

Footprints of the Dance: An Early Seventeenth-Century Dance Master's Notebook.
Jennifer Nevile.

Drama and Theatre in Early Modern Europe 8. Leiden: Brill, 2018. xiv + 286 pp. \$135.

In *Footprints of the Dance*, Jennifer Nevile leads us through a fascinating and relatively unknown manuscript held in the Kungliga Biblioteket in Stockholm. Likely created by a French dance master working in Brussels, this manuscript, the titular “dance master’s notebook,” contains approximately one hundred folios divided into thematic sections. The notebook’s diverse subject matter, Nevile argues, offers proof that teaching dance was only one of dancing masters’ many areas of expertise: they also taught music and martial arts and choreographed pieces for theatrical entertainments. Much of the seemingly unrelated content in the notebook—firework recipes, alchemical symbols, the only known instructions for a pike exhibition—would be useful for someone organizing an elaborate spectacle. This unusual, multifunctional manuscript—and Nevile’s analysis of it—can help scholars connect and contextualize the scattered dance references found in the manuals and treatises, dramatic and literary works, and financial and legal documents of early modern Europe.

The introduction and first chapter describe the physical manuscript and its contents. Chapter 3 scrutinizes the notebook’s dance-related material, highlighting how symbolism transcended format. Whether formed by dancers, soldiers, or fireworks, a circle symbolized perfection and the eternal, spiritual realm (96–97). Chapter 5 examines the notebook’s unique technical instructions for a pike exhibition, a fully choreographed and expert martial display for one man and an approximately eighteen-foot wooden staff; the exhibition begins and ends with a dance-style bow, or *reverence*, and utilizes dance vocabulary as well as military terms. Chapter 6 explores the numerous musical pieces recorded in the notebook. Most also appear in published collections, but ten dance pieces by Charles de Lespine are unique to the manuscript. In addition to dance music, there are dozens of songs and *airs de cour*, most by Pierre Guédron. Some of the scores are simpler than the published versions and may have been created for student use. Regardless, the musical selections show that the notebook’s compiler had close ties to the French court and access to the latest musical fashions.

The remaining chapters situate the manuscript within its historical context. Chapter 2 gives a general overview of dance in early modern Europe, with a detailed account of dance in Brussels. Nevile’s writing is clear and accessible, and a chapter-length overview of early modern European dance would ordinarily make an excellent course reading. However, the numerous subsections vary substantially in length and depth, and most of the intriguing quotes from primary sources lack explication, potentially leading the nonspecialist to draw incorrect conclusions. Chapter 4, on the other hand, offers a clear and concise overview of dance instruction in early modern Europe, usefully contrasting records from Nicolas Vallet’s dance school in Amsterdam with those in the notebook.

Employment contracts for Vallet's school illuminate the relationships between dance masters, apprentices, and musicians, while the notebook's student enrollment records include welcome demographic details: the Brussels school attracted an international clientele of men and women from the upper and middle ranks of society.

For theater historians, dance reconstructors, and choreographers, this book is worth buying just for the 450-plus dance figures, facsimiles of which are included in an appendix. Arranged for convenient consultation, the figures illustrate configurations for five to sixteen dancers for numerous geometric shapes and physical objects, as well as all the letters of the alphabet. As Nevile observes, "The staggering variety of this collection of figures is a telling reminder of just what was meant when contemporary witnesses wrote of their amazement at the bewildering variety in the figures which unfurled before their eyes, and why it was so difficult for those watching the shifting panorama before them to be precise, clear and detailed in their accounts of what they saw" (88). Additional appendixes feature facsimiles, transcriptions, and translations of the pike exhibition and six ballet plots, and facsimiles of approximately seventy pupils' enrollment information. Nevile also provides musical examples in modern notation and tables with titles, composers, and printed concordances.

Theatrical entertainments loomed large in the early modern period, literally and figuratively. In addition to illuminating the inner workings of a dance school, Jennifer Nevile's *Footprints of the Dance* takes us several steps closer to understanding Renaissance spectacles and increasing our knowledge and appreciation of those who designed and developed them.

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L'Époque de la Renaissance (1400–1600), Tome II: La nouvelle culture (1480–1520). Eva Kushner, ed.

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With the publication of *La nouvelle culture (1480–1520)*, the long-anticipated second volume needed to complete Eva Kushner's four-tome comparatist history *L'Époque de la Renaissance (1400–1600)*, readers now have full access to the most thorough, complete and up-to-date pan-European treatment of the spectrum of the human sciences as conceived in the premodern period we know as the Renaissance.

Initially undertaken in 1988, with the publication of the series' first volume, *L'avènement de l'esprit nouveau (1400–1460)*, followed by the fourth and final chronological volume in 2000, *Crises et essors nouveaux (1560–1610)*, and then the 2011 third volume, *Maturations et mutations (1520–1560)*, this second volume truly is the