

# **How the Waltz was Won: Transmutations and the Acquisition of Style in Early English Modern Ballroom Dancing**

## **Part Two: The Waltz Regained**

### *Abstract*

*Part One of this study on the transmutation of the Victorian waltz into the modern English waltz of the early 1920s examined the labile social and choreographic climate of social dancing in London's fashionable ballrooms before, during and just after World War One. The article ended with the teachers' unsatisfactory effort to characterise the features of a distinctively modern waltz style in response to a widespread discourse to recover and adapt the dance for the contemporary English ballroom.*

*Part Two investigates the role of club and national competitions and exhibition dancers in changing and stabilising a waltz form and style that integrated preferred aspects of both old and new techniques, as advocated by leading waltz advocate and judge, Philip Richardson.*

*This article brings into critical focus not only choreographic contributions by Victor Silvester and Josephine Bradley but also those of models such as Maurice Mouvet, G. K. Anderson, Georges Fontana, and Marjorie Moss whose direct influence in England outweighed that of the more famous American couple Irene and Vernon Castle. The dance backgrounds, training and inter-connections of these individuals are examined in identifying*

*choreological and aesthetic continuities that relate to prevalent and inter-related notions of style, Englishness, art and modernity as expressed through the dancing. Taken as a whole, the two parts provide a case study of innovative shifts in popular dancing and meaning that are led through imitation and improvisation by practitioners principally from the middle class. The study also contributes to dance scholarship on cultural appropriation through concentrating on an unusual example of competition in dance being used to promote simplicity rather than virtuosity. In conclusion, greater understanding of creativity and transmission in popular social dancing may arise from identifying and interrogating the practice of agents of change and their relationships within and across their choreographic and socio-cultural contexts.*

Following the near-monopoly of the Waltz in the Victorian couple dance repertoire on the fashionable London dance floor, the popularity of the dance was in marked decline during the first two decades of the twentieth century. As discussed in Part One, the pre-World War One rage for ragtime and Tango dancing, the impact of the war itself on established dance practices and the arrival of jazz music almost in tandem with the post-war craze for social dancing, diminished the Waltz's chances of an assured restitution to the ballroom. Despite a high profile lobby, the Waltz (also known as the Valse) was fighting against a tide of technically easier and more recent introductions from America that better suited the musical repertoire of the new jazz bands and socio-aesthetic preferences of the fashionable dancing world.

The third informal conference of dancing teachers at London's Grafton Galleries in 1921, chaired by Waltz supporter and editor of *The Dancing Times* Philip Richardson, had failed to deliver a wholly adequate recommendation for how the Waltz should be treated as a form suitable for post-war social dance culture. The aim was for dancers and teachers to embrace a Waltz that was not only distinctive in its stepping pattern to the  $\frac{3}{4}$  rhythm but also, while corresponding to the modern style seen in the Foxtrot and Onestep, included the technique of rotating as a couple both to the right and left. According to teacher Alec Mackenzie, the best prognosis for the Waltz perhaps lay in popularising the dance via the medium of competitions.(1) Models of good dancing, provided by winners selected by experts rather than by theatricalised renditions of modern couple dances, potentially offered a level of participatory engagement that might draw in more social dancers to move towards real change in the ballroom. In the opinion of leading teachers, espoused by Richardson, the general dancing public needed to be led towards authoritative tuition rather than to continue to rely on autodidactic methods that were often based on stage and cabaret performances where spectacle rather than sociability was dominant. Even when more restrained examples of dancing were presented to the public, it did not always follow that spectators were inspired to emulate them. In 1919, one audience member, for example, at Moon's Club (where Madame Vandyck presided in teaching) was disappointed by the lack of eye-catching steps in an exhibition of the Valse and Rag, rating it dull as the choreography lay within her own competence. Of course Richardson, observing the same performance, did not agree, instead relishing this model of simplicity. (2)

### ***Refining Social Dance through Competition***

As Mackenzie had suggested, a more far-reaching and systematic tactic than exemplary exhibition dancing alone was needed to enhance the rate of change in social dancing. Competitions, already a feature of early twentieth-century urban dance culture, had undergone an exponential rise during the dancing season of 1918 to 1919. As well as cash prizes, success in competing offered a potential route to a new career for young adults, while for the organisers, the dance contest was a lucrative framework in which to attract more customers both to compete and to watch. Competitions held at the Northampton Polytechnic Institute in north London's Islington, were reported in 1919 to be attracting more dancers than ever before. If the Waltz had fallen from favour amongst London's rag and jazz devotees, it was not so here or elsewhere in north and south London where dedicated competitions during May of that year had the express purpose of "[e]ncouraging the Valse". (3) Criteria for judging this dance at the Northampton Polytechnic, where competitors performed to the popular pre-war waltz melody *Destiny* (now played at a faster speed) focused on 'correctness of steps and technique, deportment, and general appearance and style.' (4) Significantly, a representative of the *Dancing Times* (no doubt Richardson) was present on the adjudication panel.

Such contests in a single form forced dancers and adjudicators to distinguish key characteristics in the dances, furthering the dances' later codification. Separate classes for the Fox-trot, Waltz and One-step were organized for the autumn of 1920 at the Palais de Danse at Hammersmith in a competition offering £60 in cash prizes. This was explicitly geared 'to Encourage Proficiency in Dancing'. (5) The newly opened purpose-built venue intentionally attracted wider patronage both socially and geographically than the West End night clubs, not only embracing

dancers from lower down the middle classes from across the capital but also celebrities, aristocracy and even the Prince of Wales. (6) Hiring the most fashionable bands (initially the Original Dixieland Jazz Band), the North American inspired palais concentrated on the most up-to-date and luxurious context for the enjoyment and development of social dancing.

Dance contests in the more exclusive venues of West End London also increased in number and frequency, the Piccadilly Hotel, for instance, advertising competitions alongside its regular afternoon and evening dances in the daily press.(7) In the private clubs, the judges typically included respected social dancers on the club circuit, together with musical theatre celebrities. At the large competition organized in July 1919 at the fashionable Embassy Club in Old Bond Street, for example, the panels included the famous stage and cabaret act The Dolly Sisters, and musical theatre star Phyllis Monckman. (8) Five dances were evaluated in this competition: the One-step, Foxtrot, Tango, Waltz and an 'exhibition dance'. Most of the winners went on to successful careers in dance either on the stage or in the competitive realm. The overall performance of the Tango and the Waltz, however, was reckoned to be 'decidedly poor', a situation that prompted further specialist competitions to be organized in the early 1920s. Typically, judges of dance competitions in the second decade of the twentieth century included a mix of event or prize sponsors, musical theatre celebrities as well as (though not always) noted dancers and teachers. Expertise and sympathy for social styles of dance were often variable across the panel. As editor of the most established and widely circulated professional periodical on dancing, Richardson had often been called upon to adjudicate and indeed, as a practising ballroom dancer himself, with an extensive network and knowledge of the industry,

he had accumulated an incomparable experience. Disseminating his understanding through the Sitter Out column, in 1919, he recommended observation from the dance floor itself rather than from a raised platform, and advised on the structure of competitions to avoid ill-formed hasty judgements and to promote interest from onlookers (9) His opinions as an experienced judge carried weight and he was instrumental in replacing musical theatre celebrities on the panels with members of the pedagogic profession who shared similar views to himself. Significantly Richardson helped in adjudicating a key competition in 1920, the impact of which was to flow across the modern repertoire. This direction for future development was signalled in a Foxtrot competition organized at the Embassy Club in 1920. Although the Foxtrot is not the immediate focus in this article, its abiding influence on the Waltz's development as a result of this competition necessitates some clarification. In addition to Richardson, the adjudication panel comprised ballroom exhibition dancers (American) Cynthia Perot and Frank Leveson; Mr Kartun, a club member who was noted for his dancing and who was also a donor of one of the prizes; leading English ballet dancer and frequenter of night clubs as a social dancer Phyllis Bedells; and ISDT teacher Major Cecil Taylor.

Josephine Bradley and G.K. Anderson **[See Figure 1]** took first prize amid the eleven couples who, as Richardson reported, comprised 'the finest collection of ballroom dancers I have ever seen in one room'. (10) Specializing in a smooth, low-key style that appealed to the judges, the winners'

steps were very simple – just the walk, the three-step  
and the side-step, done at an angle of about forty-five

degrees to the line of the dance – but their deportment  
and rhythm was [sic] remarkable.’(11)

Nor did Bradley and Anderson lift their feet in the sidestep, choosing instead to slowly drag the foot. It was these features of simplicity, understatement, poise, musicality and spatial sensitivity that were to dominate in determining an ‘English’ style, to be introduced across the modern repertoire.

Crucial to the decision, of course, were the aesthetic preferences and agenda of the adjudication panel. The rules for the 1920 Embassy Foxtrot competition had expressly warned against

rapid spins, trick steps - which really belong  
to step dancing - elaborate arm movements,  
or theatrical gestures to achieve ‘effect’ (12)

recommending, instead, ‘style, rhythm, and neatness of foot work’ as well as the ability to steer.

The immediate impact of the Embassy competition, however, was limited geographically and socially, even though Bradley and Anderson cemented their success at the more publicly accessible Ivory Cross foxtrot competition at the Alhambra Theatre in January 1921 (Richardson 1946: 50).

