

## 8. Costume in the Age of Rousseau and the Case of *Pygmalion*<sup>1</sup>

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Costumes make an important contribution to the aesthetic experience of a performance. And when they are created in a historically informed way, they can enhance our sense of the eighteenth-century aesthetic in an eighteenth-century opera. This chapter will focus on such a process, using as a case study the making of the costumes for Performing Premodernity's production of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1712–1778) *Pygmalion*.<sup>2</sup> This *scène lyrique* was revolutionary in the eighteenth century: it introduced a new genre, which manifested Rousseau's ideas about the relation between speech, gesture, and music in the theatre.<sup>3</sup> At the time of its premiere (1770), theatrical costume was experiencing a period of reform that made increasing demands on the faithful representation of the historical and geographical origins of a character. The original production of such a revolutionary piece as *Pygmalion* is unlikely to have been untouched by these reforms. In his model of Aesthetic Historicity, Willmar Sauter points to how, throughout history, such impulses were a main factor in the creation and perception of theatre.<sup>4</sup> His model provides a tool for the analysis and interpretation of the material and visual evidence of the theatrical past within its artistic, intellectual, and societal contexts. It also suggests how historical pieces can be staged today. While Sauter's model can be applied to performance as a whole, including its visual and auditory expressions, I will focus on the visual and material, and specifically on the agency of the costume and the theatre stage. Both elements are closely connected to the past (t1, in Sauter's model):<sup>5</sup> the historic theatre with its flat wings is a historical artefact, and the costumes, although created in modern times (t2), were based on

1. The first part of the title is a nod to David Charlton's *Opera in the Age of Rousseau: Music, Confrontation, Realism* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), which, although it is not cited elsewhere in this chapter, has been a great inspiration for my research in eighteenth-century costumes for opera and ballet.

2. For videos of the performances of *Pygmalion* at Český Krumlov and at Ridarhuset in Stockholm in 2015 and in the Utrecht Early Music Festival in 2018, see the homepage of Performing Premodernity: <https://performingpremodernity.com/anthology/>.

3. See chapter 7, Maria Gullstam, 'Rousseau's *Pygmalion* as Research on Stage'.

4. See chapter 3, 'Aesthetic Historicity'.

5. See chapter 3, Willmar Sauter, 'Aesthetic Historicity', 53.

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historical costumes and cuts preserved in the archives. The perception and thinking of spectators have changed since the eighteenth century, influenced by the many ‘impulses’ that have occurred since then, and therefore our relationship with the historical/historicised artefacts needs to be considered when we stage a historical piece.

In my analysis of the historical sources, I applied approaches drawn from studies of visual and material culture. These included the careful observation and description of images and objects, which allowed the form, meaning, and agency of the costumes to unfold.<sup>6</sup> As my analysis of the material was situated within the larger framework of historical and aesthetic developments, it helped reveal the social and aesthetic significance of the costumes in performance. This analysis led to the creation of the costumes for the two characters (Pygmalion and Galathée) in our staging of *Pygmalion*, performed five times between 2015 and 2019 in the Czech Republic, Sweden, and the Netherlands. This chapter will focus on the historical research that preceded the creation of the costumes and on how the historical/historicised artefacts influenced the contemporary performance of the piece. I will answer such questions as: How did the different artefacts interact? How did the use of the historically informed costume contribute to the experience of seeing the historical piece on stage? And how might this approach lead to a specifically ‘historical’ aesthetic experience?

### Visual evidence: costume and fashion

Two images showing the performance of Rousseau’s *Pygmalion* in France in the 1770s have survived: the first is a painting by Louis Carrogis Carmontelle (1717–1806) from around 1775, which shows two amateur actors, Monsieur Messer as Pygmalion and Madame Boissier as Galathée, and the second is an engraving by an unknown artist of two famous actors of the Comédie-Française, Jean Mauduit dit Larive (1747–1807) and Françoise Marie Antoinette Saucerotte dite Mademoiselle Raucourt (1756–1815), as they performed the *scène lyrique*, also in 1775 (Figs. 1 and 2).<sup>7</sup>

6. The method of object-based research was coined by Jules David Prown in ‘Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method’, *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1982), 7–10. Art historian Ludmilla Jordanova mentions the method of careful looking in historiographical research in *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Evidence in Historical Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15–35.

7. The date and place of the original publication of this print is unknown. Reproduced in Adolphe Jullien, *Histoire du costume au théâtre: Depuis les origines du théâtre en France jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Charpentier, 1880), 263–265.



**Figure 1.** Louis Carrogis Carmontelle: 'Monsieur Messer et madame Boissier, deux amateurs jouant dans *Pygmalion*'. Ca. 1775. Musée Condé. © RMN-Grand Palais (domaine de Chantilly) / Martine Beck-Coppola. License: CC BY-NC.



**Figure 2.** Anonymous: 'Larive et Raucourt en Pygmalion'. Ca. 1775, in: Adolphe Jullien, *Histoire du costume au théâtre: Depuis les origines du théâtre en France jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Charpentier, 1880), 263. © Bibliothèque nationale de France, dép. Philosophie etc., SMITH LESOUEF R-3596. License: CC BY-NC.

These two images seem to record the visual experience of a moment in the performances, and details of the costumes that the actors wore, but there is a remarkable difference between the garments of the two couples. What lay behind this difference in the visual representation? And how should we approach this pictorial evidence?

Pioneering scholars of dress history, such as Aileen Ribeiro and Lou Taylor, have written extensively on research methods and particularly on how to study visual materials.<sup>8</sup> Painters and sculptors of the past frequently reproduced garments of their time, and specialists in dress history have often been asked to date a painting based on the depicted garments. However, as Ribeiro says, ‘it is important to stress that the dress historian should never look at only one aspect of the subject – whether art object, surviving garments, documentary sources or theory – in isolation’.<sup>9</sup>

The theatrical costume combines aspects of dress and fashion, fine arts, and dramaturgy. Throughout history, the theatrical costume has reflected artistic movements, sartorial techniques, and even fashion trends of its period, as well as the specific dramatic work for which it was made. To a greater or lesser extent, it reflects the time in which the drama is set, the character wearing it (his or her status or profession, age, gender, etc.), and the situation in which the character finds him- or herself.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the costume reflects the genre of the piece and the theatre in which it appears, e.g. whether it is a play, an opera, or a ballet, a comedy or a tragedy. The mode of movement required by the genre and the character inevitably influences the form of the costume, just as movements are affected by the materiality of the dress, its cuts and fabrics. In eighteenth-century costumes, we can see remarkable differences between ballet and opera costumes, and even between costumes for different dance genres, between the serious, half-serious, comic, and so on.<sup>11</sup> The actors themselves might also adjust their costumes according to the norms of decency of the period: each genre and theatre had different customs regarding the appearance and the acquisition of the costumes. The look of the

8. Aileen Ribeiro, ‘Re-Fashioning Art: Some Visual Approaches to the Study of the History of Dress’, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 2, no. 4, special issue: Methodology, ed. Anthea Jarvis (December 1998), 315–325; Lou Taylor, *Establishing Dress History* (Manchester University Press, 2004), 115–149.

