

**8th Gaetano Cozzi Prize for studies on the history of games, 2024**

BENEDETTA COLASANTI

*Ludi scaenici nella Roma augustea. Appunti sul pantomimo**Pilade di Cilicia**(Ludi scaenici in Augustan Rome. Notes on the mime Puladēs of Kilikia)*

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**Citation**

Benedetta Colasanti's dissertation on the *Pantomima d'Augusto. Note su Pilade di Cilicia* (Augustus' mime. Notes on Puladēs of Kilikia) was discussed in 2017. In the present study, *Ludi scaenici nella Roma augustea. Appunti sul pantomimo Pilade di Cilicia* (*Ludi scaenici* in Augustan Rome. Notes on the mime Puladēs of Kilikia) she returns to the sources – slim, late and open to question – and takes account of recent studies dedicated to pantomime, an entertainment that was much loved in Augustan Rome, but about which many aspects remain obscure. In a period when there was an abundance of shows and entertainments – public festivities, theatrical performances and circus games – that took place in magnificent stone buildings – theatres, amphitheatres, circuses – constructed expressly as venues for them, the pantomime occupied a special place, the importance of which the late-lamented Ludovico Zorzi Mazzoni became aware in 2014.

The origins of pantomime are much debated. It may have had links to the mimic dance performed in Etruria, Egypt and Greece, but it is generally agreed that it was introduced and popularised in Rome by Puladēs of Kilikia and Bathullos of Alexandria from 22 B.C., with the patronage of Augustus, who was the first to realise its artistic and political potential. Taking inspiration from the founding myths of the Greco-Roman civilisation, pantomime, like poetry, played an essential role in the process of legitimisation of the nascent empire, in the *renovatio Urbis* project and in the Romanising of the conquered territories.

This mimic dance, accompanied by a chorus and an orchestra, was able to overcome the language and cultural barriers of the diverse populations of the empire and embodied the Augustan concept of a unified and peaceful realm. In 18 A.D., pantomime became part of the *Augustalia* celebrations and later of the Isolympic Games in Naples, instituted in 2 A.D. in honour of Augustus. Even after Augustus' death the festivities dedicated to him included pantomime performances.

Using material gathered from early sources, Benedetta Colasanti sets out to trace portraits of Puladēs and Bathullos, the two multi-talented artists who are credited with having brought pantomime to Rome: Puladēs seems to have been the precursor and codifier of pantomime, a theoretician, author, dancer and a teacher who inspired many disciples, including his pupil Hylas, who became his rival. Bathullos of Alexandria is said to have been the first to introduce Memphis-style dance, known as 'tragic dance' and to incorporate it into pantomime



Both enjoyed success with comic dance (κόρδαξ, *cordax*, *cordace*), tragic dance (ἐμμέλεια, *emmeléia*, *emmelia*) and satirical dance (σίκιννις, *sicinnis*, *sicinnide*). Puladēs' style was reputed to be "majestic, full of pathos and multifaceted", while Bathullos danced with more exuberance. Puladēs was particularly drawn to noble themes and roles where he played gods, demigods and mythical heroes – Agamemnon, Hercules Dionysus – but this did not prevent him one day from interrupting his portrayal of the madness of Hercules to remonstrate with his laughing audience: "Fools! I'm playing the part of a madman". When he played Bacchus, he was capable of eliciting a self-contradictory sentiment of "delicious terror". His fame spread throughout the empire; in Pompeii, a city where the arts and entertainments were much loved, a plaque inscribed for an eminent magistrate who was a generous donor of funds for games in honour of Apollo, announces a forthcoming performance by a certain 'Pilade'. Even after their deaths, the art of Puladēs and Bathullos lived on through their heirs. In the context of a nascent empire, a crucible of different cultures, languages and peoples, pantomime proved an effective means of communication through its universal language.

Benedetta Colasanti's study, based on numerous sources and references and in line with the scientific standards of academic research, astutely traces the origins and development of a complex scenic art – one which is less well known than might have been thought – whose influence went well beyond the limits of a fashionable entertainment. The work shows how the encounter between two talented artists and a politically astute emperor transformed a new form of entertainment into an instrument of cultural integration in the growing empire. It also offers a convincing demonstration of how study of the performing arts can suggest useful insights into the political and social construction of a state.

For these reasons the Selection Board for the eighth *Gaetano Cozzi Prize for studies on the history of games* has decided to award the 2024 Prize to the study by Benedetta Colasanti and to recommend that her work be published in the forthcoming issue no. 30 of the journal *Ludica. Annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*.

The Selection Board, comprising members of the Scientific Committee  
of *Ludica. Annali di storia e civiltà del gioco*:  
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