

Introduction

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The papers in this volume were given at a conference organised by the Early Dance Circle at Bankside House, London, on 23 February 2002. The title of the conference was

'Charles II—Restoration or Continuation?',

and its avowed intention was to 'explore changes in dance and related arts within the historical context of the Commonwealth and the subsequent Restoration of Charles II'.

In now publishing the proceedings of that conference we have taken the opportunity to choose a title for the volume that more exactly reflects its contents. *Dance* is the primary interest of the sponsoring organisation. The later seventeenth century is a time in which we are aware that important changes were taking place in fashionable styles of dancing, yet we have little detailed documentation of that development actually in progress. *Theatre* is literally the stage on which public performance of dancing after 1660 mostly took place. New forms of dramatic entertainment inherited parts of the tradition of the Early Stuart court masque, including music, song and dance. *Public order* gives the social context within which the performing arts were tolerated, encouraged or restricted. The papers printed here give a lively and entertaining picture of many aspects of public order, theatre and dance in the second half of the seventeenth century.

The conference opened with two papers that challenged the widely held views, first, that the Commonwealth was a distinctly un-merry time wholly dominated by Puritan attitudes to secular amusements, and, second, that the Restoration then turned morality upside down and fostered general licence.

For the Commonwealth, Roy Sherwood drew on his recent book, *Oliver Cromwell King In All But Name 1653-1658* [q.v.], to show that the Lord Protector understood that effective government demanded pomp and circumstance. This included public processions, celebration of himself and his family, and even maypoles. Under Cromwell, the public theatres may have remained closed, but life was not as colourless as it has often been painted.

For the Restoration, John Miller turned away from London and the direct influence of the Court and considered the second city of the kingdom, namely Norwich (Chapter 1). The City Records show that the mayor, aldermen and magistrates were concerned, both before and after the Restoration, with the maintenance of public order, but that this was not informed by strong sectarian bias. You did not have to be a Puritan

to condemn public drunkenness and lewd behaviour. A major recurring problem was afforded by visiting companies of players, not least because these often enjoyed the patronage of local magnates, who in turn had the ear of the King.

It is the shifting fortunes of the theatres of the capital that furnish a common element in the next two papers.

Anne Daye traced the chequered career of dancing on the stage under royal patronage (Chapter 2), from masques put on in the private domain of the court under Charles I, through the void of the Interregnum, to 'moral masques' and operas in the public domain of the London playhouses under Charles II. Elements both of masque and antimasque can be seen to have survived into Restoration theatrical production.

Jeremy Barlow took up this theme with special reference to the antimasque and its use of 'mockmusick' (Chapter 3). The discordant use of non-musical instruments served as a marker for a variety of features found on the post-Commonwealth stage that recalled the practices of the earlier antimasque.

Turning now to actual dancing, Ann Kent explored the changes that took place in the seventeenth century by reviewing the evidence for a single dance, the Courante (Chapter 4). The currency of this dance continued from the late sixteenth century well into the eighteenth century. Recent publication of sources from the middle years of the seventeenth century has made it possible to present a sequence of six dances for the period 1610-1728, with fair confidence (despite some speculative restoration). This was admirably displayed at the conference by the dancers of Greensleeves, but the development of steps and their relationship to the music can also be appreciated on the printed page.

Finally, Moira Goff undertook a detailed study of Thomas Shadwell's tragedy *Psyche* (Chapter 5), an elaborate production of 1675 that had already been mentioned by earlier speakers. Evidently inspired by an even more elaborate French production of the same name, *Psyche* prompts the question of how far did the one copy the other? This enquiry is the context for looking at many aspects of the contemporary stage both in France and in England, including the availability in London of skilled French dancers capable of executing dances in the latest French style.

It should also be mentioned that those attending the conference saw the Nonsuch Company performing two substantial excerpts from their entertainment 'A Health unto His Majesty', comprising dances and readings relevant to the period.