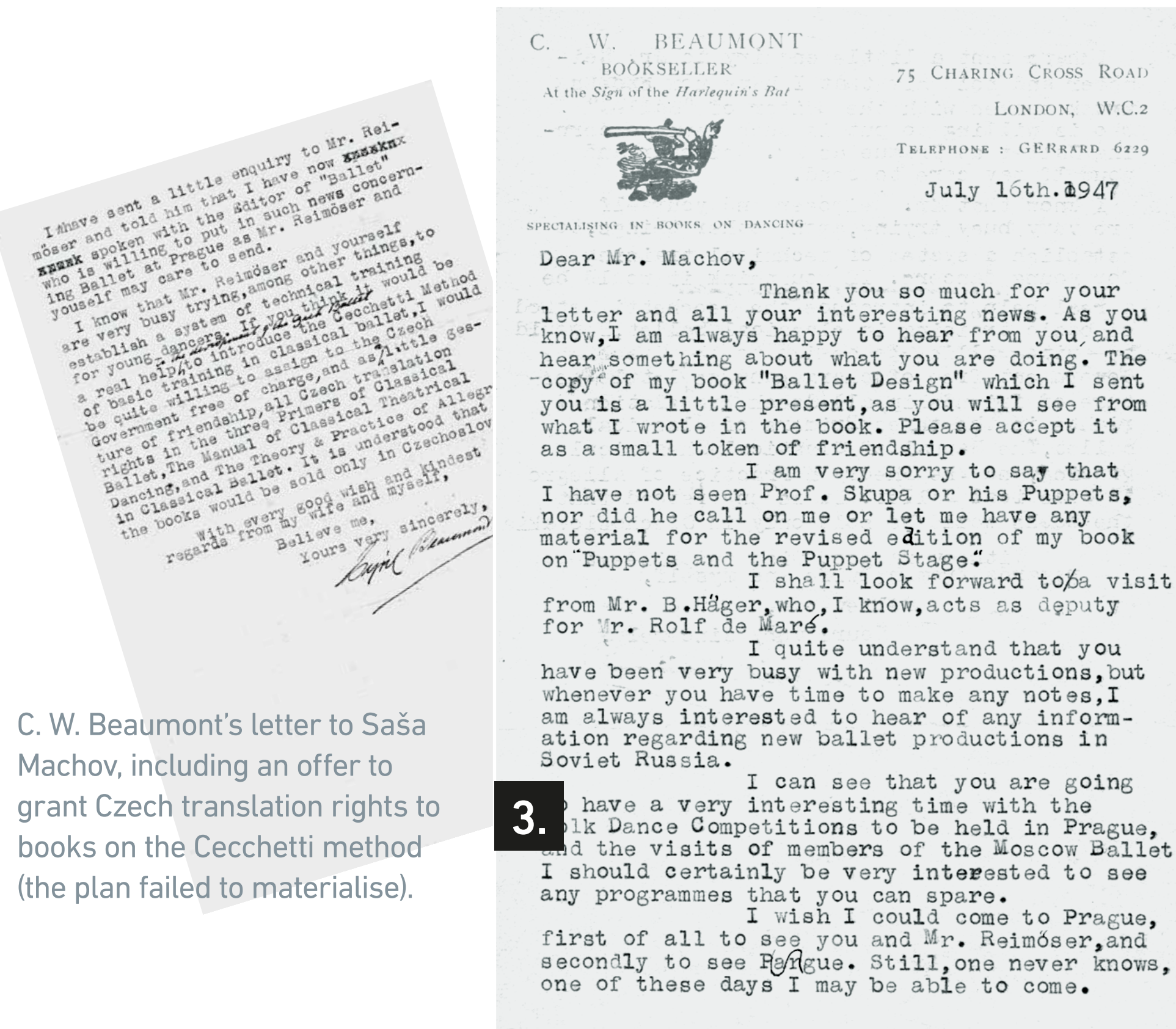
The Czech sources that inspired Ashton when creating his version of *La Fille mal gardée* have been pointed out by the British historian David Vaughan. The idea of the introductory Chicken Dance was stimulated by Walter Felsenstein's production at the Komische Oper in Berlin of Leoš Janáček's opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*. The comic role of Alain was evidently modelled on the character of the stammering Vašek in Bedřich Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, which during World War II was staged in London by the director Eric Crozier and Saša Machov (the future head of the Czech National Ballet in Prague), who at the time was working as a coach and director with the Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet. The premiere in London of *The Bartered Bride* in 1943 was attended by President Edvard Beneš and members of the Czechoslovak government in exile. After WWII, Saša Machov continued to be in vivid contact with the ballet artists he had befriended during his tenure in London. The collaboration, however, ended in 1948, following the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia, as it was regarded as suspicious by the authorities. In 1951, Machov, a former soldier of the exile Czechoslovak Army, who fought against the Germans in North Africa, committed suicide.



