



Angelini

Angellini

Angiolini



Who was Mr Angelini who danced in *Peleus and Thetis*? He danced at Dublin's Crowe Street Theatre company between February 1801 and March 1803 (Feb - Mar 1801; Dec 1801 - May 1802; Nov 1802 - Mar 1803).

There is always the possibility that he was an obscure visiting Italian by the name of Signor Angelini (or Angellini), just as advertised in the Dublin press.

It seems more likely that he was a member of the Angiolini family of dancers and choreographers, though not the famous Gasparo Angiolini, who was born in Florence on 9 February 1731 and died in Milan on 3 February 1803. Nor is it likely to have been his nephew Pietro Angiolini, who was surely too busy elsewhere.

The Dublin dancer might just possibly have been Gasparo's son Pietro, or more likely a representative of the next generation, perhaps a son of either Pietro, if such there was!

Generation 1

Like some composer dynasties, dancing was handed down from one generation to the next. Alongside the Angiolini family, there were the Taglioni and Vestri families.

Gasparo Angiolini was the "Mr Angelini", ballet master to the Viennese court, referred to in the *Memoirs of the Celebrated Dwarf Joseph Boruwlaski ... written by himself; translated from the French by Mr Des Carrières* (London, 1788). This famous Florentine was a pupil of Franz Hilverding (1710-1768).

Gasparo, as stated by Boruwlaski, was ballet master of the Vienna court opera house where he collaborated with, amongst others, the composer Gluck (1714-1787) for the ballet *Zéphire et Flore* (1759), the reformist ballet pantomime *Don Juan ou Le festin de pierre* (ballet d'action, 1761), *Citera assediata* (ballet-pantomime, 1762), *Sémiramis* (ballet pantomime tragique, 1765) and the dances in *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762).

His wife, Teresa Foglazzi, was the “première Danseuse au Theatre Imperial”. Angiolini published an important manifesto of ballet reform in 1765. During the mid 1770s he engaged with Jean-Georges Noverre (1727-1810) in a bitter polemical exchange of published letters, disputing Noverre's claims to have been the inventor of the *ballet d'action*.

From 1766, Angiolini spent several years as ballet master of the Imperial Theatre in St Petersburg, creating several ballets to his own music. He returned to Italy, producing some ballets in Venice and living in Milan. In the 1770s and 80s he was working variously between Vienna, St Petersburg and La Scala, Milan.

He was a democrat and a republican, and “was imprisoned in 1799 and exiled from Milan, although he later returned to die there.” (NYPL)

See the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts:
(<http://legacy.www.nypl.org/research/lpa/italiandance/web3.html>)

Generation 2

There is some confusion over the next generation. Gasparo Angiolini had a nephew called Pietro and it is he who was the major star of the next Angiolini generation.

However, confusion arises because Gasparo had a son, also called Pietro. The dates for son and nephew are quite close and it may be that the two are confused in some sources as one and the same – indeed, some of the following ‘facts’ may apply to one and not the other!

Gasparo's son, born 12 April 1764 in Vienna, died in Milan, probably in 1830.

Gasparo's nephew Pietro Angiolini (born c.1760, died c.1836 “probably in Florence”) was one of the most celebrated Italian choreographers in the first decades of the 19th century. He was hired for ballets in Madrid's Teatro de los Caños del Peral by Domenico Rossi in the late 1780s. The company put on operas and ballets in both Madrid and Lisbon that had been staged recently in Italy, London, Paris and Vienna.

Just as his uncle Gasparo Angiolini argued publicly with Jean-Georges Noverre, so Pietro argued with Rossi, a Noverre pupil. Pietro had become the choreographer/director of the Teatro São Carlo in Lisbon, but along with his wife Teresa Melzzi and his brother Pasquale, he closed the Lisbon company and returned to Italy in 1797 as a direct result of the dispute with Rossi.

This was probably the same Pietro Angiolini who came to London with his wife in 1784.

King's Theatre, London, December 1784
Sg and Sga Pitrot Angiolini (from the King's Theatre at Naples; their 1st appearance)

January 1785 – a new *Pas de Deux* by Sg and Sga Angiolini

And the same Pietro Angiolini who was at La Scala, Milan in 1789 and at the Nuovo Teatro Regio, Turin in 1790.

Amongst his many works, Pietro Angiolini (the nephew) created a pantomime ballet in four acts, *Herkules und Achelous* with Spontini (published in Vienna in 1810) and other 'heroic ballets', including *Il Trionfo di Vitellio Massimimo ossia La distruzione di Pompejano*, an historic-pantomime ballet for La Scala, 1803.

