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## Introduction

Our knowledge of social dancing in England in the late 16th and early 17th centuries is substantially aided by the written records made of dances used at the Inns of Court revels. Wilson (1987) gave a transcript of the dances contained in the six Inns of Court manuscripts. The earliest manuscript, *MS Rawlinson Poet.* 108, dated *circa* 1570, is to be found in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Along with songs, poems and other items it includes the step sequences for fifteen dances. The dances are pavans, almains, measures, and one coranto entitled *Caranto Dyspayne*. Unlike many of the dances, the *Caranto Dyspayne* does not occur in any of the other five Inns of Court manuscripts. As far as I am aware, the only published secondary source giving a realisation of this dance is Dolmetsch (1949).

One's first impression on reading the text of the *Caranto Dyspayne* is of a long sequence of steps which would tax any dancer's memory. No music for the dance is given in the manuscript. This is a serious handicap to reconstruction, and is perhaps the most significant reason why the *Caranto Dyspayne* is not often performed today. Other difficulties occur with the interpretation of the unknown dance step *travers*; the inexplicit description of the two weaving figures; and the use of *twyse* at the end of dance phrases, which could refer to one, or more, of the preceding steps. I offer possible solutions and a working version of the dance, based on assumptions that this is a column dance for couples, composed of five figures, with a fairly simple musical structure.

## Text

The text given here is the original wording but the division into lines and paragraphs is mine. I have added the heading to each figure to aid discussion of the dance structure. The transcript in its original layout may be read in Wilson (1987).

### Caranto Dyspayne

#### [Figure 1]

1     iiiij singles syde//  
 2     ij singles a duple forward  
 3     ij singles syde reprice backe twyse//  
 4     iiiij singles syde  
 5     a duple forward reprice backe twyse//  
 6     iiiij singles syde

#### [Figure 2]

7     a duple forward reprice backe twyse//  
 8     ij singles syde iij travers forward  
 9     ij singles syde iij travers backe//  
 10    a duple forward reprice backe twyse//  
 11    ij singles syde iij travers forward//  
 12    ij singles syde iij travers backe//

#### [Figure 3]

13    a duple forward reprice backe twyse//  
 14    A dub. rownde both ways  
 15    one single backe & honour.

16    a dub. into eche others place  
 17    and let the wemen leade  
 18    a dub forward reprice backe twyse//  
 19    a dub. rownd bothe ways  
 20    one single backe & honour  
 21    a dub into your owne place//

#### [Figure 4]

22    ☞ A dub forwards reprice backe twyse//  
 23    one single back & honour  
 24    a duple forward reprice backe twyse  
 25    one single backe & honour//

#### [Figure 5]

26    part/iiiij dub to & fro betwyne your wemen & when  
 27    you be all past them come syde longe to them with  
 28    iij travers & honour everye man to hys women//  
 29    A dub strayght forward iij duples to & fro  
 30    then come to your wemen with  
 31    iij travers syde honour Everye mane to hys woman  
 32    them let the wemen leade  
 33    a Dub. forward reprice backe twyse//  
 34    one single backe & honour vt ☞

