

SOME EARLY RECORDS OF CLOG DANCING

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This article represents an interim report on part of a much larger survey covering solo step dancing and its relationship to stage performances in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. All information in this article is derived from "The London Stage 1600-1800" by W.Van Lennep et.al.(5 parts, Carbondale Illinois n.d.) This work lists all known stage performances in London between 1600 and 1800 giving as much information as is available relating to each performance, the information being derived from a variety of sources, but in the main from playbills and advertisements in a number of London newspapers.

After the restoration in 1660, theatre in Britain in general and London in particular underwent a vigorous revival. The performances given were however rather different to those seen in the modern theatre. It was the norm for example to perform more than one play during the course of an evening, and a full evening's entertainment could take many hours. There was also a steady growth of entre'acte entertainments. In early post-restoration years rope-dancers (tightrope-walkers) were much in vogue, of whom Jacob Hall was perhaps the most famous. These "entertainments" would be termed "turns" today and have a parallel in the early years of the cinema when films were short and several single reelers would be shown interspersed with a variety of "turns".

The entertainments connected with dramatic performances fall into three categories; dance, song, and speciality acts (of which rope-dancing would be a good example). Of these the dance became the most popular form of entre'acte presentation during the early and middle years of the eighteenth century. By 1800 however, the song had taken over. At Covent Garden for example in the 1799-1800 season, 91 different songs were performed on a total of 297 occasions, whereas only 6 dances were performed on 12 occasions. At the Haymarket the decline in dancing was even more marked. From 1792-1800 in five years there were no dance performances at all, and in the remaining four years only one each season.

The variety of these dance presentations is astonishing, ranging from a ballet for the whole dance company (which at the height of the dance craze might total 20) to a solo performance. Naturally the best dancers were the ones most frequently seen, but every member of the corps de ballet was given, individually, the chance to prove what he or she was capable of. The dances generally consisted of a pas-de-deux or a pas-a-trois on which were bestowed such titles as "The Sportsman Decieved", or "The Highland Family". There is no record of a "clog dance" so named but Scotch Dances and Reels, Irish Jigs, national dances of various countries and the Hornpipe were all common. A "Lancashire Hornpipe" was performed at Southwark Fair in September 1717, and a "Sword Dance" at the Haymarket in August 1707. Morris Dances make several appearances, and even a "Hornpipe on Skates". As stated above a full study of all these dances is in progress.

Although there was no "clog dance", there are a number of occasions on which a "Wooden Shoe Dance" was performed. No details of these performances have yet been found, either from a step content or musical point of view. However music for other entre'acte dances of this

period survives and it is possible that the music for some of these "Wooden Shoe" performances exists. Nor is any information available regarding the design of the shoes, although these must clearly have been some type of clog, but whether of the English or continental type is unknown. So in summary, all that is known at this stage is when and where the dance was performed and by whom it was danced. An analysis of this information is however of considerable interest as it relates to the earliest records of clog dancing in this country.

The first record of such a dance is at the Greenwich Theatre on 17/7/1710. Between the acts of the play "Fond Husband" were a number of entertainments:

"A young Gentlewoman, who never appeared on a publick Stage, turns about upon one foot 300 times, and as she is turning fixes 12 Swords points about her, 2 to her Eyes, 2 to her Eye lashes, 2 to her Eyebrows, 2 to her nose, 2 to her Lips and 2 to her Breasts etc.
Dancing: French Peasant. Scaramouch. Wooden Shoe. Dance by Harlequin, Scarmouch, Cooper and his Wife. Ladder Dance."

This reference has been quoted in full as an example of the type of entertainment offered. The only dancer on the strength of the Greenwich company at this date was one Le Sac, and clearly personnel for this performance must have been brought in from outside.

