

# THE NORDIC MINUET

## ROYAL FASHION AND PEASANT TRADITION

EDITED BY PETRI HOPPU, EGIL BAKKA  
AND ANNE MARGRETE FISKVIK



A New Chapter in European Dance History

# THE NORDIC MINUET



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Royal Fashion and Peasant Tradition

*Edited by*

*Petri Hoppu, Egil Bakka, and Anne Fiskvik*

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**NORDISK  
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# Contents

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Foreword	1
1. Introduction	5
<i>Petri Hoppu</i>	
<b>PART I: DEFINING AND SITUATING THE MINUET IN HISTORY AND RESEARCH</b>	19
2. Situating the Minuet	21
<i>Egil Bakka</i>	
3. The Minuet as Part of Instrumental and Dance Music in Europe	61
<i>Andrea Susanne Opielka</i>	
<b>PART II: REFERENCES AND NARRATIVES</b>	69
4. Nordic Dancing Masters during the Eighteenth Century	71
<i>Anne Fiskvik</i>	
5. The Minuet in Sweden—and its Eastern Part Finland—during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries and in Sweden after 1800	85
<i>Gunnel Biskop</i>	
6. The Minuet in Finland after 1800	177
<i>Gunnel Biskop</i>	
7. The Minuet in Norway	229
<i>Gunnel Biskop</i>	
8. The Minuet in Denmark 1688–1820	245
<i>Anders Chr. N. Christensen</i>	
<b>PART III: SOURCES ABOUT THE DANCE FORM AND HOW THEY WERE CREATED</b>	257
9. Historical Examples of the Forms of the Minuet	259
<i>Elizabeth Svarstad and Petri Hoppu</i>	

10. The Minuet in the Theatre	299
<i>Egil Bakka, Elizabeth Svarstad, and Anne Fiskvik</i>	
11. Collecting Minuets in Denmark in the Twentieth Century	313
<i>Anders Chr. N. Christensen</i>	
12. Collecting Minuets among the Swedish-speaking Population in Finland	353
<i>Gunnel Biskop</i>	
13. Minuet Music in the Nordic Countries	369
<i>Andrea Susanne Opielka, Petri Hoppu, and Elizabeth Svarstad</i>	
<b>PART IV: THE MINUET AS MOVEMENT PATTERNS</b>	387
14. Nordic Forms of the Minuet	389
<i>Gunnel Biskop</i>	
15. Minuet Structures	417
<i>Petri Hoppu, Elizabeth Svarstad, and Anders Christensen</i>	
16. New Perspectives on the Minuet Step	433
<i>Egil Bakka, Elizabeth Svarstad, and Siri Mæland</i>	
<b>PART V: POST REVIVAL—THE LATE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES</b>	455
17. Minuet Memories and the Minuet among the Swedish-speaking Population in Finland today	457
<i>Gunnel Biskop</i>	
18. Minuet Constructions and Reconstructions	481
<i>Anna Björk and Petri Hoppu</i>	
19. New Forms and Contexts of the Minuet in the Nordic Countries	497
<i>Göran Andersson and Elizabeth Svarstad</i>	
<b>EPILOGUE</b>	519
20. Some Reflections on the Minuet	521
<i>Mats Nilsson and Petri Hoppu</i>	
List of Illustrations	537
List of Videos	553
Map of Locations	557
About the Authors	559
Index	565



The minuet is danced as a ceremonial dance at a wedding in Vörå, Ostrobothnia region, Finland, 1916. The minuet is danced by two couples at a time, with the bride and the groom on the left. Photograph by Valter W. Forsblom. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, CC-BY 4.0.





# Foreword

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There has been a close cooperation within the Nordic field of dance for a long time. Among folk dancers, it has lasted for more than a hundred years. The organised folk-dance revival movement started in the 1880s and, in 1920, the first sizeable Nordic folk-dance reunion (*folkdansstämman*) was arranged in Sweden. The dancers met to dance together and to show their dances, and these reunions have been held mostly biannually since then. They continue into the present.

For nearly fifty years, dance researchers in the Nordic countries have met to study these dances, gathering at work meetings for joint discussions and research. It started in 1977, with the founding of Nordisk forening for folkedansforskning (Nff; The Nordic Association for Folk Dance Research). Researchers from all the Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and the autonomous regions of Åland and the Faroe Islands) have participated. The topic is social dancing in the Nordic countries, emphasising traditional as well as revival versions and contexts. Perspectives and methods from dance history and ethnochoreology are central, as is the analysis of movement patterns. In 1978, Nff started a membership publication, which has been published every year since.

The organisation Nff has around one hundred members, and a project group of core researchers has some ten to fifteen members. The project group usually meets twice a year, running research projects. Some of them serve on the organisation's board, which is led by Egil Bakka. Regular members are invited to conferences where projects and results are discussed and presented.

The project group has published several small research reports and three comprehensive works:

*Gammaldans i Norden. Komparativ analyse av ein folkeleg dansegenre i utvalde nordiske lokalsamfunn* (1988, 302 pages; Round dances, nineteenth-century derived couple dances such as the waltz and polka in the Nordic countries). Comparative analysis of a traditional dance genre in selected local Nordic communities. It is based on some 285 filmed dances and interviews from comprehensive fieldwork in twelve communities across six countries.

*Nordisk Folkedanstypologi. En systematisk katalog over publiserte nordiske folkedanser* (1997, 135 pages; Nordic folk-dance typology. A systematic catalogue of published Nordic folk dances). It offers overviews of and classifies 3267 dances.

*Norden i Dans. Folk—Fag—Forskning* (2007, 712 pages; The North in Dance. People—Expertise—Research). This book surveys different groups of experts and their work on traditional dance/folk dance, including the topographers and early travellers; folklore and folklife collectors; theatre and ballet staff and those staging folk dance; the collectors, organisers, and teachers reviving folk dance; and specialised academic folk-dance researchers.

Finnish-Swedish folk dancers have performed the minuet for a hundred years at the aforementioned folk-dance reunions. One of the authors of this book, Gunnel Biskop, writes:

At the Nordic folk-dance event in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1982, with six thousand five hundred participants from all the Nordic countries, a swish went through the audience when eight hundred Finnish-Swedish folk dancers began to perform their minuet; I was one of them. The minuet was that time from Kimito, and it can now be found on an over a hundred-year-old picture on the back cover of the book.

For a long time, it was generally believed that the minuet had been danced in the Nordic countries almost exclusively among the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. Thanks to this project, we can present that the minuet has been danced in many different environments and in folk traditions in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.

This book has a long prehistory for several of the authors. Gunnel Biskop has been conducting her own research work on the minuet since the early 1990s, writing a long series of articles on the minuet in the membership periodical of Finlands Svenska Folkdansring (the central organization for Swedish-speaking folk dancers in Finland), starting in 1993. She then decided to publish the results in Swedish for a Nordic audience in the book *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen* (2015) (The Minuet—The Loved Dance). Much of the material from that book has been translated into English and adapted in the current book.

Petri Hoppu defended his doctoral dissertation *Symbolien ja sanattomuuden tanssi. Menuetti Suomessa 1700-luvulta nykyaikaan* (A dance of symbols and wordlessness. Minuet in Finland from the eighteenth century to the present) in 1999. He has written several articles on the minuet since 1993 and presented the dance at international conferences since 1997. Anders Chr. N. Christensen wrote two articles on the minuet in Denmark in 1993 and 1997.

Nff first engaged with the minuet in 2008, when the research group cooperated with French dance researchers about a seminar at the *Centre national de la danse* in Paris to present the Nordic minuet. In 2009, a similar seminar was held at Riverside, University of California, in cooperation with the teaching staff there, with Petri Hoppu and members of the Nff project group from Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). These seminars received support from Nordic Culture Point and NTNU. In 2013, the minuet was taken up as a research topic in Nff, and then, in 2014, the association decided to write a book in English with Petri Hoppu as the main editor. Since then, the project group has had the Minuet book as its main topic and has had about two meetings a year to develop the manuscript, with support from Nordic Culture Fund. Anne Fiskvik initiated a topically related research project at NTNU: *Music, theatre and dance in the Norwegian public sphere 1770–1850*, and Elizabeth Svarstad completed her PhD at the same university. She also presented elements from the Nff project at an international colloquium held at the Centre de musique baroque in Versailles December 2012 on behalf of Egil Bakka, Siri Mæland, and herself.

Thirty years have passed since some of the authors of this book wrote their first articles about the minuet, and Nff has worked with the minuet for some fifteen years. This work was done almost exclusively voluntarily, with the authors covering some costs themselves. During the last fifteen years, we have received support from Nordic Culture Fund, Nordic Culture Point, Letterstedtska föreningen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), and the Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance. In addition, Danish folklore archives, University of Gothenburg, University of Copenhagen, Tampere University, Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance, and Oulu University of Applied Sciences have given us space for meetings or paid for employees' or members' travel costs. We thank them all heartily for their support. All sections of the book have signed texts, and the authors are responsible for the content of each their contributions.

Göran Andersson, Sweden  
Egil Bakka, Norway  
Gunnel Biskop, Finland  
Anna Björk, Sweden  
Anders Chr. N. Christensen, Denmark  
Anne Fiskvik, Norway  
Petri Hoppu, Finland  
Siri Mæland, Norway  
Mats Nilsson, Sweden  
Andrea Susanne Opielka, Faroe Islands  
Elizabeth Svarstad, Norway



# I. Introduction

*Petri Hoppu*

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The minuet is a Western European dance with particularly strong symbolic and cultural meanings. It is a couple dance in 3/4 time but, unlike other well-known couple dances like the polka or tango, partners do not touch each other for most of the dance. Instead, they move together, facing and passing each other, following predetermined figures, and using specific minuet steps. This book examines the minuet in the Nordic countries where it achieved popularity alongside many other European countries during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Surprisingly, the tradition of dancing the minuet continues in some Nordic areas into the present day.<sup>1</sup>

The minuet is known in the Western world as a couple dance and music form that originated in the baroque era, specifically in the court of Louis XIV. In the popular imagination of today, it is a smooth and dignified dance, associated with wigs, large dresses, and tricorne hats. The purpose of this book is to show that this image of the minuet is too one-dimensional and that, especially in the Nordic countries, the minuet has appeared and still appears in many forms and contexts, as well as among many different groups of people.

What may be a surprise for some people, even those living in the Nordic countries, is that the minuet occupied a prominent position in the popular culture of the region in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, being danced by nobles and also by peasants. The dance, as part of the region's social and cultural structures, impacted the development of society. From the late nineteenth century, the minuet ceased to form part of the active dance repertoire

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1 The Nordic countries referred to in this book consist mainly of the continental part of the Nordic region: the kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, as well as the Republic of Finland, including the autonomous region of Åland. Although the Atlantic islands, the Republic of Iceland, and the Danish autonomous regions of the Faroe Islands and Greenland belong to a Nordic political and historical entity, the minuet has not played any significant role in their cultural histories, and, therefore, these are little discussed.

at social events in Europe, but exceptions to this exist in the Nordic countries: specific areas of Finland and Denmark continue to dance the minuet even today.

Over the centuries, discussions of the minuet have emphasized its formality and imagined rigidity. These qualities are suggested by metaphorical usage of the name 'minuet' but often also by theatrical staging of the dance. This book will counter such characterizations, contrasting the reality of dancing with such discourses. Whether as a court dance or a peasant dance, the minuet has enjoyable and lively dimensions. It can be noble and dignified but also cheerful, sensual, and intimate. This book is not the final truth about the minuet, but it reveals the minuet's multiple dimensions and opens new Nordic and embodied perspectives on it.

## The Intriguing Minuet

The minuet, *monsieur*, is the queen of dances, and the dance of queens, do you understand?<sup>2</sup>

This quotation is taken from a fascinating 1882 short story by the French writer Guy de Maupassant in which an old man reminisces about his youth as a dancer of the minuet. The man comes to a park every day, wearing a costume and shoes from the *ancien régime* (the social and political regime in place at the time of the French Revolution in 1789). He draws the attention of the narrator, who finally asks, 'What was the minuet?' This question revives the old man, and he replies with a lengthy description of the dance. The story culminates with the older man and a female companion performing the minuet as the narrator looks on in astonishment:

They advanced and retreated with childlike grimaces, smiling, swinging each other, bowing, skipping about like two automaton dolls moved by some old mechanical contrivance, somewhat damaged, but made by a clever workman according to the fashion of his time.<sup>3</sup>

Few dances in the Western world have achieved the iconic status of the minuet. Since the seventeenth century, the minuet has been an important part of European culture, particularly in the discourses of dance and music. The subject continues to intrigue scholars and artists from the fields of performing arts and cultural studies. Similar attention is given to the waltz and tango, relating these

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2 Guy de Maupassant, 'Minuet', in *Original Short Stories of Maupassant, 13 vols.*, trans. by Albert M. C. McMaster, A. E. Henderson, Mme. Quesada and others ([n. p.]: Floating Press, 2014), pp. 1533–38 (p. 1537).

3 Maupassant, pp. 1537–38.

couple dances to particular eras, symbolism, and behaviour. Yet, in many ways, the minuet stands on its own in European cultural history.

We, the authors of this book, share the curiosity of de Maupassant's narrator regarding this dance tradition. We ask *what was the minuet*, but we also ask *what is the minuet*? Our study has involved reading about it, but also observing others as they danced it and dancing it ourselves, examining the minuet as a historical dance and also as a part of living tradition in some rural areas of the Nordic countries. We are fascinated by its originality, persistence, diversity, and its ability to survive throughout the centuries. These are the reasons we have compiled this book: an anthology of the Nordic minuet.

## Dance and Metaphor

In a 1985 article about the minuet and its research, Julia Sutton wrote that:

[o]f all the dances popular from the accession of Louis XIV to the throne of France in 1661 until the French Revolution in 1789, the minuet is surely the most universally associated with that elegant period, not only because of its great popularity in its hey-day, but because it was the only baroque and rococo dance of that dancing time to be incorporated into the classical symphony and sonata, thereby remaining to the present day in the public ear (though not its eye), as a delightful reminder of an earlier time.<sup>4</sup>

At the time Sutton was writing, many dance scholars and teachers had already begun investigating the minuet's steps and figures as described by eighteenth-century printed and manuscript sources. From the early twentieth century, interpretations of the minuet have manifested in performances by companies specializing in historical dances. Sutton lamented in her article that the minuet's origins were not clearly traced by such groups. She saw dance scholars' different theories and hypotheses as contradictory, crying out for new scrutiny. Sutton observed that the minuet's history after the French Revolution and its 'folk', or less aristocratic incarnations, was deserving of special attention.<sup>5</sup>

Intriguingly, Sutton called the minuet an 'elegant phoenix': a dance and musical form that had preserved its special symbolic status in Western culture over the centuries.<sup>6</sup> This status has contributed to the considerable interest in the minuet from dance historians since the nineteenth century. Sherril Dodds, for

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4 Julia Sutton, 'The Minuet: An Elegant Phoenix', *Dance Chronicle*, 8 (1985), 119–52 (p. 119).

5 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 142.



example, noted that the minuet as a form of court dance has been highly valued by those interested in so-called historical dances—that is, high-society dances that were popular prior to the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Such scholarship has a history of its own since the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Researchers of historical dances do have an established network of global scholarship, despite the often contemporary focus of the field of dance studies. Thus the minuet is part of a cultural dance phenomenon that has intrigued many scholars around the Western world.

One reason for ongoing interest in the minuet is that the dance has proved to be extremely persistent. The modern misconception is that the minuet disappeared from European courts and the standard repertoire of the nobility during the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century. Instead, it re-emerges like a phoenix over and over again in different contexts in Europe during the subsequent centuries. Indeed, the minuet reappears not only as a dance but also as a metaphor for something dignified, rigid, old-fashioned, or peculiar.



Fig. 1.1 The minuet. Pierre Rameau, *Maitre à danser* (1725), engraving. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rameau\\_menuet.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rameau_menuet.jpg), public domain.

As will be addressed in detail later in this book, the minuet continued to be performed throughout the nineteenth century. Surprisingly, it even appeared as part of the tradition of court balls within the German Empire at the end of

7 Sherril Dodds, *Dancing on the Canon: Embodiments of Value in Popular Dance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

8 Theresa J. Buckland, *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870–1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

that century. Minuets have also been spotted on Western stages, in theatres and films, most often to connote the atmosphere of the *ancien régime*. More recently, the dance has appeared primarily in metaphorical usage in different contexts. A brief look at academic and literary texts published in the last fifty years reveals many instances in which the minuet is used in this figurative manner.

An American postmodern writer, John Hawkes, commenting on his erotic novel *The Blood Oranges* in 1972, wrote that:

It seems obvious that the great acts of the imagination are intimately related to the great acts of life—that history and the inner psychic history must dance their creepy minuet together if we are to save ourselves from total oblivion.<sup>9</sup>

Hawkes seems to refer to the minuet as a metaphor for complicated and forced interaction that follows a specific structure to bring about clarity regarding human reality.

Similarly, in 1977, the American educational theorist Eva L. Baker contrasted the hustle (a fast-paced dance popular in the 1970s) and the minuet, using these as metaphors for evaluation:

As evaluations, the hustle and minuet differ along other continua, from energetic to passive, or exuberant to reserved. Notice, however, that these dances, as evaluation, both contribute at a marginal level to the serious pursuits of their times.<sup>10</sup>

Baker views the minuet as an example of the worldview of a particular historical era, likening this to the changing dynamics of evaluation in education.

A Russian-born scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, Leon Aron, suggested in his 1995 article that relations between the USA and Russia/The Soviet Union could be characterized as an act of tango dancing but proposed that they could be improved by changing to something more akin to the minuet:

How about the minuet for a model: elaborate, graceful, slow, aloof, and cerebral? The partners spend a great deal of time away from each other, yet get together at regular intervals, give right hands to each other, and, upon turning a full circle, part again until the next occasion.<sup>11</sup>

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9 John Hawkes and Robert Scholes, 'A Conversation on The Blood Oranges between John Hawkes and Robert Scholes', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 5 (1972), 197–207 (p. 205).

10 Eva L. Baker, 'The Dance of Evaluation: Hustle or Minuet', *Journal of Instructional Development*, 1 (1977), 26–28 (p. 26).

11 Leon Aron, 'A Different Dance—from Tango to Minuet', *The National Interest*, 39 (1995), 27–37 (pp. 36–37).

Aron regards the salient features of the minuet as positive and aspirational, emphasising its regularity and predictability. He considers that the nations' relationship would benefit from a regular and stable structure, not the random and uncontrollable character of the tango.

A Finnish environmental psychologist, Liisa Horelli, used the minuet as a metaphor for a traditional and essentialist way of looking at gender in her article 'Engendering Evaluation of European Regional Development: Shifting from a Minuet to Progressive Dance!' (1997). Although Horelli does not refer to the dance in her main text but only in the title, the message is clear. This article suggests that the titular minuet symbolizes binary gender roles which cannot be crossed. In contrast, progressive dance embraces gender-inclusive policy-making strategies, seen as an alternative to rigid gender roles.<sup>12</sup>

A final, and perhaps most surprising, example comes from an American professor of molecular and cellular biology: David D. Moore. He commented on his colleagues' research paper and used the minuet as a metaphor for processes taking place on the metabolic level:

In the minuet, a popular court dance of the baroque era, couples exchange partners in recurring patterns. This elaborately choreographed exercise comes to mind when reading [this] paper [...]. In this study, the nuclear receptors [...] are two of the three stars in a metabolic minuet that promotes appropriate fat utilization.<sup>13</sup>

Moore compares the precise and repetitive form of the minuet to the interaction between nuclear receptors. As a metaphor, the dance's elegant choreography describes the pattern of the human metabolic system.

These examples indicate that the minuet is typically characterized by the attributes of calmness, ceremonialism, formality, and dignity. It is associated with highly formal behaviour, a quality that can be considered positive or negative depending on the context of the author reviewing the dance.

In all its different social contexts from courts to peasant villages, the minuet retains a human, corporeal dimension. It is not only a strictly formal dance, as its metaphorical usage suggests, but also an enjoyable and cheerful dance: an embodied experience. In the Nordic countries, where the minuet continues to be part of folk dancers' repertoires, it is clear that the dance retains this expressive function. The minuet remains alive as both a narrative and dance practice.

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12 Liisa Horelli, 'Engendering Evaluation of European Regional Development: Shifting from a Minuet to Progressive Dance!', *Evaluation*, 3 (1997), 435–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/135638909700300404> (p. 435).

13 David D. Moore, 'A Metabolic Minuet', *Nature*, 502 (2013), 454–55 (p. 454).

## Nordic Narratives and Embodiments

All of the continental Nordic countries have documented information about the minuet dating from the seventeenth century to the present day, encompassing all classes of society. In many ways, this is peculiar and unique. While the dance has not generally been a part of the active dance repertoire at European social events since the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, it has been performed in some areas of Finland and Denmark as late as in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This book argues that the minuet has had a remarkable position within dance culture in the Nordic countries, not only amongst the upper classes but also amongst the bourgeoisie and peasant population. The dance has been a part of the region's social and cultural structures and has impacted the development of those structures.<sup>14</sup> In the Nordic countries, the minuet is a cultural artefact that carries complex narratives and practices from various eras and areas.

It is no coincidence that various pieces of information about the minuet are found all over 'Norden' (the collective name given to Nordic countries in Scandinavian languages). Each Nordic country has a specific history of its own, but all share common social and cultural narratives and heritage. Norden, as defined by Peter Aronsson and Lizette Gradén, is a collective performative space, resulting from repeated performances.<sup>15</sup> The performances are points of departure for narratives and embodied experiences that connect people to the shared concept of Norden.

The Nordic collective space has been formed over the centuries as the Nordic countries have influenced each other. These relationships, however, have not always been harmonious. Historically, there have been strong tensions between the Nordic countries, especially the most powerful ones: Denmark and Sweden. Norway and Finland have been somewhat minor political players for many years. After becoming an independent kingdom, Norway formed a union with Denmark that lasted from the fourteenth century until 1814. Norway was then part of Sweden until 1905 when it became independent once again. Finland, by contrast, was a part of Sweden from the Middle Ages until 1809. At this point, Finland became an autonomous grand principality within the Russian Empire and finally gained independence in 1917.

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14 Petri Hoppu, *Symbolien ja sanattomuuden tanssi—menuetti Suomessa 1700-luvulta nykyaikaan* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1999).

15 Peter Aronsson and Lizette Gradén, 'Introduction: Performing Nordic Heritage—Institutional Preservation and Popular Practices', in *Performing Nordic Heritage: Everyday Practices and Institutional Culture*, ed. by Peter Aronsson and Lizette Gradén (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 1–26.

Over time, as the borders and cultural hegemonies shifted within the region, the state power relations changed. The minuet has been a part of the cultural and political ebbs and flows reflecting the unique class relations and cultural models in Norden. However, the minuet is not the first or even the most conspicuous historical example of Nordic dance cultures. Narratives of other old Nordic couple dance forms are more prolific. Although these dances have different names, one name reoccurs in slightly different forms in all Nordic countries: *pols* (Norway), *polsk* (Denmark), or *polska* (Sweden and Finland). The *pols(ka)* and other related couple dances can be seen as a collective and generative phenomenon amongst Nordic folk dancers, and even as an ‘exportable’ dance form.<sup>16</sup> The minuet is described in more specialised narratives, most often connected to specific rural areas in Denmark and Swedish-speaking Finland. However, the minuet also belongs to the contemporary Nordic collective performative space because its Danish, Finnish-Swedish, and Swedish forms are shared by folk-dance enthusiasts across the Nordic countries.

Narratives of dances cannot be separated from the practice of dancing. Where there is dancing, narratives and embodiments encounter each other, generating further practices and narratives. Minuet dancing in Norden has survived for centuries and its discursive and corporeal trajectories have shifted from the European upper classes to the local Nordic peasant communities. Since the twentieth century, Nordic folk-dance communities have danced the minuet both as a performance and participatory dance. Interest in Nordic folk dance even transcends the borders of the region. Multiple Nordic institutions and networks have been working to deepen their understanding of the dances and to build co-operation with enthusiasts in other cultures and countries as well.<sup>17</sup>

Our book is a witness of the transnationality of the minuet within the Nordic region. As members of a Nordic dance scholar community specializing in folk and historical dances, we take part in the narratives and embodiments of the minuet. We have written about the dance and we have danced its different forms, many of us for several decades. As an anthology of the minuet, the book is a meeting point for our experiences and knowledge of this fascinating dance. It is a testimony we want to share with the rest of the world. In this way, we share

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- 16 Mats Nilsson, ‘From Local to Global: Reflections on Dance Dissemination and Migration within Polska and Lindy Hop Communities’, *Dance Research Journal*, 52.1 (2020), 33–44 (pp. 38–40). In Norway, these couple dances are called ‘bygdedanser’, a term which includes *pols* as well as *springar*, *gangar*, and *halling*.
- 17 Karen Vedel and Petri Hoppu, ‘North in Motion’, in *Nordic Dance Spaces. Practicing and Imagining a Region*, eds Karen Vedel and Petri Hoppu (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 1–17.

the curiosity and passion of de Maupassant about the dance and its dancers as expressed at the end of ‘Minuet’:

Are they dead? Are they wandering among modern streets like hopeless exiles? Are they dancing—grotesque spectres—a fantastic minuet in the moonlight, amid the cypresses of a cemetery, along the pathways bordered by graves?

Their memory haunts me, obsesses me, torments me, remains with me like a wound. Why? I do not know.

No doubt you think that very absurd?<sup>18</sup>

## Chapters

The chapters discuss different phenomena related to the minuet in the Nordic countries and elsewhere from the seventeenth century until the present. Each is divided into five parts covering documentation, research, structure, performances, and revitalisation related to the minuet, emphasising the Nordic forms and contexts of the dance. The authors draw from primary material in several languages and the chapters contain direct quotations as examples. These have been translated into English by the authors themselves unless stated otherwise.

Each author has conducted his or her research individually and thus, despite the fact that all have shared their results with one other, there is inevitably some duplication of sources and information between the chapters. Special attention should be paid to the extensive research of Dr Gunnel Biskop on the minuet, particularly as practised in Swedish-speaking Finland. The texts of Biskop in this book are largely based on chapters in her outstanding monograph *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen* [*The Minuet—The Loved Dance*] (2015).<sup>19</sup> Several authors in this collection cite the monograph of Biskop and her other texts, since her work covers significant phenomena in the history of the minuet.

The texts in this book do not follow a homogenous approach. They were planned to serve different functions and they aim to target different audiences with their multi-dimensional portrayal of the Nordic minuet. There are chapters following the frames of conventional historiography and presenting excerpts from historical sources in a systematic order with comments and interpretations.

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<sup>18</sup> Maupassant, p. 1538.

<sup>19</sup> Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svensksbygder—under trehundra femtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015) [*The Minuet—The Beloved Dance: On the Minuet in the Nordic Region—Especially in the Swedish-Speaking Area of Finland in the last Three Hundred Fifty Years*].

These feed into general dance history methodologically and theoretically and provide access to new primary sources. There are also chapters presenting written descriptions of the dance in detail with comments and comparisons. These will be particularly relevant for practitioners working with the reconstruction of historical dances, as will the chapter presenting and applying a specific tool for movement analysis. Finally, some chapters reflect upon seeing the dance from contemporary and philosophical perspectives which aim to highlight the minuet's position in the early twenty-first century. In this way, we combine the theoretical and methodological approaches with systematic and detailed presentations of historical material that, prior to the publication of this book, has only been available in Nordic languages. We hope this anthology will inspire others to research the minuet and its fascinating history further.

The chapters contain many dance names whose terminology is sometimes complicated. Whenever it is necessary, we explain them as they appear in the text. Most importantly, the term *contradance* (in French: *contredanse*) emerges repeatedly throughout the book. The *contradances* were inspired by English country dances and spread to most parts of Europe and the colonies from the decades around 1700 and onwards. Individual versions of the *contradances* were invented throughout the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Consequently, they became an important European dance paradigm. They are danced in sets of dancers, with typically four up to sixty individuals in each. The dancing consists of an ever-changing interaction between subgroups of those in the set. The set is usually composed of pairs but interaction can happen between two or more individual dancers, between two or more couples, between a group of ladies or between a group of men. This means that there will always be subgroups of changing size and with changing participants, moving together or in relation to each other within the set.

The first part of the book includes two chapters situating and defining the minuet as a form of dance and music. Egil Bakka and Andrea Susanne Opielka discuss different meanings and functions encompassed in the word 'minuet'. Bakka examines the possible origin and early relations of the dance in a European context, the use of 'minuet' as a name of a dance, and how it correlates with movement structures. He also considers how research on the minuet in the European context compares to research on its Nordic practice. Opielka reviews literature related to European classical minuet music concerning the eighteenth century in particular.

The second part focuses on narratives about the minuet and its contexts in the Nordic countries. Anne Fiskvik sheds light on the activities of dance teachers in relation to the minuet. Then Anders Christensen and Gunnel Biskop look at the rural forms of the dance in Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Denmark since the

seventeenth century. Fiskvik, Christensen, and Biskop have spent many years investigating historical sources including letters, diaries, traveller descriptions, and documents from folklore archives. They have consulted this varied selection of sources to paint a picture of the minuet as a versatile phenomenon in Norden over the last three hundred years.

The third part of the book expands the investigation of historical narratives of the minuet in Norden. First, Elizabeth Svarstad and Petri Hoppu jointly discuss multiple examples of descriptions of the minuet in dance books published in the Nordic countries, starting with an overview of the different forms of the dance practised in Europe. Next, Bakka, Svarstad, and Fiskvik use similar documents to discuss the minuet in a European theatrical context. Christensen and Biskop then examine the folkloric documentation of the minuet in Denmark and Finland. The documentation began in the early twentieth century. Christensen investigates three regions in Denmark where the minuet remained important and discusses the kind of information folklorists and folk-dance enthusiasts recorded about the dance. Biskop describes the documentation process in Swedish-speaking areas in Finland, focusing on the extensive written records of Yngvar Heikel from the 1920s and 30s and on the film footage of Kim Hahnsson produced from the 1970s onward. Opielka, Hoppu, and Svarstad conclude this part of the book with discussions of the significance of minuet music in various Nordic contexts and source material of minuet melodies in multiple countries, with a particular emphasis on music books and manuscripts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Various forms and structures of the minuet are examined in detail in the fourth part of the book. The basic form of the early eighteenth-century court minuet, *le menuet ordinaire*, is detailed in numerous documents ranging from Nordic dancing masters' manuals to folkloric recordings. These records also contain information about structural variations of the basic form. Biskop discusses the different forms, distribution, and contexts of the dance in the Nordic countries, especially in Finland and Denmark. Hoppu, Svarstad, and Christensen perform a comparative analysis of the steps and basic forms of the minuet, presenting examples that range from the minuet sourced in the eighteenth century to the minuet found in more recent Danish and Finnish folkloric sources. Finally, as a conclusion, Bakka, Svarstad, and Siri Mæland look critically at how minuet structures have been analysed and interpreted in European research. They present new ways of investigating dance structures, utilizing methods including Norwegian movement analysis, *svikt* analysis, and the principles of triangulation (the combination of various research methods in the study of the same phenomenon). They argue that both *svikt* analysis and triangulation contribute to a more versatile understanding of the structures of



the minuet than results from earlier European dance research which has focused solely on court dances from restricted perspectives.

In the fifth part, the focus shifts to Nordic contexts of the minuet beginning in the early twentieth century. Biskop opens with various examples of the minuet as a living tradition in Swedish-speaking Finland. She describes, for instance, how Ostrobothnian soldiers danced the minuet at the Karelian front during the Second World War. She also examines the significance of the minuet as part of the Finnish-Swedish folk-dance movement today. In Sweden and Finnish-speaking Finland, although the minuet did not have any particular role in twentieth-century dance traditions, disparate groups of folk dancers resurrected the minuet during the latter part of the century in different ways. Anna Björk examines the phases of the reconstruction process and the position of the reconstructed minuet within the contemporary Swedish folk-dance field, while Hoppu attends to recently choreographed minuets practised by Finnish folk dancers. Finally, Göran Andersson and Svarstad discuss the role of the minuet among historical dance groups in Scandinavia and examine how these groups interpret centuries-old documents describing the minuet and how they use these documents as sources of new choreographies.

In the epilogue, Mats Nilsson and Hoppu review the various approaches and perspectives of the chapters and probe the multiple meanings found in the narratives and appearances of the minuet in the Nordic countries. They reflect upon their own embodied experiences and feelings of the dance, as well as its social and cultural contexts, summarising the story of the minuet thus far and anticipating its future.

