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***Fiametta's Four Dead Men* by Nikolai Evreinov:
From the History of Pantomime
at the *Crooked Mirror* Miniature Theatre**

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Abstract. Dramatic pantomime, shaped in large part by Vsevolod Meyerhold's 1910 production of *Columbine's Scarf* at the House of Interludes, held a modest yet meaningful place in the repertoire of the *Crooked Mirror* Miniature Theatre (St. Petersburg). Nikolai Evreinov's *Fiametta's Four Dead Men*, the theatre's first commedia dell'arte pantomime, premiered in 1911 and, as theatre historian Vadim Shcherbakov notes, grew out of this same experiment.

The premiere was preceded by Alexander Kugel's programmatic essays on pantomime in *Teatr i Iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art] and by several small-scale exploratory productions, including a staged adaptation of *The Tale of the Six Beauties Who Were Not Like One Another*. This article analyzes the narrative motifs of *Fiametta's Four Dead Men* and their relationship to *Columbine's Scarf*. The article also examines the étude in one act, *An Hour of the Decameron: A Love Tragicomedy about Zeppo di Mino*, staged at the *Crooked Mirror* on 24 January 1911. The conclusion briefly surveys other pantomimes produced at the *Crooked Mirror*, including Evreinov's *Columbine of Today*.

Keywords: Alexander Kugel, Nikolai Evreinov, Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Crooked Mirror* Miniature Theatre, *Fiametta's Four Dead Men*, *Columbine's Scarf*, *Columbine of Today*, dramatic pantomime

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Музыкальный театр

Научная статья

**«Четыре мертвеца Фьяметты» Н. Н. Евреинова:
из истории пантомимы в театре миниатюр
«Кривое зеркало»**

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Аннотация. Драматическая пантомима, стимулом к развитию которой стала постановка Всеволода Эмильевича Мейерхольда «Шарф Коломбины» («Дом интермедий», 1910), в репертуаре театра миниатюр «Кривое зеркало» заняла пусть не лидирующее, но значимое место. Первая «масочная» кривозеркальная пантомима — «Четыре мертвеца Фьяметты» Николая Николаевича Евреинова — увидела свет рампы в 1911 году и, по мнению театроведа Вадима Анатольевича Щербакова, своим появлением была обязана спектаклю Мейерхольда. Вместе с тем премьере предшествовали программные статьи о пантомиме художественного руководителя театра Александра Рафаиловича Кугеля, опубликованные на страницах журнала «Театр и искусство», а также небольшие «предпантомимные» эксперименты,

в том числе инсценировка арабской сказки «О шести красавицах, не похожих друг на друга». Настоящая статья посвящена анализу сюжетных мотивов «Четырех мертвецов Фьяметты» и их связи с «Шарфом Коломбины». В качестве дополнительного источника рассмотрен «этюд в 1 действии» «Декамерона час, Любовная трагикомедия про Цеппо ди Мино», поставленный в «Кривом зеркале» 24 января 1911 года. В заключении работы кратко представлены другие кривозеркальные пантомимы, в том числе пантомима Евреинова «Коломбина сего дня».

Ключевые слова: А. Р. Кугель, Н. Н. Евреинов, Вс. Э. Мейерхольд, театр миниатюр «Кривое зеркало», «Четыре мертвеца Фьяметты», «Шарф Коломбины», «Коломбина сего дня», драматическая пантомима

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Introduction

In studies of dramatic pantomime, a genre widely cultivated in Russian theatrical culture of the Silver Age,¹ scholars typically highlight two landmark productions: Vsevolod Meyerhold's *Columbine's Scarf* (1910, House of Interludes, St. Petersburg) and Alexander Tairov's *The Veil of Pierrette* (1913, Free Theatre, Moscow). Both works drew on texts by Arthur Schnitzler² and featured music by Ernst von Dohnányi.

According to theatre historian Vadim Shcherbakov, Meyerhold's *Columbine's Scarf* directly shaped the emergence of commedia dell'arte pantomime in the repertoire of the *Crooked Mirror* Miniature Theatre, most notably in Nikolai Evreinov's dramatic miniature *Fiametta's Four Dead Men*.

