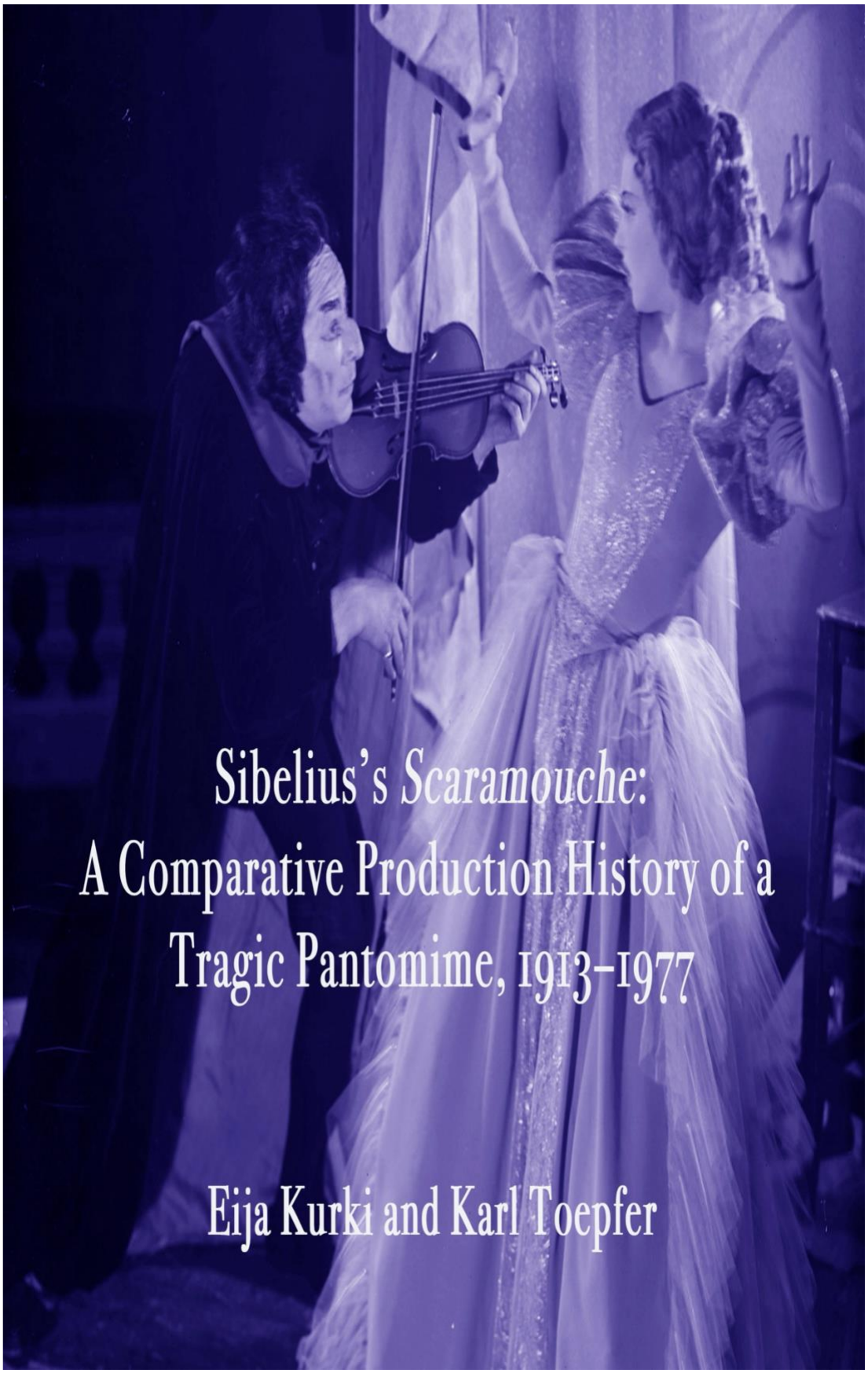

Sibelius's *Scaramouche*: A Comparative Production History of a Tragic Pantomime, 1913–1977

Eija Kurki and Karl Toepfer

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Cover photo: Alexander Saxelin as Scaramouche and Eva Hemming as Blondelaine in *Scaramouche*, directed by Maggie Gripenberg, Helsinki, 1946. Photo: Tenhovaara Studio; Finnish National Ballet.

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Introduction

Because of the ephemerality of theatrical performances, theater history is the memory of an uncountable number of performances across millennia that humanity remembers only very imprecisely. Even video recordings of theatrical performances rarely capture the qualities that make live performance a distinctive experience. But most of theater history consists of performances that took place before the invention of video, film, or photography. Peggy Phelan has argued that the value of theatrical performance lies entirely in the "present," in the living moment of interaction between performer and spectator, in its "nonreproducibility," and that all attempts to document the performance constitute another, non-theatrical experience (Phelan 1993: 146-149). From this perspective, theater history is the chronicle of how theatrical performances have been selectively remembered, misremembered, or not remembered at all. Nevertheless, the aftermath of performance determines the history of theater, and the aftermath manifests itself in a variety of forms: official records, memoirs and biographies of theater people, photos and illustrations, production designs, reviews and critical appraisals, production artifacts like programs, costumes, props, and posters, published and unpublished correspondence, and comments of spectators. The extent to which individuals or humanity as a whole "remember" theater controls the ephemeral "presence" of any theatrical performance. But the act of remembering theater can surpass in value and pleasure the act of being in the "presence" of theatrical performance. The overwhelming majority of theatrical performances took place before anyone now living was born, and of these only a very tiny number have left any trace of themselves. The lists of performances included in theater encyclopedias and attached to the resumes of performers, theater companies, and theaters are often only names. Only a relative handful of "classic" theater productions enjoy renewed "presence" as revivals, repetitions, or reconstructions in any theater culture for reasons that have nothing to do with any presumed inferiority of the incalculable number of non-classic productions that have happened world-wide. Remembering theatrical productions that no one now living could possibly have seen bestows a powerful value on theater that cannot be achieved through the "presence" of the productions. The task of the historian is to reveal how the memory of performance, however that is manifested, bestows a greater value on theater than the experience of being "present" at the performance. The purpose of theater is to construct unique memories that allow performance to "live on" in ways that no one involved with the performance can control. The "ephemerality" of theater functions above all to foreground the fragility of memory in relation to the performance of human actions. Theater history does not somehow resurrect the experience of the original, ephemeral performance; it uses the memory of the performance to establish another value for both the performance and for theater in general. The memory of performance places the performance in the past, in a point in time that is "different" from the "present" of performance. The difference between the experience of the ephemeral performance and the memory of it makes the performance an agent of change and the memory of it, as manifested in essays such as this, is the experience, not of any "now" or "present," but of a thing that is or has changed. From this perspective, the value of change supersedes the value of being "present," although change is contingent upon ephemeral performance.

To explore these basic assertions, we present a production history of *Scaramouche* (1913), a "tragic pantomime" with a libretto by Poul Knudsen and music by Jean Sibelius. Performances of *Scaramouche* are not well-known and very few living people have seen any of them. But in this respect, *Scaramouche* is similar to the vast majority of theatrical productions, the memory of which is fragmentary and dependent of an array of artifacts that seem to survive neither by accident nor by any systematic effort to control the memory of the productions. We examine the production history of *Scaramouche* across several decades and within different countries. The evolution of *Scaramouche* performances in comparative relation to different historical and cultural contexts not only elevates the significance of the textual work as a motive for performance; it elevates the significance of comparative production history in understanding how the "memory" of ephemeral performance becomes a large-scale "presence" in consciousness that bestows a value or significance on performance beyond the intentions, contexts, or beliefs motivating performance. That value lies in what the memory of performance communicates to those who will never be there to see the performance.

Figure 1: Tiberio Fiorelli (1608-1694) as Scaramouche (with dwarves), painted by Pietro Paolini (1602-1681), supposedly around 1630, which means that Fiorelli played Scaramouche before he came to Paris in 1640. Photo: Public Domain/Wikipedia.

Scaramouche

Scaramouche is an archetypal character in the repertoire of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, descended from the "Captain" archetype of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which in turn derived from the *atellenae* comedies of ancient Roman times. Scaramuccia or Scaramuzzia (Little Skirmisher) appeared as a *commedia* figure in Naples at the end of the sixteenth century. "He buzzed about with a long sword, stinging first this enemy and then that, like a bee darting from flower to flower. He is black from head to foot . . . and it is to be noted that this colour was a feature which he retained without variation throughout the evolution of his character" (Duchartre 1929: 236). However, John Rudlin contends that Scaramouche was a French invention of the seventeenth century that the *commedia* culture absorbed beyond Paris (Rudlin 2022: 103). In addition to his ludicrous sword fights, Scaramouche's comic domain includes his verbose boasting of imaginary adventures, imaginary wealth, and imaginary success with women. "He is exceedingly adroit, as slippery as an eel, and so clever at dodging that nearly every blow aimed at him falls on some poor innocent bystander" (Duchartre 1929: 237). Although by the beginning of the nineteenth century Scaramouche had "passed into oblivion" as a theatrical figure (247), he eventually experienced a revival in media outside of the *commedia* format. French composer Andre Messager (1853-1929) composed a *Scaramouche* ballet-pantomime in 1891. Anglo-Italian Rafael Sabatini (1875-1950) wrote the hugely popular novel *Scaramouche* in 1921. This book was the basis for a 1923 Hollywood film, *Scaramouche*, which MGM remade in 1952. In 1976, Embassy Pictures released an Italian-Danish-Yugoslavian co-production called *The Loves and Times of Scaramouche*. All of these incarnations of Scaramouche deviated from the *commedia* model of the character insofar as Scaramouche did not appear as an extravagant buffoon, but as a dashing, debonair, swashbuckling champion of liberty in conflict with tyrannical royalists of eighteenth-century France. He used his unsurpassed swordsmanship to defend democratic ideals, and he embodied a resolutely comic attitude in that he made fun of others instead of being made fun of by others, as epitomized by the famous opening line in Sabatini's novel: "He was born with a gift of laughter and a sense that the world was mad." Sabatini's hero takes the name when he disguises himself by playing Scaramouche in a traveling theater company. Perhaps closer to the *commedia* spirit was the Théâtre Scaramouche established briefly in Paris in 1937 by Henriette Pascar (1886-1974), a children's theater ensemble for which her friend Darius Milhaud (1892-1974) wrote, in 1938, a two-piano score for *Scaramouche*, an adaptation by Charles Vildrac (1882-1971) of Moliere's 1645 play *Le Médecin malgré lui*, a *commedia*-based play in which Scaramouche does not appear. This music, lasting about nine minutes, is cheerful, spritely, and occasionally gentle, as one might expect for performances meant to amuse children. With the advent of modernism, then, Scaramouche somehow survived largely by acquiring benevolent, even romantically appealing comic qualities and shedding the buffoonish vulgarities the *commedia dell'arte* had bestowed on him.

Figure 2: Tiberio Fiorelli as Scaramouche in the frontispiece from La Vie de Scaramouche, *a novel by the commedia actor Angelo Constantini (1655-1729), 1695. Fiorelli was the director of the Comédie-Italienne of the Hôtel de Bourgogne in Paris, where he lived from 1640 until the end of his life. The image shows Scaramouche holding a guitar, the instrument with which he is most often depicted, but sometimes he plays the violin or viola. Photo: Public domain.*

A Tragic Scaramouche

In 1913, however, Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) collaborated with a Danish librettist, Poul Knudsen (1889-1974) to produce a pantomime, *Scaramouche*, in which the mood is entirely tragic, and Scaramouche appears as a grotesque, demonic figure who is a master violist instead of a master swordsman, and who exerts a sinister, destructive erotic power over a married woman. The production history of this *Scaramouche* reveals a complicated response to the scenario and music and the complexities testing the power of modernist sensibilities to transform an archaic

archetype. From the beginning, the Sibelius-Knudsen *Scaramouche* experienced a difficult realization. Eija Kurki (2020) has described in detail the protracted process by which Sibelius composed the "massive score" supporting Knudsen's continually revised scenario. Knudsen had completed a first draft of his scenario in 1912, and Sibelius received the invitation to compose music for it through the Copenhagen music publisher Wilhelm Hansen (1854-1922). Sibelius enjoyed composing incidental music for the theater, and he composed music for ten theatrical productions, starting with *Kung Kristian II* (1898). In 1909, Canadian dancer Maud Allan (1873-1956) approached him with the idea of composing music for a pantomime she had devised, *The Sacrifice*, set in Egypt and to be performed in London. Sibelius spent most of the year contemplating her proposal, because, as he wrote to wife Aino (1871-1969), "The scenario is very appealing to me, as it is a pantomime with music, my genre (not opera!)" (Talas 2007: 135). However, he eventually turned down Allan's proposal because he didn't want to deal with an "Oriental" theme (Talas 2007: 142). In all his diary remarks on the composition process, Sibelius refers to *Scaramouche* as a pantomime, and never as a dance or ballet, and his publisher called it a "tragic pantomime."

When he wrote the scenario, Knudsen was beginning his career as a screenwriter for the Nordisk film company in Copenhagen; he specialized in the writing of erotic melodramas, a genre in which at the time the Danes excelled, and he was then married to a screenwriter, Johanne Skram (1889-1971). Though Knudsen titled his scenario after the character of Scaramouche, the protagonist is the female character Blondelaine, and Knudsen's attention focused on finding the right actress to play the role. In 1912, he hoped to have the Royal Danish Ballet perform the work, but the ballet master, Hans Beck (1861-1952), dismissed the proposal, because he felt the piece lacked "any possibility for pantomime or gestural actions." Frustrated by Knudsen's continual revisions of the scenario, Sibelius struggled throughout the entire year of 1913 to complete the score for a story that was becoming much bigger than he had been led to believe (Kurki 2020).

The following year, Knudsen and Hansen contemplated a production in Copenhagen with a Blondelaine played by the star ballerina Anna Pavlova (1881-1931), who wished to incorporate more pantomime in her repertoire (SPA 45). Instead, in 1915, Pavlova signed an astonishingly lucrative contract with the Universal film company to star in a spectacular cinematic adaptation of *The Dumb Girl of Portici* (1916), an 1828 opera by Daniel Auber (1782-1871) (Money 1982: 214, 217). Sibelius, Knudsen, and Hansen then planned on productions happening simultaneously at the Swedish Theater and the Finnish National Theater in Helsinki, and they attempted to cast as Blondelaine the famous Danish actress Betty Nansen (1873-1943) who had recently returned to Denmark after starring (1914-1915), without much success, in numerous American silent films (Kurki 2020: Sørensen 2023; Adriaensens 2023). But these productions did not happen because of the Finnish Civil War (1918) and because a complete proof of the score was not available until December 1918, by which time Knudsen and Hansen had revived their hope of premiering the work in Copenhagen. In 1921, Finnish and German newspapers announced that Knudsen and Hansen attempted to persuade the famous Danish film star Asta Nielsen (1881-1972) to play Blondelaine, but this didn't happen, presumably because Nielsen was too busy acting and

directing her film version of *Hamlet* (1921) and starring in several other German films between 1921 and 1922 (*Hufvudstadsbladet*, 17/10/1921 and 07/12/1921 'Litteratur och Konst'; *Svenska Tidningen*; 06/12/1921; Kurki 2020, ref. 171; *Oehlinger Anzeiger* 27/10/1921). For years, Knudsen attached production of *Scaramouche* to persuading a major film star to play Blondelaine, because his idea of "pantomime" derived from silent film storytelling. But the story he wanted to tell was perhaps too "dark," ambiguous, or sophisticated for presumed cinema rather than theater audiences.

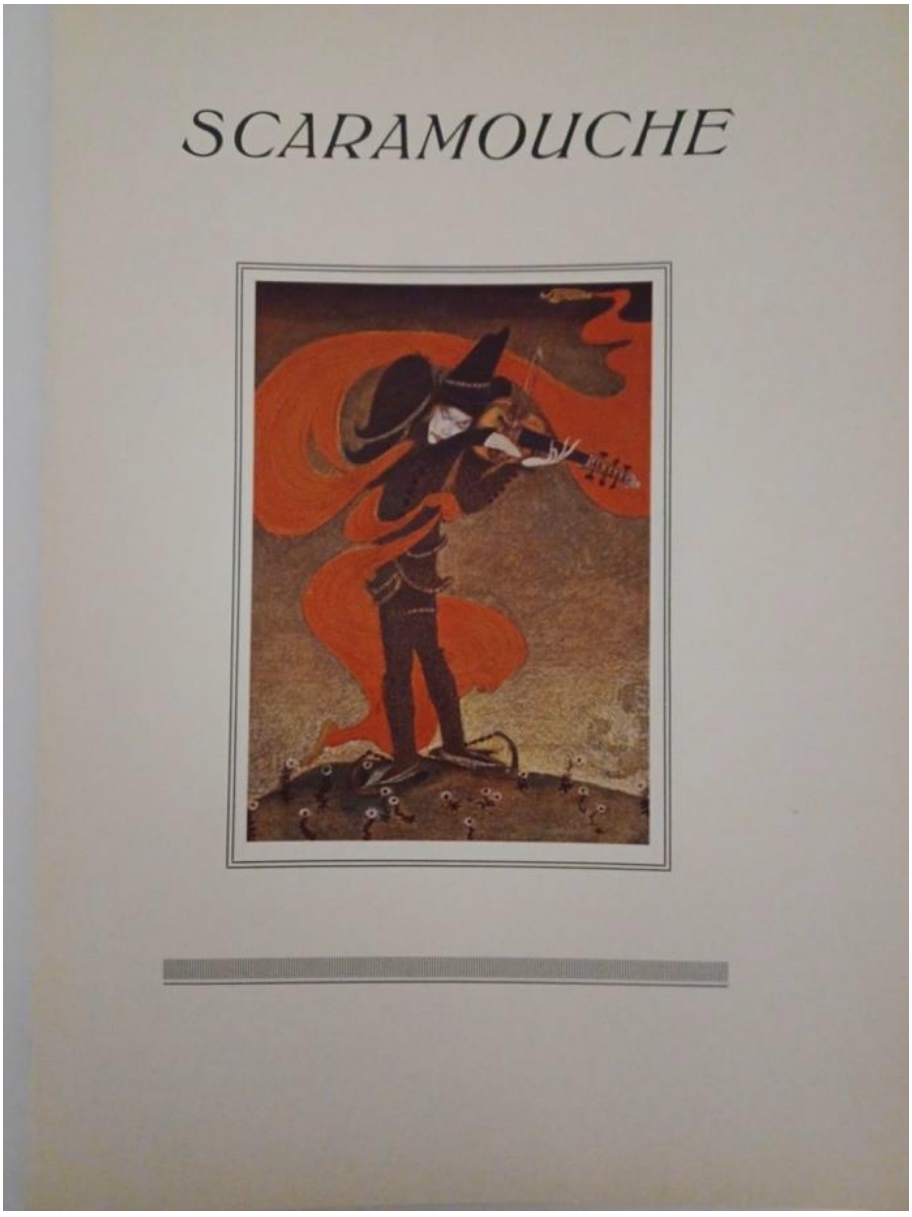


Figure 3: Kay Nielsen's cover illustration for the libretto for Poul Knudsen's Scaramouche, *published in Danish by Wilhelm Hansen, Copenhagen, 1922.*

But the premiere, at the Royal Danish Theater, did not take place until May 1922, in a production directed by Johannes Poulsen, with sets and costumes by Kay Nielsen, and choreography by Emilie Walbom, one of the earliest female choreographers. Copenhagen audiences regarded both Poulsen and Walbom as representatives of modernist trends in their respective arts, figures of "reform" seeking to move theatrical culture away from nineteenth century and Symbolist models of communication and toward more "experimental" modes of performance (Jacobsen 1990: 140; Broad 2017: 8-11). In effect, experimentation meant moving ballet away from the choreographic aesthetic of August Bournonville (1806-1879), which still dominated the Royal Ballet but which completely lacked a sense of modernity, although Bournonville was notable for his imaginative use of pantomime in ballet. Poulsen also performed the role of Scaramouche, while Lillebil Ibsen (1899-1989) performed the role of Blondelaine, although other women, dancers rather than actors (Margrethe Brock-Nielsen [1896-1977], Elna Jörgen-Jensen [1890-1969]), played the part in numerous subsequent performances. Ibsen, a Norwegian, had begun her career as a ballet dancer, but by 1915, she had transitioned to stage acting, and by 1922, she had already starred in several German and Norwegian silent films. However, she continued to dance, and in 1919, she gave a concert in Vienna in which she introduced a subsequently very popular solo dance to the music of Sibelius's *Valse triste* (1903) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Left: Lillebil Ibsen in a pose from her solo dance Valse triste*, 1919. Photo: Mjøen 1919. Right: Anna Pavlova as Helen of Troy in the Walpurgis Night scene from* Faust *(1915). Photo: Public Domain, Money 1982: 206.*

Figure 5: Betty Nansen in Af Elskovs Naade (Of the Grace of Love)*, directed by August Blom (1869-1947), Nordisk Films Kompagni, 1914. Photo: Danish Film Institute.*

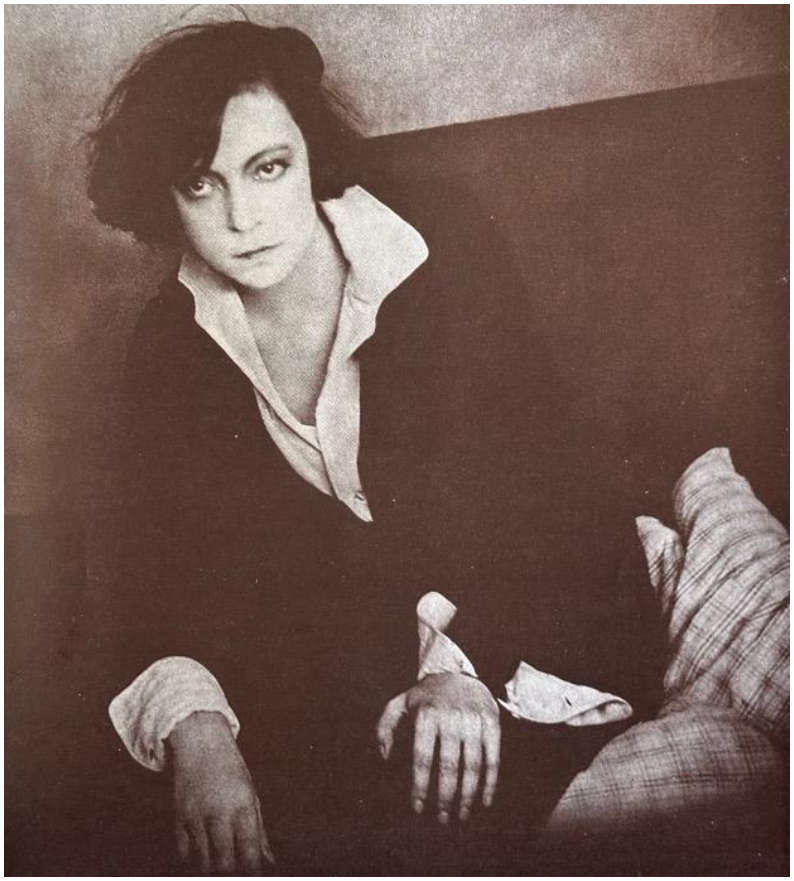


Figure 6: Asta Nielsen in the German film Fräulein Julie *(1922), directed by Felix Basch (1885-1944). Photo: Public Domain; Seydel 1981: 171.*

Poulsen and Walbom assumed the direction and choreography of the production after the famous Austrian director Max Reinhardt (1873-1943), with whom Ibsen had studied, and the almost equally famous Russian dancer-choreographer Mikhail Fokine (1880-1942), had rejected invitations to work on the production. By all accounts, the Copenhagen production was a great success, and the theater kept it in the repertory for two years (Kurki 2020). Meanwhile, Sibelius, Knudsen, and Hansen planned further productions elsewhere in Europe and in the United States. However, the protracted struggle to realize the scenario and music on stage contained within it various disconcerting uncertainties that have shadowed the strange production history of *Scaramouche*. It was not clear why Knudsen chose an absurd, minor character from the *commedia* repertoire as the driving element of his scenario but made him demonic rather than comic and allowed him to invest the entire story with a tragic tone devoid of comedy altogether. It was not clear what was meant by pantomime when Knudsen inserted patches of dialogue much to the displeasure of Sibelius and almost all critics who saw the pantomime as prescribed by the scenario. It was not clear whether, as a pantomime, dancers or actors should perform the piece— should a ballet company or a stage company perform it? It was not clear why the author had titled the piece after Scaramouche when all producers have focused on the casting of Blondelaine, have believed that the success of a *Scaramouche* production depended on casting the "right" Blondelaine, and have assumed that the piece centers on the perversity of female desire rather than on the destructive power of male desire. Nor was it even clear how old Blondelaine should be: Lillebil Ibsen was 22; Anna Pavlova was 33 (in 1914); Asta Nielsen was 40 (in 1921), and Betty Nansen was 41 (in 1914). But all these uncertainties arose from the scenario itself, not from the incongruities of national, political, or aesthetic sensibilities of the many personalities connected to efforts to produce the piece.

The Libretto and Music

Sibelius's *Scaramouche* pantomime Op. 71 to the text by Danish Poul Knudsen is from the year 1913. The score was published five years later, in 1918, by the Danish publisher Wilhelm Hansen. Sibelius composed the score on a commission from Knudsen, but the process of completing the score was a perpetual torment for the composer. Hansen acted on Sibelius's behalf and Mikael Trepka Bloch (1873-1938), a show business lawyer, spoke for Knudsen. Communication between Sibelius and Knudsen took place through these middlemen, which made it more difficult to convey even simple information: Sibelius first wrote to Hansen, Hansen passed the information to Trepka Bloch, and Trepka Bloch delivered it to Knudsen. Knudsen's messages to Sibelius followed the same route in the opposite direction. Sibelius never had direct discussions about the libretto with Knudsen. Sibelius received the commission in September 1912 (Diary 11/09/1912, Sibelius 2005: 152) and he started at once to compose (Diary 14/09/1912, Sibelius 2005: 152). Nothing in the commission contract specified the scope of the work or when it should be completed. Nor is there any mention of the author of the text. Apart from defining the rights to the work, remuneration and so on, the contract, signed by Sibelius 29 January 1913, merely states

that the commission is music for the "balletpantomime" *Scaramouche* (SPA 45). Decades later, Sibelius told his faithful secretary Santeri Levas (1899-1987) about the confusion surrounding the composition and the contract: "Poul Knudsen burst into my hotel room in the middle of the night with a lawyer and a contract… I signed it without reading it properly. It was only later that I realized that I had obliged myself to compose a large-scale work" (Levas 1992: 258). Perhaps this was some kind of preliminary contract, as Sibelius was in Copenhagen in November and December of 1912, and the lawyer who accompanied Knudsen was Trepka Bloch. When Sibelius signed the official contract in January 1913, he was in Finland and the text of the contract defines the work only as a ballet-pantomime, although Sibelius always uses the word "pantomime" in his diary when mentioning *Scaramouche*, never "ballet-pantomime." Wilhelm Hansen expected to receive Sibelius´s manuscript in April 1913 (Wilhem Hansen´s letter to Sibelius 03/02/1913, SPA 45). Although the contract did not state when the work should be finished, Hansen stated in his letter of February that it should be finished in April, although it was late more than six months than originally foreseen. Sibelius accepted commissions as a way of earning money, but they did not bring in enough, as he always had insufficient resources to fund his lavish lifestyle. His diary is full of entries on this subject. In May 1913 he wrote: "At present I have a staff of five servants, who cost me thousands when I take pay, board and lodging into account…" (Sibelius 2005: 171). He also questioned his standing as a composer. In July he wrote: "Bankruptcy and poverty are grimacing at me" (2005: 174). Sibelius mentioned *Scaramouche* in his diary entries between 10 and 19 April 1913, such as "working on the S. danse" and "forging the Pantomime" (17/04/1913 and 19/04/1913, Sibelius 2005: 170).

Sibelius's diary for May 1913 contains no references to *Scaramouche*. In June, he returned to the work, writing on 15 June: "I must start on *Scaramouche* in its original form" and the following day: 'Worked on the pantomime. Considered linear counterpoint!" (Sibelius 2005: 172-173), which suggests that Knudsen may have come up with a revised version of the text that was similar to the first one. In any case, after receiving it Sibelius contacted Hansen and, according to Tawaststjerna, the final "meltdown" came when it became apparent to Sibelius that he had to deliver a through-composed pantomime instead of three separate dances (Tawaststjerna 1989: 324). Hansen replied that Trepka Bloch had shown Sibelius's letter to Knudsen, whereupon Knudsen declared that the work should be through-composed and should closely follow events on stage, as in any mime ballet. In addition, it could be performed both in theatres and in opera houses; Knudsen used the term "ballet-pantomime" about the work, as in the contract mentioned above (Wilhelm Hansen to Jean Sibelius 18/06/1913 SPA 45).

Sibelius then demanded an increase in the fee for *Scaramouche*, pointing out that when he accepted the commission, he did not think he would need more than two or three days to compose it: "I did not think that the pantomime would be a through-composed work." Now that appeared to be the case, "my entire reputation is in the balance" (Sibelius 2005: 414, ref. 76; Tawaststjerna 1989: 324, quoting Sibelius's letter to Hansen, 21/06/1913). That same day, 21 June, Sibelius noted in his diary: "I ruined myself by signing the contract for *Scaramouche*. – Today things became so heated that I smashed the telephone. – My nerves are in tatters. What remains for me? Nothing. I have allowed one stupidity after another to weigh me down. Have written

both to Breitkopf & Härtel and to Hansen (with a demand for an additional fee). But now I'm in a jam both as an artist and as a human being. How wretched!" (Sibelius 2005: 173). Nevertheless, a few days later he was back at work on *Scaramouche* and wrote in his diary: "Hansen would release me from the Scaramouche contract, but Trepka Bloch – not a chance" (Sibelius 2005: 173-174). At the end of June, Hansen mentioned that he had forwarded a letter from Sibelius to Trepka Bloch and Knudsen, from whom he was awaiting a response. While Sibelius was waiting (commenting in his diary: "Spending my time waiting for a decision concerning the pantomime"), he began composing the orchestral work *Luonnotar* (1913) for Finnish soprano Aino Ackté (1876-1944) (Sibelius 2005: 174). Sibelius returned to *Scaramouche* in September, when he received the fourth version of the text from Knudsen and was already thoroughly fed up with it. He had been working on the basis of the third version of the text, and now drafted a letter to Knudsen: "[I] can no longer change anything without the whole musical structure collapsing. To revise the work according to what you just sent would take too long, and I no longer have the inclination for that – especially as I have already twice accommodated you by making revisions arising from additions from your side." At this stage he planned for the pantomime to play for an hour, with two separate pieces, *Danse dramatique* and *Canzone*, that could be extracted. These titles suggest that Sibelius was already planning separate numbers, of which he later made piano versions (with different names) (Draft letter from Sibelius to Knudsen, 21/09/1913, SPA 45; Dahlström 2003: 312. Draft letter from Sibelius to Hansen, 21/09/1913, SPA 45). Understandably, receiving this fourth version made work on the piece frustrating, and it became increasingly burdensome, as the September and October diary entries reveal: "*Scaramouche* is tormenting me. It's killing me"; "I can't manage to finish the pantomime. I pay in blood for these commissions!"; "Working today on the pantomime that will never be finished" (Sibelius 2005: 177-178). By November, Sibelius was apparently occupied intensively with *Scaramouche*, as he wrote in his diary: "Business matters are constantly interrupting my work on the pantomime.' And after his birthday, 8 December 1913, he continued: "Yesterday was my 48th birthday. *Sic itur ad astra*. – I was overworked and sick. Nervous in the extreme. Making a fair copy of the pantomime, i.e. composing it in its definitive form. What will become of this child?" (Sibelius 2005: 178-179). On 19 December 1913 *Scaramouche* was ready, more than six months later than originally foreseen (Diary 19/12/1913; Sibelius 2005: 179). Two days later he sent the score to Hansen along with a letter stating: "As you see, the original scheme has grown into a comprehensive work. To get it right has cost me much thought and work. In the form it now takes, I believe it will be successful. Generally speaking, I have thought of the stage as being full of activity – it's not a work for actors who stand around waiting for gestures from on high" (Sibelius 2005: 179; Tawaststjerna 1989: 324). [Some passages in the previous three paragraphs are excerpted from Kurki 2020.]

The printed score has three languages, French, German and English including dialogue and stage directions. Libretto only books were published separately in five languages: French, German, English, Danish and Swedish. The publisher obviously anticipated an international (Northern European, North American) rather than mostly Scandinavian interest in performing the work. It is difficult to see how the libretto with the score would appeal to nationalist sensibilities, although

by titling the piece *Scaramouche* rather than *Blondelaine*, Knudsen seems to have emphasized some sort of implied Nordic commentary on a non-Nordic (Mediterranean) cultural icon.

Figure 7: Knudsen, undated photograph; photographer unknown. Photo source: Danish Film Institute.

Kurki's 2020 description of the pantomime's action applies here. The story is set at Leilon's farmhouse, and the events take place one evening and in the small hours. The pantomime's theme revolves around a ball at the house and Blondelaine's solo dances, so music is a central part of the plot. At the start of Act I we hear the music of the ball – in Sibelius's score a minuet. The host, Leilon, does not dance, and his wife Blondelaine complains about this to her admirer Mezzetin. During the festivities Blondelaine dances a bolero for the guests. From outside we hear Scaramouche playing viola da gamba. Sibelius represents Scaramouche's playing with chromatic viola and cello solos, although the vast majority of historical images depicting Scaramouche show him playing or carrying a guitar. Scaramouche´s troupe includes a boy playing the flute and a woman playing the lute. Scaramouche is invited to play at the festivities and, while he plays a bolero, Blondelaine—observed by the guests—dances ever more passionately and erotically. The jealous Leilon drives Scaramouche and his troupe away, and then the ball continues with the

dancing—in Sibelius's score, a waltz. This waltz blends with Scaramouche's playing, which entices and seduces Blondelaine.

At the beginning of Act II, Leilon and his friend Gigolo drink wine after the guests have left, and Leilon reminisces about Blondelaine. Here Sibelius has composed an attractive, melancholy string theme that he later transforms into a flute solo (Tranquillo assai). Gigolo leaves. Blondelaine enters; the scene with her and Leilon contains hints of the flute theme from earlier. When Leilon leaves, Scaramouche arrives to take Blondelaine away. Scaramouche does not play any music in the scene, but the Scaramouche theme is heard in the orchestra. Blondelaine doesn't want to go with Scaramouche and stabs him with a dagger, then hides his body behind a curtain.

After this, the music once again becomes an integral part of the events on stage. Leilon returns; Blondelaine takes him to the spinet, and he starts playing. The music heard is the minuet from the very beginning. Blondelaine begins to dance, stumbles, and sees a trickle of blood running from behind the curtain. As she continues to dance, she imagines that she can hear Scaramouche playing in the room. Leilon reveals the body of Scaramouche behind the curtain and Blondelaine dances herself to death. Leilon loses his mind. At the end (the score is marked Grave), the boy and woman from Scaramouche's troupe come looking for him and find him dead. They leave, and the woman makes the sign of the cross (Sibelius 1919. *Scaramouche* Op. 71. Score. Edition Wilhelm Hansen).

Scaramouche is a through-composed stage work and runs for more than 200 score pages. The duration of the piece is approximately 65 minutes. The two acts play without a break and are divided into 21 scenes (ten in the first act, eleven in the second). Several of the scenes last less than a minute, and the longest is scene 20 in the Act II, which plays for thirteen minutes. The piece is scored for strings plus woodwinds (2 flutes [piccolo], 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons), a brass section comprising just four horns and a cornet à piston, piano and percussion (timpani, triangle and tambourine). Sibelius has followed the instructions for the different dances contained in Knudsen´s text, and also makes use of leitmotives. The musicians are divided into three groups: the main orchestra, a group of offstage players (Scaramouche´s troupe) and players among the characters in the libretto. Daniel Grimley observes: "Although the composition of Scaramouche gave Sibelius significant cause for worry, it is nonetheless one of his most fascinating and neglected scores," and he describes several of the orchestral effects employed by the composer (Grimley 2021: 152-153). Even more detailed discussion of Sibelius's music appears in Eija Kurki's 2020 article on *Scaramouche* for *Sibelius One* and in Leah Broad (2017).

On a narrative level, *Scaramouche* bears many similarities to a work of the same time by another Dane, the composer Paul von Klenau (1883-1946). In 1915, Klenau composed a fairytale "ballet pantomime," *Klein Idas Blumen*, based on an 1835 H. C. Andersen story, which enjoyed considerable popularity in Germany and Austria before 1939 (Hamilton 2017). Klenau attempted a second ballet pantomime in 1917-1918, *Marion*, which Wilhelm Hansen published in 1920, although the work has never been performed. The story occurs over a twenty-year span from 1850 to 1870, but Klenau's music contains several musical anachronisms, including "a ragtime

with Hungarian dances, an Italian song, the playing of a stand-up violinist and a “Paris waltz” (Bogdahn 2022). According to Gerrit Bogdahn:

> Henry, an aspiring painter, falls in love during a dance performance with the prima ballerina Marion, who then breaks away from her troupe of artists to go with him. Charles, the director and bandmaster of the traveling theater, is also smitten with Marion and vows to snatch his best dancer back from the young artist. In the years that follow, Henry advances to become the most famous painter in Paris, while Marion renounces dancing in accordance with his wishes. The couple spends the summer months in a seaside resort in southern France. There Charles ambushes Marion in the gardens of a spa but is driven away by Henry. That same evening, Charles makes an appearance as leader of the dance orchestra. As the high society dances to the latest Parisian waltz, a gentleman invites Marion to dance. As she enters the dance floor, the music changes and finally Charles plays a furious violin solo to which Marion falls under his spell again. She leaves Henry and joins Charles once again. Fifteen years later, the latter’s troupe of artists is performing in an Italian fishing village where Henry is also staying. Marion has aged prematurely by now and refuses to dance, but Charles and the fishermen present force her. The curtain falls as Marion performs a demonic dance that may be her last (Bogdahn 2022).

Like Leilon in *Scaramouche*, the character of Henry, the painter, “remains pale and his actions are not comprehensible. He falls in love with Marion when he sees her on stage and wants to ‘put himself at the service of her art’ by painting her, but subsequently forbids his future wife to dance. At the last meeting in the fishing village, he does nothing to save her but remains passive with the rest of the audience” (Bogdahn 2022). Klenau never had any connection with Sibelius, as far as we know, but he was a strong supporter of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone theory of music composition, conducting numerous concerts of Schoenberg’s music, and he remained a friend of the composer throughout his life. *Marion* seems just as promising as a narrative as Knudsen’s libretto, and the score contains many attractive, innovative, and imaginative effects. But it is not known why Klenau’s work has never been performed, despite the composer’s great confidence in his composition. However, the work deserves mention in relation to the peculiar identity of *Scaramouche* as a Danish pantomime of that time period.

Figure 8: Jean Sibelius, 1913, at the time he completed work on Scaramouche. *Photographer unknown. Photo: Public Domain.*

Sibelius dedicated the score to Svend Borberg (1888–1947). His reasons for dedicating the score to Borberg remain obscure. Borberg was a Danish intellectual and playwright who achieved prominence in the interwar Danish theater milieu for his dramatic criticism in the newspaper *Politiken*, in which he advocated an anti-naturalistic, expressionistic approach to theater production similar to modernist theater culture in Germany, France, and Italy. The great Danish playwright Kaj Munk (1898–1944) credited Borberg with guiding him toward the liberating possibilities of modernist theater. Borberg wrote three plays that attracted much attention when produced at the Royal Danish Theater and elsewhere in Scandinavia and Germany: *Ingen* (*Nobody)* (1920), *Cirkus Juris* (1935), and *Synder og Helgen* (*Sinners and Saints*) (1939). From 1923 until 1942, he worked on a "ballet pantomime," *Stambul Burns*, which was never published or performed. After the war, Borberg faced accusations that he collaborated with the Nazis, possibly because his play *Baaden* (*Boats*), set in the Faroese Islands, was staged in Hamburg in 1942. (Knudsen also faced accusations of collaboration because of his artistic activities in the Third Reich.) Although a tribunal acquitted Borberg of the accusations, he faced ostracization from the

Danish arts community (Lawaetz 2023; Kallenbach 2022; Petersen 1981). However, by 1918, when Hansen published the score with the dedication, Borberg was an ambitious but not major Danish intellectual who had published four experimental philosophical books, of which the most notable was, perhaps, *Krig og Køn, bidrag til en erotisk ny-orientering* (*War and Sex, contribution to a new erotic orientation*) (1918), in which he, a pacifist, used Freud's theory of sexuality to explain the origin of the Great War and pathological gender inequities. There is no evidence that Borberg and Sibelius ever met. Borberg visited Finland for the first time in 1936 in relation to the Helsinki production of his extravagantly allegorical "mind game play" *Cirkus Juris* in 1937. He told *Svenska Pressen* (14/09/1936) and *Åbo Unterrättelser* (15/09/1936) that he had been "in contact" with Sibelius, but not that he had actually met the composer or that he had in any way collaborated with him or that Sibelius had dedicated *Scaramouche* to him. Sibelius never mentioned Borberg in his diaries. It may be that the dedication served a practical, political purpose. Knudsen was trying to get *Scaramouche* staged at the Royal Danish Theater, where Johannes Poulsen was attempting reforms to move the theater away from provincial naturalism and toward a cosmopolitan, international modernist aesthetic. Provincialism and nationalist sentiment were perhaps partly responsible for the frustrating delay in staging *Scaramouche* in either Helsinki or Copenhagen or even in printing the score, since Sibelius had completed the score in 1913. Though already famous internationally, Sibelius hoped that *Scaramouche* would align him more securely with modernism in public consciousness in a way that his symphonies had not. Knudsen and Poulsen (and maybe Hansen, too) probably persuaded Sibelius that a dedication to Borberg would strengthen Borberg's influence in the Copenhagen cultural milieu and thus facilitate more easily a production of *Scaramouche* in that city. But if that was the motive for the dedication, then the strategy did not work, because it took another four years to get *Scaramouche* staged in Copenhagen. Nevertheless, the mysterious dedication seems connected to the struggle within Danish theater to escape nationalist provinciality and adopt a modernist aesthetic influenced by German Expressionism, new dance, and perhaps cinema.

