

PLAYFORD AND THE COUNTRY DANCE

This paper brings together much of what has been found to have been written about the Playford family as publishers and something of the consequent history of the country dance. It is "illustrated" by a set of extracts from Pepys' Diary first published in EFDS News.

The Puritan Attitude

There is a considerable literature existing which implies that the Puritans were against the use of music and dance both in England and in the American colonies. However as was first shown by Percy Scholes in *The Puritans and Music in England and New England, a Contribution to the Cultural History of Two Nations*, OUP, London, in 1934, this was not so, although the misunderstanding appears to persist. The major problem in understanding the period is that the culture was Protestant but not as that today. It is not to be confused with the distorted Puritanism of the 18th and especially the 19th century. It was Calvinist in flavour, looking for a Presbyterian form of government to replace the Episcopal, but not yet accepting the Armenian position. This was a certainty that Christ has died for all, but that the benefits of salvation were only received through personal faith not by works, whereas the Calvinists tended to accept predestination. The Puritans in time fragmented into Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers, and other sects.

The Reformation was for the removal of scandals and abuses, but retaining both the doctrines and usages. However Calvinists did not want the trappings and ceremonies of Romanism and moved towards the use of the vernacular and the avoidance of musical elaboration in worship, although music itself was considered an innocent species of sensual enjoyment. The Puritan conscience attached much importance to the quiet and the religious observance of Sunday. This was contrary to those who wanted to retain the Festival Culture, that saw Sunday as a day of enjoyment, to contrast with the realities of the rest of the week. Although the reign of Charles II was a period of insincerity in the leading public lives and in many quarters a licentiousness of private conduct, the Puritan influence survived as the quiet Sunday, the stay at home and church going associated with it, and hence eventually allowing of the evangelical revival starting with the Wesleys.

The Puritans were keen music lovers. The leader of the Mayflower Pilgrims was a luteist whose children became musical performers. Oliver Cromwell possessed an organ and employed an organist. The first recorded public music concerts in England or New England occurred during the Protectorate. John Bunyan made a flute from a chair leg whilst in prison, played a violin, and favourably mentioned music and dancing throughout his inspirational books. There were no enactments on either side of the Atlantic against music or dancing on **weekdays**. They were neither anti-pleasure, as long as it was kept in proportion, anti-art, as long as it avoided superstition, or anti-music, as long as it did not distract in worship. The Puritans looked upon music as one of the good gifts of God.

Card playing and games of chance were associated with gambling, and this was objected to because it was believed that everything which happened in this world was arranged by a personal God, so these were believed blasphemous activities. Dancing was considered better than gaming for money or going forth to places of

debauchery! When abused it was seen as an introduction to whoredom, wantonness, provocative uncleanliness and an introduction to all kinds of lewdness, rather than a pleasant exercise of the mind, or a wholesome practice of the body. A familiar response to young people's dancing to this day!

Often quoted is Philip Stubbs *Anatomie of Abuses* of 1583, a wonderful source of descriptive social material. He was educated at both Oxford and Cambridge, without taking a degree, and then he travelled widely. However he was not a Puritan but a self proclaimed Episcopalian who was actually abusive of the Puritans and the Sects. He was much disturbed by the social conditions of the day, at a time when gross exaggeration was a legitimate ploy.

Beginnings of Music Printing

The first recognised music printer was Petrucci in Venice from 1501. Successful concerns were established in Paris (1527), Nuremberg (1532) and Antwerp (1540) and then such spread across Europe. Psalm books with music were printed in London from 1559 and secular music less successfully by Vautrollier from 1570. Thomas East acquired Vautrollier's set of type by 1585, but was then forbidden to print music from 1598-1602 under the royal patent given to Thomas Morley. By 1610 the momentum to sustain an English music publishing industry had faded and from 1620 new music was rarely published here. East, the leading printer of his day, had printed most of the works of Byrd and Morley. The evidence from format, style and printing, together with the stationers' registers, suggests that the elder Playford's music was printed with East's types. In many instances Playford adopted East's device and its surrounding motto, "Laetificat cor musica".