The *Crooked Mirror* arrived at dramatic pantomime through a series of exploratory productions, including silhouette techniques, the mimodrama *Pierrot in Love*, and an adaptation of *The Tale of the Six Beauties Who Were Not Like One Another*.³ The success of Meyerhold's *Columbine's Scarf*⁴ then provided additional impetus for both the artistic director, Alexander Kugel, and the stage director, Nikolai Evreinov.

Neither Kugel nor Evreinov appears to have commented publicly on Meyerhold's production in 1910.⁵ In *Teatr i Iskusstvo* [*Theatre and Art*], widely regarded as Kugel's own critical platform, only a single review of *Columbine's Scarf* appeared, signed with the initials "NN":

¹ For a discussion of the cultural significance of the commedia dell'arte in the Silver Age, see [1, pp. 77–93].

² Interest in Arthur Schnitzler was a notable feature of Silver Age culture. His dramatic works were staged widely in Russian theatres and were also used repeatedly as the basis for operatic libretti. On this, see [2, pp. 1–13; 3, pp. 115–133; 4, pp. 50–67].

³ For further discussion of these productions at the *Crooked Mirror* and of Kugel's theory of pantomime, see [5, pp. 54–74].

⁴ Detailed analyses of Meyerhold's production are provided in [6, pp. 49–76] and [7, pp. 96–105].

⁵ Evreinov later acknowledged Meyerhold's achievement in his memoirs of the *Crooked Mirror* [8, p. 122].

The centerpiece of the production [at the House of Interludes] is Schnitzler's pantomime *Columbine's Scarf*, staged by someone identified in the program as "Dr. Dapertutto." Dr. Dapertutto is, in fact, the true author of the pantomime, for little of Schnitzler remains here. This pantomime enjoyed great success at the Royal Theatre in Dresden and is evidently inspired by Schnitzler's tragedy *The Veil of Beatrice*. To allow those present at the House of Interludes to judge how far the staging departs from Schnitzler's pantomime, we shall briefly recount the plot of at least the second scene. Pierrot has poisoned himself. Columbine dances, trying to banish the terrible memory. Suddenly, in the midst of merriment, the candles dim halfway, and Pierrot appears before her as a ghost. Pale and motionless, he gazes at her intently, invisible to the others. Terrified, she runs to the buffet to drink a glass of wine and steady her nerves, but instead of the attendant, the figure of Pierrot rises before her. The glass slips from her hand and shatters. Summoning her last strength, she begins to dance again, but once more Pierrot appears before her—this time holding her veil, and so on.⁶

The reviewer's synopsis of the second scene of *Columbine's Scarf* is broadly accurate; however, the account is marked by a tone of restrained disapproval. The anonymous critic subtly encourages the reader to perceive the plot as implausible and concludes with the following judgment:

Overall, the very idea of staging this pantomime on a tiny stage, accompanied only by a piano and performed by an inexperienced mime, though a quite capable dancer (Madame [Evgenia A.] Khovanskaya), is more daring than it is well-founded. Neither the very beautiful and original sets by Mr. Sapunov nor the charming, elegant costumes can redeem it.⁷

Whether the editorial board of *Theatre and Art* shared this view cannot be determined. Even so, the publication of such an unequivocally negative review in a journal closely associated with Kugel remains noteworthy.

*'Columbine's Scarf' and 'Fiametta's Four Dead Men':
Shared Features and Distinctive Elements*

Following the success of *Columbine's Scarf*, the *Crooked Mirror* likewise turned to commedia dell'arte pantomime in 1911.

⁶ N. N. (1910). *Dom Intermedii* [House of Interludes]. *Teatr i Iskusstvo* [Theatre and Art], (42), 774; in that and subsequent citations, the original spelling and punctuation are retained.

⁷ N. N., 1910, p. 774.