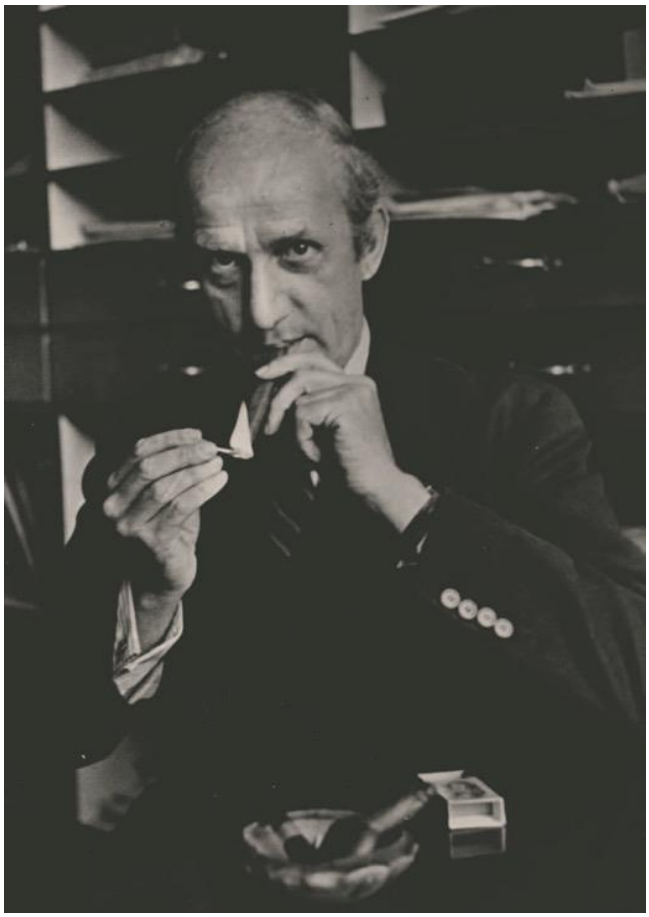


Figure 9: Svend Borberg, unknown date, unknown photographer. Photo source: Kallenbach 2022.

Knudsen's Libretto: Themes and Contexts

Toepfer has discussed several themes in *Scaramouche*:

> *Scaramouche* is another of those pantomimes in a Germanic vein in which female dancing represents a fatal, "forbidden" sexual desire. The by now familiar German trope of the hunchback dwarf is also here. The piece may be understood as an expressionist representation of marriage from the wife's perspective: despite claiming to love her husband, she yields to an impulse, stirred by a demonic music, to experience some sort of orgasmic wildness that leads her outside of the cozy room, outside of marriage, and into death. Her attraction is not to the dwarf, but to the music. The "decadent" husband, refusing to dance himself, is unable to subdue the power of the music to control her, even when he plays it. The demonic music goes on, although the dwarf is dead. The scene before the mirror suggests that her own image drives Blondelaine toward an ecstatic apotheosis of herself through dance. Her dance draws men (Leilon, Scaramouche, Mezzetin) toward her, yet it frees her from them. It also releases her capacity for degradation and murder, and this fundamental paradox of her identity kills her. The scenario embeds the idea that music can be "too much" for the (female) body—it is a male fantasy of anxiety toward female masturbation. Sibelius' music achieves a dark-hued, melancholy, shimmering charm, but it is not "wild" or "demonic" in any conventional sense, as if he wished rather to invoke trembling shadows playing across a dappled surface (Toepfer 2022: 902).

Leah Broad describes *Scaramouche* as "an allegorical depiction of dance's dependence on music" that explores "alternative masculinities and sexualities" to the heterosexual, marriage-bound norms of a sexually repressive society governed by an aristocratic elite: the dance-oriented release of female sexual desire has the power to undermine the capacity of the aristocratic elite to control the social order (Broad 2017: 152). The music that awakens female desire has its source in a physically grotesque or deformed maleness, although, mysteriously, the source of her desire is not the object of her desire, which is something more abstract than a body—it is "music," a thing without an image or at least something that cannot be seen in the milieu depicted on the stage. Sibelius produced "an intensely sexual score," in part because he saw the project as a way to articulate his changing attitude toward sexuality and the limitations of male comprehension of female sexuality (Broad 2017: 127-132).

Figure 10: Poster for the Soviet documentary film The Secret of Success *(1965) depicting the*

education of ballet dancers. The poster visualizes dance's "diabolical" dependence on music in an allegorical manner similar to the way Gunnar Hauch and other critics perceived the relation between Blondelaine and Scaramouche. Artist unknown. Photo: kino-teatr.ru.

As for his own preoccupation with sexuality, Knudsen constructed a scenario that more closely resembled the erotic film dramas he was beginning to write for Nordisk Film Company than anything that one might extract from the *commedia* repertoire. His libretto for *Scaramouche* also bears some resemblance to *Der Schleier der Pierrette* (1910), a pantomime with some dialogue by Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931); a performance of the piece occurred in Copenhagen in March 1911, with Poulsen playing a "creepy" Arlechino (Jacobsen 1990: 142). When informed of the similarities, Sibelius became enraged and threatened to abandon the project (Sibelius 2005: 169-170). Schnitzler's pantomime may have inspired Knudsen, but it is misleading to say that Knudsen copied or plagiarized it, when he was instead influenced by a narrative structure that was not even original with Schnitzler (Toepfer 2022: 752-755). Hartmut Vollmer (2011: 77-110) has written extensively about Schnitzler's pantomime and edited a 2012 edition of the text, which, after its Dresden premiere in 1910, had many performances in different European countries until the late 1920s. Alexander Saxelin (1899-1959), who choreographed a *Scaramouche* production for the Finnish National Ballet in 1935, appeared as Pierrot along with ballerina Mary Paischeff (1899-1975) in a 1928 production of *Der Schleier der Pierrette* at the Swedish Theater in Helsinki. However, none of the reviewers of this production made any reference to the *Scaramouche* production at the National Theater five years previously.

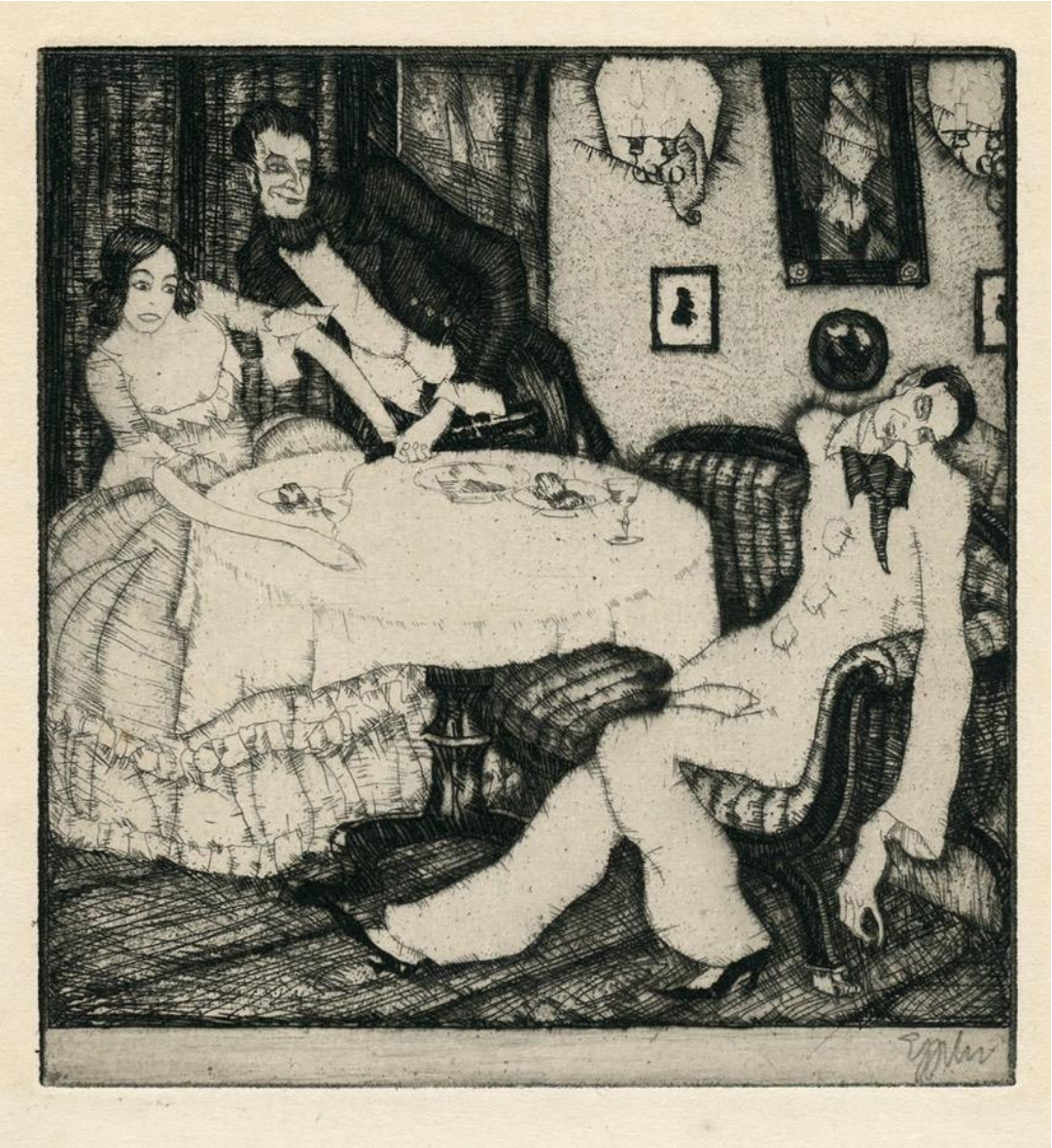


Figure 11: Book illustration for Arthur Schnitzler's Der Schleier der Pierrette*, Vienna: Fritsch, 1922, by Austrian artist Stefan Eggeler (1894-1969).*

Figure 12: Mary Paischeff and Alexander Saxelin in Pierrettes slöja (Der Schleier der Pierrette), *Helsinki, Swedish Theater, 1928. Photo: Hufvudstadsbladet 29 March 1928.*

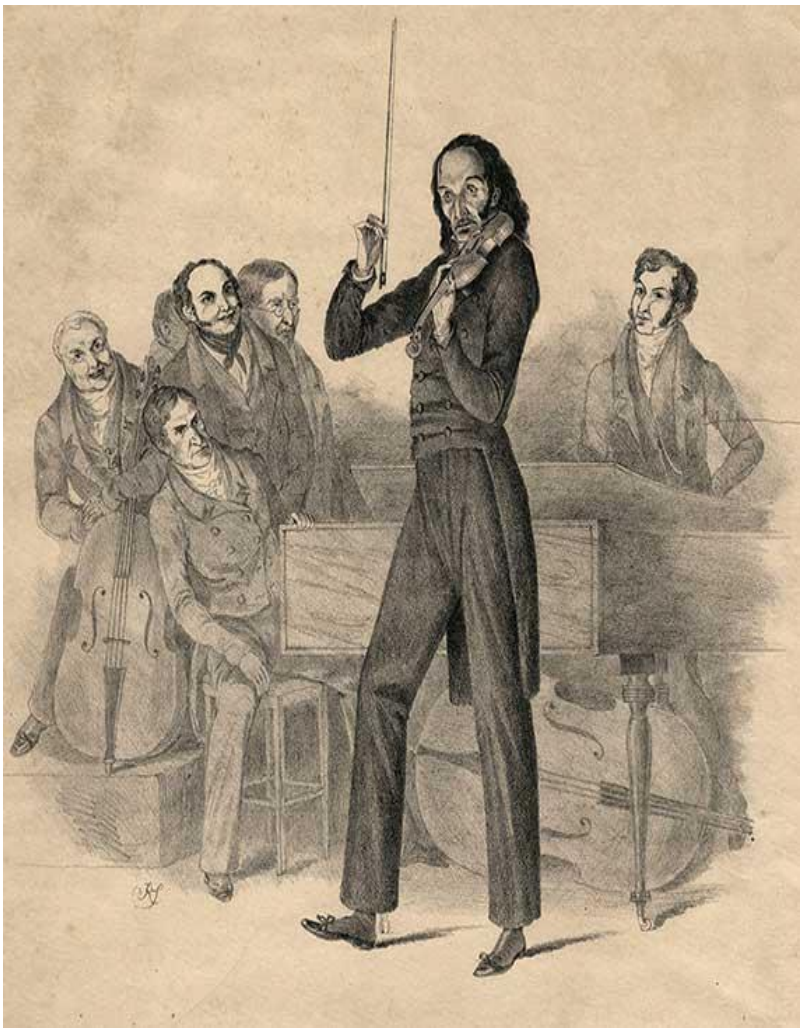


Figure 13: Drawing by Richard James Lane (1800-1872) of violinist Niccolo Paganini (1782-1840) as "The Modern Orpheus," Haymarket Opera House, London 3 June 1831. Photo: Public Domain; Photo source: National Portrait Gallery, London. Paganini's flamboyant personality and performance style introduced the idea of the "demonic" violinist, whose music hypnotized listeners in a "dark" manner. The demonic violinist was a popular trope when Knudsen wrote his libretto and still is. The Italian violin virtuoso Giuseppe Tartini (1692-1770) told people that he had a dream (in 1713), where the Devil himself appeared and played a sonata for violin. When Tartini woke up, he hastily tried to write it down, but it was a bleak sketch of what he had heard: Il trillo del diavolo, clearly a precursor to Paganini if not to Scaramouche, was most likely written in the 1740s.

Nordisk had achieved remarkable international success with films focusing on women conflicted by socio-economic aspirations and "improper" (often adulterous) erotic desires, women struggling with their attraction to "strange" or "dangerous" men. However, Knudsen complicated this trope by making Scaramouche a hunchbacked dwarf dressed all in black: he exerts a hypnotic, telepathic power over Blondelaine, whom he clearly desires, but Blondelaine's desire encompasses more than the grotesque Scaramouche. Rather, his music awakens an erotic ecstasy in her that is free of her need to touch any man. Scaramouche may be grotesque, but Blondelaine indicates no

serious physical attraction to her handsome, elegant husband. Knudsen may have received some inspiration from the very popular novel *Trilby* (1894), by the Franco-British cartoonist George Du Maurier (1834-1896), in which a demonic, "foreign" (implicitly Jewish) hypnotist in Paris, Svengali, exerts telepathic control over a talentless artist's model, an Irish girl, Trilby, and transforms her into a rapturous singer, with tragic consequences for both. A stage adaptation of the novel by Anglo-American Paul M. Potter (1853-1921) appeared in 1895 with great success in London and New York. In 1898, the Danish actress Anna Larssen (1875-1955) starred with apparently much success as Trilby in a Copenhagen production of Potter's play (Borg 1986: 94-95; *The Sketch* 05/10/1898: 482). Numerous film adaptations of *Trilby* ensued, beginning in 1914.

Figure 14: Anna Larssen as Trilby and Peter Fjelstrup (1866-1920) as Svengali in Trilby, *Copenhagen, Folketeatret, 1898. Photo sources: Copenhagen, Theater Museum Picture Collection.*

Figure 15: Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1852-1917) and Dorothea Baird (1875-1933) as Svengali and Trilby in the play Trilby *(1895), by Paul Potter, based on the novel* Trilby*, by George Du Maurier, United Kingdom. Photo: Public Domain.*

Figure 16: Marian Marsh (1913-2006), Bramwell Fletcher (1904-1988), and John Barrymore (1882-1942) in Svengali *(1931), directed by Archie Mayo (1891-1968), based on Du Maurier's 1894 novel, and produced by Warner Brothers, USA. Photo: Public Domain.*

While it is unlikely that Knudsen saw the Copenhagen stage production, the trope of a mysterious alien or "foreign" enchanter casting a transformative spell over a beloved person within an elite social milieu became recurrent for decades. Numerous early silent films developed variations of the trope. In 1910, the Nordisk Film Company in Copenhagen, Denmark, achieved great international success with the 38-minute film, *Afgrunden (The Abyss)*, starring Asta Nielsen (1881- 1972) as a woman from a refined family, engaged to a vicar's son, who becomes enraptured with a "dark," charismatic, but sinister circus performer, and runs away with him, with tragic consequences. In this case, it is not music, but a sadomasochistic "Apache" dance that seduces the woman, a very famous scene.

Figure 17: Asta Nielsen and Poul Reumert (1883-1968) as Magda and Rudolf performing the "Apache" dance in The Abyss *(1910), directed by Urban Gad (1879-1947), Nordisk Film Company, Denmark. Photo: Danish Film Institute.*

It is impossible to believe that Knudsen, who began writing scripts for Nordisk and other film companies in 1912, was not aware of this film, for *Scaramouche* is yet another mutation of the trope. Knudsen's innovation within the trope was to embed Scaramouche's telepathic control over Blondelaine in his music making, his violin playing. Scaramouche is the artist who transforms Blondelaine into an ecstatic dancer, whose rapture frees her from attachment to all bodies other than her own. She cannot, however, detach her rapture from a contradictory feeling of intense degradation, which entails a tragic doom for both the artist and the dancer: the seductive music also makes her homicidal and suicidal. The story displays a preoccupation with the relation between physiognomy and sexual rapture: the source of the ecstatic music is a hunchbacked dwarf dressed entirely in black with a name that is obviously "foreign" to the refined milieu depicted on stage. Blondelaine's intense feeling of degradation derives from her dependence on an "ugly" body to give her pleasure. Scaramouche embodies a male physical repulsiveness, for which no artistic "power" can compensate in relation to possessing the woman of his desire or satisfying her desire for a man. With Leilon's failure to exert a successful counter-power to Scaramouche, the story dramatizes a male fear that the male body is not able to "cause" a woman to reach the most intense manifestations of her sexuality. However, in producing the scenario on stage, ballet companies tend to suppress this aspect of the story by suggesting that Scaramouche is a "Gypsy" (presumably because of his violin playing) or a demonic, crypto-Jewish "foreigner," like Svengali, or, much more anodyne, a handsome "dark" figure of Gothic romanticism. When Knudsen published his text separately in 1922, he described Scaramouche merely as a violinist who plays the viola da gamba, not a gypsy (Knudsen 1922: 12–13). And in the *dramatis personae* he is only Scaramouche without any definitions of being a violinist or with any other epithets; in the

published music score, he is described as “a musician.” On the cover of the published scenario, Kay Nielsen, who also designed set and costumes for the Copenhagen production, envisioned Scaramouche to be a slim figure, dressed in black and wearing a hat. The hair is black, his face and long fingers are very pale. He plays a treble viola da gamba with six strings, differing from the modern violin of four strings. He looks somewhat reminiscent of the Italian violin virtuoso Niccolo Paganini (1782–1840) with his sorcerer-like appearance (Figure 13).

Figure 18: Scene from the film Elskovs Magt (Man’s Great Adversary) *(1913), directed by August Blom (1869-1947), with screenplay by Poul Knudsen and Sven Lange (1868-1930) with Ferdinand Bonn (1861-1933) between an unidentified actress and Clara Wieth (1883-1975). According to the Danish Film Institute, the film shows how “Director Cordt is in love with the chancellor’s daughter Wilda, who unfortunately has a crush on the actor Frits. But Cordt knows: The only way to convince Wilda that Frits isn’t the right one for her is to let her find out about the actor's debauchery and financial irresponsibility for herself. Step by step Cordt executes his cunning plan.” Photo: Danish Film Institute.*

Ballet companies also discard the dialogue patches that so annoyed Sibelius and reviewers of productions that retained them. Consider the opening scene, in which “as the curtain rises, a minuet is heard, the music slow and spiritless, occasionally false. In the background of the hall

the musicians are seen; they play the bagpipes. Beside the doorway leading to the hall stands Leilon, a tall, very slender, somewhat décadent young man, with fair hair falling over his forehead. He stands awhile looking in at the dancers." Soon "an old servant approaches" and says: "You called me, Sir?" Leilon responds: "Lights, candles! Fetch tapers and light all the fairy lamps here." The servant departs. Gigolo enters and says: "Here all alone, Leilon?" Leilon responds "earnestly with a gesture of the hand toward the dancers" and says: "Yes, drinking in the colours; all the wealth of colour on that rich palette made living by the dance." The servant re-enters and lights the candles. Gigolo says: "Yes, yes, it is beautiful indeed. I am glad to have seen your home in festive sway." Leilon: "Oh, we are always feasting here" (Sibelius 1919: 3-5). None of this dialogue is necessary, and dialogue elsewhere in the text is equally feeble. All of the ideas and sentiments conveyed by these patches of speech could be conveyed much more economically and imaginatively through physical actions. Speech immobilizes the bodies of the performers and, as the exasperated Sibelius understood, compels the music to become more static and less expressive than it needs to be. It is not a matter of the performers "translating" the dialogue into gestures; it is a matter of communicating a dynamic uncertainty of mood through the signifying collaboration of music and physical action. But Knudsen insists on explicitness, probably because he lacked confidence in his pantomimic imagination—or rather, he feared perhaps that the performers and the music would undermine his control over the scenario, as if he himself were Leilon, and the music and the performers were like Scaramouche taking control over his story, his Blondelaine. The dialogue resembles silent film intertitles, and it may be that Knudsen's entire experience of pantomime derived from watching silent films, where he hoped to establish himself as a screenwriter, in which case, it is understandable that he lacked confidence in his ability to inscribe pantomimic action into his scenario, for in silent films, the insertion of the intertitles *followed* the composition of the scenic action, which was the work of people who thought out the story in terms of pantomimic action. Through the dialogue patches, Knudsen asserted an authorial control over the story that he feared would be diminished if the ideas and sentiments were less explicit and Sibelius, Johannes Poulsen, and Lillebil Ibsen had more freedom to "interpret" or, rather, to construct the narrative.

Figure 19: Scaramouche, *Copenhagen, directed by Johannes Poulsen, 1922, with Lillebil Ibsen as Blondelaine, Svend Methling as Leilon, and Johannes Poulsen as Scaramouche; set design by Kay Nielsen. Photo from Det kongelige Teaters Arkiv og Bibliotek. The photo shows blood dripping down the steps from the fatally wounded Scaramouche.*

Copenhagen 1922

The first performance of *Scaramouche* took place in 1922 at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen (12 May 1922). It was directed by Johannes Poulsen (1881-1938) with choreography by Emilie Walbom (1858-1932), who had been choreographing at the Royal Ballet since 1878. Kay Nielsen (1886-1957) designed the set and costumes, and Georg Hoeberg (1872-1950) conducted the orchestra. Poulsen also performed the role of Scaramouche. Lillebil Ibsen (1899-1989) initially performed the role of Blondelaine, until other women, dancers, Margrethe Brock-Nielsen (1896-1977) and Elna Jørgen-Jensen (1890-1969), took over the role. Svend Methling (1891-1977) played Leilon. The performance included dialogue, which "placed equal importance on the music, the set design, the mime/dance and the dialogue" (Vedel 2012: 524). "The stage realization of this slightly unoriginal libretto, which let the dance, the word and the music gather up into a higher dramatic unity, was something quite new for the genre" (Jacobsen 1990: 142). "Apart from the piano or spinet and a few other pieces of furniture, the hall decoration was simplified to the bare essentials: flat wall backdrops painted with 'black and blue fields with flower decoration and adorned with metallic

ornaments' The painted windows in the background were covered by 'black curtains with silver monsters [dragons].' Between the windows, steps led up to an ajar door with a view of a moonlit sky" (Jacobsen 1990: 142). Journalist Christian Houmark (1869-1950) proposed that the production applied "colors that suggest neurasthenic visions" (Jacobsen 1990: 143). Especially fascinating for audiences then was the skill of the stage technicians in showing blood streaming from the stabbed Scaramouche down the steps on which he sits to the floor and then down the stage toward the audience (Jacobsen 1990: 143). A critic of the time remembered that a local butcher, Halgreen, was said to get free tickets because he delivered blood to the theater for tragedies (Tawaststjerna 1988: 108). Director Johannes Poulsen played Scaramouche himself. He made Scaramouche an ugly and hunchbacked violin player, not a gypsy, and being tall and having a heavy physical structure as an actor, he was not a dwarf. He was neither the slim Paganini type, nor did he have long black hair as in the libretto cover picture. Neither was he dressed in black as in Kay Nielsen's cover illustration and as is mentioned in Sibelius´s score text. Kirsten Jacobsen has described that he had red hair, colourful clothes, and he was a hunchback (Jacobsen 1990: 143): "Johannes Poulsen's Scaramouche was big and dangerous--very creepy with wildness in it. Ulla Poulsen [his wife] did not like him in this role" (Jacobsen 1990: 149). Kay Nielsen had been involved with the production since 1914, soon after Sibelius had sent his composition to Hansen (Kurki 2020). Later, Nielsen's set and costumes were used in the Oslo (1923) and Stockholm (1924) productions as well. (Kurki 2020; Vedel 2014: 367– 368). His designs for both set and costumes emphasized the fantastic and decorative rather than any realistic effort to evoke an aristocratic manor house decor. Aside from Blondelaine, the costumes evoked an archaic era, perhaps around 1810 (Leilon) and seventeenth century Italy (Scaramouche and musicians); Blondelaine alone appeared attired in a fashion somewhat close to 1922. Blondelaine's name suggests that she is a blonde character, but Lillebil Ibsen was not a blonde, nor did she wear a blonde wig, nor were any of the other dancers or actresses considered for the role blonde. Indeed, Ibsen's Blondelaine wore a vaguely modern Spanish dress, including a black mantilla. Sibelius composed a bolero for Blondelaine; however, a bolero is not a Spanish dance, it is Cuban. Scaramouche's costume was an extravagant patchwork of indifferently juxtaposed designs, as if the character had improvised his attire from cloths that originally had another purpose. His companions in his musical troupe appeared in rags, conveying an almost medieval look (Figures 19 and 20). The Copenhagen production was a success. Reviewers praised the music and the performance while complaining about the dialogue, and one reviewer felt that Lillebil Ibsen was not "wild" enough at the end of the piece (Kurki 2020; Jacobsen 1990: 143–144).

The composer Gunnar Hauch (1890-1937), a persistent advocate for Sibelius's music, wrote two articles for *Nationaltidende* about the production but discussed mostly the music, asserting that "the topics that have tempted him to [dramatic] musical treatment are those which contain fantasy and mysticism. [. . .] should one classify his style, the characterising words are almost Expressionism or Symbolism" (Broad 2017: 170). In an article, "Sibelius' Musik til "Scaramouche," for an unidentified newspaper in the Stockholm Music and Theater library, Hauch, writing as "—r—h," wrote entirely about Sibelius's music for *Scaramouche*, which he regarded as "a significant work in the famous composer's output." He explained that "Sibelius has written his music for a

theater orchestra, not for large opera or symphony orchestra. The number of instruments he uses is therefore not large, but the art with which the limited resources are utilized is all the greater. His score works like a 'color erasure' with refined, but sublime values and masterful drawing. The atmosphere of the picture itself is so full of strength and fantastic horror that it is difficult to find very many dramatic pictures that grab the viewer more immediately and seductively. [. . .] there are none of the musical- dramatic props that modern theater music literature was overflowing with." The reviewer gives an example of Sibelius's skill at musical dramatization: "In Scaramouche's [violin] stanzas, after which Blondelaine dances, there is no actual breathtaking melody, but a rhythm and a discordant lusciousness, so strongly suggestive. The same goes for the Interlude in the Forest, which was originally only intended as a symphonic Intermezzo in the Orchestra; but in the spirit of the second act springs forth a music that is wonderful and unforgettable. Leilon's sorrow over his good luck that he has lost, and then his painful encounter again with Blondelaine; these are melodies that have received their colors and tones from all the autumn leaves; it's rhythms like the death dance that remain in painful remembrance. The scene at the spinet with the two [Blondelaine and Leilon], who seek to cradle wild thoughts through the old melody, has a soulful fervor that is unique in recent theater composition; and from this tension [emerges] the great pathos, the gruesome ending." The reviewer admired the orchestration: "The woodwinds could chatter in enraptured, attuned groups, or a single flute could hum a quiet melody to the strings' softest whisper (as in the beginning of the 2nd act), and violins could rush like the wind in demonic horror or swell in sweet-filled singing." "This all-but-easy score was given an admirable rendering by the Royal Chapel under Kapellmeister Georg Hoeberg. The sound was beautiful [and] Sibelius' music to *Scaramouche* became the season's event among the musical news at the Royal Theatre."

But the Danish reviewers also compared Scaramouche to the Belgian Symbolist dramas of Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949) in relation to the set, costumes, and direction, while incorporating elements of expressionism (music, pantomime, and dance), although "G.W.," in the Social-Demokraten (13/05/1922), remarked that "The symbolism in the little drama is not easy to grasp" (Vedel 2014: 363; Kurki 2020). It seems, then, that Poulsen and his collaborators saw the scenario as an opportunity for a multimedia, *Gesamtkunstwerk* experiment in synthesizing contradictory aesthetic styles. According to Jacobsen, Poulsen's "slightly decadent style was in line with the time and dance art ideals [. . .] Poulsen was on the way to a modern, European-inspired theater with this staging, and for that reason, *Scaramouche* is considered his most epoch-making effort for the ballet genre" (Jacobsen 1990: 150). The production would probably have benefitted from having an actual dwarf play Scaramouche, but at that time, it was no doubt exceedingly difficult to find a dwarf with acting experience to play the role, although not so difficult to find someone smaller than the tall, burly Poulsen. But Poulsen wanted to play the role, and that is a key element in the difference between pantomime and ballet productions of the piece. Within an acting company, there's always someone who wants to play the dwarf, unlike in ballet companies, where a dwarf is simply unimaginable as a major character. Knudsen at least intuitively understood this difference when he conceived his scenario as a pantomime, not a ballet, although ballet interested him, and he wrote several ballet scenarios in the early 1930s.

Figure 20: Scaramouche (Johannes Poulsen) with members of his musical group in the 1922 production of Scaramouche *in Copenhagen. Lute player: F. Meyer-Hane. Flute player: Svend Aage Larsen (1899–1988). Photo: Holger Damgaard (1870–1945). Royal Danish Library.*

Perhaps the most unusual assessment of the Copenhagen production came from the Swedish-Finnish "radical" social and political philosopher Rolf Lagerborg (1874–1959), who published his review in a book, *Om konst och konstnärer* (1924), after it had appeared in the magazine *Våra kvinnor* (*Our Women*) (22/01/1924 No 2, 30–33). In 1946, *Nya Pressen* (07/03/1946) republished Lagerborg's review, slightly abridged, on the occasion of a production of *Scaramouche* in Helsinki, discussed later. Lagerborg had known Sibelius since around 1902, when they were both members of a Finnish arts society, Euterpe, which for a few years published a journal of the same name devoted to commentary on literature, music, and art. Lagerborg developed an affinity for Freudian psychoanalytic theory of sexuality, but he also believed that Finland should move closer, politically and culturally, to Sweden and France than to Germany and Russia (Nygård 2015: 190–192; Sibelius 2005: 479). Between 1902 and 1904, Lagerborg attracted considerable notoriety for publishing "radical" texts critical of upper-class sexual morality in Finland, and he advocated a remarkably advanced, feminist attitude toward marriage and female sexuality, which he maintained even after he stopped writing on the subject when he faced excessive difficulty in publishing his ideas (Jalava 1997: 69-78). In 1918, however, Sibelius was skeptical of Lagerborg's application of Freudian theory of sexuality to explain artistic creativity in a 1918 article for *Finsk*

Tidskrift, where Lagerborg wrote: "But it is absolutely certain that the refined nervous structure of an artist is more susceptible to shock than others. This is based, among other things, on the fact that the artist escapes into his imagination: his soul life, his art itself becomes a goal for him, which makes up for his unbearable trials and tribulations. With the help of his art, he avoids neurosis, with it he satisfies his restless desire for life, gets rid of inhibitions and internal conflicts, frees himself and calms down" (Lagerborg 1918; Sibelius 2005: 463-464). In his diary entry for 7 June 1918, Sibelius wrote, in Swedish: "The fear that I shall die before the symphonies [op. 82, 104, 105] are finished. It's called: 'ei kaksi kolmatta' [written in Finnish, a phrase meaning not two without three] Kuula, Faltin and ? [Sibelius was afraid he would die soon, as composers Toivo Kuula (1883–1918) and Richard Faltin (1835–1918) had just recently passed away, Kuula on May 19th and Faltin on June 1st.] - Plagued by Rolf Lagerborg's article in Finsk Tidskrift regarding Freud's theory. Derogatory to me as a composer. They don't realize that a symphonist's aspiration: to establish laws for the notes in eternity is slightly larger than to 'fall for king and country' - many can plant potatoes and be of 'use' - many more can" (Sibelius 2005: 274). In his monumental biography of Sibelius, Erik Tawaststjerna (1916-1993) speculated on why Lagerborg's theory annoyed the composer: the idea of art as "sublimation or compensation" for unhappiness was disturbing. For Sibelius, "creative genius was a positive factor that raised him above ordinary people. And more: he saw himself as an intermediary of a higher power. But still, the quote Lagerborg picked up from a biography of [Gustaf] Fröding [1860-1911, Swedish poet who suffered from mental illness] may have hit him hard: 'Spiritual culture is first of all, made by unhappy people.' Did he react so violently because he found the sublimation theory to be valid after all? [. . .] In addition, [Sibelius] could have been teased by another fact: Lagerborg defended the biographer's right to clarify the soul life of the artist with things that 'a large number of people mistakenly consider degrading, - for example with physiological or pathological explanations'" (Tawaststjerna 1978: 293-294).

In his review of the Copenhagen *Scaramouche* production, Lagerborg fused description of the story with description of the performance to construct a vividly subjective account of what he saw, an inventory of emotional responses to the story as realized by the production. For example:

> When the curtain goes up, you are transported to a party in a legendary past. The men in jerseys of different colors, the ladies almost the same, but with embroidered hips and silver-knit air bathing veils, fluttering about in the dance. An orgy of arms and bosoms; and the bosoms rise and the dance goes. The lady of the castle, the dandruff-white Blondelaine, with hair like red gold, with a robe as black as sin, dances solo to everyone's delight. But mostly to the amorous castle lord; he has a heart defect and is not allowed to dance with her but is all joy in his child-wife.

Lagerborg's psychoanalytical approach to the action is evident in his use of many adjectives and adverbs to describe not only the emotions of the characters but the feelings they provoke in the author:

> But Blondelaine is not satisfied with the bagpipes; those tones with their scraping sound, in contrast to the playful dance music, violently shaking tones, forcing everyone to listen. Blondelaine stops her solo dance, shuddering, longingly swaying to the sensually ensnaring beat. They call in the gypsies. Scaramouche, a red-haired ruffian, ugly, plays, and the lady of the castle dances.

> Smooth, blissful, passionate, Blondelaine adjusts her movements to the tones of the wandering rogue; the beat of his bolero grows wilder, he fixes his eyes on her, follows her, she dances in agony, giddiness with her eyes in his. She crouches before him like an animal before its tamer. Her dance carries on increasingly lascivious: a murmur arises among the guests, the friend intervenes: '...she dances like your wife is not allowed to dance.' But the lord of the castle is imprisoned by his own intoxication.

"But Blondelaine is out of her mind," Lagerborg continues, as he sees the performance as an externalization of the psychic disorders of Blondelaine and her husband (Lagerborg never identifies Leilon by his name), which causes him, the writer, to shift uncertainly from present to past tense: "She wants to have the bolero once more, she wants the musician back, she has never felt anything like it before. Her husband talks sense to her, but he only satisfies her desire with beautiful words about what he himself felt before the wild tones," which "flowed as from an underworld, they blazed like a passion, whose fire scorched the clouds, whose smoke extinguished the stars. 'I didn't recognize anyone here, not the guests, not the hall, not you, Blondelaine.'" By using heavily emotional language to describe the action, Lagerborg reveals the physical choices the actors made to construct their performances, although he never mentions any actress by name in the 1946 version of the essay; Johannes Poulsen is the only actor mentioned by name. However, at the end of the *Våra kvinnor* version, he does differentiate between Elna Jörgen-Jensen's performance and Margrethe Brock-Nielsen's: "Prima donna, Mrs. Jörgen Jensen, nevertheless let hope shine; she was replaced at yesterday's performance by the more vivacious diva Mrs. Brock-Nielsen, who gave a far less soulful, but bloodier Blondelaine. In her portrayal, the end was embarrassing; she throws herself (certainly according to the text) straight across the corpse, she caresses and kisses the dead. She whispers her yes with a glow, the impression of which was hardly softened by the laughter she emits in the dance, silly, lazy, but sarcastic [. . .] But the devil-possessed woman, who bears the main role of the piece, demands a ... star. Mrs. Jörgen Jensen is everyone's favorite, from the student's gallery to the royal lodge - just returned, shrouded in layers, from a guest appearance at the Paris Grand Opera." In a "Postscript" to the article, he adds that he saw Lillebil Ibsen perform Blondelaine in Oslo (1923), and here he inscribes details of her performance that reveal how the actress probably approached the role when she performed it in Copenhagen, and her approach created a quite different understanding of what the piece communicated: Ibsen "varies the role according to her own disposition, more expressive in general, and always captivatingly soft and lovable in plasticity and mimicry. But *Scaramouche* turned out thoughtfully believable when Blondelaine was guided by Mrs. Jörgen Jensen. The 'interlude' was too poetic: the game in the forest. She lures Scaramouche, she is the one who dares him instead of the other way around. And it goes against the idea of the piece: the trance, the willingness does not come into its own, she gives herself up voluntarily instead of the other way around. The play did not turn out as the author had intended." Yet Lagerborg's description of the action and performance remains the most vivid account of any performance of the work.

> They break up until evening. But Blondelaine is too hot, she lingers: a moment only, she says. As she stands by the balcony door and breathes in the cooling night breeze, suddenly the boleros's rhythms again reach her ear. She freezes, she trembles with anguish, she calls her husband with

distressed scream after distressed scream, with a voice that is increasingly choked; she hooks herself, to furniture, to walls, her pantomime game culminates in her, with eyes closed and mouth half open, witnessing how the state of ecstasy rises, staggers towards the exit door. The tones well up more powerfully; at once the somnambulant heaviness in her is replaced by a fleeting flight, shrinking her gaze towards the light and with the same blind and trembling speed you see her rush onto the stage in the "Interlude." Scaramouche stands and plays in the moonlight. Johannes Poulsen, who played the role, apparently wanted to excel with his arm strength, his athlete's chest, his toreador-type charm; and had therefore designed the scene with brutality. One sees how the predator pounces on his prey, where she writhes at his feet and he lifts her up like a ball, lets her fall, again in triumphant wild manhood; his muscles swell and contrast with her softness, and with a horse roaring he carries her away while the felt curtain slowly falls and painting tones reveal the end of this love forest meeting between the primeval male and female.

Figure 21: Elna Jörgen-Jensen as Blondelaine in Scaramouche*, directed by Johannes Poulsen, Copenhagen, Royal Theater, 1923. Photo*: Våra kvinnor (Our Women) *(22/01/1924 No 2). The picture bears the caption "Den trolltagna" (the bewitched).*

Lagerborg describes actions in the second act with even more intense "psychological" language, focusing at first on the "agony of the despairing husband [. . .] the melancholy agony of his love," although the libretto depicts Leilon as eager to believe Blondelaine's story that she does not know where she has been and, kneeling before her, eager to demonstrate his love for her. The

description of Blondelaine's entrance and interaction with Leilon makes her seem more distraught and inwardly conflicted than the libretto indicates. Lagerborg uses language to give "voice" to Blondelaine's tortured conscience and to Leilon's self-deception that does not appear in the Knudsen's text, as if the performers signify these unspoken "thoughts" through physicalized subtext; Lagerborg does not ascribe the representation of these psychic conflicts to the music nor does he indicate how the music might operate in tension with the stage action, suggesting that he perceived the music as reinforcing the action in a conventional soundtrack manner rather than creating an emotional juxtaposition:

> Blondelaine creeps in, pale and with her hair past her shoulders; she shows it in her smart sunken hesitation, runs her hands over her whole being: in self-disgust. Then she rushes with regret, half on her knees, and kisses her husband's hand; but she is now at his throat and entwined with him. He sits down again, she sobs at his knees. Yes, yes, say the wind. It's your hair, the dew has wet it, your voice is wonderful, irresistible. This hair smells like you want to rest after your dance; yes, you do. Happy. My only desire is to sit with you, close to you. Shall I speak? But I know it's a lie, lie, lie! But in love he continues to speak, banish all evil and lets himself be governed by his fate again; where the desire is strong, one believes the lie. Blondelaine has crept into his arms, she is caressing the victory, she is doing penance, as only that woman can caress, who has a debt to sweep. He lets himself be taken, he builds castles in the air believing they will find happiness again.

Figure 22: Elna Jörgen-Jensen as Blondelaine in Scaramouche*, directed by Johannes Poulsen, Copenhagen, Royal Theater, 1923. Photo*: Våra kvinnor (Our Women) *(22/01/1924 No 2).*

Almost none of this language is in the libretto; this is the language of the writer inhabiting the consciousness of the two characters he saw on the stage, interpreting performed actions to mean what he has described. Lagerborg describes the rest of the act in a similarly torrid and unstable style: "Then she slips on something wet. A scream. What is going on? She responds in horror:

play, play faster! More and more out of her wits, Blondelaine dances while the wide blood stream [. . .] slowly flows forward. Closer and closer the blood flows, wilder and wilder the dance. With eyes directed and undaunted by the blood [. . .].” However, Lagerborg’s description of the ending is confusing: “The bolero's beat becomes fiercer, the witch's dance turns into a death dance; she finally collapses limply at Scaramouche's side. Her husband carries her forward into the light and caresses her corpse. The crescendo of the bolero motif is excruciatingly awful. But its content offers a certain atonement, the evil goes of itself into the abyss, the unfaithful atones for her guilt.” Sensing that the ending provides an excessively conventional moral—adulterous sin and guilt punished by death; the sanctity of marriage must be preserved, even at the expense of female desire—Lagerborg drifted further into psychoanalytic explanation:

> Scaramouche is, despite its hideousness or by virtue of it, eminently moralizing. Not with a direct tendency; art reaches its ultimate effect most safely by detours. The play could be given in a church as a modern mystery play: that of fear from sinful love more than images of the horrors of hell. With the great art in “Scaramouche” one much prefers to bow insofar as the subject is most difficult: a course of illness set to music. It is not just the old story of how the butterfly-winged Eros transforms into a cruel tyrant, to whom one sacrifices the love of life; it is more: life itself, in tribute to the intoxication of the mind. But here comes something more, and hence the music's constant background of gloomy tearing apart under dreamily caressing tones. After all, we are faced with the insanity that the excitement triggers in Blondelaine, and with the typical trance state when she is bewitched and unaccountable: under anesthesia through all [her] waking life can [cause her to] yield to the tempter; and further, how during anxiety and relapse (as soon as the bolero sneaks in), even worse is ignited; finally hallucinations, the insane madness emerges. To shape this into captivating art is a task that requires devilish possession also on the part of the master of the work, it demands a Jean Sibelius.

