



Dance in the Shadow of the Guillotine

Judith Chazin-Bennahum

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Ballet changed dramatically during the French Revolution. Judith Chazin-Bennahum reveals how the cold, stylized dance movements and weighted ornamental costumes of the 18th-century court ballets developed into the ballet of the Romantic movement, where dancers wore lightweight costumes that allowed them to flow freely across the stage and take to the air.

Chazin-Bennahum studies the *livrets* (printed scenarios) of ballets performed in Paris from 1787 to 1801 to illustrate how dance reflected the social and political upheaval of the French Revolution. Ballet's main characters changed from mythological heroes and heroines to the heroes of the Revolution. She examines three major types of ballets and their sources to document these changes: ballets based on classical mythology; ballets inspired by the revolutionary spirit; and ballets rooted in middle-class themes from pastoral drama, traditional comedy, and exotic settings.

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