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‘Come, now a roundel and a fairy song’: Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and the early modern Invitation to the Dance

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Abstract

This article considers the status and function of dance in one of Shakespeare's best-known comedies. Equally importantly, it seeks to embed this playtext within the intense and multifaceted cultural debate surrounding dance and performance in early modern England. Dance is explored in legal, moral, philosophical and spiritual terms in the course of this discussion. In its final stages, this article also considers the appeal for dancing which the comedy has exercised for generations of performers down the centuries.

Keywords

Shakespeare, Dance, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Early modern England, Elizabeth I

Résumé

Cet article considère le statut et la fonction de la danse dans l’une des comédies les plus connues de Shakespeare. Tout aussi important, il cherche à intégrer cette comédie dans le débat culturel intense et à multiples dimensions qui entoure la danse et la représentation théâtrale dans l’Angleterre de la première modernité. La danse est analysée à plusieurs niveaux (juridique, moral, philosophique et religieux) au cours de cette discussion. Dans ses dernières phases, cet article considère également l’appel à la danse que la comédie a exercé pour des générations d’artistes au cours des siècles.

Mots clés

Shakespeare, danse, *Le Songe d’une Nuit d’Été*, l’Angleterre de la première modernité, Elisabeth Ière.

On Thursday morning, hir Maiestie was no sooner readie, and at hir Gallerie window, looking into the Garden, but there began three Cornets to play certain fantastike dances, at the measure, whereof the Fayerie Queene came into the

Garden, dancing with hir maides about hir. She brought with hir a garland made in forme of an imperiall crowne, which in the sight of hir maiestie, she fixed vpon a siluered staffe, and sticking the staffe into the ground, spake as followeth.

*I that abide in places under ground,
Aureola, the Queene of Fairy land,
That euerie night in rings of painted flowers Turne
round and carroll out Elisaes name:
Hearing that Nereus and the Syluane Gods
Haue lately welcomde your Imperiall Grace,
Opend the earth with this inchanting wande,
To doe my duetie to your Maiestie,
And humblie to salute you with this Chaplet,
Geuen me by Auberon, the Fairy King...*¹

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595/96?) may have been performed at court to welcome in the New Year in January 1604 ('play of Robin goode-fellow'²), but the initial performances in early modern England either in the London playhouses or elite residences remain the subject of critical speculation. Nonetheless, as may be witnessed above, it becomes apparent on reviewing the pageantry and ceremonial surrounding the Elizabethan court that the last Tudor sovereign was far from being unaccustomed to the company of fairy kings and queens soliciting her attentions in dramatized performance.

Interestingly, the entertainment described above dates from the autumn of 1591, just a few years before the composition of Shakespeare's comedy. This *divertissement* populated by figures such as Aureola and Auberon unfolded on the fourth day of the court's residence at the home of the Earl of Hertford at Elvetham in Hampshire. Furthermore, we learn that 'After this speech, the *Fairy-Queene* and hir maids danced about the Garden, singing a song of sixe partes', and that 'This spectacle and Musicke so delighted hir Maiestie, that she commanded to heare it sung and to be danced three times ouer, and called for diuers Lords and Ladies to behold it; and then dismiss the actors with thankes, and with a gracious larges, which of hir exceeding goodnesse she bestowed vpon them'.³ Royal largesse, a precious commodity during the Elizabethan period and infrequently gifted, offers a good indication of the queen's receptiveness to such performances and feeds into the larger concerns of the discussion which follows to reflect upon the status and functions of dance in Shakespeare's comedy. Equally importantly, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* not only asks us to attend to movement as narrative action in the dramatic intrigue but, as we shall see, makes very particular invitations into the multifarious world of early modern dance. Drawing on courtly, legal and social documents of the period, this discussion examines how capers, corantos and the like tempted both participant and spectator into a profoundly morally chequered environment. In its final stages, the present study also considers some of the ways in which Shakespeare's playtext has continued to encourage writers, directors and audiences down the centuries to anticipate in this particular comedy an enhanced status for dance – a practice which, as Randy Martin has stressed, 'treats the mobilization of bodies more reflexively than quotidian bodily acts'.⁴

Early Modern England and the Dance

In turning to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we enter a dramatic world in which, as Alan Brissenden argues, Shakespeare exploited the potential of dance 'more abundantly than he was

ever to do again'.⁵ However, the roles and referencing of dance and (dis)placement in this *fairy* entertainment might not be a source of surprise given, as Sondra Horton Fraleigh has highlighted more generally, the art form's propensity to communicate 'movement that has undergone some meaningful transformation... it holds the transformational power to move us beyond self and beyond the ordinary'.⁶ The artistic undertaking of this comedy is indeed to move us *beyond self and beyond the ordinary* into an environment of seemingly benign improbability. In the final stages of the play, Titania instructs the assembled company, specifying 'First rehearse your song by rote, / To each word a warbling note. / Hand in hand, with fairy grace, / Will we sing, and bless this place' (5.1.387-90).⁷ In so doing, she not only indicates a function of dance in Shakespeare's intrigue to modulate narrative speed and to restore an axis of temporal organisation in what might appear a fractious and flux-ridden dramatic world, the fairy queen also posits authoritatively a form of ritualised agency that exists beyond the realm of the spoken word. Indeed, such various figuring forth of dance in terms of benediction, transformation and, ultimately, transcendence would not have been at all unfamiliar to early modern minds. In the early Tudor period, for example, Sir Thomas Elyot had conceded in *The Boke named the Governour* (1531) that

Some interpretours of poetes do imagin, that Proteus, who is supposed to haue turned him self into sondry figures, as somtyme to shew hym selfe like a serpent, some tyme lyke a lyon, otherwhyles lyke water, an other tyme like the flame of fyre, signifieth to be none other, but a delyuer and crafty daunser⁸

Arguing in this way, Elyot carefully intimates not only the fascinating measures and motions which might beguile both onlooker and dancer in the early modern period, but also the apprehension and ethical ambiguities which frequently surrounded such practices at the time. While recognition of the significance of dance in early modern culture is widely in evidence in current scholarship, there is frequently recourse to a form of critical mourning when its study is broached as a discipline. In a key enquiry *The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern England*, for example, Skiles Howard laments that 'dancing is an evanescent practice that leaves no trace of itself'.⁹ Similarly minded in *Music and Society in Early Modern England*, Christopher Marsh draws attention to the difficulty in understanding 'the prominent and often controversial place occupied by dance within early modern culture'.¹⁰ Strikingly, this sentiment continues to be voiced in more recent times for the art form as a whole, as the testimony of the leading choreographer Merce Cunningham bears witness: 'Yes, it's difficult to talk about dance. It's not so much intangible as evanescent. I compare ideas on dance, and dance itself, to water. Surely, describing a book is certainly easier than describing water. ... I'm not talking about the quality of the dance, but about its nature'.¹¹ In terms of dance practice in Tudor and early Stuart England and, most especially, in the context of this discussion of theatre performance, one of the greatest challenges remains, as Emily F. Winerock underlines, that 'there are no surviving English dancing manuals for the period between the compilation of the Gresley manuscript (c. 1500) and the publication of John Playford's *The English Dancing Master* (1651)'.¹² There are the rare examples of descriptions for the English reader, such as Robert Copelande's brief appendix to his 1521 book of French grammar entitled *The Manner of Dauncyng the Bace Daunces after the use of France*. In addition, continental publications (principally French or Italian) circulated, such as Fabritio Caroso's *Il Ballarino* (1581) and *Nobiltà di dame* (1600), Cesare Negri's *Le gratie d'amore* (1602) and *Nuove inventioni di balli* (1604) – and, on occasions, these enjoyed translations into the vernacular as they travelled the continent.¹³ Elsewhere, the Jacobean dancing master François de Lauze, for example, found his

treatise on dance pirated by a rival, Barthélemy de Montagut, and printed in London as *Apologie de la Danse* (1623) with a dedication to Buckingham.¹⁴ However, what can be established conclusively about dance practice across the British Isles from such publications remains open to speculation.¹⁵ Nonetheless, on consulting surviving documents from the period it remains abundantly clear there were a whole host of possibilities for encountering dance at all levels of early modern society – and this consideration of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* necessarily directs attention to the stage as a notable location. For the playhouse alone, Dorothy Richey recounted that in a review of 237 surviving Elizabethan scripts, sixty-eight ‘call for the performance of one or more dances as an integral part of the plot’.¹⁶ Perhaps most familiar to modern critical debate, the Swiss visitor Thomas Platter noted that during his own visit to the London theatre in the late sixteenth century, ‘At the end of the comedy they danced according to their custom with extreme elegance. Two in men’s clothes and two in women’s gave this performance, in wonderful combination with each other’.¹⁷ The practice seems to have been widely acknowledged. When a young German lawyer, Paul Hentzner, visited the realm in 1598, he also recorded that in the capital’s theatres ‘English Actors represent almost every day Tragedies and Comedies to very numerous audiences; these are concluded with excellent music, variety of dances, and the excessive applause of those that are present’.¹⁸ Moreover, the native-born lawyer/poet, Sir John Davies, recognised in verse, ‘we see at all the playhouse doores, / When ended is the play, the dance, and song, / A thousand townesmen, gentlemen, and whores, / Porters and serving-men, together throng’.¹⁹

The intervention of dance in the London playhouse has frequently been dominated in critical debate by the widely documented practice of the gig associated with those playing fools and foolery, such as Will Kempe, who was reputed to have ‘spent his life in mad liggess and merry iestes’.²⁰ The gig in theatrical fare of the period was clearly a highly sought-out performance which might occur onstage before, during, and/or after the performance of tragedies, satires and comedies. Indeed, the satirist Edward Guilpin poured scorn on the ‘rotten-throated slaues / Engarlanded with coney-catching knaues, / Whores, Bedles, bawdes and Sergeants’ who, amongst other things, ‘filthily / Chaunt Kemp’s Jigge’.²¹ However, this particular dance has largely proved an imponderable performative act, owing perhaps to its resemblance in nature to a *coloratura* intervention in opera, incorporating marked elements of improvisation. Whatever the case, knowledge of it at the time appears to have been commonplace. Hamlet dismisses Polonius as one who cares only ‘for a jig or a tale of bawdry’ or his own slumbers (2.2.422), and Jonson’s dedication to *Catiline* lamented the nature of ‘these Iig-giuen times’.²² Indeed, its performance continued to have a memorable effect on participant and audience as the decades went by, as the following entry records from the later seventeenth century: ‘Priscilla did dance a jig with Tom / Which made her buttocks quake like a Custard’.²³ Brissenden notes that by 1612 such were the disorders associated with the unruly jig that the authorities issued an order to suppress it altogether in the theatre.²⁴ However, in direct comparison with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, other Shakespearean plays, such as *Much Ado About Nothing*, indicate that dance literacy amongst theatre audiences extended significantly beyond the warmly anticipated jig. Assuming the role of comic pedagogue to Hero, Beatrice dismisses ‘wooing, wedding, and repenting ... as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque pace: the first suit is hot and hasty, like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding, mannerly-modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance and, with his bad legs, falls into the cinque pace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave’ (2.1.61-7).