Press reports of poor and intemperate dancing wider afield continued. This was to change when in October 1921 the populist tabloid, *The Daily Sketch*, capitalizing on the immense post-war enthusiasm for dance launched a National Dancing Competition that was expressly designed to ‘appeal to all classes in all parts of the country.’ (13) The aims were to improve standards of amateur dancing in the

Foxtrot and the Valse while raising funds for the National Institute for the Blind and the Greater London Fund for the Blind. Cash prizes totalling £1,500 were on offer, together with expenses paid for those travelling to take part in the finals which were scheduled for February 1922 at the Queen's Hall, London. In the run up to this event, local dancing teachers across England and Wales were encouraged by the newspaper to organise trial competitions to select entrants for the heats which took place in December in five large towns. (14) *The Daily Sketch* also offered help with local publicity, printed certificates for trial winners and commissioned popular music composer and conductor Herman Darewski (1883-1947) to write specific melodies for the two competition dances which were then named in a competition for cash prizes of £5 run by the paper. Carefully building anticipation on a daily basis, the *Sketch* reported on the pieces' premiere at the Alhambra Theatre, London before advertising their publication in music sheet form and later as an HMV gramophone record by Darewski and his orchestra. (15) The composer waived his royalties so that a percentage of sales went to the named charities while coupons, attached to the music sheets, could be traded by dancing teachers in return for certificates recognizing the winners of trials.

In response to actual and anticipated queries from competitors and local organisers, advice was offered on the preferred style of dancing in a series of articles by Richardson. Later to chair the final event in London, Richardson was presented by the newspaper as editor of *The Dancing Times* and as the most experienced judge in the land. No doubt under his guidance and that of his fellow judges, the forthcoming national competition was angled to tackle two particular irritations: the use of 'showy steps' on the social dance floor and the lack of distinction between dance forms. The former was countered by advance warning



that 'special steps' in the desired 'ordinary valse' could well be judged unfavourably and, in the case of the latter, dancers should be clear that this was 'not a foxtrot competition to valse music.'(16) At the level of the heats, parity of criteria was attempted through inclusion of one finals adjudicator on each provincial panel. Engaging the concerted efforts of the press, music and entertainment industries together with the dance profession, the *Sketch* thus mounted an enterprise that activated both local and national implications for the practice of social dancing. It did so not only in a period of intensive and extensive interest in dancing in which much of its readership aspired to be 'modern' and to participate in the social and visceral pleasures of dancing to the new music, but also at a time of more widespread promotion of dance as a means to improve health. The same paper had already published a feature by Belle Harding headed 'Dancing Cures Ills' in which she extolled the benefits of social dancing for all ages, for men and women, for disabled soldiers and to alleviate 'jaded nerves'. She concluded her article with a call for the adoption and promotion of dancing within the brief of the government's newly created Ministry of Health. (17)

*The Daily Sketch's* competition undoubtedly resulted in improved and more widespread social dance competence. It helped to disseminate a greater standardized aesthetic approach to social dancing which was validated by an adjudication panel that for the grand finals, held in February 1922, at the Queen's Hall, London, was for the first time, entirely composed of members of the pedagogic profession: Major Cecil Taylor, Mr H Bloodworth, Mr Alec Mackenzie and Miss Grace Cone. If results were notable in the Foxtrot (won yet again by G.K. Anderson but here necessarily dancing with an amateur, Mrs Rey, in light of professional Josephine Bradley's ineligibility), they were less so in the Valse whose

prize was shared by two couples. Nonetheless, as Richardson reflected (1946: 51-2), the *Daily Sketch* competition exercised substantial impact on the future execution of the dance as a form distinct from that of the Foxtrot and as being, in essence, a turning dance.

The public appetite for dancing competitions continued, offering further scope for professionals and amateurs alike to innovate and modify their renditions of the main dances. The World Ballroom Dancing Championship in December 1922 is noteworthy for a number of factors. It was not only the first major international ballroom dance contest to be held on British soil but it also firmly established the idea of competing for the crown as the best all-round couple across a number of dance forms. (18) Organised by French dancer, composer and impresario Camille de Rhyal, the World Championships had previously been held in Paris but postwar conditions for social dancing were no longer ideal. At the Queens's Hall, London, the grand finals were divided into three categories of professional, amateur and mixed, followed by the grand finals in which the winners and runners-up of each section were required to perform the four dances of Waltz, Foxtrot, One-step, and (a recent returnee to the ballroom in a much revised form) the Tango. The judges, once again chaired by Richardson [see Figure 2] were predominantly from the teaching profession, and included Belle Harding, Mrs Lisle Humphreys, Alec Mackenzie, Monsieur Pierre, Josephine Bradley and Madame Vandyck as well as prominent ballroom exhibition dancer, Bernard Carrington. Victor Silvester and his partner Phyllis Clarke won the professional competition, going on to become overall World Champions. They showcased the first successful performance of a modern style of waltzing that fully put into practice the notion that the Waltz had a distinctive step pattern in which the couple rotated both left and right.

### ***Towards the Technique of the Modern Waltz***

In Richardson's evaluation, the *Daily Sketch* competition propelled the restoration and reformation of a dance that he had first learned in 1897. (19) He argued that this national competition had prompted insights into the Waltz for two separate constituencies: for post-war dancers the realization that foxtrot steps are not only 'unnecessary...but also prevent a true appreciation of the beautiful rhythm' and for the 'very old fashioned dancer' an appreciation of the fact that

a mechanical revolution on the half toe, first one way  
and then the other, equally renders it impossible to  
interpret the lilt and joyous swing of the queen of ball-  
room dances.(20)

Evident across the Foxtrot and Valse in this competition was the propensity to place the lower limbs as if in walking, the heel often being placed on the floor first, the feet parallel and the knees passing closing together as the man placed his feet in direct alignment with those of his partner (Richardson 1946: 51).

Not all devotees of the Waltz, however, practised the dance in the manner endorsed by the *Daily Sketch* judges. 'The Clubman' (1922: 5) writing in *The Ballroom*, which catered for the more conservative national community of dance teachers, remained unconvinced by claims that the competition had successfully homogenized the Waltz:

we believe that the large majority of dancers  
will continue to look upon what is known as the

orthodox waltz as the standard.

This notion of orthodoxy in the Waltz is inscribed in a titular 'The' in a competition held later that year in the north London suburb of Hendon. This contest divided the dance into three categories: 'the Real English Waltz', "the Continental Walking Waltz', and one for ladies only, presumably in light of the loss of male partners as a result of the war. (21) The geographical distinction here appears to be the reverse of later categorisations when a stylized mode of walking was to be associated with the English Waltz. Nonetheless, the manner of dancing prevalent in fashionable London, was gaining ascendancy. As 'The Clubman' in the same article cited above noted of the *Daily Sketch* competition:

the movements which were recognized and  
rewarded by the judges represented the steps  
which are in vogue in the West End of London  
at the moment

and conceded the likelihood that they would eventually be adopted more widely. Even before the national *Daily Sketch* competition, which was at his instigation (Bradley 1937: 355), Richardson had published a clear vision of what he wanted to see in a modern way of waltzing:

I am hoping to see the old style and the new style  
"get together." Let the new style admit that the basis  
of the valse is the valse step - six steps in two bars for

one complete revolution - and let the old style admit that the pas de valse forwards and backwards (in a straight line) may be done on broader lines and with less “operatic” finish than was the case forty years ago, and with an occasional ellipsis of two steps and the substitution of a pause to produce the modern “hesitation” movement. (22)

In setting this forth he also revealed that the ISDT had taken on the challenge of remodelling ballroom technique and ‘phraseology’ though this did not take clear direction until the ballroom branch and its first committee dedicated to technical matters was established in 1924.

Too strict an adherence to the Victorian rotary style of waltzing was not, however, the only problem perceived in assimilating the Waltz into a modern repertoire.

There was a distinct lack of turning in contemporary performances. A characteristic of wartime and Armistice waltzing in London’s fashionable ballrooms was the disappearance of the natural turn, that is, turning to the right. High Society teacher Mrs Alec Mackenzie considered that its decline was a technical fault mostly in evidence among young dancers who had not been schooled in the old technique of waltzing. (23) By contrast, the Valse reverse turn (to the left) remained in practice and was regularly adopted in the more popular Foxtrot where, to circumvent this dance’s mostly linear pathway, the reverse turn could be used to negotiate the corners of a room. In the first half of the Valse reverse turn, the feet were crossed on the third beat, followed by a heel turn on the sixth beat in order to complete the dancing couple’s full revolution (Silvester and Richardson, 1936: 43). Mrs

Mackenzie noted the excellence of this reverse turn among competitors in the heats of *Daily Sketch* Valse contest but was dismayed at its frequent inclusion in the Foxtrot. According to the West End teachers, the distinctive step of the Foxtrot in turning, should be characterized by the feet passing each other in an open turn. The Valse turns, by contrast, were to be executed theoretically via closed turns — that is, using a foot pattern of step, step, feet together. This ideal, however, was rarely achieved, even among the top competitors at this time. Silvester recalled how, at the start of his dancing career in 1920, many amateurs used the slow Foxtrot open turn when dancing the Waltz and even his professional idols, although better retaining the character of the dance through variations on the Hesitation Waltz, nonetheless included so-called ‘stunt steps’, especially spinning. (24) In the West End venues, if the natural turn was attempted, only the first half of the turn was performed, followed by what was known as a backwards change, that is, three steps travelling backwards, the feet passing on the third step rather than closing together. Commenting on renditions of the Waltz in the World Championships of 1922, Richardson (1923: 413) observed significant improvement among regular competitors, recording that many now shunned the open Foxtrot turn and attempted the natural turn in full.

