

# Dancing-Masters in Early Eighteenth-Century London

Moira Goff

How many dancing-masters were working in London in the early eighteenth century? Who were they? Where did they live? Who were their pupils?

There are no easy answers to any of these questions. Information about dancing-masters in this period is hard to come by. There is only one directory of trades for London before 1740, but it does not include dancing-masters.<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to make painstaking searches through parish registers, rate books, will indexes, newspaper advertisements, and the many other sources well known to family historians in order to find any information about the lives of the men who taught Londoners to dance.

It is even more difficult to discover who their pupils were. Clues must be sought in family papers, particularly accounts, correspondence, and diaries – where these exist. Of course, likely families must first be identified.

Such work, while far from easy and extremely time-consuming, is by no means impossible. Careful reading of the most easily accessible sources – the publications of the dancing-masters themselves – provides a wealth of information which can be used as a starting point for researches in the local and national archives. Indeed, one purpose of this article is to show how much information can be gathered from the most obvious published sources.<sup>2</sup>

## London dancing-masters and their publications

During the period 1700–1740 sixty-six individual dances and five collections of dances were published in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation in London.<sup>3</sup> In addition ten treatises on dancing appeared, a number of which were translations from French originals. Many of these works contain prefaces, dedications and other material which include references to London dancing-masters.<sup>4</sup>

Most important are the six works which were published by subscription:<sup>5</sup>

*Orchesography. Or, the art of dancing, ... an exact and just translation from the French of Monsieur Feuillet.*  
By John Weaver. (1706)<sup>6</sup>

*A collection of ball-dances perform'd at court: ... All compos'd by Mr Isaac, and writ down in characters, by John Weaver.* (1706)

*An essay for the further improvement of dancing ... by E. Pemberton.* (1711)

*Anatomical and mechanical lectures upon dancing. ...*  
By John Weaver. (1721)

*A new collection of dances ... composed by Monsieur L'Abbe ... Recollected, put in characters, and engraved, by Monsieur Roussau. [1725?]*

*The art of dancing explained by reading and figures; ... by Kellom Tomlinson.* (1735)

Weaver's *Orchesography* and *A collection of ball-dances* had 39 and 47 subscribers respectively, the majority of whom were London dancing-masters; when he came to publish his *Anatomical and mechanical lectures upon dancing* Weaver was able to persuade only 31 people to subscribe, although again most were London dancing-masters. Edmund

Pemberton fared a little better in 1711, attracting 58 subscribers for *An essay for the further improvement of dancing*, about 40 of whom were London dancing-masters. Anthony L'Abbé was even more popular with 68 subscribers, including approximately 50 London dancing-masters. Most popular of all was Kellom Tomlinson with a grand total of 169 subscribers; his list differs from all the others in being almost entirely composed of the nobility and gentry (he invites us to suppose that they were his pupils), with only about 15 London dancing-masters. In fact over 100 dancing-masters living and working in London in the period 1700–1735 can be identified by this means.<sup>7</sup>

A number of the works listed above also included dedications and prefaces, which provide valuable information about other dancing-masters. Some of the authors published other treatises without the need for subscriptions, for example John Weaver whose *An essay towards an history of dancing* appeared in 1712 with a dedication and a short testimony of praise for six dancing-masters. John Essex published *For the furthur [sic] improvement of dancing* in 1710 and the first edition of *The dancing-master*, his translation of Pierre Rameau's treatise, in 1728 – both have informative dedications and prefaces. P. Siris, rather an outsider among the London dancing-masters, published *The art of dancing, demonstrated by characters and figures*, his translation of Feuillet's *Choregraphie*, in 1706, and included a dedication 'To the dancing-masters of this city and kingdom' thus emphasising the importance of the London masters.<sup>8</sup>

A number of the dances published in notation during this period, in addition to the collections listed above, also had dedications. Those discovered so far include *The Union* (1707), *The Pastorall* (1713), and *The Godolphin* (1714), all by Mr. Isaac, *The Princess Royale* (1715) and *The Princess Anna* (1716), both by Anthony L'Abbé, and *The Passepiéd Round O* (1715) and the *Six dances* (1720), by Kellom Tomlinson.

## The leaders of the profession

One hundred dancing-masters is rather too many to deal with in a single short article, and many more must have lived and worked in London in the early eighteenth century without subscribing to or being otherwise mentioned in any of the works listed above. This article will concentrate on a handful of men who formed the centre of a network of power and influence – the men who could be described as the leaders of the profession in England in the early 1700s.

They can be readily identified. Six names stand out by reason of the number of mentions they receive in the works of others, or because of the number or importance of their own publications about dances and dancing – Thomas Caverley, Mr. Isaac, Anthony L'Abbé, John Weaver, Edmund Pemberton, and John Essex.<sup>9</sup> Their names can be followed through the sources to see how they appeared to their fellow dancing-masters, to catch a glimpse of their personalities and, occasionally, their foibles.

