

## Social Change as Reflected in *The Dancing Master*

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A fruitful way to study dance history is to look at the new material presented in commercial publications issued in serial form. While the material that is reprinted over and over again may or may not indicate longevity, new dances give a view of what the buying public is demanding. They also show the efforts of entrepreneurs in the trade to meet those demands and to create new markets. What others select from those books is also of interest. As I was helping with the notes to the forthcoming facsimile of André Lorin's manuscript of country dances presented to Louis XIV of France in 1687, some interesting aspects of the changing repertory in London-printed *Dancing Master* series became evident.<sup>1</sup> In August 1685, Lorin accompanied a diplomatic mission to England to carry French congratulations to James II on his accession. While in England, Lorin collected nine country dances, four of which had been printed for the first time in the 1670s in *The Dancing Master*. Four did not appear until the year after Lorin's trip, and another was not printed until 1698. These choices suggest that Lorin was chiefly interested in very new dances, and that he collected from masters on the leading edge of the field.<sup>2</sup>

The first edition of *The Dancing Master* appeared in 1651 with 105 dances.<sup>3</sup> It was hurried to market, ostensibly because a competitor was in the wings—and the many errors of music and dance supports publisher John Playford's apologies for that haste. Succeeding volumes show the

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1. Julia Sutton, ed. *Dances for the Sun King: André Lorin's "Livre de Contredance."* (Annapolis: Colonial Music Institute, 2008), in press.

2. 1675: "White-hall"; 1679: "Christchurch Bells," "Valentine's Day," "Hedgelane"; 1686: "The New Bath," "Cupid's Garden," "Excuse Me," "Vienna"; 1698: "Winsdort [Windsor] Castle." Lorin's manuscript includes four additional dances in English country dance formation: "Menuet Anglois," "Irish Jig," and two titled "Contredance nouvelle." While English sources were important to Lorin's work, he did not follow them slavishly. In some cases he made minor changes to the dances, for others, gave entirely new figures. He may have created the four additional dances himself in the English country dance format.

3. The first edition of the first volume was titled *The English Dancing Master*. "English" was dropped with the second edition. By 1728, the series had reached three volumes, eighteen editions of the first, four of the second and two of the third.

editor's desire to gratify his customers' desires as various dances were dropped or added, and the whole was rearranged and modernized.

The earliest known English country dances were in a variety of formations involving small numbers of couples. They were chiefly danced in private or domestic settings by advantaged performers of equal social rank. Most of the dances were complex enough to need rehearsal. Dance descriptions or instructions in the few extant manuscripts and in early editions of *The Dancing Master* are often directed to specific people as each dancer's role was distinct. Between 1651 and the 1720s, the small set dances declined in favor and were replaced by longways duple or triple minor dances, suitable for performance in large public spaces by many dancers of varying experience and without previous rehearsal. By the end of the eighteenth century country dances were entirely in triple minor longways formation, were composed of a small group of standard figures, and were danced chiefly by middle class performers who had only to watch the top couple perform a few rounds to be able to join in the dance. Instructions were almost entirely directed to the first couple and the others stood idle for much of the time, eventually progressing up to the top, when they then joined the dance.

In the 1670s this change began to be visible in the printed manuals. In the fifth edition of the first volume of *The Dancing Master* (1675) five new longways dances appear at the end of the book.<sup>4</sup> The last four of these include an opening instruction that is quite different from the other dances in the book: "Honour to the Presence. Lead up all forward and back · That again ··".<sup>5</sup> Most of the other longways dances began with "Lead up all a D. and back · . That again ··". While the lead up instruction includes a note for the music (the marks · which denotes first time through the music and ·· , second time through the music), the honor movement has no music indication in the new dances. (See figure 1.)

In the next edition, the sixth (1679), a group of twenty-two dances were added.<sup>6</sup> These have a similar opening instruction with the addition of

4. "Green Stockings," (p. 156), "The Witches" (p. 157), "White-hall" (p. 158), "The Opera" (p. 159), "Newmarket" (p. 160).

5. The only other dance with a similar opening is "The Slip," that had been in all editions and began with: "Honour to the Presence · Honour to your own ··". But for this dance music was indicated for the honors.

6. The new dances were all together at the end: "The King's Jig" on p. 162 through "Old Simon the King on p. 182. It is interesting to note that Lorin selected three dances from this group.

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White-hall. ⊙ ⊙ ⊙  
*Longways for as many as will.* ) ) )

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the dance 'White-hall'. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is written in a style typical of 18th-century dance manuals, with notes, rests, and bar lines. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Honour to the Prefence. Lead up forward and back. That again. 1. Cast off first man and wo. lead up second Cu. in their places, then cast off 2. Cu. into your own places, then men take hands and likewise we. and fall back, then the first Cu. cast off, and second Cu. lead up as before, then cross over men and we. in each others places, then men and likewise we. go back to back, then men and likewise we. go right hands a whole turn, and left hands a turn with your own, which is the first Part.