In the *Våra kvinnor* version of his essay, Lagerborg equates Blondelaine’s hunger for ecstatic release from marriage and upper-class moral constraint with the function of modern, avant-garde art, as represented by the Russian director Alexander Tairov’s (1885-1950) book *Das entfesselte Theater* (*The Unchained Theater*), published in Berlin in 1923 and the “pictures” in *Das moderne Bühnenbild* (*The Modern Stage Image*) (1923), by German art historian Oskar Fischel (1870-1939). The theater should “bring together dance and music, nudity and decorative art, lighting and all kinds of strange effects (one thinks of The Blue Flag, the cabaret art of the Russian artists): [theater] should bring out anxiety and movement in an ever-changing orgy of jubilation, frenzy and lust, of desire, anguish and rebellion all brought together in a swirling cauldron, the audience loses its breath, forgets itself and goes up in ecstasy. [. . .] as one could just as easily regard the orgiastic religious ecstasy as the purpose or supreme fruit of religion. Certainly, the work of art should grab, pull along and uplift, but not beyond the dreamlike atmosphere. Not so that you lose yourself and forget that it is unreal. Art must make every heart tremble, but not do violence to our whole being.”

In this cascading tumult of words, Lagerborg attempts to show how *Scaramouche* functions to compensate for a sick or profoundly unhappy “modern” existence. The story is a kind of allegory dramatizing the suppression of female desire through marriage. Female desire awakens and expands through a musical rather than poetic maleness. But the musical maleness overwhelms

and then destroys the wife, female desire, and the poet's love is not powerful enough to protect her. The story "compensates," so to speak, for the failure of love to accommodate desire, which is why the story is "tragic." Love goes into the making of the work rather than "saves" the characters in the story. However, the production itself provoked in Lagerborg a turbulent and not altogether coherent outpouring of words, which confirms his theory to a degree that most likely he was unaware. It is as if, in his review, he is striving to produce a special, though not exactly "poetic," language with which to reveal his love for Blondelaine and thus "save" her from the story and from the "devilish" music of the master composer, save female desire from the failure of poetic maleness to accommodate it. What does it mean to say the writer of this essay loved Blondelaine? Did he love the character Blondelaine or the actress playing Blondelaine? But which actress? After all, three different actresses played Blondelaine in Copenhagen, and it is possible that Lagerborg saw more than one performance of *Scaramouche*. Most likely, the Blondelaine he loved was a psychic amalgamation of the imaginary and the real that produced a profound disordering of his emotions or seriously disturbed his "nervous system," to use the psychoanalytic parlance of that time. In this way, the writing of the review "compensated" for an "illness" within the writer.

The Copenhagen production was obviously a powerful emotional experience for Lagerborg. It was also a lasting experience. On 16 December 1945, in Helsinki, he gave a Swedish Writers Association Christmas matinee lecture on the Copenhagen *Scaramouche* production, apparently in a very dramatic manner, in relation to a scheduled production of the work that did not take place because of the difficulty in assembling an orchestra; it was rescheduled for March 1946 (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 17/12/1945). Quite possibly he enacted the essay he published in 1924. It is remarkable that Lagerborg found the Copenhagen production of *Scaramouche* moving and memorable enough to give a lecture on it in Helsinki over twenty years after he published his essay.

Helsinki 1923

A production of *Scaramouche* took place 19 March 1923 in Helsinki, Finland, at the Finnish National Theater, which had been negotiating to produce the work since 1916. The director and choreographer was the Finnish modern dancer Maggie Gripenberg (1881–1976). She got the job after Sibelius rejected a proposal from the National Theater's managing director, Eino Kalima (1882–1972), to have the work performed by the Finnish National Opera (with its attendant ballet company). Sibelius wanted the National Theater to perform the work in part because his daughter, Ruth Snellman (1894–1976), an actress at the Theater, would play Blondelaine (Kurki 2020). With Gripenberg directing the production, actors (rather than dancers) were more likely to use pantomimic rather than balletic physical movements. Ruth Snellman's husband, Jussi Snellman (1879–1969), who had already achieved distinction as a lead actor in early Finnish silent films, played Leilon. Another actor who had just begun to star in silent films, Einar Rinne (1890–1933) played Scaramouche. The semi-Impressionist painter Eero Snellman (1890–1951), not related to Ruth and Jussi Snellman, designed the set, although it is unclear how it looked. A photograph of the production indicates a much more austere and less decorative scene design

than Nielsen's, an image closer to the Nordic manor house prescribed in the libretto. Another painter, more of a realist, Matti Warén (1891–1955), designed the costumes. However, the costume he designed for Scaramouche was emphatically expressionistic: Scaramouche wore tight black pants, a tight black jacket, a huge V-like bow, and a curious black hat with furry brim. His pants had bizarre disk-like cuffs with downward pointing spikes, and he wore strange, speckled boots (Figures 23 and 26). But this Scaramouche was neither a hunchback nor a dwarf. Blondelaine, however, wore a light, sleeveless, floral-printed dress in the style of 1923. But other members of the cast seem to have been dressed in different centuries—early nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Members of the Helsinki Philharmonic played the music, conducted by Tauno Hannikainen (1896-1968). Critics responded enthusiastically to the production and considered it an adventure in expanding the possibilities of theater. But the critics also criticized Knudsen's dialogue ("too much talk and too little real pantomime"), and the music often drowned out the actors' voices (Kurki 2020). Like Lillebil Ibsen, Ruth Snellman, though largely praised for her performance as Blondelaine, faced criticism for being inadequate to the demands of "the powerful climax in the closing act" (Kurki 2020).

Figure 23: Jussi Snellman as Leilon and Einar Rinne as Scaramouche in Scaramouche*, directed by Maggie Gripenberg, Helsinki, Finnish National Theater, 1923. Photos: Finnish Theater Museum.*

Figure 24: Ruth Snellman as Blondelaine in Scaramouche*, directed by Maggie Gripenberg, Helsinki, Finnish National Theater, 1923. Photos: Finnish Theater Museum.*

Figure 25: Ruth Snellman as Blondelaine and Jussi Snellman as Leilon in Scaramouche*, directed by Maggie Gripenberg, Helsinki, Finnish National Theater, 1923. Photos: Finnish Theater Museum.*

Figure 26: Ruth Snellman as Blondelaine and Einar Rinne as Scaramouche in Scaramouche*, directed by Maggie Gripenberg, Helsinki, Finnish National Theater, 1923. Photos: Finnish Theater Museum.*

For *Uusi Suomi* (20/03/1923), composer Lauri Ilmari Ikonen (1888-1966), as "L. I:nen," perceived the music as the driving force of the production, whereby "the orchestra, depicting the development of the main characters' thoughts and feelings, weaves them together, gradually into a flowing symphonic voice [. . .] demanding sensitive attention from the actors, so that the integrity of the whole is not diminished." Ikonen felt that the actors' "dependence" on the music to complete the construction of the characters they played, which "should not be felt," indicated the "difficulty of the joint performance of Sibeliusian music and pantomime with dialogue. The most solid parts on the stage were the 'silent' ones, such as e.g., the fine atmospheric description at the beginning of the second act with the flute solos related to Leilon's mournful mood." Ikonen praised Einar Rinne's skill at responding to the music in role of Scaramouche, but other actors

tended to deliver “performances that did not deviate from the usual speech show.” Ruth Snellman’s Blondelaine “was very charming as a stage phenomenon, but it seemed as if it was a little heavy for her to swim freely in the constricting framework, which in this case means the music, which was sparing, but so dominant in the background of the whole scene.” In *Helsingin Sanomat* (20/03/1923), music critic Evert Katila (1872-1945) also discussed the relation between music and pantomime: “it seems as if Sibelius, when composing the piece, intended it to be a pure pantomime play, where the events of the land are not spoken at all, and moods and emotions are interpreted with gestures and dance,” but unfortunately, Knudsen wrote a libretto that, with dialogue, “became a strange mixture of pantomime and melodrama,” which provoked problems, because the orchestral music made it difficult to understand what the actors where saying. Katila recommended that whenever actors spoke, the orchestra should play “piano or pianissimo, regardless of how the music is written.” He ended up calling *Scaramouche* a “ballet melodrama.” Aside from the problem of the dialogue, “the National Theater performed Sibelius's ballet melodrama gracefully and exquisitely in all aspects.” Sibelius’s music was “not especially original or high-powered, but composed with excellent style and sense, melodious, descriptive, rich and beautifully played, as one would expect from a master.” Katila praised all the actors as well as Eero Snellman’s scenery and Matti Warén’s costumes. Ruth Snellman, as Blondelaine, “was a wonderful revelation: her expressive acting and beautiful dances made her the central character of the dance tragedy.” Theater critic Nils Göran Lüchou (1896-1949), writing for *Svenska Pressen* (20/03/1923), also focused on the music, which is “the power that gives all expression and form, that pours life into people and events, which gives the [stage] phenomena their artistic validity (one completely forgets the original author Poul Knudsen). And this music is healingly beautiful. It owns a rare poetic enchantment, it can flow forth in the subtlest and most sensitive moods, it lives with dramatic shadows and clarification, and it can find the rarest magically fantastic and violent expressions of the pantomime's content; it shuns all banal theater paintings.” “*Scaramouche* belongs to one of the most sensitive, artistically poetic and expressive of musical dramas that exists.” Nevertheless, the “effect of the play on the stage of the Finnish Theater yesterday was not quite as strong as one imagined when reading it. [. . .] the pace was too slow for the action and mood and too burdensome for the short, concentrated scenes. The environment needed more life from light and shadows.” Even so, “the set was believable and good, and the various elements of the plot were dramatically underlined quite well,” and Maggie Gripenberg “really solved the difficult task of putting the music on stage in a natural and successful way.”

Figure 27: Maggie Gripenberg, 1912, painting by Wilho Sjöström (1873-1944); Gripenberg in Sibelius's Valse triste in London, 1911. Gripenberg first performed Valse Triste in Finland in 1906. Photos: Wikipedia; Gripenberg 1952.

A reviewer for the *Åbo Underrättelser* (20/03/1923), "(—m.)" provided a more perfunctory assessment of the production: "The music is the essential, while the plot, though refined, hardly is other than a series of sensations. The music was subdued passionate and extraordinarily effective. The decorations, the costumes, and the lighting effects were well done. However, it can be noted that there wasn't much style about the set as desired," and "a truly educated dancer" was necessary for the Blondelaine that Ruth Snellman played, and Rinne's Scaramouche overpowered all the other performers. "The overall assessment is: a very interesting theater evening." In *Karjala* (01/04/1923 No. 74), "V" contended that *Scaramouche* was "nothing substantial; [. . .] It's surprising that Sibelius could be inspired by the libretto [. . .] because the composer is always far above the text writer. [. . .] the [spoken] words do not claim any attention at all. This is partly due to the fact that the words are often hard to hear in the music [. . .] All attention is drawn to the musical effects. It is a very fine piece of high art written in the salon style, which, although not evidence of progress in the production of its master, is interesting as a specimen of its kind. Here

and there, themes prettier than usual are brought to the ear, which are twisted into a wreath of summer flowers." The theatrical aspect of the production "V" confined to single sentence: "the staging was also carefully taken into account in the National Theater. Eero Snellman and Matti Warén had together given their imaginations the message to produce a beautiful scenic environment with impressive colors, costumes, lighting effects, etc., which inspired universal praise. "V" made no mention of the actors/dancers. The reviewer for the *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* (21/03/1923 No. 67), "(-la)" asserted that the "melodramatic or declarative form of pantomime is not suited to promote hearing music" against the dialogue, but one can "still enjoy in this special evening the fertile productivity of Sibelius's creative spirit." Ruth Snellman "incarnated well the struggles of Blondelaine, performing her pantomime coolly and sensually. Jussi Snellman's role as Leilon was interpreted with great skill [. . .] Einar Rinne played Scaramouche with passionate flamboyance." The orchestral conductor Toivo Haapanen (1889-1950), as "T.H.", wrote more expansively and somewhat verbosely about the production in *Iltalehti* (20/03/1923). Sibelius's music impressed him: "The composer has not put so much emphasis on creating colorful dramatic effects; rather, he has taken on his task more, if I may say so, decoratively, creating a very solid and expressively restrained compositional background for the action of the play; on the one hand airy, bright dance notes, while on the other hand an excellently aptly dark and demonically fascinating Scaramouche's tune gives the surrounding outline. The music of *Scaramouche*, where you can feel Sibelius's master stamp throughout, makes this pantomime especially valuable." As for the production values: "The National Theater has put a lot of care into the performance, and the result was beautiful in many ways" with "the eye-catching color of the general effect, scenery, costumes and lighting, The scenery was designed by the artist Eero Snellman and the costumes by the artist Matti Warén. In some details, I would have liked an even bolder and more appropriate use of lighting (when, for example, in Leilon's last action in the show he pulls aside the curtain that hides Scaramouche's body, the lighting effect that offers itself is not used to advantage here)."

Figure 28: Scaramouche*, directed by Maggie Gripenberg, Helsinki, Finnish National Theater, 1923. Photo: Finnish Theater Museum*.

> As for the performance of the pantomime itself, directed by Miss Maggie Gripenberg, it cannot be considered a reproach if it is stated that the performance was not quite up to par in all respects. This kind of task naturally also requires a special skill from its performers. First of all, it is doubtful whether a performance of a pantomime can ever reach its full effect when the individuals perform their parts also speaking. The movements seem too realistic in the work, where only music, gestures and facial expressions should speak, and surely it is not composed with melodrama in mind. Yesterday's performance had a lot of spoken word and too little actual pantomime. The one who perhaps most truly met pantomime in tone, was Mr. Snellman as Leilon: the part could well have been understood without explanatory lines. Mrs. Ruth Snellman had the most demanding and difficult task as Blondelaine, which part requires an actual dance artist to perform. The performance had, in any case, a lot of style and beauty, so it definitely rose to a central position in the drama. Mr. Rinne's Scaramouche was also very well drawn.

Yet despite the enthusiastic media coverage of the production, this *Scaramouche* did not resonate with Finnish audiences: over five weeks, the production enjoyed only eight performances, even after the National Theater announced it had lowered ticket prices (*Helsingin Sanomat* 27/03/1923; *Hufvudstadsbladet* 10/04/1923; Kurki 2020). However, in summarizing past cultural events of the spring 1923 season, director and playwright Eero Alpi (1885-1933), writing for the Tampere newspaper *Aamulehti* (29/04/1923), explained that "due to difficulties of obtaining the Helsinki City Orchestra [Philharmonic Orchestra] to play at the performances, the National Theatre has

been compelled to remove *Scaramouche* from the program at least for the time being." Perhaps, then, a similar situation curtailed the number of *Scaramouche* performances in the fall season. Even so, that does not sufficiently explain the ambivalence of the Finnish public toward the production. But it does seem that the reviews lack sophistication in the description of theatrical qualities and effects. Only two women contributed reviews of *Scaramouche.* Helmi Krohn (1871-1967) in the *Suomen Kuvalehti Magazine* (No. 12, 13/03/1923) and Anna-Maria Tallgren (1886–1949) in *Valvoja-Aika* (Nos. 5–6, 01/05/1923). Tallgren regarded Knudsen's "Maeterlinckian" libretto as "completely worthless," but she praised the "exquisitely delicious color effects," the "powerful fantasy," of Eero Snellman's scenery and Matti Warén's costumes. Jussi Snellman, as Leilon, performed "extremely beautifully," displaying a quality of "genuine romance" in contrast to Einar Rinne's "romantically evil spirit." Ruth Snellman, "on the other hand," "longed to achieve a mystical beauty, but her demeanor was graceful and refined as always. *Scaramouche* was well done and successful." Krohn published by far the longest review of the Helsinki production. Using strongly emotional, subjective language, she gave an extremely detailed account of the entire action in the drama, including quotations of the dialogue: for example, Blondelaine moves "like a glittering butterfly, floating from flower to flower in circular rays. Every step is joy, every word is love: Blondelaine, walking beside Leilon, who adores her, carries her flowers to him. But in the midst of happiness, a violin echoes from outside, as if a thousand golden violins were playing there, and Scaramouche enters, a hunchbacked violinist, with a creeping step, with glowing eyes [. . .] his gaze penetrates deep into the young woman's soul." Krohn clearly found the story gripping to describe it in such detail and with such poetic language, while saying almost nothing about Sibelius's music. But she did not think Sibelius was accurate in calling his work a pantomime. "Rather, it's a melodrama, because a lot of space is given to the word, albeit with gestures and especially dancing claiming priority." Dancing is "the greatest part of Blondelaine's performance." Through dance, she "controls her joy, her sorrow, tenderness, and pain of death, her guilt and fear [. . .] the ability to interpret the female soul in a thousand vibrations. But it takes something else—it also requires soulful visions." Krohn then assessed Ruth Snellman's performance. "It seemed as if [Snellman] had grown attached to the music. And when we take into account that she has only been practicing dance for three months, one has to wonder at the good results she has achieved. She controls her body and especially her legs with amazing skill, her gait is so flexible and beautiful, as if she were just walking over flowers." Nevertheless, "in places she should have avoided stereotypical [movements], and the dance in the final scene does not rise to the summit, which there was every reason to expect, but the highest rise was already in the first act. A deeper grasp is needed, greater tragedy [. . .] Still, the way in which the part was performed at the National Theater deserves great recognition. Mrs. Snellman has all the prerequisites to succeed in this demanding role, a beautiful appearance, a lovely body, smooth movements, a sensitive voice, and an even more sensitive musical understanding." Krohn vividly describes a couple of moments when Snellman made astute performance choices ("the heavy pain of conscience rippled in her voice") before concluding that the "National Theater gave a grand drama with care and artistic intelligence—rarely is such beauty available to the public." This is the only review that, aside from the extensive description of the action, focused almost entirely on Snellman's performance of Blondelaine.

However, male critics and perspectives have overwhelmingly dominated evaluations of *Scaramouche* since 1922, and no one had written about the Helsinki production until Eija Kurki in 2020. Maggie Gripenberg did not mention anything about the production in her memoirs. If it had been a success with the public, she would surely have mentioned it. Sibelius was, of course, a significant person in Finland in 1923, and some of the reviews perhaps should be read as manifestations of politeness or deference towards the great composer. The Theater announced on 16 April, that Sibelius would be present at the performance that evening [7th performance] after coming home the previous day from his European travels. He would see *Scaramouche* for the first time (*Helsingin Sanomat* 16/04/1923). However, no evidence has appeared confirming that he actually saw the production. The last, eighth, performance of *Scaramouche* was then 23 April. Sibelius makes no reference to the production in his diary, nor in any published correspondence. Most likely, he did not attend any performance for reasons he preferred not to disclose, implying at least, that the production was not a point of pride for him. The Theater double-billed *Scaramouche* with *Galgmannen (The Gallows Man)*, by Runar Schildt (1888–1925), a one-act play originally written in Swedish but translated into Finnish (*Hirsipuumies*) for performance, in which the man of the gallows is a little sinister wooden figure that the proprietor must sell before his death; if not, he will be doomed and unredeemed. But this added production did not seem to function well as a further incentive to see *Scaramouche*. By contrast, when MGM's film production of *Scaramouche* (1923), a costume drama-adventure caper set during the French Revolution, directed by Rex Ingram (1895–1969) and starring Ramon Novarro (1899–1968) and Alice Terry (1899–1987) opened in Finland in September 1924, it played for months into the spring of 1925, often at multiple cinemas in Helsinki.

Figure 29: Scene from the MGM film Scaramouche *(1923) directed by Rex Ingram, starring Ramon Novarro (left) as Scaramouche (André-Louis Moreau) and Alice Terry as Aline de Kercadiou (center). Photo: Public Domain.*

Oslo 1923

Productions of *Scaramouche* in Norway and Sweden proved much more popular. The Centralteatret in Oslo staged the work, on 1 December 1923 with Lillebil Ibsen playing Blondelaine. A planned production with Lillebil Ibsen at the Nationalteatret did not happen for reasons that remain unclear, so staging moved to the Centralteatret, a private enterprise headed by Harald Otto (1865-1928), who stipulated that the production use the set and costume designs Nielsen had used in Copenhagen (Wilhelm Hansen to Sibelius 27 October 1923 SPA 45; Ibsen 1961; 169-170). Odd Frogg (1901-1934) played Leilon, and Erling Drangsholt (1885-1950) was Scaramouche. Here, however, Ibsen's mother, Gyda Christensen (1872-1964), was the director and choreographer. Christensen began her career as a modern dancer inspired by Isadora Duncan and taught by Emil Jaques-Dalcroze, but she guided the formation of ballet in Norway in 1910. She was a student of Emilie Walbom and then Max Reinhardt, through whom she became influenced by the modernist theater aesthetics of Alexander Tairov and Edward Gordon Craig. By

the time of the *Scaramouche* production, she worked entirely as an actor, director, and occasional choreographer. Torolf Voss (1877-1943) conducted a smaller orchestra than the score requires, but apparently without causing any disappointment in the music, according to Reidar Mjøen (Gjesdahl 1964: 136). Karin Vedel remarks: "Unlike in Denmark, where Lillebil by some critics had been found too graceful to really portray Blondelaine's passion and terror, she is commended in Oslo for her convincing mimical rendition of Blondelaine's emotions, moving the audience from ecstasy to horror" (Vedel 2014: 368, cit. *Politiken* 13/05/1922; *Tidens Tegn* 03/12/1923, signed Arne van Erpekum Sem.) In his history of Centralteatret, Paul Gjesdahl writes of *Scaramouche* "being a bold experiment" and continues: "The plot is not anything new [. . .] and the dialogue is often hurryingly banal, but Sibelius´s genius leads and directs the uninspiring plot and mild dialogue so that the melodrama is very impressive." (Gjesdahl 1964: 136). The Finnish newspaper *Hufvudstadebladet* (09/12/1923) reported on a review of the production in the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* by Hjalmar Bergström, who wrote:

> To this unlikely but in any case captivating and exciting act was added a sparse text. Not much is said there, but the meaning apparently is that the music tells so much more. Does it actually do that? Does it give any clear insight into the mental life of the performers? I have only been able to discover that it only exceptionally achieves this task, although I attentively followed both at the dress rehearsal and the first evening performance. I find it quite remarkable that Sibelius was content with such a small orchestral apparatus. He uses e.g. neither trumpets nor trombones and yet they would have been of good use in portraying Blondelaine's violent ecstasies. Caressing dance melodies and delightfully tongue-in-cheek mood pictures are enough to be happy about. But the Scaramouche melody, which was supposed to honor Blondelaine, does not have the compelling power that one must expect; it seems comparatively tame. On the whole, I perceive the music more as an accompaniment to the action than as an independent intervention. Maybe Sibelius wanted it that way, but that is also inexplicable to me. However, the audience does not ask such questions. Most theatregoers reveled in the rich beauty of the notes without pondering their psychological justification. And the success at the premiere last Saturday was magnificent.

In her 1961 autobiography, Ibsen claimed that *Scaramouche* received fifty performances, but publisher Wilhelm Hansen reported that the production received 24 performances, which was still an impressive achievement for a new and "experimental" work (Hansen *Afregning* 3 September 1923, SPA 45). Ibsen also remarked that "all Oslo's women swarmed over Frogg," and that Frogg "swarmed" over her (Ibsen 1961: 169-170). The German composer and concert pianist Wilhelm Kempff (1895-1991) found the Oslo production impressive enough to write to Sibelius praising his achievement: "Yesterday I went to see Scaramouche (with Lillebil Ibsen) and was enchanted by your music. Everything is so original and yet seems so natural. That is how it should be. Scaramouche has also made a great impression on my friends" (Tawaststjerna 1988: 147, cit. Wilhelm Kempff to JS 12/12/1923; Tawaststjerna 1997: 221, cit. Wilhelm Kempff to JS 12/12/1923; translation from Layton).

Figure 30: Odd Frogg as Leilon and Lillebil Ibsen as Blondelaine in Scaramouche*, directed by Gyda Christensen, Oslo, Centralteatret, 1923. Photo from: Ibsen 1961.*

Figure 31: Scaramouche*, directed Harry Stangenberg, Stockholm, Swedish Royal Opera, 1924, with set design by Kay Nielsen. Sven d'Ailly as Scaramouche and Ebon Strandin as Blondelaine. Photo: newspaper clipping, the Swedish Music and Theatre Library.*

Figure 32: Sven d'Ailly as Scaramouche, directed by Harry Stangenberg, Stockholm, Royal Swedish Opera, 1924. Photo: newspaper clipping, the Swedish Music and Theatre Library.

Stockholm 1924

The Stockholm production of *Scaramouche* on 29 September 1924 used the same set and costumes as the Copenhagen and Oslo productions. Direction and choreography followed the Copenhagen production, using Johannes Poulsen's director's book and Emilie Walbom's choreography (poster 29/09/1924 in https://arkivet.operan.se/repertoar/ and Wilhelm Hansen's letter to Jean Sibelius 11/09/1924 SPA 45). But Harry Stangenberg (1893-1941), a Swedish opera director, assumed responsibility for directing the players. Sibelius's friend, the Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871-1927) conducted the orchestra. Blondelaine was Ebon Strandin (1894- 1977), another dark-haired woman who was a prima ballerina with the Royal Swedish Ballet and had appeared in Danish and Swedish silent films. Opera singer Sven Herdenberg (1890-1957) was Leilon, and Sven d'Ailly (1892-1969), a singer, actor, and director played Scaramouche (Figures 31 and 32). D'Ailly used the same costume that Poulsen had introduced in the 1922 Copenhagen production, but he was neither a hunchback nor a dwarf, and he projected a kind of disheveled Bohemian handsomeness. In January 1925, Swedish prima ballerina and star of German films Jenny Hasselquist (1894-1978) replaced Strandin as Blondelaine for the last three performances. Like all other Blondelaines, Hasselquist was dark-haired and, moreover, cast a melancholy aura in nearly every role she played.

The production was controversial, provoking a diverse range of commentary in the press. For example, composer Moses Pergament (1893-1977), a promoter of modernist music, denounced the production in two lengthy articles for *Svenska Dagbladet* (28/09/1924; 18/01/1925). What most distressed him was the production's "repulsive" depiction of the physical relation between Blondelaine and Scaramouche, which produced "a nauseating odor," intensified by the sight of "the panting heroine running into the arms of the hunchback." It disturbed him that Blondelaine made her first entrance by "shamelessly swinging her hips a bit, as she walks through the otherwise so distinguished company." Blondelaine's attraction to Scaramouche was offensive to him: "The entire piece is based on the contradiction between a repulsive hunchback and the magic power of his violin. Personally, he is abhorrent, and every thought of a touch between him and Blondelaine is out of the question with her." Pergament disliked Knudsen's dialogue, which he mistakenly believed Poulsen had compelled Knudsen to add, for "clarity" of action, in developing the Copenhagen production. The dialogue, he complained, undermined "the piece's symbolic idea: music as the master of the dance," even though most of the piece was pantomime. "Instead of strictly following the grand theme, the text author tries to a give a 'psychological' justification of the sequence of events. Therefore, right at the beginning, he puts a line like this into Blondelaine's mouth: 'Every day the same flowers and the same love!' Pergament questioned the logic of Knudsen's scenario, particularly the interlude between the first and second acts, in which Blondelaine goes into the forest with Scaramouche. He felt the music alone should have conveyed the idea that Blondelaine has a sexual rendevous with Scaramouche in the forest. Instead, Knudsen confused the action in the second act by having Gigolo urge Leilon to give up Blondelaine and follow the travel plan he has devised, to which Leilon responds by driving Gigolo out: "This scene thus becomes the most tangible proof of the lyricist's mishandling. He lets Gigolo simply hint that Blondelaine disappeared and never intended to return. As if it was not a

temporary catastrophe at all, but something that the friend had long understood would happen." The action was not in synchrony with the music, for this music "can be counted among the most inspired Sibelius ever wrote and contains all the essential features of the master's creative spirit." "It is only in the consciousness of the great value of this music that I consider the piece deserves a better fate." Therefore: "The fact that the text came about thanks to a director's need for clarity does not necessarily mean that this clarity could not be achieved even without text. On the contrary, I am convinced that the text should be abolished if a strong and uniform dramatic effect is to be achieved. But it is at least as important that the entire staging be scrapped. It is superfluous to go into detail about both decorations and costumes. They have already received their verdict from a more authoritative source. The main thing is that a director with imagination takes care of the rehearsal. With a view to the basic idea of the piece, he must be able to shape the course of events and bring the dance as close as possible to the music. The first condition for the latter is that Blondelaine's dance be freed from all ballet styles and become what modern art dance is: an expression of soulful life." Pergament contended that choreography should be subordinate to the beat of the music and that actors should move for reasons given by the music, which presumably was not the case in the Stockholm production (*Svenska Dagbladet* 18/01/1925). But from Poulsen's perspective, a silent film pantomime aesthetic was perhaps the controlling directorial principle, so he directed *Scaramouche* as if Sibelius had composed film soundtrack music, which in relation to pantomime, was the proper approach: the music did not drive the action; it responded to it. But Pergament's review is peculiar in that he made no direct reference to the performance or performers, other than to chide Poulsen for adding dialogue that Knudsen himself had written many years before. He demanded that "Blondelaine's dance be freed from all ballet styles and become what modern art dance is" without describing the dancing of Strandin or Hasselquist. He mentioned the "shameless swinging hips" of Blondelaine's entrance without acknowledging that the swinging hips were Strandin's invention, not Knudsen's. But Pergament blamed Knudsen's scenario for the degradation of Sibelius's beautiful music; he therefore focused his critical sensibility on the defects in the scenario that contributed to the desecration. Presumably reference to the performance merely compounded the degradation.

Another composer, Wilhelm Peterson-Berger (1867–1942), regarded both the production and the music as "boring," which was perhaps not surprising, considering that his aesthetic sensibility was hyper-wholesomely nationalistic, and he was averse to cosmopolitan currents that explored dark erotic themes (*Dagens Nyheter* 01/10/1924; *Hufvudstadsbladet* 03/10/1924). The theater and art critic August Brunius (1879-1926), writing for *Svenska Dagbladet* (02/10/1924) found the production "completely empty and dead as a drama and even if Ebon Strandin could compete with the best actors in ingenuity and technique, she would not be able to make life out of the dramatic crag that is her character (with the horribly made-up name of Blondelaine). What happens is no more remarkable or more poetic than what occurs in dozens of ordinary ballets: a year ago in Paris, a tiptoe ballet was given, horribly banal, where the heroine was also lured from her home by a fancy gypsy band." Brunius complained about the dialogue and the failure of the production to clarify its performance aesthetic. The production was "all saved by Sibelius' music. But it is not drama and it is not theater. Ebon Strandin's Blondelaine is quite simply a dance performance. If the spoken lines have any effect, it is to lower the value of its restitution and to

confuse the concepts. Ballet must be ballet and theater theater. Let's all do the best on both sides of the ramp." That is, the mixing of dance with "naturalistic" pantomime and dialogue was a mistake, to which the composer Kurt Atterberg (1887-1974) responded by publishing in the newspaper a letter to Brunius that the mixing of dance, theater, and music was a good thing: "I can say with equal justification . . . that Sibelius' music is saved by the action (the saving could have been better), saved by the decorative (the saving should have been better) but rather that all these factors met each other, that they only together represent something enjoyable, bare, and this kind of performing arts I sympathize with. [. . .] For my part, I love it when scenic art can be performing arts." Brunius replied that he and Atterberg simply had different sensibilities and that, as if his view was not already clear, "*Scaramouche* has no artistic integrity, it is a scrappy piece for which Sibelius allowed himself to be tricked into composing music." Strandin's beautiful dancing did not redeem a "lifeless dramatic composition" (*Svenska Dagbladet* 03/10/1924).

In an article ("Säsongens första operapremiär") for an unidentified newspaper in the Stockholm Music and Theater library, an anonymous reviewer observed that "Sibelius's composition to this ballet pantomime [was] more original and fresher [than Erlanger's preceding opera], although the invention was not as original as the advertisement judged it to be. This originality appeared best in the interpretation of the mysterious, fantastic, gypsy-like Scaramouche figure, which was quite characteristically reproduced by d'Ailly. In particular, the orchestral organization of these sensuous scenes was very apt and refined. In its entirety, however, the music is very rhapsodic and can even without staged images give expression to something demonically magical. The conductor, Kapellmeister Wilhelm Stenhammar, knew how to emphasize the real, moody content of the strings in the best possible way, and the orchestra also performed with great panache his discreetly given instructions" (30/09/1924).

In a review for *Aftonbladet* (30/09/1924), (S. Sn.) praised the performers for overcoming the problems imposed by the dialogue: "It was clear from yesterday's performance that the composition is not intended to be illustrated by speaking actors. The intimate contact that must exist between the orchestra and the declamation in a melodrama is not here, and the lines fell moment after moment without any musical point of reference at all. Our opera artists are not trained in the art of speech either, but the stage images were clear, and the large audience, which can easily be misled by ballet mimicry, could now perceive all the shifts and nuances in the action without difficulty. Blondelaine was portrayed by Miss Ebon Strandin. The role is extremely difficult. It presupposes an artist who is not only a perfect dancer, but also an actress who, through the movements of her body and face, can give expression to the different phases of a tragic consciousness. Here in Sweden, I only know Jenny Hasselquist, who would have been able to complete the task. In fairness, however, it must be admitted that Miss Strandin exceeded expectations. Not content with being beautiful and dancing skillfully, she also made admirable attempts to capture the moods, and in the fateful scenes she seemed to be fascinated herself. What bothers mostly is her facial expression, which has so little to say. What would [dancer-pantomime artist] Mrs. [Charlotte] Wiehe-Béreny [1865-1947], who in her time could both dance and act, have gotten out of the horror scenes in the last act! Mimically expressive, on the other hand, was Mr. d'Ailly's Scaramouche, who with his fiery red hair and suffering-ravaged face made a terrible and mysterious impression. He was the one of the performers who came closest to the composer's thought. He was also the one who could best express himself through his speech."

For *Stockholms-Tidningen* (30/09/1924), "Gr. J." wrote: "What is surprising is that in this work Sibelius has so clearly succeeded in emancipating himself from a one-sided national language. The Scaramouche music sounds unexpectedly cosmopolitan, it reveals links with German, French and Italian styles." The reviewer singled out Ebon Strandin's performance: "In the role of Blondelaine, one had the pleasure of seeing Ebon Strandin, who expressively styled the woman obsessed with dance."

The prominent theater historian Agne Beijer (1888-1975), reporting on the Stockholm production for *Göteborgs Handels-och Sjöfarts-Tidning* (undated clipping), reminded readers of Bournonville's skillful use of pantomime, which, "to a Danish audience," might feel like "an old, familiar childhood experience," but which descended from Jean-Georges Noverre's (1727-1810) efforts to use pantomime to "elevate" ballet to "heroic" status with the "ballet tragique." But the comparison to Noverre's heroic ballets "is not entirely favorable to Knudsen, however. For if there's something you miss in Knudsen's composition, it's exactly heroism and masculinity. *Scaramouche* is feminine, weak, and close in spirit to hysteria, is entirely romantic and not classical." Beijer described Knudsen's dialogue in a disconcerted, even poetic tone: "The words seem to burst against the masses of tones, the human tribe finds no echo in the orchestra, while on the other hand what is said stands out with an almost eerie relief effect against the alien background. If the technique can be used with greatest effect in certain high-tension and infuriatingly pathetic moments, a danger lurks in its prolonged use. The sublime and the pathetic turn incredibly quickly into their opposite; the deeply meaningful seems easily affected and trivial. Not for nothing does the word melodrama have a pejorative connotation." But Sibelius's music was also a problem, for it "is irresistibly suggestive, through which the whole thing also has its only justification. It is above all Sibelius from Valse triste that we meet here, a wild and ecstatic romantic music, laced with absorbing suffering, with grinding excitement but above all and beyond all limits with the sweetness of trancelike melancholy. The strong scent of all this lyricism sometimes becomes numbing [. . .] Above all, *Scaramouche* is not healthy, is not masculine, and you feel it as a relief to shake off the intoxication that this music has poured into you." Beijer praised the actors for the excellence of their performances. Herdenberg was "close to ideal as the melancholic Leilon," Sven d'Ailly's Scaramouche, "disguised as the goblin in a fairy tale, was, in truth, as ignoble in Romanesque conception as the essence of the music." "However, the main interest was attached to Ebon Strandin's Blondelaine, a truly admirable performance. The role makes extraordinary demands both on dance, acting and declamation. In the midst of all the unrestrained lyricism, Miss Strandin's sure and calculated action, her plastic precision and self- control seemed liberating. As a dancer, she has hardly received the recognition her art deserves; there is something in the very essence of this art that stands between her and popularity. The lyrical dance poem is not nearly her thing: her strength lies in that which is incomparably more demanding, but also for the audience the more difficult dramatic genre, which she masters more perfectly than anyone in this country, and where she stands in high international class for the alternation of devotion and defiance."

Another reviewer, "M-e," in an unidentified (30/09/1924) clipping ("Operasäsongens första nyheter") in the Stockholm Music and Theater Library, enthused over the performance because "Sibelius has ingeniously interpreted these kaleidoscopically changing moods. It is difficult to get a firm grip on the first part of the play, because the downright silly dialogue is very distracting, but with Scaramouche's entrance on the stage, the music also intervenes irrevocably. There is a context and a unity over the entire work that one hardly wants to let go of remembering the mixture of sleek, refined and elegant scenic details. Here constantly runs the red thread as an undertone of battle and tragedy, but the weave in the fabric shifts as richly and variegated as life itself. Sibelius' orchestra seethes and sings in the heat of life"; "one finds here both the innocent, caressing waltz and the delicate spinet's song as well as the sensual longing, the animalistic brutality and finally the crime's piercing dissonance in irritating thirds and chromaticisms." "Blondelaine was danced by Ebon Strandin, who here did perhaps her best yet. She gave in both speech and plasticity real characterization, no false tones or inauthentic poses, she was clearly aware of her situation and managed to cast life in her presentation. It can be forgiven that there was little pity for the abandoned Leilon (Sven Herdenberg), the role has few grateful moments. Scaramouche was Sven d'Ailly, who again proved to be able to master a character role."

A correspondent for *Hufvudstadsbladet* (3/10/1924)," E," compared the Swedish production with the productions in Copenhagen and Helsinki. In Copenhagen, he had seen Elna Jörgen-Jensen as Blondelaine, not Lillebil Ibsen. As "charming" and "gifted" as Jörgen-Jensen and Ruth Snellman were in this role, he felt that Ebon Strandin greatly surpassed them. Apparently Strandin had experienced many difficulties and little success in singing and dancing the role of Carmen for the Royal Opera and Ballet. The role of Blondelaine in a pantomime was a great "revanche" for her and restored general confidence in her as a lead performer. He considered Sven d'Ailly's Scaramouche the best of the three he had seen, whose "violent and primitive" performance of "victory and suffering" made as much of an imprint as Blondelaine in the busy opera season. In Helsinki, he thought the monumentality of the scenic environment turned the characters into decorative elements rather than the main focus. The Copenhagen production, with Nielsen's "dragons," provided a more spacious milieu that was "was neither pure imagination nor a real historical style" and allowed "the body's beauty and the physical delight of dance" to steer the production. Nevertheless, "Nielsen's decorative creations offer an arbitrary and far from consistently beautiful stylization, which certainly gives a kind of atmosphere, but which cannot easily be considered to have any real artistic connection with the content of *Scaramouche*." "E" then refers to other reviews that are enthusiastic about the Stockholm production, except for Peterson-Berger's "hysterical" opposition to the audience's pleasure in it. According to the reviewer, "The Stockholm press is also today, with one exception, highly enthusiastic. *Svenska Dagbladet* talks about how ingeniously Sibelius solved his task in Stockholm. The newspaper states that the 'overall impression was suggestive and incredibly impressive.' *Aftonbladet* says that 'this music is harmonically and rhythmically brilliantly expressive' and talks about the iridescent drama of the instrumentation. *Dagligt Allehanda* claims that the music could express something even without scenes of demonic witchcraft. Even the *Social-Democrat* is full of enthusiasm." For *Uusi Suomi* (11/10/1924), journalist Ernst von Wendt (1877–1939) also gave a brief evaluation of the three productions, and he believed the Helsinki production was the best:

> In fact, *Scaramouche* has been composed as a pantomime and as such it was performed in The Finnish National Theater in Helsinki--there the performance kept close to the text which was the basis for the music. In other words, the performance in the home country was free of extras and directorial planning; artistically it was the most simple and free from seeking effects on the stage. The musical side came into its own [in Helsinki] more directly and dominated so much that the seduction scene in the woods was interpreted only musically, while the curtain was down. Scenically, the choreographic side of the performance was the least developed, which is no wonder as the stage is a speech scene and not an opera scene that could include ballet.