9. Ribeiro, ‘Re-Fashioning Art’, 316.

10. For the more recent research on theatre costume history, see Anne Verdier, *Histoire et poétique de l’habit de théâtre en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Vijon: Lampsaque, 2006); *Art et usages du costume de scène*, ed. Didier Doumergue, Olivier Goetz, and Anne Verdier (Vijon: Lampsaque, 2007); *Le costume de scène: Objet de recherche* ed. Didier Doumergue and Anne Verdier (Vijon: Lampsaque, 2014); Veronica Isaac, ‘Dressing the Part’: *Ellen Terry (1847–1928) – Towards a Methodology for Analysing Historic Theatre Costume*, PhD thesis (University of Brighton, 2016); Donatella Barbieri, *Costume in Performance: Materiality, Culture and the Body* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); Mickaël Bouffard, ‘De Berain à Boquet: Comment habiller les vieux opéras?’ and ‘Les habillements de l’Académie royale de musique: Une chasse-gardée bien française’, in *Un air d’Italie: L’Opéra de Paris de Louis XIV à la Révolution*, ed. Mickaël Bouffard, Jean-Michel Vinciguerra, and Christian Schirm, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux and Bibliothèque national de France, 2019), 128–129, 130–143.

11. See Petra Dotlačilová, ‘Costuming Musical Theater: Louis-René Boquet’s Work for Opera and Ballet in the Second

costume depended to a great extent on who wore it, who bought it, who designed it, and who watched it on stage.

In the mid-eighteenth century, theatrical costumes for tragedies, including those set in classical Antiquity, tended to be influenced by the fashions worn by the contemporary nobility, because the tragedies mainly featured noble or royal characters who needed to dress according to their status. But it was still ‘historical’ attire *à l’antique* or *à la romaine*, a type of costume that, in various forms, had appeared on the stage since the sixteenth century, when the court spectacles started to represent Greek and Roman myths. The costume *à la romaine* included an imitation of the Roman armour in fabric or papier-mâché, with stripes (*lambrequins*) in place of the leather pteruges, a circular skirt called a *tonnelet*,<sup>12</sup> a shirt, breeches, shoes with lacing up the calf, and, most importantly, a helmet adorned with tall plumes.<sup>13</sup> The costumes for the heroines followed contemporary court dress more closely, and were more strictly bound by the rules of decency. A few garments of this type have survived from the middle of the eighteenth century, mainly from operas (Fig. 3). They were made of silk, velvet, and linen, with the bodice, sleeves, and *tonnelet* created in one piece, heavily embroidered with silver thread and sequins, and decorated with semiprecious stones or glass.

The Roman inspiration that we recognise in these garments demanded historical verisimilitude, one of the basic requirements in the arts since Aristotle and reformulated by French theorists in the seventeenth century. Historical verisimilitude was not necessarily the same as a *truthful* representation; by the early eighteenth century it just meant that history was presented to the contemporary spectators in a believable or probable way.<sup>14</sup> The accurate imitation of historical dress, found in paintings and sculptures of the period, was not the main objective of the costumes. The sumptuous and glittering decorations reflected both the candlelight and the high status of the character. Moreover, as the actors and actresses of spoken drama usually had to buy their own costumes – unless they were lucky enough to receive them from a noble patron – they were the ones who literally

Half of the Eighteenth Century’, in *Dance Body Costume*, ed. Petra Dotlačilová and Hanna Walsdorf, Prospektiven 2 (Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2019), 103–160.

12. For a definition of the *tonnelet*, see my previous chapter, ‘Materiality in Action’, 147n22.

13. On the Baroque stage costume, see Diana De Marly, *Costume on the Stage, 1600–1940* (London: BT Batsford, 1982), 20–23.

14. For a discussion of the various interpretations of the concept of verisimilitude, see my dissertation, *Costume in the Time of Reforms: Louis-René Boquet Designing Eighteenth-Century Ballet and Opera* (Stockholm University, 2020), 53–57.



**Figure 3.** Anonymous: Costume for an *opera seria*, 1740s. Red satin, yellow and white taffeta, red and black velvet, sequins, silver gallons, silver net, linen lining. State Castle of Český Krumlov / The National Heritage Institute, CK 5067. Photo: Jana Koubová, NPÚ České Budějovice ©. License: CC BY-NC.

15. Paula von Wachenfeldt, 'Fashioning the Self in Pre-Modern and Post-Modern Society', in *Cimode 2012: 1<sup>o</sup> Congresso Internacional de Moda e Design*, ed. Ana Cristina Broega, Kathia Castilho, and Joana Cunha (Guimarães: Universidade do Minho, 2012), 1362–1371: <http://repositorium.sdum.uminho.pt/handle/1822/29259> (accessed 22 March 2021).

16. See Valeria De Lucca, 'Costumes for *balli* in Seventeenth-Century Italian Opera', in *Dance Body Costume*, ed. Dotlačilová and Walsdorf, 79–102.

17. On the aesthetics of propriety, which informed the early modern theatrical costume, see Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms*, 57–107.

18. On the question of the propriety of dress in the period, see Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality* (London: Batsford, 1986), 95–118.

19. Pascale Gorguet-Ballesteros and Hadrien Volle, 'Andrienne et papiers ou l'argument de la scène dans la circulation des modes féminines au début du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Modes! À la ville, à la scène*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Catherine Join-Diéterle, Sylvie Richoux, Pascale Gorguet-Ballesteros, Mathias Auclair, and Joël Huthwohl (Paris: Centre national du costume de scène and Somogy éditions d'art, 2017), 25–27.

20. Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe: 1715–1789* (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 97.

fashioned their appearance on stage. As Paula von Wachenfeldt states, the complex societal relations of *l'ancien régime* were often 'performed' through the clothes. Individual appearance was decisive when it came to social status at the court and in the city.<sup>15</sup> While on stage, the actors were also performing their 'real-life' societal roles, striving for the audience's admiration and favours. The audience in turn were often influential people able to provide advantages and protection. In the opera, the sumptuous costumes reflected the wealth and status of the aristocratic patron who usually sponsored the production.<sup>16</sup> In this way, the theatrical costume was steered by what I refer to as the aesthetics of propriety: the social and sartorial codes of contemporary society were more important than the historicity of the performance, and the imitation of historical dress might even be considered improper.<sup>17</sup>

The customs and morals of the mid-eighteenth century dictated the shape and composition of the dress for women. They wore a close-fitting bodice with boned stays that emphasised the slimness of the waist, elbow-length sleeves, a long petticoat, voluminous underskirts, and dressed hair or a wig. It was considered inappropriate or even indecent to lack any of these garments because the constraining bodice, the coverage of certain parts of the body, and the carefully maintained appearance all indicated one's social station and virtue.<sup>18</sup> Loose clothes without a clearly defined shape, especially the absence of stays, were considered too revealing and therefore indecent. The same was true for loose hair or an undressed wig.

A wide hoop or side-hoops (*paniers*) were placed beneath the skirts, which by the 1750s reached enormous proportions, especially at the court and in aristocratic circles.<sup>19</sup> The width of the hoop required more material for the gown. This served to show off the beauty of the design and signify the wealth of the lady. Its pretext was to keep the men at a greater distance.<sup>20</sup> In the 1770s, one could still see some hoops at court (and on stage), but mainly the volume was moved towards the woman's rear parts. The development of the hoop was

by this stage mostly replaced by the new craze of the extravagant upward growth of the hairdos and wigs. These reached exaggerated heights and were decorated with everything from plumes to models of boats.<sup>21</sup> The dresses were further decorated with three-dimensional trimming made of ribbons, ruffs, garlands, and feathers, in place of the large, embroidered decorations from the 1750s.

