

Dancers Pictures: and Where To Find Them

[Hilligsberg -title]

This is going to be a very personal Odyssey:

I hope you will all forgive my title - but I do feel a certain personal affinity with J K Rowling, and her works - having trained at RADA, which if not precisely Hogwarts was certainly an ancient school where we all learned to do magic, and I did have the benefit of the late Allan Rickman and wonderful Imelda Staunton acting in my finals play.

Also I signalled 'pictures' in the title rather than prints – which are my major study – this will give a wider range of material to show.

[Taglioni as Flore]

And Marie Taglioni – Taglioni as Flore in the 1831 revival of Didelot's Ballet Flore et Zephyr in a lithograph by R J Lane after A E Chalon.

I can't resist showing off – this the original pencil and watercolour drawing by Chalon; Authors Collection!

[Taglioni drawing]

This is not the 'work of art' the finished work of art is the Lithograph – this is a working drawing – Chalon often did a sketch of a pose and costume in pencil and worked up the heads and hands in the 'watercolour' technique for which he was justly famous.

Phew - back to 1830 in no time at all – and from now on not a lithograph in sight

Now I wholeheartedly despise 'Kangaroo' dance history – the sort of history that follows the bouncing ball - The Royal ballet – Diaghilev – Taglioni – Vestris – Salle & Camargo – Louis XIV – its really very easy to write that sort of history – but what of those in-between? Where are Marie Rambert, Katty Lanner, James Harvey D'Egville, Simon Slingsby, and Nancy Dawson?

But - and I'm really sorry - I'm going to do just that myself – the alternative is locking you all in, and keeping you here until at least tomorrow lunchtime.

I'm going to start with straight forward portraits – These show dancers and dancing masters of sufficient celebrity to justify the considerable outlay of making a painting or print.

And to begin with a recent discovery! – and I'm sorry I'm showing off yet again!

There is no training, as far as I am aware, for my role of Consulting Iconographer, several years of looking (Twenty or Thirty would do) to build up a knowledge of the source material, and a good memory for faces will suffice.– and a knowledge of, and access to, decent old fashioned libraries - here in London the Pavlova Memorial Library in Leicester Square and the Witt library at Somerset House (a library of images) are of infinite help.

And nowadays some facility with the internet.

I generally look at about a thousand images a day – paintings, drawings, prints – and stupid reproductions of images ripped off from the V&A or the Library of Congress which do not tell you that you are dealing with a reproduction until you get well down the line...

When I see something interesting I usually save it on to a watch list either on Ebay or on one of the Auction sites for fuller investigation later – unless the object is exciting enough to warrant abandoning the days search – as here.



[baccelli]

I felt slightly at sea when this painting appeared on French Ebay – she is perhaps no great beauty but it’s a singular face and one imagines not easily forgotten – which is perhaps why one of those bells in my head went **ting!**

Hands up if anyone in the room knows who she is?

I have two responses written down – one – towards any raised hand “where were you when I needed you”

And two – if no hand raised – just a smug ‘hooray’ –

It took me two long days to hunt her down – but here she is again.

[royal collection as zanerini by Dupont]

(this is like cataloguing Fonteyn under Hookham)

Even then I was lucky - Twenty years ago such a hunt might have taken months – years even but the internet has its uses as well as its considerable dangers – this painting hides in the Royal Collection at Windsor.

There can be little doubt that these depict the same sitter and with the picture on the right having been bought by George IV shortly after the death of the sitter; and the painting having remained in the royal collection ever since – there can be no questioning the subject of that portrait.

The painting in the Royal Collection is by Gainsborough Dupont (Gainsborough’s nephew and pupil) and if the other is also by Dupont, and even if it’s not – it is a major new find. – we will see more of the dancer Giovanna Baccelli later.

Now If this sort of portrait was not engraved or it has subsequently lost its title or history - there is little chance of retrieving it unless there are other portraits.

Here are three Celebrity Dancing Masters



Mr Isaac – Kellom Tomlinson – and Louis Pecour – the latter two sporting dance notation to show their profession.

