Records of Early English Drama

JAMES STOKES AND INGRID BRAINARD

'The olde Measures' in the West Country: John Willoughby's manuscript

A one-page list of Elizabethan dances with their choreographies, surviving among the Trevelyan family papers at Somerset Record Office in Taunton, has come to light during research on the REED volume for that county. Designated SRO DD/wo 55/7, item 36, the list is written on a paper bifolium preserved in a bundle of 60 loose papers (letters, inventories, and other notes concerning domestic life) in the Trevelyan collection. Its dimensions are 300mm by 200mm (the text covering 230mm by 180mm). The list is entitled 'The olde Measures' and was signed at the bottom in 1594 by 'Io Willoughbye'. It names eight measures and provides choreography for each one, and mentions the Galliard (lacking choreographic description) at the end of the list. It is one of only seven such documents known to survive. This newly-discovered document is interesting not only because it is the only one of the seven that is dated, but because it differs from the others in some details and appears in records far

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removed from venues associated with the Inns of Court, suggesting the possibility of performance in a country house setting.

The man who signed the list was John Willoughby (b Sept 27, 1571, d 1658), lifelong resident of Payhembury, Devon, and "the influential, respected centre of a large family circle," who married Margaret Steyning of Holnicott, Somerset in 1598. The Willoughby papers are now among the papers of the Tevelyans of Nettlecombe Court, Somerset, deposited at Somerset Record Office in Taunton. Apparently they made their way into the Tevelyan Collection in 1656 when Mary Willoughby, granddaughter of John and daughter/heir of John Willoughby junior (last male heir in the Willoughby line), married George Trevelyan of Nettlecombe. There is nothing before that time to connect the dances with the Trevelyans or with a performance of the dances at Nettlecombe Court. The connection of the dances with west country performance would seem to be at one of Willoughby's several residences in Devon.

John Willoughby senior's name does not appear in the registers of the Inns of Court, or of Oxford, but considerable circumstantial evidence links him with the law courts. His correspondence includes 'twenty-two letters from two barristers settled in London (John Willoughby's son-in-law John Tuberbill, and William Davy of Creedy, whose sister was his son's second wife). In 1600 Willoughby addressed a letter 'To my very good frend Mr Humphrey Spurway, at Mr Edmond Prydeaux his Chamber in the Inner Temple,' in which he mentions having been 'in London the laste terme' of the courts. Spurway was a baronet 'of great reputation for skill in the law,' and Spurway was employed in his office. Spurway also wrote to Willoughby from the Inner Temple in 1605 describing a disputation between bishops and ministers moderated by the King. George Montgomery 'presented by Queen Elizabeth to the living of Chedzoy,' Somerset, eventually the first Protestant Bishop of Londonderry, and connected to the Willoughbys by his marriage to the daughter of Philip Steyning (Willoughby's sister-in-law), 'acted as broker to his brother-in-law' in buying influential public offices. A letter to Willoughby from Montgomery in 1603 comments knowledgeably that 'all monopolies and excessive taking of fees in courts are prohibited by proclamation.' Willoughby's son John (b 1611, m 1632) was at Oxford in 1630, from where he addressed four letters to his father, between April and December that year. In April 1631, a letter addressed to John Willoughby senior at Payhembury was left for delivery at 'the Middle Temple in London, at Mr John Willoughby's Chamber.' John junior was not admitted to the Inner Temple until 5 November 1639, but may already have been working or studying there. The wording suggests that the office was his. So even though Devon was the lifelong centre of Willoughby senior's life, he had close and sustained legal contacts with persons at the Inns of Court and was present there from time to time.

When he signed the list of dances in 1594, Willoughby was twenty-three years old and unmarried. The presence of his signature reflects his interest even then in formal dancing as it would have occurred in the Inns of Court and perhaps in the great houses of the west country. Later, as the head of a large family making diverse economic demands upon him, Willoughby's interest in the courts seems mainly to have been in their possible impact upon his estates and relatives. He would have had little time or
opportunity for dancing in London. What, then, are we to make of the list of dances and its probable contexts?

