

Early Dance Circle Annual Lecture 2024

Dance, Stillness and the Early Modern Image

Lynsey McCulloch | Royal Shakespeare Company

I want to firstly say ‘thank you’ to the Early Dance Circle for inviting me to speak today. I felt really very honoured to receive the invitation and I’m delighted to be here.

So, I’d like to talk today about ‘dance, stillness and the early modern image’. I want to explore, with you, the iconicity of the dance image. Taking as my case study the English court masque of the early seventeenth century, I will examine stillness within dance—not as a precursor to motion—but as a state in its own right. My talk will point to the ways in which early concert dance employed stillness but also consider the representation of dance as a static image within the graphic systems of the early modern period. Finally, I will look closely at the generative relationship between movement and stillness, one that may have repercussions for our understanding of status and agency in this period. The interplay between dance and the visual arts typically reinforces the iconicity integral to both forms. Inigo Jones’s costume designs for the English masque, such as this one, harnessed both classical iconography and a more contemporary visual politics. They provided one component of a powerful dance image; the choreography of court entertainment—characterised by pose and pattern—provided another. But, while this iconicity is often supportive of a socio-cultural status quo, it can, in some cases, be repurposed in the interest of a more progressive politics.

I work as a Research Fellow at the Royal Shakespeare Company. I spend some of my time with school children who are studying Shakespeare, often at first resisting Shakespeare! And I took advantage of a recent spell in a classroom to do a wee survey. I asked the class to help me come up with a definition of dance. I had some fun responses. Some defined dance as ‘hopping’ or ‘wriggling’. And that’s certainly how my own son dances. Others mentioned ‘flossing’, ‘voguing’ and ‘breaking’. We had ‘throwing shapes’ and some retro ‘busting a groove’. But the students eventually came to a consensus around... ‘Movement to Music’. And I think many people, children and adults, would agree with that definition, especially in relation to older and more traditional forms of dance. But, even in regard to contemporary dance, commentators continue to identify dance with movement, stubbornly I would suggest. Academic specialists in dance photography talk about the ‘paradox’ of trying to capture dance using a still image. William A. Ewing, a prominent scholar and curator of dance photography, states:

Dance is the movement of bodies through space and time. Dance is fluidity and continuity. Dance connects, dance unfolds. Dance envelops us; it enters through the eye and ear. Photography imprisons in two dimensions. Photography flattens and shrinks. Photography tells the ear nothing. It fragments time and fractures space. Yet movement is the goal.¹

It’s a lovely description of dance, and its affects, but is it accurate? For Ewing, the ultimate ambition, and the decisive challenge, of dance photography is to capture motion. The identification of dance with movement is self-evident. It inevitably follows that traditional photography, as a system for producing two-dimensional and non-moving imagery, is ill-equipped to represent dance. In other words, the stillness of photography is no match for the movement of dance. But are we missing

¹ William A. Ewing, *The Fugitive Gesture: Masterpieces of Dance Photography* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 27.

something when we define dance as synonymous with movement? I'd point us here to one of Rudolf Laban's descriptions of dance.

Dance is movement, its tendency is labile. Nevertheless, the harmonization of movement is allied with a certain stabilization. The simplest form of harmony is symmetry, equilibrium.²

Laban, rather than equating dance exclusively with motion, recognises the relationship between stillness and movement that characterises the form. This relationship is not static, no pun intended. We could, of course, look at the shifting interaction between movement and stillness historically but I'd like today to focus on early modern European dance, specifically the dance presented at court, where, for me, the interrelation of these two physical states was employed and exploited by dance practitioners.

In early modern Europe, attempts to codify and communicate dance via the static image—using for example art, sculpture and notational systems—hint at a sympathetic relationship between motion and stillness in Renaissance culture, one that—given the origins of Western theatrical dance in the genre of the court masque—remains influential today. This compatibility hinges on an early modern conception of dance that privileged static pose and still patterning over dynamic motion. European court dance relied upon a large repertoire of fixed bodily positions and miming gestures. Dance historian Jennifer Nevile notes that pose and posture signified authority in the elevated environs of Renaissance France, Italy, and England and that these practises were formalised in courtly dance. Nevile's likening of the 'horticultural and kinetic arts'³ alerts us to the importance of pattern in early dance; the geometry of the formal garden—with its lines, shapes and symmetry—is replayed in the creation of spatial patterns within dance.

