

On 11 January 1721, a new dancer made his first London appearance at Drury Lane, billed as ‘Mons Desnoyer, lately arrived in England’.<sup>1</sup> He stayed less than two seasons. On 22 December 1731, Drury Lane advertised a ‘new *Grand Ballad d’Amour*, Compos’d by Monsieur Desnoyer, Dancing-Master to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales’. Desnoyer had evidently spent at least part of the 1720s in Hanover teaching George II’s eldest son, Prince Frederick, to dance. In combining the careers of theatrical dancer and royal dancing master, he was following such illustrious predecessors as Anthony L’Abbé – although, unlike L’Abbé, he seems to have pursued these careers simultaneously. The *Biographical Dictionary of Actors* is in some doubt about whether Desnoyer’s forename began with ‘G’ or was Philip. It states firmly that he maintained a close relationship with the Prince of Wales and other members of the Hanoverian royal family throughout his life, and records Desnoyer’s death in 1788.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this account is not entirely accurate. The young man who came to London in 1721 and returned in 1731 was George Desnoyer. The man who died in 1788, Philip Desnoyer, was probably George’s son and also a dancing-master (although apparently never a theatrical dancer).<sup>3</sup> In this essay, I will try to disentangle the two. I will outline the career of George Desnoyer as a professional dancer and dancing master and set down the most significant surviving evidence for the life and career of Philip Desnoyer.

## Drury Lane 1721–1722

During his first visit to London, the advertisements did little more than announce Desnoyer’s appearances in the entr’actes at the Drury Lane Theatre. He was allowed a benefit performance on 18 May 1721, which was both commanded and attended by George I. The King’s patronage is significant. The *Biographical Dictionary* suggests that the young dancer’s father may have been the ‘Desnoyers’ who arranged ballets for the opera *La festa del Himineo* in 1701 at Lietzenburg (now Charlottenburg). Lietzenburg, just outside Berlin, was a palace of the Prussian monarchs. Sophie Charlotte, Queen of Prussia, was the only sister of George I and it was she who supported the staging of the first operas in Berlin, a few years before her death in 1705.<sup>4</sup> Surviving records of the court in Hanover show that George Desnoyer was the son of the dancing master ‘Denoyé’ who was employed by the Elector from 1694 or earlier. The elder Desnoyer – who was probably the Berlin ‘Desnoyers’ – was charged with the creation of ballets given as part of court entertainments. Between the early 1700s and the mid-1720s the dance troupe in Hanover included Desnoyer’s wife (who was, presumably, George Desnoyer’s mother) and his daughter Georgine.<sup>5</sup> There is no record of the younger Desnoyer at this period, but it is reasonable to conjecture that he was born around 1700 and that he received his earliest tuition from his father.

There is little information about Desnoyer’s repertoire during his first seasons at Drury Lane, but advertisements in the London newspapers suggest that he formed an onstage partnership with the dancer-actress Elizabeth Younger. They were billed as dancing together on several occasions. A high point of their partnership was the ‘Turkish Dance’ created for them by Anthony L’Abbé. The duet was published in

Beauchamp-Feuillet notation in the mid-1720s in L’Abbé’s *A New Collection of Dances*, together with two of L’Abbé’s solos for Desnoyer, a ‘Spanish Entrée’ and an ‘Entrée’.<sup>6</sup> All three dances show clearly Desnoyer’s command of virtuoso *belle danse* technique. The young dancer could undoubtedly have pursued a successful career on the London stage at this period, but he received another offer of employment which he would have been very unwise to refuse. The *Weekly Journal or Saturday’s Post* for 15 September 1722 reported ‘One Mr. De Noye, a Dancing Master, is gone over to Hannover to teach Prince Frederick, for which we hear, his Majesty allows him a Sallary of Five Hundred Pound per Annum’. It was to be some time before George Desnoyer returned to dance in London.

## Prince Frederick

When George I arrived in England following his accession, he brought with him his son and daughter-in-law, the new Prince and Princess of Wales, and their daughters. The King’s grandson Prince Frederick, born in 1707, was left behind in Hanover as the representative of the electoral family. George did not enjoy cordial relations with his son, but he took a keen interest in his grandchildren. By 1715, Anthony L’Abbé was teaching Anne, the Princess Royal (then aged six) and his appointment as dancing master to the princesses – Anne and her younger sisters Amelia and Caroline – may date to that year.<sup>7</sup> The King must surely have made a similar arrangement for Frederick, of whom he was particularly fond, as part of the educational programme he laid down for his grandson.<sup>8</sup>

Prince Frederick was made a Knight of the Garter in 1716, and in that year was the subject of a glowing ‘Character’ by the diplomat Anthony Hammond. ‘Nothing can be more agreeable than the Person of this Young Prince’, wrote Hammond, adding among other details that ‘He applies himself to his Exercises, Riding, Dancing and Fencing, with great Assiduity, in all which he will arrive to such a Degree of Perfection, as becomes a Prince’.<sup>9</sup> It is likely that the boy received his earliest dance tuition from the elder Desnoyer, for it was only after his father’s death on 18 April 1721 that George Desnoyer was appointed dancing master in Hanover. He took up his duties at Easter 1722, with an annual salary of 400 Thaler.<sup>10</sup> Prince Frederick came of age in 1725, when he was 18, and the event was celebrated in Hanover with a costume ball and a formal ball at which Frederick opened the dancing.<sup>11</sup> This event may have marked the end of Desnoyer’s formal duties as the young prince’s dancing master.

