

Early Dance Circular

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A Kaleidoscope of Early Dance The 39th Annual Early Dance Festival 2022



FROM OUR CHAIRMAN, BILL TUCK:

With the Annual EDC Festival having been postponed as a live event for two years, it was a great relief to be able to celebrate in *Real Life*. As most of us have long since come to realise, dancing over Zoom is no substitute for the real thing. On the other hand, there have been many opportunities to **watch** dance, whether from the EDC archives of past festivals, or the great wealth of material now available on YouTube. This period of incarceration has, however, led me to ponder on just what it is that makes the ‘dance observed’ so different from the ‘dance performed’.

Participation versus Presentation

An interesting current development in the understanding of arts is the differentiation

between those forms that are essentially “participatory” and those that are “presentational”. It started in musicological circles some years ago with the publication of Thomas Turino’s *Music as Social Life: the politics of participation* (2008). Turino divides music into two broad categories: **Participatory**, in which everyone present is active, playing an instrument, singing or dancing, and **Presentational** in which there is a clear distinction between the performers and the audience. The audience might dance or sing along, but the focus remains with the group on the stage.

It is interesting to relate these ideas to the world of dance because the distinction between the participatory and

presentational is no less valid there. For years we have been careful to distinguish between “social dance” on the one hand, and “concert dance,” such as ballet performance, on the other. Two recent events, however, have made me aware of how fluid that boundary is. The first was the EDC Festival at Tring and the second was a week spent dancing “modern” country dances at Halsway Manor with Rosemary and Steve Hunt. Both were very enjoyable, excellent events, but very different in their approach to their *participatory* and *presentational* elements.

It may be true to say that EDC performances have moved towards the presentational, whereas “modern” country dance has remained resolutely participatory, but what exactly does this mean in practice? Well, the first observation is to note just how much the EDC Festival participants have improved the quality of their presentations, not just in their dancing, but also in their inventiveness in creating a convincing narrative thread to enable its comprehension. From Arbeau’s *Buffens* as court entertainment at some ‘humanist’ soiree in 16th century Italy, through Pastime’s comic 15th century re-working of *Romeo & Juliet* to the 18th century Court Ball as recreated by Contretemps, plus numerous others – all

greatly contributed to the meaning and comprehension of the whole dance milieu. Yet, even for those not directly involved in any performance there was also a sense of *participating* in the overall event.

By way of contrast, my week spent dancing ‘modern ECD’ at Halsway had no element of the presentational: if you weren’t dancing, there was little to watch. That is in no way a criticism, but it did indicate a significant difference between the folk dance and the historical dance worlds. Folk dance does not seek novelty for its own sake, but is happy with the familiar. The link here is with the two sessions of general dancing at the Festival, along with the evening ‘social’ presented so well by Colin Hume, a well-known – indeed famous – caller from the modern folk dance world. There is something very relaxing about the act of dancing in a situation where you do not have to feel that you are on display. Getting the moves right may be a challenge, but getting them wrong does not entail any serious loss of face. I feel that juxtaposing these two – the *presentational* and the *participatory* – at our Festival is one of its most valuable attributes.

From the Editor: *Further thoughts on this divide in early dance itself would be most welcome. Just contact the Editor.*

An Account of the Festival at Tring 2022

Sharon Butler



Our chairman Bill Tuck welcomed everyone warmly, beaming with the pleasure of meeting after too long a separation. He opened the programme with **Renaissance Footnotes'** presentation of “The After-Masque Party,” a glimpse into some of the more private moments in a 17th century ballroom. Live music was provided by Tamsin Lewis and Arngeir Hauksson, who played in a party of eight dancers, impressively brandishing wine cups throughout their turns and heys. As always, this group demonstrated some

beautiful choreography, but this time with a markedly comic touch. A meek housemaid startled us all when she suddenly, and most adroitly, instructed her “betters” in how to do a galliard.

Finally, a large new keg of beer enticed this already fairly inebriated crowd out of the auditorium -- to much applause.

The next group, **Pastime Historical Dance** picked up and developed the narrative approach to staging early dance. Their “Star-Crossed Lovers, Uncrossed” turned the tragedy of Romeo and Juliet into comedy. Using 15th century dance and costume to excellent effect, Pastime mixed romance, menace and buffoonery into a skilful cocktail for the audience. New and more experienced members of the group all danced their parts with enthusiasm and skill. Never has Rosina been more terrifying!



The marriage bells of Verona had hardly ceased when the floor was suddenly flooded with Regency beauties and their gentlemen, gliding gracefully from one figure into another. **Jane Austen Dancers of Bath** began with Cat in Pattens and the Steam Packet Waltz, both of which



Liz Bartlett expertly taught to an admiring crowd in the first General Dancing session, which flowed on from their presentation. Before that, however, the group also presented three dances from their 2022 Scottish-themed performance described in the recent September EDC Circular. The footwork contrived to be both neat and flamboyant, while the complex patterns were interwoven with a royal tribute.

From the party atmosphere of our foray into Regency dance with Liz, we moved back in time to the fifteenth-century again. The presentation by **Dance Past** was full of variety and a



sense of fun. There were *balli* for two, three and four, plus Domenico's graceful Corona in *bassa danza ala fila*. This group is so at home with their repertoire that they can relax. They are equally expressive of both the emotional depth of some of their dances and the sheer sense of fun in others.

The next group to perform was **The Contretemps Academy**, led by Barbara Segal. Bill's trumpet call announced a grand promenade of

beautifully costumed dancers who then, en masse, performed *Jouissons des Plaisirs*, quite a feat with twelve on the floor at once. Couples then showed off the dances they had learned in Barbara's Sunday classes and at the Chalemie Summer School in Uppingham. By turns the dancing was elegant, flirtatious, tender, then smooth and sometimes even bubbly. The



playing space was filled with movement and life. As a welcome treat, we were offered a solo



by Barbara Segal, full of her trademark musicality and subtlety of movement, now embodying pathos and now light-hearted. But the presentation belonged to the students, who seemed to be having a wonderful time displaying all that they had achieved together.

Norwich Historical Dance provided a very different approach to staging early dance. The group is deeply committed to portraying aspects of the history of Norwich. This time they focused on its long tradition of welcoming refugees. "Come yew in..." took us from 17th century weavers, through 1940's American servicemen to more recent newcomers from Serbia. in a jaunt through energetic and deft 17th century set dances, 1940's jive and Serbian folk dance, they entertained us all with their usual dancing prowess and dramatic ability. I must mention the saucy minx

at the centre of *La Bööhmiene*. In fact, saucy women were much in evidence at this Festival! Finally, Chris Gill stepped forward to lead us all in some folk dancing for the second session of General Dancing. It was good to be on our feet, celebrating the international gift of dance together.

In a complete change of pace, **Gloriana** gave us a vignette from a Florentine-style Renaissance *intermedio*. Five dancers, beautifully dressed in ancient style, presented mythological figures, their three dances coming entirely from Arbeau. The four impassive ladies' *Les Buffons* was almost mesmeric, with its stately pace and repetitive elements. The shock came at the end, when their dignified exit was abruptly interrupted by their "assassination" of their Apollo, who looked truly overcome!



