

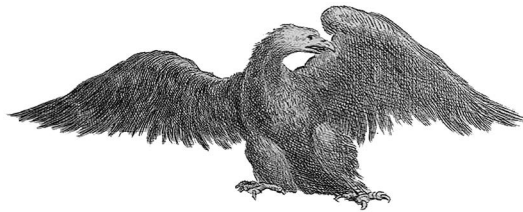
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BOURNONVILLE:
SOME UNTOLD STORIES

BY
COLIN ROTH

Some important things that should have been said about Bournonville have not been: this is an attempt to tackle some of the gaps.¹

Story-telling strategies

We have come to take the story-telling strategy of August Bournonville² and Hans Christian Andersen³ so much for granted that we don't notice how distinctive it is in comparison to that which preceded it, or why it made such an impact when they first began to tell their tales.

Bournonville and Andersen invite us inside the story and encourage us to experience the feelings and experiences of the characters as though we were ourselves one of them. Specifically, they do that by presenting their theme within a heaving mass of naturalistic detail from which we have to recognise what matters most: it is our having to work at seeing, rather than having the artist select the theme and highlight it for us, that makes the narrative strategy so powerful. Moreover, the detail is frequently expressed in direct speech: characters come to life and utter exclamations or comments, juxtaposed vigorously and often ironically against the voices of others.

It is a different approach to that in which a narrator, often recognisably the author's own voice, tells the story and maintains a more

¹ This sentence paraphrases a similar announcement in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, one of the great works of 20th century story-telling. This paper was written for and presented in printed form to the Bournville Symposium held at The Rigging Loft, The Opera, Copenhagen, [*Takkelloftet, Opera- og Ballethuset, København*] 18-19 August 2005.

² Danish choreographer of French (father) and Swedish (mother) parentage, 1805-1879.

³ Danish author, 1805-1875.

or less straightforward role as the arbiter of what should be said and what should be left out. The narrator's presence, and their telling you something, makes you sure that what you've been told must matter in some way, whereas in Bournonville's and Andersen's work, making your own selection of the significant gives you ownership of its importance.

Bournonville and Andersen were not 'original' in adopting this strategy, and I don't want to suggest that one of them had this idea before the other: rather, this approach to the relationship between the author and his audience had emerged gradually over the fifty years before Andersen's first publications and Bournonville's first ballets, and many of their contemporaries in other countries were adopting similar strategies about the same time. But in Andersen's stories we find the strategy endearingly and persuasively embodied, and it was Andersen whose work offered a model of communicative efficacy to his Danish contemporaries, so let's have a look at what's involved.⁴

In 1837, H.C. Andersen published *Den lille Havfrue* [*The Little Mermaid*]. It begins in the way an ordinary story might, as the narrator tells us about the undersea world in which our main character's family live. But as we get along the little mermaid discovers her voice, and the tale is increasingly told in speech – notably in the dialogues about death with her grandmother and then about her most urgent desires with the sea witch. We have, by that time, got so used to hearing her speak that we feel, with some force, the importance of the bargain the mermaid strikes with the witch. First she hears of the pain she will feel when her fish tail divides into legs: “If you're willing to endure that, then I'll help you.” “Yes”, said the little mermaid in a quavering voice, thinking about the prince and about winning an immortal soul.' But then the witch strikes hard: “You have the loveliest voice of anyone here at the bottom of the sea. You're probably thinking of using it to charm him, but your voice you must give to me. I want the best thing you possess in return for my precious potion.” We have come to 'hear' the mermaid's voice ourselves, and her muteness, the frustration she feels at not being able to communicate effectively, has been made real for us by a clever author who is managing our perceptions very carefully.

⁴ I have used the Gyldendal *H.C. Andersens Samlede Værker* (Vol. 1, 2003) and the new English translations by Tiina Nannally (2004) for references to H.C. Andersen.