George I died in 1727, and at the end of 1728 Frederick was summoned to London by his father who was now King George II. In January 1729, he was created Prince of Wales and took up permanent residence in England. George Desnoyer presumably remained in Hanover as dancing master to the court ballet troupe (a responsibility which he may also have undertaken in succession to his father). The absence of the electoral family must have meant a reduced programme of court entertainments in Hanover, but there were opportunities for employment elsewhere. Desnoyer probably spent time in Dresden or Warsaw working for the Elector of Saxony, who was also King of Poland. He was finally dismissed from his post in Hanover on 23 January 1730.<sup>12</sup>

## Drury Lane 1731–1740

When he returned to London, and the Drury Lane stage, on 22 December 1731, Desnoyer was advertised as ‘Dancing-Master to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales’. The *London Evening Post* for 21–23 December 1731 provided further details:

Mons. Denoyer, first Dancer to the King of Poland, perform’d last Night (by Command of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales) at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane: He perform’d on that Stage about 10 Years ago, and was sent to Hanover, by his late Majesty, to teach his Royal Highness; from whence he went to France, and was afterwards entertain’d in the Service of the King of Poland.

Whether or not Desnoyer was still dancing master to the Prince, he obviously enjoyed Frederick’s patronage. This season he began a dancing partnership with Mrs Booth, the company’s leading dancer, with whom he danced at his benefit on 16 March. The performance was commanded by Prince Frederick, who was in the audience with his younger brother and his sisters. Desnoyer’s last performance of the 1731–32 season was on 1 April 1732 and he did not return to London until early 1733.

The *Daily Post* for 25 January 1733 reported Desnoyer as ‘arriv’d from Dresden’. His first performance of the season was on 6 February in John Weaver’s new afterpiece *The Judgment of Paris*. Desnoyer took the title role, with Mrs Booth as Helen of Troy. When the afterpiece was repeated on 8 February, the Prince of Wales was in the audience. Although Desnoyer performed for only a few months of the season, he was accorded a benefit on 26 March which was commanded as well as attended by Prince Frederick. For much of 1732–33, there was squabbling between the new managers of Drury Lane who followed the triumvirate of actor-managers who had successfully led the company for 20 years.<sup>13</sup> Desnoyer had left London by 20 April, when another dancer was advertised as Paris, well before the season ended in chaos and one of the new managers left with a group of rebel actors to set up a rival company at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket.

Desnoyer did not return to London for 18 months. The *Grub Street Journal* for 17 October 1734 reported ‘A few days ago arriv’d Mons. Denoyer from Poland’, so it seems that he had spent much of the intervening period in the service of the King of Poland.<sup>14</sup> Desnoyer made his first appearance of the season at Drury Lane on 4 November 1734 in ‘Serious and Comic’ dancing. The company he rejoined had undergone a number of changes following the split of 1733 and its subsequent reunification under the management of a gentleman-amateur.<sup>15</sup> The most significant change for Desnoyer was the retirement of Mrs Booth, which at first left him without a suitable partner.

Desnoyer’s repertoire this season included appearances in two short-lived pantomime afterpieces, in which he took serious dancing roles, as well as a variety of entr’acte dances. Prince Frederick’s continued patronage was demonstrated at Desnoyer’s benefit ‘By Command of His Royal Highness’ on 17 March 1735. The performance was notable because it brought together ‘The celebrated Monsieur Denoyer and Mademoiselle Sallé’ who ‘by Permission of the Masters of the two Theatres Royal, have agreed to dance at each other’s Benefit’.<sup>16</sup> Her benefit at Covent Garden on 24 April was also

commanded by the Prince of Wales. These were the only occasions on which George Desnoyer and Marie Sallé danced together in London.

Desnoyer returned to Drury Lane to dance throughout the season in 1735–36 and 1736–37, but he arrived late and gave fewer performances in 1737–38 and 1738–39.<sup>17</sup> His absence in the first months of the 1737–38 season could, perhaps, be attributable to his close involvement in the affairs of his patron Prince Frederick. The Prince had, after much pleading with his parents, been allowed to marry in April 1736.<sup>18</sup> In July 1737, the pregnancy of Augusta Princess of Wales was formally announced. The Prince was determined that the child’s birth should not happen while the couple were staying with the King and Queen, so when Augusta went into labour unexpectedly at Hampton Court on 31 July there was a dash to get her back to London for her delivery. The story is recounted by Lord Hervey, who among his unsavoury details had ‘M. Denoyer, the dancing-master, lugging her down stairs and along the passages by one arm, and Mr. Bloodworth, one of the Prince’s equerries, by the other’ as the Prince and his people struggled to get Princess Augusta into a coach for the journey. Hervey also cast Desnoyer in the role of ‘the Prince and Princess’s constant companion’ and their go-between with other members of the royal family, describing him as ‘a sort of licensed spy on both sides’. The flight from Hampton Court caused a serious rift between the Prince and his parents. When Frederick was ordered to leave St James’s Palace in September 1737, he and Augusta took up residence at Kew where, according to Hervey, ‘Dunoyer the dancing-master’ was one of the party.<sup>19</sup> By the end of 1737, the young couple had returned to London and a new residence in St James’s Square. Their stay in the country had coincided, more or less, with Desnoyer’s absence from Drury Lane at the beginning of the 1737–38 season.<sup>20</sup>