Silvester and Clarke, however, demonstrated the greatest accomplishment in the natural turn. Silvester had made a concerted effort to perfect turning in both directions using the recommended Waltz step, having been encouraged to do so by Bernard Carrington who pointed out how such a feat would make them stand out in competition (Silvester, 1935: 53). Many waltzing couples in the Championship lingered over the initial step of the Waltz, a delay which, in order to maintain rhythm, necessitated ‘clipping’ their second and third steps, with the result

that the flow of the turn was momentarily halted. Silvester and Clarke, on the other hand, in company with their improving rivals Maxwell Stewart and Barbara Miles, appeared to “float” from one half turn into the second half.’ (Richardson 1923: 413). Silvester (1935: 53-54) recollected the time invested in perfecting this turn in the two months leading up to the Championship:

I remember how hard we practised in order to carry out Mr. Carrington's advice. We spent hours at it. You must not forget that we had no one to guide us, and there was very little theory and technique to assist us.

Silvester later contributed to the expansion of theory for modern ballroom dancing principally as a member of the 1924 Imperial ballroom committee and through his many publications, the most reprinted of which was his *Modern Ballroom Dancing* first published in 1927 (25) Richardson (1923) featured this new way of dancing the Waltz in the *Dancing Times* less than a month after the couple's Championship success. The article was accompanied by twelve photographs of Silvester and Clarke to illustrate the natural and reverse turns of the modern Valse[see **Figure 3**]. The open passing three step known as the change step was utilized in between changing from turning in one direction to the other.

Unlocking the key to mechanical proficiency in the Waltz turns was only part of the equation in transforming the Victorian into the modern Waltz. More generally, comparing pre-war versions with contemporary manifestations of waltzing, Richardson described the shift in the modern couple's alignment with one another, from the Boston's hip to hip hold to one in which the couple danced face to face but

off centre with the lady slightly to the man's right when executing the natural turn, and to the left in performing the reverse turn. Other key differences, he noted, lay in the change of leading foot from left to right for the man, the lady moving backwards instead of forwards to begin, and the use of the body in initiating movement rather than the feet. In company with other modern dances, the modern Valse now required parallel feet, the couple's feet moving toe to toe in line and a more muted rise and fall as the dancers covered space with a modified walking step. These technical details were intrinsic to the modern manner of social dancing and increasingly essential to the desirable acquisition of 'style'.

### ***Acquiring Style in the Ballroom***

The endorsement and marketing of 'style' as an essential accomplishment of social dancers had been increasingly foregrounded in the post-war discourse of London-based teachers. No longer did advertisements simply list the new dances to be taught at their premises; instead, teachers promised above all to deliver 'style' which, as Monsieur Pierre pronounced in 1920, was 'the main point in Modern Ball Room Dancing'. (26) This emphasis upon style can partially be attributed to the lack of new dances to be taught to the general public during and immediately after the war. But it owed much more to the continuing drive towards the 'refinement' of contemporary ballroom dancing, formulated explicitly in opposition to spectacularised stage and disruptive social dancing.

The acquisition of style for social dance competitors was never fortuitous. As Belle Harding advised in advance of the 1921 *Daily Sketch* competition:

There are...quite a large number both in London and the



provinces whose steps are good and whose rhythm is excellent, but who lack that indescribable something which we call 'style.' (27)

The remedy in her opinion was to take classes with 'really good' teachers for whom style consisted in a shared combination of aesthetic preferences on the dance floor – namely, simplicity, grace, fluidity, and rhythmic quietness. For Madame Vandyck, the proof of her own pedagogic methods was already discernible in her pupils' dancing during the early war years:

I have been very gratified to hear from a number of people that 'Vandyck' pupils are recognised at once in any ball-room both in London and abroad by their grace and ease of movement. (28)

Following the war, such aesthetic traits were highlighted by the prominent London school of the Mackenzies, even if their eye-catching advertisement illustrated a fashionably dressed couple, obviously jazzing with bent elbows and legs kicked up at the back. Their prospective students, nonetheless, were guaranteed '[s]implicity with perfect, smooth, unobstructive style'. (29)

High-level teachers and performers alike touted the aesthetic and pedagogic values of the Waltz in this acquisition of 'style', emphasising simplicity and smoothness on the dance floor. Esteemed exhibition ballroom dancers, such as American actor and exhibition ballroom dancer Harry Pilcer, had drawn a distinction between theatrical and social waltzing, when interviewed in London in 1916. 'Like

all good ball-room dancers', Richardson reported, 'he is a lover of the valse, and said that the simpler it is done the better as a rule it is'. (30) Cree's 1920 manual also advocated smoothness in waltzing, interestingly a feature of high-class society Victorian and pre-war ideals:

The chief point to note about the valse is that it must be perfectly smooth and unjolting. The slightest jump or jerk at any period of the movement spoils everything. It must all be one long continuous glide, rising ever so slightly to the swell of the music and, perhaps, with an infinitesimal swaying of the body. If a cup of tea were fastened on your head the tea should be unspilt.'

(31)

No wonder that Richardson, who frequented the West End clubs and classes, announced in his analysis of 'style' that '[i]n spite of all innovations, the smooth gliding valse is the foundation of all good dancing' (1919: 157). Later recommendations in the press for intending Waltz competitors similarly stressed the flowing nature of the dance (32) while the popularity of post-war Foxtrot music which was described as 'smooth, almost valse-like melodies' undoubtedly helped to foster delivery of a similar aesthetic of refined style in the Foxtrot. (33)

This quest for refinement, as has been amply demonstrated in studies of the contemporary American fashionable dance scene, was importantly, at root, a coded term for the 'whitening' of those dances that owed much to African American practices. (34) Most recreational dancers in England, more removed from African American culture than in the United States, tended towards a hazy knowledge and

interest in the dances' African-sourced associations (Buckland 2011b: 66). Not surprisingly, given racial prejudices of the period, there was an absence of African American role models performing these dances onstage. This is not to say that there were no African American dancers appearing in England, but their numbers were few. Exhibition ballroom dancing was very much a white monopoly and most English people's perception of African sourced performance was through the lens of blackface minstrelsy. (35)

Professionals working in England during the late 19-teens and early 1920s, however, were definitely aware of the choreomusical provenance of the new repertoire. All the committee members from the first Grafton Galleries conference had, over a decade earlier, witnessed the influx of ragtime and the ensuing widespread moral outrage. Some younger dancers regularly danced to African American bands at Ciro's and Murrays, while many from the older generation of teachers, conspicuously Scott, had launched a virulent racist campaign against what were perceived as primitive and degenerate moves (Buckland 2011b: 65-68). It was impossible to avoid the charge of so-called 'primitive' derivation given that the circulation of dancers, teachers, musicians and shows across the Atlantic to the European continent and London was accompanied by a highly racialised discourse. Well reported too was Maurice's invective (at the 1920 Grafton conference) against the introduction of jazz and 'dubious steps into decent places' from their origins in 'low negro haunts', together with connotations of sexual activity.

By the Armistice, the repositioning of the imported dances as socially acceptable by teachers was already well in train In England but with comparatively little reference made to projected African connections.(36) Alec Mackenzie (1920: 261) told

*Dancing Times* readers later that year that

[i]t cannot, of course, be denied that the rhythm and steps at present being danced are founded upon negro rhythms, but in spite of that the method must not be condemned as barbaric, for the movement has been refined in such a way as to suit the British temperament.

### ***Forging the English Style on the Dance Floor***

Most historiographies of modern ballroom dancing highlight the first ballroom committee of the ISDT in 1924 as the prime generator of the English style. But as Nerina Shute (in Allen, 1984: 17), later partner of influential ballroom dancer and teacher Phyllis Haylor, describes: the English style was ‘born on the dance floor’, only to be ‘christened’ by the new committee which clarified and codified the style, shaping future direction. Contemporary sources and reminiscences reveal that staple features of the English style were in creative practice by 1919, perhaps even earlier, and that the dance pedagogic profession alone was not initially responsible. Investigation of this context for the nascent style and its key agents of change helps to shed light, insofar as historical records allow, on how ways of inventing, emulating, adopting and adapting moved towards a consensus of style that became associated with Englishness. As teacher Alec Mackenzie (1921: 591) informed *Dancing Times* readers:

For many a year the style of dance has been set by a very small coterie of dancers, who are members of West End clubs. These are the salt of the ballroom dancing world, and may be termed

exponents of that style of dancing. They are the cream of the dancers, and they set the fashion, since most people recognise perfection and do their best to imitate it.

By mid-1921, he reckoned, this style, once restricted to an exclusive set, had expanded its number of exponents, snowballing through example beyond its immediate milieu. (37) Such was the glamour of this embodied capital that the tagline 'as danced in the best West End Dance Clubs' was added to the Mackenzies' own adverts for their dancing school. (38)

There was extensive confidence and a growing sense of national pride expressed in the choreological realizations of this elect group of dancers. Just two years after the end of the war, English exhibition dancers Majorie Moss and Georges Fontana (1920: 176) enthused:

England is rapidly taking her place as the foremost dancing nation of the world. The average English dancer can hold his or her own in any continental ballroom.

Does it not seem a pity that we have to go abroad for all our dances? Are we not clever enough in this country to evolve something ourselves?