In *Den grimme Ælling* [*The Ugly Duckling*], published in 1844, the value of direct speech is further advanced. Although there's an introductory paragraph setting the context into which our duckling is born, even here there's a stork who, 'was walking around on his long red legs, speaking Egyptian, because that was the language he had learned from his mother'. So it's no surprise that the little ducklings, when they arrive very shortly afterwards, quickly progress from, 'peep, peep', to 'How big the world is!' as the inquisitive, 'how does life feel to me?' tone of the story is set. The garden birds are pretty rough with the big egg that's slow to crack and the ugly little creature that comes out of it: "That's an awfully big duckling," she said. "None of the others look like that. He couldn't be a turkey chick, could he? Well, we shall soon see! Into the water he goes, even if I have to kick him in myself." Although his mother defends, 'the hideous gray youngster', he has a pretty rotten time through the winter, defending himself against all sorts of attacks and his own depression once he has escaped from the raucous farmyard, full beyond sense with characters who are most interested in their own opinions and in hearing their own voices.

As in *The Little Mermaid*, we have come to hear the 'duckling' speaking his thoughts to us, expressing his experiences and his feelings. We feel real sadness when he thinks, "Better to be killed by them than to be nipped by the ducks, pecked by the hens, kicked by the maid who tends the chicken coops, and to suffer so terribly all winter", and his own genuine relief when he realises who he really is, and with whom he really belongs. This journey, like *Tommelise's* [*Thumbelina*, 1835], is not just a 'picaresque' narrative, a sequence of lively episodes that serve to entertain the reader. Andersen is using direct speech and thought to take us inside his characters, and showing them coping with challenging and difficult lives, so that we experience their world from their point of view and not 'at a distance' as objective observers.

In this way Andersen drew in his audiences, helped them towards direct contact with and experience of his characters' own feelings (and thus with those of the author himself). He presented ideas in a way that made those listening (remember that Andersen's work was written to be read aloud, to be performed) go through the same processes of perception and recognition that they would have to go through 'in the real world'. Andersen, and the other artists adopting this approach, recognised that when we look around us in that real

world, we select the things we're most interested in engaging with from a mass of detail that impinges on us peripherally. Elucidating coherence and meaning from muddle is an excellent way of taking ownership of the meaning you discover.

So the generation of masses of supportive detail is a primary characteristic of the style of H.C. Andersen. This contrasts, we should observe, with the far more old-fashioned 'neo-classical' selection of primary issues which his contemporary Charles Dickens preferred.⁵ Equally, this effort to present a more authentic reproduction of the *whole* of an experience correlates precisely with the recognition by Søren Kierkegaard⁶, just contemporary with our heroes, that thinking which focuses purely on the object of attention, and which filters away 'irrelevant' things as lacking in significance, can be deeply misleading. Kierkegaard's great innovation was to give value and significance to our feelings and un-objective perceptions as an authentic part of our thought and experience, part of our mental activity deserving of attention and analysis. 'Being-in' was to be Martin Heidegger's⁷ helpful term for this 'existential', whole-context, way of seeing, and it's actually a very good way of describing the narrative strategy of H.C. Andersen (for example in *Den grimme Ælling's* [*The Ugly Duckling*] farmyard) and Bournonville.

We have so little of Bournonville's opus surviving on stage: although we can read the libretti of his lost ballets and imagine what effect they might have had, the visceral truth of *Sylfiden*, of *Napoli*, depends on the immediacy they manifest on stage. For our study, that means that we can only surmise that Bournonville's narrative strategy may have 'developed' through his career, and that the bolder strategy of *Napoli* (compared to *Sylfiden*) was a product of his experience and greater

⁵ British author, 1812-1870. I have refrained from discussing Dickens at length for reasons of space: but there is a lovely example of his all-powerful narration in *Hard Times*, 1854, where Louisa, the benighted heroine, descends a 'moral' staircase. 'Now, Mrs Sparsit was not a poetical woman; but she took an idea, in the nature of an allegorical fancy, into her head... It became the business of Mrs Sparsit's life, to look up at her staircase, and to watch Louisa coming down. Sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, sometimes several steps at one bout, sometimes stopping, never turning back. If she had once turned back, it might have been the death of Mrs Sparsit in spleen and grief.' Book 2, Chapter 10.