## Dance steps

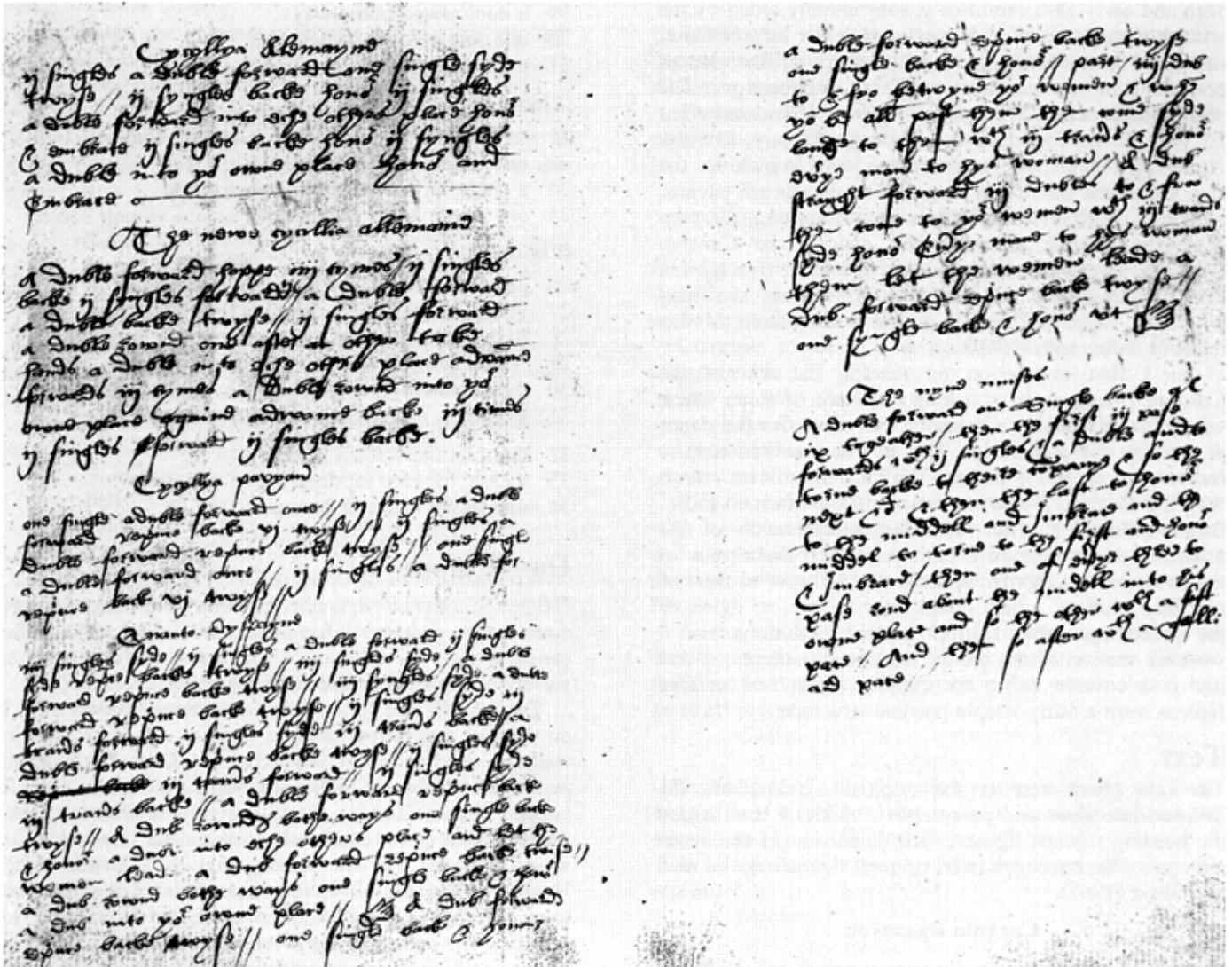
Neither this manuscript, nor the other five Inns of Court manuscripts give any information on how to perform the dance steps. To reconstruct the dance, I have used a variety of steps from contemporary dance treatises.

Though the title tells us that the dance is a coranto, I do not feel that all the *doubles* (written *dubles* or *dub.* in the text) need to be the hopped steps as described in the corantos of Arbeau (1589) and Negri (1602). To use all hopped steps makes for a very energetic dance; and these authors also gave easier alternatives for less able or weary dancers. For the leading figures I favour using Negri's *Ordinario*. However, hopped doubles should be used for the weaving sections of figure 5 in order to complete the pattern in the given number of steps.

A *reprise* is a double taken backwards. As Wilson (1987) noted, this is confirmed by comparison between the dances which do occur in several of the other five manuscripts.

An *honour* in this dance, normally takes the time of one double. However in figure 3, lines 15 and 20, a single back and honour must both be made in the time of one double unless an unusual musical phrase is played. Here, I suggest making a left step back on the first beat, followed by a right honour. In figure 4, lines 23 and 25, the time of two doubles is available for the same step combination. I choose to make the single followed by a pause, and then the honour in the time of the second double.

No dance step called *travers* is described in any of the known contemporary sources. I propose that these are hopped sideways steps, moving in one direction, ie slip steps. In the dance they occur in groups of three, which take the time of one double.