The 1. Cu. lead down and walk round the 2. Cu. in their own places, then cross right over and stand in the 2. Cu. places, the 2. Cu. moving up a little, then the 2. Cu. go the Figure of 8, then both men take their own we. by both hands, the 1. man put his wo. back, the 2. man pull his wo. to him, till both men and we. fall into their own places, then men and we. fall back, then the 1. wo. cross over to the 2. man, then presently the 1. man go behind the 1. wo. and turn, the 2. wo. turning both together, set to your own, then right hands round, and so to the rest.

Figure 1. "White-hall." All figures courtesy of the Vaughan William Library of the English Folk Dance and Song Society

[ 172 ]

Valentine's Day. ⊙ ⊙ ⊙  
*Longways for as many as will.* ) ) )

The image shows two staves of musical notation for the dance 'Valentine's Day'. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music is written in a style typical of 18th-century dance manuals, with notes, rests, and bar lines. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

Honour to the Prefence, next to your woman. Lead up all forward and back, that again.

First Cu. lead up, and the second Cu. lead down, then change hands and meet, then the two men take hands, and the two we. take hands, and lead to the wall and back again, then the first man and second wo. changing places, stand still till the first wo. and second man do the like, then the two men take hands, and the two we. take hands, and fall back from each other, and then meet and cross over with your own wo. then the first man and the second wo. meet and turn back to back and stand still, till the first wo. and the second man do the same; then all four clap hands and turn 5. and take hands in a Ring and go quite round: Do the same over again to the left.

Figure 2. "Valentine's Day"

an honor to “your woman.”<sup>7</sup> This instruction was followed by a line setting it off from the main dance directions, and there is no indication as to how the music fits this opening figure, if at all. (See figure 2.)

It is not at all clear how this opening figure is to be performed.

- Is it the first figure and to be repeated with every repetition of the dance, or is it an opening figure that is performed only at the beginning?
- Is it performed to music?
- How does it relate to the older opening figure, “Lead up all forwards and back, set and turn S.  $\cdot$  That again  $\cdot\cdot$ ,” that was an integral part of the dances patterned on the USA principal (Up a double, Siding, Arming)? The USA figures are performed to the first strain of music and repeated with every repeat of the dance figures.
- In several of these new dances, the instructions for the other figures include instructions about the music, i.e., which strain is to be played for which part of the dance (“Sawney and Jockey,” “Dragoons March,” “The Bore,” “Christchurch bells.”) No music instruction is present for the opening honors figure. (See figure 3.)
- We do not know what kind of honors were performed before and after country dances. At the opening of “Christchurch Bells,” Lorin suggests that the gentleman honors his partner on arriving at their places in the dance. After asking his partner what dance she wishes to dance, they honor the company without music at the beginning of the dance. His instructions omit the partner honor and lead up a double and back of the dance as it appears in *The Dancing Master*.

Another feature of this new collection of dances is the presence of several new dances in duple minor longways formation in which, after the honors figure, the remaining figures are performed in sequence and at the

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7. “Honour to the Presence, then to your women [next to your women (woman), then to your own]. Lead up [all] forward and back, that again.” Minor variants are given in square brackets.

[ 177 ]

Christchurch Bells. ○○○○  
*Longways for as many as will.* ))))

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The music consists of a series of rhythmic patterns, likely representing the bells of a church tower. There are three distinct sections of music, each starting with a different rhythmic motif. The first section is marked with a '1', the second with a '2', and the third with a '3'. The notation includes various note values, rests, and bar lines.

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Honour to the Prefence, next to your women. Lead forwards and back, that again.

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First man turns right hands with the second wo. once round, and left hands with his own wo. once round. This ends the first Strain of the Tune.

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Second man turns left hands with the first wo. once round, and right hands with his own once round; which ends the second Strain of the Tune.

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All four take hands and go once round, then each Cu. clap hands right and left, then the first Cu. cast off into the second Cu. place, while the second Cu. lead up; which ends the third Strain.

Figure 3. "Christchurch Bells"

end the first couple is progressed to second place. In most of the early "longways for as many as will" formation dances, each figure is performed as many times as is needed to progress the first couple to the bottom of the set and back to first place, where they then lead off the second figure, dancing that to the bottom and back up, &c. The usual instructions say "do this change to all" or "Do this to the last."

