

In the eighteenth century there were dancing-schools in many towns and cities to teach young ladies and gentlemen the essential skills of social dancing and properly elegant deportment. The vast majority of these schools were run by men. For instance, the cathedral city of Norwich was an important centre in the 18th century, and in her detailed study of dance teachers in Norfolk, Maggie Marsh states that there were 21 dancing masters in the city from 1690 to 1815.¹ There were between one and three at any one time, with intense competition, but not one female teacher. Even if based in large towns, dancing masters needed a circuit in order to earn a living, and while a man could travel on horseback and stay overnight at inns, this was not possible for a woman on her own. Advertisements for girls' schools in Essex at this time repeatedly offer dancing lessons by 'proper masters' or by named visiting masters but the authors found none offering female dance teachers. It seems to have been in the nineteenth century that dancing mistresses became at all common. However, the cities of Bath and Edinburgh supported successful dancing-schools run by women in the eighteenth century.² These cities had a sufficient number of aristocratic and well-to-do inhabitants and visitors to provide pupils for more than one dancing-school, not to mention employment for visiting teachers at boarding schools and in private houses. In Edinburgh there was a school run by the rope-dancer Madame Violante from the late 1730s to her death in 1741, but few details survive.³ Two Italian theatre dancers, Felice Marcoucci and Teresa Rossignoli, settled in Edinburgh and established successful and long-lasting dancing schools in the second half of the century, and an English theatre dancer, Bridget Davenport opened her school there in 1755.

Bridget Davenport

Mrs Davenport appeared on stage in Edinburgh for six years, beginning with the 1748–9 season.⁴ At this time, the Edinburgh theatre company performed at the concert room in the Canongate, supposedly giving a play as a free addition to a concert of music to avoid prosecution for unlicensed theatrical performances. She took some acting roles, including the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, but was principally employed as a dancer, playing Columbine or Harlequin in pantomimes.⁵ Her entr'acte dances included a French dance, a Dutch dance, a Louvre and a Minuet, all with Mlle de Frene, who took the male role.⁶ Then, in April 1755, she announced the opening of her school:

Mrs. DAVENPORT

Having taken the DANCING SCHOOL at the Foot of Carrubbers Close, that was formerly Mr DOWNING's, will open it on Monday next, being the 28th Instant. During the three Years that she was engag'd as a Dancer, at the King's Opera house, she was under the Tuition of the most eminent Dancing Masters in London, to qualify herself for this Undertaking; which she had begun much sooner, but that her Engagement

to the Stage prevented it; Being now free'd from that, her Scholars may depend on her giving them due Attendance.⁷

Mrs Davenport's London stage career was not quite as distinguished as her advertisement would imply. She was first advertised as Miss Price, dancing at Drury Lane Theatre in May 1729, when she was one of the villagers in a dance at the end of the afterpiece *The Lover's Opera*. She then appeared at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket from November 1730, and there she had some youthful acting roles, including one of the two princes in the tower in *Richard III*. Theodore Davenport was also appearing at the Haymarket as a minor dancer, and they had a shared benefit there in February 1731.⁸ She may have been Davenport's pupil, for he also taught dancing, and they performed the popular dance of *The Dutchman and his Wife* together at his benefit on 14 May 1733. At this time, he was a married man with three infant daughters, but his youngest daughter was buried on 29 June 1733 and his wife was buried nine days later.⁹ 'Theodorus Davenport' and Bridget Price were married at St Andrew Holborn on 9 September 1733, after which the Davenports danced for several years at Drury Lane and at the London Fairs, with spells at Covent Garden and Goodman's Fields. From 1740 until 1748 Theodore Davenport appeared at the Sadler's Wells summer theatre, where in 1741 he was described as the 'English Ballet-Master.'¹⁰ Mrs Davenport also danced at Sadler's Wells in 1740 and then from 1744;¹¹ the three intervening seasons must have been when she was in the opera company at the King's Theatre, as stated in her advertisement for her school in Edinburgh. These were the seasons when an opera company largely financed by Lord Middlesex was at the King's and offered entr'acte dancing as part of the evening's entertainment. Mrs Davenport does not feature in any advertisements or reports, and was presumably a figure dancer when she was at the opera house.

Theodore Davenport moved to Edinburgh with his wife in 1748 and was employed as a minor actor. His roles in pantomimes, the Old Woman in *Pigmalion*, the drawer in *Merlin* and the Petit Maitre's Man in *The Hussar*, may have included some dancing.¹² He continued to take small acting roles for a few years, but apparently without much success, for a reviewer in the *Scots Magazine* of December 1753 wrote:

Nor will our impartiality suffer us to omit to do justice to a man who has been long in the disesteem of the public. The person we mean is Mr Davenport; who acted the little part of *Shirly* as well as we can conceive it possible to be done.¹³

This may well have been a satirical comment, for Shirly is a miniscule role in the Duke of Buckingham's play *The Rehearsal*. Davenport had apparently not been in good health since 1747, when his Sadler's Wells benefit notice mentioned a 'very severe Fit of Illness' that would prevent him from visiting his supporters to sell his benefit tickets. A