Certainly, the roles of dance in dramatized performance might be many and various, as we witness in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and audiences might clearly bring extratheatrical knowledge of such activities to bear when prising meaning from the spectacles enacted before

them. Indeed, dance might all too often augment, enhance and/or demarcate the parameters of spoken text in the unfolding narrative representation of human experience onstage: thus, Ingrid Pfandl-Buchegger persuasively argues that in scrutinising early modern performances, we may discover that ‘The body is what is left beyond the text’.²⁵ Like music, dance may offer an alternative mode of communication and exchange to the written or printed script. Exciting, re-enacting, reflecting upon and, elsewhere, resolving tensions and conflict, the intervention of dance inevitably revises and complicates our understanding of a given dramatic world or any primacy or autonomy with which the spoken word might be attributed in an intrigue. Such stylised movement may entertain participant and onlooker alike, but in the theatre it can serve to evoke locale, event or act as a narrative drive or supplement. As will become apparent, in a text such as *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, its performances also offer the possibility of expressing power relations, both equal and unequal, to the eye as well as the ear and posit the body itself as a learning environment to audiences on- and off-stage.

‘middle summer’s spring’: A dancing Nation and a dancing Queen

One of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*’s post-war editors, Harold F. Brooks, acknowledged that ‘the text of the *Dream* is on the shorter side, though in performance the songs and dances would lengthen it’²⁶, and Shakespeare’s play itself constantly invites us to conjoin speech, music and dance to render its narrative wholly legible. When Oberon accuses Titania of unwarranted intimacies with Theseus, the fairy queen replies disarmingly:

These are the forgeries of jealousy:
 And never, since the middle summer’s spring,
 Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
 By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
 Or in the beached margent of the sea,
 To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
 But with thy brawls thou hast disturb’d our sport. (2.1.81-7)²⁷

Here, conjuring up the never-never land of ‘middle summer’s spring’, Titania’s account of the contrary motions of the collectively enacted ‘ringlets’ as opposed to the imperious dancing vigour of ‘brawls’ or *branles* deploys a strategic narrative *amorce* for the play’s increasingly complex meditation upon alternative modes of sovereignty and (self-) governance.²⁸ Moreover, in this instance, as throughout Shakespeare’s playtext, the referencing of dance urges us to quit the surroundings of courtly or formal gatherings, and to situate the dances in a more broadly experienced environment of Elizabethan England which remained highly receptive to such measures. At this point in Shakespeare’s narrative, the evocation of inclusive revelries (rather too inclusive for Oberon who covets the Indian boy) is thus traumatised, challenged by the robust capering initiated by the fairy king. Interestingly, however, adversarial dancing manoeuvres would not have seemed out of place for those conversant with early modern practice. As Sydney Anglo underlines in his magisterial study *L’Escrime, La Danse et L’Art de la Guerre*, ‘Passer sans transition de Mars à Terpsichore peut sembler maladroit, mais la différence entre la danse de cour et le combat ... n’est pas aussi grande qu’on le pense’.²⁹ Indeed, de Lauze’s *Louange de la Danse* (1623) insisted that dance ‘est d’autant plus nécessaire à la Noblesse, que ce qu’il luy faille paroistre en Compagnie, ou apprendre le maniment des Armes, pour le Seruice de sa Patrie’.³⁰ If the war with the Amazons is consigned to the past in

Shakespeare's comedy, the potential for physical (and verbal) violence is nevertheless still regularly evoked in the intrigue.

A Midsummer Night's Dream was written for an early modern society that seems to have been renowned (for good or ill) both nationally and internationally as having an exceptional appetite for dancing which was shared by all ranks. The young German visitor Hentzner affirmed in 1598 that the English as a whole 'excell in dancing and music', adding, 'for they are active and lively, though of a thicker make than the French'.³¹ In the same year, John Stow's *Survey of London* adjudged that 'In the holy dayes all sommer, the yooths are exercised in leaping, dancing, shooting, wrastling, casting the stone, and practising their shieldes; the maidens trippe it with their Timbrelles, and daunce as long as they can well see'.³² Indeed, when the player Kempe engaged in his dancing marathon from London to Norwich, he recalled later in the published account

a lusty lasse being among the people, cal'd ... if the Dauncer will lend me a leash of his belles, Ile venter to treade one mile with him my selfe. I lookt vpon her, saw mirth in her eies, heard boldnes in her words, and beheld her ready to tucke vp her russet petticoate, I fitted her with bells: which [s]he merrily taking, garnisht her thicke short legs, and with a smooth bow bad the Tabrer begin. The Drum strucke, forward marcht I with my merry Mayde-marian: who shooke her fat sides: and footed it merrily.³³

As Kempe's (and a host of early modern) records indicate, the passion for dancing amongst the broader population was in evidence for everyone to witness in Elizabethan England.

Conversely, in Shakespeare's fairy kingdom when Oberon declares to the assembled company 'Every elf and fairy sprite / Hop as light as bird from brier; / And this ditty after me/Sing, and dance it trippingly' (5.1.383-6), he might be seen as appealing to a more select audience; and it was certainly the case that the elevated status of dance at Elizabeth's court throughout the length of her reign was found to warrant comment again and again by visitors from home and abroad.³⁴ If her successor, James VI/I, observed in *Basilikon Doron* that 'Kings being publike persons, by reason of their office and authority, are as it were set (as it was said of olde) vpon a publike stage, in the sight of all the people; where all the beholders eyes are attentiuely bent, to looke and pry in the least circumstance of their secretest drifts', Elizabeth showed herself to be richly sensitive to the nation's need for a sovereign on public display – in the arts, in progresses and in person – and dancing remained a key strategy for responding to her own appetites and those of others for regal performance.³⁵ In the opening years of her reign, in 1564, the Scottish emissary Sir James Melville lengthened his visit to the Tudor court: '[I] stayed two days longer, till I might see her dance'.³⁶ In the New Year festivities of January 1582 honouring the visit of the royal suitor Francois, Duc d'Anjou, 'The Barriers for Monsieur' was staged and 'La mascarade qui fut le soir mesme, fut de fort bonne grace. La Reine & Monsieur dancierent ce soir-là, comme ils auoient fait plusieurs fois auparauant'.³⁷ By the end of that decade, one of the gentlemen of the Privy Chamber assured his correspondent that 'six or seven galliards in a morning, besides music and singing, is her ordinary exercise'.³⁸ Moreover, Elizabeth seems to have nurtured this lively taste for dancing throughout her whole household. At the close of 1593, in the final decade of her reign, Robert Carey recorded that 'I made all the haste I could to court, which was then at Hampton Court. I arrived there on St. Steven's day in the afternoon. Dirty as I was, I came into the presence, where I found the lords and ladies dancing. The Queene was not there'.³⁹

Equally striking, it seems that Elizabeth remained most responsive to the dancing talents of others and was willing to reward them with high distinction. Most famously, it was widely credited that Sir Christopher Hatton secured senior status on account of his accomplished dancing skills. Indeed, his adversary, Sir John Perrot, allegedly dismissed his meteoric rise as of one who had come ‘into the court ... by the Galliard’. In his *Fragmenta Regalia* (posthumously published in 1641), Sir Robert Naunton recorded for posterity that Hatton ‘came thither as a private Gentleman of the Innes of Court in a Mask, and for his activity, and person ... taken into [Elizabeth’s] favour’, adding more judiciously that ‘besides the graces of his person, and dancing, [Hatton] had also the adjectaments of a strong and subtill capacity’.⁴⁰ Whatever the case, the legend of this dancing virtuoso continued and for his *Entertainment at Althorp* (1603) staged for the new Queen and Prince Henry, Jonson brought forward for ‘the first Nights shew ... a Morrise of the Clownes thereabout’, with the leading clown (‘No-body’) delivering ‘the Huisher to a Morrise, / (A kind of Masque) whereof good store is / In the COUNTRY hereabout’. Jonson’s No-Body remains at pains to acknowledge those who ‘come to see, and to be seene, / And though they dance afore the Queene, / Ther’s none of these doth hope to come by / Wealth, to build another *Holmby*’ – the late Hatton’s estate.⁴¹ Indeed, even in the final decade of Elizabeth’s reign, in 1597, the French emissary André Hurault de Maisse reported back to Henri IV that Elizabeth laid claim to the multiple identities of dancer, choreographer, instructor and spectator:

[the queen] takes great pleasure in dancing and music. She told me ... in her youth she danced very well, and composed measures and music, and had played them herself and danced them. She takes such pleasure in it that when her Maids dance she follows the cadence with her head, hand and foot. She rebukes them if they do not dance to her liking, and without doubt she is a mistress of the art, having learnt in the Italian manner to dance high. She told me that they called her ‘the Florentine’.⁴²

Thus, even in the final years of her reign, the lure of the dance did not falter. In 1601, it was noted with reference to the visit of the Italian duke Virginio Orsino that ‘The Queen hath been pleased to have many discourses with him and to dance before him’,⁴³ and at the close of the following year, 1602, in the final months of Elizabeth’s life, Robert Sidney learned from his correspondent, Rowland Whyte, the appeal of the dance had not palled for the sovereign: ‘Mrs. Mary vpon St. steuens day in the after noone dawnced before the Queen two galliards with one Mr. palmer the admirablest dawncer of this tyme both were much commended by her Maiestie then she dawnced with hym a Corante’.⁴⁴ Yet the court’s marked *penchant* for dancing did not always meet with universal approbation. The Spanish court was informed of Elizabeth’s participation in the Twelfth Night revelling of 1599 in which ‘the head of the Church of England and Ireland was to be seen in her old age dancing three or four galliards’.⁴⁵ Moreover, nor did the English court’s passion for the dance lapse with Elizabeth’s passing. Jonson’s masque *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618) affirmed that ‘dancing is an exercise/Not only shows the mover’s wit,/But maketh the beholder wise,/As he hath powre to rise to it’.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the first performance failed to impress the Jacobean court. The chaplain to the Venetian ambassador, Orazio Busino, reported, ‘the King, who is naturally choleric got impatient and shouted aloud: “Why don’t they dance? What did you make me come here for? Devil take you all, dance.” Upon this the Marquis of Buckingham, his Majesty’s most favored minion immediately sprang forward cutting a score of lofty and very minute capers’.⁴⁷

