

# Correspondence

Richard C. Beacham, *Adolphe Appia, Theatre Artist*, C.U.P., 1987

*We have received some correspondence regarding the review of Dr Beacham's book (TRI, 14, 1, pp. 96-9). Dr Beacham writes:*

Mme Bablet's claim that I did not 'avail' myself of her Appia exhibition or its catalogue is false: I viewed the exhibition, and its modest catalogue is the first item in my bibliography (under Bablet). I did not quote from it because the Bablets forbade using 'any unpublished texts and documents either in whole or in part' included in it. Her criticism that I did not consult her volumes of Appia's complete works is misconceived: only one volume to 1894 had appeared by the time I submitted my manuscript. My book surveys his entire career to 1928. I did carry out research at the Swiss Theatre Institute, Berne.

In offering 'one symptomatic example' of my faulty approach, ['Beacham states that "Appia anticipated a number of technical developments" and that his theory about light was "far in advance of any employed at the time"'], Bablet (a) quotes me out of context; (b) joins together two phrases of mine which deal with different topics and are ten pages apart; (c) connects them with words of her own in a way which betrays my true meaning; and then (d) criticizes this misrepresentation.

Her suggestion that I am unaware of Appia's study at Dresden is wrong: I mention it several times in my text (pp. 9-10, 14, 169). Furthermore I discuss the extent to which Appia's technical innovations were influenced by others on p. 15 and elsewhere.

Bablet claims to cite 'the more glaring' of the 'great numbers of errors contained in the biography', but ignores the body of my book entirely: ALL her examples are drawn from three pages of necessarily condensed chronology at the end of the 200-page book. On several occasions she makes these short notes appear erroneous by the disingenuous technique of simply adding facts which for the sake of brevity I omitted in the chronology, but which are found in the text itself.

Thus: (a) she seeks to suggest that I am unaware of Appia's musical contact at home although I refer to it on p. 8; (b) she 'corrects' my alleged assertion that Appia's friendship with Chamberlain was the result only of correspondence by pointing out that it developed from 'direct contact'. Yet in my text, I state this explicitly, p. 14; (c) she 'corrects' the statement in my chronology that Appia's retreat to the countryside took him to Bière, pointing out that he went instead to Gennersbrunn. In fact, in my text, I point out that he 'eventually' settled at Bière, without burdening

the reader with the details of his precise itinerary. In her own chronology (pp. 36–7) Bablet places him first at Gennersbrunn and then at Bière ‘for many years’ intermittently, from 1893 to 1904.

Bablet ‘corrects’ my note that Appia collaborated with Fortuny in 1902, asserting that ‘he only met him the following year’ after Appia had staged a production in a private Parisian theatre. Her correction must itself be questioned since Fortuny’s official biographer notes their contact in 1902, and states that they worked together on the production in question. [G. de Osma, *Fortuny* (1985), pp. 75–8] Bablet’s assertion that Fortuny ‘did not influence Appia’s conception of lighting’ is false. In fact, in an article written in 1902, Appia refers to Fortuny by name, and notes his ‘extraordinarily successful’ results ‘will bring out a radical change in favour of lighting’.

Bablet ‘corrects’ the note in my chronology that Claudel’s *L’Annonce faite à Marie* at Hellerau had a ‘setting created by Appia’, pointing out that the set was actually by Alexander von Salzmann. I nowhere discuss this controversial setting, but quote in a footnote, a previously unpublished assertion by an eye-witness and participant that ‘Appia made the designs for the Claudel Drama’. I also quote a letter of Appia in which he seems to refer to his provision of the *mise en scène*. Instead of citing this as a ‘glaring error’ Bablet might have recognized my modest contribution to a disputed subject.

Bablet disputes the date I give in the chronology of 1924 to Appia’s unpublished essay, ‘Expériences de théâtre’, claiming it for 1921. Perhaps she is right, but this is the date established many years ago by the Appia Foundation, and published by its former director, Edmund Stadler.

In dismissing Volbach’s pioneering Appia biography of 1968 for its ‘many errors and half-truths’, Bablet incorrectly dates it at 1964.

*In response, Mme Bablet states:* ‘My own work on the publication of Appia’s *Œuvres complètes* (L’Age d’homme, Lausanne, 1983–) is a work of fundamental research, based exclusively on primary documents and pursued with scientific exactitude. In answer to the points concerning Fortuny and Claudel, for example, I can only refer the readers to the volumes already published. In volume II, pp. 371–8, the relationship between Appia and Fortuny is painstakingly charted and shown to have started on 25 March 1903 (see also pp. 349 and 475). As for *L’Annonce faite à Marie*, the matter is beyond dispute: Appia was not involved (III, pp. 103–7).