### Thomas Caverley

Indisputably the first among them was Thomas Caverley, who seems to have been the most highly esteemed and influential of all the dancing-masters in London – he was

referred to by Weaver, in the dedication to *Anatomical and mechanical lectures upon dancing*, as ‘one of the first masters of our art in the English school’. He is most familiar today as the choreographer of the *Slow Minuet* which was notated and published by Edmund Pemberton, possibly in 1729.<sup>10</sup> His status is attested by the fact that he had no fewer than four works dedicated to him: Pemberton’s *An essay for the further improvement of dancing*, Weaver’s *An essay towards an history of dancing*, Tomlinson’s *Passepied Round O*, and Weaver’s *Anatomical and mechanical lectures upon dancing*. He subscribed to five of the six works listed above – the exception being *A new collection of dances* by Anthony L’Abbé – and is mentioned in a number of them. He is also referred to by John Essex in his English preface to *The dancing-master*.

Thomas Caverley was born about 1648 and lived until 1745.<sup>11</sup> *The London Magazine* reported his death, slightly inaccurately:

‘Deaths. ... Mr. Cavillier, Master of the boarding-school in Queen-Square, near Ormond-Street, aged 104.’<sup>12</sup>

Caverley married twice, and his will mentions six children – three sons and three daughters – as well as indicating considerable wealth.<sup>13</sup> Alongside his boarding school for young ladies he also took male pupils, for one of them was Kellom Tomlinson who recorded the fact in his preface to *The art of dancing*:

‘In April 1707, I was placed as an apprentice with Mr. Thomas Caverley, now living in Queen’s-Square, St. George the Martyr, with whom I continued till the year 1714.’

Caverley’s boarding school was many times mentioned by his contemporaries; John Weaver seems to have been particularly impressed and complimented him in the dedication to *An essay towards an history of dancing*:

‘The discreet manner of educating ladies according to their different genius and capacity, has so good an effect, that none go from you unimproved’.

The fine quality of his teaching was a constant theme, and he was often credited with improving both the standards and the status of the art of dancing, perhaps because his practice was concerned solely with social dancing (he seems to have had virtually no contacts with the theatre). Again in the dedication to *An essay towards an history of dancing* Weaver referred to:

‘the singular and curious improvements you have made in the art of dancing, your happy skill in teaching it’.

Kellom Tomlinson echoed this in the dedication to the *Passepied Round O*:

‘From you Sir, ... have flow’d those correct and refin’d notions, which have given so great a lustre to dancing’

Caverley was often coupled with Isaac in references to the enhanced status of dancing. Weaver (who enjoyed the patronage of both) was not slow in commending them, for example in his remarks about the dancing of his own time towards the end of chapter VII of *An essay towards an history of dancing*:

‘we are oblig’d to the great improvements given this

art [i.e. what Weaver called ‘common dancing’] by Mr. Isaac and Mr. Caverley, to whom is owing the beautiful perfection we see it in at this day’.

Pemberton, too, was obliged to both men for their support, and responded with appropriate praise in the preface to part one of *An essay for the further improvement of dancing*:

‘as you have us’d the best of methods to arrive at a mastery in your art, you have been peculiarly happy in the conversation of Mr. Isaac who is so great a master that ... he wants no encomium’

Both Weaver and Pemberton were equally quick to acknowledge in print their indebtedness to Caverley.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the references to Caverley have a more personal tone. Weaver was clearly a close friend and was able to see at first hand ‘the good order and oeconomy observed in your family, (which is composed of so many young ladies of merit and quality)’ which he drew attention to in *An essay upon the history of dancing*, although he was obviously influenced by his own weakness for the fair sex. John Essex also seems to have known Caverley well and besides remarking upon ‘so fine an oeconomy in his family’ provided a persuasive pen portrait of the old man in his preface to *The dancing-master*:

‘He is now in the eightieth year of his age, and stands firm upon his legs, his body is upright and erect, and his eye-sight and memory in perfection. He ... teaches with as much life and spirit as if he was but half that age.’

A portrait of Caverley now hangs in the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.<sup>15</sup>

### Mr. Isaac

Mr. Isaac seems to have been regarded by his contemporaries as Caverley’s equal. He is well-known today through the surviving notations of twenty-two of his dances, which were published successively by John Weaver, John Walsh, and Edmund Pemberton. Despite these, very little is known about Isaac’s life or career. He may have been French or English: an Isaac is listed as performing in ballets de cour in Paris in 1670–1671, and an Isaac is also listed among the English dancers in the masque *Calisto* performed before the court in London in 1675. He certainly had close connections with the English court from the 1670s onwards, and he numbered among his pupils both the daughter and the grandson of the diarist John Evelyn, as well as Katherine Booth, who danced a solo at the birthnight ball on 4 November 1689, at least one of Queen Anne’s maids of honour,<sup>16</sup> and Queen Anne herself. The last certain record for Isaac is dated 1717, when he received payment for teaching one Rachel Baillie: he must have died sometime between 1718 (when Pemberton published his last known dance, *The Entree* (which unhappily seems not to have survived), and 1721, since he did not subscribe to Weaver’s *Anatomical and mechanical lectures upon dancing* published in that year or to any of the later treatises listed above. His will, if he left one, is yet to be found.