Strandin appeared again as Blondelaine in a Göteborg production (01/11/1926) directed by Poul Kanneworff (1896-1958), a Dane, primarily a set and costume designer strongly influenced by German expressionism; he had collaborated on the production design for the lavish Danish film *Klovnen*, for which Knudsen was a screenwriter, and which had premiered 30 October 1926, almost simultaneously with the premiere of the Göteborg *Scaramouche* production. Kanneworff's production projected a neoclassical atmosphere with characters dressed primarily in Empire Style costumes, while Blondelaine retained her Nielsen costume, now modified to reveal more of her decoratively stockinged legs and present her as a much more modern figure than anyone else in the production (Figures 33 and 34). Eric Laurent (1898-1958) played Leilon as an Empire Style gentleman. Tullio Voghera (1879-1943), conductor for the Stockholm Opera, conducted the orchestra. The Göteborg *Scaramouche* appeared as the second half of a double bill preceded by a performance of Tchaikovsky's one-act fairy tale opera *Iolanta* (1892), based on the Danish verse drama *King René's Daughter* (1845), by Henrik Hertz (1797-1870). In Stockholm, the opera house paired *Scaramouche* with different operas, beginning (in September 1924) with *Noël* (1910), a three-act opera by Frédéric d'Erlanger (1868-1943), followed (in October) by Donizetti's two-act comic opera *The Daughter of the Regiment* (1840) and then Puccini's one-act comic opera *Gianni Schicchi* (1918). By late October and early November, *Scaramouche* paired up with darker Italian works: Leoncavallo's one-act tragic opera *Pagliacci* (1892) and Mascagni's one-act verismo drama *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890). When Hasselquist took over the role of Blondelaine in January 1925, the opera again paired *Scaramouche* with *Cavalleria rusticana*, with the pantomime in the second half, as previously. But in her second and third performances, *Scaramouche* came first in a program featuring Mascagni's opera and afterward *Karneval* (1910), a "ballet pantomime" devised by Michel Fokine (1880–1942), with music by Robert Schumann (1810–1856), which featured Hasselquist as Colombina supported by an ensemble of dancers incarnating various *commedia* characters, such as Harlequin and Pierrot. For the final performance, the third piece on the program was *Scheherazade*, a "choreographic drama," as devised by Fokine for the Ballets Russes in 1910, with the 1888 music of Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908) and starring Hasselquist as Zobeide (Operan 2024: https://arkivet.operan.se/repertoar/). All these pairings suggest that *Scaramouche*, as a rather short work and a tragic pantomime, fit well with a variety of artistic moods and theater agendas. But the "adaptability" of the piece worked best, not within regular theaters or ballet companies, but within opera houses, with their ability to marshal within themselves singers, actors, dancers, designers, directors, and musicians. In any case, Swedish productions of *Scaramouche* attracted much larger audiences than the Finnish production, and it

is not clear why, even though Sibelius inspired monumental reverence in Finland. *Scaramouche* appealed to Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian audiences as a hybrid form of performance kindled and suffused with the spirit of international modernism. The modernist pantomime style of performance required a fusion of dance and acting skills that benefitted from silent film techniques of acting. In Finland, Maggie Gripenberg's modern dance aesthetic tended to avoid nationalist themes, and of course the scenario itself did not depict a uniquely Finnish setting.

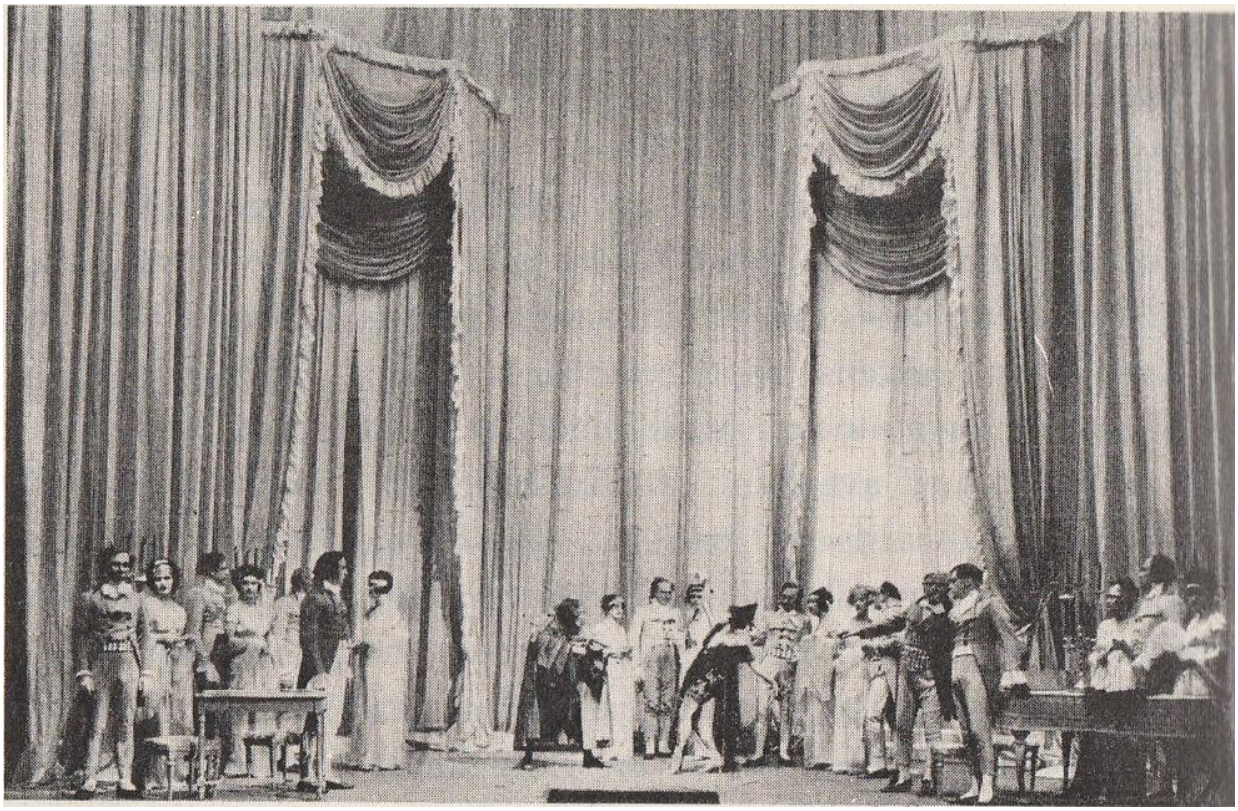


Figure 33: Scaramouche*, directed by Poul Kanneworff in neoclassical, Empire Style, Göteborg, 1926. Photo: Axel Fromell,* Stora teatern in Göteborg*, 1929, page 398.*

Figure 34: Eric Laurent as Leilon and Ebon Strandin as Blondelaine in Scaramouche*, directed by Poul Kanneworff, Göteborg, 1926. Blondelaine appears as a much more modern figure than Leilon or anyone else in the production. Photo: Fromell 1929: 399.*

Sibelius achieved national prominence with music inspired by Finnish mythology and nature. Perhaps, then, Finnish audiences in the newly independent Finland had greater expectations that theater would clarify the uniqueness of Finnish identity. Finland had gained its independence from Russia on 6 December 1917, before the end of World War I, in which Russia had participated, and a civil war had enveloped Finland in 1918, which sometimes pitted brother against brother. The Communist coup or "Revolution" in Russia in October/November 1917, precipitated the Finnish civil war, in which the Communists were defeated, with much help from Germany and the German Army. Some Red Finns went to Russia, while many members of the Russian nobility and the anti-communist Whites, emigrated to Finland. It may also be that the

bitter, polarizing "sex debates" about the function of marriage and the scope of female sexuality that took place in pre-War Finland, as introduced by Lagerborg and described by Jalava (1997: 72-82), lingered in public consciousness and made potential audiences wary of a story and enactment that dramatized the central conflicts of that debate, which many conservatives believed undermined focus on political, nationalist unity. Further complicating the issue of defining "Finnish" cultural identity was the role of Swedish-Finns in shaping "Finnish" culture. Swedish-Finns formed a small, affluent minority in Finland, perhaps only 10% of Finland's population in 1923. But the Swedish minority was largely a landowning class, much of which claimed upper class or aristocratic status. Many Finns believed that Swedes possessed disproportionally favorable advantages in pursuing economic and cultural opportunities, leading to resentments within the Finnish majority, many of whom lacked the educational advantages enjoyed by Swedes. The 1923 *Scaramouche* production was largely the work of Swedish-Finns (including Sibelius, Gripenberg, the Snellmans, among others), and the Swedish-language press exerted large influence on national culture due to its prosperous readership. Possibly, then, the 1923 production did not attract larger audiences because potential audiences associated the work with the international cosmopolitanism favored by privileged Swedish-Finns, which was not helpful in clarifying the advantages of a uniquely Finnish identity.

Blondelaine and Luonnotar

As a Swedish-Finn, Sibelius built his career as a composer by accommodating tensions between Swedish and Finnish cultural identities. In 1923, he was known primarily as a "Finnish" composer, because of his work inspired by Finnish mythology and the Finnish forest realm. But he craved recognition as an "international" composer, capable of communicating without reference to "Finnishness." *Scaramouche* offered an opportunity to achieve such recognition through the figure of an aristocratic woman, Blondelaine, seeking a sexual ecstasy, through music, that her society could not accommodate. Sibelius, however, did not want to achieve international recognition by sacrificing his commitment to "Finnish" inspirations. This division within himself manifested itself in dramatic fashion through another work he composed in the same year he completed *Scaramouche*. *Luonnotar* (1913), a symphonic poem with soprano voice, was also a commission, from the Swedish-Finnish soprano Aino Ackté (1876-1944) to whom Sibelius dedicated his score, although the theme of Luonnotar was his choice, and a theme he had explored earlier without success around 1905-1906 (Virtanen 2015: v). Luonnotar (Ilmatar) is the goddess of the air in the Finnish national epic, *The Kalevala*. According to the myth (Rune I), Luonnotar descends on the sea, whereupon a bird lands on her knee and builds a nest. The eggs, however, fall from the nest and break into pieces, forming the earth, sky, sun, moon, stars, and clouds. After thirty years of gestation, Luonnotar finally gives birth to Väinämöinen, the first human in the world of *The Kalevala*, a male. *Luonnotar* is a dark, brooding work that pits a lonely, beseeching, lamenting female voice against a prodding, even menacing orchestra. Luonnotar is not a happy female spirit; she drifts alone in the air for centuries, and then she swims alone through stormy seas for perhaps the rest of her very long existence. It is the song of a woman who cannot seem to escape a sense of confinement, no matter how great the space is around her. In this sense, Luonnotar is a complement to Blondelaine. The two female figures

represent the effort of the composer to balance Finnish and cosmopolitan sources of inspiration in female identity. But Blondelaine and Luonnotar balance each other insofar as they signify an inspiring female identity as fundamentally alone and beset with desires beyond fulfillment in the worlds they inhabit: music makes transparent intense female estrangement from the world.

Figure 35: "Ilmatar" ("Luonnotar") painted in 1913-1916 by Finnish artist Joseph Alanen (1885-1920). Photo: Public Domain (Wikipedia).

Scaramouche Unseen

Sibelius, however, partly for financial reasons, was hungry for a larger international audience. He, Knudsen, and Hansen initiated plans for productions in several well-known theaters: New York's Metropolitan Opera, London's Empire Theatre, Berlin's Deutsches Theater and Grosses Schauspielhaus. However, success in these endeavors eluded them.

A week after the premiere in Copenhagen, *Hufvudstadsbladet* reported on 19 May 1922 that, according to Lillebil Ibsen, there were discussions about her playing Blondelaine at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin and in the United States. The newspaper had inquired about the matter from

Sibelius, who said "that he has not yet received any information about this" (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 19/05/1922). Ibsen negotiated with the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, where she had performed a few years earlier under the direction of Max Reinhardt. These did not produce results, but in the summer, it was reported in Finland that Ibsen would tour America with *Scaramouche* (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 06/06/1922). Sibelius did not mention any of these possible plans in his diary. Regarding *Scaramouche*, he wrote only about financial matters in July in which he asked Hansen for 2000 crowns related to *Scaramouche*, to which he later added, "They sent 1000!" (Diary 14/07/1922, Sibelius 2005: 316). In the fall of 1922, Ibsen traveled to the United States, where she tried to get *Scaramouche* into production at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. In her memoirs, Ibsen tells how she first discussed the matter with the chairman of the opera's board, the banker Otto B. Kahn (1867-1934): "I told him what I had done before and when I mentioned *Scaramouche* he was immediately interested. He was of the opinion that it would be a great piece to perform at the Metropolitan together with an opera. Sibelius was popular and it would be a great artistic task to have his works performed. He really got excited about the idea" (Ibsen 1961: 139-142). Kahn had been a key person in connection with the American tours of the Ballets Russes in 1916-1917, when the troupe performed at the Metropolitan (Buckle 1979; Garafola 1989; Järvinen 2010). As for Sibelius, Kahn's interest in Sibelius' music had already been established before, because in 1920, Russian émigré political agitator and cultural impresario Ivan Narodny (1870-1953) had asked Sibelius to compose music for two of his ballets, which Sibelius did not do. Before this, Narodny had been associated with Otto B. Kahn at the Metropolitan Opera (Sibelius 2005: 474, reference 34, cit. Narodny's letters to Sibelius 20/05/1920 and 15/07/1920). However, Kahn could not make the *Scaramouche* decision without consulting the opera director Giulio Gatti-Casazza (1869-1940), who was currently traveling and would not arrive until two weeks later. Before joining the Metropolitan, Gatti-Casazza was the director of the Milan Opera. When the opera director returned from his travels, his answer was negative. Ibsen tells about her meeting with Gatti-Casazza: "He didn't see the justification for a pantomime at the Metropolitan—and if it were to be performed, it would have their own first-dancer, Rosina Galli [1892-1940], in the leading role. She was Cassassa's [sic] special friend, and I realized that I had no chance anymore" (Ibsen 1961: 142). But this statement implies that large foreign opera houses viewed the feasibility of performing *Scaramouche* in relation to the star casting of Blondelaine rather than in relation to Sibelius or to the appealing dramatic qualities of the work itself. In the spring of 1923, Asger Wilhelm Hansen (1889-1976) wrote to Sibelius that the assistant conductor of the Metropolitan Opera, Carlo Edwards (1891-1948), was coming to Helsinki and wanted to meet Sibelius personally to discuss *Scaramouche* (Asger Wilhelm Hansen to Jean Sibelius 29/05/1923, SPA 45). Two weeks later, Hansen confirmed that Edwards was interested in *Scaramouche* and hoped to perform it in New York (Asger Wilhelm Hansen to Jean Sibelius 12/06/1923, SPA 45). However, nothing came of this, presumably because Gatti-Casazza gave Edwards the same reasons for not staging the work as he had given Ibsen. It is not known if Gatti-Casazza ever discussed *Scaramouche* with Rosina Galli, whom he married in 1930 and who was a powerful figure within the ballet companies for the Met and for La Scala. It was probably a mistake on Hansen's part to promote *Scaramouche* to Gatti-Casazza through Ibsen; a better approach might have been to promote *Scaramouche* through Galli. Representing Sibelius, Hansen underestimated the extent to which large opera

houses required star performers to shape seasonal programs involving new works: it was a matter of focusing on Blondelaine as the chief selling point for *Scaramouche*. It could be that, even if he understood the sexual politics at the Met, Hansen did not consider approaching Galli because he saw Blondelaine as a "Nordic" character, not a Mediterranean woman. If he had found a non-"Nordic" Blondelaine, productions of *Scaramouche* might have extended beyond the Scandinavian-Baltic region.

Figure 36: Rosina Galli, ca. 1919. Photo by George Grantham Bain (1865-1944). Photo source: Bain Collection, Library of Congress.

In November 1923, Hansen met the director of the Ballets Russes, Sergei Diagilev (1872-1929), in Paris and gave him *Scaramouche*'s piano score and the libretto in French. They discussed producing *Scaramouche,* and Diaghilev told Hansen that he had known Sibelius for some time. Hansen soon after urged Sibelius to write a few lines about "the ballet" to Diaghilev (Wilhelm Hansen to Jean Sibelius 16/11/1923, SPA 45; Tawaststjerna 1988: 109). A couple of weeks later,

Sibelius sent a letter to Diaghilev through Hansen's publishing house (Asger Wilhelm Hansen to Jean Sibelius 03/12/1923, SPA 45). “It is likely that Sibelius and Diaghilev became acquainted in Finland in the late 1890’s—and almost certainly at the latest when Diaghilev attended the opening of the exhibition of Finnish art in Helsinki in October 1898” (Tyrväinen 2003: 54-55). In January 1924, Hansen informed Sibelius that he had written to Diaghilev and inquired whether his troupe intended to perform *Scaramouche* if they went to America. In the same context, Hansen wrote that he had informed “Mr. Nekton” that the performance rights to *Scaramouche* in America could not be granted unless a monetary guarantee was paid. In Hansen’s opinion, it was important that *Scaramouche* be presented in America in the right way (Asger Wilhelm Hansen to Jean Sibelius 18/01/1924, SPA 45). In Hansen's opinion, Nekton’s plan was apparently not of a high enough standard. Mr. Nekton or Toivo H. Nekton (Itkonen) (1881-1962) was an American-Finnish lawyer who lived in New York and who re-introduced Freemasonry to Finland in the early 1920s from the United States. In this context, Nekton, who was fond of choral singing, had discussed with Sibelius about composing Masonic music. The lodge was founded in 1922, which Sibelius joined as a member and then composed *Musique religieuse* op. 113 for the Freemasons (Sibelius.fi/Vapaamuurarimusiikkia). Nekton acted as Sibelius’ agent in the United States from the beginning of the 1920s. (Dahlström 2003: xvii, xxv, xxxiii, 428; Barnett 2007: 299) In the early 1920s, Nekton had organized the American tour of his schoolmate, the opera singer (and later also a Freemason) Wäinö Sola (1883-1961). The performances apparently attracted mostly American Finns (Sola 1951: 330). It may very well be that, based on the contacts of this tour, Nekton also planned *Scaramouche* performances in the United States. According to Tawaststjerna (1988: 179), an American *Scaramouche* tour was planned in the spring of 1924, but he does not elaborate on this plan. Tawaststjerna may refer to Nekton's designs, which Hansen disqualified. On the other hand, the plan might be related to the performance plans of Sergei Diagilev’s Ballets Russes in the United States, mentioned by Hansen. Curiously, there is no mention in the mainstream literature on Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes that there were any plans to perform in America at the time (Buckle 1979; Garafola 1989). The Ballets Russes did not travel to America again after the 1916-1917 tours. It may be that as a result of the meeting with Diaghilev, in 1926 Hansen took on the task of translating the text of *Scaramouche* into Russian (Dahlström 2003: 313). However, Diaghilev never included *Scaramouche* in the Ballets Russes’s repertoire, and the troupe's performances ended when he died in 1929. In the spring of 1923, the repertoire of Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes premiered Bronislava Nijinska’s choreography for *Les Noces*, with music by Stravinsky. The following year there were several new choreographies by Nijinska, including *Les Biches* to the music of Poulenc, and choreographies by George Balanchine and Leonid Massine. The choreographies were modern, and the compositions were largely new, but Diaghilev obviously preferred music composed by Russian (Stravinsky, Prokofiev) or French (Poulenc, Milhaud, Satie) composers.

At the end of 1924, *Hufvudstadsbladet* (17/11/1924) reported on a planned performance of *Scaramouche* in London at the Empire Theatre, which was a large variety theater (in Leicester Square, now a cinema). The Danish theater director Georg Neerborg (1880-1931) had just returned from negotiations in London, according to which the production would be produced with local performers and Ebon Strandin’s Blondelaine would be the guest. According to the plans, Sibelius

would conduct the music. But there is no more information about this plan. Hansen had probably taken the initiative in this, because at the beginning of 1923 he had written to Sibelius that they were trying to get a performance in London and that the Danish theater director had been making arrangements there.

A production was also planned for Berlin in 1924. Sibelius' *Scaramouche* had another advocate besides Lillebil Ibsen: the writer Adolf Paul (1863-1943), who lived in Berlin and promoted Sibelius's music in Germany, tried to have *Scaramouche* performed in 1924 at the Grosses Schauspielhaus in Berlin. Ebon Strandin would play a leading role, as in the plan for London. In 1919, Max Reinhardt had built a new theater to replace the old circus Schumann. It could hold more than 3,000 spectators, and the performances there were huge spectacles. Paul wrote to Sibelius on October 24, 1924: "I negotiated with the manager of the Grosses Schauspielhaus that he should buy rights to *Scaramouche* and I have sent him *Aftonbladet* with all the pictures and suggested a visit with Ebon Strandin. "As soon as you come here, it starts to happen. He is kind to me and he has money. Bring the score and text with you so we can play through the music and get things started. He has an 80-man orchestra" (Dahlström 2016: 379; Adolf Paul to Jean Sibelius 18/10/1924). The director of the theater was Maximilian Sladek (1887-1925). As happened earlier in connection with the premiere, Reinhardt considered directing *Scaramouche* impossible, but he was still interested in the work. In 1927, Johannes Poulsen saw the score later in Reinhardt's home Leopoldskron in Salzburg, and Reinhardt was enthusiastic about it and intended to direct it: "We pass by the red Hammerklavier and beautiful old instruments. The score of Sibelius' *Scaramouche* is open on the music stand. On all sides quietly burning wax candles, one after the other. The doors open to a small dining room and it reveals perhaps one of Reinhardt's best stage performances." At dinner: "Reinhardt speaks about *Scaramouche*, which he plans to perform. He fondly mentions the sets and costumes of my compatriot [Danish] Kay Nielsen. He finds them fascinating. He once saw the sketches in Stockholm—and he constantly remembers them" (Poulsen 1946, 13-14). But Reinhardt never directed *Scaramouche*. His *Scaramouche* score is not in the Salzburg Festival Archives, which has the Max Reinhardt Archive, nor in the Max Reinhardt Archives of Binghamton University in the USA, which has material in Reinhardt's Leopoldskron Library.

Knudsen had approached Sibelius with other pantomime dramas: *Mother and Child (Moder og Barn)* (1915), based on the 1848 H. C. Andersen fairy tale; *Shadows (Skygger)* (1920) (Diary 01/05/1915 SPA 45; Sibelius 2005: 228, 441: reference 92), *Kavakami* (1922); *Okon fuoko* (1923) (Wilhem Hansen to Jean Sibelius 07/10/1922; Asger Wilhem Hansen to Jean Sibelius 17/05/1923, SPA 45). But Sibelius rejected all these proposals. Eventually, Leevi Madetoja (1887-1947) composed music for *Okon fuoko*, and according to Madetoja biographer Erkki Salmenhaara (1941-2002), it was the first setback in Madetoja's career: "It is not known if Leevi Madetoja went to see *Scaramouche*, but it should have warned him about Poul Knudsen anyway!" (Salmenhaara 1987: 210, 259). In 1921, Adolf Paul approached Sibelius with a proposed pantomime to be performed in Berlin: "Would you write the music for my great pantomime? We will share the royalties and it will be performed right away here." But Sibelius was not enthusiastic (Dahlström 2016: 351; Adolf Paul's letter to Sibelius 24/01/1921). Instead, in 1928, Sibelius asked Paul to make a

new text for the *Scaramouche* music, because he was not satisfied with Knudsen's text. Sibelius wrote to Aino from Berlin: "I would like Paul to write a new text for *Scaramouche*. I wrote to Hansen and received the piano arrangement today. Let's see now." (Talas 2007: 376, Jean Sibelius to Aino Sibelius 01/03/1928; Tawaststjerna 1988: 286). Nothing came of this plan, too, and it is not even clear if Sibelius wanted Paul to revise the Scaramouche story or to devise an entirely new scenario for the music. What is clear is that Sibelius felt Knudsen's scenario in performance encouraged the public to underestimate the beauty of the music he had composed.

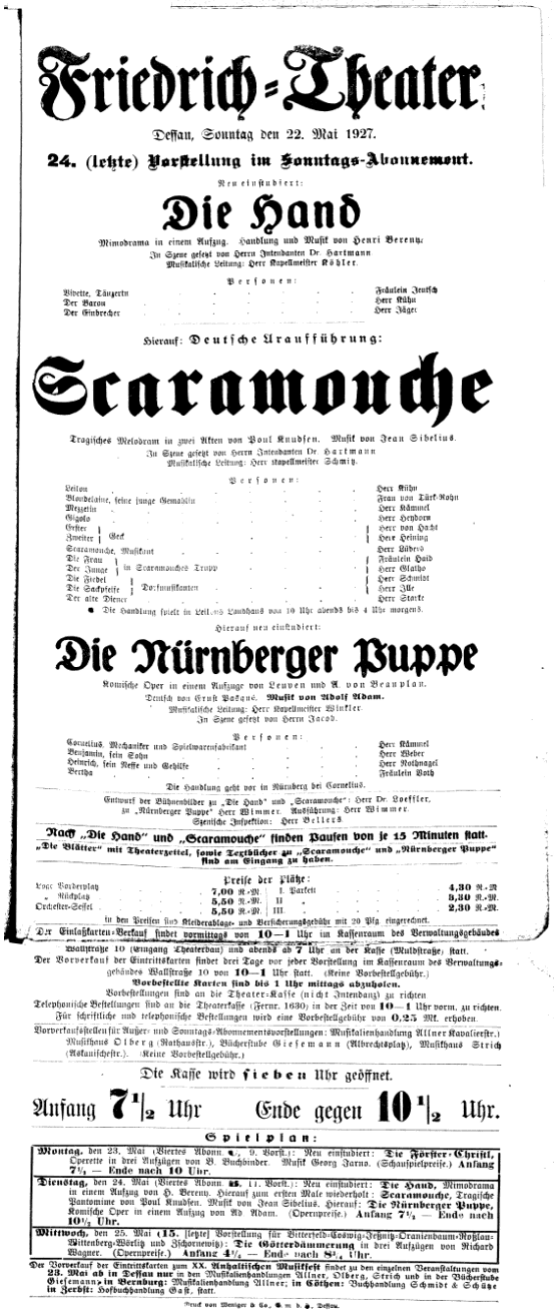
Figure 37: "Scaramouche and Blondelaine" (1927), painting by Robert Emil Stübner, Berlin, Germany. Photo: Mutual Art (mutualart,com)

Dessau 1927

Instead, the Friedrich Theater in Dessau, Germany staged a production in May 1927, directed by Georg Hartmann (1891-1972) with Viennese opera singer Bertha (also Hertha) von Türk-Rohn (1896-?) as Blondelaine. Scaramouche, Günther Lüders (1905–1975), was described by Arthur Seidl (1863–1928) in his review as "hunchbacked and ghostly and a demonical master of sorcery"

(Seidl 1927: 622). Hermann Kühn (1893–1979), who later became general director for the theater, performed the role of Leilon. But information about this production is very difficult to obtain. It's possible that the Dessau production had some connection with the German conductor Franz Mikorey (1873-1947), who led the Dessau Opera orchestra from 1902-1918, when the opera administration fired him. In 1919, he accepted the conductor post at the newly formed Helsinki Opera, where he became involved in early discussions to stage the pantomime in 1921-1922. An article in *Sächsische Staatszeitung Staatsanzeigner für den Freistaat Sachsen* (10/10/1919) announced that Mikorey had taken the post in Helsinki as conductor of the Opera and "more distantly Mikorey plans to premiere a complete pantomime, *Scaramouche*, by Sibelius (after Knudsen's libretto)." Otherwise, it is not clear what persuaded the Dessau Opera to stage *Scaramouche*, advertised as a "tragic melodrama," which appeared on a triple bill squeezed between *Die Hand* (1900), a one-act Grand Guignol "mimodrama" by Hungarian composer Henri Berenyi (1871-1932) and *Die Nürnberger Puppe* (1852), a one-act comic opera by Adolphe Adam (1803-1856). Only two performances took place (May 22 and 24) (Anhaltisches Theater Dessau Arkiv 1927). Available reviews of the production do not give a clear image of Hartmann's treatment of the story. Reviewers for the *Dresdner Nachtrichten* and the *Berliner-Börsen Zeitung* were enthusiastic about the production, but, as with so many reviews of that time, the reader does not get a clear image of what happened on stage. A reviewer for the *Berliner-Börsen Zeitung* (25/05/1927) and the *Dortmunder Zeitung* (31/05/27), "R.M.S.," considered *Scaramouche* "a new, stylistically interesting contribution to the theme: Regeneration of the music drama," and he considered the significance of the work equivalent to that of Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* (1918) and Ravel's *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* (1925), modernist works, he asserted, that moved music drama on a forward path away from the Wagnerian model. Knudsen's libretto, he wrote, focused on the theme of the "intrusion of the muses into the world of bourgeois order": the piece dramatized the "tragedy of the artist" possessed by the self-destructive "demon of music," and the score, by "a richly feeling and imaginative musician [composer] to whom the glaring colors of passion are as much at his disposal as gentleness of mood, gives the work a strange 'air' with its predominantly impressionistic, dancing quality." The "excellent" conducting by Peter Schmitz (1895–1965) "covered up many weaknesses of the performance." A reviewer for the *Dresdner Nachrichten* (24/05/1927), "F.R.," paid more attention to the performance: "the chosen form of melodrama [and] pantomime was new and interesting and in application surprisingly lively; a great part of this carried by the excellent, refined direction of Hartmann. [. . .] The music for *Scaramouche* is [. . .] of penetrating tenderness and suppleness," and the theater can celebrate "a beautiful success." In the *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, Seidl, who was a dramaturge for the Dessau theater, disdained the production, observing that it played to "a yawning, empty house." Sibelius's music, he claimed, while "fine and good but in no way innovative or penetrating," merely raised the question of why the great composer had wasted his talent on such a feeble scenario (Seidl 1927). In 1927, the Berlin artist Robert Emil Stübner (1874–1931) painted "Scaramouche and Blondelaine," obviously inspired by seeing a performance of the pantomime in Dessau (Figure 37). Stübner was fond of painting theatrical scenes. In the painting, he depicts Blondelaine wearing green feathers and a skimpy white costume that reveals more of her body than perhaps all other productions. The picture conveys a sense of the action occurring

contemporaneously rather than in the past. But Blondelaine nevertheless wears ballet shoes, indicating a balletic rather than pantomimic approach at least to her movements, although Bertha von Türk-Rohn was a singer, not a dancer.



Friedrich-Theater

Dessau, Sonntag den 22. Mai 1927.

24. (letzte) Vorstellung im Sonntags-Abonnement.

Neu einstudiert:

Die Hand

Mimodrama in einem Aufzug. Handlung und Musik von Henri Berenn.

In Szene gesetzt vom Herrn Intendanten Dr. Hartmann

Musikalische Leitung: Herr Kapellmeister Köhler.

Personen:

Babette, Tänzerin . . . Fräulein Jentsch
Der Baron . . . Herr Bühn
Der Einbrecher . . . Herr Jäger

Hierauf: **Deutsche Uraufführung:**

Scaramouche

Tragisches Melodram in zwei Akten von Poul Knudsen. Musik von Jean Sibelius.

In Szene gesetzt von Herrn Intendanten Dr. Hartmann

Musikalische Leitung: Herr Kapellmeister Schmitz.

Personen:

Lelio . . . Herr Bühn
Blondelaine, seine junge Gemahlin . . . Frau von Türk-Rohn
Mezzetin . . . Herr Kämmel
Gigolo . . . Herr Heydorn
Erster } Geck . . . Herr von Hanke
Zweiter } . . . Herr Hennig
Scaramouche, Musikant . . . Herr Lüders
Die Frau } in Scaramouches Truppe . . . Fräulein Haid
Der Junge } . . . Herr Glathe
Die Fiedel } Dorfmusikanten . . . Herr Schmidt
Die Sackpfeife } . . . Herr Alle
Der alte Diener . . . Herr Starke

Die Handlung spielt in Leli.os Landhaus von 10 Uhr abends bis 4 Uhr morgens.

Hierauf neu einstudiert:

Die Nürnberger Puppe

Komische Oper in einem Aufzuge von Leuven und A. von Braunplan.

Deutsch von Ernst Pasqué. **Musik von Adolf Adam.**

Musikalische Leitung: Herr Kapellmeister Winkler

In Szene gesetzt von Herrn Jacob.

Personen:

Cornelius, Mechaniker und Spielwarenfabrikant . . . Herr Kämmel
Benjamin, sein Sohn . . . Herr Weber
Heinrich, sein Neffe und Gehilfe . . . Herr Nothnagel
Bertha . . . Fräulein Bork

Die Handlung geht vor in Nürnberg bei Cornelius.

Entwurf der Bühnenbilder zu „Die Hand" und „Scaramouche": Herr Dr. Loeffler.
zu „Nürnberger Puppe" Herr Wimmer. Ausführung: Herr Wimmer.

Szenische Inspektion: Herr Bellers.

Nach „Die Hand" und „Scaramouche" finden Pausen von je 15 Minuten statt.
„Die Blätter" mit Theaterzettel, sowie Textbücher zu „Scaramouche" und „Nürnberger Puppe" sind am Eingang zu heben.

Preise der Plätze:

Loge: Vorderplatz	7,00 R.-M.	I. Parkett	4,30 R.-M.
„ Rückplatz	5,50 R.-M.	II. „	3,30 R.-M.
Orchester-Sessel	5,50 R.-M.	III. „	2,30 R.-M.

in den Preisen sind Steuerabzug- und Versicherungsgebühr mit 20 Pfg eingerechnet.

Der Einlaßkarten-Verkauf findet vormittags von 10—1 Uhr im Kassenraum des Verwaltungsgebäudes Wallstraße 10 (neugang Theaterbau) und abends ab 7 Uhr an der Kasse (Wallstraße) statt.

Der Vorverkauf der Eintrittskarten findet drei Tage vor jeder Vorstellung im Kassenraum des Verwaltungsgebäudes Wallstraße 10 von 10—1 Uhr statt. (Keine Vorbestellgebühr.)

Vorbestellte Karten sind bis 1 Uhr mittags abzuholen.

Vorbestellungen sind an die Theater-Kasse (nicht Intendanz) zu richten.

Telephonische Bestellungen sind an die Theaterkasse (Fernr. 1630) in der Zeit von 10—1 Uhr vorm. zu richten. Für schriftliche und telephonische Bestellungen wird eine Vorbestellgebühr von 0,25 Mk. erhoben.

Vorverkaufsstellen für Außer- und Sonntags-Abonnementsvorstellungen: Musikalienhandlung Allner (Kavalierstr.) Musikhaus Oldberg (Rathausstr.), Buchhandlung Giesemann (Albrechtsplatz), Musikhaus Strich (Askanischestr.). (Keine Vorbestellgebühr.)

Die Kasse wird **sieben** Uhr geöffnet.

Anfang **7½** Uhr Ende gegen **10½** Uhr.

Spielplan:

Montag, den 23. Mai (Viertes Abonn. **c**, 9. Vorst.): Neu einstudiert: **Die Förster-Christl**, Operette in drei Aufzügen von B. Buchbinder. Musik Georg Jarno. (Schauspielpreise.) Anfang 7½. — Ende nach **10** Uhr.

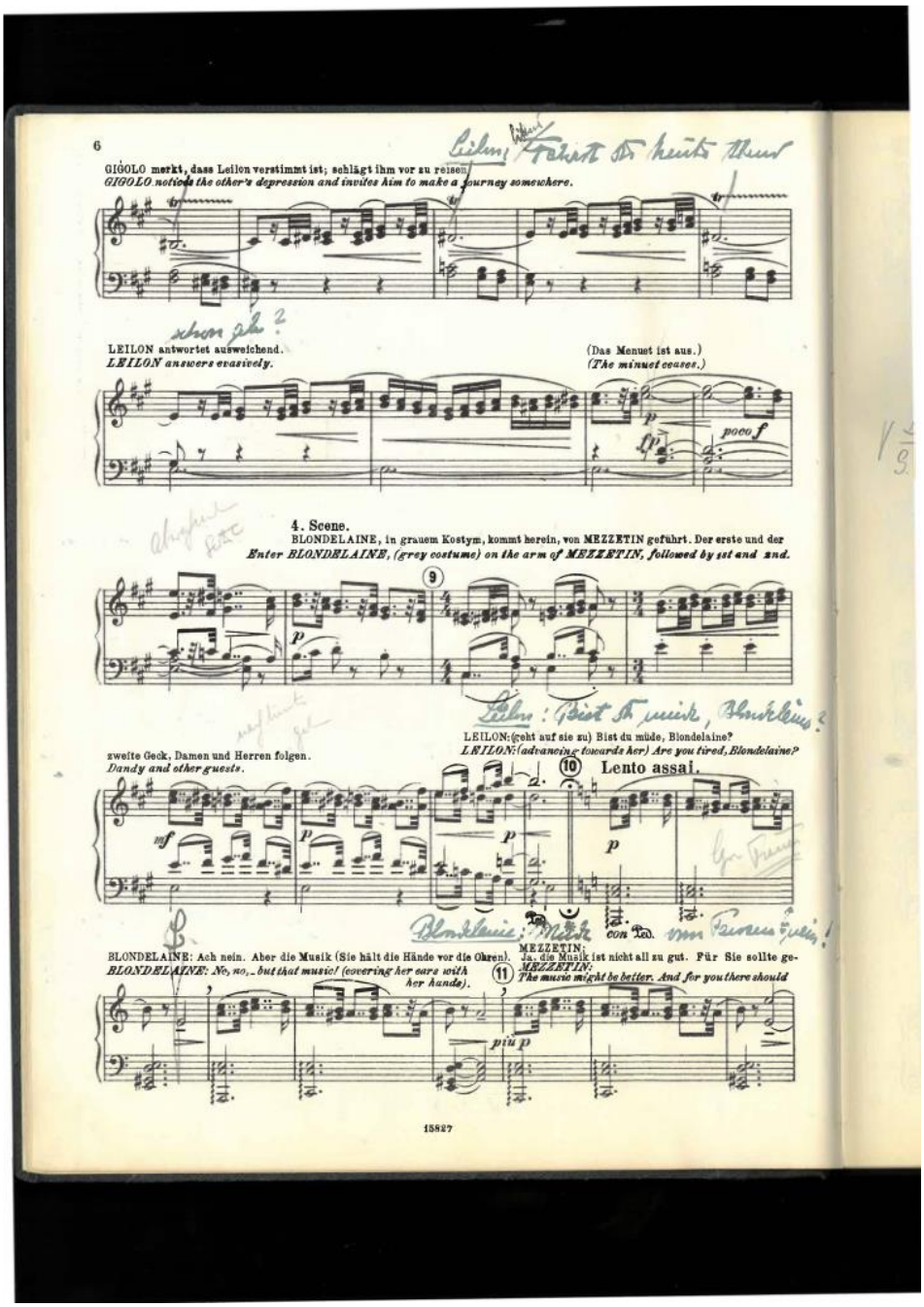
Dienstag, den 24. Mai (Viertes Abonn. **a**, 11. Vorst.): Neu einstudiert: **Die Hand**, Mimodrama in einem Aufzug von H. Berenn. Hierauf zum ersten Male wiederholt: **Scaramouche**, Tragische Pantomime von Poul Knudsen. Musik von Jean Sibelius. Hierauf: **Die Nürnberger Puppe**, Komische Oper in einem Aufzug von Ad. Adam. (Operupreise.) Anfang 7½. — Ende nach **10½** Uhr.

Mittwoch, den 25. Mai (**15.** [letzte] Vorstellung für Bitterfeld-Coswig-Jeßnitz-Oranienbaum-Roßlau-Wittenberg-Wörlitz und Zschornewitz): **Die Götterdämmerung** in drei Aufzügen von Richard Wagner. (Operupreise.) Anfang 4½. — Ende nach 8½ Uhr.

Der Vorverkauf der Eintrittskarten zum XX. Anhaltischen Musikfest findet zu den einzelnen Veranstaltungen vom **23. Mai ab in Dessau nur** in den Musikalienhandlungen Allner, Oldberg, Strich und in der Bücherstube Giesemann **in Bernburg:** Musikalienhandlung Allner; **in Cöthen:** Buchhandlung Schmidt & Schütze **in Zerbst:** Hofbuchhandlung Gast, statt.

Druck von Meniger & Co., G. m. b. H., Dessau.

Figure 38: Poster for Scaramouche*, Friedrich Theater, Dessau, Germany, 1927. Image from Anhaltisches Theater Dessau, Germany.*



6

GIGOLO merkt, dass Leilon verstimmt ist; schlägt ihm vor zu reisen.
GIGOLO notices the other's depression and invites him to make a journey somewhere.

LEILON antwortet ausweichend.
LEILON answers evasively.

(Das Menuet ist aus.)
(The minuet ceases.)

poco f

4. Scene.

BLONDELAINE, in grauem Kostym, kommt herein, von MEZZETIN geführt. Der erste und der
Enter BLONDELAINE, (grey costume) on the arm of MEZZETIN, followed by 1st and 2nd.

9

zweite Geck, Damen und Herren folgen.
Dandy and other guests.

LEILON: (geht auf sie zu) Bist du müde, Blondelaine?
LEILON: (advancing towards her) Are you tired, Blondelaine?

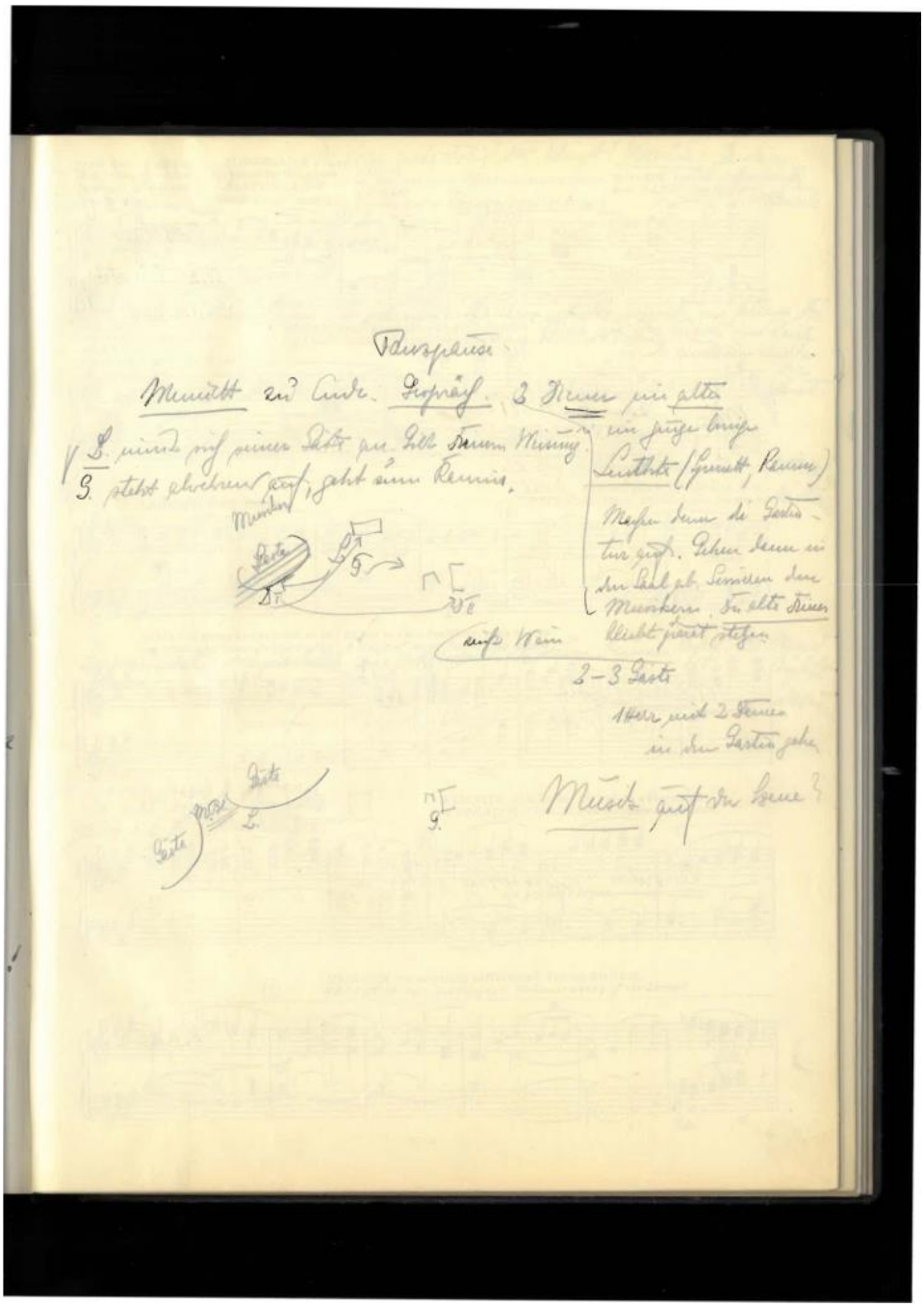
10 Lento assai.