This historical overview will help us analyse and interpret the two images of *Pygmalion*. We immediately see that they are recording historical events, with actual people performing specific roles. They do not pretend to represent the story in its ancient Greek setting, as many other engravings, paintings, and sculptures from the period do, including some that are directly related to Rousseau's play.<sup>22</sup> Our two pictures depict Galathée fully dressed, wearing a bodice with a pair of stays, a petticoat, long sleeves, and dressed hair. The figure is not naked or covered just with a light piece of cloth, which is how the statue was usually depicted. This shows us that the female figure refers to a real woman performing a role, with the general shape of her costume reflecting the dress of the 1770s, the period *Pygmalion* was first performed. However, although the shape of her costume is similar to contemporary dress, it lacks decorative elements; it is not wide as a court dress would have been, and the dress in Fig. 1, at least, is made entirely of white fabric which would have been rather unusual in a court dress. The fabric is carefully draped. The woman in the picture is playing a Greek statue. While her costume respects the rules of decency of contemporary dress, covering all the important body parts, its colour and drapery reflect the historical context of *Pygmalion*. This differs from earlier female theatre costumes, which related more directly to the court dress.

The man's costume gives away the period of the 1770s as well, though less obviously. The male dress of the French upper classes from this period consisted of a knee-length (or slightly shorter) coat, a waistcoat without sleeves, close-fitting knee-length breeches, and coloured or white silk stockings. Bright colours, including yellow and

21. For details on contemporary clothing, see the chapter '1740–1770: The Triumph of Rococo', in Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, 89–115; James Laver, *Costume and Fashion: A Concise History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), 127–153; Juliette Trey, *La mode à la cour de Marie-Antoinette* (Château de Versailles: Gallimard, 2014).

22. For instance, the engravings by Jean-Michel Moreau that accompany the print edition of Rousseau's *Pygmalion* from 1773, or Étienne Maurice Falconet's statue from 1763.

pink, were fashionable, as were elaborate embroidery and lace decorations on the coat and waistcoat. The wigs, which could be dressed, decorated, and powdered, were part of ‘decent’ attire. However, in Figures 1 and 2 both Larive and Messer wear a loose, knee-length robe with a sash around the waist and a mantle, which creates an association with the Greek tunic known from contemporary history paintings. The main features that indicate the century are the wigs, the longer sleeves, and the breeches.

These images record a breaking point in the history of the theatrical costume, with the transition from the aesthetics of propriety towards what I call the aesthetics of truthfulness. The latter related less to the social realities of the time of the performance and strove instead for a closer imitation of the visual models from the past. This caused the ever-present concept of verisimilitude to acquire a new meaning, and above all, to be manifest in a new way in the costumes. In the following, I will take a closer look at this shift in thinking about costumes, and at some of the people who contributed to the development.

### **Costume in painting and on stage: the eighteenth-century approach**

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the trend of applying elements of contemporary fashion to theatre costumes began to fall out of favour, being opposed first in writing and later in practice. Criticism of over-decorated costumes was inspired by ongoing aesthetic debates, particularly in poetry and painting, about the role of truth and nature.

In 1719, Jean-Baptiste Dubos (1670–1742) raised the question of whether artists should conform to the ‘truth’ of the historical and geographical circumstances.<sup>23</sup> In painting, Dubos demanded a poetic verisimilitude, ‘une vraisemblance poétique’, which means depicting the expressions and attitudes appropriate to the temperament, age, and status of the characters. He also insisted on what he called

23. Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, 2 vols. (Paris: Jean Mariette, 1719).

*il costume*,<sup>24</sup> a term he borrowed from Italian, meaning the ‘particular manners, dress, buildings and arms of the people that one wants to represent’.<sup>25</sup> He expected artists to ‘represent the places where the action takes place in the way it was, as far as we know’, including the plants, animals, and costumes of various nations.<sup>26</sup> In short, he wanted as much historical and geographical authenticity in painting as possible, naming Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) and Charles Le Brun (1619–1690) as the principal masters of this practice.

He also called for poetic verisimilitude in tragedy, asking poets to conform to the historical and geographical context, although he thinks mainly about the facts treated by the plot. The representation of specific customs and styles of dress may be suggested, but these should respect the society in which the performance takes place. In a French play with a Turkish theme, for instance, Turkish manners should not be fully represented on stage, even though well known to the author, because they were not common knowledge.<sup>27</sup> To create a semblance of reality, Dubos asks that respect be given to foreign customs, but the plot and the actions of the characters have to be adapted to French manners and rules when it comes to tragic dramaturgy and the theatrical representation. The same goes for the costumes. An image of dignity and elevation was required in tragedy, while comedy came closer to the reality of the spectators:

Hence these personages are commonly dressed at present in robes of our own invention; the first idea of which was borrowed of the military habit of the ancient Romans, a habit noble of its nature, and which seems to have been suited to the glory of the people that wore it. The dresses of our actresses are the richest and most majestic that fancy can invent. On the contrary, we employ the town-dresses, that is, such as are used in common life, in the representation of comedies.<sup>28</sup>

These were the ideological and aesthetic impulses that determined the theatre costume in the early eighteenth century. His argument about the form of the costume would soon be contested, while his

24. In this period, the French word used for clothes on and off the stage was *habits* or *vêtements* (in Italian *abiti*, and in English *habits*).

25. Dubos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music*, 3 vols., tr. Thomas Nugent (London: John Nourse, 1748), 1: 212.

26. Dubos, *Critical Reflections*, 1: 212.

27. [W]e are better acquainted with the customs and manners of the Turks by the verbal relations of such of our friends as have lived amongst them, than we are informed of the customs and manners of the Greeks and Romans by the narratives of deceased authors [...]. Wherefore a tragic poet cannot violate the general notion, which the public has of the customs and manners of foreign nations, without prejudicing the probability of his piece. Nevertheless, the rules of our stage, and the customs of our tragic scenes, which require that women should have always a great share in the plot, and that the intrigues of love be treated agreeably to our own manners, obstruct our conforming to the customs and manners of strange nations’. Dubos, *Critical Reflections*, 1: 129.

28. Dubos, *Critical Reflections*, 1: 340–341.

observations on verisimilitude in painting were taken up by theatre theorists and artists as their inspiration for costume reform.

French literary scholar Pierre Frantz sees Dubos's promotion of the visual arts as a crucial shift in aesthetic thinking that led to the establishment of the *tableau* as a central theatrical concept. Frantz characterises the *tableau* as a revalorisation of the visual aspect of performance, as opposed to the privileged position given to the text by theorists of French Classical theatre.<sup>29</sup> Although Dubos did not propose that all aspects of painting on stage were imitated, we find an intensified comparison between the stage and the visual arts in his *Critical Reflections*. Commentators started to ask why theatrical costumes were so different from those worn in paintings, and they suggested a closer connection between the two art forms. These reflections led to the new aesthetics of truthfulness in costume design.<sup>30</sup>

An early attempt to apply the new concept of the *tableau* on stage was made by the dancer Marie Sallé (1707–1756) in her ballet *Pygmalion*, performed in London in 1734. She combined dance and pantomime with an emphasis on feelings and action, in an attempt to emulate the art of the Roman pantomime so acclaimed by Dubos, the choreographer John Weaver (1673–1760), and by many others.<sup>31</sup> Her costume consisted of a simple muslin dress draped like 'a model of a Greek statue', without *paniers*, and she wore neither a wig nor a mask.<sup>32</sup> Although her acting style and her costume aroused a great deal of interest no picture of Sallé in that production has survived. Moreover, she received no support and had no direct followers in France, where pompous and artificial decorations were still much preferred. She was way ahead of her time.