The solution was not to invent new dances *per se* but to clothe them in English dress. The Waltz had already been through a century of assimilation into English culture with the result that a number of English had claimed it as their own. The Waltz may have come from Bavaria, Madame Vandyck reasoned, but safeguarded

by 'conservative sentiment' it now stood alone in the contemporary English repertoire as a 'familiar institution' (39) Nonetheless, it needed a modern make over, a view echoed in *The Ballroom* , where it was stated that despite ballroom dancing's faithfulness to the Waltz, 'she has insisted on a new garb'. (40)

The question must be raised, however, as to how much of this so-called English style was indebted to Parisian and American example.

Paris remained a draw for fashionable amateur dancers and teachers even after the war.(41) In the first institutionally led scheme, the ISDT began a policy of sending a few of their teachers in 1920 to investigate the Parisian dance scene in order to report back at their annual Congress. (42) President Cecil Taylor was especially active in this regard, having himself been an exhibition dancer of the new styles in pre-war days. He was also keen to advance the fortunes of this new style of dancing favoured by the British social elite for whom Paris had been a cultural centre for centuries. (43) Among British dance teachers' organisations, the ISDT was singular in catering for modern ballroom dancing, making it the obvious choice for Richardson as the institution best suited to tackling the issues of codification and standardisation of the modern English style. Few of the principal exponents of the new style were registered teachers with professional pedagogic organisations, but Richardson expediently suggested their co-option onto a purpose- directed committee, a proposal which eventually took effect in 1924. (44) Parisian post-war developments in the Tango shaped future practice and pedagogy in that dance in Britain but, closer to home, a new style of moving across the ballroom repertoire seemingly led by Americans was gaining precedence in the West End clubs.

Although the example of the American duo the Castles looms large in histories of early twentieth-century ballroom dancing, records for the situation in England

reveal little of explicit influence. Richardson had confessed himself a little disappointed on the publication of their 1914 book, believing that '[u]p-to-date London dancers' would find little new in it. (45) There were, however, strong Anglo-American dancing relations in the West End dancing scene, particularly in the late and post war years. Here the social dance culture was intense and immersive, providing opportunities for the testing of new steps and new styles. Most significant were the everyday dancing interactions when socialising between English and American amateurs, and between amateurs and professionals. Some of the American contributions lay in the introduction and/or invention of specific moves (see discussion on the Morgan Roll and Jazz Step above). More pervasive was a way of moving that appealed to English competition judges in search of a quiet, flowing style that to them accorded with the supposed English temperament. This 'quiet dancing' claimed Richardson 'exactly corresponds with one of the most important traits of an Englishman's character' (46)

A key exponent of this quiet style was, in fact, an American - Bradley's dancing partner G. K. Anderson. George Kenneth Anderson had arrived on business in London in August 1919 aged in his early thirties. Born in Manhattan New York City into a successful commercial family, he was a keen amateur social dancer and member of a select group of New York competitors known as the Sharpshooters, some of whom went on to perform ballroom on international stages. (47) Anderson or 'Andy' as he was known to friends had last competed in New York around 1913 and brought an unostentatious style with which Bradley (1947: 20-21) at the time was unfamiliar:

I can only describe it shortly by saying it was with his whole body that he danced...Andy's dancing, though beautiful, did not "obtrude" itself on the observer, and he had to be watched carefully, and viewed against the ordinary performer, before the subtlety of his movements could be detected.

This point of comparison is interesting. Prior to the *Daily Sketch* competitions of 1921-22, judges had assessed the dancing couples against one another in comparative ranking. In the national competition, adjudication took the form of evaluating each performance against that of an ideal. In Anderson's eyes, that ideal was not specific to the English. As he observed to Richardson, in recalling pre-war American competition values:

the ideal was the same as you are advocating for the present dances, namely, simplicity, smoothness, close footwork, rhythm and no stunts allowed. The valse, as I remember, was very much as you were aiming for in the *Daily Sketch* competition except that one or two additional steps were allowed. (48)

Fellow American dancer Morry Blake, following in Anderson's wake, similarly drew parallels between the dancing of pre-war America and post-war England, remarking that the style of the 'leading amateurs' of the two capitals was identical.

(49) Blake also pointed to the nurturing of the new style, not by teachers, but by the



'rapidly-growing band of enthusiasts who have taken pains over their dancing, and studied the possibilities of the modern dance during the past two or three years.'

(50) Part of the attraction was the facility of these few leaders gracefully employing in improvisational composition just a few 'basic steps', which then met with approval from the judges. Appearing frequently in competition against one another

(51) these dancers secured consolidation in a style which was then copied by contenders to be yet further disseminated through exhibition and teaching. In 1920 Richardson voiced his certainty that 'the time is at hand when Paris and New York will be given the go-by and "London style" will be the hall-mark of good dancing".

Two years later, *The Ballroom* echoed *Dancing Times'* contributor G. E. Fussell's approbation of 'world-wide appreciation' of English dancing as being superior to contemporary American manifestations. (52)

Nott's (2013: 443) analysis of prevailing characteristics of the 1920s English style highlights the values of restraint, control, order, elegance, grace, lack of exhibitionism and a democratic approach as embodied in the ideal of the dancing partnership acting as one as they moved. My own research (2011a) tallies with this and with Nott's alignment of the English style with respectability (see too Cresswell 2006 and Abra, 2017: 150-51) the public demonstration of which was an abiding concern of the middle classes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was deemed necessary by the dancing profession and its supporters to regulate activity in the ballroom before any potential interference from the law. Given the turbulent social, economic and political unrest in the immediate post-war period, a way of dancing that threatened neither moral nor public order was essential to protect the dance industry. (53) Richardson's appeal for the restoration of 'good form' in the

ballroom was not hyperbolic; and good form was an attribute believed to be peculiarly English.

This well-worn theme of dancing's facility to articulate national character was pressed to work in justifying the aesthetic preferences of leading teachers for whom there was a consequential rise in cultural and economic capital: their livelihoods stood poised to suffer should agreement in the standardization of and instruction in fashionable dancing fail. A distinctively *English* style needed to be purveyed.

As Abra (2009: 235 and 2017: chapter 5) has argued, the dancing of the English or frequently interchangeable epithet 'British' required definition in opposition to the supposed habitus of other nations or races. She quotes G. E. Fussell's identification of grace and moderation as essential traits of Britishness. He claimed British pre-eminence in producing a dance style lying between what he regarded as the overly masculine 'rough and abrupt' style of the Americans and 'the effeminacy of the Latin.' This latter cultural stereotype of the Latino character had fuelled moral opposition to the Tango and provided a rationale for British post-war lack of interest and proficiency in this dance. His evaluation of American dancing, however, differs from earlier opinion, indicating a shift in American amateur practice by the early 1920s, away from standards of refinement as set by the Castles. The way now seemed clear for the English to take the lead. Other (today less well-known) dancers and teachers, present on the international circuit and increasingly through the media, were to influence the course of early English ballroom dancing.

### ***Observing Models of Stylistic Excellence: Media, the Stage and the Dance***

#### ***Floor***

The majority of provincial teachers, social dancers and competitors had little immediate opportunity to view London's *glitterati* of the dancing world. Information on the latest style was often derived from the media, which progressively included visuals as a learning aid. During the early 1920s, copious press articles included photographs of leading couples, demonstrating correct and incorrect positions and holds. Maurice and Hughes, for example, illustrated reports of the first Grafton Conference in 1920 for the *Daily Mail* while American dancer Jack Gavin and his partner Joan Pickering (Embassy Club Exhibition Dancers in 1921) graced the pages of the *Daily Sketch* in the lead up to the national competition.(54)

Famous exhibition dancers also featured increasingly on cine footage, some of which was didactic in nature. In London in 1914, for example, Richardson viewed an instructional film by American dancers and teachers of New York's social elite, Wallace McCutcheon and Joan Sawyer. Shot in the previous year, the film employed close ups of the dancers' feet as well as full-length shots. (55) This was a format followed in the 1920s by publicity-conscious Santos Casini and his partner Jose Lennard in their many teaching films for the British news film company Pathé (56). The 1920 film of English exhibition dancers Ted Trevor and Dina Harris also preached the right and wrong ways of the ballroom hold, together with examples of which steps to avoid. Film of winners of prominent dance competitions was distributed throughout the country, affording both news and instruction for growing cinema audiences in Britain. (57)

Above all, however, during this early period, direct emulation of live performances by models of excellence in the rarefied and privileged crucible of the West End determined shifts in both technique and style. Especial favourites in the post-war years among fashionable West End audiences were Georges Fontana and Marjorie

Moss who enjoyed international accolades for their grace, elegance and seemingly effortless dancing. Richardson declared their exhibition Waltz at the Grafton Galleries in 1919 to be 'without doubt the best exhibition number I have seen.'(58) and their specially posed photographs illustrated his November 1919 article on ballroom style. 'In that part of the number where they are doing the ordinary valse of the ballroom,' Richardson advised, 'onlookers should watch Fontana's shoulders, and then try and imitate his almost perfect carriage'. (59) Richardson had observed a similar principle during the war in Pilcer's partnering, noting that the movement of a man's shoulders was a sure measure of correct footwork. (60) The goal of the couple moving 'as one' formed an essential criterion of perfect modern ballroom dancing, a desirable unity which Richardson judged to be immediately detectable from the unwavering line of the dancers' shoulders in relation to each other. He also recommended, as demonstrated by Fontana, that in the ballroom hold to be adopted by the man (1919: 84) there should be

a line from his left hand through his left arm, across his  
two shoulders and down his right arm to his right hand  
... as free from sharp angles and as full of soft curves as  
is possible.