In 1706 John Weaver dedicated *Orchesography* to him, and Isaac subscribed to both this work and *A collection of ball-dances* as well as Pemberton’s *An essay for the further improvement of dancing* in 1711. Weaver wrote another dedication to him, the only known copy of which is to be found with a copy of *The Union* although it does not seem to belong to that dance.<sup>17</sup> Like Caverley, Isaac was also mentioned many times in the works of other dancing-masters,

most notably by John Essex in his preface to *The dancing-master*:

‘The late Mr. Isaac, ... first gained the character and afterwards supported that reputation of being the prime master in England for forty years together: he taught the first quality with success and applause, and was justly stiled the court dancing-master, therefore might truly deserve to be called the gentleman dancing-master.’

In common with Caverley, Isaac acted as a patron to the younger men. In particular, he was concerned to encourage knowledge and use of the new system of notation devised by Pierre Beauchamp and revised and published by Raoul Auger Feuillet. In dedicating *Orchesography* to him, Weaver was lavish with praise for his interest:

‘so having receiv’d such great and generous encouragement in this study from you, Sir; the product ... does, ... seek shelter under your patronage, and challenge the advantage of appearing in the world under the protection of your name, whose known judgment and mastery in this art [i.e. dancing], will secure me’.

A few years later, Edmund Pemberton paid a similar debt of gratitude to Isaac in the dedication to part one of *An essay for the further improvement of dancing*, when he mentioned that it was ‘by his [i.e. Isaac’s] approbation I first appeared in print to instruct masters in the characters’, and in 1713, in the preface to *The Pastorall* (which Pemberton had notated for Walsh),<sup>18</sup> he complimented both Isaac and (indirectly) himself:

‘As it is thro Mr. Isaacs [sic] extensive goodness wee [sic] in England enjoy ye benefit of ye characters, it’s not to be doubted but his curious compositions will be lasting examples to futurity.’

Isaac, again like Caverley, was often praised for the quality of his teaching, but his ball dances seem to have evoked something approaching reverence among his fellow dancing-masters. Weaver referred to them as ‘masterly compositions’ in the preface to *Orchesography* and understandably drew attention to the ‘excellence of these dances’ in the dedication to the Duke of Richmond of *A collection of ball-dances*. Kellom Tomlinson drew many examples from Isaac’s dances throughout *The art of dancing*, but mentions *The Rigadoon* more often than any of the others,<sup>19</sup> in part no doubt because the dance was first published in *A collection of ball-dances* in 1706 and re-issued by John Walsh in 1708, 1712 and finally in 1730. Isaac’s *Rigadoon* was also mentioned in another version of *The art of dancing* – the poem by Soame Jenyns published in 1729:

‘Hence with her sister-arts shall dancing claim  
An equal right to universal fame,  
And Isaac’s rigadoon shall last as long  
As Raphael’s painting, or as Virgil’s song.’<sup>20</sup>

John Essex, again in the English preface to *The dancing-master*, gives us a more personal view of the man:

‘His qualifications were great; for he was both generous and charitable to all: he was an agreeable figure in his person, and had a handsome mein [sic] joined to an easy address and graceful deportment, which always appeared without affectation.’

An engraved portrait of Isaac survives, after a painting by

Louis Goupy of about 1710, which seems to portray the affability described by Essex.<sup>21</sup>

### Anthony L’Abbé

Like Isaac, Anthony L’Abbé is today well-known for his surviving dances – of which there are twenty-seven in all, thirteen choreographed for the theatre and fourteen ball dances. His life and career, although not fully documented, are not such a mystery as Isaac’s.<sup>22</sup> He was born about 1667 and began his career at the Paris Opéra in 1688. In 1698 he was invited to London, to dance at the Lincoln’s Inn Fields theatre, by the actor-manager Thomas Betterton. In 1700 he returned to London where he seems to have remained for most of the next forty years, first as a dancer at the Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Drury Lane theatres and then, after the accession of George I in 1714, as dancing-master to the royal family. Most of his ball dances were composed in honour of George I, his children and grandchildren, including George II, Queen Caroline, and Frederick, Prince of Wales. L’Abbé seems to have returned to France in about 1737 or 1738, where he is last mentioned in 1756.<sup>23</sup>

Although a Frenchman, L’Abbé seems to have become a member of the establishment of English dancing-masters without difficulty. He subscribed to all six of the works listed above (he set himself down for four copies of his own collection) and, although he received no dedications, he was mentioned in many of the English dance treatises and himself wrote two dedications to his pupil Anne, the Princess Royal, to accompany the published notations for *The Princess Royale* and *The Princess Anna*.

