SCHOTTISCHE (II)

WALTZ (unnamed)

2. *Notes on Clog Dancing*

SAM SHERRY

My own father was a very good dancer being particularly neat and light on his feet. He was self-taught as far as I know, having watched dancers at the Parthenon Music Hall in Glasgow as a youngster in the 1850s. He used to take a board under a secluded railway bridge on the outskirts of Glasgow, after finishing work in a shipyard, and practise the steps he had seen. He eventually became a dancer and comedian on the halls by the way of talent competitions, and was a contemporary of Dan Leno, Little Tich and the other famous people of the hey-day of the Music Halls. I believe he did once enter for the Dancing Championship, which I think was held in Blackburn or Leeds, although I cannot be certain on this point. As a boy I was more interested in getting out to play than in practising, although we had to do at least one hour per day, and I did not pay much attention to the "Old Man's" reminiscing. I am the youngest of a family of nine (5 boys, 4 girls) and my father was getting on by the time I was old

enough to take notice. All the family were taught to dance but eventually only three of us—Jim, Peter and myself became "speciality dancers". We also learned acrobatics and were taught music (violin or piano).

Dan Leno was famous for his double shuffle—I heard this after I left home to travel with my older brothers and never heard my father mention it, but it was talked of as something almost beyond the capabilities of ordinary dancers (is this how legends begin?), but I note that both Sammy Cash (Pilling *Reprint*, pp. 13–16) and Sam Steele list it as a normal routine step. I think Leno was Champion on more than one occasion, but according to father the "Daddy of them all" was a man called Jimmy Haslam (we had an uncle of that name so I've never forgotten it) who introduced many of the variations and additions to what were probably fairly elementary steps from the industrial regions, and who, I believe, won the Supreme Honour in several successive years. Thus the rather sophisticated tap dancing of the 1920s (Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly) developed, helped by exchanges across the Atlantic when American Vaudeville blossomed.

I think buck dancing was the American equivalent of clog, with its own variations, but winging was certainly American and was introduced to this country during the first decade of this century. Harry Scott, of the famous Scott & Whaley duo, was extremely good at the wing, according to my brother Jim who saw him either during or just after the first War. The wing is simply 3 quick beats in triplet time—the first a scrape as the foot flicks sideways, followed by beats at the outer and inner positions. For practice the weight is taken on the opposite foot, but in action the weight remains on the foot which wings, the other foot being in the air.

I remember being taught what my father called the "first three Lancashire steps", supposed to contain the basis of step dancing. Number one is the same as Sam Steele's *First Step*; I think number four of Sammy Cash's is the same but done cross-legged. I know that cross-legged steps were part of Lancashire clog, but we did not use them, as this style is cumbersome when done in 2/4 time which was the tempo we used. I still dance to this time—this was probably a Music Hall development.

The style was 6 bars followed by a 2-bar "finish". This was not called a "break" by Dad—a "break" was a change of step during

the first six bars—but we later came to call a "finish" a "break", as this seemed to be the generally accepted term when we began mixing with other dancers.

The first two beats of the "shuffle" described by Julian Pilling (*Reprint*, p. 12) and which Sam Steele calls a "tap", were in our family called a "Twizzle". This was probably because such a word describes the movement, which is a twist of the foot and leg up to the thigh, better than either of the other terms. However, I think this must have been purely a Sherry word, as I never came across it outside our own family. It is very distinct from the mainly ankle turn with the foot held well forward as seen in Irish dancing. The ideal was to use as little floor space as possible, and this ties in with the accepted Lancashire style of dancing on a small area (*e.g.* Sam Steele's grandfather's 3-legged stool).

We normally danced in tap shoes—specially made pumps with aluminium toe plates and bars across the remainder of the sole to allow flexibility. These replaced the full sole plate previously in use, which had to be left free at the instep end to let the sole bend. We also had these shoes with clog soles and heels, but with a leather instep—again for flexibility. It took me quite a little time to get used to the completely stiff sole when I recommenced clogging a couple of years ago. An old gentleman named Le Fre, who lived in Kennington, London, used to make our shoes—he was a real craftsman. He also made dancing mats—maple laths glued to canvas so that it would roll for transporting. We had one 20 ft long and 6 ft wide, unusually large, but we also combined acrobatics with our dancing.

Returning to the "Twizzle"—this has only two beats (taps) the foot turning in a similar movement to that described by Julian Pilling (p. 12) but instead of the third beat being made by putting the foot to the floor, it is kept in the air. The rhythm is best described as "di-dom", and this is repeated on the same foot to this rhythm:—

1 &	2 &	3 &	4 &	1 un &	2 un &	3 &	4
Di-dom	di-dom	di-dom	di-dom	di-diddy	di-diddy	di-dom	pom

In this 2-bar phrase the foot is not left on the floor except for the last beat of the second bar, when the weight is taken on that foot. The phrase is repeated on the other foot. Then the second bar (di-diddy *etc.*) is repeated with each foot. This completes 6 bars and a 2-bar finishing break is added. This is not a step but a

very rhythmic exercise and is recommended practice for any dancer.

The movement which Julian Pilling illustrates as a shuffle, we called a treble. The 3 beats are produced in the manner described, but the rhythm is different. Starting with a hop on the left foot it is done on alternate feet in this manner:—

Diddly-di			di		di		di
1	un	&	2	un	&		

Repeat each foot 3 times to complete 6 bars and finish with a 2-bar break. After the first treble each foot does alternate shuffles (Pilling style) with accent on the figures 2, 3, 4.