Desnoyer was close to both Prince Frederick and Princess Augusta at this period, but he also taught other members of the royal family. He was granted an allowance of one guinea a week for lodgings at Kensington Palace as ‘Dancing Master to their Royal Highness’s [sic]’ between May and December 1736, indicating that he was expected to be in regular attendance on various younger members of the royal family even though he was also performing at Drury Lane during the autumn of that year.<sup>21</sup> He appears in the Princess of Wales’s annual expenses for 1736–37 as the purchaser of ‘Dresden China’ and ‘Birds’, presumably at her behest.<sup>22</sup> The first of these purchases suggests that he might have been working for the Elector of Saxony for part of that period. Another source records his presence at an ‘Occasional Lodge’ of Freemasons held at Kew on 5 November 1737, when Prince Frederick ‘was in the usual Manner introduced’.<sup>23</sup> At much the same time, Desnoyer was listed among the Duke of Cumberland’s servants, with an allowance of one guinea a week for lodgings at Hampton Court.<sup>24</sup> He was referred to as the Duke’s dancing master in a letter from Lady Strafford to her husband dated 7 January 1738, although she was rather more concerned with Handel’s entanglement in the quarrels between George II and his eldest son:

The Prince as soon as Mr Hendle told him the King had forbid him to attend at his Royall Highness’s conserts told Denoyer he shou’d no more teach the Duke & the Princess’s to Dance so a Satterday he went to ye Duke to let him know he cou’d attend him no longer.<sup>25</sup>

Desnoyer was evidently also dancing-master to the Princesses Mary and Louisa.<sup>26</sup> While payment of the lodging allowance seems to contradict Hervey's account of Desnoyer's part in the flight from Hampton Court, Lady Strafford's anecdote confirms that the Prince of Wales was the dancer's principal patron to whom he had a strong bond of loyalty. Frederick reciprocated, for the *London Evening Post* of 10–12 January 1738 reported 'We hear that his Royal Highness hath settled 100 l. per Annum on M. Denoyer, the famous Dancing-Master'.<sup>27</sup>

Hervey's testimony may well reflect a close relationship between Desnoyer and Prince Frederick, but its details cannot be relied upon. His repetition of the epithet 'dancing-master' whenever he mentions Desnoyer suggests that his aim was to denigrate the Prince for being too close to his inferiors rather than provide a truthful account of a sorry affair.<sup>28</sup> Desnoyer's absence from Drury Lane in the autumn of 1737, which was followed by a similar absence in 1738, could equally well have been caused (at least in part) by engagements abroad.

According to the advertisements, between 1735–36 and 1738–39 Desnoyer's repertoire changed relatively little. He performed the same entr'acte dances and continued to appear in pantomime and other afterpieces. On 2 May 1739, a benefit performance for the dancer William Essex, the programme included an afterpiece entitled *Mars and Venus*, with Desnoyer as Mars, Mrs Walter as Venus and Essex as Vulcan. This may have been a revival of John Weaver's dramatic entertainment of dancing from more than 20 years earlier, *The Loves of Mars and Venus*. New or old, the afterpiece was given several performances. During the mid-1730s, Desnoyer often appeared with the French dancer Catherine Roland although her usual dancing partner was Michael Poitier. Initially, he was on good terms with both of them. In the uproar that followed their failure to dance as advertised at Drury Lane on 7 December 1734, Desnoyer was among those who supported them. The *Daily Journal* for 3 March 1735 devoted much of its first page to the row, and in the published extract from his letter to Mlle Roland Desnoyer declared 'I know they have done Injustice to you, and to our friend Poitier, but every thing will be made up'.

A few years later, the story was very different. On 24 January, the *London Daily Post and General Advertiser* carried a letter from Desnoyer. He described how Mlle Roland had failed to turn up for rehearsals and had 'insisted that I should wait on her at her Lodgings, for the Practice of every new Dance'. When she refused to practice an 'old Dance' with him on the stage, 'some high Words' were exchanged between them. When he was billed to dance with her again, Desnoyer claimed 'accordingly I attended, and began my Part, as she did her's, but when we were to Figure together, to my great Surprize, I found her determin'd to confuse the Dance'. He tried to restore order by 'taking hold of her', and there was an onstage quarrel. Desnoyer came off best in the dispute. He continued to dance regularly and enjoyed a benefit commanded by the Prince and Princess of Wales on 24 April 1739. Catherine Roland did not appear at all between 16 January and 14 April, although she danced a number of times in May, and she and Poitier moved to Covent Garden for the following season.

Desnoyer was exceptionally busy during the 1739–40 season, when he was advertised for no fewer than 77 performances and acquired a new partner, Mlle Chateaufeuf. Did she,

to, have a connection with Hanover? In 1701–02, the dance troupe there had included a female dancer named Chateaufeuf and the roster of 1740–41 had a dancer described as Chateaufeuf's daughter.<sup>29</sup> There was just one unfortunate incident during the season, when Mlle Chateaufeuf and Desnoyer failed to appear for their advertised performance on 23 January 1740. The *Daily Advertiser* of 25 January recounted how 'after most of the People in the Pit and Galleries were gone, several Gentlemen in the Boxes pull'd up the Seats and Flooring of the same, tore down the Hangings, broke down the Partitions, all the Glasses and Sconces'. The 'Gentlemen' smashed the instruments of the orchestra and made their way into one of the green rooms behind the scenes, where they created more havoc. Popular dancers, it seems, were vital to the success of performances. Desnoyer's benefit on 22 March 1740 was, as usual, commanded by the Prince and Princess of Wales. He gave his final performance of the season on 1 May 1740; it was also his last performance at Drury Lane.