[Here](#), we see the reconstruction of a geometric Elizabethan garden at Kenilworth Castle in Warwickshire, down the road from me, originally created by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, for the Queen herself. An eye-witness account of the original garden, penned in 1575, makes reference to its 'order and dignity', its 'symmetry', and its 'due proportion',⁴ all terms used also to describe the dance choreography of the period. Moreover, the spatial patterns of choreographed dance were designed to fit the environments in which those dances were performed. The garden was not only an example of the geometric bent of elite culture in this period but often a location for dancing itself.

Dance performers in early modern Europe were required to represent geometrical shapes and figures. The terms 'measure' or 'measures' were used frequently to describe dancing in this period, reflecting dance's relationship with, as these definitions from the *Oxford English Dictionary* confirm, rhythmic sound, due proportion, and a specific unit of time. I'd also note, in the definition of measure as a dance in bold here, the OED's keenness to characterise 'measures' as archaic and obsolete! Philosophically, these characteristics—of measurable proportion and symmetry—spoke to an early modern model of the universe as a space of harmonic order and balance. As such, they were shared across the arts, visible, to quote Erica Veevers, in:

² Rudolf Laban, *Choreographie, erstes Heft* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1926), 15.

³ Jennifer Nevile, 'Dance and the Garden: Moving and Static Choreography in Renaissance Europe,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999): 805.

⁴ Letter from Robert Langham, Gentleman Usher to Robert Dudley; see <https://www.aschb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Vol-33.pdf>, 18.

the spatial relationships of architecture and sculpture, the colours and proportions of painting, and [...] the measures of poetry.⁵

Ensemble dance works based on these mathematical principles were performed across Europe. French poet Pierre de Ronsard, exposed to festive dancing at the sixteenth-century French court, was made dizzy by the parade of geometrical figures: ‘circular, now long and then narrow, now pointed, as a triangle’.⁶ *Le Balet Comique de la Reyne*, seen [here](#) in a contemporary engraving and performed at the French court in 1581, contained no less than forty distinct geometrical figures.⁷

Across the Channel from France, despite some cultural differences, the court masque was equally precise and measured. As I’m sure you know, the masque as it was performed in this country was an elaborate and private festive entertainment, a multimedia extravaganza comprising elements of drama, poetry, dance, music, costume and stage design. Flagrantly expensive, masques employed professional performers but also provided opportunities for courtiers, even monarchs, to perform. And, as in France, they embraced geometry. At the English court of the early seventeenth century, Ben Jonson, author of many masque texts, describes, in mathematical terms, the dancing performed by female masquers, including Queen Anne, in his 1609 *Masque of Queenes*. He states:

A more *numerous* composition could not be seene: *graphically* dispos’d into letters, and honoring the Name of the most sweete, and ingenious *Prince, Charles, Duke of Yorke* [.] Wherein, beside that principall grace of perspicuity, the motions were so even, & apt, and theyr expression so just; as if *Mathematicians* had lost *proportion*, they might there have found it.⁸

In this example, typographic systems provide Ben Jonson and Thomas Giles—who produced the choreography for the masque—with the vocabulary required to create and to describe the dance. The masquers become dancing letters, flattering the King’s son. As we know, the masque was produced by the elite for the elite. Its often complex symbolism was designed to praise and protect monarchy. This dance was also, in Jonson’s words, ‘numerous’, an indication of both a measured harmony and a mathematical composition. Static imagery—of letters, numbers, and geometric shapes—inspires the choreographic imagination and is made manifest on the early modern courtly stage.

As Mark Franko makes explicit, ‘in geometrical dance, it was frequently necessary to strike a significant stillness at the heart of motion, a posed quiescence in dynamic stasis, in order to assure the legibility of the pattern or the characters to which the pattern gave rise’.⁹ For a choreographed pattern to be ‘read’ by a spectator, the dancers must be still. And, as dance developed into an increasingly codified form, its communicability became essential. To survive, the choreographed work must be documented. The use of pose and pattern—both easily illustrated in two dimensions—no doubt assisted this process of reproduction via the emergence of notational systems. But the correlation between the stillness within dance and the static nature of a representational symbol is not only convenient: it is constitutive. While historians and theorists have debated the efficacy of static representations of dance, few have considered the feedback loops that

⁵ Erica Veevers, *Images of Love and Religion: Queen Henrietta Maria and Court Entertainments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 194.