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## PART I

# DEFINING AND SITUATING THE MINUET IN HISTORY AND RESEARCH

The first part of this book defines and situates the minuet as a dance and a musical form. Its chapters discuss the role of the minuet in European society and culture since the seventeenth century as well as its research and historiography.



## 2. Situating the Minuet

*Egil Bakka*

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The starting point for my investigation is the name of the dance and whether it corresponds to one or more basic movement structures. This chapter then examines the distribution of the dance in time and space, comparing contentious ideas about its origins and ascertaining how political and social references have shaped interpretations of the dance. For these purposes, it is necessary to establish the minuet in its European historical context, including the European research landscape, despite the book's concentration on the forms and roles of the dance in the Nordic countries.

### Name and Distribution

The name 'minuet' occurs in various forms in different languages. *Menuet* (French) is the point of departure; slight variations of this word are found in many European languages: the German *Menuett(e)*, the Swedish and Norwegian *menuett*, the Danish *menuet*, the Spanish *minué*, the Italian *minuetto*, and the Russian *менуэт*. Additionally, there are dialect(al) versions of the word, such as the Danish *monnevet*, *møllevit*, *mollevit*; the Swedish *minuett*, *möllevitt*; Finnish *minetti*, *minuutti*, *minuee* (Finnish); and the Norwegian *mellevit*.<sup>1</sup> Some forms refer to the mix of the minuet and other dances, such as the Spanish *minué afandango*, a minuet partly composed of *allemande*.<sup>2</sup> We also find the term 'Volks-Menuet' [folk minuet] which, at least in the case referred to, is a comparison between the style of the Russian national dance to that of the French court

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1 Unlike the popular understanding, the Danish term *molinask* does not refer to the minuet but to a contradance.

2 Carlo Blasis and R. Barton, *Notes upon Dancing, Historical and Practical* (London: M. Delaporte, 1847), p. 52.

minuet. It is not proposing that the minuet had become a folk dance in Russia.<sup>3</sup> In the same spirit, a French source characterises the Farandole as ‘this popular minuet’, not to hint that the dances are related but rather to imply that the two dances are similar in function and status.<sup>4</sup>

Surprisingly, the minuet does not seem to have been fully taken up into folk culture anywhere in Europe except in the Nordic countries, where it has survived as continued practice. It has not been possible to find definitive sources that permit any other interpretation. Proving a negative is difficult, but the following examples do suggest that the minuet was not part of folk culture in the rest of Europe.

Richard Wolfram, an Austrian dance ethnologist, for instance, was one of the most knowledgeable researchers of Austrian folk dance, and he could find little evidence of the minuet in this context. Comparing the history of Austrian and northern European folk dance, Wolfram concluded:

The ‘folk’ do take over [material from the upper classes], but not without making selections. In this way, the minuet remained almost without impact on Austrian folk dance even if the educated classes mastered it for a long period. The minuet was only played as table music at weddings and similar events in rural environments. Its courtly form could not find any danced expression here.<sup>5</sup>

A similar idea is offered in a long and well-informed article from 1865 that criticises staging practices of Mozart opera *Don Juan*. Discussing the historicity of staging practices, its anonymous author asks why Mozart and his libretto writer use the minuet in an opera purportedly set in Spain, since the story involves a peasant couple. The implication is that Spanish peasants do not dance the minuet. Although the statement is quite general and absolute, it points in the same direction as the previous quotation.<sup>6</sup>

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- 3 ‘The Russian dance is like a folk minuet full of grace and dignity, but livelier, more natural, and less lacking in ideas than the old French dance, which was limited to ornamental postures and bows modelled after the custom of the time.’ Josefa Durán y Ortega, *Memoiren der Sennora Pepita*, 3 vols (Berlin: Hermann Hollstein, 1854), iii, p. 163.
  - 4 Jean-Michel Guilcher, *La Tradition de danse en Béarn et Pays Basque Français* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l’homme, 1984), p. 658.
  - 5 Richard Wolfram, *Die Volkstänze in Österreich und Verwandte Tänze in Europa* (Salzburg: Müller, 1951), p. 23.
  - 6 ‘Zur Oper Don Juan. Kontroversfragen Bezüglich Der Darstellung Auf Der Bühne’, *Morgenblatt Für Gebildete Leser* (1865), pp. 772–80.



Video 2.1 The minuet in a 2001 Zurich production of W. A. Mozart, *Don Giovanni*, complete opera with English subtitles. Uploaded by Pluterro, 5 November 2017. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/2a74d4a1>. See timecode 01:26:59.

The German author and philosopher Karl Heinrich Heydenreich (1764–1801) wrote the article ‘Über Tanz und Bälle’ [Dance and Balls] in 1798. In it, he portrays the minuet as the most valuable dance at upper-class balls and states bluntly that the dances of the lower classes are just a raw mixture of hopping, jumping and circling. Heydenreich does not suggest that the lower classes copy the upper classes.<sup>7</sup>

From these sources, we conclude, like the Swedish musicologist Jan Ling who writes extensively about dance in his *European History of Folk Music* (1997), that there is little evidence of a folk minuet outside of the Nordic countries.<sup>8</sup> It is nevertheless important to review some folk dances outside of the Nordic countries because some of these are called the minuet and we need to check to what degree they are similar to the main forms of the minuet. Julia Sutton refers to a German minuet: the ‘Treskowitzer Menuett’.<sup>9</sup> This is danced to music in 3/4 time like the minuet in which we are interested—but has a square formation, walking steps, and ends with a waltz. As the following video recording from the Dancilla website shows, this ‘Treskowitzer Menuett’ does not share the typical movement patterns of the minuet that will be presented in detail in later chapters.<sup>10</sup>



Video 2.2 ‘The Treskowitzer Menuett’, Dancilla website (2020), <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/ead1d1a8>. See both videos on this page.

Dancilla includes other videos showing dances that are referred to as minuets but also do not share its characteristics. Some seem to be folk-dance style choreographies set to pieces of classical music.

In the Czech Republic, a folk dance called Minet has been assumed to be a minuet version due to its name. A publication entitled *Lidové Tance z Čech*,

7 Karl H. Heydenreich, ‘Über Tanz Und Bälle’, *Deutsche Monatschrift*, May 1798, pp. 43–52 (p. 48).

8 Jan Ling, *A History of European Folk Music* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1997), p. 192.

9 Julia Sutton, ‘The Minuet: An Elegant Phoenix’, *Dance Chronicle*, 8 (1985), 119–52 (p. 151).

10 Horak, Karl, *Treskowitzer Menuett*, 2021 vols. (Dancilla, 2020) [https://www.dancilla.com/wiki/index.php/Treskowitzer\\_Menuett](https://www.dancilla.com/wiki/index.php/Treskowitzer_Menuett)



*Moravy a Slezska* [*Folk Dances from Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia*] is an ambitious series of ten videos, each accompanied by a separate booklet. The series presents the folk dances of the Czech Republic danced by folk-dance groups all over the country.<sup>11</sup> In this collection, we also find several names that are similar to the minuet:

1. Minet—corava c Hlineca Vysokomytska a Crudimska, vol. III, piece E 11 3.
2. This is a couple dance danced on a circular path to waltz-like music.
3. Minet ze Strážnice u Melnica, vol. IV, piece D 11.
4. Minet z Čáslavska, vol. IV, piece D 17.
5. The D 11 minet opens with men and women facing each other in two lines, which is one of the most popular formations in minuet, but then continues as a waltz couple dance. The D 17 is also more of a waltz couple dance.
6. Menuetto (minet) z zapadni Moravi a cheskomoravskeho, vol. V.

This dance, with the name Menuetto, has a line formation and uses some steps on the place that vaguely resemble features of the minuet.

The *Minet* dance form, which is the most similar to what we would now define as ‘the minuet’, was collected 1912–13 by Fritz Kubiena in Kuhländchen, a region in the eastern part of the present Czech Republic that was inhabited at the time by a German population. Kubiena gives a precise description of the dance and accompanying music in the folk-dance collection he published in 1920.<sup>12</sup> As can be seen in the following video, the dance does not have minuet steps or a full minuet form, but similarities in music and style suggest that the *Minet* may imitate minuet patterns:



Video 2.3 Das Kuhländler Mineth. Folk dancers safeguarding heritage from Kuhländchen perform eleven dances. Uploaded by Wir Sudetendeutschen, 30 April 2020. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/d7079ef1>. See the Mineth at timecode 8:24.

11 The following dance titles appear in *Lidové Tance z Čech, Moravy a Slezska*, 10 vols., directed by Zdenka Jelínková and Hanna Laudova (Strážnice: Ústav lidové kultury ve Strážnici, 1994).

12 Fritz Kubiena, *Kuhländler Tänze Dreißig Der Schönsten Alten Tänze Aus Dem Kuhländchen* (Neutitschein: Selbstverl. d. Hrsg., 1920).

Compared to the minuet as danced by the French court, descriptions of the minuet given by European dancing masters, and those practised by Nordic folk dancers, the Czech Minet(h) dances seen above are not recognisable as minuets. Some seem to be different dances altogether. One or two have features that might have been inspired by the minuet but not much more.

Moving away from European examples, dance theorists Russel and Bourassa claim that, to this day, a form of the minuet is danced in Haiti. This dance, called in Creole the *menwat*, is as part of a sequence of dances that echoes the order of eighteenth-century balls.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 2.1 George Henriot's watercolour *Minuets of the Canadians* (1807) seems to confirm that the minuet was danced even in Canada. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Minuets\\_of\\_the\\_Canadians\\_-\\_TPL.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Minuets_of_the_Canadians_-_TPL.jpg), public domain.

## A Definition of the Minuet as Movement and Music Patterns

How can the minuet be characterised as a form? Do the movement patterns labelled 'minuet' in its different linguistic variations have a cohesiveness, and can it be defined clearly and consistently? In many discourses, the minuet is *a* dance. This is logical in the context of traditional social dancing and for the minuet's realisation within a single community. The minuet functions as one dance in the local repertoire during a specific period, whether this is the *menuet*

13 Tilden Russell and Dominique Bourassa, *The Menuet de la Cour* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2007); Egil Bakka, 'Typologi og klassifisering som metode', in *Nordisk Folkedanstypologi: En Systematisk Katalog Over Publiserte Nordiske Folkedansere*, ed. by Egil Bakka (Trondheim: Rådet for folkemusikk og folkedans, 1997), pp. 7–16; Yuen-Ming D. Yih, *Music and Dance of Haitian Vodou: Diversity and Unity in Regional Repertoires* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Wesleyan University, 1995).

*ordinaire* performed in French court circles or the *menuet*[t] danced in Nordic urban and rural communities, particularly in Denmark and Finland. In the latter case, there were regional variations and the dance form changed over time as is usual for any dance. Still, the movement patterns and the music of these Nordic minuet forms show a surprisingly strong unity. The choreographed versions of the minuet, particularly in French court circles, do not follow this model. If we want to identify the minuet movements shared by all variations carrying the name, another concept or dance paradigm might help.

- a) A dance paradigm is a set of fundamental and constitutive conventions for how a specific form of dancing is organised. It is a long-lasting and widespread cluster of conventions which provides the basis for a particular kind of dancing. Some criteria for identifying a dance paradigm could be a new set of conventions for the design and organisation of dancing that is so radically different from what is already in use, that it is perceived as something completely new in the place where it settles.<sup>14</sup>
- b) A dance paradigm is stable enough to remain in use over a long time.
- c) Its conventions are inspirational and fruitful enough to give rise to an extensive dance practice.

A group of characteristics can be used to define which dances belong to the paradigm but no single characteristic is necessary or sufficient to include all dances of the paradigm. This is the principle of polythetic classification.<sup>15</sup> An assessment must be made in each case of a dance realisation to determine if it belongs to a specific paradigm. Not all dance forms do.<sup>16</sup>

To ascertain what is typical of a minuet, it is essential to look at the movement patterns and not base any judgement strictly on the name. The main reason for this is that the choreographed forms that were used in the French court tradition were unlikely to appear unchanged as social dances in subsequent decades. For many later choreographers, it was more important to break the conventional framework in one way or another than to maintain a connection to the older *menuet ordinaire*. Therefore, these choreographies must be assessed

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14 Egil Bakka, 'Dance Paradigms: Movement Analysis and Dance Studies', in *Dance and Society: Dancer as a Cultural Performer*, ed. by Elsie Ivancich Dunin, Anne von Bibra Wharton, and László Felföldi (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2005), pp. 72–80 (pp. 73–74).

15 Egil Bakka, 'Revisiting Typology and Classification in the Era of Digital Humanities', *Arv*, 75 (2019), 153–79 (p. 168).

16 Bakka, 'Dance Paradigms', p. 74.

by other criteria. We propose defining the minuet as a social dance based on the following conventions:

- a) the dance can be performed by one couple
- b) it may group two couples together
- c) it may group many couples in a line of men and a line of women facing each other
- d) the dance does not move far away from the place it started, or, at least, it returns to the starting point
- e) the music is in 3/4 time
- f) the step pattern spans two bars
- g) the partners move both toward and away from each other
- h) the partners change places and change back again
- i) the partners can use one same-hand fastening<sup>17</sup>

## Some Points of View on Historiography

Histories of dance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rely heavily on excerpts from a large variety of written sources that describe dancing or dances at that time. Such source material is not easy to find. If the scholar cannot access specialised archives, he or she must depend on materials located by earlier researchers and even adopt their interpretations. These repetitions tend to lend the interpretations an air of reliability that is seldom questioned. Without revisiting primary sources, or not doing so in a systematic way, dance historians have tended to present fragmented narratives. Dance groups interested in historical re-enactments, for example, have used the dance notations and descriptions from earlier centuries' dancing masters. However, this work rarely displays the rigour of advanced research. The Dean of Research in French Dance Ethnology, Jean-Michel Guilcher, is an exception. He wrote an exemplary study of the eighteenth-century French *contredanse*, combining detailed analysis of its forms with an impressive contextualisation of the social and political life of the era.<sup>18</sup>

We argue here that this kind of critical approach is needed to achieve progress in dance history. Another significant point is that dance history has tended to

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<sup>17</sup> One same-hand fastening is to hold hands left in left or right in right.

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Michel Guilcher, *La contredanse et les renouvellements de la danse française*, Études Européennes, 6 vols. (Paris: Mouton, 1969).

be written about one genre at a time. Some historians specialise in the history of theatrical dance; others write about the history of the social dances of the upper class. Relatively few write about the history of folk dances or the dancing practised by the lower classes. Yet these different classes and different kinds of dancing existed simultaneously throughout history. This book will reveal that although there were socioeconomic divisions and specialisms, people of various groups were part of the same world and did interact. We argue that dance history should take such interaction into account to create fuller pictures of historical periods.



Fig. 2.2 Marten van Cleve, *A village celebrating the kermesse of Saint Sebastian* in the lower right corner there are groups of upper-class people celebrating side to side with the peasants (between 1547 and 1581), oil on panel. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marten\\_van\\_Cleve\\_-\\_A\\_village\\_celebrating\\_the\\_kermesse\\_of\\_Saint\\_Sebastian,\\_with\\_an\\_outdoor\\_wedding\\_feast\\_with\\_guests\\_bringing\\_gifts.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marten_van_Cleve_-_A_village_celebrating_the_kermesse_of_Saint_Sebastian,_with_an_outdoor_wedding_feast_with_guests_bringing_gifts.jpg), public domain.

Finally, it is crucial to understand dancing and dances as belonging to paradigms, each of which relies on specific organizational conventions. Seeing dances as parts of certain paradigms yields a safer hypothesis about their genesis and development than drawing comparisons between isolated traits of dances not studied in context. For instance, a specific way of holding hands needs to be recognised as part of a paradigm. One such similar feature between two individual dances does not tell us much about how or whether they are related.

Dances are movement designs, which are often based on stunning relationships between strict, long-lasting, deep structures that remain stable through time and space. They usually appear with superficial variations in what are often called dance dialects but maintain the basic deep structure. Dance history needs to be understood within the context of social class, social functions, music, dress, gender roles and conventions; however, dance history also needs to include the history of the dance. The movement structures are the substance of the dance and the dances are not only inventions that reflect

a cultural moment but also long-lasting patterns that connect and explain the present through the past. The following is an attempt to view the minuet from the latter perspective, where dance form and the context of dancing are merged in the analytical process. This is also the methodological point of departure for the following brief discussion about the genesis of the minuet.

## The Genesis of the Minuet

Very little evidence describing the origins of the minuet is available. However, several sources do cite a score from 1664 as the first appearance of the minuet. A document containing information about a Comédie-ballet that premiered in that year mentions the dance. Later, the advisor of Louis XIV Michel de Pure (1620–80), published a book on dance and court ballets in 1668 confirming that the *menuet* was relatively new at that time: ‘As for the quite new inventions, these *Bourrées*, these Minuets, they are only disguised repetitions of dancing master’s toys and honest and spiritual pranks to catch fools who have the means to pay’.<sup>19</sup>

A brief contention about ‘where the minuet came from’ is repeated in almost all, even the shortest, pieces written about the dance. The core of the argument is that the minuet comes from Poitou and further that it is a derivation or adaptation of one of the region’s traditional dances: the *Branle de Poitou*. One such text described the minuet, for instance, as an

Old French dance, triple time, which appears in the seventeenth century and seems to be derived from of a ‘*branle to lead*’ *Poitevin*. [The French composer Jean-Henry] D’Anglebert [1629–1691] named actually [one of his works] the *Menuet of Poitou* in his harpsichord pieces, which offer a primitive type thereof.<sup>20</sup>

There is also a *Branle de Poitou* described in the famous musical study *Orchesographie* by Thoinot Arbeau (1589).<sup>21</sup> The French philosopher and composer Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) repeated the idea of Poitou as the origin of the minuet, crediting the French cleric Sebastian de Brossard (1655–1730) with the notion but disagreeing with him about the character of the

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19 Michel de Pure, *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux. Des anciens: cirques, amphitheatres, theatres, naumachies, triomphes. Nouveaux: Comedie, mascarades, exercices et reveuës militaires, feux d’artifices, entrées des rois et des regnes* (Paris: Michel Brunet, 1668).

20 Michel Brennet, *Dictionnaire pratique et historique de la musique* (Metronimo.com, 2003) <https://dictionnaire.metronimo.com/index.php?a=print&d=1&t=5615>

21 Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchésographie: Méthode et théorie en forme de discours et tablature pour apprendre à danser, battre le tambour* (Geneva: Editions Minkoff, 1972).

minuet.<sup>22</sup> Brossard, however, did not refer to the *Branle* at all, only to Poitou; he also described another dance, the *Passe-pied*, as a ‘rapid minuet’ and yet another, the *Sarabande*, as a ‘severe and slow minuet’.<sup>23</sup> Did Brossard consider the minuet a general term for any type of couple dance?

Another more probable explanation for the references of Rousseau and Brossard to the ancient region of Poitou is that in the early seventeenth century, Poitou was a centre for the making of woodwind instruments, and *Hautbois de Poitou* was the name of a specific oboe-like instrument.<sup>24</sup> Throughout the seventeenth century, the French court had a musical ensemble by the name ‘*Hautbois et Musettes de Poitou*’. The ensemble probably derived its name from these instruments since it is not likely that it was populated with musicians from Poitou, over this long period or mainly played music from the region. No other regions are mentioned in this context, yet the name Poitou seems to have had a strong presence at court.<sup>25</sup>



Fig. 2.3 Frontispiece and title page from Moliere, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1688). Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BourgeoisGentilhomme1688.jpg>, public domain.

Molière’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, a comédie-ballet first performed on 14 October 1670 before the court of Louis XIV, bore out this suggestion containing

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- 22 Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Claude Dauphin, *Le Dictionnaire de musique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Une édition critique* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), p. 425.
  - 23 Sebastian de Brossard, *Dictionnaire de musique contenant une explication des termes Grecs, Latin, Italiens & François les plus usitez dans la musique* (Amsterdam: P. Mortier, 1710), pp. 203, 212, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8623304q>
  - 24 Bruce Haynes and Robin Spencer, *The Eloquent Oboe: A History of the Hautboy 1640–1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 45.
  - 25 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

the following stage directions: ‘Six other French come after, dressed gallantly a la Poitevine accompanied by eight flutes and hautbois and dance minuets’.<sup>26</sup> Its music was composed by Jean-Baptiste Lully and its choreography was made by Pierre Beauchamp. Therefore, we can surmise that Beauchamp may have introduced the minuet at court for the first time through this work but the name minuet and some musical and choreographical elements could be older. References to Poitou, then, probably appear in the ballet because within this performance, six of the court dancers are dressed as people from Poitou, perhaps to match the name of the music ensemble at the court.



Video 2.4 Music by Jean-Baptiste Lully from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, ‘Menuet pour faire danser Monsieur Jourdain’ [Menuet to make Monsieur Jourdain dance]. Uploaded by Vlavr, 24 December 2010. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/4d73077b>

Reviewing mentions of the French *branles* in written sources and popular tradition may contribute to our understanding of the genesis of the minuet. There are many tunes and many versions of the dance *branle*, but it is beyond our scope here to give more than a few examples. Nevertheless, one might suspect that the meter and other characteristics of the music, rather than the dance pattern, is the basis of the claim that links the *branle* and the minuet. Jean Michel Guilcher found similarities between Arbeau’s sixteenth-century *branle* types and the material about the *contredanse* he collected in the mid-twentieth century. He does not, however, suggest any connection to the minuet when he mentions the pattern of the *Branle de Poitou*.<sup>27</sup>



Video 2.5 Branle des Poitou, from Luther Hochzeit. Uploaded by kaltric, 14 June 2014. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/0ab38173>. See the Branle des Poitou at [timecode 1:45](#).



Video 2.6 Branle du Poitou (par Chacegalerie), Les Clouzeaux. Uploaded by Bedame Trad, 18 December 2018. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/86ea3111>

26 J. B. P. Molière, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme. Comedie-ballet. Faite à Chambort, pour le Divertissement du Roy* (Paris: Suivant la Copie imprimée, 1681), p. 108.

27 Jean-Michel Guilcher, *La Tradition Populaire de Danse en Basse-Bretagne* (Spézet: Coop Breizh, 1997).



If we embrace the idea of dance paradigms as widespread and long-lasting organisational structures, a chain dance such as *branle* and a couple dance such as the minuet would be classified as representatives of very different paradigms. I am suggesting here that Spain, France, and perhaps neighbouring countries had a comprehensive paradigm of couple dances where the partners danced in front of and around each other. In this model, when more couples danced at the same time, they often made a line of men and a line of women. This line formation is one of the characteristics we listed for the minuet but it is also typical of several well-known dances in Spain and France that may be of a similar age. The *Jota*, a dance in triple time, like the minuet, has several regional variations. The version from Aragon is particularly well known and is shown here:



Video 2.7 A jota dance, by the group 'La Calandria' for a fiesta in Torre del Compte on 20 August 2011. Uploaded by maxxyvidz, 20 August 2011. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/2dd07cec>



Video 2.8 A jota aragonesa dance, by Jorge Elipe and Elena Algora at the national jota contest in Zaragoza, Spain 2013. Uploaded by proseandpoetry, 2 May 2014. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/f0622713>

The *seguidilla* is another dance in triple time that was known and popular in Spain in the sixteenth century. Several modern regional dances are considered to be derived from its early versions.<sup>28</sup> The *Fandango* is a well-known triple time dance from Spain; its name was even given to a contradance that was practised in the Nordic countries.<sup>29</sup> The French Renaissance court dance *Galliard* and the traditional dance *Le Bourré d'Auvergne* are also couple dances in triple time that share some of the characteristics of the minuet described above. There is also a similar dance from the Resian region, though its music is in 5/4.<sup>30</sup> There are also duple time versions such as the *courante* and *bolero*. Dance historians have not linked these many triple meter couple dances in France, Spain, and Southern Europe which have characteristics in common with minuet. The one most

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- 28 Philippa Heale, 'Seguidillas', in *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, 6 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), vol. 5, p. 565.
- 29 Egil Bakka, 'Innleiing. Turdansen i Folkedansarbeidet', in Klara Semb, *Norske Folkedansar: Turdansar* (Oslo: Noregs boklag, 1991), pp. 17–58; Henning Urup, *Dans i Danmark: Danseformerne ca. 1600 til 1950* (København: Museum Tusulanum, 2007), p. 141.
- 30 Mirko Ramovš, *Polka je Ukazana: Plesno Izročilo na Slovenskem. Od Slovenske Istre do Trente*, 2 vols. (Ljubljana: Kres, 1998-1999), 2, pp. 214–51.

often shared being that the partners dance in front of each other. I suggest that these dances should be seen as part of the same widespread paradigm. Further research would be required to confirm or refute this surmise.



Video 2.9 Seguidilla de Huebras dance, by Grupo Folklórico Abuela Santa Ana, from Albacete, La Mancha, Spain. Uploaded by Folk Dances Around the World, 8 September 2011. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/1a152e4c>



Video 2.10 Fandango antiguo castellano dance, by folk ensemble Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, from Alcorcon, Madrid, Spain. Uploaded by Folk Dances Around the World, 25 March 2009. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/4f22dfdc>



Video 2.11 Gaillarde dance, by historical dance ensemble TIME OF DANCE. Uploaded by AltaCapella, 18 March 2012. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/0efb4761>



Video 2.12 Bourrée 3 temps d'Auvergne dance, by Gregory Dyke and Cynthia Callaou. Uploaded by Tirn0, 19 April 2013. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/34ce1b13>



Video 2.13 Resian dance, by Gruppo Folk Val Resia in Moscow, Russia on 9 November 2015. Uploaded by Gruppo Folk Val Resia, 10 November 2015. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/53faf208>

Some of these are traceable as early as the seventeenth century. They can be seen as part of the same paradigm within which the minuet may have developed into an acceptable court dance. Let us look closer at the whole paradigm. One feature that French dance teachers may have considered rude is the jumping and the gesticulation with the free leg; another is the twisting of the upper body and the gesticulations of hands. Perhaps this is why the minuets have a *port de bras* [a way to place the arms] which could be interpreted as a refinement of the livelier hand gestures of popular forms. The minuet shared more structural and formal similarities with these open couple dances than to the *branles*. However, there is one point of structure that could be used to argue for a relationship between the minuet and the *branle*. If we start the most common movement pattern of the minuet on the third beat, the resulting step has the structural pattern of the *branle simple*. I would argue, however, that chain dance forms such as the

*branle* and the couple dances of the Baroque period belong to different dance paradigms. From this perspective, the similarity noted above would be between two individual dances.

As Guilcher observed, there is a lack of extant sources about social dance even as practised in the higher circles in the seventeenth century.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the genesis of the minuet remains in the shadows. It seems likely, however, that the minuet was created by the dancing masters and musicians at the court of Louis XIV based on patterns from a widespread paradigm of couple dances and that its associations with the *branle* and perhaps also with musicians from Poitou are fictional.

### Political and Social Aspects of European History

Let us take a very general and long-range perspective on the significant dance paradigms of the aristocracy in Western and Central Europe over the last five centuries. It seems reasonable to believe that during the Middle Ages, before the time of the dancing masters, the aristocracy primarily used the same dance material as the lower classes. At the very least, the dances may have sprung from the same roots and retained apparent similarities from a distant point of view. Their differentiation would not be so much in the dance forms but the style in which they were performed, as well as in dress, music, etc. During the Renaissance and Baroque periods, the dancing masters would create ballets and masques at many courts. They even brought forth social dances for use at courts and these innovations were markedly different from dances practised by the lower classes. Although they might refer to and take inspiration from the dances of the peasants in rural regions, the dancing masters would codify and adapt them to new ideals and direct similarity would disappear. This may be why these noble dances, as invented or codified at the courts, do not seem to be represented to the same degree as the chain dances and the contradances in traditional dance material throughout Europe. Contradances, first known as country dances, are said to have their roots in the lower classes, but the upper-class variations created by the dancing masters were the dominant ones. This can be seen from the wealth of contra dances in dancing masters' manuals. Contradances were first published by the sixteenth-century Englishman John Playford and this practice continued through to the early twentieth century. Still, for many reasons, the contra or country dances were not as strictly codified by the courts as the minuet.

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31 Guilcher, Jean-Michel, *La contredanse et les renouvellements de la danse française* (Paris: Mouton, 1969), p. 24.

Around 1800, the round dances grouped under the name of ‘walzen’ [waltzing] and later ‘walzer’ [waltz], came fully into fashion. These dances emerged from the lower classes and created challenges for dancing masters that the profession until this time had yet to encounter. I have not seen claims or evidence that dancing masters played a central role in bringing waltzing into fashion. Rather, it seems that they took these dances into the courts only after demand for them had grown strong. This puts the round dances in a different relationship to courts and power since they were not created or codified by their servants. These dances slowly entered upper-class culture in ways comparable to class journeys of the *nouveau riches*. These dances also lacked the structural richness of the contradances and did not lend themselves as easily to new choreographies. When the dancing masters saw they needed to deal with the round dances, they faced the challenge of adapting them to the mechanics and strategies of class distinction.

### The Minuet at the French Court

How popular was the minuet at the French court? Louis XIV’s sister-in-law Lieselotte von der Phalz (1652–1722), a German princess who married into the French royal family in 1671, did not like it. Her letters from the beginning of the eighteenth century state that nothing made her more impatient than being made to sit and watch the minuet for three hours. She did not like the French dances at all, and she said that she had a special aversion to the minuet.<sup>32</sup> In 1672, immediately after arriving in Paris, she complained that she did not like dancing anymore, partly because the French dances were different from the German ones she knew from home.<sup>33</sup>

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32 Charlotte-Elisabeth Orléans and Malte-Ludolf Babin, *Liselotte Von Der Pfalz in Ihren Harling-Briefen: Sämtliche Briefe Der Elisabeth Charlotte, Duchesse d’Orléans, and Die Oberhofmeisterin Anna Katharina Von Harling, Geb. Von Offeln, Und Deren Gemahl Christian Friedrich Von Harling, Geheimrat Und Oberstallmeister, Zu Hannover* (Hannover: Hahn, 2007), pp. 792–93.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 24.



Fig. 2.4 Lieselotte von der Pfalz introduces the Prince Elector of Saxony to Louis XIV in 1714. Louis de Silvestre, *König Ludwig XIV. empfängt den späteren König von Polen und Kurfürsten von Sachsen August III* (1715), oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis\\_XIV\\_1714.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis_XIV_1714.jpg), public domain.

In the year 1700, Lieselotte reported that after a ballet performance, the court danced many minuets.<sup>34</sup> This is interesting because she had remarked in 1695 that dancing had fallen out of fashion in France. She claimed that it was so popular for people to play cards at parties that young people did not want to dance anymore.<sup>35</sup> Historian Philip F. Riley substantiated this idea when he described how Louis XIV, during the last three decades of his reign, considered dancing a sin and persecuted those who practised it. At the court, dancing was to a large extent replaced by gambling during the 1690s.<sup>36</sup> By 1697, dancing was still a rare activity, but Lieselotte hoped that the incoming duchess of Bourgogne, Princess Marie Adélaïde of Savoy (1685–1712), would restore its fashionability.<sup>37</sup> A spate of deaths in the royal family during 1711–12 (including the Dauphin [Crown Prince], his son and daughter-in-law, plus two of their children) meant that the five-year-old great-grandson of Louis XIV, upon the latter's death in 1715, succeeded him as Louis XV, after a period of regency. It is an open question how all these deaths in the royal family may have influenced life at court in the regency that followed, as answering this question would require a systematic search for sources that is beyond the scope of this book. However, a modest search in French newspapers returns a few hints that the minuet continued at the court through the reign of Louis XV. The Parisian *La Gazette* reported that an eleven-year-old Louis XV danced the minuet at a reception held in January 1722

34 Ibid., p. 233.

35 Ibid., p. 170.

36 Philip F. Riley, *A Lust for Virtue: Louis XIV's Attack on Sin in Seventeenth-Century France* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001).

37 Orléans and Babin, p. 197.

to mark the arrival of the seven-year-old princess from Spain who was meant to become his queen.<sup>38</sup> Much later, in October 1757, the same *Gazette* reported that a court ball opened with minuets, though the king and queen were merely observers of, rather than participants in, the dance.<sup>39</sup>

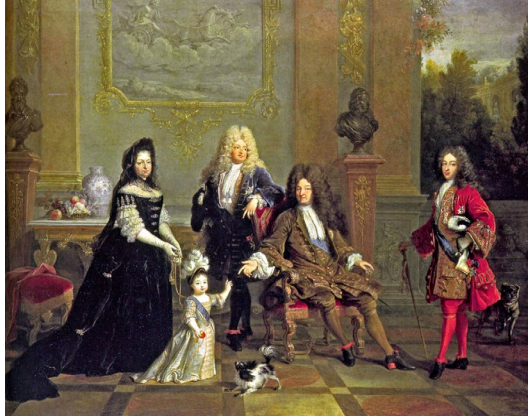


Fig. 2.5 Louis XIV, his son, grandson and great-grandson, the later Louis XV with his governess. French school, *Madame de Ventadour with Louis XIV and his Heirs* (c. 1715–1720), oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis\\_XIV\\_of\\_France\\_and\\_his\\_family\\_attributed\\_to\\_Nicolas\\_de\\_Largilli%C3%A8re.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis_XIV_of_France_and_his_family_attributed_to_Nicolas_de_Largilli%C3%A8re.jpg), public domain.

