

3

A Path to Virtue: Dance and Education in the Seventeenth Century

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The organisers were kind enough to tolerate a report rather than a formal referenced paper, so this synopsis records approximately the themes of my presentation. The notion of a report in progress also acknowledged that the core of the information here is founded on the scholarship of Andrew Ashbee¹, set alongside my research into the Stuart masque and dancing at court. My interpretations are inevitably based on slight evidence, and further archival research may alter the picture.

Dance specialists of the Jacobean court

The first point to make is that the terminology of the court records does not seem to include ‘dancing master’ but rather ‘tutor for dance’ or ‘dancing tutor’, whilst even ‘dancer’ is a rare designation, applied to French performers. Dance professionals were part of the Jacobean musical establishment, within which they had different expertises probably based on individual skills. The separation from the profession of music into a new independent profession of dance was driven by the demands of the court masque, paralleling developments in France. Tutors for dance at court did not dance in masques until the late 1630s; knowledge of dance teachers outside the court is too limited to attempt generalisations.

My research has resulted in a clear picture of the importance of dancing and masques to King James amongst his policies to achieve a calm change of dynasty in England, with advance planning before 1603. I propose that coaching the dance skills of Queen Anne and the two eldest children Henry and Elizabeth were key to this policy. The first professional to assist was Thomas Cardell (fl. 1574 – 1621)², dancing tutor to Queen Elizabeth and

lutenist. Bearing in mind her reputation for excellence in dance and her longevity as a dancer, there was no-one better to pass on the graceful skill appropriate to an English queen to the new incumbent. He was created Groom in Anne’s Privy Chamber whilst the financial records show rewards for frequent attendance outside London. Meanwhile, his son Francis Cardell (fl. 1604 – 1605) was assigned to Princess Elizabeth, but on his demise the father took on this responsibility too. Making a good impression on the European scene was also a factor in James’s policies. In the first year of his reign, Jacques Bochan (fl. 1603 – 1653), also known as Cordier, entered Anne’s service until 1614. Sent across the Channel with letters from the English ambassador in Paris, it is likely that he was released by Henri IV for this important duty. He became the most famous dance tutor for royal women in Europe, as well as a highly-regarded violinist. English court records indicate that his role was to enhance the personal skill of his clients, rather than to create masque dances. A priority for the Jacobean court would have been social dancing, with the masques developing later.

The first tutor assigned to Prince Henry was Nicholas Villiard (fl. 1604 – 1605). It is likely that he arrived in England in the train of the French ambassador, the Marquis de Vitry, along with Charles Guérolt fencing instructor and M. Antoine riding instructor. That three such masters were sent by Henri IV was noted by the Venetian ambassador. I deduce that the education of Henry was discussed during the visit of the Extraordinary Ambassador from France in the first months of the new reign, resulting in this arrangement in January 1604. On the demise of Villiard, the Englishman

Thomas Giles (fl. 1605 – 1617) was appointed to teach Henry. Giles may have been a member of a theatrical and musical family of this surname, but we have no direct evidence for this. When Henry died, Giles became part of Anne's establishment; he contributed dances to masques.

Prince Charles was enfeebled by rickets and aged only three at his father's accession. By 1611, a French master for the young prince was sought. I suggest that this was one motivation for the journey made by Jeremy Herne in early summer to Paris, bearing in mind that Henri IV had been assassinated the previous year so was unavailable for consultation through the usual diplomatic channels! Sebastian La Pierre (fl.1611 – 1646) remained in England until the Civil War drove him back to France. By the 1630s we have evidence of his creative work in masques, probably dancing too, and the work of his son Guillaume. The La Pierre family contributed to dance under Louis XIV, forming an intriguing link between English and French dance theatre. A second tutor for dance accompanied Charles on his journey to Spain to court a wife. Jacques Gaultier (fl. 1622 – 1642) would have ensured that the young English prince was up-to-date with French style. Gaultier was a highly-regarded lutenist, but also gained a reputation for violence. He spent a period in the Tower following charges of assault on a young female pupil.

The above dance specialists formed half of the Jacobean establishment. Jeremy Herne (fl.1608 – 1640) was employed to compose masque dances, becoming the specialist for antimasques, as well as teaching. From the little known about him, I surmise that he may have had a background in the London theatre, perhaps as a dancing master combining private clients with the training and choreography of boy actors and adult players. Nicolas Confesse (fl. 1610 – 1635), visitor from France, contributed to masque dances also: the circumstances suggest that he brought experience of French burlesque dance to England. The five members of the queen's

French musicians devised a ballet for her in 1617. Like violinist Adam Vallet (fl. 1607 – 1625) who danced for James during a visit to Newmarket, they represent the French profession of dancing violinist. A late arrival on the scene was Barthélemy de Montagut, employed by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham; as a baladin (dance professional), he may have been a model for the new English profession of dancer that emerged during the 1630s. These individuals represent the three dance specialisms within music: tutor, dancing violinist and dancer.