⁶ Quoted in Margaret M. McGowan, *Ideal Forms in the Age of Ronsard* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), 224.

⁷ Jennifer Nevile (ed.), Introduction to *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick, 1250–1750* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 24.

⁸ Ben Jonson, *Masque of Queens* (London: N. Okes for R. Banian and H. Wally, 1609).

⁹ Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 16.

emerge from these outputs. Different representational schema—be they notation systems, sculptures, etchings or engravings—do not merely describe a dance and allow for its reproduction. They, each of them, represent a distinctive dance philosophy. As such, they influence future choreographies and contribute powerfully to the production of meaning within dance.

This next section of my talk examines the relationship between the codification and the content of dance works, noting their shared investment in the static image. How was early modern dance captured for posterity? How was it inscribed? The answer to this question is that it very often wasn't!

Barbara Ravelhofer questions the extent to which dance was successfully notated in the late medieval and early modern periods:

Between 1400 and 1699, very few choreographic works were written or published; current counts circulating within the scholarly community arrive at a two-digit number.¹⁰

The absence of an accepted notational system was one impediment to the wider documentation of dance. In many cases, dance notation—far from being iconic or graphic in its presentation—took the form of textual description. Books containing the content of English masques, not unlike the *livrets* or leaflets of French court tradition, were often sold following a performance. Ravelhofer cites several early modern English dramas that make reference to the booklets that accompanied masques, amongst them Thomas Middleton's *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's* from 1611, which describes these elucidating texts as the 'abstract' of the masque performance.¹¹ Given the politically charged nature of the genre and its allegorical complexity, such booklets were in high demand amongst the nation's gentry, especially those not present at a performance. Following the 1603 Christmastide masques at the court of James I, the Earl of Worcester, who had been in attendance, wrote to the Earl of Shrewsbury, who was not.

Whear as your *Lordship* saythe youe wear never particulerly advertised of the maske I haue been at 6 d charge with chore to send youe the booke *which* wyll enform youe better than I Can having Coted the names of the ladyes applyed to eche goddes, and for the other I would lykewyse haue sent youe the ballet yf I Could haue got yt for money but theus bookes as I heare are all Cawled in, and in truthe I wyllnot take vppon mee to set that down *which* wyser then my self doe not vnderstand.¹²

Shrewsbury, absent from court, is clearly keen to better grasp the importance of these festive revels. What the textual record of the masque would provide him with, as Worcester's reluctance to offer his own description suggests, is a full account of the work's complex symbology and political underpinnings, the underlying message courtiers were anxious to understand. In this instance, one of the Christmastide masque's politics proved so sensitive that its accompanying text was withdrawn

¹⁰ Barbara Ravelhofer, *The Early Stuart Masque: Dance, Costume, and Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 16.

¹¹ Quoted in Ravelhofer, *Early Stuart Masque*, 4.

¹² Lambeth Palace Library, Talbot MS. 3201, Letter 182, f. 1^v (or quoted in Barbara D. Palmer, 'Court and Country: The Masque as Sociopolitical Subtext,' *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 7 (1995): 338-354 (346)).

from sale. In performance, the employment of dance as a legible sign system was central to the masque's political messaging.¹³

But, while this messaging was communicated to the reader and decipherable in part to the spectator, the absence of a developed notational system in England at this time impeded efforts to reproduce dance in the printed work and was arguably injurious to dance's standing within the arts. Written accounts were able to communicate dancers' opening positions, followed by the sequence and subsequent direction of steps. But floor patterns were mostly absent from choreographic description across Europe, as was any clear sense of the alignment of steps and music.

Thoinot Arbeau's influential dance treatise *Orchésographie* from 1588 provided readers with the information they needed to match dance steps with musical notes and employed written description alongside woodcuts of individual dancers' movements but was unable to reproduce spatial floor patterns.¹⁴ By the seventeenth century, however, dancing masters—using pictorial methods, usually in the form of figurative drawings—were able to record geometric dance sequences.