For those men already training at the Empress Rooms, Fontana's enviable style might be examined at closer quarters.

Parisian-born Fontana gained his dance expertise at Belle Harding's Empress Rooms in Knightsbridge, London. This proved a hot house for in-depth practice of the modern style, an environment that was later dubbed by top ballroom dancers

as the 'University of Dancing' (Silvester, 1935: 53). Certainly, a number of successful male ballroom dancers, including Silvester and - another of his models-exhibition dancer Vincent Davico emerged from Harding's stable. How 'hands-on' was Harding's tuition by 1919, however, when Silvester first took to the floor as a novice and -by his own admission - as a gigolo, is uncertain (1958: 30, 33, 40-43). As was typical in Harding's vast dance empire, basic tuition was given by one of her numerous female assistants (lasting just two weeks before becoming an instructor in Silvester's case). Through constant practice at the Empress Rooms, clubs and restaurants, Silvester began to cultivate his competitive proficiency in waltzing. In 1921, he had chance to study Maurice's Waltz performances (1935: 53) although his direct experience of Maurice's dancing did not extend to social contexts.

The roots of Maurice's waltzing style lay in an amalgamation of continental European and, more indirectly, American modes of performing this dance. His initial study of the Waltz began as a social dancer in the *Bal Tabarin* cabaret at the foot of Montmartre, Paris. He then frequented recreational dancing venues in Vienna when employed there as an exhibition dancer during the first decade of the twentieth century. (61) Maurice was especially keen to scrutinise the waltzing of George (Georgie) Maher, a Viennese actor and exhibition dancer who was performing at the Carlton Hotel in Monte Carlo (Mouvet, 1915: 20). Mahrer, publicised as the 'world's best dancer' had introduced a new dance into Franz Lehár's operetta *The Merry Widow* which Maurice in his autobiography (Mouvet, 1915: 76) links to the Viennese Hesitation Waltz. Mahrer characterised his new dance as a combination of the two-step, 'eccentric Argentine' and Boston, his reference to the 'Argentine' indicating the Tango. (62) Mahrer's dancing in Monte

Carlo, according to one observer, outshone that of Maurice, but the latter, following his move to New York in 1911, enjoyed a meteoric rise as the social elite's performer and teacher of choice, earning huge sums -perhaps deservedly so on account now of 'his beautiful waltzing. (63).

Richardson had consistently commended 'the dancing of such brilliant and world-famous valsers as Maurice or his brother Oscar' (64) citing them as models for the adjudication of the *Daily Sketch* competition. 'In Maurice', Richardson claimed, 'we have the ideal modern valser', praising Maurice's ability to cover space, his emphasis on the first and fourth steps of the Waltz and complete absence of foxtrot movements. (65) Through recourse to hesitation steps, he argued, Maurice was able 'to introduce that wonderful swing and lilt ', which Richardson so desired as both a somatic sensation in execution and as an aesthetic attribute to be relished by the spectator. (66)

'I do not think there is any ballroom dancer in the world whose opinion carries more weight with me than Maurice (67)

declared Richardson, and his importance as an influential model of excellence in the development of early English ballroom dancing cannot be under-estimated. It is evident then that this new style drew from multi-faceted sources, its formative dancers, in particular, actively seeking to copy and adapt the dancing of each other. Major nexuses of creativity and dissemination in the years during and just after the war were located in London, Paris and New York, but also on the French Riviera and Vienna. Influential dancers and teachers in London shaped and

claimed this nascent style as modern, superior and quintessentially English; they also sought to attribute to it characteristics and recognition as an art form.

***Balletic Connections: The Art of Ballroom Dancing***

A number of high-profile English female ballroom dancers had initially trained in ballet. Such expertise was not always relished by their partners. According to actor and man about town George Grossmith (in Cree 1920: 11) a female ballroom dancer schooled in ballet proved an impediment on the dance floor:

a perfect woman dancer is she who submits herself to the man's guidance, be it good or bad. For this reason the great solo danseuse of the stage is very often an indifferent partner in the ball-room. She is accustomed to control her own actions, which may not coincide with the will of her partner.

Not all approved Grossmith's condemnation. Teacher of both genres Florence Purcell, for example, expressed strong appreciation of her own early tuition from Mrs Vincent Glass (a doyenne of schooling for the presentation of young aristocratic ladies at Court) and of her later instruction from ballet dancer and master Edouard Espinosa. Indeed, she criticised many ballroom teachers for failing to give "sufficient attention to deportment" (68) Little June, pupil of Seraphina Astafieva and Anna Pavlova and successor to stage roles of Phyllis Bedells, concurred:

I certainly do not agree with people who say that a classical dancer cannot shine in it [ballroom dancing].

Quite to the contrary, her knowledge should simplify all dancing, and supply that grace often so sadly lacking in the ordinary exponent.' (69)

Graceful movement, especially for women, was a desirable social trait. Instruction in ballet and its associated deportment continued a process of incorporating ideals of feminised gentility thought appropriate to the upper and middle classes. Given the middle-class background of so many promoters of the modern style, it is not surprising that identification of initial ballet training runs as a *leitmotif* through the biographies of leading female practitioners of early English ballroom dancing. Even Josephine Bradley, who recognised the limits of her own talent as a potential professional ballet dancer, nonetheless attributed her skilful ease in walking backwards in the Foxtrot to many years of executing *battements en arrière*.(1946: 8). Moss and Fontana believed that some competence in balletic principles was necessary for success in exhibition ballroom dancing, more particularly for the woman if 'anything elaborate is to be attempted'. (70) So graceful and effortless was her execution in partnership with Fontana that Richardson credited the couple with raising the form to an art [**see Figure 4**]. But then Moss had also trained with Pavlova and Bedells before becoming an exhibition ballroom dancer. (71) For men, the role of ballet in cultivating correct deportment for the modern style was thought less crucial. 'Slight training' in ballet for the male exhibition dancer might be desirable, advised Fontana, 'but though he may, in his work, *suggest* the barre and the centre practice, he must never actually *show* it.'(72) Technical



proficiency for the male should be subjugated, just as in many Victorian stage *pas de deux*, to showing off his female partner to the audience.

Dancing in the ballroom had long been evaluated by dancing masters as both a social accomplishment and as an art, but in the 1920s the rhetoric of the 'art' of ballroom dancing gained fresh visibility. This heightened profile is part of a longer, complex and much wider understanding of the progress of dance more generally as a culturally and economically respected art and discipline in the twentieth century; its detailed consideration, however, necessarily falls beyond the scope of this present essay. But in making the case for early English ballroom dancing as an art form, racial and social exclusion of other dance practices, whatever the historical connection, was fundamental. In this transformation, as Mackenzie argued, the resultant 'artistic product ... would scarcely be recognized by the people from whom it was borrowed.' (1920: 261). In rendering social dance an art form, the modern repertoire, according to perceptions of the time, required a redefinition largely cast in opposition to any visible signs of projected origins in so-called primitive African culture. European valued qualities of harmony, grace, flow, simplicity, symmetry, elegance, gentle curves, restraint and lack of visible effort had for several centuries been regarded as properties embodied ideally in royal and aristocratic deportment and upheld as inter-related signifiers of beauty and propriety. (73) It was these qualities that were to be re-affirmed in modern social dancing. Underlying classical principles of beauty were pressed into service to support the restoration and development of dancing in the ballroom.

For Richardson, as part of this enterprise, the restitution of a fully revolving Waltz was essential. He likened its proper execution to 'a perfect circle' and argued that in contrast to the trajectories of the One-Step and Fox-Trot, 'there is a

completeness about the circle which well illustrates the perfection of the valse.’ (74)

Leading ballroom teachers judged order and regularity, even in improvisational practice, as desirable features of modern style even if, in essence, these principles hailed from traditional European classicism. In Mrs Mackenzie’s view, for example, when considering the Foxtrot in its contemporary manifestation, the ability of dancers to execute steps in a symmetrical manner, as in the *danse d’école*, signalled a quest for all-round perfection of execution, an ideal that she viewed as commensurate with understanding of ballroom dancing as an art form. (75)

### ***The Modern Style of Ballroom Dancing***

To the present eye, the worlds of ballroom and ballet appear quite distinct, yet, as noted above, the ‘general’ dance teacher of the early 1900s belonged to a tradition that had shared a basic technique and associated aesthetic principles for several centuries. In the new ballroom style, however, a key difference lay in the discourse of modernity in English ballroom dance whereby ‘natural’ movement was elevated over the perceived artificiality of the nineteenth-century ballet. Fundamental to the new technique of the ballroom was a use of the feet and legs principally for locomotive means rather than for “decorative detail”. In a style shorn of ‘frills’, Richardson argued, in true modernist spirit of paring down to the essentials,

the feet and legs are used merely as instruments to carry the body round the room in harmony with the rhythm of the music. (76)

Highly conscious of parallels with early twentieth-century ballet and society, he maintained that the

‘modern ballroom dancer has revolted against the despotism of the Victorian dancing master in the same way that the modern Diaghileff Company has revolted against the conventional choreography of Marius Petipa and the classic schools of La Scala and Paris ‘ (77)

Expanding comparison further with the political world, Richardson saw correspondences with the overthrow of autocratic rule, as in the conquest of the Germans in the recent war, but he cautioned against going too far towards ‘artistic Bolshevism’. The restoration of social and choreographic harmony in the ballroom was to be achieved through suggestions made by the pedagogic profession and by appeal to ‘good form’ rather than by dictatorship to a now more democratically-minded dancing public.