Ann and Paul Kent's **Greensleeves**, a skilled company of nine dancers, injected a welcome note of scholarly research into the afternoon. Ann and Paul have been looking closely for some time at the Sloan, Patricke and Landsdowne manuscripts. We were allowed a taste of the riches they have found, in a continuous programme of delightfully complex patterns. Couples processed and turned, advanced and retreated, interwove and circled, all to well-chosen

period music provided by Paul, since there is none in the various manuscripts. I'm sure that many of the watching groups felt eager for a chance to try dancing some of these intriguing dances.

The last group to perform was **Apollo's Revels**, a pair of girls definitely out for a good time. What they described as a European City Break, travelled from London, to Lisbon, and finally to Venice in Carnival time. Ann Deller and Kath Waters share a deep interest in the dances of Mr Isaac and hope to help make them better known. Their joy in dancing together was clear to their audience, who appreciated both the intensity and the gala quality of their various dances.

Bill stepped forward to bring the afternoon to a close, expressing the Early Dance Circle's great appreciation for



the many talents all the different groups had shared and the planning and hard work that went into all the performances. It had been a difficult year, with not only Covid but flu and train strikes to overcome for everyone. But everyone seemed to agree that the Festival for 2022 was a triumph for early dance! Next year, the 40th Early Dance Festival, will be even better.

Dancing & Performing Animals in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods, by Dr Kathleen Walker-Meikle.

Paul Cooper

Of course, there is more to the EDC Festival than the Saturday extravaganza. Those of us who arrived in Tring on the Friday evening were treated to an excellent lecture by Dr Kathleen Walker-Meikle. Her beautifully illustrated talk took us on a rapid tour of dancing animals from the 11th century through to the 19th century and beyond.

She began quite properly by acknowledging the dark side to the subject, namely the evils of animal cruelty. Animals were and are sometimes coerced into performing; whether dancing bears, circus acts or snake charming. The process can be very cruel.

Kathleen presented a wonderful collection of humorous and ridiculous manuscript marginalia images of dancing and musical animals. These medieval images were charming. Some animals were depicted in anthropomorphic actions, many dressed in clothes or playing instruments, others dancing to the music of human minstrels. The parade included bears, baboons, lions, monkeys, camels, elephants, lynx, parrots, an ostrich, horses, dogs, cats, geese, rats, donkeys, goats, deer and otters... I'm liable to have forgotten more than I've

remembered! The marginalia often depicted a disordered or upside-down world; comic role reversal was common. Thus a cat might be depicted playing an organ while a dog is pumping the bellows, or a fox playing the bagpipes while geese dance. We also saw images of mummers either dressed as animals or wearing animal masks and dancing. Many of the fantastical images involved animals appearing to dance. Apes were especially popular since they were felt to be most akin to man, rather like the



Flanders, early c14th, Walters MS w.88-f158r
upright bear as well.

Kathleen went on to discuss real animals trained to dance. We saw historical images of dog and horse trainers. We were told of



Bodleian MS 264, f106 r

the celebrated performing horse Morocco, trained by William Bankes in the 1580s. Morocco performed into the 1590s and beyond. Horse ballets included Louis XIV's great Carousel of 1662 in which entire choreographed routines would be performed. Schools existed in the 16th century to train animals for performances in both France and Poland.

Many references exist to bears performing on the English stage, especially in Jacobean plays. The performances could have involved actors dressed as bears, or they may have involved actual animals such as the polar bears presented at the Jacobean

court in 1610-11. The lecture ended with the wonderful music of Passamezzo's "The Bears' Dance" from Ben Johnson's 1622 Masque of Augurs, to be enjoyed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2On7gxJ2mU>

Throughout Kathleen's talk, we were invited to question whether the dancing was genuine or coerced and what meanings it conveyed. We explored human cultural history as seen through our interactions with animals and ended with a host of insightful questions and answers and a well-deserved round of applause.



THE PEASE POTTAGE MUSICAL DUO

Friday evening also saw an innovation for the 2022 Festival. New members, Pease Pottage, volunteered to play for us as people arrived for the drinks reception before Kathleen's lecture.

Veronica Thomas and Andrew Challenger use a wide range of instruments for their early music performances. They would love to play for historical dancers. Contact: Veronica at 01296 696795 or at peasepottageinfo@gmail.com.

THE VISIT TO WADDES DON ON SUNDAY 23 OCTOBER



Traditionally, Festival goes troop off on late Sunday morning to a local site of interest, perhaps have lunch together and then travel on home afterwards. This year, the arrangements at Waddesdon Manor meant it was best for everyone to book their own admission, but a number of us met up as we gazed in some awe at this monument to French Renaissance style and

the sumptuous wealth and exquisite taste of its creators. The dining room alone gives a strong sense of the opulence on display.

It had been ten years since the EDC Festival had last visited Waddesdon and now much more of the house is open to visitors. The set of seven Sleeping Beauty murals by Léon Bakst (appropriately in one of the tower rooms) is gorgeous, but everyone had their tale to tell, notably members of Jane Austen Dancers of Bath, who arrived in full costume. Charlotte Cumper has sent us a brief report of their visit:

The Jane Austen Dancers were excited to attend the Festival in October. We performed our special 2022 demonstration dance commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the visit of King George IV to Scotland in 1822 (hence all the tartan we wore!). We certainly attracted some strange looks from the people of Tring as we left the venue in our Regency finery.

On the Sunday we joined other Festival goers at Waddesdon Manor, a great excuse to break out our Regency day wear (as if most of us need an excuse!). Whilst the house itself was built in the 1870s, it was jam-packed with 18th Century art and furniture, so we didn't look too anachronistic. We spent two hours exploring the seemingly endless number of stunning rooms and then moved on to the gardens, which were equally large!

We were quite a talking point amongst the staff and other visitors. We had all of the usual comments and questions: "Why are you dressed like that?" and, "Is there an event on?". We often do costumed outings and sometimes forget that we're wearing something most people find unusual, but it always brightens people's day to see us. All in all, we had a lovely weekend of dancing, and we would highly recommend a visit to Waddesdon Manor if you're ever in that area.



ANNOUNCEMENT

The annual Celebration of

World Commedia Day (25 February) will once again take place over the weekend of February 24th to 26th next year (2023). A full programme is in preparation – though further applications to join us are welcome.

Once details are finalised, further information and links to booking facilities will be posted on the Festival Website:

<https://minicommediafest.co.uk>



Diary Dates

- **DATE CORRECTION: 7:30 pm, Saturday 21 January, 2023** for ***THE REMARKABLY TALENTED MR WEAVER PRESENTS...*** An evening with The Weaver Ensemble, sponsored by the EDC. -- baroque dance, music, drama & song in London 1717. The Marylebone Theatre, 35 Park Road, Rudolf Steiner House, London NW1 6XT. **PLEASE BOOK ONLY ON EVENTBRITE** at: <https://tinyurl.com/4fbpsdnw>.
- ***COME DANCE WITH ME: DANCE IN GERMANY 1450-1900***, Saturday 21 – Sunday January 22, 2023 with Dance & History Online on Zoom. Register at <https://us06web.zoom.us/join/tZlvde6vqT4pHNNballQvFPMbXhgpJSN3ac->
- ***DANCING WELL, DANCING LONGER***, Renaissance and Baroque dances, focussing on technical skills and safe dance practice, useful for dancers and group leaders. **Friday 3 -- Saturday 5 February**, with Kath Waters at Benslow Music, Benslow Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 9RB. Contact: <https://webcollect.org.uk/hds/event/dancing-well-dancing-longer>
- **THE 6TH ANNUAL COMMEDIA FESTIVAL**, Friday 24 to Sunday 26 February (World Commedia Day is 25 February). Visit <https://minicommediafest.co.uk> for full details nearer the time.
- **RENAISSANCE DANCE WEEKEND** with **MARY COLLINS**, Saturday 25 Feb – Sunday 26, at North Warnborough Village Hall, Priors Corner, Dunley's Hill, North Warnborough, Hook, Hampshire RG29 1EA. Contact ren.footuk@gmail.com.
- **EARLY DANCE CIRCLE ANNUAL LECTURE 2023**, Friday 10 March. Professor Barbara Ravelhofer of Durham University will speak on the topic, *Game Over? The Dance of Death in the Visual Arts and Performed Experience*. Swedenborg House, 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2TH. Book your free place with Eventbrite here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/game-over-the-dance-of-death-in-the-visual-arts-and-performed-experience-tickets-439016499167?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>.
- **NORWICH AND CAMBRIDGE EARLY DANCE WEEKEND** Fri. 31 March to Sunday 2 April with tutor: Sasza Zargowski, at Langley School, Langley Park, Loddon NR14 6BJ. For information, contact Harriet Cox, 9 Maida Vale, Norwich NR2 3EP Tel.: 01603 393618 or enquiries@norwichhistoricaldance.org.uk.
- **THE CHALEMIE SUMMER SCHOOL 2023**, July 10 - July 16, at Uppingham School, High St W, Uppingham, Oakham LE15 9QE. <https://www.chalemie.co.uk>.
- **EARLY DANCE CIRCLE BIENNIAL CONFERENCE**, 10-12 May, 2024. Save the date; the Call for Papers will be out in the Spring.

THE EARLY DANCE FESTIVAL 2023

Plans for the Early Dance Festival in 2023 are moving ahead, but because of the cancellation of our booking by Shrewsbury School, we are still not able to give full details. As soon as things are settled, an email will go out to all members and the Booking Leaflet will be sent out in March.

**AN EXCITING NEW CAST
MEMBER FOR THE WEAVER
ENSEMBLE**



Artur Zakirov joins the Weaver Ensemble in the new year, taking over leading roles in *Pygmalion* and *The Loves of Mars and Venus*. At only 17, Artur danced with the Kazan National Opera. In 2001, he joined the National Choreographic Center of Caen in France and, since discovering Baroque dance in 2011, he has regularly collaborated with *Les Cavatines* and *L'Eventail*, performing in many choreographic creations by Marie-Geneviève Massé.

Artur has appeared in *Amadis de Gaule* at the Royal Opera of Versailles, in Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* at the Paris Opera and his *Pygmalion* at the Potsdam Musik Festspiele. He travels with the production "Rameau, Maître à danser" to the Bolshoi, the Barbican Center, BAM in New-York and Seoul's Arts Center.

We can see this young, vibrant dancer on stage in January at the Marylebone Theatre. Book your tickets now if you haven't already.

Dancing Masters as Gatekeepers for Civil Society:

For readers interested in this area, here is a Call for Papers. Travel grants are available from the EDC.

The Uses and Abuses of Civility, 1500-1700

26th-27th May 2023, Université de Neuchâtel. **Conference Call for Papers**

This conference will re-examine early modern Europe's fascination with civil conduct. What actions were performed in the name of civility, and who benefitted from the culture of civility in early modern Europe? How were codes of manners used to justify the stratification of society in Europe and beyond? What is the legacy?

Some suggested topics: the practical application of civil conduct in schoolroom, household, court, and beyond; the circulation, translation, amendment, and critique of concepts of civility; constructive and destructive outcomes of civil behaviour depicted in fictional and non-fictional texts.

The Conference **Keynote Speakers** include: Professor Jane Ohlmeyer (Trinity College Dublin) and Professor Cathy Shrank (University of Sheffield).

Proposals of c.200–300 words, with a short biography (max. 100 words), to:

civility2023@gmail.com by the **27th**

January 2023. Papers of 15-20 minutes and papers for 3-person panels are welcome.

Further details

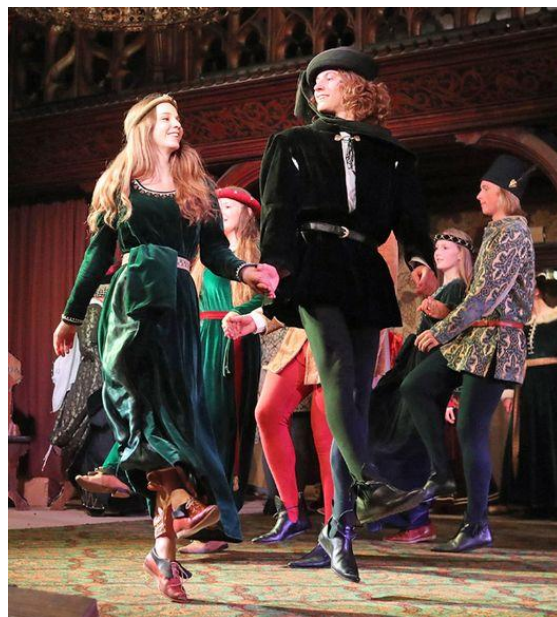
at: <https://earlymoderncivility.com/conference/>

The Landshut Wedding 2023

The Landshut Wedding is one of the largest historical pageants in Europe. Every 4 years, countless visitors from all over the world take part in, or attend, the *Landshuter Hochzeit 1475*, a pageant held in the city of Landshut, Bavaria, Germany. More than 2,000 participants in medieval costumes bring to life the Late Middle Ages. This summer's Royal Wedding of Landshut takes place from June 30 to July 23. Booking begins on January 9, 2023, at [https://www-landshuter--hochzeit-de.translate.google.com/kartenbestellung.html?_x_tr_sl=de&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc](https://www.landshuter--hochzeit-de.translate.google.com/kartenbestellung.html?_x_tr_sl=de&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc)

The celebrations commemorate the wedding of Hedwig Jagiellon, daughter of the King of Poland, and George, son of the Duke of Bavaria. Detailed records exist, even down to the names of the dancers, but unfortunately no specific dances themselves or specific music. Such a large event, taking in so many aspects of medieval life, presents a huge challenge to recreation.

The Wedding Procession is a highpoint, as are the Festival and Dance Games, but food



and drink rank alongside music, concerts, equestrian games, fencing and mumming.

Lieven Baert, well known to English historical dancers for his teaching and his recent work in Durham, has been deeply since 1997. He will be talking about his experiences as part of the Zoom conference, **COME DANCE WITH ME: DANCE IN GERMANY 1450-1900**, Saturday 21 – Sunday 22, 2023 presented by Dance & History Online.

DO YOU LOVE EARLY DANCE AND WANT TO ENSURE ITS FUTURE? THEN PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THE EDC COMMITTEE

At the moment, we have 2 vacancies on the committee and would very much like to fill them with enthusiastic people able to give some time and energy to maintaining and developing early dance. We're a happy ship and looking for more people to join us.

Being willing and able to travel is no longer necessary. We meet on Zoom -- on the 3rd Sunday of January, March, May, July, September, with the AGM in November. We need friendly people who can contribute to the mix of abilities that go into the variety of work that we do and, of course, with a commitment to the aims and activities of the EDC. Social media is a growth area that we want to develop, but we also need more help with online/computer skills and much of the rest of our work. Perhaps most importantly, we welcome fresh ideas as well.