The Enlightenment *philosophes* Voltaire (1694–1778) and Denis Diderot (1713–1784) both developed Dubos's concept of the imitation of nature, and as they both used the theatre as a platform for the dissemination of their ideas, the costume was inevitably affected.

While Diderot created a new dramatic genre, the *genre sérieux* (later known as the *drame bourgeois*), which dealt with ordinary

29. Pierre Frantz, *L'esthétique du tableau dans le théâtre du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998).

30. On the development of this new aesthetics, see Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms*, 108–165. The following pages are based on that chapter of my dissertation.

31. Richard Ralph, *Life and Works of John Weaver: An Account of His Life, Writings and Theatrical Productions, With an Annotated Reprint of His Complete Publications* (London: Dance Books, 2008).

32. Judith Chazin-Bennahum, *The Lure of Perfection: Fashion and Ballet, 1780–1830* (London: Routledge, 2005), 44.

people, rather than princes and gods, and therefore required costumes that were truthful copies of everyday dress with their social connotations,<sup>33</sup> Voltaire remained within the sphere of political history and mythology. He used themes from classical tragedy and applied to this his take on the imitation of nature. These attempts to develop a more natural expression led in his later tragedies to an emphasis on clarity and simplicity in the vocal delivery, reportedly inspired by English theatre. Additionally, Voltaire strove for enhanced verisimilitude in the visual representation of foreign cultures.<sup>34</sup>

One of the pioneers of the so-called costume reform was the French choreographer and dance theorist Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810). Drawing on the aesthetic ideas of the time, he announced a new approach to theatrical costume in various versions of his famous *Letters on Dancing and Ballets* (first published in 1760).<sup>35</sup> Noverre criticised the capriciousness of the prevailing fashion, which imposed itself on the theatrical stage and spoiled the imitation of nature:

Every actor has made a fantastical being out of a Turk, a Chinese, a Greek, and a Roman, dressing them according to his caprice. As a result, the genres have been confused and sacrificed, propriety was despised, the painters were not consulted, the poets were not listened to, the ancient authors were not read, but the fashion traders supplied everything.<sup>36</sup>

He accused both the tailors, the fashion merchants who created the everyday dress and the theatre costumes, and then the actors themselves of ignoring the subject of the plays, giving first priority to the trends of fashion.

Noverre adapted Dubos's definition of *costume* (quoted above), which he defined as 'the character, the laws, the morals, the uses, the religion, the taste, the genius, the customs, the arms, the dress, the buildings, the plants, the animals, and the wealth of a nation',<sup>37</sup> and which had only been used in the context of visual arts so far, applying it to ballet and theatre in general.<sup>38</sup> This is the first time we see a demand for truthfulness in costume and other aspects of the theatrical

33. Denis Diderot, *De la poésie dramatique* (1758), in *Œuvres complètes: Revues sur les éditions originales: Études sur Diderot et le mouvement philosophique au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 20 vols. (Paris: Garnier frères, 1875–1877), 7: 375–377.

34. On vocal delivery in Voltaire's tragedies, see Marvin Carlson, *Voltaire and the Theatre of the Eighteenth Century* (Westport CT: Praeger, 1998), 31–32. Several of Voltaire's plays used exotic settings (Turkey/Arabia in *Zaire* (1732) and *Mahomet* (1741), Peru in *Alzire* (1736), and China in *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (1755)) as a way of separating universal human virtues from the Christian European context, and he was interested in the accurate representation of the foreign cultures. Such endeavours were already familiar from comic stage works, as reflected in the popular *turqueries* and *chinoiseries*, but Voltaire was the first to apply it to tragedies. It seems as if tragedy needed to adapt to the trend, since the visual appearance of the Turks had become so commonplace within the other genres and in the visual arts. However, there were still limits on the accuracy: Voltaire felt restricted by the anticipated reactions of the spectators whom he did not consider ready to accept a radically different image of a foreign nation on stage. As he wrote to César Chesneau du Marsais: 'If the French were not so French, my Chinese would have been more Chinese and Genghis even more Tartarian. I had to impoverish my ideas and embarrass myself in my costume so as not to frighten a frivolous nation that laughs foolishly and thinks it is laughing merrily at everything that is not according to its morals or rather according to its fashions'. 'Si les Français

n'étaient pas si français, mes Chinois auraient été plus chinois et Gengis encore plus tartare. Il a fallu appauvrir mes idées et me gêner dans le costume pour ne pas effaroucher une nation frivole qui rit sottement et qui croit rire gaiement de tout ce qui n'est pas dans ses mœurs ou plutôt dans ses modes'. 'Lettre À M. Dumarsais', 12 October 1755, in Voltaire, *Ceuvres complètes*, ed. Louis Moland, 52 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1877–1883), 38: 482. Translation mine. 35. First edition: Jean-Georges Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse, et sur les ballets* (Lyon and Stuttgart: Aimé Delaroché, 1760); the last edition published by Noverre was *Lettres sur les arts imitateurs en général, et sur la danse en particulier*, 2 vols. (Paris: Léopold, 1807).

36. 'Chaque Comédien a fait d'un Turc, d'un Chinois, d'un Grec et d'un Romain un Etre de fantaisie, et l'a déguisé selon son caprice; dès lors les genres ont été confondus et sacrifiés; les choses de convenances ont été méprisés; les Peintres n'ont point été consultés; les Poètes n'ont pu se faire écouter; les Auteurs anciens n'ont point été lus; mais les marchandes de modes ont supplée à tout'. Jean-Georges Noverre, *Théorie et pratique de la Danse simple et Composée; de l'art des ballets; de la Musique; du Costume et des Décorations*, 11 vols. (manuscript, 1766), 1: 223–224; PL–Wu Zb. Król. 795. Translations from Noverre are mine, unless otherwise stated.

37. '[...] le caractère, les loix, les mœurs, les usages, la religion, le goût, le génie, les habitudes, les armes, les vêtements, les bâtiments, les plantes, les animaux, et les richesses d'une nation'. Noverre, *Théorie et pratique*, 1: 224.

setting. Like Dubos, Noverre says nothing about the nobility of appearance. He banned from the ballet the *tonnelets*, the *paniers*, and the masks, also for practical reasons because they restricted the dancer who was 'busier taking care of the movement of her *paniers* than of her arms and legs'.<sup>39</sup> Both dancers and actors should be able to move freely in order to concentrate on the correct and emotionally charged interpretation of their roles.

Noverre drew his inspiration for the Greco-Roman style from paintings of mythological and historical scenes, such as those depicted by Charles Le Brun and Charles-André van Loo (1705–1765). He did not want to copy the paintings literally but rather preferred to adapt draperies and cuts from the paintings to suit the nation, age, and social station of the characters that the performers had to represent. He argued that the theatre, like the fine arts, had its own rules and its own ways of creating the right effect.<sup>40</sup> And like Voltaire, he would not breach certain sartorial conventions.