Most of the references by other dancing-masters are to his undoubted abilities as a performer, teacher and choreographer. Weaver was again at the forefront with a mention in the preface to *Orchesography*, in which he spoke of ‘the admirable compositions of Mons. L’Abbe in ballet, and his performance’, and in the preface to *Anatomical and mechanical lectures upon dancing* he referred to L’Abbé as ‘that great master in every branch of this art’. Tomlinson used several of L’Abbé’s dances as examples in *The art of dancing*, which indicated their continued currency among dancing-masters,<sup>24</sup> and gave his estimate of L’Abbé’s worth by dedicating his own dance the *Passacaille Diana* (published in 1721, but since lost) to him, and drawing attention to this in the preface to *The art of dancing*. Essex added L’Abbé to his roll-call of dancers and dancing-masters in the preface to *The dancing-master*:

‘Monsieur L’Abbe, who came from France about the year 1700, succeeded him [i.e. Isaac] at court. He is an excellent master, and was a great performer when upon the stage: ... His talent chiefly lay in the grave movement, and he excelled all that ever appeared on the English stage in that character’.

Sadly, no portrait of Anthony L’Abbé is known to have survived.

### John Weaver

John Weaver, although he could not lay claim to the same status as Caverley, Isaac or L’Abbé, played a central role among the London dancing-masters of the early eighteenth-century. He is one of the very few dancing-masters of that time whose life and career have been adequately documented,<sup>25</sup> which is particularly helpful since, although he

was one of the principal writers on dancing of the period, he is mentioned relatively rarely in contemporary treatises.

Weaver was born in Shrewsbury in 1673, and died there in 1760. He began his career there, teaching social dancing, but by 1700 he was in London working at Drury Lane as a theatrical dancer. He divided his time between the two places, and between 'common-dancing' and 'stage-dancing', until 1733 when he worked in London for the last time. Weaver's 'dramatick entertainments in dancing' are well known, from *The Loves of Mars and Venus* in 1717 to *The Judgment of Paris* in 1733 – even though, despite his skill as a notator, none of his dances survive. John Essex, in his preface to *The dancing-master*, referred to Weaver's own performance as a dancer:

'his Mars and Venus, a dramatick entertainment, was the first of this kind produced on the British stage, ...

He performed Vulcan himself, and shewed the passions to great advantage'.

His many works, five treatises on dancing, three articles for *The Spectator*, libretti for the four ballets d'action which he choreographed and staged at the Drury Lane Theatre, as well as the seven dances he notated for Mr. Isaac, are important sources of information about dance in London in the early eighteenth-century.

John Weaver's writings indicate a man who was conscious of his own worth, although he was happy to acknowledge the contribution of others he respected, and he makes his attitude clear in the dedication to Mr. Isaac bound with a copy of *The Union*:

'there is room left yet for industry & application to give it [i.e. Beauchamp-Feuillet notation] the last perfection. I flatter myself that I am able by my own study, & your [i.e. Isaac's] assistance (being master of all Mr. Beauchamp's designs and works) to attain this end, so usefull & necessary both for masters and scholars.'

Pemberton certainly valued Weaver's work, for he took care to point out in the preface to part one of *An essay for the further improvement of dancing* that 'where there is occasion for particular steps I have followed Mr. Weaver's method'. John Essex was happy to accept Weaver's estimate of himself, which he set down in *The dancing-master*:

'Dancing here in England has been very much advanced within this twenty years, which I must confess hath been chiefly owing to the masters now in being, particularly Mr. Weaver, who gave us the institutions for dancing'

No portrait of John Weaver is known.

### Edmund Pemberton

Until recently Edmund Pemberton was a shadowy figure among the London dancing-masters of the early 1700s, despite his work of notating and publishing the dances of Thomas Caverley, Mr. Isaac, Anthony L'Abbé and others. Like Weaver, but less obviously, he was central to the work of the leading dancing-masters of the time.<sup>26</sup> The date and place of Pemberton's birth are yet to be discovered, but he was married by 1698 when the first of his nine known children was born, and it seems likely that he was born in the 1670s and thus a close contemporary of John Weaver. He was active as a dancing-master by 1709, when he merited a mention on the titlepage of Isaac's dance *The Royal Portuguese*,

and his first published work was *An essay for the further improvement of dancing* of 1711. He worked briefly for the music publisher John Walsh and then, after a dispute with Walsh over the latter's piracy of *The Princess Royale* and *The Princess Anna*, he embarked upon a successful independent career as the notator and publisher of Anthony L'Abbé's ball dances (like Caverley, he seems to have had no contact with the theatre). He died in 1733 and his will shows him to have been well-to-do (but as the result of inheritance rather than the profitability of his business either as a publisher or a dancing-master). At least two of his sons were also dancing-masters.