If you'd like to talk about joining the committee, please contact Sharon Butler at secretary@earlydancecircle.co.uk.

A Welcome to Our New Patron, Dr Jennifer Nevile



The Early Dance Circle is honoured that Dr Jennifer Nevile of the University of New South Wales has agreed to become one of our Patrons. Dr Nevile gave the Annual Lecture in February 2021 and has often contributed to the EDC Circular. Her many publications include *The Eloquent Body: Dance and Humanist Culture in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (2004) and *Dance, Spectacle and the Body Politick, 1250-1750* (2008). To introduce herself to members, she has written the following account of her life in historical dance.

Researching Early Dance

Jennifer Nevile

When Sharon Butler asked if I would like to write a short piece on my years of work researching early dance, I immediately thought of the first sentence of David Fallows' 1996 article on the Gresley dances – 'It is a slightly embarrassing story' - as this sentence could well be applied to my entry into the field. My interest in early dance came through music, and around 40 years ago, when I had to find a topic for my Honours thesis in music, I decided I wanted to investigate an aspect of fifteenth-century music. Having been told that this was impossible, as everything had been done in this field (difficult as it now is to believe such a statement could ever have been made), I then proposed a thesis topic on fifteenth-century Italian dance and music given the classes I had been attending for the past few years taught by Fiona Garlick and John Barnard of *The Early Dance Consort*. Much to my surprise this suggestion was accepted, and by the time my honours thesis was finished I was hooked, and I knew that a PhD on the same topic was my next step.

One of the reasons I have continued researching historical dance is that analysing the choreographic descriptions is intellectually challenging. It is like detective work with many clues, or pieces of a jigsaw

puzzle, that have to be thought through and fitted together before a more complete picture begins to emerge. It is also a field that requires knowledge of both the choreography and the music before a possible solution to the jigsaw puzzle can be obtained. This is because from the fifteenth to the mid-eighteenth century dance and music were closely intertwined. As far as the fifteenth-century Italian dance masters were concerned dance was the physical expression of music, and music was essential if dance was to be considered an art.

Over the decades I have found my research to be exciting: there are always new questions to be asked, new avenues to explore, and – very occasionally – a new, or hitherto ignored, source to be investigated. As I continued my research work it became clear that I enjoyed tying things together, investigating potential relationships between different aspects of society, and I realized that early dance research was the perfect field in order to satisfy this interest, since western European dance from circa 1400 to circa 1750 was intrinsically enmeshed in almost all facets of society. During this period dance was part of music, the expression of power, and the workings of the political processes. Dance

performances also played an important role in theatrical spectacles and festivals, and these performances were often an expression of the world-view of the time, as well as an expression of moral virtue and nobility, the latter which I explored in 'A Measure of Moral Virtue: Women, Dancing and Public Performance in Fifteenth-century Italy'.¹

As I continued with my research it became very clear to me that dance masters from the fifteenth century onwards were not isolated from, nor unaware of, trends in contemporary artistic thought. They wanted their art to participate in and to reflect current intellectual concerns. Dance masters were concerned to give meaning to their choreographies, to ensure that the dance practice they advocated was more than just a set of physical skills, and that the choreographies they created represented something more than a fleeting parade of pleasing patterns. The fifteenth-century Italian dance masters were fully aware that for dance to be included (through its association with music) in the liberal arts, it had to be understood both on a physical level and at an intellectual level. Domenico da Piacenza, Guglielmo Ebreo and Antonio Cornazano lived in a world dominated by the concerns and preoccupations of men such as Leonardo Bruni, Vittorino da Feltre, Guarino Guarini and Leon Battista Alberti, men who were public figures and influential in the literary, philosophical, artistic and political affairs in Italy in the first half of the fifteenth century. The intellectual climate created by these men influenced the dance masters as they adapted their choreographies to fit in with this intellectual agenda.

¹ This essay is a chapter in *The Sounds and Sights of Performance in Early Music. Essays in Honour of Timothy J. McGee*, edited by Maureen Epp and Brian E. Power, Ashgate (2009): 197-209.

The reaction of dance masters to contemporary intellectual concerns can also be seen in the sixteenth century. One example is the work of Fabritio Caroso. On the title page of his revised dance treatise *Nobiltà di dame*, published in Venice in 1600, Caroso speaks of his 'newly corrected' dances that have been improved since their first appearance in *Il ballarino*, 19 years earlier. The corrections introduced by Caroso primarily involved introducing balance, repetition, and regular shapes, that is, changes which show an affinity with the wider sixteenth-century intellectual discourse on the arts, and reflect the concepts found in the earlier writings of Vitruvius and Leon Battista Alberti. Caroso was neither unaware of, nor isolated from, current debates on artistic matters, as shown by his concern to provide a theory or set of rules for designing choreographies that were both articulated and written down, and also conformed to the prevailing theory of beauty in the other arts, in order that his choreographies would also be judged to be perfect and to epitomize grace and beauty.²

Often I find that a research project starts with a single question. For example, after my PhD on fifteenth-century Italian dance and music I wanted to find an answer to why are there so many surviving dance treatises and other dance primary sources from *quattrocento* Italy as opposed to France, England, Spain or Germany? What impelled Domenico da Piacenza, Guglielmo Ebreo and Antonio Cornazano to write their treatises, and what influenced them when doing so? My research led me to conclude that developments in dance practice and theory in fifteenth-century Italy was closely related to the development of humanism in that country, and so in 2004 my monograph

² I discuss Caroso's set of rules in the journal article 'Rules for Design': Beauty and Grace in Caroso's Choreographies', *Dance Research*, vol. 25 no. 2 (2007): 107-118.

The Eloquent Body: Dance and Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Italy was published by Indiana University Press.

Other significant pieces of research have come out of my investigations into primary sources that previously had been mostly ignored or dismissed. One major example of this focus is my 2018 monograph, *Footprints of the Dance: An Early Seventeenth-Century Dance Master's Notebook*. The handwritten notebook has turned out to be a unique document in the corpus of surviving sources for early modern European dance.³ The collection of material is essentially personal, so much so that the name of the dance master who recorded much of the material is never mentioned. The manuscript of over one hundred folios, exhibiting a number of different hands both musical and textual, is a mixture of dance-related material and *resets*, the latter being recipes and remedies that would have been useful in daily life, such as remedies for toothache and for epilepsy, and instructions on how to fumigate one's house to ward off the plague. The folios in the manuscript related to dance and the production of theatrical spectacles include ballet plots, a list of ballet titles, a canon of geometric figures for five to sixteen dancers, music for ballet *entrées*, instructions for an exhibition of manoeuvres with a pike, and also a series of instructions for making various types of fireworks. There are also folios related to the teaching of dance and music: the signatures and general descriptions of dance pupils and when they began their lessons, the music of fashionable dances such as the courante in mensural notation, lute tablature and violin tablature, and the notation of words and music of popular *airs de cour*. The notebook is the only known source that provides a canon of possible figures for differing numbers of dancers, which a dance master could consult

when choreographing a figured dance. The instructions for the pike exhibition is also unique. Nothing like this material has ever been found in either choreographic sources or in sources for the martial arts.