As Jennifer Nevile has discussed in her book *Footprints of the Dance*, the extant notebook of a French dancing master active in Belgium in the 1610s contains over 450 drawings of figures for groups of dancers, including composite figures used to create complex choreography.¹⁵ Later still, the Beauchamps-Feuillet system, developed by Pierre Beauchamps at the French court following a request from Louis XIV (14th) and first published in Raoul Auger Feuillet's 1700 dance treatise *Chorégraphie*, became the first graphic notation system to be widely adopted across Europe.¹⁶

[Here](#) (scroll down to second image on page), we can see an example of this notation system, one of its great innovations being the presentation of the dance steps relative to the music, seen on a staff at the top. The use of track lines makes the choreography legible, with a geographically demarcated 'route' across the floor. Alongside this is a complex ideographic system of abstracted forms which is used to convey the core choreographic information. Graphically, Beauchamp-Feuillet notation provided an easy-to-understand indication of where the dancer was meant to be and when they were meant to be there, alongside some indication of what they were meant to be doing. The system was functional enough to support the transmission of French dance across Europe.

However, the publication in Nuremberg of Gregorio Lambranzi's lesser-known 1716 *New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing* points us towards a gradual rethink in the function and purpose of dance notation. Rather than provide a comprehensive record of popular European dances or capture a one-off court performance, Lambranzi's manual takes the form of a choreographic toolkit, from which dancing masters were able to select component parts for the production of an original work. He stated, and do note this is a translation.

¹³ The three masques performed during that yuletide season were Samuel Daniel's *Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, referred to by Worcester at the start of this extract, an unpublished masque containing Indian and Chinese knights, and an unidentifiable Scottish masque. It is not clear which of the latter two works Worcester refers to when he describes a masque text being recalled but it is perhaps worth noting that the Scottish masque was already a substitute for another entertainment deemed unsuitable for the French ambassador. It is clear from these controversies that masques were politically motivated and subject to considerable debate. See Palmer, 'Court and Country,' 346.

¹⁴ 'Thoinot Arbeau' was the pseudonym of French cleric Jehan Tabourot (1520–95).

¹⁵ See Jennifer Nevile, *Footprints of the Dance: An Early Seventeenth-Century Dance Master's Notebook* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

¹⁶ For a thorough account of this history of Beauchamp-Feuillet notation see Jennifer Nevile, 'Baroque Dance,' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Baroque*, ed. John D. Lyons (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 264–285.

My aim is not to describe in detail the choreography of these dances or any particular *pas* [step], still less to depict all their possible variations; this would be too ambitious a work and, moreover, would necessitate a large volume. But, by means of the illustration and its accompanying air, . . . I shall portray a principal character in appropriate costume, the style of his dance, and the manner of its execution. I shall also explain the essential matters in such illustrations and indicate what *pas* should be employed. However, it is not my intention to restrict anyone to my method but to leave each dancer free to adapt it as he pleases.¹⁷

We can see [here](#) Lambranzi's illustrative approach. His emphasis on adaptation, even improvisation, and his provision of a flexible tool for choreographers is representative of a shift in the early modern understanding of what dance could be. Dance notation, in slowly becoming a pictorial rather than textual sign system, does not simply mark this shift; it propels and encourages it. The static image is, in other words, central to the development of dance as a medium.

This gradual turn from written description to visual symbolisation within dance notation had myriad effects. The representation of dance as a 'written' form in manuscripts and published works had traditionally positioned it as one element of a larger text rather than a medium in its own right. The masque at the early modern English and Scottish courts may have been an intermedial device but it was one in which the written element was central, with dance simply repeating and reiterating in bodily action and via established measures the main masque narrative. Is it then possible that the increase in graphic and pictorial dance notation, in providing dance with a 'language' of its own, liberated it from the multimedia spectacle that was the court performance and allowed it to develop its own genres, the first of which was the standalone ballet? One could argue that Lambranzi's pictorial notation system allowed for improvisation, providing the component parts required for choreographing new works rather than reproducing existing ballets. The codification of dance, alongside its representation as image rather than text, did not limit the medium—as such classification systems conceivably might—but rather liberated it from a subordinate position in early modern theatrical culture.

But, in addition to thinking about the representation of dance as a static image, we can also look at the static image as a feature itself of dance performance.

