

Introduction

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This volume presents the proceedings of the 9th biennial conference hosted by the Early Dance Circle. The intention of the conference organisers, when proposing the general title of “ballroom, stage and village green” was to encourage the exploration of the *context* in which dance takes place -- the **where**, **when** and **why** people dance -- with a particular focus on European dance pre-twentieth century. This is quite different from our usual investigation into the dances themselves, to discover **how** they danced. The details – steps, patterns, style, etc. -- of the dance forms current at different times and in different places is, quite properly, the primary question in our study of ‘early dance’. But it is important nevertheless to extend this into looking at the **context** of dance. One reason, of course, is that the context always has a strong bearing on the types of dance performed, or on the way in which they are performed – dances on the stage are likely to be presented in a very different way from those on the village green or ballroom, even

if there is a close relationship between the basic form (such as with the 18th century ‘country dance’ for example, which may well have been performed in all three locations).

So where, when and why did people dance? Two well-known pictures provide a useful illustration of the diversity of locations and of motives for dance that can occur even in the same place at the same time. Nuremberg in the middle of the 16th century was an important European political and cultural centre. The picture below shows the good burghers of the town dancing in a very sedate manner in the elegant surroundings of the town hall. The following picture shows the Guild of Butchers celebrating *Fastnacht*, or Carnival, outside in the marketplace. Both illustrations are from the middle of the 16th century, and it may be surmised that many of the butchers cavorting at carnival were the same good burghers parading with their wives in the town hall.

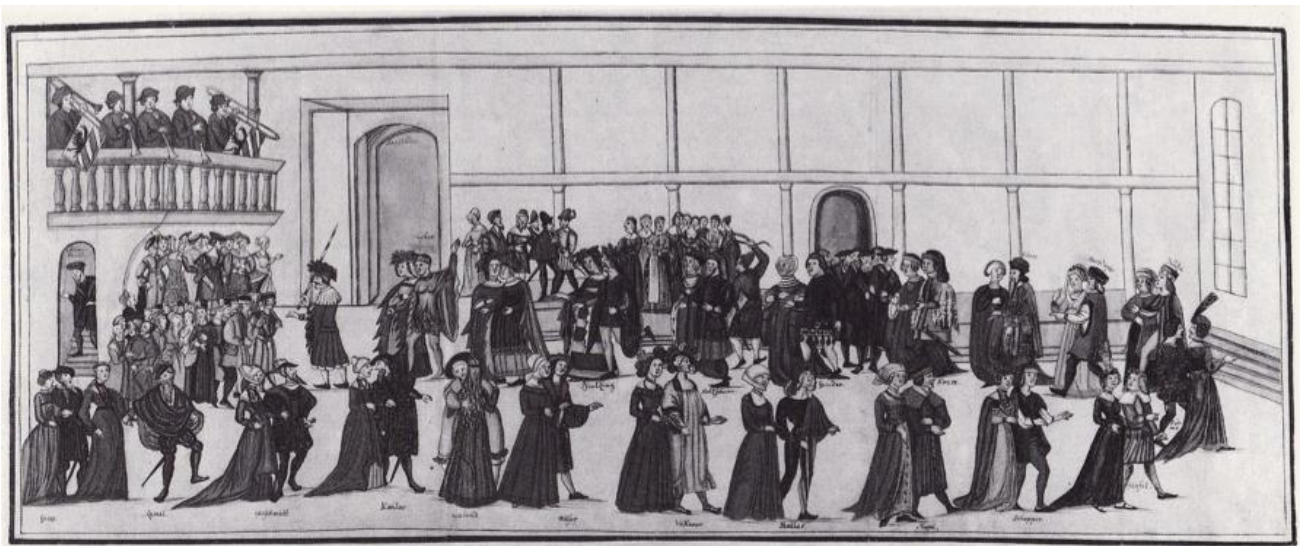


Fig. 1 c.1550—Nuremberg, Germany: *Patriziertanz im Grossen Nürnberger Rathausaal* (Nuremberg, Stadtavchiv; Salmen, *Tanz im 16J*, 148).