A concise synopsis of Evreinov's production is preserved in Maria K. Yarotskaya's account⁸:

Venice, Carnival. In a poor room, an old tailor sits on a trunk; his young wife stands by the window. Before leaving, the old man locks the door. Fiametta opens the window; carnival music bursts in, and at her call, three Harlequins leap inside.⁹ Festivities and dancing begin. But the old man is already turning the key in the lock; the situation is hopeless, and the young men hide in the trunk one after another. To keep them from suffocating, Fiametta wedges a small stone under the lid. Entering the room and sensing something amiss, the old man pulls Fiametta onto the trunk. He notices the gap, removes the stone, and triumphantly leaves, locking the door behind him. Horrified, Fiametta discovers that the three men in the trunk are dead.

She sees a beggar outside the window, entices him with money, and begs him to throw the bodies into the canal; the beggar also throws in the old man as he enters. The scene ends with Fiametta dancing a tarantella.¹⁰

Parallels with Meyerhold's production are most evident in the treatment of the characters. According to the scenario, Fiametta was costumed as Columbine. At the same time, her husband appeared as Pierrot. This configuration seemed to reproduce the familiar commedia dell'arte triangle of Pierrot, Harlequin, and Columbine, precisely as in *Columbine's Scarf*. However, Evreinov, a committed advocate of theatricality, inverted it. He dressed all three of Fiametta's lovers as Pierrot, thereby multiplying the figure onstage and creating a quartet (*Illustration 1*).

Another parallel lies in their treatment of festivity: in both works, the protagonists' tragic experiences unfold against a celebratory backdrop.

⁸ Yarotskaya, M. K. (n.d.). *Pantomimy, postavlennye v dorevolyutsionnyi period teatra "Krivoe zerkalo"* [Pantomimes staged during the pre-revolutionary period of the Crooked Mirror Theatre] (Fund 396, fol. 2). A. A. Bakhrushin State Central Theatre Museum, Manuscript Department, Moscow, Russia.

⁹ Yarotskaya's recollection is not entirely reliable. In the *Chronicle*, she identifies the intruders not as three Harlequins but as three Pierrots. Yarotskaya, M. K. (1908–1918). *Letopis' teatra "Krivoe zerkalo"* [Chronicle of the Crooked Mirror theatre] (Fund 2352, Inventory 1, File 62, fol. 1). *Russian State Archive of Literature and Art* (RGALI), Moscow, Russia.

¹⁰ A fuller account of the pantomime's plot, based on the libretto held in the St. Petersburg State Theatre Library, appears in Vadim Shcherbakov's *Pantomime of the Silver Age* [6, pp. 82–93].



Illustration 1. *Fiametta's Four Dead Men*. Drawing by Alexander M. Lyubimov.
Theatre and Art, 1911, No. 39, p. 726

In *Columbine's Scarf*, this backdrop is the wedding of Columbine and Harlequin; in *Fiametta's Four Dead Men*, it is the Venetian Carnival. Yet Meyerhold and Evreinov interpret these festivities in markedly different ways. Meyerhold places the ball directly *on stage*, setting the tragic action against a comic and exuberant environment and thereby heightening its emotional impact. He accordingly subtitled *Columbine's Scarf* a “tragic fairground show” [*tragicheskii balagan*]. Evreinov, by contrast, situates the carnival *offstage*, using it as a symbolic image of joy and freedom that beckons to Columbine-Fiametta.

The productions shared another, perhaps incidental, connection: both featured Evgenia Khovanskaya in the leading female role, the very same actress described by the anonymous *Theatre and Art* reviewer of *Columbine's Scarf* as an inexperienced mime.

Despite these parallels, Evreinov's pantomime departs from Meyerhold's in several important respects. In Meyerhold's staging, Pierrot is the abandoned lover and Harlequin the deceived husband. In Evreinov's version, this configuration is reversed: the detested old husband is one of the Pierrots. Thus, three Pierrots (Fiametta's lovers Lorenzo, Giacomo and Andrea) die at the hands of the fourth (old man Silvio), and he, in turn, is killed by an external character — the Beggar, dressed, however, in a Harlequin costume. Through this device, Evreinov's playful engagement with both the commedia dell'arte tradition and Meyerhold's production shifts the pantomime toward farce, black humor, and even grotesque anecdote. Columbine's tragic death in Meyerhold's version becomes Fiametta's joyful release from her elderly husband and from her three lovers alike. Shcherbakov is therefore right to argue that the relationship between *Fiametta's Four Dead Men* and *Columbine's Scarf* is fundamentally polemical, and that Evreinov's pantomime (chronologically the later work) functions above all as a choreographic response to Meyerhold's staging.