The programme for Saša Machov's production of the opera *The Bartered Bride* in London. Noteworthy is the cast – John Cranko, Peter Darrell, Kenneth MacMillan – future towering ballet figures.



Inspired by the chicken in Leoš Janáček's opera *The Cunning Little Vixen* and the stuttering Vašek in Bedřich Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* (J. Dolnik as the Rooster, V. Burlac as Alain).



C. W. Beaumont's letter to Saša Machov, including an offer to grant Czech translation rights to books on the Cecchetti method (the plan failed to materialise).



Machov as a soldier of the exile Czechoslovak Army, by an anti-aircraft gun.



Saša Machov (1903–1951).

- 1. J. Hošková's archive
- 2. Photo: M. Divíšek
- 3. National Theatre Archives
- 4. National Theatre Archives
- 5. National Theatre Archives



In 1966, The Royal Ballet made a week-long tour of Czechoslovakia, performing a production of *Swan Lake* and Ashton's *La Fille mal gardée*, featuring the original cast. One of those who spread the fame of *La Fille mal gardée* in the Americas was Alicia Alonso, a Cuban prima ballerina assoluta, who in 1980 staged in Prague her adaptation of *La Fille mal gardée* at the National Theatre. Between 1980 and 1990, the production, based on Petipa and Ivanov's version, and set to Ludwig Hertel's music, received 74 performances. In the 2002/03 season, Alonso's *La Fille mal gardée* was revived by the Prague Dance Conservatory under its director Jaroslav Slavický.

LA FILLE MAL GARDÉE

AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE IN PRAGUE



1.



Nadia Nerina, Stanley Holden, Leslie Edwards and Alexander Grand also danced in Prague.



2.