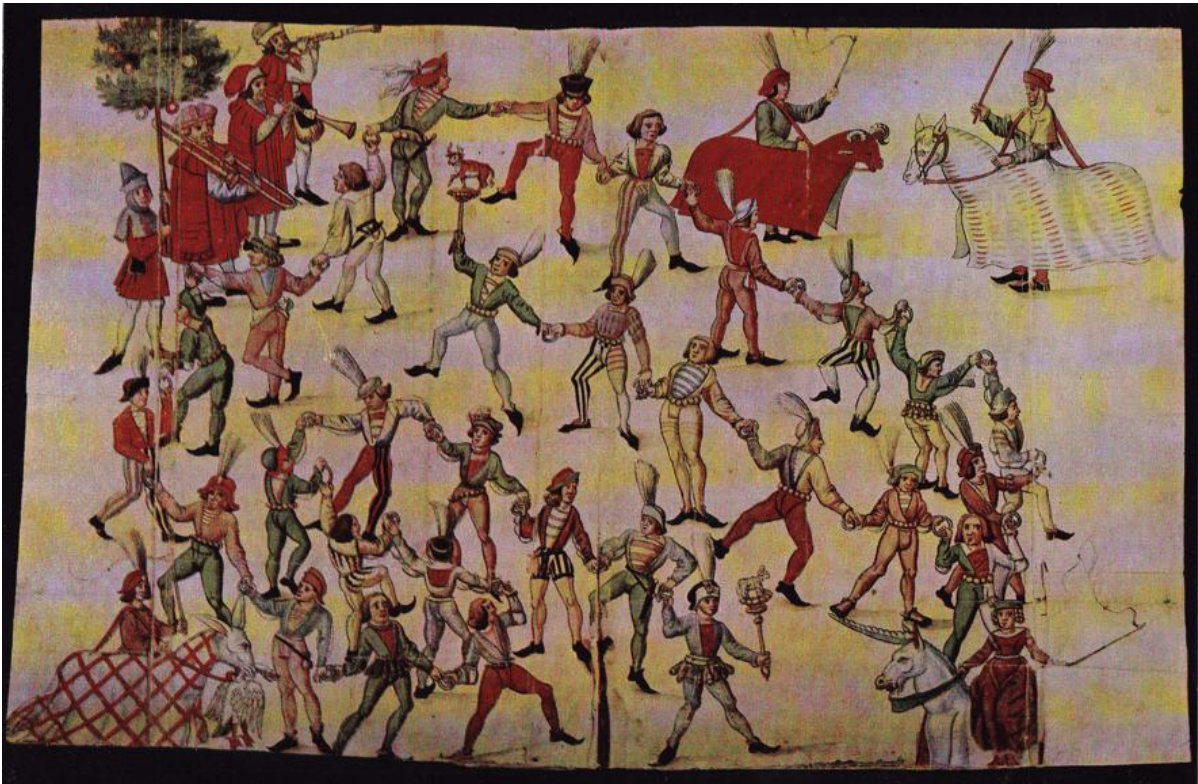


Fig. 2 c.1545—Nuremberg, Germany: *Fastnachtstanz von Metzgern im Jahre 1519* (Carnival Dance of the Butchers in the Year 1519) (Salmen, *Musikleben im 16J*, 78-79).

What these pictures show is the importance of context in assessing the nature of dance at any given place and period. Not everyone danced the same dances in the same places and many of the same people danced different things on different occasions. The following papers all explore various aspects of this same question: What is the context in which the dance occurs?

The first three papers in the collection all address this question of the physical space in which dance is performed, beginning with Anne Daye's examination of how the stage and ballroom were created within the space of an aristocratic 'great hall' before dedicated theatres or ballrooms were ever built. The enormous army of servants needed to prepare the space for a ball is quite remarkable, with the 'wireworkers and chandlers' alone needing as much as five days to complete their job of installing the lighting. In the

second paper, Hazel Dennison looks at the way in which dance was composed for specific spaces, in this case to celebrate the construction of elaborate villas or *delizie* for their aristocratic owners, such as the d'Este family of Ferrara. In the third paper, Bill Tuck considers what may be regarded as one of the first English theatres ever to be built specifically for the presentation of 'dance spectacles', the Dorset Garden theatre in which the dramatic works of Purcell first appeared (including *Dioclesian*).

In the second group of four papers it is the social context in which dance occurs that is examined. Beginning with a famous quotation from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* we are plunged at once into the social domain and the significance of dance in determining one's place therein. As with many things however, the levelling process of modern life has rendered us largely insensible to the

subtle nuances of social interaction in past times. Of course, that dancers should always be “honorable and well brought up people” still goes without saying -- it is, after all, part of the civilizing process. It is fascinating therefore to read of the rules and regulations governing the behavior of dancers in the Polish city of Gdansk during the 17th and 18th centuries. The sumptuary laws that governed this behavior reveal much about the social customs of the time.

I do not believe that sumptuary laws were ever part of the world of 18th century Bath, although even here the rules of polite behaviour were quite strict. And it was, to some extent, the responsibility of the dance teachers to maintain standards, not only in dancing but also in deportment and polite behavior: ‘Now ladies, do credit to Bath’ was how the redoubtable Miss Fleming would instruct her pupils in performance. Relatively little is known about female dance teachers during the 18th century, so the contributions from Matthew Spring and Jennifer Thorpe are a welcome addition to our knowledge of this often under-appreciated profession. The transition from stage performer to teacher may not always have been an easy one, and the competition from male dancing masters is likely to have been harsh. The lives of the Fleming sisters along with their parents, and of Ann Elford, show in fascinating detail the dependence each had on the social context in which they found themselves.

