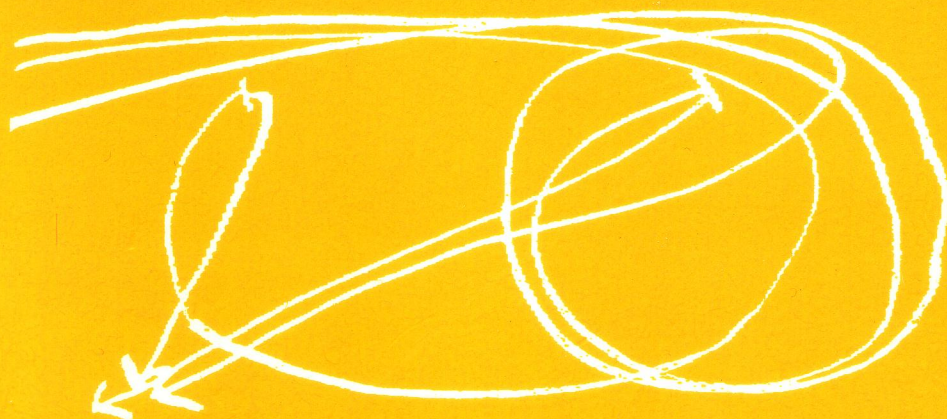


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THE AUREL MILLOSS COLLECTION AT THE GIORGIO CINI FOUNDATION OF VENICE

PATRICIA VEROLI

Free Lance and Dance Historian. Text read at the 1993 European Dance
Historians Association Conference *L'Italia e la danza*, Turin

Since 1990 the Cini Foundation has housed a large collection of books and documents bearing the name of Milloss Collection. It is only a part of what Hungarian choreographer Aurel Milloss (1906-1988) intended to will to the Venice foundation: the initial negotiations were underway when he died. Even if the integrity of the bequest as he had planned it is missing, the collection itself, generously donated by his heirs, is so valuable that the Cini Foundation, internationally known for dozens of years for the importance of its theatrical and musical holdings, has become the Italian institution with the richest collection of printed materials in the dance field.

The Milloss Collection contains over 2300 reference books about dance, about one hundred ballet librettos of the XIX century, many ballet playbills of various centuries, programmes, press cuttings and photographs related to innumerable ballets of this century.

The computerized cataloguing of the books has yet to be completed (this prevents me from giving exact figures), but the provisional catalogue kindly put at my disposal by the Foundation makes it possible to indicate the most important areas of the Library - areas that record the main directions of Milloss' artistic research, as well as the living core of his thought. As anyone who had the privilege to come into close contact with him will recall, the power of Milloss' creative urge was united with a tremendous thirst for knowledge of all aspects of dance. Anything he

explored even to solve the practical problems he faced as a dancer and choreographer, grew into a thought of a rare and sound consistency. His erudition was anything but dry and ponderous. His knowledge was, for the time, uncommonly broad and refined, inherently universalist and simultaneously organic. One might say that Milloss' spirit was breathing, consuming itself in the aura of the dance.

Like so many artists of his generation, Milloss owed his discovery of dance to the Ballets Russes. The event took place in Budapest in 1913 when he saw Nijinsky as the Spectre de la Rose. «Nijinsky arrive au dessus du plateau», Milloss would write in 1945 in the Rome French-language magazine *Présence*, «et soudain, à mi-chemin de sa course dans l'espace il semble s'arrêter. Contre les lois de la pésanteur, il freine son élan et lentement il descend. Littéralement, il se pose. Je dois dire que dans ce moment même où il pénètre sur la scène, Nijinsky pénètre au fond de mon être pour y allumer la flamme sacrée». No wonder the bequest includes a collection of 'Diaghileviana' of unusual richness: among the many titles - about 70 - , one must stress the iconographical importance of Valerien Svetlov's *Le ballet contemporain* (1912), *Vaslav Nijinsky, six vers de Jean Cocteau, six dessins de Iribé*, where the graphic design alone gives us the perfume of the era; and the Emil Hoppé and Bert portfolio of 15 *Studies from the Russian Ballet*, which recalls the early years of the company. Scholars will also find the first important titles in the field, by authors such as Svetlov, W.A. Propert, Jean-Louis Vaudoyer and Jacques-Emile Blanche, as well as the first editions of the many memoirs written since the 1930s by dancers and artists who shared the company's adventure. Another mythic figure for the young Milloss was Pavlova, whom he saw in Berlin at mid-1920s. In her dancing he discovered the sublime poetry that could be attained through classical technique - one that continued to bear the pedagogical and stylistic imprint of the late XIX century Italian masters and in which he had received his earliest instruction from Nicola Guerra at the

¹ A. Milloss, "Vaslav Nijinsky", *Présence*, II, n. 13.