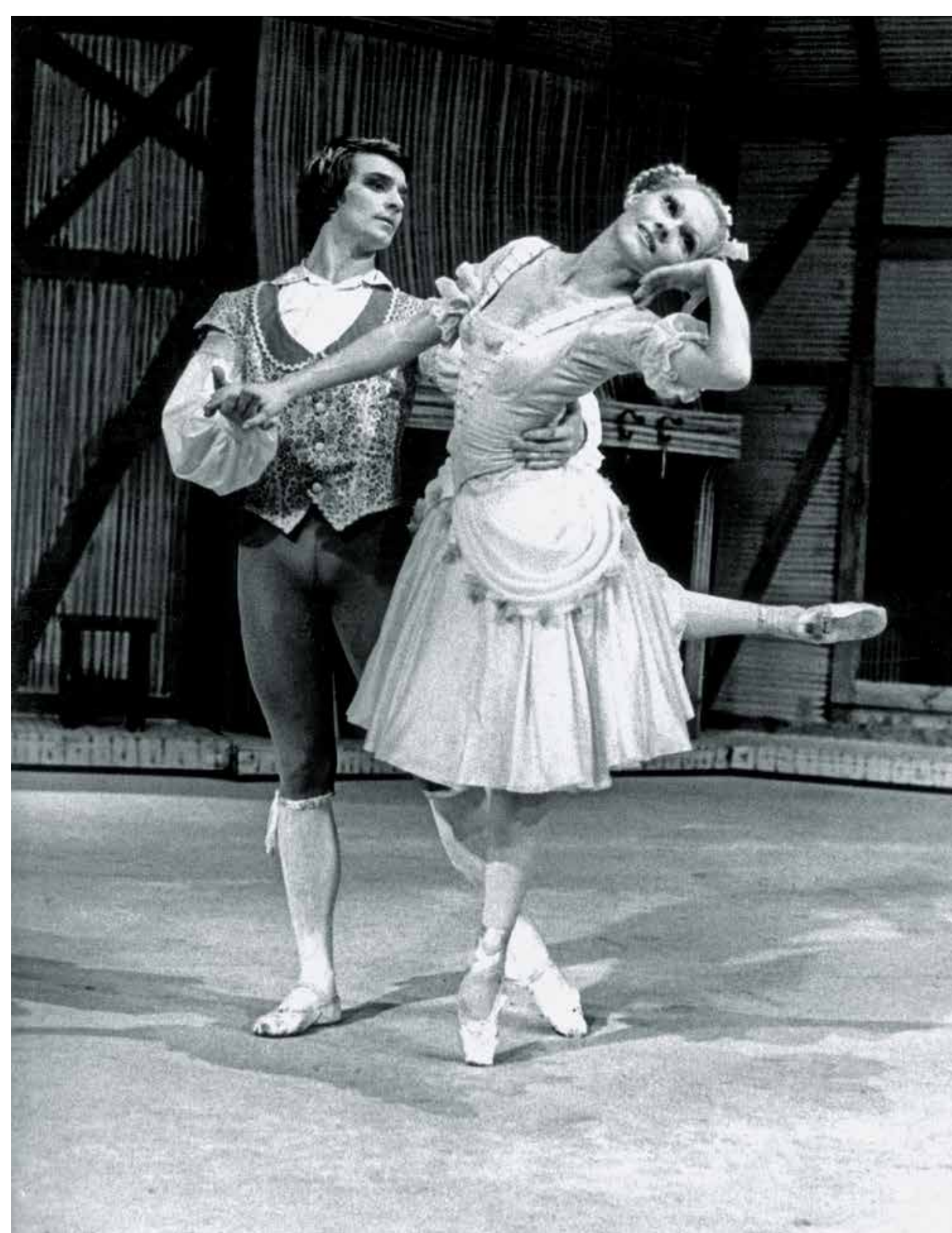
H. Vlácilová,
J. Slavický, 1980.



