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Introduction to the space

Despite its fame and acknowledged importance in the development of English architecture, the Banqueting House, Whitehall remains an enigmatic structure. Sightseers enter the beautiful but empty space, looking around for objects of interest, then focus their attention on the Rubens ceiling. (Figure 1) Meanwhile, the audio guide briefly informs them of the masques performed there, before guiding their eyes to the detail of the paintings, and the use of the hall for ambassadorial receptions. Scholars read of the importance of the building in Per Palme's¹ full discussion of its planning, execution and use by the Stuart monarchs. Simon Thurley has developed Palme's account with further archaeological and documentary explorations of the whole palace and the life of the royal court.² Both scholars weigh up the evidence for assessing the intentions of the builders of the House. Even the masterwork by Rubens, which dominates the hall and gives it a rationale for today, raises questions that have not been fully explored,³ leading Ellis Waterhouse to claim that:

...it has remained the least fruitful and the least studied of the surviving great works inspired by the patronage of Charles I.⁴

The current debate concerning the function of the room pivots around its use as a dance theatre (masquing room) and as a room of state (Presence Chamber). Palme and Thurley take the cessation of masquing in 1635 when the Rubens paintings were installed as an indication that the Banqueting House was always meant to be a Presence Chamber rather than 'merely a masquing house'.⁵ The phrase implies that dance is not consonant with matters of state; despite arguments to the contrary⁶, dancing continues to have a low profile in modern scholarship. This is not surprising in the face of limited published research in the dance field. This article will explore the history of the Banqueting House from two aspects: the debate over function and the use of the building as a dance theatre. At the least, it will present a fuller picture of the way the site was regularly fitted up as a dance theatre, to balance the debate.

Part I: 'la sale au nouveau palays'

The Banqueting House was commissioned by James I to replace a brick and stone structure destroyed by fire in 1619. Designed by Inigo Jones, the new building opened in 1622 as the first major building on Palladian principles in England. Despite extreme stringencies in the king's finances, the cost was borne, and it remained the only substantial building (and surviving) project of James' reign: another one being the restoration of St. Paul's Cathedral. It has been accepted that it formed the first stage of a plan to rebuild the palace of Whitehall on a grand scale: a dream that was nurtured by his descendants but remained unfulfilled in the face of political and financial problems. James also initiated discussions with Rubens for the decoration of the ceiling. Charles I continued negotiations after his father's death in 1625 leading to the installation of the Rubens canvases by March 1636. At this point the use of the building for masques ceased, but by Shrovetide 1638 a new wooden Masquing Room had been built next door, in which the remaining court masques of his reign were presented. The finished House of 1622 had no practical use whatsoever: it was empty and unfurnished; it had no provision for heating; it contained no offices or accommo-

modation, and it stood silent for many days in the year. When it was scheduled for use, teams of craftsmen and provision of materials were needed to transform the interior, only to be dismantled and carted away after the event. Its status as a great room of state was very clear, enhancing the provision for important ceremonies at Whitehall.

Prototypes

The designation 'banqueting house' is part of the enigma of this building, as the concept of the banquet at court is entirely lost. The fact that this term is now used for a grand dinner obscures the truth, and the hiring out of the Banqueting House today for corporate entertainment adds to the confusion. The visitor needs only to descend into the basement of the building to note the makeshift catering arrangements and the lack of ovens to realise that the building was not convenient for feasts. The palace kitchens, buttery and pantry were across a courtyard, adjacent to the Great Hall.

Two building prototypes merged in the court banqueting house. The first prototype was the medieval Great Hall, the central space of a large house or palace.⁸ It was a rectangle, with one end leading to the kitchens and outer court, and the other end leading to the private apartments. A hierarchical interpretation of the two ends was consistent throughout the Tudor and Stuart period. The upper end nearest the private apartments was where the lord's table or chair was placed, dignified by being raised on a dais and well-illuminated by a large window. At the lower end were placed the humbler members of the company, and was the province of the servants. A wooden screen, with a gallery above, masked the doors to the kitchens and storehouses. The terms 'upper end' and 'lower end' were used consistently by all English-speaking commentators when describing halls at home or abroad. In contrast, French and Italian commentators spoke more loosely of 'one' end and 'the other'. It appears that this notion of the hierarchy of the space was particularly strong in Britain.

The route from the lower end to the upper end was a ceremonial one, to be traversed by servants with dishes of food, or distinguished guests arriving in style, or professional performers with a show. The arrangements for dining and seating kept this space clear. The lord's table or seat was placed across the width of the upper end, affording him (along with his family and favoured guests) a clear view and command of the whole space. The tables or seats for the rest of the company were placed at right angles to the upper end, along the length of the rectangle, allowing the placing of the company in descending order from the upper end. These arrangements are familiar, as they persist in the great halls of modern times: the college halls of Oxford and Cambridge; at the Inns of Court; the two Houses of Parliament and the choirs of cathedrals. When a formal approach to the lord was made, the journey started at the lower end, with honours being made at set points, the deepest bow being made on arrival in the presence (i.e. the close proximity) of the lord. This requirement to pay respect to the lord on his dais is also found in the dance documents for seventeenth century England, in which measures and country dances start with an honour to the presence. Again, dance documents for France and Italy do not make this point. Even in the absence of the physical presence of the lord, a sense of respect for the position of the presence was maintained.



Figure 1. Banqueting House Interior.
By permission of Historic Royal Palaces/newsteam.co.uk

The main use of the great hall was for dining, with the feast being the most sumptuous version of the main meal. At this time, the term 'banquet' was kept for the course of sweetmeats and spiced wine served as a luxurious treat for a special occasion.⁹ It was planned to delight the eye and the senses, rather than satisfy the stomach. The serving of a banquet went alongside the provision of plays, masques, shows and music as part of the generous expenditure of a great lord in entertaining his household and guests. It was the custom to present the banquet after a feast, when the tables and trestles had been cleared, either in the hall itself or an adjoining room. In this way, the consumption of a banquet became ambulatory and

informal. A development of this was to build a banqueting house in the gardens or on the roof of a great house, so that guests could add to their pleasure by taking a short walk to a fantastic little room with a beautiful view. These little buildings were popular throughout James' reign. Banqueting houses were also erected temporarily as a particularly sumptuous compliment to a great occasion, in the spirit of a pavilion or a modern marquee. They were constructed out of wood and canvas and painted to represent stone and columns, then extravagantly decorated with greenery, flowers and sweet herbs. This kind of banqueting house is the second prototype for the Whitehall building. Elizabeth I had ordered one

wooden banqueting house to be built for entertainment in 1559, a year of courtship for her hand, and a second for the embassy from France led by the Duc de Montmorency in 1572 concerning marriage to the Duc d'Alençon. They were used as ceremonial halls for reception and entertainment, more than as places to display and consume a banquet, so became synonymous with masques and shows rather than eating.

For the final marriage embassy of the Duc d'Alençon in person in 1581, the third temporary house was built on the site of the current Banqueting House, along the west side of the principal court of the palace, called the Preaching Place. Around the square was the Terrace with a two-storeyed gallery or loggia providing a covered walkway for courtiers. After the event this house was left standing, and actually survived for 25 years. James inherited this building and used it to present the first masques of his reign. He ordered a replacement in brick and stone in 1606, when that became too shabby. It was this structure that was destroyed by fire in 1619, leading James to resolve on creating a grander replacement. By then, the Whitehall Banqueting House had become an essential hall of state, alongside the Hall and Great Chamber of the palace. The foundations of the 1581 and 1606 houses lie beneath the present building, both in fact and in concept.

When Inigo Jones started to formulate designs, he also explored a third prototype: the basilica. In one draft of the plans and in the first stage of the construction, an apse or great niche was placed at the upper end, corresponding to the position of the altar in a basilical church, in which the king's throne was placed. This elevated the building to a ritual, quasi-religious space, which was consonant with James' view of the monarchy as being ordained by God. This possibility certainly shows the level of importance invested in this building as an expression of monarchy: a view that did not see dancing as incompatible with such a serious treatment.

The Commission

The decision of James to rebuild in stone following the fire of 1619 is astounding in the context of the time, yet he met no opposition to the plan; indeed the City of London offered to raise funds. His financial resources were so low that he was forced to delay the funeral of Anne of Denmark for six weeks following her death in March 1619 until he could afford it. The two events came close together and left him low in spirits. We could surmise whether the solace he found in planning the new building was linked at all with the notion of a memorial to Anne and her love of dancing: only the building itself can speak of this. A possible source for funding the building has recently been proposed: income from the Netherlands towns of Vlissingen and Brill paid as compensation for transition from English rule to Dutch rule.¹⁰ The significance of the project is further indicated by the appointment of a commission to oversee the planning, formed from the principal noble officers of the court, who were also the leading connoisseurs of the age. While being responsible for the State ceremonies that might take place in the new hall, they were entirely familiar with the festive programmes. The commission comprised:

The Duke of Lennox, Lord Steward of the Household
(tilter and masquer)

The Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain
(tilter and masquer)

The Earl of Arundel, Deputy Earl Marshall
(tilter and masquer)

Lord Digby, Vice Chamberlain

Sir Ffulke Greville, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Involvement in masques extended to wives and offspring. For example, the Countess of Arundel danced in the masques of *Beauty* and *Queens* and Lady Anne Herbert, daughter of the Earl of Pembroke, danced in *Blackness*.

As the Surveyor of the King's Works, Inigo Jones was charged with the task of designing and constructing the new building. His career with the royal family had commenced as a designer of masques, so he brought a particularly intimate understanding of the masquing genre to this project.

The Design

Jones had developed a command of Palladian architecture, formed through his journey to Italy in the train of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, and maintained by close study of the leading texts. The site awaited him, bounded by King Street (now Whitehall) and the Preaching Place (also known as Sermon Court and Pebble Court) with its Terrace. The upper end to the south was linked to the Privy Gallery and court lodgings, and the lower end to the north adjoined the Court Gate and was oriented towards the business end of the palace: the kitchen offices, the horseguards' lodgings, and the outlying storage yards, including Scotland Yard where the Office of Works, with Jones's residence, was located and the masquing timbers were stored. One façade would front the public road, and the other would face into the main court of the palace, so both were of equal importance and given identical treatment. He intended to improve on the proportions of the previous building by using a double cube of 110 feet by 55 feet, but the site limited him to 120 by 50 feet.¹¹ He also chose to raise the principal space on a basement, establishing it as a first floor room, following the model of the Italian *piano nobile*. This was no ordinary basement, either, as it contained the King's Privy Cellar, which was transformed into a shell grotto by Isaac de Caus in 1623. Here the king could enjoy drinking parties in a fantastic setting, in echo of the masques presented above. Further importance was added to the building by the deployment of the three highest orders of columns as decoration. The Ionic order was used for the first floor level both outside and in, whilst the Corinthian order was used for the second level inside, and a version of the Composite order used for the outside. There was no place here for the humble Doric or Tuscan column. The former buildings had also been raised on a basement with offices below, partly serving as a cellar for the king from 1603, so there was continuity in the design, but a richer treatment.