Despite these accounts of royal passions and dancing, it remains equally evident that dance’s potential to provoke misgovernment was frequently identified amongst certain sections of the

broader population of early modern England. Indeed, in a striking inversion of Titania's cohesive 'roundel' in Shakespeare's comedy, Puck's gamesome toying with the 'mechanicals' is expressed in terms of unruly dancing measures: 'I'll follow you; I'll lead you about a round, / Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier' (3.1.102-3). This artform's ability to inspire both dancer and onlooker to err wildly, even to render themselves ungodly, was repeatedly pointed up in radical Protestant print culture. In more contemporary critical debate promoting the performative engagement of the audience, Jacques Rancière has affirmed, 'Il nous faut donc un autre théâtre, un théâtre sans spectateurs': thus a quest must be initiated 'd'enseigner ... [aux] spectateurs les moyens de cesser d'être spectateurs et de devenir agents d'une pratique collective ... L'émancipation, elle, commence quand on remet en question l'opposition entre regarder et agir'.⁴⁸ However, it was precisely these possibilities of collapsing performative distinctions (and worse) between participant and audience that exercised early modern critics so heatedly. Philip Stubbes, for example, protested with lively animation, 'what clipping, what culling, what kissing and bussing, what smouching & slabbering one of another, what filthie groping and vncleane handling is not practised euery wher in these dauncings?'.⁴⁹ If this tradition of censure had roots in the medieval centuries, many early modern critics frequently turned to the Church Fathers (notably Augustine) to consolidate the authority of their diatribes.⁵⁰ Citing the dictum of Augustine that *melius est enim arare quam saltare* (it is better to plough than to dance)⁵¹, hostile voices focused their scorn upon the practice as a disreputable and purposeless distraction in the working day which enfeebled body, mind and soul and caused the masses to profane holy days. Furthermore, dance might (like theatrical performance) prove an occasion for the abhorred custom of cross-dressing:

that you doe vse to attyre men in womans apparrell, whom you doe most commenly call maymarrions ... I my selfe haue seene in a may game a troupe, the greater part wherof hath been men, and yet haue they been attyred so like vnto women, that theyr faces being hidde (as they were in deede) a man coulde not discerne them from women. What an horrible abuse was this? what abhominable sinnes might haue here vpon ensued?⁵²

Such tracts affirmed again and again that dancing imperilled the soul by leading to all kinds of vice-ridden behaviours. Many, like Gervase Babington's *A very fruitfull exposition of the Commaundements* (1583), emphasised that dancing was among the principal 'allurements to vncleanness ... The scriptures checke it, the fathers mislike it, the counsels haue condemned it, & the prooue of Gods iudgementes vpon it biddeth vs beware'.⁵³ If, in the early years of the reign of Elizabeth's successor, James VI/I, one Robert Corbett was hauled up before the judges at Bath for being 'a minstrel [who] did with ... three ... [others] on Midsomer day now last past during the time of divine seruice in y^e afternoon play vpon their instruments and maintained dauncing to the evill example of others',⁵⁴ the vigorous appetite for dancing amongst Elizabeth's subjects (and the periodic declaiming of it) was nonetheless widely recognized in the second half of the sixteenth century. Indeed, Stephen Gosson expressed a deep-rooted nostalgia for a time when, like Shakespeare's youthful Antony, 'english men could suffer watching and labor, hunger & thirst, and beare of al stormes w^t hed and shoulders, they vsed slender weapons, went naked, and were good soldiours, they fed vpon rootes and barks of trees ... The men in valure not yeelding to *Scithia*, the women in courage passing the *Amazons*. ... But the exercise that is nowe among vs, is banqueting playing, pipyng, and dauncing'.⁵⁵

In calling for the staging of dances, Shakespeare's comedy directs attention specifically to the question of summer revelries. On discovering the lovers asleep in the

Athenian forest, Theseus concludes, ‘No doubt they rose up early, to observe / The rite of May’ (4.1.131-2). Although such secular festivals as May Day and Midsummer might appear to be linked to precise moments in the calendar, in practice the celebrations took place broadly during the period of late spring and summer in early modern England. If the acts of Maying celebrated renewal in the natural cycle, there were, it seems, many more associations with revenants, lures, antics and magical events for Midsummer festivities.⁵⁶ In Christopher Fetherston’s *A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lasciuious dauncing* (1582), the pro-dance voice of Iuvenis affirms, ‘mee thinks it is good that we should daunce, when as we see all thinges so pleasant in May’.⁵⁷ Fetherston’s beleaguered figure adds that the practice may be ‘a meane wherby loue is acquired’, shadowing in part the steps of Elyot, who had submitted that ‘the ioyning of a man and a woman in daunsynge may be signified matrimonye’.⁵⁸ Indeed, going a stage further, Thoinot Arbeau (the French cleric Jehan Tabourot) in his treatise *Orchesographie* (1589) had affirmed that ‘dancing is practised to reveal whether lovers are in good health and sound of limb’.⁵⁹ Unsurprisingly, such contentions only served to enflame the critics further. In his *Dialogue* Fetherston’s ‘Minister’ chastises the wayward Iuvenis, insisting that ‘When as God did institute the firste mariage in paradice, hee did not sende for a pyper or idler, (for they were at that time vnhatched) to play, y^e Adam might daunce, and so please Euah. And is not God as well able to bring marriages to passe without dauncing, as he was then?’.⁶⁰ Similarly minded, the anonymously published *A Treatise of Daunses* (1581) railed, ‘although wee haue not any plane and expresse forbidding, where it should be sayd, Thou shalt not daunse, yet we haue a formall and plaine commandment, Thou shalt not commit adultery, or whoredome: to which the daunses ought to be referred’.⁶¹ Certainly, such conclusions might be easily arrived at if early modern court proceedings were consulted. On the eve of the Civil Wars, for example, a Bridgwater magistrate heard that one Henry Pillchorne was summoned before the Bench because ‘he daunced with his britches downe about his heeles in the house of one Iohn Chute ... and did shew his privie members vnto the companie most vncivillie there being then many women present, and said he did daunce Piddecocke bolt vpright, and readie to fight’.⁶²

More specifically, Philoponus in Stubbes’ *Anatomy of Abuses* decries the highly prized ‘rites of May’ in which ‘I haue heard it credibly reported ... that of fortie, threescore, or a hundred maides going to the wood ouer night, there haue scarcely the third part of them returned home againe vndefiled’.⁶³ Certainly, there was every evidence at the assizes of the time that such times of festivity in the summer months could lead to a great number of exchanges. However, a court in early Stuart Somerset learned that the remnants of Midsummer revelry might last the full course of the year. One Thomas Cornishe was presented who ‘haue lived verie suspiciouslie of incontinent liffe with Ioane Cole’:

and especiallye that on Broomfeeldes las[t] fayer ... (the said ffayer being always kept on the feast [or] daie of All Sowles yearelie) he had the carnall knowledge of her bodie against the parsonage wall & was by diverse seene soe comitting the said crime of incontinenie together, and on the said ffeast daie at night he had the carnall knowledge of her bodie agains the Sommer pole [in] which made a bell hanging on top of the pole to ring out whereby he was alsoe discovered & by some seene⁶⁴

Such instances only served to strengthen the dance-phobic attitudes of the critics who in early modern England were often much influenced by the sermons of Calvin in such matters. The Genevan minister had turned his attentions to ‘dances, & semblables dissolutions’, stressing that those partaking ‘ne cherchent qu’à sauter et à dancier comme bestes esgarees’; and Stubbes reminded his Elizabethan readers that ‘Maister *Caluin* ... calleth dauncing the cheefe mischief

of all mischeefs, saying there be such vnchast gestures in it, as are nothing els, but inticements to whordome'.⁶⁵ Certainly, there are abundant examples of episcopal directives during the period forbidding, 'anye lords of misrule or sommerr Lordes or ladyes or anye disguised persons or others in christmasse or at may gammes or anye minstrels Morrie dauncers or others at Ryshebearinges or at any other tymes to come unreverentlye into anye churche or chappell or churchyard and there daunce or playe anye vnseemelye partes'.⁶⁶ However, these directives, regularly re-affirmed, seem to have received a decidedly mixed reception across the length and breadth of the land. In 1608, one Catherine Jones of Aston Botterell in Shropshire was reprimanded publicly by the parish's minister for dancing on the Sabbath. She retorted, 'I care not for parson ... toord [turd] in his teathe; I will dance on the Sabaoth daie in despite of him even at his nose'.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, moving to the southern limits of the realm, to Wimborne in Dorset, one Joan Etherege was presented to the Church court 'for sittinge in the streets at sermon tim on the Saboth day being the I of aprill & maintaining her prentises to play and when she was gently warned of she abusethe the officers & bad them kisse her asset wise'.⁶⁸

Despite the vigour of such exchanges, it remains the case that any perceived transgression of public order in such matters might be remorselessly punished in early modern England. A couple bringing forth an illegitimate child was ordered by a Jacobean court at Glastonbury to be 'both whipped through the Highe Streete ... vntill their boddies shalbe both bloody and that there shalbe during the time of their whipping two fiddles playeing before them in regard to make knowne their lewdnes in begetting the said base childe vpon the sabboath day coming from dancing'.⁶⁹ Thus, unsurprisingly, in *The Praise of Muisicke* (1586), the Oxford academic John Case tendered, 'I dare not speake of dauncing or theatrall spectacles, least I pull whole swarmes of enimies vpon me'.⁷⁰

But which dance? – 'Lord, what fools these mortals be!'

As was indicated at the opening of this discussion, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* makes very particular invitations to its audiences into the morally chequered world of early modern dance. The exasperated Oberon demands of his consort, 'How long within this wood intend you stay?', and is answered by a queen resolute in her pleasures:

Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.
If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts. (2.1.139-42)

The fairy king thus is offered the opportunity to participate, spectate or to absent himself from the gathering. Here, once again, the invitation to the dance in Shakespeare's intrigue operates as an opportunity for strategic (in early modern terms, civic, spiritual, erotic) decision-making and for securing competing identities – in short, an alternative and dynamic mode for *diegesis* for the stage.