In my opinion, the notebook had several functions. It served as a repository of music that was useful for teaching. It also served as a record of the dance pupils taught at the school, though not as an account book that recorded payments for the lessons. It also functioned as a reference work, an *aide-memoire* for the many possible figures which could be used during the composition of *entrées* and the closing Grand Ballet of a *ballet de cour*, an indispensable tool for a professional dance master involved with theatrical dance performances. In part, the notebook also served as a *curriculum vitae* for its owner, as a written document that held examples of what he could teach and whom he had taught, and what he could choreograph and organize for a theatrical spectacle, ballet or masquerade. Today one might describe such a document as an 'event manager's handbook'. The notebook also had a domestic purpose; that is, the recording of useful remedies for everyday (and occasional) ills that could beset a person at that time.

Even though we do not know the name of the dance master who owned the notebook, nor his date or place of birth, the picture that emerges from its pages is an appealing one. The dance master was an entrepreneur who ran a school in Brussels at which dance and music was taught to both ladies and gentlemen from a wide geographic area and from a range of social backgrounds. The range of subject matters of the *resets* – medical, cosmetic and agricultural – reveals a man of wide interests, while the systematic canon of dance figures suggests someone with a logical mind, who appreciated order

³ The manuscript is held in the Kungliga Biblioteket in Stockholm, Cod. Holm S 253.

and design in his art, and his ironic comment on the character of the lovers in the title of one of his ballet plots reveals his sense of humour. He had connections with other musicians and dancers, as well as with other professionals such as the expert in the handling of staff weapons and an artificer (an expert in fireworks), men whose expertise differed from his. The dance-related material in the notebook adds to our understanding of court and civic festivity circa 1600 across Europe more generally, and specifically in Brussels, the city in which the anonymous dance master was living, teaching and performing.

My most recent article, 'Dance Lessons, Mirrors and Minuets: Martin Engelbrecht's Engraving *Das Tantzen / La Danse*' (*Dance Research*, vol. 40 no. 2 (2022): 206-226) resulted from both my desire to discuss a print of a dance lesson that was not widely known, and questions concerning the presence of a large glass mirror and five, tall, single-paned windows in the room where the dance lesson is taking place. My investigation and analysis of this engraving from c. 1730 meant that I had the fun and enjoyment of learning about the print industry in Augsburg in the early eighteenth century and Martin Engelbrecht's position in this industry, how engravings were produced, who bought them, as well as the history of glass production and the place and significance of large, flat, silvered glass mirrors in European society in the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century, topics not usually considered at all germane to a discussion of dance.

Engelbrecht's engraving of a dance lesson also illustrates the benefits of a very detailed examination of a single image, and the wealth of information that such an image contains. In this case, apart from the glass windows and mirror, there are the French and German texts in praise of dancing, the style of clothing worn by the dance master

and his students (wigs, shoes, coats, shirts, breeches, and waistcoats), and the posture of all the six gentlemen portrayed in the engraving, all of which reveal attitudes to dance and the values associated with it. The verses under the engraving, for example, clearly reveal the remarkable consistency of values and ideals which were tied to the dance practices of the middle to upper levels of society for at least 300 years, in spite of the myriad of ways in which society had changed in Europe during those three centuries, especially in regard to political governance, religious beliefs, wars, and scientific and philosophical ideas and knowledge. The positive view of dance and of dance teachers which is presented in the engraving confirms how deeply engrained this view of dance had become by the eighteenth century.

In the second half of the 1990s one of the projects I was working on was a study that investigated parallels between the design of gardens in Renaissance Europe and the choreographic designs of Italian, French and English dance masters. In the resulting article, 'Dance and the Garden: Moving and Static Choreography in Renaissance Europe' (*Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 52 no. 3 (1999): 805-836) I argued that the principles which underlay the design of grand gardens in Europe also underlay the construction of the choreographies, and that changes in the design principles of these gardens – order and measure, symmetry, geometrical forms, straight lines, the construction of the whole out of small compartments, and the creation of enclosed spaces with clear boundaries – occurred at a similar time to corresponding changes in the choreographic practices. That both garden design and choreography are concerned with manipulating, controlling and ordering space is perhaps now taken for granted, but in the 1990s the connection between the two arts had not yet been explored. The work I did on European grand gardens was initiated by a suggestion

from a close colleague and dear friend, the late Graham Pont. Having such colleagues is an enormous help in a research career.

Throughout my research work I have also always been concerned with investigating choreographic structures of different dance genres, such as the English Gresley dances,⁴ the fifteenth-century *balli* and *bassedanze*, and the final dance from the sixth *intermedio* in the 1589 Florentine production held to celebrate the wedding of the Grand Duke, Ferdinando de' Medici and Christine of Lorraine.⁵ Sometimes the work on the choreographic structure of a specific dance genre expands to become part of a larger study. One example of this is my book chapter, 'Dance and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Europe', where I sought to answer the question of what criteria people might have used in the fifteenth century when they labelled dances as belonging to one country or another.⁶ In this essay I discuss various possibilities: choreographic structure, choreographic style, the gestures and the qualities of the movements executed by the dancers, the costumes of the dancers, and the musical style of the accompanying music.

Another fundamental concern of my research is the conviction that early modern European choreographies carried meaning. Social dances carried messages about social interaction between men and women, while

danced spectacles also had a significance and meaning for those who created them and for the spectators. These meanings could include both specific political commentary on royal policy or current political events, as well as more general meanings of glorifying the achievements of a monarch, or projecting an image of a confident and secure kingdom. Furthermore, I argue that *part* of the meaning in these spectacles was conveyed by the dances themselves, in addition to the texts of songs or speeches, the costumes, set designs, machines and music. The meaning carried by these spectacles could also be found in the identity of the dancers who performed, their position in the social hierarchy, and the amount of power they wielded in the governing councils of the state.⁷

Dance is above all a performative art, and this aspect has also formed part of my research work. 2017 saw the publication of the book chapter 'Performer-Audience Relationships in Fifteenth-and Sixteenth-century Danced Spectacles',⁸ while several years earlier I investigated rehearsal practices in theatrical danced spectacles.⁹ Like other topics I have investigated, the conclusions from the rehearsal study prompted further questions that could not be answered at the time. Perhaps one of the most fascinating questions that arose from this study,

⁴ See 'Dance in early Tudor England: an Italian Connection?', *Early Music*, vol. 26 no. 2 (1998): 230-244.

⁵ This project appeared as two articles: 'Cavalieri's Theatrical *Ballo* "O che nuovo miracolo": A Reconstruction', *Dance Chronicle*, vol. 21 no. 3 (1998): 353-388 and 'Cavalieri's Theatrical *Ballo* and the Social Dances of Caroso and Negri', *Dance Chronicle*, vol. 22 no. 1 (1999): 119-133.

⁶ This chapter appeared in the collection of essays *Music, Dance, and Society. Medieval and Renaissance Studies in Memory of Ingrid G. Brainard*, edited by Ann Buckley and Cynthia J.

Cyrus, Medieval Institute Publications (2011): 231-248.

⁷ See 'Choreography and Meaning in Renaissance Danced Spectacles: A Catalyst for Discussion', *Historical Dance*, vol. 4 no. 2 (2012): 29-33.