The Playford Family

John Playford was born in Norwich in 1623, the son of a mercer who died in 1639. Shortly afterwards he was apprenticed to John Benson, publisher at St Dunstan's Churchyard, Fleet St, on the north side of Old St Paul's, the scene of executions during the Tudor religious persecutions and of some of the members of the Gunpowder Plot. In 1640, on achieving his freedom, he became a member of the Yeomanry of the Stationer's Company in 1647, entitling him to trade as a publisher. He was twenty eight when he published *The English Dancing Master, or Plaine and easie Rules for the Dancing of Country Dances with the Tune to each Dance*, addressed to the "Gentlemen of the Innes of Court", in March 1651, four years after setting up shop in the angle of the porch of the Temple Church, becoming the only music shop of account in London at that time, and trading from there until his retirement. He implied that "there was a false and surreptitious copy at the Public Presse, which if it had been published would have been a disparagement to the Professors thereof and a hinderance to the hearer."

Playford had begun by publishing political tracts culminating in the official account of the trial and execution of King Charles, *The Perfect Narrative of the Tryal of the King*. As a Royalist, a warrant had been issued for his arrest in 1649. But from 1651 he produced little else than music, the first possibly being *A Musicall Banquet* in conjunction with his former master, and he set about amassing a stock-in-trade of the musical works published in the previous one hundred years. *A Musicall Banquet* contained the genesis of many later books. It included a list of teachers of musical instruments, showing how he was in contact

with the music, and presumably dance teachers of his day, and from whom he must have drawn. During 1653 he published his *Catalogue of All the Musick Bookes printed in England*, and in 1654, a *Brief Introduction to the Skill of Music*. Covering every publishing opportunity, in 1655 he published *Court-Ayres* or the Court Dances of *Pavanes, Almains, Corants* and *Sarabands*.

A partial list of Playford publications is given in Grove.

From 1653 until his death John was clerk of the Temple Church, beginning soon after publishing the 2nd Edition of *The Dancing Master*, was devoted to the repair and maintenance of the fabric and the ordering of the services, and for a while before the Great Fire he was also vicar-choral at St Paul's Cathedral. He married Hannah Allen about 1653. They moved to Islington in 1655, where she had inherited from her father Benjamin Allen, a publisher in nearby Cornhill. There she established a boarding school for girls and ran a dancing school until her death in 1679. Playford then moved back to Arundel Street by the Strand, which he later passed to his son. He was called to the livery in 1661 and admitted to the court of assistants in 1681, at the request of the King. As a publisher he used a series of printers, Thomas Harper the successor to Thomas Snodham, the adopted son of Thomas East (d.1608), and who had inherited East's business in 1634, William Godbid (d.1679), the successor to Harper, and finally Playford's nephew, also called John Playford (1655-1685), son of brother Rev. Matthew Playford, one time vicar of Stanmore Magna. This John started as Godbid's apprentice and went into business until 1679 with Godbid's widow Anne. He appeared in the livery list of the Stationers Company in 1682. His business passed on his death to his sister Eleanor.

English music printing resumed with Playford, who sensed and met the distinctive spirit of the middle class audience. Playford's publications covered three categories, theory of music and lesson books for various instruments, collections of songs and instrumental pieces, and psalms and psalm paraphrases and hymns. *The Whole Book of Psalmes* was published in 1651 for the Stationers' Company. There were many "new" editions which differed little from their predecessors. Later songbooks could be rearrangements of earlier titles under new names. He enhanced the musical literacy of the generation before the advent of popular sheet music just after 1700. Later British music publishing never forgot this origin in the popular song sheet, and the annual output of several hundred such editions every year persisted from soon after 1700 to well into the 19th century. Also he published the "books" of the Lord Mayor's Shows for 1672, 1674, 1675, 1680 and 1688, which were in those days more of a pageant than a simple procession.

John dominated the English music trade, then largely confined to London, until he retired in 1684, just before James II came to the throne. He was not a dancing master nor, as far as is known, a musician. He left his business to Henry Playford and Robert Carr, a member of the King's Musick, who was the son of John Carr (ff. 1672-1695) a collaborator in publishing at the nearby Middle Temple Gate, but he took no active part and he and Henry soon parted. John died in 1686 aged sixty three. In his will Henry Purcell and John Blow, both composers, were beneficiaries. On his death Purcell wrote the *Elegy on my friend, Mr John Playford*. John Blow (1649-1708) was in 1669 Musician of the Virginals to Charles II and in 1674 Gentleman of the Chapel Royal and Master of the Children, which

made him the teacher of Henry Purcell. He wrote an anthem for the Coronation of James II in 1685.