Budapest Royal Opera House. Among the more than 20 titles related to Pavlova, one finds Oscar Bie's admiring volume published in Berlin (*Anna Pawlowa*, 1913), the splendid volume by Svetlov published by De Brunoff in 1922 (*Anna Pavlova*), and one real curiosity: the Dresden autobiography of 1928 (*Tanzende Füße - Der Weg meines Lebens*), brought out without her consent and withdrawn under threat of legal suit. There is also a great number of volumes related to the most important dancers of the times: Argentina, the Sakharoffs, the Wiesenthal Sisters and many others. As one might expect, the Duncan section is very important. Actually, in old age, Milloss revealed towards Duncan the same disappointed attitude which Nijinska ascribed to her brother. The collection of books about Duncan, however, is outstanding: 25 titles, mostly of the 1920s and 1930s. In addition to many editions of her memoirs, one finds *Der Tanz der Zukunft* (1903), the lecture she gave at the Berlin Press Verein immediately after her first German recital. Printed by Eugen Diederichs, a publisher very interested in dance (he used to invite many of the early German 'free' dancers to his vast Jena holdings, where they would perform in the open-air), Isadora's text must have had a seminal importance for the development of German modern dance. This section also includes the monograph devoted to the artist by Fernand Divoire and illustrated by Bourdelle (*Isadora Duncan fille de Prométhée*, 1919), the dancer's *Ecrits sur la danse*, illustrated with drawings by Bourdelle, José Clara and Grandjouan (1927), José Clara's *Soixante-douze Planches* (1928), Arnold Genthe's portfolio of 24 studies (1929), and many writings by the dancer's brother Raymond. Likewise, the Collection is rich in books charting the birth of American modern dance: there are several works by Ted Shawn, whom Milloss may have met in Munich in 1930 including his iconographically precious *The American Ballet* (1926) and *Gods Who Dance* (1929). The collection also houses outstanding volumes by Paul Magriel, Lillian Moore, John Martin, Walter Terry, Walter Sorell and Agnes De Mille, whilst Graham is represented only by the Barbara Morgan's early volume of photographic studies and historical accounts (Armitage, B.de Rothschild). As

a bibliophile, Milloss has cherished modern dance ephemera such as *La danse grecque antique d'après les monuments figurés* (Emmanuel, 1896) and *Kordax: Archaeologische Studien zur Geschichte eines antiken Tanzes und zum Ursprung der Griechischen Komoedie* (Schnabel, 1901). He purchased some works by Jaques-Dalcroze, and a few studies presumably of the Delsartian area dating to the late XIX century. The German bibliography of the early XX century is obviously outstanding: one finds authors like Sachs, Brandenburg, Böhme, Bie, Schur, Thiess, Hildebrandt and Giese. This was the time when the idea of dance was merging together with the powerful tide of new conceptions of the body and of physical health, drawing on the same deep psychological sources which would be nourishing the political and artistic fanaticism of the 1930s. As an Hungarian, Milloss was more sensitive to the clarity and equilibrium of classicism than to the dionysiac and neoromantic urges of expressionism. He would find his way thanks to Laban, not the expressionist Laban genially improvising at Ascona, but the Maestro of the late 1920s who had understood that freedom of expression could effectively grow by using rather than refusing ballet. As he said, «There is no old and new dance, there is only one art of dance»². In the dramatic conflict splitting the German dance world, with Laban and Wigman leading the opposite factions, Milloss' choice was Laban. In the cultivated and openminded magazine *Der Tanz*, whose Russian-born editor Joseph Lewitan would be forced into exile by Nazism, the 25-years-old choreographer wrote: «Truth as such is not art, beauty without truth is not art either...The culture of the old ballet is fundamental, it only has to be enriched... Ballet (its skeleton, its sense, the training it imposes on articulations up to the widest possible range of movement) is the necessary basis to create modern dance works»³. The Venice Collection houses all of Laban's monographs, together with the oldest iconographical sources related to the most representative of Germany's early modern dancers : not

² R.Laban, "Nicht stehen bleiben!", *Singchor und Tanz*, Festnummer Laban, H. 24, Dec.1929, p. 307.