### Covent Garden 1740–1742

On 25 October 1740, Desnoyer was billed at Covent Garden with 'Signora Barberini, the first time of her appearing on the English stage'. The occasion was evidently a special one, for the King, the Duke of Cumberland and the Princesses Amelia, Caroline and Louisa were all present. Desnoyer's new partnership and his change of theatre may have had a connection with his patron Prince Frederick. The *London Evening Post* for 7–9 August 1740 had carried a report of the 'Entertainments represented at Cliefden, before their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales' at the beginning of the month, when the masque *Alfred* had received its first performance with dancing between the acts 'in particular by the famous Venetian Dancer Signora Barberini'. The ballerina Barbara Campanini was just 19 years old and fresh from triumphs in Paris, where she had been acclaimed in Rameau's *Les Fêtes d'Hébé*. During the 1740–41 season Desnoyer regularly partnered her. On 21 November 1740, they were billed together in a 'Grand Serious Ballet called *Mars and Venus*', which could conceivably have been another revival of John Weaver's 1717 dramatic entertainment of dancing. Desnoyer danced at La Barberina's benefit on 14 February 1741, which was commanded by George II, and she in turn appeared at his on 7 March which was commanded by 'Prince George and Lady Augusta', the eldest children of the Prince and Princess of Wales. This was another busy season for Desnoyer, who was billed for some 70 performances.

He and La Barberina resumed their partnership the following season, once Desnoyer had returned to Covent Garden on 11 January 1742. (There was no explanation for his late arrival in the newspapers). They danced together at her benefit on 4 March and again on 1 April at Desnoyer's benefit (commanded once again by the Prince and Princess of Wales). Popular as they were, Desnoyer and La Barberina could not please everybody. One person who deplored their style and technique of dancing was the artist William Hogarth. He made a sketch entitled 'The Charmers of the Age', in which he ridiculed La Barberina's extravagant virtuosity and what he saw as Desnoyer's exaggerated and unnatural dancing. Hogarth's original drawing, which is lost but has been dated to 1742, was not engraved until 1782.<sup>30</sup> His caricature is the only known depiction of Desnoyer, who made his last appear-

ance at Covent Garden on 2 June 1742 quitting the stage after a brilliant career which had lasted more than 20 years.

### George Desnoyer, Dancing Master to Prince Frederick's Family

George Desnoyer had formally entered the service of Prince Frederick and Princess Augusta soon after their marriage, and he continued to work for them after his retirement from the stage. The annual accounts of the Princess of Wales for the period 1736–37 to 1744–45 include his salary of £100 each year.<sup>31</sup> The former dancer did not entirely disappear from public view. The *General Advertiser* for 1 August 1748 reported that 'Mr. Denoyer, Dancing Master to the Prince of Wales's Children, made some Fireworks at Kew in Honour of the Birth-day of the Princess Augusta'. By this time there were four boys to be taught dancing – George (later to become King George III, born 1738), Edward (born 1739), William (born 1743) and Henry (born 1745). By 1751, the year of Prince Frederick's death, Desnoyer was receiving £200 a year as dancing master to Prince George and Prince Edward. He was the most highly paid of the various tutors, receiving £50 a year more than the riding master.<sup>32</sup> By 1756, the Prince of Wales was apparently his sole pupil and Desnoyer continued to teach the young man until shortly before he succeeded to the throne on 25 October 1760.<sup>33</sup> Thereafter, he was paid a 'Bounty' of £100 each year by Augusta, Dowager Princess of Wales.<sup>34</sup> His several annual payments, and his duties, suggest that he was employed as a dancing master by various members of the royal family.

Desnoyer also taught the nobility. The Earl of Chesterfield, in a letter to his son dated 16 May 1751, put the importance of dancing lessons into an interesting perspective:

I hope you do not neglect your exercises of riding, fencing, and dancing, but particularly the latter; for they all concur to *dégourdir*, and to give a certain air. To ride well, is not only a proper and graceful accomplishment for a gentleman, but may also save you many a fall hereafter; to fence well, may possibly save your life; and to dance well, is absolutely necessary, in order to sit, stand, and walk well.

Chesterfield added 'when you return to Paris, I only propose your continuing your dancing; which you shall two years longer [the young man was then aged nineteen], if you happen to be where there is a good dancing-master. Here, I will see you take some lessons with your old master Desnoyers, who is our Marcel' – Chesterfield was referring to the most fashionable dancing master in Paris.<sup>35</sup> As late as 1760, writing to a friend, Mary Delany declared 'Dunoyer is now I believe the best dancing-master in London, his price is high' adding that he could give an intended pupil 'a better air in a month than a less skilful dancing-master would in three'.<sup>36</sup> Like Chesterfield, she was well aware of the importance of dancing in high society.

Despite his involvement in teaching royalty and aristocracy, Desnoyer seems to have maintained his links with the theatre world. In 1755, he was apparently called in to help with David Garrick's attempts to raise the profile of dancing at Drury Lane. Benjamin Victor wrote that Garrick 'applied to Mr. *Denoyer* senior, to recommend some Person of Genius; and he engaged Mr. *Noverre*, a *Swiss* by Birth, in their Service'.<sup>37</sup> The engagement resulted in the London produc-

tion of *Noverre's The Chinese Festival* on 8 November 1755, and a riot which did serious damage to the theatre.