No other dance type, with the possible exception of the Galliard, is mentioned as frequently in English literature from the second half of the sixteenth to the late seventeenth century as the Measure. The term, because of its varied shades of meaning, lent itself ideally for punning by Tudor and Stuart wits, among whom not surprisingly Shakespeare occupies a place of preeminence. For him, and others, measure could represent a measuring device for time, space, mass, that is, for quantity; measure in the Aristotelian sense is the golden mean and indicates, in terms of civility, restraint; measure in the context of Elizabethan and Jacobean dancing is the name for specific dances as well as a directive for performance.13 The definition is even more complicated by the variety of descriptive adjectives – delightful, solemn, stately, mannerly modest, antick, etc – that were then used in conjunction with Measures,14 and by the fact that danced Measures occurred in the setting of the ballroom as well as in grand entertainments such as Masques.15 For our present purpose the masquers’ measures are only of peripheral importance; we are concerned with Measures for the ballroom, particularly with the set of The Olde Measures (various spellings) that were traditionally performed at the beginning of balls held at the Inns of Court in London from c 1570 to c 1675.

The group of eight dances in the Willoughby list begins with a Pavane, The Quadrant Pavin, very much in keeping with late sixteenth-century continental practices that favoured the stately processional Pavane as the opening dance of a given festive evening.16 The English Pavin Measure is distinct from the French Pavane by its pattern in which the dancers trace a square on the floor – hence the name.17 Second in the set is Turcullonye (various spellings), like Tinternell (no. 4) without genre classification in the title. The only choreography specifically called Measure is no. 3, ThEarle of Essex his measure. The remaining four dances are Almaines, namely, The old Almaine (no. 5), The Queenes Almaine (no. 6), Scillia Almaine (no. 7),18 and The blacke Almaine (no. 8). The sequence concludes with The Galliard, for which no choreographic specifics are given.19

Given this diversity of designations, what then is it that makes a Measure a Measure? And what distinguishes, for instance, a conventional Allemande from an Almaine Measure? We must agree with John Ward’s statement that ‘the term “measure” … was applied to dances with individual choreographies … to distinguish them from dances whose steps were typical.’20 In other words, anyone who in the late sixteenth and early to mid-seventeenth century went to dancing school in London, or Paris, or any other dance-conscious European metropolis, learned from the dancing master a variety of step-sequences required for the performance of the fashionable dances: Pavane, Galliard, Allemande, Courante, etc.21 Over time a movement vocabulary was developed that could be used at the dancers’ discretion and according to the level of his or her ability with any piece of music of the same genre that the musicians chose to play in the course of a ball or an assembly.22 But there was only one way to perform Turkeylonye, or ThEarle of Essex his measure, or Tinternell. Consequently, the Olde Measures as well as those composed for masques had to be memorized in their entirety.23
Like five of the hitherto-known manuscripts, the Willoughby Measures are transmitted without music; the tunes for The Quadran Pavin and The blace Almaine are among those notated in ms Music 1119. But the frequency with which the dance titles appear in music sources of the period, in books for the lute, for citrinx, for keyboard instruments and consort, suggests that this was a repertoire of melodies familiar to the practising musicians who were part of every household of repute, from the outlying manor to the royal palace, and who could and would play them from memory.

John Willougby's sequence of the Olde Measures is concordant with that of most of the Inns of Court sources; only the earliest of these, the ms Rawl 108 of c 1570, relates a programme in which the soon-to-be-called Olde Measures alternate with other choreographies, among them two Paviions, a Coranto, and a concluding piece, The nyne Muses. The blace Almaine is still missing; it seems to have entered the repertoire after Elinor Gunter had completed her Commonplace Book. Apparently in 1570 at Lincoln's Inn, the set, which only a few years later was to become standard for the Solemn Revels, had not yet quite found its eventual shape.

Harley 367 (c 1575–c 1625) and the late Music 1119 (c 1640–75) carry the sequence intact and without additional dances. Douce 280 from the Middle Temple (c 1606), the 'Practice for Dauncinge,' begins with our set but continues with an extensive group of choreographies for the Post Revels in which dances from France and Italy appear side by side with other English Measures. The 'copye of the oulde measures' in ms Rawlinson D.864 (c 1630) had diagrams and descriptions for two additional choreographies: I.T.R. 27 (Butler Buggins, c 1640–75) adds Argulius Measure 'to be Danct about the Middle of the Measures' after the sinke a pace. It appears that in the chronology of the documents John Willoughby in 1594 was the first to use the formula 'The Olde Measures' as the title for the sequence.

