

The Nyne Muses - A Workshop

A realisation of the dance entitled The nyne muses

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This workshop was designed to illustrate how the performance of a dance may be affected by the choice of steps and music chosen for a given choreography.

Before the 18th century there exist many dance choreographies which have no specified music. To reconstruct these dances music must either be newly composed, or selected from contemporary sources.

For consideration, the dance entitled *The nyne muses* was chosen. This is found in the earliest of the Inns of Court manuscripts, *MS Rawlinson Poet. 108¹*, a commonplace notebook of poems, songs, and other items. It was owned by Elinor Gunter, whose brother Edward was admitted to Lincoln's Inn in February 1563. It has been dated around 1570. It contains a collection of social dances, measures and almaines, and finishes with two figured dances, the *Coranto Dyspayne*, and *The nyne muses*. A transcription² of *The nyne muses* is shown below:

The nyne muses
 A duple forward one Single back al
 ix togeather/then the first iij pase
 forwards with ij singles & a duple and to
 torne back to there companye & and so the
 next &c. & then the last to honour.
 to the middell and Imbrace and the
 middel to torne to the first and honour
 & Imbrace/then one of everye three to
 pase rond about the midell into his
 owne place and so the others with a soft
 pace/And then so after with a galli=
 ard pace//

From the title and choreographic content it might be assumed that *The nyne muses* originated as a masque dance. However, perhaps it is given here in the context of this manuscript because it became a popular feature of the social dances at Lincoln's Inn revels. Was it danced by all ladies, in which case why use the male pronoun in the instruction '... into his own place'; if danced by all men, does all men embracing seem appropriate, or would it have been a mixed group?

The initial part of the dance has a fairly specific structure, but is followed by only a general instruction '.....and so the others with a soft pace'. At the workshop this was expanded into several further weaving figures using three, four, and eight, dancers.

The dance as reconstructed is of length 32 doubles. It is suggested that, if dancing in a mixed group, men should take the corner positions.

Though no music for *The nyne muses* is written in the manuscript, most of the other almaines and measures either have their music in a later Inns of Court manuscript³, or can be found by name in contemporary collections.

For *The nyne muses* a choice had to be made, and two pieces from Praetorius' *Terpsichore* were taken: the *Ballet des Princesses* and another ballet. Though *Terpsichore* was published several decades later than the dating of this particular Inns of Court manuscript, the music is a compilation of older dance tunes collected from France for the Duke of Brunswick and arranged by Praetorius and others.

The tunes chosen have the popular dance structure of regular 8 bar phrases.

But even having made a choice there is still the vexed question of tempo, and the style and number of steps that should, or could, be used in each given phrase that will define the character of the dance.

Using Praetorius' music two versions were danced, the first version using a tempo of 110 beats (crotchet) per minute and a double to 4 bars, giving a very stately measure. The second version using a tempo of 80 beats per minute and a double to 2 bars, making a more lively dance. Pavan style doubles were used throughout as described in Arbeau's *Orchésographie*⁴, a double being 3 steps with a close, and a single, one step and a close. To fill the gap in the first phrase of music a pause equal to the time of one single was taken. In the second version some of the doubles in the weaving were broken up into small running steps, best known as *scorsi* in Italian dances of the same period. The first version should be followed by a separate galliard around the room, while in the second version the final

chain figure was adapted to a galliard rhythm. The full dance choreography is shown in the table, Fig. 1, and the music in Fig. 2.

It was interesting to note that the majority of the dancers at the workshop preferred the second, more lively, version, while our dance group, who earlier tried both versions, preferred the more stately version with which they were familiar.

The meeting, greeting, and interweaving figures of the dance can be viewed as illustrating the harmonious interaction between Terpsichore and her sister muses, which here translates into the human pleasures marrying dance and music in the social dance

End Notes

¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poet. 108

² Wilson, D. R., 'Dancing in the Inns of Court', *Historical Dance*, vol.2, no.5 (1986-87), 5.

³ Royal College of Music, MS 1119

⁴ Arbeau, Thoinéau, *Orchésographie* (Langres, c.1588)
Orchésographie: translated by M. S. Evans (New York, R/1967)

The Nyne Muses

Dance for nine dancers in three rows of three

Version 1			Version 2		
	bars				bars
A	1 - 8	All nine	: All face the Presence	$\frac{1}{2}$ A	1 - 4
	9 - 16	1 st row	: 1 double L forward, 1 single R back. Pause : 2 singles L, R, and 1 double L forward, turning L on last step to face back of room		5 - 8
B1	1 - 8	2 nd row	: as above	B	1 - 4
B2	1 - 8	3 rd row	: 2 singles L, R, and 1 double L forward		5 - 8
C1	1 - 8	2 nd & 3 rd rows	: Honour and embrace by stepping forward on L and touching R cheeks. L foot back and 2 nd row turn by L to face 1 st row.	C	1 - 4
	9 - 16	1 st & 2 nd rows	: Honour and embrace as above with 1 st row turning L at the end to face the Presence		5 - 8
	17 - 32	Middle person in each row	: Make figure of eight round their two ends with 4 doubles, 1 st and 3 rd row middles going R round their R H end to begin, while 2 nd row middle goes L round her L H end to begin (adjust to scorsi in 2 nd and 4 th doubles in version 2)		9 - 16
C2	1 - 16	Middle row	: Each dancer makes figure of eight round person in front and behind them with 4 doubles. Central dancer goes forward passing R round the one in front to begin, while the other two cast R and go round the one behind to begin (adjust to scorsi in 2 nd and 4 th doubles in version 2)		17 - 24
	17 - 32	Four corners	: Face in (1 st row casting R) and loop round the central person by R with 4 doubles, returning to place		25 - 32
			Version 1	Version 2	
A	1 - 16	Eight outsiders	: Chain with 8 doubles round to place giving R hands to begin, corners going clockwise, middles anti-clockwise.	All nine :	Galliard 1 - 16
B1	1 - 8			2 galliard steps facing Presence (campanella)	
B2	1 - 8			Then eight outsiders chain 2 places with 2 doubles. Repeat 3 times to place	
Chord			Honour to Presence	Honour to Presence	Chord

Fig. 1

Music for The Nyne Muses

Ballet des Princesses Praetorius : 'Terpsichore' CCLXXVII à 4

A



B



Ballet Praetorius : 'Terpsichore' CCLXVIII à 4

C (*perf. 4th higher than orig.*)



Gaillarde Praetorius : 'Terpsichore' CCLXXXV à 5 (pts. 2 & 3)

(*perf. 5th lower than orig.*)



Fig. 2