⁶ Danish philosopher, 1813-55.

⁷ German philosopher, 1889-1976.

confidence in managing the balance between narrative and expressive purpose.

It may also be that *Sylfiden* (1836) retains a degree of ‘neo-classical’ objectivity, of explicit focus on its central characters and themes, because it retains its roots in the Paris of 1832, where Berlioz – an exponent of the ‘vivid’ ‘Romanticism’ we’re discussing – was still only at the beginning of his career, and was widely regarded as dangerous and dreadful. The limited survival of Bournonville’s ballets means that we cannot safely assert that his methodology or strategies evolved or developed, nonetheless it is tempting to wonder whether Bournonville’s evident pragmatism in aiming to give his audience something which would please, but also uplift, them (*ei blot til lyst*, remember!⁸) didn’t generate the patterns we’re observing here.

The sylph’s disastrous longing for incorporation into an element of ordinary life (‘being in love’), her fascination with James (parallel, remember, to the desires of *Den lille Havfrue* [*The Little Mermaid*]), and James’s balancing fantasy of stepping beyond the ordinary (his life with Effy) into a more exciting and mysterious world, are shown to us in a bright light. There is contextualisation, a community’s life around James and a forest world around the sylph, but individual productions can shift the balance between the central couple and their contextualising worlds significantly. It hasn’t been unusual for ‘modern’ productions to focus on the central couple and diminish the vitality of their contexts, reducing them to a back-cloth. Interestingly, a production taking the opposite line, Matthew Bourne’s⁹ *Highland Fling*, generates an intense awareness of an element of the universal – the fatal error of attempting to bring an outsider in – precisely by increasing the activity and interest in the material of everyone except the central couple, so that the incredible power of James’s vicious assault on the sylph – in Bourne’s production, the scarf has gone, and James excises the sylph’s wings with garden shears (off stage, thank goodness) with horrendously bloody results – is brought into the centre of our attention precisely because its shocking force registers against a higher level of activity elsewhere.

⁸ ‘Not just for pleasure’, the motto inscribed over the proscenium arch of Copenhagen’s successive Royal Theatres.

⁹ British choreographer, 1960-. *Highland Fling* was first performed at the Arnolfini, Bristol, in 1994. See *Matthew Bourne and his Adventures in Motion Pictures*, ed. Macaulay, London, 1999, pp. 152-84.

Perhaps Bournonville's use of the 'being-in' narrative strategy is most evident in his management of the story in *Napoli*, where Gennaro's and Teresina's symbolic passage to the underworld and back only gradually crystallises from the overall energy of Neapolitan life that fills the stage in Act 1.

In *Napoli* (1842), the best preserved elements of the ballet (Act 1 and 3) are full of all sorts of material, some of it clearly designed to pick up strands in the ballet's 'universal' theme (the ability of love to bring one 'back to life'), for example the unloving flirtatiousness of the older characters and the dissipation of 'moral worth' through gossip and untruthfulness. As in H.C. Andersen (see above), Bournonville conveys the vitality of the scene by bringing individual voices and points of view to the fore; little sub-stories like those of the trumpet-singer, or the lemonade and macaroni sellers' adventures, perform the same function as the creatures *Tommelise* [*Thumbelina*] meets on her long and hazard-strewn journey. By contrast, attempts to give choreographic life to N.W. Gade's central act seem to struggle. Could this be because they are too simplistic to feel as though they match Bournonville's narrative density in Acts 1 and 3? If the tritons were more actively engaged with Gennaro; if the water nymphs were less Ivanov-ed and had more character (not all of them, but as in *Sylfiden*, soloists with specific acting functions and a *corps* with their special reflective [Greek chorus] role); if the contrast between Fra Ambrosio's Apollonian dignity and Golfo's Dionysian vigour and voraciousness was more apparent; would this bring balance and life to the Act?