Henry Playford was born in 1657, the younger son and only known survivor of John's children, and apprenticed to his father from 1674 to 1681. He updated many of his father's titles to suit more modern tastes, showing a lively perception of the requirements of public entertainments and the pleasure garden concerts which created a market for more ephemeral "favourite songs" and instrumental pieces. From 1687 he published large numbers of non-musical works, roughly one third of his total output. Married to Anne Baker in 1686, they probably had a daughter. Between 1690-3 he promoted sales and auctions of art works and antiquarian music books. Starting in 1692 he published most of Purcell's music. He took a number of not too successful initiatives to increase trade.

On John's retirement, his son Henry had moved the business to the Temple Change, over against St Dunstan's in the West Church in Fleet Street, from where he sold the eighth to twelfth editions of *The Dancing Master*, which after the first edition had dropped the word *English*. These thoroughly revised editions provided the Longways type of country dance more suited to the assembly room than the figure dances of his father's editions. The stock of the Temple Church shop was auctioned in 1690. John Cullen of The Buck, Fleet Street and John Young took over Henry's publications from 1707. In 1706, Henry's final stock had been sold, probably by Young. John Young (c 1660-c 1732), established in London by 1695, of the Dolphin and Crown at the west end of St Paul's Churchyard, published a further six editions after Henry's death in 1709. He also published more editions of Henry's *Wits and Mirth or, Pills to Purge Melancholy* of Tom D'Urfey's songs to popular airs, and also made violins. They were followed by John Johnson who between 1740 and 1762 published annual volumes of music and large collections of country dances. Then he was followed as a music publisher by his widow until 1777.

The Dancing Master Book

The front plate of the book was an illustration, apparently by Hollar, taken from the pornographic book *The Academy of Love : describing ye Folly of Younge Men and ye Fallacy of Women*, by another John Johnson, son of John Johnson of Oddington in Gloucestershire, a thin quarto published in 1641, showing the Young Gentleman, guided by Cupid, arriving at the last stage of his progress. Country Dancing did not form part of that Academy's activities! The book was dreary attempt at humour and of no literary merit. When the design was redrawn for the seventh edition, Cupid, now playing a violin, was retained, but it was not uncommon to find on surviving copies that he was snipped out by owners of delicate susceptibilities, or his person was clothed with pen and ink unmentionables. The new title page for the final edition suggested the Pump Room at Bath.

The production of a book which could be circulated throughout the Kingdom was the answer to the prevailing condition in which many people stayed at their country home and were cut off from the urban dancing schools. The book circulated widely, not only in England and France, but among the Puritans and others in North America. Later editions cost three shillings and six pence for about three hundred and sixty dances. The most important rival collection, Walsh's *Compleat Country Dancing Master* only appeared in 1719. John Walsh

(1665-1736) and his son, also John (1709-1766), started publishing in 1695 when Henry Playford appeared to lack the initiative to maintain the family firm's dominance. Henry stayed with the old fashioned production methods, not seriously adopting engraving. From then onwards until the early nineteenth century Prof J Flett estimated that nearly ten thousand notations appeared in print, with many repetitions of course, but reflecting that the country dance had become fashionable and had to have the appearance of innovation. The most comprehensive collection eventually was Thomas Wilson's *Complete System of English Country Dancing* of 1820.

As a Source of Melody

The first to recognise in *The Dancing Master* a source of English melody was John Malchair (1730-1812), a German who lived in England from 1754, who interested his friend William Crotch (1775-1847) sufficiently to include examples in his book of *Specimens of Various Styles of National Music* in 1807. William, a prodigy, had played for the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace when three and half years old, and became the organist at Christ Church College Oxford from the age of fifteen until 1807, and he had gained a Doctorate of Music in November 1799. He had befriended Malchair in 1788 when he became blind and acknowledged his help in the book. John had been collecting airs, one of what were at least three volumes is now with the EFDSS. They are mostly from Playford but include some from singers and military bands heard in the streets of Oxford. Malchair also wrote a chime still used at Gloucester Cathedral.