Copyright © 2021 Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

Published on-line 16 November 2021

similar apology was issued for his benefit in the following year, when he was 'very much afflicted with the Gout'.¹⁴ He must have travelled to London from Edinburgh in summer 1751, for 'Theo Davenport' had a benefit at Sadler's Wells on 1 October and stated in his benefit notice that he was suffering from gout and dropsy.¹⁵ In the following year, described as 'Composer of the Dances', he was again given a Sadler's Wells benefit, though still suffering from gout, and there is no indication that he danced at Sadler's Wells in the summers of 1751 or 1752. The last record of him seems to be the report of his appearance as Shirly in Edinburgh in December 1753.¹⁶

When she opened her school in 1755 Mrs Davenport was probably in her mid-forties, and as a widow or supporter of a chronic invalid must have needed the steady source of future income that she hoped the school would provide. Her establishment was in operation for at least three years, for in spring 1758 she denied a rumour that it was to be closed:

Mrs. DAVENPORT ... begs leave in this Manner to assure every one the Report is false; and that she is repairing, beautifying, and fitting it up for the more commodious Reception of her Scholars — She was engaged as a Dancer, for several Years, at the King's Opera House in London, and under the Tuition of the most eminent English, French, and Italian Masters; and therefore she flatters her self, that her Scholars, dance as well as any of their Standing, as any one may judge who pleases to come to her PUBLICK TOMORROW NIGHT.

N.B. Mrs. Davenport teaches at her School Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays in the Forenoon; and in the Afternoons attends her private Scholars, either at her own, or their Houses.¹⁷

A 'Public' was an occasion on which parents and others were invited to watch a display by the pupils, sometimes including demonstration dancing by the teacher. There do not seem to be any further mentions of Mrs Davenport's school in the Edinburgh newspaper, the *Caledonian Mercury*, which could imply that her school did not survive for long after this. However, it could mean that she was attracting sufficient pupils by word of mouth not to need to go to the expense of advertisements. As her school had survived for the three years from 1755 to 1758 without advertising, it could have continued for a few more years.¹⁸

Felice Marcoucci

Like Bridget Davenport, Felice Marcoucci danced on the stage in Edinburgh before opening her dancing-school in the city. 'Mrs. Marcucci' was engaged by David Ross for the 1768–9 season at the old Canongate theatre, which, with its recently acquired patent, was now called the Theatre Royal.¹⁹ She moved with the company to the newly built Theatre Royal in Shakespeare Square that opened in December 1769 and performed there in entr'acte dances until the end of the 1771–2 season. At her final benefit evening, on 1 April 1772, she performed two new dances, *Ceres in Arcadia* and *The Washerwomen* with Master and Miss West, who are very likely to have been her pupils. Her benefit advertisement ended:

Encouraged by the countenance and protection of her friends, Signora Marcoucci has taken Mr. Lamotte's school, and enters at Witsunday next, where she proposes to teach dancing. Those who are pleased to favour her with their children, may depend upon her constant care and attention.²⁰

The notice implies that, besides young stage performers, she already had pupils among the Edinburgh wealthier classes. Pierre Lamotte, whose school in James's Court Marcoucci took over, was described when he died in 1784 as 'for many years well-known as a teacher of dancing'.²¹ That Marcoucci's school was successful is shown by the fact that Mr Scott, a clerk at the English Chapel, delayed the concert he had planned for 10 March 1773 to avoid a clash with her ball.²² In the following year Miss Marcoucci's dancing-school at James's Court was listed in *Williamson's Directory for the City of Edinburgh*.²³ Apart from this, almost nothing would be known about the early years of her school without details from an unexpected source, the private papers of James Boswell, the friend and future biographer of Samuel Johnson.

A year after Marcoucci opened her school, Boswell, with his wife and children, moved into a large apartment with handsome and spacious rooms on two floors in James's Court, Lawnmarket.²⁴ Madam Marcoucci's establishment was in the same building, where she rented a 'large and elegant room', with two other rooms, a kitchen and cellars.²⁵ On 14 December 1774 Boswell wrote: 'At seven I came home to tea ... and then went to a ball for young ladies at Madame Marcucci's'.²⁶ In April 1777 he wrote in his diary that Marcoucci had been invited to dine at Prestonfield:

I was asked also. The coach was sent in for us to come together. This was quite a regale to me. We went and returned tête-a-tête and I was enlivened to Italian pitch, though La Signora seemed so strict a religionist that I saw no prospect of gallantry ... I was somewhat hurt to find that I was still too combustible by women.²⁷