Order and symmetry dominate the conception: not only do the façades match, but the outside and inside treatments correspond. Evidence of Jones' thinking on the façade shows the developing emphasis on the hierarchy of the internal space. One design¹² included a pedimented bay creating a central focus for the façade. This was abandoned in favour of a rhythmical treatment of windows, columns and pilasters, with only a slight accentuation of the centre by the use of columns instead of pilasters. This suggests a wish to preserve the longitudinal axis from the upper end to the lower end both outside and in. For a Palladian villa, a central bay would have served as a formal entrance portico. Such an entrance would have created a major distraction from the internal dynamic. At the time, this building did not particularly require one. The king and court entered at the upper end, having passed from his lodgings or reception rooms near the Thames along the

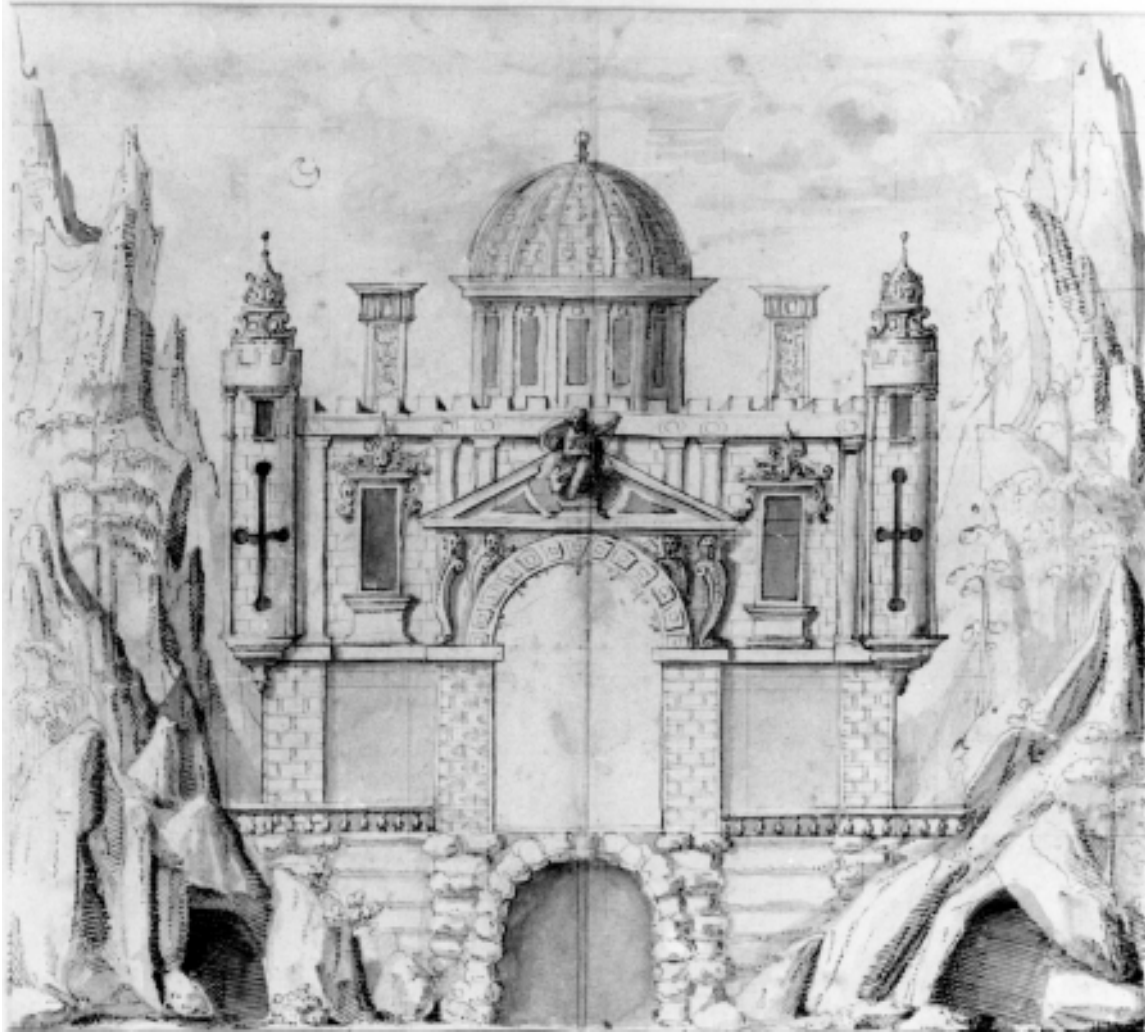


Figure 2. Design for Oberon's Palace by Inigo Jones for *Oberon* 1611.

By permission of the Duke of Devonshire and the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees: Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.

Photograph: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art.

Privy Gallery. At the lower end, various entrance arrangements were organised for access near the Court gate, much like the penthouse addition which is the sole access today.

The horizontal rhythm of the façade was balanced by a vertical rhythm. The basement was given a rusticated treatment, with the stone dressed to resemble large hewn rock. A more refined rustication was continued upwards, giving a masculine interest to the background. The rising orders of columns in smooth stone civilised this statement, and were surmounted by fine examples of stone-carving in the shape of swags of foliage interspersed with masks. These are therefore the climax of the architectural ascent, as has been noted by John Summerson:

...a sub-frieze of masks and swags. This, the only piece of naturalistic carving in the building, rhythmically celebrates the ascendancy of the orders over the mechanic harshness of V-jointed stones.¹³

These effects were heightened in the original by the use of different coloured stone: honey-brown Oxfordshire stone for the basement, darker brown Northamptonshire stone for the upper walls with the columns and balustrade in white Portland stone. It was resurfaced entirely in Portland stone from 1829 by Sir John Soane. The subtle play of colour of the original can

be seen in the background of the Paul van Somer portrait of James I, and a reproduction of this and examples of the three types of stone are on current exhibition in the basement. The ascending thrust is a symbolic reference to the civilising benefits of monarchy. Jones had already explored this in the set design for Oberon's palace for the masque of 1611, using the same architectural arguments.¹⁴ (Figure 2) The interior decoration reiterated the outside, with the addition of a gallery between the upper and lower storey, an arched window placed at the upper end, and internal doors at each end. The same swags of foliage and masks decorated the top of the walls.

The interior walls were painted white, and the windows and gallery left little space for further decoration. The ceiling paintings by Rubens were probably planned from the outset, but were not delivered to Charles I until 1635. With the apotheosis of James I for the central oval, the ceiling glorifies the monarchy in the same terms as the masques. The *Apotheosis*¹⁵ and the rectangle dubbed *The Benefits of Government* were designed to be viewed from the lower end, and the rectangle dubbed *The Union of the Crowns* from the upper end where the presence was placed. There are strong indications that the walls were hung with tapestries for ceremonial occasions, using the fine products of the Mortlake factory

founded by James in 1619. As patterns for a set of tapestries, cartoons by Raphael were bought from Genoa in 1623.¹⁶ James planned that Van Dyke would design a set of tapestries for the Banqueting House depicting the history of the Order of the Garter for the prince's installation. Whilst preliminary sketches were made, this scheme was never executed. Tapestries were hung over the windows at first floor level (the central five were bricked-up), leaving light to fall from the second floor storey.

By 1622, James I had acquired the most exquisite and luxurious building possible in seventeenth century England. It was so important to his image, that he had it painted as the background to a state portrait by Paul van Somer of c.1620, when it was still a work-in-progress. He held the St. George's Feast of April 23 1621 in the half-finished shell, and a rich masque inaugurated the building on January 6 1622. (Figure 3) This was *The Masque of Augurs* by Jonson, who combined an antimasque set before the Court Buttery Hatch with characters from the Three Dancing Bears at St. Katherine's Dock in light-hearted reference to the drinking cellar below, with a solemn ritual of augurs to prove the good auspices of James's reign, finishing on this note:

Sing then his fame through all the orbs, in even
Proportions, rising still from earth to heaven;
And of the lasting of it leave to doubt:

The power of time shall never put that out.¹⁷

Unusually this masque was repeated in unseasonal May to welcome the new Spanish ambassador. On this occasion the audience was held in the Presence Chamber as the Banqueting House was being set up for the masque. The interdependence of dance and state is plain here. Even in the masque of the following year, James could not resist presenting his new house. The antimasque of *Time Vindicated to Himself and to*

His Honours by Fame with the Curious, the Eyed, the Eared, and the Nosed has no specific location in the text, but Chamberlain notes that the first scene 'was a perspective of Whitehall, with the Banqueting House'¹⁸, for which a sketch by Jones survives. I suggest that the theme of time was also inspired by the installation of a new sundial in the Privy Garden, calibrated by the mathematician Edmund Gunter, who published *The Description and Use of His Majesty's Dials in Whitehall Garden* in 1624.¹⁹

As the largest ceremonial room in the palace, it became increasingly important. The Banqueting House later took on iconic status as the place of execution of Charles I. No doubt its placement on the public road resolved the problem of where to locate this unprecedented act, allowing the death to be witnessed whilst being essentially in private, following the conventions of noble executions. The poignancy of Charles making his final appearance at the Banqueting House was not lost on either his friends or his enemies. However, Cromwell found the Banqueting House useful during the Interregnum, so it was maintained in fair order. Charles II chose to use it for the symbolic entry to his restored kingdom on his birthday May 29th. in 1660, recorded in paint by an artist of the time, possibly Isaac Fuller.²⁰ Here the offer of the throne to William of Orange with Mary was made in February 1689. It was therefore used for court ceremonial until the rest of Whitehall Palace was destroyed by fire in 1698.

Proportions

The beautiful proportions planned for the Banqueting House were an architectural device to exalt the monarch. The double cube (even though approximate) is the most obvious statement of harmony to the modern visitor. Several writers argue that Jones' design approach, developed from practical obser-



Figure 3. Design for a Procession of Augurs by Inigo Jones for *The Masque of Augurs* 1622.

By permission of the Duke of Devonshire and the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees: Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.
Photograph: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art.

vation and theoretical reading, drew on the Renaissance symbolism of number. Wittkower, for example, proposes that Jones used a modular system of measurement:

We may look for a moment at the beautiful preparatory drawing for the Banqueting House. The design is strictly and subtly developed from the module of the principal order. Inigo divided half the diameter of the left pilaster into three parts, which gave him one sixth, one third and five sixths of the module to work with.²¹

This line is explored by John Orrell²², who sees the use of Serlio's *ad quadratum* principle in two of Jones' theatre designs, by which a square is taken, and the diagonal halved to evolve the measurement of the next stage of the design. This produces a sequence dominated by three and its multiples, with all the symbolic resonance of that number. A further observation by Orrell concerns the carpenter's bill for putting up the seating in the Banqueting House in 1622. From the measurements given, the space taken by the seating in relation to the whole is in the proportion 8:5, the Renaissance approximation of the Golden Section. While Jones produced no theoretical discourse on architecture, some of his thinking can be discerned from marginal notes in the Palladian treatises of his own library. Gordon Toplis draws attention to the concept of Eurythmia which interested Jones as an idea of 'fayre number' with 'the temperinge of the proportion applied to the matter as Equity is to justice'.²³

Gordon Higgott has explored Jones's thinking more fully to propose that the guiding principle for Inigo Jones was to moderate theory with practical sense:

The central concept in Jones's theory was 'varying with reason', by which he meant the judicious selection and adaptation of classical architectural forms to create well contrasted but harmonious effects according to the needs of a particular building or part of a building.²⁴

Higgott follows Jones in developing his ideas from classical models, including Vitruvius who emphasised the importance of proportion and symmetry, based on number, but adapted to make a comely effect. This he called 'eurythmia': 'as beauty and fitness in the adjustments of the members'²⁵. This is also identified by Jones as the indefinable quality that pleases the eye, and the word is found linked with 'leggiadra': 'Eurythmia or leggiadria...Joyned with the soule...principall intent of nature'²⁶. Here we have a partial insight into his artistic theory, in an age when architecture shared the same language as dance and music: 'number', 'proportion', 'measure', 'rhythm' and 'harmony' being recurrent terms. 'Leggiadra' is also the Italian dancing masters' term for that quality of grace to be achieved in dancing which the English would later express as 'a nameless grace'.

Jones's masque designs reveal the same foundation in classical and European models as his architecture. This has been discussed most fully by John Peacock.²⁷ A fellowship between poetry and architecture was acknowledged by George Chapman, with inspiration giving life to the formal discipline. Praising Jones in his *Museaus* of 1616, he says:

Ancient Poesie, and ancient Architecture, requiring to their excellence a like creating and proportionable Rapture.²⁸

In the masques, Jonson presents dance as the model art form, embodied on this occasion in the heir apparent:

And now put all the aptness on
Of figure, that proportion
Or colour can disclose.

That if those silent arts were lost,
Design and picture, they might boast
From you a newer ground,
Instructed to the height'ning sense
Of dignity and reverence
In your true motions found:

Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue 1618²⁹

It is very clear that the Banqueting House and the masques spoke the same language at least, which may provide a context for discussing the chief purpose of the building.

Problems to solve

While the Banqueting House is a beautiful structure, there are several mysteries and problems intrinsic to the design. A desire to stress Inigo Jones's contribution to architecture and classical culture in England has led to an avoidance of criticism of the structure, which may be implicated in the debate about the intended function of the room.

