

Aesthetic and Performative Functions of the Mask in French Court Ballet (1573-1681)

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In the European aristocratic festival culture of the Renaissance and Baroque, disguises and masks had important aesthetic and performative functions as well as symbolic meanings.¹

When considering the lavish drawings of costumes of French court ballets, masks are often part of their aesthetic elements.² They are not counted amidst other accessories of the costume because of their particular effect on the mask wearer and the spectator. However, exclusive attention is rarely given to these objects and only few articles focus on this topic (Daye, 2006, 19-22; Garandeau, 2008³; Vialleton, 2010, 461-475; La Gorce, 2014, 94-103; Choné/La Gorce, 2015, 128-133). Notwithstanding that masks were more common at that time and especially during carnival, when many court ballet performances were traditionally performed, there are only a few explicit references to masks in festival books or ballet librettos – although several iconographic sources of costume sketches, paintings and engravings show an interesting variety of masks. Contemporary theoretical writings on ballet also include reflections on their practical aspects and the object of the mask itself, but do not theorise about them (Saint-Hubert, 1641; Pure, 1668; Rault, 1681; Ménestrier, 1682).⁴ The aim of this article is to summarise research results on the use of masks in French court ballet and to put them in a more general context of masking in the seventeenth century. Furthermore a typology of ballet masks during this period is proposed after an analysis of the iconographic sources.⁵ The categorising principles of the masks are based on their form and will then be linked to a perspective on performance practice. Their

symbolic aspect, or perhaps even their ritual dimension, are not treated in the context of this article.

Masks – Ambiguous objects of an ancient cultural technique

Before reflecting on the function of the mask and its specificities, some preliminary considerations on the face seem to be expedient. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote in an article about masks: ‘Man believes that he is at variance with the rest of creation: he has, in any case done enough damage for thousands of years to justify this conviction. But, in the same way the state of society is at variance with the state of nature. The natural functions belong to the body: breathing, circulation, assimilation, generation and over these we have little control. The face, on the other hand, is the seat of the ‘socialised’ functions, or should I put it, ‘socialising’; first language, articulated by the mouth; then that other system of signs which constitutes the expression of feelings, of natural origin, no doubt, but which each culture has remodelled in a special range and style. It is by reason of the face and by the face that man communicates with man. It is by disguising or transforming his face that he interrupts that communication, or diverts it to other ends’ (Lévi-Strauss, 1961, 11-12).

The idea of the face as an ‘interface’ of communication and the consciousness of the human capacity to control its culturally and socially determined expressions, respectively to mask emotions, were of significant influence for the creation of the ideal conduct of the courtier in the Renaissance and Baroque – though not without moral

discussions over the problematic dissimulation for a Christian gentleman (Magendie, 1970; Bury, 1992, 125-138; Montandon, 1992, 7-18).⁶ The shaping of the social role with its codes and conventions, following a process of social conditioning and the elaboration of a *habitus corporis* was one of the major strategies of distinction within European nobility (Elias, 1969; Roucher, 2007, 79-113; Mallinckrodt, 2008; Lecomte, 2014, 143-197).⁷ The consciousness of daily (re)presentation of the self, of the social role with its many facets as described for modern society by Erving Goffman (Goffman, 1956),⁸ was at the origin of the constant play with the dichotomies of the mask as an emblem for the society during the French *Ancien Régime* (Chaouche, 2010, 7-21).⁹

The mask with its covering, uncovering as well as discovering function is a symbol of its own dichotomy of reality and appearance, of truth and lie, of revelation and deception. Its spectrum always implies issues of identity, transformation and alienation. A mask is a means of communicating multiple messages, conscious and unconscious ones. The inherent ambivalence of the mask serves as an aesthetic and symbolic allegory for deceit and duplicity in the fine and performative arts (Napier, 1984; Inhaber, 1997; Aslan/Bablet, 1999; Ferris, 1999, 230-246; Edson, 2005; Weihe, 2004; Ferino-Pagden, 2009; Belting, 2013; Viatte, 2014; Kruse, 2014). Representations of masks can be traced back to the Upper Palaeolithic Period (Nunley/McCarthy, 1999, 21-39; Ferino-Pagden, 2009, 26, ill. 3) and are to be found in almost all cultures and societies, proving the existence and importance of this cultural technique for human beings. The ethnologist Emilie Botteldoorn analysed the multiple purposes of masks in a publication of a European project about the living heritage of masks: 'The mask takes on various conflicting functions. Whatever the reasons, these functions match the needs of a whole community including the person wearing it. The reasons are many and not always obvious, most often they are the result of specific unconscious needs or fears' (Botteldoorn, 2012, 34). Among the functions of masks she cites the following: 'the social

function, the temporal and secular role, the religious as well as the historical and cultural aspect, a support of individual life, the link to the seasonal changes and the cycle of nature' (Botteldoorn, 2012, 33-39). Michel Revelard and Guergana Kostadinova from the *International Museum of Carnival and Masks* in Binche, Belgium, distinguish European masques in zoomorphic as well as anthropomorphic types and subdivide masks for seasonal change rituals in a serious, virile, authoritarian group and another one inclined to mockery, obscenity and even aggressiveness (Revelard/Kostadinova, 2000, 118-129).

In Europe, masks are traditionally used for commemorative purposes (mortuary and funerary masks), for protection and camouflage (surgical masks, fencing masks, gas masks, etc.), for disguise during carnival and other festivals of seasonal changes (e.g. masks in the alpine regions and masks of the 'Savage' spread all over Europe).¹⁰ Society masks are a particularity - the black *loup/vizard/moretta* worn by ladies from the sixteenth to eighteenth century, as well as the *bautta* (also *baùta*) worn by both sexes in eighteenth century Venice. These masks originally had protective purposes, however the Venetian disguise was also part of a social convention permitting the wearer to hide his or her social identity and status during social interactions.¹¹ Finally, many different forms of masks were created for theatrical or choreographic performances. Among them are the half-masks of the *commedia all'improvviso*,¹² which influences western art until today (Fisher, 1992).

In the performing arts, the expression 'mask' does not only designate the object mask or the altered face, but the role with its character, movement and language patterns, costume and accessories, permitting to (re-)identify the represented figure. The word mask/masque originally derives from the Arabic, *mashara^h*, which means mockery, farce, buffoon as well as scurrility, and was further transmitted from the Spanish language, *mascara*, to the other European languages - the French *masque*, the Italian *maschera*, the German *Maske* (Hoad, 1993, 283; Duden, 'Maske').¹³ In Ancient

Greek, the same word meant both face and mask, whereas in Latin, mask and face were linguistically differentiated (Belting, 2013, 65). The anthropologist Hans Belting points out that the change during the Renaissance from the ancient Greek and Latin expressions to a new word with an Arabic origin is not without significance. The ancient expressions could not be used any more for the theatre because they had already been adopted for theological discourses (Weihe, 2004, 25-30; Belting, 2013, 69).

The Use of Masks in Early Modern Europe

The most common use of masks, not only in France but in many countries, was their employment for carnival festivities by the popular as well as the aristocratic classes. These masks could have many different forms and appearances – nevertheless, they all served the purpose of offering anonymity during a socially and temporarily defined period, where everyone had the freedom to choose to be someone else.¹⁴ For the aristocracy other festivities also offered a pretext for masked processions, masked tournaments – for example golden masks were worn for the running at the ring by a band of knights during the festivities at Bayonne, 1656 (McGowan, 2008, 161-162), or masked balls. A special code of behaviour was observed towards a masked person, which is also confirmed by treatises of civility (Courtin, 1671, 143-144).¹⁵ Traditionally at carnival, but also at other festivities a group of masked and disguised persons could enter houses and assemblies in a spectacular manner, which bore an apparently improvised, ephemeral, gratuitous character (Hourcade, 2002, 96-97).¹⁶ But for the official and religious authorities ‘wearing masks and dancing in public places had been deemed synonymous with civil disorder’ (McGowan, 2008, 179).

At the end of the Middle Ages, a cover for the nose and also the lower parts of the face, attached to the headdress, called a *touret de nez*, was fashionable among aristocratic ladies (Oddo, n. d.). Since the second half of the sixteenth century masks were also part of the

wardrobe and the habits of French aristocratic ladies.¹⁷ These masks were supposed to protect their face from curious looks, rough wind and cold during winter time, as well as to preserve the skin from blemishes and sun-tan (Vigarello, 2004, 49-50). Either covering the whole face or half of it, they were generally made of black velvet.¹⁸ In France the half-masks were sometimes called *loup*¹⁹ and masks without further precision *masque* (Oddo, n. d.). In England they were referred to as ‘vizard’ (Daye, 2006, 19-22).

These kinds of masks were part of a social convention. They were a standardised, socially authorised means of anonymisation for the upper classes that provided a certain incognito, especially when ladies were traveling, as shown in the drawing of a horseman traveling with a lady sitting behind him, wearing a protective black masque covering her entire face.²⁰

Two engravings of ladies with two black half-masks from the first half of the seventeenth century, one of a French lady by Jacques Callot around 1620-1623, and one of an English lady by Wenceslas Hollar from c. 1645, obviously dressed for the winter season, show the fashionable attire of the female costume with masks. The mask of the English lady is attached on the sides and with one string above the head, without crushing the locks on the side of her temples. The attachments for the mask of the French lady are not visible.²¹

The habit of wearing masks was so common in day-to-day life that it was an extraordinary fact if a high-born lady would not wear one, as Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de Brantôme (c. 1537-1614), explains in the description of the effective beauty of Marguerite de Valois: ‘[...] in order to give pleasure to the people of France and win their friendship, it would only be necessary to often show them this Queen Marguerite, to please them and make them enjoy the contemplation of such a divine face, which she hardly ever hid under a mask, unlike all other ladies of our court; because, most of the time, she walked with her face uncovered’ (Brantôme, 1991, 128; Vigarello, 2004, 50).²²

These masks could also dissimulate the emotions of the wearer, as an example of an encounter, cited by Georges Vigarello, between Maria de' Medici and M. de Longueville (Henri II d'Orléans-Longueville) shows 'The Queen was masked and that is the reason, why one could not judge her passion by her face' (Malherbe, letter to Peiresc, Paris, 1st June 1614, 1971, 645; Vigarello, 2004, 50).²³ In her memoirs, Mme de la Guette (1613-1676) mentions that she was wearing a mask while riding with some servants to look after her estates in the troubled period of the *Fronde*. Being recognised by her reputation as a brave woman, she unmasked herself and asked the gentlemen who addressed her to accompany her home, since they considered it to be dangerous for a woman outside (La Guette, 1982 [1681], 113).²⁴

In an article about the origin and the use of masks, published by the poet and translator Rault de Rouen in the *Extraordinaire du Mercure Galant*, 1681, this kind of mask worn by women is not considered as a disguise, nor does it give offence, because of its form, colour and material and it has never been prohibited by the official authorities (Rault, 1681, 264).²⁵ A year later, an unknown author of a poem, which was also published in the *Extraordinaire du Mercure Galant*, 1682, questions, by referring to this same article and by quoting religious arguments, whether all kind of persons should be permitted to wear masks and particularly attacks ladies who use them (Anonymous, 1682, 288-289).²⁶

In Venice the well-known combination of a cape, also known as *tabarro* or tricorn, and the white mask, the *bautta*, was the regular mask attire, worn not only during carnival, but also during political gatherings. It became a standardised social costume from the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century. It was first introduced by the nobility, but became a popular fashion for everyone, as masks 'were an accepted article of clothing, [...] simple, cheap and easily had' (Johnson, 2011, 49-53; Urban Padoan, 2009, 242-245, 255).²⁷

Besides these rather agreeable functions of masks, there also existed the so-called 'masks of shame', which were used as a defamatory punishment or also during witch trials (Lommel, 1972, 200 and ill. 143).²⁸ These masks were made of iron and covered the whole head. Mainly women were punished by wearing these masks in public, so that they suffered not only from the occlusion of the mouth and nose, but were also humiliated. In this case the purpose of the mask was to reveal the true inner identity, the 'real face' of the delinquent (Cathelineau, 2014, 200-202 and ill. 97). This specific type of mask cannot be mentioned without the evocation of the mystery of the '*Masque de fer*' under the reign of Louis XIV (Bély, 2015, 882-884).

