

Though many scholars have acknowledged that dance occurs periodically in the plays of Plautus, the importance of dance to Roman comedy has not been appreciated. In fact, various types of dance pervade all of Roman comedy, and large sections of some plays are built entirely around dance.

The dance of Roman comedy can be divided into three categories. The most obvious dance is "cinaedic dancing," recently discussed in some detail by Habinek. Cinaedic dancing, featuring obscene gestures, showy virtuosity, and emphatic sexuality, appears to have been reserved for moments of greatest inversion of societal norms, such as slaves' revelry (*Per.* 804ff., *Ps.* 1273ff., *St.* 751ff.), or the entrance of a husband wearing his wife's clothing (*Men.* 110ff.). Far more common must have been gestural dancing. Descriptions of stage gestures by Cicero, Quintilian and others suggest that such gestures were often, if not always, done rhythmically. The extensive accompanied portions found in all plays of both Plautus and Terence would thus feature a kind of gestural dance. In addition, a very large number of scenes in both playwrights work best if we envision a third type of dance, which involved movement of the entire body, including the feet, but which did not necessarily feature lewd "cinaedic" posturing. By way of example, this paper will concentrate on one class of such scenes, the many scenes featuring *servi currentes*.

*Servus currens* scenes, without exception written in accompanied meters, seem exceedingly awkward if one imagines them performed without dance, for the runners take a great deal of time to cover the limited distance from where they enter to where they encounter those they seek. The awkwardness is removed if we envision the *servus currens* scene as a dance scene. The runner makes his way in a series of stylized movements, done in time to the accompanying *tibia*. Given the stock nature of the scenes, there were probably a number of identifiable *servus currens* dance steps, which the runner varied and supplemented in response to the text.

Curculio's entrance as a *servus currens*, for example (*Cur.* 280ff.), consists of six clearly-defined sections: the parasite's general warning (280-284), his threats against a list of officers (285-287), his description of *Graeci palliati* (288-295), the threats to the *servi scurrarum* (296-300), Curculio's failure to see Phaedromus (301-304), and finally the meeting of Curculio and Phaedromus (305-308). Each one of these sections would bring its own dance step. Some, like the "get out of my way" routine that begins the passage, would be standard steps familiar to the audience. Others, like the list of magistrates that follows, would be more innovative. Still others, like Curculio's extensive descriptions of the *Graeci palliati* and the *servi scurrarum*, would involve imitative dance. Each of Plautus' and Terence's *servus currens* scenes can be analyzed in the same way, as a series of dance routines.