

# Lithograph of Marie Taglioni in costume for the ballet La Sylphide

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1837



## Title Statement

Lithograph of Marie Taglioni in costume for the ballet La Sylphide  
Guide to Lithograph of Marie Taglioni in costume for the ballet La Sylphide C0551

**Subtitle:** Lithograph of Marie Taglioni in costume for the ballet La Sylphide

**Author:** Meghan Glasbrenner

## Publication Statement

**Publisher:** George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Fenwick Library, MS2FL  
4400 University Dr.  
Fairfax, Virginia 22030  
Business Number: 703-993-2220  
Fax Number: 703-993-8911  
speccoll@gmu.edu  
URL: <https://scrc.gmu.edu>



May 5, 2026

## Profile Description

**Creation:** This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-05-07 03:02:13 -0400.

**Language Usage:** Description is written in: English, Latin script.

**Descriptive Rules:** Describing Archives: A Content Standard

## Descriptive Summary

**Unit ID**

C0551

**Unit ID**

/repositories/2/resources/776

**Unit Date**

1837

**box**

1 (folder)

**Language**

English

**Abstract**

Lithograph of Marie Taglioni in costume for the ballet *La Sylphide* based on the sculpture by Jean-Auguste Barre.

**Creator**

Bénard et Frey

**Extent**

.01 Linear Feet 1 folder

**Physical Location**

R 73, C 2, S 4

**Repository**

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

## Administrative Information

**Access Restrictions**

There are no access restrictions.

**Use Restrictions**

No known copyright. The Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries believes that this collection is not restricted by copyright or related rights, but a conclusive determination could not be made. (See <https://rightsstatements.org/page/NKC/1.0/?language=en>)

**Acquisition Information**

Purchased from Schubertiade Music by Lynn Eaton in March 2025.

**Processing Information**

Processing completed by Meghan Glasbrenner in April 2026. Finding aid completed by Meghan Glasbrenner in May 2026.

**Preferred Citation**

Lithograph of Marie Taglioni in costume for the ballet *La Sylphide*, C0551, Special Collections Research Center, George Mason University Libraries

## Biographical Information

Marie Taglioni was born on April 23, 1804 in Stockholm, Sweden into a family of dancers, including her brother Salvatore who was a dance master in Naples, Italy and her father Filippo, a dancer and choreographer who was also her main dance trainer. Marie made her professional debut in Vienna, Austria in 1822 and rose to fame with her role in the ballet *La Sylphide*, choreographed by her father, which premiered at the Paris Opéra on March 12, 1832. A dramatic Romantic ballet, *La Sylphide* tells the story of a young Scottish man who falls in love with a sylph, the role played by Marie, not long before he is to be married. Sadly, when he is finally successful in catching the sylph, she dies, emphasizing the impossibility of love between a human and a spirit.

In this ballet, Marie became the first ballerina to dance en pointe for the work's entirety, accomplished using normal ballet slippers with reinforcements in the block of the slipper, rather than specialized pointe shoes. The technique was used to create the illusion of her sylph character floating across the stage, providing a stronger visual contrast to the movement of the Scottish man pursuing her. Additionally, the fitted bodice and airy, bell-like skirt worn as part of her costume became the prototype for the traditional tutu worn by ballet dancers for over a century. Marie remained active as a dancer, instructor, and choreographer for the next 40 years before she passed away in Marseille, France in April 1884 at the age of 79.

## Scope and Content

Lithograph of Marie Taglioni in costume for her most famous role in the ballet *La Sylphide* based on the contemporary bronze sculpture by Jean-Auguste Barre (1811–1896), printed by Bernard & Frey in 1837. The image shows Marie balancing on one foot above a base covered in a bed of flowers and her name appears in

full along the front of the base. The initials "M.A." appear at the bottom left of the image, and the name "A. Barre" along the bottom right of the base. The name "Taglioni" is written in pencil at the bottom.

## Related Materials

The Special Collections Research Center holds other collections related to ballet, such as the Ernst Oppler illustrations of Anna Pavlova in "The Dying Swan", and lithography, such as the "La Navarraise" opera scene and costume lithographs.

## Keywords

Ballet

Performing arts

Art

Lithography

Barre, Jean Auguste, 1811-1896

Taglioni, Marie, 1804-1884

## Bibliography

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. 2026. "Marie Taglioni | Romantic Ballet, Pointe Technique, La Sylphide." Britannica, April 20, 2026. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Marie-Taglioni>.

"Detailed Biography - Marie Taglioni." n.d. Accessed May 4, 2026. <http://marietaglioni.orchesis-portal.org/index.php/texts/detailed-biography>.

"The Ethereal Woman." 2013. Gaynor Minden, October 21, 2013. <https://dancer.com/ballet-info/the-story-of-ballet/the-ethereal-woman>.

## Arrangement

This is a single item collection.