See page 26 of *Music in Spain during the Eighteenth Century* by Malcolm Boyd and Juan José Carreras (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

It seems incomprehensible that Pietro, the nephew, would have spent three seasons in Dublin across 1801-1803. Perhaps it was Pietro the son or Pasquale the other nephew. Or a son from the next generation.

Whoever the Dublin dancer was in 1801-1803, George Male's pantomime with music by Tom Cooke seems an unlikely attraction for the major Angiolini figures!

Generation 3

So far I cannot find any reference to a son of either of the Pietros or of Pasquale.

Just for the record, mention should be made of two Angiolini ballerinas in this third generation, both probably daughters of Pietro, the nephew.

In Venice in February 1820 at the Teatro alla Fenice, in the ballet (an 'azione mimica') *Timur-kan* by Nicola Vaccai (1790-1848) we meet Pietro and, presumably, his daughter:

"... soggetto, direzione e coreografia di Pietro Angiolini (ballerine Maria Bresciani (Cenira) e Giuseppina Angiolini (Ganara) ..."

Giuseppina Angiolini, said to be born c.1800, was listed as prima ballerina in Turin in 1821 and in one of the principal roles (Bradamante) in Giovanni Battista Giannini's heroic ballet *Il cavaliere della morte ossia La disfatta dei mori* (Teatro alla Canobbiana, Milan, carnival 1827) and Giannini's magic ballet *Egilde* for Turin's carnival, 1821.

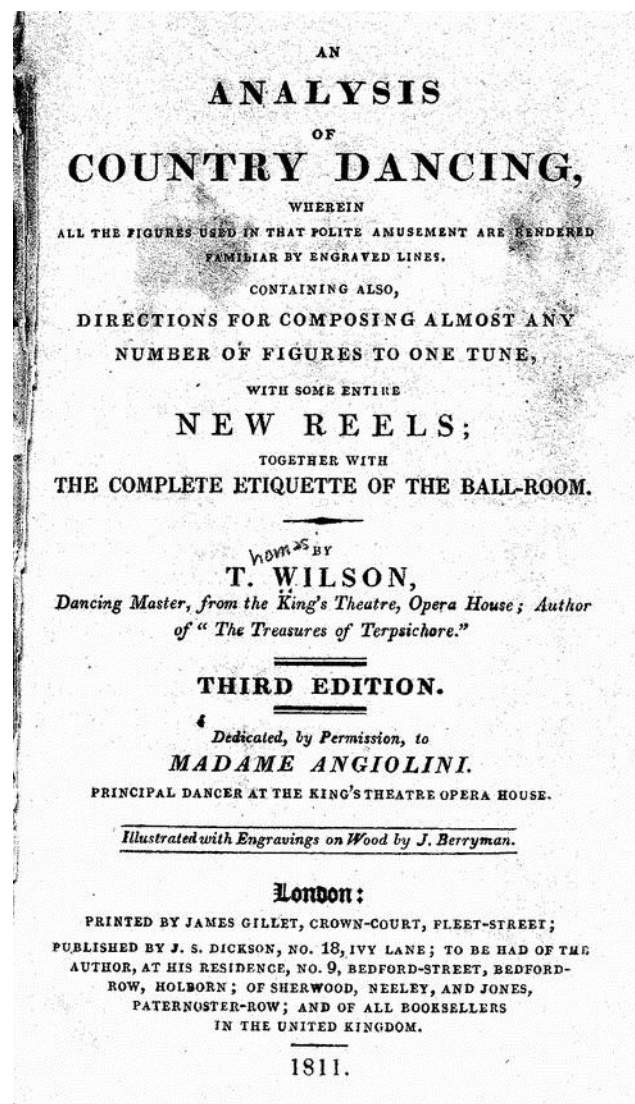
In 1824 she was listed as Giuseppa Cortesi-Angiolini, having married the leading choreographer Antonio Cortesi.

Skipping back a decade or so, there is this, from *Extracts of the journal of a gentleman on a visit to Lisbon* published in *The Monthly Anthology, Boston Review*, February 1811:

The [Italian] opera [house – Teatro São Carlo] is about to be shut for want of encouragement. Young Vestris, and Angiolini, who are the principal dancers, are going to England.

This was Fortunata Angiolini, almost certainly another daughter of Pietro, the nephew, given the La Scala and Lisbon connections below. "Young Vestris" was Auguste Armand Vestris who was born in 1788 and died in Vienna in 1825. Armand was the grandson of Gaétan Vestris (1728-1808) and son of Auguste Vestris (1760-1842), principal dancer and ballet master of the Paris Opéra – both men accorded the accolade of "le Dieu de la Danse".

Young Vestris and Angiolini cannot have stayed long in Lisbon. They did indeed move to London, though towards the end of 1808. Fortunata Angiolini soon became the principal dancer at the King's Theatre in Haymarket.