³ A. Milloss, "Ist die Verbindung ein Kompromiss?", *Der Tanz*, Jhg IV, H.9, 1931, p. 6.

only Wigman, but Kreutzberg, Georgi and Gert. Milloss inherited from his Maestro a deep interest in dance notation: one finds in the collection Feuillet's *Recueil de danses* (1709), so important for researchers of Lulli's ballets, and *Chorégraphie ou l'art de décrire la danse* (1713), Magny's *Principes de chorégraphie* (1765), Klemm's *Katechismus der Tanzkunst* (1863), one of the first editions of Zorn's *Grammatik der Tanzkunst*, a late XIX century edition of Thoinéau Arbeau's *Orchésographie*, together with the modern works of Stepanov, Antonine Meunier and Benesch. But minor system are represented, too, like dancer Olga Desmond's *Rhythmographik als Grundlage zum Selbststudium des Tanzes* (1919) and Antonio Chiesa's *Ritmografia* (1932).

Already in 1932, when Milloss started his choreographic career in Breslau, he had a clear vision of what his artistic itinerary would be: he had to synthesize the formal and figurative legacy of classical dance with the rhythmic and dynamic acquisitions of modern dance. His goal was reform, not a violent break with the past - the same task that others choreographers of his generation, like Balanchine and Lifar, set for themselves. Milloss, however, could not boast a classical training as thorough and sound as his colleagues: a victim, as an Hungarian, of the tragic circumstances of World War I, he had several training experiences and although a few were of a very high level (Cecchetti, Gorsky), all were short. So he sought his way not through the new set of rules advanced by neoclassicism, but rather towards a classicism responsive to expressive aims still but within the bounds of a strictly formal control. The problem, as he saw it, was analogous to that facing choreographers during the transition from a dance language dried up by the need of allegory and emphasis, to the ballet d'action, and Viganò's dance drama⁴. While searching through old documents in libraries and archives, he trained himself as a dance historian and it should be stressed that his essays are worth a wide and careful

⁴ In 1933 he began searching about significant ballets of that faraway time such as Angiolini's *Don Juan*, Noverre's *Les Petits Riens*, and Viganò's *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus* in order to shape out his own versions of all three. He would put hands on them later on for several new editions.

recognition. As an historian, his scholarship was unusually sound, and his integrity uncompromising: he was always prompted, however, by his intuition and personality as an artist.

Thus, of special significance are the sections of the Collection related to the ballet de cour, XVIII century dance, and the ballet d'action. Basic works such as Père Menestrier's *Des représentations en musique anciennes et modernes* (1681), the manuscript of Pécour's *Recueil de danses* (1700), the already mentioned 1713 edition of Feuillet's *Chorégraphie* and Nicola Callachius' *De ludis scenis mimorum et pantomimorum* (1713), exist side by side with Noverre's *Lettres* (from the first edition of Lyon of 1807 to the 4 volumes published in Saint Petersburg in 1803-4, and the various XX century editions), Gennaro Magri's *Trattato teorico-prattico di ballo* (1779), rare volumes about pantomime, such as *La scoperta della chironomia* by Vincenzo Requeno (1797), the 1820 Milan edition of Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik*, and *La mimica degli antichi investigata nel gestire napoletano* by Andrea Di Jorio (1832). Several volumes of the late XIX and of the early XX centuries are related to the commedia dell'arte. And one can obviously find the most authoritative source about Viganò: Carlo Ritorni's *Commentarii* of 1838. It should be noted that I am mentioning here only the most important and best known books: the collection includes many minor publications which are worth a study in themselves, a great number of reprints, many dating to the late XIX century, and of fac-simile editions.