Choreographically the eight Willoughby Measures resemble closely those of the other manuscripts; all vary from one another in some details of execution, in the direction and the names of steps, in the length of phrases, in the presence or absence of repeats prescribed for a given section. There is no simple explanation for these discrepancies. R.D. Wilson conjectures that they 'may reflect a difference of tradition between one Inn and the other,' or that poor memory or carelessly copied notes may have been the cause, or that a natural process of evolution may have taken place over the time-span of nearly a century, or that dancing masters like Rowland Osborne or Robert Holeman at the Inner Temple may have made their influence felt.

The step-repertoire in all seven sources is limited. It consists basically of single steps forward, backwards and to the side, and of double steps forward, backwards and turning. Rawl 108 uses 'reprynse backe' (= reprise) in the place where the later documents, including Willoughby, have a 'double backe,' another indication of the somewhat old-fashioned, bassedanse-related style of that manuscript. Only Douce 280 demands the courteous reverence (Honour) at the beginning and at the end of each dance, very much in accordance with generally accepted practices of etiquette. It is possible that the little formula 'and soe end' in four of the seven ms implies a final reverence, but we cannot be sure.
When the steps are combined into phrases and directional changes occur, either in relation to the dancing space or in the positioning of the partners, patterns or 'figures' result. Many of these figures are of a venerable age; they can be documented from the mid-fifteenth century on and are most likely much older than that. Frequent is the going round first holding the partner’s right hand, then the left (e.g., Tinternelh, The blacke Almaine), or going round ‘both wayes’ with both hands of the partner taken (as at the beginning of The olde Almaine). Then there is the graceful step combination known to English Country Dancers as ‘set and turn’ which consists of two sideways single steps (first to the left, then to the right) danced facing the partner, and a turning double step. In Willoughby’s The Queenes Almaine this configuration reads ‘2 singles syde, caste of a double rounde.’ Occasionally there is a place change followed by a return to original positions (e.g., Scillia Almaine); ‘honour & imbrace’ occur there as well.36

In The blacke Almaine (no. 8) Willoughby twice uses the term ‘traverse’ for the sideways progression that the couples make while holding one another by both hands: ‘take both handes & goe A double round & traverse 4: on your left hande;’ at the repeat of the figure immediately following they are told to ‘traverse fower on your righte.’ In the corresponding place Douce 280 says ‘slide upwards 4.’ and ‘slyde downe 4.’ which is a little clearer than Willoughby’s directives. Both Butler Buggins manuscripts (I.T.R. 27 and Music 1119) give the sliding step a name: ‘slide four french slydes to the mans right hand,’ change places holding both hands with partner and then ‘slyde 4 french slydes to the right hand againe.’ Willoughby’s The blacke Almaine ends at this point; missing is the final passage in which the partners back away from each other with double step and then meet again with another double.37

We can only conjecture as to how the various steps employed in the ballroom Measures were done. While we have a fair number of contemporary dance instruction books from the Continent that transmit details of dance technical execution,38 English treatises containing such information are practically non-existent. Even John Playford who had close connections to the Inner Temple gives only the basics and is less than clear in these, probably because he, like Willoughby and the compilers of the Inns of Court mss, could assume that the dancing English of his day knew how to do single and double steps and reverences.

In a tradition that begins with the dance manuals of the fifteenth century39 the double step consisted of three small steps, ending either in an open position or followed by a close. This appears to be what Playford envisioned in his description ‘A Double is foure steps forward or back, closing both feet.’40 A single step according to Playford ‘is two steps closing both feete;’41 what he seems to mean is the step + close of Arbeau’s pas simple.42 More than the single and double steps, which were the backbone of the dance techniques through the Renaissance and into the Baroque period, reverences or Honours were subject to change, both regionally and in the light of newly emerging aesthetic ideas. For the Willoughby Measures of 1594, Renaissance reverences would be appropriate43 whether the French or the Italian style of bowing should be chosen would depend on the decision of the master of ceremonies or the Master of the Revels, or on the personal preference of the host/hostess or ‘presence’ at an event.