Highly exercised by the moral indeterminacies surrounding such capers, Fetherston submitted that 'it is to be feared, least lasciuious dauncing in time bee taken for a vertue, where as in deede it is but a vice, as it is nowe a dayes vsed', and thus far this discussion has considered early modern debate surrounding the dancer and the ethical standing (or otherwise) of those who might refrain from such practices.⁷¹ However, turning to Titania's invitation to 'see our moonlight revels', we may be reminded that the status and functions of *the spectator* were also

seen to warrant the serious attention of writers, preachers and the authorities in early modern England. As Ranci re has underlined, for those hostile to all forms of spectacle, ‘c’est un mal que d’être spectateur ... regarder est le contraire de connaître ... [et] c’est le contraire d’agir’,⁷² and such an activity might thus for critical eyes become a falsification of collective experience. Shakespeare’s Oberon for one remains deeply suspicious of the communal gatherings of the ‘round’, or ‘roundel’, which continue to deprive him of the prized Indian Boy and to remind him of his impermanent status in the affections of his queen. Conversely, as was intimated at the outset of this discussion, danceophile voices often sought to defend the positions of performer and onlooker by investing in narratives of transformation and transcendence – that the spectacle of dance might re-script our understanding of human experience. As Margaret M. McGowan argues, for sixteenth-eyes the spectacle of dancing could lift ‘the observer onto another plane of being, transferring him to a marvellous and transfigured realm’.⁷³ Indeed, in Sir John Davies’s ‘Orchestra’ (1598), even a recalcitrant onlooker could be brought to a state of awe: ‘So subtil and curious was the measure, / With such vnlookt for change in euey straine; / As that Penelope rapt with sweet pleasure, / Weend she beheld the true proportion plaine / Of her owne webb weavd and unweavd again’.⁷⁴

In the *Timaeus*, Plato had conceived of the universe itself as enacting complexly choreographed motions: ‘the dancing movements of [the] gods, their juxtapositions and the back-circlings and advances of their circular courses upon themselves’.⁷⁵ Later in antiquity, Lucian’s dialogue entitled ‘The Dance’ sought to laud the practice, employing the figure Lycinus to win over the cynic Crato.⁷⁶ While the former acknowledges the widespread criticism that dance was bewitching, ‘something unworthy and effeminate’, he subsequently makes the equally telling point that the practice ‘brings not only pleasure but benefit to those who see it; how much culture and instruction it gives; how it imports harmony into the souls of its beholders ... the praise that [the dancer] gets from the spectators will be consummate when each of those who behold him recognises his own traits, or rather sees in the dancer as in a mirror his very self, with his customary feelings and actions’.⁷⁷ Equally importantly, Lycinus also strategically directs attention to the close parentage of dance and eloquence: ‘The chief occupation and the aim of dancing, as I have said, is impersonating, which is cultivated in the same way by the rhetoricians’.⁷⁸ All these emphases upon loss of (self-)government, the ethical enrichment of the onlooker and the highly articulate appeal communicated by the dancer’s motions would figure prominently in cultural debate across early modern Europe. Arbeau, for example, affirmed in *Orchesographie* that ‘la danse est une espece de Rhetorique muette, par laquelle l’Orateur peult, par ses movement, sans parler un seul mot, se faire entendre et persuader aux spectateurs’, and concluded his tract by insisting to his reader, ‘pratiquez les dances honnestement, & vous rendez compaignon des planettes qui dancent naturellement’.⁷⁹ However, a generation earlier in early Tudor England, Elyot had argued at length for the presence of

a concinnitie of meuing the foote and body, expressyng some pleasaunt or profitable affectes or motions of the mynde. ... there is no passe tyme to be compared to that, wherin may be founden both recreation and meditation of vertue ... daunsyng [is said] to be of an excellent vtilitie, comprehending in it wonderfull fygures (whiche the grekes do call Idea, of vertues and noble qualities, and specially of the commodious vertue called prudence, whom Tulli defyneth to be the knowlege of thinges, whiche oughte to be desyred & followed: and also of them whiche ought to be fled from or eschewed.⁸⁰

Furthermore, dance was not only mythologised in tracts and treatises appearing across early modern Europe, it was also envisaged again and again as a material practice disciplining both mind and body in a requisite manner for acceptable engagement in the body politic and, indeed, in the hereafter.⁸¹ If in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* dance is considered both in terms of discipline and insubordination, notable voices in sixteenth-century England might be heard firmly advocating such exertions. Peter Martyr, for example, attended to the spiritual training which dancing might facilitate: 'This kinde of exercise seemeth to me of its owne nature neither viciouse nor to be prohibited, for as muche as agillitye and nimblenesse of the boddye, is the gifte of God; and if there be added some arte, that the boddye be mooued with decencie, iust *pace*, & comlines, I see not why it ought to be reprehended'.⁸² Rather more focused upon questions of social preferment, amongst a host of different activities, Elizabeth I's former tutor, Roger Ascham, asserted that the ability 'to daunce cumlie ... be not onelie cumlie and decent, but also verie necessarie, for a courtlie ientleman'.⁸³

Thus, in order to cater to those of rank and those wishing to embark upon a more gentrified condition, dancing schools proliferated across the Tudor realm as they did across its continental neighbours. If, during the reign of Henry VIII, the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives complained that 'we nowe in chrystiane countreis haue scholes of daunsynge, how be it that is no wonder, seing also we haue houses of baudry ... this newe fasshyon of daunsynge of ours, so vnresonable, and fulle of shakynge and bragging, and vncleanly handlynges, gropynges, and kyssynges', at the end of the century Shakespeare's own Duke of Bourbon in *Henry V* shows himself swift to disdain the reputation of 'English dancing-schools' where 'lavoltas high and swift corantos' are taught (3.4.32-3).⁸⁴ In such a society, it would come as no surprise that 'the modest Princesse [Penelope] blusht & smil'd' in Davies's 'Orchestra' when she revealed, 'My feet, which onely Nature taught to goe, / Did neuer yet the Art of footing know'.⁸⁵ Davies was a product of early modern London's Inns of Court where, we learn in the Middle Temple it was 'accounted a shame for an Innes of Court man not to have learned to dance, especially the measures'.⁸⁶ Indeed, for the 1594 Christmas revels at Gray's Inn the assembled company was instructed 'to pass the time in dancing: so his Gentlemen Pensioners and Attendants, very gallantly appointed, in thirty Couples, danced the Old Measures, and their Galliards, and other kind of Dances, revelling until it was very late'.⁸⁷ However, the Elizabethan authorities might be a good deal less appreciative of such activities amongst the lower orders. In 1582, for example, the directive was issued for the attention of the capital's youth that 'no Apprentice should frequent, or go to any Dancing, Fencing, or Musical Schools'.⁸⁸

As we have seen, in Shakespeare's comedy Titania enquires whether Oberon 'will patiently dance in our round / And see our moonlight revels' (2.1.140-1) – in essence, whether he will agree to be subject to the designs of others. The dancing measure of the round, or roundel, looking back to a more inclusive experience of community might initially seem opposed to the decorous, sophisticated world of the court with its capering couples. Interestingly, the censorious voice in Fetherston's *Dialogue* grudgingly submits, 'I can like better of your common daunces, and yet the liking whiche I haue thereof is but a little'.⁸⁹ However, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* invites us to attend to the fairy queen calling for these 'common daunces': 'Come, now a roundel and a fairy-song' (2.2.1). If Titania's fondness for cohesive ringlets is here starkly contrasted with the more vigorous *branles*, or brawls, to the fairy king's taste, both modes were familiar to England's elite. Indeed, Elizabeth and her court actively sought out the dancing figures of those belonging to, what Puck terms, communities of 'patches, rude mechanicals' (3.2.9) – as McGowan underlines, 'It is tempting to depict the modes of dancing at court and in the country as diametrically opposed

... But this picture is oversimplified. ... Dance and celebration have always gone hand in hand'.⁹⁰ In the summer of 1591 when the court was welcomed by Lord and Lady Montague to their Sussex residence of Cowdrey, we learn that the queen 'dined in the priuie walkes in the garden ... In the euening the countrie people presented themselues to hir Maiestie in a pleasant daunce with Taber and Pipe. And the Lorde *Montague* and his Lady among them, to the great pleasure of all the beholders, and gentle applause of hir Maiestie'.⁹¹ Even in the last months of her life, in 1602, the Earl of Worcester might be found recording that

we are frolyke heare in Cowrtt mutche dawncing in the privy chamber of Contrey dawnces before the Queene maiestie whoe is exceeding pleased therwith Irishe tunes are at this tyme most pleasing but in winter lullaby an owld song of Mr Birdes wylbee more in request as I thinke.⁹²

Frances Rust makes the telling point that 'As she grew older, the Queen became more and more interested in "English" dances as opposed to those of Continental origin', and draws attention to the Sidney Papers dating from the final years of the Elizabeth's life where it was reported, 'Her Majestie is in very good health and comes much abroad these holidayes; for almost every night she is in the presence to see the ladies daunce the old and the new Country dances, with the taber and pipe'.⁹³

Shakespeare's comedy urges audiences again and again to consider the ways in which dance might enhance, challenge and/or thwart social exchange in a dramatic world subject to a host of contrary motions. In the midst of this densely lyrical text, dance offers an alternative possibility for narrative encounter, conflict and/or resolution as well as proposing quite different perspectives for understanding the development of communal experience. Indeed, Claire Gwendoline Hansen points persuasively to the potential of dance to effect 'a nonlinear, disruptive, and transformative act' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, highlighting the text's propensity not only to signal convergence, but also these stage inhabitants' propensity to err and lose their way – a motif evoked repeatedly (both physically and metaphorically) as the intrigue unfolds: 'The nine-men's morris is fill'd up with mud, / And the quaint mazes in the wanton green / For lack of tread are undistinguishable' (2.1.98-100).⁹⁴

As the mechanicals' performance is brought to a close, Bottom enquires of his elite audience, 'Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?' and he is answered by his sovereign, 'come, your Bergomask; let you epilogue alone' (5.1.344-5, 351-2). Once again we discover movement being privileged above spoken word and, in a now familiar dramatic mode for this play, those both on- and off-stage are thus rendered audiences to the dance.⁹⁵ Moreover, if we are minded, like Shakespeare's Hippolyta, to dismiss the peasant theatricals (and even the fairy shaming of Bottom) as 'the silliest stuff that ever I heard' (5.1.209), it is timely to remember that the early modern ecclesiastical courts were not wholly unfamiliar with the antics of Puck and the clowning mechanicals. Shakespeare's Theseus endeavours to reconcile the company, submitting 'The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them' (5.1.210-1), but again and again the courts of the time might take a different view. It was reported to the Bishop's Court at Bathampton, Somerset, in 1604, for example, that there was

a man arayed vpp in a Surplice and that vppon his head there weare two thinges, which weare called Asses eares [who] went from house to house this Christmas last, in

Bathampton to steale Cob loaves. And y^t amongst other houses he went to Thomas Powles house, & that there he did thrust his head at Thomas Powles wiffe as if he had hornes to bush her

In his defense, the defendant subsequently reported to the company that the ‘wiffe seemed to be in noe sorte displeased therwith a prettye while’.⁹⁶

Concluding thoughts – the invitation to the dance continues

Shakespearean dramaturgy invites us repeatedly to consider figurations of human experience under the terms of dance. The would-be (and oafish) suitor Sir Andrew Aguecheeck in *Twelfth Night*, for example, reminds us that he can still ‘cut a caper’ (1.2.108), and at the close of *As You Like It*, the Duke trusts that the final gathering will end as it begins ‘in true delights’ – and then dancing commands the stage (5.4.189). Even when we retire from comic worlds, we discover that the witches in *Macbeth* ‘hand in hand, / ... Thus do go about, about’ (1.3.33, 35), the beleaguered Antony remembers that at Philippi the novice commander Octavius ‘kept / His sword e’en like a dancer’ (*Antony and Cleopatra* 3.11.35-6) and the angst-ridden Leontes in *The Winter’s Tale* confesses, ‘I have *tremor cordis* on me; my heart dances, / But not for joy, not joy’ (1.2.110-11). However, as was appreciated at the beginning of this discussion, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* draws more variously upon the resources of dance than any of its counterparts in the Shakespearean canon, and this discussion has sought to evoke how contemporaneous expectations of festivity and social integration, mutuality and (in)subordination, government and human failing, eloquence and agency might serve to account more satisfactorily for the playtext’s multiple invitations to the dance – invitations which all too often appear in abbreviated form, locked in brief quotations in critical discussions or in italicised stage directions at the edges of edited texts.