Two years later he returned home one day in February and 'found Signora Marcucci, the Italian dancing-mistress who lives in our stair, had taken refuge with my wife, there being an outrageous mob against the papists'.²⁸ Parliament had recently passed a bill relaxing many of the penal laws enacted against Catholics, and feeling ran high against this in Edinburgh. Boswell went out again and found the mob burning a 'mass house', and Marcoucci stayed to supper with them. There are several references in his diary to her supping or drinking tea with the Boswells. Marcoucci taught the Boswells' two daughters, and in February 1780 he went into a dancing lesson and saw Veronica, then nearly seven, dance a minuet 'very well'. A fortnight later, 'My wife was at Signora Marcucci's Public with my daughters, who she told me danced very well; and indeed I regretted that I did not go to see them'.²⁹ The younger daughter, Euphemia, was only five. In the following month Marcoucci had another 'public', and this time Boswell attended and saw his daughters dance. Signora Marcoucci also organised balls and Boswell recorded that he went with his wife to her balls in 1780 and 1781 and on both occasions they enjoyed seeing their daughters dance 'very well'.³⁰

Unfortunately, Boswell gives no details about Signora Marcoucci's 'publics' or her balls, other than noting the progress of his daughters. However, Susan Sibbald, a pupil of the dancing mistress Anna Fleming in Bath in the 1790s, is more helpful:

Two or three times during the half year we had public days, as Miss Fleming called them, when we were dressed for the occasion, as Mothers and female friends came to see the girls dance. We were at the latter part of the year preparing for Miss Fleming's ball ... I was told I was to dance a Minuet that night, standing up with seven others of my own size. ... We were all to be dressed in book-muslin frocks, with primrose color'd sashes wide and long, and wreaths of roses of the same color on our heads.

The ball was opened by Miss Fleming dancing a *minuet de la cour* with a star pupil, taking the male part herself. After this the girls, in groups, danced cotillions, figure dances of different kinds and minuets, and a few of the older girls were allowed to remain for the general dancing that followed the tea interval.³¹ Miss Anna Fleming had not been a stage dancer, but her mother, as Mlle Roland, had danced in the London theatre.³² In 1769 Miss Fleming had travelled to France to study with Monsieur Lany, ballet master at the Paris Opera, to learn 'the true Step of the COTILLIONS, with the additional Graces of the MINUET'.³³

Felice Marcoucci had had a much wider experience of stage dancing than Mrs Davenport. She had appeared in Barcelona, Montpellier and Venice before coming to England early in 1764, when she was about 21, having been recruited as the principal comic dancer at the opera house in London.³⁴ Unfortunately for her, this was to be a very dodgy season under the management of Felice Giardini, who had engaged more performers than he could afford to pay.³⁵ Marcoucci, as 'Signora Marcucis', was advertised for a solo dance in four performances in January 1764.³⁶ The dancer recruited in Italy as her partner, Luigi Berardi, had a difficult journey and only arrived in London at the end of January. 'Sig. Berardi and Sig. Marcucci' were then advertised as dancing together on 21 and 25 February.³⁷ As 'Sig.' generally indicated 'Signor', the *Biographical Dictionary of Actors* concluded that Felice Marcoucci was a man and that the dancer advertised in January was his wife.³⁸ In fact, Signora Marcoucci does not appear to have had a husband, and there is no doubt that she was Berardi's partner in February. Giardini forced Berardi to accept a contract for about £45 less than he had been promised and demoted Marcoucci to a figurante. She promptly left and danced at Sadler's Wells Theatre for its entire summer season, from 23 April to 27 September, advertised there as 'Signora Marcucius', while Berardi moved to dance at Drury Lane. Marcoucci joined other performers in a law suit against Giardini for unpaid fees and expenses, but this seems to have come to nothing.

Marcoucci was engaged by Henry Mossop of the Smock Alley theatre, Dublin, for the 1764–5 season, and there she was advertised as Sig^a. or Signiora Marcuti or Marcutii. Her main partner was Francesco Giordani and they performed entr'acte dances such as *La Lettier Allemand; or, the German Milk Girl*, a *Crutch Dance* and a 'new Irish Dance', *The Turf Cutters*. Marcoucci then moved across to the Crow Street

theatre under the management of Spranger Barry for two seasons, performing in entr'actes as the leading female dancer. At the end of the 1766–7 season Barry's management failed and Marcoucci moved to Edinburgh, to dance in the theatre there.³⁹