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There is no need to go into all the ramifications of technique here. Suffice it to say that the steps of John Willoughby’s ‘The olde Measures’ appear to be in the mainstream of the dance traditions both in England and on the Continent; they are simple and uncontrived, well-suited for the Solemn Revels in which the lawyers presented themselves in full professional attire, or for guests of renown and social standing in attendance at a Ball in an English country manor.

TRANSCRIPTION

1594

John Willoughby’s List of Dances

Somerset Record Office: DD/WO 55/7
item 36, bifolium

The olde Measures
The Quadran Pavin./
2 singles & one double forward :2: singles side & a double back :4: times over:

Turculonye./
A double forwarde & a double backe :4: times: 2 singles & a double forward 
twice then begin all againe

The Earle of Essex his measure./
A double forward and a single backe :4: times :2: singles syde, a double forward 
& a double backe, then begin all againe/

Tinternell
A double forwarde and a double backe :2: singles & a double round firste with the 
one hande & then with the other, a double forward & a double back 3 times :2: 
singles & a double round both wayes./

The olde Almaine./
Take both handes, & goe :2: singles & one double round both wayes :4 doubles 
forward, then with both handes :2: singles & one double rounde

The Queenes Almaine
A double forward & a double backe, :2: singles syde, Caste of A double [round] 
rounde, A double forwarde with your righte legge & a double backe, 2 singles 
syde Caste of & a double round :5 doubles forwarde, & a double backe, 2: 
singles cast of A double rounde, A double forwarde with your righte legge, A 
double backe, :2:singles syde caste of a double rounde

Scilly Almaine
2 singles & a double forwarde & a single backe twice, parte handes, 2 singles 
syde and honor :2: singles & a double into your womans place, then honour & 
inbrace :2 singles syde & honour :2 singles & a double into your owne place, 
then honour & imbrace

The blacke Almaine
flower doubles forwarde, parte handes, a double backe one from an other, a double 
meetinge againe, a double on your lefte hande & an other on your righte, take both
handes & goe A double round & traverse :4 on your lefte hande, A double rounde & traverse fower on your righte

The Galliard
1594 John Willoughbye

NOTES

1 The reed editor for Somerset wishes to thank Mary Siraut, assistant editor of the Victoria County History of Somerset, for having brought this document to his attention in 1981.

2 The six are: Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Rawlinson Poet 108, c 1570, the so-called Elinor Gunter Commonplace Book (hereafter cited as Rawl 108); London, British Library, ms Harley 367, c 1575–1625, a collection of papers and fragments written by J. Stowe and others (hereafter Harl 367); Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Douce 280, c 1606, a collection of notes, essays, etc written by John Ramsey; the dance sequence is entitled 'Practise for Dauncinge' (hereafter Douce 280); Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Rawlinson D 864, c 1630, miscellaneous papers of Elias Ashmole (hereafter Rawl 864); London, Inner Temple Records, 'Revels, Foundlings & Unclassified, Miscellanea, Undated etc.' vol 27, c 1640–1675, written by Butler Buggins (hereafter I.T.R. 27); and London, Royal College of Music, ms 1119, c 1640–1675, with music for 5 Measures. The dance sequence is entitled 'A Coppye of the old Measures in ye Inner Temple' and is signed by Butler Buggins (hereafter Music 1119).


4 Ibid, pedigree chart following 348. See also Wilfrid Drake, 'Willoughby Arms,' Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries 7 (Jan 1912–Oct 1913), 273–4.

5 Ibid, xxxii.

6 Ibid, 32–3.

7 Ibid, 88.

8 Ibid, xiv.

9 Ibid, xviii.

10 Ibid, 45.

11 Ibid, 179.

12 Herbert A.C. Sturgess (comp), Register of Admissions to the Honorable Society of the
Middle Temple From the Fifteenth Century to the Year 1944, vol 1 (London, 1949), 125.

13 For a list of the term's meanings, including those applying to music, see John M. Ward, 'The English Measure,' Early Music 14.1 (1986), 16.