At the denouement of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the thematic emphasis falls upon a host of different exchanges, restitutions, performances that must be brought to pass through movement. On the eve of Theseus’s wedding day, the fairy king reminds his consort of the rituals to be enacted and the higher powers to be invoked in order to consecrate the forthcoming nuptials:

Come my queen, take hands with me,
And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.
Now thou and I are new in amity,
And will to-morrow midnight solemnly
Dance in Duke Theseus’ house triumphantly,
And bless it to all fair prosperity. (4.1.84-9)

If this appeal signals reconciliation in the midst of what has been a highly volatile, very diversely populated environment, Oberon also speaks to a regeneration in the converging worlds of monarch, noble and artisan through mutually choreographed measures between the fairy couple. In this way, we may like to see the benevolence of the comic world communicated in word, deed and movement – yet, it must be remembered, such a social vision insists upon a profound sense of priority, hierarchy and, indeed, its limits. Some must remain shamed buffoons or subject to enchantments in order to remain within it.

In this closing movement of Shakespeare’s comedy, Theseus calls for revelries to celebrate his nuptials: ‘Come now; what masques, what dances shall we have [?]’ (5.1.32).

Strikingly, this query seems to have been voiced by theatre directors, producers and audiences down the centuries in anticipation of a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. One of the earliest recorded accounts of the play's performance dates from 26 September 1662 when, in the early years of the Restoration, Samuel Pepys attended a production staged by Thomas Killigrew's company in London:

To the Kings Theatre, where we saw 'Midsummer Night's Dream', which I have never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life. I saw, I confess, some good dancing and some handsome women, which was all my pleasure.⁹⁷

This revival for the 1662-63 season was to be its only appearance for Restoration audiences who more frequently sought out urban confusion and urbane raillerie for their comic fare.

Nonetheless, one of the ways in which a version of Shakespeare's dramatic narrative did later gain access to the stage was through the visual splendour of Purcell's opera, *The Fairy Queen* (1692), produced by Thomas Betterton at Dorset Garden Theatre.⁹⁸ Here, even the introductory music included four dances. At its opening, Titania declares, 'Now we glide from our abodes, / To Sing, and Revel in these Woods'⁹⁹ and, in due course, the production offered a broad selection of interventions in song and in dance: e.g. 'a Fairy Dance', 'A Dance of the Followers of Night', 'A Dance of Hay-Makers', 'A Dance of the Four Seasons'. This most ornate production (including 'a Prospect of Grotto's, Arbors, and Delightful Walks' and 'a great Wood ... Two great Dragons make a Bridge over the River') clearly met with greater approval in some quarters than the dramatized version that Pepys had witnessed in the opening years of Restoration. *The Gentlemen's Journal* duly recorded, 'The *Drama* is originally *Shakespears*, the *Music* and *Decorations* are extraordinary. I have heard the Dances commended, and without doubt the whole is very entertaining'.¹⁰⁰

Interestingly, the drawing together of adaptations of Shakespeare's intrigue with the arts of music and dance continued to figure prominently in any staged version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for well over a century thereafter. In the eighteenth century, there was a rendering of the mechanicals' 'most lamentable comedy' (1.2.11) by Richard Leveridge (himself playing both 'Prologue' and 'Pyramus') as *The Comic Masque of Pyramus and Thisbe* (1716). This afterpiece, presented for London audiences at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, sought to burlesque 'the exalted performances' of Italian opera ('high Recitative and buskin airs') accompanied by periodic interventions from Mr. Semibreve ('If this won't fetch a Subscription, I'll never pretend to compose Opera, or Mask again, while I live'¹⁰¹), Mr. Crotchet and Mr. Gamut. The music for the staging has since been lost, but the tantalizing query (echoing that of Bottom's) from Semibreve indicates that the artform still might find its place on the stage: 'Will it please you to have the Epilogue, or a Dance?'.¹⁰² The *Comic Masque* clearly enjoyed a good measure of success and continued to be warmly received in Georgian London.

Choosing to stress the interventions of music and, more centrally on this occasion, of dance to meet the prompts signalled in Shakespeare's text, Garrick's Theatre Royal in Drury Lane offered in the mid-century *The Fairies* (1755) by Christopher Smith (the Younger). This production eschewed the broad comedy of the *Comick Masque*, yet, as R. A. Foakes underlined, 'retained fewer than 600 lines of the original text, omitted all characters but the lovers and fairies'.¹⁰³ In these years, Garrick was working closely in London with the dancerchoreographer-dance theorist Jean-Georges Noverre, whose work continued to reflect

upon the narrative functions that dance might hold for the stage.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the impresario's engagement with adaptations of Shakespeare's text continued into the next decade when he staged a poorly received production in 1763. In the days that followed the unsuccessful première, George Colman confected a shorter spectacle entitled *A Fairy Tale in Two Acts. Taken from Shakespeare*. This concluded with 'A Dance of Fairies' that had also been present in the original. If it was in the second half of the eighteenth century that complete dance productions of Shakespearean plays began to be staged, as that century yielded to a new generation of theatre producers in the nineteenth, more interest came to be invested in reclaiming Shakespeare's original texts for the stage. In 1816, for example, the dramatist Frederick Reynolds offered an operatic version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with music by Henry Rowley Bishop, but this did not meet with approval. In 1840, if a Covent Garden production by Madame Lucia Vestris promoted a more faithful version of the source text, as Foakes stressed, 'it still treated [the play] largely as an operatic spectacular, with antiquarian settings, crowds of female fairies dressed in white gauze in the romantic tradition of ballet'.¹⁰⁵ Three years later, the seventeen-year-old Mendelssohn would compose his overture for Shakespeare's comedy and, in later life, at the age of thirty-four would complete the incidental music which would continue to serve as the main inspiration down the decades for choreographers at both home and abroad.

By the mid-century, Charles Kean's production of Shakespeare's comedy catered, as Trevor R. Griffiths points out, to the rich tastes of the time for opulent spectacle: 'In return for more than 40 per cent of Shakespeare's text that Kean omitted, he provided a wealth of dances and tableaux conceived on a monumental scale'.¹⁰⁶ In the second half of the century, the narrative of Shakespeare's comedy attracted choreographers internationally. Marius Petipa created a version for the Imperial Russian Ballet at St. Petersburg's Hermitage Theatre set to Mendelssohn's overture, and this production was revised at the turn of the century, in 1906, by Mikhail Fokine for the city's Maryinsky School in which Nijinsky danced the role of the principal elf.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, both versions have since been lost. However, Tyrone Guthrie's 1937 production of Shakespeare's comedy at London's Old Vic (now most frequently celebrated for images of Vivien Leigh as Titania) included dance interludes set to Mendelssohn's music and choreographed by Ninette de Valois. Directly after the Second World War, the Sadler's Wells company (both opera and ballet companies) offered yet another multi-medial (rather than spoken text-centred) performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, drawing upon Purcell's music from *The Fairy Queen* supplemented by dances choreographed by Frederick Ashton.¹⁰⁸ The latter also created a dance interlude set to Mendelssohn's music for a 1954 production of the play again at the Old Vic.

During the post-war period, the appeal of setting Shakespeare's comedy for dance, notably the classical ballet, was most pronounced in the 1960s. At the beginning of the decade, Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears collaborated on the libretto for an operatic version of Shakespeare's comedy at Aldeburgh, drawing on approximately half of the original text. If the production's Oberon discovers a sleeping 'Tytania, sometime of the night, / Lull'd in these flowers, with dances and delight', dance is later allowed to command the stage momentarily in the spectacle when a 'Bergomask' is called for: '*The other Rustics come in and arrange themselves for the dance. They dance. Midnight sounds. The rustics stop dancing, bow deeply to the Duke. Hippolyta and the court, and leave*'.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, in terms of fully fledged classical ballet adaptation, the French choreographer George Ballanchine created his first full-length ballet, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for the New York City Ballet in 1962, devoting its second act wholly and, for some critics, controversially to Theseus and Hippolyta's nuptial celebrations. Two years later, in 1964, Ashton created a one-act ballet *The Dream* for the Royal

Ballet in London. Both productions drew upon Mendelssohn's music and Ashton's *Dream* was conceived as one element in a billing of three – namely, a revival of the company's *Hamlet* ballet and another new ballet created by

Kenneth MacMillan and inspired by the *Sonnets* to mark the Royal Ballet's celebration of the Shakespeare quatercentenary. While Rudolf Nureyev danced in the first two elements, the Royal Ballet promoted the young dancers Antoinette Sibley and Anthony Dowell to interpret the roles of Titania and Oberon.

In the next decade, the American choreographer Jon Neumeier created *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été* (1977) for the Ballet de Hambourg. Interestingly, then dancing in the German company, Jean-Christophe Maillot would go on later as a choreographer himself to create his own ballet *Le Songe* for Les Ballets de Monte Carlo in 2005, drawing dynamically upon music from Mendelssohn, but also the percussive, and sometimes minimalist, scores by Daniel Teruggi and Bertrand Maillot. Here, Shakespeare's narrative is reconfigured imaginatively into three soundscapes divided amongst the Athenian lovers, the fairy kingdom, and the 'artisans'.¹¹⁰ Amongst other innovative and challenging productions of Shakespeare's comedy, Sukanta Chaudhuri draws attention to one staged in 1990 in

'violence-torn Lebanon' where 'a dance version [was staged] in a cedar forest outside Beirut'.¹¹¹ For his own Shakespeare-inspired ballets, the dancer/impresario Maurice Béjart had created *Le Songe d'une nuit d'hiver* for his company Les Ballets romantiques in 1953 at the Théâtre de l'Étoile, Paris – this production was choreographed to the music of Chopin, rather than that of Mendelssohn.¹¹² Nonetheless, perhaps most strikingly, in his memoirs Béjart recalled learning about the distinguished performance of one of the Argentinian dancers in his company who in his youth in Buenos Aires had danced Puck in an open-air performance of *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été*:

[il fut] projeté sur scène en Tarzan au bout d'une liane. A la première, il s'électrocuta: la liane le dépose sur un fil électrique à nu et il continue de jouer sans se rendre compte de rien; il ne s'évanouira qu'à la fin de la scène, en coulisses, terriblement déçu parce que son père était dans la salle ! Et trois jours d'hôpital...¹¹³

Any account of the invitation of Shakespeare's comedy to stage dance can never be exhaustive, but it remains remarkable how eagerly this invitation has been responded to down the centuries.