The artist's focus on getting each audience member to step inside the story that's being told, not just be an 'objective' outsider, is the central expressive strategy of this particular phase of the 'Romantic' era. From its beginnings in the 1760s – *Sturm und Drang* is the best known early manifestation – through to whenever you think it might have passed,¹⁰ the core of 'Romanticism' lies in artists' belief that their experience is unique, and that sharing it with others by manifesting it in a work of art, both offers ordinary people the opportunity to share special heightened experiences and, consequently, raises the status of the artists themselves because of their ability to make these emotional

¹⁰ Some might say the 'Romantic Era' was over in 1914, but many would agree that the 'Romantic' aesthetic still dominates despite, or perhaps because of, its inversion in modernism, abstraction and the various deconstructive approaches to culture we have seen during the 20th century.

insights and sensory experiences real. The strategies that different artists adopted to share their perceptions changed (or evolved) many times during the 'Romantic era', and so too did the outward styles of their work; but the aesthetic core, the expressive intent, remained the same: for the artist to put their own experience up as a means through which lesser souls might gain insight and access to feelings that would otherwise be beyond them.

One of the great shifts in *style* between Bournonville's and Andersen's generation and its predecessor was caused by this recognition: many of the first generation of 'Romantics' had selected the subjects that they found significant, and singled them out for attention in their works; for example, John Flaxman's¹¹ neo-classicism (or Ary Scheffer's¹² 1835 *Francesca da Rimini* in the Wallace Collection); Caspar David Friedrich's¹³ 1818 *Wanderer above the sea of fog*; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's¹⁴ Tamino in *Magic Flute* (where we experience the changing 'truth' understood by the opera's hero as he progresses towards his masonic enlightenment). Now the new generation embedded their theme in something more like a 'realistic' context, dressed with a mass of more or less distracting detail, all of which contributes to the intensity with which we eventually 'recognise' it. (The balance was to shift later in the century, for example in Gustave Flaubert¹⁵, Emile Zola¹⁶ or Gustave Courbet¹⁷ – the French school of ultra-realism, or for that matter in the most intensively realistic 'ism' of all, 'impressionism'.) The role of the detail is at once to submerge, and at the same time to set off in relief, the idea which it exists to support.

What we see, then, is the emergence of a significant issue, perhaps one with universal value, which gains strength and power to engage us in its message precisely because we deduce it ourselves from amongst the mass of less important detail within which it is presented to us.

We should also recognise that Bournonville and Andersen are part of a much larger pattern of cultural shift: Norman Bryson argued, in

¹¹ British artist, 1755-1826

¹² Artist domiciled in France of German (father) and Dutch (mother) parentage, 1795-1858.

¹³ German artist, 1774-1840. *The Wanderer* is in the Hamburger Kunsthalle.

¹⁴ Austrian composer, 1756-1791. *The Magic Flute* was given its first performances in Vienna in 1791.

¹⁵ French author, 1821-80.

¹⁶ French author, 1840-1902.

¹⁷ French artist, 1819-77.

*Word and Image*¹⁸, that our cultural history sees regular shifts of emphasis between two primary means of communication. These polar types he calls ‘narrative’ and ‘aesthetic’, and the later nineteenth century saw a huge shift from one to the other as the dominant cultural paradigm. In both Bournonville and Andersen, the explicit emphasis is clearly in the story being told, its direct meaning and purpose; but there is already evidence of the ‘abstraction’ to come, with detail being subsumed into larger elements to suggest, rather than state, meaning. In other words, in the cycle of cultural preference that Bryson has described, people are sometimes more interested in hearing *what happens* first, and then seeing what that tells them about how people feel; at other times, they prefer to hear first about *how people feel*, only then taking an interest in the emerging narrative of what happens, once they have established their emotional, ‘kinaesthetic’, bearings.

The rise and fall in the popularity of narrative poetic behemoths like Lord Byron’s¹⁹ *Don Juan* is an interesting barometer of this changing preference; a good example in Danish culture is the changing fortune of Adam Øhlenschläger’s²⁰ *Aladdin* (1805). We can compare the original’s narrative density with the version adapted for the Royal Theatre’s stage in 1919, for which Carl Nielsen²¹ wrote a score which aims to highlight the most emotionally significant moments, giving the ‘aesthetic’ more weight.²² Another interesting example of this shift towards a perception that music [or dance] could contain meaning on its own account, rather than expressing meaning which comes in a verbal commentary describing a specific inspiration or purpose, is Felix Mendelssohn’s²³ *Songs without Words* (1834-45).²⁴ It follows that a comparison between Bournonville’s handling of ‘crowd’ scenes

¹⁸ Norman Bryson: *Word and Image: French painting of the Ancien Regime*, Cambridge 1981, pp. 1-28.