Like Mrs Davenport, Felice Marcoucci suffered from false rumours, probably put about by her male rivals. In May 1776, four years after she opened her school, Marcoucci issued a strong denial of the malicious report that she had 'a mind to run off from this country, and leave her scholars abruptly ... invented for no other end than to prejudice her character, and hinder scholars from coming to her'.⁴⁰ Her school continued, and in July 1779 Giovanni Gallini, a leading London dancer, announced that he was to visit Edinburgh for a short time and would 'attend such of the Nobility and Gentry as intend doing him the honour to receive lessons, at Mrs Mercucci's school'.⁴¹ The school, of course, would have been closed for the summer vacation. In 1763–4, when Marcoucci was dancing in London, Gallini was dancing at Covent Garden Theatre, and they may well have kept in touch. In February 1780, a notice in the *Caledonian Mercury* stated that her dancing-school and dwelling house was available to let, but in March she denied that she was closing the school and stated that she had asked her brother, who was also trained as a dancer, to come to Edinburgh before the winter to expand the range of her teaching.⁴² Her school continued for two more years, but nothing further is heard of her brother. In February 1782 there were several notices stating that her premises were to let, and this time she really did leave, and the dancing master Mr Laurie moved his school there on 25 May. Before that, however, on 26 March, at the desire of several ladies of distinction, 'Master Crotch the Musical Infant' gave a concert in 'MADAM MERCUCCI's Elegant Room, the West Corner of James's Court, Lawn-market'.⁴³ Soon after the concert, Marcoucci announced that 'By *Desire of several Persons of Distinction*' her public and ball would be at Dunn's Ballroom on 10 April, and 'after the Scholars have danced, there will be a BALL for the Company — Tickets, THREE SHILLINGS'.⁴⁴ She then disappears from the records for seventeen years, to return in 1799 as 'Mrs Bonnet, (formerly Marcucci)' and to take over her old premises at James's Court from the dancing master Mr Laurie.⁴⁵

Mrs Bonnet, now probably a widow or with a husband who needed support, re-opened her dancing-school on 1 October 1799. She seems to have had some trouble at first in re-establishing herself, for she issued a second notice in November stating that her school was open, referring to the success she had had in teaching young ladies in earlier years and promising that no pains would be wanting on her part 'to bring forward her Scholars, and to give their parents every desirable satisfaction'.⁴⁶ In December she denied a report that she was not intending to remain in the city for very long and stressed that she was teaching children of either sex. She concluded by stating that 'in returning to Edinburgh, she has not the most distant view of leaving it again; and that her fixed purpose was and is to pass the remainder of her days in this place, if she finds employment'.⁴⁷ These notices seem to have had their desired effect and she did indeed continue to teach in Edinburgh for the rest of her life. In October 1802, perhaps in response to

two male dancing teachers who had advertised a week earlier, she announced the opening of her school for the winter season in the 'commodious and central Room in JAMES's COURT', ending, as her male rivals had done, with the statement that private instruction was available as usual.⁴⁸ The last reference to her school in the *Caledonian Mercury* was the announcement that her ball would be at the George Street Assembly Rooms on 30 March 1813.⁴⁹ She died only two months later, aged seventy, and was buried in the Canongate burial ground on 28 May.⁵⁰

Teresa Rossignoli

During Marcoucci's absence another Italian stage-dancer had arrived in the city and established a dancing-school. Unlike her two predecessors, Teresa Rossignoli had not danced in London, but she had performed in various other cities, as she stated in her notice of 31 October 1785. Under the heading 'To the Lovers of Genteel Improved Dancing', Miss Rossignoli claimed that she had been 'for many years past employed as First Dancer in the theatres of the chief courts and cities of Europe, such as Spain, Portugal, Naples, Milan, Florence, Venice, and others, and, lastly, in Dublin, at the theatre of Smock-Alley, for the last four years'.⁵¹ She offered to teach 'all the different modes of dancing, many very modern, not as yet seen in this city, and composed by herself, and the best masters in Paris', and claimed that she was under the patronage of the Duchess of Buccleugh, whose daughters she was teaching. The Buccleuch family papers show that in 1785 Teresa Rossignoli was teaching the duchess's three eldest daughters, who were aged between eleven and sixteen.⁵² In February 1786 she received three guineas (£3 3s) for twelve lessons, but two years later, in February 1788 she was paid six guineas for the same number of lessons, an apparent doubling of her fee. She was also reimbursed for the payments she made to the fiddler who provided the music for the dancing.⁵³ (When they were in London the Duchess's daughters were taught by Maire-Louise Hilligsberg, a leading dancer at the opera house.⁵⁴) Records also survive of Rossignoli teaching three of the daughters of the Duke of Gordon while they were boarding in Edinburgh for their education. She began to teach them in December 1786 and received her final payment at the end of October 1787. In total, she received nearly £40 for teaching the Gordon young ladies and for ball tickets, which included the money she had to pay the fiddler and for the occasional use of a sedan chair.⁵⁵ While running her dancing-school, Rossignoli doubtless continued to give private lessons to wealthy families for which the records do not survive.

In her first advertisement for her school, Rossignoli stated that she would be assisted by her brother, 'a professed teacher of dancing', and that there would be lessons for ladies between ten and twelve in the morning and for gentlemen between six and eight in the evening at her room in Advocate's Close. In mid-December she gave a ball at Dunn's Rooms, and danced 'a Plain Graceful Minuet, a Minuet A-la-Cour, and other A-la-Mode Dances, which she teaches at ordinary rates – in order that Parents of Children who intrust them to her care, may have an opportunity to judge of her way and method of dancing'.⁵⁶ Things appear to have gone well, for in the following September she announced that she intended to fix herself in Edinburgh and had moved

her school to a 'new-fitted-up large room, foot of Carrubber's Close, east side'.⁵⁷ This may well have been the premises occupied earlier by the dancing-schools of Mr Downing and then Mrs Davenport.