The importance of Pemberton's work to his peers is demonstrated by the list of subscribers and contributors to *An essay for the further improvement of dancing*. Between the publication of that collection in 1711 and his death in 1733 he notated, published and sold at least twenty dances which would otherwise have been lost. The unique nature of his work is demonstrated by the fact that after his death only one more dance seems to have been recorded in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation and published in London.

In his dedication of *The Godolphin* (to Lady Harriet Godolphin, granddaughter of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough)<sup>27</sup> Pemberton, rather more modestly than Weaver, indicated that he himself understood the value of his contribution:

'By ye art of chorography I have endeavour'd [sic] to preserve it [i.e. *The Godolphin*] to posterity.'

Pemberton was not mentioned by his contemporaries in any of the works listed above, and there is no known portrait of him.

### John Essex

John Essex seems to have begun his career at the beginning of the eighteenth century as a theatrical dancer at Drury Lane, where he continued to dance into the 1730s. In 1710 his translation of Feuillet's *Recueil de contredances* (1706) appeared, entitled *For the furthur [sic] improvement of dancing*. A new edition of this work was published in about 1715, with some additional country dances and Essex's only surviving court dance *The Princess's Passepied*.<sup>28</sup> *The dancing-master*, Essex's translation of the *Le maître à danser* (1725) by Pierre Rameau, appeared in 1728 and was popular enough to warrant a second edition in 1731 and several subsequent re-issues. Essex died in 1744 and his quite considerable estate was divided between his two surviving children, William (who was also a dancing-master) and Elizabeth. He must have been friendly with John Weaver, for he left him a legacy of £20.

Essex subscribed to all six of the works listed above. In the English preface to *The dancing-master* he passed judgment on many of his contemporaries, but the only mention he himself seems to have received was from Edmund Pemberton, who referred in the preface to part one of *An essay for the further improvement of dancing* to 'Mr. Feuillet's treatise of country dances, translated by Mr. Essex, which method I have for the most part follow'd'.

John Essex is said to be portrayed as the dancing-master in *The Levée* from Hogarth's series of paintings entitled *The Rake's Progress*,<sup>29</sup> but there is no real evidence to support this assertion.

### Other London dancing-masters

The sources listed above mention a number of other dancing-masters besides the six who may be regarded as leaders of the profession. Among these others were two who seem to have been thought of as belonging to an older generation, even though both must have been much the same age as Thomas Caverley.

One of them was the famous collaborator with Purcell – Josias Preist.<sup>30</sup> John Weaver, who seems never to have seen Preist dance, referred to him thus in the final chapter of *An essay towards an history of dancing*:

‘Mr. Joseph Priest of Chelsey, I take to have been the greatest master of this kind of dancing [i.e. the grotesque style], that has appear’d on our stage’

Preist contributed a minuet for twelve ladies to Pemberton’s *An essay for the further improvement of dancing*, the only dance of his known to have survived.

Another such dancing-master was the ‘admirable Mr. Goree’, Jerome Geary, to whom Pemberton devoted much space in the dedication of part two of *An essay for the further improvement of dancing*.<sup>31</sup> Pemberton emphasised his importance to the profession, but also explained why he no longer practised as a dancing-master:

‘He had the honour to teach eight or nine crown’d heads, and likewise most of our quality during the minority of Mr. Isaac. ... till with age having lost that evenness of temper purely requisite in a master, he laid down’.

Weaver was generous in his praise of Geary, but remained reticent about his weakness. He included Geary in a short testimony to the merit of ‘those masters whom I take to have arrived at the true skill and taste of genteel dancing’ in *An essay towards an history of dancing*:

‘Mr. Groscort, Mr. Crouch, Mr. Holt, Mr. Firbank, Mr. Lewis, and Mr. Geary, are happy teachers of that natural and unaffected manner, which has been brought to so high a perfection by Isaack and Caverly [sic].’

Despite his retirement, Geary subscribed to all the works listed above except Weaver’s *Anatomical and mechanical lectures upon dancing* and Tomlinson’s *The art of dancing*.