Isaac and Pecour are souvenir / Celebrity prints and there must have been a sufficient number of pupils or public to justify the very expensive production of an engraving – these are mezzotints – and the Tomlinson is the frontispiece to his book – separate impressions would certainly have been made so every impression we see today does not imply the destruction of a copy of the text - though this did happen – particularly in the 19th century and it is not unknown today.



Here is a dancer who doesn't look like a dancer – Rose Didelot as Calypso in Dauberval's 1791 ballet *Telemaque* – the original painting is somewhere in a Russian collection labelled with the wrong artist and the wrong sitter – I saw it

online years ago – but can I find the picture again – ‘write your researches down’ is easy advice.

Here an engraving of the dancer Marie Salle clearly titled.



And here the same plate reworked as a decorative image after the portrait has outlived its commercial usefulness (with the addition of a hat) and then an English version of the second print – but reversed.

Your Never Fully Dressed without a Swag.

Unless a picture is titled (or unless we recognise the subject) how can we tell if we are dealing with the picture of a dancer at all?

Well – it’s not easy - In an age where deportment was automatically taught alongside dancing we might expect that standing figures – especially those posing for an artist might adopt a bit of a turn out ‘how to stand’ must surely have always been the very first lesson – I remember well being taught how to ‘make a leg’ during ‘Restorations’ at RADA.

One clear indication of a ‘dancing’ subject is the ubiquitous swag.

Here’s our poster girl again - Janet Hilligsberg.



Here's Hilligsberg again in an oil painting by Hoppner – he said it was the best thing he ever did – I first saw this painting in a dealers window in St James' in the 1990 and had a brief correspondence with Ivor Guest about it – I'm sorry to say that you will have to go to New Zealand to see it today.

Few people in ordinary life, even in the eighteenth century, went about carrying a swag – only dancers or – and this is important – persons **posing** as dancers use them – it is as clear an iconographical attribute as St Peter's keys or a bishops mitre.



And here is our Mlle Salle again with Swag – I have to thank Sarah McCleave for the Salle identification.

And two more Swaggerers by Carmontelle : Pygmalion and Mlle Lani de l'opera (which you can find online)

Next best indicator is 'the shawl' – but the shawl held in a similar manner – the key is that it is clearly being used as a 'prop' rather than as an item of dress. As we see here –



Worcester College Oxford

the shawl dance is a regular feature of the romantic ballet.

As we go back into the past single images, because of their increasing rarity, take on a much greater significance, but sadly, they do also become more difficult to read, and there are many pictures in our history which inhabit these gaps - and having lost their context, take on a more popular name (in this way any dancer between 1800 and 1870 magically becomes “Marie Taglioni” in any dealers list) – and this painting is a fine example:

The painting, without any doubt the portrait of a professional dancer, now hangs in Worcester College Oxford and for at least a hundred years has been known as a portrait of the dancer Nancy Dawson.

It is now labelled:

Nancy Dawson (in the costume she wore in the shawl dance in 'The Beggars' Opera')

Is there a shawl dance in the beggars opera?

I think not.

Nancy’s famous dance was her Hornpipe – there is a dance however for prisoners in chains



I couldn't find one to show you - so here is a scene from an Opera with a Diva between two Castrati – stage prisoners chains seldom restricted movement. They form a sort of metallic swag.

This is the standard image of Nancy Dawson:



Nancy Dawson's popularity, one should perhaps say notoriety, rests mainly on the colourful stories about her private life, having turned to dancing as a second profession after an earlier career in prostitution (the normal transformation being the other way about). She is often written-off as a "speciality act" an one trick pony after her hornpipe famously turned round the failing production of *The Beggars Opera* at Covent Garden in 1759.

That David Garrick, surely one of the great movers in eighteenth century ballet, should then poach her for Drury Lane shows how skilled she was and her use in other productions there shows versatility, I doubt if Garrick would have continued to use her if her talents were in any way limited.

And here her engraved portrait



Dawson's early retirement was due to ill-health and she then gained a reputation for piety and good works which might have inspired the caricature – previously unidentified as Nancy but I think almost certainly her – the 'religious' might also be a sly reference to her former career : "Abbess" was a popular 18th century term for a brothel's 'Madame' and her girls were often labelled in contemporary prints as 'nuns'.

Nancy also features in a pair of prints of 1790.