## The French Revolution

The French Revolution started in 1789 and progressed through many different stages until Napoleon Bonaparte took power in 1799. This period included the execution of the King and Queen, plus thousands of aristocrats and leading people. There were several periods of killings and executions called *la terreur*. Many sources from the time suggest that dancing, though not killed by the Revolution, was hampered and changed by these periods of terror. In the words of one commentator:

During the terrible days of the revolutionary government, the Jacobins [males and females] were the only ones who danced. The great masters of the minuet, the *gavotte* and the *Allemande* found themselves condemned to a very disastrous rest at their purse and forced to give their place to masters of an inferior rank. They found more activity than they wanted amongst the female citizens of the suburbs Saint Antoine and Saint

38 'Relation des rejoissances publiques', *Gazette*, 1 January 1722, p. 153.

39 'De Versaille', *Gazette*, 29 October 1757, p. 542.

Marceau, whose fathers or young husbands showed indifference to the bloody scenes that happened in the square of Louis XV or at the throne barrier.

After 9 Thermidor, joy and dancing began again with much more brilliance and more generally than before, since it had been suppressed for a long time. Then there was not a single girl who did not hurry to take lessons in such a unique art so well suited to enable them to distinguish themselves in public and private assemblies. [...]

At the same time so many families deplored the tragic death of their leaders and of what was dearest to them, others danced on the ground of the old cemetery Saint Sulpice. The dance teachers were more in vogue than ever during the consulate and the empire.



Fig. 2.6 Fred Barnard, *The Mob in Paris dancing La Carmagnole* (1870). La Carmagnole was a chain dance with singing popular among common people during the French Revolution, known from 1792. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T2C,\\_Fred\\_Barnard,\\_The\\_Carmagnole\\_\(III,5\).jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T2C,_Fred_Barnard,_The_Carmagnole_(III,5).jpeg), public domain.

All doors were opened for the dancing masters: the court, the palaces, the hotels, the residential school of young ladies, the houses of bankers. It only took a word and all the beauties hastened there to receive their lessons. It was then a complete revolution in the art of choreography. To become worthy of trust for their practices and to increase their reputation, Masters were occupied with inventing new figures, new steps and new contradances or they borrowed from abroad that which their genius could not imagine. It was in this way that the Walse [waltz], heavily executed by male and female dancers from Germany, was imported to France to the despair of mothers and husbands. This lustful dance was first and for many years in fashion in large houses and amongst the

bourgeois. Today, it is no longer much in use, except in the most common balls and taverns.<sup>40</sup>

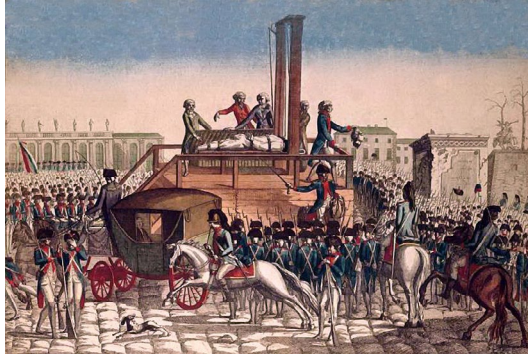


Fig. 2.7 Execution of deposed French King Louis XVI, anonymous eighteenth-century engraving, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Exécution\\_de\\_Louis\\_XVI\\_Carnaulet.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Exécution_de_Louis_XVI_Carnaulet.jpg), public domain.

The minuet was a product of Louis XIV's court, known as *l'ancien régime*, the old regime before the revolution in 1789. In France, it seems that the revolution did kill the minuet; in the nostalgic short story of de Maupassant, presented at the beginning of this book, the old minuet dancer said: '*Depuis qu'il n'y a plus de roi, plus de menuet*' [Since there is no king anymore, there is no minuet].<sup>41</sup>

The minuet was associated with the court and the royals to such a degree that few people dared to or wanted to dance it during the Revolution; the new leading classes of the country had not learned or even wanted to learn it. On the other hand, Jean-Michel Guilcher suggests that the minuet was already falling out of favour prior to the Revolution, being hardly danced any more during the very last years of *l'ancien régime*.<sup>42</sup> The contradances had a much broader reach even before the Revolution. These dances were easily refreshed by the dancing masters to remove any association with the earlier regime and remained in fashion.

From an account by the French Duchess de Arantés, we can glean some of the feelings and the unsaid ways of expressing adherence right after the

40 Antoine Caillot, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des moeurs et usages des français: Depuis les plus hautes conditions, jusqu'aux classes inférieures de la société, pendant le règne de Louis XVI, sous le directoire exécutif, sous Napoléon Bonaparte, et jusqu'à nos jours*, 2 vols. (Paris: Dauvin, 1827), II, pp. 247–49, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6378010q.texteImage>

41 Guy de Maupassant, 'Menuet', in *Oeuvres complètes, contes de la bécasse* ([n. p.]: Arvensa editions, 2021), pp. 1957–60 (p. 1959).

42 Guilcher, *La contradanse*, p. 136.



French Revolution. She, Laure Martin de Permond (1784–1838), married one of Napoleon’s close co-operators, general Jean-Andoche Junot (1771–1813), in 1800. She was the daughter of a widow in whose Paris home Napoleon had been a frequent guest at the beginning of his career around 1784. Later, after falling out with Napoleon, the widow kept a house where she received sympathisers of *l’ancien régime*.<sup>43</sup> Some weeks after the wedding of her daughter, the widow threw the usual wedding party in her home and the family convinced Napoleon (who was at that time the first consul) and his wife to attend. It was a party at which many political, as well as personal, tensions lay just under the surface.



Fig. 2.8 Marguerite Gérard, *La Duchesse Abrantes and General Junot* (c. 1800), painting. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marguerite\\_G%C3%A9rard\\_-\\_La\\_Duchesse\\_Abrantes\\_et\\_le\\_General\\_Junot.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marguerite_G%C3%A9rard_-_La_Duchesse_Abrantes_et_le_General_Junot.jpg), public domain.

According to the hostess, dancing the minuet was a requirement at wedding parties, though the bride protested and cursed the practice. They resolved the disagreement with a compromise: the bride consented to take several minuet lessons from a famous ballet dancer named Gardel and arranged for another renowned minuet dancer from *l’ancien régime*, M Treniz, to dance with her, all the while hoping to avoid the performance. M Treniz was not present when it was time for the dance but the hostess insisted, so the bride had to dance with a different gentleman. This man had come to the party without a hat and

<sup>43</sup> The French monarchy before the 1789 revolution.

had to borrow one since the minuet could not be done without it. When the minuet had finished, M Treniz appeared and was offended that somebody else had taken his place in the dance. He gave a long speech about the importance of mastering the greeting with the hat that prefaced the dance, indirectly shaming his stand-in. Napoleon, upon hearing this, was half-amused and half-provoked by the outdated topic and the comic figure of the man. What may have been the conventional or acceptable style during the old regime had clearly become a caricature.

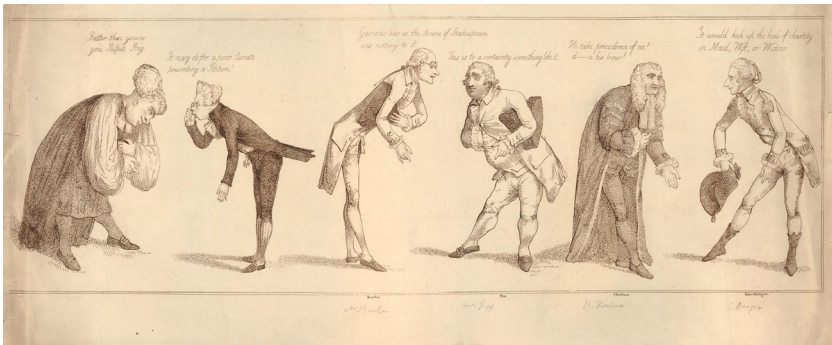


Fig. 2.9 *The Prince's Bow* (1788), etching after Frederick George Byron. Satire on greetings with hat, targeting particularly the later King George IV. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Prince%27s\\_bow\\_\(BM\\_1868,0808.5697\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Prince%27s_bow_(BM_1868,0808.5697).jpg), public domain.

The bride did not spell out why she was so reluctant to dance the minuet. The social dances used at the party are referred to as *reels* and *anglaises*. It seems no one other than the bride and her partner danced the minuet, though a number of the older guests undoubtedly knew the minuet. It had only been eleven years since the start of the Revolution. Perhaps because the minuet was expected to be danced very well, we might guess that the bride felt that she had not mastered it to the level required. What seems more likely, however, is that she did not want to be perceived as old-fashioned; but it is even more probable that she was viewing the minuet as inappropriate to dance in the presence of the first consul. The groom was, after all, one of Napoleon's men. She may even have worried that it would be insulting to the first consul to honour *l'ancien régime* by performing 'its' dance. Her mother, on the other hand, may have wished to provoke and irritate the old friend she had fallen out with, playing a game of etiquette with seeming candour and innocence but a hidden edge of sympathy for Napoleon's adversaries.

The defeat and imprisonment of Napoleon in 1814 was followed by the so-called Bourbon Restoration, which lasted until the July Revolution of 1830. Brother of

the executed King Louis XVI reigned in a highly conservative fashion, allowing the exiled to return. Although they were unable to reverse most of the changes introduced by the French Revolution and Napoleon, the erstwhile aristocrats could be expected to revive practices from *l'ancien régime*. However, it seems that the minuet did not experience any real revival, even if it may have lingered on to some degree as a symbol of distinguished behaviour in the upper classes. Many other European courts had followed the model of the French court and had adopted the minuet accordingly. Most royals in Europe had been appalled at the beheading of their peers and in some cases their family members in France. It is reasonable to expect them to have retained the pre-terror French ideals, including the minuet. In spite of this, the dance does seem to have fallen out of frequent use at most European courts by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

## The Minuet at Other European Courts

From brief mentions, we can build up a picture of the minuet as it was being performed and conceived by the aristocracy outside of France.

At the Prussian court in Berlin, for example, the minuet was in use in 1797. The famous *Oberhofmeisterin* Sophie von Voss (1729–1814), when she almost seventy years old, wrote that she danced several minuets at a party for visitors and court staff that year.<sup>44</sup>



Fig. 2.10 The bride Princess Luise kisses the forehead of a well-wisher from the crowd. The Oberhofmeisterin von Voss at the left. Woldemar Friedrich, [untitled] (1896). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prinzessin\\_Luise\\_k%C3%BCsst\\_ein\\_M%C3%A4dchen\\_aus\\_dem\\_Volk.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prinzessin_Luise_k%C3%BCsst_ein_M%C3%A4dchen_aus_dem_Volk.jpg), public domain.

44 Sophie Marie von Voss, *Neunundsechzig Jahre am preussischen Hofe: Aus den Erinnerungen der Oberhofmeisterin Sophie Marie Gräfin Von Voss* (Berlin: Story Verlag, 2012).

Writer Felix Eberty (1812–84) grew up in Berlin in a bourgeois Jewish family. He recalled his youth as a time when, ‘We learned just as little French language as we learned to dance—both these were considered non-German and unpatriotic right after the liberation war (1813), and we, the boys, detested it’.<sup>45</sup> Eberty also referred to his aunt Hanna ‘who when she was young had been an attractive partner for the French officers who preferred to invite her to [dance] ‘*Ekossaise*’ and ‘*Kontertanz*’. Waltz and *Galopp* are newer and the minuet already was about to die’.<sup>46</sup> He might be describing a time around 1800 or even earlier.



Fig. 2.11 Georg Cristoph Grooth, portrait of Friedrich Wilhelm von Bergholtz (1742), oil. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrich\\_Wilhelm\\_von\\_Bergholtz.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrich_Wilhelm_von_Bergholtz.jpg), public domain.

Friedrich Wilhelm von Bergholz (1699–1765) was a courtier from Holstein who followed his Duke on a mission to Russia and stayed there for some years. In his diary, he described dancing at the Russian court in 1722, at which time the minuet seems already well known:

After the table had been lifted, there was dancing, and Her Royal Highness, our most gracious lord, started the ball with the Empress in a Polish dance. The very smallest imperial princess, along with the Grand Duke and his sister, also appeared at the beginning of the dance, so afterwards the little imperial princess of 5 years also had to dance English, Polish and Minuets, which for her age was quite well done. She

<sup>45</sup> Felix Eberty, *Jugenderinnerungen eines alten Berliners* (Berlin: Hertz, 1878), p. 133.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

is an extremely beautiful child. At around 9 o'clock, the dance ended with the English chain dance, in which the Empress herself also danced.<sup>47</sup>

This was towards the end of the reign of Peter the Great (1672–1725). He brought European cultural traditions to Russia and may even have introduced polite social dancing. Before this time, women did not participate in parties at the court but were kept out of sight in the *terem*.<sup>48</sup>



Fig. 2.12 Mikhail Petrovitch Klodt, *Terem of tsarevnyas* (1878). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Terem\\_tsareven\\_klodt.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Terem_tsareven_klodt.jpg), public domain.

The minuet seems to have gone out of use in Russia around 1800. The German philologist Aage Ansgar Hansen-Löve summed up changes in the social dance at the Russian court around this time:

In Russia, the transition from typical aristocratic court dances like the minuet to the repertoire of social dances, such as the *mazurka* and the Waltz, took place at the beginning of the 19th century. It happened in the course of a new appropriation wave and is to understand as a new break of tradition.<sup>49</sup>

One might question whether the decline of the minuet in Russia was a widespread change. All three dances were used at court by the aristocrats. We

47 Friedrich W. V. Bergholz, 'Tagebuch 1721-1724 dritter Teil', *Magazin für die neue Historie und Geographie*, 21 (1787), 180–552 (pp. 356–57).

48 Natalia Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History: From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 1997), p. 83.

49 Aage A. Hansen-Löve, 'Von Der Dominanz Zur Hierarchie Im System Der Kunstformen Zwischen Avantgarde Und Sozialismus', *Wiener Slavistischer Almanach*, 47 (2001), 7–36 (p. 7).

do not know if the waltz also influenced the lower classes of Russia as early as this or whether the dance had not yet filtered down to them from the aristocrats.

The unhappy consort of the British Regent (later King George IV of Britain), Caroline of Brunswick, went travelling from 1814 and visited several European courts. One member of her staff, John Adolphus, kept a diary in which he described the German court of Kassel where she stayed with Wilhelm I, Elector of Hesse.<sup>50</sup> Adolphus observed minuet dancing at this court and suggested that the practice was customary there. It seems strange that the minuet continued to have this prominence as late as 1814 and that the waltz was not mentioned, especially as Caroline was known to have danced the waltz much earlier in Britain when she arrived to marry the British Regent. Adolphus may have been trying to protect Caroline from being considered too German and therefore stressed the minuet, taking care not to mention the waltz.



Fig. 2.13 Anonymous, Queen Caroline, wife of King George IV, is greeted by people from Marylebone (c. 1820), etching. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Queen\\_Caroline,\\_wife\\_of\\_King\\_George\\_IV,\\_is\\_greeted\\_by\\_Wellcome\\_L0050927.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Queen_Caroline,_wife_of_King_George_IV,_is_greeted_by_Wellcome_L0050927.jpg), CC BY 4.0.

Another reason why Adolphus may not have mentioned the waltz is that there might have been a ban on this dance at this court and that they tried to prolong the use of the minuet. Napoleon favoured his own family and gave the land of the Elector to his brother. In 1814, at the time of the report, the Elector of Hesse had just returned to his position after the defeat of Napoleon and may have wished to reinstate the earlier customs of the court. As Adolphus wrote:

After supper, the company put on their masks; her Highness is led into the ballroom, and the rest follow, each lady being handed in by her partner. The Electress and her partner walk to the upper end of the room; the next couple stop at a small distance below them; the third next to

<sup>50</sup> In German, the position is known as *Kurfürst von Hessen*.

the second, and so on, till this double line filled the length of the room. From this arrangement, one would naturally expect a country-dance; but a minuet is all. The music begins, and the masked people, consisting of twenty or thirty couples, walk a minuet together. This being over, which is rather a confused affair, everyone sits down, the Electress excepted. She generally dances nine or ten minuets successively with as many different gentlemen. She then takes her seat till the rest of the company have danced minuets; which being over, cotillions and country-dances begin, and continue till four or five in the morning.<sup>51</sup>

It is interesting to note that Adolphus described the court as having ‘walked’ the minuet. He probably meant that they did not use the minuet steps but simple walking. This technique was also used in Contra Dances and was a sign that dancers were forgetting the dance, that it was losing its popularity. A similar account comes from the province of France in 1701, ‘They danced the minuet doing nothing but walking on the beat’. Jean-Michel Guilcher interprets this excerpt as an example of how upper-class people in the towns imitated the court dances but had not learned them properly.<sup>52</sup>

## State of Research

On the surface, it may seem that the literature about the minuet is not very extensive. After all, few monographs have ‘minuet’ in their titles. However, when we expand the search to include separate articles or books with chapters about the dance, more substantial amounts of information are found. To survey this material, I have grouped it into different types, according to its creators and their purpose.

## The Dancing Masters

The dancing masters were the first experts who wrote professionally about minuet dancing. The famous book of Pierre Rameau from 1725 is often considered the first significant description of the minuet as a standard social dance: *le menuet ordinaire*. Information about the dance was published before that, however, in Feuillet notation, as well as in a couple of books produced by dancing masters in Leipzig (at that time, part of the Electorate of Saxony). It is quite surprising to see that there were so many dancing masters publishing

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51 John Adolphus, *Memoirs of Caroline, Queen Consort of Great Britain* (London: Jones, 1821), p. 39.

52 Guilcher, *La contredanse*, p. 39.

books in a city with only sixteen thousand inhabitants. Kurt Petermann has discussed this leading group of academic dancing masters, reprinting works by several of them, including Johan Pasch, Samuel Behr, Gottfried Taubert and Louis Bonin.<sup>53</sup> Tilden Russel has examined the corpus of eight books/editions published in Leipzig in the period 1703–17, finding commonalities that suggest their authors may have borrowed from each other. Still, only a few of these texts contain descriptions of the minuet.<sup>54</sup> It is but a small number of books from the early eighteenth century that have caught the attention and scrutiny of dance historians to date.<sup>55</sup>

Several manuals from dancing masters published later in the century included descriptions of the minuet. These texts have hardly been systematically surveyed and compared, except in the book *The Menuet de la Cour* (2007).<sup>56</sup> The attitude of the renowned nineteenth-century French dancing master, Henri Cellarius, represented the status of the minuet in Europe during his time:

I will cite, for instance, a dance which has not been executed in France for many years, but which still finds partisans in other countries,—the *minuet de la cour*. This dance is much too foreign to our manners for us ever to expect to see it re-appear. But, as a study, it offers very great advantages; it impresses on the form positions both noble and graceful.<sup>57</sup>

Another vital source of material for studying the early minuet is the Feuillet notations, although the number of minuets so notated is not large. Francine Lancelot, a dance researcher and pioneer of historical dance in France, has published an impressive work surveying these Feuillet notations. She wrote,

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- 53 Johann Pasch, *Kurt Petermann Beschreibung Wahrer Tanz-Kunst* (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1978); Samuel Rudolph Behr and Kurt Petermann, *Die Kunst, Wohl Zu Tantzzen* (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1977); Gottfried Taubert, *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister, oder gründliche Erklärung der frantzösischen Tantz-Kunst* (Leipzig: Friedrich Lanckischens Erben, 1717); Louis Bonin and Johann Leonhard Rost, *Die Neueste Art Zur Galanten Und Theatralischen Tanz-Kunst* (Place: Edition Hentrich, 1996).
- 54 Tilden A. Russell, *Theory and Practice in Eighteenth-Century Dance the German-French Connection* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2018).
- 55 One such historian is Kellom Tomlinson. See *The Art of Dancing Explained by Reading and Figures: Whereby the Manner of Performing the Steps is made Easy by a New and Familiar Method: Being the Original Work, First Design'd in the Year 1724, and Now Published by Kellom Tomlinson, Dancing-Master [...] in Two Books* (London: The author, 1735).
- 56 Russell and Bourassa.
- 57 Henri Cellarius, *Fashionable Dancing: By Cellarius, with Twelve Illustrations by Gavarni* (London: David Bogue, 1847), p. 14.



The corpus is made up of the compositions of French choreographers notated in *Feuillet* notation. [...] The total corpus as of today includes 539 dances, printed or manuscript, coming from collections of dances, treatises, or published separately. These sources are spread out between 1700 and 1790. [...] The choreographic corpus of minuets is made up of twenty dances—sixteen ballroom dances and four ballet entrées—to which are added six movements contained in multipartite forms.<sup>58</sup>

The first minuet in *Feuillet* notation was published in 1706 and the final two were published in 1781. Lancelot defined the ballroom dances as those indicated as such by the titles of the collections, such as the annual collections from 1703 to 1724, or by the preface. The other group of dances is the ballet entrées. She found the minuet corpus quite slim ‘with regards to the first appearance of the *menuet* in the mid-seventeenth century, its vivid rise and its preponderant place during the entire eighteenth century’.<sup>59</sup> I discuss the work of Lancelot here because she presents the historical material in *Feuillet* notation but her work is also interesting for the revival of historical dances—a different but no less important or valid kind of research.

## Works Connected to the Reconstruction of Historical Dances

Much of the literature on the minuet is linked to the movement for the revival of historical dances. Most authors writing on the minuet seem to have participated in this movement and they intend for their work, including the re-presentation of dance manuals, to serve as aids in this revival. The first twentieth-century manual of what the author called ‘historical dances’ was probably published by the American pedagogue Mari Ruef Hofer in 1917.<sup>60</sup> Europe’s revival movement during the same period was likely inspired by Eugène Arnold Dolmetsch (1858–1940), a French-born musician and instrument maker who was also a leading figure in the twentieth-century revival of interest in early music.

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58 Francine Lancelot, *La Belle Dance: Catalogue Raisoné Fait En L’an 1995* (Paris: Van Dieren, 1996), pp. xii, xlv.

59 Ibid.

60 Mari Ruef Hofer, *Polite and Social Dances: A Collection of Historic Dances, Spanish, Italian, French, English, German, American, with Historical Sketches, Descriptions of the Dances and Instructions for their Performance* (Chicago: Clayton F. Summy, 1917).



Fig. 2.14 Anonymous, portrait of Eugène Arnold Dolmetsch, playing the lute (1897), lithograph. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Print\\_\(BM\\_1903,1006.7\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Print_(BM_1903,1006.7).jpg), public domain.

According to Harry Haskell, ‘Dolmetsch’s interest in historical dances paralleled the revival of folk dance in England by Cecil Sharp and others in the early 1900s.’<sup>61</sup> He collected dance treatises and showed them to friends and acquaintances, hoping to interest them in reconstructing the old steps and patterns. His third wife, Mabel (1874–1963), eventually took up his challenge and became an acknowledged authority on historical dance, although her work has been criticised in retrospect.<sup>62</sup> Already in 1916, she published her first article on the subject but her major works came in 1949 and 1954.<sup>63</sup> Peter Brinson described her involvement in the revival as follows: ‘The study of early dance forms was led by Mabel Dolmetsch and Melusine Wood. They were joined presently by Joan Wildeblood, Mary Skeaping and Belinda Quirey; Skeaping and Quirey being pupils of Melusine Wood in this area of scholarship’.<sup>64</sup> Wood also published in the early twentieth century, but her three essential manuals for historical

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- 61 Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History* (New York, Dover) (1996), p. 42.  
 62 Patri J. Pugliese, ‘Why not Dolmetsch?’, *Dance Research Journal*, 13 (1981), 21–24.  
 63 Mabel Dolmetsch, ‘Sixteenth century dances’, *The Musical Times*, 57 (1916), 142–45; Mabel Dolmetsch, *Dances of England and France, 1450-1600* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949); Mabel Dolmetsch, *Dances of Spain and Italy: From 1400 to 1600* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954).  
 64 Peter Brinson, *Dance as Education: Towards a National Dance Culture* (Routledge, 2004).

dance appeared between 1952 and 1960.<sup>65</sup> Wood died in 1971. Dolmetsch and Wood intended their manuals for practical purposes and often do not supply references for their sources. Belinda Quirey (1912–1996), a British dance history teacher and student of Melusine Wood, also published a popular dance history that still has references.<sup>66</sup>

The two most prominent authors in the second generation of dance historians take took up a novel approach by combining interpretations of referenced historical sources with corresponding presentations of dance history. The British historical dancer, scholar, and student of Melusine Wood Wendy Hilton (1931–2002), published an advanced work on interpreting the descriptions and Feuillet notations in *The French Noble Style, 1690–1725* (1981).<sup>67</sup> The German dance historian and music pedagogue Karl Heinz Taubert (1912–1990) published several works, including summaries of dance history and dance descriptions, a general collection in 1968, a book on Baroque dances, and a monograph on the Minuet.<sup>68</sup> Mary Skeaping (1902–1984) was a British ballerina and choreographer who served as ballet master of the Royal Swedish Ballet in the 1950s. Whilst in Sweden, she started reconstructing seventeenth and eighteenth-century court ballets and involved the Swedish dance pedagogue Regina Beck-Friis (1940–2009) in this effort. Beck-Friis continued this work, later publishing four volumes (and a video) in Swedish on historical dances from the continent.<sup>69</sup> Finally, we need to mention Volker Saftien's book, which combines

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65 Melusine Wood, 'What did they really dance in the Middle Ages?', *Dancing Times*, 25 (1935), 24–26; Melusine Wood, *Some Historical Dances, Twelfth to Nineteenth Century: Their Manner of Performance and their Place in the Social Life of the Time* (London: Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, 1952); Melusine Wood, *More Historical Dances, Comprising the Technical Part of the Elementary Syllabus and the Intermediate Syllabus: The Latter Section Including such Dances as Appertain but Not Previously Described* (London: Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, 1956); Melusine Wood, *Advanced Historical Dances* (London: Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, 1960).

66 Belinda Quirey, Steve Bradshaw and Ronald Smedley, *May I have the pleasure?: The Story of Popular Dancing* (London: Dance Books Limited, 1976).

67 Wendy Hilton, *Dance of Court & Theater: The French Noble Style, 1690–1725* ([Princeton]: Princeton Book Company, 1981)

68 Karl Heinz Taubert, *Höfische Tänze: ihre Geschichte und Choreographie* (Mainz: Schott, 1968); Karl Heinz Taubert, *Barock-Tänze: Geschichte, Wesen und Form, Choreographie und Tanz-Praxis* (Zürich: Pan, 1986); Karl Heinz Taubert, *Das Menuett: Geschichte und Choreographie; Tanzbeschreibungen, Notenbeilage, Bilder zu Tanz- und Kulturgeschichte* (Zürich: Pan, 1988).

69 Regina Beck-Friis, Magnus Blomkvist and Birgitta Nordenfelt, *Dansnöjen genom tiden*, 3 vols. (Lund: Historiska Media, 1998); Regina Beck-Friis, Magnus Blomkvist and Birgitta Nordenfelt, *Västeuropeiska danser från medeltid och renässans* (Stockholm: Akademitratur, 1980), Beck-Friis, Regina, *The Joy of Dance through the Ages*, VHS tape (Malmö: Tönneheims Förlag, 1998)

dance descriptions and discussion of their sources, engaging with interpretation and context.<sup>70</sup>

## Research Emphasizing Minuet Music

Publications that discuss the minuet but do not include dance descriptions or notations aimed at the historical dance movement often focus instead on the music of the minuet. This is a substantial body of literature but one we do not take up here in detail. The American dance and music historian Tilden Russell has published extensively on the minuet as a form of dance, but he often approaches it from a musical angle. His Master's dissertation from 1983 is mainly about the changes in minuet music during the period when minuet dancing 1781–1825 was in decline on the European continent.<sup>71</sup> He returns to the music-dance relationship in several articles, claiming, for example, that

Odd-measured phrases, [...] existed in dance music. However, they did not confuse the dancers or render the music undanceable; on the contrary, they seem to have had a positively stimulating effect.<sup>72</sup>

[...] That dance-minuets were full of examples of flexibility and liberties with gross form, phrase and smaller details [...] When fully realized in performance by dancers and musicians, the dance minuet was in its way as much a play with form as the art minuet.<sup>73</sup>

More recently, Eric McKee has written on the dance-music relationship in the minuet and the waltz. His primary research question asked 'What did the dancers require of the music, and how did the composers of the minuet and waltz respond to the practical needs of the dancers?'<sup>74</sup> McKee's method is a sophisticated and detailed comparison of minuet scores by Bach and Mozart and dance descriptions by dancing masters at work, predominantly in the eighteenth century. However, his starting point is a problematic assumption about the structural requirements of a minuet or waltz. Dancers and musicians usually want to find a shared harmony; the tolerance to the other part may have its limits

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70 Volker Saftien, *Ars Saltandi: Der europäische Gesellschaftstanz im Zeitalter der Renaissance und des Barock* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1994).

71 Tilden A. Russell, *Minuet, Scherzando, and Scherzo: The Dance Movement in Transition, 1781-1825* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

72 Tilden A. Russell, 'The Unconventional Dance Minuet: Choreographies of the Menuet D'Exaudet', *Acta Musicologica*, 64 (1992), 118–38 (p. 120).

73 Tilden A. Russell, 'Minuet Form and Phraseology in Recueils and Manuscript Tunebooks', *Journal of Musicology*, 17 (1999), 386–419 (p. 419)

74 Eric McKee, *Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz: A Study of Dance-Music Relations in 3/4 Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

but that is a question about performance rather than structure.<sup>75</sup> This is seen in the fact that old dance melodies are often adapted for use with new dances. Minuet melodies can be found accompanying dances such as *polska*, *springar* or waltz in Nordic dance music. In these cases, it is not the musical structure that has been changed; it is instead the tempo and metrical accentuation. McKee also emphasised what he called a hypermeter as he searched for ‘the dancer’s cueing requirements’ in the music.<sup>76</sup> Experience with traditional triple-time music with a similar hypermeter structure shows that the main problem is to get started on the right beat, rather than on the right bar; in fact, it is often acceptable to begin on any bar of the music. Russell’s claim that there was entirely danceable music with odd-measured phrases does not support McKee’s theory of the hypermeter’s correspondence in music and dance. This example reveals the problem of working strictly from prescriptive material, without studying the performance practice. Petri Hoppu responded to my question about practice as follows:

People without knowledge of Western theory of music don’t think about ‘bars/measures’ while beginning the dance but they perceive the music in different ways, listening to the beat and accents and their relation to the overall melodic and rhythmic structure (the perception is complicated). Therefore, it is possible they start the dance in the middle of the bar at the end of a musical phrase, as often happens in Nykarleby region. When it comes to the question of minuets with odd-measured phrases, only a few of them exist in the Finnish-Swedish collections (together with minuets that may contain 2/4 or 4/4 bars). These are rare, and I’ve never heard that one would have played them during actual dancing.<sup>77</sup>

This commentary sheds important light on the question about melodies with odd-measured phrases: even if they seem not to have been popular as dance music, they should, in principle, not cause problems for dancers.

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75 In the present author’s experience, it is quite usual to hear dancers criticize musicians for not playing well in the context of social dancing. Conversely, one hears stories about the musician who stopped playing because the dancers were not following the beat.

76 According to McKee, ‘The term «Hypermeter» refers to levels of meter operating above the notated meter’ (Footnote 11, location 3764). In the minuet the meter is 3/4, but since two bars according to McKee are connected due to the dance pattern, the hypermeter would be 6/4.