*'An Hour of the Decameron': An Additional Source
of Plot Motifs in 'Fiametta'*

Several motifs in *Fiametta's Four Dead Men* appear to derive not only from *Columbine's Scarf* but also from another source: Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The connection is suggested most immediately by the protagonist's name. Fiametta¹¹ is a recurrent figure in Boccaccio's oeuvre: a novella bears her name; she is the dedicatee of *Teseida* and *Filostrato*; she appears in several sonnets; and she is, of course, one of the ten storytellers in the *Decameron*.¹²

Particularly striking is the fact that several motifs in Evreinov's pantomime coincide with those of *Day Eight, Story Eight*.

¹¹ The name *Fiametta* (or *Fiammetta*) circulated widely in Russian theatrical culture of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The character appears in Ludwig Minkus's fantastical ballet *The Flame of Love, or Salamander (Fiametta)*, in Catulle Mendès's conte dramatique *La Reine Fiammette* (its Russian translation received censorial approval in 1903), in Franz von Suppé's operetta *Boccaccio*, and in several other works.

¹² Some scholars have proposed that Fiametta was a historical figure and Boccaccio's beloved. No evidence for her existence, however, has been found outside the writer's own literary works.

The tale concerns two friends from Siena, Zeppo¹³ di Mino and Spinelloccio. Spinelloccio betrays their friendship and becomes the lover of Zeppo's wife. When Zeppo discovers the affair, he devises a plan for proportionate revenge. In this novella, the trunk becomes the instrument of retribution: through Zeppo's stratagem, Spinelloccio ends up locked inside it. Zeppo exacts his vengeance by having intercourse with the wife who wronged him while her lover is confined within. The central elements of the intrigue are adultery and revenge enacted through the trunk, a configuration that resonates directly with the dramaturgy of *Fiametta's Four Dead Men*.¹⁴

Parallels with Evreinov's pantomime are clear. The elements of adultery, here involving three lovers, and revenge, far more terrifying than in Boccaccio's novella, where all the characters survive, are fully retained. The central motif, however, is the trunk, which firmly links the two texts and which Evreinov underscores scenographically. Describing the setting of *Fiametta's Four Dead Men* on the basis of the surviving libretto, Shcherbakov notes:

The furnishings of the tiny room were marked by an almost symbolic austerity. On the right, the entrance door; on the left, a small window opening onto an alley; in the center, a large window leading to a balcony beneath which the carnival revelry seethed. [...] The only piece of furniture in the room was an unusually large trunk in which the owner [Fiametta's husband, the old tailor Silvio] apparently kept his wares [6, p. 84] (*Illustration 2*).

The resemblance is unlikely to be coincidental. On 24 January 1911, in the sixth program of the *Crooked Mirror* and almost six months before the premiere of Evreinov's pantomime, the theatre staged an adaptation of the same *Decameron* novella: *An Hour of the Decameron*, an étude in one act directed by S. Lyuboshits and titled *A Love Tragicomedy about Zeppo di Mino*.¹⁵

¹³ In Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Zeppa.

¹⁴ One further point of contact links the *Decameron* tale not to *Fiametta's Four Dead Men* but to *Columbine's Scarf*: the motif of the bridal veil. Meyerhold used Columbine's wedding veil as a key prop, and Boccaccio's story turns on the displaced veil of Zeppa di Mino's wife. After meeting her lover, she adjusts her veil in her husband's presence, which then becomes material evidence of the adultery.

¹⁵ Yarotskaya, 1908–1918, fol. 107.