We also used the "crunch" (Pilling, p. 21) but did not have a special name for it—it came under "heel and toe".

No one appears to use the "flop", although Pilling describes it (p. 12) as "brush forward, brush back", and states correctly that it is not a shuffle. It very effectively follows a shuffle and this may be what Sam Steele refers to when he mentions a treble beat in 3/4 time, although it can be done in any time.

I have not come across the outward shuffle as described in Sammy Cash's 6th step (Pilling, p. 14).

Sam Steele's 3rd step I remember from years back, but had forgotten it.

S.S. No. 4. This was a fairly common step.

S.S. No. 5. This bears resemblance to our own 2nd step.

S.S. Nos. 6 & 7. Both new to me but this may be because I find them difficult to follow. If I saw them performed perhaps I would recognise them.

Soft Shoe. This was more of a movement dance with no taps at all, and was featured by the "chocolate coloured coons" of the early music halls, notably Eugene Stratton who sang and danced to "Lily of Laguna", and later G. H. Elliot whom I saw many times in the 20s and 30s, although by then he was "getting on". Later, taps were added to this type of dancing and the straw hat and cane became trade marks.

The step which is called Soft Shoe Shuffle (Pilling, p. 22) was known to us as "Off to Buffalo" and was used as a " get off" step. Will Mahoney, an American who did a marvellous dance on the large xylophone, used the "get off" to great comedy effect.

Conclusions

I feel that is it not possible to be certain about the Lancashire steps or how many there were, although it is singular that both Cash and Steele list them as seven.[1] However, although similar in many ways there are enough differences to point to each locality having its own steps. In Sammy Cash's case they appear to be more or less 7 variations of the same basic steps, whilst Sam Steele's seem to me to progress more. I always understood that the Lancashire steps were progressions rather than variations. The three which we were taught were definitely progressive.

The fact remains that certain features predominate in all the steps described and in the steps I use myself. The turn of the foot is the first basic, whatever name it is given—each step is repeated on each foot so the left has to be as proficient (in theory) as the right. I think this must have developed from competition dancing. A "right-footed dancer" was a derogatory term in my young days.

I have heard that in some competitions the sole of the foot only was used, the heels being chalked so that a mark would show if they touched the floor. This came from Mr Herbert Downham of Nelson, who was employed by Coultons, printers, of Nelson. Herbert died about 10 years ago and was then over 80 years of age. Competitions were regular features of Saturday night socials in his young days.

Mr Julian PILLING writes:

Certainly the "Seven Steps of the Lancashire Clog Dance" is the term normally used in stage circles. To a large extent they were standardised, but not entirely so. As I said in my article, this by no means invalidates them as 'traditional'. In the past we have been too narrow-minded about stage performers. There is in fact a lot to be learned from "professionals" as there was plenty of to and fro between them and "popular" entertainers.

Sam Steele's steps are in the same character as those of my Lancashire Clog Dance. His *First Step* is a duplication of one I gave.

As regards terminology, I have come across so many different usages that I attempted a standardisation based on the work of Tom Flett. Certainly Mr Steele's terminology and that of Mr Sherry have equal validity.

[1]In January 1964 the Cambridge whistle-player, Harry Day, told me of "Cockney" (Harry) Leamore from Seven Sisters Road, London, who was the best step-dancer Harry ever saw. He beat the local champion, Joe Richardson, in competition at the Hippodrome, Auckland Road, Cambridge (operating *c.* 1907-13); "he could dance the Seven Lancashire Steps and could keep going for three-quarters of an hour . . . he could dance faster than I could play", said Harry playing a hornpipe rhythm; "he would say to me: 'Give us a breakdown'"; he danced in ordinary shoes and was also a whistle-player. "Cockney" Leamore returned to London and, according to Harry, had died only about two years previously (*i.e. c.* 1961/2).—Ed.

The Bagpipe in Northern England

R. D. CANNON†

TO MANY PEOPLE nowadays, the term "bagpipe" suggests one thing only: the Great Highland bagpipe of Scotland. But the *piob mòr* is only one of many different bagpipes played in various parts of Europe, and even in the British Isles several other forms of the instrument are still actively cultivated, notably the Irish and Northumbrian pipes. The history of the bagpipes of Scotland and Ireland has still not been adequately written, but the Northumbrian pipes have been quite thoroughly studied, and thanks to the work of Charlton, Askew, Cocks and others we have a clear account of the instruments played in the far North of England, at least over the last three centuries.

But it is also known that bagpipes were once more widely played. In the middle ages they were popular throughout England and Wales and not until the 16th century was there any substantial decline. For a considerable time after that, bagpipes remained fairly familiar to English ears, and yet were not associated with Scotland so much as with Northern England, especially the hills and dales of Derbyshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire. In this paper I propose to review the literary and historical evidence relating to the English bagpipe, from the time when it first began to be regarded as a regional "folk" instrument, down to its final extinction in the early 19th century.

Persistence of a Medieval Tradition

A very strong European tradition associates the bagpipe with shepherds and herdsmen, and this is easily understood when we think of the musical characteristics of the instrument. The loud and penetrating tone of the typical pipe chanter, offset and sustained by the richly harmonic bass drone, is an ideal combination for a musician who must needs play alone and out of doors. In most parts of Europe where the bagpipe is still played, it is mainly a pastoral instrument, or was so until comparatively recently; and that the same was true in medieval times is amply shown by the enormous number of paintings and sculptures of the Nativity scene in which one of the shepherds is shown holding or playing a bagpipe. A study of these works of art, many of

†B.A., D.Phil., School of Chemical Sciences, University of East Anglia.