Mr. Groscort, who featured first among Weaver’s ‘happy teachers’, belonged to a younger generation and was obviously a dancing-master of some importance. He subscribed to all the treatises except Weaver’s *Anatomical and mechanical lectures upon dancing* and Tomlinson’s *The art of dancing* and was represented in Pemberton’s *An essay for the further improvement of dancing* by *An Ecchoe*, a bourree and minuet for three ladies which was the first dance in the treatise. John Essex dedicated *The dancing-master* to him in 1728, saying:

‘you have an indisputable claim among the masters of our profession to be esteemed one of the first, so the delicacy of your judgment will vindicate my choice’

He also commended Groscort’s teaching:

‘your scholars of both sexes have distinguished themselves by a just merit in their performances, which joined to a just cadence, an handsome and agreeable manner, and an unaffected deportment, evidently shew you to be that great master you have always been taken for by those of the nicest taste and politeness’

Thus Essex provided evidence that over the years since

Pemberton’s collection of figured dances Groscort had grown to an eminence rivalling that of Caverley and Isaac, and showed his own nicety of taste in appreciating it.

### Illustrious pupils

The various works listed above also provide some information about the pupils of these men – at least the most illustrious of them. Mention has already been made of the list of subscribers in Tomlinson’s *The art of dancing*, among whom must be a number of families who consistently patronised the dancing-masters discussed above. More direct evidence is provided by the aristocratic dedicatees of some of the treatises, for example the Duke of Richmond, to whom *A collection of ball-dances* was dedicated by John Weaver in 1706, and the Duchess of Buckingham and Normanby who was the dedicatee of the second part of Pemberton’s *An essay for the further improvement of dancing* in 1711. John Essex dedicated his treatise *For the furthur [sic] improvement of dancing* to the Duchess of Bolton, and Kellom Tomlinson dedicated *The art of dancing* to the Viscountess Fauconberg. Anthony L’Abbé, by virtue of his position as royal dancing-master, was able to dedicate his collection of dances to the King.

The surviving dedications contain much judicious flattery, as the opening paragraph of Weaver’s dedication to the Duke of Richmond in *A collection of ball-dances* shows:

‘The generous endowments of your Grace’s mind, must give every artist hopes of a share of your favour, and the admirable proficience, which your Grace has made in the art of dancing, as it is no small honour to it, so we naturally derive assurance of encouragement from those inclinations, which have rais’d your Grace to so great an excellence therein.’

Although, if the Duke had actually performed Isaac’s six dances, Weaver was probably telling the truth about his ‘admirable proficience’.

### The London dancing-masters and the art of dancing

The sources from which all the above quotations were taken show clearly that there was a network of patronage existing between the dancing-masters themselves. The fulsome compliments which Weaver, Essex and the others paid to Caverley, Isaac and L’Abbé in particular were intended to publicly convey gratitude for past favours and, where possible, to prepare the ground for future requests for assistance and support, for the continuance of patronage. But it was not just patronage that was at stake: the passages quoted show the close identification between the aims of Caverley, Isaac and Weaver, all of whom were attempting to raise the standards and status of what they thought of as the art of dancing. They wanted dancing to take its place equally with the other long established and more respectable arts. L’Abbé, Pemberton and, later, John Essex, were drawn into this work – probably through the encouragement and support offered by these members of the older generation of dancing-masters. Even allowing for the hyperbole, which was normal at the time, these men clearly admired each other’s work and shared the same aspirations.

They used their various publications as a means of furthering their ambitions, not only by writing about dancing as an elevated, refined, and moral exercise, but also by

writing about each other – emphasising their high ideals, the excellence of their teaching standards, and (above all) their unimpeachable moral standards and respectability. All of this was undoubtedly meant, in part, to counter the many attacks on dancing, dancers, and dancing-masters;<sup>32</sup> and, of course, they wanted to attract the right sort of pupils – preferably from among the ‘quality’. The many satirical portraits of dancing-masters produced during this same period contain some truth, in that they reveal popular attitudes towards the profession – perhaps based on the foibles and weaknesses of some of its individual members. But, although it is wise not to take too literally the quasi-Olympian view of dancing and dancing-masters put forward by Weaver, Essex and the others, their steadfastness of purpose and their support of one another should be admired. Without these men, how could there have been the rich legacy of notated dances and books on dancing which we enjoy today?

*This article is a revised version of a lecture given at the 1993 Summer School of the Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society.*

### Primary sources published in London

*Orchesography. Or, the art of dancing, ... an exact and just translation from the French of Monsieur Feuillet. By John Weaver.* London: printed by H. Meere, for the author, and are to be sold by P. Valliant, 1706.<sup>33</sup>

*A collection of ball-dances perform'd at court: ... All compos'd by Mr Isaac, and writ down in characters, by John Weaver.* London: printed for the author and sold by I. Vaillant, 1706.

*The art of dancing, demonstrated by characters and figures; ... Done from the French of Monsieur Feuillet, ... by P. Siris.* London: printed for the author, and may be had of him, 1706.

*The union a new dance compos'd by Mr. Isaac ... writt down in characters by John Weaver.* [London, 1707].

*For the furthur [sic] improvement of dancing, a treatis [sic] of chorography ... Translated from the French of Monsr Feuillet, ... by John Essex.* London: sold by I. Walsh & P. Randall, I: Hare, I. Culen, & by ye author, 1710.

