

Jennifer Nevile, *Footprints of the Dance: an Early Seventeenth-Century Dance Master's Notebook*. Koninklijke Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands, 2018. ISBN 978-90-36179-9 (hardback); ISBN 978-90-04-37773-8 (e-book), xiii + 285 pp. 18 figures

While the existence of a dancing master's notebook has been known since the late 1960s, this publication is the first to make it accessible to scholars and to set it in the context of the dance culture of its time. The original is in the National Library of Sweden (Kungliga Biblioteket, or Royal Library) in Stockholm: Cod. Holm S 253, acquired in 1880 but with little trace of its earlier history. Dance scholars will have had an insight into its special nature from the 1988 article by John Ward in *Acta Musicologica* 60/2 'Newly Devis'd Measures for Jacobean Masques', which reproduced some of the diagrams of figured entries. As Nevile proposes a date of c.1615–1619 for the notebook, this confirms that it was contemporary with the Jacobean masque and the ballet de cour of Louis XIII. She also confirms that the principal author among several contributors with differing handwriting was a French dancing master working in Brussels.

Chapter 1 covers findings on the physical manuscript, its structure, contents and handwriting. While listing the whole contents in Table 1, Nevile presents only the material on dance, music and pike exercises in her publication, omitting the recipes for fireworks, remedies and other miscellaneous material. The dance material comprises ballet titles and plots, diagrams of dance figures, music for ballets and social dancing and records of pupils and their fees. Of great value to the serious dance researcher is the facsimile reproduction of the dance-related material between pages 166 and 243, followed by a transcription and translation of the ballet plots. In addition, there is a transcription of the pike exhibition with a translation by Margaret McGowan, set in the context of combat dances. Except for one example, the dance tunes and the songs associated with ballets (*airs de cour*) are not printed here, no doubt their inclusion would have made the volume too costly. However, Nevile introduces and discusses them thoroughly in Chapter 6 alongside a table of the *airs de cour* and their concordances.

The contents of the original manuscript are not well-organised and were probably meant to serve as an aide-memoire to those who used it, rather than a coherent scheme for wider use or publication. Nevile has drawn on her extensive understanding of dance in the Renaissance to make excellent sense out of its disparate information. A context for the analysis of its contents is established in Chapter 2 concerning dance in Early Modern Europe. This would allow readers from other disciplines to frame the book within the wider world of court dance in Italy and France, supported by a full bibliography with which to extend their knowledge. An overview of dance in Brussels is a valuable addition to dance research; both French and Spanish influences were operative while the Habsburg princes Albert and Isabella were in power. The discussion of the practice of the profession of dance teacher also adds to our understanding of an elusive species.

The diagrams will be a great delight for Renaissance dance practitioners, conveying both geometric and letter shapes in S-shaped squiggles and a few labels, such as 'pinecone', 'tortoise' or 'lozenge'. There is little indication of direction and no steps or means of arriving at the figure, and they do not identify gender. As Nevile says, they are probably a resource that a dancing master can draw on as needed. The six ballet plots are also a delight as well as

extraordinary to modern taste. Their structure is common to the ballets and masques of the time, with entries of torchbearers to light the performance and sometimes to dance, chariots to bring in dancers, several dance entries to convey the theme of the work in action and costume, climaxing with a Grand Ballet for the principal dancers, followed by social dancing. The occasions and performers are not recorded, although the setting is a hall with a little scenery, so the performances would have been somewhat old-fashioned and low on spectacle compared to productions in Paris and London.

This review cannot do full justice to the wealth of information provided, and the publication is a valuable resource for serious researchers, and an important contribution to the wider humanities field. One caveat is the reliance on fifteenth century Italian sources for the general contextual discussion, which predate the manuscript by more than a century. Inevitably, too, there are many suppositions in interpreting evidence which are part and parcel of early modern dance history: all are carefully enunciated and referenced by the author. Readers from other disciplines will need to negotiate this astutely. While there may be continuity in dance practice across Europe and across time, it is hard for the general reader to understand specifics for Brussels c. 1615. The discussion of dance in drama perpetuates the notion of the jig on the English stage as a dance genre, whereas more recent research by Clegg and Skeaping (2014) has established that the theatrical jig is a dramatic text-based genre, with dance as only a minor component.

A key document that seems particularly relevant to understanding dance in Brussels is the anonymous manuscript *Instruction pour Dancer*, as it presents dances and steps c.1612 from a non-courtly French repertoire. The publication by fa-gisis of 2000, edited by Feves et al., made the text available to scholars, with a transcription and commentary. It is not included in the bibliography and would have illuminated the discussions of social dance and music in regions influenced by France. For example, the Brussels c.1615 manuscript contains music for 'la boimiere' commended as 'an excellent new dance' by Destourmelle, an unknown music and dance master. Nevile identifies the concordance in Praetorius 1612. Instructions for the courante or branle La Boesme are given in *Instruction de Bien Dancer*: sufficient to reconstruct a dance popular in its day with its probable tune, but little known to dance historians so far.

*Footprints of the Dance* is a valuable addition to dance studies, extending our understanding of the professional life of a dancing master, the choreographic activities of the time and the interaction of dance with other cultural elements such as pyrotechnics, health and travel. The analysis and contextualisation draw on extensive understanding of early modern dance and the culture of Brussels. Through it, readers will derive an excellent understanding of this special manuscript. It should also encourage some scholars to study the manuscript in situ, encouraged by the open access philosophy of the National Library of Sweden.

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