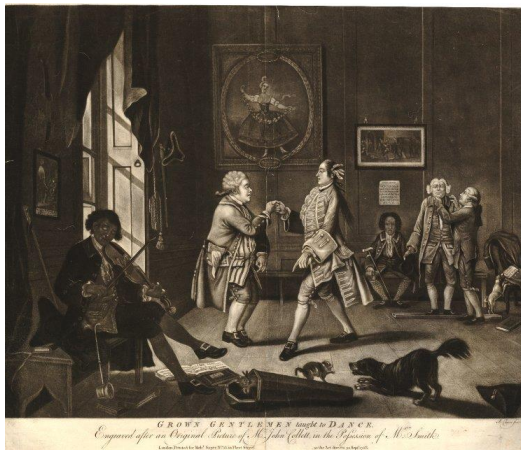
The Bachelor and The Married Man.

The Married Man is set to live happily ever after so we need not trouble him but The Batchelor is not in a good way - He has a housekeeper who drinks and the Doctor is paying a visit – not for the first time given the bottles in the mantelpiece:



And here along with Rochester's Poems – (Smut) – is our Nancy in pride of place – the first print to show a dancer as a pointer to a dissolute lifestyle but by no means the last.

Other dancers pictures appear as “Furniture” on significant walls but they are more often found in dancing academies or places of entertainment.



Grown Gentlemen taught to dance – a dancing academy – with here on the wall a picture of ‘Madame Elastique’ (probably Aurette) And on the wall of Bob Perry and Oyster Nan’s rather more down market establishment – is Hogarth’s “The Charmers of the Age”



Dancers pictures do turn up in the most unexpected places – a number of years ago I was visiting the mini stately home Dalmeny – just outside Edinburgh – it is famous as the home of the Earl of Roseberry – prime minister from March 1894 to June 1895. He was a famous collector of Napoleana and the house is full of Napoleon’s this and Napoleon’s that – but I was most surprised to see on the walls a number of small oil paintings of dancers of the eighteenth century, – he also collected the works of Jean-Frederic Schall. Jean-Frederic Schall came to Paris in 1772 and he suffers almost as badly as does poor Degas.

Degas knew the dancers he drew intimately – yet when they are exhibited today their names even when they are known - even when they are written on the sheet of paper – are often ignored – and they become “A Dancer” devoid of either history or personality – its like those modern lighting designers who insist on ‘badger’ lighting – light from one side – light from the other – leaving a dark strip down the face and the middle – dancers are dancers – they are not “sculptural forms”

In a similar manner over time all of Schalls subjects have become either “A Dancer” or else “La Guimard” – she counts as the Taglioni of the 18th century and all female-dancer images tend to gravitate towards her name.

Somebody aught Well yes I do mean one of you aught to recover these dancers – there are costume studies in Paris opera archive – now on line through Galica - which might tie some of these paintings to a role – to a ballet and perhaps to an individual dancer.

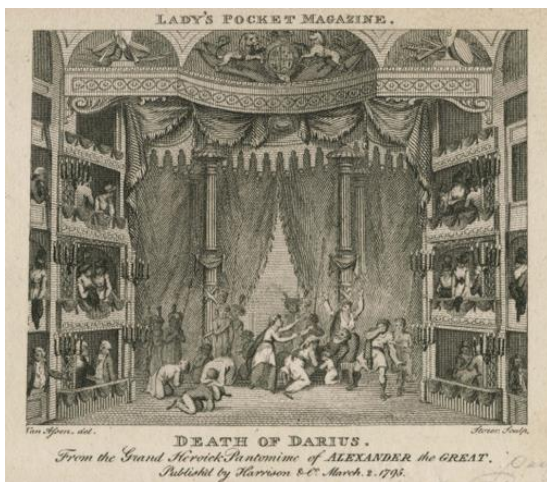
Many of Schall’s paintings of dancers can be found on-line

Let's look at something closer to home – this is a very familiar engraving of 1782:



I had a conversation at one of the Oxford Dance Symposia with Ed Nye – author of the recent book on the Ballet d’Action : I was on my usual hobby-horse complaining that there were not enough pictures (there are none) - “but,” says he, “there are no pictures of the Ballet D’Action in progress” (other than this) – “Aha” says I, “There are two!”