The Use of Masks in French Court Ballet

First and foremost, it is expedient to point out, that iconographic sources, although they may convey a general idea of the aesthetics of a performance, are not always trustworthy (Hourcade, 2002, 18-21). There may be pitfalls, such as the false deductions Barbara Segal highlights (Segal, 2016, p. 35). The following examples were selected not so much for their representativeness, but because the masks are clearly visible and thus they can serve as examples for masks in the French Court ballet in the seventeenth century. The aesthetic distinction between serious and grotesque *entrées* also applies to masks, as they represent the general idea, but it seems that it is also possible to classify them according to their design.

Despite the representations of masks in costume sketches and engravings, masks are hardly mentioned in printed texts for ballets in the first half of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, it seems that they constituted part of the costumes and the aesthetics of court ballet, masquerades, chivalric contests and horse ballets (McGowan, 1963, 1986, 2008, 2012; Christout, 1987, 2005; Hourcade, 2002, 87-108; La Gorce, 2014, 94-103; Choné/La Gorce, 2015). The dance historian Marie-Françoise Christout emphasised that 'Of a tremendous variety, masks are

fortunately adapted to the role, [...]’ (Christout, 2005, 27)²⁹ –and contributed to the stylisation of the role (Christout, 2005, 171). Indeed masks present many different designs. In the recent overview of French and European aristocratic dance culture from 1515-1715 by the dance historian Nathalie Lecomte, a drawing is reproduced which shows a dancer preparing for his entrance with the help of two servants. Tables are placed on both sides in the background; on the left one – next to the dancer – one can see five masks lying on the table as well as another dancer looking in a mirror placed besides on the table. The dancer, attended by two servants, has potentially been identified by Marie-Françoise Christout as Louis Hesselin (Lecomte, 2014, 292-293; Christout, 1987, 57, ill. 38). Louis de Cauchon, dit de Hesselin, (1602-1662), an important art sponsor and organiser of ballets and festivities, was appointed superintendent of the royal entertainments for Louis XIV in 1655, becoming thus responsible for the successful realisation of court festivities. He was also a regular dancer in many court ballets and possessed his own collection of masks, which were also recorded in his legacy (Lecomte, 2014, 292-293).³⁰ Unfortunately, this inventory does not detail the different types of masks, but perhaps there were the following categories among them?

The proposed typology divides the masks in three groups: the black mask; the ‘noble’ mask; and the expressive mask. The latter is subdivided in demonic, grotesque and character masks. Bearded masks can belong to either category, but have been treated separately.

The Black Mask

Apart from the former mentioned etymologies of the word ‘masque’ another origin might derive from the pre-romanic expression *maska*, meaning black and therefore linked to the devil, as Nancy Oddo argues (Oddo, n. d.).

In the album of costume drawings the six dancers of the *Entrée des Esperlucattes* in the *Ballet des fées des forêts de Saint-Germain*

are wearing black half-masks. Two are dressed as ladies and the costumes of the four others have a decent female upper part, identical to the dress of the two ladies, but their skirts are missing and they are dancing in white breeches, white stockings with red garters. Around their hips is a black great farthingale with the red upper part of the skirt.³¹

In the same album the dancers of the ‘grand ballet’ of the *Ballet des fées des forêts de Saint-Germain* wear whole black masks and a headdress of white ostrich feathers. All sixteen dancers wear identical red and gold costumes *à la romaine* with white stockings and antique looking tight boots going to the middle of the calves (Lecomte, 2012, 309, ill. 30).³² This is also the case for the masks in the grand ballet of the *Ballet du château de Bicêtre*, where the dancers also wear identical gold and silver costumes *à la romaine*.³³

The female dancer holding a black masque in her hand, apparently without any strings to attach it, must have been holding it with her teeth, if she was really dancing with it and the mask is not just an attribute to hint at a performance context (Kirstein, 1971, 89, ill. 162).³⁴

The type of the black mask existed in colourful variations in yellow, green, brown and blue for court masquerades and ballets at the court of Lorraine at the beginning of the seventeenth century (Choné/La Gorce, 2015). These masks had large round eye openings and several of the drawings show that they were attached at the height of the temples and the middle of the front (Choné/La Gorce, 2015, 128-133). One of these masks distinctly shows the outline of the nose of the lady wearing it, inducing the thought that the cloth was sufficiently fine to allow the natural lines of the face to come through (Choné/La Gorce, 2015, 98, 134).³⁵

The 'Noble' Mask – Similarities with Neutral Masks

This type of mask has no expression of any kind of emotion but portrays youth, smoothness, regularity and therefore beauty in the canon of the western world (Vigarello, 2004, 27-36; McCormick, 1998, 301).³⁶ It represents the ideal of a beautiful noble face, reflecting a noble, virtuous soul and thus suits all divine and heroic roles perfectly. It was originally created for all 'noble' roles, male and female ones. The many cross-dressing roles in court ballet made the 'noble' mask particularly necessary for men when dancing female roles, if they wished for a successful effect of travesty. In modern terms of the twentieth century this mask would be designated as a kind of 'neutral mask' because of its shape.³⁷

Although there are many drawings depicting travesty roles only few of them distinctly show a mask. The face of a female role is generally represented like an ideal female face, e.g. the faces in the costume drawing for the *Entrée des Sultanas* in the album by Daniel Rabel for the *Ballet de la douairière de Billebahaut*, 1626 (Christout, 1987, 131, ill. 117).³⁸ These roles were, as was common in court ballet, represented by male dancers, which is evident since their names are mentioned. However the shorter skirts would also indicate travesty roles. Another drawing with a different version of the costume for this *entrée* in the same ballet represents a single 'lady of the Seraglio', yet the shading of the edge of the face gives it a detached appearance, which might suggest a mask (McGowan, 1986, ill. 69).³⁹

Sometimes the line drawn between the mask and the actual face is distinctly recognisable, as is the case with the costume drawing for a muse in the *Ballet royal de la nuit*, 1653. The muse is represented in profile and one can see the line from the chin, outlining the jaw and giving the impression of a double chin, which does not look quite natural.⁴⁰ The borders of the mask in a costume drawing attributed to the school of Henri Gissey for a travesty role for a male dancer are clearly distinguishable (Reade, 1967, ill. 24).

Another example would be an engraving by Jean Lepautre, c. 1670, that shows a dancer, dressed in a *habit à la romaine*, holding castanets in his hands and wearing a beautiful, 'noble' mask. The traits of the mask are following the aesthetics of the Greek classical style with a very slightly upward turned corner of the mouth for a serene expression. Besides this detail it has a bland appearance (Kirstein, 1971, 89, ill. 161).⁴¹

A similar example is an engraving of a ballet dancer after Jean Berain, also in a costume *à la romaine*. His head is slightly tilted backwards and ever so slightly inclined to the left shoulder, while his eyes are visibly directed upwards in a diagonal. The edges of the mask and the rather large holes for the eyes are clearly visible. The mouth of the mask has a small smile and its lips are open, the nose is straight and it seems as if the brows were painted with a darker colour (Beaumont, 1946, 23).⁴²

The 'noble' mask is not only depicted in sources concerning ballets but is generally portrayed in Renaissance and Baroque paintings and reliefs. An early illustration would be, for example, the mask painted on a portrait cover by Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio from the beginning of the sixteenth century. This kind of mask has the peculiarity of not seeming to be attributed to one sex. The shape is gently oval, with a smooth forehead, finely designed eyebrows, a straight nose with very small nostrils, and slightly opened, rosy lips. The mouth is small and the chin is delicately rounded. It could be a beautiful symmetrical face of either a young man or a young woman, if it were not for the openings of the eyes that are the decisive detail, for which it is recognizable as a mask. It has attached strings, which makes the depiction of the mask more real and less ornamental. Above the mask there is a painted panel with the inscription 'SVA CVIQVE PERSONA' alluding to the double nature of the portrait, meaning that everyone has his or her mask (Ferino-Pagden, 2009, [1] [20] 82).⁴³ Another, very similar example is the mask held by *The Allegory of Simulation* by Lorenzo Lippi from c. 1640.⁴⁴

This kind of 'noble' mask was widely used in court ballet during the seventeenth century and in professional ballet in the eighteenth century, before becoming obsolete on the ballet stage. The abandonment of masks in favor of the expression of the face should not be linked exclusively to Jean-Georges Noverre and the new aesthetic demands of the ballet reform (Noverre, 1930 [1760], letter IX, 78-98).⁴⁵ Noverre argues that the frozen 'graceful' features of the 'noble' mask for serious roles are contradictory to the changing expressiveness of the interpreter's eyes (Noverre, 1930, 93).⁴⁶ Rebecca Harris-Warrick points out: 'Whether the practice was ubiquitous as he claims is not known.' (Harris-Warrick, 2016, 121) It seems rather that Noverre's criticism of masks is aimed at emphasising strategically the novelty of his aesthetic concepts and ideas.

The Expressive Mask

The majority of masks of the French court ballet fall into the category of expressive masks, meaning that the form, shape and colouring allow the identification of a certain type of role and that they reproduce not only an expression, but are designed to produce a certain impression on the audience based on the codes of representation in the fine Arts. The distinction of these types is mostly based on culturally and socially determined stereotypes. Among the many different designs four groups can be identified: the zoomorphic mask; the demonic and grotesque masks; and finally the character mask.

It might be controversial to introduce the concept of demonic masks to masks in French court ballet. Perhaps demonic as well as zoomorphic masks should be categorised as grotesque masks? However, the typology proposed in this article is inspired by their form, as it is deductible from the iconographic sources.

The Zoomorphic Mask

Masks imitating animals are among the oldest forms of masks in human history. These masks often cover not only the face but are a

kind of headdress, functionally similar to a helmet. In court ballet, these masks are not very frequent, as human forms - even deformed and grotesque ones - were preferred. Nevertheless, in several ballets masks imitating animals were employed (McGowan, 2012, 62-67). Such is the case in the *Ballet de la délivrance de Renaud*, 1617, where the six monsters vanquished by the defenders of Renaud appear. They were represented by male human figures, but with the heads of dogs and owls. The dancers interpreting the monkeys wore female attire (Durand, 1617, plate 7 and plate 8; Christout, 1987, 167, ill. 153; Garden, 2010).⁴⁷ The theatre and court ballet historian Anne Surgers considers the costumes in this ballet de cour as 'emblematic in movement,' a concept applicable to other court ballets (Surgers, 2010, 113).⁴⁸ She explains that the choice of these animals was influenced by extant allegorical figures representing both vices and virtues attributed to them, following thus the humanist idea of mute eloquence of court ballet (Surgers, 2010, 129). The monstrous dimension is not so much embodied in the awful appearance of the masks and costumes, but by their symbolic dimension allowing several degrees of interpretation (Surgers, 2010, 113-130).

The costume drawing, attributed to the school of Henri Gissey, for a bird consists of a large skirt with wings and bird feet attached, as well as of a headpiece in form of a duck [?]. Here, the disguise hides the human figure underneath it completely (Reade, 1967, ill. 27).

The Demonic Mask

This kind of mask is well-known in many popular cultures. It has an obscure, very ancient origin and is often linked to pagan rites, e.g. for the 'wild man' or the devil (Fréger, 2012, 243-259). The simplest prototype of a mask can be made of hair, which covers the face completely, constituting an alienating element and suggesting a 'savage' man in the European culture (Lévi-Strauss, 1961, 12). The demonic dimension in court ballet is mainly influenced

by antique mythological creatures and the allegoric representation of vices, as well as by a fantastic imaginary of diabolical characters (Closson, 2000).