George Desnoyer's last payments from the establishment of Augusta, Princess of Wales date to 1764, when he received only half of his pension. Her household accounts for that year contain a letter, dated 30 June 1763, in which he requests her Treasurer 'Please to pay to my son my midsummer and other quarters as they become due', signing the letter in a shaky hand. The letter may have been misdated, for his last recorded payment is for the quarter ending in April 1764. He had disappeared from the list of payments for the quarter to October 1764, but a note at the end of these records the dancing master Peter Desnoyer as receiving the same salary.<sup>38</sup> It seems likely that Peter was in fact George's son Philip, although it is difficult to account for such a mistake. George Desnoyer presumably died during 1764, unless he returned to the Continent for his final years. The date of his death and his place of burial are yet to be discovered.

### Philip Denoyer, Dancing Master to George III's Family

There are no references to appearances by Philip Denoyer as a theatrical dancer. He is first recorded in British sources in a 1751 private act of naturalization which describes him as 'son of George Denoyer by Sophia his Wife born at Hanover in the Electorate of Hanover'.<sup>39</sup> The next record of the young man is his marriage licence allegation of 18 May 1757, in which he describes himself as a 'Bachelor aged twenty nine years'.<sup>40</sup> He must have been born in 1726 or 1727, while George Desnoyer was in Hanover as dancing master to Prince Frederick. Philip Denoyer married Sophia Salliar at St Martin in the Fields (his parish church) on 21 May 1757.<sup>41</sup> The bride came from the parish of Richmond in Surrey, suggesting that she belonged to the family of Salliar who served Prince Frederick and Princess Augusta for many years.<sup>42</sup> Philip and Sophia Denoyer had at least five children, naming many of them after the members of the royal family whom they served.<sup>43</sup>

The younger Denoyer's first mention in connection with the royal family is his allowance 'for the hire of a carriage to Kew to attend H.R.Hs there' during the summer and autumn of 1759. He received the same allowance for a similar period in 1760, when his period of attendance was cut short by his pupil's accession to the throne as King George III.<sup>44</sup> At this period, George Desnoyer was receiving £200 a year as dancing master to the young Prince of Wales and had an assistant, Frederick Nicholay, who received £50 a year. By then in his late fifties, or older, he evidently no longer wished to make arduous journeys between London and Kew and was preparing the way for his son to formally succeed him.

During the early 1760s, Philip Denoyer's name occurs in contexts other than the teaching of dancing. In 1760, he was listed among the members of the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.<sup>45</sup> *The Court and City Kalendar* for 1762 records him as 'secretary' in the Office for Hackney Coaches and Chairs at £80 a year. This was, presumably, a sinecure. Among the Liverpool Papers in the British Library is a letter from Philip Denoyer to the first Earl of Liverpool dated 14 March 1765, asking 'if there should be a Lottery, that I may be continued in the Commission' and revealing that he had previously been appointed to that position 'by Lord Bute my Patron'.<sup>46</sup> John Stuart, third

Earl of Bute, had been closely involved in the education of Prince George after Frederick's death, and became his leading minister after his succession. The correspondence provides a glimpse of the network of patronage within which royal dancing masters worked.

The 'Mr. Dunoyer' listed in *The Court and City Kalendar* in 1764 as dancing master to Princes William and Henry (the new King's younger brothers, aged 21 and 19 respectively) may be the last reference to Philip's father. As mentioned above, the 'Peter Desnoyer' who began to receive payments as a dancing master in Princess Augusta's household during 1764 may well have been Philip, but his earliest explicit appearance in her accounts is for 1766.<sup>47</sup> Shortly afterwards, he began to be listed in Queen Charlotte's accounts as dancing master to George, Prince of Wales (born 1762) and Prince Frederick (born 1763).<sup>48</sup> He continued as dancing master to the two princes until 1771, when he apparently stopped teaching his elder pupil. Denoyer was listed as Prince Frederick's teacher until 1780, when the Prince of Wales again came under his tuition. Queen Charlotte's household accounts record that he taught both princes until the end of 1782, by which date the young men were aged 21 and 20 respectively.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, he was regularly listed in *The Court and City Register* as dancing master to Prince William (born 1765) and Prince Edward (born 1767), and then Prince Ernest (born 1771), posts he seems to have held from 1778 until his death in 1788.<sup>50</sup>

Philip Denoyer died on 9 May 1788 at his house in Albermarle Street.<sup>51</sup> He was buried on 17 May at St George Hanover Square.<sup>52</sup> Denoyer's will, which was dated 6 November 1784 and made no mention of his profession, was proved on 19 May 1788.<sup>53</sup> He appointed his wife Sophia and four of 'my good friends', Richard Crofts, William Devaynes, John Dawes and William Noble (all described as 'of Pall Mall') as his executors. At least two of the men were probably associated with the court. Richard Crofts may have been one of George III's Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber, while William Devaynes was undoubtedly related to John Devaynes who was apothecary to both the King and the Queen.<sup>54</sup>

Sophia Denoyer received the leasehold property in Leicester Fields 'in which I did live' together with all her husband's 'plate watches jewels china linen household goods and furniture ... and all such ready money as shall be found in my house belonging to me', as well as a substantial portion of his holdings of stocks and annuities. The other executors received £20 each together with the rest of Denoyer's investments, which they were to hold in trust for Sophia and the couple's daughter (presumably their only surviving child) Charlotte who were to receive the interest and dividends during their lifetimes. Those stocks held in trust for Sophia Denoyer were to be divided equally between her fellow executors following her death.