Reforms that continued to respect the rules were also introduced by other famous costume reformers, including the actors Claire Josèphe Hippolyte Leris *dite* La Clairon (1723–1803) and Henri Louis Cain *dit* LeKain (1728–1778), both of whom were major stars at the Comédie-Française.<sup>41</sup>

Like Noverre, Clairon would not tolerate fashionable garments on stage. She called for the removal of accessories, feathers, jewels, chiffons, and flowers, and she did not approve of the modish tall hairdos. Importantly, she also added the character of the role into her costumes, that is, the costume would represent the character's inner emotions and motivation, which would prepare the audience for her portrayal: 'An actress, in arranging her dress, should pay particular attention to the situation of the person she represents. Age, austerity, and grief do not fit well with the decorations of youth, gaiety, and happiness'.<sup>42</sup>

While creating their new costumes, Noverre, Clairon, and LeKain were still very aware of the limitations imposed by the rules of decency.

They had no intention of imitating the history paintings and sculptures literally. As Clairon put it, ‘to adopt the dress of past ages, in every respect, would be indecent and ridiculous. The dresses of antiquity display too much of the figure’.<sup>43</sup> According to Damien Chardonnet-Darmaillacq, LeKain’s and Clairon’s efforts are defined by a ‘double negative: it was not about imitating the fashions of the city, and not about the launch into realism. [...] It was about proposing a costume that would shock neither by its too close aesthetic proximity to everyday clothing, nor by going too far away from the customary’.<sup>44</sup>

This moderate approach marked an important period of transition in the thinking about stage costume – it was the first stage of the reform. Through the practical efforts and writings of these influential artists, and through the support of other authors and the work of the Parisian costume designer Louis-René Boquet (1717–1814), the ground was gradually prepared for a more radical approach to the imitation of the visual arts on stage, finally realising fully the aesthetics of truthfulness. This second stage of the reform occurred in the 1780s, through the work of the visual artist Jean-Michel Moreau (1741–1814), the playwright and critic Jean-Charles Le Vacher de Charnois (1749–1792), the singer Antoinette Saint-Huberti (1756–1812), and the actor Francois-Joseph Talma (1763–1826), among others.<sup>45</sup>

### Rousseau’s costume

Jean-Jacques Rousseau had a peculiar relationship to fashion and dress, acknowledging both their importance and criticising their misuse. In his youth he was keen on quality clothing: his *Confessions* include many examples of how he appreciated elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen, and descriptions of his own collection of fine clothes, even though limited by his modest finances.<sup>46</sup> He was well aware of the significance that society ascribed to clothing, including establishing the status and character of other people, and he manipulated his own image accordingly, although only for as long as he was in the

38. Louis Jaucourt’s 1754 article ‘Costumé’ for the *Encyclopédie* adopts Dubos’s definition, referring only to the visual arts: ‘The costume is [...] the exact observation of what is, according to the time, the genius, the customs, the laws, the taste, the wealth, the character, and the habits of a country where the scene of a painting is placed. The costume also contains everything that concerns chronology and the truth of certain facts known to everyone; finally, everything that concerns the quality, nature, and essential propriety of the objects represented’. ‘Le costume est [...] l’observation exacte de ce qui est, suivant le tems, le génie, les mœurs, les lois, le goût, les richesses, le caractère & les habitudes d’un pays où l’on place la scène d’un tableau. Le costumé renferme encore tout ce qui regarde la chronologie, & la vérité de certains faits connus de tout le monde; enfin tout ce qui concerne la qualité, la nature, & la propriété essentielle des objets qu’on représente’. Louis Jaucourt, ‘Costumé’, in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, 17 vols. (Paris: Briasson, 1751–1772), 4: 298–299. Translation mine.

39. ‘[...] que le mouvement de son panier l’affecte & l’occupe quelquefois plus sérieusement que celui de ses bras & de ses jambes’. Noverre, *Lettres sur la danse* (1760), 185. Translation from 1782 by Parkyns MacMahon, *The Works of Monsieur Noverre, Translated from the French: Noverre, His Circle, and the English Lettres sur la Danse*, ed. Michael Burden and Jennifer Thorp (Cambridge: Pendragon Press, 2014), 312.

40. Noverre, *Théorie et pratique*, 1: 235.

41. Their ideas about costume as well as their concrete suggestions were published in the following publications: Clairon, *Mémoires d'Hyppolite Clairon et réflexions sur l'art dramatique publiés par elle-même* (Paris: Buisson, VII/1798–1799); LeKain, *Matériaux pour le travail de mon repertoire tragique, historique, anecdotique et géographique* (a preparatory work) and *Registre de LeKain* or *Cahiers de mises en scène*. None of these manuscript documents is dated, but it is reported that LeKain worked on them from 1760 until his death. For a detailed study of this material, see Damien Chardonnet-Darmaillacq, *Gouverner la scène: Le système panoptique du comédien LeKain*, PhD thesis (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre la Défense, 2012).

42. Clairon, *Memoirs of Hyppolite Clairon, the Celebrated French Actress: With Reflections upon the Dramatic Art, Written by Herself: Translated from the French* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1800), 85.

43. Clairon, *Memoirs*, 83.

44. Damien Chardonnet-Darmaillacq, 'Repenser la réforme du costume au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Quand les enjeux pratiques priment sur les enjeux esthétiques', in Doumergue and Verdier, *Le costume de scène*, 129–138: 138. My translation.

45. On the second wave of the costume reform, see Dotlačilová, *Costume in the Time of Reforms*, 157–164, 286–296; Frantz, *L'esthétique du tableau*, 101–111; Chazin-Bennahum, *The Lure of Perfection*, 93–116; Marc-Henri Jordan, 'Décorations et habits à l'Académie royale de musique vers 1780: Nouvelles identifications de dessins', in *Le Dessin et les Arts du spectacle: Le geste et l'espace*, ed. Pierre Rosenberg and

service of others.<sup>47</sup> As soon as he decided to embark on a free career in literature and music – after the success of his *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (1750) – he changed his dress. He abandoned luxury and began to wear simple clothes and fabrics, to sport a beard, use a simply cut and undressed wig. This conversion is also recorded in the *Confessions*: 'As soon as my resolution was completely formed and completely confirmed [...] I began my reform with my adornment; I gave up gilt and white gloves, I put on a round wig, I took off my sword, and sold my watch'.<sup>48</sup>

This simplicity was meant to express the purity and freedom of his profession: freeing his mind of changing fashions, superficialities, the 'vanity of luxury', and proving his constancy and lack of interest in material wealth. At the same time, the simple garments relieved his body from the artificial constraints of fashionable clothes, which was a process he later perfected by adopting a loose, oriental-style caftan. This 'natural' appearance, however, did not mean that he stopped taking care of himself; on the contrary, he stressed the importance of cleanliness and hygiene. All aspects of his new attire, including the beard, recalled the appearance of ancient philosophers or religious men (e.g. Franciscan friars or Islamic muftis); and so, Rousseau could be said to have fashioned himself as a learned and spiritual person. Furthermore, the clean, modest, and simple appearance was in accordance with the ground rules of good manners promoted by Christian preachers.<sup>49</sup> He was well ahead of his time with such use of dress: his clothes represented his inner state, beliefs, and aspirations rather than his social status – which of course became a problem in social interactions. Eighteenth-century dress represented a strict set of codes, which Rousseau deliberately blurred, and therefore his transition was not easy; it required a great amount of courage and self-assurance to break the norms and appear in these garments in public, both in the countryside and at the court.