Teresa Rossignoli was born in Parma in 1752, and so was about thirty-three years old when she moved to Edinburgh.⁵⁸ After her career in various venues on the continent followed by four years dancing on the Dublin stage, she was doubtless happy to settle down. Her first season in Ireland had been at the Smock Alley Theatre in 1781–2, when she was the leading female dancer in a troupe performing with an Italian burletta opera company.⁵⁹ Their first night, on 3 November, received high praise in the press: 'The infinite variety, and inimitable Performance of the Dances, were such, as extorted the loudest and most uninterrupted Applause'. The performance of the *maitre de ballet*, Jean-Baptiste Laurent, was 'inexpressibly great', while Rossignoli 'acquitted herself to the Satisfaction and Admiration of all the audience'.⁶⁰ However, not everyone was pleased with the Italian and French visitors, for a letter from 'Paddy Whack' grumbled that the performers were 'the very refuse of the singing and dancing tribe'.⁶¹ The dances were not integrated into the burlettas but consisted of divertissements and short narrative ballets between the acts and sometimes also after the opera. The burletta season lost money, and for the following three years Rossignoli was employed as the leading female dancer with the theatre company at Smock Alley Theatre, where she was advertised for numerous entr'acte dances. A particular favourite was *Love in a Camp; or. The Female Soldier*, which featured in her last two benefits. This *ballet d'action* was said to have been devised by the famous Jean Georges Noverre, with music by Gluck, and in it Rossignoli 'went through the martial exercises in the character of a Volunteer'.⁶² A 'twelve-page description of this 'universally admired piece' was available gratis from Rossignoli and from Moncrieff, bookseller of Capel Street.⁶³ In her last season she danced other breeches roles, including a hornpipe in the character of a sailor, and was advertised as the choreographer of a new comic dance, *The Unfortunate Gamblers*.⁶⁴

It is possible that Rossignoli's brother, who was to teach dancing at his sister's school, had been working in Edinburgh before her arrival there.⁶⁵ He was primarily a teacher of fencing, and in December 1789 he announced that he was to open a fencing school in Bailie Fyfe's Close, having been 'for some time' the manager of the Royal Academy in the city.⁶⁶ (The Royal Academy taught fencing and riding.) Francis Rossignoli's fencing lessons were to be between 11am and 4pm, so he could have continued to teach dancing to gentlemen in the evenings at his sister's school. However, at some point after this he moved to become the riding master to the Berwickshire Light Dragoons, before returning in October 1795 to teach the small sword and broad sword between 10am and 3pm at his fencing-school in Thistle Lodge at the foot of Carrubbers Close.⁶⁷ The Post Office directories for Edinburgh list him as a fencing master at the Royal Menage from 1806 to 1820. His relationship with his sister remained close, for in 1807 he organised the booking of the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh New Town for her practices and balls.⁶⁸

Teresa Rossignoli's first advertisement referred to teaching ladies and gentlemen, but a few weeks later, when

announcing her ball, she expressed the hope that parents would come to see how well she could teach their children.⁶⁹ At first the children she taught seem to have been only girls, but two years later, in December 1787 she stated that she had been advised to teach boys as well.⁷⁰ She would teach them in the morning before the ladies, in her Carrubber's Close room that was now 'greatly enlarged'. Her school ball in March 1788 was at the fashionable New Assembly Rooms, George Street, New Town, and after this she does not seem to have needed to advertise.⁷¹ However, in March 1792, possibly when her brother was leaving Edinburgh to take up his appointment with the dragoons, she was forced to deny a rumour that she was to close her school. On the contrary, she promised to 'exert her utmost endeavours to forward the improvement of those Young Ladies and Gentlemen who may be in future intrusted to her care'.⁷²

It was clearly an advantage to keep up-to-date with the very latest fashionable dances in London and Paris, for the leading Edinburgh dance teachers went to considerable trouble and expense to do so. Mr Laurie, who had taken over Marcoucci's premises in 1782 and released them to her on her return to the city, travelled to London and Paris in 1802, as he boasted in the *Caledonian Mercury* of 9 October 1802, under the heading *Aux Amateurs de la Danse*:

MR LAURIE, who had frequently been in LONDON and PARIS, to receive instructions in his Profession from the first Masters, during last Vacation, in order to acquire the present Taste, Fancy, and the various Steps now in those Capitals, again visited both these Cities, and attended the Opera in London under Mr DEGVILLE, the Ballet Master there, till it closed for the Season; when he went immediately to Paris, where he studied and practised regularly more than six hours a day with Messrs. VESTRIS, and GARDELL the Ballet Master of the Opera in Paris, as also at Mr CULON's *Salle de Danse*, where the *Eleves de l'Opera* are trained up; there particularly he obtained the present style and taste, and selected some beautiful French Steps, and modeled them, so as to be gracefully introduced into Scotch Reels and Country Dances.