The costume sketch for the devils in *Le Ballet du château de Bicêtre*, 1632 shows three dancers wearing black masks with a neutral expression and no hideous traits (Beaumont, 1946, 31).⁴⁹ These masks correspond to a black version of the 'noble' mask and together with the black costumes and their yellow flame-like trimmings suggest their devilish nature.

Following the convention for the representation of furies in the fine Arts, the costume drawing by Daniel Rabel for one of the furies in the *Ballet de Tancrede*, 1619 (McGowan, 1986, ill. 10)⁵⁰ as well as the drawing of the workshop of Henri Gissey for a fury in the *Ballet des noces de Pélée et Thétis*, 1654 interpreted by Louis XIV, show hideous distorted faces (Christout, 1987, 177, ill. 163).

The costume drawing for a demon in the *Ballet royal de la nuit*, 1653, shows a mask that is characterized by a pointed chin and a straight nose, but it is the peculiar form of the eyes and eyebrows which gives it a diabolic expression. In this case, the mask has to be considered together with the red and black costume and the headpiece made of horns, snakes and flames (Christout, 1987, 180, ill. 166).⁵¹

In a costume and stage set sketch by Henri Gissey for the *Ballet des fêtes de Bacchus*, five fairies, who just gave birth to 'scatterbrained spirits' are shown up in the clouds (Christout, 1987, 161, ill. 147). The half-masks of the fairies are black with a very high forehead and long pointed noses, giving them a rather demonic appearance.

Iconographic sources in court ballet depict demonic masks, whose demonic appearance is rather moderated and does not display a taste for diabolical fantasy. Interestingly, the motive of the mask is used as a detail for costumes of roles like magicians, and then these mascarons may be more terrible than the masks which hide the face of the interpreter, e. g. the costume for the phantom

in the *Ballet des fêtes de Bacchus*, 1651 (Christout, 1987, 185, ill. 173) or for the magician in the *Ballet des noces de Pélée et Thétis*, 1654 (Christout, 1987, 170, ill. 156-157).⁵² Marie-Françoise Christout emphasizes that the contribution of cardboard workers for the court ballets in the seventeenth century was very important. It was also their task to manufacture small masks, which could ornate the costumes at the knees, elbows, breast or were used for the headdress (Christout, 2005, 172).

The Grotesque Mask

The grotesque mask has to be considered as the counterpart and aesthetic contrast to the 'serious' - meaning the beautiful mask and the expressive mask. A mask can have more than one effect on the spectator, but the line between laughter, amusement and a certain uneasiness or even horror is very subtle. Masks can represent idealised beauty as well as distorted reality, exaggerated traits and facial parts, as it is, for instance, often the case regarding the nose. It depends to what degree this deformation is considered amusing or whether it produces a kind of fascination by ugliness. The abbot, Michel de Pure, takes a position against masks and disguises which he considers to be too appalling, and says: 'However, extravagant one makes an *entrée*, I wish that no deformed mask shall be presented. I consent easily to the Burlesque, but I cannot stand those dreadful objects, those masks which are horrendous: & and I cannot find any pleasure in what upsets me' (Pure, 1668, 295).⁵³

Furetière's dictionary entry of the time defines 'grotesque' as 'A capricious figure of a painter, engraver, or sculptor which has something ridiculous, extravagant, and monstrous, such as grottoes are ornamented with' (Furetière, 1690, n. p.).⁵⁴ Furthermore it explains: 'Grotesque is said, so to speak, of what is bizarre, extravagant, ridiculous in the persons, clothes, discourses, etc. [...] The costumes of masks, of ballets are the most estimated the more grotesque they are. [...]' (Furetière, 1690, n. p.).⁵⁵

In several costumes drawings the whole body is covered – masked - by the structure of the costume, sometimes representing only body-fragments or bodies with distorted proportions, illustrating the monstrous aspect of the grotesque aesthetics (McGowan, 1986, plate IX and ill. 110, plate X and ill. 112, ill. 72, ill. 73, ill. 182, ill. 88; Christout, 1987, 123, ill. 107).⁵⁶ In his publication, *Dance as Text*, the dance historian Mark Franko deals with the deeper signification of the grotesque aspects in court ballet, considering that ‘the dancing figure becomes autonomous from its ‘natural’ body in a project whose artistic outcome is not bound up with assumptions about psychology and human actions resumed in narrative’ (Franko, 1993, 110).

Yet a grotesque effect is not only obtained by the form of the mask, but also by playing with contrasts, e. g. in the *entrée* of drunken peasants in the *Ballet du château de Bicêtre*, 1632, where four dancers have youthful faces and only the fifth central figure is wearing a half-mask with a very long nose. It even seems as if he sticks out his tongue, a gesture which would fit a grotesque mask, who is allowed to take liberties and make indecent gesture (Christout, 1987, 101, ill. 85; Moulineau, 2012, 93, ill. 3).⁵⁷ The mask has a very similar shape to the *commedia all'improvviso* masks, but the contrasting effect of combining both kind of masks linked to the imitation of drunkenness enhances the grotesque effect. The borderline between a grotesque mask and a character mask is not clearly defined. Its effect and aesthetic function depends on the performance context.

A comparable situation is portrayed in the ninth *entrée* for the ‘Persons in search of Rhythm which Wine has made them lose’, in the *Ballet des fêtes de Bacchus*, 1651. Here, not only the face is hidden under a mask with a very long nose and a protruding chin, but the eyes are also hidden behind big spectacles. The bust is emphasized by the costume, while a lantern is used as an accessory and is also part of the headdress (Beaumont, 1946, 33).⁵⁸

The costume sketch for an apothecary, attributed to the school of Henri Gissey, shows a similar design and the mask is well

distinguishable. It has a long pointed nose, a thin long dark moustache and a beard on the chin, which consists only of two strands of straight hair, giving it a ridiculous appearance. Furthermore, spectacles are a complementing accessory (Reade, 1967, ill. 28).⁵⁹

Another example for a grotesque mask with an allegorical dimension would be the costume of a goldsmith, engraved by Jean Lepautre after a drawing by Jean Berain. He is dressed with the attributes of his profession: silver chains; spoons and other cutlery; silver plates and small containers. His headdress is a pair of bellows and he holds a hammer as well as a pincer as accessories in his hands. The mask covers the whole face and has a mouth with open lips and a rather large nose with very broad nostrils. The cheeks have two deep lines, thus creating the effect as if the mask represents the face of an older man, who is smiling. The cheekbones are very prominent and exaggerated. The openings for the eyes are very large. Between the eyes there is only a small root of the nose. One cannot see much of his forehead, which is overshadowed by his headdress. His look goes to his left, the chin is a little lifted, the eyes are also directed slightly upwards, while his arms move to his right. The weight is on his almost straight right leg, the left leg is in a small plié and if any weight is on it, it is only on the toes, because the heel is lifted from the ground (Beaumont, 1946, 13).⁶⁰

The influence of the *commedia all'improvviso* masks can be found in the grotesque characters, as the iconographic sources prove. While they were conceived to excite laughter and might be ridiculous, these masks are not to be qualified as grotesque, even if they exaggerate certain traits. Spectators might be amused or thrilled by grotesque masks, but there would never be an emphatic link between them, as would be possible for the types of the *commedia all'improvviso*, despite their psychological limitations.

The Character Mask

More than for any other mask, the expression 'character mask' implies not only the object mask, but the whole conception of the role with all its particularities, including body posture, movement and language patterns, costume and accessories. These character masks are not psychological roles but types. Until today, the most famous character masks in Early Modern Europe are constituted by the repertoire of *commedia all'improvviso* roles, which is a collection of well-known stock characters, who sometimes have ancestors going back to the antique theatre: the old cruel father; the boastful soldier; the resourceful courtesan; the lazy servant, etc. (Rudlin, 1994; Rudlin/Crick, 2001). Iconographic sources are abundant, although little is known about the actual art of acting. Several original masks have been preserved in museum collections. The photographs of eighteenth-century leather masks with their wooden mould of the Musée de l'Opéra in Paris, for the roles of a faun, an old man, a peasant and two Harlequins (Beaumont, 1946, 23; Ferino-Pagden, 2009, 221-222, ill. III.64 a-e)⁶¹ or for Harlequin and two versions of Pulcinella of the Museo teatrale del Burcardo in Rome (Ferino-Pagden, 2009, 220, ill. III.61-63) show how diversified these masks were.

Most of the *commedia all'improvviso* masks were half-masks, but it seems that also masks covering the whole face existed, as can be seen in the engraving representing a Pulcinella and a Pantalone interacting with each other. The mask of Pulcinella is a half-mask, characteristically with the big nose similar to the beak of a bird, the almond shaped eyes and the high cheekbones. On his forehead a pensive line can be seen. The mask for Pantalone seems to be a mask for the whole face with a low forehead, an aquiline nose, a pointed chin with a beard and wrinkled cheeks. The openings for the eyes are round.⁶²

The portrait of an actor holding a mask in his hands by Domenico Fetti has been identified to represent Francesco Andreini, of the troupe I Gelosi. This mask is the mask of a Zanni, the role of a servant, although it is considered

strange as Francesco Andreini was known as Capitano (Ferino-Pagden, 2009, text by Eckhard Leuschner 344, ill. VI.12).⁶³ The mask is very dark, has round eye openings, uplifted eye-brows and several pensive lines which repeat the shape of the eyebrows and give the mask an astonished expression. The nose is irregular with a bump and not very big. It seems as if there was a wart on the cheek.

In French court ballet the types of the *commedia all'improvviso* were also integrated in the repertory of roles, sometimes even interpreted by the actual actors, as in the *Ballet des Plaisirs*, 1655, where Domenico Locatello, alias Trivellin, Tiberio Fiorilli, alias Scaramouche and Giovan Batista Turri, alias Pantalone appeared in their respective roles (Christout, 2005, 82; Benserade, 1997, 261-261).

A great number of iconographic sources show similar types of masks, for example the drawing for the *Entrée du grand Can* for the *Ballet de la douairière de Billebahaut*, 1626 the mask of the leader of the skirted camel can be perfectly distinguished. Looking at the physiognomic aspect of the other dancers it seems that all dancers wore masks, but then they are not so obviously identifiable as the mask of the leader of the camel (Christout, 1987, 145, ill. 133).⁶⁴

A French engraving, dated c. 1680, shows the male dancer wearing a mask with emphasised traits. It has a slightly longer straight nose, a wrinkle across the forehead and deep nasolabial lines, as well as a slightly stronger chin. Although it is not possible to identify the exact nature of the role, it is not of a noble register (Kirstein, 1971, 85, ill. 152).

Two costume drawings from the same workshop for the role of Bacchus for the *Ballet royal de la nuit*, 1653 and *Ballet des noces de Pélée et Thétis*, 1654 illustrate how codified representation and the effect of recognition were achieved with several characteristic elements - the face depicted is round, the cheeks are full and quite red, imitating the effect of wine. It can be a noble or a more expressive, jovial mask. The costume is red and wine-leaves and/or grapes

or a cup of wine as accessory allowing the audience to identify this role easily. The repetition of such characteristic elements would fix them in the memory of the spectators.⁶⁵

Bearded masks

Several recurrent roles in French court ballet necessitate yet another category of masks, such as male faces with long beards for Pluto, Tritons and allegories of rivers, as well as for soldiers, tradesmen or old men.

As mentioned above, iconographic sources are not without pitfalls and it is very difficult to deduce the performance practice from the costume drawings. Not all roles might have been masked, fake beards and wigs would have been a possible solution too, particularly for singers.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, assuming that the mask was an integrative part of court ballet costumes for dancers, there would have existed masks with beards. The characterisation of several traits would almost always indicate the use of masks, as perfect role casting in modern terms was irrelevant in court ballet.

For the *Ballet de Tancredi*, 1619, the drawing and the printed description by Scipion de Gramont of the role of Charon match perfectly: 'a large and unkempt grey beard, hollow eyes and a bent frame [...]' (McGowan, 1986, ill. 14; Gramont, 1619, 19).⁶⁷ The drawing for Pluto in the same ballet shows yet another kind of beard, more elegant and fitting for the representation of a god (McGowan, 1986, ill. 15).