J. Kodym, J. Hejna,
M. Wenzelová, 2002.



A. Kramešová,
L. Slavický, 2002.



V. Harapes,
M. Pešíková, 1980.

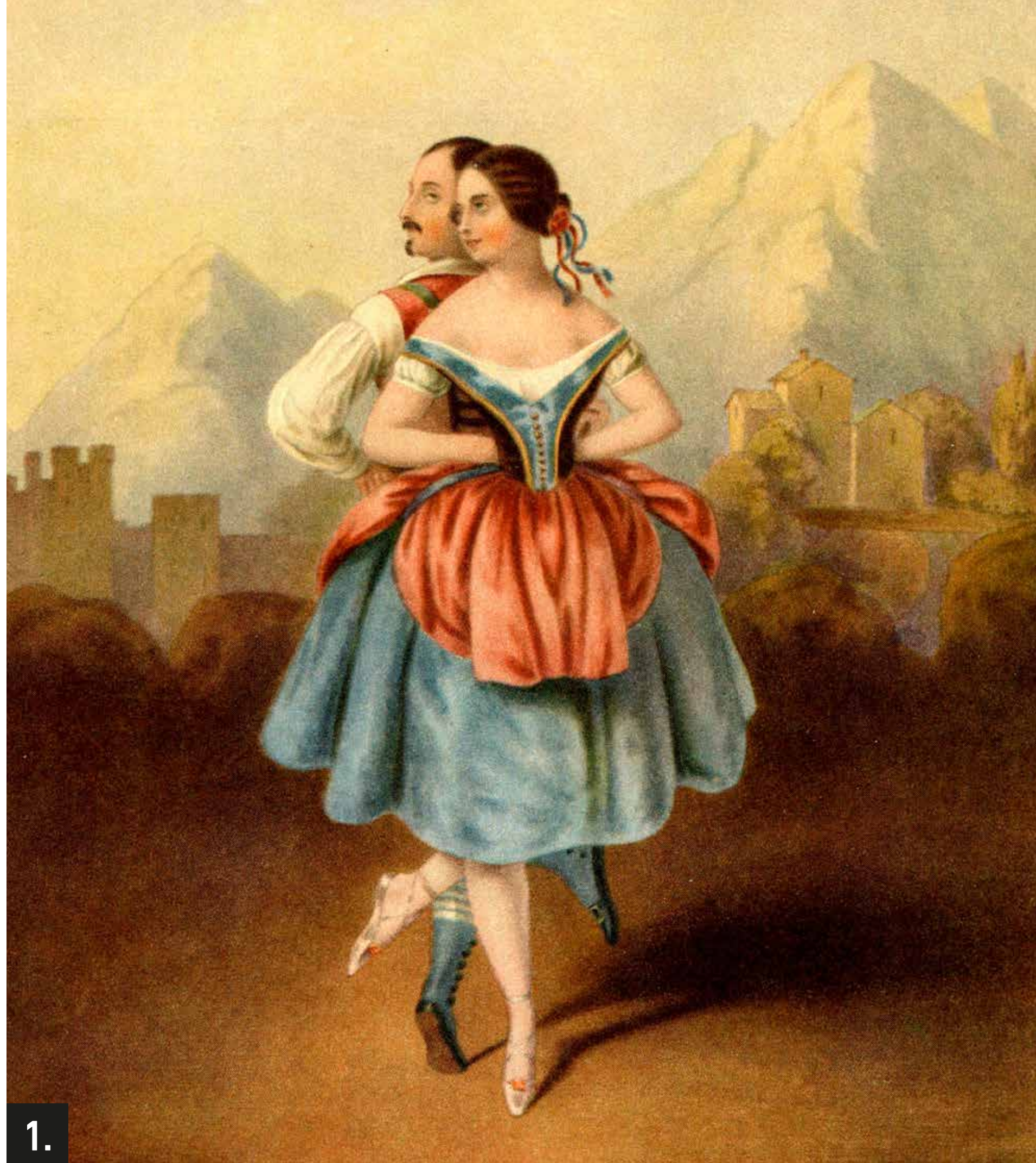
English version



Česká verze



1. The photographs were provided free of charge by the British Council (OFFICIAL COUNCIL PHOTOGRAPH)
2. National Theatre Archives, photo: J. Svoboda, H. Smejkalová, O. Perníca