A second Edinburgh dancing teacher also visited Paris and London in 1802, and his announcement was printed in the *Caledonian Mercury* immediately below Mr Laurie's:

MR RITCHIE ... is now returned from PARIS and LONDON, where he had been these some months, in the way of his profession, studying under the most approved Masters, particularly Mess. VESTRIS, GARDEL and COULON of Paris, and several of the most eminent in London, from whom he has acquired, according to the most correct principles of the science, many of the much approved and most admired DANCES practised in the Higher Circles of Fashion ... N.B. 'Mr R. begs to add, That he has been favoured by Mr JENKINS, Teacher to the *Royal Family*, with a great variety of new Steps for Scotch Reels and Country Dances now danced at Court'.⁷³

These visits to Paris by the two dancing masters in summer 1802 were made possible by the short-lived peace between Britain and France that resulted from the Treaty of Amiens, which had been signed that March. It was, of course,

easier for a man to journey to London and Paris than for a single woman, but Rossignoli exerted herself to keep up with her male rivals. In May 1805 she travelled to London to attend the Opera House 'where everything New in DANCING is to be seen'. Six weeks later she announced her return, after studying with 'the celebrated Mr Jenkins, Teacher of Dancing to her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, also Mr Duguille [James D'Egville], Composer of the Ballet Opera House, Miss Parisot, Miss Durinall, and Madam Laborie, the three first Dancers in the Opera House, London'.⁷⁴ At a time when the war made visits to France impossible, she could still study with the leading French dancers in London. In 1801 George Jenkins had been appointed as dancing master to the Prince of Wales's daughter, the five-year-old Princess Charlotte.⁷⁵ Like his father, who had died in 1798, Jenkins was acknowledged as the leading specialist in Scottish dancing. Based in London, both father and son were highly regarded by the aristocracy and credited with bringing Scottish dancing in the fashionable world 'to its present perfection'.⁷⁶ As Mr Ritchie had done, Rossignoli studied in London with Mr Jenkins in order to add the latest steps to her teaching of Scottish dancing, and it is noteworthy that she named Jenkins first among the dancers she had worked with. In her notice on her return from London she stated that she was about to open her school at her usual room in Bailie Fyfe's Close and ended 'N.B. Private Teaching, as formerly.'

Rossignoli continued her dancing-school for a further nine years after her visit to London, until she was forced to close it because of ill health in 1814. She gave a final ball at the New Assembly Rooms, George Street, New Town. on the 30 March under the patronage of three aristocratic ladies, headed by Lady Caroline Douglas, Marchioness of Queensberry, who was the third daughter of the Duchess of Buccleuch and so her former pupil. After the ball she inserted a final notice of thanks for the kindness and attention she had met with 'on this and every occasion during the prosecution of her professional duties in this city for more than twenty years'.⁷⁷ In fact, she had been teaching dancing in Edinburgh for over twenty-eight years, having opened her school in autumn 1785. Although Rossignoli no longer felt able to cope with all the demands of running a dancing-school, her health did not fail her, for she taught dancing from 1814 to 1831 at the Merchant Maidens Hospital, a school founded in 1695 for the education of daughters of decayed merchant burgesses of Edinburgh, where the curriculum consisted of 'the English and French languages, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, drawing, dancing, music, and needle-work'.⁷⁸ She died on 21 September 1837, and her death notice in *The Scotsman* stated that she died in Edinburgh, 'aged above 90 years'.⁷⁹

Conclusion

One has to admire the staying power of both Felice Marcoucci and Teresa Rossignoli in running their schools for so long. They were not only teaching classes of children and adults, but also managing a business, organising publics and balls, giving private lessons and dealing with competition from male rivals. It is interesting that there does not seem to have been prejudice among parents against tuition from Catholic Italian women who had been dancers on the public stage. Of course, they were very careful to remain

respectable, as Boswell found in the case of Marcoucci, and we know of no scandal attached to any of our three lady teachers. Besides, it is difficult to think of any other experience that would have so well equipped a woman to teach fashionable dances. To survive and remain respectable on stage she needed to be tough, self-controlled and careful with money, all traits essential for running a dancing-school. Teachers also needed artistic flair to choreograph dances to show off their pupils and the ability to project their personality when managing a class and meeting parents, again qualities developed by stage experience. However, teaching dance was a male dominated field and it is hardly surprising that only a few determined women like Felice Marcoucci and Teresa Rossignoli could succeed for a long period.