77 Personal communication from Petri Hoppu, 7 December 2020.

## The Nordic Folk Dance Minuet

The music of the minuet has not been a core focus of Nordic folk music research. In Norway and Sweden, where the dance disappeared from practice in the nineteenth century, the topic remained on the periphery of scholarship concerning folk dance and folk music. On the other hand, in Denmark and Finland, folk-dance and folk-music scholars did document minuet dance movements as well as dance music, and they published a few small articles early in the twentieth century.<sup>78</sup> Professor Otto Andersson's work in Swedish-speaking Finland from the beginning of the twentieth century to the 1960s should be mentioned as an early example of extensive minuet music collection, analysis, and publication.<sup>79</sup>

Substantial research and publication on minuet as folk dance and its music accelerated after 1990, driven mainly by some of the authors of this book, other individuals connected to the authors' group and to the group's parent organisation, *Nordisk forening for folkedansforskning* (who are supporting this work). Petri Hoppu completed his doctoral dissertation about the minuet in Finland from a socio-historical perspective in 1999. It emphasised both symbolic and embodied aspects of the dance. According to Hoppu, minuet dancing, including the dance structure, was closely connected to Finland's social and cultural development during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.<sup>80</sup> Gunnel Biskop began publishing articles on the minuet in 1993 in *Folkdansaren*, a membership journal for the Finnish folk-dance organisation *Finlands svenska folkdansring rf.*, a practice which she continued for two decades. These articles provided much of the material for her book *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen* (2015), upon which a large part of the present text is based. Biskop drew from her lengthy research into Nordic sources but also her own practical knowledge of the dance. Her work connects these findings to general European history.<sup>81</sup>

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78 An example is Yngvar Heikel, 'Om menuetter i Österbotten', *Budkavlen*, 2 (1929), 105–11.

79 See, for example, Otto Andersson, *VI A 1 Äldre dansmelodier. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 400 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1963), pp. cvii–cxxiv.

80 Petri Hoppu, *Symbolien ja Sanattomuuden Tanssi—Menuetti Suomessa 1700–Luvulta Nyky aikaan* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1999).

81 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen: Om Menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands Svenskbygder—under trehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015).

## Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, we have found that the term ‘minuet’ and its versions in European languages refer to a precisely definable movement structure in the field of social dance. It has few variations compared to other dance forms or paradigms—comparisons that will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters of this book. We have also suggested that the minuet might be seen as part of a larger paradigm of couple dances widespread, at least in Spain and France where the couples dance in front of each other without couple turning motifs.<sup>82</sup> Finally, we have maintained that the dance clearly belonged to the upper classes and was taken up by the lower classes only in the Nordic countries, with the Czech *mineth* as a possible minor exception.

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- , ‘Innleiing. Turdansen i Folkedansarbeidet’, in Klara Semb, *Norske Folkedansar. Turdansar* (Oslo: Noregs boklag, 1991), pp. 17–58
- , ‘Revisiting Typology and Classification in the Era of Digital Humanities’, *Arv*, 75 (2019), 153–79

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82 The most typical couple turning motives are those where the partners hold each other with both hands in a close embrace and turn around their common axis, such as in a waltz or polka. Couple motifs can be used for a broader range of moves where partners hold each other at least by one hand. However, these motifs are not dominant in the minuet nor in the old couple-dance paradigm of Spain and France.

- , 'Typologi og klassifisering som metode', in *Nordisk Folkedanstypologi: En systematisk katalog over publiserte nordiske folkedanser*, ed. by Egil Bakka (Trondheim: Rådet for folkemusikk og folkedans, 1997), pp. 7–16
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# 3. The Minuet as Part of Instrumental and Dance Music in Europe

*Andrea Susanne Opielka*

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From the second half of the seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth century, the minuet was, by far, the most popular ballroom dance in Europe and was thus the only Baroque form of dance that survived until the end of the Baroque era. Its origins lie in France, and its big break beginning around 1650 when it was introduced at the court of King Louis XIV. The oldest-known minuet music was created by Jean-Baptiste Lully, dated 1653. Until his death in 1687, Lully was able to compose ninety-one minuets for his operas and ballets and thus contributed significantly to the spread of the new fashion.<sup>1</sup> Like the *Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande*, or *Gigue*, the minuet was also established as a type of instrumental music. From early on, composers distinguished between minuet tunes intended as an accompaniment for the dance and more stylized minuet tunes intended solely for listening. The minuet became an important tool for instrumental pedagogy, and music teachers used it to teach the fundamentals of composition.<sup>2</sup>

## Characteristics of the Music

While the minuet could be performed as a ballroom dance to any music, the choreography for more formal performances was always tailored to a specific piece. As the fundamental minuet step took six beats to complete, it would run across two  $3/4$  bars. Many melodies were thus built around common two-bar

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1 Carol Marsh, 'Minuet', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 29 vols. (London: Macmillan, 2001) vol. 16, pp. 740–46.

2 Eric McKee, *Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp. 3–5.

phrases, but this was not always the case. In the early history of the minuet especially, irregular structures were relatively common. Lully's first minuet, for example, had an asymmetric form with nine bars in the first part and eight in the second part.<sup>3</sup> Later, Lully wrote sixteen- and thirteen-bar sections, and his colleagues Louis Marchand and Louis Couperin experimented with five- and three-bar phrases.<sup>4</sup>

Sebastian Brossard, in his influential *Dictionnaire de Musique* (1703), recommended that the first part contain four or eight bars and end on the dominant or minor parallel, while the second part should consist of eight bars and should lead back to the tonic.<sup>5</sup> In 1768, Jean-Jacques Rousseau stated in his *Dictionnaire de Musique* that the number of bars in each of minuet's repeated sections should be four or a multiple thereof.<sup>6</sup> One of the minuet's key characteristics is a basic rhythm in triple time, usually noted as a 3/4 bar, more rarely as a 3/8 bar or 6/4 bar. Another characteristic is that it follows a two-part form, with each part being repeated exactly. The harmonic structures are relatively simple. The first part often leads to the dominant and the second part back to the tonic. Minuets can begin at the full bar and on the upbeat. In Mozart's famous works, minuets can be found which begin on both the full bar and also which begin on the upbeat.

Undoubtedly, the minuet was one of the simplest and shortest instrumental forms of the early eighteenth century. Thus, in order to accompany long dances, musicians had to either improvise or bring together several pieces of music. Lully introduced the custom of combining two minuets that contrast in key and content, using an A–B–A pattern. In other words, the first minuet would be repeated at the end of the dance performance.<sup>7</sup> Since the second minuet was characterized by a three-part texture (with two melody parts and one bass part), the name 'trio' was applied and became prevalent.<sup>8</sup>

The basic tempo of the minuet seems to have varied significantly and may also have changed frequently over time. Brossard described it in 1703 as 'very lively' and its tempo as 'very fast'. Johann Mattheson, in his *The Perfect*

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3 Karl Heinz Taubert, *Das Menuett. Geschichte und Choreographie* (Zürich: Pan, 1988), p. 118.

4 Marsh, p. 743.

5 Sebastian de Brossard, *Dictionnaire de musique contenant une explication des termes Grecs, Latin, Italiens & François les plus usitez dans la musique* (Paris: [n.pub.], 1703), p. 45, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1510881v>

6 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Encyclopédie*, 28 vols (Paris: Diderot et d'Alembert, 1765), vol. 10, p. 346.

7 Monika Fink, 'Menuett / Menuet / Minuetto', in *Das Große Tanzlexikon* (Lilienthal: Laaber, 2016), pp. 375–77.

8 Eric Blom, 'The Minuet-Trio', *Music & Letters*, 22 (1941), 162–80 (p. 163).

*Chapelmaster* (1739), however, advised that the minuet be played only with 'moderate mirth'. Rousseau, in 1768, quoted Brossard only to contradict him: 'on the contrary: the character of the minuet is elegant and noble simplicity, its forms of tempo are extremely temperate rather than fast'.<sup>9</sup> These changing views might indicate that the tempo became slower during the eighteenth century, but one must be careful not to draw a definitive conclusion from only three sources.

## The Triumph of the Minuet

With Lully's first minuet in 1653, the genre's triumphant march across Europe began. It gained dominance, for a time, over all other musical forms in all countries. Lully's successor, Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764), composed at least seventy-six minuets for the music to be performed at the theatre. As early as 1670, the minuet entered the suite, an important musical form in the Baroque era: Jean Jacques Champion de Chambonnières (circa 1601–72) published a minuet as the last piece in the second volume of his *Pièces de clavecin, Suites for harpsichord*.

In England, at the end of the seventeenth century, Henry Purcell (1659–95) used the minuet more often than any other dance in his stage works. Well-known examples of English orchestral music are the two minuets in the *F major suite HWV 248* from *Water Music* (1717) by Georg Friedrich Händel (1685–1759).<sup>10</sup>

Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713) was the first in Italy to integrate the minuet into art music, or more precisely, into chamber music in the *Sonata da Camera*. In the works of Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725), the minuet appeared in various opera overtures, some of which were also published separately as *Sinfonia*. The Italian minuet style differed significantly from the rest of Europe's tradition: a faster tempo was preferred, which led to the use of 3/8 or 6/8 time. In addition to this variation, the musical phrases in the Italian style were significantly longer and often included eight bars.<sup>11</sup>

In the German-speaking world, Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706) added several minuets to the standard dances of some of his suites, including the *Allemande*, *Courante*, *Sarabande*, and *Gigue*. At the same time, Georg Muffat (1653–1704) wrote a minuet in Salzburg in 1682 for his chamber sonata.<sup>12</sup> Muffat had studied with Lully in Paris and, therefore, was very familiar with the French tradition. His minuets were motivically and contrapuntally designed in a 'specific artistic

9 Rousseau, p. 346.

10 Wolfram Steinbeck, 'Das Menuett in der Instrumentalmusik', in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997), pp. 126–32 (pp. 127–28).

11 Marsh, p. 743.

12 Taubert, p. 31.



way' but held fast to the simple formal structure. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) wrote approximately thirty minuets for works of various types and thus proved the versatility of the dance in instrumental music. Minuets appear, for example, in his *1st Brandenburgischen Konzert BWV 1046* from 1721, in 1722–23 *Piano Booklet for Wilhelm Friedemann Bach (BWV 841–43)*, in the *Music Booklet for Anna Magdalena Bach* from 1725, and in the *English Suite F-Dur BWV 809*, written between 1722 and 1724.<sup>13</sup>

Of particular interest are also some of Bach's cantatas, as they demonstrate the minuet's influence on vocal music. The basic characteristics of the minuet—a moderate tempo in triple time, simple harmonic structures, four- or eight-bar regular phrases—appear in his *Unser Mund und Ton der Saiten BWV 1*, *Hochgelobter Gottessohn BWV 6*, and *Man halte nur ein wenig stille BWV 93 quiet BWV 93*.<sup>14</sup>

The minuet's final triumph as inclusions in large instrumental compositions began in the mid-eighteenth century and culminated in Viennese Classicism. The Viennese composer Matthias Monn (1717–50) was the first to include a minuet in his *D Major Symphony* in 1740.<sup>15</sup> But it took nearly fifteen years before the minuet was established as an independent portion of the symphony in the musical centres of Mannheim and Vienna. Credit for this development goes to the Mannheim School composers related to the Stamitz family and to the composers of the early Viennese school led by Georg Christoph Wagenseil (1715–77).<sup>16</sup> The establishment of the minuet as a part of the classical symphony also created a distinction that was reflected in the use of terminology: the 'Italian overture' now signified something very different than the 'symphony', whereas previously these titles had been used interchangeably.<sup>17</sup>

## The Viennese Classic: From the Dance Minuet to the Stylized Minuet

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) composed approximately four hundred minuets and, more than his contemporaries, valued this dance above all others. From 1765 onward, he never composed a symphony that did not include at least one. Haydn gave the minuet a symphonic expression without renouncing its characteristically simple harmony and cheerful character. He adapted the symphonic form by extending its three movements to four movements, with

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13 Marsh, p. 743

14 Ibid.

15 Taubert, p. 31.

16 Ibid., p. 120.

17 Frederick Niecks, 'Historical Sketch of the Overture', *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, 7 (1906), 386–90 (p. 386).

the minuet as the final portion.<sup>18</sup> Incidentally, this new symphonic form differed from *divertimentos* and serenades which already consisted of five movements (two of which were minuets). Indeed, Haydn famously removed one of these two minuets from the *divertimento* in order to create a musical form called the 'string quartet'. This resulted in a four-movement form with the minuet as the third movement. Although this structure corresponds to that of the symphony, both genres have very different origins and developmental paths.<sup>19</sup>

Haydn also included the minuet into the *Piano Sonata* and the *Chamber Music Sonata*. However, because the sonata continued to consist of three movements throughout Haydn's lifetime, he chose to substitute one of these three movements for the minuet. It is sometimes found as the middle movement and is, therefore, a slow(!) minuet. At other times, it appears as the final movement and is called a *Tempo di Minuetto*. Indeed, the concerto was one of the only compositional forms in Viennese classical music into which the minuet was not incorporated.<sup>20</sup>

### Mozart and the Minuet

The life of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91) is an excellent illustration of how closely the work of a musician and composer can be linked to the minuet. Not only did Mozart learn to play the piano by practising minuets, but, on 16 December 1761, at the age of five, he composed his very first minuet. This was followed by five more in subsequent months. He created approximately one hundred and thirty minuets for different occasions and musical forms during his short life. These were all in two parts, had a length of sixteen to twenty-four bars, and they did not have a trio. In 1768, Mozart's father Leopold drew up a list of all the works his twelve-year-old son had already written and notes that it included 'Many minuets with all sorts [of] instruments'.<sup>21</sup> These early compositions were dance music, but they are unfortunately lost. However, in later years, Mozart wrote further dance minuets, often composing whole series for particular occasions.

While these dance pieces are now largely forgotten, Mozart's stylized minuets for instrumental performance are firmly lodged in the classical concert repertoire. As with Haydn, the minuet played an essential role in his symphonies. Apart from one exception from 1780, he composed no symphony without a minuet.

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18 In Western musical terminology, a *movement* means a complete, independent section of a larger work such as a symphony or sonata.

19 Steinbeck, p. 130.

20 Ibid.

21 *Mozart in der Tanzkultur seiner Zeit*, ed. by Walter Salmen (Innsbruck: Helbling, 1990), p. 87.

Interestingly, when he reworked his *Symphony No. 7 in D Major* to produce the overture of the opera *La Finta Semplice* (1768), he dropped the minuet, marking the aforementioned difference between an overture and symphony. Also, in his quartets and quintets, Mozart established the form permanently as the third movement. These minuets often followed a simple harmonic structure but were significantly longer than the dance minuet and were not danceable due to their complicated rhythms and syncopation.<sup>22</sup> His departure from the dance form culminated in the *Jupiter Symphony* of 1788. Each of its two parts consisted of forty-three bars, and only the dance-related theme and the Minuet–Trio–Minuet sequence resembled the original dance music.

After 1766, Mozart also composed movements called *Tempo di Minuetto*, a term often used for fast final movements of three-movement works such as sonatas or concertos. The earliest example can be found in the *Sonata for Piano and Violin KV 30*. Here, the composer freed himself from the traditional minuet form's constraints, while still using the dance's charm and character for his music. Interestingly, despite the title, these movements were not presented in the minuet tempo, but in a much faster time scale. As early as 1802, the music theorist Heinrich Christoph Koch pointed this out in his musical encyclopaedia:

However, because minuets of this type are not intended for dancing, [...] one has deviated from the original arrangement of the minuet with regard to the tempo, [...] and they also perform it in a much faster tempo than it can be danced to.<sup>23</sup>

Several of Mozart's opera arias are also called *Tempo di Minuetto*, but these utilized metrical structures and, often, the eight-bar division that recalled the dance movement. The earliest example was in the *Singspiel* entitled *Bastien and Bastienne* from 1768, followed by arias in *La Finta Semplice* (1768), *Lucio Silla* (1772), *Zaide* (1780), *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1785/86), and *La Clemenza di Tito* (1791).<sup>24</sup> A particular case is the world-famous minuet which Mozart composed in 1787 for *Don Giovanni*. The minuet presents the aristocratic way of life and captivates with its simple, elegant beauty, which corresponds to the traditional minuet ideal. In the same scene, a *Contredanse* and a *Deutscher* are also sung. In the same year, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe describes a scene within his masterpiece, *Die Leiden des Jungen Werther*, which includes a ball where the minuet also follows an *Englischer* and then a *Deutscher*.<sup>25</sup> This description confirms that the

22 Marsh, p. 744; François Filiatrault, 'Maestrino Mozart: Youthful Operas', trans. by Sean McCutcheon (Les Boréades, 2021) <https://www.boreades.com/en/maestrino-mozart-youthful-operas/>

23 Salmen, p. 92.

24 Ibid., pp. 93–94.

25 Taubert, p. 123.

exciting combination of these three forms were part of the danced reality at that time. However, only two years later, revolutionaries in France turned against everything courtly and instigated a revolt with consequences that shook Europe and made impossible the minuet's continuation as a ceremonial dance.

## Loss of Meaning and Reflection: The Minuet in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Even in instrumental music, the minuet lost its importance after the French Revolution and during the transition from Viennese Classicism to Romanticism. In Ludwig van Beethoven's (1770–1827) *oeuvre*, only thirty-eight minuets are known, almost one hundred fewer than in that of the only slightly earlier Mozart. Although Franz Schubert (1797–1828) can boast about seventy minuets, he wrote roughly fifty of them as dance music for piano whereas only twenty are orchestral works.

In Haydn's and Mozart's times, the minuet had already begun to evolve in various ways, resulting in three subtypes. The first was the traditional, moderate dance movement with all the minuet's standard features, while the second was a livelier dance set that anticipated the waltz. The third was an often rapid, highly stylized concert set, which later developed into a *scherzo*. While Haydn called pieces of all three subtypes a 'minuet', Beethoven and Schubert use this title only to describe compositions of the first type. This terminological discrepancy may explain why there are far fewer works labelled 'minuets' in their *ouevres*.<sup>26</sup>

In early nineteenth-century music, the minuet developed the connotation of having an outdated style, and thus it became rarely used. Among the few surviving examples are the minuet in the *Serenade op. 11* by Johannes Brahms (1857/58) and the two minuets by Georges Bizet—one in the *L'Arlésienne Suite* (1872) and the other in his *Symphony in C* (1860–68). However, at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, when classical and neoclassical tendencies began to influence music, the minuet regained some of its earlier status. In France, Claude Debussy (*Suite Bergamasque* (1890)), Maurice Ravel (*Menuet Antique* (1895) and *Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn* (1909)) and Gabriel Fauré (*Masques et Bergamasques* (1919)) utilised the minuet. In Hungary, it played a role in Béla Bartók's work *Nine Little Pieces* (1926). In Germany, the minuet was rediscovered by Arnold Schönberg (*Serenade op. 24* 1920–23 and *Suite op. 25* 1921–23). These later minuets were characterized by atonality, which signals how a fashionable dance can change over time. Even

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26 Steinbeck, p. 131.

two hundred and seventy years after its creation, the minuet form continues to appeal to composers and audiences.

In summary, the minuet has been a musical form in European art music for more than three hundred years, and it has appeared in various contexts from baroque dance suites and classical symphonies to impressionist and expressionist orchestral works. It plays an important role in masterpieces by great composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach, Georg Friedrich Handel, Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Claude Debussy, and Maurice Ravel.

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## PART II

### REFERENCES AND NARRATIVES

A rich array of minuet references and small narratives appear in Nordic sources. These are found in letters, diaries, memoirs, poems, periodicals, and other genres of writing, which, to date, have not been translated into other languages. Members of our project group, particularly Gunnel Biskop, have spent many years collecting this elusive material. Part Two of this book includes excerpts from these sources. As such, they are accompanied by little advanced or interpretative discourse. Framing the general context of the minuet, the excerpts paint a picture of its situation in a variety of countries. The chapters are mostly organized according to the chronology of their principal sources.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Source material speaking to specific topics will be treated in later chapters, including more interpretive discourse.



# 4. Nordic Dancing Masters during the Eighteenth Century

*Anne Fiskvik*

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This chapter investigates the role of the dancing master and their teaching of the minuet in the Nordic countries in the latter part of the eighteenth century and onwards. The primary focus is on the role and the material of these masters as they taught the minuet. Drawing on examples from Norway and the other Nordic countries, the chapter includes short case studies of both female and male dance teachers.

The profession of the dancing master developed in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Italy and France. The first dancing masters who published books on their disciplines worked for private or royal patrons in Italian cities like Firenze and Piacenza. In these countries, dancing masters were typically employed by royalty or wealthy patrons through the centuries. However, during the eighteenth century, with the growing bourgeoisie, the market for dancing masters expanded and gave rise to independent dancing masters. Thus the minuet became a key dance during the eighteenth century, especially for teaching etiquette and gracefulness. Even in Norway, a country without a court or aristocracy, learning how to dance was important for social reasons. In all the Nordic countries, the so-called dancing master taught various forms of dance. These dancing masters who taught the middle and upper lower classes serve as some of the case studies in this chapter.

Dance teachers who worked in the Nordic countries often travelled to serve more limited markets, because, unfortunately, the number of citizens in these places who could afford to take dancing lessons was limited. Subsequently, itinerant male and female dancing masters often also worked as a performer in the places they visited for financial purposes. However, dance teachers also settled and worked in Nordic towns on a more permanent basis. From newspaper sources, it can be deduced that several women and men were offering lessons in



Christiania (Oslo) in the early 1770s. With five thousand inhabitants, this was a provincial city just large enough to provide a decent audience and customers for dance classes. Three women and four men were active as teachers at any time, and there was quite a bit of competition for customers. Some of them worked solely with teaching, whereas others were travelling around looking for work also as dancers.<sup>1</sup>

## Sources and Previous Research

Much can be inferred about Nordic itinerant dancing masters and performers from notices and advertisements in Danish, Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian newspapers. For instance, around 1770, Norwegian papers included advertisements for several dance teachers offering lessons in Christiania. Among other sources are printed and handwritten materials, including posters, copies of applications, theatre records, and entries in church record books.<sup>2</sup> Madame Stuart, one of the dance teachers discussed in this chapter, is referred to in Swedish as well as Danish newspapers, suggesting that instructors even worked in different countries. For instance, mentions of her appear in the [Swedish] *Göteborgska Nyheter* and *Hwad Nytt*, the [Danish] *Hwad Nytt*. In Norway, Stuart is referred to in the Christiania newspaper *Nordske Intelligenz-Seddeler* (1768–74), the *Bergens Adressecontoirs Efterretninger* (1768–69), and the *Trondhiems Adresse-Contoirs Efterretninger* (1769–86).<sup>3</sup>

Little research has been done on dancing masters, and many aspects of their work deserve scrutiny. Questions of interest center around daily life of dancing masters and their performances. I ask how they were treated, and what kind of

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- 1 For more information about the dancing masters in Christiania, see Anne Margrete Fiskvik, 'Information uti Dands i Christiania, 1769–1773', in *lidenskap eller levebrød: Utøvende kunst i endring rundt 1800*, ed. by Randi M. Selvik, Ellen Karoline Gjervan, and Svein Gladso (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2015), pp. 287–314.
  - 2 Thanks to the documents preserved at the National Library of Norway in relation to a dancing master called Martin Nürenbach, who travelled in Sweden, Norway, and Finland, we can learn something about attitudes towards itinerant artists among audiences as well as the authorities. Nürenbach's application for starting a theatre is of special interest.
  - 3 It must be pointed out that Norway was relatively late in establishing newspapers compared to its Nordic neighbours—the *Nordske Intelligenz-Seddeler* of Christiania did not begin until 1763; it lasted a few years until newspapers came to other towns such as Bergen (the *Adressecontoirs Efterretninger*) and Trondheim (the *Trondhiems Adresse-Contoirs Efterretninger*). The earliest versions of Swedish newspapers were published from 1614 and Danish ones from 1634. Finland's press co-existed with that of Sweden: its first independent newspaper, Åbo Tidningar, was founded in 1771.

social status they had. And, especially for this chapter, I looked to see what we know about their methods for teaching the minuet.

## The Combined Dance Teacher and Performer

The latter part of the eighteenth century was a prosperous one for itinerant dance performers on the continent and in the Nordic countries. Several artists travelled from city to city, offering a variety of entertainment. Dancers also came from beyond the Nordic countries to try their luck. They belonged to a well-established tradition of travelling artists who worked in smaller or larger groups, a practice that has been common since the birth of theatre itself. Throughout the Early Modern period, musicians, singers, acrobats, actors, and dancers travelled across Europe, often seeking employment at princely courts or asking for permission to perform publicly in market squares or other rented locations. Additionally, teaching dance was included in their practices.<sup>4</sup>

### Repertoire

The decade beginning in 1770 was a prosperous period for this travelling professional in Norway. This can be seen in several advertisements in the few extant newspapers. From these, it is possible to learn the types of dances taught by the masters. Their teaching repertoire was similar to that of contemporaneous teachers who were settled in one city, and the minuet is almost always mentioned as one of the dances offered. As many as seven dancing masters were active in 'provincial' Norway at this time, and all of them are also known to have travelled in the other Nordic countries.

### Itinerant Dance and Theatre Activity

Itinerant dancing masters and performers have not been a major theme in the work of Nordic scholars, who have been generally more interested in theatre as an institution. Among the exceptions is the Swedish theatre scholar Gunilla Dahlberg, who has conducted extensive research on travelling artists who visited Stockholm in the seventeenth century and later periods. She has written about various theatre and dance activities that were connected to the Swedish

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4 See Marian Hanna Winter, *The Pre-Romantic Ballet* (London: Pitman, 1974), pp. 7–18. Winter notes the vital link between the performance traditions of the *Commedia Dell'arte* and the development of ballet.

court.<sup>5</sup> Of particular interest to this chapter is the influence of travelling German itinerant artists, including those who specialized in performing and/or teaching dance.<sup>6</sup> The Finnish theatre historian Sven Hirn also offered insight into the types of performance and teachings provided by itinerant artists. In *Den gastronomiska hästen* (2002), he published some of the many theatre posters he collected related to dancers and dancing masters. Drawing on comments on performers and types of practices, he has created a picture of the sheer variety of itinerant activity seen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hirn was fascinated by itinerant circus artists, including dancers and acrobats, and pointed out what he thought were their strengths and weaknesses. His research filled many of the gaps in our knowledge about the numerous travelling teachers and artists who toured the Nordic countries.<sup>7</sup>

Many sources testify to the activity of itinerant artists outside of larger cities. Claes Rosenqvist and Dag Nordmark's *Att resa var nödvändigt* (1990), for example, examines Swedish rural theatre. The two scholars discussed, among other aspects, the itinerant artist's social and artistic place in society. Their research offers a more balanced perspective on high versus low theatre culture, emphasizing the range of itinerant practices and teachings and how both high and low cultures met the social and cultural needs of spectators from various social classes. Their more inclusive views on theatre and dance have influenced my research.

## Itinerant Travelling in the Nordic Countries

European performers travelled not only on the continent, but also in Nordic countries. According to Norwegian historian and conservator Vidar Parmer, source material from around 1600 onwards shows evidence of various itinerant troupes visiting Bergen, Christiania, Fredrikshald (Halden), Christiansand (Kristiansand), Stavanger, and Trondheim. Indeed, German theatre troupes dominated itinerant activity in Sweden, Denmark, and Finland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Several such troupes stayed and made Sweden their base of operations, including those led by the tigtrope dancer Karl

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5 Gunilla Dahlberg, *Komediantteatern i 1600-talets Stockholm* (Stockholm: Kommittén för Stockholmsforskning, 1992), p. 14.

6 Ibid.

7 Sven Hirn, *Den gastronomiska Hästen: Gamla nordiska artistaffischer* (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2002), pp. 2–3.

Friedrich von Eggenberg, as well as the theatre director Carl Gottfried Seuerling (1727–95), both of whom travelled extensively in the Nordic countries.<sup>8</sup>

These ensembles generally travelled inland via Sweden or came by boat from Denmark.<sup>9</sup> Teaching dance was, as already mentioned, a necessary part of their existence. Therefore, they settled for a variety of lengths of stay in various towns, attempting to attract students while also performing. It would be fair to say that performing mostly taking place outdoors was the primary activity for several dancing masters, but teaching that could take place all year indoors was often the more lucrative pursuit.

### Artists' Obstacle: Permissions to Perform

Many artists travelled due to the difficulty of obtaining performance privileges in other European countries. The British dance historian Marian Hanna Winter, describing the period between 1700 and 1830 in particular, notes that official theatres—ones that had obtained privileges from the king or state—were rare and highly competitive:

Out on the continent, the theatre companies that enjoyed 'official patronage' jealously watched their smaller rivals, even down to the eeriest company of marionettes. The patented or government-sponsored theatres might also be called the 'over-privileged', and all others the 'underprivileged'. The former were allocated complete rights for exploitation of certain types of entertainment and prosecuted infringements mercilessly.<sup>10</sup>

According to Winter, travelling artists would be categorized as underprivileged because it was difficult, if not impossible, for them to be accepted into the privileged theatres. Established European theatres seldom hired artists who were not within their closed circuit, and, consequently, many ensembles were forced to move regularly to find work. Some probably preferred this, but others likely searched for some safer or more stable work environment, which may be what motivated Madame Stuart's Norwegian adventures.

If we look at the Nordic situation in the second half of the eighteenth century, the privileged theatres in Copenhagen and Stockholm were almost exclusively connected to, or part of, the royal courts. For instance, the Stenborg and Seuerling

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8 Dahlberg, p. 14; for an overview of the Stenborg and Seuerling theatre companies, see *Att resa var nödvändigt: Äldre svensk landsortsteater*, ed. by Claes Rosenqvist and Dag Nordmark (Gideå: Vildros, 1990), especially chapters 1–3.

9 See Vidar Parmer, *Teater, pantomime, linedans, ekvilibristikk, menasjeri, vokskabinett, kosmorama etc. på Fredrikshald* (Halden: Halden kommune, 1965).

10 Winter, p. 30.

theatre companies, as Dahlberg notes, had obtained privileges from the Swedish king to perform in Swedish (including Finnish) towns at various times between 1760 and 1780.<sup>11</sup>

One major challenge faced by itinerant dancing masters/artists was applying for permissions to perform. This seems to have been somewhat more challenging for women, according to the sources describing the Norwegian situation. Itinerant artists who wanted to perform in the Nordic countries had to observe the state laws and any applicable local rules. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Norway was under Danish rule, and its king and central administration were located in Copenhagen. Privileges allowing performances were granted by the king who enforced various prohibitions—a variety of laws that forbade practices such as the staging of plays, wire-dancing, and acrobatics—that had been passed in Denmark-Norway from 1738 onwards.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, local issues were dealt with by Norwegian authorities in each town, rather than by the Danish king. Madame Stuart and her itinerant colleagues should be viewed in light of these conditions, which imposed a variety of restrictions on the artists, even in terms of their repertoire choice.

Legislation on theatre performances was variously applied and enforced during the eighteenth century in all of the Nordic countries, including Denmark and Norway. Laws restricting theatre activity were introduced in the Swedish realm as well, which at this time included Finland.<sup>13</sup> The extent of the local restrictions on travelling artists varied, but they all made life more difficult for the itinerant dance performers. However, it was to their benefit that the power to decide who would be allowed to teach and perform was controlled by local authorities, as this meant they did not have to wait for a response from a central governing body. A significant argument underpinning these prohibitions was that money should not be paid to foreigners or be taken out of the country. Of course, most of the time, the travelling artists were barely getting by, and the little income they had would be spent on food and housing in the country in which

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11 See Gunilla Dahlberg, 'Till E.K. Maj:ts aflägsnare undersåtars nöje', in *Att resa var nödvändigt*, ed. by Claes Rosenqvist (Gideå: Vildros, 1990), pp. 18–48.

12 It might be added that, like dancers and acrobats, travelling musicians also struggled to perform publicly. For more on the different theatre prohibitions in Denmark-Norway, see Svein Gladso, *Teater Mellom Jus og Politikk: Studier i Norsk Teater Fra 1700-Tallet til 1940* (Oslo: Unipub, 2005), pp. 8–16.