There are true duple minor longways dances in earlier editions. The first of 1651 included four: "New New Nothing," "Tom Tinker," "The Punk's Delight (the new way)," and "Lady Cullen." "Simple Simon" was added in the third edition (1657), and "Green Stockings" in the fifth (1675). Out of the 160 dances in the sixth edition (1679), most of which either don't progress at all, or progress figure by figure, the presence of six duple minor and three triple minor dances (the first appearance of this type) among the twenty-two new dances suggests that this type of progressive dance was beginning to gain popularity.<sup>8</sup>

In the seventh edition (1686) all of the previous dances are retained, three more dances with opening honors are added.<sup>9</sup> Then a large group of longways dances is appended in which another change can be discerned.

8. The triple minor dances are "Mr. Staggin's Jig," "Dragoon's March," and "Bore la Bass."

9. "Parsons upon Dorothy" (p. 167), "Young Jemmy" (p. 191), "Love lies a bleeding" (p. 182), and "Never love thee more" (p. 183) have the honor and lead figures. Excepting these, new dances added between pages 170 and 208 have no honors.

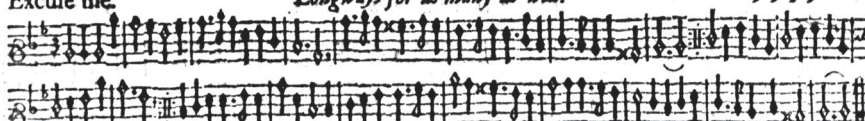
Rather than having each figure followed by the instruction: “Do this change to the last, the rest following” the instruction becomes “the rest do the same” or “the other Cu. doing the same.” However, many of these new dances have specific instructions for the arrangement of the music which makes it clear that each figure is to be performed once, thus they are actually true duple minor progressive dances.<sup>10</sup> Lorin’s “Excuse Me” is among this group. (See figure 4.)

[ 188 ]

*Longways for as many as will.*

○○○○  
)))))

Excuse me.



First man and first wo. cross over, and pass into the second Cu. place, and take hands and turn round, till the first man is in the second man's place, and the first wo. in the 2.wo. place, then the second Cu. do over this same as the first Cu. did, the rest doing the same. This to the first Strain twice over.

Next, the first man and second wo. meet and fall back, and turn S. and the first wo. and second man meet and fall back, and turn S. This is to the second Strain twice over.

Then the first Cu. cast off and go down on the outside of the second Cu. and go the whole Figure, till the first wo. come into the second wo. place, and the first man into the second man's place, then the second Cu. cast off and go the whole Figure of 8. between the first Cu. till they come into the third Cu. place, and slip up in the middle till they come to their own places again, the rest do the like. This is to the third Strain played twice over.

Figure 4, “Excuse me”

While these observations seem quite minor and rather confusing, I believe that they reflect the beginning of a change in the social environment of the English country dance.<sup>11</sup> The need to honor the presence and one’s partner suggests a more impersonal ceremonial or public setting. The “presence” may have been the company in the room, as André Lorin indicates in his manuscript layout of “Christchurch Bells.” It may have been the King, as in drawings of minuets danced at Versailles as seen in Rameau’s *Le Maître à Danser* (Paris: 1725).<sup>12</sup>

10. These instructions read “This to the tune twice over” or “This to the first strain of the tune twice over.”

11. In her *Playford’s English Dancing Master 1651* (London: 1957, xxiv), Margaret Dean Smith noted the change in the seventh edition (1686), stating that it was “enlarged to 209 dances, including many of intricate design with fine tunes, and an Appendix of a further 32 tunes, it appears designed to meet the demand of the new Assembly Rooms, and the adoption of the English country dance abroad.” Lorin’s manuscript certainly indicates that English country dances were traveling abroad.

12. Facsimile edition: New York: Broude Bros., 1967.

Charles II was restored to the English throne in 1660 and returned from exile in France with the sister of Louis XIII as his wife. He understood the importance of a regal and powerful court life, and encouraged the growth of painting, music, theater and dance to enhance this public image. These dances may have been a conscious attempt to appeal to the court, adding ceremony to the recreational dances. The attempt appears to have been in vain. While these dances continued to be included in later editions of *The Dancing Master*, no more dances with this kind of honors instruction were added.

At this period, the stirrings of a newly empowered social class was beginning to be felt. After the deposition of Charles I in 1641, control of power in England had shifted away from the court. Colonization and mercantile opportunities had created consumers and consumption was creating wealth. Control of these new opportunities was critical, but neither Charles II (1660–84), James II (1684–89), William and Mary (1689–1702), nor Queen Anne (1702–14) had sufficient public confidence or power to seize it. With the ascension of the Hanoverian George I in 1714, it was too late. A “consumer revolution” was well underway, led by merchants and wealthy nobility but not by the crown.<sup>13</sup> Lacking a court to enhance their appearances, the new leaders of society used other public spaces—chiefly the dance floor—to display their wealth and power. The English country dance became the staple in those ballrooms, and changed from intimate domestic formations to a standard longways type to fill the public needs.

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13. Neil McKendrick et al. *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), *passim*.