



**Thackeray's first publication, a volume of caricatures inspired by the ballet 'Flore et Zéphyr', in which Thackeray detected 'disturbing sexual innuendo and license' (Muresianu). Reduced from 373 × 270 mm**

### **Thackeray, William Makepeace**

Calcutta 1841 – 1863 London

**Flore et Zephyr Ballet mythologique Dedié à [vignette of Marie Taglioni as Flore] par Théophile Wagstaff [pseudonym of Thackeray; this title printed on the upper wrapper].**

**London & Paris, [printed by Graf & Soret] for John Mitchell & Rittner & Goupil, 1836**

FOLIO (375 × 270 mm wrapper, 340 × 245 mm mounts), suite of eight lithographs on india paper applied to mounts having printed captions, plus vignette of the ballerina Marie Taglioni as Flore printed on upper wrapper, all the prints drawn by Thackeray, signed with his monogram W.T. (or T.W., denoting the fictitious Théophile Wagstaff), and lithographed by Edward Morton, the vignette coloured and the other plates lightly tinted, the eight plates hinged on guards, interleaved, original tan paper wrappers bound in (lower wrapper is unprinted).

Two unrelated drawings by Thackeray mounted on a card are inserted (see below).

PROVENANCE Frederic Robert Halsey (1847–1918), exlibris — [William W. Miller, his sale Parke Bernet Galleries, New York, 6–7 November 1940, lot 430] — William Alfred Westropp Foyle (1885–1963), exlibris — Christie's, 'The Library of William Foyle, Part III: English Literature and Manuscripts', London, 12 July 2000, lot 748 — Bloomsbury Auctions, 'Important books and manuscripts: Bloomsbury Auctions 25th anniversary sale', London, 15 May 2008, lot 252

Occasional light spotting on mounts only, tiny ink spots on upper wrapper, generally a well-preserved copy. Joints of binding splitting, corners and edges worn and abraded.

BINDING nineteenth-century brown half-morocco portfolio, stamped on the front free-endpaper *Bound by Zaehnsdorf*.

**O**NLY EDITION of Thackeray's first publication, a volume of caricatures of a *ballet divertissement* in two acts performed during April and May 1833 in the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, London, with the celebrated Marie Taglioni dancing the rôle of Flore and her partner of that year, Monsieur Albert (François Decombe), that of Zéphyr. A modern critic describes it as 'a work of no small consequence', which 'establishes precedents and suggests patterns for most of



Thackeray's later major works'.<sup>1</sup>

The so-called 'Anacreontic' ballet *Flore et Zéphyr* is the principal work of the choreographer Charles-Louis Didelot (1767–1837) and seems to have been one of the first ballets in which dancers performed on pointe.<sup>2</sup> Written originally as one act of seven scenes, it was first staged in 1796 in London with Marie Rose Paul as Flore and Didelot himself as Zéphyr.<sup>3</sup> The ballet was revived by Didelot in the Paris Opéra on 12 December 1815, as a two-act production (new music by Frédéric-Marc-Antoine Venua and added airs by Pierre-Louis Hus-Desforges and François-Charlemagne Lefebure), and remained in the repertoire of the Opéra until 8 March 1826, with 164 performances given to that date.<sup>4</sup>

After a short rest, *Flore et Zéphyr* was revived in June 1830 in the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, London (five performances), with Marie Taglioni as Flore and Antoine-Louis Coulon as Zéphyr. Two performances featuring Taglioni and the veteran Albert were then given in London during April 1831 and four performances during April–May 1833; it is supposed that Thackeray attended one of the latter.<sup>5</sup>

On 4 May 1833, a satirical review of the ballet appeared in the *National Standard*, the first number of that journal published under Thackeray's editorship.<sup>6</sup> His caricatures were published in the spring of 1836 without text apart from the title printed on the wrapper (transcribed above) and captions printed on the mounts. The caricatures document a production in long Romantic ballet skirts and emphasise the illusion of flying obtained by elaborate stage machinery (counter-weighted wires and corsets).

The first six of the eight plates depict the ballet: The Dance making its offerings at the altar of Harmony ('La Danse fait ses offrandes sur l'autel de l'Harmonie'); The innocent games of Zéphyr and Flore ('Jeux Innocents de Zéphyr et Flore'); Flore laments Zéphyr's absence ('Flore déplore l'absence de Zéphyr'); In a pas-seul,

<sup>1</sup> Selma A. Muresianu, in *The Works of W.M. Thackeray*, edited by Peter L. Shillingburg (New York 1991), p.14.