The dancing master directed that the residue of his estate should be invested in 'Government or other good and sufficient securities' to provide his widow with an income during her lifetime. After her death, two thirds of the residue was to be divided between twenty-two named beneficiaries and the remaining one third was to be shared among another twenty. Denoyer's daughter, who had married shortly before the will was made, received income but no capital and did not share in the residue of the estate.<sup>55</sup> Philip Denoyer gave no explanation, other than the description of those in the first list of

residuary legatees as 'my good friends', for his disposal of his estate. Among them, in both lists, are several who can be identified as members of the royal household. The first list begins with Miss Goldsworthy and Mrs Schwollenberg both 'of the Queen's House'. They were, respectively, Sub-Governess in the Royal Nursery and Keeper of Robes to the Queen.<sup>56</sup> Also included was Frederick Nicholay, his father's former assistant and a Page of the Back Stairs to the Queen as well as a member of her Chamber Band.<sup>57</sup> The second list includes Thomas James Mathias, sub-Treasurer in the Queen's household, who beyond the court was making a name for himself as a satirist.<sup>58</sup>

Denoyer's second list of residuary legatees includes several members of the Le Mesurier family. John Le Mesurier was, presumably, the hereditary governor of Alderney. Peter and 'Miss' Le Mesurier, both described as resident there, were probably two of his children. Peter would, in his turn, become governor of Alderney in 1793, while Miss Le Mesurier may have been Marthe, born in 1762, who married Richard Saumarez in 1786. Paul Le Mesurier 'of Walbrook' and Havilland Le Mesurier 'of Gurnsey' were two more of John's sons; the former would become Lord Mayor of London in 1794.<sup>59</sup> Thomas Le Mesurier 'of Mitre Court Temple' may well have been yet another of John's sons. During the 1780s, the Le Mesuriers were wealthy and successful merchants, so Philip Denoyer's links with them may have been primarily business and financial.

There are some surprises among the legatees, for they include 'the Honble Samuel Admiral Barrington' and 'Sir John Jervis', who would become Earl of St Vincent in 1797 following one of the most famous naval victories of the period. Denoyer may have made the acquaintance of Barrington in the late 1760s, when the naval officer was governor to the Duke of Cumberland who was serving on board his ship.<sup>60</sup> Jervis was a friend of Barrington, but any other link with Denoyer is yet to be discovered.<sup>61</sup> There were also Charles Kevern 'Master Boat Builder of his Majesty's Dock Yard Chatham', Peter Butt of the royal dockyard at Deptford and Nichols Bools and his nephew John Good, both master ship builders at Bridport. How did Philip Denoyer make their acquaintance? Why did he wish to include them among his residuary legatees? On 16 July 1787, he added a codicil to his will which underlined the importance of ships and the navy to him, for he carefully disposed of fourteen ship models and an unspecified number of 'ship drafts and plans'. The latter went to Nicholas Bools, who also received two ship models, while the rest of the models were divided between Sophia Denoyer, Admiral Barrington and Frederick Nicholay, among others.

There seem to be no dancing masters or dancers mentioned in the will, nor apparently is there any hint of links with the theatre. Apart from their shared post of royal dancing master, father and son pursued quite different careers. There is obviously more to be discovered about the career of Philip Denoyer, but it seems unlikely to be of great significance for the history of dancing.

### George Desnoyer and Philip Denoyer

Between them, over a period of more than sixty years, George Desnoyer and Philip Denoyer served three Kings, a Prince of Wales and their families. The elder Desnoyer was one of the most famous theatrical dancers of the early eighteenth century, appearing with a succession of celebrated partners. The

younger man had a career that went beyond the teaching of dancing and brought him a wide circle of friends, acquaintances and associates from the court, the City of London and the navy. Within and beyond the court, both father and son enjoyed successful and (in contrast with so many dancers and dancing masters of this period) well-documented private and professional lives. Their respective, and successive, careers provide much new information but also raise many questions about the appointment, duties and rewards (monetary and otherwise) of the dancing masters employed by the royal family during the Georgian period.

### Acknowledgement

Material from the Royal Archives is used with the permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

### Notes

- 1 Unless otherwise stated, all information about performances in the London theatres (including unattributed quotations) is taken from *The London Stage. Part 2: 1700–1729*, ed. Emmett L. Avery (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960) and *The London Stage. Part 3: 1729–1747*, ed. Arthur H. Scouten (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965).
- 2 Philip H. Highfill Jr., Kalman A. Burnim and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800*. 16 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973–1993), entry for G. or Philip Denoyer.
- 3 George consistently signed his name ‘Desnoyer’ (sometimes ‘Desnoÿer’), while Philip seems always to have signed himself ‘Denoyer’. These differing spellings will be used here.
- 4 Markus Völkel, ‘The Margravate of Brandenburg and the Kingdom of Prussia. The Hohenzollern Court 1535–1740’, in *The Princely Courts of Europe*, ed. John Adamson (London: Seven Dials, 2000), 211–229 (p. 223).
- 5 Rosenmarie Elisabeth Wallbrecht, *Das Theater des Barockzeitalters an den welfischen Höfen Hannover und Celle* (Hildesheim: August Lax Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1974), pp. 197–199. I am very grateful to Karen Limper-Herz for her translation of the German text into English.
- 6 Anthony L’Abbé, *A New Collection of Dances: Originally Published by F. Le Roussau c.1725* (London: Stainer & Bell, 1991), plates 72–97. George Desnoyer’s dancing career and his repertoire will be analysed in Moira Goff, ‘The Celebrated Monsieur Desnoyer’ (forthcoming).
- 7 Carol Marsh, ‘Introduction’, L’Abbé, *New Collection of Dances*, pp. x–xi.
- 8 Ragnhild Hatton, *George I* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 128.
- 9 The earliest known printed version of the ‘Character’ appears in the *Flying Post or the Weekly Medley*, 7 December 1728.
- 10 Wallbrecht, *Das Theater des Barockzeitalters*, pp. 197, 199. The 400 Thaler may be the source of the report that Denoyer was to be paid ‘Five Hundred Pounds’ a year – a salary twice that of L’Abbé in London. Although it is not possible to accurately determine a modern equivalent