More specifically the 'statuas moving' or 'moving statues' described by Francis Bacon here as one of the key devices of the English masque.¹⁸ Not only did court masques utilise stillness as a key element of their choreographic vocabulary but they also drew close attention to the relationship between motion and stasis in their narrative arcs, musical scores, and overall design. In seventeenth-century Venice, which saw the emergence of a publicly performed opera much influenced by private court ceremonials, dance remained central, as did playful nods to the static image as a feature of early modern dance practice. In the 1665 Venetian opera, *Mutio Scevola*, with a libretto by Nicolò Minato and a score by Francesco Cavalli, eight dancers posing as statues descend from their pedestals to perform a short choreography, or *ballo*, before returning to their plinths.¹⁹

This synergy between motion and stasis is also explicit in the English masque's fascination with figurative sculpture. The medium, in part influenced by masque designer Inigo Jones's artistic and

¹⁷ Gregorio Lambranzi, *New and Curious School of Theatrical Dancing*, trans. Derra de Moroda (New York: Dover, 2002), 15.

¹⁸ Francis Bacon, *The Essays*, edited by John Pitcher (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 176.

¹⁹ Rebecca Harris-Warrick, 'Dance and Ballet,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Seventeenth-Century Opera*, edited by Jacqueline Waeber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 137.

architectural predilections, is full of statues. Well-travelled, the architect and designer Jones used images from his *Roman Sketchbook* and engraving collections for his masque costume designs.

John Peacock, working on Jones's iconography, has identified this costume design for a [Fiery Spirit](#) in *The Lords' Masque*—a 1613 masque designed by Jones and written by Thomas Campion for the marriage night of James I's daughter, Elizabeth, and Frederick, Elector Palatine—as a composite image of two figures from antique sculpture.²⁰

The [Apollo Belvedere](#) and the younger of two fauns in [Two Fauns Carrying a Child](#), pictured here in an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi after an anonymous bas-relief. Campion's *Lords' Masque* not only contains costume designs based on sculptural precedents, but it also includes the spectacle of eight silver statues, impersonated by female masquers, animating and dancing at Jove's behest, and a finale in which built golden statues of the bride and groom are revealed in, and I quote, 'gracious postures' (45-46).²¹ Moreover, *The Lords' Masque* was one of three masques produced in 1613 to celebrate the diplomatic marriage of Princess Elizabeth to Frederick, Elector Palatine.

Francis Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn* and George Chapman's *Memorable Masque of the Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn* were also commissioned for the occasion, the former containing female statues described descending from the heavens to join the dance and the latter staging the animation of an artificial rock and sculptural façade from which dancers emerge. This marked concentration of sculptural imagery is noteworthy. And the repeated motif of 'statuas moving' within the genre speaks to dance's preoccupation with the relationship between motion and stasis.

Inigo Jones's visions for the masques he oversaw drew on antique statuary, as we've seen, but this was not simply Jones's 2D style or design aesthetic. The costumes rendered from his sketches were also highly sculptural. Jones culled images—and sections of images—from other artists and, in fitting his costume designs to the imperfect bodies of his court masquers, did all he could to produce a picture of the divine, the deified and the superhuman. The aristocratic participants impersonated gods and goddesses, figures from mythology. Their physical appearance had to reflect their social importance.

Heeled shoes and headdresses increased the masquers' height, emulating the colossi of Greek and Roman statuary. Corsetry accentuated the waist and, as Barbara Ravelhofer has suggested, female characters—whether represented by men or by women—may have employed breast prosthetics made of fabric or plaster to simulate nudity. We can see some of these effects at work in this [image](#) of Penthesilea in Jonson's *Masque of Queenes*, a costume designed for the Countess of Bedford. Male masquers might even be tempted to stuff their tights, emboldening and defining the stockinged leg with bombast or cotton wool. Stiffening materials, such as wire and whalebone, hardened masquing costumes, creating, in some cases, solid edifices rather than wearable clothes. Metallic cloth and materials—of gold, silver, and copper—created an artificial and iridescent façade, one exaggerated further by the use of candlelight refracted by coloured metal or reflected in coloured water.

²⁰ John Peacock, *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones: The European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 125.

²¹ All references to Campion's *The Lords' Masque* and Chapman's *Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn Masque* are taken from Stephen Orgel and Roy Strong, *Inigo Jones: Theatre of the Stuart Court*, vol. 1 (Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1973). References to Beaumont's *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*, given its omission from Orgel and Strong's collection, are drawn from Early English Books Online.