13 For Swedish theatre legislation, see Dag Normark, 'Med Kongl.Maj:ts allernådigste tilstånd' in *Att Resa Var Nödvändigt: Äldre Svensk Landsortsteater* ed. by Claes Rosenqvist and Dag Nordmark (Gideå: Vildros, 1990), pp. 49–83.

they were performing. Still, the perception that money was leaving with these performers remained strong and informed the decisions of local authorities.<sup>14</sup>

### The Partnership of the Stuarts and the Nürembachs

In the summer of 1770, the well-known dancing duo Michael Stuart and his wife Madame Stuart arrived in Christiania, Norway.<sup>15</sup> The couple had, by then, travelled and worked in the Nordic countries for several years, and in Norway since 1768. They arrived in Bergen in the early fall of 1768 after performing and teaching in Danish cities such as Odense and Copenhagen. Another widely-travelled couple was the Nürembachs: Martin Nürembach and his wife Anna Catharina Rancke. The Nürembachs worked in Sweden, Finland, and, briefly, Norway. The Stuarts and the Nürembachs performed rope- and wire-dancing and acrobatics. Michael Stuart claimed a particular expertise in these types of dancing that involved balancing on a tightrope (or at times a more slack rope). Such performers were known at the time as equilibrists. Martin Nürembach was also an equilibrist, well-known and significantly appreciated for his ladder-dancing—a skill that involved dancing and performing acrobatics up and down a ladder while at the same time balancing the ladder itself. Source materials indicate that these men performed what was known as ‘comic’ and ‘grotesque’ dancing styles, both of which incorporated acrobatics as well as rope- or wire-dancing, tumbling, and pantomime.<sup>16</sup> According to a textbook on dance from 1762 written by the Italian-British dancing master Giovanni Andrea Gallini, these technically demanding styles were designed to entertain the audience.<sup>17</sup> Little is known about where Stuart and Nürembach acquired their skills, though it was quite common for children born to itinerant artists in the eighteenth

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- 14 Many other restrictions could apply. Typically, permission was granted, but in return the ensemble was obliged to donate the income of the last performance in a given city to the local poor.
- 15 In 1770, Christiania was called ‘Stiftstad’ and had approximately five thousand inhabitants. Norwegian cities have often changed names or spellings. Today’s capital, Oslo, was known as Christiania until 1877, when it became Kristiania. In 1925, the city reinstated its original medieval name, Oslo. Throughout this article, I use the name and spellings of places that were common around 1770.
- 16 For more info on the role of the equilibrist/dancer-performer, see Jacques François Bonnet, *Histoire générale de la danse sacrée et profane: Son origine, ses progrès & ses révolutions* ([1723]; Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969) and Anders Enevig, *Circus og gögl i Odense, 1640–1825* (Odense: Universitetsforlag/Stadsarkivet i Odense, 1998).
- 17 Giovanni-Andrea Gallini, *A Treatise on the Art of Dancing* ([1762]; London: Dance Books, 2002), pp. 84–86.

century to start training from an early age, learning musical (especially singing) skills as well as acrobatics, tumbling, and rope- or wire-dancing.<sup>18</sup>

Both couples had several children, and both women were widowed: Michael Stuart died in the summer of 1770 in Christiania, whereas Martin Nürenbach died in Tavastehus (Hämeenlinna), Finland in 1780.<sup>19</sup> Madame Stuart continued performed without her late husband in Gothenburg, Sweden in 1773, and then chose to remain in Christiania until 1774, when one of her sons died and was buried.

Madame Stuart continued her partnership with Martin and Madame Nürenbach. They became the first artist group to obtain a royal privilege to stage 'comedies' (plays) in the Danish language. For reasons unknown, the theatre enterprise did not last, nor did it keep the Nürenbachs in Norway. After only a few performances, the Nürenbachs left in the early spring of 1772 to resume their itinerant performance careers in Sweden and Finland, which constituted the Eastern part of the Swedish kingdom at that time.<sup>20</sup>

## Teaching Dance and Minuet

In addition to performing, both the Stuart and Nürenbach couples advertised themselves as teachers of dance. Often, they would label themselves 'dancing masters' in the advertisements. Usually, whenever travelling artists remained for a more extended period of a few months, they would attempt to sell their services to the general public. The Stuarts, for instance, advertised dancing lessons in the newspapers of Bergen and Christiania. In one such advertisement, the announcement reported the presentation of the minuet by the Stuarts.<sup>21</sup> Those teaching dance typically announced classes in the minuet, but this particular advertisement from Bergen is exciting because it supplies detailed information about which types of dances were taught, the costs, and where the teaching took place. Perhaps most importantly, the notice stated that learning the minuet would help students to develop a good sense of rhythm, something which is expressed as a quality needed both for dancing well and for general manners.

Also noteworthy is the fact that men and women could be taught separately. In Christiania, in 1770, an advertisement states that Monseigneur Stuart would

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18 See Winter, p. 34.

19 The *Oslo domkirkes kommunikaantprotokoll 1767–75* in January 1771 lists the widow 'Stuart, Christina Dorothea, Enche.'

20 Sven Hirn, 'Martin Nyrenbach: teaterpionjär?', *Nordisk Tidskrift*, 90 (1967), 261–68 (p. 261).

21 See for instance Annouement in *Efterretninger fra Adresse-Contoirtet i Bergen*, 12 December 1768.

teach men, while Madame would teach women.<sup>22</sup> The most likely reason for this division was one of practicality. However, it might also address the reputation that Michael Stuart had as a womanizer.<sup>23</sup> The implication is that it would be safer to leave female children, teenagers, and adults with a female teacher. This risk mitigation helps to explain why women pedagogues sometimes found work despite dance instruction being a rather male-dominated field.

### The Ups and Downs of Being a Female Dance Teacher

Anna Catharina Rancke and her husband Martin Nürenbach moved back to Sweden in the spring of 1773 and continued to perform there.<sup>24</sup> They then settled in Finland, where an attempt to create a Finnish theatre ensemble failed.<sup>25</sup> Madame Rancke became a widow in 1780, and she then started a career as a dance teacher in the city of Pori (in Swedish: Björneborg).<sup>26</sup> A noteworthy account of her teaching, seen from the perspective of a dance student, is given in the autobiography of Pehr Stenberg.<sup>27</sup> Stenberg explains that he visited Pori several times as a young apprentice priest, feeling obliged to take lessons to learn the popular dances of the time and be able to take part in social entertainments and balls. However, the twenty-one-year-old was bothered by his dance teacher's intense interest in him. Stenberg specifies that, at the time when Madame 'Nyrenbach' (as he spells her name) had just become a widow, she kept asking him, and not her other students, to dance during all the minuets and contra dances. He felt he had no choice because to reject would have been rude. However, Stenberg did not appreciate the Madame's attention; he would have preferred to dance with some of the young Mademoiselles.<sup>28</sup>

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- 22 The teaching of dance was announced in local papers. Still, it must be emphasised that likely information about dance lessons, in the same manners as dance performances, were spread thorough pamphlets and flyers that were delivered or posted.
- 23 Swedish historian Eva Helena Ulvros notes that some male dancing masters were known to be womanizers and heavy drinkers (*Dansens och Tidens Virolar: om dans och lek i Sveriges Historia* (Lund: Historiska media, 2004), pp. 24–25).
- 24 Performances from Humlegården/Stockholm were reviewed in the newspaper *Hwad nytt Hwad nytt?*: 'Utdrag af bref', *Hwad nytt Hwad nytt?*, 6 November 1773, pp. 1–2.
- 25 Hirn, 'Martin Nyrenbach', p. 261.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Gunnel Biskop, 'Danser i bondsonen Pehr Stenbergs självbiografi i slutet av 1700-talet', *Folkdansforskning i Norden*, 40 (2017), pp. 3–13.
- 28 Stenberg was interested in Mademoiselle Eneskjöld, a purportedly beautiful young woman, Biskop, pp. 6–8.



It appeared to me that she [Madame 'Nyrenbach'] had special intentions; that she wanted to win certain favours of me, such favours that an actress has been used to getting. But if this is so, she is miscalculating totally, I thought.<sup>29</sup>

This rather blunt statement reveals something about Stenberg's attitudes towards what he calls an *actrice*, his dance teacher, as an entertainer, would be used to getting male attention and of obtaining 'certain favours'.

What kind of favours might he have been assumed her to expect? Given that Madame Nürenbach was recently widowed, Stenberg was, first and foremost, worried that she wanted him as a new husband. The attitudes displayed here towards a female dancing teacher were not unusual or even unfounded. While it is widely known inside dance scholarship that female dancers were regarded as sexual objects and that they also had reputations as courtesans inside the court opera ballets, less is known about female dance teachers.<sup>30</sup> But according to dance scholar Ivor Guest, female dancers at the French opera were regularly mistresses of wealthy French men during the Enlightenment period. There was even a particular lounge at the opera where the spectators could meet the dancers after the performance and make their 'arrangements'.<sup>31</sup> The same situation occurred in court ballets all over Europe and the Nordic countries. For example, in Sweden, the dancer Carlotta Slottsberg (1760–1800) was a celebrated performer at the royal opera, but she was perhaps better known as the mistress of Count Karl (later King Karl III). Slottsberg openly lived as a courtesan and had other lovers in addition to her more than twenty-year-long relationship with the count.<sup>32</sup>

Stenberg would likely have been aware of the rather negative notions about female dancers and thus may have jumped to conclusions about Madame Nürenbach's intentions towards him. Practically, Anna Catharina might have felt vulnerable after her husband's death and, with children to support, and considered Stenberg good husband material. As a young priest, he would seem the right choice for somebody seeking stability and also a measure of respectability. But it is also possible that Stenberg misread the situation: perhaps his instructor simply wanted to help him to improve his dancing skills.

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29 Biskop, p. 8.

30 Gunilla Roempke, *Vristens makt: Dansös i mätressernas tidevarv* (Stockholm: Fischer & Co., 1994), p. 89.

31 Ivor Guest, *The Ballet of the Enlightenment: The Establishment of the Ballet D'Action in France, 1770–1793* (London: Dance Books, 1996), p. 24.

32 Gunilla Roempke, *Vristens makt: Dansös i Mätressernas Tidevarv* (Stockholm: Fischer & Co., 1994), p. 89.

Alternatively, perhaps he struggled to learn the steps and needed extra attention. Nevertheless, Stenberg did not paint her in a positive light.

## Summary and Concluding Remarks

The division between high and low culture, art, and entertainment is one that was present two hundred and fifty years ago and continues to be an issue even today. Learning how to dance was, nevertheless, a necessity, at least among the middle and upper classes. Not surprisingly, the minuet continued to be taught well into the nineteenth century, even though it fell out of fashion as a *social* dance during that century. Dance scholar Elizabeth Svarstad points out that the minuet seems to have served a sort of foundational educational purpose; if one showed sufficient discipline to learn its steps, he or she was likely capable of learning more of the contemporary, modern dances that were evolving.<sup>33</sup> As such, the minuet figured in advertisements for dancing lessons almost into the twentieth century in Norway.

According to dance scholar Sherill Dodds, popular forms of entertainment attract audiences with different mechanisms.<sup>34</sup> Dancers who combined teaching and performing were popular with audiences all over eighteenth-century Europe. Yet, the artists themselves were not necessarily well respected, especially not among the upper classes. A parallel exists in modern theatre and dance scholarship wherein such popular entertainment forms have been belittled and received far less attention than more highbrow dance forms such as classical ballet. Several of the travelling performers were nevertheless highly skilled in various styles, and there was a market for them, even in the 'provincial' towns of Nordic countries. However, the status of combined performer-teachers, in particular, was often low. Dance teachers, perhaps especially women, had a reputation that was not always positive.

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33 Elizabeth Svarstad, *Aqquratesse i alt af Dands og Triin og Opførsel.* 'Dans som Sosial Dannelselse i Norge 1750–1820' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2017).

34 Sherill Dodds, *Dancing on the Canon: Embodiments of Value in Popular Dance* (London: Palgrave, 2011), pp. 11–28 and 45–65.

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# 5. The Minuet in Sweden—and its Eastern Part Finland—during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries and in Sweden after 1800

*Gunnel Biskop*

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During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Finland was part of Sweden and referred to as the eastern constituent part of the state. One result of the Finnish War between Sweden and Russia in 1808–09 was that Sweden was forced to relinquish its eastern portion (now called 'Finland') to Russia. Finland became an autonomous state under the Russian rule; it became independent in 1917.

## The Minuet in Sweden/Finland until the 1720s

The earliest records which discuss the minuet as a dance in Sweden, including in the eastern constituent part—Finland—are found in incidental poems and handwritten musical scores from the late seventeenth century onwards. These incidental poems or verses of tribute were written for individuals upon specific occasions, and they were reprinted frequently before weddings, birthdays, and funerals. The poet could read or sing the poems himself. However, the fact that dance names are present in some of these sources does not necessarily mean that the dances were introduced at that time; rather, these dances had likely developed far earlier in another context and subsequently happened to be mentioned in a poem at a later point. Those who wrote the poems and those who heard them must have already known the dances mentioned in them. At weddings, poems were performed after a meal but before any dancing started:

the lyrics often described what was to come.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the dance from the period is even described in a eulogy and several early manuscripts.

### Early Minuet References

The Royal Library of Stockholm houses collections of verses and incidental poems that have been reviewed by Nils Decker, researcher of music and local history. These verses contain information on instruments and dances from the late seventeenth century. He noted that the most popular instruments were violin, lute, dulcimer, and regal. Those considered ‘folk instruments’ included the *stjälkpipa* [stem pipe], horn, hummel, harp, *nyckelgiga* [key harp], and drums. The dance *sarabande* was first mentioned in 1658, the *courante*, *gavotte*, *allemand*, *galliarde*, *Kas’ und Brot*, and *daldans* in 1662, *cinque pas* in 1671, and the ‘Polsk dans’ (Polska Dance) in 1673. The first-known minuet record in a Swedish text is part of a poem by Favonius written for a noble wedding in Stockholm 1676.<sup>2</sup> The poem is very long and, in the section where the minuet is mentioned, the topic is the misadventures of foolish virgins, who have contracted a disease through their conduct:

that just while she stands and walks  
The horny jitters make her move  
her waist,  
her knee and thigh.  
She twists the neck and foot as well as Eyes and Tongue  
And sing to that as if by the Tarantula stung  
With strange wriggling and bounce  
This funny way  
They call La bocan, Courant and Minuet.<sup>3</sup>

The poem was not addressed to the bride but to the entire audience, including the groom, a Doctor of Medicine, who would have understood the text. These listeners must have known the minuet and its movement patterns to have grasped the poet’s meaning and the comparison with the consequences of a tarantella sting. From this, we can deduce that the minuet was well known in Stockholm in 1676.

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- 1 Carl-Allan Moberg, *Från Kyrko- och Hovmusik till Offentlig Konsert. Studier i Stormaktstidens Svenska Musikhistoria* (Uppsala: Uppsala universitet, 1942), p. 124.
  - 2 Favonius is a pseudonym. See Nils Dencker, ‘Musiknotiser i 1600-talets verser’, *Svensk Tidskrift för Musikforskning*, 12 (1930), 53–73 (pp. 53–63).
  - 3 Stina Hansson, *Svensk bröllopsdiktning under 1600- och 1700-talen. Renässansrepertoarens framväxt, blomstring och tillbakagång*, LIR skrifter 1 (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 2011), p. 206; Dencker, p. 62; Tobias Norlind, *Dansens historia. Med särskild hänsyn till dansen i Sverige* (Stockholm: Nordisk rotogravyr, 1941), p. 60.

The Estonian-born cartographer and poet Admiral Werner von Rosenfeldt, mentioned the minuet in three of his poems written while he was living and working in the city of Karlskrona in Blekinge [a province in southern Sweden].<sup>4</sup> In a long wedding poem from 1688, Rosenfeldt wrote that he wanted to bring out the musician's perspective in his text.<sup>5</sup> In verse six, he describes the instruments and described the bride's wish to dance:

Tune your violins,  
Double Bass and dulcian,  
Bring also shawms on.  
I can clearly see on the bride's face  
That it will not last long,  
Till she wants to get up and dance

By verse eight, the narrator urges the audience to dance the Polska dance even as he invites them to express their own preferences. He asks if they wanted to perform French dances, such as *courantes* and minuets:

Get up with you rapid, kind feet,  
There will be a Polska dance.  
Or do you want, in your French way,  
To have courants, minuets?  
Give me your command, and I will  
Play what pleases you.

In verse eight, the 'kind feet', in the Swedish language *snälla fötter*, might be translated as 'agile feet'.<sup>6</sup>

In another wedding poem that uses the same concept, Rosenfeldt wrote what was then modern dance and what was out of fashion. The minuet was among the contemporary dances, and the Spanish *folia* had become obsolete:

Everyone should now get started with rapid, kind feet,  
As best you have learned, to dance minuets,  
'Curinter, polinska, paspiéd' and more,  
The Spanish follies are not used anymore.<sup>7</sup>

4 Werner von Rosenfeldt, *Samlade Vitterhetsarbeten af svenska författare från Stjernhjelmtill Dalin. Efter originalupplagor och handskrifter utgifna af P. Hansell. XVI delen* (Upsala: P. Hansellis förlag, 1873), pp. 215–45; Tobias Norlind, *Studier i svensk folklore*, Lunds universitets årsskrift (Lund: Lunds universitet, 1911), pp. 369–70.

5 'Uppmuntring till lustigheter på herr rådman Schlyters bröllop i Karlskrona, den 30 maj 1688, uti musikanten Johan Ottos namn.' Norlind, *Studier i svensk folklore*, p. 369.

6 Elof Hellquist, *Svensk etymologisk ordbok* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerups förlag, 1922), p. 817.

7 The original word for 'folly', here, is 'tokerie', a translation into Swedish of *Folie d'Espagne*.



Rosenfeldt composed a third poem, *Värkö's slätteröl*, for an event held on 24 July 1688.<sup>8</sup> The text describes food and drink and proposes many toasts. The poem also describes Pan, dressed in the clothes worn by peasants in Blekinge creeping forward and beginning to play on his pipe—an act that causes ‘the peasant, his wife, his maid, his farmhand’ and the whole crowd to run out and start dancing. Rosenfeldt writes:

Then the game started,  
 Pan, with his ram's foot, played a song  
 That our rural people are accustomed to praise  
 And not any *la Bochan*.  
*Courant*, simple, minuets  
 Is not for a peasant's feet,  
 A Polska dance, however,  
 Can well be used in our country.

With this, Rosenfeldt suggests that the Polska dance was suitable for peasants. On the other hand, the minuet, because it was relatively new and was an upper-class dance, was associated with graceful greetings and bows—movements that did not belong to the dance repertoire of peasants.



Fig. 5.1 Portrait of Werner von Rosenfeldt (1639–1710). Engraving probably by Nils Strömcröna (1720). National Library of Sweden. Wikipedia, [https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Werner\\_von\\_Rosenfeldt#/media/Fil:Werner\\_von\\_Rosenfeldt\\_SP138.jpg](https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Werner_von_Rosenfeldt#/media/Fil:Werner_von_Rosenfeldt_SP138.jpg), public domain.

That same year, 1688, an unknown poet in Uppsala described the following in a wedding poem: ‘Thus, now the world has become so fussy about food and so

<sup>8</sup> *Slätteröl* is a celebration for the end of haymaking, and Värkö is the name of a place.

delicate, that all five senses have become charmed by French customs, such as minuets and Polska crook dances'.<sup>9</sup> This writer believed that 'all' are fond of the minuet and the Polska crook dance, which could be interpreted to mean that the ordinary people of the countryside danced them.

Another unknown poet, this time in Stockholm, spoke about the minuet in a wedding poem from 1691. The narrator suggested that some of the ladies danced neither the minuet nor other dances: 'And even if she does not go dancing with dainty steps, nor dances the Minuet, Gavot and Allemande [...]'.<sup>10</sup> It also proves that other guests did dance the minuet. The same year, in 1691, another unknown poet in By parish in Dalarna sang the words: 'The one that does not say the words as with flute voice, can jump the minuet and mimic the nightingale'.<sup>11</sup> Here, we learn about someone who could 'jump minuet' and also that the poet sang his poem. In Lund, the minuet was mentioned in a wedding poem in 1696. The poem compared the dancers with Greek gods, and the minuet is named as one among many other dances, such as 'Folie d'Espagne, Bourrée, Gavott, Rigaudon, the English gigue, and the Daladans'.<sup>12</sup>

In the following year, 1697, a wedding poem penned by G. Straub mentioned Tartu's minuet along with the dances *Folie d'Espagne*, *La Bochan*, and *gavotte*.<sup>13</sup> The same year, an unknown author in Linköping encouraged people to let the musician come forward to play a minuet in the groom's honour.<sup>14</sup> This example may indicate that the minuet was the first dance at the wedding.

In the 1690s, the poet Israel Holmström (1661–1708) wrote a song to the tune of the English gigue, in which he mentioned games and, in the fourth verse, four dances—one of which is the minuet:

then we dance, English Giges  
a Minuet also goes prettily,  
just as *Bourees Pecour*,  
as well as *Gavott l'amour*,  
just as each and everyone like.<sup>15</sup>

9 Norlind, *Dansens historia*, p. 60; Dencker, p. 68

10 Dencker, p. 68

11 Ibid., p. 69

12 Dencker, pp. 69–71; Norlind, *Dansens historia*, pp. 60–62; Carl-Allan Moberg 'Musikalisk kommentar', in *Samlade Skrifter av Johan Runius, Tredje Delen*, ed. by Erik Noreen, Svenska vitterhetssamfundet (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1950), pp. 133–74 (p. 156).

13 *Dorpat, present Tartu* was the second university of Sweden, established in 1632.

14 Dencker, pp. 71–72.

15 Israel Holmström, *Samlade Dikter. Del I. Kärleksdikter, förnöjsamhetsvisor, sällskapspoesi, dansvisor, burleska dikter, fabler, gåtor, spådomar, epigram*, ed. by Bernt Olsson, Barbro Nilsson, and Paula Henriksson. Textkritisk utgåva (Stockholm: Svenska Vitterhetssamfundet, 1999), p. 254; Dencker, pp. 71–72. Here, 'English Giges' is written 'Engliske Gicquer'.

The minuet, here, seems to be a familiar dance, included among other dances that ‘everyone like[s]’. Interestingly, the writer mentions *Pecour*, which may indicate that he knew of the French choreographer and dancing master Louis Pécour.

The minuet is also referred to as a familiar dance in a thesis from the year 1702. The work is about the sting of the tarantula spider, which was considered a cause for dance illness. The thesis also mentioned Daldansen as one of the ‘most popular folk tunes of its time’ of the same kind as ‘Arie, Contre-Dantzar, minuets, Folie d’Espagne with castanets, Jullekar and Långdansen.’<sup>16</sup>

A 1744 funeral sermon preached by the parson Gustaf Adolf Fult for his wife Hedvig Margareta in Hjortsberga in Blekinge addressed the importance of dancing well and being known for one’s dance skills. As the parson recounted his wife’s life story, he recognized in her ten points of virtue. The second point was that ‘In dancing, which the noble lady loves very much, and which she very much adorns and recommends, Ms. Parson was so consummate and skilled that those proficient in the art admired her’.<sup>17</sup> The wife had danced the minuet exceptionally well, even when she was part of the only couple on the dance floor. Hedvig had been in the spotlight, and everyone who knew the finesse required to dance it well could admire her talent.

These scattered records show that the minuet was known, at least by name, in Stockholm, Karlskrona, Uppsala, the parish of By, Lund, Dorpat, and Linköping.

## Dancing Masters

In addition to these fragmented poetic references, researchers have noted that the universities had their dancing masters. Axel Oxenstierna established a dancing master position at the University of Uppsala in 1638 to benefit young students. The objective was to teach dance, posture, and deportment. The position still existed there as late as the 1840s. Similarly, the University of Lund had a dancing master on staff from the founding of the University in 1668. Dancing masters were also often tasked with teaching the nobility and professors in private. When the minuet was presented at the universities, however, the cost to students was not an obstacle because it was included in their tuition. In Uppsala and Lund, university-employed dancing masters were encouraged to reduce or waive entirely their fees for poor boys who showed talent in dance. During the holidays, these dancing masters could also give private lessons in the city and the

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<sup>16</sup> Moberg, ‘Musikalisk kommentar’, p. 144.

<sup>17</sup> von Platen, p. 156.

countryside.<sup>18</sup> It is also quite possible that the students themselves introduced the minuet in their communities during the holidays and after graduation.

One such dancing master was Caspar de Creaux who worked at the University of Lund from 1700 to 1738. Two of his students were sons of a nobleman named Jon Stålhammar—Otto was twelve and his brother, Adam, was ten years old in 1707. It was customary for boys from noble families to begin learning to dance at a young age, and their mother, Sophia Drake, sent them to the university for that reason in that year. Their father was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Småland cavalry and was on the battlefields with Sweden's King Charles XII at the time, waging the *Nordiska Kriegen* [the Great Northern War]. The boys' teacher in Lund, Master Osængius, wrote a letter to the mother telling her that a dancing master was teaching the young men for one hour a day: 'Daily at 12 after the meal they go to the dancing master, who is quite gallant, and he is proclaimed as the best, but he never teaches more than one dance a month, however capable a disciple he receives'.<sup>19</sup> This approach was probably the dancing master's method of ensuring he always had students. The young gentlemen Stålhammar made good progress in their dance education and were praised by their dance teacher. They also improved in music, and Otto had borrowed 'a nice piano and a double bass' to practice on.<sup>20</sup>

In Stockholm, the court had its own dancing master from 1637, so it is not surprising to find the earliest record in Stockholm. For example, in letters to her children from the very beginning of the 1680s, the Baroness Catharina Wallenstedt (b. 1627) related that the clergy and the bourgeoisie of Stockholm hired a dancing master. She wrote in November 1680 about the Erlands, a vicar and his wife, who 'have a sense for collecting, possessions increase and fashion influences the body'.<sup>21</sup> Continuing, the Baroness wrote of the Erlands' daughter: 'she learns to sing here, and the dancing master comes to her every day, maybe she will still be a minister's wife or something similar. I do not respect them, for I see that their arrogance is so great'.<sup>22</sup> It seems that the Baroness was correct about the young woman's prospects after improving her artistic skills: Erland's

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18 Eva Helen Ulvros, *Dansens och tidens virolar. Om lek och dans i Sveriges historia* (Lund: Historiska Media, 2004), pp. 90–156; Eva Helen Ulvros, 'Dansmästarna vid universiteten i Uppsala och Lund. Ett nytt bildningsideal formas', *Rig –Kulturhistorisk Tidskrift*, 87 (2004), pp. 65–80; Magnus von Platen, 'Dans-Karriär-Karaktär', in *Den gemensamma tonen*, ed. by Hannu Apajalahti (Helsingfors: Musikvetenskapliga sällskapet i Finland, 1990), pp. 138–39.

19 Ulvros, *Dansens och tidens virolar*, p. 108

20 Ellen Fries, *Teckningar ur svenska adelns familjelif i gamla tider. Två Samlingar* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1901), pp. 132–33.

21 The precise Swedish meaning is not clear here.

22 Catharina Wallenstedt, *Allrakäraste. Catharina Wallenstedts Brev 1672–1718*, comments and selection by Christina Wijkmark (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1995), p. 202

daughter 'who was taught dancing, playing and singing is now engaged to the vicar in St. Catherine, and took the ring from him as well as gifts'.<sup>23</sup> A year later, in September 1681, when writing to Erland's daughter about the dancing of the bourgeoisie, Catharina implied that everyone knew how to dance:

My dearest daughter, you can never believe how haughtiness has increased in the bourgeoisie; it's horrible. Everyone who is now going to the parties can dance all the French dances that can be mentioned. And dress with their hair curled, even put up as do the nobility, and with trains on their skirts. The sum, none of the nobility can adhere better.<sup>24</sup>

The Baroness's nineteen-year-old son, who was an unwilling student, had difficulties finding his place in life. Of him, she lamented, 'He does not learn more than from a Frenchman who goes to him for an hour a day, and he has now danced for two months'.<sup>25</sup> On the subject of her own dancing skills, the Baroness remained silent and, though she did not mention any specific dance names, her reference to 'all the French dances which can be mentioned' likely included the minuet. The dancing masters often came from abroad or had received their education in France. They introduced the newest dances, and dance was a component of the general education.

None of the evidence from the seventeenth century characterizes the minuet as 'new', which could imply that the dance had already been in use long before it began to appear in written contexts.

## Minuet Performance

In 1711, the archives describe a ball in Stockholm at which a very important guest could not dance the minuet. King Stanislaus Leczinsky from Poland had risen to the throne with the help of Charles XII but had been deposed in 1707. In 1711, he came to Stockholm for a nine-day visit and was received with pomp and ceremony. A ball was held in Leczinsky's honour on 29 September, and the royal confided his discomfort to the sixteen-year-old Count Carl Gustaf Tessin:

In the evening ball, their Majesties and Her Royal Highness played a game of *l'hombre* [card game for three people]. King Stanislaus, a little overwhelmed by this facility, asked Tessin: '*Je Vous prie de me dire qui est ce qui a fait a croire à la Reine que j'aime la danse? Hélas! Ce n'est pas là ma passion. Ce n'est pas là ma passion*'. [I ask you to tell me what it is that has

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23 Ibid., p. 306.

24 Ibid., p. 358.

25 Wallenstedt, p. 358.

made the Queen think I love to dance? It is not my passion.] Count Horn persuaded the King to go up to the Dance Hall, where he danced English cs and polska, but not minuets, until 10 p.m.<sup>26</sup>

The minuet was probably practised in Poland at this time, but when the King insisted he had no 'passion for' dancing, he meant he had not learned to do it.<sup>27</sup> The dances in question may not have been mentioned by name, but the fact that Leczinsky did not dance the minuet attracted attention and was recorded. There was also dancing the following evening: 'Again dancing until 11'. Some days later, Tessin noted: 'In the evening, quadrille party and then dancing, however, the King did not participate much'.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps he did not participate because they danced so many minuets?



Fig. 5.2 Portrait of Poland's king Stanislaw Leszczyński (1677-1766), by Jean Girardet. National Museum in Kraków, oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stanislaw\\_Leszczynski1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stanislaw_Leszczynski1.jpg), public domain.

Not even the King of Sweden, Charles XII, was a prominent dancer of the minuet. A story from a ball in Leipzig, 18 June 1707, describes his dancing style in unflattering terms. The ball took place during the Great Northern War, and the king had his headquarters in Saxony. A student, Anders Alstrin from Uppsala, who was in Saxony as a tutor for two young noblemen, was a near relation of some of the people at the headquarters. Alstrin later became secretary for

26 Carl Gustaf Tessin, *Tessin och Tessiniana: Biographie Med Anecdoter och Reflexioner, Samlade Utur ... Grefve C. G. Tessins Egenhändig Manuscripter* (Stockholm: J. Imnelius, 1819), pp. 263–64; Adolf Lindgren, *Om Polskemelodiernas Härkomst, Nyare Bidrag till kännedom om de svenska landsmålen ock svenskt folkliv XII.5* (Stockholm: Kungl. boktryckeriet, 1893), p. 18; Nordlind, *Dansens Historia*, p. 73.

27 Nordlind, *Studier*, p. 374.

28 Tessin, p. 64

the ministry in Pomerania. In a letter to his uncle, Alstrin described the King's appearance, clothing, and his dancing at the ball:

The funniest thing was that the King stood for a moment, hunchbacked like a long slender Uppland farmhand, who had just received and put on a blue coat, a pair of oversized gloves and boots. Then he walked on with his big steps, got a lady, and stepped around the floor the strongest he could, without observing any pace, throwing the other around, poor thing, regardless of who she was, so that she flew as a hair glove [mittens made of hair yarn], and remembered well; she had danced with the king. It could easily be seen who had danced with him: the high hairdos drooped and fluttered to all sides, and they looked so messy.<sup>29</sup>

The writer did not mention which dance was performed, but because the king danced on his own with a partner, did not keep to the pace, and took advantage of the whole floor, while it could have been a polska, it was more likely a minuet, because in the minuet in various forms the couple turns at the beginning and in the middle, and then the king could have danced around the ladies present in an enthusiastic solo.



Fig. 5.3 Portrait of King Charles XII by David von Krafft (1706), oil painting. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karl\\_XII\\_1706.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karl_XII_1706.jpg), public domain.

In his 1711 exercise book, doctor Johan Linder discussed the physical and health benefits of various dances. Linder was born in Karlstad in 1678, and studied

29 Carl Grimberg, *Svenska folkets underbara öden IV. Karl XI:s och Karl XII:s tid t.o.m. år 1709* (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söners Förlag, 1922), p. 613, <http://runeberg.org/sfubon/4/>

ten years at the university Åbo Academy in the city of Turku,<sup>30</sup> Finland in 1700, and then in Uppsala and Holland. Formal dances often occurred at the locations where he was staying, and he likely danced in many different styles. The following quotation suggests that he danced the minuet because he was familiar with the movements. He had perhaps learned them in Turku, which would indicate that the minuet was danced there in the late seventeenth century. Linder wrote:

Those who need more vigorous exercise and movement can use riding, ball throwing, playing bowls, and Polska dance, since French reverences, so-called minuets, gavotts, Passepieds, and similar does not give any significant benefits. La folie d'Espagne and English giguees have strong movements and do not fit well for spa guests unless they have come only due to the beginning of scurvy. All the dancing and games do not please everyone equally. One person wants to have a sad tone, another a Runda, a third Daldansen,<sup>31</sup> another French rhythm, another German, and so on.<sup>32</sup>

He did not consider the minuet (nor the *gavotte* or *Passepiéd*) lively enough to confer the benefit of exercise; only the Polska was appropriate for this purpose. *La folie d'Espagne* and *gigue* had strong movements and were, perhaps, considered too lively for spa guests.