The first problem to note is the constraint of the site, by which the double cube could not be delivered. It is interesting that the monarch respected the status of the public highway, the route between Westminster and the City of London. Only the latest Stuart plans for a new Whitehall Palace show proposed building spreading across Whitehall to St. James's Park, despite the fact that many palace buildings were on that side, and on certain occasions, the Banqueting House served as a grand stand for watching events in the tilt yard across the road. A genuine despot might have been tempted to ignore such matters. Today it is hard to imagine the building in its original surroundings, but to contemporaries it did seem incongruous: Chamberlain reported on his first sighting that it was 'too fair and nothing suitable to the rest of the house'.³⁰

Linked to this is the question of access. The building stands today in almost as odd a relationship with its surroundings as it did in the seventeenth century. It abuts government offices at the south end, and fits into the corner of Horseguards Avenue and Whitehall at the north end, the site of the Court Gate. Here a grand lean-to (constructed 1798) houses the staircase which is the only access to the room today. Behind lies a builder's yard at the time of writing to service the works on the Ministry of Defence, a sad replacement for the Preaching Place. The main access to the room in the seventeenth century was through the south doors at the upper end from the Privy Gallery and the lodgings and corridors of the private apartments. After the Banqueting House was completed in 1622, works at this end restored damage and established openings into the new space, and made one new room, with staircases to match. However no such works were done for the north and lower end, and no staircase was planned for access to the first-floor room. Here are issues regarding the planned use of the building. For a masque, the courtiers made their way into the Banqueting House from the upper end, assembling across a period of two hours. They were in place ready for the arrival of the monarch who traversed the same route from his own lodgings. He was conducted to the presence in the centre front of the auditorium under the full gaze of his court and guests. The lower end was occupied by the theatre accessed by the performers and craftsmen from the penthouse enclosing a staircase. For a reception, the king and court assembled in the room in preparation to receive an ambassador and his train, who processed up the lane of honour from the lower end to the upper end where the presence was placed. A Presence Chamber normally formed part of a suite of rooms, with an

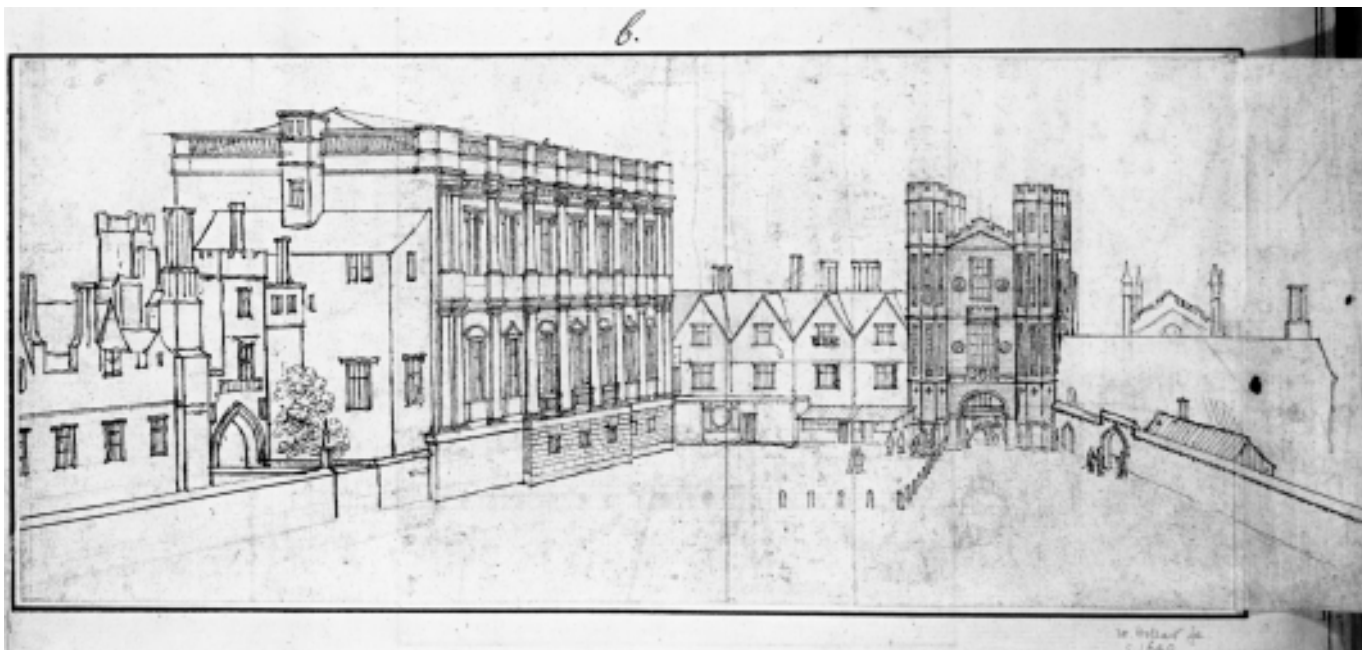


Figure 4. The Whitehall Front: the Banqueting House by W. Hollar c. 1640.
By permission of The Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge.

antechamber of some dignity coming before it. At Whitehall, this was the Guard Chamber. There was no such reception room adjacent to the Banqueting House for him to be welcomed, and to wait for the summons into the king's presence, so the Guard Chamber across the Preaching Place had also to be used for receptions in the Banqueting House. Not only was there no antechamber, but the staircase was essentially a 'backstairs' one, awkwardly placed in relation to the Court Gate with its Porter's Lodge, which was also a staff and goods entrance. Illustrations of the Banqueting House in the seventeenth century show the cramped and ugly appendages that were added to solve the problem of access. (Figure 4) Even today, the entrance is subdued and the visitor soon realises that it is merely a staircase housing. It is clear that the entrance to the Banqueting House worked well for access to a masque, but had not been completely thought through for access to the king in presence.

If the Banqueting House had flaws in functioning as a Presence Chamber, it had flaws in use as a masquing room. The most problematic was bad ventilation. This has not gone unremarked as the risk of smoke damage to the Rubens paintings led to stoppage on masques. The most commonly cited reference is that of Davenant and Jones in the text of *Britannia Triumphans*, the first masque performed in the replacement Masquing Room:

There being now past three years of intermission that the King and Queen's majesties have not made masques with shows and *intermedii* by reason the room where formerly they were presented having the ceiling since richly adorned with pieces of painting of great value figuring the acts of King James of happy memory, and other enrichments; lest this might suffer by the smoke of many lights, his majesty commanded the surveyor of his works that a new temporary room of timber, both for strength and capacity of spectators should be suddenly built for that use; which being performed in two months, the scenes for this masque were prepared.³¹

There has been no published investigation of the ventilation of the Banqueting House, but observation suggests that the room was an airless box lacking fireplaces and flues, topped by a flat ceiling sealed off from the roof, with bricked or boarded-up windows. The original specification stated:

...a strong Tymber rooffe covered wth lead, and under it a ceeling devided into a Frett, made of great Cornishes inriched wth. carvings, wth. painting, glazing, etc.³²

Robert Tavernor is the only commentator on the construction of the roof. He states that Jones knew of the need for a flat ceiling so brought in an Italian method for making a lighter flatter structure:

...continuous horizontal ties (requiring only a small section) supporting a system of triangulated timber members above, which resulted in a lower pitch externally and provided a flat soffit internally.³³

At the same time Tavernor reminds us that Jones was attempting something completely novel in England, and needed to direct his workmen in these new projects at all times. Any problems from heat and smoke must have been apparent from the start, whilst extensive experience must have been developed from the 1581 and 1606 buildings. Perhaps these ones leaked smoke through the walls and joints, or had louvred outlets in the roof, as in a great Hall over the central hearth. There is however, no whisper of concern in the records. Certainly the quantities of burning candles and torches required for the masques, mostly strung up on wires close to the ceiling, would have threatened the precious canvases.

Poor ventilation was not the only deficiency. The acoustics were not adequate either. The insight into this is provided by Balthazar Gerbier, an architect and colleague of Rubens who made his home in England. He questions the wisdom of abandoning wood for stone, in the design of the *salles des fetes* and gives another reason for the replacing of the stone building with a wooden one for masques:

Neither can all great Rooms of Princely Palaces serve for this use, except they be after the Modelle of such as

the Italians have built,...with conveyances for Smoak, and capacities for Echoes, which Inigo Jones (the Late Surveyor) experimentally found at *Whitehall*, and by his built Banqueting House, so as having found his own fault, he was constrained to Build a Wooden House overthwart the Court of Whitehall.³⁴

Gerbier has been accused of enmity towards Jones, so it is worth noting that friends could admit of some problems with the design:

Frende, I have seen Inigo Jones his banqueting house which is a good lustie piece saving that it has some blemishes here and there...But though Architects may differ in opinion about ornaments, I am glad in substance to see good building begin to get into this island.³⁵

These problems, particularly of ventilation, relate closely to the treatment of the ceiling.

Decorating ceilings

Whilst it is universally accepted that the Rubens paintings are the crowning glory of the room, the limited discussion of the ceiling is confined to rationalising the few facts available on the commission itself, and analysis of the allegory and artistry of the canvases. As the ceiling challenges the validity of the room for masquing, it seemed worthwhile pursuing the matter further. This also involves suggesting the unthinkable: that the rich perspective paintings do not match the restrained decoration of the rest of the space. A commentator who seems to be uneasy with the total effect is Summerson:

...the interior has a formidable and even forbidding immobility.³⁶

The room must have had little attraction in its own right, as a place to delight the visitor with the opulence of the Stuarts, relying completely on being 'apparelled' for use. No statues or furnishings are associated with the space. The Palace of Whitehall as a whole was a treasure house of decoration, objets d'art and paintings, astounding Rubens on his visit in 1629 and it would have been important to ensure that the new grand room should be equally gorgeous.

In Jones's view the external rigour of Palladianism could accompany rich interior decoration. This is expressed in one of Jones's fullest marginal notes, frequently quoted as a touchstone to his aesthetic, from which the following figure is extracted:

For as outwardly every wyse ma[n] carrieth a graviti in Publicke Places, whear ther is nothing els looked for, yet inwardly hath his imaginacy set on fire, and sumtimes licenciously flying out...³⁷

The Double Cube room designed by Jones with his pupil Webb at Wilton House after the fire of 1647–8 is a triumphant exercise in extravagant decoration in which the painted cove and ceiling are answered by richly decorated walls designed to showcase works by Van Dyke. Here 'the vertical and the horizontal are once more brought into harmony'.³⁸ This defines the limitations of the Banqueting House, with its plain walls and rich ceiling.

Rubens scholars are confident that discussions concerning the ceiling of the Banqueting House were first opened up in 1620–21, at which time he was working on the ceilings for the new Jesuit church of St. Carlo Borromeo in Antwerp. If so, then James was avant-garde as an art patron, the Antwerp scheme being the first such commission in Northern Europe. The proposal originated with Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel,

leading connoisseur of the age and driving force in the design and construction of the Banqueting House. He had sat for a portrait to Rubens (now lost) in Spa, Belgium on his first trip to Italy in 1612. A second tour followed shortly afterwards in 1613, when he escorted Princess Elizabeth to her new home in the Palatinate. With Inigo Jones in his train, their study of classical antiquities and collection of ancient and contemporary art resulted in the introduction of a neo-classical sensibility to England. A third tour was made by Lady Arundel in 1620–1622 independently of her husband, to visit the two sons completing their education in Italy. Not only did she sit for Rubens in Antwerp, but also went to see the work in progress on the ceilings of St. Carlo Borromeo. The portrait (now in Munich) shows her against a background of Solomonic twisted columns, as later provided for James in the Banqueting House ceiling. This contact through Lady Arundel in 1620 was therefore the stimulus for the commission of the Rubens canvases. The delay resulted from Lord Arundel's close attendance on an ailing king, and loss of favour with his heir.³⁹ Renewed contact with the English court occurred in 1625 when Rubens attended the proxy marriage of Henrietta Maria, also attended by the Duke of Buckingham. Buckingham arranged commissions of his own, whilst other purchases were organised around this time for the King. Rubens was in Paris to ensure the completion in time for the wedding of the ambitious decorative scheme for the Luxembourg Palace, celebrating the achievements of Marie de Medici, mother of Henrietta Maria. The details of the London commission were pursued during Rubens' stay in London as diplomat 1629–1630, when he was knighted by Charles I and given an honorary degree by Cambridge University. This extended process, lasting fifteen years by the time the paintings were delivered, meant that James I was the initiator of the commission whilst Charles I completed it.

Two groups of documents survive which give some insight into the thinking of the artist and patron. One comprises preparatory sketches (the Glynde Sketch) which have been useful particularly in ensuring that the paintings were mounted in the correct spaces in the ceiling at restoration.⁴⁰ The other comprises two short written proposals of c. 1627 in the papers of Sir John Coke, Secretary of State to Charles I and former protégé of Buckingham, which reveal the developing plan for the allegory of James's reign, as the project became a posthumous glorification.⁴¹ Both sources agree that the compartmenting of the ceiling had been decided by Jones. The ceiling is trabeated, that is, divided by deep beams richly decorated in themselves and highlighted in gold, forming nine spaces: a central oval, flanked by two narrow compartments, two chief rectangles, and four corner ovals. He used the same divisions for the Queen's House, Greenwich. Symbolism of number must be in play here, as three important spaces are set off against six minor ones, with four and two to play on, and three again for each large compartment and its flanking small ones.