BLONDELAINE: Ach nein. Aber die Musik (Sie hält die Hände vor die Ohren).
BLONDELAINE: No, no, but that music! (covering her ears with her hands).

MEZZETIN: Ja, die Musik ist nicht all zu gut. Für Sie sollte ge-
MEZZETIN: The music might be better. And for you there should

11

più p



Figures 39 and 40: Piano score for Sibelius's Scaramouche *with choreographic notes, presumably by Georg Hartmann, facing the prescribed action in the score, 1927. Photo source: Anhaltisches Theater Dessau, Germany.*

Figure 41: Johannes Poulsen as Scaramouche in the 1927 Paris production of Scaramouche. *Photo from:* Hufvudstadsbladet*, 26 June 1927; "Gästspelet på Théatre de Champs-Elysées" written by Anna Levertin.*

Paris 1927

Knudsen made efforts to get *Scaramouche* staged in Paris. He had developed a friendship with Anne-Mathilde Paraf (1894-?), a stepdaughter of prominent Zionist Max Nordau (1849-1923); she entered Parisian literary culture by translating stories of Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), and she had translated three works by Knudsen. She and her husband, Pierre Paraf (1893-1989), published a sizable history of theatrical production processes, techniques, and technologies in 1927, *Les Métiers du Théâtre*. The Parafs had "translated and adapted" *Scaramouche* with the help of Knudsen, a "spiritual son of the great, legendary Danish authors, of whom Andersen is the father," although Knudsen's "modern and active" talent was for "nostalgia, melancholy, and voluptuousness" (*L'Ère nouvelle*, 02/03/1927). However, their plan to stage *Scaramouche* ran into numerous difficulties that remain obscure. In late November 1926, Finnish newspapers announced that the Odéon theater in Paris would perform *Scaramouche* with Elna Jörgen-Jensen

directing and dancing Blondelaine (*Åbo Unterrättelser*, 30/11/1926). Two weeks later, a Finnish newspaper reported that the Opéra Comique would stage *Scaramouche* (*Hufvudstadsbladet*, 17/12/1926: Sibelius "Scaramouche" i Paris och Warschau). Hansen informed Sibelius that he expected the Odéon to perform *Scaramouche* in Paris between Christmas and New Year with Danish performers, Johannes Poulsen as director, and Emil Reese as conductor (Asger Wilhelm Hansen´s letter to Sibelius, 14/12/1926). This arrangement involved both the Danish and Finnish embassies, and, according to Danish screenwriter and music critic Gustav Hetsch (1867-1935), the premiere was planned for 29 December (*Hufvudstadsbladet,* 17/12/1926; *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 16/01/1927, "Gustav Hetsch: Finländsk musik i Paris"). Hetsch wrote that the Danish conductor Emil Reesen (1887-1964), who resided at that time in Paris, had already rehearsed *Scaramouche* with the local orchestra, and more players had been attached to the orchestra because of these impending performances. (*Hufvudstadsbladet*, 16 January 1927: Finländsk musik i Paris). Poulsen arrived in Paris before Christmas and noticed that production work had not progressed enough, and that the scenery had arrived from Copenhagen too late. Therefore, the performance was postponed to June. The manager of the Odéon was Fermin Gémier (1869-1933), a central figure at the International Theatre Congress in June, under whose auspices the production of *Scaramouche* finally took place.

A single performance of *Scaramouche* took place in Paris at the Théâtre du Champs-Élysées on 10 June 1927 as part of the first conference organized by the Société Universelle du Théâtre. Facilitated by the Danish and Finnish embassies in Paris, this was the Royal Danish Theater production that premiered the work in Copenhagen in 1922, except that Blondelaine was played by Elna Jörgen-Jensen. As in Copenhagen, Georg Hoeberg conducted the Royal Danish Opera orchestra. *Scaramouche* appeared on a huge program that included the Overture to *Elverhøj* (1828), by Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832), an introduction to *Erasmus Montanus* by Fermin Gémier, a performance of the five-act comedy *Erasmus Montanus* (1723) by Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754), and a set of three "ballet-divertissements." Ulla Poulsen (1905-2001), a prima ballerina with the Royal Danish Ballet and wife of the director and actor of Scaramouche, performed two of the ballet-divertissements and a dance devised for her and inserted into the *Scaramouche* production, in which she wore a costume designed for her by the Danish artist Gerda Wegener (1886-1940), who had been living in Paris since 1912 with her transgender spouse, Lili Elbe (1882-1931), and enjoyed considerable affectionate notoriety for her provocative drawings of women, including many of Ulla Poulsen, with whom she maintained a very close friendship (Figure 42). Johannes Poulsen played the lead role in the *Erasmus Montanus* production. For *Scaramouche*, Poulsen revived his 1922 costume and presumably his approach to performing the character.

Figure 42: Ulla Poulsen in Michel Fokine's ballet Chopiniana*, painted by Gerda Wegener in 1927. Photo: Public Domain.*

Reviews of the production were generally complimentary. In *l'Avenir* (13/06/1927), "Nozier" declared that Sibelius's music provided "abundant leading rhythms and agreeable, easy motifs." "One cannot reproach him for being obscure." Knudsen's libretto evoked a "violent adventure in an atmosphere of Watteau." He praised Poulsen's performance of the "vehement, ferocious" Scaramouche, which Eyrind Johan-Svendsen (1896-1947) matched with "nostalgic melancholy" as Leilon, "the dreamer who adores Blondelaine. He summons for her delicate and classical pleasures, but she aspires to ardors more natural." But Nozier reserved his strongest praise for the female performers: Jörgen-Jensen's Blondelaine combined "fragility and violence, calmness and fever, timidity and impudence, pity and cruelty. . . This is a task that can frighten an interpreter. Without hesitation, Mme Elna Jörgen-Jensen poured her drunkenness into us, like the demands of Dalilah by Saint-Saëns. She poured to the brim." Nozier also liked the dancing of Ulla Poulsen, a "romantic beauty," whose movements in *Scaramouche* "ravished us." "She has the strange and vaporous charm of an Ophelia." But he disliked Nielsen's set and costumes. "A French artist would never have evoked [such] voluptuousness or shown, using diaphanous material, the nude body of a woman. These are images for childish collectors or tired men. This [Danish] spectacle does not agree with our taste or sensibility," although the critic praised the costume Gerda Wegener designed for Ulla Poulsen.

In *Comoedia* (12/06/1927), "Etienne Rey," gave a more muted reception. He considered *Scaramouche* to a be a "less original" work than the Holberg play that preceded it. It was "agreeable" without providing any "revelation." Knudsen's scenario, suffused with "facile symbolism," was nevertheless "adroit." Sibelius's music was "ardent and streaming with Scaramouche's violin" before concluding with "frenetic rhythms." While the scenery was beautiful and colorful, the reviewer disliked the costumes: "They hide the contour of women and show the forms of men; we prefer the opposite." The cast was "excellent," but Jörgen-Jensen, "a great artist," especially displayed "passionate dramatic temperament" as Blondelaine, and her final, self-destroying dance achieved "tragic beauty." The major dance critic André Levinson (1887-1933) attended the performance but only wrote about the ballet-divertissements and did not even mention *Scaramouche*, presumably because Levinson, as a reactionary defender of classical ballet technique, believed that neither a pantomime nor the dances it contained merited his attention, although he praised Ulla Poulsen for embodying well the "royal" ballet tradition of the 1840s in the divertissements (*Comoedia* 14/06/1927). Writing for *l'Europe nouvelle* (15/06/1927), playwright André Obey (1892-1975) described the "mimodrama" *Scaramouche* as "necessarily hybrid": "one imagines a poem by Verlaine staged by a choreographer of the Swedish Ballet and played by the heroes of Musset." Obey considered the production peculiarly "Nordic" in its emphasis on "carnal disorder, heavy and blonde sensuality, immodesty." Blondelaine was "clothed in an ample and vague black robe, chaste, as long as she remained motionless." But when "she started dancing, the dress, swirling, revealed two very beautiful legs in black silk sheaths, then a diabolical slip of white satin." Obey also mentioned the memorable effect of Blondelaine dancing in red heels ("talons rouge") on the blood flowing from the impaled Scaramouche." "Moving under this Danish work is such a vast and quiet passion, a desire so violent, yet silent, patient and cold, that it felt suffocating at the same time, like hunger and disgust."

The music critic Louis Schneider (1861–1934) enjoyed the production. Sibelius's music, he wrote, was "fluid and dreamlike, expressive and elegant, of distinguished inspiration." Johannes Poulsen "played Scaramouche with a profound sensibility" and "Mme. Elna Jörgen-Jensen mimed the role of Blondelaine with talent, with lightness, and one should not forget M. Eyrind-Svendsen, who rendered the role of the husband Leilon with sobriety and sadness" (Program booklet for the International Theater Congress 1927: 84–86). In *La Liberté* (14/06/1927), literary critic Robert Kemp (1878–1959) observed that the production was "not deeply Scandinavian." *Scaramouche* unraveled within "a dark decor, violet and gold. The fairly daring costumes suggest that women, after this ball, will not refuse [sexual invitations]. They clearly announce the sensual crisis of Blondelaine." Jörgen-Jensen was "the complete Venus"—"passionate, so pale, livid, between her red heels." In a very brief notice for *Le Matin* (14/06/1927), Jean Prudhomme described the action of the "mimed drama" as "visible symbolism, poured into tragedy." "The musical coloring adapted appropriately to the movements with expressive comment." Jörgen-Jensen "triumphed" in her role beside Johannes Poulsen while Ulla Poulsen was "a ravishing dancer." Like other reviewers of the program, the novelist and drama critic Edmond Sée (1875–1959) devoted far more attention to the production of *Erasmus Montanus* than to *Scaramouche*, to which he

allocated a single cryptic sentence: "The somewhat naive scenario is certainly at the door of all intelligences, but there M. Johan Svendsen and Mme. Jordan-Yensen [sic] demonstrate the loyal qualities of tragic mimes" (*l'Oeuvre* 13/06/1927). In *Paris-Midi* (12/06/1927), literary critic Fortunat Strowski (1866–1952) did not even mention *Scaramouche*, because "music, dance, and their beauty are not within my radius," yet he gushed over Ulla Poulsen, "the most beautiful and gracious blonde in the world." The journalist Pierre Brisson (1896–1968), in *Les Temps* (12/06/1927), wrote extensively about the production of the Holberg play, but managed only a few words in relation to the "mimodrama" *Scaramouche*: "The production without doubt did not support any very new element of art, but it showed the qualities of a company of actors in perfect possession of their talents to form a happy ensemble" that "offers us the pleasure of recognizing, alive and recreated, traditions born of French genius." Paul Ginisty (1855–1932), a theater columnist for *Petit Parisien* (13/06/1927), acknowledged that "this is not the Scaramouche of the Italian Comedy." Here Scaramouche was a "hirsute bohemian," rendered "expertly" by Johannes Poulsen, and Leilon was a "poet" rather than a melancholy aristocrat. The music was "full and expressive," the costumes "singular," and Jörgen-Jensen, a "gracious and dramatic dancer," was the core of "this pantomime that is not exclusively a pantomime," as the "beautiful and happy Blondelaine possessed by an irresistible force to leave the house of the poet Leilon." In a review of the entire Theater Congress program for *Fêtes* (6–12/06/1927), literary and art historian Paul Gsell (1870–1947) supplied a brief paragraph praising Johannes Poulsen's performance as Scaramouche: "He appeared as a nomad, a bohemian who represents all the impulses of instinct, all the violence of desire, all the nostalgic attractions of dream and mystery. This huge range of feelings he translates it into a universal language of gesture and attitude."

At best, the French reception of *Scaramouche* could be described as cordial, with greater appreciation ascribed to the performers than to the libretto or even to the music. Reviewers devoted far more attention to *Erasmus Montanus*, by the "Moliere of the north," than to *Scaramouche*, indicating that they expected to see distinctively Danish productions from the Royal Danish Ballet, whereas *Scaramouche* seemed neither Danish nor Finnish but international in its story and in its puzzling form of "mimodrama," although several reviewers enjoyed commenting on the "Nordic" beauty or "blonde sensuality" of Ulla Poulsen and Elna Jörgen-Jensen, and those journals that published photographs related to the reviews favored portrait images of these women over images of any of the Danish productions themselves. Perhaps also the reviewers, for the most part middle-aged men, found the strange eroticism of the libretto, costumes, and the performances disconcerting, something aberrant within the large program of an international theater congress that mostly stressed the national uniqueness of its diverse participants. The failure of the Parisian production to attract much media attention deeply disappointed Sibelius, who was eager to have his music heard in an otherwise oblivious France, and probably doomed the possibility of staging the work in another big city in Europe or America. It may be, though, that the French back then failed to appreciate or perhaps even notice the dark, ironic treatment accorded a character and story with a French name. In her memoir, dancer Ulla Poulsen writes about the idea of performing *Scaramouche* at the Odéon with French performers and Johannes Poulsen directing it. As Poulsen was engaged in Denmark, he came to

Paris just to finish the rehearsals. In a letter to his wife, Poulsen described a total negligence of the preparations on the side of the French performers and the direction of the Odéon theatre (see Johannes Poulsen's letter copied in Poulsen Skou 1959: 121).

Figure 43: Scaramouche*, choreographed by Alexander Saxelin, production design by Martti Tuukka, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1935. Photo: Aarne Tenhovaara (1890-1945); Finnish National Ballet.*

Helsinki 1935

On 7 December 1935, to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Sibelius's birthday, the Finnish National Ballet staged *Scaramouche* in Helsinki entirely as a ballet, with choreography by Alexander Saxelin (1899-1959), the artistic director of the Finnish National Ballet. Kaarlo Hiltunen (1910-2006) danced the role of Leilon, dark-haired Irja Koskinen (1911-1978) that of Blondelaine, and Saxelin that of Scaramouche. Armas Järnefelt (1869–1958) conducted the Helsinki Philharmonic; prior to the ballet, the orchestra and several other musicians played five short orchestral songs by Sibelius. In later performances, a one-act opera, *Med ödet ombord* (1923), by Alfred Anderssén (1887–1940), preceded *Scaramouche*. In creating a ballet from the libretto and music, Saxelin purged the scenario of Knudsen's dialogue. The production design, by Martti Tuukka (1891-1945), whose career as a theater designer evolved in relation to his work as a designer for films, evoked Leilon's "farmhouse" manor even more decoratively and elegantly than Nielsen's design in 1922,

but both the scenery and the costumes depicted a milieu from the 1840s, eliminating the quasi-expressionist stylistic disunity that marked earlier productions. However, it remains unknown the extent to which, if any, Saxelin played Scaramouche as a hunchback; he was not a dwarf. He resembles more a sleazy entrepreneur (Figure 44). The controlling idea of the production was that the action occurred entirely in a romantic past and contained no disorienting allusions to modernity and temporal disunity, as was the case in earlier productions with their modernistic design effects and alignment of pantomime with silent film. But with this production, *Scaramouche* became a work performed almost entirely by ballet companies. Once pantomime disappeared from production of the piece, the work diminished and perhaps even lost its affiliation with modernism as the bodies in performance conformed to the nineteenth century movement tropes defining ballet in the 1930s and ever afterward. The production did not attract much attention in Finnish news media of the time; reviewers were mildly enthusiastic. In *Helsingin Sanomat* (08/12/1935), Urho Kivijärvi ("U. K- i") remarked that Knudsen's libretto was "not genius," but Sibelius's "absolutely delightful" music was, causing the performers to "twinkle with gestures and dancing." "*Scaramouche* is more coherent and more impressive when presented in a different way [as ballet combined with pantomime]. Otherwise, the parts, which are indeed difficult, seemed less suitable for the ballet dancers of the opera, so the overall impression was a bit over the top." The reviewer enjoyed Koskinen's performance as Blondelaine and Saxelin's "vivid" incarnation of Scaramouche but felt that Hiltunen's Leilon was "superficial." He also noted that composers Peder Gram (1881-1956), Hugo Alfvén (1872-1960) and Olallo Morales (1874-1957) attended the performance. For *Svenska Pressen* (09/12/1935), Raoul af Hällström (1899-1975) agreed that it was wise to eliminate Knudsen's dialogue, "but if you give this piece without dialogue, then it should be completely reworked. The old pantomime style with its deaf-mute speech now seems outdated, often even ridiculous. Instead of translating lines into gestures (which gestures a large part of the audience didn't understand), you should have resolutely thrown all this overboard and used the music for something completely different. It could have been an expressive modern movement drama. One could possibly have let the corps de ballet take part in the action in the same dynamically effective way as e.g., the chorus in Olof Molander's [1892-1966] *Medea* production [1934]." The reviewer complained that pantomime was not effective in representing dramatic moments. Instead of pantomime, guests at Leilon's party, "when they noticed that Blondelaine had become bewitched by the diabolical fiddler," should have responded with "coordinated, effectively stylized movements." However, he considered Saxelin "excellent as the fiddler Scaramouche: a satanic yet fascinating mask, a wildly romantic apparition. It was understood that this limping and grotesque apparition could exert a demonic attraction on Blondelaine. Irja Koskinen made a stylish entrance as Blondelaine, beautiful in her golden blondness, transparent in fleet crinoline yellow and black. Most importantly, she was able to bring out the soulfulness of the young woman, fragile, swarming, and thirsty. She did the dance scenes with grace, even if in the big dance, where she falls more and more into Scaramouche's violence, one would have wished for something more of a wild obsession." The reviewer felt that Elna Jörgen-Jensen, in the 1922 Copenhagen production, was more successful in capturing this wildness, but he contended nevertheless that, in spite of Koskinen's "relaxation of intensity," she was "a truly talented dancer with great development potential." But Hiltunen's

Leilon was "decidedly misplaced: too stiff and wooden, with a dead expression." A follow up review of the production in *Svenska Pressen* (13/12/1935) by "B. B. —t.," wherein *Med ödet ombord* preceded *Scaramouche*, commented mostly on Slovenian conductor Leo Funtek's (1885-1965) success in leading the orchestra, despite having almost no time to rehearse (Funtek had been a fixture of the Finnish music world since 1906). *Scaramouche* "was received with enthusiastic applause." "S. P — n.," writing for *Hufvudstadsbladet* (08/12/1935), observed that "Sibelius has created for this tragic story music that captivates as much through psychologically refined art of characterization as through the richness of melodic inspiration." Koskinen's performance dominated the production: her Blondelaine "gave a both plastically and mimetically believable image of the poor victim of diabolical seduction. Alexander Saxelin . . . donned a satanic mask and seemed strongly suggestive of great awfulness." But Hiltunen's Leilon, though he "moved freely and elegantly enough," would have benefitted from a more "Othello-like" approach to the character. However, "Särrä's" review for *Ilta-Sanomat* (13/12/1935) connects Sibelius's famous *Valse triste* (1903) to the music of *Scaramouche*. According to Särrä, composer Sulho Ranta (1901-1960), "Valse triste is not an ordinary waltz, just as Scaramouche's dances are not 'numbers' in the familiar sense of the word. The ironic thing about this music is that there is dance rhythmicity only as an underlying idea, sometimes as a distant, sometimes as a closer pulsation, never intended or enhanced . . . the frantic bow strokes of a violinist with magical power sound from deep recess." "Only when Saxelin appeared on his violin, did a little life come to the stage [. . .] The performance grew towards the end, in the second act even Irja Koskinen got more involved, but even so, it feels as if it would be to the work's advantage if they performed it with better actors (even at the risk of worse dancing) than with actual dance artists with their formulaic expressions." Martti Seilo [1903-1963], as Gigolo, "for example, was almost a key person yesterday with his actorly habits. Ballet is currently very youthful," and presumably lacked the theatrical maturity necessary to achieve the dramatic power of the narrative. However, in his book *Suomen Kansallisbaletti 1922–1972*, ballet historian Raoul af Hällström recalled the production more favorably: "Scaramouche still had some dramatic moments, and especially Saxelin himself gave a good performance as the ringleader, a dangerously scheming devil who took the golden-haired Blondelaine, who was resting next to his count, to the depths of the forest. Irja Koskinen danced the part gracefully and also developed a dramatic strength, while Leilon (Kaarlo Hiltunen) remained a silent background character. Hilarious Gigolo and Mezzetin appeared as liberators of the mood, because Martti Seilo and Robert Nikko knew how to be supple, elegant cavaliers" (Vienola-Lindfors 1981: 54).

Figure 44: Irja Koskinen as Blondelaine and Alexander Saxelin in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Saxelin, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1935. Photo: Aarne Tenhovaara, Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 45: Kaarlo Hiltunen as Leilon and Irja Koskinen as Blondelaine in Scaramouche*, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1935. Photo: Aarne Tenhovaara, Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 46: Harijs Plucis as Leilon, Helēna Tangijeva-Birznieceas as Blondelaine, and Rudolfs Saule as Scaramouche in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Osvalds Lēmanis, Riga, Latvian National Ballet, 1936. Photo: Brants 1937.*

Riga 1936

Many more uncertainties apply to the *Scaramouche* produced by the Latvian National Opera in Riga in 1936 directed by Osvalds Lēmanis (1903-1965), a ballet dancer and choreographer notable for his great skill in staging ballets with modernist music. *Scaramouche* appeared on a double bill with a ballet version of *Bolero* (1927) by Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). The production was evidently a success (nine performances), because the ballet company revived it for a decade (1971-1981) long after Lēmanis had migrated to Germany in 1944, with choreographic supervision under Aleksandrs Lembergs (1921-1985), who introduced numerous practices to modernize ballet, such as

staging dances on multiple planes. But Lembergs' production will be discussed later. Lēmanis eliminated the dialogue and reduced the work to two scenes rather than three (Rebling 1980: 345). In the 1936 production, Rudolfs Saule (1903-1975), who had been with the Latvian National Ballet since its founding in 1922, was Scaramouche, and Helēna Tangijeva-Birznieceas (1907-1965), soloist with the Ballet since 1927, was Blondelaine. Harijs Plucis (1900–1970), a soloist with the Ballet since 1932, performed the role of Leilon (Beaumont 1952: 100). The prominent modernist visual artist Niklāvs Strunke (1894-1966), who designed many productions for the Opera, was responsible for the set decor and the costumes, and judging from the two illustrations published here, the *Scaramouche* production entailed a sumptuousness not seen in other productions of the work. Oļģerts Bištēviņš (1907–72) conducted the Opera orchestra; in 1946, he arranged an orchestral suite of the *Scaramouche* music and sent it to Sibelius for the composer's approval, but Sibelius never approved it, according to correspondence between Bištēviņš and Sibelius's publisher Hansen (Kurki 2020). But details about this Latvian production are difficult to excavate. A report by Raoul af Hällström (1899-1975) in the Finnish newspaper *Svenska Pressen* (09/06/1938) gives perhaps the most detailed account of the production, even though the writer describes only pictures of the production seen in a book published in 1937 about the Latvian National Ballet, *Le Ballet Lettone*, by Georgs Brants (or Brands), a dancer in the company:

> What mainly interests us are the pictures from Sibelius' *Scaramouche*, which belongs to Osvalds Lēmanis' very best artistic achievements. Our own opera gave this pantomime as written but omitted the occasionally occurring dialog. It wasn't a successful experiment. Lēmanis has also cut out the dialogue, but he has also understood that the action cannot live on mere pantomime. Dance it must be. This dancing *Scaramouche* has had extraordinary success in Riga. The romantic plot has transferred to the Middle Ages. The set and the costumes are, judging by the photographs, exquisitely varied. There is a decorative group dance that is performed by ten girls with large lilies in their hands. There is Blondelaine, with all these lilies in her arms, listening to Scaramouche's diabolical music, with the girls grouped on each side of them. Elsewhere, two couples dance a classic waltz, three girls appear in a Spanish dance, and Blondelaine's nightmare is illustrated by a ballet scene. This is everything that is not in the text for the original *Scaramouche*. Lemanis is apparently a ballet master with fantasy. He has understood how to exploit the existing music to create effective dances. His Blondelaine is a southern one, the beautiful ballerina Helena Tangijeva-Birzniece, who we had the opportunity to applaud at our opera when she guest starred in *Swan Lake* and *Don Quixote* as well at the performance of the Latvian ballet soloists. There are many lovely pictures of her in the book.

Figure 47: Female ensemble dance with lilies from Scaramouche*, choreographed by Osvalds Lēmanis, Riga, Latvian National Ballet, 1936. Photo: Brants 1937.*

In her huge history of the Latvian Ballet, Ija Bite (b. 1938) remarks that Lēmanis combined dance with pantomime to produce a "romantic lyrical mood" that entailed "heavy choreography" in a "northern" vein that was remote from the Renaissance origins of Scaramouche in Italy. She says that Tangijeva-Birznieceas received considerable praise for her "fully psychological" portrayal of Blondelaine. Strunke's costumes and decor also received praise, and some viewers saw in them a resemblance to the paintings of Velasquez (Bite 2002: 124). Bite also quotes from a review in the journal *Rits* (12/12/1936) by the composer and music critic Volfgangs Dārziņš (1906-1962), who asserted that the two ballets on the program revealed Lēmanis to be not only a richly imaginative ballet master but someone who could "form new personalities and new solutions" for ballet art. "Sibelius's *Scaramouche* . . . has survived the fiasco it suffered in Finland, and to escape this fate, Lēmanis has struggled to resolve the work as a ballet. . . Lēmanis is well able to preserve the characteristic mysticism of this work, [because of] the excellent director's idea of solving many psychological moments through mimed scenes" (Bite 2002: 124-125). The photograph below indicates that Lēmanis surrounded Blondelaine with a group of ten young women, all identically dressed in white, rather than the mixed aristocratic salon group of other productions. Lēmanis amplified the idea of multiple or duplicated identities with the female entourage reappearing in identical folkloric costumes, with the Waltz scene, and with the Spanish dance (Figures 48-50). The idea of multiple manifestations recurred at the end of the piece, when Blondelaine, after killing Scaramouche, succumbs to hallucinations of being surrounded by multiple dark Scaramouches (Beaumont 1952: 42). Though uniformed ensembles are common in ballet, Lēmanis

used the convention to dramatize a bright, flowery, luxuriant female world destroyed by a dark, foreign, overpowering male world. The hallucinatory vision of multiple Scaramouches appears also in the Finnish productions of *Scaramouche* in 1955 and 1974, but it is not clear how the concept migrated from Latvia to Finland almost twenty years later, although it is evident that Lēmanis was knowledgeable about the 1935 Finnish production and made significant "adjustments" to the narrative accordingly (Bite 2002: 124). Why Lēmanis chose to stage *Scaramouche* so soon after the Finnish production is obscure. In October 1936, the Latvian Ballet visited Helsinki as part of a Latvian "cultural propaganda" mission arranged through diplomatic channels, following an exhibit of Finnish art in Riga in 1935. An exhibit of Latvian art opened shortly before the arrival of the ballet group, and high-level Finnish officials presided over the exhibit opening and welcomed the ballet (*Helsingin Sanomat* 01/10/1936; *Uusi Suomi* 09/10/1936). Raoul af Hällström published three articles about the Ballet's visit in *Svenska Pressen* (8, 9, 10/10/1936), and his reporting is generally enthusiastic, complimentary, and sometimes ebullient. Helēna Tangijeva-Birznieceas told him that *Scaramouche* was in the repertoire for the season and would be performed in Riga in December (*Svenska Pressen* 09/10/1936). If she or Lēmanis gave a motive for performing the piece, Hällström chose not to share it. It may be that the Ballet wished to extend the "cultural exchange" program the two countries had initiated by performing a work using music by Finland's greatest composer and decided that the score for *Scaramouche* was the most theatrical and dance-oriented of his works. Ballet companies at that time simply did not imagine constructing ballets using Sibelius's concert orchestral or chamber music (although *Valse triste* had been popular with solo dancers almost from the time of its 1904 publication); George Gé (1893-1962), ballet master for the Finnish National Ballet, choreographed an apparently modernistic, abstract "dance symphony" ballet, *Poeme*, in 1931, that used Sibelius's *En Saga* (1892) as accompaniment, but this "extremely interesting novelty" was an anomaly that did not lead to further dance experiments with Sibelius's non-theatrical music (*Hufvudstadsbladet* 08/11/1931). Lēmanis's production apparently was powerful and full of imaginative effects, but the Finnish press did not report on it, despite all the coverage of the Latvian "cultural propaganda" mission in Helsinki.

Figure 48: Waltz scene from Scaramouche*, choreographed by Osvalds Lēmanis, Riga, Latvian National Ballet, 1936. Women (left to right): F. Tracevska and Galina Černova (1911-2004). Men (left to right): Sergejs Liepiņš (1903-1979) and Reinis Jākobsons (1910-?). Photo: Brants 1937.*

Figure 49: Spanish dance from Scaramouche*, choreographed by Osvalds Lēmanis, Riga, Latvian National Ballet, 1936. T. Fokina, Tatjana Vestene (1914-?), Karmena Burkevica (1913-?). Photo: Brants 1937.*

Figure 50: Blondelaine (Helēna Tangijeva-Birznieceas) surrounded by the invitees to her party in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Osvalds Lēmanis, Riga, Latvian National Ballet, 1936. Photo: Brants 1937.*

Figure 51: Scaramouche, *choreographed by Osvalds Lēmanis, Riga, Latvian National Opera, 1936. In the middle of the picture Rūdolfs Saule as Scaramouche and Helēna Tangijeva-Birznieceas as Blondelaine. Photo: Beaumont 1952: 96–97.*

Figure 52: Set design for Scaramouche *by Niklāvs Strunke, 1936, Riga, Latvian National Opera and Ballet, Photo: Collection of Guntis Belēvičs.*

Figure 53: Nightmare scene in which Blondelaine (Helēna Tangijeva-Birznieceas) imagines being assailed by multiple Scaramouches after she has murdered him, in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Osvalds Lēmanis, Riga, Latvian National Ballet, 1936. Photo: Brants 1937.*

In 1939, Michel Fokine produced his *Paganini* ballet for the Covent Garden Russian Ballet using the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (1934) by Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943). The extravagantly allegorical and symbolic scenario depicts the life of Paganini, played by Dimitri Rostoff (1898-1985), as a struggle between Divine and Evil spirits within his consciousness. Rostoff, a highly experienced lead ballet dancer, performed the role of Paganini almost entirely in pantomime (Horwitz 1985: 127-132). Fokine may have borrowed ideas from the Latvian *Scaramouche*, such as the demonic multiplication of Paganinis at the end, even if it is difficult to locate evidence of his actually having seen the Latvian production. In the rustic scene 2, Paganini plays a guitar that drives a peasant girl to perform a dance with intensifying ecstasy until she collapses (Beaumont 1952: 39-42). In a clip from a 1940 color film made of this ballet, Tatiana Riabouchinska (1917-2000) performs this dance with astoundingly beautiful wildness: (https://vimeo.com/411334206).

Figure 54: Covent Garden Russian Ballet production of Paganini*, choreographed by Michel Fokine, Melbourne Australia in 1940, with Dimitri Rostoff as Paganini (foreground) in a photo taken by Hugh P. Hall (1899-1967). Photo source: National Library of Australia.*

Helsinki 1945

Perhaps a clearer understanding of Saxelin's approach to *Scaramouche* emerges in a film document made a decade later. To celebrate Sibelius's 80th birthday in 1945, Suomi Film made a thirteen-minute film showing performances of Sibelius's music by different musical groups. The film, *Sibelius* (1945), directed by Holger Harrivirta (1915-1986), includes a two-minute clip of dancers performing *Scaramouche*. Saxelin choreographed the scene and played Scaramouche, while Irja Koskinen and Kaarlo Hiltunen were again Blondelaine and Leilon. But the film scene differs significantly from the 1935 production. Harrivirta shot the scene in a film studio, not on a theater stage, and Saxelin organized the action for the camera, not for a proscenium audience. The staircase is different from the 1935 production, Blondelaine wears a different costume, indeed, all the women wear more flowing gowns than the 1935 production, the trees and patio scenery are not in the 1935 ballet, Blondelaine is much blonder, Scaramouche's gang is bigger, and the action does not happen indoors. The men's costumes do retain the 1840s look of the earlier production, but the set design does not depict a country manor house so much as a summer villa with a garden, potted plants, ivy decorated columns, and an encircling row of fir

trees. But what is most exciting about the film clip is Saxelin's choreography. He created swirling, coiling, looping movements of bodies. Leilon and Blondelaine engage in a *pas de deux* of remarkable erotic intensity, something not evident in other productions, with Koskinen's Blondelaine clearly elated to be in physical contact with Leilon and glorified by him with exultant lifts. Blondelaine's "community" flows down the staircase in rows of male-female pairs and surrounds Blondelaine and Leilon with swirling *pas de deux* of their own. It is a kind of bacchanalian movement, a community of couples reveling in their unity or homogeneity of erotic desire, their shared, aristocratic sense of belonging to each other. Then the stage dims, as Scaramouche enters, playing his violin and sending a shudder through the party guests. Saxelin's Scaramouche is not a dwarf nor a hunchback, but he is emphatically hunched. He moves in a creeping, lizard-like manner, in jolts, lurches, and twists. His dark entourage, containing both men and women, is somewhat larger than earlier productions have made his gang, and apparently initiated the inclination of the Finnish National Ballet in subsequent productions of the piece to keep enlarging the gang to accommodate more members of the ballet corps. As soon as Scaramouche enters, the dancing becomes wilder--churning, teeming, frenetic. The movement becomes more pantomimic than balletic; the dancers' steps, gestures, and movements become individualistic; the community becomes a crowd. Scaramouche, followed by his entourage, slithers around the patio and immediately draws Blondelaine toward him with his violin playing, and Koskinen skillfully signifies how Blondelaine becomes intensely, sexually captivated by Scaramouche without feeling any of the happy rapture she displayed in her duet with Leilon. The crowd raises their arms, as if, under the spell of Scaramouche, to salute this morbid pairing, but then they surge forward and release gestures of helpless dismay as Leilon tries to pull Blondelaine away from Scaramouche (Figure 55). The small film clip shows a remarkably complex piece of choreography, character dancing, and powerfully emotional bodily movement, emphasized by the sudden shift from balletic to pantomimic action. It feels like watching a fragment of a larger, stranger, more ambitious vision of the narrative than anyone is allowed to see. Was this brief scene all that Saxelin and Harrivirta made of the work? But evidence for more is missing.






Figure 55: Sequence of images from the "Scaramouche" section of the film Sibelius *(1945), directed by Holger Harrivirta, choreography by Alexander Saxelin, with Irja Koskinen as Blondelaine, Kaarlo Hiltunen as Leilon, Alexander Saxelin as Scaramouche and members of the Finnish National Ballet. Cinematography: Unto Kumpulainen (1917-2000). Photo: Harrivirta 1945; Suomi Film; Elonet.*

Helsinki 1946

Indeed, it is puzzling that the next year, in March 1946, as part of a delayed national celebration of Sibelius's 80th birthday, the Finnish National Ballet did not seem to consider developing Saxelin's vision, but instead staged a new version of *Scaramouche*, with Maggie Gripenberg as the director-choreographer and Jussi Jalas (1908-1985), Sibelius's son-in-law, conducting the orchestra. According to dancer Eva Hemming, the Opera planned on an ambitious ballet built around different works by Sibelius to celebrate his birthday, but the resources (mostly related to the formation of an orchestra) to create the ballet were lacking due to the war (the surviving Helsinki Philharmonic was not always available to the Opera) ; the Opera management therefore settled on producing *Scaramouche* in conjunction with a couple of smaller works using Sibelius's music, *Festivo* and *The Tempest*, all directed and choreographed by Gripenberg (Hemming 1991: 344). For *Scaramouche*, Gripenberg restored the dialogue and treated the work entirely as a pantomime, most unusual for a ballet company. Kaarlo Hiltunen (Leilon) and Alexander Saxelin (Scaramouche) reprised their roles in the 1935 Finnish production, and Eva Hemming (1923-2007), also a ballet dancer, performed the role of Blondelaine. But the photo documentation shows an approach that differed significantly from previous productions. Martha Neiglick-Platonoff (1889–1964) designed both the set and the costumes, as was still customary for Finnish productions of the time. She set the action in the sixteenth century, as indicated by the costumes. The setting does not look anything like an aristocratic manor house, but like a cavernous and gloomy reception hall in a castle or fortress. The oppressive mood evoked by the set conveys the idea that a large, dark, foreboding milieu or social order is responsible for the unhappiness and demonic perversity that unfolds through the action, in contrast to earlier productions, which emphasized the idea of a comfortable, complacent, and congenial milieu invaded by a dark, "foreign" being. Eva Hemming was a somewhat blonde-haired Blondelaine. But production photos indicate that Gripenberg attempted a transformation of Blondelaine connected to blondeness. She introduced the character as a glowing, smiling, very self-composed woman with dark, intricately braided hair (Figure 57). But in the latter half of the pantomime, her hair appears loose and blonde (Figures 58 and 59), as if to show how Scaramouche's music has made her look both more vulnerable and more uninhibited than when the spectator first saw her. Neiglick-Platonoff's costume for Scaramouche was perhaps the darkest and most sinister of all costumes designed for the character, although perhaps also the simplest: black pants, black shirt, black wig, and a black cape with a heavy collar. Saxelin emphasized the character's grotesqueness by applying a large, hooked prosthetic nose and makeup that amplified his "demonic" eyes and sallowness (Figure 61). His physical embodiment of Scaramouche came the closest to the Scaramouche described in the libretto. Saxelin was not the muscular, "gypsy-like" vagabond featured in earlier productions, nor was he the unsavory Biedermeier entrepreneur he himself created in the Finnish National Ballet's production of *Scaramouche* in 1935. For Gripenberg, he was a hunchback or at least hunched and even dwarfish: he was shorter than Blondelaine, indeed shorter than anyone else in the cast. As in his 1935 performance, Saxelin moved about with lizard-like slitheriness or coyote-like swaying, as indicated in the very brief

1945 film clip. These qualities imbued Blondelaine's attachment to Scaramouche and his music with a more frightening, mysterious, and perverse magnetism than previous productions had attempted. Previous productions had invested the story with expressionist, symbolist, romantic, or neoclassical stylistic elements. Perhaps because of the recently ended war, the 1946 production seems somehow infused with historicism, an inclination to show Blondelaine's sexual desire as the result of peculiar historical pressures rather than (as Knudsen probably intended) as an inner psychic conflict that neither bourgeois or aristocratic society can contain or control.

Reviewers conveyed ambivalent attitudes toward the production, which had eight performances (Encore Database 2024). Raoul af Hällström (1899-1975), writing for *Hufvudstadsbladet* (08/03/1946), complained about the unnecessary and "unmotivated" dialogue, but he thought Gripenberg directed the production "with a sense of style, musical finesse and a delicious taste." The set seemed "imaginatively airy with something magical in the atmosphere." Eva Hemming as Blondelaine brought "a spontaneous joy of movement and a mild charm" to the role, "even a certain degree of dramatic expressiveness when she enters the difficult scene where Blondelaine dances her despairing dance of madness." However, Hällström regretted that the production omitted the blood flowing from Scaramouche that causes Blondelaine to slip and die. "Overall, more dance is desired for this dance drama." Eva Hemming made "quite heavy movements," and "even the guests could have given more contagious expression of party exuberance." Kaarlo Hiltunen had the "somewhat ungrateful task" of playing Leilon, but he "did it pretty well even though he had not much to do." Scaramouche, Hällström contended, required a "more attractive appearance" to make his seduction of Blondelaine believable. "I.M.H.", in the leftwing *Arbetarbladet* (08/03/1946), observed that "the collaboration between Maggie Gripenberg and her three soloists produced a very beautiful result." The production raised "the question of the kind of movement that arises within each person, when she is exposed to mental torment, which causes spontaneous tensions and solutions that propagate an external, visible itching movement. This emotional movement is an expression of the intimate connection between soul and body, and its beauty is conditioned by its authenticity, not by a form" imposed upon the performer. "The stylization of the movements could have been further elaborated," especially in the first act, and "the orgiastic and ecstatic character of the drama did not turn out right in this version, which was significantly more subdued than the text prescribes," although the production was nevertheless "beautiful and gripping." In *Nya Pressen* (08/03/1946), "H.K.," also objected to the use of dialogue in the production. Eva Hemming's bolero was ponderous, and her dance of madness did not have sufficient impact. The reviewer received the impression that Gripenberg had not worked on *Scaramouche* as enthusiastically as she did on the other pieces on the program, *The Tempest* and *Festivo*.