In this modern style, Victorian attention to ‘steps’ was replaced by an emphasis on the body as the initiator of movement, just, Richardson argued, as in the principles of walking, by moving the body first into the direction of intended travel. No longer was social dancing the repetition of steps in which the feet and legs were paramount in stepping to each beat of the musical bar. Instead the dancers were to move expressively to the melody (compare the earlier Boston, see Buckland 2013) using the feet and legs as vehicles to propel the body through space ‘It is the body that dances’ Richardson insisted. (78) In a similar vein, the

*Daily Sketch* repeated advice from a 'well-known teacher' that 'the valse is a dance that should be taught from the shoulders downwards rather than from the feet upwards.' (79) Travelling through space while turning would result in a desirable sense of flow and 'that lovely sweeping movement which is so delightful to watch' (80) '[F]lowing lines' for Richardson meant that 'whilst they are turning they will also advance a considerable distance' (81) Progression could be facilitated by dancing on the quarter rather than half toe, this latter technique for waltzing now being regarded as old-fashioned and artificial, 'a convention that belongs to the stage' rather than to the social sphere. (82)

Responses to the intertwined aspects of space and rhythm were crucial to the development of the new style in London. Here, there were numerous large ballrooms with good dance floors that were frequented by a restricted number of dancers who could move expansively to increasingly melodic sounds. This was in contrast to the dance scene in Paris where the dancers' movements at the time were hampered by crowded small venues and inspired by a more emphatically rhythmic style of playing (termed 'jerky' by Richardson). (83) Africanist influenced moves such as the shimmy and the toddle suited the spatial-sonic environment in Paris, but in London were not deemed appropriate to English restraint and morally irreprehensible dancing

### ***The Waltz Transformed: Some Legacies and Reflections***

After Silvester's success in the World Championships, there was no immediate, acceptance of the technical changes necessary to perform a smooth travelling Waltz in which a couple might equally execute natural and reverse turns. Attempts to hone the turning technique of the modern Waltz continued mainly because of the

difficulties experienced by non-professionals. Richardson noted the tendency of some men to slip back towards dancing a Fox-trot rhythm to a Waltz tune caused, he reasoned, by their failure to close the feet firmly together on the third step. (84) Indeed, this manner of execution – the recurrence of the three-step - gained such ascendancy that in 1927 became a subject of correspondence and instructional article in the *Dancing Times*. Silvester, noting the three step's popularity among leading dancers, and basing his argument on mechanical grounds, argued for retention of its usage but only when travelling in a straight line, never in turning. Maxwell Stewart, Silvester's Waltz rival and indeed usurper of the latter's crown in the 1924 World Championships, complained against the 'so-called new "three-step valse."', as it upset the rhythm and character of the dance.(85) Interestingly, he viewed the three-step as 'foreign' (that is, American via the Fox-Trot) and exhorted teachers to 'keep the valse British throughout.' Less practised couples continued to struggle to complete a full turn while performing the recommended pattern of six steps over two bars. The problem was eventually solved by the introduction of a three-quarter turn that laid the foundation for today's diagonal Waltz. (86)

In addition to ascertaining kinetic factors in the technical transformation of the Waltz, understanding the social and dance networks of individual personalities illustrate how such changes occurred within a comparatively short space of time and how positions of social advantage fostered and facilitated their later dissemination. Access to the dance floors was predicated not just upon dance interest and ability but also more particularly on wealth and social connections

The narrow coterie of innovative and well-practised dancers in the new style shared similar social backgrounds. Josephine Bradley was born into a middle-class family, prosperous enough to educate their children privately and tutor her in piano lessons

which eventually led to her career as dancer, dance teacher and band leader. (87)

Her early pupil and World Champion ballroom dancer already by 1924, Phyllis Haylor, came from a similarly privileged background as the daughter of a local government official who was also great friends with Richardson. (Shute in Allen, 1984: p 17) Other opinion shapers in this dance world moved on further up the social scale. Sometime dance partner to G. K. Anderson and member of the 1924 ISTD ballroom committee, Mrs Lisle Humphreys, eventually left the exhibition dance and teaching profession when converting her marital status to that of Lady Peacock; whilst Little June, stage dancer, actress and celebrity frequenter of the dances at Grafton Galleries later became Lady Inverclyde. (88) Appropriate social provenance to enter this world was not exclusive to the women. Silvester recalled how Belle Harding inquired about his father's status (a vicar in Wembley, London) before taking him on at the Empress Rooms, while his competition rival Maxwell Stewart was born into the aristocracy and regularly acted as dance partner to the Queen of Norway when she visited the capital. (Silvester 1958: 32-33, 65).

Given their backgrounds, then, the dancers already shared a gendered and class-related way of standing and moving. Even though the men were expected to improvise and steer their female partner around the floor, typically they were taught, at least initially, by women. At first sight this appears problematic both culturally and practically; but Bradley (1947: 10), in recalling her first (disastrous) lesson in teaching the Foxtrot, reveals her preference for teaching a man, rather than a woman, because she 'might have pulled him through.' This embodied participatory mode of instructing men in couple dances is, in fact, not uncommon today and leaves the men to model their demeanour and style on that of those male dancers whom they admire and whose dancing skills are highly regarded by both sexes.(89)

For that to occur, although film was later to be nationally disseminated for dancers to copy, in the initial years, the physicality of the learning and innovating process was essential.

Key to the development of style was the geographical proximity of these London-based dancers who met regularly in the same places, whether in studios and dance clubs organised, in particular, by Madame Vandyck and Belle Harding, or in hotels, restaurants and nightclubs. Vandyck and Harding insisted on only 'ladies' to train in the dance profession at their schools, the former teacher providing not only space but instructional shaping in the new style. Bradley, Haylor (studying from the age of four), and Eve Tyngate-Smith, member of the 1924 ISTD committee, all studied ballet with Vandyck and the obituary in the *Dancing Times* salutes Vandyck's two-year guardianship of the Moon Club, where Bradley and Anderson perfected their 'flowing dance', as being critical in the emergence of modern ballroom dancing. (90)

It is more than possible that this tribute was penned by Richardson, himself a former pupil of Vandyck and frequent visitor to her studios and dance events.

Richardson's appetite for dancing and late night socializing was a decided advantage in witnessing the latest shifts in dance style in the West End night club scene (Bradley, 1937) and there can be little doubt of his enormous contribution to the rescue and transformation of the Waltz. His persistent and widespread publication campaign across specialist and popular press, sympathetic engagement with leading London teachers, encouragement of dance music composition in Waltz time, promotion of dancers expert in the Waltz and creation of a national competitive structure in which it might flourish and be monitored, not least by his own presence as a judge, testify to his unstinting commitment. The Waltz mattered to him, as it did to many of his circle, on the grounds of providing rhythmic contrast

to other dances in the nascent modern ballroom repertoire and for men, as an instructional aid in steering. Most importantly, as a keen ballroom dancer himself, he was evidently loath to relinquish the visceral sensations offered exclusively by the Waltz.

Bradley (1937) recalled how she had witnessed Richardson brooding over performances of the Waltz immediately prior to coming up with the idea for the *Daily Sketch* national competition. 'Competitions make for the best' he headed one of his numerous press articles, noting how the recommendations of the three conferences had been implicitly applied as motivating criteria.(91) In the scholarly literature, dance competitions are generally seen as drivers towards virtuosity and spectacle, yet what is distinctive about these competitions is the insistence upon simplicity rather than complexity. (92) Obviously Richardson was not acting alone in this and his ideas, shaped by his increasing knowledge of dance more generally, owed much to the dancers and teachers with whom he consulted and worked. For them, the goal was not only to reform the excesses of contemporary national dance floors but also to create a modern national art form of dancing in which the Waltz, while if not maintaining its previous supremacy as the most well-known and practised of ballroom couple dances, could join the other anglicized foreign forms on equal terms. By the late 1920s, the English Waltz was recognized as a distinctively modern yet inherited form and assured of its future position in ballroom dancing both socially and competitively. Its pathway from outdated Victorian relic to modern cultural asset was achieved through the interplay of individuals in distinctive social and choreographic networks, the tracing of which invites further journeys into archival resources, comparison with past and present examples of popular dancing



and attempts to turn both ways in waltzing between social history and the study of dance.

### ***Acknowledgements***

Aspects of this article were presented as a research seminar 'Agents of Control of Creativity? Leading Social Dancers of 1920s London' at the Centre for Dance Research, University of Roehampton, London December 2014. I am grateful to my colleagues at Roehampton for their interest and stimulating questions, in particular, Chris Jones for her continuing curiosity on this topic.

I would like to thank the following for their helpful and timely support: Eleanor Fitzpatrick, Philip Richardson Library Archive, Royal Academy of Dance, London; Sarah Jardine-Willoughby, Library, Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing and Kornelia Cepok, Archives and Special Collections, Library, University of Roehampton, London. My thanks also to librarians at the British Library, London and the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

I thank the Mary Evans Picture Library and Getty Images for permissions for illustrations reproduced here. I am especially grateful to Jon Gray for his kind assistance and generosity in granting permission for several images from *The Dancing Times*

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1. *Dancing Times* April 1921: 573.
2. *Dancing Times*, November 1919: 80.
3. *Dancing Times*, May 1919: 347.