At this point it is interesting to put the Banqueting House ceiling in the context of the history of interior decoration, because it is rarely acknowledged that it was very unusual for its time. There seems to be little consistent study of the genre, as ceilings are marginal to the expertise of art historians, architects and historians of interior decoration. Ceiling paintings have also been far more vulnerable to the ravages of time than conventional paintings, so disappear from the record. The following discussion makes best use of the current evidence and discourse.

While Rubens enjoyed tackling large decorative schemes, the ceiling of the Banqueting House is the only one to survive in situ. He only undertook three ceiling schemes: the Jesuit church (destroyed by fire in the eighteenth century), a single painting for Buckingham (destroyed by fire in 1949) and this one. The chief use of such paintings was the embellishment of churches or important public rooms in palaces. This ensured that painted ceilings were associated with exalted contexts. However, in England, the treatment for important ceilings was moulded plasterwork or the heightening with paint or further carving of the structural features such as rafters and beams. With no precedent for painted ceilings, what led James, not known for adventurous arts patronage, to commission oil paintings in the first place?

His Scottish heritage was one important factor. The painting of ceilings with allegorical subjects was a popular feature of Scottish interiors, particularly between 1550 and 1650, and is considered specific to Scottish culture.⁴² James I personally supervised the redecoration of the Royal apartments at Holyrood Palace and Edinburgh Castle for his return visit in 1617, including the ceiling of the bedchamber in which he was born, sending his English craftsmen up to do it. Such ceilings are being rediscovered all the time, and have distinctive features.⁴³ They have strong moral and allegorical themes conveyed through flat and illusionistic pictorial images, alongside text. A beamed ceiling provided three surfaces for decoration: the sides and soffits of the beam and the flat ceiling in between. The work was part of the tradition of heraldic painting, and was carried out by craft painters, drawing on emblem books to devise each programme. The allegorical programme of the Rubens ceiling accords with these schemes, but what is particularly interesting is that the second document of the Coke papers proposes the use of text. These were verses from Isaiah in the narrow compartments beside the great oval, which are now rendered pictorially, and a Latin inscription at the first entrance: *Sol occubuit, nox nulla est* (The sun has set, no night followed).⁴⁴ Michael Bath argues that, by selecting image and words in a didactic programme, the patron presented his own personal and dynastic image to his peers and posterity.

Another factor was the tradition of decorating disguising houses, public theatres and banqueting houses. Evidence for this has been accumulating, particularly through the painstaking documentary research of John Orrell. He makes a strong case for the creation of heavenly scenes for the roofs of disguising houses from Henry VIII's reign onwards. The public theatres included a heaven over the stage in their rich decoration, and Orrell's research has a practical outcome today in the decoration of Wanamaker's Globe. The banqueting houses that preceded the new one had significant ceiling decoration. Information on the 1581 house is particularly clear from Holinshed's description:

...and in ye top of this howse was wrought most cunninglie upon canvas, worke of Iuie and holy with pendants made of wicker rodes, & garnished with baies Rue & all maner of strang flowers, and garnished with spangs of gold, as also garnished with hanging Toseans, made of holly & Iuie, with all manner of strang fruites, as pomegarnettes orrenge pompiens Cowcombers grapes carrettes Reaves with such other like, spanged with gould & most ritchlie hanged between these workes of baies and Iuie were great spaces of canvas which was most cunninglie painted ye cloudes with ye starres ye

sunne and sunne beams with diverse other coates of sundry sortes belonging to Queens majestie, most ritchlie garnished with gould...⁴⁵

The payments for this work reveal that the decorations combined artificial elements with fresh flowers and greenery, and provided employment for a large number of workpeople. The ceiling was repainted in 1584–5 and in 1603–4. The only snapshot we have of the ceiling of 1606 is the comment of the short-sighted Orazio Busino when attending *Pleasure Recon-ciled to Virtue* in 1618:

From the roof hang garlands and angels in relief.⁴⁶

The appearance of 'boys' as the first decoration of the 1622 ceiling (taken down in 1625–26) demonstrates the continuance of a strong tradition of rendering a banqueting house into a fantastic and magical space in which the outside appears to have come in, and the eyes are directed upwards for pleasure and spiritual contemplation. The Masquing Room of 1638 was given a blue cloth ceiling. These traditions suggest that by decorating the ceiling of the new house it was being presented as a theatrical space, for a gaze directed upwards, rather than a Presence Chamber where the gaze was directed at the monarch in state.

Investigation into ceiling paintings reveals a fashion for such schemes within the close royal circle contemporary to the Banqueting House. The earliest exemplars are the fantasy ceilings of Heaven and Elysium added to the private closets of William Cavendish in 1619 in his father's bijou fortification of Bolsover Castle. Both moral and erotic in content, these were not intended for public consumption and the paintings are on boards and anonymous. Cavendish became Governor to Prince Charles and entertained King Charles twice over with the last dance entertainments by Jonson. The Duke of Buckingham commissioned a ceiling painting from Rubens in 1627 depicting his own apotheosis into heaven to decorate York House. This can be identified in the inventory of contents of 1635 in the Great Chamber as 'a great piece for the ceiling of my Lord's Closett'.⁴⁷ He also patronised Gentileschi who painted an allegorical ceiling on the theme of Apollo and the Muses. Henrietta Maria embellished several of her apartments with ceilings by foreign and native artists, including Guido Reni and Jacob Jordaens, with Jones to advise, and had her own connection to Gentileschi and Rubens through her mother. This opulence is then pursued in the decoration of Wilton House, home of the Earl of Pembroke and a favourite resort of James and Charles. Part of Wilton's decoration pre-dates the fire, including the ceiling painting of the Single Cube Room by Giuseppe Cesari (d. 1640).⁴⁸ These schemes suggest that the royal circle initiated a trend, which was interrupted by the Civil War and then took off again as a marked feature of Baroque decoration in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. A familiarity with these later schemes has obscured the novelty of the Banqueting House ceiling in England or indeed in Europe of the 1630s.

With James bringing a Scottish taste for ceiling decoration,⁴⁹ Charles and Henrietta Maria attuned to the most fashionable aspects of European art, and the existence of a tradition of theatrical decoration, the pressure to embellish the ceiling of the Banqueting House was compelling. Charles I found in Rubens an artist who held a completely compatible belief in the value of Peace and the strong rule of monarchs. They shared the same habit of educated classical symbolism, combined with a more personal commitment to the image of the family (the married couple and their children) as the

perfect image of Peace. Rubens and Jones must have recognised each other as peers, both master craftsmen with a special relationship of trust with their monarch. The king and queen and Rubens and Jones also used the same device of contrasting the triumph of virtue with the deposition of evil. Hence the canvases show, for example, Hercules beating down Envy, just as the noble masquers drove out the antimasquers personating evil. The depiction of the glories of James's reign and the celebration of the Divine Right of Kings was eminently suitable to a Presence Chamber, whilst being embodied in each royal masque.

Columns, swags and masques

If we return to Jones's concern to make a building suitable for use, then perhaps the structure itself might provide clues to the original intention. Jones knew that each choice he made in design had meaningful resonances. The hierarchical orders of columns had a further decorum for Vitruvius, so that the Corinthian was suitable for temples dedicated to 'delicate divinities' such as Venus and Flora, whilst the Ionic had more severity, and so suitable for Juno and Diana.⁵⁰ This points in a feminine direction. Anne of Denmark's hearse was ornamented with Corinthian capitals, whereas James's deployed the masculine Tuscan. Here Jones was not using the capitals as hierarchical symbols but as expressive of the nature of the incumbent. Another architectural detail is the pattern of swags and masks linked by large ribbon bows that adorn the highest point of the facades and the internal walls. These have elicited no debate amongst architectural commentators. A rare attempt at interpretation is offered by Michael Jenner:

The discreet use of naturalistic masks and swags as a continuous frieze hints at the theatrical and ceremonial purpose of the building.⁵¹

I'm not sure that so strongly repeated a feature should be called 'discreet' but the swags clearly relate to the tradition of decorating a banqueting house with fresh flowers and greenery. The masks are not 'natural' either, but offer a stylised rendering of a human face. The adornments to the building must also be answerable to the building's function. Jones himself lists some of the possibilities of '...festoni.armes. Emprese. maskuari. folliami...'⁵² and so on. Elsewhere he used Charles's initials as king and Tudor roses. The previous two banqueting houses had used coats of arms mixed with flowers and herbs, declaring royal power. Another choice might have been putti, like the 'boys' of the 1606 and 1622 ceilings. The masks with swags are not entirely original, as this ornament decorated the pulpit of the Preaching Place outside the windows of the Banqueting House, which was also damaged by the fire of 1619.⁵³ From Colvin, we discover that this was put up during the time of Henry VIII, from a design by an Italian, Nichola Bellini of Modena, who also designed a banqueting house for the Privy Garden. The loggia surrounding the Preaching Place had a richly painted ceiling at this time, with armorial bearings, flowers and 'antique work'. Here is a distinct tradition of mingling the devout with the festive, maintained by the Office of Works in repainting and maintenance.⁵⁴

The masks between the swags were a Palladian feature but were probably copied from a Roman frieze in the possession of Lord Arundel, drawn again by Jones in 1633 and copied by his pupil Webb.⁵⁵ Jones notes his thoughts on the Arundel frieze:

...wch I thinke was of the tempell of minerva at Smirna by reason of ye gorgons heades....sheauing how the Ansientes varied and composed ther o[r]ders according to the nateures of the gods to whome ye Tempels were dedicated.⁵⁶

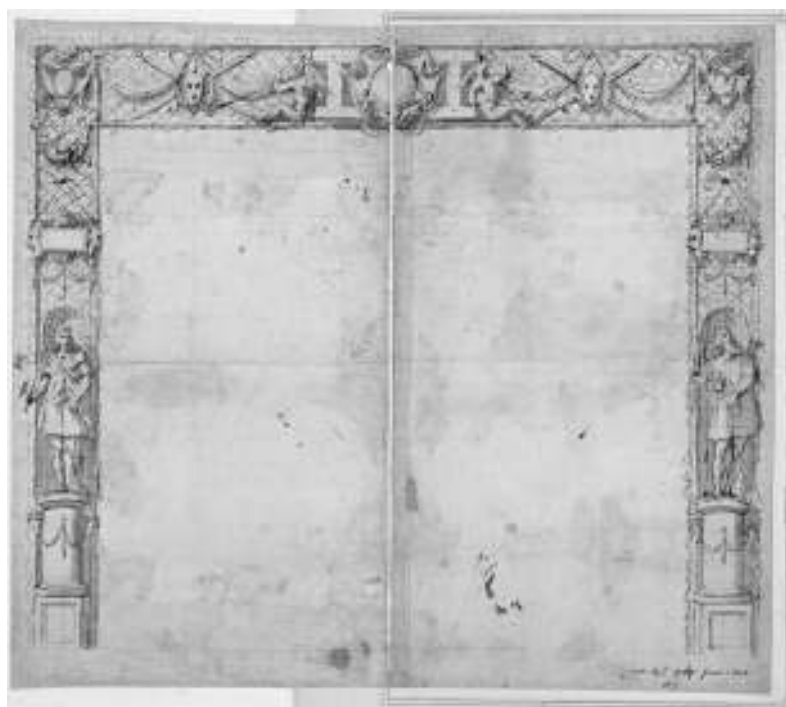


Figure 5. Design of 'the front for the Masque' by Inigo Jones for *The Triumph of the Peace*, 1634. By permission of the RIBA Drawings Photographs Collection.

These masks have the wavy and disordered locks indicative of snake-hair. The Banqueting House masks have been subtly altered to a finer narrow-chinned visage with regular tresses and a three pointed head-dress reminiscent of the pointed crowns designed for Artemisia and Atlanta in *The Masque of Queens*.⁵⁷ I suggest that Jones has adapted the medusa masks into the calm and pleasing vizard worn by the noble masquer, to be suitable to this temple. Telling concordant masks appear in the ornament to the scene of *The Triumph of Peace* (Figure 5) for which Shirley's text confirms identity:

...with trophies proper to feasts and triumphs, composed of masquing vizards and torches.⁵⁸

These are combined with figures to declare the theme of the whole to be 'Peace, Law and Justice'. The same masks are incorporated into the pediments of the buildings forming A Roman Atrium for *Albion's Triumph* of 1631.⁵⁹ The friezes of vizards and swags placed both inside and out, at the highest and most noble level of the building, declare to the world that masquing was a prominent function of the room. It may also be that, by combining the feminine orders of columns and a feminised mask, Jones evoked Anne of Denmark in a discreet memorial on behalf of the king.