Other reviewers praised the performances and direction without touching much on the implications of the story. For *Helsingin Sanomat* (08/03/1946), dance critic and dramatist Ukko Havukka (1890-1959), "U.H-ka," praised Saxelin for his "strong" characterization of Scaramouche, which was familiar from his 1935 performance. What was new, on the other hand, was Eva Hemming's "unusually intensively lived and characterized Blondelaine. Maggie Gripenberg has

included something very suggestive with a genuine outpouring of emotion in the dance of this unhappy young woman in every tragic part of the performance, which reaches a powerful climax in the final scene." As Leilon, however, Kaarlo Hiltunen "performed credibly but the part does not give the opportunity for dancing or any other significant expression. In my opinion, the performance of the pantomime was embarrassed rather than benefited by connecting it to redundant dialogue, without which the events would probably have been as intelligible." In *Karjala* (08/03/1946), "J.K —s," noted that Gripenberg "directed and composed the dances with great skill, expertise and the richest imagination. I noticed the director's exceptional musicality, both in connection with individual dance artists and larger group scenes." But Scaramouche required stronger "dramatic underlining." The problem was that "Eva Hemming is an interpreter of lyrical roles," and she "made her part a charming and beautiful fairy tale character." Composer Sulho Ranta (1901-1960), as "Särrä," focused on Sibelius's "strange and wonderful music" in *Ilta Sanomat* (08/03/1946); "the journey of imagination in his stage compositions has really taken off: temporal and local boundaries never seem to stand in his way and he has always been able to look at new subjects from his own bird's eye view without ever straying into naturalistic bareness." Jussi Jalas "led the performances very beautifully, with real piety." Ranta left commentary on the choreography and staging to Antti Halonen, but he did remark that "the atmosphere of *Scaramouche*, which this time was more refined and less fantastic than [in 1935]; Gripenberg's choreography was elegant, maybe sometimes a little too correct." In *Nya Pressen* (08/03/1946), cultural commentator Antti Halonen (1903-1985) described the "genius music" as "completely alive. It has the psychologically quivering nerve of a true horror drama and an unwavering mesmerizing power that sometimes dominates the ear with the chilled notes of just a single violin," although he described the story as an "old-fashioned pantomime. In this form, it is undoubtedly a bit of its time, although decorative and atmospheric, and naturalistic speech sometimes also interrupts that atmosphere a bit." Eva Hemming "succeeded as Blondelaine, a difficult task. She is lyrical and sensitive, bright and soulful: the ingenue's fragile drama reaches believable power as interpreted by her," and "Alexander Saxelin's grotesquely decorative Scaramouche figure is a valuable old-style cabinet work." "T.K—la" in *Ilta Sanomat* (11/03/1946) also concentrated almost entirely on the music, whose "captivating melodiousness, atmosphere condensed into long, so-called pedal point sounds and repetitive rhythmic pattern are *Scaramouche's* most essential stylistic features." In a Swedish-language article in *Hufvudstadsbladet* (08/03/1946), Raoul af Hällström ignored the criticisms he leveled against the production in his 8 March review for *Hufvudstadsbladet* and focused on Maggie Gripenberg's choreography, which he discussed generally without specific reference to *Scaramouche* and the "good idea of engaging Maggie Gripenberg as guest choreographer. It is extremely healthy for our ballet to dance rhythmically and plastically for a change, with an emphasis on soft and expressive arm movements, the musical feeling. This choreography consists of fairly simple and easy movements, but it depends on how you perform them. They require empathy, sensitivity and musical expression. A number of dancing girls from Maggie Gripenberg's own dance group participated. The choreographer had managed to merge their special style with that of ballet. The result looked good."

Gripenberg herself, in her memoirs, mentions working on *Scaramouche*, but omits any evaluation of her production, preferring instead to describe her greater success with *The Tempest* and *Festivo* (Gripenberg 1952: 319-321). However, Eva Hemming, in her own memoir, described in detail her relationship to Gripenberg prior to performing the role of Blondelaine and the impact of the role on the performer:

> [T]here in the corridors of the Opera was whispered that the Grand Old Lady of free dance, Maggie Gripenberg, would come to choreograph the [Sibelius 80th birthday] ballets. I still remembered the times when I had been her free [dance] student - no less than three years and then I cold-bloodedly left her and transferred to the ballet school. I also remembered the many joint performances of the Union of Dance Artists, when we met in rehearsals and in the corridors of the theater, and the disappointment that she didn't notice me and didn't say hello. Did she still hold a grudge against me? We probably wouldn't avoid meeting each other in the corridors of the opera too. Would she greet me now?
>
> Then came a message from [Opera and Ballet director Oiva] Soini [1893-1971]: Maggie Gripenberg hoped to get me the female lead roles in all three ballets. I would get Kaarlo Hiltunen, an excellent dancer and actor, as my partner. Our Master Saxelin himself would appear in the title role of Scaramouche, and the conductor would be Sibelius' son-in-law, Jussi Jalas.
>
> I was dressed in my training outfit and was nervously waiting for our first meeting. In the middle of the stage, in the group talking, stood a small, light, bird-like creature. The big earrings flashed every time she turned her head, her hands full of bracelets were not still for a moment, they were gesturing, explaining and describing things and thoughts.
>
> Embarrassed, I stepped close to her and tried to catch her eye. When she finally noticed me, the hands stopped for a few seconds, then they reached out towards me.
>
> --Eva, I'm so happy to have you on board!
>
> I was so relieved that I couldn't say anything - but you could probably see from my face that I was also happy that everything had changed.
>
> Free dance training was not forgotten. Gripenberg's choreography was difficult in a way - lots of small fast movements, jumps and sets. Music helped and made me do strong emotional accents and tones in exercise. Soon the style got used to my body and left room for self-enjoyment. Blondelaine's role in the Scaramouche ballet was difficult. At the same time, you had to be sensitive, bright and soulful, you also had to bring out the dramatic side of the task. The premiere was successful and unforgettable for me.
>
> After the show, there was a knock on my dressing room door.
>
> The daughter of Jean Sibelius entered, the well-known actress Ruth Snellman holding a large bouquet of roses in her lap. She personally brought greetings from her father, the master composer, who complained that he could not be present at this festive premiere due to illness.
>
> The reviews were gratifying. [. . .]
>
> This was exactly what I needed, for someone to say that I had developed, moved forward in my career. No one inside the walls of the opera ever cheered or cared, neither the ballet master nor the

> senior dancers. However, it's the young people who desperately need encouragement, few have self-confidence so great that they don't need any support (Hemming 1991: 350-351).

When assessing the 1946 production for his history of the Finnish National Ballet from 1922 to 1972, Raoul af Hällström implied that the piece was important as a platform for revealing the dramatic acting skills of young ballerinas who could carry Blondelaine. He referred to Irja Hagfors' (1905-1988) review in *Uusi Suomi* (08/03/1946): "Eva Hemming's Blondelaine was the soul of the whole pantomime. I think this is her greatest artistic achievement to date, which shows that she is not only our most advanced dancer, but also quite a notable actress. Like all her other performances, Eva Hemming's gentle expression is so poetic and purely lyrical that it is surprising to see such genuine, dramatic ability" (Vienola-Lindfors 1981: 71).

Figure 56: Scaramouche, *directed by Maggie Gripenberg, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1946. Photo: Tenhovaara Studio; Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 57: Eva Hemming (dark-haired) as Blondelaine in Scaramouche, *Helsinki, 1946. Photo: Tenhovaara Studio; Finnish National Ballet.*

Figures 58 and 59: Eva Hemming as Blondelaine, Kaarlo Hiltunen as Leilon, and Alexander Saxelin as Scaramouche, in Scaramouche*, directed by Maggie Gripenberg, Helsinki, 1946. Photo: Tenhovaara Studio; Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 60: Alexander Saxelin as Scaramouche and Eva Hemming as Blondelaine in Scaramouche*, directed by Maggie Gripenberg, Helsinki, 1946. Photo: Tenhovaara Studio; Finnish National Ballet.*

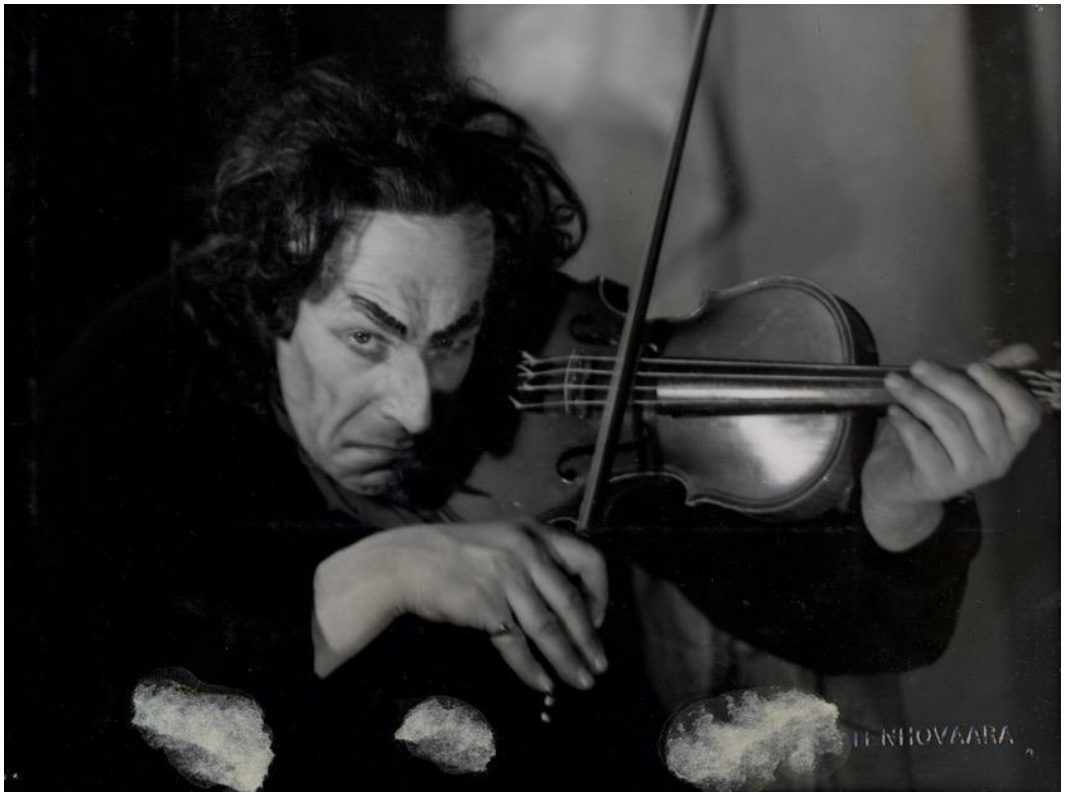


Figure 61: Alexander Saxelin as Scaramouche in Scaramouche*, directed by Maggie Gripenberg, Helsinki, 1946. Photo: Tenhovaara Studio; Finnish National Ballet.*

In 1948, when Sibelius's publisher, Asger Wilhelm Hansen (1889-1965), visited the composer in Helsinki, Sibelius suggested that *Scaramouche* be made into a movie, and Hansen responded favorably. Hansen contacted London Films Productions, run by Alexander Korda (1893–1956) and producer of many notable films, such as *The Third Man* (1949). After a first quite promising reply from London, apparently there was no further contact, possibly because MGM, with whom Korda had a troubled relation, had begun production on its 1952 *Scaramouche* film (Kurki 2020).

Odense 1950

To celebrate Sibelius's 85th birthday, on 25 November 1950, the Odense Theater in Odense, Denmark staged *Scaramouche*, on a double bill with George Bernard Shaw's chamber play *Korsikeren* [*Man of Destiny*] (1895) (Dyrbye 1996: 381). Helge Rungwald (1906–1960) directed what was billed, not as a pantomime, but as "a play and dance in two acts with an interlude." Erik Hofman (1901–1975) played Scaramouche, "a vagabond musician." Ib Fürst (1923–1976) was Leilon, and Rungwald's wife, Birthe Backhausen (1927–2005), a ballet dancer, performed Blondelaine. The choreography was the work of one Erik Bidstedt, but his achievements in this field remain obscure. Rudolf Henriksen, the set designer, and Elna Nielsen, the costumer, were apparently little known outside of the small Odense theater culture. The Odense Byorkester, conducted by Martellius Lundquist (1904–1969), provided the musical accompaniment; indeed, the stage looked cramped when the entire cast was on it (Figure 62). The Odense theater provided a smaller stage than previous productions of *Scaramouche* in opera houses. Photos of

the production indicate that Rungwald staged perhaps most of the action as pantomime, because the stage was not large enough to accommodate much, if any, ensemble dancing, although Bidstedt nevertheless choreographed four dances for the production, a bolero, a sarabande, a flamenco number, and a final tarantella (*Fyens Stiftstidende* 26/11/1950). Henriksen's modest set avoided the decorative symbolism, neoclassicism, romanticism, or historicism of earlier, more opulent productions: the action unfolded in a comfortable country home devoid of distinctive ornamentation. Elna Nielsen refurbished Johannes Poulsen's Scaramouche costume from the 1922 Copenhagen production, with Hofman's navel exposed, as was the case with Poulsen as Scaramouche in 1922 (Figure 63). Erik Hofman embodied Scaramouche in a manner similar to Poulsen, muscular, flamboyant, crudely "foreign." He was not a hunchback or a dwarf, not at all the dark, nimble, self-consciously demonic figures conjured up by the Finns in their 1923 and 1946 productions. Elna Nielsen's costumes for the men emulated the 1810s Empire Style employed in the 1922 Copenhagen production. But for the women, including Blondelaine, she designed or assigned sleeveless evening gowns that belonged to the fashion style of 1950, thus emphasizing the idea that the women in the play (not just Blondelaine) are much more "modern" than the men. The gendered historical tension between men's and women's fashion styles suggested that Blondelaine represented more than her psychically tormented self; she amplified a "modern" spirit associated with her gender in the "old society" depicted on stage (Figure 64). The production reinforced this point by casting of the former silent film actor Kaj Lind (1887-1962) as Leilon's "friend" Gigolo, who, with the application of further "ageing" effects, appeared as an archaic patriarchal figure rather than as a suave, worldly contemporary of Leilon (Figure 66). The men in this production seemed to belong to a venerable men's club while the women seemed to belong to something outside of the old manor house, to a "society outside" of the manor house yet not "foreign," like Scaramouche and his gang.

The Odense press reviewed the production very favorably. In *Fyens Stiftstidende* (26/11/1950), Dagmar Seldorf (1898-1984), director of a local ballet school, proposed that "director Rungwald must be given full credit for the beautiful course of the premiere evening," for he had mastered the "extremely demanding and complicated task of handling a genre that a provincial theater probably has never before tackled." But the success of the production was "due first and last" to Birthe Backhausen's Blondelaine. Backhausen "asserted herself brilliantly as both a lyrical and dramatic artist." "Her very beautiful body glided through the choreographic vortex with an emotional pathos that is rare in such a young dancer."

> The highlights of Birthe Backhausen's great breakthrough as a character dancer were the balcony scene, where her beautiful, soft back sways involuntarily under the invisible caress of Scaramouche's music, which sounds like the calling song of a thousand golden violins, and the rose scene, where she inhales the rose petals and the scent drifts out into the moonlit night. In Act 2, her tragedian talent culminates in the agonizing love for her husband Leilon after the experience with the brutal Jester, and finally in the closing scene, where she stumbles in the blood of the murdered lover and dances her dance of death.

Seldorf had much less to say about Erik Hofman's Scaramouche, which was "excellent" because "masking and costume added color to the slightly too pale milieu. More glow in the eyes and his

mime interpretation and statuary calm will complete the figure's imaginative character." Ib Fürst's Leilon "was hardly fully psychologically worked out [. . .] but in Act 2, he won big in the sweetness-filled spinet scene with the deep sadness of his petrified face." Seldorf also complimented Erik Bidsted's "bizarre" choreography for the four dances in the production: a bolero, a saraband, a zorongo [flamenco], and a tarantella, although she does not explain how these dances worked on such a small stage crowded with furniture. These pieces "enchanted" the public and gave further proof of "an admirable effort of strength that gives good promises of a new epoch. But to achieve that, lighting effects of more recent date are required. The lighting of the stylized decoration, in which the highly erotic scene takes place, was far too dim" In the same issue of *Fyens Stiftstidende*, the organist Christian Vestergaard Pedersen (1913-2016) discussed Sibelius's music for *Scaramouche*, which was "Nordic music, but from the farthest corner and in many respects not without the influence of the music from the big neighbor to the east." String tones were "dark," clarinet tones were "deep," because "the subject dictates such moods." "One wonders for sure that Sibelius does not paint with stronger colors, but what happens strongly underlines the play's character." Pedersen also remarked that when "one's full attention is on the stage, one may forget to listen to the music, which is of course a compliment to the actors, but it will not be difficult for the untrained to hear the quality of the musical performance." He spent the rest of the review complaining about several audience members who talked during musical interludes, and it was "not the first time" this "rude" behavior had tarnished the Odense Theater.

For *Fyns Tidende* (26/11/1950), Sven Arnvig (1905-1990), a journalist and historian, thought the production "succeeded exceedingly well." "This drama is built up of lyricism, passion and pathos. A whole series of visions in line with that of the music is required for the performance, and here the theater has really managed to bring together the individual arts, music, dance acting - the latter understood by both the spoken and what is seen in the faces. The weakest is probably the decoration in the hall where the two acts are played; it is a little too conventional and cold in the juxtaposition with the rest, which has the tinge of fable about it." Like Seldorf, Arnvig found Backhausen's Blondelaine captivating. She

> plays expressionistic tensions completely in line with the music. Her dance in the first act is undoubtedly the most difficult to express, because the demonic horror, which is supposed to explain her obsession, is somewhat lacking in the music. But she has a very fine feeling for the difference in the bolero, which is played by her husband's dance orchestra as any other orchestra will play a bolero, and then the fateful savagery when Scaramouche accompanies her on his violin. She is frightened when she feels the seductive power of the music, and stops, but the passionate tones, which finally gather in a fury of the senses, seize her [. . .] Afterwards, she is like the child who has been told a fairy tale and now wants to experience it. What she has been told about love so far has only been like the dreams of fairy tales to experience. Hot and angry, she runs into the forest to Scaramouche, and increasingly inflamed by his desire and his contempt, she surrenders to his power. [. . .] Mrs. Backhausen wins with this role a beautiful victory for her art, in the dance as well as in the mime. Her face really has a dreaminess about it in the first act, as she has not yet heard the seductive music, and when she begins to dance, you sense in her expression the same hidden light as in the music, until, with violence, she gives in to her senses.

Arnvig discussed other roles that used language that fused description of the character with description of the performance: "Ib Fürst as the husband Leilon has also understood the dreaminess of the young man who thinks he is lucky. And when he thinks he has lost it with Blondelaine he sits petrified, bereft of the dream, while the music underlines his feeling that nothing, neither travel nor life, will ever be the same again. You feel a stab in the heart with him when, to the ritardandos of the music, he sees his cut flowers on the floor in the salon." Kaj Lind, as Gigolo, as "the older friend, was "Perhaps a little too shabby until the scene where he wants Leilon to go on a new journey, and to get him to go, he tells about the time when the woman he loved looked past him and smiled at someone else. Here, Kaj Lind found a truly sublime expression for the belittled, who regained some of the strength of his youth." But Arnvig was more ambivalent, more muted about Hofman's Scaramouche: Hofman "correctly reproduces the fiddler's passion and at the same time his contempt for the young woman whom he can subdue with his music. In the scene in Act 2, where his intention comes out most strongly in the words: 'I must have travel money.' One will then always be able to discuss, whether he should assert himself more strongly on the stage during the dance of Act 1, where he seems a little anemic to Blondelaine's dance or whether he should be so slightly prominent that the guests at the company do not understand where Blondelaine has gone." In a companion article to Arnvig's, journalist and historian Jørgen Hæstrup (1909-1998) rapturously described Sibelius's music. "Precisely through Sibelius's genius, it is possible to turn the unreality of the action into stage reality, and only through music could it succeed, [for music] is the one [art] that can best express the inexpressible and therefore has the strongest impact and maintains the play's bizarre, frantic and demonic atmosphere. [. . .] One is therefore captivated by this music's strange, powerful and demonic atmosphere." It would be helpful, however, if Jaestrup had explained how or why Sibelius's "captivating" music "combines chastity with spirituality." Nevertheless, "Sibelius's deep subjectivity, radiant thematic and instrumental imagination and true dramatic sense pilots the fantasy play," thanks also to the conductor, Martellius Lundquist, and his "remarkably inspired" orchestra, who provided "an evening that fulfilled several dreams."

This provincial production elicited from its reviewers unusually detailed and vivid descriptions of the performances and their emotional effect. The reviewers regarded neither the story nor the music as "old" or dated, but an intimation of "a new epoch" for the Odense Theater, a lurch into modernist aesthetics. However, despite the enthusiastic response of the reviewers and audiences, the Odense Theater never revived the work. Perhaps the theater took seriously the mild complaints of the reviewers that the production required better lighting and set decoration. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the theater was able to combine dance and pantomime so effectively on such as small, crowded stage. This production, along with the 1927 Dessau production and the later Karl-Marx-Stadt production, showed that staging *Scaramouche* did not require the big stage resources of capital city theaters to achieve engrossing performances. As the photos indicate, the Odense production is memorable because of its intense atmosphere of domestic intimacy, a sense that the story is tragic because maybe the characters are too close to each other.

Figure 62: Scaramouche, *directed by Helge Rungwald, Odense Theater, 1950. Downstage Center: Birthe Backhausen as Blondelaine and Erik Hofman as Scaramouche. Photo: Odense Theater*.

Figure 63: Scaramouche, *directed by Helge Rungwald, Odense Theater, 1950. Birthe Backhausen as Blondelaine and Erik Hofman as Scaramouche. Photo: Odense Theater.*

Figure 64: Scaramouche, *directed by Helge Rungwald, Odense Theater, 1950. Erik Hofman as Scaramouche and Birthe Backhausen as Blondelaine. Photo: Odense Theater.*

Figure 65: Scaramouche, *directed by Helge Rungwald, Odense Theater, 1950. Birthe Backhausen as Blondelaine, Erik Hofman as Scaramouche, and Ib Fürst as Leilon. Note blood seeping from*

Scaramouche on the floor, an effect used in the 1922 Copenhagen production. Photo: Odense Theater.

Figures 66 and 67: Scaramouche, directed by Helge Rungwald, Odense Theater, 1950. Einar Larsen as servant, Kaj Lind as Gigolo, and Ib Fürst as Leilon. Ib Fürst as Leilon and Birthe Backhausen as Blondelaine. Photo: Odense Theater.

Paris 1951

Scaramouche returned to Paris on 20 November 1951 at the Théâtre de l´Empire in a production staged by the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas, with choreography by prima ballerina Rosella Hightower (1920-2008), who also danced the role of Blondelaine ("The Young Wife"). Ukrainian-born George Skibine (1920-1981) danced the role of Scaramouche; as a child he had danced with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, and by 1938, he was a member of the Ballet Russe de Monte-Carlo, then De Basil's Ballet Russe, and then (1941) the American Ballet Theatre. American John Taras (1919- 2004) danced the part of Leilon; he had danced in New York ballet companies since the late 1930s, including the American Ballet Theatre (1942-1946) when Hightower and Skibine were also members. Russian-born Georges Wakhévitch (1907-1984) designed the set; he had designed many Parisian theatrical, ballet, and opera productions as well as sets for numerous French films. In his stage work, he tended to construct sets that exuded an eerie, dreamlike, surrealistic atmosphere. The costumes were the work of the American Raoul Péne du Bois (1914–1985), who had designed many Broadway shows and Hollywood films, gaining Academy Award nominations in 1941 and 1944. The Marquis de Cuevas formed his own orchestra, Grand Orchestra du Marquis

de Cuevas, to accompany the ballet concert in Paris. Gustave Cloëz (1890-1970) was the conductor, and he had conducted a great many ballets and operas in Paris since the early 1920s. It is remarkable that de Cuevas could assemble so much accomplished international talent to support the choreography of a woman who was beginning her career as a choreographer. Hightower was the first Native American to choreograph a professional ballet, but she may not have regarded this fact as significant as the fact that she was a woman. But even photographic knowledge about this production remains limited because an accessible photo archive of it has not been established, and Hightower's family has so far not indicated plans for establishing one for her. In *Les Lettres francaises* (29/11/1951), Victoria Achères (1918-1991) wrote unenthusiastically about the performance. She disliked that Hightower supplied Iberian-style dances for Blondelaine's responses to Scaramouche's music, because these constituted a "break in unity of style, an absence of connection between the steps," leading to an "embarrassment of expression," although she acknowledged that the production as a whole "presented a certain eloquence which did not fail to impress." "Miss Hightower was appropriately sentimental and remorseful in her role as the unfaithful wife, and Mr. John Taras [1919-2004] played the scorned husband with much good grace." However, though "Miss Hightower interprets the score faithfully, she has endeavored to favor technique rather than spirit as her basis. This is where her failure lies." The dance critic and historian of religion Maurice Brillant (1881-1953), writing for *L'Homme libre* (30/11/1951), shared a more positive attitude toward the production, which, he said, included pantomime. He praised Wakhévitch's "sumptuous" scenery, "a vast palace in a baroque style," and Péne du Bois's costumes of "soft pinks and delicate blues," with Leilon in "dark velvet." He did not care much for Sibelius's music, but he found Hightower "admirable" as Blondelaine, Skibine "passionate" as Scaramouche, and Taras "perfect" as the "sweet and blonde" Leilon; Brillant seemed captivated by the character of Leilon and Taras's performance of him.

Hightower's ballet departed from the Knudsen scenario in several important ways. She eliminated all the dialogue, and shortened the performance considerably, removing at least 17 minutes out of the 65-minute score. While earlier pantomime/ballet productions end with Blondelaine's final dance and death, in Hightower´s choreography, the ballet ends sooner, when Blondelaine stabs Scaramouche (Daguerre 1954: 115-116; program sheet at the 1952 Edinburgh Festival). Furthermore, the character of Scaramouche, as performed by Skibine, "had become a young, wild but handsome gypsy" (Kragh-Jacobsen 1954: 204). The ballet company described the ballet as follows:

> To amuse his wife [Blondelaine], a husband [Leilon] gives a ball. A group of gipsies with their chief, the handsome Scaramouche, come to dance for them and their guests. The young hostess is fascinated by Scaramouche and cannot resist his charm, and when the gipsies are dismissed by the husband she follows the irresistible Scaramouche. The distressed and deceived host is comforted by a faithful friend [Gigolo] who remains with him, but the young wife comes back repentant and imploring forgiveness. Alas! Scaramouche follows her, using his charm as a weapon to overcome her resistance to follow him. The young wife [is] in a panic, knowing that she is not strong enough to resist the temptation, kills the fascinating Scaramouche (Programme sheet, Edinburgh Festival 1952, Festival Archive; see also Daguerre 1954: 115–116).

In Hightower's version, Scaramouche is not a musician: he seduces Blondelaine entirely through dance--he is a "seducing dancer with brilliant leaps" (Daguerre 1954: 116). By transforming the hunchback dwarf of the scenario into a tall, dark, glamorous, and athletic dancer, Hightower completely eliminated fundamental themes from Knudsen's scenario, such as the asymmetrical relation between desire and physical attraction, the symbiotic relation between degradation and ecstasy, the linking of female sexual ecstasy to an abstract (music) rather corporeal power, the dependency of dance upon music, and the mutually self-destructive relation between seducer and seduced. The result of these excisions is a more conventional ballet romance than the pantomime, an adultery drama that lacks the tragic dimension of Knudsen's scenario. However, Hightower's motives for making these changes deserve consideration. Perhaps she felt that Blondelaine did not deserve to die for her adulterous temptation by such a handsome seducer, although in Knudsen's scenario, it is music, not men who awaken her rapture—the "tragic" point of the story is that music frees her from men altogether, and from marriage. For Hightower, Scaramouche represents an overpowering "temptation" that threatens Blondelaine's marriage, and Blondelaine must kill Scaramouche to preserve the authority of marriage over desire. In this way, Blondelaine remains a "good" rather than a "perverse" woman. Hightower saw the scenario as an opportunity to explore female "temptation" by male beauty rather than female submission to male "ugliness." She apparently wanted to dramatize a female desire for male beauty that could destroy the authority of marriage to constrain the desire, and the manifestation of that male beauty was a dancer, not a musician, not an aristocrat, not any other man. Her ballet projects an idea of a new masculinity emerging out of dance, out of ecstatic bodily movement, and it is this rapturous kinetic performance of the male body that cannot happen within marriage and releases woman from marriage. The emphasis on Scaramouche as a "gypsy" seems misplaced; or rather, the point of defining Scaramouche as a gypsy is to place this new masculinity behind the mask of an alien social and class identity that does not "belong" within a "decadent" milieu dependent on marriage to sustain it. This masking seems designed to protect the audience from taking too seriously Hightower's critique of female desire, marriage, and male beauty. Ballet renders dance less dangerous by presenting alternative masculinities as also unacceptable alternative social identities. But Hightower made this compromise by making a ballet of the pantomime scenario. Ballet can never escape the idealization of desires and bodies through a dance aesthetic totally controlled by an idealizing movement vocabulary, whereas an obligation to idealize desires and bodies is never central to pantomime performance.

Figure 68: Rosella Hightower as Blondelaine and George Skibine as Scaramouche in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Rosella Hightower, Cuevas Ballet, Paris, 1951. Photo: Kragh-Jacobsen 1954: 200.*

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Scaramouche was the largest work staged by the Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas until its ruinous production of *Sleeping Beauty* in 1960. Most programs of the ballet consisted of four works choreographed by contemporary choreographers, such as Skibine, George Balanchine (1904-1983), Victor Gsovsky (1902-1974), and Philippe Héria (1898-1971), who acted in many French films between 1920 and 1935 while also achieving distinction as a prolific novelist. The ballet company was the creation of the Marquis (George) de Cuevas (1885-1961), who understood that the ballet world would not take his company as seriously as he desired unless it produced large-scale ballets. He was a Chilean aristocrat who spent most of his life in France, although he and his wife maintained a luxurious residence in New York City. In Paris during the 1920s, de Cuevas became friendly with many modernist artists, who appreciated his flamboyant, indeed extravagant, style of socializing, described deftly by the Chilean diplomat-journalist Jorge Edwards (b. 1931) (Edwards 2004: 239-248; see also Folch-Couyoumdjian 2014). Despite his homosexuality, in 1927 de Cuevas married Margaret Strong Rockefeller (1897-1985), a granddaughter of oil magnate John D. Rockefeller and heir to an enormous fortune. Margaret's money allowed de Cuevas to fulfill his longtime dream of directing a ballet company. De Cuevas's strange, sybaritic life was the inspiration for the bizarre and daring novel, *The Double Door* (1950), by the adventurous Theodora Keogh (1919-2008), a granddaughter of President Theodore Roosevelt. De Cuevas formed the Ballet International in New York City in 1944, but soon changed the name to Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo and then (1949) to Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas. At least since 1944, he had established a working partnership with the famous choreographer Bronislava Nijinska (1891-1972), but his collaboration with her was always unsteady and messy, culminating in her departure from the company over her demands regarding the company's already hugely expensive 1960 production of *Sleeping Beauty*. In 1947, de Cuevas invited Hightower to join his company as a prima ballerina. She was born in Oklahoma, a member of the Choctow Indian tribe, and started dancing professionally in 1937 with de Basil's Ballet Russe and then with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, which moved to New York at the beginning of World War II. But Hightower cultivated ambitions to choreograph. Her first choreography was for the Markova-Dolin Ballet, *Henry the Eighth and His Wives*, performed at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1947. The preeminent dance critic for *The New York Times*, John Martin (1893-1985), who had effusively praised Hightower's performances as a dancer, regarded her ballet as "without merit of any kind" (Sutton 2013, np; *New York Times* 26/10/1947). For the short-lived (1947-1949) Metropolitan Ballet Company, she choreographed her second ballet, *Scenes from Pleasuredome* (1949), with music by John Lanchbery (1923-2003), the company's orchestra conductor. This piece, set in an amusement arcade, received only one performance, on a television ballet special broadcast on 19 December 1949 by the BBC. Her first choreography for the de Cuevas Ballet was *Salome*, a seven veils dance to Richard Strauss's music, in which she herself performed the role of Salome. A performance of the piece in New York at the Century Theater, on 15 November 1950 was on a program that included Nijinska's *Les Biches* (1924), a *Black Swan* (1880) pas de deux that involved Hightower, and David Lichine's (1910-1972) *The Enchanted Mill* (1949). Her performance was unusual at least insofar as she danced the role on point. In *The New York Times* (16/11/1950: 48), John Martin denounced Hightower's piece as "not very good" and "not vastly different from the Salome dances which used to grace vaudeville halls forty years ago." The previous day, Martin had panned *The Enchanted Mill* as "corny," and on November 12, 1950 (102), he reported on the Cuevas Ballet in general, asserting that while it had a quite promising future, there was "no uniformity of style in

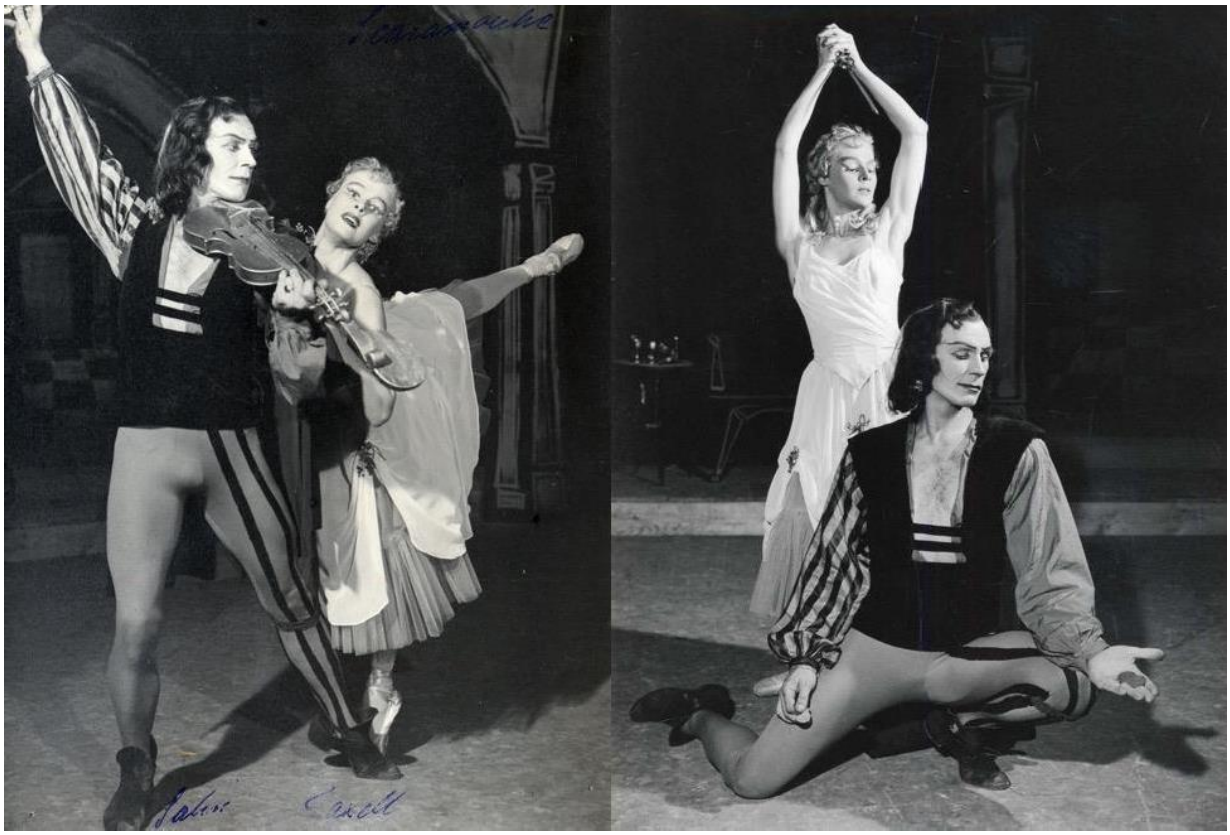
the dancing [. . .] no smartness in the stage direction," a repertoire consisting too much of "hand-me-downs," and a need for "drastic reform" of the musical support. Yet, despite these discouraging circumstances for her initial choreographic efforts, Cuevas entrusted her with the large production of *Scaramouche*. It is not clear why he did so, nor why she wanted to choreograph the work. It is possible that Cuevas Ballet commissioned *Scaramouche* in connection with a planned tour of Scandinavia and Finland in summer 1951, although in her memoirs, Taina Elg (b. 1930), a Finnish dancer in the company, remarked: "We never came to Finland because the costs were too high" (Elg 1991: 97; footnote on Szalkiewicz). However, the *Scaramouche* premiere did not take place until November 1951, in Paris, so work on the production probably did not begin until after the tour. The Parisian critical response to the ballet was quite negative (*Helsingin Sanomat* 21/12/1951). Even so, the company performed the work eleven times at the Théâtre de l´Empire over the ensuing month, and the piece stayed in the repertoire for several years, receiving numerous performances on the company's tours in France, the Netherlands, North Africa, England, Portugal, Uruguay, and Brazil (SPA 45). It is possible that the Cuevas Ballet production reached the largest audience for any production of *Scaramouche*. In a 1954 tour, Denise Bourgeois (1925-2007) replaced Hightower as Blondelaine, German dancer Oleg Sabline (1925–2010) replaced Taras as Leilon, and Vladimir Skouratoff (1925–2013), who was Gigolo in the 1951 performance, took on the role of Scaramouche. Hightower's husband since 1952, Jean Robier (1919-2002), designed the costumes, which, in the case of Scaramouche, meant that the character no longer wore a darkly glamorous "gypsy" costume, but only white pants and a naked torso, suggesting that Hightower wanted Scaramouche to embody a highly abstract idea of alternative masculinity, as far removed as possible from the hunchback dwarf, the demonic gypsy, or the beautiful, handsome seducer of earlier versions. Hightower continued to dance in Cuevas Ballet productions until the demise of the company in 1961, following the death of Cuevas and Margaret's decision to stop subsidizing the bankrupt company. However, despite the success of her *Scaramouche*, Hightower did not choreograph any more ballets for the company.

Helsinki 1955

Subsequent productions of *Scaramouche* took place in Finland. The Finnish National Ballet was responsible for these productions, all of which occurred as commemorations of Sibelius's 90th, 100th, and 110th birthdays. Although Sibelius's music in various forms has accompanied many ballets, *Scaramouche* was the closest thing to a ballet that he ever wrote, even though he insisted it was a pantomime. Performing *Scaramouche* provided the Finnish National Ballet with a reason for claiming Sibelius for ballet and for reinforcing ballet as a source of native, national pride. The music of the great composer justified production of the libretto on the stage, not the peculiar intricacies and significations embedded in Knudsen's libretto. On 9 December 1955, the Ballet premiered a new production of *Scaramouche* in the old opera house in Helsinki, the second half of a program that began with a performance of the one-act opera *Varjo (The Shadow)* (1952), by Tauno Pylkkänen (1918-1980). Nisse Rinkama (1920-1961) conducted the Helsinki Phiharmonic. The choreography was by Irja Koskinen, who had performed the role of Blondelaine in the company's 1935 production of *Scaramouche*. Like Saxelin's 1935 production, Koskinen eliminated the dialogue. She also rejected pantomimic movement. Liisa Taxell (1931-1974) played Blondelaine. This was a role she had performed in the 1946 Finnish production when she

replaced Eva Hemming for the final three performances of the work. She was, therefore, at the age of barely fifteen, the youngest person ever to have played Blondelaine. Jaakko Lätti (1923–1967) was Leilon, and Koskinen's husband, Klaus Salin (1919–1973), performed Scaramouche, and both these men had also performed these roles in the 1946 production. In addition to his lengthy career with the Ballet, Salin, in the 1930s and 1940s, had partnered with another ballet dancer, Orvokki Siponen (1915-1978), to perform glamorous show dances in Finnish movies as well as on stage. He devoted his performance career to dancing romantically idealized male figures, such as Siegfried in *Swan Lake*, for he had not only a beautiful physique, but he moved with extraordinary elegance (Figure 69) (Hemming 1991: 347). Koskinen avoided Gripenberg's big "mistake" in the 1946 production by depicting Scaramouche as a beautiful but "dark" romantic man of female fantasy. The 1946 production troubled critics and perhaps some audiences and cultural officials because of its fidelity to the libretto, in which a beautiful woman's sexual desire awakens and intensifies in relation to a deformed and frightening male body. Transforming pantomime into ballet meant performing a less "perverse" story than Knudsen had written; Koskinen produced a conventional ballet about a woman divided between two equally beautiful men. By casting her husband as Scaramouche, she also publicly idealized her own marriage in a way that would never have happened if her Scaramouche assumed the frightening qualities Saxelin, though himself a very handsome man, had applied to the role (Figures 70 and 71). Like Hightower, Koskinen seemed afraid of the scenario because ballet itself is afraid of such a scenario; Scaramouche's physical strangeness undermines ballet's rigid assumption that physical idealization is the foundation of intense (adulterous) erotic desire.

Figure 69: Orvokki Siponen and Klaus Salin in a dance sequence from the Finnish film Niin se on, poijaat! *(*That's Right, Guys!*) (1942), directed by Ossi Elstelä (1902-1969), Suomen Filmiteollisuus.. Photo: Finna.fi.*



Figures 70 and 71: Klaus Salin as Scaramouche and Liisa Taxell as Blondelaine in Scaramouche, *choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1955. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

Nevertheless, the 1955 production contained remarkable qualities. The set, by Paul Suominen (b. 1930), avoided the inclination of earlier productions to evoke a distinctive historical milieu: the action took place in an abstract "ballet world" associated with "the past," but not much with history. Koskinen and Suominen cleared the stage of furniture, except for a sofa at stage rear, to make space for dancing. Suominen represented the manor house with a painted backdrop done in the abstract-symbolical style developed in Paris after the war, when choreographers collaborated with notable French painters on ballet productions. The self-consciously "painterly" style of the backdrop, with its checkerboard hallway floors and distorted arches, amplified the artificiality of the environment (Figure 72), as did the "timeless" (conventional) ballet costumes, also designed by Suominen (Figure 73), which allowed dancers to move with ease through a large open space. Koskinen expected the movement of dancers to create the "mood" of the piece, which meant that the ballet corps, the "community" surrounding Blondelaine and Leilon, consumed much of the action in the piece; they were not the decorative bystanders of earlier productions. To accommodate further the ballet corps, Koskinen expanded the size of Scaramouche's gang to include both male and female members, and thus emphasized the idea of a "light" community of many women in white or bright dresses (Figure 73) and a "dark" community in much darker colors, with the dark community somehow conveying a more modern identity. Koskinen also used Osvalds Lēmanis's idea from the 1936 Riga production of

having Blondelaine surrounded by multiple dark, phantom Scaramouches rather than slipping on blood (Figures 74 and 83).