This discussion began with evocations of elite consumption of Elizabethan fairy entertainments and it is perhaps fitting that it should end in this way. Such spectacles were many and various as Elizabeth's reign unfolded. Thomas Churchyard, for example, recalled that as an amusing entertainment for Elizabeth's departure from Norwich in the summer of 1578 he arranged that 'seauen Boyes of twelue, should passe through a hedge from the place of oure abode (which was gallantly trimmed) and deliuer seauen speches, ... dressed like Nimphes of the water ... and to daunce (as neere as could be ymagined) like the Phayries. Their attire, and coming so strangely out, I know made the Queenes highnesse smyle and laugh withal'.¹¹⁴ In addition, this discussion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has sought to demonstrate that the early modern world of the dance was characterised by vehement and often contrary motions of opinion – and all might find their response in Shakespeare's dramatic narrative. To appreciate the breadth of opinion in the vigorous early modern debating of dance, the Elizabethan court's delight, Elyot's evocation of the natural cycles of experience embedded within dancing measures, or Arbeau's Platonic allusiveness to the figurations of the universe, for example, must be counterpointed by the critical voices of

Stubbes, who protested that ‘Euery leap or skip in dance, is a leap toward hel’, or that of Fetherston, who contended that ‘when as dauncinge was vsed, then men & women came abrode, and now they creep into corners, either to filtch or els to play the naughtipackes’.¹¹⁵

If the early modern cultural discourse of dance differed markedly in response to the allegiances of writer and the targeted readership as the early modern period unfolded, the irrepressibly passionate nature of the interventions in this debate in both word and deed remained evident for everyone to witness – as the Archdeacon’s Court in county of Kent was forced to acknowledge in 1580:

We present Elizabeth Brett wydowe an olde woman for keeping of naughty Rewle in her howse[.] continually she hath in her howse one of her daughters[,] whose name is Ioane wyllowes[,] a wydowe that sheweth her self to be of an yll Couersatyon[.] she hath ben seen vppon her mothers bed with Edward mylls the one in the others armes & the doors shut to them & made fast on the other syde, & no bodye in the howse to do y^t but her mother, And she hath also one christofer fforeman that doth resorte to her & hath done all this Sommer whome she sayth is her husband & is there sometimes to or three weekes together & lyeth in the howse susspicyouslye [together] but sheweth no lykelyhode of marryage ... This olde woman doth also retayne Thomas mylles the pyper & Edward mylls the fyddler in her howse, And if there by anye daunsynge in the Towne eyther by day or nighte the olde woman will be the first that shall begyn & the last that will leave. There were in our towne the weeke before whitesondaye a company of souldyers that were goyinge over the sea, whereof there were vj or vij of them that ran out of their hostes howse one eveninge starke naked in to the Strete having this mylls & his sonne to pype & to fyddle & there daunsinge, this oulde woman & her daughter Ioane wyllowes without all shame wente & daunsed wyth them.¹¹⁶

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Notes

¹ With regard to the extract quoted at this point, see: ‘The fourth day’s entertainment of ‘The Honorable Entertainment geuen to the Queenes Maiestie in Progresse, at Eluetham in Hampshire, by the right Honorable the Earle of Hertford. [Sept] 1591 *Newlie corrected, and amended*’, in John

v, John Nichols's *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth I: A New Edition of the Early Modern Sources*, vol. 3 (1579-1595), ed. Elizabeth Goldring et al. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014), 592.

² E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 3 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1945), 279. ³ The fourth day's entertainment of 'The Honorable Entertainment', in Nichols, *John Nichols's The Progresses...*, vol. 3, 593. In this context, see the account of a royal visit to Norwich in late August

1578 in David Galloway (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Norwich 1540-1642* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984), 315-6. Nor were these fairy entertainments limited to the reign of Elizabeth. Jonson himself, for example, penned the court masque *Oberon, the Faery Prince* in 1611 with Prince Henry interpreting the leading role.

⁴ Randy Martin, *Critical Moves. Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1998), 46.

⁵ Alan Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance* (London, Macmillan, 1981), 41.

⁶ Sondra Horton Fraleigh, *Dance and the Lived Body. A Descriptive Aesthetics* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1987), 140.

⁷ All references to the text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are taken from William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (London, Bloomsbury/Arden Shakespeare, 2017).

⁸ Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Booke named the Governour* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1537), sig. 71^v. ⁹ Skiles Howard, *The Politics of Courtly Dancing in Early Modern England* (Amherst MA, University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 4. In this context, see also Barbara Ravelhofer, *The Early Stuart Masque. Dance, Costume, and Music* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006), 8

¹⁰ Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010), 328.

¹¹ Merce Cunningham, *The Dancer and the Dance, in conversation with Jacqueline Lesschaeve* (New York, Marion Boyars, 1985), 27.

¹² Emily F. Winerock, "'Performing" Gender and Status on the Dance Floor in Early Modern England', in Kim Kippen and Lori Woods (eds), *Worth and Repute. Valuing Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Essays in Honour of Barbara Todd* (Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2011), 449-73 (451).

¹³ For further discussion, see Barbara Ravelhofer, 'Memorable Movements. Rhetoric and Choreography in Early Modern Courtly Entertainment', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 22.1 (1997), 1-18.

¹⁴ For further discussion, see: F. de Lauze, *Apologie de la Danse. A Treatise of Dancing and Deportment given in the Original French with a Translation, Introduction and Notes by Joan Wildeblood* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1952); Ravelhofer, 'Memorable Movements'; B[arthélemy] de Montagut, *Louange de la Danse*, ed. Barbara Ravelhofer, *Renaissance Texts from Manuscript*, 3 (Cambridge, RTM Pubs./Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000).

¹⁵ For further discussion here, see Ravelhofer, *The Early Stuart Masque*, 8

¹⁶ Dorothy Richey, 'The Dance in *Henry VIII*: A Production Problem', *Furman Studies XXXV*.3 (Spring 1952), 1-8 (2).

¹⁷ Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 2, 365.

¹⁸ Paul Hentzner, *A Journey into England by Paul Hentzner in the Year MDXCVIII*, ed. Horace Walpole, trans. R. Bentley (London, Strawberry Hill, 1757), 41.

¹⁹ Epigram XVII. See Sir John Davies, *The Complete Poems of Sir John Davies*, ed. A. B. Grosart, vol. 2 (London, Chatto & Windus, 1876), 18.

²⁰ William Kempe, *Kemps nine daies wonder. Performed in a daunce from London to Norwich... Written by himselfe to satisfie his friends* (London, E. A. for Nicholas Ling, 1600), sig. A2^v.

- ²¹ Satire V in Edward Guilpin, *Skialetheia. Or, A shadowe of Truth, in certaine Epigrams and Satyres* (London: I. R. for Nicholas Ling, 1598), sig. D5^{r-v}.
- ²² Ben Jonson, *Catiline. His Conspiracy* (London, William Burre, 1611), sig. A2^r.
- ²³ Frances Rust, *Dance in Society. An Analysis of the relationship between the Social Dance and Society in England from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 50.
- ²⁴ Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance*, 15.
- ²⁵ Ingrid Pfandl-Buchegger, 'The Performing Body in Renaissance Literature and Dance', *Anglia* 132.1 (2014), 23-39 (23). For further discussion of the extra-textual in Shakespeare's dramaturgy, see Andrew Hiscock, "'Enter Macduffe, with Macbeths Head": Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Staging of Trauma', in Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods (eds), *Stage Directions and Shakespearean Theatre* (London, Bloomsbury/Arden Shakespeare, 2017), 241-61.
- ²⁶ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks (London, Methuen & Co./Arden Shakespeare, 1979), lv. All quotations from the play are taken from this edition. ²⁷ In addition, in *Love's Labours Lost*, the page Moth enquires of Armado 'Will you win your love with a French brawl?' (3.1.7). In her discussion of the Basse Danses, Mabel Dolmetsch explains, 'This dance derives its name from the French word "branler", to swing from side to side, since the steps of the branle go alternately from left to right. The English converted the name into "brawl" ... Another feature of the branle, besides its sideways movement, is the linking of the row of dancers by the holding of hands or of fingers, so that they form a chain or a circle'. See Mabel Dolmetsch, *Dances of England and France from 1450 to 1600* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949), 55. For further discussion of the 'round', see Howard, *The Politics of Courtly Dancing*, 8-9.
- ²⁸ Genette specifies that *amorces* in a narrative do not function as 'annonces, par définition explicites', but rather as 'simples pierres d'attente sans anticipation, même allusive, qui ne trouveront leur signification que plus tard et qui relèvent de l'art tout classique de la "préparation"'. See Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris, Seuil, 1966), 112. Translation: 'heralds, by definition explicit'; 'simple figures of expectation free of anticipation, even allusive, which will only assume their meaning later and operate within the classic mode of "preparation"'. Unless otherwise indicated, translations from source texts are my own.
- ²⁹ Translation: 'To move with demur from the arts of Mars to those of Terpsichore may seem inappropriate, but the difference between courtly dance and combat ... is not as great as one would think'. See Sydney Anglo, *L'Écume, La Danse et L'Art de la Guerre: le livre et la représentation du mouvement* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris, 2011), 69. In her own study of early modern dance culture, Jennifer Nevile also emphasises that 'The dance masters often used battle as a theme for their choreographies'. See Jennifer Nevile, *The Eloquent Body. Dance and Humanist Culture in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Bloomington IN, Indiana University Press, 2004), 44.
- ³⁰ Translation: 'is all the more necessary for a noble, that this is an introduction to the most honourable exercises, whether he is required to appear in society, or to learn the handling of weapons for the service of his country'. Source text and translation may be found at the following: B. de Montagut, *Louange de la Danse*, ed. Ravelhofer, 107.
- ³¹ Hentzner, *A Journey into England*, 88.
- ³² John Stow, *A Suruay of London* (London, John Wolfe, 1598), 68-9.
- ³³ Clearly affected, Kempe's narrator adds: 'There parting with her, I gaue her (besides her skinfull of drinke) and English crowne to buy some more drinke, for good wench she was in a pittious heate: my kindnes she requited with dropping some dozen of short courtesies, and bidding God blesse the Dauncer, I bad her adieu: and to giue her her due, she had a good care, daunst truly, and wee parted friendly'. See Kempe, *Kemps nine daies wonder*, sig. B3^v.
- ³⁴ Indeed, this national reputation for an extravagant fondness for dancing pre-dates Elizabeth's reign. In the Norwich Chamberlain's accounts from 1547, for example, an entry records, 'Item gaf in reward on the sonday beyng sent Iamys Evans to certen spanyardes and ytalyans who dawnsyd antyck & played dyuerse bayne ffeetes at the Comon Halle byfore Master mayer and the Cominalte

xij s iij d'. See David Galloway (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Norwich 1540-1642* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984), 21.

³⁵ 'To the Reader', in James VI/I, *Basilikon Doron, or His Maiesties Instrvctions to his Dearest Sonne, henry the Prince* (London, E. Allde, 1603 2nd ed.), sig. A3^v.