Presence Chamber or Dance Theatre?

So how to respond to the forceful assertion of such distinguished architectural historians as Simon Thurley:

First, it is now clear that the building was never intended as a masquing house. Ruben's name was mooted in connection with the painted ceiling at the outset, proving that masques with their smoky torches, were never intended to be part of the building's function.⁶⁰

While noting that all occasions would be illuminated with a quantity of burning candles and torches (and the best quality was selected to ensure a clear flame), the structure and decoration make plain that it was meant to be both a masquing house and a presence chamber (as well as serving other purposes, see below). Airing a decorative project is one thing, but giving a firm commission is another. While James may have explored the idea of having a leading European artist decorate his ceiling rather than his Sergeant Painter, by the time Charles confirmed the commission other pressures had come into play. James's death led to the need for a monument to him, at a time of financial constraint that prevented the full celebration of either Charles's marriage or his coronation. An apotheosis and celebration of his father's achievements for peace and unity in paint was a fitting one, alongside the acquisition of a major work by the leading artist to the courts of Europe. This much has been aired by scholars, but the Buckingham factor must not be overlooked. By 1627, George Villiers had his own self represented in apotheosis alongside a noble equestrian portrait on show in York House by the hand of Rubens, while he and his associates were involved in the discussions at this stage. Charles must have felt strong pressure to give his father the king at least the same dignity in death, not to be out-shone by a subject.

Across the fifteen years of discussion, the context of planning clearly changed several times, and at the back was always the hope of an extensive rebuilding of Whitehall Palace, exemplified by the inadequate treatment of the north and south ends. The desire for the important ceiling eventually took precedence, to the detriment of maintaining the performance of masques. We are used today to the muddle of

a more sophisticated bureaucratic government in delayed planning and dysfunctional delivery of public building works: the Millennium Dome, Wembley Stadium and the Scottish Parliament spring to mind, demonstrating the same mix of financial circumspection and vaunting ambition. I suggest that, rather than making the mistake of belittling the Banqueting House's role as a dance theatre, we should accept that there was no master plan but a series of shifting priorities. Rubens shrewdly provides a clue in a letter sent to a friend when in England on his embassy of 1629–30:

I am very apprehensive as to the instability of the English temperament. Rarely, in fact, do these people persist in a resolution, but change from hour to hour, and always from bad to worse...for whereas in other courts negotiations begin with the ministers and finish with the royal word and signature, here they begin with the king and finish with the ministers.⁶¹

Gerbier also tells us that the finished canvasses lay in Rubens' studio for several months awaiting payment, although in the end they were dispatched on trust, the fee and a gift being sent three months after installation.⁶²

It is equally important to establish that, to men of understanding at the time, there was no dichotomy between acts of state and dancing. The masques were as integral to the conduct of majesty as the reception of ambassadors. The continuity of dance and state is exemplified in all the protagonists and theoretical background of the Banqueting House story. James in partnership with Anne made this an essential element of Stuart rule, and Charles and Henrietta Maria continued the enterprise. This could be copiously illustrated, but an invaluable indicator is an inscription planned but not executed for the Banqueting House, announcing it to be for 'festive occasions, for formal spectacles, and for the ceremonials of the British Court',⁶³ which expresses with absolute clarity the European convention for using great rooms for multiple purposes. It is up to the dance historian to make more concrete the reality of dancing amongst the festive and ceremonial occasions of the British court, to persuade others that a dichotomy between dance and state did not exist at this time. The transformation of this empty shell into a dance theatre is therefore discussed below.

Part 2: The Banqueting House as a dance theatre

Making the house ready

The following account synthesizes records relating to the three banqueting houses and other spaces used for masques and ceremonies, such as the Hall, and rooms in other royal houses.⁶⁴ When the Banqueting House of 1622 is specifically concerned, it will be designated by capitals. For every event, the room had to be prepared by workmen from the Office of Works and other servants, as part of the common routine of 'apparelling' rooms for royal use.

It is important to note that the banqueting houses were used for a variety of events, not only masques and receptions. The St. George's Feast was held there for members of the Order of the Garter, the only recorded dining occasion. The emphasis must have been on the ceremonial aspect rather than a gourmet treat, as the food was brought from kitchens across an open courtyard. James assembled parliament there for special addresses. The semi-religious ceremonies of touching for the king's evil and Maundy Money were held in this room.

Dancing, plays, tumbling and fighting at the barriers were enjoyed in this space, as well as the Great Hall. For a dancing, the Presence was installed and degrees raised, underlining the spectacular nature of the social art. The banqueting house was also used as a kind of grandstand to watch tilting in the Tilt Yard or bear-baiting, dancing animals and fencing matches in the street, requiring a boxed stand for the monarch at his window. There was a seasonal cycle to this routine: masques at Christmas with the most important on Twelfth Night and Shrove Tuesday; plays in late autumn and winter; animal baiting at Easter. Events occurring outside their season were deeply significant.

When needed, the State was created at the upper end. A large dais was installed (the half pace), surmounted by a canopy, with chairs for the king and queen. This was considered a theatre in its own right. The most distinguished guests were accommodated in boxes, placed near the State, and raised bench seating, called 'degrees', were placed along the sides of the room. For a formal reception, the ambassador or prince walked the length of the room, between a lane of honour formed by the nobility of England and Scotland. This processional route is marked out by the columns at each end and the compartments of the ceiling in the Banqueting House, particularly the narrow rectangles along which the putti dance.

For masques, more extensive preparations were necessary. The State was built further forward, still with the dais and canopy, and the king was placed where everyone could see him, without turning their backs. A number of boxes were created for the most important members of the court, and degrees were built up higher in several tiers of scaffolding. The glazed windows were boarded up for safety. A raked stage, built at the lower end, was commonly about forty foot wide, thus fitting snugly into the fifty three foot wide House

and was raised up on trestles six or seven feet. The depth varied across time, from forty feet in 1605 to twenty seven feet in 1634. Steps led down from the stage onto the spacious dancing floor, which may have been built up from the floor of the room when necessary. It was covered in green cotton cloth, stitched and nailed into place by the matlayers. This cloth only served one performance, having to be relaid for any repeat performances. Within the stage, Inigo Jones used perspective scenery and special effects created by machinery. While these had been in use since 1605, the perspective set remained an innovation, to serve the eye of the central onlooker, the king, and those who sat near him. As seating was organised by precedent, the most important members of the audience had the best view, and others would have partial or obscured views of the stage, scenery and action on it. This was also the case with the dancing of the revels (the social dancing incorporated into the masque), when the masquers invited partners from those seated closest to the State and the dancing space. High status therefore demanded high competence in dance, and the confidence to be watched by the majority of the audience. The conventional layout of the spaces is indicated by Jones's plans for *Florimène*, a pastoral with danced intermedii and antimasques, presented in the Hall in 1635. (Figure 6)

The horizontal and vertical axes

The perspective set altered the dynamics of the performance. The older style of theatrical production, using a dispersed set of houses and locations around the hall, led the eye and the performers' movements in a circular pathway. The older form of the masque and the ballet de cour featured the march around the space, and this was still a method of presentation in the non-scenic public theatre. The perspective set emphasised the

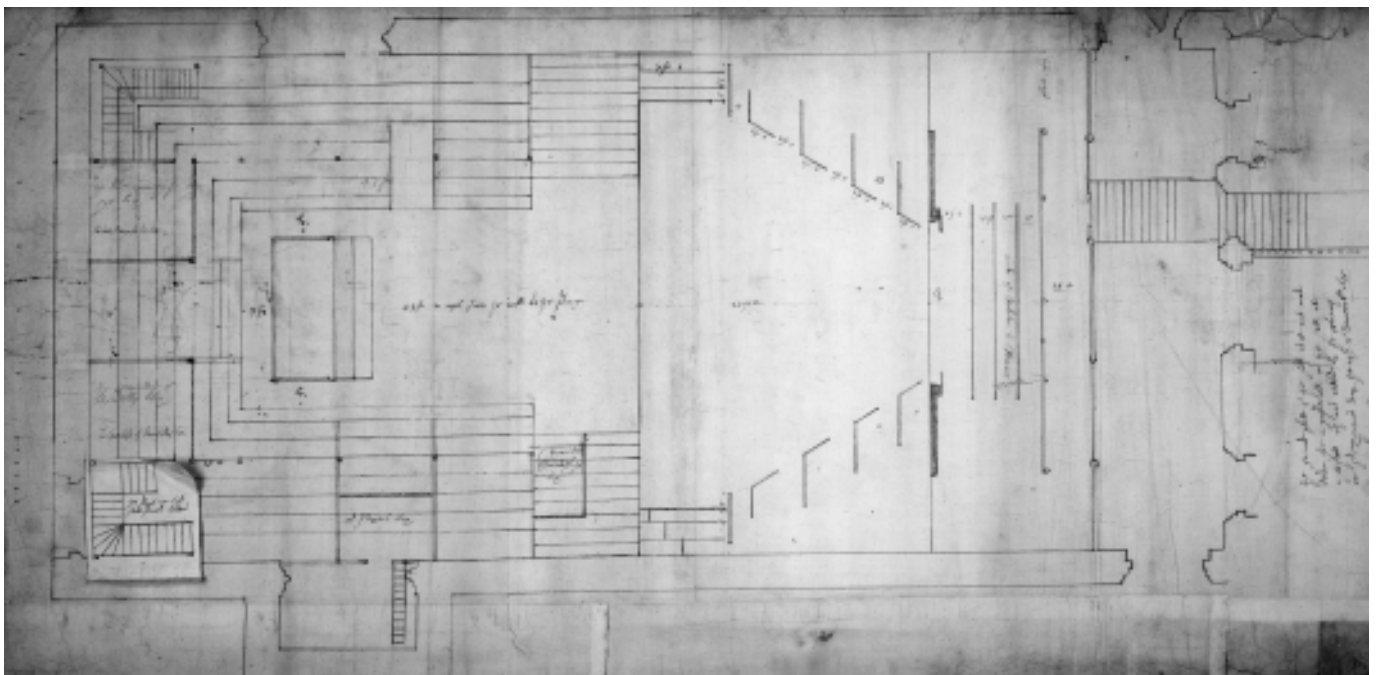


Figure 6. Floor plan by Inigo Jones for *Florimène*, 1634. By permission of The British Library, no. LANS.1171 f5-6.

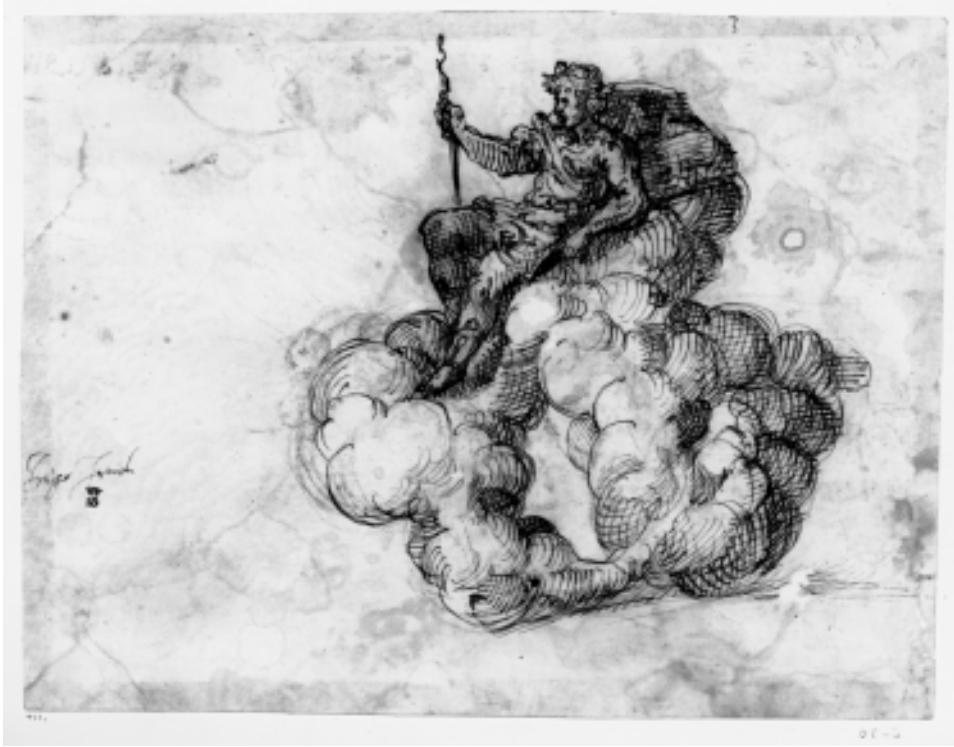


Figure 7. Design for Apollo by Inigo Jones for *The Masque of Augurs* 1622.