14 Ibid, 15.


16 See Thoinot Arbeau, Orcheographie (1588, 1589, 1596) for comments, step-descriptions, and musical accompaniment.

17 For a reconstruction, see Pugliese-Casazza, 12 ff.

18 In Rawl 864 this dance has the title 'Madam Sicillia pauin'!

19 Of the Inns of Court mss, three also end with a Galliard, there called 'The cinque pace' (Douce 280) or 'Sinke a pace' (I.T.R. 27 and Music 1119). The term refers to the basic five-step of the Galliard, les cinq pas in French. For a variety of ways of dancing this, see Arbeau, f 52 ff. Persons with italianate tastes could avail themselves of the many variations of i cinque passi of the Gagliarda that are described in the manuals of F. Caroso and C. Negri (for the full titles see note 38 below) or reach for the collections of such steps published by L. Lupi and P. Luti (titles in note 22 below).

20 See Ward, 'The English Measure,' 17, 19, and 'Newly Devise'd Measures,' 113.

21 See the descriptions and pattern suggestions in Arbeau.

22 In addition to the dance instruction manuals, entire books were published during the late Renaissance that attest to the enormous variety of step combinations for specific dance types, for example, Livio Lupi, Mutianze di gagliarda, tordiglione, passo e mezzo, canari e passeggi (Palermo, 1600; 2/1607); and Prospero Luti, Opera bellissima nella quale si contengono molte partite et passeggi di gagliarda (Perugia, 1587, 1589).

23 As early as c 1450, the Italian dancing master Domenico da Piacenza places memoria second among the prerequisites for excellence in dancing. See Paris, Bibl Nat fds it 972 f 1: 'e necessario hauere una grande e perfonda memoria laquale e texorera de tuttili motti corporali Naturali e Accidentali.' In following a set form, the Old Measures are much like the Burgundian bassedanses of the preceding century, several of which were known in England as is proved by Robert Coplande's small treatise, The maner of dauncyng of bace daunces after the use of fraunce and other places, translated out of frencche in englysshe (London, 1521). The work is printed at the end of Alexander Barclay's The introductory to wryte and to pronounce Frenche (London, 1521), f 16r/v (Oxford, Bodl Lib Douce B, 507), E.J. Furnivall (ed) in Captain Cox (London, 1871; rpt 1937, The Pear-Tree PreB, Flansham); in modernized spelling in M. Dolmetsch, Dances of England and France, 1450–1600 (London, 1949; rpt 1975, Da Capo Press), 2–4. See also John M. Ward, 'The maner of dauncyng' in Early Music (April 1976), 127–42. Even within the Old Measures a connection to the Bassedanse is suggested: In the Elinor Gunter Commonplace Book of c 1570 (Rawl 108) the second dance in the sequence, Turquylonye (Turculonye in John Willoughby) has the additive 'le basse' in the title. The relationship of the Turkeyloney choreography to the classical Bassedanse is remote but recognizable. If in England the Measure superseded the older Bassedanse in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, the Pavane did the same on the Continent. In Turkeyloney both traditions meet: the steps are suggestive of the one, the music relates
to the other, for among the versions of the tune known in the sixteenth and
seventeenth centuries is one entitled *Pavane d'Anvers*. See John M. Ward, 'A Handefull
of Pleasant Delites' in *JAMS* 10 (1956), 164.

24 See Facsimilia in Cunningham, 38–9.

25 See the musical documents cited in John Ward’s articles. Also Pugliese-Casazza 10–11;
Sabol nos. 333–8, 350–2 with comments; and Wilson, 14 ff.

26 For this little ballet see John Ward in *Acta Mus*, 134–5.

27 Sabal dates the Ramsey Commonplace Book ‘around 1630.’

28 A useful table in Cunningham, 40–1 (Appendix vii) facilitates comparison between
the order of events as it is given in the different Inns of Court manuscripts.

29 In addition to the dance documents, the formula occurs in *Gesta Grayorum* in an entry
relative to The First Grand Night of the Christmas celebrations of 1594: ‘Then his
Highness [the Prince of Purpoole] called for the Master of the Revels and willed him to
pass the time in dancing: so his gentlemen-pensioners and attendants, very gallantly
appointed, in thirty couples, danced the old measures, and then galliards, and other
kinds of dances, revelling until it was very late;’ quoted in Cunningham, 4.