There is this:



Alexander the Great at Drury Lane in 1795 A ballet-pantomime by my own Mr D’Egville the pupil of both Dauberval and Noverre.

Here are D’Egville and Aumer (both choreographers of the romantic ballet and earlier) our poster girl Mlle Hilligsberg ... and the child star Master Menage – the death of Darius ends act II. Act III is a huge Wedding procession which emptied the contents of both the London barracks and the London Zoo onto the stage at Drury Lane – (think of Aida but bigger).

The second is this:



The final moments of ‘Jason and Medea’ probably the most famous Ballet d’Action of the century – with here, Gaetano Vestris held back by ram-horned demons, Mademoiselle Baccelli lying dead, and here is Madame Simonet as Medea making her escape in a chariot drawn by dragons killing her children along the way. The chief of the demons was Simon Slingsby and if this is he then this is the only known representation of this most famous English dancer.

But in fairness to Ed. I ought to add that up till last year you had to know me to be able see this print.

Its not impossible to get a handle on the nature of the 18th century Ballet d’Action and the Ballet-Pantomime – in our own day – the works of Lindsay Kemp – not just his ballets but all his theatreworks “Flowers” was in essence a ballet’daction – his work is much closer to the Ballet d’action than anything of Marcel Marceau or the French school.

And if any of you were fortunate enough to see Japanese actor Ninagawa as Medea at the Edinburgh festival in 1986 towering over the classical facade of the University building - in the pouring rain - in his dragon-chariot cherry-picker an hundred feet above the stage.

It was a true coup de theatre and something that not only thrilled on the night but lives on in the memory in every member of the audience to this day.

– and for younger viewers – the increasing availability of the Silent Cinema also provides an useful key. I regret that when I met Sir Charles Chaplin in the 1970s I was then completely unfamiliar with his works – one could see them in the 70’s but only at the NFT or at special screenings such material is much more accessible today.

The Jason and Medea print which we saw before is reproduced in every survey history of the dance, And dance certainly reached its peak of celebrity during this 1781/2 season – even a sitting of Parliament was curtailed in order to give members time to get to the King’s Theatre to see Vestris. But I show it here with its pendant publication:



– the Ballet Arthritique – we’ve got to take this print into consideration when we ask ourselves whether the Jason image is reportage or caricature – it is, of course certainly both!

Here are the well known Thornthwaite series from Bell’s British Theatre.



The four stars of the season – Gaetano Vestris, Armand Vestris his son Madame Simonet and the lovely Giovanna Baccelli.

Baccelli was famously painted at this time by Gainsborough – the painting now in the Tate Gallery [T02000]. Also in the Tate resides the original drawing of Madame Simonet. [T10555] Simonet is also commemorated in this engraving - another extreme rarity – only one impression recorded - with another of Mme

Theodore (Theodore Dauberval) from the same source only two impressions known.



Now does anyone here, and it must be my best chance to learn the answer, know the title of the Robert Baldwin publication from which these three engravings come?

I think Madame Simonet is one of the lost stars of the 18th century – she could hold her own against Gaetano Vestris and thrilled the London audiences with her powerfully dramatic dance-mime.

The Vestris' were truly an international dancing dynasty – but why did they keep coming to London?

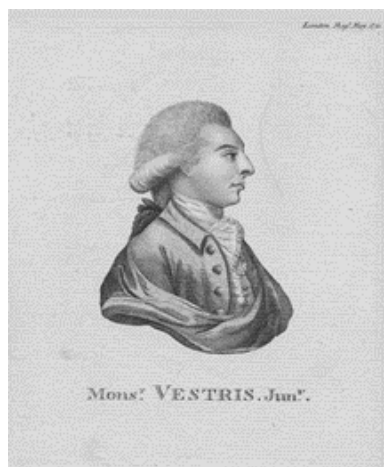
There are three reasons: a/ money b/ money and c/ money - with probably another; d/ artistic freedom – the Paris opera was never the happy home to new ideas - Innovation usually required a move away; a move to the Parisian minor theatres (especially to the Porte St Martin), a move to the provinces, to Lyon or Bordeaux, or a move abroad – Dauberval went first to Bordeaux – where an engraving – This engraving:



seen in a print shop window inspired his ballet *La Fille Mal Gardée*. the revolution then forced both Dauberval, and Noverre to come to London.