- 4.. *Dancing Times*, July 1919: 465. See also 'A Valse Competition for South London. Mr Hurndalls's Enterprise', *Dancing Times*, March 1919: 229 held 'under the auspices of *The Dancing Times*' in that same journal, March 1919: 229.
- 5.. *Dancing World*, October 1920, vol. 1, no. 6: 18.
6. See Nott (2015: 18-19) for an informative analysis of the Hammersmith *palais de danse*'s opening success. The *palais de danse* was an important national phenomenon which was instrumental in providing facilities for the promotion and evolution of popular social dancing for much of twentieth century Britain – see Nott (2015) more generally.
7. *Dancing Times*, August 1919: 497.
8. Richardson (1946): 48.
9. *Dancing Times*, September 1919: 539. See also his Dance Competitions, *Dancing Times* April 1921: 581, 583, 585 which includes a chart of recent West End competitions listing the venues, dancers, dances, judges and winners.
10. *Dancing Times*, December 1920: 241.
11. Ibid. The 2<sup>nd</sup> prize went to Miss Elsie Scott and Mr Raphael and the 3<sup>rd</sup> prize to Miss Joan Pickering and Mr Timmy Thomas.
12. *Dancing Times*, December 1920: 168. Step dancing – that is, percussive stepping as in clog dancing, remained popular in English variety theatre.
13. *The Daily Sketch*, 6 October 1921, p. 2.
14. See, for example, *The Daily Sketch*, 12 October, 1921: 2, 13 October, 1921: 2. The local press also took up publicity: see, for example, *The Dover Express*, 11 November 1921: 4; *Leeds Mercury*, 15 November 1921: 10, *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 14 November 1921: 2.

15. *The Daily Sketch*, 13 October 1921: 2; 14 October 1921; 17 October, 1921: 11-
12. Double-sided recording of both tunes played by the "Queen's" Dance Orchestra, listed as Number B1286 in *The 1922 Catalogue of HMV Records* held in the British Library.
16. *The Daily Sketch*, 21 October 1921: 6. See also 24 October: 1, 28 October: 15.
17. *The Daily Sketch*, 7 April 1919: 7.
18. Richardson (1946: 54) notes that this form of competition materialized earlier in March that year at the Frolics Club when it was won by Victor Silvester and Phyllis Clarke. For details on the 1922 World Championship see Richardson (1946: 54-55); Silvester (1958: 64-69); "The Sitter-Out", *Lessons of the Championship and other Ballroom News*, *Dancing Times*, January 1923: 411, 413, 415.
19. *Dancing Times* March 1922: 527.
20. Ibid.
21. *Hendon and Finchley Times*, 22 December 1922.
22. *Dancing Times* June 1921: 703-04.
23. Quoted in [PJSR] 1922: 231.
24. Silvester (1935: 53). Casani (1930) also recalled the attraction of spinning, citing the technique of Moss and Fontana as one which he had emulated.
25. The British Library holds over ten editions (with revisions), the last appearing in 2005. He was not alone amongst his ballroom dancing leading lights to publish technical manuals on the modern style in the 1920s; see too Maxwell Stewart [1927] and Casani (1927). Each also contributed specialist articles to the *Dancing Times* as did Eve Tynegate Smith.
26. *Dancing Times*, December 1918: 90. For similar examples see Mme Jeanie Smurthwaite of the Adine School of Dancing; 'Special attention given to Style'

*Dancing Times* December 1919: 236. Mme Vandyck, 'Style and Department a Speciality', *Dancing Times* February 1918: 166.

27. *Daily Sketch* 13 December 1921, in Philip Richardson Archive Collection (hereafter PRAC), Notebooks, number 3, labelled Daily Sketch Dance Competitions, Press Cuttings November 1921-January 1922 [p. 12], Philip Richardson Library, Royal Academy of Dance (hereafter PRL, RAD). .

28.. *Dancing Times* September 1916: 332.

29. The logo no doubt worked to catch the reader's eye. See, for example, *Dancing Times* October 1920: 50 and May 1921: 664.

30. *Dancing Times* August 1916: 302. Pilcer was teamed with French music hall star Gaby Deslys by American Broadway choreographer Ned Wayburn (Malnig, 1992: 32-33) and partnered her until her early death in 1920. They introduced the Gaby Glide (which did not entirely succeed as a ballroom social dance). A brief clip of their dancing (a rag that reveals an exuberant stage style not at all suitable for the ballroom) as entertainment for the British troops during the war can be viewed at [http://www.itnsource.com/en/shotlist/BHC\\_RTV/1916/08/17/BGT407050462/?s=dancing](http://www.itnsource.com/en/shotlist/BHC_RTV/1916/08/17/BGT407050462/?s=dancing)

31. Cree (1920: 39). Richardson did not, however, agree entirely with Cree's advice on waltzing – see his review of the latter in *Dancing Times* July 1920: 768-69. For a similar espousal of smoothness, but in the late Victorian period, see actor Hayden Coffin quoted in *Dancing Times*, April 1913: 416.

32. 'First Dance Heat on Monday' newspaper cutting labelled January 2<sup>nd</sup> in PRAC, Notebooks, number 2, labelled 'Daily Sketch' Dance Competitions, Press Cuttings Oct. Nov 1921, PRL, RAD.

33. *Dancing Times*, December 1922: 224. The Foxtrot supplanted the Onestep both musically and as a dance form, the latter already declining in popularity by 1921. See *Ballroom Gossip. Something about Bands, Dancers and Where They Dance*, *Dancing Times*, November 1921: 90.
34. See, in particular, George-Graves (2009) and Robinson (2009, 2010, 2015).
35. On African American performances of exhibition ballroom dancing in the United States see Gottschild (2000). African American dancers and singers on the English stage gained a higher profile from 1923 (notably Florence Mills in the musical theatre show *Shuffle Along* but the models of social dance practice during the Armistice years in England were exclusively white.
36. This was to change with the arrival of the Charleston craze in 1925.
37. Anderson and Bradley were requested by those watching to demonstrate the 'Slow Foxtrot, the dance was to be copied by thousands of dancers, right up to the present day' immediately after winning at the Embassy Club in 1920 (Bradley, 1947: 25)..
38. *Dancing Times*, September 1920: 940.
39. *Dancing Times*, April 1921: 575. During the vogue for ragtime dancing, the dance had already been claimed as suited to the English temperament even before undergoing transformation into the regularly labelled English Waltz of the later 1920s. See, for example, letter to *The Times*, 15 December 1913: 9.
40. December 1922 3, 10.
41. *The Dancing Times* featured reports on the Parisian dancing scene, see, for example, the series 'Notes from Paris', November 1919: 103, 105 and December

1919: 185, 187-189. See too Richardson's earlier advice to teachers, *Dancing Times*, December 1914:70.

42. *Dancing Times* September 1920: 961, *Dancing Times* April 1921: 551. On the ISDT, see Charles D'Albert, 'The Imperial Society of Dance Teachers. Its History, Objects, and Its Future', *Dancing Times* May 1918: 245, 247.

43. Cecil Taylor, 'Impressions of Parisian Dancing', *Dancing Times*, July 1920: 785.

44. *Dancing Times* September 1920: 961. For first-hand accounts of the membership and work of the committee see Silvester (1958 :84-87) and Bradley ( 1947: 53-59); see also Richardson (1946: chapter IX).

45. *Dancing Times*, July 1914: 607. He did quote the 'Castle House Suggestions for Correct Dancing'.

46. 'British Fashion in our Ballrooms. Why the Englishman likes Quiet Dancing Steps' Philip J S Richardson, *The Daily Mirror*, 15 November [1921] in PRAC, Notebook, number 4 labelled 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings 1921-1922', PRL, RAD.

47. Anderson has faded somewhat from dance historiography. Details on his birth and passage to Europe have been uncovered through searching the website [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk). On his previous dance experience see *Dancing Times* March 1922: 529. Another American male dancer admired by Richardson was Selig Baruch, who had also been a member of the Sharpshooters, and performed as an exhibition dancer with his wife in England during the early 1920s.

48. Quoted in *Dancing Times* March 1922: 529.

49. *Dancing Times* February 1922: 424-428. Blake was successful at open dance competitions in New York and then at Murray's Club. In contrast to Anderson, he

capitalised on his dance experience professionally, becoming an exhibition dancer at the Adelphi Theatre, Liverpool, creating a dance known as the Bluestrot, writing and touring to promote the 'London Style.'

50. *Dancing Times* February 1922: 424-425.

51. Richardson reported that the same dancers took the prizes. as note *Daily Sketch* 1922 post says no new ones coming forwards)

52. *Dancing Times* October 1920: 3; 'the happy result at which America is aiming today may be said to have been achieved already in the best ball rooms of our country'; anon 'The dawn of the season', *The Ballroom*, October 1922, 3, 8: 327; English exhibition dancer Ted Trevor reported of dancing in Paris that it was 'not so good as one sees in London.'" *Dancing Times*, December 1920: 225. By 1921, Richardson could claim 'London's Ballroom Dancing The Best In The World'; interestingly he cites spatial constraints in crowded ballrooms in Paris from preventing the development of a sweeping, flowing style, 'Footnotes on Dancing', *The Strand Magazine* October 1921, 348—52 (350) in PRAC, Notebook number 4, labelled 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings', PRL, RAD.

53. Richardson was well aware of religious criticism against dancing in France (1946: 41 and *Dancing Times*, January 1921: 306). Religious censure was occasionally reported in the contemporary British press (see, for example, *Daily Sketch* 2 April 1919: 11, and *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 5 March 1921: 5.