The next time the dance was performed was at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre on 3/6/1719 when Sandham and Newhouse were the dancers. Both these were members of the company at Lincoln's at this time although it is not known from where they obtained the dance. It is in 1723 however that the dance became prominent. On 9/11/1699 an entry states "We hear that Monsieur Nivelong (sic), the Famous Grotesque Dancer, is lately arrived from Paris and that he designs to appear shortly on one of our English Stages. He is in fact recorded as appearing at Drury Lane on 20/8/1702 but then seems to have left London for he does not appear again until Francis and Louis Nivelon (father and son) joined the company of Lincoln's in the autumn of 1723. Indeed on 18/10/1723 there is a performance "by the two messieurs Nivelon, lately arrived from the Opera at Paris" (Lincoln's). It seems that the Nivelons brought with them a large repertoire of dances which were new to London audiences. On 29/10/1723 (Lincoln's) we find a performance of "A New Scating Dance in the Character of a Dutch Sailor by the elder Nivelon" and on 2/11/1723 (Lincoln's) both Louis and Francis appear in a programme of "all new dances". The names of these dances are not recorded but it seems likely that this was the same programme to that recorded in more detail on 19/11/1723 (Lincoln's) as "Wooden Shoe Dance, Running Footman, and Drunken Swiss" all performed by the Nivelons. This is the first performance in which the latter two dances are named. From later entries (after 29/4/1724 (Lincoln's)) it becomes apparent that the wooden shoe dance was in fact performed by Nivelon Sr (Francis). By this date Louis had left the company, perhaps to return to France. Francis continued to perform the dance at Lincoln's until 1731. Performances are listed for the following dates;

16/12/1723	10/3/1726	4/5/1727	11/1/1731
29/4/1724	28/3/1726	9/5/1727	19/1/1731
18/5/1724]	13/4/1726	15/5/1727	5/4/1731
10/4/1725	16/5/1726	18/5/1727	22/4/1731
26/4/1725	23/5/1726	22/5/1727	12/1/1734
3/5/1725	25/5/1726	13/9/1727	(at Goodmans Fields)
6/5/1725	12/10/1726	23/5/1728	

9/11/1725	3/2/1727	29/5/1728
12/11/1725	11/3/1727	6/4/1730
18/11/1725	7/4/1727	24/4/1730

The dates give a good picture of the distribution of the performances, stretching as they do over a period of seven years, at quite regular intervals.

On 25/10/1725 and 7/2/1727 he performed what was presumably either the same dance in a new costume or a new variant - "Wooden Shoe Dance in the character of a Clown".

His monopoly of the dance was almost complete, but on 27/4/1726 and 5/5/1726 at Drury Lane there were two performances of the dance by "Sandham's Children". This dance was in all probability derived from that danced by Sandham and Newhouse in 1719. The children in question were his son and daughter. They were aged 7 and 8 respectively in 1721 when they made their debut at Lincoln's. They performed sporadically at Drury Lane until May of 1726.

Two performances are recorded at the Haymarket during this period. On 22/ and 23/7/1730 although no performer is named. At Bartholemew Fair on 20/8/1730 the dance was presented by St Luce and Mlle Delorme. Delorme was in the Drury Lane company after 1730 but it is of note that St Luce was at Lincoln's during 1729 and 1730, whilst Nivelon was also there and may have learnt or at any rate copied the dance from him.

On 20/3/1732 at Lincoln's, Nivelon and Mrs Laguerre (a regular member of the Lincoln's company 1725-34) performed a "New Wooden Shoe Dance composed by Nivelon" perhaps in response to the performances given by other dancers in the previous season. After this however the number of solo performances begins to multiply, Nivelon's last performance being at Goodman's Fields on 12/1/1734.

Later performances may be summarised as follows:

13/5/1732. Lincoln's. Performance by Poitier. He was a member of the Lincoln's company 1727-36 and possibly was a pupil of Nivelon.

28/5/1733. Haymarket. Performance by De Vallois, Bowford and Pawlett. Jovan De Vallois was another product of the Lincoln's company although he only remained there for a few months. He may however have been trained by Nivelon. His only other known performance of the dance was a solo at Goodman's Fields on 22/1/1734. Of Bowford and Pawlett nothing is known.

7/11/1734. Haymarket. Performance by Master Francis Cochoy. Also on 25/4/1735 and probably on 28/3/1735 both at the same theatre. Cochoy seems only to have danced on five occasions and there is no obvious connection with either Nivelon or any other earlier performers of the dance.

8/4/1736. Covent Garden. Performance by "A scholar of Nivelon's". This shows that Nivelon did in fact teach the dance to his pupils and lends weight to the theory that he was the source or at least the inspiration of many later performances of the dance. Nivelon himself was at Covent Garden for the 1735-36 season.