⁸ This chapter appeared in *Medieval Theatre Performance. Actors, Dancers, Automata and their Audiences*, edited by Philip Butterworth and Katie Normington, D. S Brewer (2017): 123-140.

⁹ See 'Dance Rehearsal Practices in Early Modern Court Spectacles', *Parergon*, vol. 28 no. 1 (2011): 135-153.

concerns how the participation of elite dancers affected the dynamics of the rehearsals with non-elite singers and musicians? We know dance masters had been performing in public with members of the elite at least since the fifteenth century in Italy, when the names of individual dance masters first appear in the records. Presumably, therefore, courtiers and members of the ruling family would be used to receiving instruction from a dance master. But what if it was another member of the creative team who was responsible for overseeing rehearsals? The dance practice of the time required close coordination between dancers and musicians. How was this managed in practice? We know that a great deal of time was devoted to dance rehearsals, and yet there do not appear to have been any records about what happened during these gatherings. The crucial point is that whatever the dynamics of the rehearsals with elite dancers were in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the relationships between the dancers, musicians, those 'directing' could not have been what is normal in rehearsals today. The power balance was quite different.

The theme of difficulties in rehearsals and production disasters was one I returned to later for the EDC Annual Lecture in 2021. It is a very good illustration of the sheer enjoyment that is part of early dance research. Even though an essay or lecture considers serious issues, the material one finds can be highly amusing. Another example is the work I did on dance references in the letters of the sixteenth-century Venetian Andrea Calmo, 'Learning the *Bassadanza* from a Wolf: Andrea Calmo and Dance' (*Dance Research*, vol. 30 no. 1 (2012): 80-97). Calmo's letters are voluminous, written in the Venetian dialect, capricious, impulsive and highly entertaining. The letters, or short essays, are written in a variety of styles: witty, crude, exaggerated and overblown, humorous,

bombastic or learned depending upon the scenario Calmo is describing. Their immediacy and conversational nature, along with the robust and vivid language he employs, and their frequently pointed and pretention-depressing nature, speak to readers today just as they did in the second half of the sixteenth century, when 69 editions were published both during Calmo's lifetime and after his death in 1571. Who could not help but be amused by Calmo's letter where he is railing against his lover Madonna Balzana, who has had the bad judgement to drop him and to take up with another man. Signora Balzana is ridiculed for rejecting a man (ostensibly Calmo) born into a good Venetian family, well educated, wealthy, well-dressed and well-liked, for a man who is a foreigner – a non-Venetian – who has no family, who eats peasants' food, who was raised among sheep, horses and cattle, and who was taught the *bassadanza* by wolves. Having a wolf teach someone a dance that was seen as for the exclusive use of the elite in society heightens the absurdity and exaggerated nature of Calmo's description of his rival. It implies that, with such a teacher, he must perform this elegant and sophisticated dance very badly. By referring to a *bassadanza*, Calmo heaps more insults onto his rival; he implies that the dances he does know are old-fashioned, and that he is similarly out-of-date.

As I reflect on 30 years of research in early dance, two over-riding principles emerge. The first is that I have always tried to analyse fifteenth to early eighteenth-century dance on its own terms, rather than through the lens of a twentieth or twentieth-first-century theory or ideological viewpoint. The second is that when writing one should construct an interesting, engaging and logical narrative. Academic writing should not be boring: it should present the author's arguments in a manner that is accessible to all, and one that captures and holds the reader's attention.

New products from the Historical Dance Society

Ian Cutts

Music for English Ball Dances 1700-1740

This set of 2 CDs, together with the 16-page booklet, provides a new and valuable resource. For the first time, students, teachers and performers of baroque dance now have access to recordings of the music for all the English Ball dances of the baroque period that have survived in notation, opening up this vast repertoire for exploration. All 63 tracks have been dance-trialled and are suitable for the average dancer to use for learning. The music was played by Ian Cutts (baroque violin) and Christine Thornton (harpsichord), using the original arrangements where they exist. The notation of many of the dances can be found online, and links are given in the accompanying notes, along with details of the original publications and modern facsimiles of both dances and music.

Price £20 (2 CDs with 16-page booklet) or £15 (digital download with recordings in MP3 format)

La Belle Dance – Essential Dances from Court and Theatre in Early Eighteenth Century France and England

This book contains 21 notations of ballroom and simple theatre dances from the Baroque period, together with their accompanying music in score and in recordings by various performers on the enclosed CD. The book is designed as a Baroque dance primer. It has an introduction by Kimiko Okamoto which provides essential information such as the definitions of 26 basic steps (illustrated with their notational symbols) and 15 standard dance types, as well as biographies of 8 choreographers and 10 historical terms and concepts relevant to the topic. Each

notation is presented with source and background information, together with some analytical commentary and practical advice.

Price £25 (book and CD, or digital download with recordings in MP3 format)

A New Collection of Dances for Jane Austen

This is an instruction and information book by Anne Daye with recorded music for dance practice by the Austen Allegros (directed by Ian Cutts). The book has 149 pages, with 15 country dances, 10 cotillons, a set of quadrilles, a section on waltzing, a minuet, and a strathspey. It contains a substantial section on steps. Music scores are included for all the dances. There is a wealth of contextual information about the dances and also about Jane Austen's life as it related to dance and music, which makes up about a third of the book. This includes an essay by Paul Cooper. In the back of the book are two CDs packed full of 38 recordings for the dances. The book is interspersed throughout with appropriate illustrations. It concludes with an extensive bibliography of sources.

All the dances are typical of the late Georgian to Regency repertoire, with many links to Jane Austen's life, family and music. The collection is aimed at all dancers who enjoy going to balls, with easy country dances and cotillons, but also a few more challenging dances, including an early set of quadrilles and varied waltzes.

Price £25 (book and 2 CDs, or digital download with recordings in MP3 format)

To order any of the above products, visit historicaldance.org.uk

IN MEMORIAM: Beryl Grey CBE, DBE, 1927 – 2022

For many years, Dame Beryl has been one of the Patrons of the Early Dance Circle, an association stemming from her friendship with Belinda Quirey. Her support is a loss to us and to many more in the world of dance.

From her teen years with the Royal Ballet,

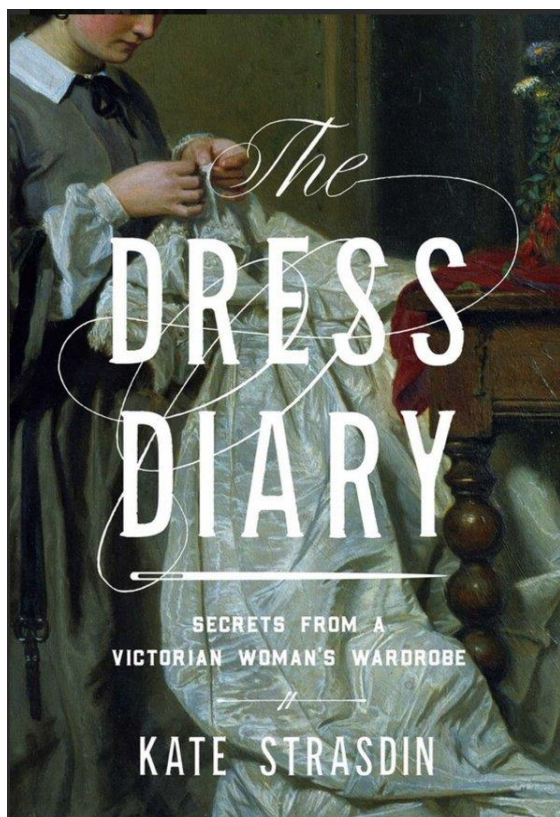


Dame Beryl had a stellar career, both as a dancer and as an artistic director. The Guardian (11/12/22) offers a full account of

her life from her Swan Lake debut at 15 to the honours heaped upon her by the end. She was an inspirational figure and a stalwart supporter of many dance organisations. The Royal Ballet announced the news at https://www.ballet.org.uk/blog-detail/dame-beryl-grey-ch-dbe-1927-2022/?fbclid=IwAR2_YKRJ_TM43p9oQfaEjy-OggqqsVRPRjrVRqP06EjTF-cldfgZCmJJ3Ok, including a number of lovely photos.