Now we've already seen Gaetano Vestris and his son Auguste.

And here they are again in the London Magazine – the 'Hello' of its day – complete with celebrity profiles within the text.



Unlike his father Auguste excelled in less aristocratic roles.



Here he is in a caricature by Bartolozzi – illustrating lines from Plutarch:

“A Stranger at Sparta standing long upon one Leg, said to a Lacedaemonian, I do not believe you can do as much; 'True (said he) but every Goose can'.

Caricatures or semi caricatures are quite equal to the souvenir prints – and equally as useful – they show the stage as a stage – artists – proper artists tend to make the stage scenery into real scenery or landscape – and they never show the stage lighting.

Auguste’s son; A.A., Auguste Armande, followed in the family business:



I’m sorry to say that many books reproduce this print as being his father. And I showed a superb aquatint of him with his partner Angiolini which now resides in the Paris Opera Archives – it seems to be the only impression in any public collection – and I know of none in any private one either.

Auguste Armand married a singer at the London opera – miss Bartolozzi – granddaughter if the engraver who was known throughout her life as “Madame Vestris.”



Here she is dancing with her second husband Charles Mathews. – oops – I thought a lithograph had crept in – but we are safe – this is an Aquatint.

In the Tate Gallery (and freely available on its website) are the 50 odd drawings in the Wharncliffe Album – an album long in possession of the Wharncliffe family and erroneously attributed to the aristocratic hand of Lady Wharncliffe herself – It shows several Opera dancers in ballets of 1808 9 & 10.

Armand persuaded his father to return to London in 1818 where our old friend A E Chalon depicted him dancing the Minuet de la Cour with Mlle Narcisse.



He was then nearly 60 but still had a way to go as he famously danced the Minuet with Taglioni in 1835 when he was 75.

Well - where to find them, – other than in my home

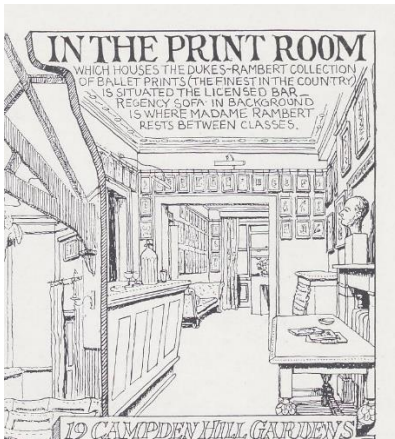
Private collections so very often end up in public collections and it should come as no surprise that the major collectors of ballet prints were either dancers themselves or those closely connected to the ballet:

Anna Pavlova had a wonderful collection and on her death many of her pictures ended up in the collections of the next generation;

Marie Rambert, bought her first ballet print as a wedding present for a friend –



She saw it in in the window of a shop – I think that of Ifan Kyrle Fletcher - when she entered the shop she found another (the Any Goose Can; above) and bought that for herself. Her extensive collection decorated the walls of the bar of the Mercury Theatre for the delectation of the audiences of the early Rambert performances.



The majority of her collection is now in the V&A.

(I ought to have warned you all earlier that the collecting of ballet prints and pictures can be seriously addictive – stick to Cocaine – its probably cheaper)

[I showed the original but see Beaumont Sitwell Plate 4 which they reproduced from a reproduction in a book]

Alicia Markova's collection focussed on the Romantic Ballet – to Taglioni with whom she felt a special affinity and to Giselle – without doubt her greatest role – she was much aided in her collecting by having a rich and eccentric fan, sorry

a very rich and very eccentric fan - who bought many things for her – (I think we'd now call her a stalker).

This print – the only impression known outside Russia – now in a British private collection – was formerly Markovas - and possibly once belonged to Pavlova.

The collections of the writers Arnold Haskell, Peter Revitt, and G B L Wilson are at the Royal Ballet School.

The enormous Beard Collection is in the V&A as is C W Beaumont's – his own collection and The London Archives of the Dance.

Now where Beaumont's collection – ended and the 'Archives of the Dance' began I do not know – and I don't think he was very clear on that point either.

There are, of course, a number of Private collectors who are still with us ... I am their secret keeper – their secrets are safe with me.