By permission of the Duke of Devonshire and the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees: Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth.
Photograph: Photographic Survey, Courtauld Institute of Art.

direct route from the stage to the State, as in the processional lane for the reception of an ambassador. The pivotal episode of the masque was the arrival of the noble masquers within the scene, their descent to the dancing space, and approach towards the State. As John Orrell notes:

For all its lack of physical depth, the scene was still intended to function as the route for a triumphal entry...⁶⁵

However, once they had descended to the dancing space, the noble masquers could be seen well by everyone. The view would be different according to position in the three sides of the auditorium, but the figured dances of the main masque and social dances of the revels were of interest from every angle. It is probable that the spectacle of the noble dancing was the primary experience of the bulk of the audience at a masque. Hence the use of a green cloth on the floor to provide a calming background for an intense gaze, derived from its use on counting house tables and diplomatic conference tables at the time, and continuing use today on billiard tables.

Inigo Jones also paid attention to the vertical axis, as he had done in the architecture of the Banqueting House. His greatest technical achievements were to develop the upper stage. From *Hymenaii* in 1606 onwards, masquers and gods descended from on high in luminous clouds. In 1622, *The Masque of Augurs*, as the first presentation in the new stone house, included a new effect: the ascent of a god. Apollo had descended to conduct the proceedings, but later ascended to join Jove in the heavens again. (Figure 7) Twelve years later for *Chloridia* of 1631, the curtain was drawn up rather than dropped, and Fame appeared at stage level, and ascended alone to the heavens, showing that Jones had developed the fly gallery. His last great technical achievement was for *Luminalia*

of 1638, when the masque closed with an aerial ballet of zephyrii.

The two axes of descent from above and procession towards the State were traversed exclusively by the noble masquers and those representing the classical deities or moral symbols. It is likely that the speakers and dancers of the antimasque performed on the stage, keeping the professional performers from outside the court establishment at the lower end and distant from the king's presence. In this way, the axes already set up by the architecture were reiterated at every masque with as much dignity as possible. To the masque audience, the dance made plain in a particularly vivid form, the notions of harmony and proportion underpinning wise government, that were also demonstrated in the new Banqueting House.

The Ornament of the Scene

The building of the stage required a frame, both for the structural strength of the whole and for the hanging of a curtain to veil the scene from the assembling spectators. The term 'proscenium arch' has been used by theatre historians for this feature but it is a completely anachronistic term and so avoided in this paper. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the word 'proscenium' referred to the actor's stage in front of the scene, but the masque stage did not have such a proscenium stage. Steps were placed at the front of the scenic stage, in line with the frame, allowing access for the noble dancers and musicians to the dancing floor, which corresponded to the orchestra space of a classical theatre. The story of the theatres of the late eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries is of the slow reduction of the proscenium stage to produce the picture-frame stage we know today. During this

time the enclosing frame was known as the 'proscenium opening', with the term 'proscenium arch' being introduced only after 1900.⁶⁶ During the history of the masque, the frame was known mainly as 'a great arch' or 'arch triumphal' in the reign of James I, then as 'the ornament of the scene' from 1631 onwards. This also marks a shift of emphasis on the arch in the records.

Information on the arch is scant in the Jacobean period. It is clear that a framing structure was required for the curtain (traverse or veil), which was drawn (c.1603–c.1611), then dropped (c.1618–1631), then raised in the following years. Little comment is made about the frame, although it is likely that it was given special treatment for special occasions. The first sketch of a decorated arch cannot be attributed to a particular masque, but is considered to belong to c.1621. From 1631, the information is much fuller, with both a verbal description and a sketch by Jones often available. This growth in information coincides with Jones's increasing control of the device of each masque, and the development of Henrietta Maria's masquing policy.

From these records, it becomes clear that the decorated frame was analogous both to the arches built for triumphal entries and to the frontispiece of a book. In both cases, the emblematic design announced the theme of the whole, inviting the reader to pass through into the world beyond. For the masque stage, the noble dancers passed through the arch from the idealised fantastic world of the scene into the real world of the dancing space and auditorium, just as a monarch passed through a triumphal arch idealising facets of good government into the realities of governance posed by his reign. In the other direction, the audience of a masque read the emblems of the frame, before passing through in their minds to the moral message of the whole device, just as a reader gauged the contents of a book from the frontispiece, assisting a full understanding of the argument beyond. In this way, the ornamental arch of the masque stage emphasised the longitudinal axis between performer and audience, and heightened the sense of essential exchange of understanding. A clear example of this is the ornament for *The Triumph of Peace*. (Figure 5) Two figures greater than life-size stood in niches on either side, one representing the Greek judge Minos, and the other the Roman lawmaker Numa. As well as holding emblems of their status, their names were inscribed in tablaturs above. Further emblems were used in the decoration, of a sharp-sighted eye, a golden yoke and a caduceus with olive branch, and Shirley's text states plainly that these were 'hieroglyphics of Peace, Law and Justice'.⁶⁷ Mingled with these were the tokens of feasts and triumphs as mentioned above, including greenery, drapery, masquing vizards, torches and naked children. Thus the high topic of law is mingled with the enjoyment of delight. This emblematic mix is the key to the whole work, particularly the thinking behind the antimasque entries. The caduceus and olive branch are important symbols of Peace in Rubens' art, and the naked children ornament the serious depiction of good kingship in the Banqueting House ceiling. The emblematic tradition of the triumphal arch was the same as that of the decorative schemes of great houses, executed by the same professionals of master carvers and painters. The combination of architecture, human figures, emblems and text to convey the message linked the ornament of the scene with both the triumphal arch and the frontispiece of a book, and the Scottish tradition of ceiling decoration.

Extending the space: lights

In the performance of the masques the deployment of both lighting and music helped to extend the space in the imagination. The installation of lights for masques and their rehearsals, plays, dancing, St. George's Feast and other occasions in the principal rooms of the palaces was the responsibility of the Revels Office. The procedure remained substantially the same throughout the reigns of James and Charles. Using iron wire and wires twisted into rods stretched across the space, great and small branches were strung up to hold quantities of wax candles. Further brilliance was achieved by adding reflectors of plates and shapes cut from assidue (a gold-coloured alloy of copper and zinc) to form plates, fringes and tassels. Hooks, staples and nails tensioned and fastened these, and soldering strengthened the structures. Ropes and pullies were rigged to raise and lower the branches, and extinguishers on poles were to hand. Large and small wall lights (wallers and prickers) were pushed into all available wooden vertical surfaces, while further candlesticks were placed around. In the financial records, there are occasional references to the use of pasteboard to protect surfaces. There are also indications of special treatments for great occasions. For Princess Elizabeth's wedding masques, the pendants from the lights were garnished with roses, other flowers and green paper leaves, whilst the brilliance of the candles was increased with looking glasses, gilded bladders and the painting of the branches.

It is not possible to determine from the court records how many candles were used for each occasion, but the special performance at Merchant Taylor's Hall of *The Triumph of Peace* in 1634 funded by the City of London provides a useful insight. Three suppliers were used to purchase the total needed: 10 pounds of Venice white wax candles and 3 flambeaux weighing 12 pounds each from Henry Bax; 20 dozen and 44 pounds of wax lights and 19 dozen torches from Bartholomew Hitche; 18 dozen wax lights and 10 dozen torches from Stafford Clare. These were mounted on at least 20 great branches, 32 branches and 9 dozen and 8 wallers. These accounts also give an insight into the embellishment of the lighting surrounding the presence:

Paid to Robert Wilson Mercer for nine yards and a half of crymson cullored plush vused about the Piramids that supported the lights or candles by the Kings seate in the said hall as by one bill appeareth £7. 7s.⁶⁸

All this illumination served the auditorium of the hall and the dancing space. It needed to be lit at the last moment in front of the assembled audience, but presumably before the arrival of the monarch. Busino refers to this:

There were two rows of lights, which were to be lit at the proper time.⁶⁹

The financial records show teams of five to ten men in attendance on the day. The audience, particularly the ladies, was part of the glorious spectacle of the event, and there are frequent comments on the fine clothes and quantity of jewels on display. Busino noticed this, while revealing the level of light before the performance started:

...with most noble and richly dressed ladies, 600 and more in number...and on their foreheads strings of jewels, and on their necks and on their bosoms and in their girdles, and on their garments in such quantity that they appeared so many queens; so that at first, when there was little light, as if it were twilight of dusk or

dawn, the splendour of the diamonds and other jewels was so brilliant that they appeared so many stars.⁷⁰

There are no separate records of the cost of lighting the stage, but this would have been under the direct supervision of Inigo Jones. His devices were ingenious and every effect heightened the glory of the masquers. Costume fabrics and decorations incorporated reflecting metallics while colours were selected to look good in candlelight. This point was noted by Bacon:

The colours that show best by candlelight are white, carnation, and a kind of sea-water green; and oes or spangs, as they are of no great cost, so they are of most glory.⁷¹

Intense light was focused on the triumphal thrones on which the masquers first appeared. Such glories are particularly well evoked in the account by George Chapman of *The Memorable Masque of...the Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn* of 1613:

...the upper part of the rock was suddenly turned to a cloud, discovering the rich and refulgent mine of gold, in which the twelve masquers were triumphantly seated, their torch-bearers attending before them; all the lights being so ordered, that though none were seen, yet had their lustre such virtue, that by it the least spangle or spark of the masquers' rich habits might with ease be discovered as far off as the state.

Over this golden mine in an evening sky the ruddy sun was seen ready to set; and behind the tops of certain cliffs by degrees descended, casting up a bank of clouds; in which awhile he was hidden; but then gloriously shining, gave that usually observed good omen of succeeding fair weather.⁷²

This indicates that Jones could manipulate the lights during the masque. Although the most famous effects are the dancing fires in *The Lords' Masque* 1613, he had been doing this for some time, as evidenced by this effect in *Tethys' Festival* 1610:

First at the opening of the heavens appeared the three circles of lights and glasses, one within another, and came down in a straight motion five foot, and then began to move circularly, which lights and motion so occupied the eyes of the spectators that the manner of altering the scene was scarcely discerned: for in a moment the whole face of it was changed, the port vanished, and Tethys with her nymphs appeared in their several caverns gloriously adorned...The seat or throne itself was...all covered with such an artificial stuff as seemed richer by candle than any cloth of gold....About the scallop and round about the sides was a resplendent frieze of jewel glasses or lights, which showed like diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and such like.⁷³

In *Chloridia* of 1632, Jones worked the opposite effect, that of increasing darkness, as he created a horrid storm in the middle of the antimasque scene.

Henrietta Maria's masque *Luminalia* of 1638 was essentially a virtuosic exercise in illumination:

...a scene all of darkness...with a calm river that took the shadows of the trees by the light of the moon, that appeared shining in the river, there being no more light to lighten the whole scene than served to distinguish the several grounds that seemed to run far in from the eye. with this scene was heard the voices of birds of the night....[after the passing of Night]...the heaven began to be enlightened as before the sun rising...⁷⁴

The final masque *Salmacida Spolia* 1640 employed even more complex and dynamic illumination:

...a huge cloud...opened, and within it was a transparent brightness of thin exhalations, such as the gods are feigned to descend in; in the most eminent place of which her majesty sat, representing the chief heroine, environed with her martial ladies; and from over her head were darted lightsome rays that illuminated her seat; and all the ladies about her participated more or less of that light, as they sat near or further off. This brightness with many streaks of thin vapours about it, such as are seen in a fair evening sky, softly descended; and as it came near to the earth the seat of Honour by little and little vanished, as if it gave way to these heavenly graces.⁷⁵

This is of course an apotheosis, and is matched in the Rubens ceiling by not only the apotheosis of James in the central painting but the female figure of Abundance, who is haloed by light, rising above the darkened figure of Avarice; both masque and picture take the imagination beyond the roof or the sky, into heaven and the afterlife

The illumination of the masquers' thrones and those of other deities represented by singers and instrumentalists reiterated the vertical axis. The horizontal axis was traced in light when torchbearers processed through the stage and down to the dancing floor. These only appeared on special occasions. From 1613, the torchbearers began to have danced entries of their own, by which the dancing figures they traced were enlarged by the incandescent torches.⁷⁶ Jones emulated the more sophisticated effects of France and Italy, under the influence of Henrietta Maria, but solved the technical problems by his own ingenuity. The only area he did not attempt was that of fireworks, which were provided for the ballets in Paris by military artificers.