*An essay for the further improvement of dancing ... by E. Pemberton.* London: printed, and sold by J. Walsh, J. Hare, and at the author's, 1711.

*The pastorall Mr. Isaac's new dance. ... Writ by Mr. Pemberton.* [London]: Printed for I: Walsh. And I: Hare, [1713].

*An essay towards an history of dancing.* London: printed for Jacob Tonson, 1712. The dedication was signed by John Weaver.

*For the further improvement of dancing a treatise of chorography, ... Translated from the French of Monsr: Feuillet, and a new French dance call'd the Princess's Passpied compos'd and writt in characters by John Essex.* London: sold by I: Walsh. I: Hare. And by the author, [1715?]

*The Godolphin Mr. Isaac's new dance ... Writ by Mr. Pemberton.* [London]: Printed for I: Walsh. And I: Hare, [1714]

*The passepied round O a new dance compos'd and written into characters, ... By Kellom Tomlinson.* [London]: To be had at Mr. Walsh's, or at the author's lodgings, [1715].

*The Princess Royale ... compos'd by Mr: L'Abbe writ by Mr:*

*Pemberton.* [London]: Sold by him [i.e. Pemberton], [1715].

*The Princess Anna ... compos'd by Mr: L'Abbe writ by Mr: Pemberton.* [London]: Sold by him [i.e. Pemberton], [1716].

*Six dances compos'd by Mr Kellom Tomlinson.* [London]: To be had only of the author, [1720].

*Anatomical and mechanical lectures upon dancing. ... By John Weaver.* London: printed for J. Brotherton, and W. Meadows; J. Graves; and W. Chetwood, 1721.

*The dancing-master. A satyr. Canto I.* London: printed for A. Moore; and sold by the booksellers of London, 1722

*A new collection of dances ... composed by Monsieur L'Abbe ... Recollected, put in characters, and engraved, by Monsieur Roussau.* [London]: To be sold at Mr. Barreau's and at Mr. Roussau's, [1725?].

*The dancing-master: or, the art of dancing explained. ... Done from the French of Monsieur Rameau, by J. Essex.* London: printed and sold by him [i.e. J. Essex]; and J. Brotherton, 1728.

*Mr. Caverley's. Slow minuet. ... writt by Mr: Pemberton.* [London]: Sold by him [i.e. Pemberton], [1729?].

*The art of dancing explained by reading and figures; ... by Kellom Tomlinson.* London: printed for the author, 1735.

### References

- 1 The earliest London directory to be published in the eighteenth century was *The intelligencer or, merchant's assistant*. London: printed for W. Meadows; and L. Gilliver and J. Clarke, 1738.
- 2 The emphasis in this article is on descriptions of the dancing-masters and their relationships with each other, rather than factual matters such as where they lived. The addresses of individual dancing-masters are often given in the imprints to their works, and can provide a starting point for research into their family backgrounds.
- 3 These figures are given in: Goff, M. and Thorp, J. Dance notations published in England c.1700–1740 and related manuscript material. *Dance Research*, 1991, IX (2), 36–37.
- 4 Full details of the works cited are given in the list of primary sources at the end of the article.
- 5 In the eighteenth century subscriptions were a means of financing the printing and publishing of books. The author would encourage his patrons, friends and others to pay in advance (i.e. subscribe) for one or more copies of the work he was preparing, and his printer (or publisher, or bookseller, the roles were not clearly defined in the eighteenth century) might request additional subscriptions by advertising in the newspapers. Pemberton's *An essay for the further improvement of dancing* was advertised with a call for subscriptions by John Walsh in *The Tatler*, no. 182, 6–8 June 1710, and no. 185, 13–15 June 1710.
- 6 The titles listed are as transcribed from the original titlepages, preserving the punctuation but normalising the capitalisation to modern usage.
- 7 They are listed in: Marsh, C. *French court dance in England, 1700–1740: a study of the sources*. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. City University of New York, 1985), pp. 289–299.
- 8 Siris, although an important dancing-master, seems to have worked outside the group of established London