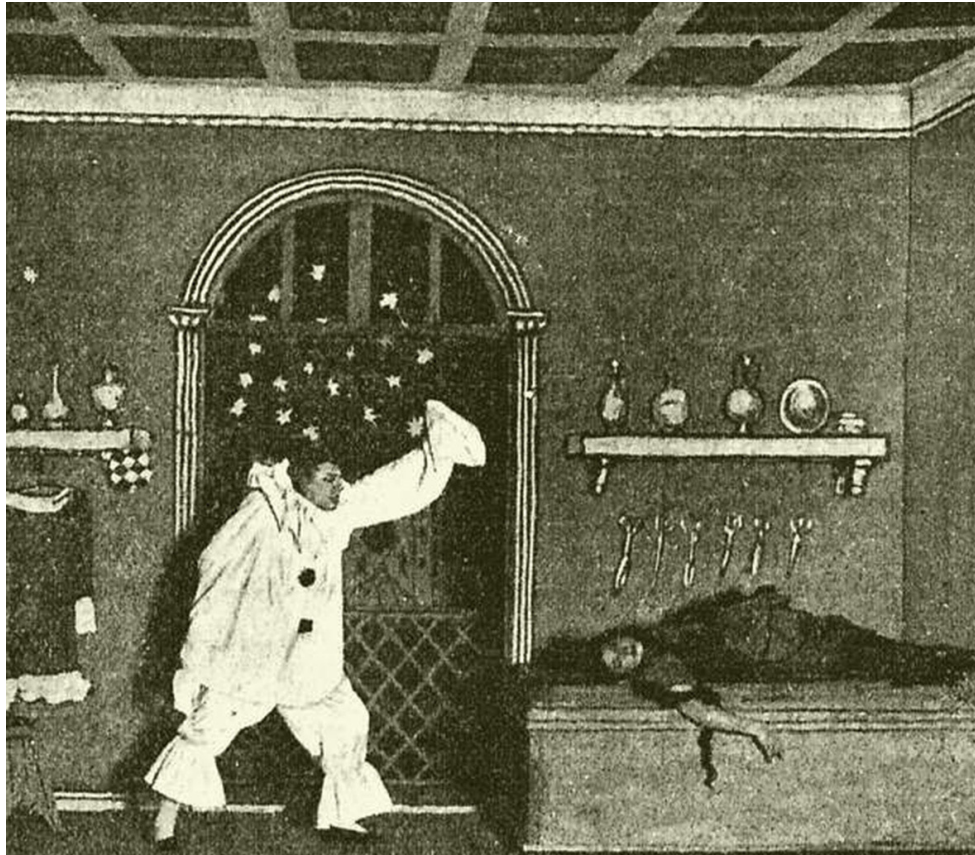


Illustration 2. Fiametta's Four Dead Men. Scene from the production.
Fiametta – Evgenia A. Khovanskaya; Silvio – Lev A. Fenin.
Theatre and Art, 1911, no. 39, p. 725

* * *

The available evidence suggests that Evreinov's Harlequinade-pantomime elicited little response in the press. The *Chronicle of the Crooked Mirror* preserves only a single, fragmentary review. Eugene A. Znosko-Borovsky wrote:

The pantomime *Fiametta's Four Dead Men* was disappointing in that an excellent plot was mishandled, and the director's and choreographer's imagination was curtailed. Nor was there sufficient material for Madame Khovanskaya, who would have been capable of creating an engaging and compelling spectacle.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Apollo. Russian Art Chronicle*, 1911, no. 15 (as cited in Yarotskaya, 1908–1918, fol. 121).

Although largely overlooked by contemporary critics, the *Crooked Mirror's* Harlequinade nevertheless enjoyed a long stage life. According to the *Chronicle of the Crooked Mirror Theatre*, it continued to be performed through 1916,¹⁷ which suggests that it was well received by audiences. Over time, Yarotskaya replaced Khovanskaya in the title role, while the part of Silvio, the elderly tailor, remained with one of the *Crooked Mirror's* leading actors, Lev A. Fenin.

One issue remains unresolved. In his study of Silver Age pantomime, Shcherbakov argues that in creating the production, “Kholmskaya, Kugel, and Evreinov [...] abandoned the well-trodden *Crooked Mirror* path of parody.”