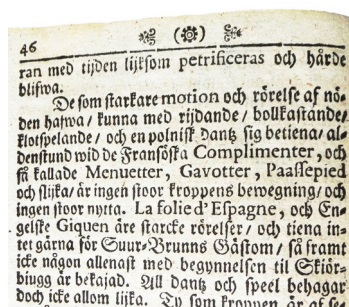
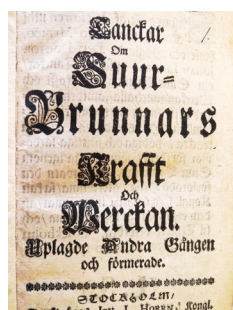


Fig. 5.4a and Fig. 5.4b The doctor Johan Linder in Sweden wrote in his book in 1711 that, unlike the Polish dance, the minuet did not provide enough exercise. A few lines of text from the book, Johan Linder, *Tankar om surbrunnars kraft och verkan*. Andra upplagan (Stockholm: [n.pub.], 1718). Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, public domain.

30 Åbo is the Swedish term and Turku the Finnish term for the same city. Turku is generally used in English today.

31 A dance named after the Swedish province of Dalecarlia.

32 Johan Linder, *Tankar om surbrunnars kraft och verkan*. Andra upplagan (Stockholm, 1718), p. 46; Norlind *Studier*, p. 370; Tobias Norlind, *Svensk folkmusik och folkdans*, Natur och kultur 96 (Stockholm: Stockholms Bokförlag, 1930), pp. 128–29.



We do not know how the minuet was danced in all the above examples because it took different forms. First, the minuet was danced in the shape of an eight, and later, it was danced in the form of an inverted S, which resembled the numeral two. Around the year 1700, the dancing master Pécour revised the minuet to follow the form of the letter Z. This meant that the minuet danced during the seventeenth century in Sweden had a different form than Pécour's minuet. An incidental poem by the poet Johan Runius contains information indicating that the minuet in its early 'figure-eight' form was danced in Sweden in the eighteenth century. Runius was born in 1679 in the province Västergötland and served as tutor to the twelve-year-old Count Claes Stromberg. In 1712, Runius wrote a poem for his student, in which he urged his student to spend time training his body. He encouraged his protégé:

[You] should spend time upon, and no exercise should run out:  
 A lovely *Reverentz*, a well-shaped bow  
 A spine must understand  
 it becomes him too.  
 How a poor foot is  
 Not bothered in the world  
 To become decorated with *the pas, coupe, cadants, balants*  
 Making S on the floor  
 according to measure and *note*?  
 It can and have its praise  
 To dance on a good foot.<sup>33</sup>

Runius wrote knowledgeably about the dances of the time, aware that the student who made charming greetings, such as reverences and deep bows, would find these hard on the back. He also knew that the foot followed different steps, and he was familiar with the dance terms of his time. To 'make S on the floor' probably refers to a step-in minuet dance that traces the shape of the reversed letter S. This strongly suggests that Runius knew and danced just such a form. Given that the S-form developed before the Z-form, we can infer from Runius' poem that the S-form was danced and so it was not only minuet *music* that reached Sweden long before 1700. Runius also called for the student to perform the minuet 'according to measure and *note*', that is, in time with the beats and melody. His phrase 'to dance on a good foot' meant that it was worthwhile to dance well, to execute well its steps. Runius wrote several poems that include the word 'minuet' in their title, and he also wrote texts for minuet melodies.

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33 Johan Runius, *Samlade Skrifter av Johan Runius, Andra Delen*, ed. by Erik Noreen, Svenska vitterhetssamfundet (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1934), p. 101.



Fig. 5.5 In 1712, the poet Johan Runius (1679–1713) urged his twelve-year-old student, a count, to follow the tempo of the minuet. Lithograph by Johan Henric Strömer (1847). National Library of Sweden. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johan\\_Runius.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johan_Runius.jpg), public domain.

## Swedes Learned to Dance Abroad

Dances were imported into Sweden by dancing masters but also by Swedes who had travelled abroad. For example, the twenty-two-year-old Nils Reuterholm (1676–1756), later a baron and governor travelled to Paris in August 1698 with an objective to learn to dance. The stop was part of a long journey through Europe, during which Reuterholm had met several Swedes. In Paris, he noted that there were ‘quite a number of our Swedish youth, who were here’.<sup>34</sup> Reuterholm found that the first task in Paris was to learn French and then to learn to dance. He wrote:

Strangers who visit this city held that, after language, it is of the highest necessity to learn to dance there, for who comes home again and did not learn dance in Paris, he cannot possibly expect the favourable judgment that he is well-educated. I would therefore go and jump a little, but as my legs did not want it so much, and the funds were scarce, that exercise became short.<sup>35</sup>

A youth with social aspirations had to go to a dance school in Paris, but Reuterholm’s education in this area was hampered by two misfortunes. First, his

<sup>34</sup> Nils Reuterholm, *Nils Reuterholms journal, utgiven av Kungl. Samfundet för utgifvande af handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia*, ed. by Sten Landahl. Historiska handlingar del 36:2 (Stockholm: Kungliga Samfundet, 1957), p. 124.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124–26.

foot was injured in the dance school, perhaps due to lack of practice in turning his feet outwards. Secondly, Reuterholm sometimes lacked money, which affected how often he could attend dance classes. In addition to dance skills, there were other things that one was expected to bring home from travel abroad, including the ability to sing a French song. Reuterholm spent his money on obtaining that knowledge. He also wrote of wasting some money on an instrument called a *clavesin*.



Fig. 5.6 When the Swede Nils Reuterholm came to Paris in 1698, one of the first tasks was to attend a dance school. Portrait of Reuterholm by Ulrika Fredrica Pasch. Lithography (1847). National Library of Sweden. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nils\\_Reuterholm\\_x\\_Ulrika\\_Pasch.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nils_Reuterholm_x_Ulrika_Pasch.jpg), public domain.

The priest Georg Wallin (1686–1760) from Gävle also attended dance school as a priority upon beginning his travels abroad. He later became a professor of theology and bishop of Gothenburg. After completing his studies at Uppsala, he enrolled at universities in Pomerania, The Netherlands, and England for further education. His first stop was the University of Greifswald, the most significant city in the Swedish Pomerania in 1708. One of his initial tasks in Greifswald was to visit a dancing master for lessons.<sup>36</sup> The specific dances he learned are unknown, but the fashionable minuet was probably one of them. Once back home, Wallin and other travellers were able to share their knowledge of the latest dances.

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36 Tor Andrae, *Georg Wallin. Resor, forskningar och öden* (Stockholm: Svenska Kyrkans Diakonistyrelses Bokförlag, 1936), p. 103.

## Swedes Teach the Minuet

In Skara Library, there is a music manuscript entitled *Menuetter och Polska Dantzar* [*Minuets and Polska Dances*] that the oboist and composer Gustaf Blidström started writing in 1715. He served as an oboist in Skaraborg's regiment and had left the home region in 1699. He was in the army of Charles XII of Sweden in the Great Northern War against Peter the Great of Russia. After their defeat at Poltava at the end of June 1709, Blidström was taken prisoner together with about twenty-five thousand other Swedes. Among these imprisoned Swedes were both civilian and military personnel, including more than nine hundred officers. They were deported to many different places in Russia, including Petersburg, Tomsk, and Tobolsk.<sup>37</sup>

Blidström was deported to Tobolsk, which was the capital of the Siberian government, and composed his manuscript there. The document contains one hundred and seventy minuets out of approximately three hundred music pieces, demonstrating Blidström's skill as a music notator. Indeed, Samuel Landtmanson, who published the manuscript in 1912, later considered it to bear witness to the popularity of minuet melodies in the early eighteenth century.<sup>38</sup> Among the captured Swedes, there were two hundred and seventy-nine musicians. Some of them were sent to Tobolsk, where these musicians contributed valuably to the Russian music world: many were given jobs in the upper-class orchestras and organized concerts. In Tobolsk, the children of the captive musicians went to school and, in addition to the major subjects of arithmetic, German, French, and writing, were taught 'music, dance and physical exercises' by their Swedish supervisors. What dances the students learned is not given, but one was likely the minuet since these 'flooded' Blidström's manuscript.<sup>39</sup> The captured Swedish officers, who were often well-educated nobility, taught young Russian gentlemen and ladies also in Tomsk. A travelling Englishman recorded that they taught German and French but also 'music, dance and similar skills, thereby they acquired many friends among high-ranking people'.<sup>40</sup> This source did not state what dances the Swedes taught, but these would have been dances that they had learned in the late 1600s, before the war in 1700. Clearly Tsar Peter was very sympathetic to impulses from Europe and took advantage of prisoners'

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37 Anna Nedospasova, 'Svenska bidrag till den ryska instrumentalmusikens tradition', in *Poltava: krigsfångar och kulturutbyte*, ed. by Lena Jonson och Tamara Torstendahl Salytjeva (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2009), pp. 108–9.

38 Samuel Landtmanson, 'Menuetter och Polska Dantzar', in *Svenska Landsmål och Folkliv*. Häfte 2 (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1912), pp. 78–82.

39 Nedospasova, p. 109.

40 Ibid.

specialized knowledge in music and dance to spread these skills among the Russian people.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike the fate of captives in Tobolsk, it is unclear which dances were taught by the subset of Swedish officers deported to Petersburg. The city's journal, the *Saint Petersburgische Zeitschrift*, published an article describing the first balls that were held there in 1717. The text is a translation from Russian to German and explains that Peter the Great, when returning from abroad, introduced dance events called *assemblées*. It specifies, among other things, which social classes were allowed to participate in the assemblies and that different rooms followed models of balls as these were occurring in France, the Netherlands, and England. A statement in the article confirms that the Russian dance in national folk costumes only occurred in the lower social class, while the higher circles danced the graceful *polonaise*, the tranquil minuet, and the fast English contradance. The writer credited the Swedish officers, who were prisoners of war in Petersburg, for being the first to teach the Russian ladies and gentlemen the dances. For a long time, the Swedes were the only male dancers at the assemblies. The article also reports that the choice of partners had been handed over to the ladies. Once a gentleman had been invited and had danced, he should ask a new lady, dance with her, and then stop dancing. The lady, on the other hand, continued to dance, choosing the next gentleman and restarting the cycle. In this way, the minuets continued until the music stopped.

The *polonaise* and the contradance were danced in much the same way, but both dances lasted longer than the minuet, and all the couples did 'their tours'. This could give the impression that the minuet was relatively short. The music was written for and performed by a quartet comprising a trumpet, bassoon, oboe, and kettledrums. The minuet did not start the assemblies, large celebrations, and all other parties were opened with a ceremonial dance, similar to *ecossaise* and ending in some *polonaise* style. The leader announced loudly when the ceremonial dance should end, which allowed everyone to join in on

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41 Landtmanson, pp. 78–82; Nedospasova, pp. 108–9. Peter himself could not cope with the minuet in 1698 when he visited Dresden. This is evidenced by the letter written by the Countess Maria Aurora Königsmarck. However, the Tsar turned out, after a four-hour dinner of good wines, to be an excellent drummer. Dancing carried on into the morning, but it was an 'exclusively "polnisch"' type of dancing. This is the only time the Countess mentioned the name of a dance, which suggests that it may have been out of the ordinary. When the Countess entered August the Strong Courthouse in Dresden in 1695, she described twenty-six consecutive days of dancing but did not name a single one of the dances. See Birger Mörner, *Maria Aurora Königsmarck. En Krönika af Birger Mörner* (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söners förlag, 1914), pp. 175–91.

the next dance. When the court moved to Moscow in 1722, the *assemblée* model was instituted there.<sup>42</sup>

The Swedish officers had learned the minuet before they went to the Great Nordic War, which lasted from 1700 until peace was negotiated in Nystad in 1721. One of these was the future Major Leonard Kagg who had been appointed a page at the King's Court in 1698 when he was sixteen years old. In his diary that year, he wrote that 'I and all the king's pages began learning to from the dancing master Dûcroi'.<sup>43</sup> Kagg was held captive in Tobolsk until 1722. Along with the other imprisoned noble Swedes, he had learned in Sweden a dance style that originated in France and introduced it in Petersburg. For this reason, I consider it quite clear that the upper classes danced the minuet in Sweden in the 1690s.

### Despite Sorrow, the Court Danced Minuets

After the loss of the Great Northern War, Charles XII made an incursion into Norway, which ended with the king's death at Fredrikshald in 1718. Although all of Sweden was in mourning, the court continued to dance minuets. Prince Carl of Hessen-Philippsthal was in Stockholm in 1719 on a visit to his cousin Fredrik who would, in the following year, become Sweden's new king. Carl described the Swedish court in his diary. He felt that the time was rich with 'despair, for those who loved stormy pleasures', noting that sadness following Charles XII's death meant that '[t]here was neither comedy, opera nor ball; The only amusement of which one could enjoy was made up of two or three assemblies in the week in her Majesty's room'.<sup>44</sup> The 'her Majesty' to whom he refers was Queen Ulrika Eleonora, Sister of Charles XII, who was married to Fredrik. Carl's text continued:

I once enjoyed another pleasure, a small, less numerous, and more pleasant *assemblée*, held after the soup in the rooms of one of the queen's ladies in waiting. Some played different games, while others amused themselves by singing a French aria. Often even the whole company united to dance to the tunes of minuets and contradances.<sup>45</sup>

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42 'Die in Petersburg anwesenden kriegsgefangenen Schwedischen Offiziere lehrten zuerst den Russischen Damen und Herren den Tanz: sie waren lange Zeit die einzigen Tänzer in den Assemblée', *Saint Petersburgische Zeitschrift*, 2.2 (1823), 317–21.

43 Leonard Kagg, *Leonard Kaggs Dagbok 1698–1722*, ed. by Adam Lewenhaupt. Historiska handlingar, del 24 (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1912), p. 4.

44 R. Bergström, *Svenska bilder 1–Stycken ur vår odlingshistoria* (Stockholm: Fritze, 1882), p. 99.

45 Ibid.



Fig. 5.7 Ulrika Eleonora, Queen of Sweden (1712–1720), and the people at court, amused themselves in 1719 by dancing minuets and country dances. Painting by Georg Desmarées, National Museum, Sweden. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ulrika\\_Eleonora,\\_Queen\\_of\\_Sweden\\_Georg\\_Desmarées.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ulrika_Eleonora,_Queen_of_Sweden_Georg_Desmarées.jpg), public domain.

It is difficult to confirm how these Swedes danced the minuet in 1719 and how it was danced generally in Sweden in the late seventeenth and well into the eighteenth century. There are few clues as to when the Pécour minuet became common. The most detailed descriptions of minuet dancing during the eighteenth century are offered by Admiral Carl Tersmeden. Tersmeden, recalling his education in Uppsala in 1723 at eight years old, writes of being taught for one hour each day by the dancing master Petter Malpart, who worked at the university there from 1713 to 1728.<sup>46</sup> We do not know whether Malpart taught Pécour's minuet from the start of his appointment or if this form had been established earlier. Nevertheless, Tersmeden's diary suggests that he did not dance any other kind of minuet throughout his lifetime other than the one he learned in 1723. Since dancing masters tried to have the latest forms in their repertoire, we may guess that Pécour's minuet was used in Uppsala in 1713. We will return shortly to give much greater attention to Tersmeden's account.

### The Minuet in the Eastern Constituent Part—Finland

Incidental mentions of the minuet are also found in seventeenth-century poems from Turku. In a wedding poem dating from 1679, an anonymous writer mentioned the dances the *courant*, the *saraband*, and ballets, as well as

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<sup>46</sup> Ulvros, *Dansens och tidens virvlar*, p. 98

several musical instruments.<sup>47</sup> The minuet, though not named, may still have been known or practised since dancing masters taught contemporary dances at the university and the Åbo Academy from the 1660s.<sup>48</sup> As noted above, the prospective physician Johan Linder, who studied at the academy, referred to the minuet.

Musicians from Stockholm came to Finland to play and were expected to have the new melodies in their repertoire. The French elite culture, including its wigs and hairstyle, also reached Ostrobothnia in Finland as early as the late seventeenth century. Boys from Finland also studied in Uppsala. One was Isac Wasbohm, a merchant's son from Vaasa who had attended the Trivial School in his hometown. He entered the Uppsala University in 1691, and the handwritten score he produced there includes a minuet, a *gavott*, and a *gigue*. In 1695, Wasbohm moved to Turku, where he worked as a singing teacher until he became a priest in 1697. Three years later, he became a teacher of singing in his old school in Vasa and from 1702, a priest in Vörå in Ostrobothnia.<sup>49</sup> It is likely that Wasbohm and other Finnish students learned the minuet in Uppsala and practised the dance in rural areas.

When Russia occupied Finland during Charles XII's Great Nordic War in 1713, many people fled to Sweden, including nearly all of the highest officials and groups of countryfolk from Ostrobothnia. After the peace process in Nystad in 1721, the relocation to Finland began. Some musicians who learned how to play minuet during their eight years in Sweden were among those who returned and could share the dance and its music with the Finnish people.



Fig. 5.8 View from northern Ostrobothnia in Finland. Watercolour by C.P. Elfström, ca 1808. The Finnish Heritage Agency, Finland. <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.738e0950-e6f5-4412-8168-c2b0a7723653>, CC BY 4.0.

47 Dencker, pp. 55–67.

48 Ulvros, *Dansens och tidens virolar*, p. 90.

49 Armas Luukko, *Vasa stads historia I. 1606–1721* (Vaasa: Vasa stad, 1972), p. 559; Jan Olof Rudén, 'Stormaktstidens 10 i topp', *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, 2 (1976), 28–29.



## The Minuet in Some Handwritten Music Books

The Swedish music researcher Tobias Nordlind believes that the minuet was more popular than other dances in Sweden in the latter part of the seventeenth century. He supports this claim by referring to two musical manuscripts for lute dating from this period. The first contains three minuets, two *sarabands* and one *gavott*; the other consists of fifteen minuets, eight *gavotts* and seven *courants*. During the first half of the eighteenth century, music manuscripts show that the minuet was common among Sweden's upper classes. Several notebooks from that time show that the overwhelming majority of dances were minuets. One example, written in Stockholm between 1700 and 1725, contains one hundred and forty-seven minuets out of one hundred and seventy melodies.<sup>50</sup> Another, dated 1703–27, includes one hundred and fifty minuets out of one hundred and eighty-nine melodies.<sup>51</sup> The oldest known music manuscript including minuets that has been preserved in Finland is one called *Tuulo's Notebook*, which contains fifty-five minuets.<sup>52</sup> The manuscript contains the following reference to the author: 'Paul Håkan Eekman Gothenburg 1720'. One does not know if Ekman was originally Finnish or Swedish, or if the notebook was written in Sweden or Finland.<sup>53</sup>

Sources from earlier than 1720 do not mention that the minuet had any particular position as an opening dance. Nor did it have a ceremonial character in Sweden–Finland: it was merely one dance among others. Even earlier sources from Finland are relatively rare, but the minuet became particularly important there, as a ceremonial and as a more general dance.

## The Minuet in Sweden/Finland from the 1720s

The most detailed eighteenth-century source of information about minuet dancing in Sweden and the eastern constituent part, Finland, is the memoirs of Admiral Carl Tersmeden (1715–1797). He lived in many different places in Sweden, lived for a long time in Finland, and also lived abroad. At the time of his death, Tersmeden left exceptionally voluminous memoirs, or a *Lefnadsjournal*.<sup>54</sup> These comprise fourteen volumes and over ten thousand numbered pages; a

50 Norlind, *Studier* p. 365.

51 Eero Nallinmaa, *Barokkimenuetista masurkkaan. Sävelmätutkimuksia* (Tampere: [n.pub.], 1982), p. 16.

52 *Ibid.*, 17.

53 Norlind, *Studier*, pp. 364–65, p. 375; Göran Andersson, 'Tidiga svenska menuettbelägg', *Folkdansforskning i Norden*, 36 (2013), 11–14.

54 The word translates as 'Diary of Life'.

six-volume summary was published in 1912–19.<sup>55</sup> Tersmeden's detailed account serves as a useful guide for placing and chronologizing the many other diaries and memoirs from the eighteenth century. Together, these create a good picture of minuet dancing at this time.

Tersmeden had a long and varied career. He trained as an apprentice shipbuilder, graduated as a maritime officer, and served as a Member of Parliament, a *Varfsschoutbynacht*, and an Admiral of the shipyard.<sup>56</sup> Tersmeden also had close relations to the royal house. His memoirs joyfully depict and detail life and events in the eighteenth century, portraying an exceptionally flourishing society. He described his own experiences in dance, offering first-hand information that, for this reason, is extremely valuable. His notes about dance also reveal the kinds of things a man of that time noticed and wrote down. Tersmeden mentioned and participated in countless balls, picnics, and other gatherings where dance featured, but I mainly analyse situations where the minuet occurred.

Tersmeden's account is also valuable because he came into contact with the lower classes of society in Sweden and Finland and describes these interactions. That he sometimes danced with people from different social classes tells us that the higher and lower classes mixed and could dance the same dances. During the eighteenth century, the minuet appeared as general dance and an initial dance within the ceremonial part of balls or weddings. I primarily use the terms 'upper class' and 'peasants' or 'rural population' when referring to the different social strata.

My references to Tersmeden's diary are given mainly in terms of years and dates as I relate his story. Although more precise citation information is given in some instances to help to locate the quotation or note about dancing, his comments are best appreciated in a broader context.

### Tersmeden Learning to Dance and Participate in Society

Carl Tersmeden was born on 23 April 1715 at Larsbo's mill in Bergslagen in Dalarna. He was the esquire, son of *bergsråd* Jacob Tersmeden (1683–1752) and Elisabeth Gangia (1688–1753).<sup>57</sup> Carl was the fifth of thirteen children born to the couple, receiving tutelage at an early age: in 1723, at eight years old, he was sent to Uppsala to continue his studies at the university, as his two eldest

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55 *Amiral Carl Tersmedens Memoarer*, 6 vols (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widström, 1912–19).

56 As an MP, Tersmeden represented Swedish *Riksdagen*. A *Varfsschoutbynacht* is a title comparable to contra admiral.

57 The *bergsråd* is the second in command of the king's bureau for mining.

brothers were already staying there. His tutor Johan Sundius and his seven-year-old brother came along. The brothers were enrolled as university students, and by living together, the four could save on costs.<sup>58</sup>



Fig. 5.9a Portrait of Admiral Carl Tersmeden. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carl\\_Tersmeden.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carl_Tersmeden.JPG), CC BY-SA 3.0.

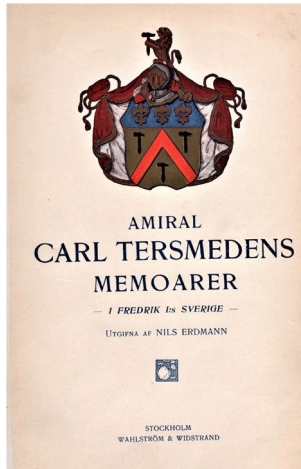


Fig. 5.9b The title page of Tersmeden's memoirs *Amiral Carl Tersmedens memoarer—I Fredrik I:s Sverige*, ed. by Nils Erdmann (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1916). Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, public domain.

In Uppsala, Tersmeden studied languages. He also daily attended an hour-long lesson with the dancing master Petter Malpart and another with the

<sup>58</sup> Carl Tersmeden, *Amiral Carl Tersmedens Memoarer—Från Kadettåren*, ed. by Nils Sjöberg (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1912), pp. 4–9.

drawing master Kloppert—a schedule which lasted for several semesters. When Tersmeden was ten years old, he wrote that ‘The French and the exercises with the master of the fencing and dance became my main activities’. He learned the minuet in Uppsala, and he could then dance it in all the situations in which he found himself. It is also noteworthy that he became a very tall man, and his height attracted attention.<sup>59</sup>

Tersmeden put his dance experience to use almost immediately. As a twelve-year-old coming home to celebrate Christmas and New Year’s Eve in Larsbo in 1727, he had musicians sent for, and he and his siblings and cousins danced and played Christmas games for fourteen days in a row. Tersmeden wrote that there were no other pleasures for young people at that time, nothing but dancing, playing games, hitting snowballs, and going out on the ice. Neighbours went to each other’s houses for dinners consisting of five to six dishes, ‘nice beer and rarely a glass of wine’. In January, the family went to Hedemora and stayed there for four days. ‘Here, we were treated and lived even so fresh’. We can expect that the young people continued to dance, just as other visitors to Hedemora did.<sup>60</sup>

As a fifteen-year-old, Tersmeden went to Stockholm to continue his training under a bourgeois shipbuilder named Falck, to whom he was apprenticed. In Stockholm, Tersmeden consorted with the Taube family, and the son, Count Edvard Taube, who was also fifteen years old, became his companion. This might have partially been because Edvard’s sister, Hedvig Taube, had already caught King Fredrik I’s attention. With his master Falck, Tersmeden participated in their community, for example, attending a Christmas party in 1731 which included a dinner for about thirty people. Tersmeden’s record of the event includes a boast about his talent for boldly joking with the girls while the other young men just bowed and crimped ‘without saying little gallantries to the girls’. The dinner wine increased his eloquence and boldness so that, before nine in the evening, he had become friendly with most of the guests and had ‘ample time between minuets and polskas’ to make the acquaintance with the girl he found the most beautiful. This is his first mention of the minuet. It shows that the dance repertoire for the shipbuilding family consisted of two different dances—minuets and polskas.<sup>61</sup> The dancing continued until two in the morning, at which point the parents proposed Christmas games to allow their daughters and sons to wind down so that they could go home. ‘We continued the fun until 5 o’clock’, wrote the sixteen-year-old Tersmeden in his diary.

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59 Ibid., pp. 9–18.

60 Ibid., pp. 18–25.

61 Ibid., pp. 61–62.

Tersmeden later moved in the highest social circles, and in time, came to be close to the kings. At a ball in Stockholm, he had won at cards against King Fredrik I. His rising status was noticed: 'I went to the dance room, and for the first time in my days, I was invited by Miss Falck to a minuet, after which I took Miss Hedvig'.<sup>62</sup> He described the ball following the same invitation-to-dance pattern that appeared at the French court—namely, that the lady chose her partner every second dance. In other words, whoever had been selected became the one who extended an invitation during the following dance.

### Tersmeden Dancing Abroad, 1734

Tersmeden continued his education in different European counties and, as before, he moved in the highest social circles, including the Lisbon court. He offered examples that illustrate how the dancing was in that setting at this time. In June 1734, Tersmeden was present at a ball with more than one hundred guests, and he reported: 'The ball was opened in a large hall with English contradances in four sets. Spectators who waited on their turn were sufficient, but without any crush'.<sup>63</sup> This means that everybody did not dance simultaneously but danced in different rounds. In other rooms, various games were played, including bridge. In Lisbon, Tersmeden experienced a dance that was not yet known in Sweden. Although he knew the Swedish contradances, he encountered new steps and figures in the English ones. He learned by watching and imitating others and by allowing his partner, who had invited him to dance, to guide him in the movements. Tersmeden remarked:

When a rubber had finished, I was invited by Donna Victoria to contradance, and I was a little embarrassed. Even though I had learned to dance the minuet and our Swedish contradances passably, I did not know the English ones. But my *moitié* [partner], who was good, led me so that I did not get confused, and as I had a good ear, I carefully observed the English steps and imitated them as well as I could. It was a charm to see how easily and gracefully both the boys and girls did the English steps.

While in Lisbon, he was also invited to a masquerade by Duc de Lafees upon the occasions of the birth of Duc's son. Contradances were the most frequent dances at that event, but there were also minuets. Tersmeden was regularly asked to dance. Because he did not want to be recognized by his dancing

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid. pp. 108–9.

<sup>63</sup> *fyra careér* [four contradance sets].

skills—it was masquerade—he deliberately changed the minuet's steps and beat. He succeeded in his purpose and was not recognized. After the dance, the lady left him without saying a single word.

Later in the summer of 1734, Tersmeden stayed in Portugal at the Aveiro castle for a few months. One morning, while the company sat in slippers out in the green, one of the girls suggested they dance. She started singing, and 'before we knew the word, we were all dancing minuet'. The minuet was the most common dance. But, they did not dance for a long time because it was difficult to dance in slippers.<sup>64</sup>

### Tersmeden Dancing in Falun, 1736

While Tersmeden was dancing in Stockholm and in Europe, others were dancing in the Swedish city of Falun. In 1736, the fifteen-year-old Gustaf Gottfried Reuterholm noted briefly in his diary what was happening. He wrote that Sara Lisa Moraea was with them on 18 February and danced the minuet with his brother Axel. Sara Lisa was nineteen years old and would, three years later, marry the botanist Carl von Linné [Linnaeus]. If someone played or if they sang to provide music for the dance, Gustaf Gottfried did not say. On 7 March, Quinquagesima, he notes that they first played 'pock' and then went into the hall and danced the minuet, polska, long dance, and contradances. There was nothing ceremonial about these occasions, taking place as they did within the home environment, and the minuet was one dance among others.<sup>65</sup>

### Tersmeden Dancing Back in Sweden: in Bergslagen, 1740

In December 1740, Tersmeden was back in Sweden. During Christmas and New Year's Eve, he stayed with his parents at Larsbo's mill in Bergslagen. The Christmas Day celebration took place in the usual way with food, church visits, and relaxing with relatives. For New Year's Eve, several musicians had been hired to start the New Year with dance in the usual way, as Tersmeden says. The music was 'Huselius with two French horns, one bass, and three violins'. The following day, New Year's Day 1741, was also his mother's fifty-third birthday, and both were thoroughly celebrated. First, there was a dinner for forty-six people. They sat down at noon, and the meal, which included sixteen courses,

64 Tersmeden, *Från Kadettåren*, pp. 202–03, 228, 259.

65 Göran Axel-Nilsson, 'Frihetstidens borgarnöjen', in *Det Glada Sverige. Våra Fester och Högtider Genom Tiderna II*, ed. by Gösta Berg (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1948), pp. 1090–92.

continued until the 'darkening'. The company then moved up to the grand hall where three French horns 'gave the Overture', and then the dance was initiated by Tersmeden's uncle, H. Exc. Cedercreutz.<sup>66</sup>

H. Exc. let his hat be brought and started a minuet with my mother. But sorry to dance alone in such a big room, he asked, why were not more couples at one time taken up? My father, who had not danced for several years—despite his corpulent and stiff body—requested a hat and invited auntie Cedercreutz, and we left these honourable men to open the ball.

They started the dance with a minuet of one couple in the ranking. Cedercreutz invited Tersmeden's mother for the first dance as she was the hostess and was celebrating the birthday. Upon request, the father, who was the host, joined in despite not having danced for years, asking his sister to be his partner. One might assume that, due to his rank, the father thought he had to dance. Both gentlemen asked to be brought their hats, which were needed to perform the greetings in the minuet. After the two couples had danced, the minuet continued:

There was a general continuation of 4 couples until all of them had danced. On her birthday, my mother danced with all the gentlemen, and it lasted until over 10, after which the contradances began and continued until 12, when they in groups went to the lower hall to eat, after everyone's request a cold meal.

The dance proceeded with four couples at one time. The mother, because it was her birthday and celebration, danced with all the gentlemen in each round. If there were twenty men in the company, for instance, the mother danced twenty minuets in a row, while three other couples danced simultaneously. The couples who danced at the same time probably also switched partners in each round. This is apparently the first source in Sweden that describes a minuet started by single couple then changing to have four couples dancing simultaneously—to be given this level of detail is rare. As the first dance of the party, the minuet does have a ceremonial character in this event. This pattern reoccurs in descriptions for years to come; the minuet continues to be used in the ceremonial part of weddings in Ostrobothnia for another hundred and fifty years.