8/5/1736. Covent Garden. Performance by Leviez (or Levier). Once again possibly attributable to Nivelon. Levier had moved from Drury Lane to Covent Garden for the 1735-36 season (as had Nivelon), but returned to Drury Lane in 1736 and remained in that company after that date. He performed the dance on many occasions, first as a solo (Covent Garden on

8/5/1736 and 17/5/1736), and after this always as a duet. This dance, perhaps a new version, he tried out on the public at the Hallam-Chapman Booth at Bartholemew Fair on 23/8/1736 in company with one Danno (nothing known). After his return to Drury Lane he teamed up with Villeneuve who had joined the company at the same time as Levier back in 1734. The following is a list of their performances, all at Drury Lane:

2/10/1736	11/5/1737	20/5/1737	30/5/1737
4/5/1737	13/5/1737	24/5/1737	31/5/1737
5/5/1737	14/5/1737	25/5/1737	11/6/1737
6/5/1737	16/5/1737	26/5/1737	
7/5/1737	19/5/1737	27/5/1737	

It is of note that the pattern of these performances is quite different from that of the earlier run by Nivelon. They performed the dance almost continuously for a period of about a month and then dropped it from the repertoire. Whether this was due to a decline in interest or because the dance had been passed on to others is not certain. One further performance of probably the same duet occurs at Drury Lane on 16/5/1747, a gap of ten years. This time the performers were Levier and Villette (nothing known), and the occasion was a special performance for the Masons. The Wooden Shoe was the only dance on the programme and it seems likely that it was performed as a special request for this occasion.

3/3/1738. Drury Lane. Performance by Master Ferg. This dancer is described as "a scholar of Mas. Levier", thus once again we have a performance whose ancestry is traceable. Ferg gave the dance on a number of occasions at Drury Lane: 3/3/1738, 22/5/1739, 19/2/1740, 21/4/1740, 5/5/1740, 6/5/1740, 7/5/1740, 23/5/1740.

22/12/1739. Covent Garden. "Dancing by a French Boy and Girl, the first time of their appearance on this Stage... Wooden Shoe Dance by the Boy." The same boy also performed the dance on 26/12/1739 and 24/3/1740, and another boy, described as "lately arrived" on 5/5/1741, again at Covent Garden. Mechel performed the dance there several times (18/11/1740, 19/11/1740, 20/11/1740, 7/1/1741, 9/3/1741, 10/3/1741, 16/3/1741.) Michael Mechel had joined the company in 1740 and moved to Drury Lane for the 1741-2 season. Villeneuve was in the Covent Garden company by 1740 having moved there in 1737 and may have taught the dance to Mechel.

1/5/1741. Covent Garden. Performance by Master Pitt "lately arrived from Ireland". This must surely be a new dance and the Irish dimension makes the reference all the more interesting. Another performance by a Master Pitts (who is presumably the same person was recorded at Drury Lane on 13/5/1741.

23/8/1743. Finch and Pinchbeck's Great Theatrical Booth, Bartholemew Fair. "Wooden Shoe Dance by La Pierre, never performed by any but himself." No other record of this dancer.

31/1/1746. Goodman's Fields. Performance by Banberry. Also at the same theatre on 4/3/1746. Banberry is only recorded as dancing on a total of five occasions.

19/12/1749. Drury Lane. "Wooden Shoe Dance by Master Maltere and Miss Foucalde, their first performance on any stage." The same pair also appeared performing the same dance on 20/12/1749 and 17/3/1750 both at Drury Lane. The 20/12 entry reveals that they were both the children of M. Maltere. The boy seems to have performed on his own on 26/4/1750 and with "Two Miss Foucaldes" on 1/5/1750. These performances presumably relate to either the same or a similar dance although its origin is not known.

16/4/1758. Covent Garden. Performance of "A New Wooden Shoe Dance by Potier Jr. and Miss Vernon. This performance represents a revival of the dance after a gap of some eight years. The Poitier in question was Charles, the son of Michael who had performed the dance on 13/5/1732 at Lincoln's. Charles has a double connection with the earlier performances however as he was trained at Covent Garden while Levier was resident there, arriving shortly after the latter had ceased to perform the dance himself and is known to have been passing it on to his pupils. Charles only gave the dance on one other occasion as far as is known. This was again at Covent Garden on 11/4/1758, this time as a duet with Mlle. Capedeville, who was a regular member of the company from 1754-62.

12/1/1758. Haymarket. "The Wooden Shoes by Master Settree and Miss Twist. Their only performance of the dance. No apparent connection with earlier performances.

10/12/1761. Covent Garden. Performance by "Sg. Maranesi, Miss Valois etc." It is possible that Miss Valois is the daughter of Jovan De Valois, who performed the dance at the Haymarket on 28/5/1733.

30/4/1765. Covent Garden. Performance by Leppie and Miss Pitt. Their only performance of the dance. It is possible that the Miss Pitt in question was a relative of the Pitt who danced on 1/5/1741 at Covent Garden.