In the eighth book of his *Confessions*, Rousseau describes the moment he entered the royal court for the first time after his 'conversion'. It was to attend the premiere of his opera *Le Devin de village* in 1752:

That day I was in the same carefree outfit that was usual for me; unshaven and in a rather poorly combed wig. Taking this lack of propriety for an act of courage, in this manner I entered the room into which the king, queen, the royal family, and all the court were to arrive shortly afterwards. [...] When it was lit up, I began to be ill at ease seeing myself in this outfit in the midst of people who were all excessively adorned: I asked myself whether I was in my place, whether I was suitably dressed? And after several minutes of anxiety, I answered myself, Yes, with an intrepidity that perhaps came more from the impossibility of withdrawing than the force of all my reasons. I told myself ‘I am in my place, since I am seeing my piece played, since I was invited, since that is the only reason I composed it, and since after all, no one has more right than I to enjoy the fruit of my labour and my talents. I am dressed in my ordinary clothes, neither better nor worse. If I begin to be enslaved to opinion in something, I will soon be enslaved by it in everything all over again. To be always myself, wherever I am I must not blush at being dressed according to the station I have chosen; my exterior is simple and untidy, but neither dirty nor improper, in itself the beard is not improper because it is nature who gives it to us, and because according to time, place and fashions it is sometimes an ornament. I will be found ridiculous, impertinent; ah what does it matter to me? I ought to be able to endure ridicule and blame, as long as they are not deserved’.<sup>50</sup>

From 1762, Rousseau reportedly went one step further and started to appear in the Armenian costume he became famous for, which was not only unconventional, but almost dangerous in certain situations. People in the countryside could react violently to such an appearance, threatening him verbally and sometimes even throwing stones at him. Gradually, however, he found a modicum of acceptance and could wear his ‘intellectual uniform’ more confidently in all situations:

A little time after my establishment at Môtiers-Travers, since I had all possible assurance that I should be left tranquil here, I put on an Armenian habit. This was not a new idea. It had come to me in the course of my life, and it often came back to me at Montmorency [...]. The convenience of an Armenian tailor, who often came to see a relative he had at Montmorency, tempted me to take advantage of it to take this new outfit at the risk of what people would think about it, about which I cared very little. [...] Thus I had a little

Michèle Sajous d’Oria, 2 vols. (Paris: Editions L’Echelle de Jacob, 2019), 2: 57–72.

46. E.g. in Book VIII: ‘On Christmas Eve, whilst the women-folk were at vespers, and I was at the spiritual concert, the door of a garret, in which all our linen was hung up after being washed, was broken open. Everything was stolen; including forty-two of my shirts of very fine linen, and which were the principal part of my stock’. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions and Correspondence, Including the Letters to Malesherbes*, vol. 5 in *The Collected Writings*, ed. Christopher Kelly, Roger D. Masters, and Peter G. Stillman (Chicago IL: Dartmouth College Press, 1995), 305.

47. ‘Madam de Beuzenval was a very good kind of woman, but of limited understanding, and too full of her illustrious Polish nobility: she had little idea of the considerations owed to talents. On that occasion she even judged me by my bearing rather than by my outfit, which, although very simple was extremely neat, did not represent a man made to dine with servants’. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, Book VII, 243.

48. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, Book VIII, 305.

49. Such as Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, *Les règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (Troyes, 1703), quoted in Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5–6.

50. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, Book VIII, 316–317.

Armenian wardrobe; but the storm it excited against me made me put off its use to calmer times, and it was only several month later, that, being forced to have recourse to catheters again by new attacks of my disorder, I believed I could take up this new form of dress at Môtiers without any risk, above all after having consulted the pastor of the place, who told me I could even wear it to the temple without scandal. Thus, I put on the coat, caftan, the fur cap, and belt; and after having assisted to the divine service in this outfit, I did not see any unsuitability at all in wearing it to the Lord Marshal's.<sup>51</sup>

Although Rousseau's new dress was inconvenient for the social interactions in the eighteenth century, he persisted in following this practice, and portraits of him in his Armenian costume show that he succeeded in making this his signature garment.<sup>52</sup>

The philosopher's gradual abandonment of fashionable dress went hand in hand with the development of his ideas about man in the state of nature, first expressed in his *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (1755). One of the main arguments in this work is that people have lost the immediate contact with nature and therefore have found comfort in material goods. He saw luxury, with its artificiality and emphasis on abundance and technical development, as one of the negative effects of civilisation, separating man increasingly from his natural state while at the same time creating inequalities. Paula von Wachenfeldt concludes her analysis of the second *Discourse* in relation to luxury: 'Fashion and luxurious lifestyle create a master and slave morality, which increases moral and political inequalities in the society'.<sup>53</sup> Rousseau's attempt to rid himself of his dependence on luxuries might therefore also be seen as an attempt to come closer to the ideal natural state.

As much as Rousseau paid attention to clothing and its meaning in society, he did not, unfortunately, leave behind many comments about theatre costumes either generally or for his own plays. One rare exception is found in his novel *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), where he criticises the interference of fashion in scenic illusion:

The comedians [...] paste French fashion over the Roman costume; you see Cornelia in tears caked with rouge, Cato powdered

51. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, Book XII, 502–503.

52. See the portraits by Allan Ramsay (1766, today in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery) and Étienne-Maurice Gérard (1778, today in the Public and University Library of Geneva).

53. Paula von Wachenfeldt, 'The Language of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century France', in *Fashion in Popular Culture: Literature, Media and Contemporary Studies*, ed. Joseph Hancock, Toni Johnson-Woods, and Vicki Karaminas (Chicago IL: Intellect/University of Chicago Press, 2013), 207–223: 217.

in white, and Brutus in a panier [...]; since they only see the Actor in the character, they likewise see only the Author in the play, and if the costume is neglected that is easily forgiven; for they know full well that Corneille was no tailor and Crébillon no wigmaker.<sup>54</sup>

This remark is reminiscent of the criticism of the Parisian fashion and costumes aired by theatre artists Noverre and Clairon, and other contemporaries. Taking Rousseau's preference for a simple and modest style of dress into account, we can probably conclude that he would have been in favour of the costume reform described above, and that he might even have pushed it further.

### Dressing *Pygmalion* and *Galathée* – then

The previous sections show the complex social and aesthetic motivations that lay behind the cuts, draperies, and decoration of theatre costumes at the time of *Pygmalion*. Amidst the tensions between the striving for social prestige, the contemporary moral codes, and the call of the *philosophes* for more authentic theatrical costumes, the garments of the actors had to be made one way or another. In the case of *Pygmalion*, the contexts of each production affected the design of the costumes, and their potential effect on the public.

Rousseau had written the text of *Pygmalion* in 1762, but the music was not composed until 1770 when it would have its premiere at the Hôtel de Ville in Lyon. Maria Gullstam describes the circumstances of the premiere in chapter 7, 'Rousseau's *Pygmalion* as Research on Stage', but she found no information about the costumes worn by the first performers of *Pygmalion* and *Galathée*, Antoine Le Texier (1736–ca.1814) and Madame de Fleurieux. We therefore have to turn our attention to the two images from 1775, when *Pygmalion* was performed in both a private and a public setting in Paris.