V&A, BM, Tate, NPG,

In Europe the Bibliotheque Nationale, and the Derra de Moroda.

In America :NYPL, Harvard, Princeton, and the Vincent Warren collection in Canada.

Collections continue to be catalogued using modern methods, particularly the vast British Museum portraits collection, and more and more material will inevitably become more and more available, particularly material on-line.

The prints for the most part we know – but every print made in this period was made from a drawing – Here is an engraving of Dauberval and Allard (Auguste Vestris' mother) dancing in the opera Sylvie in 1767.



And the original drawing

But there is another drawing in Museum of Fine Arts in Boston – and another drawing given to Gabriel St Albin



Sorting out which is the original and which copies and in what order is what we are here to do.

And to sort out things that are simply wrong



This is a 19th century version with the names changed.

And things like this on Wikipedia



“**André-Jean-Jacques Deshayes** as Achilles and James Harvey d'Egville as Hercules in a scene from the ballet-phantomime *Hercules and Deianeira* from a painting by **Antoine Cardon** 1804. “

Despite what it says on wikipedia this Aquatint although it does show Deshayes as Achilles (aloft) D'Egville is dancing the role of Chiron – not Hercules in the teaching scene from Act 1 of his own ballet Achille et Diedamie – the Aquatint, the print, is by Cardon but done from an original painting by Huet Villiers. The original sketch drawing is in the V&A. I've also seen and corrected a prestigious website who thought Deshayes figure was female.

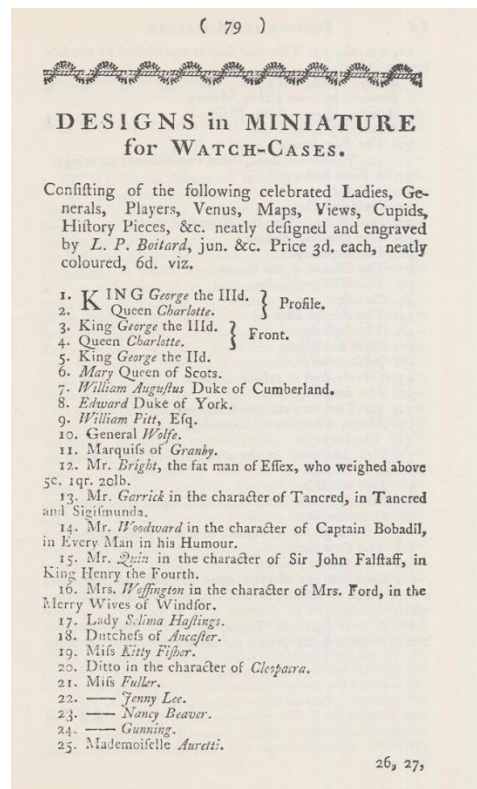
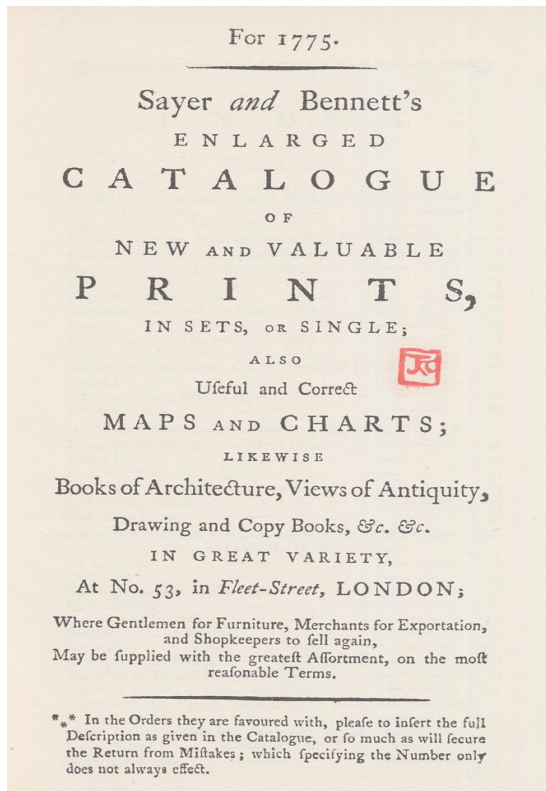
Once wrong information gets on line it is terribly difficult to remove it – I've already alluded to the V&A's website – many years ago they used untrained volunteers to input data – it doesn't happen now – but the lithographs of the 1760s (lithography was invented in 1796), the date of “18th or 19th century – when a print actually says 1846 and long descriptions of what you can see, without telling you who you are looking at will take many years to unpick.