Since the dinner lasted until 'darkening', that is the beginning of twilight (at about six o'clock), the party danced minuets for at least four hours and contradances for another two hours until midnight supper. After that,

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66 The word for 'uncle' in Swedish, here, is *farbror*, specifying that it was Tersmeden's father's brother.

immediately polska dances began to test how much the youth could take; 'slängpolska' was danced until the girls were sweltering, and at the request of the elderly, minuets were inserted now and then until 3 o'clock when we noticed that H. Exc. and [Tersmeden's] parents started watching the clock.<sup>67</sup>

Even after all this, the sons had further plans to surprise and celebrate their mother on her birthday. To prevent her from retiring, they began another *slängpolska*, 'which amused the elderly to see, even though it was long enough'. Tersmeden continued, 'Then uncle Cedercreutz went out of the dance and obliged my mother to honor him with a little polska inside the circle, to which, after much convincing, she finally agreed'. The surprise was that the sons and sons-in-law put the mother on a chair and lifted her while the others danced polska in a circle around them. The oldest son brought a glass of wine to the mother, and many boys served everyone else full glasses. Tersmeden explained how everyone in the circle fell on their knees:

Wishing her all prosperity and good health for many years to come with the noisy hurrah and the sounds of French horns for a long time. After my mother thanked everyone with her glass, her chair was put down [on the floor] and she was kissed on her hand, first by of those of us who had elevated her, then by all in the ring.<sup>68</sup>

They continued to dance Polska until five in the morning when the elderly guests finally retired. The youths continued to dance until seven in the morning. Some even continued to dance with staff in the kitchen building, indicating that those from both 'high and low' classes danced together.

At this party, the dance repertoire consisted of the minuet, contradance, and polska. The minuet, which I consider to be the standard form, was danced first with the mother because she was the host and guest of honour. Everyone danced with her in the order of their ranking. Everyone danced the minuets before the contradances began but again later at the suggestion of the elderly who sought to slow things down. The contradance was danced for two hours, and the polska did not begin until after the night time supper. The type of polska this party danced is hard to determine. A 'throwing polska' may have been danced after midnight because this requires everyone to form a large ring around one couple at a time who danced the polska in pairs with two hands in the circle. Within

67 The 'slängpolska' is a specific type of Polska dance.

68 Carl Tersmeden, *Amiral Carl Tersmedens Memoarer—I Fredrik I:s Sverige*, ed. by Nils Erdmann (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1916), pp. 70–79.



such a polska, uncle Cedercreutz could compel the mother to 'honor him within the ring'.

This birthday celebration included ancient wedding customs. According to Troels-Lund, since the sixteenth century, it had been a tradition for the bride first to dance with the most distinguished guests. Thereafter, she danced with each of the others in attendance, as was customary in later minuet dancing. The ceremony's final stages involved the bride and groom being danced symbolically from an unmarried to a married status.<sup>69</sup> Honouring someone by lifting his or her chair occurred not only at weddings. It is a tradition that was used until recent times.

### The Minuet Danced in Turku, Finland, 1741

In 1741, Sweden began a war against Russia. Tersmeden, who was then Captain Lieutenant, participated in the war and travelled the sea to Fredrikshamn with the *galäreskadern*.<sup>70</sup> Other Swedes who went to the battle travelled via Turku and stayed there for some time. They were in no hurry to leave: the front was far away at the Russian border, and the soldiers spent many weeks in Turku, according to a romantic story by Zacharias Topelius.<sup>71</sup> The governor of Turku, Otto Reinhold Yxkull, was invited to a ball on 25 August. Many of the most respected inhabitants of the city were in attendance, along with several senior officers from Sweden who were on their way to the war. Topelius described their dancing:

A Military band was placed at one end of the hall and played a long dance, the *polonäs*. You saw some of the eldest gentlemen appear according to their ranking and bring the graces around the hall, most silently. Then four or six couples appeared, and they performed under the silent but admiring gaze of all others a minuet, which was then new in Finland, seen by few and danced by even fewer. The second minuet was now running and was an exceptional success. It was danced by five of the most distinguished damsels of the city with their cavaliers, mostly officers; a sixth pair who radiated greater beauty, charm, and ease than all others was far below them in rank.

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69 Frederik Troels-Lund, *Dagligt liv i Norden på 1500-Talet, Del XI, Bröllop*, ed. by Knud Fabricius (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1939), pp. 152–61.

70 This term refers to a specific part of the Royal Army's fleet.

71 Topelius was a Finnish author and historian who wrote several novels related to Finnish history. He wrote in Swedish.

Approximately twelve couples danced minuet. The ladies in the first minuet were girls from Turku, and they had been educated in Stockholm. Perhaps the Cavaliers were officers from Sweden. The second minuet was danced by the distinguished local damsels who did not seem to have come from or been to Stockholm. The cavaliers appeared to be from Turku, one from Russia. The sixth pair, however, consisted of a Russian commander and a daughter of the mayor of Turku. Topelius recounts the love story between these two, including an actual incident that had caused a scandal at the time. The original tale was transmitted from generation to generation, and it usually included the account about the ball. Topelius himself mentioned that he had seen notes about the event.

I would like to assert that the minuet had been danced in Turku much earlier than the written records immediately suggest, since the local gentlewomen (known as *Åboflickor*) and their cavaliers knew how to dance it. It is not a dance that can be learned by practising it once, and some instrumentalists knew how to play the minuet music. At the Åbo Academy, dancing masters taught modern dances from the 1660s, as discussed earlier, but the 'military band' in this example could be from Sweden. The minuet came to Turku in the late 1720s after the war known as 'the great discord' (1700–21).<sup>72</sup> Researcher Sven Hirn tells us that the dancing master Jac. Rapsal had 'passed' the city in 1728. Here, 'to pass' means that the dancing master stayed for some time in Turku, which is why he was mentioned in Topelius's account.<sup>73</sup> Sweden lost the war against Russia, and in the peace negotiations in Turku in 1743, was made to renounce land—the concession brought the border with Russia to the Kymmene River, east of the town of Lovisa.

### Tersmeden Dancing in Stockholm, 1744

After the war, Tersmeden participated in Stockholm's lively social scene, including its dances. However, he rarely specifies which dances were enjoyed. In 1744, Tersmeden mentioned the minuet and contradance twice, one of which one is occurs in a description of a ball on 26 January, at which King Fredrik suddenly appeared to be 'seeking a mistress'. Tersmeden had noticed that Beata Christiernin impressed the king, the latter asking the Count Düben to invite Mademoiselle Christiernin to dance and begin a minuet 'at the top' with her. The word 'top' here is interesting, and I would interpret it in the following way:

<sup>72</sup> In Swedish, this war is called the *Stora ofreden*.

<sup>73</sup> Z. Topelius, *Hertiginnan av Finland, Romantiserad Berättelse, Jemte en Historisk Skildring, af Finska Kriget åren 1741–1743* (Helsingfors: Wasenius, 1850), pp. 165–66; Sven Hirn, *Våra danspedagoger och dansnöjen. Om undervisning och evenemang före 1914*, SLS 505 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1982), p. 103.

Many couples come onto the floor to dance simultaneously, and the Count with Christiernin was asked to form what we call the ‘first couple’—a position of honour and prominence that was bestowed on the mademoiselle to indicate that she was held in the king’s favour. The second time Tersmeden mentioned the minuet was in his account of a court ball on 21 July. At this occasion, Crown Princess Louisa Ulrika started the minuet with Count Carl Gustaf Tessin, and it looks like her royal highness was even the one who offered the dance to Count Tessin. Later Louisa Ulrika invited Tersmeden as well, but to the contradance, not the minuet.<sup>74</sup>



Fig. 5.10 Her Royal Highness Lovisa Ulrika opened a ball in 1744 by beginning a minuet with Count Carl Gustaf Tessin. Portrait by Lorens Pasch the younger (1768), oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luisse\\_Ulrike\\_in\\_blue.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luisse_Ulrike_in_blue.jpg), public domain.

### Tersmeden Dancing on Åland, 1747

After Sweden had lost the war against Russia in 1743, the building of the fortress of Sveaborg outside Helsinki, Finland started. Tersmeden was involved in its construction, coming to live in Finland for a period of around sixteen years. At the end of December 1747, the now-thirty-two-year-old stopped at Åland on his way to Finland. He arrived there on 27 December and stayed for several weeks, lodging with the commanding officer Mansnerus in Jomala Town. Upon his arrival at eleven in the morning, he had to take liquor and breakfast according to local customs. A sizeable horseshoe-shaped table in the hall was laid out for twenty people, and, an hour later, a long line of sledges with ladies and gentlemen arrived for the welcome.

<sup>74</sup> Tersmeden, *I Fredrik I:s Sverige*, p. 207, p. 224.

Tersmeden, together with the host, greeted the guests in the courtyard. By chance, he helped the wife of the priest of Saltvik from the sledge. It was clear to him from her reception that she was the most respected lady in the countryside, although everyone greeted each other as sister and brother. Having entered the house, Tersmeden was presented to all as the country's new company manager by the commander Mansnerus. The meal was a long affair, and afterwards, Tersmeden wrote:

[...] Coffee was also taken but only by the ladies. We drank freshly in the hall for my happy arrival until 5, when three violins came in, and the priest of Saltvik's wife invited me for the minuet. When we stopped, I asked the priest of Finström's wife, Thorin, so we were three couples on the floor... To pay my respect to the country's ladies, I danced the suite minuet with everyone present, after which polska in full bustle began, interleaved with the beer beaker, so that all the gentlemen, even the old priests, were dancing their polska and singing.<sup>75</sup>

They had eaten and drunk for about four hours when the three musicians arrived. The wife of the priest of Saltvik, who was considered the highest in rank, conferred an honour on Tersmeden by inviting him to be her first dancing partner, and they danced solo. When this dance ended, Tersmeden invited the wife of the priest of Finström to dance, saying that they then became three couples. The identity of the two other couples is not given. Then Tersmeden invited and danced in turn with all the ladies present. The minuets were danced first, and these were followed by polskas. He noted that the priests had their 'own polska [dances]', which they could sing. The party danced for seven hours, until midnight, when cold food was served. At that point, the closest residents went home, but fourteen people stayed overnight and slept in a sibling bed in the hall.<sup>76</sup> At ten o'clock the following morning, tea and coffee were served, and at one o'clock, all of the guests reconvened for another dinner and fresh round of drinking, which went on until dusk when a polska finished the party. The wife of the priest of Saltvik invited the whole company to Saltvik on the following Sunday.

Tersmeden stayed for one month at Åland. He was surprised to see that the party in Saltvik the following week was just like the one in Jomala. He also experienced a similar party, with the same guests, in the vicarage in Finström and once more in Saltvik, where the gathering ended 'with a cheerful polska'

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75 Carl Tersmeden, *Amiral Carl Tersmedens Memoarer—Ur Frihetstidens lif*, ed. by Nils Erdmann (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1917), pp. 15–17.

76 'Sibling bed' probably describes improvised bedding set out for a large group of young people on the floor.

on the Monday night. The vicarage of Hammarland also held a similar party. To Tersmeden, all of these Christmas and New Year celebrations looked so identical ‘that no small difference was seen’.<sup>77</sup>



Fig. 5.11a View from Åland. School poster by Vihtori Ylinen (1913). Vantaa City Museum, Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/vantaa.Arkisto:281:10>, CC BY 4.0.



Fig. 5.11b Fiddlers at a peasant wedding in Södermanland, Sweden, c. 1820. From the *Fogdösviten*, drawing by Carl Philip Sack, in *The Nordic Museum's and Skansen's Yearbook 1947*, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1268761/FULLTEXT01.pdf> (p. 80), public domain.

These notes from Tersmeden are precisely dated and show that the minuet was danced generally in the vicarages at Åland, and that the priests both danced and drank alcohol. Professor Otto Andersson stated in the introduction to the issue *Äldre dansmelodier* in the series of *Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning* that the musicians were country people and that they must have had a rich repertoire of minuets and polska dances because a player could not repeat the same melody too often, neither at a dance party among the upper classes nor the lower classes. Andersson finds it remarkable that the priests were so favourable towards dancing and that they danced themselves. He suggests that the priests ‘singing

<sup>77</sup> Tersmeden, *Ur Frihetstidens lif*, pp. 15–17.

their polska' demonstrates that the so-called polska lilts were still current and that the polska was danced in couples.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, Andersson believes that the dances themselves would already have come down to the peasantry by this time.<sup>79</sup> I agree with this assessment, finding it evident that the peasantry also danced the minuet since this was the audience for whom the musicians largely played their tunes. In my view, we can safely deduce that the minuet had appeared on Åland long before Tersmeden's visit because all the guests were already familiar with it.

It is interesting that Tersmeden's text clearly shows that the dance repertoire was restricted to two dances: the minuet and polska. The minuets were danced first, and Tersmeden claimed to have danced 'with everyone'. If half of the twenty-strong company comprised ladies, then approximately ten minuets would have been danced. The second dance in the repertoire, the polska, was then danced, and it seems that all the attendees also danced that dance. The situation was the same as in Dalarna seven years earlier at Tersmeden's mother's birthday, except that contradances were danced before the polska began.

The account also makes clear that a ranking system existed among the priests in Åland. Tersmeden noted at the guests' arrival that the wife of the Saltvik priest was the most 'respected', and later, she initiated the first minuet by inviting Tersmeden.

### Tersmeden Dancing in Finland in Turku, 1748

Tersmeden continued the voyage from Åland, stopping next at Turku. He stayed there for a few months at the beginning of 1748, taking part in many social gatherings. At the end of March, he attended a picnic at Beckholmen on the archipelago outside Turku, where over thirty small sledges, three *källkvagnar*, and a few peasant's sledges arrived.<sup>80</sup> The company, consisting of about eighty people, was received with kettledrums and trumpets played by designated marshals, and tea, coffee, mulled wine, and confectionery were served. Tersmeden's account continues: 'The dance with the minuets of the most famous wives began during good music at 7 o'clock and continued with contradances, during which punch, *bishoff*, and lemonade were served'.<sup>81</sup> At midnight, after five hours of dancing, there was a break in the dance, during which 'chocolate

78 The polska lilts (*posktrallarna*) refers to singing the polska dance melodies as a series of syllables rather than words.

79 Otto Andersson, *VI A 1 Äldre dansmelodier. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 400 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1963), p. xxxiv.

80 *Källkvagnar* probably names a special kind of sledge.

81 *Bishoff* probably refers to a hot alcoholic drink.

and coffee' were served to allow the musicians a half-hour's rest. Tersmeden, perspiring from so much dancing, took the opportunity to change 'linen as well as clothes'. Elderly guests began to go home around two o'clock at night, while the rest continued to dance until six a.m., at which time food was served, and the party continued at all tables with singing and drinking until eight o'clock. When everyone had cooled off somewhat, they said their goodbyes, sat down in their sledges and raced each other to Turku.<sup>82</sup>

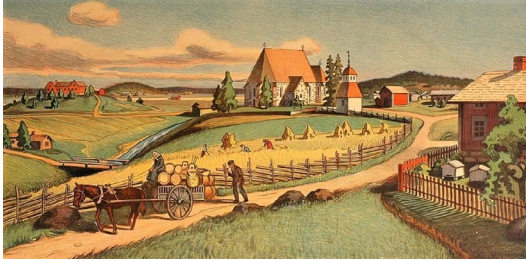


Fig. 5.12 View from southwest Finland, school poster by Vihtori Ylinen (1920), Vantaa City Museum, Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/vantaa.Arkisto:281:7>, CC BY 4.0.

From this entry, we see that the dance had begun with 'minuets of the most famous wives', confirming that a ranking system determined which ladies would initiate the dance. Whether one lady at a time asked and danced solo [with her partner], or if several ladies asked for the first minuet, it cannot be ascertained. Likewise, it is difficult to tell if the dancing of all ladies happened during the same or the following round. Tersmeden's mention of the arrival of 'some peasant's sledges' may indicate that the lower-class country people also participated in the party and danced the same dances—both minuets and contradances.

### Tersmeden Dancing with the Peasantry in Uppland, Sweden, 1748

By the end of 1748, Tersmeden was in Stockholm, where he became engaged to Inga Dorotea Malmström. On the second day of Christmas 1748, he received an order to travel back to Finland, and the following day he left. His route, via Grisslehamn in Uppland, was disrupted by a storm, so Tersmeden had to wait at a farm in Wäddö for better weather. The farm was owned by a priest who, along with his wife three daughters, welcomed the newcomer. The following day happened to be a wedding in Toftinge village. The middle daughter was to serve

<sup>82</sup> Tersmeden, *Ur Frihetstidens lif*, p. 39.

as *brudsäta*, and the priest asked Tersmeden to come along.<sup>83</sup> Tersmeden was curious to see a wedding among the lower classes and accepted the invitation. He wrote,

On Sunday, December 29, we went to the church together, where the bridal procession came marching in with two violins and two *nyckelgigor*.<sup>84</sup> After the wedding, we went in sledges, indeed 40 to 50 in a row, a short half a mile to Toftinge.<sup>85</sup>

As Tersmeden was the highest in social rank in the wedding company, the father of the bride asked him to dance the first dance, which was a minuet, with the bride. Tersmeden demurred, insisting that ‘The first dance belongs to the groom, but then I would like to do what you ask’. When the bride and groom had danced the first minuet, then, Tersmeden invited the *brudsäta*, so that there were two couples on the floor. Tersmeden danced, in other words, the second minuet with the bride, while the groom danced with the *brudsäta*, and he danced the third minuet with another of the priest’s daughters while the *länsman* danced with the other.<sup>86</sup> At this point, the bride and groom were not dancing, but there were still two couples on the floor. ‘With this, the minuets ended, and polska began in a full bustle’, according to Tersmeden. He danced the first polska with the bride, who had a high crown, which prevented him from swinging her under his arms (as was typical in the polska), but he said that he was swinging all the more with the priest’s daughters, which indicates that this was a polska danced in pairs. At three a.m., the crown was danced ‘off’ the bride. Tersmeden ‘swung happily’ with the priest’s daughters and the bride, dancing until eight a.m. The music was played on a key harp and two violins.<sup>87</sup>

According to this account, the peasantry in Uppland danced the minuet in 1748. It is the earliest clear example that country people followed a ranking order with two couples on the floor. Tersmeden said that the first minuet, the *fördans*, belonged to the groom, and I interpret this to mean the first, ceremonial dance before the general dance.<sup>88</sup>

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83 The *brudsäta* is a maid of honour whose task to help the bride with her clothing.

84 *Nyckel-gigor* literally means keyed fiddles—a traditional Swedish instrument, similar to a hurdy-gurdy.

85 Tersmeden, *Ur Frihetstidens lif*, pp. 65–66.

86 In the eighteenth century a *länsman* was a local state official responsible for various tasks.

87 Tersmeden, *Ur Frihetstidens lif*, pp. 65–68.

88 *Fördans* means ‘opening dance’. In German, the word is ‘Vortanz’.





Fig. 5.13a and Fig. 5.13b Dance at a peasant wedding in Södermanland in Sweden, c. 1820. Upper picture: two couples dance the polska in the ceremonial dance; to the left: the priest with the bride's seat; to the right: bride and groom; and bottom picture: general dance wherein the bride walks in the middle while around her, others dance a polska. From *Fogdösviten*, drawings by Carl Philip Sack. Sten Lundwall, *The Nordic Museum's and Skansen's yearbook*, 1947, pp. 81, 82. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1268761/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, public domain.

### Tersmeden Dancing in Helsinki, Finland, 1748–64

Arriving at Åland two days later, when the storm had settled, Tersmeden stayed at the priest's farm in Saltvik, just like the previous year. It was New Year's Eve 1748, and in the courtyard, the people were in 'full dancing and drinking', and Tersmeden joined the reverie. He also visited the other priests' mansions, but this time he did not discuss the dancing.

Tersmeden arrived happily in Helsinki. In 1749, he bought the Alberga mansion, a *säterirusthåll* west of Helsinki, where he lived until September 1764.<sup>89</sup> He married in Stockholm in 1751, at thirty-six years old, and his wife, the eighteen-year-old Inga Dorotea Malmström, moved to live with him in Finland.

There was a vibrant and happy social life at the mansions around Helsinki with balls and dancing, later also in Sveaborg. Among Tersmeden's associates were the merchant Sederholm in the city, Taube at Sjöskog, the governor Hans Henrik Boije, and the head of fortress work at Sveaborg, Augustin Ehrensvärd.

<sup>89</sup> A *säterirusthåll* is a specific kind of mansion belonging to a nobleman.

They met often: every week in wintertime, Tersmeden hosted a large ball at Alberga for sixty to seventy people. These balls started with minuets, which were followed by contradances. The dancing often continued till morning.



Fig. 5.14 *Dancing children*. Painting by Lorens Pasch the Younger (1760). National Museum, Stockholm, <https://artvee.com/dl/dancing-children/>, public domain.

Before the 1763 Christmas weekend, Tersmeden and his friends drew lots to decide the order of visitations. A visit usually lasted for two days. By chance, the Tersmeden family spent Christmas Eve at Taube on Sjöskog and later spent the second day of Christmas with the governor Boije; they hosted guests at Alberga from the fourth day of Christmas, and then they spent New Year's Day at Ehrensvärd's home. There was dancing at these get-togethers: at Boije's, the dance started at six in the evening and went on until five the following morning. Here, Tersmeden took the role of *maitre de bal*, dancing master, and taught 'our new contradances, being in constant motion for 10 hours'. A question is where he had learned these 'new contradances' since he had lived in Helsinki for many years. Tersmeden may have learned them in Stockholm when he was there to conduct parliamentary work from autumn 1760 until June 1762. Perhaps he, the eager dancer, had even acquired a new dance book.

On Christmas Day 1763, twenty people came together at Tersmeden's mansion for dinner at two o'clock, and later, a similar number arrived so that forty people were in attendance for the post-dinner coffee. At six, the dancing started with the minuet, 'until the whole tour of dances was done and contradances began'. By 'whole tour', Tersmeden probably meant that small group of couples danced the minuet at one time and that they switched partners within the group, so that everyone danced with everyone in that group before the following group started dancing minuets. The number of women was twenty, and, if each small group included five dancing pairs, there would have been four rounds—a total

of about twenty minuets would have been danced before the contradances started. The elderly sat down at a game table, but ‘we the youth’, as the forty-eight-year-old Tersmeden characterised himself, danced until midnight when the tables were laid out with food. They had been dancing for six hours, and two hours later, the tables were swiftly cleared away, and ‘a polska with *långdans*’ begun.<sup>90</sup> Many of the guests stayed until eight in the morning, and the Boijens stayed overnight.

Indeed, Tersmeden encouraged dancing in his family home very early. Tersmeden’s son Carl Gustaf had a beloved playmate in the daughter of the governor Boije, a girl named Ann Lis. On 21 February 1764, the birthday of Ann Lis was celebrated with a big party. Carl Gustaf was then six years old and would be seven in a month. The two children got along very well, and Ann Lis was called Carl Gustaf’s fiancée. The party convened at one am, and ‘the young couple’ [the two children] were placed at the end of the table and became the centre of attention. Tersmeden wrote that ‘all the youth in the city came to coffee, and the dance began with a polska around the two young ones who were elevated’. Here, even the children are honoured as the guests lift them and dance the polska dance around them. Following this, ‘regular minuets’ were danced, then contradances continued until ten o’clock when the supper was served at several tables. After supper, they split up at eleven in the evening. ‘Regular minuets’ might refer to a practice wherein everyone danced minuets in different rounds with a few couples at a time. During each round, all participants danced with everyone else. Even young children danced, absorbing the local dancing culture.



Fig. 5.15a Maybe the boys are thinking about whether they should go to dance school or not? Elias Martin, *Two Schoolboys*, Yale Center for British Art. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elias\\_Martin\\_-\\_Two\\_Schoolboys\\_-\\_B1975.4.887\\_-\\_Yale\\_Center\\_for\\_British\\_Art.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elias_Martin_-_Two_Schoolboys_-_B1975.4.887_-_Yale_Center_for_British_Art.jpg), CC0 1.0.

<sup>90</sup> This is a Nordic dance type wherein dancers hold hands and dance in a long open chain.

In September 1764, the family Tersmeden moved back to Sweden, and the detailed information on minuet dancing in the Helsinki region ends. His memoirs tell us that the minuet was very popular, indeed, the primary dance, at the mansions around Helsinki at this time. As before, we can surmise that the musicians must have had a considerable number of minuets in their repertoire, as well as contradances and polska dances.<sup>91</sup>



Fig. 5.15b Antoine Pesne, *The Masquerade Ball*, detail. Finnish National Gallery. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antoine\\_Pesne\\_-\\_The\\_masquerade\\_ball\\_-\\_S-2005-67\\_-\\_Finnish\\_National\\_Gallery.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antoine_Pesne_-_The_masquerade_ball_-_S-2005-67_-_Finnish_National_Gallery.jpg), CC0 1.0.

## The Minuet Danced in Ostrobothnia in Finland, in the 1750s

The minuet was likely danced in the countryside in Ostrobothnia in the mid-eighteenth century. We have shown that peasant musicians played minuets during Tersmeden's visit to Åland in 1747, and in Uppland, Sweden, the peasantry danced the minuet in 1748. From Munsala in Ostrobothnia, there is an unusual account. A soldier named Eric Kruthorn from Vexala in Munsala is reported to have danced the minuet for a Prussian King during the Pomeranian War (1756–62). Kruthorn was born in Gästrikland, Sweden and was one of the many very young boys shipped from Sweden to Finland in the early 1750s to cover the army's lack of reserves in Ostrobothnia. During the military draft for Pomerania in 1757, older men were exchanged for young men from the reserve. Kruthorn was one of these.<sup>92</sup> In response to a questionnaire posed in 1922, the dance researcher Yngvar Heikel was informed by

<sup>91</sup> Tersmeden, *Ur Frihetstidens lif*, pp. 124–97.

<sup>92</sup> Ulf Smedberg, *Krigsmans tid. Den svenska tidens ständiga knekthåll i Nykarleby socken 1734–1810. Rotesoldaternas värld, villkor och verklighet* (Nykarleby: Eget förlag, 2013), p. 462.

The old musician Jacob Fogel in Munsala, Vexala village, born in 1834, [...] that the soldier's daughter Maja Greta Kruthorn in 1854 said to him that her father, the soldier Kruthorn, during the Polska War (1756–1762) danced the minuet and polska for the Prussian king at the request of Colonel Ankarcrona.

Based on this account of Kruthorn's minuet dance, Heikel believed that it could be 'assume[d] that the people in the Munsala region already danced the minuet during this time'.<sup>93</sup>



Fig. 5.16 and Fig. 5.17 Minuet was danced in Ostrobothnia in the middle of the eighteenth century. C.P. Elfström, *pohjalaismies pyhäpuvussa* [Ostrobothnian man in Sunday clothes] and *pohjalaisvaimo pyhäpuvussa* [Ostrobothnian wife in Sunday clothes] (c. 1808), watercolour. The Finnish Heritage Agency <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.8F997E0D8CF823CB4AF6B017CAB4C83B>; <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.704378AD4F66F992F11AC27548BA4A23>, CC-BY 4.0.

Kruthorn's youngest daughter, Maja Greta, born in 1778, told the unusual story of class-mixing via the minuet to Jacob Fogel, a violin player. The fiddler never forgot the story and wrote it down when responding to Heikel's questionnaire later in his life at eighty-two years old. One might ask if the young boys from Sweden had learned the minuet in their home villages before moving, or if they learned the minuet immediately after they arrived in Ostrobothnia. Also, one might wonder if Kruthorn was dancing alone for the king, or if several men participated in the dance. There are no answers to these questions. Nevertheless, the minuet was probably danced in Munsala in Ostrobothnia in the middle

93 Yngvar Heikel, 'Om menuetter i Österbotten', *Budkavlen: Organ för Brages sektion för folkliksforskning och Institutet för Nordisk Ethnologi Vid Åbo Akademi*, 2 (1929), 105–11 (p. 105).

of the eighteenth century. It may seem strange to modern audiences that a soldier would be invited to dance for the king of enemy forces, but warfare was conducted very differently in the eighteenth century compared to how it is done today.<sup>94</sup>

In the summer of 1752, King Adolf Fredrik made a trip through Finland that included Oulu in the northern part of Ostrobothnia. When the bourgeoisie of the city held a big ball to celebrate the king's arrival, they danced the minuet. According to the early twentieth-century writer and pedagogue Sara Wacklin, the music at this event in Oulu consisted of three violins and a regal.<sup>95</sup> Upon the king's entry into the hall, a march was played, which continued until he had taken his throne. Wacklin wrote that the 'Dance begins with the minuet, the most gracious of all dances'. However, she did not say with whom the king danced or if he danced at all. Wacklin also reported on a wedding held in Oulu twenty years later, about 1770, at which the bourgeoisie danced contradances and minuets.<sup>96</sup>



Fig. 5.18 In 1752, King Adolf Fredrik visited Oulu in Northern Ostrobothnia in Finland. Maybe he also went to a sauna. It was common for the whole family to bathe at the same time. Here it is only girls. C.P. Elfström, *naisväkeä saunassa* (1808), watercolour. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.54B146C40871A17D93997EBAD7E1A088>, CC BY 4.0.

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- 94 Historian Peter Englund offers the example that, after the defeat of the Swedes at Poltava in 1709, the Swedish general, Count Adam Ludvig Lewenhaupt ate dinner with the opposing general, Prince Alexander Danilovich Mensjikov: 'They dined in Russia's food tent, which was erected on a high hill and where you could see the Russian troops set up.' At this place, twenty-thousand Swedes were captured. See Peter Englund, *Poltava. Berättelsen om en armés undergång* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1988), pp. 260–61.
- 95 A regal was a kind of organ.
- 96 Sara Wacklin, *Hundraå minnen från Österbotten* (Helsingfors: Holger Schildts Förlagsaktiebolag, 1919), pp. 193, 363.

## Tersmeden Dancing Playfully in Stockholm, 1763

During Christmas 1763, while Tersmeden was dancing around the clock choosing partners in order of social rank at his friends' mansions near Helsinki, the party at Stockholm's castle ignored such ranking systems. While the royal couple of Adolf Fredrik and Louisa Ulrika reigned, between 1751 and 1771, the new year was celebrated with amusements. On New Year's Eve 1763, a chosen company had 'been ordered to eat an evening meal' at the castle at six p.m. Everyone invited knew that they should be prepared for 'arranged amusements', but they did not know which kind. The surprise was great, for, in the Queen's dining room, many dolls and toys were laid out. The guests were to 'buy' a toy, such as drums, wooden horses, shawms, etc. with their own money. Even the royal couple bought one. Everyone went to the gallery to have fun with the toys they had bought. 'The more bawling, row, and screaming, the better'. General Jacob Albrekt von Lantinghausen, age sixty-four, rode on a wooden horse and blew a shawn. The queen played the governess and walked around with a *ris* in her hand among 'these children'.<sup>97</sup> When this had been going on for a while, some violins were called, 'at whose playing everyone should dance polska, minuets, higgledy-piggledy, with no rank or ceremony'. After the dance, supper was served and, at noon, the guests left.<sup>98</sup>



Fig. 5.19 Royalty acting like children on New Year's Eve 1763, including a sixty-four-year-old general riding a wooden horse. Polskas and minuets were danced 'higgledy-piggledy'. Here the young Gustav IV Adolf rides a wooden horse in 1784. Postcard of oil painting by C. F. von Breda 1784. National Museum, Stockholm. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, public domain.

97 A *ris* is a bundle of twigs used for spanking naughty children.

98 Gunnel Biskop, 'Danser i några reseskildringar', in *Folkdansforskning i Norden*, 35 (2012), 7–14.

What is surprising and amusing about the situation described was that the party of people with a very high social position did not dance minuets in strict order, with one or a few pairs at a time, as was customary. Abandoning the rankings was as playful as a sixty-year-old man riding a wooden horse. It was also unusual that the company did not dance the orderly minuets first, waiting until later to begin the polska. Apparently, the guests also did not invite partners to dance the minuet with the typical ceremonial bows but took each other's hands freely. What other conventions these royals and members of the uppermost echelons of society flouted when dancing the more lively polska, we can only guess.

### Tersmeden Dancing in Karlskrona in Sweden, 1764

When Tersmeden was appointed to a higher position, his family moved back to Sweden and took up residence in the naval city of Karlskrona. The social life there was too quiet for his liking, and soon he suggested that *assemblées* should be arranged once a week in the same way as in Finland, and this idea was approved. From this information we see that the social life in Finland was not necessarily more modest than it had been in Sweden. Later, Tersmeden proposed the idea of picnics and, at five o'clock on Friday, 29 October 1764, the first of town's picnics was held in Commissioner Fischerström's grand hall. In the 'small town' of Karlskrona, as Tersmeden described it, the organizers of these events were progressive: they decided to transgress class borders and invite merchant's daughters to attend if they were 'good-looking and honourable'. The wife of the admiralty surgeon Gersdorff agreed to serve the coffee and tea in Fischerström's kitchen. She had previously kept a *spiskvarter* in Malmö for officers, so she was pleased to take on the task.<sup>99</sup> Gersdorff's handsome fifteen-year-old daughter Gustafva was also invited to the ball.