Of course dances may also be found in a literary context, either as a description within a novel or as the text in a dance manual. In both cases it is a challenge to reconstruct the dance from the textual description, perhaps by introducing further information such as pictorial descriptions or possible accompanying music. The next two papers are essentially of this kind, decoding and reconstructing the dance from its literary context. In the first, Jadwiga Nowaczek takes the description of a dance given in Goethe’s novel *The Sorrows of young Werther* as the basis for a reconstruction of a late eighteenth century ballroom scene. The remarkably detailed description indicates that Goethe himself must have been a fine dancer.

Weaving these details together with other information that can be derived from the dance texts of the period enable a very realistic reconstruction of the Ballroom to be made.

In the second case, Christine Bayle works from the text description of a dance in the recently discovered manuscript *Instruction pour Dancer* to reconstruct a gavotte (with the title La Gilotte). The discovery that this can be linked to a gavotte with the same name that appears in Praetorius’ *Terpsichore* (1612) collection enables a convincing choreography to be created. Re-creating these choreographies from the abbreviated descriptions contained in the original text is an important next step towards recovering this segment of our dance heritage and the exploratory workshop given by Christine increased still further the value of this research.

Finally we get to three fascinating and very different papers that all explore various aspects of the political context in which early dance can find itself. The first is an examination of the attempt to infiltrate the English Folk Dance Revival by political agents of Nazi Germany in the years before the Second World War. We are all dimly aware that the Nazis held the ‘folk arts’ in high regard – with the result that much of the German folk song repertoire is no longer performed because of its historical association with the cultural propaganda of the Nazi regime. Georgina Boyes’ account of the degree to which attempts were made similarly to subvert the English folk dance movement are certainly eye-opening and it is indeed a sobering thought to consider what might have happened had the German invasion been successful.

The politics of the more distant past are recalled in Hannelore Unfried’s paper on the *Alliance* quadrille. Devised by the Viennese dancing master Johann Raab, this work was published in 1856 at the conclusion of the Crimean War (1853-1856). The Alliance in question was that of France, Britain, and the Ottomans who were in conflict with an expansionist Russia. The parallel between the

dance ‘alliance’ and the political alliance, along with the battle itself, is played out over the six figures of the quadrille. Austria was itself neutral throughout this conflict, although nominally in alliance with Russia (probably through fear of Ottoman incursions on its own territory as had happened frequently in the past). Although neutral it had a great fascination with the activities in which the warring parties indulged, reporting these on a daily basis in the newspapers, such that one can view the dance *Alliance* as a metaphorical re-enactment of these activities, all of which was further reinforced by the workshop given by Hannelore (though thankfully without serious belligerence among the participants!)

Another workshop on an interesting German choreography was that of Isabel Suri, who recreated a quadrille for ten couples from the publication by Justus Friedrich Häcker, *Der selbstlehrende Tanzmeister* Grimma, 1835. Hooped arches decorated with flowers were a feature of such dances.

This brings us to the last paper and Tiziana Leucci’s exploration of two pieces created at the court of Louis XIV, ostensibly to celebrate royal betrothals, but in reality to glorify the exploits of Louis in the Far East, where French merchants and supporting armies had carved out a trading empire encompassing India and much else beyond. The two productions were essentially of the **stage**, even if the metaphorical location was distant India.

By the same token, Raab’s *Alliance* quadrille is essentially of the **ballroom**, though standing again as a choreographed re-enactment of political manoeuvrings. Finally, of course, the drama of spies infiltrating the English folk dance scene has all the elements of a **village green** performance (or parish conspiracy!) even though the wider implications were on an altogether more terrifying scale. With this we come full circle in our exploration of the title of the conference, from ballroom to stage and village green.

Editorial policy

In an often thwarted attempt to get these collections out within a reasonable time, our policy as editors is to interfere as little as possible with the words of the authors; so long as the meaning is reasonably clear we accept the text as it stands. Likewise we have not tried to check the all too numerous references; any errors here are the responsibility of the authors. Spell checking, formatting and the general layout of these proceedings, for all their deficiencies, are however entirely our responsibility.

The editors must also offer thanks to Georgina Boyes for her very welcome assistance with Alexandra Kajdanska’s paper. One way to lighten the load on future editors of these proceedings may be to offer specific assistance to our foreign speakers with help on translations where necessary.