The glories of the illuminated stage were heightened by their mystery, and remained obscure compared to the fuller glory of the main room, and once again Francis Bacon reminds us of this:

Let the scenes abound with light, specially coloured and varied, and let the masquers or any other that are to come down from the scene, have some motions upon the scene itself before their coming down; for it draws the eye strangely, and makes it with great pleasure to desire to see that it cannot perfectly discern.⁷⁷

All in all, the lighting effects rival the achievements of our own day, but with candles and torches only. What is striking in the documents that record the masque performances is the complete absence of complaints about dripping wax or unpleasant smoke, and no accidental combustion during any performance. It is possible to deduce that Jones's achievements, particularly when stimulated by Henrietta Maria, may have led to far greater intensity in lighting in 1635 than in 1619, producing an unforeseen threat to a special ceiling.

Shaping the space: music

During performances music was used to control effects and to shape the space, as well as being integral to the device and the performance. Loud music signalled the start of the performance at the king's arrival. It was also played to cover up the noise of machinery and add to the mystery of scenic transformation. The revels section in the heart of the performance was an episode of improvised social dancing, which required aural control. An induction song signalled the commencement of

the ball, and a closing song organised the transition back into the fictional world. The consorts changed position to accompany the revels, afterwards returning to their places. Groups of musicians were deployed around the space, to create different effects. The consorts were placed in boxes at floor level at each side of the stage. Other musicians might be placed high up in the gallery at the lower end, on scenic structures or at the side. These arrangements allowed for the various echo effects, which were such a desirable part of the masque aesthetic as stated by Gerbier and Bacon. Music helped establish locations with sound effects: the witches with veneficall instruments in *The Masque of Queens*, bird-song in *The Triumph of Peace* and *Luminalia*.

Throughout the period, instrumentalists and singers appeared in the heavens to add glory to the masquers' appearance. In *Oberon* 1611:

There the whole palace opened, and the nation of fays were discovered, some with instruments, some bearing lights, others singing;...⁷⁸

In *Coelum Britannicum* 1634, the masque closed with two clouds descending bearing singers impersonating Religion, Truth, Wisdom, Concord, Government and Reputation, and then ascended to conclude. Thus the music celebrated the vertical axis and the route to heaven. They also formed processions to the state: for *The Triumph of Peace* 1634 we have a sketch of the order of such a procession, showing the singers and instrumentalists marshalled to move forward in a lozenge for one song, and forming a crescent block for another.⁷⁹ By these deployments the music enlarged the physical space and took the mind out into the upper regions, bringing the harmony of the heavens to the English court. The music helped to reinforce the sense of exchange of the whole occasion between the real and the ideal.

The audience

A court masque was essentially a private occasion hosted by the king, so that an invitation was a significant mark of honour. It could also be a state occasion for which an invitation was an essential courtesy. Entry was controlled by the Lord Chamberlain with the assistance of the Master of Ceremonies whose special concern was the ambassadors and the Lord Steward. The Chamberlain was present in person (but might also dance, as in *Haddington* and *Somerset* masques) bearing his white staff as the badge of office. He was assisted by others bearing staves. These staves were wielded when necessary to reinforce their authority. The Lord Chamberlain probably depended mainly on personal knowledge of court circles, supported by the word of leading men, to recognise and admit those entitled to be present. Tickets of admission sent out in advance were introduced from 1634 to assist the Chamberlain in his task.⁸⁰

He controlled the seating in boxes and degrees, some of which would have been planned beforehand with the carpenters, the rest clearly impromptu as people arrived. The fixed seating in boxes and degrees could be augmented by adding stools and cushions. Placement was a key to your status, and the ambassadors were very alert to the issues involved. Dispatches are full of the minutiae of invitations and placing. In fact it was this that led James to create the post of Master of Ceremonies, as embassies became a routine part of international politics, rather than for special issues as in Elizabeth's day. These dispatches provide useful information. Gabbaleoni, agent for the Savoy, attended the *Somerset* masque in 1613,

and describes the king with the queen sitting on his left, under the canopy of state. Prince Charles was on his right with the Flemish ambassador next on a bench. Beside the Queen was the Spanish ambassador (correlating to the Prince), with the wives of the Lord Chancellor and the ambassadors of Spain and Flanders on velvet-covered stools. The Savoy agent was given the first place on the bench next to these stools, with the wife of Sieur d'Aubigny (patron of Jonson and brother of the Duke of Lennox, the closest friend of James) next to him, then all the leading dukes and countesses of the English court. The bride was placed on a cushion on the steps of the state, and was the principal dancer in the revels. All this was described to show how he was favoured over the Florentine agent, who was placed ten places lower down on the other side.⁸¹ While the fuss over invitations is often ridiculed today, it is also an unequivocal marker of the high importance invested in the masques. There is no such discourse for the performances of plays at court.

The audience was as vital to the success of a masque, as the performers. Masques were delayed until particular people were able to attend, both envoys and key lady dancers. People were placed to form a significant block, such as the one hundred Inns of Court men who headed the procession to Whitehall in 1634. The committee members who organised *The Triumph of Peace* were given seats next to the dancing floor, so that they could act if anything went amiss. This overt stage managing must have been normal: the Chamberlain led the procession of singers and musicians to the state in the same work. In *The Somerset Masque*, the Lord Chamberlain was the second most important masquer, after the Duke of Lennox, but ex-officio led the revels by inviting Anne of Denmark.

Guests had to make their way through the galleries and rooms of the palace leading to the upper end of the banqueting house. It was usual to meet for supper beforehand in your lodgings, and invitations to supper were part of the punctilio. Those who did not lodge at Whitehall would have had to pass the scrutiny of the guards keeping the Court Gate, and probably at other points in the warren of buildings that formed the palace. The numbers attending led to over-crowded corridors and a degree of mayhem. Turnstiles were introduced at the end of the period: 'turning doors' were arranged for the performance of *The Triumph of Peace* at the Banqueting House and at Merchant Taylors' Hall. They are first mentioned in use at York House for the masque of 1626. The discomfort of attending *The Masque of Blackness* is conveyed by Carleton in one of his newsletters:

The confusion in getting in was so great, that some Ladies lie by it and complaine of the fury of the white staves. In the passages through the galleries they were shutt up in several heapes betwixt doores, and there stayed till all was ended...⁸²

Ben Jonson also paints a vivid picture of the scramble to gain unauthorised access to a masque in the complaint of Robin Goodfellow in *Love Restored*:

Nay, so your stiff-necked porter told me at the gate, but not in so good words. His staff spoke somewhat to that boisterous sense. I am sure he concluded all in a non-entry, which made me e'en climb over the wall and in by the woodyard, so to the terrace, where when I came, I found the oaks of the guard more unmoved, and one of 'em, upon whose arm I hung, shoved me off o' the ladder and dropped me down like an acorn.⁸³

He then attempts entry in disguise as one of the many masque

workmen and audience: a carpenter, an engineer, a firewoman (dresser), a musician, a feather-maker, a bombard-man (tavern servant), a citizen's wife, wiremen and chandry (lighting), a stranger (diplomat). Finally he tries as himself (household sprite) with his broom and candles claiming to be part of the device (an antimasquer) and succeeds. In the course of his racy account, an impression emerges of a long queue stretching up ladders or steps, having to make shift for refreshments and relief of natural functions, and controlled by the porters at the court gate, and the black guard (who were essentially the court bouncers, not a military escort).

Even once arrived and a seat allotted, it seems that the crowd was fairly mobile. Busino describes the dancing floor being cleared, after the arrival of the king at *Oberon*. Considering that the audience assembled across a two hour period before the masque started, it is not surprising that moving around and conversing occurred. What is more surprising is that this mobility continued through the performance. The revels offered a break from intense concentration, and it is clear that Anne of Denmark, even when a masquer, took this opportunity to favour people with her conversation. With the paired masques of Charles and Henrietta Maria, the royal dancer in masque costume joined the non-dancing spouse on the state to watch the closing scenes of the masque. Furthermore, it is clear from the text of *Coelum Britannicum* that Charles sat as the presence throughout the antimasques, and then appeared in the scene as a masquer for the noble entry. It is hard to discern at what point he might have moved from the auditorium to back-stage, but presumably the Lord Chamberlain escorted him down the narrow corridor between the east wall and the degree scaffolds. At the completion of each masque, the noble masquers came forth once again to take off their vizards and reveal their identities. Such incidents give an insight into a completely different attitude to a theatrical event, and further understanding of the key distinctions between a masque and a play. In a masque the imagined action is interwoven with reality, and the contract between the audience and the performers is crucial.

As masques lasted at least three hours, often longer, with a waiting time of two hours beforehand, the question of facilities arises. Scattered references are made to chamber pots and close stools, alongside candles and coals, for workmen and performers. As the banqueting house was an unheated and non-residential space, both groups of workers had to bring their own comforts for periods of work. For the noble performers, there are enough references to the preparing of nearby lodgings in connection with masque performances, to make clear how their need for changing and preparing was met. The queen was given use of a tiring room in 1609. The Inns of Court gentlemen in 1613 were taken 'through the gallery to a chamber appointed, where they were to make ready for their performance in the hall'.⁸⁴ Indeed when *The Triumph of Peace* went to Merchant Taylor's Hall, a room was prepared for the king, gilded and painted, with carpets, hangings and mats. We can only assume that chamber pots, close-stools and garderobes were also accessible for audience members in adjoining rooms, and that slipping out as needed occurred.

There is also no reference to snacks being consumed during a masque, in contrast to the public playhouses, although Robin Goodfellow's bombard man above is essentially delivering a take-away! In the rhythm of court entertainment, the masque still fell into the concept of delicious and

extravagant entertainment, and so was timed to come between supper and the banquet. As said above, attending a supper in good company and with special dishes was the start of the event, but the host of the masque itself, usually the king, provided the banquet of stunning sweetmeats afterwards, laid out in a nearby room. The city records of 1634 list bread, roast meats and baked meats gilded amongst the banquet stuff, indicating the provision of more sustaining food for the masquers than confectionery alone. Commentators complain constantly of the disorder at the masque banquets, leading swiftly to the knocking down of the trestle tables, and the destruction of the delicacies. In some ways this is not surprising in view of the long fast and close confinement of the entertainment, but this mayhem was clearly traditional. Henrietta Maria and Charles showed particular favour to the Inns of Court masquers by ensuring that they had first go at the banquets in 1634. It was also the convention for the masquers to be rewarded with a sumptuous dinner a day or two after the performance, with plainer provisions at an inn for the musicians and antimasquers.

Backstage

It becomes apparent when studying the routine records of the time, that the masques had a much greater impact on court life than plays. Halls were readied for plays very quickly, and there is no allowance for rehearsal, presumably because they were tried and tested productions from the public theatres with minimal staging. Only the queen's pastorals and special plays with dancing were afforded perspective sets and stages designed by Jones. Getting spaces ready for masque rehearsals is noted, not always the banqueting houses; James ordered rehearsals at Newmarket from time to time. When a production was to hand, then the hall was out of action for some time as the stage, scenery and seating was built and both technical and dance rehearsals took place. Specialists and labourers in scene building and painting were in action, as well as costume and prop makers. All had to be ready to work through the night, if time ran out.

Anticipation was a factor of the pleasure of a masque, as well as comment afterwards. There may seem few eyewitness accounts to use, but these in fact far outnumber the observations on play performances. Keeping the device secret was part of the fun, and Campion notes with regret that the pattern of the golden trees of *Lord Hay's Masque* was demonstrated in advance.⁸⁵

There is little evidence on backstage staffing, but both labourers and skilled engineers were in action under the direction of Inigo Jones. His omnipotence here produced some of Jonson's most vicious attacks, with the byproduct of providing information on how he operated. In *An Expostulation with Inigo Jones*, he reveals that Jones decided where the musicians were placed, and controlled his team with a whistle.⁸⁶ The 'motions' or machines were greased with lard and soap to keep the operations smooth and quiet. The success of Jones's stagecraft can be judged by the lack of complaint about the effects, compared with his only rival, the Florentine Constantino de Servi. Gabaleoni, the Savoy agent, recorded with glee the inept machinery of *The Somerset Masque*, when the masquers' throne plummeted inelegantly to the stage: when it came down one could see the ropes that supported it and hear the pulleys, or rather wheels, making the same noise as when they raise or lower the mast of a ship...The music done, the Florentine engineer let

drop his portcullis and the lords came down without any music, with no other sound but the screeching of the wheels.⁸⁷

It is possible that Balthasar Gerbier was Buckingham's masque designer, but otherwise Inigo Jones had a complete monopoly at court throughout the reigns of James and Charles.