Among the costume drawings for the *Ballet royal de la nuit*, 1653, a soldier and a haberdasher are both represented with beards. These two drawings do not clearly show masked characters, but both figures have a somewhat exaggerated facial characterisation, which would suggest the use of a mask, beside two different fashions for the beards. The soldier has a very pointed chin with a small goatee, an impressive moustache and a crooked nose, befitting his martial attitude, since he is drawing his sword for a combat with two rascals in the thirteenth *entrée*

(Benserade, 1997, 113)⁶⁸. The haberdasher is represented in a similar attitude, holding a long stick, though his whole figure is less aggressive and represented in a more defensive posture. The face has a large slightly upturned nose, a pointed chin with a goatee of rather longer hair and a small moustache.⁶⁹ In the sixth *entrée* four bandits and their captain are robbing him (Benserade, 1997, 107).

A corresponding example of masks with beards and characteristic traits is a French engraving for the month February, combined with the sense of taste, which is part of a series of the twelve months from c. 1640/41. The topic is represented by a richly dressed lady sitting in front of a plate with a roasted bird. In one hand she holds a glass filled with wine and in the other one a mask for the whole face with a dark upturned moustache and a pointed beard. The mask has high cheekbones, forehead lines, the mouth is rather opened rather widely, and the openings for the eyes are round. There are strings attached to the mask.⁷⁰ The mask is an emblem for the ballets, since a subscription explains that the coldness of February is combated with wine, ballets and gaming, proving once more the relationship between carnival, ballets and masks.⁷¹

Influenced by court fashion and the symbolic value of authority and virility of a moustache, a 'noble' mask could also be ornamented with it, following thus the model set by King Louis XIV himself, who wore a thin moustache until 1686 (Bély, 2015, 1043-1044). In a costume sketch, attributed to the school of Henri Gisse for a dancer wearing a *habit à la romaine*, the mask has a moustache of elegant dimensions compared to the examples cited above (Reade, 1967, ill. 26). The mask reflects not only the aesthetic ideas of beauty for a face, but fashion as well.

Theoretical Reflections and Practical Recommendations on Masked Performance

The quality of masks seems to have been a preoccupation for the contemporary theorists. In the chapter about masks in his *Idée des*

spectacles anciens et nouveaux, 1668, the abbot Michel de Pure points out that he desires above all appropriate masks, which means that they should closely match the expectations of the spectator and the codes of representation: 'It would be desirable if one could find skilful craftsmen, skilful enough to represent in an appropriate manner the objects one wishes to show on stage: because a good mask not only helps to make the disguise graceful, but also allows the spectator to recognise the represented person. It would be a big mistake to make a mask of Bacchus look as sweet and tender as the one for Cupid or Venus.' (Pure, 1668, 291).⁷²

In his article on the role and importance of masks, Jérôme de la Gorce links these recommendations by de Pure to his chapter on costumes, emphasising their conformity with the represented role: 'Of all rules which one could give for costumes, there is only one indispensable, against which one never revolts without impunity and without the performance and the spectator suffering from it. It is the propriety of costumes. A king has his fashion and his manner, which have to designate him. The simple man, the burgher, the miserable and generally all mortals have a kind of exterior character in their dress, which indicates their dignity and merit. Therefore the poet has to apply himself seriously to order appropriate costumes' (Pure, 1668, 287-288; La Gorce, 2014, 95).⁷³ Another theorist, the Jesuit Claude-François Ménéstrier, is not very explicit as to masks in *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre*, 1682, but his indications for the representation of the different roles, which he designates as 'figures', follow the same direction and mention the mask as part of the role (Ménéstrier, 1682, 138-153, in particular 139).

The different criteria of quality, meaning the outward aspect, the design and the proper execution as well as the accordance of a mask with the poetical intentions and the subject of the ballet are not the only requirements. Hygienic questions naturally preoccupy the theorists:

'The quality of a mask depends on the excellence of the cloth, the glue and the wax

and all other ingredients. Concerning the form, it depends on the neatness of the mould and the perfect resemblance with the idea of the poet and the object of the idea. The question of the material seems to me of no little importance, that I should not give the advice of taking good care of their manufacturing to those who organise ballets, especially for the masks of the King, the princes and other noblemen, because there is nothing as dangerous as a mask already worn by suspicious faces and to dance under an unclean mask or one which would have been used by an unhealthy man' (Pure, 1668, 293-294).⁷⁴ Especially for the mask of a dancer these considerations are not without foundations, and besides being a real health issue, it is at least very disagreeable to dance with a malodorous mask. The face does not only sweat because of the physical effort, but this effect is made worse through the cover of a mask.

While it seems that people of the popular classes bought their masks at hardware stores (Vialleton, 2010, quoting the Journal of Pierre de l'Estoile, 14 April, 1591, 468), the masks for court ballets were bought at the shops of craftsmen specialised in their trade and manufacturing. Venetian masks had already acquired a high reputation in the seventeenth century, but de Pure would prefer French craftsmen: 'The masks of Venice are doubtless the most soft, fine and proper; but it is easy to make a mask with the same excellence at much less expense. The most beautiful mask should not cost more than 30 sols and if it is ornamented with everything, the price should not exceed 40 sols; any higher price is cheating and fraud' (Pure, 1668, 294-295).⁷⁵ Virginie Garandau enumerates, quoting the research accomplished by Yvan Leymarie, several mask-makers or mask-merchants in Paris for the middle and the second half of the seventeenth century: Isaac de Lorge, who imitated Venetian masks; and Leonard de Lorge; Claude Baraillon and Boncaventure Gonnier; and Ducreux (Garandau, 2008, 10). During the reign of Louis XIV Jacques Ducreux, mask manufacturer and merchant, created masks for court performances

organised by the Menus-Plaisirs or the Académie Royale de Musique, e.g. for *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* in 1670. His two sons Jean-Baptiste, but particularly Michel-Joseph Ducreux, continued their father's business by creating and selling masks as well as costumes for the theatre and the carnival. These masks were cast in moulds, either made of cardboard or wax, and painted. In the inventory after the death of Marguerite Pinthenet, the widow of Michel-Joseph Ducreux, an important number and variety of masks of all kind of qualities were to be found: 'façon de Venise' et 'façon de Paris'. In total 405 masks and 199 unfinished masks as well as 400 moulds are listed (Glorieux, 2006, 120-121).⁷⁶ For several court ballets of Louis XV at the beginning of the eighteenth century, an important quantity of masks were ordered by the Menus-Plaisirs. Marguerite Pinthenet delivered 87 masks for *L'Inconnu*⁷⁷ and many more masks and accessories for *Les Folies de Cardenio*⁷⁸ in 1720. The year after she sold 83 masks 'tant sérieux que comiques' and other accessories for the ballet *Les Quatre éléments*,⁷⁹ performed at the Tuileries on 31st December 1721 (Glorieux, 2006, 126-129).

At the court of Lorraine, the merchant Nicolas Forault and his mother, Jeanne d'Aussone delivered masks for festivities at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Some of these masks were from Venice or Modena (Choné/La Gorce, 2015, 129-130).

Besides these material aspects concerning the 'object mask' itself, reflections on practical aspects of the performance with masks were a topic for theorists. Saint-Hubert stressed the importance of the role and obligations of the organiser of a court ballet performance, also implying that this person was held responsible for the masks and costumes for the dancers: 'The master of order should also take care to visit the place where the dancing will take place, to arrange the space and mark where the dancers will enter the stage, where they should change their costumes, [...]. Then he should take care to order the most beautiful and less inconvenient machines, to choose the masks for the entrées and to mark them' (Saint-Hubert, 1641, 23, 25-26).⁸⁰

The dancing master, who was choreographing the different *entrées* and the choreographic figures, was also responsible for the supervision of rehearsals. Again de Pure gives a very practical advice: 'The useful manner to conceive the figure is to prepare it with the masks and the costumes. Because if one is without mask, the diversity of faces helps our poor memory and gives us a kind of local memory which reminds us of lost or vanished images' (Pure, 1668, 257).⁸¹ The uniformity of the other participant's masks blurs the perception of the individual dancer and renders his orientation during the execution of the choreographic figures more difficult. Additionally, a mask not only restricts vision and sometimes breathing, it also changes the perception of one's own movements and of the surrounding space.⁸² The consequence of rehearsing without masks were drastic and could ruin the effect of an *entrée*: 'Because there is nothing which shocks the eyes as much as a dancer without memory or skill, who bumps into his fellow dancer while taking his place [in a figure]' (Pure, 1668, 253).⁸³

Another practical aspect to consider was the possibility of masked persons talking in a court ballet. For this case Saint-Hubert does not take position for or against it, but assumes that it depends on the subject. Its dramatic complexity might require a dialogue or declaimed verses. Thus he is against the blind acceptance of long established rules for the sake of their authority and favours innovations: 'Certain persons approve and others do not approve of talking [in a ballet]; in my opinion it depends on the sujet [...]. And those who argue against it say that, because of a custom of former times, where masks were not allowed to speak, because this is fine for a Momon [mummery] and not for a ballet, given that it is allowed to correct the old rules in order to make better ones' (Saint-Hubert, 1641, 24).⁸⁴

None of the three before mentioned authors provides a historical overview about the origin and the use of masks in former times, but in the article in the *Extraordinaire du Mercure Galant* Rault gives an account of the origin of the bacchanals as well as the

evolution of masks, explaining that the first prototypes of masks were made by smearing the face with the lees of oil or painting it white and red. Then leaves and bark were used for primitive masks in the Pre-Roman era. The Greek, Suidas, suggests that the first inventor of masks was the poet Cherillus of Athens, although Horace believes the first inventor to be Aeschylus. Masks were then made from cloth and goatskin and later from moulded cardboard. Rault's article concludes with a short commentary by the author on the use of masks in his own epoch (Rault, 1681, 234-264).

Along with observations on performance practices and the object itself, it is interesting to mention that no theorisation or rules for masked performances are established by the theorists: For them, the central question was about defining criteria of what could be considered a good performance. Saint-Hubert insists on the importance of hiding the performer's identity under the mask, thus letting the mask have a life of its own and creating a real surprise for the audience. Several interpreters could not resist the temptation to make themselves known before their *entrée* and Saint-Hubert suspects that they wanted to show themselves to some ladies they knew.⁸⁵ He also insists on the coherent interpretation and that a dancer should stick to the nature of his *entrée* from the beginning to the end (Saint-Hubert, 1641, 14-15).