28/5/1773. Drury Lane. "A New Wooden Shoe Dance by Mas. Whitlow, Miss Lings, and Miss Wilkins, scholars of Giorgi." No other details of this performance.

2/6/1773. Haymarket. No names of performers given.

12/5/1775. Covent Garden. "The British Bacchanalian, or the Hop-Pickers an Interlude of Singing and Dancing by Helme and Sga. Vidini, in which Dagueville will introduce the Wooden Shoe Dance." Dagueville was the Ballet Master at Covent Garden at the time and Helme the principle dancer. The same performance was given on 16/5/1775 also at Covent Garden. This represents the last known performance of the Wooden Shoe Dance as an entre'acte entertainment prior to 1800.

As will be seen there are considerable gaps between the recorded performances of the dance in the later years of the eighteenth century, but this must be viewed in conjunction with the fact that dance performances in general were in decline at the time as outlined above. It would be interesting to know just how popular the dance was in comparison to others performed at the same period and also to discover how much dancers passed on their creations to their pupils and others. Much further work will however be required before it will be possible to attempt to answer these questions. It may seem from the names of the performers given above that most were of French origin. Whilst it is certainly true that many dancers were imported from France at this time it was also the custom for dancers to adopt French stage-names, and it is very unclear what proportion of the dancers were of British origin.

As stated at the beginning of this article, the above represents only the beginning of a much larger project, and is intended in no way to be definitive. Clearly the information outlined poses many fascinating questions regarding the origins of clog dancing in this country. It is hoped that further analysis and research will reveal some of the answers.

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The Newcastle Cloggies founded in 1980 by ex-members of the Reading Traditional Step Dance Group, Chris and Alice Metherell, is unique in its research and publishing enterprises. Recognising the need to systematically collect and record step dancing and its background in Northumberland and Durham (a region about which much is talked but surprisingly little is recorded), they formed the Instep Research Team consisting of some half-dozen enthusiastic and dedicated dancers. Of the dozen or less collectors of steps (pre-eminent amongst whom are Flett, Pilling and Tracey), only half that number are currently involved in research. So the formation of the IRT instantly doubled that number. Their team approach to a methodical survey of an area within easy travelling distance, enabling frequent and regular visits, has resulted in an enormous file of information after little over a year's work. Anxious to make their researches available to as many people as cheaply and as quickly as possible, the team entered the private publishing business. The Newcastle Series is the result of such a venture. The problem of a notation which is unambiguous, universal and at the same time simple enough for use by both notators and readers has long troubled dance collectors of all kinds. The WMF have given serious thought to the problem over the past few years in a series of workshops. They have developed a standardised descriptive language and also intend to write the dances in Laban notation. The Newcastle team, needing a notation in which to notate the steps they were currently collecting, considered the various notations in existence, and, finding none suitable for their purposes, developed Newcastle Notation. Based on a mathematical model, it owes much to the notation employed by Prof.T.F.Flett. The notation is explained in the first of the series of booklets published by the IRT Newcastle Notation - a rational system for the notation of clog and step dances. As all steps in the Newcastle Series are written in Newcastle Notation, this manual is essential. It fulfils its aim of being easily grasped after only a few hours' study. Its arrangement into three sections means that it can be used in its simplest form as an aide memoire. The modifier column gives more detailed information of foot positions. Each of the other booklets published so far has an introductory section giving background information. This contextual information is particularly welcome, since before Flett's work, such details were rarely considered necessary. An Introduction to Clog Dancing in the North East gives ten steps and a finish commonly found in Northumberland and Durham and taught by the Ellwood family. The discussion of the fallacy of regional styles loses itself in the argument. But the important point is made that dancing should be learnt "by word of foot" (Russell Wortley); the printed word is a poor substitute. A newcomer to clog dancing would be unlikely to "teach himself" from this, or any other book, but would find the booklet useful in conjunction with a beginners' class such as that run by the Newcastle Cloggies last November. Mrs.Ivy Sands Double Hornpipe contains concise and informative introduction to her dancing as well as eight steps and five finishes. It is carefully researched and the best of the series. It is a pity that the photographs are of such poor reproductive quality. Aylis Angus. Step Dancer is written in conversation style giving some of Ms.Angus' reminiscences. This loose style presents difficulties to the reader in separating fact from speculation. Ms.Angus is from a travelling family, her dancing is free phrased, performed by fitting together various sequences of movements, some of which are noted. We are told that the