MS Rawlinson Poet, 108, folio 10 verso and 11 recto  
 Bodleian Library, Oxford

**Figures of the dance**

To perform the dance, couples stand in a long column down the centre of the room. A minimum of three couples is required to make the weaving pattern described in line 26. I shall refer to the head of the room as the presence.

The dance divides into five figures as I have indicated by the paragraphing of the text. Each figure, except the fifth, begins with 'lead a double forward to the presence and fall back a double', followed by an immediate repeat. This is the principal introductory figure in early Playford

country dances (Playford, 1651). In the first occurrence of this leading, each double is preceded by a pair of singles. The first and third pairs of singles are made forwards, the second and fourth sideways. On completion the dancers have moved the distance of two doubles nearer to the presence. This feature, combined with the opening acknowledgement of four sideways singles, shows similarity to contemporary Italian dances, which usually begin with honours to the presence and a progression forwards (Caroso, 1581; Negri, 1602). It should be noted that I am reading *twyse* as referring only to the doubles forward and

back, not to other preceding steps, except in the irregular opening discussed above. Hence I do not concur with Wilson's (1987) suggestion that a section of the text has been repeated in error. The '/' marks appear to punctuate the dance phrases but do not consistently mark equal phrase lengths.

Each figure contains an internal repeat; in figures one, two and four these are identical repeats. In figure three, partners change places, and change back in the repeat. To reverse the footing on the repeats seems to make unnecessary complications for the dancers, without improving the pattern of the dance. I prefer to continue the use of sequential alternate footing throughout the dance. Having made the leading section towards the presence, each figure is generally completed facing partners.

Figure five is preceded by the word *part*. This may refer to the fact that the men dance solo at this point. In place of the leading forward and back, the four doubles are used to make a weaving pattern around the women. The men begin by passing above their partner, then turning away from the presence they weave down the line passing in total four times between the women (see first diagram in the reconstruction of the dance). Then, with the men's line facing the women's line, all make three slip steps to their left, men travelling up the room, women down. This brings each man opposite his own partner for the honour. Everyone has moved the distance of one double down the room.

In the second section of figure five, it is necessary for partners to finish in each others' places in order to let the women lead, as stated in line 32. The men make the first double forwards towards the presence. They are then adjacent to the woman above their partner. Dancing in front of this woman and weaving down the women's line for three doubles, they come to the contrary side of their partners (see second diagram in the dance reconstruction). Facing the presence all make three slip steps sideways to the left across the room. This repositions the column centrally in the room, with the women in their partners' places.

During the first weaving figure the last man dances round his partner and two imaginary women. Similarly in the second weaving the first man dances round an imaginary woman above his partner. I experimented with alter-

native versions of the weaving patterns but none worked as simply and neatly as the those given above.

The last paragraph, lines 32–34, is an instruction to let the women lead from the point where the sign previously occurs, ie line 22. The whole of figures four and five are thereby repeated with the women dancing the weaving patterns previously done by the men. Thus the dance ends with everyone in their original positions. This type of dance structure, where a weaving figure is first made by the men, and then by the women, is an additional similarity to many Playford (1651) country dances. Furthermore such a figure usually comes at the end of the dance.

### Music

The musical structure based on the dance steps described is as follows:

Figure number	Doubles	Total	Bars in 6/8 rhythm
1	2+4+4+2+4+2	18	36
2	4+2+2+4+2+2	16	32
3	4+2+2+4+2+2	16	32
4	4+2+4+2	12	24
5	4+2+4+2	12	24
4	4+2+4+2	12	24
5	4+2+4+2	12	24
		98	196

The basic musical requirement is an eight bar phrase for the four doubles of the leading figures, and a four bar phrase for other parts of the dance. It is also desirable that each of these phrases subdivides into equal halves. In the dance reconstruction I refer to the eight bar phrase as the A music and the four bar phrase as the B music.

Given the title, music should be Coranto, 6/8 or 6/4 rhythm, with a Spanish flavour. (Coranto music may also be written in 3/4 rhythm, in which case twice as many bars are needed for each phrase.) The traditional tune *Spagnoletta*, origin anonymous, is the most obvious. Many variations, both in rhythm and length are to be found in contemporary collections (New Grove Dictionary, 1980). Unfortunately none that I know exactly fits the dance phrasing. However it is fairly easy to adapt the traditional tune and not unreasonable to suppose that a suitable variation was arranged at the time. Alternatively any other suitably phrased Coranto piece may be used.