Michel de Pure has the same opinion and requires the following attitude of a dancer: 'The dancer should be intelligent and take care to enter into the sujet, the spirit of the poet and the character of his role. If he is forced to play a woman, a king, a mutilated man, or whatever could be imagined, he should only think to express well what he should represent without attempting to raise himself when he must not, or when he has to act the modesty of a woman, the majesty of a king or the helplessness of an invalid' (Pure, 1668, 284-285).⁸⁶ For the dancers as well as the spectators of a court ballet, it seems that the pleasure of participating consisted in the disguise and the revelation of the true identity of the dancer. Many printed verses

commenting not on the role, but the interpreter include allusions, jokes and criticism with regard of the actual person and his personal history. Regarding the question of interpretation in the seventeenth century, Jean-Yves Vialleton argues that the game of disguise is not a game of metamorphosis (Vialleton, 2010, 466). One important aspect of the disguise is its dimension of concealment. He argues whether it would not be more suitable for the society of this time to consider a role, with its costume and its *habitus*, not in terms of mimetic, but as semiotic figuration - thus the disguise is a poetical figure and gives pleasure because it is different from ordinary life (Vialleton, 2010, 461-470). When the theorists insist so much on the subordination of the interpreter to the poetical object of the ballet and the *entrée*, it might be because in performance reality, the principle of the concealment by the mask and the costume was often undermined, consciously or unconsciously. A professional technical attitude in terms of interpretation was perhaps not the aim of all aristocratic dancers, but was wished for by theorists like Michel de Pure: 'There is one perfection among dancers, which is essential for a ballet, that is to disguise oneself well under a mask, so that one is not recognised. There are people who always have a hunched back or an inclined head, or a mannered way of walking, or any other typical behaviour. It is necessary to restrain this kind of action and to control oneself in this moment and to let no gesture escape which might allow the discovery of who you are. This is what is meant by masking well. Because the finality of the *entrée* is not to represent yourself, but a king, a god, a nymph, and other similar things. And when one recognises in the Nymph a well-known man, then the idea of the ballet and the dessein are interrupted and one amuses oneself only to judge the performer and not what is represented. It is a perfection in the man who masks well not to make himself known, and if he does something special and surpasses the other dancers, there will be time enough to gather the glory once the ballet is over' (Pure, 1668, 295-296).⁸⁷ Rebecca Harris Warrick emphasises that for Michel de Pure 'the mask served theatrical illusion, as a

means of making the audience think about the role, not about the person playing it' (Harris-Warrick, 2016, 122). In the chapter about the ball, de Pure insists on the difference between the behaviour when dancing masked and when dancing at a ball: 'Under a mask, one dances for someone else, one has the ambition to express what one represents and the disguise can hide many faults, either of the person, or of the dance performance. But here [at a ball] there is nothing else than yourself: you appear the way you are and all your steps and all your actions depend on the eyes of the spectator and expose the good and the bad with which Art and Nature have favoured or disgraced your person' (Pure, 1668, 177-178).⁸⁸

One last kind of recommendation concerns the social interaction at masked balls. In his treatise on civility, Antoine de Courtin included in the chapter with regard to polite behaviour at a ball, a recommendation concerning behaviour towards masked persons: 'It is also necessary to pay attention, being among masked persons, that it is uncivil to oblige someone to take off his mask, if he does not want it and to touch his mask with the hand; On the contrary one is obliged to be even more civil to masked persons than to other people: because often, under a mask, there are persons to whom we do not owe only civility, but respect' (Courtin, 1671, 143-144).⁸⁹ The complex play between incognito and recognition in the context of masked balls is a fascinating topic worth further investigation, but cannot be elaborated in this article.

Verses in the libretti and the mask - Roles without Masks?

The necessity for the use of masks in French court ballet is certainly linked to the code of behaviour for a nobleman, who should not imitate the virtuosity of a professional dancer and never lose his dignity, as Mickaël Bouffard points out by quoting the recommendations of Baldassare Castiglione in his *Book of the Courtier*, 1528 (Bouffard, 2014, 210): 'There are certain other exercises that can be practised in public and in private,

like dancing; and in this I think the Courtier ought to have a care, for when dancing in the presence of many and in a place full of people, it seems to me that he should preserve a certain dignity, albeit tempered with a lithe and airy grace of movement; and although he may feel himself attempt those agilities of foot and double steps which we find very becoming in our friend Barletta, but which perhaps would be little suited to a gentleman. Yet in a room privately, [...] I think he may try both, and may dance morris-dances and brawls, but not in public unless he be masked, when it is not displeasing even though he be recognized by all. Indeed there is no better way of displaying oneself in such matters at public sports [...]; because disguise carries with it a certain freedom and licence.' (Castiglione, 1903, 86-87). Consequently wearing a mask made it possible for the noble dancers to perform all kinds of roles, noble as well as ridiculous and even indecent ones without dishonouring themselves (Bouffard, 2014, 210). Mickaël Bouffard deduces that the honour of a person was not residing in his or her identity but in his or her image and that the mask preserved thus the *honnêteté* of a person (Bouffard, 2014, 210).

In his article about masks, Rault considers masks as a component of public entertainments, saying that in the context of ballets and dancing the act of disguising and masking is part of an innocent and honest amusement and he insists that these disguises are not profane and offensive (Rault, 1681, 263-264). The situation seems to have been ambiguous. On the one hand masks were necessary for the aristocrats, allowing them to perform all kind of roles without the loss of their dignity and on the other hand, masks were suspect objects, as they were also used for licentious behaviour in public festivities, such as the carnival.

In ballet libretti and other printed documents for the French court ballet, several rather rare mentions of masks can be found, such as the description of the *entrée* of Proserpina in the *Ballet de Tancredi*: 'Through the large door in the middle entered Queen Proserpina with a black face' (Gramont, 1619, 19).⁹⁰ It is almost certain that her face was covered with a black

society mask, as the ones described above. In the *Ballet des Ballets*, 1626, besides the poet, violin player and the dancers several craftsmen necessary for a ballet are cited among the roles: the shoemaker, the mask-merchant, the bonnet-maker, the painter and the costume tailor. The verses for the mask merchant are addressing the ladies, arguing while they cover their faces, which he considered as an error, their uncovered eyes cause even greater damage.⁹¹

Marie-Françoise Christout affirms for the court ballets for Louis XIV: 'Besides character roles, the [female] dancers seldom wore masks' (Christout, 2005, 171).⁹²

Mostly the information is implicitly hidden in allusions within the verses for a role, playing with the appearance of the interpreter and his real social identity and personal appearance by commenting on the double function of the mask, which reveals by concealing. Numerous and not always flattering are the allusions of Isaac de Benserade to the outward appearance and the face of an aristocratic dancer in the court ballets for Louis XIV (Benserade, 1997).

It seems that the dancers of the Grand Ballet were unmasking themselves before inviting the ladies of the court to dance with them a subsequent ball. This custom is attested for court festivities at the court of Lorraine (Choné/La Gorce, 2015), and also for a court ballet in Ratisbon (Anonymous, 1637, f.27v – 28r).⁹³

Some comments by the ballet theorists also suggest that certain roles were interpreted without masks. In his chapter for the steps in ballets Michel de Pure also describes his expectations towards the dancer's interpretation of the roles: 'So for the lover, the sick, the sad or the joyful [role], he [the dancer] shall employ himself to interpret, and paint well the different changes, that love, sickness, sorrow or joy can cause on the face or the other parts [of the body] which seem to be connected to the inner sentiments' (Pure, 1668, 250-251).⁹⁴ For the interpretation of Love, Ménestrier also explains the following requirements: 'Love demands eagerness & tenderness, a soft and serene face, which

nevertheless sometimes is upset, and which has as many expressions as exist movements of the heart to change it' (Ménestrier, 1682, 161).⁹⁵ In her recent publication on dance and drama in the French baroque opera, Rebecca Harris-Warrick not only cites both theorists, but also the example of a female professional dancer, who seems to have danced without a mask in 1699 (Harris-Warrick, 2016, 121). This leads to the question, whether these pieces of performance advice, influenced as they are by reflections on the art of acting, reflect the performance practice of court ballets or whether the altered context of a professional performance context made the dancers gradually abandon the masks.

A costume sketch by Henri Gissey for one of the three Graces, a role held by a professional, in the *Ballet des fêtes de Bacchus*, shows a costume similar to travestied dancers. What is most remarkable here is that the borders of the mask are clearly visible, although the roles of the three Graces were not dancing but singing roles (Christout, 1987, 43, ill. 22). Whether the costume sketch is not accurate concerning the performance practice at the time, or whether this was a mask which allowed the articulation of the jaw, as Paulette Choné and Jérôme de la Gorce affirm to have existed already in Modena, another Italian city famous for its masks (Choné/La Gorce, 2015, 129-130), is impossible to determine today.

Conclusion:

For the European Carnival customs and the French court ballet masks were an important means of transformation for the interpreters. The fragility of these utilitarian objects are the reason why they were usually not preserved and those which are still to be found in the collection of European Museums are mostly dating from the eighteenth century. Besides many iconographic sources, little is known as to their prototypes, models, the craft of mask-making and the craftsmen of the seventeenth century. The forms of these masks had a wide range from the beautiful 'noble' mask, which also served the purpose of travesty, to expressive masks. The latter are testimony of

the fertile imagination and the creative freedom of costume designers and craftsmen as well as an attempt of codification for the outward appearance of certain roles.

There can be no doubt as to the fact that in French court ballet masks were an integrative part of the costume and the conception of a role until the beginning of the eighteenth century. The inquiry into the symbolic dimension, the codified meaning of an allegorical sense, as emphasized by Anne Surgers, would be another worthwhile field of investigation (Surgers, 2010, 87-130). The role of masks in the context of social interaction and the fact that in many cultures the ritual context has to be taken into consideration might be an argument for researching the ritual frame and not just an aesthetic element of masks in European court ballet, especially with regard to the concept of *honnêteté* and the aristocratic code of behaviour.

Interestingly, the theorists of court ballet do not consecrate much reflection on masks. They merely give practical advice. It is the question whether masks were taken for granted to such an extent that they hardly ever were discussed.

It is unknown to what extent masking was imperative for aristocratic ladies, or whether court ballet was also an occasion to display their beauty - as it was done by the actresses of the *commedia all'improvviso* who were not masked (Ferris, 1999, 239)⁹⁶ - in order to contribute to the prestige of the court. In addition, the question whether any dancer, female or male, could appear on stage without a mask, is still to be investigated. However, it seems that the custom of masking was less common towards the end of the seventeenth century as perhaps another consequence regarding the professionalisation of dancers.

A systematic record and an in-depth analysis of the iconographic sources might reveal further insights, as proven by Margaret M. McGowan and her comparison of iconographic motives, which influenced the representation of costumes, in particular those of exotic design (McGowan, 2012, 38-79).

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Aesthetic and Performative Functions of the Mask in French Court Ballet (1573-1681)

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End Notes

1 Already at the end of the Middle Ages, for example during festivities at the Burgundian court, accounts on spectacular disguises can be found. In the *Chroniques* by Jean Froissart an illumination illustrates the historical account on a *charivari* performed on the 28th January 1393 by the French king Charles VI and five of his courtiers disguised as 'wild men', which ended in a horrible accident when their disguise took fire. This is why it is since known as *Bal des Ardents* (Froissart, c. 1470-75, f° 2176). Not only for dances and processions but also for chivalric contests, precious and fantastic costumes, sometimes with masks, were an important aesthetic element (Schaedler, 1999, 324-5; Strong, 1984, 3-19; Corens, 2002, 24).

2 Despite the obvious use of the object mask in sketches and drawings, further explanation or focus on the use of masks is rarely provided by scholars. Apart from this, the explanations are not always accurate. Relating to early court ballet in France, Cyril W. Beaumont wrote that 'whatever the nature of the ballet, the sole purpose of the different *entrées* was to provide a suitable excuse for the entry of dancers wearing black or gold masks, and diadems adorned with tinselled aigrettes and plumes, who danced a number of figures generally containing some complimentary allusion', which is obviously a superficial view on the phenomenon of court ballet (Beaumont, 1946, 11). Referring to court ballet under Louis XVI he explained, 'The ballet continued to be a spectacle composed of dancing, painting, music and singing, but now it passed from restricted performance at Court to the public theatre. The personnel consisted of men alone, the women's roles being taken by youths of feminine build, whose faces were concealed with masks, at this time a fixed part of the dancer's costume.' (Beaumont, 1946, 11).

If it is true that masks became *de rigueur* in the choreographic performances and that many female roles were danced as travesty roles, several performances of French court ballet, from its very beginnings to the court ballets for Louis XIV, were danced by female members of the aristocracy.

3 In her unpublished article Virginie Garandau compiles all relevant quotations about masks in the contemporary theoretical writings by Saint-Hubert, de Pure and Ménestrier, which will be discussed in this article further on (Garandau, 2008).