<sup>2</sup> *International Encyclopedia of the Dance* (New York 1998), II, p.415.

<sup>3</sup> Lincoln Kirstein, *Movement & metaphor. Four centuries of ballet* (London 1971), pp.130–133, figs.255–256.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Grace Swift, *A loftier flight: the life and accomplishments of Charles-Louis Didelot* (Middletown, CT 1974), pp.131–135, figs.24–25 (from the copy in the National Art Library, Victoria & Albert Museum, London).

<sup>5</sup> Ivor Guest, 'Thackeray and the ballet' in *Dancing Times* 62 (January 1972), pp.188–190 (all plates reproduced).

<sup>6</sup> Harold Gulliver, *Thackeray's literary apprenticeship* (Valdosta 1934), pp.41–42.

Zéphyr expresses his extreme despair ('Dans un pas-seul il exprime son extrême désespoir'); Sad and dejected, Zéphyr is unmoved by the charms of the nymphs ('Triste et abattu. Les séductions des Nymphes le tentent en vain'); The reconciliation of Flore and Zéphyr ('Réconciliation de Flore et Zéphyr'). The last two prints are of scenes after the curtain has fallen: Flore's retreat ('La Retraite de Flore'), showing Taglioni, wrapped in a shawl, receiving the adoration of a vulgar young swell and a stout middle-aged man; and The relaxation of Zéphyr ('Les Délassements de Zéphyr'), depicting the forty-six year old Albert consoling himself with a pint of porter and a pinch of snuff.

The prints were issued uncoloured (copy in British Library, shelfmark C 59 h2) and lightly tinted (as here). The collector H.S. Van Duzer asserted that his uncoloured copy represented the 'first issue', a point sustained by the high price (\$1900) which Jerome Kern paid for it in the Van Duzer sale (Anderson Galleries, New York, 6 February 1922, lot 93), if not by subsequent bibliographers. (In the Kern sale, in Anderson Galleries, 23 January 1929, the copy was resold for \$2900.) Van Duzer reported his copy to be 'as large or larger than any other copy we have examined', its wrapper measuring  $14 \frac{3}{4} \times 10 \frac{7}{8}$  inches and plates  $13 \frac{1}{2} \times 9 \frac{3}{4}$  inches. The wrapper of our copy is of equal height, but  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch narrower; the plates of our copy measure  $13 \frac{1}{4} \times 9 \frac{3}{4}$  inches. In comparison, the plates of the highly regarded coloured copy in the Morris Parrish collection (now Princeton University) are said to measure  $13 \frac{3}{16} \times 9 \frac{9}{16}$  inches, and the plates of the Pierpont Morgan Library copy  $12 \frac{3}{4} \times 9 \frac{1}{8}$  inches.

Two drawings associated with the prints survive in the Edward FitzGerald scrapbook.<sup>7</sup> Inserted in our copy are two unrelated drawings, both convincingly ascribed to Thackeray. One, a rapid sketch executed in pen and ink ( $176 \times 120$  mm sheet), depicts a female figure wearing a coronet, shown in profile, with a crowd of onlookers glimpsed through an open door; it very probably is a theatrical scene. The other drawing, executed in pencil and pen and ink heightened with coloured wash and ink ( $96 \times 89$  mm sheet), depicts a man in theatrical costume (broad-brimmed hat and sword).

REFERENCES Richard Hearne Shepherd, *The Bibliography of Thackeray* (London 1881), no. 3; Charles Plumtree Johnson, *Hints to collectors of original editions of the works of William Makepeace Thackeray* (London 1885), p.12 no. 11; Henry Sayre Van Duzer, *A Thackeray library* (New York 1919), no. 69; [Morris L. Parrish], *Catalogue of an exhibition of the works of William Makepeace Thackeray, held at The Library Co. of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia 1940), no. 9; Gordon N. Ray, *The Illustrator and the book in England from 1790 to 1914* (New York 1976), no. 121; John Buchanan-Brown, *The illustrations of William Makepeace Thackeray* (London 1979), p.11 and nos.13–16; Selma A. Muresianu, 'Thackeray's Flore et Zéphyr' in *Harvard Library Bulletin* 27 (1979), pp.223–244 (all prints reproduced from the Houghton Library copy); *The Art of the Terpsichore. From Renaissance festivals to Romantic ballets*, catalogue of an exhibition, Brigham Young University (Provo 1994), no. 84

<sup>7</sup> Reproduced by Anne Thackeray Ritchie, *The Works of William Makepeace Thackeray: with biographical introductions by his daughter* (New York & London 1910), xxiv, pp.xlvi–xlvii.