Yet the *Chronicle of the Crooked Mirror Theatre* records a different assessment, attributed either to Yarotskaya or to an unnamed critic:

Fiametta's Four Dead Men (revival). Pantomime, music by [Dmitrii Akimovich?] Bigdai. A parody of pantomime libretti, with the usual accumulation of romantic horrors.¹⁸

For now, this question remains open. However, the conjunction of the terrifying and the absurdly comic was one of the characteristic features of Silver Age theatrical practice.

On the Composers of the Music for 'Fiametta's Four Dead Men'

Fiametta's Four Dead Men is the only *Crooked Mirror* pantomime for which the music has survived.

However, on the first page of the typewritten scenario preserved in the Dramatic Censorship Collection of the St. Petersburg State Theatre Library, the composer's name has been heavily crossed out in black ink. The deleted text is almost impossible to decipher, although it is plausible that the original line read “Music by V. Karatygin.” At present, this hypothesis remains unconfirmed.

The same black ink appears a few lines below, where the handwritten addition “D. A. Bigdai” has been inserted. Yarotskaya likewise names Bigdai as the composer of the pantomime's musical score in the *Chronicle of the Crooked Mirror Theatre*.

¹⁷ Shcherbakov, in his monograph, gives the year 1917 [6, p. 82].

¹⁸ Yarotskaya, 1908–1918, fol. 281.

Bigdai's identity is difficult to establish with certainty. The reference most likely concerns Dmitri A. Bigdai, the son of the well-known Kuban folklorist Akim D. Bigdai. No documentation has survived regarding his years of birth and death or his musical education. The only available evidence relates to his work with the Children's Theatre Workshop in Krasnodar in the late 1920s, where he served as director and head of artistic production. Beyond his presumed authorship of the music for *Fiametta's Four Dead Men*, no further links between Bigdai and the *Crooked Mirror* Theatre have been identified. The vocal score and full score, if they ever existed, have not yet been located.

The *Manuscripts and Documents Collection* of the St. Petersburg State Museum of Theatre and Music also preserves a vocal score for *Fiametta's Four Dead Men* (coll. 270, inv. 1, file 5). The inventory card identifies the composer as Dmitri B. Astradantsev (1904–1945), a Russian Soviet composer and pianist who was among the earliest film composers in the Soviet Union and wrote scores for several feature and documentary films, including works on the Siege of Leningrad. In the 1920s, he performed as an improvising pianist on the variety stage and worked as a taper. During the same period, he became music director of the *Crooked Mirror*. Astradantsev most likely composed an entirely new score for the Soviet revival of the pantomime, probably because Bigdai's musical setting had been lost, although no evidence survives apart from the vocal score itself.

The vocal score comprises only fifteen pages of handwritten music, divided into numbered sections. Only a few of these sections are labeled in the manuscript, including the first, second, third, and fifth numbers. A further difficulty is the absence of verbal cues, apart from tempo markings, that would allow the musical material to be correlated with the verbal scenario. Consequently, only the most general and necessarily concise observations can be offered regarding the music of the production.

The clearest indications of a dance-like character, and specifically of waltz idiom, appear at the beginning of the pantomime (No. 1). The waltz seems intended to evoke the sonic image of the Venetian carnival, and its introduction bears a faint resemblance to the opening of the waltz from Pyotr I. Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* (Example 1).