## Reconstruction of the dance

Couples form a column down the length of the room.

### Figure 1 Bars

B	1–4	4 singles sideways L, R, L, R.	Facing the presence.
A	1–4	2 singles L, R, 1 double L forwards.	Towards the presence.
	5–8	2 singles sideways R, L, 1 double R backwards.	
A	1–2	2 singles L, R, 1 double L forwards.	
	5–8	2 singles sideways R, L, 1 double R backwards.	
B	1–4	4 singles sideways L, R, L, R.	Facing partner.
A	1–4	1 double L forward, 1 double R backwards.	Towards the presence.
	5–8	1 double L forward, 1 double R backwards.	
B	1–4	4 singles sideways L, R, L, R.	Facing partner.

**Figure 2**

A	1-4	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	Towards the presence.
	5-8	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	
B	1-2	2 singles L, R, sideways	Facing partner.
	3-4	3 slip steps up the room.	Holding two hands with partner.
B	1-2	2 singles L, R, sideways,	Facing partner.
	3-4	3 slip steps down the room.	Holding two hands with partner.
A	1-4	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	Towards the presence.
	5-8	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	
B	1-2	2 singles L, R, sideways,	Facing partner.
	3-4	3 slip steps up the room.	Holding two hands with partner.
B	1-2	2 singles L, R, sideways,	Facing partner.
	3-4	3 slip steps down the room.	Holding two hands with partner.

**Figure 3**

A	1-4	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	Towards the presence.
	5-8	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	
B	1-2	1 double L turning round to the left,	Facing partner.
	3-4	1 double R turning round to the right.	
B	1-2	A step back L & honour R,	
	3-4	1 double R	Crossing by R into partner's place.
A	1-4	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	Towards the presence, women leading
	5-8	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	
B	1-2	1 double L turning round to the left,	Facing partner.
	3-4	1 double R turning round to the right.	
B	1-2	A step back L & honour R,	
	3-4	1 double R	Crossing by R into own place.

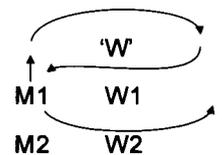
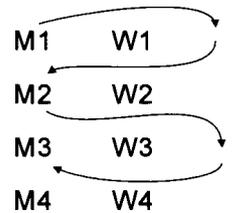
**Figure 4**

A	1-4	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	Towards the presence.
	5-8	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	
B	1-4	1 single back L, pause, honour L.	Facing partner.
A	1-4	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	Towards the presence.
	5-8	1 double L forwards, 1 double R backwards.	
B	1-4	1 single back L, pause, honour L.	Facing partner.

**Figure 5**

A		All men simultaneously make the following weaving pattern:	Women face the presence.
	1-2	1 double L crossing above partner to her contrary side.	Example of track for the first man
	3-4	1 double R crossing below partner into the next man's place.	
	5-6	1 double L crossing between their respective second and third women.	
	7-8	1 double R crossing below third woman into third man's place.	
B	1-2	All make 3 slip steps L, men up the room, women down, to come opposite partner.	Men's line facing women's line.
	3-4	Honour L.	Facing partner.
A		All men simultaneously make the following weaving pattern:	Women face the presence.
	1-2	1 double L straight forward towards the presence.	Example of track for the first man
	3-4	1 double R crossing above woman who stands in front of partner.	
	5-6	1 double L crossing in front of partner into original place.	
	7-8	1 double R behind partner to her contrary side.	
B	1-2	All make 3 slip steps L sideways to come into partner's place.	Facing the presence.
	3-4	Honour L.	Facing partner.

Repeat figures 4 & 5 with the women leading and making the weaving figures as the men did.



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## Conclusion

Although at first reading the *Caranto Dyspayne* appears to have a long and disjointed sequence of steps, analysis shows that it has a definite structure; and is no more complex than many of the country dances in Playford's collection, to which it bears strong resemblance. Given the manuscript date of *circa* 1570 it could be considered to be the earliest recorded English country dance. The *Caranto Dyspayne* deserves a wider audience, and I hope that this discourse will encourage its performance.

## References

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