References

- 1 Marsh, M. 'Norfolk Dancing Masters 1690–1815'. *Norwich Historical Dance*, 2007, p. 4
- 2 From the late 1740s a dancing school in Bath was run by Francis Fleming, first with his wife and later with his daughter, who ran the school after her father's death in 1778. See: Fawcett, T. 'Dance and Teachers of Dance in Eighteenth-Century Bath'. *Bath History*, 1988, 2, 27–48.
- 3 Carlyle, A., *Autobiography of the Rev. Dr Alexander Carlyle*. Blackwood and Son, Edinburgh, 1860, pp. 47–8; *Caledonian Mercury*, 14 February, 10 June 1740; *Scots Magazine*, June 1741, 279.
- 4 Advertisements in the *Caledonian Mercury* from 24 Jan 1749.
- 5 She was advertised in the *Caledonian Mercury* as Columbine on 23 February 1749 and as Harlequin on 5 December 1750.
- 6 They were advertised in the *Caledonian Mercury* for a minuet and louvre on 4 May 1749, a French dance on 13 March 1750 and a Dutch dance on 20 Dec 1750.
- 7 *Caledonian Mercury*, 22 April 1755. Carrubbers Close is off High Street, Edinburgh.
- 8 *Daily Post*, 26 February 1731.
- 9 Registers of St Paul's Covent Garden, 29 June and 8 July 1733.
- 10 *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 11 September 1741.
- 11 *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 10 September 1740; *General Advertiser*, 14 May 1744, 15 April 1746, 14 March 1748.
- 12 *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 February 1749, 6 and 18 December 1750.
- 13 *Scots Magazine*, 3 December 1753.
- 14 *General Advertiser*, 28 September 1747 and 8 October 1748.
- 15 *General Advertiser* 30 September 1751.
- 16 He is highly unlikely to have been the Mr Davenport who acted over a dozen minor roles at Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin, in the 1757–8 season. (Greene, J.C. *Theatre in Dublin, 1745–1820: a calendar of performances*, vol.1. Lehigh University Press, Bethlehem, Pa., 2011).
- 17 *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 April 1758.
- 18 There was a Bridget Davenport buried at St James, Piccadilly, London on 20 January 1776, but the register gives no age or status.
- 19 *Caledonian Mercury*, 21 January 1769. 'Mrs' does not, of course, necessarily imply a married woman at this time.
- 20 *Caledonian Mercury*, 25 March 1772. In Edinburgh her name was most often spelled 'Marcoucci', so that spelling will be used in this article, except in quotations. It was quite often spelled 'Marcucci' and occasionally 'Mercucci'.
- 21 Obituary of Pierre Lamotte, *Scots Magazine*, April 1784, 223.
- 22 *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 March 1773. Scott's concert was to have been at St Cecilia's Hall on 10 March, as advertised in the *Caledonian Mercury*, 6 March 1773.
- 23 *Williamson's Directory for the city of Edinburgh, Canongate, Leith, and suburbs, from the 25th May 1773, to 25th May 1774*. Peter Williamson, Edinburgh, 1774.
- 24 A plaque at St James's Court commemorates Boswell's residence there from 1773 to 1786.
- 25 *Caledonian Mercury*, 14 February 1780 and 2 February 1782.
- 26 Boswell, J. *Boswell, the Ominous Years 1774–1776*, ed. C. Ryskamp and F. A. Pottle. Heinemann, London, 1973, p. 45.
- 27 Boswell, J. *Boswell in Extremes, 1776–1778*, ed. C. M. Weis and F. A. Pottle. Heinemann, London, 1971, p. 114. The dinner was probably at the house of Sir George Preston of Valleyfield.
- 28 Boswell, J. *Boswell, Laird of Auchinleek*. ed. J. W. Reed and F. A. Pottle. McGraw Hill, New York, p. 47.
- 29 Boswell, *Laird of Auchinleek*, pp. 177, 181.
- 30 Boswell, *Laird of Auchinleek*, p. 290.
- 31 Sibbald, S. *Memoirs 1783–1812*, ed. F. T. Hett. John Lane, London, 1926, pp. 58–64.
- 32 Ann Roland, Miss Fleming's mother, was the younger sister of Catherine Violanta Roland, who also danced in London. They were the daughters of the French dancer, Nicholas Roland and his wife, also a dancer.
- 33 *Bath and Bristol Chronicle*, 3 November 1768 and 19 October 1769.
- 34 Her age was given as seventy when she was buried in the Canongate Burial Ground, Edinburgh on 28 May 1813.
- 35 Price, C., Milhous, J and Hume, R.D. *The Impresario's Ten Commandments: Continental Recruitment for Italian Opera in London 1763–4*. Royal Musical Association, London, 1992.
- 36 *The Public Advertiser* gives performances on 10, 14, 17 and 21 January 1764.
- 37 *Public Advertiser*, 21 and 25 February 1764.
- 38 Highfill, P. H., Burnim, K. A. and Langhans, E.A. *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800*, vol. 10. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 1984, p. 92. The entry for 'Marcucci, Felice fl. 1764–1771?' gives only one performance at the King's Theatre in January and one in February, and ignores Sadler's Wells. The dancer in Dublin is assumed to be a man, when in fact the notices there clearly refer to a female dancer. Only one appearance by 'Signora Marcoucci' is noted for Edinburgh.