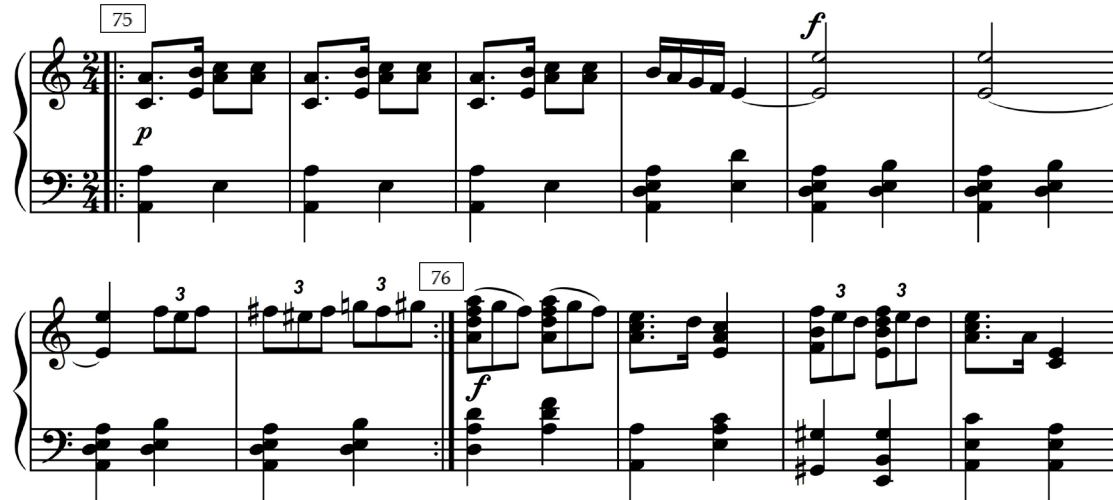
Example 1. Dmitri B. Astradantsev (?), *Fiametta's Four Dead Men*. No. 1.
Introduction to the waltz (seven bars before reh. 1)

A further, barely perceptible allusion follows the principal waltz theme: the subsequent motif faintly recalls either the B minor or the E minor Prelude by Frédéric Chopin (*Example 2*). Both themes recur several times in the vocal score, which suggests that they function as a kind of leitmotif or are at least associated with specific choreographic or narrative images within the pantomime.



Example 2. Dmitri B. Astradantsev (?), *Fiametta's Four Dead Men*. No. 2
(six bars before reh. 12)

The finale also contains a possible reference to the tarantella mentioned by Yarotskaya, although it is only faintly discernible (*Example 3*):



Example 3. Dmitri B. Astradantsev (?), Fiametta's Four Dead Men.
Reh. 75–76

Dance-like elements appear elsewhere in the score, although they are often obscured by frequent changes of meter, texture, tempo, and agogic character. This level of variability likely reflects close coordination between the music and the unfolding choreographic narrative.

* * *

Although *Fiametta* failed to meet the expectations placed upon it, pantomimes continued to be staged at the *Crooked Mirror*. Among them were three productions with music by Vladimir G. Erenberg: *Sumurun*; *The Circle of Life of a Conqueror*, a pantomime-parody of the Prussian king Wilhelm II; and the “mimo-melo-tragi-drama” *When Knights Were Brave*.

In the last of these, the composer devised a distinctive representational technique that in some respects anticipates features of later instrumental theatre: each character in the play was voiced by a separate musical instrument [9, pp. 42–43].

A comparable device was employed by Evreinov in his pantomime *Columbine of Today* (1915).

This production offered a variation on the commedia dell'arte theme, although in an unexpected interpretation. Five characters, including Columbine and her admirers (Pierrot, Harlequin, the American, and the 'Negro,' in the terminology of the 1915 source), enact a story in a contemporary idiom in which

Columbine's little house represents her red heart. Columbine appears in four successive stages: as an innocent girl who rejects the chaste and sentimental love of Pierrot; as a mischievous coquette who frolics with Harlequin after he steals the key to her heart-house; as a courtesan who sells herself to a wealthy American; and finally as a shameless odalisque who ultimately gives herself to the American's servant, the hideous 'Negro'¹⁹ (*Illustrations 3, 4, 5*).