Before that London success, both Vestris and Fortunata were in Milan, usually in productions with choreography by Pietro Angiolini. This listing does not claim to be exhaustive:

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| Spring 1805 | <p><i>Labino e Carlotta</i>, commedia in musica by Simon Mayr
 with Armand Vestris and Fortunato
 Bologna in occasione dell' apertura del nuovo teatro detto del Corso</p> |
| Spring 1806 | <p><i>Le nozze campestri</i>, melodramma comico by Giuseppe Nicolini
 with Armand Vestris (listed as one of many <i>autori</i>) and Fortunato;
 choreography by Pietro Angiolini
 La Scala, Milan</p> |
| Spring 1806 | <p><i>I raggiri amorosi</i>, dramma giocoso by Ferdinando Orland
 with Armand Vestris and Fortunato
 La Scala, Milan</p> |
| April 1806 | <p><i>Gli ultimi due giorni di carnevale</i>, melodramma giocoso by Francesco Gnecco</p> |

with Armand Vestris (listed as one of many *autori*) and Fortunato;
choreography by Pietro Angiolini
La Scala, Milan

December 1806 *Adelasia e Aleramo*, melodramma serio by Simon Mayr
with Armand Vestris and Fortunato
La Scala, Milan

Lent 1807 *I misteri èleusini*, drama per musica by Simon Mayr
with Armand Vestris and Fortunato; choreography by Pietro Angiolini
La Scala, Milan

Presumably somewhere around this time, Vestris and Angiolini travelled to Lisbon and then onwards to London's King's Theatre in time for the start of 1809 when Wilkinson & Co., late Broderip & Wilkinson, 13 Hay Market, published *The much admired castanet dance*, performed by Monsr. Vestris & Sgra. Angiolini in the favorite ballet of *Don Quichotte* by F Venua.

The Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions and Politics for July 1809 reports that:

The ballet "Le Calife de Bagdad", composed by Mons. Vestris, is certainly elegant and splendid, although, in our opinion, inferior to the productions of Mr. D'Egville, particularly his mythological ballets. ... Suffice it now to add, that Vestris and Angiolini danced delightfully. Mons. Des Hayes, nevertheless, is still an old favourite of ours. We really believe the principal reason why Vestris appears to greater advantage is, because he exerts himself more; he does not husband his powers ...

The 1810 etching (below) shows both Vestris and Angiolini in the *Ballet of the Tyrolese*.



Drawn and engraved by Nicolaus Heideloff (1761-1837). Source: Bibliothèque National de France.

The following pen-portrait of Armand Vestris is from the *Memoir of Madame Vestris in Oxberry's dramatic biography and histrionic anecdotes*, Vol.5 (London, 1826):

When about 15 years old, the enchanting Miss Bartolozzi was introduced to M. Armand Vestris, who was then astonishing and delighting all the fashionable world at the King's Theatre. The descendant of the man whom the enthusiastic French called "The God of Dance" deserves some mention. He was born at Paris, May 3, 1787, was educated from his cradle in the steps in which he was destined to walk, and was presented by his father and grandfather (the immortal Vestris) to the Parisian public in 1800.

That circumstance is in no danger of being forgotten abroad, for the elder Vestris returned to the stage on that occasion, in compliment to his grandson; and all Paris was on fire to behold the three generations, all excelling in their joint art, exhibit at once. Young Armand, however, bore away the balm, and for nine years remained the most attractive ballet performer in that nation of dancers.

Perhaps no men have more temptations presented to them than public dancers in France, and Armand Vestris, at the age of two-and-twenty, shewed that dissipation had done her work upon him; in fact, though only just arrived at manhood in years, he was sinking into old age in constitution, when he accepted an engagement in England. After a little preliminary nursing, he appeared in a *pas de deux* with Madame Angiolini, on the 6th of January, 1809, in D'Egville's ballet called "*Les Amours de Glaucque, ou la Vengeance de Venus*." He then danced a fandango with Angiolini, in "*Don Quichotte, ou les noces de Gamache*;" which fandango, it is said, turned the heads of half the female portion of the audience.

Vestris reposed quietly in the good graces of the fashionables, and, on one eventful evening, Miss Bartolozzi sighed, and looked, and fairly owned herself "danced out of her heart." Vestris was struck by the mute eloquence of the lady, and, on the 28th of January, 1813, the rector of St. Martin in the Fields performed the marriage ceremony, and joined these extraordinary individuals.

Some of our readers may not remember Vestris. He was rather of a clumsy make, and not altogether the man to look at, that should train for an Adonis. His face was chubby and inexpressive, and his eye had an expression of dissipation that was displeasing; the *gloating* of passion without fire.

He lived expensively, and as the charms of his young wife began to be much lauded, he determined to bring her on the stage, to which the lady "nothing loth" consented. Little preparation did she require, but after receiving a few lessons in singing from M. Corri, made her first appearance, for her husband's benefit, at the King's Theatre ...