- for Desnoyer’s annual salary in Hanover, in the early 1720s 400 Thaler were worth around £60, see John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600–1775. A Handbook* (London: Macmillan Press, 1978), pp. 63, 77.
- 11 Frances Vivian, *A Life of Frederick, Prince of Wales* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon Press, 2006), pp. 76, 77.
- 12 Wallbrecht, *Das Theater des Barockzeitalters*, p. 199.
- 13 The triumvirate, Colley Cibber, Robert Wilks and Barton Booth, had dissolved following Wilks’s death in September 1733. For the ensuing problems, see Robert D. Hume, *Henry Fielding and the London Theatre 1728–1737* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 143–4, 155–64.
- 14 A letter to Raymond, dancing master in Württemberg, dated 18 December 1733, records ‘nous avons l’honneur d’être connu de Monsieur Desnoyer qui est au service de Sa Majesté le roi August de Pologne’, Wallbrecht, *Das Theater des Barockzeitalters*, p. 200.
- 15 Charles Fleetwood, see Hume, *Henry Fielding and the London Theatre*, pp. 179–180, 185–6.
- 16 *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 17 March 1735.
- 17 Desnoyer was advertised for 56 performances in 1734–35, 61 in 1735–36 and 44 in 1736–37, but only 24 in 1737–38 and 28 in 1738–39.
- 18 Vivian, *Life of Frederick, Prince of Wales*, pp. 198–201.
- 19 John Hervey, Baron Hervey, *Some Materials Towards Memoirs of the Reign of King George II*, ed. Romney Sedgwick. 3 vols. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1931), vol. 3, pp. 757–8, 791, 792, 836.
- 20 He was first advertised as dancing on 11 January 1738.
- 21 Desnoyer was listed alongside masters serving the Duke of Cumberland and Princess Amelia, among others. It is not clear whether ‘their Royal Highness’s’ refers to the Prince and Princess of Wales or Frederick’s siblings. The National Archives, LC5/20, p. 156. His last performance of 1735–36 was on 19 May and he returned to Drury Lane on 26 October to dance regularly until 30 December 1736.
- 22 Royal Archives GEO/MAIN/55422, for the period 6 July 1736 to 17 July 1737.
- 23 James Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Antient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons* (London: W. Johnston, 1767–76), p. 223.
- 24 The allowance was for the period 13 July to 30 October 1737, The National Archives, LC5/20, p. 263.
- 25 British Library, Additional MS. 31145, f. 210, transcribed in Ruth Loewenthal, ‘Handel and Newburgh Hamilton: New References in the Strafford Papers’, *Musical Times*, vol. 112, no. 1545 (November 1971), pp. 1063–1066 (p. 1066).
- 26 Anthony L’Abbé was dancing-master to the two elder Princesses, Amelia and Caroline. He was succeeded in 1738 by Leach Glover, see L’Abbé, *New Collection of Dances*, p. x.
- 27 Desnoyer appears not in Prince Frederick’s but in Princess Augusta’s accounts from 1736–37 onwards at an annual salary of £100; there is initially no mention of his position in her establishment. See Royal Archives GEO/MAIN/55422.
- 28 Hervey also drafted a ‘character of Frederick, Prince of Wales’, drawing a parallel between the Prince and the