³⁶ E. Francis Steuart (ed.), *Memoirs of Sir James Melville of Halhill 1535-1617* (London, Routledge, 1929), 96.

³⁷ Translation: 'The masquerade that took place that same evening was extremely beautiful, during which the Queen and Monsieur danced, as they had danced several times previously'. For source text and translation, see: Nichols, *John Nichols's The Progresses...*, vol. 3, 105.

³⁸ Qtd. in Edmund Lodge, *Illustrations of British history, biography and manners* (Farnborough, Gregg Int. Pubs., 1969 2nd ed. reprint), vol. 2, 386.

³⁹ Memoirs of Robert Carey – entry for December 1593. See Nichols, *John Nichols's The Progresses...*, vol. 3, 718.

⁴⁰ Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia, or Observations on the Late Queen Elizabeth, Her Times and Favorits* (London, s.n., 1641), 27. For further discussion of Hatton's reputation as a distinguished dancer, see: Lucy Aiken (ed.), *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth, in Two Volumes* (London: Longman, 1818), vol. 2, 10; M. Bella Mirabella, 'Mute Rhetorics: Women, the Gaze, and Dance in Renaissance England', *Genre*, 28:4 (1995), 413-40; M. Bella Mirabella, "'In the sight of all": Queen Elizabeth and the Dance of Diplomacy', *Early Theatre*, 15:1 (2012), 65-89.

⁴¹ 'A Particular Entertainment of the Queene and Prince their Highnesse at Althrope, at the Right Honourable the Lord Spencers, on Saterdag being the 25, of June 1603'. See Ben Jonson, *His Part of King James his Royall and Magnificent Entertainment through his Honorable Cittie of London ... With other Additions* (London, Edward Blount, 1604), 10-11. Interestingly, for this entertainment also: 'there came tripping vp the lawne, a Beuy of Faeries attending on Mab their Queene, who falling into an artificiall ring, that was there cut in the pathe, began to daunce a round'; the Satyr 'mixing himselfe with the Faeries skipped in, out, and about their Circles'; and the 'Faeries hopt away in a fantastique daunce' (ibid. respectively 2, 3, 7).

⁴² André Hurault de Maise, *A Journal of all that was accomplished by Monsieur de Maisee Ambassador in England from King Henri IV to Queen Elizabeth Anno Domini 1597*, trans. G. B. Harrison and R. A. Jones (London, Nonesuch Press, 1931), 95.

⁴³ Henry Foley (ed.), *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus ... in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (London: Burns & Oates, 1877): I.5.

⁴⁴ Rowland Whyte to Robert Sidney, 28th December 1602. See John Nichols, *John Nichols's The Progresses...*, vol. 4 (1596-1603), 210.

⁴⁵ See E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 1, 6.

⁴⁶ *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, ll. 240-3. See Ben Jonson, *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1969), 273.

⁴⁷ Qtd. in Stanley Wells and T. J. B. Spencer (eds), *A Book of Masques* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980), 234. De Lauze reports that the dedicatee of his tract, the Duke of Buckingham, was 'the finest dancer in the country'. See F. de Lauze, *Apologie de la Danse. A Treatise of Dancing and Deportment given in the Original French with a Translation, Introduction and Notes by Joan Wildeblood* (London, Frederick Muller Ltd., 1952), 19.

⁴⁸ Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé* (Paris, La Fabrique, 2008), 9, 13-4, 19. Translations: 'We therefore need a different theatre, a theatre without spectators'; 'to teach their spectators ways of ceasing to be spectators and becoming agents of a collective practice ... Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting'. See Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London, Verso, 2009), 3, 7-8, 13.

⁴⁹ Voiced by Philoponus in the section entitled 'The horrible Vice of pestiferous dauncing, vsed in Ailgna'. See Phillip Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses* (London, John Kingston for Richard Jones, 1583), sigs. M8^f-M8^v. In this context, see also, for example, the condemnation of dance as 'the Nurce of much naughtiness', in Thomas Lovell, *A Dialogue between custom and veritie concerning the use and abuse of dauncing and minstrelsie* (London, John Allde, 1581), sig. A4^v.

- ⁵⁰ For further discussion here of medieval criticism of dance, see Alessandro Arcangeli, 'Moral Views on Dance', in Jennifer Nevile (ed.), *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick, 1250-1750* (Bloomington IN, Indiana University Press, 2008), 282-94 (esp. 284).
- ⁵¹ Commentary on Psalm 91.2. See *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, Garnier, 1845), vol. XXXVII, col. 1172. Interestingly, in *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531), Elyot dismissed such criticism saying it surely referred to the dancing practised in Augustine's time. See Elyot, *the Governour* (1537 ed.), 67 (I.19). For accounts of how dancing might be interpreted in the Bible in early modern print culture and in more recent criticism, see, for example: Lovell, *A Dialogve between custom and veritie*, sig. B5^v; Gervase Babington, *A very fruitfull exposition of the Commaundements* (London, Henry Middleton for Thomas Charde, 1583), 321; Matthieu Coignet, *Politique discours upon trueth and lying ... Newly translated out of French into English, by Sir Edward Hoby, Knight* (London, John Windet for Ralfe Newberie, 1586), esp. 39; Mary Pennino-Baskerville, 'Terpsichore Reviled: Antidance Tracts in Elizabethan England', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 22:3 (Autumn 1991), 475-94 (esp. 482); Alessandro Arcangeli, 'Moral Views on Dance', in Nevile, *Dance, Spectacle, and the Body Politick*, esp. 286
- ⁵² Christopher Fetherston, *A dialogue agaynst light, lewde, and lasciuious dauncing* (London: Thomas Dawson, 1582), sigs. D7^r-D7^v.
- ⁵³ Babington, *A very fruitfull exposition*, 318.
- ⁵⁴ Ex Officio Act Book (22 September 1606): record of court proceedings held in the house of Anthony Methwyn, MA, surrogate judge, at Bath. See James Stokes (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset (including Bath)*, ed. Robert J. Alexander (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1996), 20.
- ⁵⁵ Stephen Gosson, *The schoole of abuse* (London, for Thomas Woodcocke, 1579), sig. 16^r. ⁵⁶ 'Lunish' in this context draws upon early modern connotations of nocturnal (moonish), madness (lunes) and submission to the unruly forces of nature. For instances of such usage, see, for example: Richard Mulcaster, *Positions* (London, Thomas Vautrollier for Thomas Chard, 1581), 176; Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, 2.2.31.
- ⁵⁷ Fetherston, *A dialogue*, sig. D7^r.
- ⁵⁸ See respectively: Fetherston, *A dialogue*, sig. M8^r; Elyot, *the Governour* (1537 ed.), 78 (I.21).
- ⁵⁹ Thoinet Arbeau, *Orchesography*, trans. Mary Stewart Evans, new intro. Julia Sutton (New York, Dover Pubs., 1967), 12. In this context of dance as a healthy bodily pursuit, see Fabio Ciambella, 'There was a star danced': *Danza e rivoluzione copernica in Shakespeare* (Rome, Carocci, 2017), 27. ⁶⁰ Fetherston, *A dialogue*, sig. C7^v.
- ⁶¹ Anonymous, *A Treatise of Daunses* (London, H. Middleton?, 1581), sig. A5^r.
- ⁶² Ex Officio Act Book, Bridgwater, Somerset (24 February 1640). See Stokes (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset (including Bath)*, 60.
- ⁶³ Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*, sig. M4^r.
- ⁶⁴ Bishop's Court Deposition Book (28 May 1633). Statement taken before William Hunt in Wells in the presence of Matthew Peck, notary public. See Stokes (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset (including Bath)*, 63. In this context, see also the account of those spending their time in 'drunkenness, dauncing & singing of ribaldry songes, and [who] seldome repayreth to the church on sondayes and holydayes' (ibid., 95).
- ⁶⁵ Translations: 'dances and other similar dissolute behaviours'; 'only seek to leap and dance like mad animals'. See respectively: Jean Calvin, 'Sermon LXXIX sur le livre de Job', in Jean Calvin, *Sermons de M. Jean Calvin sur le livre de Job*, ed. Denis Raguénier et al. (Geneva, Matthieu Berjon, 1611), 404; Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*, sig. O2^r.
- ⁶⁶ Archbishop Grindal's Register (1570-6). See Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (eds), *Records of Early English Drama: York* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1979), vol. 1, 358. In this context, see also, for example: James Stokes, *Records of Early English Drama: Lincolnshire* (London/Toronto, The British Library/University of Toronto Press, 2009), vol. 1, 9, 11. ⁶⁷ Qtd. in Marsh, *Music and Society*, 377.
- ⁶⁸ Wimborne Minster. Churchwardens' Presentments to the Peculiar Court 1609-10. See Rosalind

Conklin Hay & C. E. McGee (eds), *Records of Early English Drama: Dorset*, Sally L. Joyce & Evelyn S. Newlyn (eds), *Records of Early English Drama: Cornwall* (Toronto: Brepols & University of Toronto Press, 1999), 286. Such responses were indeed not restricted to the lower orders of early modern society. When James VI/I was asked to respond to the popular appetite to see their sovereign in public, he allegedly declared, ‘God’s wounds! I will pull down my breeches and they shall also see my arse’. Qtd. in P. Johnson, *The Offshore Islanders* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975), 257.⁶⁹ Quarter Sessions Roll, Glastonbury (20 July 1617). See Stokes, *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset (including Bath)*, 132-3. In this context, see also: *ibid.*, 162; John R. Elliott et al. (eds), *Records of Early English Drama: Oxford*, in 2 vols (London/Toronto: The British Library/University of Toronto Press, 2004), vol. 2, 906.

⁷⁰ John Case, *The Praise of Musick* (Oxford, Joseph Barnes, 1586), 79.⁷¹

Fetherston, *A dialogue*, sig. ¶5^f.

⁷² Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé*, 8. Translation: ‘being a spectator is a bad thing ... viewing is the opposite of knowing ... [and] it is the opposite of acting’. Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Elliott, 2.

⁷³ Margaret M. McGowan, *Dance in the Renaissance. European Fashion, French Obsession* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), 209. In this context, see also Ciambella, ‘*There was a star danced*’, 43.

⁷⁴ Davies’s poetic narrative then adds, ‘But that her Art was somewhat lesse, she thought,/And on a meere ignoble subiect wrought’. See stanza 129 in Sir John Davies, *Nosce Teipsum ... Orchestra or A poeme of Dauncing* (London, Augustine Mathewes, 1622), sig. L2^v. The first edition of the poem is published in 1596.

⁷⁵ *Timaeus* 40c. See *Timaeus*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl in Plato, *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper et al. (Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 1244. See also ‘The Dance’, where Lucian’s danceophile voice, Lycinus, argues: ‘In fact, the concord of the heavenly spheres, the interlacing of the errant planets with the fixed stars, their rhythmic agreement and timed harmony, are proofs that Dance was primordial’. See ‘The Dance’, in Lucian, *Works*, Eng. trans. A. M. Harmon, 8 vols. (London/Cambridge MA, William Heinemann Ltd./Harvard University Press, 1936), vol. 5, 221.