We have to assume that extra guards were drafted in to handle the crowds. Control at the porter's lodge at the Court Gate by the back entrance to the Banqueting House is indicated in *Love Restored*. This was also the disciplinary office for court servants, where punishment was meted out, such as whipping. Records exist for the payment of watchmen to secure the masquing stuff, but only for great occasions, such as the Princess Elizabeth's nuptials.

The business of dismantling all the carpentry work for return into storage and repairing any damage to the fabric seems particularly onerous to modern perceptions. The job is evoked by a record of 1614 when twelve cartloads of timber were returned from Somerset House after the performance of a pastoral play and others:

Carpenters, taking down the bourds and degrees out of the hall after the plaies were don....and likewise divers bourds which were nailed on trestles for service at that tyme.... Labourers...carrying forth the degrees, bourds and trestles into the storeyard...loding away the degrees and other stuff to be carried to Scotlandyard, whence it was brought...⁸⁸

The most striking of these duties occurred for the Christmas of 1634. Part of the tiltyard wall was taken down to accommodate the procession, while the king and queen watched from a window. The masque was performed on February 3, then the whole stage and set were transported to Merchant Taylor's Hall in the city for the repeat performance on February 13, apparently on the whim of the monarch. The same procession took place, and the detailed city records show how all the householders along the route were charged with cleaning and repairing the streets, placing lights and ensuring order, including:

...give special charge unto all his servants and Children that they nor any other through the forth noe squibbs or Crackers...⁸⁹

Then the materials had to be transported back to Whitehall for the stage and scenery to be re-erected for the king's masque *Coelum Britannicum* on February 18. No wonder that Inigo Jones received a double fee from the Inns of Court or that the carpenter John Damporte had a tip of £4 for 'his extraordinary paines and Care...and better expedition of those woorkes'.⁹⁰ The king bore the cost of these removals.

Conclusion: a site specific to dance?

As stated above, this Banqueting House was designed by dancers for dancers. Points of interest are the essential flexibility of the space and the raising of the high galleries of degrees to allow clear viewing of the dancing. It is interesting that the dancing space was never replaced by seating to make better sight-lines for the audience in viewing the perspective set. Another possibility not followed was to concentrate the dancing on the stage, enlarging it to accommodate the noble group, particularly as there are indications that experiments in dancing on the stage were being pursued, for example with the aerial ballet mentioned above. However, this method of presentation was in line with developments in France, where

the descent to the dancing space was not given up until the 1650s, after which dance began to be fully staged.

One of the most interesting developments for a dance historian is the consequences of the installation of the Rubens paintings in 1634. At this point, masques could have been presented in the Great Hall or ceased, as indeed there was a three year intermission in the court masques from 1635 to 1638. However, in 1637 Charles ordered the erection of a large wooden building with all speed. This was designated for masques alone:

Wee haue a stately buylding toward in Whytehall....to be employed only for maskes and dancing.⁹¹

It was set up at right angles to the Banqueting House leading to the loss of one side of the terrace and valuable space in the central courts of the palace. It was not cheap, costing £2412–15–10, again in times of chronic shortfall in finances. The building was dubbed 'the masquing room', and its reputation as a dance theatre is clear from a dismissive Puritan remark, deriding it as 'the queens Dancing Barn'.⁹² Here, the three great masques of the last years of the king's peace were performed.

This building was a little larger than the Banqueting House, and the brief records of its construction suggest that the seating was integral to the design, rather than a removable insertion: '... to cause a great roome of Timber with Degrees for Masques to be presently built...'⁹³ The laying of the floor under the stage was itemised separately from the rest of the floor of the room, suggesting both the permanent installation of a stage, and a different treatment of the floor beneath it. A most significant detail is that Jones was able to pierce the floor for a capstan to raise and lower the thrones for the king and queen for *Salmacida Spolia* :

The Capstalls for these Engynes were placed in the vault / under the floore of the roome.⁹⁴

This gave greater leverage and room to work, compared with the six or seven feet between the floor and the stage. It argues for a specialist use, with no concern about damage to a floor for show. Charles had also had a specialist drama theatre made out of the court cockpit in 1629–1630, with a permanent stage and seating. It seems that the opportunity came in 1635 to correct the problems of the stone-built and airless space, to build again in wood and dedicate the space to masques alone. Due to the outbreak of Civil War the Masquing Room had a short life, so its significance has been greatly underestimated. It was pulled down in 1645 by order of the House of Commons, along with a masque house at St. James, and the courts of the guards, so that the timbers could be sold to pay the wages of the King's servants.

It was completely common-place across Europe that dance stages and scenery, with seating for the audience, were erected on purpose in the most noble room of the palace, and then immediately dismantled. This was the normal practice in France and Italy until the end of the seventeenth century. The Masquing Room and the Cockpit-at-Court at Whitehall however show the English court leading the way with specialist spaces, specific to each art form.⁹⁵ Yet conflict destroyed the initiative, so, from the Restoration down to today, dance has had to exist in theatres designed more for drama and opera as on the Continent.

This survey of the Banqueting House, Whitehall demonstrates the deeply serious nature of the building as a public room for ceremonies of state. That dance was integral to its

conception cannot be denied, even by those who argue that the main intention was to reserve it as a Presence Chamber. It is time to review the evidence for this important and extant site in the light of dance history, and to propose that the masques were not so much driven out by the installation of valuable canvasses, as requiring a dedicated space of their own. The new Masquing Room was undoubtedly the first site specific to dance theatre, and the last for more than three hundred years. The very emptiness of the space, confronting each visitor to the Banqueting House, is mute testimony to its function as a dance theatre.

Notes

- 1 Palme, P. *Triumph of Peace: A Study of the Whitehall Banqueting House*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1957
- 2 Thurley, S., Groom, S., Jenkins, S. *The Banqueting House, Whitehall Palace*. Historic Royal Palaces Agency, London, 1997
Thurley, S. *The Lost Palace of Whitehall*. British Architectural Library Drawings Collection RIBA, London, 1998
Thurley, S. *Whitehall Palace: An Architectural History of the Royal Apartments 1240–1690*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1999
- 3 A forthcoming volume by Gregory Martin will provide the fullest assessment of the Rubens ceiling to date.
- 4 Waterhouse, E. *Painting in Britain 1530–1790*. Yale, London, 1994, p. 70
- 5 Thurley, 1998, *ibid.* p. 84
- 6 Bevington, D.; Holbrook, P. (editors) *The Politics of the Stuart Court Masque*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998. This collection of essays, for example, discusses the political content of the masques, paying attention more to the texts than to the dancing in its own right.
- 7 This is Rubens' account of the proposed commission, hinting at the currency of a plan to rebuild Whitehall as early as 1621. Martin, G. The Banqueting House ceiling. *Apollo Magazine*, 1994, **CXXXIX** (384), 29–34
- 8 Girouard, M. *Life in the English Country House*. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1980
- 9 Wilson, C. A. *Banqueting Stuffs*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1991
- 10 Leapman, M. *Inigo*. Hodder Publishing, London, 2003
- 11 Thurley, 1999 *ibid.* p. 87
- 12 Harris, J.; Orgel, S.; Strong, R. *The King's Arcadia: Inigo Jones and the Stuart Court*. Arts Council of Great Britain, London, 1973
- 13 Summerson, J. *Inigo Jones*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000
- 14 Orgel, S.; Strong, R. *Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court*. Sotheby Parke Bernet, London, 1973, no. 63
- 15 At a recent lecture (November 2003) given by Gregory Martin at the National Gallery in connection with the exhibition of Rubens's oil sketches from the Hermitage Collection at Somerset House, he stated that the proper title for the central oval is 'The Final Reckoning of James I with his Maker' and that the apotheosis of Buckingham is called 'Buckingham ascending to the Temple of Honour and Fame'. This will no doubt be discussed in his forthcoming book on the ceiling and its symbolism. This does not detract from the link with the apotheosis-like climaxes of the masques, but presents an interesting insight into James's view of kingship.
- 16 Leapman, M. *Inigo*. Review, London, 2003, p. 188
- 17 Orgel, S. *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1969, p.389
- 18 Orgel and Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 349.
- 19 Colvin, H. M. (editor) *The History of the King's Works*, Volume IV 1485–1660 (Part II). Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London 1982, p. 318
- 20 Thurley, Groom and Jenkins, *ibid.*, p. 19.
- 21 Wittkower, R. *Palladio and Palladianism*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1974, p. 58
- 22 Orrell, J. *The Theatres of Inigo Jones and John Webb*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, p. 10, pp. 58–59
- 23 Harris *et al.*, *op. cit.* p. 62
- 24 Higgott, G. 'Varying with Reason': Inigo Jones's theory of design. *Architectural History*, 1992, **35**, 51–77
- 25 Higgott, *op. cit.* p. 62
- 26 Higgott, *op. cit.* p. 65
- 27 Peacock, J. *The Stage Designs of Inigo Jones: The European Context*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998
- 28 Summerson, 2000, *ibid.* p. 64–65
- 29 Orgel, *op. cit.* p. 273
- 30 Colvin, *op. cit.* p. 328
- 31 Orgel and Strong, *op. cit.* p. 662
- 32 Palme, *op. cit.* p.64
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- 42 This is proposed by:
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- 43 Bath, *op. cit.* pp. 215–275 for the current inventory.
- 44 Martin, *op. cit.*
- 45 Orrell, J. *The Human Stage: English Theatre Design 1567–1640*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 38–39
- 46 Orgel and Strong, *op. cit.* p. 282
- 47 Tracing the history of this painting has been difficult, as it was removed from York House to Osterley Park, where it was destroyed by fire in 1949. A survey of the art works is included in; Cammell, C. R. *The Great Duke of Buckingham*. Collins, London, 1939
- 48 Hunt, C. *A Tour of Twelve Great Country Houses with Arthur Negus*. Peerage Books, London, 1989, p. 50–51
- 49 Bath's full treatment of the surviving ceilings in Scotland leads him to propose that Scotland led England in this field. 'The iconography of the Stuart court has attracted an enormous amount of scholarly attention in recent years but it is probably time to insist that this iconography had a Scottish dimension.' Bath, *op. cit.* p. 91.
- 50 Higgott, *op. cit.* p.56. See also the discussion by Summerson of personality in the classical orders in Summerson, J. *The Classical Language of Architecture*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1996
- 51 Jenner, M. *London Heritage*. Mermaid, London, 1991, p. 97
- 52 Higgott, *op. cit.* p. 55
- 53 Thurley, 1997, *op. cit.* p. 68 for an illustration of the pulpit in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* of 1563.
- 54 Colvin, *op. cit.* pp. 313–314. The chapel also had a painted roof using blue, gold, arms and figures (p. 318)
- 55 Peacock, *op. cit.* p. 23 for photograph; Higgott, *op. cit.* p. 59 for drawing
- 56 Higgott, *ibid.*
- 57 Orgel and Strong, *op. cit.* nos. 20, 27
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- 62 Durante, S.-S. *et al. Peter Paul Rubens: A Touch of Brilliance*. Prestel Publishing Ltd., London, 2003, p. 94
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- 65 Orrell, 1985, *op. cit.* p. 131
- 66 Leacroft, R. *The Development of the English Playhouse*. Methuen, London, 1988
- 67 Orgel and Strong, *op. cit.* p.547
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- 72 Orgel and Strong, *op. cit.* p. 257
- 73 Orgel and Strong, *op. cit.* p.194
- 74 Orgel and Strong, *op. cit.* p. 706
- 75 Orgel and Strong, *op. cit.* p. 733
- 76 Daye, A. Torchbearers in the English Masque. *Early Music*, 1998, May, 247–262
- 77 Bacon, *op. cit.* p. 175
- 78 Orgel, *op. cit.* p. 167
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- 80 Bentley, G. E. *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, Volume III. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1968, pp. 107–8
- 81 Orrell 1977, *op. cit.*
- 82 Herford and Simpson, *op. cit.* p.449
- 83 Orgel, *op. cit.* pp. 188–189
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- 89 McGee, *op. cit.* p. 335
- 90 Greg, 1975, *op. cit.* p. 46
- 91 Bentley, G. E. *The Seventeenth Century Stage*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968, p. 285
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- 93 Colvin, *op. cit.* p.337
- 94 Orgel and Strong, *op. cit.* p. 737
- 95 This point is acknowledged to some degree by drama historians, for example John Astington: 'The remarkable theatrical activity at the English court between 1558 and 1642 was unmatched anywhere in Europe.' Astington, J. *English Court Theatre 1558 – 1642*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 220.