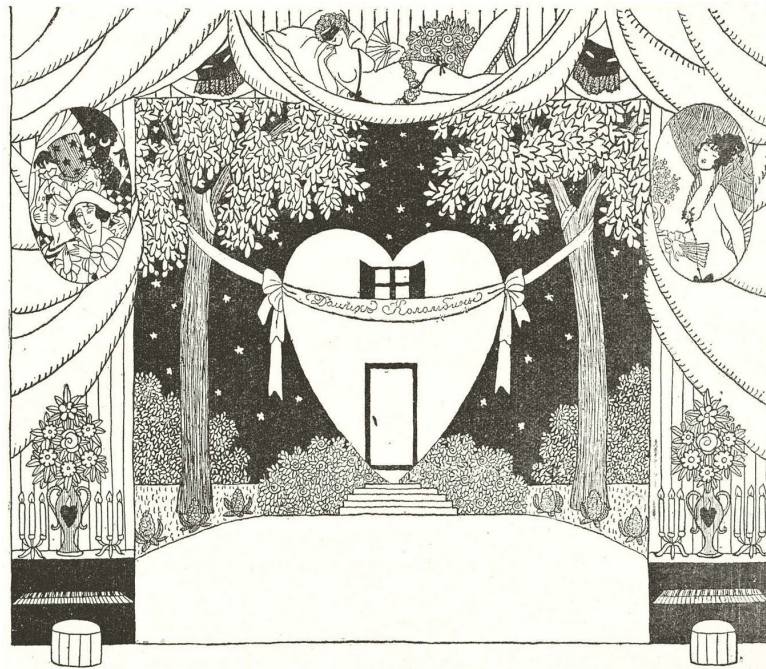


*Illustration 3. Columbine of Today. Set design by Miss.²⁰
Theatre and Art, 1915, no. 47, p. 879*

¹⁹ N. N-v. (1915). *Krivoie zerkalo* [The Crooked Mirror]. *Teatr i Iskustvo* [Theatre and Art], (47), 875.

²⁰ Anna V. Remizova-Vasil'eva (pseudonym Miss; between 1880 and 1890–1928) was a Russian painter and graphic artist, a member of *Mir Iskustva* [The World of Art] association. Between 1908 and 1914 she published illustrations in *Novyi Satirikon* [New Satiricon] and *Solntse Rossii* [The Sun of Russia] journals.



Illustration 4.

Columbine of Today. Costume sketch
for Columbine by Miss.
Theatre and Art, 1915, no. 47, p. 881



Illustration 5.

Messrs. Likhmarsky and V. Granovsky
in the pantomime *Columbine of Today*.
Drawing by Yury P. Annenkov.
Theatre and Art, 1915, no. 48, p. 902

The musical accompaniment to the pantomime was written for two pianos, with one instrument voicing Columbine and the other representing the voices of her admirers. Contemporary critics regarded the device as witty and described the music as “charming, delicate, beautiful, and spirited.”²¹ One reviewer noted that the score drew on a wide range of stylistic models:

...Columbine and the tango, Pierrot and football—all of this is presented to the audience with sharpness and with astonishing formal elegance, under the accompaniment of Evreinov’s music, which fuses the musical primitivism of past centuries with the couplet-like rhythm of the most modern American tap dances and two-steps. [...] I would only add that the foot-stomping in the ‘Negro’ dance is unnecessary. It is a naturalistic element that does not accord with the silent

²¹ N. N-v., 1915, p. 875.

stylization of the pantomime and somewhat disturbs its caressing quiet. This stomping with its rhythm and mechanics is already present in the music, and a silent tap dance [...] would be more in keeping with the style of this little piece.²²

Conclusion

The *Crooked Mirror's* pantomime experiment concluded in 1916 with *The Eternal Dancer*, staged and scored by Evreinov. The play carried a markedly rhetorical subtitle, “a choreographic mystery,” and aspired to a philosophical, even supra-mundane, interpretation of existence.

None of these productions achieved even the modest success that *Fiametta* had enjoyed. Moreover, no musical manuscripts have survived, and any understanding of them must be reconstructed solely from secondary sources.

Whether the *Crooked Mirror's* pantomime experiment was ultimately in vain remains uncertain. In one respect, however, a contemporary observer was surely correct: in its finest examples, pantomime was indeed “a joy for the eyes, a delight for the ears...”²³

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²² As cited in Yarotskaya, 1908–1918, fol. 262.

²³ P. Yu. (1912). *Krivoie zerkalo [The Crooked Mirror]*. *Teatr i Iskusstvo [Theatre and Art]*, (5), 100.

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