Like Miss Marple - my old Mentor the late Nesta MacDonald always used to say – “never believe anyone” – it's a good maxim - Naturally it doesn't apply to me!

Now you have already indulged me and my boasting for far too long but I would like to balance the books a little and end with a failure.

Despite my familiarity with collections both here and abroad there are one or two items which still continue to elude capture:

Of the “Known Unknowns” one in particular which I know only from a description in that very useful volume the Sayer & Bennett catalogue of prints offered for sale and published in 1775. (and usefully reprinted in 1970)



Amongst the hundreds of prints listed are a number of Ballet items and a watch paper portrait of the dancer Aurette.

Pocket watches in the 18th century, and no gentleman in the 18th century would be without his pocket watch, were wound up regularly with a key – to get to the keyhole one opened up the back of the watch – the ‘inside cover’ of this very private part of the watch was often decorated with a printed paper cut to fit it. For the most part – as here - these watch-papers are merely engraved text advertising the watch-maker or watch-mender – the British Museum collections website has a comprehensive collection of such ephemera.

A rare subset of these were pictorial – and the Sayer & Bennett catalogue lists some on page 79: Number 19 is Kitty Fisher and Mademoiselle Aurette is listed as number 25.

Of course I had hope that a hand will be raised and for one of you to say “oh - I’ve got one of those.” - There must be one out there somewhere – possibly hidden in an eighteenth century watch – well your homework for the next year is clear...

There are other drawings, and other paintings out there still to be researched and to be identified –

I look forward to an age of discovery. Thank You

During questions I was asked about my long awaited catalogue of English Dance Prints 1670-1836. This was a project which stemmed from my M.Phil. dissertation on James Harvey D’Egville in 1994. I had hoped to add as an appendix a short catalogue of the 30 or 40 ‘usual suspects’ prints of dancers prominent in D’Egville’s lifetime – the project got a bit out of hand and led to a Visiting Research Fellowship at Harvard in 1996 and two subsequent months researching there in the famous Theatre Collection – as it nears publication (I cannot in fairness say completion) there are over four hundred items and 90% of them I have been able to illustrate. Every print made at this time was made from a drawing – even if the original was a painting but I know the whereabouts of only six original drawings and three paintings from this period – there must be many more.

EDC Lecture

February 2017

Poster Girl – Mme Hilligsberg (Watercolour)

Dancers pictures and where to find them: Researching the early iconography of the dance.

Today we live in a world surrounded by images in books, magazines, advertisements, in cinema, and television. For those of us interested in dance, images of dancers abound, but as we look to the past - beyond the development of photography in the middle of the nineteenth century and lithography at its beginning – these images of dancers become increasingly rare, who made them? and why? and, more importantly, where are they hiding?

Brief CV

Keith Cavers trained in Stage Management at RADA but became interested in images of the dance whilst working at the Royal Opera House alongside John Gill and assisted curating his ‘The Romantic Ballet’ Exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall in 1985. Keith took a BA Hons. in The History of Drawing and Printmaking at Camberwell in 1989 and taught there from 1990-2010. He was an Information Officer at the National Gallery for 12 years, and now works independently as a Consulting Iconographer.

Dance related Exhibitions include: Nancy Dawson at the Royal Opera House in 1987, Ballets Trocadero in 1988, and Louisa Fairbrother – Romantic Ballerina and Royal Bride in 2000. In 1994 he was awarded an M. Phil from the University of Surrey for a thesis on James Harvey D’Egville which started him on a project to catalogue dance prints of the London Theatre in D’Egville’s era and was awarded a Visiting Research Fellowship by Harvard to that end – twenty years later it’s almost there but has grown from a simple listing of about 40 items to a fully illustrated union catalogue of 400 images of dancers made between 1670 and 1837.

Sent off 16th July 2016