¹⁹ George Gordon, Lord Byron, British poet, 1788-1824.

²⁰ Danish author, 1779-1850.

²¹ Danish composer, 1865-1931.

²² The summary of the narrative of Øhlenschläger’s *Aladdin* in the Critical Edition of Carl Nielsen published by The Danish Royal Library, I/8, 2000, edited by David Fanning, makes the score a good place to look to make the comparison.

²³ German composer, 1809-47.

²⁴ It may be a mark of the emerging interest in the issue of ‘meaning’ in instrumental music that Mendelssohn’s first set of piano pieces were published in 1830 as ‘Melodies’ and only re-named ‘Songs without Words’ after the second set appeared in 1835.

and Michael Fokine's²⁵, where both have an interest in enhancing the 'meaning' of their ballets by populating the scene with 'realistic' activity but where their cultural contexts had quite different ways of 'reading' cultural communications, would be instructive – but is beyond the scope of this article.

In a way it is as a consequence of this particular form of narrative strategy – encouraging 'ownership' of insight by engineering each audience member's personal connection to the drama – that the committed audiences (and performers) of the Bournonville repertoire have been so loyal, and the Bournonville ballets have survived. You learn how to understand the mime and the dramatic expression of the dance better each time you go to a Bournonville ballet, and as your expertise increases, your appreciation of the style and value of the way it is done increases – that is, the narrative hooks you and the aesthetic raises you. Once your expertise is developed, you have a commitment to maintaining the thing you're expert at, because your expertise gives you status you can only exercise while it (the ballet) survives. Here is another strand in the fascinating story of Bournonville's survival, a story which is infinitely clearer now that the excellent essays by Birthe Johansen and Katja Jepsen have been published in Ole Nørlyng's splendid anthology, *Dansen er en Kunst*.²⁶

Bournonville, Andersen and Hartmann

I am grateful to Niels Krabbe for drawing my attention, while he was working on the score of the opera, *Liden Kirsten*²⁷, to a letter that J.P.E. Hartmann²⁸ wrote to H.C. Andersen on 11 October 1845. It sheds an intriguing light on the friendship between Bournonville, Andersen and Hartmann, all three born in 1805 and of great significance in Danish cultural history. *Liden Kirsten* was to be their only joint work, and then only when the original form of the work as a one act *singspiel* (premièred 12 May 1846) was modified to become a two act opera for performances in 1856; it was not until then that Bournonville was invited to provide choreography for the dances and to direct the

²⁵ Russian choreographer, 1880-1942.

²⁶ *Dansen er en kunst*, ed. Ole Nørlyng, 2005.

²⁷ The Hartmann Edition, IV, 1, ed. Inger Sørensen and Niels Krabbe, The Royal Library, Copenhagen, 2005.

²⁸ Danish composer, 1805-1900.

'crowd' scenes. When he wrote to Andersen in October 1845, Hartmann was concerned that the presence of the hugely popular Jenny Lind²⁹ in Copenhagen would distract everyone from noticing the première of a new opera.

'For God's sake, be my loyal ally in preventing the performance of 'Liden Kirsten' being brought forward too much. – We must surely take note that we will not have our usual audience – for whom we have both written and composed – before us until the overwrought atmosphere that the presence of Jenny Lind has aroused has been somewhat tempered. [...] – This is a serious matter for both of us, and in such a case one must be careful and choose the right time; but, as I have said, the public is at present quite disorientated, and if a new thing like our little girl, which is no sensation, comes out just after the departure of Jenny Lind, I dare almost lay odds that it will be ill judged, and will not have the effect it could have had in more fortunate circumstances'.³⁰