In a 2019 interview with The Guardian, she said, I've been very lucky...It's been a lovely life. Dance meant everything to me. Dancing is a very personal expression of happiness."

NEW BOOKS: Advance Notice for those interested in costume



Kate Strasdin, Senior Lecturer in the History and Theory of Fashion at Falmouth University, has a new book coming out from Pegasus on June 6, 2023: *The Dress Diary of Mrs Anne Sykes: Secrets from a Victorian Woman's Wardrobe*.

This is the story of one woman's life, times and wardrobe expressed in her scrapbook of fabrics. Kate has unearthed details about family, friends, social occasions, industry and Empire, all related to a young woman who was given a diary in 1838. She kept swatches of fabric, all carefully annotated, a hoard that Kate has managed to turn into a celebration of ordinary people and their way of life, with all its joys, hardships and social costs.

Norwich and Cambridge Early Dance Weekend, April 2022

Angela Dyer, Capriol Society for Early Dance, Cambridge

It was a great joy to be able to have a weekend of dance at Belsey Bridge Conference Centre again this year. After waiting two years due to the pandemic it felt like a liberation, and we looked forward to it with great excitement.

We were not disappointed. This year the focus was on 18th century French dances, led by Sasza Zargowski. Knowing that he had a group of mixed ability, and let's face it, some of us are not as agile as we used to be, Sasza chose dances of varying levels of difficulty and something to keep us all on our toes.

Over the course of the weekend we learned eight dances; four long-ways dances: La Sultanne, La Courtesanne, L'Egyptienne, and Les Caravanes d'Amour; and four cotillions: Le Turc, La Rose d'Egypte, Le Serail; a 'pot pourri', and La Bizarre. From the titles you can see that this was 18th century dance with an Eastern theme. Whilst many of the Norwich group are familiar with 18th century dance steps, for others it was a new period. Through demonstration and gentle teaching, we came away feeling we had learned a lot about contretemps, and demi-contretemps, chassé, pirouette, balancé and rigaudon.

Traditionally, the Saturday evening session is a little different. Sasza certainly maintained that tradition by choosing to teach a Lebanese dabki, and surprising us all by dressing up in appropriate costume!

As always, the accommodation was good, and the food excellent, all helping towards a very enjoyable weekend. Little did we know that it would be our last at Belsey Bridge, for the centre has had to close, due to difficulties after the pandemic. It is hoped that a new venue can be found for 2023, to keep up this long-standing annual celebration of early dance. I, for one, am grateful to Norwich Historical Dance for continuing to organise the event.

Important Note:

Happily Norwich Historical Dance has found an alternative venue for their next weekend course, which will be on Victorian Quadrille dances, and again led by Sasza Zargowski. It will be at Langley School, Langley Park, Loddon, Norfolk. The dates are 31st March to 2nd April 2023. There may be a non ensuite room still available, if you wish to apply, please contact Harriet Cox at:

harrietcpcox@yahoo.co.uk



The Workshop in 2022

More Thoughts on Early Dance History & EDC Strategy A Number of Responses

Sharon Butler

In the September 2022 issue, I aired some ideas based on a re-reading of Belinda Quirey and Michael Holmes's "Apology for History", 1969 and 1993. I have to admit that the Circular rarely prompts responses from its readers, but a select few did get back to me this time. Our mutual project is to promote the enjoyment, performance and study of historical dance and we are all busily engaged in aspects of that, many of us very successfully. But we also need to develop a serious dialogue about the future.

When Jeremy Barlow replied, it was to contribute some cautionary advice from Hilary Mantel's 2017 Reith lectures, to be applied to those who consign historical dance to a dead past: 'We don't reproduce the past, we create it' ... 'History is not the past - it is the method we have evolved of organising our ignorance of the past'. To those comments, I'd add William Faulkner's great line, "The past is never dead, it isn't even past."

Hazel Dennison too got in touch to supply me with a copy of "The Crucial Gap", a short article by Belinda Quirey from *Dance Research*, 1, i (1983). Understandably, early exponents of historical dance could become frustrated at the general lack of understanding and acceptance. "The Crucial Gap" is a combative piece that attacks amateurs, academics and professional

dancers alike. These last, she finds, move and perceive only in terms of their own training. Too often, they "simply do the nearest ... equivalent ... and go happily off to perform teach or choreograph an often ludicrously wrong version of the work." Anger is a keynote here. Quirey feels that historical dance has been reduced to "mere degree fodder, and the indignity of performances that make one weep." This approach, however vividly expressed (and her writing is vivid), doesn't seem to offer much for the future. It seems to me that it's vital to accept new evidence and a variety of ways of re-imagining the dances of the past. The EDC has established links with many academics who are expanding our knowledge of the field, we support professionals when we can (not often enough) and, of course, we treasure what our member groups are doing to keep this tradition before the public and available to those who want to learn it. Work on all fronts is required. But are we doing the right things and enough of them?

There was considerable informal discussion at the Festival about how to safeguard and pass on our enthusiasm for historical dance. The EDC committee is planning a strategic meeting for a date in the coming year. All ideas most welcome!

Please send them to the Editor for inclusion in the ongoing discussion.

Meanwhile, I have received an email from Miles Thomas of Renaissance Footnotes containing the following call to action and, with permission, have reproduced the bulk of it below. Many of Miles's points have begun to be addressed, but we urgently need dynamic committee members or associates who want to be part of a team to carry such a programme forward, while the regular work of EDC continues alongside.

The EDC needs to take some action now to prevent Early Dance from lapsing into a niche academic discipline. A key goal is to continue encouraging the development of

Early Dance as a well-researched accurate practice, enjoyed by amateurs and explored by academics and professionals, amateurs and academics working together.

The challenge is finding a new generation of amateurs and students interested in early dance, especially for periods less well documented and less popular.

At the very least, current knowledge must be preserved in a form easily accessible to anyone first discovering early dance. Preserving knowledge can potentially draw new interest, but we must take that knowledge to where people are, rather than expecting them to come to the EDC (via membership, website etc.) This should be within the remit of the EDC.

I would propose that the EDC should focus, more than they already do, on the publication of high quality educational videos to allow people to understand the technical details of specific dances and, in the first instance, teach themselves. These videos should be freely available on platforms like YouTube, Facebook, maybe even TikTok. The power and reach of such platforms should get the material in front of anyone who shows even a little interest and drive people towards the EDC and its work.