- dancing-masters and will not be included in this article. For information about his life and career see: Thorp, J. P. Siris: an early eighteenth-century dancing-master. *Dance Research*, 1992, X (2), 71–92.
- 9 Despite his publication of *The art of dancing* Tomlinson, like Siris, seems to have been rather an outsider among the London dancing-masters and will not be included in this article.
  - 10 The dance also appears, in a slightly different version, in Kellom Tomlinson's workbook where it is dated to about 1708. See: Shennan, J (editor). *A workbook by Kellom Tomlinson*. Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992, pp. 41–51.
  - 11 Biographical details of Caverley and the other dancing-masters are taken from: Marsh, C. *French court dance in England, 1700–1740: a study of the sources*. (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. City University of New York, 1985); Highfill, P.H. *A biographical dictionary of actors, musicians, dancers & other stage personnel in London, 1660–1800*. 16 vols. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973–1993, unless otherwise stated.
  - 12 *The London magazine: and monthly chronologer*. MDCCXLV. London: printed for T. Astley, [1745], p. 519.
  - 13 His will was proved on 12 October 1745, his sole executrix being his daughter Elizabeth Henrietta Caverley. PRO PCC PROB 11/742 quire 268.
  - 14 'acknowledging the many favours you have honour'd me with' Weaver. *An essay upon the history of dancing*, dedication. 'my being oblig'd to a person, whom the most eminent of our profession allow to be a judge' Pemberton. *An essay for the further improvement of dancing*. Part one, dedication.
  - 15 The portrait is reproduced in: Ralph, R. *The life and works of John Weaver*. London: Dance Books, 1985, p. 15.
  - 16 Anne South, who was apparently in great need of lessons in deportment. See: Harris, F. 'The honourable sisterhood': Queen Anne's maids of honour. *The British Library Journal*, 1993, 19 (2), 190.
  - 17 The dedication is bound with a copy of *The Union* in the collections of Glasgow University Library. However, it refers to 'a treatise of dancing' and 'a collection of all the dances perform'd at the balls at court' which Weaver was 'preparing for the press' and so must date to 1706 or earlier.
  - 18 The dedication survives only in the copy of *The Pastorall* now held by the Library of Congress.
  - 19 *The Rigadoon* is mentioned in *The art of dancing* (1735) on pp. 47, 56, 62. Other dances by Isaac are mentioned on pp. 92, 146, 147, 149, 150. I am indebted to Ken Pierce for these references.
  - 20 Jenyns, S. *The art of dancing*. Edited and with an introduction by Anne Cottis. London: Dance Books, 1978, p. 31.
  - 21 Reproduced in: Ralph, R. *The life and works of John Weaver*. London: Dance Books, 1985, p. 12.
  - 22 Details of L'Abbé's life and career are drawn principally from the introduction by Carol Marsh to: *Anthony L'Abbé. A new collection of dances originally published by F. Le Roussau London c.1725*. Facsimile reprint. London: Stainer & Bell, 1991, pp. x–xi.
  - 23 L'Abbé is listed as 'aujourd'hui vivant' in: Parfaict, François and Claude. *Dictionnaire des théâtres de Paris*. 7 vols. Paris: chez Lambert, 1756, vol. 3, p. 252.
  - 24 Dances by L'Abbé are mentioned in *The art of dancing* (1735) on pp. 60, 80, 145, 148, 149. I am indebted to Ken Pierce for these references.
  - 25 Information about Weaver is taken from: Ralph, R. *The life and works of John Weaver*. London: Dance Books, 1985.
  - 26 Pemberton's life and career were the subject of an article by the present author: Edmund Pemberton, dancing-master and publisher. *Dance Research*, 1993, XI (1), 52–81.
  - 27 The dedication is included in the copy of *The Godolphin* held by the Library of Congress.
  - 28 There is only one known copy of this edition, now in the British Library, which has a dedication to the Princess of Wales (later Queen Caroline) and was probably intended as a presentation copy for her.
  - 29 The figure said to be Essex is reproduced in: Ralph, Richard. *The life and works of John Weaver*. London: Dance Books, 1985, p. 124.
  - 30 Preist's final name is often given as 'Priest' by modern writers, although the former spelling appears more often in documents of his own time. The best account of Preist's career is still that by Selma Jeanne Cohen in: Fletcher, I.K.; Cohen, S.J. & Lonsdale, R. *Famed for dance: essays on the theory and practice of theatrical dancing in England, 1660–1740*. New York: New York Public Library, 1960, pp 22–34.
  - 31 Eighteenth-century spelling, particularly of surnames, was notoriously erratic. Jerome Geary appears variously as Goree, Geary, Geare, Gorey, Gohory, and Gery in the sources. Circumstantial evidence suggests that these were all the same man.
  - 32 There were many satirical mentions, particularly of dancing-masters, in the plays and poems of the period. One of the best-known is *The Dancing-Master. A Satyr*, published in London in 1722, the text of which appeared in *Historical Dance*, 1988–92, 2 (6), 21–23. The original poem was 'printed for A. Moore, near St. Paul's: and sold by the booksellers of London'; A. Moore was fictitious, the imprint was one which was used as a cover for publications which might draw unwelcome attention from the authorities.
  - 33 The citations of these primary sources are essentially according to the practice of the *Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue*: titles are transcribed as they appear on the titlepage, inessential words are omitted, the original punctuation is preserved, but capitalisation is normalised according to modern usage. The place of publication is normalised, but the remainder of the imprint is transcribed as it appears on the titlepage, except that addresses are omitted.