

Letter to F.R. 7.2.60

Dear Frank,

Note received & duly noted. Some comments follow at the end, but first let me say one or two things about step-dancing in England.

I have a theory - very vague, and possibly rubbish - that in England there were basically three forms of step-dancing. I suspect that there was first what we may call the early stage tradition - the tradition of the stage and of professional dancing-teachers of the early 1800's, which spread to the ordinary working people via itinerant dancing-teachers. The standard movements ~~there~~ here would probably be the catch in, treble, back treble, flatter, and it is probably from this tradition that these movements have come. Secondly, I think that there was a folk tradition of stepping independent of this, probably strongest in clog-wearing districts. If there were such a thing as a "basic" style here, my guess is that it would have been similar to Bob Cann's setting (i.e. introductory) steps, with use of heel and toe beats made with little or no lateral movement of the feet. (In any case, I think that such a style is essentially folk, for it is ineffective on a stage - you need the lateral movement there.) There would, of course, be wide variations in such a folk tradition, for it would have been very local.

Finally, in the clog-wearing districts, I think that, overlaying both the early stage and folk traditions, there is a much more modern stage (and music hall) tradition of clog-dancing, dating say ca 1870-1900. This probably owed much to both of the other traditions, but there were considerable departures from both, for virtuosity in the composition of ^{new} steps was to be applauded. And it goes without saying that both this later stage tradition & the earlier one would be common to England & Scotland. (The champion clog-dances of Cumberland ca 1905 had studied under a top-notch music hall clog dancer in Scotland.)

As a rough attempt at classification, I would say that the Cumberland & Westmorland steps known to us are from the early stage trad". In the mining areas of Cumberland, you

also got exponents of the later stage clog tradition. It is noteworthy that one old dancing-master I met there distinguished very carefully between "the old Cumberland step dancing" and "clog-dancing". I couldn't get him to explain the difference, but he knew the difference in his own mind.

I would also say that Bob Conn's steps are the folk tradition. Sam Steele's are the later clog tradⁿ, but owing very much to the earlier stage tradition, and very little to folk. Julian Pilling's owe less to the earlier stage tradⁿ, and some owe none at all.

What I don't know is how much the later clog stage tradⁿ owes to a folk tradⁿ. I discard Pat Tracey's theories as unreliable.

But in view of my Cumberland dancing-teachers remarks, I think we should, at least for the moment, distinguish clog-dancing from step-dancing. This is relevant to §7 of your lecture.

Minor comments are

- 1) Maux Duh Dance not a war dance. Can we avoid Maux dances in general?
- 2) Want to ask Pat Tracey & Sam Steele for evening. Can we ask them to demonstrate two or three typical steps during the lecture, separating ~~the~~ steps one step from another for the sake of clarity? This would still leave us free to ask them to dance in the evening. If this satisfactory, I will write to them & warn them.
- 3) Don't want to do full Duh Dance here. Is it satisfactory to show one step. Can do whole in evening. Can you handle for it?
- 4) Miss Grayton isn't High Dance. Possibility is Miss Forbes, but don't want to include it. Could we just use Miss Grayton as example of dancing-teachers dance of mid 19th cent. or earlier date?
- 5) Which solos will you take? Will you have modern swords & J the old, or vice-versa. I will send you Mrs MacFarlane's step - will you do it? Miss Grayton & Fling?

Here not
verbatim.

will deal with. For HL/ST, would you take R. MacPherson's. I will take Mrs Macdonald's ST, & get Leslie to do the Games one. And would you also include a few steps of the Nova Scotian S.T.?

- 6) Will you take two or three Westmorland? I will add one or two of later ones.
- 7) Will you work up single crunch and show it with me, without comparing notes. Will show you can write steps down, & send them by post. What do you think?
- 8) Would you do 7. of 6. in evening. Can you let me have details of music?
- 9) How Beryl anything she can do. If so, let me know, & I will write.

Social Dancing

- 10) Will try to get references in EFDS & etc
- 11) No dance-games.

English Reels

- 12) I will mention Buttered Peas.
- 13) If you haven't started your friend on the Saddlers' dance, I will take it.
- 14) Ref to Bricks & Mortar provided. The source may be still alive; see him?
- 15) I will try to obtain Mr Leather.
- 16) I will omit Horns Reels - but you can interpolate a remark.
- 17) I intended to mention Nova Scotian Reels
- 18) I will include 8-some.
- 19) Leave Wales to Welsh.
- 20) I have Westmorland dances.

Odd remarks

- 21) Addition of Mini Mayne
 - 22) In Dorset look for 3-hand Reel with fig 8 (E ca 1860)
 - 23) Note from EFDS News & ED&S sent. Note reference in N & Q. Joe is sending these in
 - 24) Step dances for Westmorland to Soldier's Joy - for single crunch
- Finally, evening programmes. Any changes.