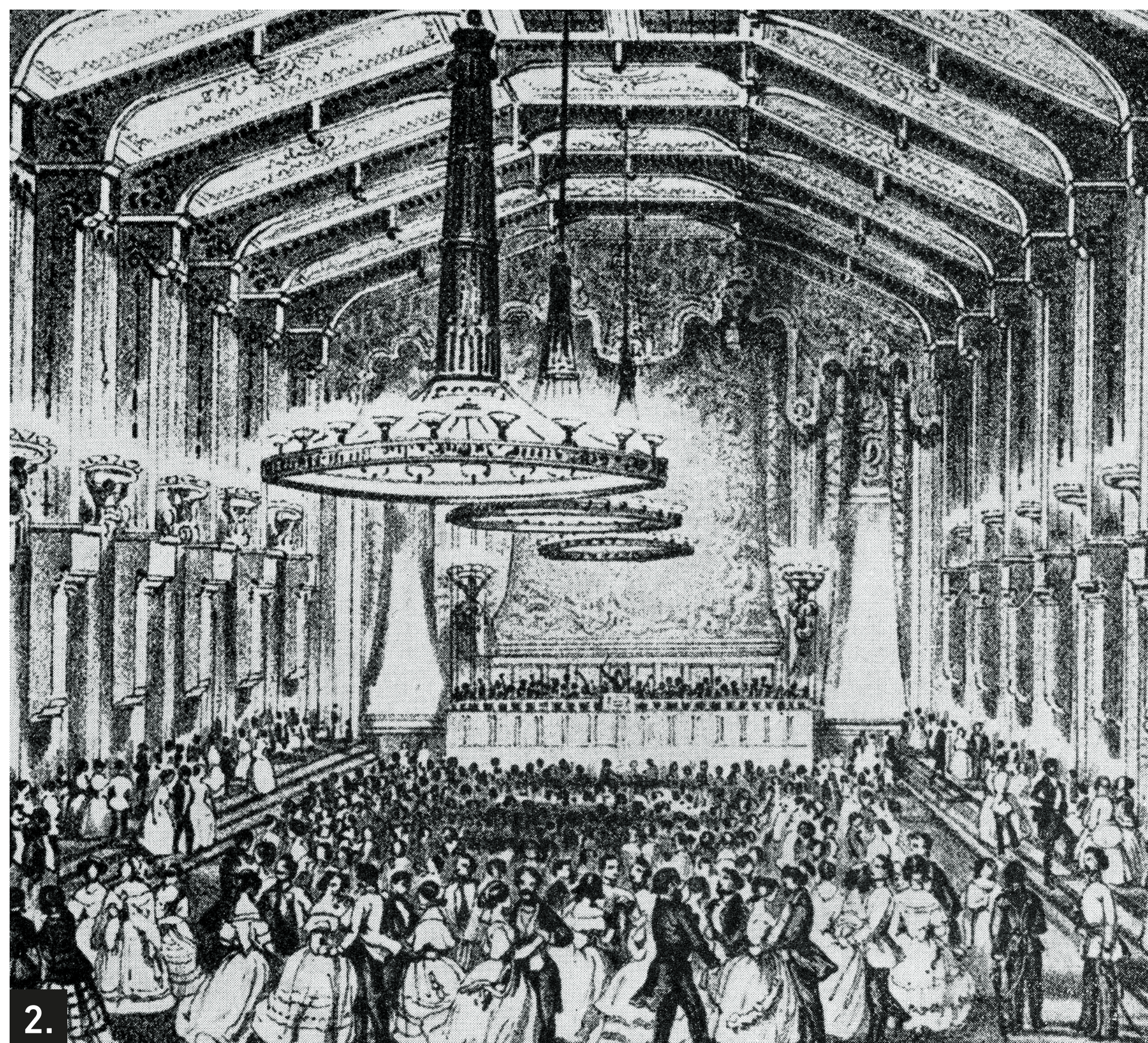
1.

Redowa, Fanny Cerrito and Arthur Saint-Léon in the ballet *La Vivandière* (1844).

Dauberval's original *La Fille mal gardée* featured folk dances, popular French songs and opera arias. As the ballet was performed all over the world, the story remained the same, yet the scenery and musical accompaniment changed, depending on the place in which it was staged. In 1836, the Estates Theatre in Prague presented a production based on Dauberval's piece by the director of its ballet company, Johann Raab, *Lise and Colin*, accompanied by music on themes of Czech folk songs. In 1836, Raab brought on to the stage Czech polka in the ballet *Zlatá sekýra* (The Golden Axe), and would make the dance famous in Paris, where in 1840 he performed it in the choreography *La Polka* with Mlle Valentine at Le Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique. Subsequently, the polka conquered the world as a social and stage dance.

LA FILLE MAL GARDÉE

THE POLKA IN THE BALLET



2.

A Czech ball on Žofín island in Prague, 1851.



3.

Johann Raab and Julie Springer.



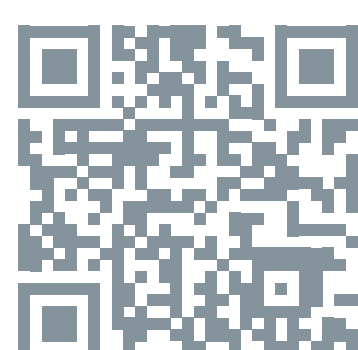
4.

The Czech polka on a stage in London – Carlotta Grisi and Jules Perrot, 1844.

The polka and its variations would become extremely popular in Europe. Amidst the revolutionary atmosphere of 1848 and 1849, it was embraced by progressive circles in a number of countries, while reactionary governments made attempts to ban the dance, as they considered it to be a manifestation of the democratic spirit.

In 1860, the Czech choreographer Václav Reisinger presented at the New Town Theatre in Prague his version of *La Fille mal gardée*, conceived in the Czech style and featuring popular Czech folk songs.

English version



Česká verze



1., 2., 3., 4. J. Hošková's archive