The high status of the dance tutors is represented by generous wages and fees for extra responsibilities in preparation for masques. Thomas Cardell was distinguished by receiving the highest salary of the whole musical establishment. In 1611, he was receiving £35 for his quarter wages (three months) whilst viol player Alphonso Ferrabosco received £12.10s; in 1623 John Dowland received £11.10s. Cardell was also being paid high rewards for riding charges in carrying messages for Elizabeth I, whilst we have confirmation that his son carried letters from Princess Elizabeth to Cecil. It is time we acknowledged that these dance tutors were a highly-paid elite, intimate with the royal family and entrusted with their private correspondence. It is also important to note that teaching was mainly in the hands of Englishmen, plus a Frenchman who settled in England, with some input from French visitors. A pattern of concern at the highest level with the dance skills of the royal family is also evidenced by the involvement of Henri IV and the interest expressed by other diplomats.

Anne, Henry and Elizabeth were already capable dancers in 1603, which implies sound instruction in Scotland. At present, we know nothing about this. James himself was also taught by an Englishman, William Hudson, who may have still been on the court establishment. Anne was quick to demonstrate the dance skills of her children on the journey south³. At Worksop Manor in June 1603, Henry (aged 9) danced for the

company followed by Elizabeth (aged 6) who danced a galliard with William Cecil (aged 12). The coaching of Villiard allowed Henry to lead the dancing in honour of the peace treaty with Spain in August 1604 which included a galliard with capers and a correnta. He danced in the revels of the masques, then in 1611 made his debut as a masquer in *Oberon*.

Elizabeth expressed her appreciation of Francis Cardell in a letter to Cecil, Secretary of State, who oversaw her education for Anne, and asked him to ensure that he stayed with her, as their majesties were so pleased with her dancing. James later rewarded her for her progress in 'virtuous exercises' with a diamond jewel. Like her brother, she gained experience by dancing in the revels, making a first appearance in a masque alongside her mother in 1610. However, her second appearance in *Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly* in 1611 was, I would argue, her presentation on the international marriage market, and far more significant.

Charles must have received sound initial tuition, perhaps first from Thomas Giles, then from Sebastian La Pierre, as he was brought into the public gaze in small ways from 1608 (aged 7). I suspect that James wanted to show the world that he had two promising sons to found a dynasty, demonstrating that Charles had overcome his physical problems. Following a successful debut in 1617, he continued to dance receiving praise and giving great joy to his father. He became the first (and last) king to dance theatrical works in England since Henry VIII.

Masques for education and moral learning

The reputation in history of the Jacobean and Caroline masques is confused, coloured by the jocular report of the masque of Solomon and Sheba with its drunken protagonists. The sober truth is that the masques were both important political statements and seen as a vehicle for moral learning. We have clear evidence of the participation in masque performance in schools, in addition to colleges such as the Inns of Court and at

Oxford University. Amongst examples of performances within educational establishments is *Cupid's Banishment* 1617 performed by the young women (daughters of court officials) of Ladies Hall, Deptford for Anne of Denmark. One group delivered an antimasque, another group the main masque dances, whilst a senior girl delivered the central speech. Rachel Fane (aged 14) of Apethorpe both wrote and choreographed *A May Masque* in 1627. *Comus* (1634) by Milton and *Cupid and Death* (1653) by Shirley were composed whilst the authors were working as tutors, so that the masques demonstrated the skills of their teenage pupils.

Alongside this use of the masque within educational contexts, similar to drama performances in schools and colleges, was the development of a form of masque for performance on the public stage. The term 'moral masque' was occasionally used, and can be applied to several dramatic texts for which dance embodied the moral theme. The first moral masque was *The World Tossed at Tennis* 1620 performed for Prince Charles by his players. The genre allowed the common player to present serious dancing as well as the comic and grotesque style of the antimasque, as the moral theme culminated in a grand masque of virtuous or heroic characters. This genre was tolerated by the Parliamentary powers during the Interregnum. *Cupid and Death* is a moral masque, lacking the revels of the court masque. As Davenant began his campaign to revive the drama within the limitations of Commonwealth laws, he offered works that featured either singing or dancing. *The History of Sir Francis Drake* (1653) was one of two works with multiple episodes of dance, on a theme of Protestant valour acceptable to the age. It was a moral masque: in effect a ballet with a verbal context.

The young Princess Elizabeth saw her education as 'a path to virtue': a clue to the role of both social dancing and theatrical performance in the education of royal children in the seventeenth century, and the

consequent importance of the professionals who assisted this. The model was followed by noble and bourgeois families supported by a profession of tutors for dance outside the court of whom we know even less. It is to be hoped that further research could uncover a little more knowledge of this important profession.

Notes

¹ Ashbee, A. (1988 – 1991) *Records of English Court Music* Vols. 3, 4 & 5, Aldershot: Scolar Press.
Ashbee, A., & D. Lasocke (1998) *A Biographical Dictionary of English Court Musicians 1485 – 1714*, Aldershot: Ashgate

² The dates given relate to known facts of their professional practice, not birth or death necessarily.

³ London: Her HMC Salisbury (1933) *Calendar of the Manuscripts of...The Marquess of Salisbury, His Majesty's Stationery Office*