... Armand Vestris, known as a "gay man" in London, was trebly so in his own country; and his young and fascinating wife was left in solitude, whilst he mingled in all the dissipations of the metropolis. She was then under 20 years of age, "with all the wicked world before her," reflected, in a foreign country, by him for whom she had given up the protection of parents, and the attentions of friends, "'twas much;" – the sequel may be guessed.

Vestris went to Naples; his wife stayed in Paris, launched into the pleasures of the city, and, if we may use an old quotation in a new sense, sought "that bourn from which no traveller returns." From the year 1816 to the day of the death of Armand Vestris, which

took place about twelve months since, we understand he and his enchanting spouse “dwelt asunder,” though they had once or twice met. He died, as he had lived, greatly embarrassed.

Lord Byron went to the King’s Theatre in February 1809 and in his long satirical poem, *English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers* he wrote (from line 626):

Let high-born lechers eye the lively Presle
Twirl her light limbs, that spurn the needless veil;
Let Angiolini bare her breast of snow,
Wave the white arm, and point the pliant toe;
Collini trill her love-inspiring song,
Strain her fair neck, and charm the listening throng!

An editor’s footnote adds that Mademoiselle Presle ... “was well known as ‘première danseuse’ in ... ballets” and Mademoiselle Angiolini, “elegant of figure, ‘petite’, but finely formed, with the manner of Vestris.”



Above: Armand Vestris as Macbeth c.1819 at the Teatro San Carlo in Naples.

In his *Sketches of history, politics and manners, taken in Dublin, and the north of Ireland, in the autumn of 1810*, Rev. John Gamble commented on Palmerston, near Dublin, “a small village of a mean appearance, which, however, is amply compensated by the beauty of the surrounding scenery”:

We saw pas de deux and de trois innumerable; not done with the grace of Vestris or Angiolini perhaps, but to the full with as much spirit. As the dancing was on the declivity of the hill, little accidents sometimes occurred; the fair one stumbled, and displayed in her fall a stout pair of limbs, not easily tired, I guess, in any kind of exercise: – the music in front, of our tent was a pair of bag-pipes; another party was dancing to the sound of a fiddle. – I got up and went nearer, to hear it more distinctly – It would have been as well for me, however, had I remained where I was – these Palmerston figurantes did not “trip it on the light fantastic toe;” one huge fellow laid his great heel, stuck round, with hob nails, as heavy as a cart-horse, on my foot, and almost crushed it to a mummy. – He danced on, and I hopt back to my tent, where I took another glass of wine and water to lull the pain, and listened to the drone of the bag-pipes with the same intention.

Gamble also described a print in an inn in Balligawly [*sic*] with prints on the wall. One was of Sophia, “fallen from horseback, taken from Tom Jones: – There was a capital display of limbs in this print – Angiolini could not have exceeded it, when she capers the highest. It was harmless, however, – as the legs were as thick as a citizen’s in a dropsy, and the face as frightful as Medusa’s. It would not have been possible to have recognised the lovely Sophia, but for the kind information of the engraver.”

Madame Angiolini, a dancer, also makes an appearance in a stage direction in Thomas Hardy’s epic drama in verse of the war with Napoleon, *The Dynasts* (published 1904-1908):

“The Opera proceeds to the end, and is followed by a hymn and chorus laudatory to peace. Next a new ballet by MONSIEUR VESTRIS, in which M. ROZIER and MADAME ANGIOLINI dance a pas-de-deux.”

Another possible daughter of Pietro Angelioni is Giuseppa Angelioni, listed as a ballerina for Mayr’s *Alfredo il grande* in Milan in the autumn of 1820. Pietro was the choreographer for the first performance in 1818.

But, so far, not a son who might have danced for Tom Cooke in Dublin.

David Byers

Belfast, 30 July 2012

Please see a subsequently added (2024) postscript overleaf:—

I am grateful to Duncan Hawley, Chairperson, History of Geology Group, The Geological Society, for the following sentences about Fortunata Angiolini in London. He kindly forwarded a copy of an Indenture, a head of lease agreement from November 1815 with Fortunata Angiolini.

‘It shows her former address as [Charlotte Street] Portland Place and relocating to [20 Bedford Street] Covent Garden suggesting a move to a more affordable residence – as neither place is a great distance from where she was Principal Dancer in Haymarket. She relinquished the lease after only a few months, and her death in 1817 suggests she may have declined in health and was not able to dance, so could not afford the £350 annual rent. If so, this was a sad demise to her career and life. The lease was taken up by The Geological Society of London (who now reside with most of the other learned societies in Burlington House on Piccadilly).’

15 August 2024