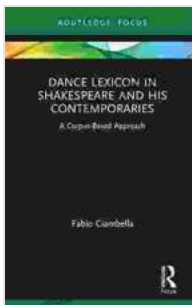


Dance Lexicon in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: A Comprehensive Guide

In the vibrant tapestry of Elizabethan and Jacobean theater, dance held a mesmerizing sway, its rhythmic movements and graceful gestures adding layers of meaning and spectacle to the dramatic performances of the time. Shakespeare, the literary titan of the era, deftly employed a rich lexicon of dance terms, weaving them into his plays to enhance the emotional depth, atmosphere, and dramatic tension.



Dance Lexicon in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: A Corpus Based Approach (Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama) by Fabio Ciambella

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The Significance of Dance in Shakespeare's Time

Dance permeated all levels of society in Shakespeare's England. It was an integral part of courtly entertainments, social gatherings, and popular festivities. The royal court, in particular, was a hub for elaborate dance performances, where courtiers showcased their skill and grace in intricate

choreographies. These dances were not merely frivolous displays but also served as a means of social interaction and diplomatic exchange.

The theater, too, embraced dance as an essential element of dramatic expression. Dance sequences were incorporated into plays to convey emotions, establish character, and advance the plot. In fact, some plays, such as "Romeo and Juliet," featured extended dance scenes that were central to the story's development.

Shakespeare's Dance Lexicon

Shakespeare's plays are peppered with a diverse array of dance terms, reflecting the wide range of dances popular in his time. These terms, often rooted in French and Italian vocabulary, provide valuable insights into the specific movements and formations used by the dancers.

Allemande

A stately and elegant dance in triple time, characterized by its gliding steps and graceful arm movements.

Brawl

A lively and energetic dance in duple time, typically featuring rapid footwork and leaping steps.

Coranto

A lively and graceful dance in triple time, known for its intricate footwork and flowing movements.

Galliard

A stately and dignified dance in triple time, often performed by men and featuring leaps and turns.

Jig

A lively and spirited dance in duple time, characterized by its quick tempo and lively steps.

Lavolta

A lively and graceful dance in triple time, featuring intricate footwork and lively arm gestures.

Measure

A stately and formal dance in quadruple time, typically performed by couples in a circle.

Pavane

A slow and stately dance in duple time, often performed at courtly events and featuring elegant and graceful movements.

Round

A simple and lively dance in duple time, typically performed in a circle or ring formation.

Trenchmore

A lively and energetic dance in duple time, typically featuring vigorous footwork and leaping steps.

Dance in Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare's plays offer a rich tapestry of dance scenes, each adding a distinct layer of meaning and atmosphere to the story. Here are a few notable examples:

- **"Romeo and Juliet"**: The famous ballroom scene in Act I is a pivotal moment in the play, where Romeo and Juliet meet and fall in love. The dance provides a backdrop for their burgeoning romance and highlights the social conventions of the time.
- **"A Midsummer Night's Dream"**: The play features several enchanting dance sequences, including the fairies' dance in the forest

and the rustic dance performed by the mechanicals. These dances add a magical and whimsical element to the play, reflecting the themes of love, illusion, and transformation.

- **"Twelfth Night":** The play's famous dance scene in Act V features a lively and energetic performance by the characters, expressing their joy and excitement at the resolution of the plot. The dance serves as a joyous celebration of love and reconciliation.

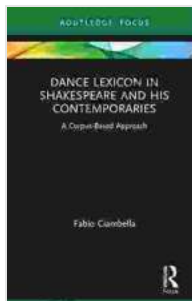
Dance in the Works of Shakespeare's Contemporaries

Shakespeare's use of dance was not isolated; his contemporaries also employed dance as a powerful theatrical tool. Playwrights such as Ben Jonson, John Fletcher, and Francis Beaumont incorporated dance sequences into their plays to enhance the dramatic impact and provide insights into the characters and their relationships.

One notable example is Jonson's "Masque of Queens," which features an elaborate dance performance that satirizes the court and explores themes of virtue and vanity. Fletcher and Beaumont's "The Maid's Tragedy" also includes a powerful dance scene that expresses the grief and despair of the characters.

The dance lexicon in Shakespeare and his contemporaries offers a fascinating glimpse into the cultural significance of dance in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Shakespeare's skillful use of dance terms enriches his plays, adding layers of meaning and emotional depth to the performances. By exploring the vibrant dance vocabulary of the era, we gain a deeper understanding of the theatrical conventions and social customs that shaped the world of Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights.

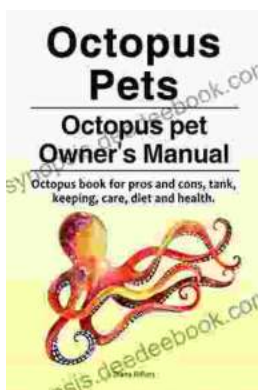
As we delve into the intricate steps and graceful gestures of Shakespeare's dance lexicon, we not only appreciate the artistry and spectacle of Elizabethan theater but also gain insights into the human condition and the enduring power of dance to express emotions and convey stories.



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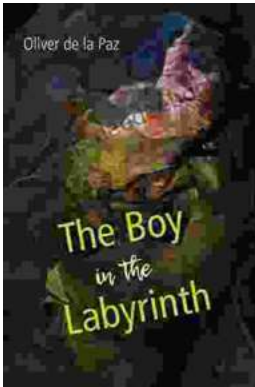
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