4 Interestingly enough, most books giving a general overview about masks in different cultures and periods rarely mention the use of masks in court festivities, and if they do, without going into deeper analysis. Lesley K. Ferris affirms for example that, 'By the year 1500 mummeries and disguisings were primarily court entertainments, and although masks were used, this tradition did not develop into a sustained theater of masks' (Ferris, 1999, 238). Rudi Corens mentions that masks were part of costly court entertainments in Europe and analyses that: 'It was mainly in the applied arts that the mask degraded to a common ornament, which had lost all significant symbolism. On the other hand, the mask had gained prestige as a prop by ballets, masquerades and intermezzi' (Corens, 2002, 30). But his choice of examples lack understanding of the French musical theatre and court ballet (Corens, 2002, 30-31).

In overviews or exhibition catalogues it is almost never referred to the fact that court ballet and professional ballet in the eighteenth century used masks (Lommel, 1972; Mack, 1994; Schaedler, 1999; Nunley/McCarthy, 1999; Revelard/Kostadinova, 2000; Ferino-Pagden, 2009).

5 This article cannot provide a complete analysis of all iconographic sources. Only selected examples illustrate the variety of different types of masks. In-depth research concerning the titles and the artistic attribution of several costumes drawings would be illuminating, but this analysis would exceed the scope of the present article. Due to copyright restrictions, this article is not illustrated. All illustrations cited are either found in books and/or on the Internet. For Internet sources the corresponding URL is provided in the endnote. In the bibliography, only the main home-

pages are mentioned, the exact URL is to be found in the text of the endnote.

6 In order to be successful at court, the capacity of simulation and dissimulation was deemed necessary for a courtier and his personal strategy to gain power, influence, status and financial advantages. This attitude was not perfectly reconcilable with the honest conduct of a perfect Christian gentleman – another ideal of the *honnête homme*. These opposite codes of conduct reveal the baroque dilemma between religious and social demands. From a religious point of view, worldly matters were considered as vain and the salvation of the soul was in the centre of interest. On the other hand, the demands of a society, in which appearance was constitutional for social communication and where the concept of the *'theatrum mundi'* – with everyone playing his or her part – was omnipresent, induced the individual to develop strategies for the increase of personal prestige (Heiter, 2016, 13-31).

7 For the strategies of distinction see the sociological studies of the French population after WW II by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1979; Swartz, 1997). His analysis of the traditional process regarding elite up-bringing derived from the principles of the French aristocratic society during the *'Ancien Régime'*. For more recent studies see (Hengerer, 2005, 519-546; Lecomte, 2014, 143-197).

8 The title of an exhibition about masks at the Ethnological Museum in Vienna in 2009 was *'Wir sind Maske'*, thus alluding to the mask of the social role, which each human as a social being wears in multiple forms [The title is very difficult to translate into English, meaning literally 'We are mask' which of course is not correct]. Claude Lévi-Strauss sums up the principle idea as follows, 'For social man is in essence masked: he bears a name, inherits a status, holds a position.' (Lévi-Strauss, 1961, 18).

9 For definitions and intricacies between the face, mimics, masks of the self and roles of the face see (Belting, 2013, in particular 25-44).

10 For the alpine masks and the masks of the 'Savage' see (Fréger, 2012).

11 In the modern theory of the social mask, this would mean that the social mask is hidden under yet another mask allowing the self to reveal a part, which has been hidden under the social mask.

12 The denomination *'commedia all'improvviso'* is used in this article in order to distinguish the

traditional Italian theatre form from the modern *'commedia dell'arte'* of the twentieth century.

13 The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* states, that the first occurrence in the English language was during the sixteenth century, further explaining that the verb also derives from the sixteenth century (Hoad, 1993, 283). As the English synonym 'vizard', which relates to the word 'visor', is not used in France, this expression will not be employed in this article, besides English examples.

14 In the German language there exists the explicit expression *'Narrenfreiheit'*, which literally means 'fool's liberty' or also 'jester's licence'.

15 This code of behaviour towards masked persons was most probably much older than the recommendations in the treatise on civility. Cesare Poppi argues that, 'In Europe, as elsewhere, masks are paradoxical in their use: as Mesnil and Napier have noted, they at once transform and fix identities. In concealing individual identity, they simultaneously transform it into something radically different – to the extent that tearing the mask from somebody's face is an act of abomination' (Poppi, 1994, 194).

16 See also the painting by Louis de Caulery, *Banquet avec des personnages masquées et musiciens*, before 1628, oil painting, no measures indicated, Florence: Palais Pitti, Galleria Palatina, <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/10-530356-2C6NU0YTKJIH.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

17 An anecdote related by Brantôme citing the *Héptameron* by Marguerite de Navarre explains that for a gallant encounter the face of the lady in question was covered with a *'touret de nez'* as masks were not yet used (Brantôme, 1841, 141-142).

18 An English example of such a mask has been found in Daventry, dated after 1500 and before 1750, 195mm in length and 170mm in width, made of black velvet, silk lining, pressed-paper inner, cotton thread and a black glass bead, <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/402520> (Accessed 10 April, 2017). The doll of the Lady Clapham collection also possesses a mask as part of her wardrobe, c. 1690-1700, made of cardboard covered with ribbed silk and lined with vellum, including a glass bead, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O82639/dolls-mask-unknown/> (Accessed 10 April, 2017).

19 Nancy Oddo explains that the expression ‘*loup*’ was given to the object because little children were afraid of it (Oddo, n. d.). Interestingly in the fine arts, the motif of the frightful mask and children or *putti* - signifying the incapacity of children to distinguish between appearance and reality - was fashionable during the Renaissance and Baroque (Leuschner, 2014, 193-214).

20 See Anonymous, *Courtisan et sa damoiselle*, 1586, drawing, no measures indicated, Paris, French National Library, BNF, Dép. Estampes et Photographie RESERVE OA-39-4, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6935167r/f1.item> (Accessed 13 April, 2017). The drawing is part of the collection *Habits de France*, dated around 1581 and containing original drawings of the sixteenth century (Paresys, 2011, 57-65).

21 See Jacques Callot, *La Dame au masque, La Noblesse*, c. 1620-1623, etching, 144 mm x 95 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, Collection Rothschild, <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/16-565626-2C6NU0AEX7R94.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017) and Wenceslas Hollar, *Lady with Mask and Muff*, in: *Ornatus Muliebris Anglicanus (The Severall Habits of English Women)*, 1640, etching, 134 mm x 70 mm, San Francisco, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, <https://art.famsf.org/wenceslaus-hollar/lady-mask-and-muff-ornatus-muliebris-anglicanus-severall-habits-english-women> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

22 ‘[...] pour donner plaisir au peuple de France et gagner son amitié, il ne faudroit que leur représenter et faire voir souvent ceste Reyne Marguerite, pour se plaire et s’esjouir en la contemplation d’ung si divin visage, qu’elle ne cachoit guieres d’un masque, comme toutes les autres Dames de nostre Court; car, la plupart du temps, elle alloit le visage découvert.’ (Brantôme, 1991, 128) [All translations* are my own, unless otherwise stated.]

*All original French quotations have been re-transcribed, conserving the spelling and the punctuation of the original text, changing only the i and j, u and v, s and f have to modern spelling.

23 ‘La reine était masquée, qui fut cause, que l’on ne put rien juger de sa passion par son visage’ (Malherbe, letter to Peiresc, Paris, 1st June 1614, 1971, 645).

24 ‘Je levai mon masque à l’heure même et leur dis: ‘Messieurs, puisque vous craignez quelque chose pour une femme, ayez la bonté de me conduire jusqu’à la porte de Grosbois, et je vous

en aurai obligation.’’ (La Guette, 1982 [1681], 113).

‘I took off my mask immediately and said: ‘Messieurs, since you are afraid for a lady’s welfare, please be so good to conduct me to the door of Grosbois and I will be obliged to you.’

25 ‘La figure, la couleur, & la matière, qui n’ont rien de choquant, ne passent pas pour un déguisement. Aussi n’ay-je pas dessein d’y rien contredire, les Loix n’ayant jamais étendu leur autorité pour en interdire l’usage’ (Rault, 1681, 264). I am indebted to Béatrice Pfister for having pointed out this source.

26 ‘[...] Mais le Masque n’est pas un voile assurément, C’est pour la Laide un ornement, Pour la Belle un amusement, Et pour l’orgueilleuse Grizete Un honneste moyen de courir en cachete. Ainsi, je le dis franchement, Du Masque en general je condamne l’usage; Et qui s’en couvre le visage, Hors la necessité, mérite châtiment.’

(Anonymous, 1682, 288-289)

27 Venetian masks were already renowned and a product of exportation. Their forms influenced French mask-makers, but Venetian masks were always considered the more refined masks (Pure, 1668, 293).

28 The example in Lommel’s book is not French, but from the Festungsmuseum in Salzburg, Austria.

29 ‘D’un extrême variété, les masques sont heureusement adaptés au personnage, [...]’ (Christout, 2005, 27)

30 Natalie Lecomte cites an inventory of the attic of Louis Hesselin’s Parisian residence ‘mentioning baskets full with costumes and masks’, ‘mentionant aussi des ‘mannes’ pleines de costumes et de masques’, see also (Leymarie, 2004, vol. I, p. 26).

31 Daniel Rabel, *Album: Ballet des fées des forêts de Saint Germain: ‘Entrée des Esperlucattes’*, 1626, watercolours, pen and brown ink, highlights, 285 mm x 440 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, D.A.G., <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/01-012721-2C6NU0G33AAZ.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

For an in-depth analysis of the iconography of the drawings in the album Daniel Rabel see (Moulineau, 2012, 79-121; Dorothée, 2012, 177-205).

32 Daniel Rabel, *Album: Ballet des fées des forêts de Saint Germain: 'Grand Ballet'*, 1626, watercolours, pen and brown ink, highlights, 285 mm x 440 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, D.A.G., <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/01-012787-2C6NU0G3PXHA.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017) The same drawing has been falsely designated as being part of the *Ballet du château de Bicêtre* (Christout, 1987, 58, ill. 39).

33 Daniel Rabel, *Album: Ballet du chasteau de Bicêtre: Grand Ballet, dansé le 8 mars 1632 au Louvre, à l'Arsenal et à l'Hôtel de Ville, 1632*, watercolours, pen and brown ink, highlights, 285 mm x 440 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, D.A.G., <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/01-012688-2C6NU0G3LNGZ.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

34 How difficult it must have been for the dancers to breathe during their dance, with only small openings for the nose and the impossibility of breathing through the mouth, can only be imagined.

35 In modern mask-making technique such a result seems very unlikely, but it might be possible that a technique existed, which is nowadays lost. And it would require that the mask was made from a mould reproducing the exact features of the face or even directly on the face of the wearer.

36 Georges Vigarello emphasizes the fact that the 'second' sex became the 'first' reference for the ideal of beauty during the sixteenth century and that a man was considered more 'terrible' than 'beautiful', underlining the separation of force and beauty (Vigarello, 2004, 28-30). This aesthetic, paradigmatic shift has its repercussion for the representation of the beauty ideal in the fine and performative arts. Our modern perception of male beauty does not correspond to the ideal of the comparatively 'soft' and 'feminine' features for the male heroic roles and the features of the 'noble' mask any more, although a tendency of an androgynous beauty ideal in the *haute couture* and publicities of luxury products can be observed since the 1960s (Vigarello, 2004, 231-237).

37 However, the surface of the modern neutral masks is generally not painted, but the natural appearance of the material with which they are created is used: undyed leather, plastic, silicone, plaster or *papier maché*.

Nowadays the neutral mask is used for the search of universal expression of the human being. When the face is reduced to one fixed expression and the on-looker cannot interpret it, the attention

is directed towards the bodily expression. See my article *Explorations with Masks – Considerations for the Use of Masks in Baroque Dance*, in this issue, p 97.