In both images, the costume of the male protagonist is close to the period's understanding of 'historical' dress, with its turning away from contemporary dress and from the ornate 'Roman' costume traditionally worn in tragedies. This is clear from his loose tunic called

54. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie or the New Heloise, Letters of Two Lovers Who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, tr. Philip Stewart and Jean Vache (Hanover NH and London: University Press of New England, 2010), 208.

à la grecque, possibly made of a simple, non-embroidered fabric, from the sash he wears around the waist, and from his sandals. However, both actors have long sleeves and white wigs, as was appropriate for contemporary noblemen. Messer's costume is perhaps more pompous than Larive's, with its rather old-fashioned fringes on the *tonnelet*. Larive, an actor at the Comédie-Française, was a protégé of Clairon, a disciple of LeKain, and a friend of Voltaire, and he is therefore likely to have followed the endeavours of his mentors more closely than the amateur Messer who preferred a more decorative look. An image of Larive in the role of Pygmalion from 1787 (Fig. 4) shows that he later progressed towards an even more truthful Greek costume, overcoming Clairon's concern that naked skin should not be shown on stage. In the 1787 image he has naked arms and short hair (possibly not a wig), and he wears a casually draped tunic, a dark mantle, and a headband similar to the one on Étienne Maurice Falconet's (1716–1791) sculpture of Pygmalion from 1763.

However, his partner on stage, Mademoiselle Raucourt, had a different agenda. As was noticed by Jean-François de La Harpe (1739–1803), a sharp-witted commentator from the time, who wrote about their performance in a letter to Count Schouwaloff in 1775:

It is impossible to imagine a more seductive sight than this actress standing in posture on her pedestal in the moment when the veil that is hiding her is drawn aside. Her head was that of Venus, and her leg, half uncovered, that of Diana. [...] A Greek would have advised her to sacrifice it to the Graces; good taste would have had to advise her to not play the statue in a *panier*: a *panier* is not ancient.<sup>55</sup>

Raucourt did not fashion herself as a nymph but as a 'goddess', aiming to show off her beauty and status as a principal actress; she even revealed part of her leg (which can also be seen on the engraving), perhaps in order to entice the audience. The desire to impress the spectators with her looks seems to have been stronger than the desire to represent a Greek statue, as suggested by her choice to wear a *panier* under her dress, as well as a tall hairdo, feathers, and flower garlands. The comment by La Harpe shows that such a costume

55. 'Il est impossible d'imaginer une perspective plus séduisante que cette actrice en attitude sur son piédestal, au moment où l'on a tiré le voile qui la couvrait. Sa tête était celle de Vénus, et sa jambe, à moitié découverte, celle de Diane [...]. Un Grec lui aurait conseillé de sacrifier aux Grâces; le bon gout devait lui conseiller aussi de ne pas jouer la statue en panier: un panier n'est pas antique'. Jean-François de La Harpe, 'Lettre XXXIV, au Comte Schouwaloff', in *Œuvres De La Harpe, de l'Académie française, accompagné d'une notice sur sa vie et ses ouvrages*, ed. Pierre Tiffon de Saint-Surin, 16 vols. (Paris: Verdrière, 1820), 10: 245–247. My translation.



**Figure 4.** [Janinet]: ‘Costume de Mr. de La Rive / Rôle de Pygmalion’. Engravings from *Costumes et annales des grands théâtres de Paris*, n.2, 1787. © Musik- och teaterbiblioteket, Stockholm, Litt. RAR 269:1–8. License: CC BY-NC.

was already considered inappropriate: as he put it, the play takes place in ancient Greece, and ‘the *panier* is not ancient’. Apparently, the absence of *paniers* for roles of this type was common: costume historian Diana de Marly mentions that, according to contemporary English stage practice, the representation of statues (e.g. the statue of Hermione in Shakespeare’s *Winter’s Tale*) was the only occasion for actresses to abandon the hoop and perform in a loose skirt without support.<sup>56</sup> And yet, English and French approaches to everyday dress seem to have been quite different: the English preferred less formal, less decorated, and more practical attire.<sup>57</sup> Stage practice might therefore differ as well, the English being perhaps more tolerant of alterations (we recall that it was in London that Marie Sallé succeeded with her lightly dressed statue in *Pygmalion*, while the Parisian public could not accept it). Noverre, too, appreciated the ‘truthfulness’ of the English approach to stage costume, though he sometimes found it a bit too simple:

The English are attached to a *costume* that is far more faithful than ours; their exactitude in this regard is extreme and their plays generally so well staged that the effect carries us away and the illusion is so perfect that it seems to concur with the truth. However, I have remarked that in some regards, they lack that of which we have too much; their costumes in some genres are too simple, too plain, and they don’t make an effect at all.<sup>58</sup>

The costume of Madame Boissier, however, is in a much simpler style: a white dress with irregular drapery and a looser hairdo, which is more in line with the reform’s idea of ancient costumes, while still respecting the rules of propriety. The general shape of her dress, with its traditional waistline, follows eighteenth-century fashion, and we cannot know if she wore a *panier* or not as we have no other evidence from the performances.

Another visual source that shows a costume for Pygmalion’s statue, albeit not created for Rousseau’s *scène lyrique*, is a costume design by Louis-René Boquet (Fig. 5), from a collection of drawings created

56. Diana De Marly’s example is a painting by Robert Edge Pine from 1765, which shows Hannah Pritchard (1711–1768) as Hermione. See De Marly, *Costume on Stage*, 60.

57. Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, 100–101.

58. ‘Les Anglois s’attachent à un costume bien plus fidèle que le nôtre; leur exactitude à cet égard est extreme; et il est des pieces généralement si bien mises, que l’effet en transporte et que l’illusion est si parfait, qu’elle semble se disputer à la verité. J’ai remarqué cependant qu’à certains regards il leur manqué ce que nous avons de trop; leur habits dans quelques genres sont trop simples, trop dégarnis, et ne font point d’effet’. Noverre, *Théorie et pratique*, I: 243–244.



**Figure 5.** Louis-René Boquet and workshop: 'Statue de Pygmalion'. Ink drawing and watercolour on paper. 1791. © Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm, MS S254.2. License: CC BY-NC.

for the ballets of Jean-Georges Noverre.<sup>59</sup> This design for a ballet costume was probably made in the 1770s or 1780s. As discussed earlier, Noverre promoted a moderate reform of the costume: in his view, the ancient style should be suggested through the choice of colours and drapery. He fought against excessive decorations with garlands and ribbons and, most importantly, against the wide *paniers* that destroyed the illusion and obstructed the movements. But while he emphasised simplicity and lightness, he did not want to abandon the traditional silhouette of the female dress entirely. All this is reflected in Boquet's design: the loosely draped skirt and loose hair reveal the ideal of simplicity that Noverre strove for, and of which Rousseau would also probably have approved.<sup>60</sup>

### Dressing Pygmalion and Galathée – now

It was on the basis of this historical analysis that we created the costumes for our production of *Pygmalion* in t2: the twenty-first century. Taking into account Rousseau's aim for simplicity and naturalness, we worked towards costumes that were in line with the reform, and we were thus drawn to the 'Greek' style of Pygmalion's costume in the picture of Larive from 1787, with its avoidance of excessive decorations and the stiff-looking shapes and fabrics. However, we wanted to maintain the longer sleeves that were more typical of the 1770s. We avoided the powdered wig as the dark, short-haired wig for the ancient Greek sculptor corresponded to the eighteenth-century ideal of naturalness. The dress of Galathée, however, had to conform to the silhouette typical of the 1770s, with stays and skirt, which would have been unavoidable at the time of the premiere. But obviously without the *panier*. Only two small cushions (bum rolls) on the sides added volume to the skirt. She would also wear elbow-long sleeves that covered her shoulders and arms, in accordance with the rules of decorum. Galathée also wore a wig, which was only slightly dressed,

59. This collection was created in order to present Noverre's work to the Swedish King Gustav III in 1791, as the ballet master hoped to get a position at his court, and it is preserved in the Swedish Royal Library: *Habits de costume pour l'exécution des ballets de Mr. Noverre, dessinés par Mr. Boquet*, MS, 1791; S-Sk S254 2.

