

Dance, Song, Music and Sociability 1750 -1832

5-6th March 2022

A two-day conference/workshop will be held on the weekend of 5-6th March 2022 exploring the world of dance, and sociability in the late Georgian period.

The workshop will be held in the Notre Dame London facility in 1-4 Suffolk Street SW1Y 4HG, almost next to the Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery.

Supporting Organisations: DIGITENS EU Project and the Universities of Warwick, UEA and Notre Dame

Sociability is one of the single most significant ideas to emerge out of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The societies, clubs and institutions that underpinned intellectual exchange, made possible the scientific developments of the period, the development of "public opinion" through political meetings; and they helped form the entertainment industry through the commercialization of pleasure. Less widely understood, however, are the specific dynamics of sociability -- the ways that both institutions and private gatherings combined serious discussion with entertainment in the form of musical entertainment and dance. This conference will challenge the dominant understandings of Enlightenment sociability by placing music and dance at its core. Rather than thinking of music and dance as a peripheral ornament to the serious business of the Enlightenment, it will understand them as important engines in the development and dissemination of the ideas and practices that mobilised people's bodies and emotions and shaped their social, emotional and intellectual worlds.

Programme

Saturday 5th March

10.00 Introduction

10.15- 12.00

*Hillary Burlock, 'Dancing Masters and the Social Implications of Grace and Ease'

*Ambre Emory Maier/Valarie Williams, 'Clothing the Ballroom and Ballet Body: Hidden Meanings in Movement'

*Moira Goff, 'Ballroom dances on the stage and stage steps in the ballroom, dancing shared.'

12.00 – 12.20 Coffee

12.20 – 1.20

*Kimberley Page Jones and Véronique Léonard-Roques 'French fetes and festivals in British travel writing (1790-1815)'

*Sabrina Juliet Garzon, 'Music and dances in Edinburgh polite society in the light of the journals and letters of Jenny Harden Agnes Witts and Lord Cockburn, 1793-1804.'

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 823862



1.15 -2.00 Lunch

2.00-3.00

*Matthew McCormack, 'Dancing Feet'

*Alena Shmakova, 'Edinburgh Assembly and Scottish Enlightenment'

3.00 Tea

3.20 – 6.00 Practical Dance class (participants are encouraged to wear/bring smooth/leather-soled shoes – since the floor has a carpet and rubber/ridging will impede movement).

7.0 Dinner at the [Brasserie Blanc on Chancery Lane](#)

Sunday 6th March

9.30 – 11.00

*Natalie Hanley Smith, 'Dance Flirtation and Affairs 1780-1830'

*Ian Newman, 'Hopping in London – Pierce Egan and the dirty underbelly of Austen's balls.'

*Lynn Matluck Brooks, 'The Black Ballroom in early nineteenth-century Philadelphia'

11.00-11.30 Coffee

11.30 – 12.30/1.00

*Catherine Mayes, 'No Room at the Inn: Class, Gender, and Vernacular Music in Enlightenment Vienna'

*Alice Little, 'Playing Music Together in late-C18th England'

* Mascha Hansen

12.45 – 1.30 or 1.00.00-1.45 Lunch

1.45 – 2.45 closing discussion

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Notes:

1. One thing we think deserves attention is the physical side of dance, song, and playing music – and how that physical experience interacts with people’s social and emotional experience. Are these physical components things that in some ways set people apart from their social worlds – as if it is a formally distinct form of conduct, as against something integrally part of that world – as it might be in elements of carnival and masquerade or as a performance set apart from the self. And can these occasions be contrasted with cases in which the body engaged is not individualized (as in Dickens’ account of the Carmagnole in *Tale of Two Cities*). And how far does this vary across types and forms – is singing a complex aria a performance that separates the singer out from her audience; does a cotillion work in the same way – a separating performance – in contrast to a contra-dance or the companionable singing of sea shanties at work (see for example the collection: *Rhythms of Labour: Music at Work in Britain*, Cambridge UP 2013) . How and in what ways, for which forms, do ‘performances’ separate or bind, appeal to formal aesthetic criteria, as against a sociable conviviality – and how far are such matters different depending on age, gender, social class, or how far do they create temporary sociabilities/communities constructed on these lines?
2. We might also reflect on the different forms and dimensions of memory involved in these conjunctures. We tend to think of memory in terms of hard-drives, or entries on a disk/stick that we/ retrieve. Psychologists are increasingly resistant to that metaphor and argue that much memory (and much mind) is simultaneously bodily. That seems evident in relation to learning certain skills and movement – learning to dance or sing or play an instrument is not a wholly cognitive process but is embedded in learning to move bodily in certain ways. And memory (qua recall of events) may itself be encoded in and only fully triggered and recalled in movement. And if that is so, how far should we see this not narrowly in terms of a mind/body & memory/performance conjuncture but also as a social/cultural experience, embedded in a wider world that powerfully shapes the physical and mental aspects of a performance and, at the same time, the memories (both embodied and cognitive) of it?
3. What kind of ‘field’ is the dance floor? More appropriately – for any particular dance – what are the rules and conventions at work? Who is it for (in terms of ostensible purposes, and who benefits from the opportunities)? Who participates and under what conditions with whom? Who polices? Who can claim whose attention and compliance? Does one have to wait to be asked, when are same sex couples accepted and when not? Who determines the music, the order, the dances and the steps? How do new dances, tunes or songs get introduced and what impact does the setting have on that? What must one have in order to participate – is this about social distinctions, familial and social networks, an appearance of wealth, evidence of ability – and how do such things vary according to the occasion – and how are such occasions marked out and distinguished as this rather than that type?
4. And in relation to all of these points – how uniform is experience across class and how disparate, and how far do different cultures and groups of practices ‘talk’ to other cultures and groups.

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