

David R. Wilson

Students of Early Dance with access to a good reference library will probably be familiar with *Records of Early English Drama*, published by the University of Toronto Press. These excellent volumes are systematically collecting and publishing documentary (as opposed to literary) references to dramatic events of all kinds, county by county. Since the editors cast their net wide and include all references to public and communal dancing, it is possible with the help of the indexes to find a wealth of documentary sources of importance for the social history of dancing in England.

The *REED Newsletter* is less familiar, being circulated twice yearly amongst those working on *REED* volumes and a presumably small group of interested scholars. In *Newsletter*, 1992, 17 (2), which I have not seen, James Stokes and Ingrid Brainard published a newly discovered text of the Old Measures. In the following issue an article by John Ward took exception to certain of their comments.

Professor Ward's position is succinctly stated at the beginning of his article.

Publication in *REED* of yet another copy of the eight Elizabethan social dances that came to be known as 'The old measures' is welcome; a description of them as 'traditionally performed at the beginning of balls held at the Inns of Court in London from c. 1570 to c. 1675' is less welcome, since it perpetuates a misreading of the sources first made by James Cunningham in 1965 and repeated many times since.

My own copy of Ward's article arrived out of the blue in offprint form, presumably as a courtesy of the author, which I am happy to acknowledge. Without it I should not have known either of the article or of the newsletter in which it appeared. In case there are other readers of *Historical Dance* in the same state who might continue to put their trust in Cunningham, I take the opportunity to make it known here.

With devastating scholarship Ward demolishes all connection between the Inns of Court and the known manuscript sources for the Old Measures apart from the obvious case of Butler Buggins at the Inner Temple c. 1675. In seeking to explain the close similarity of these sources, despite the range of time and space over which they are spread, Ward suggests that the Old Measures formed a standard introductory course at the dancing schools. This in turn can be thought to explain their presence, which is not denied, in the Solemn Revels at the Inns of Court, for every member of the Inn was required to participate, and these were the dances it was reasonable to expect everyone to know who could dance at all.

This is all quite speculative, but plausible. Whatever we think of it, it is plain that we should be more careful in future in our references to dancing at the Inns of Court and would do best to speak and to write simply of the Old Measures, unless we genuinely mean to make a point about the Revels.

Ward is kind enough to observe that my transcript published in *Historical Dance*, 1986-7, 2 (5), and slightly corrected in the following issue, 'provides the only satisfactory edition' of all but the new text, of which I was at the time still unaware. He is nevertheless able to correct me over the title of the dance that I (and others) have tentatively read as 'Caranto dyspayne' (Spanish Coranto). Ward reads 'Quanto dyspaigne', which he identifies with 'Li guanti di Spagna' (Spanish gloves), an Italian dance known to have been performed in England, and usually known as 'Les guanto' or 'Les quanto'. This new identification does nothing to invalidate Ann Kent's analysis of the dance in *Historical Dance*, 1993, 3 (2), but it does remove the need to relate it, either musically or choreographically, to known forms of the coranto.

Ward's article is not the only recent paper to deal with the Old Measures, and it is worth remembering that of Robert Mullally in *Early Music*, May 1994. Mullally (amongst other things) tries to deduce the standard choreography of each of the Old Measures. (He is not yet aware of the new manuscript.) It is of interest that he and Ward hold opposed views about the name of the Quadran Pavin. Ward (note 12) states that "'Quadran" (more often "Quadro") is the English name for the *passamezzo B quadro* = passamezzo in major, to distinguish it from the *passamezzo antico* = passamezzo in minor, called by the English the passingmeasures pavan.' Mullally, on the other hand, comments (p. 422) that 'this theory has now been disproved' and cites Ward as his authority for rejecting it!

Both articles contain a wealth of useful references related to measures in general and to the Old Measures in particular.

References

- Mullally, R. (1994) More about the measures. *Early Music*, 22 (2), 414-438.
- Stokes, J. & Brainard, I. (1992) 'The olde Measures' in the West Country: John Willoughby's manuscript. *REED Newsletter*, 17 (2), 1-10
- John Ward (1993) Apropos 'The olde Measures.' *Records of Early English Drama Newsletter*, 18 (1), 2-21.