All the evidence points to Hartmann, Andersen and Bournonville having been closely acquainted. For example, here is a passage from Andersen's *Fairy Tale of My Life* which Jackie Wullschlager³¹ says is referring to the late 1830s, when Andersen had just taken a room under the eaves of the Hotel du Nord: 'Winter life in Denmark [had] its attractions and its variety ... felt myself at home with the married sons and daughters of Collin, where a number of amiable children were growing up. Every year strengthened the bond between myself and the nobly gifted composer Hartmann: art and freshness of nature prospered in his house.'³²

Andersen first met Lind at around this time – at the Hotel du Nord in 1840 – but only when she came to sing in Copenhagen in the summer of 1843 did their friendship develop. Andersen was called upon by Bournonville, with whom Lind had come to stay with a view to performing at the Royal Theatre, to join them and persuade Lind to overcome her self-doubt and to sing. The correspondence quoted by Wullschlager and the narrative account she bases on it³³, make it

²⁹ Swedish soprano, 1820-87.

³⁰ Letter 238 in Inger Sørensen: *J.P.E. Hartmann og hans kredse*, 1999.

³¹ Jackie Wullschlager: *Hans Christian Andersen*, London 2000.

³² Wullschlager 2000, p. 184.

³³ This correspondence has been published in an edition (in Danish) prepared by Knud-Arne Jürgensen: *Digterens & Balletmesterens luner*, 2005.

clear that Bournonville and Andersen had a *very* familiar and comfortable friendship which allowed either to ask considerable favours of the other, and Charlotte Bournonville's memoirs of her childhood clearly show that she remembers the strength of Andersen's infatuation with Lind: 'of course we didn't imagine him as a *primo amoroso*, and we thought it would be fun to tease him ... When Jenny Lind came to see us, he never stopped asking, "Has Jenny Lind ever talked about me? Has she ever said 'I like him'?" But we said "no", because although Jenny Lind did talk about him and liked him very much and admired his works, she was not in love with him'.³⁴ It's clear that Andersen's love life was a matter of open knowledge in the Bournonville house, even amongst the children.

Andersen's frank openness within the Bournonville family about his attachment to Jenny Lind contrasts strongly with the reserve that both Bournonville and Andersen himself must have shown to their mutual close friend Hartmann *if* we are to take Hartmann's 1845 letter at face value (it strikes me that it's just possible that Hartmann might have written in those terms to deliberately tease Andersen). By 1845 Andersen's feelings for Lind, though still strong (the almanac entries are scary) were also definitely his alone: she had written to him making it quite clear that she saw him 'as a brother'. In fact, if the story of *Liden Kirsten* hadn't been drafted in the mid-1830s it could be taken for a direct manifestation of strands in Andersen's life from the 1840s, especially if you're prepared to recognise the possibility that this tale of forbidden love between siblings may cover a gay sub-text. Although Hartmann's music is 'aware' of at least some of the many-layered meanings in the opera – notably evident in the music written to hint at dark doings during the dancing in the second act – it's intriguing to see the distinct *kind* of friendship the theatrical man, Bournonville, had with Andersen, himself a performer who had originally thought of a career on the stage, and that which both of them had with the socially superior Secretary Hartmann, who held a senior administrative post in the Civil Service. It seems that the two theatrical gentlemen maintained a different, more frank and intimate, friendship between themselves while remaining more reserved with their composer contemporary.

Now that the correspondence between Bournonville and H.C. Andersen has been fully published, and the Hartmann correspondence,

³⁴ Wullschlager 2000, p 220.

too, is available, there is plenty of work for a scholar to do in exploring this fascinating and complex interaction in more depth.

Bournonville recognised abroad

A myth has emerged in some of the publications associated with the 2005 3rd Bournonville Festival which needs nipping in the bud before anyone takes it as truth: that a full appreciation of Bournonville's importance did not take hold in the English speaking world until after the first Bournonville Festival in Copenhagen in 1979; and that the pioneering work in raising interest in Bournonville and the Danish ballet lay primarily with the book published by Erik Bruhn and Lillian Moore in 1961, which in turn led to the wonderful Norman Campbell³⁵ film, *Ballerina*, of 1965 (Disney), and thereafter with the Royal Danish Ballet festivals.