60. The daringly high slit and the bare feet of Boquet's figure should be understood as artistic licence, as they would not have been permitted on stage.

and decorated with simple flowers rather than feathers, garlands, or ribbons. Classical poetry and paintings provide nymphs – and Galathée is supposed to be a nymph – with flower garlands as an attribute of their idyllic pastoral milieu. On eighteenth-century images, we see the garlands in Galathée's hands and on her garment. We opted for the latter and placed the garland across her chest, as on Boquet's drawing. The aim was to make her appearance as simple as possible, dressed in white silk taffeta and with the drapery on her skirt imitating the drapery on Greek statues.

However, just as in the eighteenth century, the twenty-first-century production faced various organisational and financial challenges, necessitating compromise. For the first performance, at Český Krumlov in 2015, we needed to borrow the costumes from other institutions. Pygmalion's costume came from the deposits of the Drottningholm Palace Theatre, and while the shape of the tunic and the mantle suited our purposes, the short sleeves were too revealing for the period, and for the moderate approach to the costume reform that we were aiming for. The shape of Galathée's costume, however, which we borrowed from the Hartig Ensemble in the Czech Republic, perfectly suited our purposes: even if it was not executed according to historical sartorial practices (the bodice was not boned), it was made of light white silk with the drapery on top of the skirt.

The meeting between the historical stage set and the historically informed costumes finally occurred in the Český Krumlov theatre, constructed in 1766. The colours and shapes of the costumes fitted harmoniously into the setting: the painted flat wings and backdrop represented a sumptuous salon in yellow, brown, and grey, with touches of rose and green, equipped with pilasters, doors, and windows, and richly decorated with elegantly curved ornaments, including even a figural mural on the backdrop. Although this room seemed a little too grand for a sculptor's workshop, the placement of Galathée's white pavilion in the foreground limited the playing

area to a smaller space. Now Galathée's white and modestly draped costume emanated purity, its colour pointing to her being a statue similar to the actual stone statues that we had placed on the stage. The curves of her dress corresponded both with the draped curtains of her pavilion and with the ornamental decorations of the set. Pygmalion, in his simple tunic, did not stand out in this setting: the simplicity of his costume instead enabled the spectators to concentrate on his expression and gestures, its darker colour making him visually distinctive, as he was (through most of the performance) the only person moving on the stage. In this eighteenth-century theatre the performance demonstrated the value of the interconnection between the sets and the costume. The two artefacts, one from the past and one from the present (although based on historical sources), contextualised and supplemented each other, the curved shapes and carefully matched colours creating the visual harmony praised in numerous eighteenth-century sources (Fig. 6).<sup>61</sup>

Later, for the performances that took place at the House of Nobility and at Confidencen in Stockholm, we were able to make new costumes for the actors, thanks to the collaboration with tailor and designer Anna Kjellsdotter who specialises in eighteenth-century sartorial practices. She created Pygmalion's tunic in sand-coloured wool, shaped according to Larive's second picture (Fig. 6), but with long sleeves that had been rolled up casually (which seemed appropriate for a sculptor at work), brown woollen breeches and mantle, and dark sandals which laced up his calf. She added a cream-coloured silk *dupion* to the lining of the tunic's hem, a cordon, and two sashes of the same fabric to enhance the effect of the drapery. Galathée's costume consisted of a white, boned bodice made after eighteenth-century models, with folding sleeves made of very light, semi-transparent fabric (silk organza) in place of a shirt, a white petticoat of crisp taffeta, and an underskirt. The bodice was modestly decorated with one flower garland, and the skirt adorned with light organza drapery to underscore her Greekness. We also decided to

61. See e.g. William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (London: Reeves, 1753).



**Figure 6.** *Pygmalion* by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. State Castle Theatre of Český Krumlov, 2015. Photo: Libor Sváček ©. License: CC BY-NC.

keep the detail of the slightly raised front hem of the skirt, playfully revealing the ankles of the actress, which is a feature in all the visual and textual records of the costume. Given the erotic undertone of the play, this coquettish gesture on the part of the actress might contribute meaningfully to the performance.

The setting of the second performance, the grand hall of the historic House of Nobility from 1660, lacked the visual unity we had

experienced on the eighteenth-century stage in Český Krumlov, as this was not a theatrical stage. On the other hand, it may have been closer to the setting of *Pygmalion*'s premiere in 1770, Lyon's Hôtel de Ville, which is also a non-scenic space. Galathée's pavilion stood out in its whiteness and immediately attracted attention in the grand hall in Stockholm, with its small raised stage surrounded by dark walls covered with metal plates carrying the coats of arms of Swedish noble families. Pygmalion, in his sand-coloured tunic, was also visually distinctive in the dark surroundings (Fig. 7).

Our production of *Pygmalion* returned to the setting of an eighteenth-century theatre in 2019 at Confidencen. Even though this stage is a reconstruction from the twenty-first century, the period costumes matched with the painted flat wings and the soft lighting, again creating a harmony of colours and shapes. The set represented a salon with pilasters, doors, and an alcove crowned by an elegant curve, in the shades of beige and brown. It was similar to the set of the first performance at Český Krumlov although with a far more modest decoration of the walls, the effect suggesting the simplicity sought after by the reformers of the mid-eighteenth century. Furthermore, the depth of the stage was limited by a backdrop after the third pair of wings. This created a more intimate atmosphere after the grandeur of the House of Nobility. The pavilion was now placed towards the right-back corner of the stage, which gave Pygmalion more space and allowed him to direct his acting towards one side (Fig. 8). The different positioning of the pavilion in the various spaces offered the performer new possibilities to experiment with his placement and movements.

This performance was the final destination of a long journey that had started with looking at two old pictures over five years earlier. After reading about the fashions, costumes, and aesthetics of the period, and interpreting the visual and textual sources on the *scène lyrique*, we created actual costumes worn by actors on stage. The case of *Pygmalion* serves to demonstrate both the multiplicity of the theatrical meanings



**Figure 7.** *Pygmalion* by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. House of Nobility, Stockholm, 2016. Photo: Maria Gullstam ©. License: CC BY-NC.



**Figure 8.** *Pygmalion* by J.-J. Rousseau and H. Coignet. Ulriksdal Palace Theatre (Confidencen), 2019. Photo: Eva Frykevall ©. License: CC BY-NC.

and subtexts of a costume, and the importance of looking beyond the iconographical sources to understand them. This method has implications both for our understanding of the particular aesthetic of a historical work, and for the physical experience of the actors involved in a historically informed performance.<sup>62</sup> Historically informed costumes, particularly when the performance is in a historical theatre, allow the audience to partake in a historical aesthetic experience that enriches their understanding of both the work and its period.

62. See chapter 6, 'Materiality in Action'.