Figure 72: Set design by Paul Suominen for Scaramouche*, choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1955. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 73: Costumes by Paul Suominen for Scaramouche*, choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1955. At right, Jaakko Lätti* as *Leilon. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 74: Liisa Taxell as Blondelaine surrounded by the "ghosts" of the murdered Scaramouche in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1955. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

The casting of Liisa Taxell and Jaakko Lätti as Blondelaine and Leilon further strengthened the idea of an abstract conflict between light and dark. This was the first production of *Scaramouche* to emphasize the blondeness of either Blondelaine or Leilon. The pair appears much more youthful than the Blondelaine-Leilon couples of previous productions, even adolescent (Figure 76). The conflict between light and dark communities embeds a conflict between youth and "maturity": one can therefore view the production "abstractly" or allegorically as the tale of a woman's fatal disillusionment, not only with marriage, but with the idealized "alternative masculinity" embodied by Scaramouche, with her own desire, with conventional female romantic fantasy. From this perspective, Koskinen's production functions as a critique of ballet and its addiction to idealized embodiments of male beauty to construct images of female erotic desire. Koskinen's *Scaramouche* proved popular enough to remain in the repertoire of the Finnish National Ballet for ten years. The Ballet performed the work every year from 1955 to 1962, with Salin, Taxell, and Lätti performing Scaramouche, Blondelaine, and Leilon, and presented it on tours to European cities.

Figure 75: Scaramouche (Klaus Salin) with members of his gang and Blondelaine (Liisa Taxell) in a staged photograph for Scaramouche*, choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1955. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

The transformation of the pantomime into a complete ballet elicited strong approval from reviewers. For *Uusi Suomi* (13/12/1955), former dancer Irja Hagfors (1905-1988) asserted that Koskinen's direction and choreography were "overall clear, clean and intact. There is an unstoppable dramatic tension, and even the subject reduced to a classical style is more effective than before." Her choreography "surely and soberly steered the drama to its rise and to its final solution. (The only disturbing moment was a weakness due to the libretto: after the somewhat sudden reconciliation of the rather shocking scene between Leilon and Blondelaine, Leilon cheerfully waves and leaves to get his wife some wine and stays so long on that task that Blondelaine has time to sort out her relation with Scaramouche and kill him!) Scaramouche's entry begins with a most effective dance scene: Blondelaine's ever-so-hot dance to Scaramouche's playing, then their pas de deux. And the women in the garden are skillfully and convincingly guided. Gigolo's dance with his beloved is especially beautiful: delicate, pure and tender. The final scene with the black ghosts of the musicians that haunt Blondelaine was a very successful solution, beautiful and without exaggeration." The reviewer was also impressed with Liisa

Taxell's "elegant" performance and Klaus Salin's skill in transforming an "ungrateful part" into startling "dramatic power." An unidentified reviewer (possibly Raoul af Hällström) in a clipping from *Hufvudstadsbladet* (10/12/1955) in the Finnish National Ballet archive reminded the reader of previous productions of *Scaramouche* since the 1922 Copenhagen production, which had "something completely incomparable in terms of wild intensity in the performance. (Rolf Lagerborg has dedicated one of his most sparkling essays to this performance.)" He also mentioned the 1951 Cuevas Ballet production. "Sibelius's music, in its transparency and fiery grace, belongs to the most beautiful ballet music written in our century," and "one was therefore grateful to Irja Koskinen that she shaped Scaramouche in a classically pure form, where the lovely music and movements tell the tragic story of Blondelaine [. . .] The choreographer had woven the pantomime motifs into the dance with tact and taste and a good artistic eye, and instead of letting the insane Blondelaine slip in the blood of the murdered Scaramouche, she inserted floating black ghost figures frantically rubbing their violins. Something that gave far more visual aggravation to the insanity hallucinations on the carpet which, according to the libretto, should be stained red with blood. A rather dubious dramatic effect, by the way." Another unidentified reviewer, probably Irja Hagfors, in *Uusi Suomi* (10/12/1955) also found the production impressive: "The warm Eros that radiated from the caressing notes of Sibelius' Scaramouche inspired Irja Koskinen to probably her very best choreographic creation. Some scenes, such as the enchanting, ecstatic seduction of the violin playing, rose to the highest level of ballet art. In the title role, Klaus Salin was incredibly strong. He was like the demon of the violin and the demon of playfulness combined into a huge dream image. Liisa Taxell had finally been given a big task, which she performed triumphantly. A sensual soulfulness manifested in a rare and strong way was associated with dancing charm, which can be said to be exceptionally personal and intelligent. It was a pleasure to look at such lively, human, sensitive faces as the best crown of the beautiful ensemble." In *Nya Pressen* (10/12/1955), composer, musicologist, and music administrator Nils-Eric Ringbom (1907-1988) wrote only of Sibelius's music as something that outlived its purpose in accompanying Knudsen's outdated scenario: "The music for Scaramouche is so far peculiar in Sibelius' production in that it is thoroughly composed theater music. Here, for our master, highly characteristic features in the combination of gracefully dancing episodes are combined with the symphony's eminent ability to build and develop musical wholes, to create effective transitions in an organic unfolding of themes." However, it is odd that Ringbom did not write more about *Scaramouche* as he had written a book about Sibelius several years previously (1948). In the same issue of the newspaper, an unidentified reviewer described and evaluated the production in greater detail than any other reviewer:

> [*Scaramouche*] was a great success premiere thanks to choreographer Irja Koskinen's bold efforts to rework the originally tedious pantomime libretto into a ballet with classical dance. In the past, Alexander Saxelin and Maggie Gripenberg have been given the opportunity to make an enjoyable spectacle of *Scaramouche*. In Irja Koskinen's ballet version, it wasn't just the blonde, charming, warm-hearted Liisa Taxell with her stylish soft dance and clean, beautiful arabesques that grounded the work; the whole thing was a purely breathtaking experience, choreographically as well. And how good it is: Sibelius's graceful, light, festively sparkling Scaramouche music has never come into its own as now. So it was also played by Nisse Rinkama and the orchestra with nuanced tenderness

and studied subtleties. Irja Koskinen has wisely used most of the score's possibilities vis a vis adagio dance, pas de deux and strongly designed expressive dance. The ballet begins quite charmingly with the ball at Leilon and Blondelaine's house. Here the choreography has played out a stylized suggestive, noble exuberant ballet in gavotte and bolero style with two dominant couples in the group dance, Jaakko Lätti [1923-1967] as Mezzetin and Uuno [sic] Onkinen [1922-1994] as Gigolo along with the ladies, Virpi Laristo [1934-2020] and Marita Ståhlberg [1926-2015]. They are skillfully used throughout the act, and later the technically rigid Marita Ståhlberg happens to show that she is also a most engaging, soft and pleasurable dancing ballerina. The dramatic rising ring with the [multiple] fiddler Scaramouches entrance and Blondelaine's increasingly wild dancing is excellent, thanks in large part to Klaus Salin's expressive performance. He is a young and neighborly gypsy, dancing much more than the originally intended hunchbacked horror figure, a demonically passionate partner to the dancer in the forest interlude, which Koskinen added and realized with fine results. Lisa Taxell works her way up to a temperamental rise in the dance, which was not believed in her until now. The pain and horror of the madness scene after she murders Scaramouche is given with experienced strength. Here, the choreographer has seen a whole bunch of morbid little Scaramouches in an expressively danced tone, and it's great. If you want to criticize, then you can mention some single, immature parties such as Leilon's appearance. Jaakko Lätti is romantic and probably emotional enough as Blondelaine's unassuming husband, but the role would win by further elaboration and preferably against something more decidedly danced. – Paul Suominen's decor with the castle hall divided into two sectors, one red for the allure, the seduction, and one blue for the cozy domestic happiness is from a conceptual point of view good but seems too heavy and dirty in color (as well as the costumes); it should be somewhat tasteful and elegant to match the content and music."

Figure 76: Jaakko Lätti as *Leilon and Liisa Taxell as Blondelaine in* Scaramouche*, choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1955. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

"Kun." in *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* (10/12/1955), devoted most of his attention to Pylkkänen's opera, but in regard to *Scaramouche*, he remarked that Sibelius "is a genius who thrives on a wide variety of subjects, mastering his field truly and powerfully. In the tragic ballet pantomime *Scaramouche*, which was completed in 1913, commissioned by the Royal Theater in Copenhagen, the music is restrained, almost reductive. Yet it seems, at least when presented this way, its charm lies in the rich rhythm and the ingenious playing. This is obviously the reason why the music offers a lively, appreciative starting point for the performance of *Scaramouche*. It's enough to mention the conductor Nisse Rinkama's conducting of the performance is indeed elevated."

Koskinen's *Scaramouche* remained such a strong fixture in the Ballet's repertoire that the Ballet took it on tour to the Edinburgh Festival in August 1959, just before its first visit to the United States, Canada, and Cuba. An article in the *Helsingin Sanomat* (06/09/1959) summarized British responses to *Scaramouche*, beginning with a general summation of the London-based attitude toward the Finnish repertoire as a whole: "The general repertoire as well as the choreography were considered old-fashioned and dusty, the strength and joy of life of the dancers was appreciated, but it was added that the technical accuracy and purity suffered from this [lack of discipline]." *The Times* music critic announced that the Ballet "has reached international standards as an ensemble as well as in the virtuosity of the soloists in their assertiveness, which combines a youthful spark with sufficient experience [. . .] The group increased the value of its success by making its specialized skills seem natural and its male dancers showing the ability to lift their partners with a lightness that can be compared to the performances of the Bolshoi ensemble." *Scaramouche*, according to the *Guardian* critic, was "clumsily staged, weak and lazy; the work is too long to maintain dramatic lightness and convincingness. Jaakko Lätti as her husband, sublimely accompanied by Lisa Taxell as the wife, and Klaus Salin as Scaramouche, danced with more power than sensitivity." *The News Chronicle* commented unenthusiastically: "There is vitality in everything they do, and all the young dancers have a very pleasant personality. What's missing from them right now is a polished work - and a good choreographer." *The Daily Mail* considered *Scaramouche* too lazily performed to "justify" Knudsen's tragedy with Sibelius's "obscure" music. Liisa Taxell brought pathos and drama to her role [. . .] But the other performers were just names [. . .] and better lighting would have helped tremendously, curbing the harshest of shadows." Noel Goodwin (1927-2013) in *The Daily Express* was similarly unimpressed with "the naive, old-fashioned ideas of stage layout, the flamboyant taste for decoration and the obsession with anxiously wandering spotlights." *Scaramouche* was "a crude five-penny horror melodrama set to the dark music of Sibelius [. . .] It took 40 minutes of fluffy choreography, simple mimicry and a rare lack of style in dance or performance to push that paltry pantomime through its paces. Lisa Taxell as the heroine had some feeling, but her acting was dull, and she was hampered by a weak partner." Prominent dance critic A.V. Coton (1906-1969) in *The Daily Telegraph* called *Scaramouche* "probably the weakest ballet ever put on the stage in the history of the art . . . They could not make it bearable even for an audience consisting of blind and deaf-and-dumb people." Another major dance critic, Richard Buckle (1916-2001) announced in *The Sunday Times* that "I dare to compare the Finns to be roughly where Sadlers Wells was before the war - maybe not quite there. Personally, I think they are too immature to go abroad." But all this negativity did not

stop an unknown reviewer for *Uusi Suomi* (03/09/1959) from asserting that "English press reviews of our National Opera's Ballet performances at the Edinburgh Music Festival are quite contradictory, but most reviewers are positive nonetheless," although the article does not clarify the contradictions or the basis for seeing a positive outcome.

Scottish reviewers shared more enthusiastic responses to the Finnish Ballet. Of *Scaramouche*, an unknown reviewer for *The Edinburgh Evening News* (01/09/1959) remarked that "Lisa Taxell has an exacting role, and her interpretation fully merited the ovation awarded her last night. [. . .] She senses the arrival of Scaramouche (Klaus Salin), a wandering musician. Scaramouche arrives bathed in a green light, which accentuates his green and black costume [. . .] The ballet [. . .] includes a thoroughly appealing pas de deux by Uno Onkinen and Marita Ståhlberg." In a broad article in the Edinburgh *Evening Dispatch* (31/08/1959) covering all the works presented by the Ballet at the Festival, Leslie Glass said of *Scaramouche*: "The Finns make great use of their national composer, and several ballets have Sibelius scores. The dramatic story of Scaramouche, chief of a group of gypsies, is one. The group is entertaining at a ball, when he entices the hostess away from her husband only to be murdered by her to break the spell he has over her. This ballet will be seen in a very different guise from that presented in 1952 by Le Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas."

In recalling Koskinen's production for his history of the Finnish National Ballet from 1922 to 1972, Raoul af Hällström remarked that "Blondelaine was the role that brought Lisa Taxell to public awareness. Her lady of the castle was dreamy, full of pale sweetness, warmth and tenderness, and her softly undulating dance with high arabesques was apt to attract the audience's attention. Irja Koskinen had well developed the dark romantic rise when the violinist Scaramouche and his entourage arrived in the manor house as well as Blondelaine's ever wilder dance, which Scaramouche, expressively acted by Klaus Salin, lured out with his playing. His Scaramouche was a masculinely attractive, handsome gypsy, and incomparably more danceable than the previously seen hunchbacked and demonically lustful horror apparition." Both Hällström and Koskinen believed that the Ballet could achieve international distinction only if a *Scaramouche* production eliminated the dialogue, the pantomime, and the "perverse" idea that Blondelaine could be attracted to a hunchback dwarf; a much more abstract design was necessary to highlight the balletic virtuosity of the performers and allow the choreography to adapt to the abstractionism that invaded ballet (and other arts) in the 1950s. However, according to Hällström, "*Scaramouche*'s greatest merits were in the sharply defined main roles of Lisa Taxell and Klaus Salin, because despite its good moments, the choreography proved to be old when its carrying capacity was tested on foreign visits" (Vienola-Lindfors 1981: 102-103).

In 1965, the Ballet again revived *Scaramouche*, but this time Koskinen made adjustments to her staging of the work. Salin again appeared as Scaramouche, but Blondelaine was performed by Sorella Englund (b. 1945), who had joined the company only the previous year after studying in the Ballet's school since the age of eight. Martti Valtonen (1937– 2019), a lead dancer since 1964 and a member of the ballet corps since 1959, danced Leilon. Suominen remained responsible for the scenery, but costumes were the work of Ritva Vanhanen (1933–2013), who had only recently begun to design costumes for the opera. Jussi Jalas (1908–1985), Sibelius's son-in-law, conducted the

orchestra. For the 15 May 1965 premiere performance, *Scaramouche* was the first half of a double bill that concluded with *Festivo*, a suite of "discrete abstract" dances set to various pieces of music by Sibelius and choreographed by Elsa Sylvestersson (1924–1996), who had a very long career with the Ballet from 1936 until 1984. Sorella Englund, whose career as a dancer unfolded largely in Copenhagen, has remarked of her performance as Blondelaine: "*Scaramouche* is one of the most important experiences in my career. I was young and working with Irja Koskinen and Klaus Salin, and they influenced my future perfectly. Everything started from within and the body was purely the messenger of feelings. I understood how important it is to find one's own inner world of values, whatever the role. Dancing Blondelaine is still the most beautiful thing I've experienced on stage. Irja Koskinen was a wise woman in life and Klaus Salin one of the greatest artists that I have worked with. I use them as inspiration in my own directing work around the world" (Englund 2024).

Koskinen made the ballet even more abstract than her 1955 production. Gone was Suominen's painted backdrop. Instead, the action transpired in a large, empty space surrounded by darkness sprinkled with tiny lights to suggest stars in a night sky. The dancers inhabited a completely abstract world without historical or even physical context. Figures moved in and out of pools of light and shadow. The sense of the action occurring in a confined, comfortable, complacent, and intimate space has disappeared. The bodies moved within a seemingly borderless space or darkness. The conflict between light and dark appeared even more starkly than in 1955, but Koskinen complicated the conflict. The female figures were brighter, with fluffier, whiter, and more hyper-feminized tutu skirts than in 1955. Yet Blondelaine was dark-haired; indeed, blondeness was not visible anywhere among figures on the stage. The male figures were all darker than in 1955, wearing dark tights and dark tunics that, in the ballet idiom, merely signified the "romantic past" (Figures 77 and 83). The conflict between light and dark equaled a tension between genders that transcended historical and spatial borders, that took place in a dark "anywhere" or "everywhere." This scenic schematization allowed Koskinen to amplify bodily movement as the controlling power defining relations between the sexes through time. However, here, as in all other productions of *Scaramouche*, the movements of the performers will only be very imperfectly understood because reliable (film, video) documentation of them is lacking.

Nevertheless, the photo documentation suggests that Koskinen used a conflict of ballet movement styles to differentiate the "dark" movement of Scaramouche and his gang from the larger darkness engulfing the stage and embodied by the male members of Blondelaine's "community." At the beginning of the ballet, Blondelaine and other women in her community dance with men and display their elegant classical poise and polished kinetic fluidity, while the men are symmetrically "supportive" according to the ballet code or system for engineering male movement (Figure 80). When Scaramouche and his gang appear, their movements are no less precise and disciplined, but they are also less uniform, less rigid; they are "freer" (Figure 81). Scaramouche's dark "community," which contains both male and female members, constitutes a deeper darkness within the predominate darkness: Scaramouche's dark music, emanating from a darkly idealized male body, makes bodies move in differentiated ways that undermine the gendered unity of movement governing Blondelaine's community. A woman's desire to move

outside of her community is fatal. The dark male music makes her move differently, and her movements differentiate her desire, fatally separating her from the ballet system for imposing gendered control over bodies, movements, and desires.

The last performance of Koskinen's production took place on 27 September 1966. On 19 October 1960, Finnish television broadcast a TV movie, *Scaramouche*, directed by Seppo Wallin (1928-2003) and choreographed by Irja Koskinen with dancers Liisa Taxell, Klaus Salin and Oiva Ollikkala (1928-2001). Unfortunately, no copy of it exists either in the Finnish film databases (KAVI/RTVA) nor at the archive of the Finnish Broadcasting company (Andberg 2024). The IMDb identifies the one-hour film as a "ballet pantomime." Wallin directed many Finnish television movies from 1957 to 1988. Presumably the film incorporated much of Koskinen's choreography from her 1955 Finnish National Ballet production.

Figure 77: Scaramouche*, choreographed in very abstract fashion by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1965. Photo: Taisto Tuomi; Finnish National Ballet.*

Figures 78 and 79: Sorella Englund as Blondelaine, Martti Valtonen as Leilon, and Klaus Salin as Scaramouche, in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1965. Photo: Taisto Tuomi; Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 80: Blondelaine (Sorella Englund) and other women dance with men in a round dance. Blondelaine's hair is tightly coiffed and partially netted with jewels. Scaramouche*, choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1965. Photo: Taisto Tuomi; Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 81: Sorella Englund as Blondelaine, surrounded by Scaramouche (Klaus Salin) and his gang, in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1965. Photo: Taisto Tuomi; Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 82: Scaramouche (Klaus Salin) and Blondelaine (Sorella Englund), with hair unknotted, in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1965. Photo: Taisto Tuomi; Finnish National Ballet.*

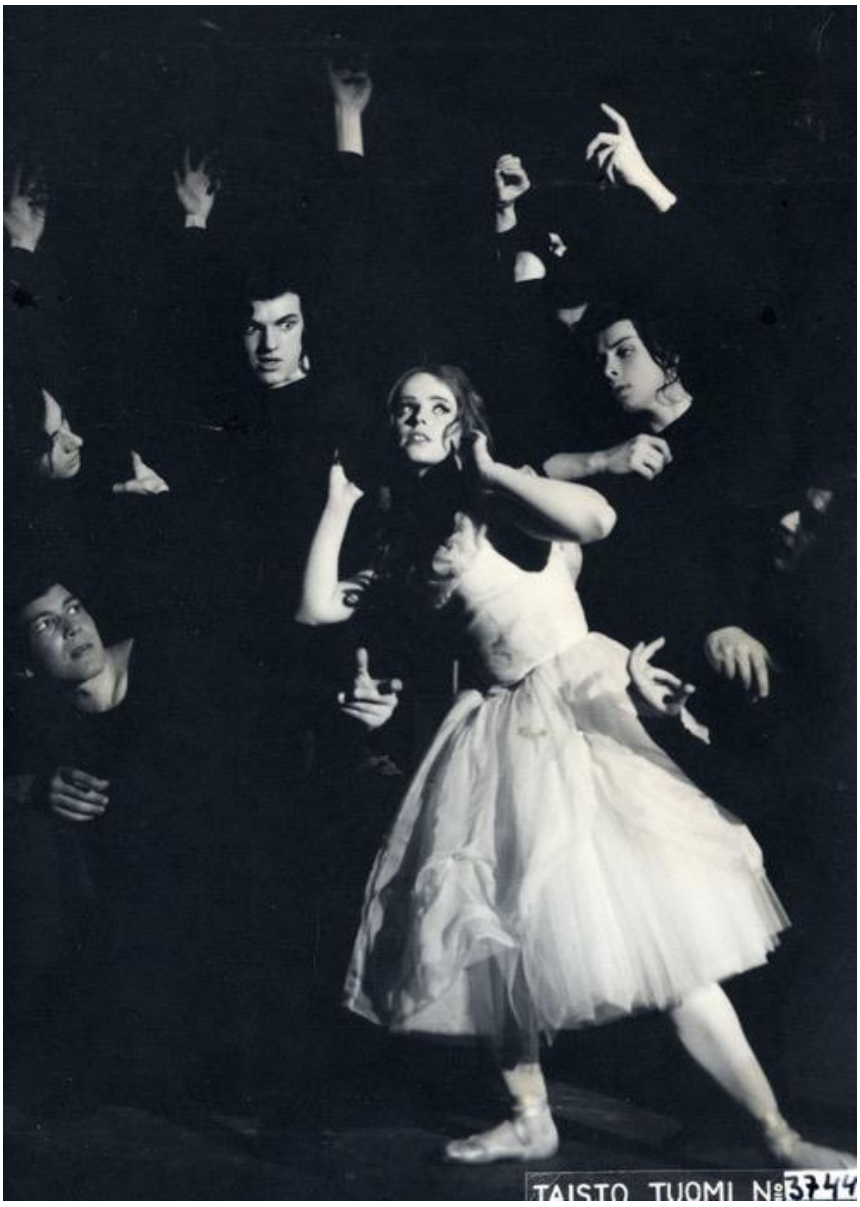


Figure 83: Blondelaine (Sorella Englund) surrounded by the "ghosts" of the murdered Scaramouche's "community," in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Irja Koskinen, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1965. Photo: Taisto Tuomi; Finnish National Ballet.*

Helsinki 1974

But *Scaramouche* continued to claim the attention of the Finnish National Ballet. On 9 April 1974, the Ballet premiered a new version of the work on a double bill with, in the second half, *Myrsky*, a ballet, guest choreographed by Hungarian Imre Eck (1930-1999), based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610), with music by Sibelius, who wrote incidental music for a production of the play in Copenhagen in 1926. The choreographer for *Scaramouche* was Margaretha von Bahr (1921-2016), who began dancing with the Ballet in 1938; she turned to

choreography in 1964, but the Ballet identified her as a guest choreographer. The set designer and costumer, Anneli Qveflander (b. 1929), was another "guest" of the Ballet, although the opera costume shop was supervised by Ritva Kokkonen, who was Ritva Vanhanen when she designed the costumes for Koskinen's 1965 production. Martti Valtonen, who played Leilon in the 1965 production, danced the part again in the 1974 production. Ulrika Hallberg (b. 1952) was Blondelaine, and Aku Ahjolinna (b. 1946) played Scaramouche; Ahjolinna had been dancing with the Ballet since 1963, and Hallberg since 1964. Jussi Jalas again conducted the orchestra, as a "guest."

Regarding her performance as Blondelaine, Hallberg recalled, fifty years later: "*Scaramouche* was the first work by Sibelius that I have been involved in, and what I remember best is Sibelius's fine music; especially Scaramouche's viola playing was impressive and gave me goosebumps. Margaretha von Bahr had made her own libretto for the work based on the original. The play was to her liking. She was a flamboyant person with whom you could work on the role by yourself, but as a young dancer I didn't quite understand what we were doing. I had danced lyrical roles before, but there was a passion, strength and courage that was new to me. I was shy by nature and it required courage to transform oneself into something else and throw myself into eroticism, passion and animality. I also remember the beautiful costumes designed by Anneli Qveflander" (Hallberg 2024).

Bahr's production of *Scaramouche* retreated from the perhaps excessive abstractionism of Koskinen's version. She brought a more sensual or even sensationalistic approach to telling the story. The costumes did not evoke a particular historical era, nor did they signify an abstract value, such as "light" or "darkness"; instead, they seemed like the work of an experimental fashion design project. The male ensemble wore, besides ballet tights, overly fancy, complicated blouses that may have been "inspired" by some "old" male fashion, but which function simply as a kind of ornate uniform (Figure 84). The women's ensemble wore sleeveless burgundy dresses close in style to high fashion dresses of the 1970s, although the dresses are even more uniform than the men's blouses. Blondelaine wore the same style dress, except that it was white, as were Leilon's tights and blouse (Figure 85). After Scaramouche arrived, Blondelaine shed much of her dress to dramatize his power to strip her and intensify her sense of becoming a wildly erotic woman. As in earlier productions, her hair, elegantly coiffed at the beginning, flowed freely when she succumbed to Scaramouche (Figures 86 and 87). Here, too, Blondelaine was not blonde. Scaramouche appeared entirely in black: black boots (with, curiously, bare toes peeking through), a black shirt that exposed his bare chest, and diaphanous sleeves. His makeup further blatantly constructed the satanic, "black magician" image often associated with the contemporary underground culture of bondage and discipline and sadomasochistic games (Figure 88). In this production, Blondelaine did not die at the end, giving the impression that she and Leilon can somehow achieve reconciliation. Bahr also deviated from previous productions by introducing, in the first half of the piece, what she called "The Serenade." This was a trio dance involving identical female twins, Riitta and Soile Heinonen (b. 1955), who were students of Bahr and had achieved popularity for their duets on television. The twins performed "The Serenade" with a single male dancer even younger than themselves, Hannu-Pekka Holmström (b. 1956). "The Serenade" was a kind of gimmick or stunt dance designed to showcase the charm of a boy dancing with two of the same girl. Photos indicate that the twins performed identical

movements, which would mean that Bahr did not explore the possibility of "the same girl" developing different kinetic relations to the boy. Rather, the dance apparently showed the power of the male body to bring unity of identity and movement to female identity, to efface difference between one female body and another. For the last three performances of the piece, in autumn 1974, the Ballet replaced the twins and Holmström with Venla Konttinen, Hilppa Kujala, and Eero Huttunen. If the choreography remained the same, with Konttinen and Kujala "twinning" or copying each other's movements, then the idea of the male body bringing unity to female identity received even stronger representation. This trio configuration contrasts with the presentation of Blondelaine, a woman too weak to reconcile the difference between one man and another, between Leilon and Scaramouche (Figures 89 and 90).

Bahr retained a few ideas from Koskinen's 1965 production. She used a set consisting merely of a series of columns receding into darkness. Most of the action occurred before a backdrop of darkness, but this darkness did not signify a cosmic, nocturnal void in which a timeless, borderless conflict between light and dark, between male and female transpired. Bahr also kept the idea of uniformed distinctions between male and female communities; however, the photos show the men and women of Blondelaine's "community" performing the same movements, so it is likely that Bahr did not follow an entirely coherent theme or hermeneutic for organizing the narrative. She placed the action in a large spotlight that separated the dancers from the darkness but did have them moving through shadows. This effect, combined with the fashion-studio costumes, the "Serenade" dance, Blondelaine's erotic costuming, and the "satanic" fashioning of Scaramouche, created an atmosphere vaguely reminiscent of a cabaret or nightclub act. But the production was not kitschy. Rather, by 1974, it was clear to Bahr that the "old" libretto required an infusion of new sensations, a more provocative image of sexual power dynamics, and a less subtle and less complex way of defining relations between bodies, movement, and music. Bahr's production had fifteen performances. It was the last production of *Scaramouche* staged by the Finnish National Ballet. Since then, the Ballet has used music by Sibelius to accompany other ballets. No production of *Scaramouche* by the Ballet was ever hugely popular compared with other ballets in the company's repertoire, such as *Coppelia, Cinderella, Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty,* and *Romeo and Juliet*. *Scaramouche* was, nevertheless, more popular on the Ballet stage than any other ballet with Finnish musical accompaniment, including ballets using music by Sibelius.

Reviewers responded ambivalently to the production. For example, Antti Halonen, in *Uusi Suomi* (11/04/1974), contended:

> The old, strange Scaramouche has bothered the imagination of choreographers for decades. When the score was commissioned for the first time in Denmark, the libretto still had a strong, belated dose of Herman Bang's horror romance days. [Herman Bang (1857-1912), impressionist novelist estranged from the Danish cultural elite because of his homosexuality.] Over the years, the text turned yellow, and every new choreographer took it for granted to modify the content according to changing taste trends. However, music still attracts experiments on the stage. The female lead role also constantly seems to be a kind of test that leads to a breakthrough in the career of the starting ballerinas. This time it's the turn of a new generation's talented newcomer, Ulrika Hallberg, whose Blondelaine is a clichéd lyrical stage character in a tangle of love fantasies. This time, the choreographer Margaretha von Bahr has tried to lighten the neurotic imaginings of the final stage,

> by giving up the chaos that leads to destruction and leaving the final solution up to the discretion of those sitting in the audience. In the future, we will see if such a decision is the final key to the problem, if Scaramouche still, in the future will attract stage entrepreneurs. The title character is Aku Ahjolinna, who in recent years has played with strong, obvious tendencies as an interpreter of character roles. According to the new vision, Martti Valtonen is a bit more assertive Leilon than earlier ones. The relationship between the title character and the young married hero is still in this fantasy like sketching a hole in the air. Riitta and Soile Heinonen's extra number is surprisingly in the middle a chalky, albeit funny number, if almost detached in the emotional rush of the entire pathetic story.

Halonen proposed that a ballet constructed around Sibelius's symphonic poem *En Saga* (1892) would have proved more satisfying than *The Tempest*. Meanwhile, rightwing politician and journalist Torsten G. Aminoff (1910-1985), in *Hufvudstadsbladet* (11/04/1974), was largely complimentary: "Margaretha von Bahr's task of choreographing *Scaramouche* is not an easy one. The story, to which Sibelius wrote his music, is neither natural nor well-connected. It is therefore a marked compliment when you note that she has created a choreographic design that flows smoothly and gives a natural illusion. One reservation can only be made for the death scene [in which Blondelaine does not die]. But what does a poor choreographer do, when all the works emanate from an enormously protracted dying? Scaramouche can be counted as her undeniable choreographic maturity test." Aminoff called the production a "joyful event." "Ulrika Hallberg had the biggest burden as Blondelaine. Her dance was beautiful and confident [. . .] vivid and strong. Aku Ahjolinna was a demonically enchanting Scaramouche, superb in his scenes against Blondelaine. That the role did not come alive was of course the fault of the libretto. Martti Valtonen as Leilon danced some very beautiful parts with Blondelaine and played his part with recognizable skill." In a review for *Helsingin Sanomat* (11/04/1974), former dancer Irma Vienola-Lindfors (1930-2007) also expressed doubt about the libretto but was enthusiastic about the production: "Scaramouche is anachronistic and from a contemporary point of view implausible: a demonic caller arrives at the prom and enchants the entire party crowd and above all the young mistress, then seduces her by exploiting her unstable status. Sibelius' sparkling waltz melodies have kept the piece alive. I personally feel the power of this music extremely strongly - when the first time from the orchestra the fateful theme of Scaramouche emerges, a cold shiver runs down my spine. The music then takes you so thoroughly that even the pathetic story is swallowed up in it, living it with every cell of the body. Margaretha von Bahr has modernized the libretto as far as it has been possible and has created as good a ballet as you can understand on this basis." Vienola-Lindfors considered the bizarre "Serenade" scene with the identical twins in the garden effective: "They seem completely separate at first but are connected to the main theme [because they find the fainted Blondelaine there]." Ulrika Hallberg, as Blondelaine, was brilliant. She "has grown up in our ballet circle, a delightful and bottomlessly malleable creature whose dance stands up to comparison even in larger circles than ours. She is no longer a great promise, but an artist opening like a flower, rich in interpretive nuances and sensitive internalizations, whose childish gentleness makes events of the ballet logical: young, open and inexperienced, she is easy prey for Scaramouche who with the power of his violin haunts from the forest, uninvited, as a guest who has learned his witchcraft from the oriental sciences and is welcomed by his host as an old friend."

As Scaramouche, Ahjolinna was an “impressive apparition, tall, handsome,” in complete contrast to the character physique as described in the libretto. The blonde husband, in this version a painter, has undergone a modest makeover. There is tenderness and warmth in the couple's love-play. This Leilon does not remain a sad bystander, but acts, reacts and in his blackness is very typically a man with hurt self-esteem. Martti Valtonen brings out these mental qualities with dance in a controlled manner, but undeniably he could still sharpen his characterization a lot.” Vienola-Lindfors felt that Bahr had “softened” the ending regrettably. “Her Blondelaine does not attach to a mental disorder. The young couple remains standing in the ruins of their happiness, and it is up to the viewer to decide what happens next. A bit dry, this ending is divided and without a climax.” Another former dancer, Irja Hagfors (1905-1988), an advocate for modern dance and new manifestations of classical ballet, wrote in *Kansan Uutiset* (18/04/1974), a communist newspaper, that Sibelius’s music provided many opportunities for dance production that have yet to be realized, and “Scaramouche has been my go-to dream over the years. [. . .] Unfortunately, the over-romantic libretto . . . with all its horror elements, mostly resembles a short story in a weekly magazine. The weakness of the libretto has always been a hindrance to the work’s effectiveness. Fortunately, the choreographer Margaretha von Bahr this time has reduced and modernized the libretto. She deserves credit for having achieved as good a ballet as I can understand from this basis. Originally a humpbacked Commedia dell'arte character, Scaramouche, now performed by Aku Ahjolinna, is an elegant, exotic apparition who really creates the illusion of seducing Blondelaine and performs a captivating dance.” Ulrika Hallberg was an “ideal Blondelaine,” for she was “captivating: graceful and gentle, wonderfully lithe, feather-light. Her dance is softly flowing, confident and straightforward, she is still childishly sensitive and sincere in her expression, although at the same time she has added a lot of nuances and a new instinctive awareness to her acting.” Like other critics, Hagfors complained about “Leilon’s unjustified departure right before the decisive scene between Blondelaine and Scaramouche,” but she thought the garden “Serenade” involving the charming dancing identical twins was “unjustified at first but was connected to the main theme as they find the fainted Blondelaine there.”

Figure 84: Male and female ensembles of Blondelaine's "community" in Scaramouche, choreographed by Margaretha von Bahr, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1974. In the upper left corner: Scaramouche (Aku Ahjolinna). Photo: Finnish National Ballet.

Figure 85: Leilon (Martti Valtonen) and Blondelaine (Ulrika Hallberg) surrounded by the women's and men's ensembles in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Margaretha von Bahr, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1974. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 86: Blondelaine (Ulrika Hallberg) stabbing Scaramouche (Aku Ahjolinna) in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Margaretha von Bahr, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1974. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

Figure 87: Scaramouche (Aku Ahjolinna) and Blondelaine (Ulrika Hallberg) in Scaramouche *choreographed by Margaretha von Bahr, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1974. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

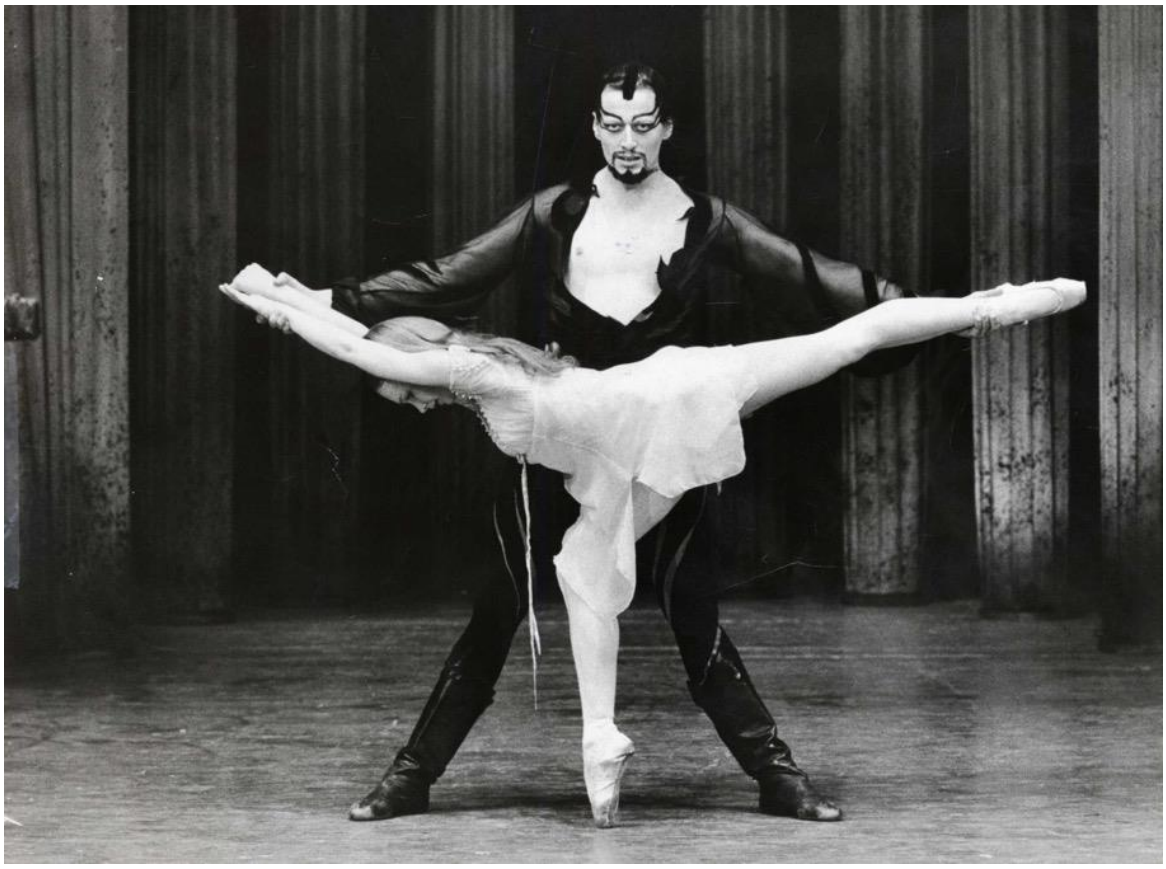


Figure 88: Scaramouche (Aku Ahjolinna) and Blondelaine (Ulrika Hallberg) in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Margaretha von Bahr, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1974. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

Figures 89 and 90: Top: Riitta and Soile Heinonen, identical twins, with Hannu-Pekka Holmström. Bottom: Venla Konttinen, Hilppa Kujala, as twins, and Eero Huttunen in "The Serenade" section of Scaramouche*, choreographed by Margaretha von Bahr, Helsinki, Finnish National Ballet, 1974. Photo: Finnish National Ballet.*

Riga 1971

The Latvian National Ballet premiered a production of *Scaramouche* on 14 June 1971 with choreography by Aleksandrs Lembergs (1921-1985). Details concerning this production are very difficult to retrieve, and it is not clear to what extent, if any, Lembergs' production borrowed from Lēmanis's 1936 production. Almost all information about the production comes from Ija Bite's *Latvijas balets* (2002). Scaramouche appeared in the middle of a triple bill that included *Urban Legends* to music by Valters Kaminsky (1929-1997) and Rodion Shchedrin's (b. 1932) 1967 adaptation of Bizet's orchestral music for the opera *Carmen,* first produced in 1875. Lembergs wanted to present a ballet of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913), but when this proved unfeasible, he adapted the Kaminsky music. The motive for producing *Scaramouche* is obscure. Lembergs had studied under Lēmanis and may even have seen the 1936 production. Helēna Tangijeva-Birznieceas, who danced Blondelaine in that production, was influential in the Ballet and instructed many of the female dancers in the corps, including the women who performed Blondelaine. Bite provides very few details about the 1971 production, although she claims it was the most popular work on the triple bill. The piece remained in the Ballet's repertoire until 1981,

and the company took it on tour to various countries. The reviewers Bite cites described the production in vague language. For example, musicologist Tatiana Kurysheva (b. 1937) contended that “the music for *Scaramouche* interweaves two basic lines, two plots: the first, solved in a gallant manner with elements of stylization, reveals the atmosphere of the work’s milieu, an aristocratic ball at Leilon’s palace; the sharply expressive, dramatic line is associated with Scaramouche and Blondelaine’s passion; the famous Sibelius *Valse triste* included in the ballet joins this second plan . . . Aleksandrs Lembergs and Edgars Vārdaunis [the set designer, 1910-1999] clearly felt this duality, the polyphony of two spheres of images, which is included in the music. Delicate decorations in rococo style and the beautiful, elegant, and graceful movements of the guests in the dances of the first and second scenes, which with their clarity and ‘coldness’ highlight the drama, the power of burnt feeling. The second, dramatically expressive plan, unfortunately, does not always rise to the level of tension offered by the music” (Bite 2002: 292). Gunta Bāliņa quotes further from Kurysheva’s review: “The fragile decorations made in rococo style and the beautiful, elegant and graceful movements of the guests in the dances of the first and second scenes are similar to delicate inlays, which with their clarity and "coldness" highlight the drama - the power of burnt feelings” (Balina 2012: 103). Genādijs Gorbanovs (b. 1950), though very young, apparently played Scaramouche with a captivating expressive power that made the role one of the great triumphs of his lengthy career; no one else in the company played Scaramouche. Several women, however, played Blondelaine during the years it remained in the repertoire. But Bite remarks: “We can also read in the reviews that not so vivid expression is given to Blondelaine. For example, the Waltz music sounds emotionally deeper and richer than the illustrative choreographic text. Also, the first dance duo between Scaramouche and Blondelaine lacked the need for fulfillment, the ambiguity of the images, and the gamut of feelings.” But Bite herself says that Blondelaine was one of the best roles ever performed by prima ballerina Ināra Gintere (b. 1934), “because in the abundance of contradictions and passions, the dancer evidenced a new quality in her art” (Bite 2002: 293). Zita Errsa (b. 1952) also achieved much acclaim for her Blondelaine. It is unfortunate that we do not have enough information about this production to compare the performances of Gintere and Errsa, who were eighteen years apart in age and surely brought different, age-inflected embodiments of the role. Commenting on Errsa’s embodiment, dance critic Eriks Tivums (b. 1947) observed: “The fantastic violinist's seduced and seductive wife who feels confused by her torment: At one time it was the crown role of Helēna Tangijeva-Birznieceas; this time, it established Zita's rich potential for tragic performance, but *Valse triste* . . . confirmed her skill to play with the tones and half-tones of elusive transition" (Bite 2002: 293). Of Leilon, performed by Haralds Ritenbergs (b. 1932), another reviewer contended that the dancing was quite static: "His movement assumes three positions--shaking, standing and lying on the floor," but Ritenbergs was nevertheless quite “striking” and memorable in the role (Bite 2002: 293). Ritenbergs’ Leilon was two years older than the Gintere Blondelaine and twenty years older than the Errsa Blondelaine. This production was at least quite strange due to the extreme youth of Gorbanov’s Scaramouche, who appeared as a dark, handsome, “demonic” figure, juxtaposed with either a very youthful or a mature Blondelaine, suggesting that no matter how old she is, Scaramouche will exert a powerful, fatal grip on her. Balina says the work did not stay in the repertory of the Ballet after 1981 because of

"the great technical difficulties that the interpreters of the main parts had to overcome - the young artists were not quite up to this task yet" (Balina: 2012: 103).