In fact so much was published in English about the wonders of Bournonville and the Danish ballet in the 1960s and before that the only surprise is that it remained so difficult to see for so long. We forget, in our modern age of video, dvd and television, that it's not so very long since the only way to see something different was to go and see it; and travelling around Europe used to be *very* expensive as well as intimidatingly slow. My own first glimpse of Bournonville being danced was in Peter Brinson's tv series, *Ballet for All*, in the early 1960s – a short extract from the opening of *Sylfiden* if I remember correctly – and Peter Brinson was one of the most articulate exponents of the Danish Ballet's value. With the dancer Peggy van Praagh he wrote an extended appreciation of Bournonville's place in the development of ballet in *The Choreographic Art*, published in 1963, and then described the resources available in public and private collections, in Copenhagen and beyond, in a virtuoso study of European ballet history, *Background to European Ballet*, which was published in 1966. Quite characteristically, Mary Skeaping tells us in her introduction to the text that Peter regarded the book as 'no more than a notebook' even though it was, in her words, 'the first of its kind'.

At pretty much the same time, Ivor Guest's³⁶ extraordinary sequence of publications was getting underway: his account of Bournonville's importance in *The Dancer's Heritage* (1960) and of its place in the Royal

³⁵ American director, 1924-2004.

³⁶ British historian of the dance and co-creator of *La Fille mal gardée*.

Danish Ballet's history, is quite explicit: 'The Royal Danish Ballet ... is the proud possessor of a national tradition that stretches back, unbroken, to the eighteenth century. Its special value for us today is that a number of ballets by August Bournonville ... have been wonderfully preserved in Copenhagen and are still given there in their authentic style'. In the same year, 1960, Ivor Guest was one of a very special group, with Frederick Ashton³⁷, John Lanchbery³⁸ and Osbert Lancaster, who between them 'revived' Jean Dauberval's³⁹ 1789 ballet, *La Fille mal Gardée*, for the British Royal Ballet. In the book published to celebrate the ballet's re-birth, Ivor Guest concentrated on the historical strands that had helped to preserve the ballet within the French and Russian traditions, but still noted that, at a performance at the Paris Opera on 17 November 1828, amongst a cast that included the Taglionis, father and daughter, was one August Bournonville, appearing in the *divertissement*.

One of the special moments in *La Fille mal Gardée* is the passage of mime which Tamara Karsavina⁴⁰, Sergei Diaghilev's⁴¹ great ballerina, remembered from the Lev Ivanov⁴² productions she had seen as a young woman. In her time at the Imperial Ballet Karsavina had been a pupil of Christian Johansson⁴³, himself an early pupil of Bournonville – and her account in *Theatre Street*⁴⁴ of Johansson's classes should be compulsory reading for any cast of *Konservatoriet!*⁴⁵ It should be no surprise, therefore, to discover a pair of chapters called 'Lost Steps' in Karsavina's 1956 book, *Ballet Technique*⁴⁶, which was assembled from a series of articles that had been published in *Dancing Times*⁴⁷ over an extended period. In opening her discussion, she says, 'I cannot believe that the steps and the manner of the old classical ballet, were

³⁷ British choreographer born in Guayaquil, Ecuador, 1904-1988.

³⁸ British ballet conductor and arranger, 1923-2003.

³⁹ French choreographer, 1742-1806.

⁴⁰ Russian ballerina, 1885-1978.

⁴¹ Russian impresario and lighting designer for his *Ballets Russes*, 1872-1929.

⁴² Russian choreographer, 1834-1901, assistant of and successor to the French-born choreographer to the Russian Imperial Ballet, Marius Petipa, 1818-1910.

⁴³ Swedish dancer and teacher, 1817-1903.

⁴⁴ London, 1929, revised 1947.

⁴⁵ Bournonville ballet, 1849.

⁴⁶ London, 1956.