38 Daniel Rabel, *Album: Ballet de la douairière de Billebahaut et Ballet des fées des forêts de Saint Germain: 'Entrée des Sultanes', huit figures de femmes*, 1626, watercolours, pen and brown ink, highlights, 285 mm x 440 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, D.A.G., <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/01-012747-2C6NU0G3Q9ZL.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

Another version exists, which was made in the workshop of Daniel Rabel for the '*Entrée des Sultanes*', gouache, watercolours, pen and ink, highlights, 250 mm x 395 mm, Paris, French National Library, BNF, *Dessins des entrées pour: le Grand Bal de la douairière de Billebahaut, Ballet dansé par sa Majesté*, Paris, 1626, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b105440443/f1.item> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

39 Daniel Rabel, *Costume design for Lady from the Seraglio, Ballet royal du Grand Bal de la douairiere de Billebahaut, Court ballet of Louis XIII*, 1626, drawing, no measures indicated, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1222924/costume-design-rabel-daniel/> (Accessed 4 April, 2017)

40 French school, *Ballet royal de la nuit, Muse*, 1653, watercolor, pen and ink, no measures indicated, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut, Ms1004; Fol. 74, <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/01-021260-2C6NU0G08EWC.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

41 Jean Lepautre, *Homme en habit de ballet, c. 1670-1671*, engraving, no measures indicated, Paris, French National Library, BNF, Recueil Collection Michel Hennin, Estampes relatives à l'Histoire de France. Tome 50, Pièces 4532-4594, Henin 4565, RESERVEFOL-QB-201(50), <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/13-567750-2C6NU06VO2YC.html> and <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8405082g/f1.item> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

42 Anonymous, *Habit de Ballet*, 1680, engraving, no measures indicated, Paris, French National Library, BNF, Recueil Collection Michel Hennin, Estampes relatives à l'Histoire de France. Tome 58, Pièces 5085-5180, RESERVEFOL-QB-201(58), <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/13-543359-2C6NU05IP57I.html> and

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8406241j>
(Accessed 4 April, 2017).

43 Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (attributed to), cover for a portrait, c. 1510, oil painting on wood, 730 mm x 505 mm, Florence, Galleria Nazionale degli Uffizi (Ferino-Pagden, 2009, [1] [20] 82).

44 Lorenzo Lippi, *The Allegory of Simulation*, c. 1640, oil painting, 725 mm x 585 mm, Angers: Musée des Beaux-Arts,
<http://www.photo.rmnm.fr/archive/14-585152-2C6NU0AWCI4SV.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

45 For the English translation of the ninth letter see (Noverre, 1930, 79-98).

46 ‘It might still be urged against me that a mask in the serious style bears the character of nobility and does not conceal the dancer’s eyes, so that in their glances can be read the passions which affect them. I shall reply: first, that a face which has one expression only is not a face for the stage; secondly, that a mask having thickness and being the result of a mould, the form of which differs from the face it is to conceal, it is impossible for it to fit the features exactly; not only does it make the head larger and cause it to lose the proper proportions, but it buries and stifles the looks. Supposing even that it did not deprive the eyes of the expression they should have, would it not be opposed to the alteration which passions produce in the lines and colour of the features? Can the public see these passions arise, perceive their development and follow the dancer in all his movements? Are the eyes the sole indication of feeling? Defenders of masks will argue that the imagination will supply that which is hidden from us, and when we see the eyes gleaming with jealousy we must think we see the rest of the features glowing with the fire of passion. No, Sir, the imagination, however lively it may be, cannot lend itself to nonsense of that kind. Eyes expressing tenderness when the features depict hate? Looks full of fury while the features are gay and jovial? Those are contrasts which are never encountered in nature and which are too revolting for the imagination, however complacent it may be, to be able to conciliate them. That, then, is the effect produced by a serious mask; always graceful, it cannot change its character, while the eyes alter at every moment’ (Noverre, 1930, 93).

Following Noverre’s argument, the face seems to be necessary to the audience in order to ‘read’ the features of passions, but he completely omits the

expressivity of the body here. His argument is no longer logical when he claims that the features of the mask are contradicting the expression of the eyes, which would never be in that extent the case of a ‘noble’ mask for a ‘serious’ dancer, as this mask never has any distorted, passionate lines, but is smooth and without expression, so that the eyes, the inclination of the head etc. can suggest quite a range of expressions. Its ‘gracefulness’ is indeed contradictory to strong passions, but then would those correspond to a serious role on the ballet stage? It seems, that there are still several unsolved questions concerning the aesthetic of ballet performances in the middle of the eighteenth century.

47 See also: Daniel Rabel, *Costume design for Two Dog Monsters in the Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud*, 1617, watercolours and pen, no measures indicated, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, N° S.1161-1986,
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1222908/costume-design-rabel-daniel/> (Accessed 10 April, 2017).

48 See the title of her subchapter: ‘Les costumes: une emblématique en mouvement’ (Surgers, 2010, 113).

49 Daniel Rabel, *Album: Ballet du chateau de Bicêtre, Entrée des Diables*, 1632, watercolours, pen and brown ink, highlights, 285 mm x 440 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, D.A.G.,
<http://www.photo.rmnm.fr/archive/01-013186-2C6NU0G37ZUS.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017)

50 Daniel Rabel, *Costume design for Three Furies, Ballet de Tancrede*, 1619, watercolours and pen, no measures indicated, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, N° S.1161-1986,
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1222910/costume-design-rabel-daniel/> (Accessed 10 April, 2017).

51 French School, *Ballet royal de la nuit, Démon*, watercolours and pen, no measures indicated, Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Institut, Ms1004; Fol93,
<http://www.photo.rmnm.fr/archive/01-021396-2C6NU0G05SBF.html> (Accessed 10 April, 2017).

52 French School, *Ballet des noces de Pélée et Thétis, Magicien*, 1654, watercolours, pen and ink, no measures indicated, Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Institut, Ms1005; Fol8,
<http://www.photo.rmnm.fr/archive/01-020987-2C6NU0G09M4L.html> (Accessed 10 April, 2017). The drawing showing the front of the costume for the Magician is not yet on-line.

53 'Quelque extravagante Entrée que l'on face, je souhaiterois que l'on n'exposast aucun Masque difforme. Je consens aisément au *Burlesque*: mais je ne puis souffrir des objets épouvantables, des masques qui font horreur: & je ne puis trouver du plaisir en ce qui me fait de la peine.' (Pure, 1668, 295).

54 'GROTTESSQUE [...] Figure capricieuse de Peintre, de Graveur, de Sculpteur, qui a quelque chose de ridicule, d'extravagant, de monstrueux, telles que sont celles dont on pare les grottes. [...]' (Furetière, 1690, n.p.).

55 'GROTTESSQUE, se dit figurément de ce qui est bisarré [sic!], extravagant, ridicule dans les personnes, dans les habits, dans les discours, &c. [...] Les habits de masques, de ballets sont plus estimez plus ils sont *grotesques*. [...]' (Furetière, 1690, n.p.).

56 Daniel Rabel, *Costume design for a man with oversize head and hat, Ballet du Serieux et du Grotesque*, c. 1627, no measures indicated, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1222940/costume-design-rabel-daniel/> (Accessed 10 April, 2017)

Daniel Rabel, *Album: Ballet de la douairière de Billebahaut, Entrée des Hocricanes et Hofnaques, quatre figures*, 1626, watercolours, pen and brown ink, highlights, 285 mm x 440 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, D.A.G., <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/01-012760-2C6NU0G3QMRN.html> (Accessed 10 April, 2017)

See also: Daniel Rabel, *Costume design for a Headless Character in the Ballet royal du Grand Bal de la Douairiere de Billbahaut*, 1626, no measures indicated, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1222253/costume-design-rabel-daniel/> (Accessed 10 April, 2017)

Daniel Rabel, *Album: Ballet de la douairière de Billebahaut, Entrée de la Douairière et de ses dames*, 1626, watercolours, pen and brown ink, highlights, 285 mm x 440 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, D.A.G., <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/01-012697-2C6NU0G3L84A.html> (Accessed 10 April, 2017)

See also another costume drawing for the douairière de Billebahaut: Daniel Rabel, *Costume design for the Dowager, Ballet royal du Grand Bal de la douairiere de Billebahaut*, 1626, no

measures indicated, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, 1626, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1224748/costume-design-rabel-daniel/> (Accessed 10 April, 2017)

57 Daniel Rabel, *Album: Ballet du chateau de Bicêtre, Entrée des paysans ivres*, 1632, watercolours, pen and brown ink, highlights, 285 mm x 440 mm, Paris, Musée du Louvre, D.A.G., <http://www.photo.rmn.fr/archive/01-013033-2C6NU0G3IICC.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

58 The subtitle of the reproduction erroneously indicates that this drawing belongs to the *Ballet des noces de Thétis et Pélée* [sic!], 1654 (Beaumont, 1946, 33).

59 School of Henri Gissey, *Design for grotesque male ballet costume representing Chemistry* [?], c. 1650, pen and watercolour, 11 in x 7.8125 in, London, Victoria & Albert Museum, Department of Engraving, Illustration and Design and Dept. of Paintings, Accessions 1936, London, Board of Education, 1937, N° E.1309-1936, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O735374/theatre-design-gissey-henry/> (Accessed 10 April, 2017).

60 Jean Lepautre after Jean Berain, *Habit d'Orfèvre*, c. 1700, engraving, no measures indicated, Paris, French National Library, BNF, Collection Michel Hennin. Estampes relatives à l'Histoire de France. Tome 74, Pièces 6486-6607, RESERVE FOL-QB-201 (74), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84074723> (Accessed 10 April, 2017).

61 This half-mask inspired Amleto Sartori in the rediscovery of the fabrication technique of leather masks (Sartori/Lanata, 1983). See also my other article *Explorations with Masks – Considerations for the Use of Masks in Baroque Dance*, in this issue, p.97

62 Anonymous, *Polichinelle et Pantalon*, c. 1638-1640, engraving, no measures indicated, Paris, French National Library, BNF, Collection Michel Hennin. Estampes relatives à l'Histoire de France. Tome 32, Pièces 2770-2852, RESERVE QB-201 (32)-FOL, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84034931> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

63 Domenico Fetti, *Portrait of the actor Francesco Andreini* (copy), c. 1621, oil painting, 1020 mm x 790 mm, Venice, Galleria dell'Accademia, <http://www.beniculturali.it/mibac/multimedia/MiBAC/images/upload/original->

images/1486054557594_34_venezia-accademia-grande.jpg (Accessed April 10, 2017).

64 Daniel Rabel, *Ballet de la douairière de Billebahaut, Entrée du 'grand Can et de ses suivants': six figures et un chameau*, 1626, watercolours, pen and brown ink, highlights, 285 mm x 440 mm, Paris Musée du Louvre, D.A.G., <http://www.photo.rmnm.fr/archive/01-012770-2C6NU0G3QWH0.html> (Accessed 10 April, 2017).

65 For the first drawing see: French School, *Ballet royal de la nuit, Bacchus*, 1653, watercolor, pen and ink, no measures indicated, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut, Ms1004, Fol. 69, <http://www.photo.rmnm.fr/archive/01-021249-2C6NU0G088ZZ.html> (Accessed 10 April, 2017).

For the second drawing see: French School, *Ballet des noces de Pélée et Thétis, Bacchus*, 1654, watercolor, pen and ink, no measures indicated, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut, Ms1005, Fol. 65, <http://www.photo.rmnm.fr/archive/01-021103-2C6NU0G0MUBH.html> (Accessed 10 April, 2017).

66 See several drawings by Jean Berain (Choné/La Gorce, 2015, 180-181, ill. 9, 188-189, ill. 11A, 200-205, ill. 15a and 16).

67 Margaret McGowan describes this mask as 'a masked male figure'. The English translation of the French text is also from her legend for the drawing (McGowan, 1986, ill. 14).