30 For instance: in The Queense Almaine (no. 6) Willoughby’s description demands ‘5
doubles forwarde.’ Only Rawl 864 agrees with him; the other mss prescribe four
doubles. Collation of the step sequence with the music (See Sabol, no. 337, p 464;
Pugliese-Casazza musical appendix) shows that 4 is the correct number.

31 Wilson, 14.

32 Rawl 864, f 199: ‘Rowland Osborne taught me to dance these measures.’

33 Music 1119, f 2: ‘The old Measures of the/Inner Temple London/as they were first
begun and taught by/Robert Holeman a dancing-Master/before 1640 and continued
ever since/in the Inner-Temple-Hall.’

34 The *reprise*, sometimes also called *desmarche*, was one of the steps of the fifteenth-
century Burgundian Bassedanse. It always went backwards and could occur singly or in
groups of three. R. Coplande describes it as follows: ‘A repysse alone ought to be made
w the ryght fote in drawynge the ryght fote bakwards a lytyll to the other fote.// The
seconde repysse ought to be made (whan ye make .iii. at ones) w the lyft fote in
reyssyinge the body in lyke wyse.//The thyrde repysse is made in place and as the fyrst
also.’ For a reconstruction of the step see I. Brainard, *The Art of Courtly Dancing in the

35 Harley 367; Rawl p. 864; I.T.R. 27; Music 1119.

36 The embrace was a cherished ingredient of social dancing in England more than
anywhere else. Embraces are choreographed into several of Playford’s country dances;
kissing games enjoyed wide popularity in court and country. It was considered a breach
of ballroom etiquette if a gentleman invited a lady to dance with him without embracing
her: ‘I were unmannerly to take you out and not to kiss you,’ says Shakespeare in
*Henry van*, ii. iv. 95. Or, as a contemporary of the Bard’s puts it: ‘If thou doe not kiss
her that thou leading by the hande didst daunce withall, then thou shalt be taken for a
rusticall, and as one without good maners and nuture’ (quote after P. Reyher, *Les
Masques Anglais* [Paris 1909], 437).

The rule in Elizabethan England seems to have been the combination of honour
and embrace at the beginning and at the end of the dance: 'Come unto these yellow sands;/And then take hands;/Curtseied when you have and kiss'd/... Foot it feasty here and there' (The Tempest i. ii. 375 ff). 'All turn together, all together trace,/And all together honour and embrace' (Sir John Davies, *Orchestra or a Poem of Dancing* [1594/1596], Stanza 110). That the combination could occur in the middle of a dance as well is demonstrated in *Scillia Almaine*. The custom of frequent embraces which had already enchanted the young Erasmus during his first visit to England in 1499 (see *The Correspondence of Erasmus*, trans R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson, ann by W.K. Ferguson [Toronto, 1974], i, 193) was sharply criticized by Philipp Stubbes (*The Anatomic of Abuses* [1583], p 151 of the ed in *Illustrations of Early English Literature*, [1867–70], i) and other clerics, moralists and lawmakers. It prevailed nonetheless.

37 For a reconstruction of this particularly attractive Measure see Pugliese-Casazza, 31–2.


40 *The English Dancing Master* (London, 1651) and subsequent editions. See p 5 of Margaret Dean-Smith’s facsimile (London, 1957).

41 Ibid.

42 *Orchésographie*, f 27 r/v.

43 For these see Arbeau, f 26; for Italian reverences see the descriptions in the works of F. Caroso and C. Negri, cited above, note 38.

44 For a discussion of the problems of step reconstruction in regard to English Measures, and for some suggested solutions see Pugliese-Casazza, 2 ff.

DAVID GEORGE

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Population and players in Jacobean Lancashire: a caveat for REED editors

Players in Elizabethan and Jacobean Lancashire were of five kinds: those patronized by royalty, those patronized by nobility and gentry outside the county, those patronized by Lancashire nobility and gentry, those led by an actor, and those belonging to towns and villages. The first four groups appear to have travelled from one noble or manor house to another, since it cannot be shown that Lancashire towns rewarded players for acting in their town halls (except at Liverpool). For that matter, it can hardly be shown that itinerant players were interested in Lancashire towns other than Liverpool or Manchester. I hope to show that this picture must simply be an accident of the survival