Francis Beaumont, in his *Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn*, describes the costuming of the animated statues: 'These *Statuaes* were attired in cases of gold and siluer close to their bodie, faces, hands and feete, nothing seene but gold and siluer, as if they had been solid Images of mettall'.²²

If we go back to Jones's costume design for Jonson's *Masque of Queenes*, we can see that the closefitting nature of the costume seems to create the illusion of nudity, similar to the effects of classical statuary, a technique also referenced by Ben Jonson in the text of his 1606 masque *Hymenaei* when describing the fashion worn by aristocratic male masquers.

That the lords had part of it (for the fashion) taken from the antique Greek statue, mixed with some modern additions, which made it both graceful and strange.... Their bodies were of carnation cloth of silver, richly wrought, and cut to express the naked.²³

It's worth reiterating here that these costumes were expressly designed be danced in. It's here in the interplay between masque performance and art objects that we get a glimpse of the generative feedback loop between movement and stillness. Static imagery inspires dance. It is incorporated into dance practice. And, in turn, dance revives and animates the static image. But for what purpose, we might ask?

In elite court culture, one purpose might have been the creation of living and moving icons. For some scholars, it is the monarch, for whom the masque is created, who becomes its one and only icon. The icon is thus the still centre, the privileged viewer, of the masque's moving pageant. Writing about composer and dancer Jean-Baptiste Lully's work at the seventeenth-century French court and the politic messages relayed by his ballets and operas, Rebecca Harris-Warrick points out that the 'degree to which bodies of courtiers and paid servants alike could be set magnificently in motion, whatever the ostensible theme of the ballet, represented to the world the control the king exerted over his court and his nation'.²⁴ But stillness is not confined to the figure of the monarch in the English masque. Iconicity was, in fact, more widely shared. The courtly obsession with statuary reflects a wider antiquarian impulse within England.

Several masque performers, amongst them Thomas Howard, the Earl of Arundel, seen [here](#) with his famous marbles, alongside Charles I, were dedicated collectors of classical and Renaissance sculpture. The Neoclassicism of the period was, in many ways, a legitimising construct, validating the individuals and institutions with which it was associated and providing an imperial gloss to their actions. The functions of statuary served also, you could argue, to bolster the masque genre and its heroized contributors. Figurative sculpture has varying usages. One of them is commemorative. The statue as memorial or funeral monument cements the subject's posthumous reputation, apparently ensuring a lasting legacy. The personation of statuary within the masque genre becomes a process of premature self-monumentalisation in which the noble performer anticipates their fixed, invariable standing in the history of their family, even in the nation at large. Those involved in the production of masques were surely conscious of the medium's capacity for commemoration. In several cases, they were memorial makers themselves.

Nicholas Stone, the renowned sculptor and monument-builder, assisted Inigo Jones for many years and even embossed Charles I's costume for the 1634 masque *Coelum Britannicum*. And John de

²² Beaumont, *Masque of the Inner Temple*.

²³ Orgel and Strong, *Inigo Jones*, 1: 111.

²⁴ Rebecca Harris-Warrick, 'Magnificence in Motion: Stage Musicians in Lully's Ballets and Operas,' *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6, No. 3 (1994): 200.

Critz, who had gilded Maximilian Colt's marble effigy for the tomb commissioned by King James of Elizabeth I, also painted the proscenium arch for one of the scenes in Thomas Campion's *Lords' Masque*. These men were in the icon business, and the dancing statue—whether represented by a noble masquer or a professional dancer—was one of their most iconic creations.

Moreover, dance practice, as a bodily discipline characterised by both movement and stillness, supported the masque as an instrument of social order and political propaganda. As Stephen Kolsky underlines in relation to Renaissance Italy, '[d]ance is the aesthetic ordering of gesture in order to represent in a stylized manner the basic values of court society.'²⁵ This alignment of dance aesthetic and high societal values was instilled in courtiers from their first introduction to dancing. As an element of early modern education, at least for those wealthy enough to employ a dancing master, dance taught self-control and bodily decorum. Dance instruction for the children of the elite commenced early in life and continued into adulthood. This disciplining of the body via dance addressed both motion and stasis, encouraging the co-ordination of movement, agility, balance, and concentration. Agility—the ability to move readily and rapidly—speaks to the body in motion.