⁷⁶ At the close of Lucian’s dialogue, Crato submits, ‘Upon my word, Lycinus, I have come to the point of believing you and am all agog, ear and eye alike. Do remember, my friend, when you go to the theatre, to reserve me a seat at your side, in order that you may not be the only one to come back to us wiser!’. See Lucian, ‘The Dance’, in Lucian, *Works*, vol. 5, 289.

⁷⁷ Lucian, ‘The Dance’, in Lucian, *Works*, vol. 5, 211, 219, 283.

⁷⁸ Lucian, ‘The Dance’, in Lucian, *Works*, vol. 5, 269. This emphasis upon the parities between the somatic and the verbal vocabularies of the rhetorician was also taken up by Quintilian. See Quintilian, Marcus Fabius. *Institutio Oratoria*, 4 vols. ed. H. E. Butler (London: Heinemann, 1921), vol. 2, 3.8587.

⁷⁹ Thoinet Arbeau, *Orchesography. Methode, et Teorie en forme de discovrs et Tablature pour apprendre a Dancer, battre le Tambour ...* (Langres, Jehan des Preyz, 1596 2nd ed.), 104. Translation: ‘dancing is a kind of mute rhetoric by which the orator, without uttering a word, can make himself understood and persuade spectators’; ‘practise these dances thoroughly and make yourself a worthy companion to the planets who are natural dancers’. Translations may be found in the following: Arbeau, *Orchesography*, trans. Evans, 16, 195. In his *De pratica seu arte tripudii* (c. 1463), Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro envisaged dance mirrored the rhetorical steps of *inventio*, *elocutio*, *dispositio*, *memoria*, and *actio*, with its own procedures: ‘ciò è misura, memoria, partir di terreno, aiere, mainiera, et movimento corporeo, et maximamente la memoria et misura’. Translation: ‘that is, *misura*, memory, the proportioning of the ground, *aiere*, *maniera*, and bodily movement, and especially memory and *misura*’. Qtd. in Nevile, *The Eloquent Body*, 95. Among the sixteenth-century humanists, Agrippa had argued that ‘There was moreouer the Rhetoricall daunsinge, not vnlinke that of the stage players, but not so vehement, which *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Cicero*, *Quintilian*, and very many of the *Stoickes* thought very profitable, and necessary for an Oratour’, but

this usage, according to Agrippa, had declined into extravagance in more recent times. See Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *Of the Vanitie and vncertaintie of Artes and Sciences Englished by Ia. San. Gent.* (London, Henry Wykes, 1569), sig. 32^v.

⁸⁰ Elyot, *the Governour* (1537 ed.), sigs. 77^v, 79^v. This neo-platonic emphasis would be taken by F. de Lauze/B. de Montagut in *Louange de la Danse* (1623): ‘Le mouuement des Cieux qu’est-il autre chose qu’vne Danse continuelle, qui se fait autour de la terre, et qui affermit en son propre Centre: Ces beaux Corps Spheriques, ne suiuent ils point les pas du premier Mobile, qui mene ce bransle celeste, et le reçoit luy-mesme d’vne pure Intelligence, qui ne se lasse iamais de le tenir en action?’ (Translation: What else is the movement of the heavens but a continual dance round the world, which confirms it in its centre. Do these glorious celestial bodies not follow the steps of the *primum mobile* which leads this celestial *branle* and which itself receives this motion from a pure Intelligence, which never ceases to keep it in motion?). See Barthélemy de Montagut, *Louange de la Danse*, ed. Barbara Ravelhofer, Renaissance Texts from Manuscript No. 3 (Cambridge, RTM Pubs./Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), 95. De Lauze had penned this tract and dedicated it to the royal favourite George Villiers, then Marquess of Buckingham. De Montagut had in his possession a copy of the *Apologie de la Danse* and publishes it as his own work. In *Apologie de la danse* (1623), De Lauze makes public the accusation of de Montagut’s flagrant plagiarism.

⁸¹ For further discussion here, see Ingrid Pfandl-Buchegger, ‘The Performing Body in Renaissance Literature and Dance’, *Anglia*, 132:1 (2014), 23-39 (esp. 23-4).

⁸² Peter Martyr (Pietro Martire Vermigli), *A briefe Treatise, Concerning the vse and abuse of Dauncing. Collected oute of the learned workes of the most excellent Deuine Doctour, Peter Martyr, by Maister Rob. Massonius: And translated into English by I. K.* (London, John Iugge, 1580?), sig. C6^r.

⁸³ Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (London, John Daye, 1570), 19-20. In this context, see also James Cleland, *Hero-paideia, or The Institution of a young noble man* (London, James Barnes, 1607), 226.

⁸⁴ Juan Luis Vives, *A very fruteful and pleasant boke callyd the Instruction of a Christen woman ... tourned oute of latyne into Englysshe by Richard Hyrde* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1541), sig. N2^v.

⁸⁵ See stanza 129 in Davies, *Nosce Teipsum ... Orchestra*, sig. H7^r.

⁸⁶ Breerewood ms., Middle temple library. Qtd. in James P. Cunningham, *Dancing in the Inns of Court* (London: Jordan & Sons, 1965), 3.

⁸⁷ Nichols, *John Nichols’s The Progresses...*, vol. 3, 801. For an account of the ‘ole measures’, see Ciambella, ‘*There was a star danced*’, 19.

⁸⁸ ‘Regulations Recommended for the Apparel of London Apprentices’ (1582). See Nichols, *John Nichols’s The Progresses...*, vol. 3, 160. Marsh also notes that ‘In 1554 and 1603, for example, attempts were made in Newcastle upon Tyne to prevent the city’s apprentices from dancing publicly in the streets, particularly at night’. See Marsh, *Music and Society*, 367. ⁸⁹ Fetherston, *A dialogue*, sig. D7^r.

⁹⁰ Margaret M. McGowan, *Dance in the Renaissance. European Fashion, French Obsession* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), 192.

⁹¹ ‘The Honorable Entertainment giuen to the Queenes Maiestie in Progresse, at Cowdrey in Sussex, by the right Honorable the Lord Montecute [Montagu]’ (August, 1591). See Nichols, *John Nichols’s The Progresses...*, vol. 3, 560.

⁹² Letter from the Earl of Worcester to the Earl of Shrewsbury (19th September 1602). See Nichols, *John Nichols’s The Progresses...*, vol. 4, 199.

⁹³ Rust, *Dance in Society*, 47. In this context, see also Ciambella, ‘*There was a star danced*’, 47.

⁹⁴ Claire Gwendoline Hansen, ‘The Complexity of Dance in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*’, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 18:1/2 (2015), 1-26 (13). The ‘nine-men’s morris’ in this extract refers to outside gaming with pegs or pebbles. See Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, ed. Brooks, 33.

- ⁹⁵ For a discussion of the Bergomask or Bergamasca, see Skiles Howard, 'Hands, Feet, and Bottoms: Decentering the Cosmic Dance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44:3 (Autumn 1993), 325-42 (337).
- ⁹⁶ Stokes, *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset (including Bath)*, 30.
- ⁹⁷ Entry for 29th September 1662. See Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Richard Le Gallienne (New York, The Modern Library, 2003), 74.
- ⁹⁸ The libretto has been attributed to Elkanah Settle. As Trevor R. Griffiths points out, only 750 lines of Shakespeare's text make their way into this production unmodified. See Trevor R. Griffiths (ed.), *Shakespeare in Production: A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 211.
- ⁹⁹ Henry Purcell, *The Works of Henry Purcell*, t. 12 - *The Fairy Queen*, ed. J. S. Sherlock & Anthony Lewis (Borough Green, Sevenoaks, Novello, 1968), xi.
- ¹⁰⁰ Qtd. Katherine West Schiel, *The Taste of the Town. Shakespearean Comedy and the Early Eighteenth-Century Theater* (Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 2003), 77. For further discussion here, see Andrew Hiscock, "'Fruit of that monst'rous night!": *Le théâtre anglais 1660-1760 et les plaisirs de la nuit*', *Arrêt sur Scène/Scene Focus*, 4 (2015), 33-48. This production, slightly revised and with musical additions, was re-presented for London audiences in the following year. However, it was not revived after this second run. Some twenty years earlier, in 1674, there had been a version of *The Tempest* staged in a partly operatic mode and this continued to hold its own in the repertory to the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, the latter, opulent production of *The Fairy Queen* failed to enjoy this success.
- ¹⁰¹ Richard Leveridge, *The Comic Masque of Pyramus and Thisbe, As it is Perform'd at the Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn Fields* (London, W. Mears, 1716), 12. ¹⁰² Leveridge, *The Comic Masque*, 13.
- ¹⁰³ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13.
- ¹⁰⁴ For further discussion here, see Alan Brissenden, 'Shakespeare and Dance: Dissolving Boundaries', in Christa Jansohn, Lena Cowen Orlin and Stanley Wells (eds), *Shakespeare Without Boundaries. Essays in Honor of Dieter Mehl* (Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2011), 92-106 (93).
- ¹⁰⁵ Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Foakes, 13.
- ¹⁰⁶ Griffiths (ed.), *Shakespeare in Production: A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 31.
- ¹⁰⁷ For further discussion, see Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, 'Shakespeare, Ballet and Dance', in Mark Thornton Burnett et al. (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 200-18 (202).
- ¹⁰⁸ This production was revived in 1951 by John Cranko. For further discussion here, see Brissenden, 'Shakespeare and Dance: Dissolving Boundaries', 92-3.
- ¹⁰⁹ See http://www.teatrolafenice.it/media/libretti/14_7649midsummer_bb.pdf, 26, 82.
- ¹¹⁰ For further discussion of this innovative production, see Andrew Hiscock, 'Moving Shakespeare Dancing with the Bard in Montpellier and Nice' (forthcoming).
- ¹¹¹ See 'Introduction', in Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Chaudhuri, 1-115 (1). ¹¹² Like Maillot, Béjart also choreographed a version of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (*La Mégère Apprivoisée*).
- ¹¹³ Maurice Béjart, *Un Instant dans la Vie d'Autrui. Mémoires* (Paris, Flammarion, 1979), 217. Translation: [He was] catapulted onto the scene dressed as Tarzan at the end of jungle vine. At the première, he was electrocuted: the vine landed him on a bare electric cable and he continued to perform without realising anything had happened; he would only pass out at the end of the scene, in the wings, bitterly disappointed because his father was in the audience! And three days spent in hospital...'
- ¹¹⁴ Galloway, *Records of Early English Drama: Norwich*, 327-8.

¹¹⁵ See respectively: Stubbes, *Anatomie of Abuses*, sig. O1^r; Fetherston, *A dialogue*, sig. D6^r. ¹¹⁶ James M. Gibson (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama: Kent – Diocese of Canterbury*, 3 vols (London/Toronto, The British Library/University of Toronto Press, 2002), vol. 2, 819-20.

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