In 1938 Milloss replaced Boris Romanov as the leading choreographer and ballet master at the Rome Royal Opera House, initiating the movement which was called and internationally known as 'the renaissance' of the Italian ballet. The section of the Venice Collection about pre-II World War Italy suggests the general taste and expectations in the dance field of the late 1930s. Audiences throughout Italy continued to enjoy Manzotti's balli grandi. On the other hand, Diaghilev's tours had not attracted far-sighted impresarios: the declining impresario system was indeed giving way to the changing of private theatres into 'enti autonomi' (autonomous institutions) which would become strongly conditioned by the Fascist state. He had

neither awaken the stubborn enthusiasm of Maecenases and intellectuals, nor attracted dancers who would later graft the new Russian technical developments to the once glorious Italian didactic tradition. The weakness of the Italian symbolist movement, whose chief figure, poet and playwright Gabriele D'Annunzio, regarded Diaghilev as something of a competitor, and more generally the still limited influence of Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce's idealism with its new formalist approach to art, were mainly responsible for the Ballets Russes' revolution passing by with influence. New aesthetic conditions would subsequently allow Milloss to pick up Diaghilev's lesson and develop it, wherever and whenever he could. Not only did he demand from his dancers the highest possible interpretative standard, but he asked for the cooperation of the most innovative painters and musicians of the time.

Thus, a number of this century's major Italian artists wrote the music or painted the décor for his ballets, while Milloss' dance essays were published by magazines like *Musica*, *Mercurio* and *Immagine* which were struggling to defend the cause of modernity in all artistic fields. At a time when these were few dance critics, authoritative art historians like Cesare Brandi and Giovanni Carandente, as well as musicologists of great distinction such as Massimo Mila, Luigi Rognoni and Fedele d'Amico were fired by Milloss' enthusiasm and not only supported the cause of dance in all media, but even wrote often about ballet. Their insights, imbued with a new respect for the formal values of art works, still make for enlightened interdisciplinary reading. It is interesting to note that the struggle to win a broad recognition of the choreographer's creative role paralleled the struggle to enhance the director's role in a theatre where the traditions of the 'grande attore' and 'capocomico' were still very strong. Milloss led the first battle: the second was led by drama critic Silvio d'Amico. Not by chance have their names been linked in the huge cultural undertaking represented by the *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*.

«We owe this to Milloss *only*, to his authority (and charm)», says today Alessandro d'Amico, the *Enciclopedia's* chief editor, «if dance has been

given a considerable room in the whole work...The structure of the dance sector - any choice related to general and bibliographic entries, to technical terms, etc. - has been always discussed and agreed upon with him»⁵. Between Milloss and Fedele d'Amico, the director of the Teatro musicale section, a close friendship developed that led to an unfailing and uncommonly fruitful collaboration. Apart from writing a few entries (Balanchine, Cecchetti, De Maré), the choreographer lent most of his dance books to the editorial staff. As a matter of fact, after the emigration to USA of Walter Toscanini and Cia Fornaroli together with their rare dance belongings (they are housed today at the Dance Collection of the New York Public Library), in the 1950s Milloss' library was reputed as being unique to Italy and one of the most important in Europe. As demonstrated by the Italian section of the Venice Collection, after the War not only was the *Enciclopedia* on its way (Gino Tani, the first Italian dance critic was 'born' there, abandoning his previous specialization as music critic), but several books (in translation, first) were published which helped to popularize ballet. Original studies came much later, though, and are still rare. One has only to consider that a canonical text such as Noverre's *Lettres* was not published in Italy (translated by Alberto Testa) until 1980. In a context characterized by rare, lazy or short-sighted dance publishers, historical-oriented journals have been missing, at least up to 1984, when José Sasportes founded *La danza italiana*, a daring effort which could not survive the departure from Italy of its editor.

It is presumably in the 1950s, when Milloss was already enjoying wide international acclaim (he was was invited to work at the best Italian theatres, in Paris and in Brasil; while in the 1960s he was also active in Cologne and Vienna), that the 'antiquarian' section of his library took shape. The oldest books belonging to the Venice bequest are Zuccolo da Cologna's *La pazzia del ballo* (1549) and Fabritio Caroso's *Nobiltà di dame* (1605). Still within the field of the technical development of classical

⁵ Letter to the Author of 17 July 1993.