Edward Herbert, first Baron Herbert of Cherbury and ambassador to Paris under James I, celebrates the agility of practiced dancers, 'insomuch that they seem to have the use of their legs, arms and bodies, more than any others, who, standing stiff and stark in their postures, seem as if they were taken in their joints, or had not the perfect use of their members'.²⁶ Here, the non-dancer is recognisable by their rigidity. However, balance, concentration, a noble carriage, and the sense of orientation required when dancing are more suggestive of stillness than movement, as are the behavioural benefits attributed to dance, such as discipline. In the performance of dance, as in the teaching of it, stillness—and the interaction of stillness and movement—was integral to the medium. The early modern dancing body was itself a combination of motion and stasis, consisting of dynamic foot movements and a straight, often still, upper body. This balance enabled the creation of moving, living icons within masque performance.

A final few thoughts from me. We've interrogated the still pervasive identification of dance and movement. We've brought stillness back into early modern dance discourse, with help of course from other thinkers on the subject. We've seen how stillness within masquing dance has served the status quo, cementing a particular type of dance iconography and social status, but we've also seen how static representations of dance have invigorated the form and given rise to the diverse dance ecology we have today. And while the dance icon—in masques as in today's classical ballet—might seem conservative in its political leanings, it can perhaps be repurposed in the interest of a more progressive politics.

In Ben Jonson's 1605 *Masque of Blackness*, Queen Anne was one of several aristocratic masquers portraying the dancing daughters of Niger. You can see Inigo Jones's costume design [here](#), which includes the use of blackface. The masque's plot, in which the personification of Niger seeks some means to make his daughters 'fair' or white, after they've realised the world no longer finds them beautiful, does nothing to further recommend it. In fact, Jonson's sequel to this masque, 1608's *Masque of Beauty*, grants the daughters of Niger their wish; they appear cleansed of their blackness after having discovered the nation of Britannia, assimilating to its whiteness. Scholars have often read the masque's 'blackness' as metaphorical, a contrast to the 'fairness' of Albion, James I's

²⁵ Stephen Kolsky, 'Graceful Performances: The Social and Political Context of Music and Dance in the *Cortegiano*,' *Italian Studies* 53 (1998): 1-19 (14).

²⁶ Quoted in Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion and Fiction: Dress in Art and Literature in Stuart England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 179.

political vision of an expanded state.²⁷ Its allegorical qualities, however, cannot redeem it. Contemporary responses confirm the racism at work. Diplomat Dudley Carleton, having seen the masque, was unequivocal in his response: 'You cannot imagine a more ugly Sight, than a troop of lean-cheek'd Moors'.²⁸ Observers like Carleton were concerned by the lack of decorum shown by the queen in representing blackness but, while I have no wish to rehabilitate the work, I find it interesting that, notwithstanding Carleton's aversion, blackness was imaged by Jones in the same way that whiteness typically was. This was no antimasque of grotesque figures. This was the queen and her ladies, wearing ornate and elegant costumes and dancing, as far as we can tell, in a traditional fashion. These mixed messages provide us with an opportunity, both to recognise the nascent colonial context of the image and its misrepresentation of blackness *and* to acknowledge the allure of blackness and the 'other', as felt, however problematically, by the queen and her court. And, acknowledging the 80s theme of your event here today, I want to suggest a modern analogue, in the form of pop icon Grace Jones.

[This](#) is the cover of Jones's 1985 compilation album, *Island Life*, taken by Jones's onetime partner, photographer Jean Paul Goude. Not unlike the image of the daughter of Niger, the photograph offers some mixed messages. The held pose and high shine on Jones's body is suggestive of sculpture, as is the plinth or mat on which Jones's left leg stands; in fact, although it may not look like it, this is a composite photograph, made up of more than one image. Goude has indeed sculpted and perfected Jones's body. The arabesque or attitude, of course, recalls classical dance. And yet this image of European classicism is not straightforward. Challenging this aesthetic of accepted dance icon is Jones as muscular, flat-footed and black. The emphasis on Jones's bum, for want of a better word, also marks this image as different, one comfortable with a diversity of body type. And, while its message may be difficult to pin down, it helpfully complicates the politics of dance iconography. This is an iconic image of dance. It communicates the power of stillness as an integral element of dance practice. And, while it doesn't conform to European tradition, it nevertheless draws upon and extends a long and fascinating history of dance and the static image.

Thank you.

²⁷ See, for example, Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Performing Blackness on English Stages, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 65.

²⁸ Maurice Lee, ed., 'Dudley Carleton to John Chamberlain 1603-1624,' *Jacobean Letters* (New Brunswick, 1972), 6.