54. *Daily Mail* photographs reproduced in *Dancing Times* June 1920: 699. 701. *Daily Sketch* [cuttings pages 28-30] labelled Photographs from issue dated 11 November in PRAC, Notebook 2, labelled "'Daily Sketch' Dance Competitions. Press Cuttings Oct. Nov. 1921' PRL, RAD.

55. *Dancing Times*, April 1914: 422-23. The Castles' dancing was also filmed - see *The Whirl of Life* (1915). Extracts can be viewed <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5TE74e9vAg>. Note the similarity of their ballroom hold to that espoused by Scott (1892: Plate XXVI).

56. For examples of Casini's films see <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/tango-steps-by-mr-santos-casani-and-miss-jose-leon/query/santos+casani> (Tango 1924) and <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/dance-dos-and-donts>; for other examples of how not to dance see <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/dancing-tips> which features Phyllis Haylor and Alec Millar. There was a film of Bradley and Anderson's Foxtrot made shortly after their competition successes (from which the notation by An Expert (1923) was made) but its whereabouts or survival are not known.

57. On cinema audiences of the period see Hiley (1999). The 1920 film was for the series 'Around the Town' which is recorded in the online catalogue of the British Universities Film and Video Council and noted in *Dancing Times*, December 1920: 225. There is a later version of Ted Trevor and Dina Harris's advice released by Pathe in 1926 <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/madame-will-you-dance>. For a sustained demonstration (for the technology of the time) of a winning waltz, see that by victors Maxwell Stewart and Barbara Miles in 1924 filmed by Pathé <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/the-waltz-by-miss-barbara-miles-and-mr-maxwell-ste>. The cross-over step in the reverse turn is clearly demonstrated in slow motion. 58. *Dancing Times*, December 1919: 159.

59. Ibid.

60. *Dancing Times*, August 1916: 301.

61. (Mouvet, 1915: 12, 15). His Montmartre experience of waltzing must have been around 1904 as he notes that the Bal Tabarin had only just opened.



62. *Daily Sketch* 20 January 1909: 9. This combination supports further Richardson's suggestion of the close relationship between the Tango and Waltz at this time. Mahrer performed with Gabrielle Ray in the 1909 production of *The Merry Widow* at Daly's Theatre, London and was reported as coming 'incidentally to give London people some new ideas on waltzing', *Daily Express*, London, Thursday, 7 January 1909: 7. He was also advertised as the 'model waltzer', *The Graphic*, 23 January 1908: 122. See too, with respect to the *Merry Widow* Waltz and the Boston, Buckland 2013: 61-62.

63. *Sporting Times* 17 May 1913: 2.

64. *Dancing Times* March 1922: 527. *Daily Sketch* 19 December 1921, Press Cutting PRAC Notebook 2, PRL, RAD – the "expert" noted here is undoubtedly Richardson.

65. 'Footnotes on Dancing and Dancers', *The Referee*, 7 May 1922, cutting in Philip J S Richardson Notebook 4, 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings 1921-1922', Philip Richardson Archive Royal Academy of Dance.

66. *Daily Sketch* 21 January 1922, cutting in Philip J S Richardson Notebook \* Philip Richardson Archive Royal Academy of Dance

67. 'Footnotes on Dancing and Dancers', *The Referee*, 7 May 1922, cutting in Philip J S Richardson Notebook 4 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings 1921-1922' Philip Richardson Archive, Royal Academy of Dance.

68. *Dancing World*, no 6, vol 1, 1920: 8.

69. *Dancing Times*, February 1919: 146

70. *Dancing Times*, December 1920: 176.

71. Moss understudied Bedells at the Empire Theatre, *Dancing Times*, December 1919: 159-60; 'Footnotes on Dancing', *The Strand Magazine* October 1921, 348—52 (352) in Philip J S Richardson Archive, Notebook 4, Miscellaneous Press Cuttings

1921-22. Royal Academy of Dance; for an overview of the couple's career see <http://www.jazzageclub.com/dancing-duos/moss-and-fontana-2/> [accessed 12 March 2017];

72. *Dancing Times*, December 1920: 176.

73. See, for example, Cohen (2000: 1-23) and Buckland (2011a: 96-97, 119-122). The battle for acceptance of dance as an art form equal in status to the other liberal arts was particularly active in Europe and North America at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Richardson was one of its chief champions; see, for example, Genné (1982).

74. *Dancing Times* April 1922: 527; 'Footnotes on Dancing and Dancers', 21 *The Referee* 21 May 1922, PRAC, Notebook number 4, 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings 1921-1922' PRL, RAD.

75. *Dancing Times*, December 1922: 231.

76. Footnotes on Dancing *The Strand Magazine* October 1921: 352, PRAC, Notebook number 4, 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings 1921-1922' PRL, RAD.

. Compare Cecil Sharp's directives in 1916 regarding the technique of the newly revived country dance: 'The function of the legs is to support the body rather than to help to move it forward, the actual motion being set up, regulated, and directed by the sway and balance of the body, as in skating.' *The English Country Dance. Graded Series*, Vol. 1, London: Novello, 1919: 9. Sharp also urges a 'natural' style and was noted for his opposition to the technique of opera ballet. Sharp also made extensive claims for a national, art form and was vehemently opposed to the new African American-sourced choreomusical repertoire. See Gammon (2008). There is scope for further exploration of these technical and ideological synergies between dance genres in the first three decades of the century.

77. *Dancing Times*, May 1920:606.

78. Footnotes on Dancing *The Strand Magazine* October 1921: 352, Press Cutting PRAC Notebook 4, 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings 1921-22', PRL, RAD..

79. 'Two Styles of Waltz. Difference Lies in the Frills and Not in Principles' *Daily Sketch* 12 November 1921, Press Cutting, PRAC Notebook 2, PRL, RAD.

80. American dancer Jack Gavin (partnered with Joan Pickering) quoted in *Daily Sketch* 28 October 1921, Press Cutting PRAC Notebook 2, PRL, RAD. Gavin advised intending competitors not to be 'too niggly with your steps' and to "[c]over the ground." Copious photographs of Gavin and Pickering were used to illustrate the right and wrong ways of ballroom dancing, *Daily Sketch* 11 November 1921, Press Cutting, PRAC Notebook 2, PRL, RAD. A selection of this couple also illustrated Richardson's observations in *Ballroom Gossip. Something about Bands, Dancers and Where They Dance*, *Dancing Times* November 1921: 90-95.

81. 'What Shall We Dance?' *Tits [sic]-Bits*, 30 September 1922, PRAC, Notebook number 4, 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings 1921-1922' PRL, RAD.

82. 'The Truth about the Waltz', *Daily Sketch*, 21 January 1922 PRAC, Notebook number 4, 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings 1921-1922' PRL, RAD. See too *Daily Sketch* 30 January 1922. Richardson also warned that turning on the half toe in the Waltz failed to interpret the spirit of music, resulting in loss of 'lilt and "go"' *The Weekly Despatch* 5 March 1922, PRAC, Notebook number 4, 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings 1921-1922' PRL, RAD.

83. Footnotes on Dancing, *The Strand Magazine* October 1921: 350-51, PRAC, Notebook number 4, 'Miscellaneous Press Cuttings 1921-1922' PRL, RAD.

84. 'More Waltz Hints', 4 February [*Manchester Evening News* 1926] cutting in PRAC, Notebook 6, PRL, RAD.

85. *Dancing Times*, March 1927: 721. The other correspondents include Barbara Miles (Stewart's dance partner) Victor Silvester, Amy Greenwood (judge), and H. St. John Rumsey (teacher and author of a manual on modern ballroom dancing). The discussion concludes with Richardson's own observations and recommendations, together with demonstration photographs posed by Frank Ford (Bradley's later dance partner) and partner Audrey Staples from Belle Harding's Empress Rooms, 'The Valse Goes Back. Ballroom Notes by "The Sitter Out"', *Dancing Times*, March 1927: 719 ff.. It should not be forgotten that the British dance world had also experienced the arrival of the Charleston which activated fear, fanned by the press, amongst conservative commentators and the pedagogic profession of moral regression on the dance floor.

86. Frank Ford was a keen champion of this revision, see Richardson 1946: 68. For a notation of the basic turns of the modern Waltz as danced for most of the twentieth century see Moore (1999: 101- 115).

87. Bradley (1947); for a recorded example of her strict tempo orchestra see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbT5LLCduSQ> accessed 19 June 2017.

88. Mrs Lisle Humphreys was born Irene Cynthia Le Mesurier (1892-1975), the daughter of a retired army officer; Little June, later an actress on stage and film, was born June Howard-Tripp (1901-1985) to actor-parents and solicitor grandfather.

89. Certainly, the better dance-trained women in late Victorian high society were often expected by the men to guide them through quadrilles (see Buckland 2011a: 126). I am grateful to Dr Mats Melin for sharing his experiences of being guided on the dance floor by female partners when first learning couple dances in a style unknown to him.

90 'Madame Vandyck', obituary notice, *Dancing Times*, November 1954: 123;

Bradley (1947: 5, 54-55). Haylor's father was close friends with Richardson who recommended that she go on to study with Bradley (Shute in Allen 1984:17).

91. *Daily Sketch*, 11 November 1921 in PRAC Notebook 2, PRL, RAD.

92. See, for example, Foley (2013: 178) on Irish step dancing; Morris (2008) on ballet; and more generally Foster on competitive forces in dance and neo-liberalism (2017).

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