Thirty years later William Chappell (1809-1888), noted for an interest in early music, but also for his prejudice against Scotland and everything Scottish, brought out his *Collection of (Two Hundred and Forty Five) National English Airs : consisting of Ancient Song, Ballad and Dance Tunes* in two volumes (1838-1840), and from 1855-9 *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, also in two volumes. He and later workers have identified many of the tunes, so far sixty six out of one hundred and five, in broadside ballads, English MS collections, eg. *The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, or in foreign printed collections. Therefore it is unlikely that the editor(s) of the first edition drew directly on any traditional sources for the music.

Source of the Material

The styles of the original notations suggest that several hands helped, but so far no one has made a serious study of the likely number of collaborators. The rich variety of form provided by the early editions might have reflected a sweeping together of archaic forms. The slow rate of change considered to be typical of a tradition would imply a long history for such diversity to have developed, all unnoticed, and would imply also a more sophisticated folk form than that in polite society because one would not expect Society to pick up all the peasant material. Alternatively and much more likely is that it reflects a brief period of intense innovation with a very tenuous connection with its roots of inspiration.

The tunes were often altered between editions, particularly to eliminate archaic features, especially the modal characteristics much prized by the revivalists. Oddly it was often the tune that attracted the modern performer to the dance, yet in no way does the interest in a dance in the twentieth century reflect its popularity in its day, at least as measured by persistence through several editions.

Rufty Tufty appeared in the first edition only and the better known version of *Sellengers Round* not until the fourth edition.

It is surprising that there has been no further attempt to use the vast corpus of tunes in the Playford and later English collections until quite recently, and it seems incongruous to work with Irish and Scottish collections which themselves have drawn on such sources without acknowledgement.

The Country Dance

The English Country Dance seemed to have sprung fully developed from Playford's shop, but it must have grown from something, even though the evidence is scanty. The sixteenth century was the end of the old artistic world in which all the forms from the twelfth century onwards were gathered up and worked out to their logical conclusion. In 1501 Katherine of Aragon came to marry Henry VIII's elder brother and brought Spanish music and dancing to England. When Princess Katherine met Prince Arthur at Dogmersfield House, Hampshire, before the wedding, they found that their dances were incompatible and they had to dance with their own attendees. When Henry VIII's sister Mary, the widow of Louis XII, returned, with her lady-in-waiting Anne Boleyn, French fashions became the order of the day. But none were country dances.

Rounds as dances were mentioned by Sir Thomas Elyot in 1531. The term Country Dance was used in 1560 in a play *Misogonus*. Several dances were named, some of which occurred in Playford, eg. *Heart's Ease*, but there is no means of knowing if they were the same. Country people danced before the Queen at Cowdray in 1591. In 1600 the Queen liked to watch her ladies dance the "old and the new" Country Dances. Although she preferred the solo performances in the *Galliards* and *La Volta*, and the more demanding couple dances in which the steps were more important than the tracks of the dance. Whilst medieval gentlemen could fight in tournaments to show off before their ladies, sixteenth century gentlemen were deprived of such outlets. Sport as we now understand it did not exist, so the Elizabethans became "The Dancing English". In 1623 the Court Masquers danced *The Soldier's March* and *Half Hannikan*. However this may just have been the reuse of known tunes.

In dancing, as with costume and other things affecting social life, there was a clean break during the first quarter of the seventeenth century with a fresh start on new lines. It was in many ways the beginning of a recognisably modern world. In 1625 Charles I had succeeded his father and married the sister of Louis XIII.

The *Gavotte* had become prominent because after their solo the gentlemen kissed all the ladies and his partner all the gentlemen. *Gavottes* were progressive, but not in the Country Dance sense. The top couple did not work their way down the set, but after the kissing immediately took the lowest place. Ten of Playford's first edition dances included kissing, only two of which were revived by Sharp, and it is still thought that this type of dance really belonged to an earlier period. Foreign visitors to England in the sixteenth century observed that kissing was a salutation ubiquitously used but that the habit as a common greeting went out by the mid seventeenth century. The *Galliard* became a shadow of its former self, with the springs reduced to instep movements, and so was forgotten by society, but it