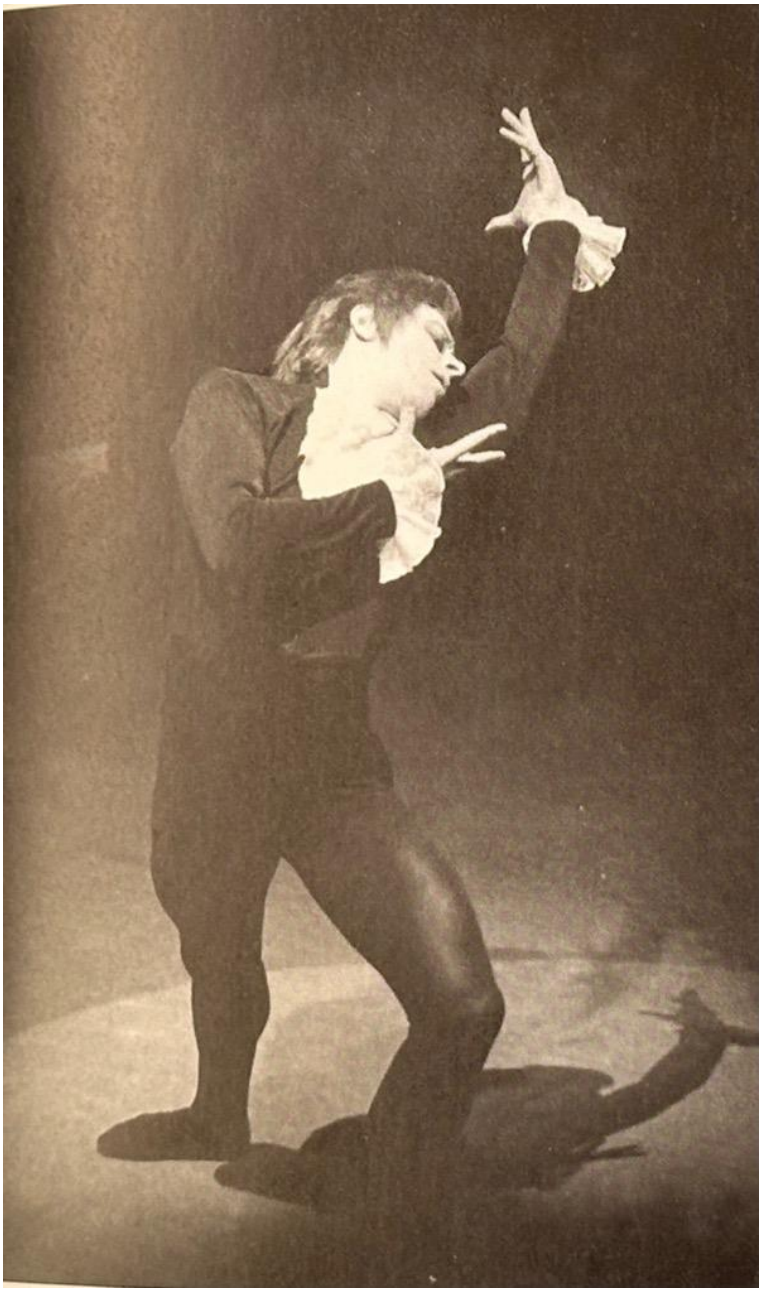


Figure 91: Genādijs Gorbanovs as Scaramouche in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Aleksandr Lembergs, Riga, Latvian National Ballet, 1971. Photo from Bite (2002: 359).*

Figure 92: Zita Errsa as Blondelaine and Genādijs Gorbanovs as Scaramouche in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Aleksandr Lembergs, Riga, Latvian National Ballet, 1971. Photo from Bite (2002: 359).*

Figure 93: Zita Errsa as Blondelaine and Vladimir Lukyanov (b. 1947) as Leilon in Scaramouche*, choreographed by Aleksandr Lembergs, Riga, Latvian National Ballet, 1976. Photo: Yan Tichonov (Jans Tihonovs); Photo Source: Sputnik Media.*

Karl-Marx-Stadt 1977

The last major production of *Scaramouche* on the stage took place in April 1977 in Karl-Marx-Stadt (now Chemnitz) in the German Democratic Republic, by the ballet corps at the Städtische Theater following the choreography of the chief ballet master there, Hermann Rudolph (1935-2020). The piece was the second half of a double bill that included a ballet interpretation of Manuel De Falla's *The Three-Cornered Hat* (1917). The theater took the production to East Berlin in December 1978 as part of the "Stunde des Tanzes" Festival. The Städtische Theater Karl-Marx-Stadt production of *Scaramouche* was closer to the original libretto than other productions by ballet companies, although the program for the production mysteriously omitted any mention of Knudsen. It is not clear if Knudsen's affiliation with Nazism played any role in the omission, although Gottfried Messenbrink (b. 1938), the assistant choreographer, in response to a question about it, wrote: "It is very unfortunate that Poul Knudsen's name was forgotten in the program, since there were several people [who could have] corrected it, even the strict general director at that time did not see it, otherwise the person would not have let it in print !! I still say today:

'Sorry!'" (Messenbrink 2021). Until the 1970s, Rudolph's ballets consisted mostly of adaptations of well-established works in the Soviet repertoire. In 1970, at the Städtische Theater Karl-Marx-Stadt, he staged, with Messenbrink and Inge Ziegler, his first piece accompanied by Sibelius's music, *Swan of Tuonela*, an austere, somber balletic interpretation of the *Lemminkäinen Suite* (1895), which proved quite popular with audiences in Gera and Altenburg as well as Karl-Marx-Stadt (Figure 94). According to Messenbrink:

> The Berlin painter and graphic artist Peter Hoppe [1938-2010] provided the overall equipment (stage design and costumes) as a guest. At the back of the round horizon there was a structure like a hill that could be walked on and danced on. It was possible to open it below. - In the middle of the stage hung a huge white ball onto which light and effects were projected!! E.g ., she shone in the swan picture in a pink light, because the swan was danced by the soloist in the pink sheer jersey; she seemed almost naked in her seductiveness: so no black swan !! When the northern landlady appeared, a green-blue northern light ran over the sphere. In the final (wedding picture) she shone completely blindingly white (Messenbrink 2021).

Figure 94: Der Schwan von Tuonela, *choreographed by Hermann Rudolph, Inge Ziegler, and Gottfried Messenbrink, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Städtische Theater Karl-Marx-Stadt, 1970. Photo: Chemnitz Städtische Theater.*

The music of Sibelius stirred an impulse to innovate in Rudolph. According to Gottfried Messenbrink, who assisted Rudolph on the choreography and direction of *Scaramouche*, Rudolph wanted to "create new ballets" in addition to the standard repertoire, and he had an ensemble that was eager to perform unfamiliar stories (Messenbrink 2021; Ziller 1977). The "complicated" choreography combined dance and pantomime. The theater's chief set designer, Ralf Winkler (1936-2009), adopted an "art nouveau" style for the set, but a production photo indicates that the costumes and women's hairstyles, managed by a quartet of designers, belonged to the latter half of the 1920s. Gisbert Karpinski performed the role of Leilon, while Jane Pörs was Blondelaine; both dancers also performed in plays. Bernd Schürmann danced the role of Scaramouche; his enthusiasm for pantomime led him to establish later in 1977 a pantomime ensemble, "Tun als ob," in Karl-Marx-Stadt. However, his Scaramouche was not a dwarf. A production photo shows him to be very handsome and taller than Blondelaine while dancing with her (Figure 96). Messenbrink wrote that "despite his good looks," Schürmann performed the role with "very bizarre and grotesque movements, a strength of this performer!" Schürmann's Scaramouche did have a hump, partially covered by a cape, and when Blondelaine murdered him, she used a real dagger that she plunged into his hump, under which was a metal plate to protect the actor from actually being pierced (Messenbrink 2021). However, it is not clear if Scaramouche used music or dance to seduce Blondelaine. Rudolph added music not in the original score: Scaramouche seduces Blondelaine "in the garden of the house" and they dance a pas de deux accompanied by Sibelius's *Valse triste* (1903). Messenbrink says the reason for including *Valse triste* was, aside from the appeal of Sibelius's music for the audience, that "This pas de deux can stand on its own as an art form," which implies that Rudolph felt the production needed a stronger dose of pure dance because so much of the show was pantomime.

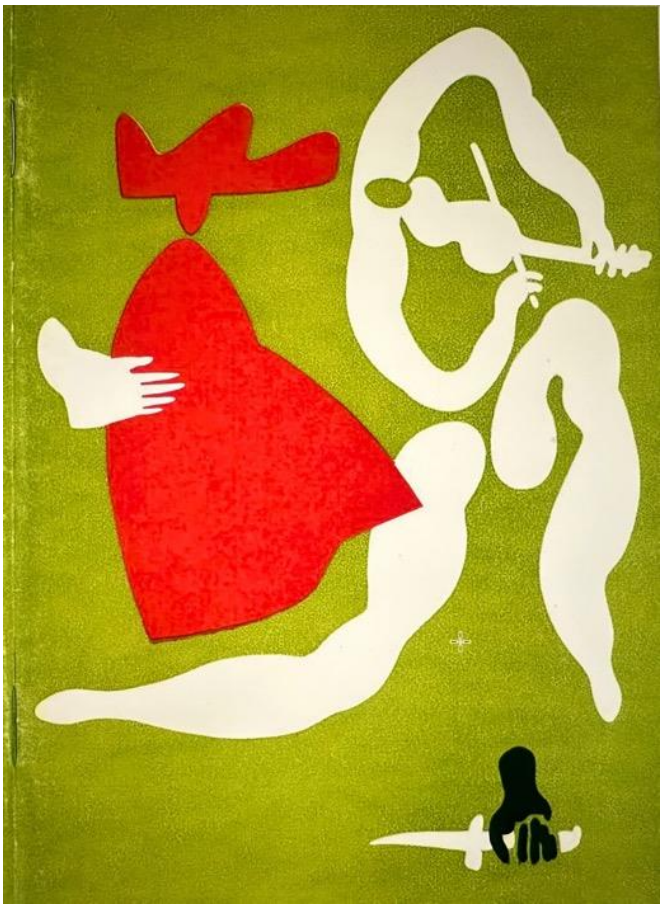


Figure 95: Program cover by Peter Hoppe for Scaramouche*, choreographed Hermann Rudolph, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Städtische Theater Karl-Marx-Stadt, 1977. Hoppe's design aligns the Scaramouche production with contemporary modernist aesthetics, even though the production itself did not follow the minimalist, vaguely abstract style of Hoppe's design. Photo source: Chemnitz Städtische Theater.*

Figure 96: Bernd Schürmann as Scaramouche *and Jane Pörs as Blondelaine in* Scaramouche*, choreographed by Hermann Rudolph, 1977, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Städtische Theater Karl-Marx-Stadt, 1970. Photo by de Kepper; Photo source: Chemnitz Städtische Theater.*

In the program notes for the production, dramaturge Gudrun Ziller suggested that a motive for seeing the production was that it showed how an elegant bourgeois milieu served to conceal criminal and self-destructive impulses: "Behind the purely externally seen, nearly criminal course of the action [. . .] deep psychological disturbances of great symbolic significance are concealed. Thoughts about love and death, suggestion and destiny compellingly define the intellectual content of the work." The reason the theater set the production in the 1920s was to connect these themes to the "literary and artistic currents of the time in which the ballet work originated." "Historical concretization had inevitable effects on the selection of dance choices. The preoccupation with this time period necessarily led to the search for new expressive possibilities" (Ziller 1977). But by historicizing the piece in the 1920s and not in the art nouveau period in which both the libretto and music were originally written, the theater was able to derive innovative inspiration from the very energetic cultural efflorescence of the Weimar Republic. The resonance with the Weimar Republic apparently allowed Rudolph to move away from the standard ballet vocabulary and explore unusual kinetic tropes ("bizarre and grotesque movements") with his dancers. That is, he could use a lot of pantomime for his implied (and probably expected) critique of bourgeois decadence, because the ballet rhetoric was inadequate to the task of representing the Weimar Republic. At the same time, the story, which originated in the pre-World War I era when "classical" ballet was in the final phase of its institutionalized codification, enabled the theater to examine "deep psychological disturbances" (erotic tensions) that did not remain confined to the Symbolist, Weimar, Nazi, or Cold War eras. New dance movements had to arise in relation to perverse psychosexual themes. But it was also necessary to show that pathological (bourgeois) social conditions incubated these "deep psychological disturbances." In his review of the production for the Chemnitz *Freie Presse*, Eckart Krölin (b. 1943) observed that Sibelius's music, conducted by Johannes Zweininger, was a "symphonic miniature drama," which did not so much produce "expressively dance-activated moments" but rather created a "luminous carpet of sound" into which "movements can flow freely." The music's peculiar accumulation of eclectic sonorities and "salon music" effects created an "indecisive mood pendulum" in which the story and performance shifted "between Strindberg and melodramatic shock, Sigmund Freud and crime thriller, artistic depth and hollow attitudes." The production did not entirely succeed in combining these moods, according to Krölin, but he praised Rudolph and the ensemble for pursuing a "will toward the unconventional, toward the new, toward artistic conditions that correspond to the possibilities of the ensemble that allow it to evolve and at the same time offer audiences something that one cannot see anywhere else." Krölin noted that Rudolph's choreography combined social dances of the 1920s, pantomime, German modern dance ("Ausdruckstanz"), and gestural stylization to evoke the historical period, not always successfully (he didn't think social dances worked well with Sibelius's music). But overall, he saw an unusual expressive or emotional power in the piece (Krölin 1977). As in *Swan of Tuonela*, Rudolph applied a minimalist scenic aesthetic, in which costumes defined the historical context rather than the set.

None of the dancers wore ballet shoes; the women wore heels. A large platform with three steps allowed for elevated action separated from the spacious stage floor. An expressionistic lighting scheme allowed the performers to cast shadows that contributed to the movement relations between bodies (Figure 97). Blondelaine captured focus through the white dress she wore. But she was not blonde. She wore her black hair in the "Bubikopf" or bob style that was pervasive in Western culture during the 1920s. This hair style did not permit a contrast between the bound hair and flowing hair that in the Finnish productions partially signified the transformation of Blondelaine from a carefully composed to a lethally wild woman. The bob haircut in itself signified that Blondelaine was a "modern" woman, already detached from the "old" aristocratic manor house "community" depicted in the Finnish and Scandinavian productions. Indeed, the manor house in Rudolph's production was spacious, empty, uncluttered, as if to signify that wealth was a matter of owning space; freedom, however, was a matter of the body's relation to music as the body moved through space. Rudolph probably assumed that his East German audience could identify the Weimar Republic context from the costumes alone and without an historically specific physical environment.

Figure 97: Scaramouche*, choreographed by Hermann Rudolph, showing pantomimic action and historical context signified by 1920s costumes. Blondelaine, in white dress, performed by Jane Pörs, 1977, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Städtische Theater Karl-Marx-Stadt, 1970. Photo by de Kepper; Photo source: Chemnitz Städtische Theater.*

Reviewing the Berlin performance at the 1978 "Stunde des Tanzes" festival, Eberhard Rebling (1911-2008), a major dance and music commentator, was enthusiastic about the performances of Karpinski, Pörs, and Schürmann. In his view, *Scaramouche* was the story of a bourgeois woman's struggle to control her sexual desire in relation to the expectations of her social class. In the end, though, she "capitulates" to "social pressures" when she stabs her "uncanny guest." Rebling praised Rudolph's skill in developing a "counterpoint" between the "unnatural formality of the decadent society in Leilon's house" and the "concentrated expressivity of the wandering violinist," which Blondelaine "grasps." Particularly impressive to Rebling was Gisbert Karpinski's skill in showing the split in Leilon between "social etiquette and comprehending the conflict within his wife." Also remarkable was the "excellent" and further "estranging" performance by Regina Spielberg as a "self-confident, snippy domestic servant" (Rebling 1978). However, despite the evident success of the production, *Scaramouche* has never been revived on the stage in Chemnitz or any other major stage.

Conclusion

A comparative production history of *Scaramouche* revises understanding of how modernism evolved in the theater. Knudsen's libretto advanced a modernist agenda by pursuing a hybrid aesthetic, combining dialogue, pantomime, dance, and music with a critique of sexual morality and social class. The scenario incorporated silent film narrative technique for audiences increasingly familiar with the new medium while retaining respect for the Bournonville heritage of combining dance with pantomime. Knudsen and Sibelius assumed their work belonged in a conventional theater, performed by actors, and initial productions were the work of theater companies. Since 1935, however, ballet companies have been responsible for all productions, except for the 1950 Odense production. Uncertainty about who should perform *Scaramouche* contributed significantly to the delay in staging its premiere, but this uncertainty was important in establishing the modernity of the work. The collaboration between a Danish writer and a Finnish composer reinforced the perception that the hybrid identity of the work was the product of an international sensibility. Modernism circulated and intensified as an international phenomenon that released artistic activity from subordination to nationalistic agendas and priorities. Both Knudsen and Sibelius were eager for greater acclaim on an international level. They had to do something "new" that resonated beyond their homelands. For Knudsen, this meant writing something darker and more ambitious than he was able to achieve as a screenwriter. For Sibelius, it was a matter of aligning himself more closely with music theater, moving beyond "incidental" music for the theater and, though he complained about the arduousness of the task, demonstrating his power to complete a large, through-composed work that would captivate audiences in different countries to a degree that his purely musical works had not achieved.

Another reason the scenario was modern was that it categorized itself as a "tragic pantomime." Knudsen's narrative subverted the archaic, popular perception of Scaramouche as a roguish comic figure, a fossilized relic from the ancient tradition of *commedia dell'arte*. For Knudsen,

Scaramouche was a demonic, "foreign" figure who possessed, ostensibly through his musical virtuosity, an exceptionally powerful sexual magnetism, despite his physical deformities. Instead of the stalwart scamp of Italian tradition, Knudsen presented Scaramouche as a hunchback dwarf accompanied by a sinister gang of vagabond musicians. The most disturbing feature of the scenario is Blondelaine's intense, "perverse" attraction to the physically grotesque Scaramouche; Gunnar Hauch described the décor and costumes of the Copenhagen production as "half-perverse" and Sibelius's music was "almost bordering on perversity" (Jacobsen 1990: 142; Tawaststjerna 1988: 108, quoting *Politiken* 15/05/1922), although the rhetoric of "half" or "almost" perversity implies a peculiar timidity of mind or emotional equivocation. This perversity was both the governing motive for staging the work and the source of greatest controversy concerning the meaning of the work. In no production of *Scaramouche* was the character a dwarf. In all productions of the work before World War II, Scaramouche appeared as a hunchback, although these productions emphasized the strangeness of the character more through bizarre costume choices than through physiognomic distortion. Alexander Saxelin was unique in developing a slithering, coiling movement for the character in the 1935 Helsinki production, in the 1945 Finnish film, and in the 1946 Helsinki production, although Günther Lüders in the 1927 Dessau production may have attempted a similar grotesqueness of movement in his incarnation of Scaramouche. After World War II, when ballet companies rather than theater companies mostly staged the work, Scaramouche appeared as a dark, handsome, sinister man, an "outsider," but not defined by physical deformity. Knudsen wanted to show an aristocratic woman whose sexual desires found no fulfillment in her marriage to the poet-landowner Leilon or within the refined social milieu in which she lived. He wanted to show how music could enable a woman's sexual desire to transcend the aristocratic ideal of sexual attraction that had failed to accommodate her desire. After World War II, however, ballet companies, regardless of nationality, transformed Scaramouche from a grotesque goblin into a "dangerously" beautiful man, which severely curtailed the scope of female desire as Knudsen imagined it. In the postwar era, apart from Saxelin's 1945/1946 Scaramouches and maybe Schürmann's 1977 use of "bizarre and grotesque movements," ballet companies did not deviate from their default ideal that a beautiful woman should be paired with a beautiful man, presumably because the message of that time was that evil sometimes dwells within an image or physique of beauty and female sexual desire is self-destructively vulnerable to that beauty. Whereas in the prewar era, the message of the pantomime-oriented productions was that the beauty of art (music) could attach female sexual desire to grotesque or bizarre male physiognomy, which, in the stereotypical popular consciousness of that time signified unmasked evil. That theater companies have not attempted a pantomimic approach to *Scaramouche* since the 1950 Odense production is probably due to lack of understanding about how to construct a sophisticated pantomimic dramatic narrative, which was less of a problem during the silent film era.

Though Scaramouche is the driving character of the drama that bears his name, Blondelaine is the protagonist, and it is her story the work tells. From the beginning, *Scaramouche* producers understood that the success of a production depended on who played Blondelaine. Knudsen believed that an international star, such as Anna Pavlova or Asta Nielsen, was necessary for *Scaramouche* to command an international audience. He was probably correct, but when he was

unable to recruit an international star, it was necessary to believe that the character of Blondelaine would make an international star of the actress who played her. But this did not happen, either. The role requires that the performer both dance and act, a greater challenge for ballet companies than for theater companies. Those who played Blondelaine came from within local, national companies, and while nearly all of them achieved success within their local markets, none achieved recognition for their artistry outside of those markets, with the exception perhaps of Rosella Hightower in 1951. Her production of *Scaramouche* toured several countries and may have reached the largest total audience of any *Scaramouche* production. The production reinforced the high international appreciation of her as a dancer but did not lead to elevated appreciation of her as a choreographer, which may be due to the peculiar, skeptical attitude toward the Cuevas Ballet in the very precarious ballet culture of that time. Of all the Blondelaines, Ebon Strandin was probably the most charismatic and alluring, based on the intensity of responses to her Stockholm performances in 1924. She invested Blondelaine with an intense erotic power as well as a tragic vulnerability; with her "shimmying" first dance, she revealed Blondelaine as hungry for ecstatic sexual experience before Scaramouche appears, which encouraged some male Swedish critics to condemn the libretto and the whole production as worthlessly morbid, a symptom of cultural sickness. Strandin's astonishing Blondelaine made the Swedish productions in Stockholm and Göteborg the most popular and successful of all prewar productions of *Scaramouche*. Yet her performance did not provide the impetus for further, alternative productions of *Scaramouche* in Sweden, which has never revived the work. Her performance was largely pantomimic. Audiences appreciated her pantomime as a novelty. Revival of the work depended on her pantomime initiating a larger enthusiasm for pantomime within the theater world, so that pantomime was no longer appreciated as a novelty but as a modernist form of theatrical communication like silent film. But this did not happen, not because Strandin's performance wasn't powerful enough to inspire a larger enthusiasm for pantomime, but because the theater world depends on authors, not actors, to drive motives for innovation in performance. A larger enthusiasm for pantomime within the theater depended on Knudsen's pantomime inspiring other authors to write dramatic pantomimes, so that his own pantomime became less of a novelty and more of a catalyst for an adopted form of modernist theater. It is difficult to see how this could have happened when authors who could think in terms of pantomimic action enjoyed greater and more lucrative opportunities in silent film production.

Knudsen and Sibelius expected *Scaramouche* to elevate their status as international artists, but when the work failed to inspire productions beyond the Scandinavian countries, revivals of it depended on Sibelius's fame, which expanded greatly internationally after his "silence" from composition around 1927. In Finland, productions of *Scaramouche* were part of large programs initiated by national institutions celebrating the composer's birthday in 1935, 1945/1946, 1955, 1965, and 1974. Though the libretto was not irrelevant in motivating later productions, ballet companies assumed that Sibelius's music bestowed a glamor or significance on the story that might not be so evident with music by a composer of lesser status. Sibelius contemplated making a concert suite of his music even before the 1922 Copenhagen production, but he never did, despite the urging of his publisher, Hansen, and he never approved the efforts of others to arrange a concert suite, although in 1914 Sibelius made two piano arrangements from the score, *Danse*

élégiaque and *Scène d'amour* and a 1925 arrangement of the latter for violin and piano. Eventually, Jussi Jalas, the composer's son-in-law, compiled a twenty-minute suite in 1957, but he did not make a recording of the suite until 1974, and the complete score did not receive a recording until 1990, with the Göteborg Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Neeme Järvi (b. 1937) (Kurki 2020). Sibelius saw his music as intimately linked to the libretto and to theatrical production. Efforts to detach or "free" the music from the libretto partially explain why *Scaramouche* has not received a production since 1977, either as a pantomime or as a ballet. These efforts presumed that the libretto was "older" than the music written for it. Even in relation to the early pantomime productions, some critics claimed or insinuated that Knudsen's libretto was "old-fashioned," a "Maeterlinckian" relic of the Symbolist era, which revealed a mystical tendency to identify female sexuality as a "demonic" phenomenon that tested the power of marriage and social hierarchies to contain it. However, the popularity of the work with pre-1945 audiences indicates that they nevertheless regarded the story as relevant, if not necessarily in need of the Gothic horror tropes to support it. In the postwar era, the story retained relevance, but not so much because it dramatized social anxiety toward female sexual desire. Rather, ballet companies, which then dominated stage productions of the work, treated the story as a representation of existential crisis, the struggle of female sexual desire to resolve competing ideals (the domesticated, forgiving, provident husband vs. the "dark," ecstatic male "outsider") in relation to reality. The story revealed the inability or failure of female sexual desire to find satisfaction within "reality," rather than within a specific social or historical context. The lack of productions since 1977 suggests that more contemporary audiences perceive female sexual desire as neither tragically demonic and frightening nor tragically fragile and divided, too complex or mysterious for the "old-fashioned" simplifications of Knudsen's libretto. But it may also be that the lack of productions has nothing to do with the story, but with the increasing conservatism of ballet companies since the 1980s and their intense reluctance to revive modernist ballets that are not among a handful of "classics" or within a very small canon of internationally respected modernist works like Stravinsky's for Diaghilev and George Balanchine. It is also possible that theater companies do not revive the work because theater directors do not understand the advantages of serious pantomime performance. However, it is helpful to recall Rolf Lagerborg's rapturous praise of the 1922 Copenhagen production. He asserted that the story was unique in linking suffocated female sexual desire to both marriage and specific class contexts; the libretto presented marriage as the primary mechanism for preserving class distinctions or separations from "foreign" bodies, and these distinctions are fundamental to the containment of female drive toward ecstatic freedom. Moreover, Lagerborg treated his rapturous response as symptomatic of a powerful unconscious process at work in defining the value of the production. From his psychoanalytic perspective, the *Scaramouche* production, as a work of art, functioned as compensation for the unhappy sexual lives of the audience, an audience that largely belongs to the same social class represented by Blondelaine and Leilon. Since the 1980s, audiences seem less able to feel rapture in response to art (as Blondelaine responds rapturously to Scaramouche's music and Lagerborg responds rapturously to the production) when art implies that they cannot be happy without it. In this sense, *Scaramouche* remains no less "relevant" than in the decades when theater and ballet companies found motives and resources for staging it.

Because Knudsen and Sibelius wanted their work to reach an international audience, Knudsen did not set the action of *Scaramouche* in a specific national context. Instead, the drama takes place within the domestic milieu of an aristocratic, landowning social class that audiences would identify as such in almost any European country. The focus of the libretto is on the relation between sexuality and social class, not between sexuality and national identity. Only two of the productions examined here linked the action to a specific national context: Hightower's 1951 production for the Cuevas Ballet created an "Iberian" atmosphere, primarily through costumes, and Rudolph's 1977 ballet staging in Karl-Marx-Stadt set the action in the Weimar Republic, again primarily through costume choices. It is not clear how the 1927 Dessau production contextualized the action, but Stübner's painting suggests a contemporary "European" setting. In Poulsen's 1922 Copenhagen production, Blondelaine wore a sort of Spanish mantilla, but this did not signify any nationalist motif; rather, it signified Blondelaine's desire to imbue her domestic domain with a "foreign" element. Instead, theater and ballet companies have tended to historicize the context for the action, sometimes blending two historical contexts in the same production. In Poulsen's 1922 Copenhagen production, Blondelaine wore a dress similar to early 1920s fashion while Leilon and his social circle wore clothes reminiscent of the 1820s and Scaramouche and his gang wore rags or bizarre combos that might have been seen in the Middle Ages. Some reviewers criticized Kai Nielsen's art nouveau style set decorations for being "outdated" or inappropriate to the narrative context. Gripenberg's 1923 Helsinki production also deployed a set and costumes evoking the 1820s, although Blondelaine wore a dress that belonged to the early twentieth century without being representative of early 1920s fashion. The 1926 Göteborg production adopted a set and costume production design closer to Empire style fashion, although Blondelaine remained boldly modern-looking in her short-hemmed dress, almost a mini-skirt. These early pantomime productions obviously suggested that the "modern," sexually hungry Blondelaine was the creation of historically specific conditions, that is, class conditions that existed in a pre-industrial era (from the audience's perspective) and survived the industrial era. The 1935 ballet production in Helsinki also evoked an 1840s visual style, but this time Blondelaine dressed like other female figures in the style of that era. Lēmanis's 1936 production in Riga was, according to a reviewer, set in medieval times, but the costumes and even the set seem more reminiscent of the sixteenth century. Gripenberg's 1946 Helsinki production also set the action in the sixteenth century, with Blondelaine garbed in the fashion of that time, while the 1945 film clip retained the 1840s aesthetic from the 1935 Helsinki production. This inclination of ballet companies, even when incorporating pantomime, to make Blondelaine less blatantly "modern" probably is due to the tendency of ballet to idealize bodies and actions with a complementary aversion to mixed or hybrid historical contexts. Blondelaine did not need to appear "modern" within a historical context; rather, her disturbing sexuality arose from a historical situation that was still relevant for modern audiences: Blondelaine was not a product of modernity, but the embodiment of a historical tragic womanhood that, enabled by class hierarchies and marital constraints, persisted into the era of modernity. With the 1950 Odense pantomime production, Rungwald and his team returned to hybrid historicization, but in a manner different from the 1920s productions. Here the décor and the men's costumes adopted an Empire-style aesthetic, while all the women wore evening gowns in the fashion of 1950. This gendered design distinction introduced the idea that

Blondelaine was not an isolated, tragic figure within her society or community, but representative of a gender that was more "modern" than the male-controlled environment containing them, although Blondelaine's dress appeared more modern by being less decorative. In the postwar era, however, ballet companies dominated production of *Scaramouche*. They needed space on the stage in which bodies could move freely and athletically, which meant eliminating historically coded furniture, walls, doorways, steps, and musical instruments, like the spinet. Historical contexts gave way to more abstract, "existential" contexts. With their self-conscious archaicism, costumes signified "the past" rather than specifically historical contexts, so that viewers saw a story that was "old" and transcended specificities of time and place but was also "new" insofar as modern bodies performed it with modern movements. Margaretha von Bahr brought a vaguely nightclub or cabaret atmosphere to her 1974 Helsinki production, implying that Blondelaine's sexual starvation had to be freed from its association with upper class morality and linked more bluntly to popular communal/social pressures. Rudolph's 1977 Karl-Marx-Stadt production relied entirely on costumes to signify the Weimar Republic as the context for the action, but it is doubtful that viewers would have made this connection without reference to the program notes. By designating the Weimar Republic as the site of the action, the production communicated the idea that Blondelaine's tragic sexual desire belonged to the social pathologies of the "decadent" society directly preceding the most disastrous period in German history and to which East German socialism provided the liberating antidote. This motive for the rather weak historical specificity in the production aligned the story and its performance with official East German cultural policy. But without reference to the program notes, viewers might well have seen Blondelaine's sexual tragedy as an ongoing "contemporary" problem, an existential political theme, which socialism had yet to resolve and may even have perpetuated. But unlike other productions, this one amplified the sense that "wild" female sexual desire was the crux of a conflict between pantomimic and balletic bodily movement, and this conflict was political, a story suffused with the struggle between fascism and communism.

Figure 98: "Isabelle Plays Guitar for Pierrot and Scaramouche," undated engraving by French artist Claude Gillot (1673-1722). Photo source: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

Another feature of this production history is the citing of many reviews of *Scaramouche* productions. These reviews provide a sense of manifold "voices" responding to performances and in dialogue with each other. Gathering all these reviews in different languages was possible because of the digitalization of newspapers in national archives. Even so, many reviews are missing because some newspapers have not been digitalized or access to digital archives was not available. Nevertheless, journalistic voices are in abundance here when other voices related to a production history are completely absent. For example, documentation is lacking the language used by directors, choreographers, designers, conductors, and performers in the planning and rehearsal processes; how did they make decisions, aesthetic choices? We have no documentation of how production company administrators selected *Scaramouche* for their programs. Even the correspondence between Sibelius, Knudsen, and Hansen, quoted almost in its entirety here, is remarkably perfunctory regarding *Scaramouche* and almost completely related to proposed productions that never happened rather than to actual productions. "Backstage chatter" about any production has not survived nor have the "voices" of all but a tiny few of the thousands of spectators who saw a performance of *Scaramouche*. The memoirs of only a few performers (Lillebil Ibsen, Ulla Poulsen, Eva Hemming) make brief mention of their participation in *Scaramouche* productions. How different actors grappled with the formation of their characters, especially Blondelaine, Scaramouche, and Leilon, remains unknown. Of course, if all this "lost"

information were somehow available, this book would be much larger and perhaps even unwieldy. But the point to make here is that a theatrical production produces a vast discourse, a huge web of language, of which only a fragment finds a place in the history of the production. It is therefore easy to underestimate the impact of the production on those who participated in it or who saw it. The reviews at least give an intimation of this vast international discourse and the extent to which *Scaramouche*, in its various productions, possessed a power to change the way people saw sexuality, pantomime, ballet, acting, theater, or their socio-political identities.

But the reviews have their limitations, largely because they conformed to constraints imposed upon them by the tight space their newspapers granted them. After explaining the plot line for *Scaramouche* and giving one-line or two-line assessments of individual performers, most reviews seldom have space to explore the "meaning" of the work or its performance. Most of the reviewers delivered favorable and sometimes very enthusiastic evaluations of the productions they witnessed. It is, however, difficult to identify any consistent pattern of critical response across nationalities, eras, gender, reviewer backgrounds, or newspaper political constituencies. Nearly all reviewers who saw the pantomime productions with dialogue felt the spoken lines were unnecessary and hindered the production, although Rolf Lagerborg, in his comparatively huge and exuberant essay on the 1922 Copenhagen production, did not mention the dialogue as an impediment. Swedish composers who reviewed the 1924 Stockholm production condemned *Scaramouche* for its "decadent" and "unhealthy" eroticism, but otherwise Swedish reviewers welcomed the production as an exciting experiment in modernism, and no other reviewers of any productions elsewhere complained about the morbidity or moral sickness of the libretto. Indeed, reviewer complaints about the libretto centered on its "old-fashioned" elements, although these complaints were strongest in response to the earliest productions of the libretto and far less evident in response to productions from 1935 to 1977. Regarding performance, reviewers across countries and eras tended to focus on the role of Blondelaine; reviewers everywhere did not see Scaramouche as the driving or dominant force in any production, even though, as a character, his performance has a spellbinding effect on her and her salon. Invariably, production companies have entrusted the role of Scaramouche to veteran actors who had already established their reliability to deliver solid, persuasive performances, regardless of whether directors saw Scaramouche as a grotesque deformity or a "dark," handsome stranger. Even Genādijs Gorbanovs, who was only twenty-one when he played the role in the 1971 Riga production, was by then a familiar, popular figure on the Riga ballet stage, with many large roles already in his repertoire. By contrast, almost all production companies saw Blondelaine as a role taken by women seeking an audacious debut or "breakthrough" performance. When planning the first stage production, 1914-1920, Knudsen and Hansen believed they needed an established star to play Blondelaine, even a movie star, to make a success of *Scaramouche*. As it turned out, though, the role of Blondelaine did not require a star; it made a star (at least locally) of the woman who played her. Consequently, reviewers tended to adopt an encouraging, complimentary attitude toward performers of Blondelaine. The power of journalists to advance performance careers was greatest in relation to roles such as Blondelaine, which were neither "classic" nor conventional, insofar as the performer had to act and dance as well as embody a sexually "perverse" woman. A result of this implicit relation between theater and journalism was that theater companies across decades saw

Blondelaine and the problem of suppressed female sexuality as best represented by young women, members of an emerging generation of women, with Liisa Taxell (b. 1931), at age fifteen replacing Eva Hemming (b. 1923) in the 1946 Helsinki production, the youngest Blondelaine of all. The oldest Blondelaine, Ināra Gintere in the 1971 Riga production, was thirty-six and played the role in subsequent years. But Bite treats Gintere's performance as something of a comeback, a role that rejuvenated and extended her dancing career. The second oldest Blondelaine, at thirty-one years old in the 1927 Dessau production, was Bertha von Türk-Rohn, an opera singer demonstrating her newly acquired dance skills. If Blondelaine, not Sibelius, Knudsen, or Scaramouche, was the center of attention for reviewers, then actors playing the character of Leilon inspired the most negative or blandest comments from reviewers. This character is indeed passive and incapable of saving his wife from her self-destruction, but it may be that both actors and reviewers underestimated the difficulty of playing the role, which, after all, requires that Blondelaine be severely divided in her desires between Leilon and Scaramouche; she's not a woman who has repudiated her husband. Leilon's "power" lies in his ambiguous blurring of distinction between passivity and gentle stability, between fearless curiosity about the scope of his wife's sexual desires and paralyzing fear of them. But in his long review of the 1922 Copenhagen production, Lagerborg correctly asserted that *Scaramouche* dramatizes a struggle between a "poetic" (or word-oriented) embodiment of masculinity (Leilon) and a musical embodiment of masculinity (Scaramouche) for control of female desire, a struggle in which neither embodiment triumphs. This is probably a reason the dialogue in the libretto did not bother Lagerborg as much as it did other reviewers. The reluctance of journalists, as word-oriented professionals, to see themselves in Leilon would account in large part for a general underestimation in the reviews of the importance of both the character and the performance of the character: none of the performed Leilons lingers in historical memory as vividly as the numerous Blondelaines and Scaramouches.

While Sibelius was the most famous person to be associated with all the productions of *Scaramouche*, his music provoked largely perfunctory commentary from reviewers, although most reviewers were not music critics. Only a few reviewers found the music boring or passé. The great majority considered the music beautiful and effective, and some felt the music was superior to anything else about a production, especially Moses Pergament, who wrote an essay about the music to "save" it from the defilement imposed on it by its association with the morally "repulsive" Stockholm production. But the reviewers did not treat the music as a revelation, as a powerful new direction for the composer's genius. In a sentence or phrase, they invariably compliment the conductor and the orchestra for good work and move to the next thought. For them, Sibelius's music did not transform their understanding of relations between music, acting, dance, theater, sexuality, or modernism. It was fine soundtrack music, but it had to be more innovative or even violently surprising to attach the composer more firmly to the development of modernist theater. The nine-year delay between completion of the work and its first performance was probably fatal to Sibelius's desire for theater to become a transformative source of musical inspiration. The reviewers deeply respected Sibelius without suggesting that his music showed a daring new path for music theater. The music remained an oddity, an experimental venture, in the composer's oeuvre, not a grand "turn" or shift in his musical identity. The reviews confirmed this perception, which, after the failure of the 1927 Paris production to elicit major international interest in

Scaramouche, surely contributed to Sibelius's conviction that his compositional imagination no longer had a future.

Reviews seldom account accurately or sufficiently for the role of directors and choreographers in shaping the experience of a production, and in general reviews of *Scaramouche* are no exception. Reviewers commented on performances by individual performers, but they tended to rely on brief, summary language to describe the *mise en scene*. They mostly wrote favorably of the work by directors and choreographers, and often quite enthusiastically, without describing much, if at all, how directors and choreographers organized ensemble action on the stage, shaped the pacing or rhythm of a production, integrated design elements, or used bodily interactions, especially regarding the pantomimic or balletic movements that defined all the productions. Only Rolf Lagerborg, in relation to Poulsen's production in Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm, and, to a lesser extent, Helmi Krohn, in relation to the 1923 Helsinki production, gave detailed, vivid descriptions of the actions seen on the stage and the emotions the actions represented or provoked in the reviewer. Only the 1945 Finnish film clip provides an all too brief (and exciting) glimpse of an actual performance, yet even this fragment provides far more information about the *mise en scene* than can be found in all the reviews of the 1935 and 1946 Helsinki productions. Of course, photos are an important source of knowledge about a production, even if they can be deceiving: a good still photo can disguise a dull production. But photos often contain striking details of a production that go unnoticed in reviews and create an impression of the production that differs from the reviews. Moreover, the distribution of production photos across countries and decades is arbitrary. In general, both the quality and quantity of post-1945 production photos greatly exceed that of the pre-1945 era, although the 1936 Riga production provided a remarkably sophisticated set of production stills, while only a single good photo of the 1951 Cuevas Ballet production is currently available. Nevertheless, productions of *Scaramouche* motivated the creation of these photos, and when these photos appear in a historical narrative such as this, and in relation to other images related to the history, a different experience of *Scaramouche* emerges, not like a theatrical production of the work, but more like an art exhibit or an art catalogue with extensive commentary, most likely, for many readers, supplemented by listening to a recording of Sibelius's music. It is an experience of *Scaramouche*, across cultures and historical eras, that an actual production of the work cannot achieve. In this respect, the comparative production history of *Scaramouche* has replaced live theatrical production as the framework for recovering a value for a now underestimated work and its power to reveal, through pantomimic/balletic actions of bodies, a still unresolved tragic conflict between competing, destructive masculinities for control of female desire and between female desire and the constraints of social class identity.

Figure 99: Four Commedia dell'Arte Figures: Harlequin "en femme," Mezzetin (?), Scaramouche, and Harlequin, ink drawing by Claude Gillot. Photo source: National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, USA.

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