A lot of work will be needed to develop a framework where EDC funds can be used to sponsor creation of such videos, including:

- * Selecting those dance styles most in need of preservation (while being interesting to the newcomer). The "viability" of specific styles needs to be researched to make this a rational data driven selection, focussing on styles where direct interaction with academics, professionals, and experienced amateur groups is harder to achieve, and quality video is lacking.

- * Obtaining music that is free from copyright or has copyright vested in EDC, or is copyright cleared, and includes sheet music (for sale at a modest price via the EDC).

- * Developing a standardised format which covers a dance completely and has "calls to action" to bring people to the EDC for assistance, deeper knowledge and contacts,

including close ups of detailed movements, and overheads of floor patterns, as well as entertaining representations.

- * Engaging academics and professionals to help validate the accuracy and refine performance (while using amateur EDC members as much as possible).

- * Building relationships with videographers and editors to record video with good production values and good technical quality (at least 1080p 30fps, ideally 4k 60fps). Shoot days and editing need funding, perhaps by using students from relevant technical colleagues as part of their studies. Fortunately, the cost of suitable equipment has decreased, although the skills to do it well are less common.

- * Soliciting for funding to help pay for preservation projects which the EDC cannot fully fund themselves.

- * Managing EDC branded channels on streaming platforms (with EDC benefitting from any monetisation from the platform or from direct sponsorship with in-video promotional message).

Clearly this will need to be a continual effort over many future years. It may be possible to undertake some projects within the format of a summer school.

I think this is worthy of a serious discussion by the EDC committee, and also the wider membership.

*Kind regards,
Miles Thomas.*

Many thanks to Miles for such a full and thoughtful contribution to our ongoing discussion of the future of early dance. Clearly, for such a programme to be undertaken successfully, we need to draw upon the many and varied skills of our membership over an extended period of time.

Please send further thoughts and reactions to the editor for inclusion in the May Circular.

ANOTHER OF LADY THISTLEDOWN'S REPORTS

Dear Readers,

How lovely to have your company again. I do hope the world has treated you well since my last letter. No doubt your lives have been eventful....and no doubt I will have heard some, if not all, of the details already...for ours is a small world and very little escapes notice, especially anything scandalous.

I think I left you after the magnificent Ball at Hopetoun – an occasion that left Mrs B quite exhausted and ready to sink onto her couch with the *sal volatile*. But now I must recall events in September in the beautiful city of Bath – always a pleasure to visit and particularly so when rumour says (I am not one for rumours as my readers know well, but this is not mere speculation) that the lady author of a certain entertaining novel may be resident. 'Pon rep I do not much admire the novel (nor indeed so-called novelists – they edge too closely to the border of what is seemly) but I am assured this lady comes from a reputable, if modest, family. She might go on to do great things.

The small season in Bath provided so many diversions that I fear it warrants more, but I confine myself here to a few highlights. First, a picnic *en plein air* at Sydney Pleasure Gardens (perhaps too much pleasure in the case of Sir R who was seen imbibing too freely of the beverage from his hamper and then falling asleep beneath an oak tree, risking grass stains on his inexpressibles). Suffice to say a snoring man, no matter how distinguished his lineage, is not attractive, though the pert Miss C did not seem so persuaded and I would hope to hear of a betrothal in the very near future. Then, visits to Laycock, Castle Combe and Bowood provided the more elderly with opportunities to stroll and speculate, whilst Society's younger

members provided matter for those very speculations. Several gentlemen of my acquaintance move easily between the two groups, pleasing both. Sir J is one such, a Pinkest of the Pinks. Enjoy his easy manners ladies, but do not be taken in by that air of innocence. He is indeed a 'man about town', a bit of a gabster, perhaps best left to those of us with experience of life. Magnificent Balls in the Pump Rooms and Guildhall provided displays of finery *sans pareil*! Some ladies seemed a trifle exposed (it is wiser to leave more to the imagination; chilly draughts can mean an early tomb). Under the expert guidance of Lady L of Bath, light footed ladies and gentlemen (and some not quite so – are more lessons needed?) enjoyed country dances, cotillions and quadrilles.

I cannot but mention the Rout at Lady A's - a crush indeed. Guests, well oiled with the Prince Regent's favourite punch, were lucky to hear Lady AM play the harp. How fortunate that she was passing through Bath and kind enough to display both her beauty and her talent. A few gentlemen lowered the tone, reading from a Guide to Covent Garden (not a book I'm familiar with but indeed several ladies were brought to the blush). Showing a fine leg in evening attire allows a gentleman to rouse the interest of every pretty gal in the room; humour of the gentlemen-club variety is likely to bring on a fit of the vapours.

Late September brought a sojourn in the Eternal City, hosted by the Marchesa D. Once again language knew no barrier as we shared art, literature, culinary delights, dancing – and who knows – even *amore*. Then, yet more dancing was enjoyed before the year end, as Hampshire Regency Dancers held a Chinoiserie Ball to celebrate their 20th anniversary. Much has been said about that evening (my lips are firmly

sealed), but I will always remember the warm friendship, the music, the graceful dancing – and the wonderful cake made by Lord and Lady G.

A final ‘Grand Tour’ Ball at Normansfield, hosted by Mrs B brought the small season to an end in time for the Christmas festivities. What it was to witness poor Lady A abandoned on the sidelines as her designated partner, Lord J, failed to appear for the opening dance. Lady A, will you never learn? Lady S danced three (or was it four) times with Lord T (Lady S, ask yourself ‘Do you really mean to marry him?’). Lord M dribbled his third glass of wine down his silk waistcoat, never a pretty sight.....

And now it’s 2023 – dance classes begin shortly, events are planned. Why not join in the fun?

I remain your faithful correspondent,
Lady Thistledown

For more information on how to join this happy world (or indeed any gossip you wish to share), Contact ladythistledownathome@gmail.com.

SOME DANCE POETRY FOR NEW YEAR

John Dryden, *Amphytrion*, 1690 “Dancing is the poetry of the foot”,

Sir John Davies’ *Orchestra, or A Poeme of Dauncing* (1596) both attacks and praises the dance. It contains a goldmine of dance quotations. Stanzas 110 – 112 provide a little marriage counselling that recalls the Renaissance practice of the woman taking the lead for one part of a dance.

Concords true picture shineth in thys Art,
VWhere diuers men and women ranked be,
And euery one doth daunce a seuerall part,
Yet all as one, in measure doe agree,
Obseruing perfect vniformitie:

All turne together, all together trace,
And all together honor and embrace.

If they whom sacred Loue hath link'd in
one,
Doe, as they daunce, in all theyr course of
life

Neuer shall burning grieffe nor bitter mone,
Nor factious difference, nor vnkind strife,
Arise betwixt the husband and the wife.

For whether forth or back, or round he
goe,
As the man doth, so must the woman
doe.

VWhat if by often enterchaunge of place
Sometime the woman get the vpper hand?
That is but done for more delightfull grace,
For on that part shee doth not euer stand:
But as the Measures law doth her
commaund

Shee wheeles about, and ere the daunce
doth end,
Into her former place shee doth
transcend.

Here Davies may be referring to the woman taking the handhold illustrated here:



Pontus und Sidonia, Stuttgart (?) - Werkstatt Ludwig Henfflin, um 1475 Cod. Pal. germ. 142 Folio 16r.

By taking the upper hand, the lady leads the man, usurping his place. Naturally and quite gently, but firmly, Sir John puts the woman back in her place.
How quaint!