68 French School, *Ballet royal de la nuit, Soldat*, 1653, watercolor, pen and ink, no measures indicated, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut, Ms1004; Fol. 24, <http://www.photo.rmnm.fr/archive/01-021145-2C6NU0G00000.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

69 French School, *Ballet royal de la nuit, Mercier*, 1653, watercolor, pen and ink, no measures indicated, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut, Ms1004; Fol. 17, <http://www.photo.rmnm.fr/archive/01-021136-2C6NU0G00B0V.html> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

70 Anonymous, *Les Mois de l'année - Le Goust - Février*, c. 1640/1641, engraving, no measures indicated, Paris, French National Library, BNF, Collection Michel Hennin, Estampes relatives à l'Histoire de France. Tome 34, Pièces 2981-3080 RESERVE FOL-QB-201 (34), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8403638h> (Accessed 4 April, 2017).

71 'Ainsi bien que de sa nature
Ce mois soit humide et negeux,
Trois choses trompent sa froidure,
Le Vin, les Balets, et les jeux.'
(see endnote 70)

72 'Il serait à souhaiter que l'on pût trouver des ouvriers assez habiles et assez adroits pour représenter juste les objets qu'on veut faire paraître sur quelque scène que ce soit : car non seulement un masque bien fait aide à rendre un déguisement gracieux, mais encore à faire connaître aux spectateurs la personne représentée. Car ce serait une lourde et grossière faute de faire le Masque de Bacchus aussi doux et aussi tendre que celui de l'Amour ou de Vénus.' (Pure, 1668, 291).

73 'De toutes les regles que l'on peut donner pour les habits, il n'en est qu'une indispensable, contre qui on ne se révolte jamais impunément, & sans que le Spectacle et le Spectateur en patissent. C'est la convenance des habits. Un Roy a sa façon & sa manière qui le doivent designer. L'homme particulier, le Bourgeois, le miserable et generalement tout les mortels ont dans leur habit une espece de caractere exterior, qui en fait connoître la dignité et le merite. Ainsi il faut que le Poète s'applique sérieusement à ordonner les habits convenables.' (Pure, 1668, 287-288).

74 'La bonté du masque dépend pour la matiere de la finesse de la toille, de la cole, de la cire et de tous les autres ingrédients qui la composent. Pour la forme; de la neteté du moule, & de la parfaite ressemblance avec l'Idée du Poète, & avec l'objet de cette Idée. Ce qui dépend de la matiere n'est pas de si peu d'importance que je ne croye devoir donner cet avis, à ceux qui sont preposez aux Balets de prendre soin de la fabrique des Masques, sur tout de celles du Roy, des Princes, & des Seigneurs; car il n'est rien de si dangereux qu'un masque essayé sur des visages suspects, & que de dancer sous un masque mal propre, & qui peut avoir servy à quelque homme mal sain.' (Pure, 1668, 293-294).

75 'Ceux de Venise ont sans doute plus de douceur, de finesse, & de propreté; mais il n'est rien de plus facile que de faire faire des Masques de la même finesse, avec beaucoup moins de dépense. [...] Le plus beau Masque ne doit pas couster plus de trente sols, & s'il doit être assorti de tout; Il ne doit jamais dépasser quarante. Le surplus n'est que filouterie & que friponnerie.' (Pure, 1668, 294-295).

- 76 Guillaume Glorieux indicates as source: 'Archives Nationales, Y 15927 A, scellé après décès de Marguerite Pinthenet dressé le 31 mai 1722 et jours suivants. L'inventaire après décès est daté du 8 juin 1722 (Archives Nationales, Minutier central des notaires, LXVIII, 262)' (Glorieux, 2006, 128 endnote 16).
- 77 See Endnote 49: A. N., O¹ 2851, f^o 141 v^o-142 r^o (Glorieux, 2006, 129 endnote 49).
- 78 See Endnote 50: A. N., O¹ 2851, f^o 189 v^o-191 v^o (Glorieux, 2006, 129 endnote 50).
- 79 See Endnote 52: A. N., O¹ 2853, f^o 162 v^o-163 r^o (Glorieux, 2006, 129 endnote 52).
- 80 'Le Maistre d'ordre aura encore soin de visiter la salle où l'on doit dancier, pour y marquer la place, y ordonner le lieu d'où sortiront les entrées, celui où les masques changeront d'habits, [...] (Saint-Hubert, 1641, 25-26) Il aura aussi soin de faire faire les Machines les plus belles & moins embarrassantes que l'on pourra, de choisir tous les masques des entrées et les marquer.' (Saint-Hubert, 1641, 23).
- 81 'La maniere de la concerter utilement est de la preparer mesme avec les masques & avec les habits. Car quand on est sans masque, la diversité des visages ayde à nostre peu de memoire, & en fait comme une memoire locale, qui nous rappelle les images perdues ou effacées.' (Pure, 1668, 257)
- 82 For the effects of a mask on the wearer, see my other article *Explorations with Masks – Considerations for the Use of Masks in Baroque Dance*, in this issue, p97
- 83 'Car il n'est rien qui choque si fort les yeux qu'un Danceur sans memoire ou sans adresse, qui pour se rendre à sa figure heurte son Compagnon' (Pure, 1668, 253).
- 84 'Les uns approuve [sic!] & les autres non d'y parler [dans les ballets]; pour moy je dis qu'il se faut assujettir au subiet, & que s'il est besoin d'y parler pour le rendre plus beau, ou plus bouffon, qu'il le faut faire sans contredit. Et ceux qui y trouvent à redire se fondent sur les costumes du temps jadis qui disent que les masques ne doivent jamais parler, cela est bon en momon & non pas en Ballet, puis qu'il est licite de corriger les anciennes reigles pour en faire de meilleures.' (Saint-Hubert, 1641, 24).
- 85 'Je voudrois bien demander à ces Messieurs qui prennent plaisir à ce montrer devant que d'avoir dancé, pourquoy il le font, si c'est pour se faire connoistre & ce faire admirer par quelques

Dames de leur cognoissance.' (Saint-Hubert, 1641, 27).

86 'Le Danceu de son costé doit estre intelligent, prendre peine pour entrer dans le Sujet, dans l'esprit du Poëte, & dans le caractere de son Personnage. Sil est obligé de faire la Femme, le Roy, un Estropié, ou tout ce qui peut tomber dans l'imagination: il ne doit penser qu'à bien exprimer ce qu'il represente: sans songer à s'élever quand il ne faut pas, ou quand il s'agit de la modestie d'une Femme, de la majesté d'un Roy, ou de l'impuissance d'un Infirmes.' (Pure, 1668, 284-285).

87 'Il est une perfection parmy les Danceus[...], qui est pourtant essentielle au Balet, c'est de si bien se déguiser sous le masque, qu'on ne puisse estre reconnu. Il est des gens qui ont toûjours ou le dos voûté ou la teste penchée, ou une démarche affectée, ou enfin quelque action particuliere: Il faut sçavoir gourmander ces sortes d'actions, se contraindre dans ce moment, & ne rien laisser échaper qui puisse découvrir ce que vous estes. Cela s'appelle, bien masquer. Car la fin de l'Entrée n'est pas de vous représenter, mais un Roy, un Dieu, une Nimphe, & autre chose semblables; & lors qu'on vient à trouver dans la Nymphes un homme connu, l'Idée du Balet & du dessein est interrompuë, & on ne s'amuse plus qu'à juger de celui qui represente, sans songer à ce qui est représenté. Il est de la perfection d'un homme qui masque bien de ne point se faire connoistre; que s'il fait quelque chose de singulier, & par-où il surpasse les autres, il sera assez temps d'en recueillir [sic!] la gloire apres la consommation de l'Ouvrage. (Pure, 1668, 295-296).

88 'Sous le Masque, on dance pour autruy, on se pique d'esprimer ceux que l'on represente, & le déguisement peut cacher beaucoup de defaux, soit en la personne, soit à la danse. Mais icy il ne s'agit que de soy-mesme: Vous paraissez tel que vous estes, & tous vos pas & toutes vos actions sont tributaires aux yeux des Spectateurs, & leur exposent & le bien & le mal, dont l'Art & la Nature ont favorisé ou disgracié votre personne.' (Pure, 1668, 177-178).

89 'Il faut observer aussi, que si l'on se trouve parmi des masques, c'est une incivilité de faire démasquer quelqu'un, s'il ne le veut, & de porter même la main sur le masque; au contraire l'on est obligé de faire encore plus d'honnêteté à des masques qu'à d'autres gens: car souvent sous le masque, il se trouve des personnes à qui non

seulement nous devrions de la civilité, mais du respect.’ (Courtin, 1671, 143-144).

90 ‘Par la grande porte du milieu sortit la Royné Proserpine avec le visage noir [...]’ (Gramont, 1619, 19).

91 ‘Quelle erreur a de son poison,
Troublé des hommes la raison.
Ils se couurent tout le visage. Laisant à
decouvert cet endroit seulement,
Par ou l’on voit vos traits blesser plus viuement,
Et par ou dans les cœurs vos yeux trouuent
passage.’

G. H. (*Balet des Balets*, 1626, 9).

92 ‘À l’exception des rôles dit de caractère, les danseuses le portent plus rarement.’ (Christout, 2005, 171). The question is what is to be understood by character roles for female dancers. The spectrum of roles was rather restricted to what was then considered ‘feminine’, aside from roles of bacchantes. See the list of roles of the dancers of the *Académie Royale de Musique* from 1700 to 1725, table 4 (Lecomte, 2007, 145)

93 An Italian text concerning a ballet danced during the celebrations of the coronation of the king of Rome during the Reichstag in Ratisbon explicitly mentions that the ladies of the court ballet were dancing with black velvet half-masks. They unmasked themselves resuming their real identity after inviting the emperor, the empress, the newly elected king of Rome and his queen as well as the elector of Bavaria and his wife, a daughter of the emperor, to a ceremonial dance, which constituted a transition to a general ball:

‘Dopo hauer i paggi dato fine al loro ballo si tolse la cortina della scena, et allhora comparue la Ser.^{ma} Arciduchessa con dicinoue Dame Principalissime delle Corte, tutte vestite di biancò ricamato e trinato ricchissimamente d’argento, et ornato con abundantissime gioie, e diamanti d’inestimabil valore: haueuan pennachi candidissimi in capo: parte della faccia coperta con mascharete de velluto nero; che tutto rendeua marauigliosa vista. [...] Finito il Balletto la Ser.^{ma} Arciduchessa inuitò à ballare alla Alemanna la M. del Imperatore, et altre cinque dame di Maschera inuitorono le M. M. dell’Imperatrice, Rè, e Regina, e l’A. A. del Ser.^{mo} Elettore, et Elettrice di Bauiera, l’altre quattordici dame ballavano fra tanto con torcie accese auanti loro M.M. Dopo questo ballo le sopra dette dame cauorno le maschere, e la Ser.^{ma} Arciduchessa si sentò al suo luogo presso la Ser.^{ma} Elettrice. Si continuò poi à

ballare al’Alemanna circa vn’hora, doppo che loro M.M. et A.A. con tutte le dame, e Cauallieri ritornorno alle case loro.’ (Anonymous, 1637, f.27v – 28r).

94 ‘Ainsi dans l’amant, dans le malade, dans le triste, ou dans l’enjoué, il doit s’attacher à bien toucher, & a bien peindre les diverses alterations, que l’amour, l’infirmité, le chagrin, ou la joye peuvent causer sur le visages ou sur les autres parties qui semblent s’intéresser aux ressentissemens interieurs, [...]’ (Pure, 1668, 250-251).

95 ‘L’Amour demande des empressemens, & des tendresses, un visage doux & serein, qui se trouble neanmoins quelquefois, & qui prend autant de formes, qu’il y a des mouuemens de cœur capables de l’alterer.’ (Ménestrier, 1682, 161).

96 Lesley K. Ferris summarises the explanations of scholars, why female roles wore no masks: first, that the female roles never developed into a clear, consistent ‘type’; and second, that the female face was exposed so as to exploit the women’s visual appeal and beauty. More recent feminist scholarship has suggested that within the society of the time there was a pervasive belief that artistic creativity precluded women, part of the ongoing prejudice against their work in all artistic arenas. The unmasked actress in a theater of masks reinforced the assumption that true, lasting art was found in male masks.’ (Ferris, 1999, 239).