⁴⁷ British dance journal founded in 1910 by Philip Richardson and presently in the safe hands of its second editor, Mary Clarke.

they but known, could be acceptable to the present-day taste. The success of the Danish Ballet confirms me in my opinion. If the naive choreography of Bournonville charms the eyes and the senses in virtue of the purity and grace of movement, of the clarity of its dramatic purpose, how could the same qualities enhanced by an effortless virtuosity fail to please?’

The great teacher and researcher, Joan Lawson⁴⁸, was also actively conscious of Bournonville’s importance. Although she didn’t begin to publish her excellent books on the teaching of ballet until towards the end of her long teaching career (she worked with Dame Ninette de Valois⁴⁹ at the British Royal Ballet School), her insight into his contribution is still worth quoting because it shows how far Bournonville’s ideas and practice influenced the development of the modern British style. In *The Principles of Classical Dance* (1979) she writes that the dancer, ‘must develop some essential *constituents* which will give *quality*, feeling and meaning to the dance. These constituents or attributes are nowhere better described than by Bournonville ... [who] in his efforts to create artists able to express themselves fully with imagination and musicality, demanded much more [than physical attributes]. He wished dancers to communicate their feelings for the lines of the dance, to phrase their steps to the music and, when necessary, to convey moods, emotions and actions to others.’

These samples from British publications in the 1950s and early 1960s are just that; samples. There is a considerable research task here for someone, to examine the extent to which Bournonville was ‘alive’ in the English-speaking ballet world’s consciousness, even though performances of his work outside Denmark were relatively rare. What they demonstrate, I hope, is that the English-speaking ballet world knew a great deal about what they were missing before the 1979 Bournonville Festival began a welcome process that has gradually given greater access to his works in performance.

The 2005 Festival, especially in the associated publication of *The Bournonville School*⁵⁰ and all the other excellent books and other materials which appeared that year, gave a greatly enhanced resource to the ballet world, which now has access to some of the most important

⁴⁸ British dance teacher, died 2002.

⁴⁹ Irish born founder of the British Royal Ballet, 1898-2001.

⁵⁰ Based on Kirsten Ralov’s 1979 publication, two books and two dvds were published by The Danish Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, in 2005, ed. Anne Marie Vessel Schlüter.

elements of the Bournonville tradition in a format that can be readily used for study and inspiration. Now, though, there's an urgent need to open up the existing archives and also to make new recordings of the extant ballets, so that students of Bournonville beyond Denmark can share the 'joy of the dance' and become part of the 'great family' so happily evident in Copenhagen that summer.⁵¹

RESUMÉ

COLIN ROTH: Bournonville: Nogle ufortalte historier

"Folk er ofte mere interesserede i først at høre hvad der sker, og på det grundlag forestille sig hvordan folk har det; andre gange foretrækker de først at høre hvordan folk har det, for derefter at interessere sig for den fremadskridende fortælling om hvad der sker, efter at de har skabt deres følelsesmæssige, 'kinæstetiske' holdning."

I denne artikel udforsker Colin Roth den narrative strategis skiftende paradigme, som det er udtrykt i værker af Bournonville og H.C. Andersen, idet han sætter den metode, hvormed de sætter deres læsere i stand til at fordybe sig i vigtige narrative elementer i en rigdom af 'realistiske' detaljer, overfor den gamle strategi, som deres samtidige, Charles Dickens valgte, hvor fortælleren kontrollerer tilhørerens forståelse af teksten ved kun at nævne ting som skal høres.

Denne undersøgelse af fortælle-strategier følges af to andre 'ufortalte' historier med forbindelse til Bournonville: et indblik i hans temmelig forskelligartede relationer til de to mænd som han deler fødselsår med: J.P.E. Hartmann og H.C. Andersen; og en påmindelse om at vigtigheden af Bournonvilles fortsatte eksistens på den danske scene var påskønnet af den engelsktalende del af verden før Den Kongelige Danske Ballet i 1979 begyndte serien af Bournonville Festivaler.

⁵¹ I am grateful to Svend Ravnkilde and Peter Hauge for their help in the preparation of this article: it goes without saying that any errors which remain are the responsibility of its author.