- Emperor Nero, in which he declared ‘Nor did Nero distinguish Paris the dancer, ... more than His [Royal Highness] did Dunoyer the dancer, who was the constant companion for years together of all his private hours, but particularly at Kew during his disgrace’, *Some Materials Towards Memoirs*, pp. 858, 867.
- 29 Wallbrecht, *Das Theater des Barockzeitalters*, pp. 198–9. William Chetwood, Drury Lane’s prompter from 1714–15 to 1740–41, contradicts this idea, for he describes Mlle Chateaufort as an orphan who took her guardian’s name and later married him, *A General History of the Stage* (London: W. Owen, 1749), pp. 128–30.
  - 30 The figure of Desnoyer also appears in Hogarth’s 1742 engraving (taken from his painting of the same year) ‘Taste in High Life’, Frederick George Stevens, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Volume III, Part 1, 1734–1750* (London: British Museum Publications, 1978), nos. 2563, 2569. Hogarth used it again in his 1753 treatise *The Analysis of Beauty*, see William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, ed. Ronald Paulson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 37, 149 and plate 1.
  - 31 Royal Archives GEO/MAIN/55422–30.
  - 32 British Library, Additional MS 37836, ff. 5r, 7r, 9v.
  - 33 Royal Archives GEO/ADD17/68/9, GEO/ADD17/69/8. The accounts for 1758–59 are not included in these sources. Desnoyer’s salary continued to be £200 a year.
  - 34 Duchy of Cornwall Records. Household Accounts of Augusta, Princess of Wales, vols. XLIV(1) – XLVI, microfilms at the British Library M2419–M2421. For the period 10 October 1760 to 5 January 1761, Desnoyer was also paid a pension of £50 by the new King, Royal Archives GEO/ADD17/69/28. This is presumably a quarterly payment towards the annual pension of £200 Desnoyer had begun to receive in 1759–60, Royal Archives GEO/ADD17/69/8.
  - 35 Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, *Letters written ... to His Son*. 2 Vols. (London: J. Dodsley, 1774), vol. 2, p. 152.
  - 36 *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs Delany*, ed. The Right Honourable Lady Llanover. 3 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1861), vol. 3, p. 584.
  - 37 Benjamin Victor, *The History of the Theatres of London and Dublin, from the Year 1730 to the Present Time*. 2 vols. (London: T. Davies et al., 1762), vol. 2, pp. 133–4.
  - 38 Duchy of Cornwall Records, Household Accounts of Augusta, Princess of Wales, vol. XLIX, ff. 339v, vol. L, ff. 315r, 317r.
  - 39 Parliamentary Archives. Private Act, 25 George II, c.36. HL/PO/PB/1/1751/25G2n96.
  - 40 Lambeth Palace Library. Archbishop of Canterbury, Faculty Office. Marriage Licence Allegations, 18 May 1757.
  - 41 Westminster Archives Centre, St Martin in the Fields, Parish Registers, Marriage Register, 21 May 1757.
  - 42 Margaret Salliar appears as ‘Under Housekeeper at Clifden’ and Lewis Salliar as ‘Porter there’ in the ‘General List or Establishment’ of the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1738, British Library, Add. MSS 37836, f. 2v.
  - 43 The baptisms recorded are: Georgina Margareta, 22 September 1759, St Martin in the Fields; George Augustus Edward, 7 December 1760, St Anne Soho; Augusta Wilhelmina Louisa, 23 September 1762, St Anne Soho; Georgina Charlotte Augusta, 9 October 1763, St Anne Soho; Mary Arabella, 19 July 1773, St Anne Soho.
  - 44 Royal Archives GEO/ADD17/69/34, GEO/ADD17/71/9. Philip Denoyer was allowed 13s.6d. per week for carriage hire. He received £14.17s.6d. for 22 weeks of attendance in 1759 and £12.3s. for 18 weeks in 1760.
  - 45 *A List of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. June 5, 1760* [London, 1760], p. 14.
  - 46 British Library, Add. MSS 38204, f. 138r.
  - 47 ‘Philip Denoyer’ is listed as ‘Dancing Master’ to ‘The Princess of Wales’s Children’, Duchy of Cornwall Records, Household Accounts of Augusta Princess of Wales, Vol. XXXII, April 1765 to January 1766, f. 75r (British Library M2410). The entry is dated 5 April 1766.
  - 48 Household Accounts of Queen Charlotte, British Library, Add. MSS 17870, f. 57r. Denoyer was paid a year and a quarter’s salary from 5 July 1768 to 10 October 1769, amounting to £187.10s. His annual salary of £150 was less than that of the writing master, who received £200 a year, and the French teacher, who was paid £300 a year.
  - 49 Household Accounts of Queen Charlotte, 10 October 1769 to 10 October 1776, British Library Add. MSS 17870, ff. 65r, 73r, 80v, 88v, 97v. Household Accounts of Queen Charlotte, 1 January 1777 to 1 January 1783, Royal Archives GEO/MAIN/36839, 36847, 36855, 36862, 36868, 36875.
  - 50 Philip Denoyer appears in the Household Accounts for the younger princes only for the period 1 January to 5 April 1781, for which he was paid the quarterly sum of £25 for teaching Prince Edward, Royal Archives GEO/MAIN/43305.
  - 51 *Gentleman’s Magazine*, May 1788, p. 468.
  - 52 Westminster Archives Centre. St George Hanover Square, Parish Registers, Burial Register, 17 May 1788.
  - 53 The National Archives, PCC PROB 11/1165.
  - 54 *The London Calendar or Court and City Register*, 1788, pp. 71, 73, 83.
  - 55 Charlotte Denoyer married Edward Southbrook at St Marylebone parish church on 26 September 1784.
  - 56 *The London Calendar or Court and City Register*, 1788, pp. 83, 84. Mrs Schwellenberg is listed as ‘Mrs. Schwellenbergen’.
  - 57 *The London Calendar or Court and City Register*, 1788, pp. 83, 84.
  - 58 Paul Baines, ‘Mathias, Thomas James (1753/4–1835)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept. 2004; online edn Jan. 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18334, accessed 24 July 2009].
  - 59 Edith F. Carey, ‘Peter Le Mesurier, Governor of Alderney, 1793–1803’, *Report and Transactions, Société Guernesiaise*, 10 (1926–9), 46–61 (pedigree between pp. 56 & 57).
  - 60 Alan G. Jamieson, ‘Barrington, Samuel (1729–1800)’, *ODNB*, online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1533, accessed 24 July 2009]. Neither Philip Denoyer nor his father were ever explicitly listed as

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dancing masters to Henry Frederick (born 1745), the fourth son of Prince Frederick, who became Duke of Cumberland following the death of his uncle William Augustus in 1765.

- 61 P. K. Crimmin, 'Jervis, John, Earl of St Vincent (1735–1823)', *ODNB*, online edn, Jan 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14794>, accessed 24 July 2009].