- 39 Greene, J. C. *Theatre in Dublin, 1745–1820; a History*, vol.2. Lehigh University Press, Bethlehem, Pa, 2011, pp. 446–7.
- 40 *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 May 1776.
- 41 *Caledonian Mercury*, 10 July 1779.
- 42 *Caledonian Mercury*, 14 February and 11 March 1780.
- 43 *Caledonian Mercury*, 25 March 1782. The future composer and organist William Crotch, who was six years old, performed on the pianoforte.
- 44 *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 April 1782. .
- 45 *Caledonian Mercury*, 28 September 1799.
- 46 *Caledonian Mercury*, 2 November 1799.
- 47 *Caledonian Mercury*, 4 December 1799.
- 48 *Caledonian Mercury*, 9 and 16 October 1802.
- 49 *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 March 1813.
- 50 ScotlandsPeople website. Old Parish Registers Deaths and Burials: Reference 300/45, Parish Number 685/3. <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk>
- 51 From 1772–5 Rossignoli danced in the Rua dos Condes Theatre, Lisbon (de Brito, M.C. *Opera in Portugal in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, University Press, 1989, p.101). She was in Venice in 1776–7 (Wiel, T. *I teatri musicali Veneziani del Settecento* Amaldo. Forni, Bologna, 1978, nos 848–9, 864–5).
- 52 Mary was born in 1769, Elizabeth in 1770 and Caroline in 1774.
- 53 National Records of Scotland, GD224/365/50; GD224/351/9. The authors are very grateful to Jeanice Brooks and Katrina Faulds, both of Southampton University, for directing them to the relevant excerpts from the Buccleuch papers. It is possible that the girls were staying in Edinburgh for the first set of lessons, but that Rossignoli had to travel to their home in Dalkeith, a few miles outside Edinburgh, for the second set and this accounts for the difference in payment. The fiddler, too, received more money (2s 6d a lesson) for the later batch of lessons.
- 54 Brooks, J. Learning to sing in Georgian Britain. *Programme booklet for a concert at Broughton House, 6 July 2019*. The authors are grateful to Jeanice Brooks for sending them a copy of this booklet.
- 55 National Records of Scotland, GD44/51/408.
- 56 *Caledonian Mercury*, 31 October, 12 December 1785.
- 57 *Caledonian Mercury*, 23 September 1786.
- 58 Family tree on the subscription website <https://www.ancestry.co.uk>. The birth date fits her career well, and other details given there are correct.
- 59 The company performed twice a week from November to the end of June.
- 60 *Hibernian Journal*, 2–5 November 1781. Jean-Baptiste Laurent was from the Paris Opera, and was in Dublin because the theatre in the Palais Royale had burned down in June.
- 61 *Public Record; or, Freeman’s Journal*, 6–8 November 1781.
- 62 The ballet is not listed in S. Dahms. ‘Das Repertoire des “Ballet en action”: Noverre-Angiolini-Lauchery’, *De editione musices: Festschrift Gerhard Croll*, ed. W. Gratzner and A. Lindmayr (Laaber, 1992), 125–42. The authors are grateful to Jennifer Thorp for attempting to trace the ballet.
- 63 Greene, J. C. *Theatre in Dublin, 1745–1820: a Calendar of Performances*, vol.3. Lehigh University Press, Bethlehem, Pa, 2011.
- 64 Greene, J. C. *Theatre in Dublin*, vol.3.
- 65 Francis Rossignoli was born in Parma in 1754 and died in Edinburgh in January 1824.
- 66 *Caledonian Mercury*, 10 December 1789.
- 67 *Caledonian Mercury*, 12 October 1795. (Francis Rossignoli married Katherine Campbell in Edinburgh on 23 July 1792.)
- 68 National Records of Scotland, GD113/5/457.
- 69 *Caledonian Mercury*, 12 December 1785.
- 70 *Caledonian Mercury*, 1 December 1787.
- 71 *Caledonian Mercury*, 1 December 1787 and 18 February 1788.
- 72 *Caledonian Mercury*, 31 March 1792.
- 73 *Caledonian Mercury*, 9 October 1802.
- 74 *Caledonian Mercury*, 9 May and 15 June 1805. Rose Parisot and Madame Laborie were principal dancers in the opera that season, but Miss Durinall is a mystery.
- 75 *Morning Chronicle*, 27 August 1801.
- 76 *Public Characters of 1799–1800*, 3rd edition. R. Phillips, London, 1807, p. 527; Cooper, P. *Nathaniel Gow (1763–1831)*. Available online at <https://www.regencydances.org>, Paper 22.
- 77 *Caledonian Mercury*, 21, 24 March, 2 April 1814. The other two lady patrons were Lady Ann Johnstone Hope and Lady Charlotte Hope.
- 78 *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* Vol. 29, 92. The authors are grateful to Keith Cavers for directing them to this source. Lewis, S. *A Topographical Dictionary of Scotland*. S. Lewis & Co., London, 184), vol.1, columns 388–9.
- 79 *Scotsman*, 7 October 1837. If her Parma birth date is correct, she was about 85.