dance, the original Blasis' bibliography should be noted, as this is richer in material here than in the Derra de Meroda Collection'. Milloss has paid a great attention to dance Romanticism: a great deal of XIX century volumes deal with the Paris Opéra, and its legendary ballerinas, but also with the origins of the Danish school (there are various editions of Bournonville's memoirs, since the first edition of 1848). Particularly impressive is the historiography of countries such as France and England, where in the 1950s ballet was reaching a peak in terms of balletic productions and popular acclaim. As to France, there are many monographs by Vaillat and Michaut (a close friend of Milloss), and several photographic volumes of Serge Lido; there are also numerous publications about Lifar, who is given a considerable representation here as an author as well. Together with more than 20 Lifar titles, one can find the many editions of *Histoire du ballet russe depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours* which, given to the absence of other sources and to the author's unquestionable prestige as a choreographer, pedagogue, and historian, has been long regarded in Europe as the main reference point in matters Russian. The English bibliography is probably the most comprehensive of the collection, with its 40 monographs by Beaumont, 30 by Haskell, the many books by Caryl Brahms, Beryl de Zoete, Anton Dolin, Cyril Swinson, A.H. Franks, Richard Buckle and Ivor Guest, together with rare and often luxurious photographic volumes including 15 by Gordon Anthony and all the Baron's 3 detail's.

Milloss' education and training took place in a transitional stage of history, when the fires lit by the artistic vanguards illuminated the collapse of a whole system of political, social and spiritual values. As an Hungarian noble, his phantasy was caught not only by the exuberantly rich folklore of his country, but also by the past glories of the recently dismembered Hapsbourg Empire. His mind could not fail to respond to a wide range of suggestions, as other rich sections of his collection show. Not only music, an obvious 'must' for an artist of his kind, but folklore, theatre and cinema: literature and plastic arts were hugely represented in his library but unfortunately have not entered the bequest.

The section of the Venice Collection related to social dances is outstanding, too. The oldest book here is G.Andrea Gallini's *Treatise on the Art of Dancing* (1765), but one can find many XIX century volumes, among them Cellarius' *La danse des salons* (1847), Desrat's *Traité de la danse*, and old studies and manuals on the menuet, quadrille, polka and waltz.

Culturally, artistically, and ethically, however, Milloss' fundamental reference point remained classicism. On Russian sources he drew in the way he was allowed by the times, that is mainly through the filter of English historiographers. One finds many volumes about twentieth-century choreographers (Tikhomirov, Lopoukhov, Vainonen, Zakharov, Chaboukiani), about Ulanova, whose art he 'discovered' with the Bolshoi's performances abroad, many Russian monographs by historians such as Krasovskaya and Slonimsky (beginning with his 1926 *Giselle*), the few surveys of Russian ballet history which have appeared in English (I speak of Beaumont's *History of Ballet in Russia 1613-1881*, the first Western volume on the subject, and based, as R.J.Wiley has recently discovered; on one of Pleshcheyev's volumes, and of Roslavleva's *Era of the Russian Ballet 1770-1965*), and the most authoritative volumes on dance instruction (Legat, Tarasov, Vaganova). As to Levinson, Milloss could never forgive the great Russian critic's sharply hostile attitude towards modern dance, even as he appreciated his uncommon merits as a scholar. The Venice Collection has all the dance monographs published by Levinson in the West even in various editions, the sole exception being his *Anna Pavlova* (which Milloss never ceased looking for), and the volumes about Bakst which are not part of the bequest. The Russian historian whom Milloss held in highest esteem, though, was Akim Volinsky: he kept through the years yellowed xeroxes of the short sections from Volinsky's *Kniga Likovaniy*, which Lewitan had published in *Der Tanz* in the 1920s. Milloss never found the book itself, but he kept insisting on its importance, and suggesting that it be translated and studied. For an artist who had not hesitated in his youth to embrace all the fury and tragedy of expressionism, his longing is clear evidence of a renewed act of faith in the soundness and richness of the

classical tradition, in an expressiveness absorbed and transformed into a poetry of the sublime.

* My warmest thanks to the Cini Foundation, Alessandro d'Amico, Francesca Falcone and Concetta Lo Iacono. My thanks also to Lynn Garafola for kindly accepting to revise my English translation.

Abstract

En este artículo se analiza la colección de libros de Aurel Milos, (del que también se ofrece una breve referencia histórica), que se encuentra en la Fundación Giorgio Cini en Venecia. La autora se basa principalmente en el contenido de la colección, que abarca desde libros a libretos de ballets del siglo XIX, y en las posibilidades de acceso a esta colección.