

The pantomime Theonoe on a mosaic from Zeugma

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Although pantomime was the most popular form of theatrical entertainment in the Graeco-Roman world of the Empire, archaeological evidence for it has been elusive.* The thorough researches of J. Jory into the iconography of pantomime have produced only a handful of images of actual pantomime dancers with the equipment of their art, most of these in the minor arts.¹ A few small terracotta statuettes show standing figures wearing long tunics and holding the characteristic mask of pantomime, with closed mouth, or in one case wearing such a mask; similar figures appear in relief on the appliqué medallions that served as attachments for pottery from S Gaul.² A small number of contorniates from the 5th c. have figures who may be wearing similar masks (though the details are not clear) and who are accompanied by victory acclamations with names known to have been used by pantomime dancers (e.g., *Karamalle nicas*).³ More substantial are the reliefs on two sides of the 2nd-c. base from Lodi (now in Milan) dedicated to the pantomime dancer Theocritus Pylades, which show two figures holding masks, and apparently representing two of the pieces in which he was victorious: one is labelled *IONA*, the other *TROADAS*.⁴ But their condition is poor, and the details again far from clear. A much richer store of material has come from Jory's studies of pantomime masks, identifiable primarily by the closed mouth, which have allowed him to establish a typology of some of the more popular masks; but masks are limited in the information they can provide and have their own problems of interpretation.⁵ None of these, moreover, offers a view of the performance of a scene from pantomime as it was presented on the stage; such scenes have until now been conspicuous by their absence, in contrast to the clearly identifiable scenes of comedy and, more rarely, tragedy performed by masked and costumed actors. The recent discovery of a mosaic in a Late Roman villa at Noheda, near Cuenca, which clearly shows two scenes of a pantomime dancer, in mask and costume, performing on stage, will transform our vision of the genre

* For a review of the evidence for imperial pantomime, its performers and performance, and some of the problems, see W. J. Slater, "Sorting out pantomime (and mime) from top to bottom," below pp. 533-41.

1 E. J. Jory, "The drama of the dance: prolegomena to an iconography of imperial pantomime," in W. J. Slater (ed.), *Roman theater and society* (Ann Arbor, MI 1996) 1-27; see also M.-H. Garelli, *Danser le mythe: la pantomime et sa réception dans la culture antique* (Bibliothèque d'Études classiques 51, Louvain 2007) 210-22, figs. 3-13.

2 Jory (supra n.1) 8-12 and 14-16. Statuettes: infra nn. 24-25. Appliqué medallions: P. Wuilleumier and A. Audin, *Les médaillons d'applique gallo-romains de la vallée du Rhône* (Annales de l'Université de Lyon 22, 1952) 77 no. 108, 158 no. 302, and see infra n.26.

3 A. and E. Alföldi, *Die Kontorniat-Medaillons 1. Katalog* (AMuGS VI.1, 1976) 214-15, nos. 228=466 (*Margarita vincas*), pl. 189.6; 229=470, pl. 190.6; 232=478 (*Karamalle nicas*), pl. 192.1; 227=378 (*Urani nica. Unio*), pl. 157.5-6; 231=459, 465, pls. 187.9, 189.1-5; 221=328, pl. 133.6 (with organ); A. and E. Alföldi, *Die Kontorniat-Medaillons 2. Text* (AMuGS VI.2, 1990) 224-25; Jory (supra n.1) 6-8; V. Malineau, "La représentation des pantomimes victorieux dans l'Antiquité tardive," *Théâtre d'hier, Théâtre d'aujourd'hui* (Travaux et Recherches de l'Université de Marne-la-Vallée, Litt., Sci. hum. 10, 2004) 113-34.

4 Jory (supra n.1) 17-18, fig. 19; and see infra n.23.

5 Jory (supra n.1) 18-20; id., "Some cases of mistaken identity? Pantomime masks and their context," *BullInstClassStudLon* 45 (2001) 1-20; id., "The masks on the propylon of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," in P. Easterling and E. Hall (edd.), *Greek and Roman actors* (Cambridge 2002) 238-53; Garelli (supra n.1) 219-22.