When the ladies were all there, tea was served. Then, six musicians came in and, it is reported that 'The six most important hosts began the minuet'. Who these 'most important hosts' were, and with whom they danced, we do not know. However, we do know that in the second round of minuets, Count Sparre, Friherre Snoilsky, Landshövding Strömfeldt, and some of the older gentlemen danced. What attracted the most attention was when Count Sparre invited Mademoiselle Gersdorff—the daughter of a mere military surgeon and only fifteen years old—to the minuet. Tersmeden orchestrated these machinations: the Governor Strömfelt had invited the hostess at Tersmeden's request, and Tersmeden had taken care that the hostess's oldest daughter also joined this second round of dancing. Furthermore, as one of the hosts, Tersmeden had

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<sup>99</sup> A *spiskvarter* is a place for military staff to eat.



ensured that no one from the lower classes was prevented from acting in the same capacity, that is, as the host of one of the gatherings. It was almost eight p.m. when they finished the minuets, which meant they had danced them for more than two hours.

From the context, we can see that there were at least thirty-two couples dancing. This suggests that, if they were dancing with six couples in each round, then six rounds were needed to allow all thirty couples to dances. Since the party danced for more than two hours, each round would have taken about twenty minutes. To dance the minuet for twenty minutes, all the men would probably have changed partners and danced with all the ladies in their round. At this point, they had not yet danced any Polska, but when all the minuets were danced, 'a long dance began with sixteen couples, who kept going until this ballet was very tired, and was replaced by an equal number of couples.' In my view, a way to do the long dance that aligns with this description could be that the first sixteen sets of partners dance in a big circle and that one pair at a time danced polska inside this circle. When everyone had taken a turn dancing in the circle, the following group of sixteen pairs took over and repeated the practice.

When Tersmeden suggested that the dance move on from the minuet to contradances, which few knew, he set up one *quarée* to model for the rest how they were done. Four couples danced in this *quarée*, according to Tersmeden:

Horn, Linderstedt, Göthenstierna and I, all 4 knew some contradances', and the *ad hoc* pedagogy worked well by adding new dancers, we split up into two *quarées* to help teach the others, less skilled, unnoticed, and this way we achieved our purpose so that we eventually danced in 2 *quarées*, which went quite well.

Earlier in Finland, in 1763, Tersmeden had instructed others in the performance of the contradance at an event for a full ten hours. We can deduce from this that he must have known a great many of them. We also see how dances were learned in such settings: those who knew the steps danced with those who did not. Tersmeden reported that: 'Ladies as well as gentlemen, [who were] pleased to have learned the tour of the first contradance, kept on with the changes until 1.00 o'clock'. This description gives the impression that, even in the contradances, all the gentlemen danced with all the ladies in turn. The guests had some coffee while catching their breath before it was time to end the party. Similar picnics were held every Friday until Christmas.<sup>100</sup>

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100 Tersmeden, *Ur Frihetstidens lif*, pp. 212–17.

## Tersmeden Dancing with Peasants in Kristianstad— Folk Dance Performance, 1764

The Tersmeden family celebrated the Christmas weekend of 1764 at Krigsrådet, with the Danckwardts family in Kristianstad.<sup>101</sup> Tersmeden's cousin, the Royal Commissioner von Lingen, joined the family for part of the celebration. On Christmas Eve, they enjoyed themselves immensely, playing Christmas games and dancing. For the second day of Christmas, the hostess, Mrs. Danckwardt, arranged a surprise for the company. She had invited 'a group of 12 of the most beautiful peasant girls [...] and just as many handsome young peasant boys' to dance with the guests. Tersmeden recounted how the young people danced into the hall:

These came by surprise into the hall, where we sat and talked, and did not pay us any attention. They had a key harp and two violins with which they played a merry polska. When they stopped their polska, they danced one of their dances, which could pass for beautiful ballet at a theatre. They continued this for over an hour until they were all was warm and sweaty, and then the girls of the house served them a glass of wine, saffron bread, and all kinds of small snacks.

The young people entered the hall by way of a polska, and, once inside, continued to perform this dance. Tersmeden, the well-travelled and very skilful dancer, could not name the dance that the peasant girls and boys danced for more than an hour. It was just 'their own'—one that was comparable to 'a beautiful ballet'. This account demonstrates that the peasantry had dances that the upper class did not know, though Tersmeden clearly did recognise the Polska.

As the gathering proceeded, four of the gentlemen in the hall wanted to tease some young ladies by inviting them to the minuet. Probably they thought their targets would not know how to dance it, but the women danced the minuet 'quite skilfully'. When the dancing finished, the ladies wanted the company to play forfeits and that all the peasant girls should join. After the game, the dance resumed and continued until 3 a.m. 'when the party ended with a general Polska'.<sup>102</sup>

This account shows that the peasantry in Skåne danced the minuet in 1764. Fascinatingly, it goes on to recount that the hostess had arranged what we, today, might call a folk-dance performance. This exhibition of nonelite dancing

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<sup>101</sup> *Krigsråd* is a title, literary translated as 'counsellor of war'.

<sup>102</sup> Tersmeden, *Ur Frihetstidens lif*, pp. 227–29.

was, perhaps, the first of its kind in Sweden–Finland, taking place one hundred years before it became common in the later nineteenth century.

### Tersmeden Dancing in Uppsala, 1766

In the summer of 1766, a tremendous magisterial promotion took place in Uppsala, and Tersmeden decided take his wife there to see the spectacle. He also had many acquaintances and relatives in the city, including Archbishop von Troil, his cousin. While there, Tersmeden also met the scientist, Professor Carl von Linné. The Archbishop's wife joked with Tersmeden, saying that he better 'prepare for ball and dancing'. After the promotion, sixty people gathered in the Nosocomial Hall for a meal that began at two in the afternoon and 'lasted, with many ceremonies until 4 o'clock'. While the tables were removed and coffee and tea were served in a side room, the guests waited for the dancing to begin. Tersmeden wrote,

The music started at 7 o'clock with six couples dancing the minuet. This round lasted till past 9 before everyone had danced. It was a rather pretty society of girls and young wives. At midnight, they were served at smaller tables, where the dancing people went in turn to take their supper.<sup>103</sup>

The minuet dancing lasted more than two hours before everyone had danced their turns, six couples at a time. From the description of the ball in Karlskrona given above, we can surmise that the couples in Uppsala followed a similar pattern: thirty couples danced five rounds with six couples in each round and, during each round, all the men danced with all the ladies, for a total of six minuets in each round. We can estimate that each round lasted twenty minutes and that the musicians probably had about forty minuet melodies on their repertoire.

### Tersmeden Dancing in Karlskrona, Thirteenth-day Ball in 1767— Name-day Party 1769

Back home in Karlskrona, Tersmeden's social life continued to flourish. Christmas weekend 1766 was lively as in the previous two years, 'passed here with parties and Christmas dances in all the noble houses so that we invited somewhere every day'.

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

The eve of the thirteenth day 1767 was celebrated with a big party at Admiral Psilanderskiöld's house: 'It ended up with 70 people'. The ladies were served tea and sweets, and the gentlemen punch. The dance started shortly after six p.m. with minuets of five couples, and 'when that was done came two contradances'. Here, five couples danced the minuets simultaneously, and after they had all danced with each other, the following group of five couples took over. When everyone had danced the minuet, contradances were danced in two groups. The guests had learned the contradances two years earlier, and now they could perform them well. The dance went on without a break until ten p.m. when the supper was served on the upper floor. They ate for two hours, and at midnight, the dancing resumed. Tersmeden wrote that 'as usual, we began immediately with a polska, then we raised the host and hostess and drank their toast'. Here too, they honoured the host and the hostess by lifting them and dancing polska around them.

Supper was served in two rounds for space reasons, first to those who were married and then to the unmarried. While the unmarried were eating, the musicians took a half-hour break to get some food, too. 'As soon as the music came back, we started contradances to show the youth when they came down, that the married and older did not give in to them'. The older guests wanted to show the younger ones that they were also eager to dance. The younger faction followed this with a 'rapid slängpolska' and then with contradances, so nobody thought about retiring until five a.m. According to Tersmeden, everyone needed to rest on the following day.

Tersmeden was eager to arrange parties in Karlskrona. In January 1769, he suggested that an especially large one be held on Prince Carl's name day. Carl was the brother of the future King Gustaf III. Tersmeden shared with eight friends the cost of the party, to which '163 people of all estates' were invited. The guests arrived at five in the afternoon, tea and drinks such as 'Pure Wine, Pounche and Erchebischof' were offered. They drank to His Royal Highness Duke Carl while thirty-two gunshots were fired and 'resounding music' played. Tersmeden recounted that 'The dance started with the minuet danced by all eight hosts'. All eight couples started the minuet simultaneously and all the men danced with all the ladies before the end of the round. The dance lasted until ten p.m. when the most distinguished male guests and the married ladies went and sat down to eat in two rooms. The guests ate in different rounds in ranking order for reasons of space. The party went on till five in the morning when they drank coffee.<sup>104</sup>

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104 Tersmeden, *Ur Frihetstidens lif*, pp. 268–69; Carl Tersmeden, *Amiral Carl Tersmedens Memoarer—Gustaf III och Flottan*, ed. by Nils Erdmann (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1918), p. 9.

## The Minuet around Sweden: in Uppland, Småland, Blekinge, Värmland, Skåne, and Västerbotten, in the 1760s and 1770s

Here we will leave Tersmeden for a while, and I will report on descriptions from other writers of diaries and memoirs around Sweden. These accounts offer insight into the dancing of the upper classes as well as the rural population.

I start in Uppland, where Tersmeden had already danced the minuet with the peasantry in Toftinge village thirty years earlier. Through the diary of seventeen-year-old Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm, we get a good overview of dancing in Uppsala in the autumn of 1773. Reuterholm was born in 1756 at Svidja farm in Western Nyland, Finland. He later became State Secretary, Duke Carl's favourite during the Guardian regency of Gustaf IV Adolf 1792–96, and a leading gentleman of the kingdom.



Fig. 5.20 Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm (1756–1813) wrote in his diaries in 1773 that the most popular dances in Uppsala in Sweden were minuets, country dances and Polish dances. Portrait by Ulrica Fredrica Pasch (1776). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustav\\_Adolf\\_Reuterholm,\\_1756-1813\\_\(Ulrica\\_Fredrica\\_Pasch\)\\_-\\_Nationalmuseum\\_-\\_38888.tif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustav_Adolf_Reuterholm,_1756-1813_(Ulrica_Fredrica_Pasch)_-_Nationalmuseum_-_38888.tif), public domain.

While in Uppsala, Reuterholm described his dancing experience there in some detail. The teenager participated in the highest circles of society. He was often invited to the castle, where he knew everyone and where balls were held; he also attended the assemblies that were held in the city hall. The usual dance repertoire at these events consisted of minuets, contradances, and polska dances. Before an assembly on 7 November, some contradances were practised

in the castle bedchamber of the *riksrådinnan*<sup>105</sup> Arnell, with only her singing to serve as music. Reuterholm described how

Riksrådinnan insisted that we repeat a few contradances that would be danced at the next assembly, which would be held the following Wednesday, and this is what we did. I and the riksrådinnan Lagersvärd, and Miss Posse, Baron Carl Rudbeck and Mrs. Bergman and little Miss Rudbeck and her little brother danced together. We were dancing *La Fête d'Ekholmsund*, *Le Cabinet*, *Les plaisirs d'Ekholmsund*, *La Princesse Augusta*, *La Comtesse Fersen*, and many more [contradances].

Later he wrote about the assembly at the city hall on 7 November itself:

The dance itself was in the grand council hall, which was lit by lamps and a chandelier of candlelights. Further in, the three rooms where one played cards and where the water and lemon were given. As soon as I arrived, I was invited to a minuet by the *riksrådinnan* Arnell.

Then Reuterholm danced with 'Miss Posse, a mamsell Hydrén, Mrs. Bergman, Miss Troil and some other ladies'. From the description, it is unclear how many couples danced simultaneously. After the minuets, he played l'hombre and danced occasionally. After the lights were lit, they started with

the contradances, when *Le Cavalier*, *La Belle Vilhelmine*, and *La Sophie* were danced. *La Belle Vilhelmine*, which was brand new and called after Miss Troil, who tricked me into joining the dancing. At 9 o'clock, they started with the minuets again, and I danced with *riksrådinnan* Arnell, Miss Troil and a few more ladies, after which I went and refreshed the ladies with chocolate and lemonade. Lastly, more than 20 couples danced the *Polska*, which lasted more than half an hour. Me and Miss Posse were among the first couples in the dance.

The dance started with minuets, after which contradances were played. Then, again, they continued to dance minuets, and it seems from his mention of the *riksrådinnan* Arnell that Reuterholm now invited women who had invited him earlier. It is also evident that a contradance was named after a specific person. Originally, the contradance *La Belle Vilhelmine* had been named after the Archbishop's daughter, perhaps created by a dancing master at the university. The polska was danced by more than twenty couples for more than half an hour. It could be that everyone moved in a big circle and that one couple at a time

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<sup>105</sup> *Riksråd* is a title of a royal advisor. *Riksrådinna* is his wife, or his widow.

danced around inside the circle. Here, then, the minuet was danced not only as an ‘introductory’ dance.

On 14 November 1773, Reuterholm completed an errand at the castle together with his friends. Afterwards, they were invited to a ball that lasted until one a.m. ‘with variations of polisch, contradances, and minuets’. *Riksrådinnan* invited Reuterholm twice, ‘and I invited her three times. [...] Otherwise, I danced with Miss Braunerskiöld, *qui passe pour une des beautés du province et de la ville*, La belle Vilhelmine, lasting over half an hour’.<sup>106</sup> Notice, here, that a contradance could last an hour and a half.

The assemblies were held weekly. At the following one on 17 November, which began at four o’clock in the afternoon, Reuterholm reported who was there, and what they danced:

*Kanslirådet* Ihre with his wife, Mrs. Melander, Mrs. Linné and her daughters were all there. Although it was very crowded, I still danced for nearly 20 minuets and contradances: *La Belle Vilhelmine*, *La Cathrine*, *La Comtesse Fersen*, and others. At half past 9, the ball ended [...].

Reuterholm danced about twenty minuets but did not note his partners’ names, the process of invitations to dance, nor how many couples danced at the same time. At the following assembly on 24 November, he does record that ‘the *överståthållaren* [baron] with his ladies and the people from all the other distinguished houses of the town attended.’ He continued:

We danced several new contradances and kept on, mostly with them until  $\frac{3}{4}$  9 o’clock, and then since no more than a quarter was left, we danced *pour la bonne* in polska, which lasted half an hour and was one of the most exhausting.<sup>107</sup>

The assembly on 1 December, the last before Christmas, was ‘as usual quite brilliant’. Reuterholm recorded who was in attendance and what was being danced:

Among other ladies was a countess Posse, born Bielke, coming in from the countryside, who combined a handsome face with the most beautiful dance. Even several gentlemen from Stockholm; A major Pauli, a major Klingsporre, a Count Lejonsted were also present, as were *Överståthållaren* with his *friherrinna* [baroness]. At this assembly, we danced quite a

106 This French phrase means ‘Who is held to be one of the beauties of the region and of the city’.

107 ‘*Pour la bonne*’ is French, meaning ‘for the maid’ and may refer to a dance dedicated to the servants.

few minuets, but instead mostly contradances, and since, for the sake of Advent, it was the last assembly with dance, we went on till over 10.

Reuterholm did not explain why they danced a few minuets. Perhaps it was to honour the gentlemen from Stockholm. They also danced contradances, and maybe this was to show these guests that the locals knew the modern dances.

On 5 December, Reuterholm, along with some friends, went up to the castle again. After a while, they were invited by the *överståthållarinnan* to amuse themselves with dance and games in her bedchamber. First, they danced 'contradances to vocal music', and then they played as well as danced minuets while wearing blindfolds. Reuterholm's diary ends at the end of 1773. His notes for the year 1775 mentioned only two dance events but for neither does he record what was danced.<sup>108</sup>

Nothing in Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm's notes suggests that he struggled to dance the minuet. From this, we may infer that he had learned the minuet in Western Nyland, Finland, during his youth in the 1760s.

At the same time that Reuterholm was dancing the minuet in Uppsala, the peasants who lived outside the city also danced the minuet to music played by folk musicians. According to the Swedish dance historian Tobias Norlind, the minuet was performed in a barn belonging to Carl von Linné [Linnaeus] at Hammarby during the summer of 1764. He gleaned this information from an account by the Dane Johan Christian Fabricius (born 1745), who studied under Linné:

On Sundays, the whole family was almost all the time with us, and then we occasionally let a farmer come to us with an instrument that had the appearance of a violin (key harp), after which we danced in the farmhouse's barn when somebody wanted. Indeed, our balls were not very shiny, the company was not numerous, the music wretched, the dances were not varied, but constantly minuet and Polska, but we still enjoyed ourselves a lot. In the meantime, the old man [Linné] smoked a pipe of tobacco with Zoega, who was weak and physically less well-formed, he [Linné] looked at us and danced himself even though very rarely, a Polska, in which he was superior to all of us younger.<sup>109</sup>

108 Carl Forsstrand, *En gustaviansk ädlings ungdomshistoria. Några anteckningar av och om Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm av Carl Forsstrand* (Stockholm: Geber, 1925), pp. 77–110. Reuterholm's notes for 1775 were published by Alma Falk in *Personhistorisk tidskrift*, 1923; Alma Falk, 'Gustaf Adolf Reuterholms dagbok från åren 1775–1776', *Personhistorisk tidskrift*, 24 (1923), 183–233.

109 Fabricius, qtd. in Norlind, *Svensk folkmusik och folkdans*, p. 133. See also Ellen Fröh, *Brev till blomsterkungen och hans son*. Utgåva och översättning med kommentarer av brev från Linnés ende amerikanske lärjunge Adam Kuhn. Examensarbete



Fabricius, together with two other foreign students, lived in a cottage in Hammarby, where the Linnaeus family often visited. There, they danced in the barn to the music of a peasant musician whose dance repertoire consisted of minuets and polska. The quotation above suggests that the peasant who was invited to play for the company did not often perform for others. The upper-class boy, the nineteen-year-old Dane Fabricius, recorded that the dances consisted only of minuets and the Polska and that the peasant's music was 'wretched'. Linnaeus, who was fifty-seven at this time, danced rarely, but he could dance a polska far better than the youngsters assembled.

In Växjö, Småland, the minuet was played at balls held in the 'better houses' during the youth of the musical priest Samuel Ödmann. The priest attended an upper secondary school there in the mid-1760s, from which he wrote that 'every spring term, with Rector's permission, a dancing master instructed the youth in how to bow and dance minuets'. What comes across strongly in Ödmann's account is the poverty and the difficult conditions of the little boys, but bows were very important and belonged to the basics of politeness. The school was renowned for the skilfulness of its instrumentalists. 'No small town could set the music higher than Wexiö. Those of the youth who had this talent was well-known and had an entrance in the better houses'.<sup>110</sup>

Ödmann's testimony shows that young people from the lower classes could see as well as participate in the dances of the upper class.

The gymnasium in Växjö was not the only school in which dance was taught. Nearly a century earlier, students at the Karlstad school received the same, inadvertent dance education. Petrus Magni Gyllenius (originally Peder Månsson), a fifteen-year-old pupil, wrote in his diary on 20 February 1637 that the school was allowing them time off from their studies to 'dance in a week'. Beginning on 3 March 1663 and 18 February 1667, the students 'were allowed to dance for a week'.<sup>111</sup> The abilities to present oneself and to dance were sufficiently valued that these skills were taught at the school. Gyllenius went on to study for eight years at the Åbo Academy and later served as a teacher in his old school town Karlstad.

In 1774, Magnus Gabriel Craelius described in detail the wedding customs in Småland, including the traditions in the city of Vimmerby and those of the

för kandidatexamen i latin (Lund: Lunds universitet, 2007) [www.lu.se/lup/publication/1318332](http://www.lu.se/lup/publication/1318332) (p. 7).

110 Samuel Ödmann, *Samuel Ödmanns skrifter och brev, med levnadsteckning och kommentarer*, ed. by Henning Wijkmark (Stockholm: Diakonistyrelsens förlag, 1925), p. XVII, pp. 56–57.

111 Petrus Magni Gyllenius, *Diarium Gyllenianum eller Petrus Magni Gyllenii Dagbok 1622–1667*, ed. by C. J. Gardberg and Daniel Toijer. Särtryck ur Värmland förr och nu (Karlstad: Värmlands Fornminnes och Museiförening, 1962).

peasants in the surrounding countryside. At this time, the customs in these two places were different: in the town, wedding dances could be started with the minuet whereas in the countryside they opened with the polska.

Although Craelius reported that large peasant weddings in the countryside were rare, he was able, nevertheless, to document in detail what happened at them:

The musicians settle in and begin encouraging dance with their violins when the priest takes up the bride and dances with her a Pällska [polska], and when he ends, says to the bridegroom: 'I dance to you', after which the priest dances once more with the bride before leading her back to the bridegroom. The bridegroom, then, in the same way as the priest, dances two dances with the bride. But before he starts the second dance, [he] says to the most important person present; the bride's or his father: 'I dance to you'. Likewise, all the men later dance with the bride, one after another, and if the room allows, the bridegroom takes up the *brudsätan*, dances two dances with her, and then, dances with all the other women, one after the other.

Once the Brides and Bridegrooms complete their dance duty, the guests take turns and dance as they please, and sometimes so many couples are dancing at once that they stand as packed herrings and have to follow the couple in front for the turns and hooks.

The first dances at these weddings, which I would call ceremonial dances, are clearly described. The priest invited the bride for the first dance and danced a polska with her. Then the priest told the groom, 'I'm dancing to you,' and danced another polska with the bride before handing her over to the groom. Then the bride and groom danced a polska, after which the groom said to the most prominent of the guests, 'I'm dancing to you,' and danced another polska with the bride. Thus two dances were needed or danced before the handover of the bride to the following person. The words 'I'm dancing to you' are spoken to the next person between the two dances. In this way, the bride went from 'hand to hand', so that all the men danced two dances with the bride in turn. The first two dances were danced solo by a couple. If there was space, the groom danced at the same time, first with the *brudsätan* and then with the other women in turn, two polskas, so that there were two couples dancing at the same time.

Craelius also reported in detail how wedding dances were conducted in the city of Vimmerby. There, they seldom danced in any style other than the minuet, 'because there is hardly anyone who has not learned to dance it':

The bride invites all of mankind, small and big, no exception, and dances two dances with each one, after the other, everyone as they are ranked in order. Each one of the closest male family members keeps a silver

spoon with him that he presents to the bride when he ended the dance. Others should give a *ducat*, *riksdaler*, or banknote at the end of the dance, depending on their means and fortune. Men, as well as children, would make such gifts; whoever cannot dance himself empowers someone in his place, who then gives the gift to the bride.

While the bride is dancing with all the men, the groom dances in the same way with all the women, but he has just the dancing for his efforts.<sup>112</sup> If the size of the room allows, a couple of the guests can also dance. This continues until the bride and groom have danced with everyone, the bride with the men and the groom with the women, and then the bridegroom is danced away, as it is called, after which the guests dance and enjoy themselves all night long.<sup>113</sup>

According to Craelius's description, it appears that everyone could dance the minuet; the bride invites all the men and dances two dances with each of them, probably in rank order according to social status and relationship. Although Craelius did not mention what the two dances were, I would think it was either minuet and polska or two polskas. He did offer great detail, however, about the dancing being linked to the bestowal of gifts on the bride: the closest male relatives gave a silver spoon, and the other men gave money. The gifts were to be handed over even if the donor did not dance, and he could appoint a representative to dance in his place. Thus, two dances were necessary, or in any case, danced with the same person as part of the gift-giving ritual. While this was happening, the groom was dancing with the women and girls, so there were two couples on the floor simultaneously.

Another account from Blekinge, Sweden—where Karlskrona is located and where Tersmeden danced the minuet with high-ranking people—describes the wedding customs of the peasantry in the Jämshög parish there. Reverend Jöran Johan Öller (1740–1811) described how large wedding celebrations often lasted from Sunday to Wednesday. After the church ceremony on Sunday and the evening meal, the dancing began:

After the first evening meal, the dance begins with the Matchmaker and the Bride, who then takes up her bridegroom. With each one, two dances are always danced; sometimes one minuet and one polska, or even two polskas. Minuets have only come into use in recent times, even as a few contradances, that the peasants have learned from specific musicians

112 This probably means that, though the bride was given a gift for her dancing, the groom was not.

113 Magnus Gabriel Craelius, *Försök till Ett Landskaps Beskrifning, uti en Berättelse om Tuna Läns, Sefuede och Aspelands Häraders Fögderie, uti Calmar Höfdinge Döme* (Calmar: [n.pub.], 1774), pp. 423–26, pp. 213–14.

who sometimes play in the cities. They play here, generally well, and with pure tones; but in particular, I heard two who had all musical insight, especially on the violin, of which I the first time was also completely surprised when I got to listen to the most beautiful concert piece during the meal executed by these peasant players, with every possible taste and skill. The music is generally good, and the dance is also justifiable.<sup>114</sup>

The first, ceremonial dances were danced by one pair at a time. The Matchmaker invited the bride for the first dance, and they danced two dances. Since the minuet had come into use only in 'later times,' guests in earlier years probably danced two polskas. To the next dance, the bride invited her new husband, and they subsequently danced two dances. From Öller's phrase 'with each one, they always dance two dances,' it seems to be that the bride danced two dances with all the men. Here, I wonder if some words were spoken between the dances, such as 'I'm dancing to you', as Craelius described above. Probably the groom, after the first dances, danced at the same time as the women. It appears that the priest, who recorded the account, did not dance here. He had moved into the village in 1777. It also seems that the players had learned new dances when they played in the cities and that they were skilled on their instruments.

The minuet was also danced in Värmland in the 1770s. In the memoirs of the second lieutenant, landowner Knut Knutsson Lilljebjörn (1765–1838), he explained how, as a child, he had learned to play and dance the minuet. His music teacher was an old 'organist from the countryside with the name Sneweis' who put a tiny violin in his hand and taught him to play simple melodies—minuets and marches—by ear when he was six years old. Lilljebjörn also learned the minuet in his rural home region. He and his sister had first had a Danish teacher called director Siegler:

This man worked quite methodically. Having completed the five positions' instruction, the dancing master taught how to do several kinds of reverences, namely at the first entry into an even for everyone the same when you were going to bow or curtsy *à la Ronde*, as he called it. This greeting is as challenging to describe as it now would be ridiculous to look at. Next came the greetings to each person in particular, according to the person's rank in society, whereby the teacher called out: 'Deep, deep, the arms quite dead', which most often did happen.<sup>115</sup> When sufficient insight into the reverences was achieved, table seating was taught. In this topic, the youth was taught to sit straight and hand over plates, glasses,

114 Jöran Johan Öller, *Beskrifning öfver Jemshögs Sochn i Blekinge* (Wexiö: [n.pub.], 1800), pp. 228–30.

115 Quoting his teacher, these words are given in Danish.

spoons, knives, forks, and the like in a skilled manner, and only now they are sufficiently prepared to be taught the dancing.

Even before lessons in dance, the children were taught to walk and stand. They learned to perform the reverences, just as would be used at a ball in the late 1600s to greet everyone in the room. The dance teacher also taught etiquette and how to behave at the table. Lilljebjörn went on to describe the customs at bigger parties:

Towards the evening, the dance music was played by one, or at most two, violins. The ball was opened by the elderly with the minuet. The custom said that the women invited would, in turn, ask another gentleman than one who last danced with her. A dancer was always obliged to stay reasonably far away from his partner, since her lower half, according to the dress code of the time, was twice as wide as nature shaped it, resulting from the so-called *pocher* or *konsiderationer*.<sup>116</sup>

The dance started according to age in ranking order, so that ‘the old ones’ started the minuets. A lady who had been invited and had danced would then ask another gentleman to the following minuet—this was the method that had been used in France at the beginning of the century. By ‘*pocher*’ or ‘*konsiderationer*’, Lilljebjörn referred to a panier, a kind of stiff undergarment that extended the dressskirts to the sides, like a petticoat or bustle. He recognized an advantage of the minuet, writing:

The advantage of its use was, at a time when all kinds of card games were unusual at ball and parties, that the old ones could participate in the amusements and thereby avoid the punishment of being motley wallflowers half the night or all night.

The other dances at these parties included ‘*Kadriljer*, then called contradances, or *angläser*, then called long dances—the waltz was not yet invented—were rarely used in rural areas. After the minuet, the polska was played up, to the youth’s great satisfaction and refreshment’. In rural areas, the dance repertoire consisted mostly of minuets and polska. At first, everyone danced minuets and, afterwards, polska dances.

The history professor in Lund named Nils Henrik Sjöborg (1767–1838) wrote about his childhood in Skåne. He grew up at a priest farm in Högestad, and, in 1824, composed his memories of the time before he was eighteen years old. Sjöborg explained that, in addition to his parents and three brothers,

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<sup>116</sup> Knut och Henrik Lilljebjörn, *Hägkomster*. Andra upplagan, ed. by E. G. Lilljebjörn (Stockholm: Wilhelm Billes Bokförlag, 1911), pp. 7–8.

several other people and relatives lived at the farm. Many played different instruments, and Sjöborg had been taught to dance by his brother and an itinerant dancing-master:

Since my eldest brother Carl Ulrik learned to dance in Malmö, he taught us, and besides, we had an elderly, travelling dancing master, who taught us the minuet, long dance (Angloise), and contradances (quadrilles).

He recalled that, on the thirteenth day [of Christmas], a big party was organized on the priest farm for up to forty guests. A neighbour, the priest Olaus Grönqvist from Öfraby, was jealous of the size of the party, complaining that it cost too much. Sjöborg specified that

Grönqvist was nevertheless satisfied when he saw his son Göran at every measure making an *Agreementskrumlur* with his arms, like a bird lifting his wings and wanting to fly but changing his mind and releasing them again. The Father, lost in his thoughts about the joyful spectacle, moved his arms in the *kaftan* at the same pace as the son at every measure.<sup>117</sup>

Even though Sjöborg described the neighbour and his son in a joking manner, his account makes clear that there were vigorous arm movements in the minuet in the 1770s, so much so that the priest's son Göran had problems mastering it. His father watched the situation with such tension, perhaps afraid that the son would not manage the steps, that he unconsciously mimicked the arm movements in a way that amused Sjöborg. The minuet was probably danced by one couple, so it was not surprising that the father was concerned about the son being the centre of attention.

In another account, a rare autobiography of a peasant boy from Västerbotten provides further information about the role of the minuet among this group. Pehr Stenberg (1758–1824) was born in the village of Stöcke, south of Umeå, under simple conditions, educated first at home and then for several years in Umeå. Stenberg was very shy, and this affliction affected him socially: he was too nervous to invite anyone to dance. In February 1777, at the age of eighteen, Stenberg was at his cousin's wedding in the home village. The celebrators danced the minuet among other things. Relatives who had travelled from Torneå in Lapland to attend the wedding guided him through the dancing of many minuets. Stenberg wrote that he did not know to dance the minuet very well, but he kept the beat. At another family wedding, in 1779, held at the *bränneriet*

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117 Nils Henrik Sjöborg, 'Förklaring öfver kartan, föreställande Högestads Prästgård i Skåne och Herrestads Härad, ur minnet, efter 40 a 50 års förlopp, år 1824', in *Meddelanden från Nordiska Museet* (Stockholm: Nordiska museet, 1897), pp. 60–62. An *Agreementskrumlur* is here a raising and lowering of the arms.

[distillery] in Umeå, he was invited to a minuet and later managed to ask one of his cousins:

And as there were a lot of strangers and gentry, I was timid as usual. Therefore, I was not particularly happy there because I had to sit and watch others dancing all night, not daring to invite anyone myself. In the end, Mrs. Berlin (the priest's wife in the City) did me the honour and invited me to a Minuette. I dared not refuse but danced as well as I could, and then I invited my Cousine Madame Magdalena Stenman, and after the wedding ended, I went home happy again.<sup>118</sup>

Since the women as well as the men invited partners to dance, Stenberg was asked to participate in the minuet. His account proves that the minuet was danced regularly in Umeå, both in rural areas and in the city itself, as well as in Torneå up in Lapland.

After a few years of school in Umeå, Stenberg continued his education at the Åbo Academy in Finland and became a priest. He returned to Umeå when, in 1789, his dissertation in botany was rejected. I will return to Stenberg's account two further times.

### Tersmeden Dancing at Parties in Karlskrona and Stockholm in the 1770s

Here we resume the narrative of Tersmeden based on his memories. In February 1771, King Adolf Fredrik died, and his son, Crown Prince Gustaf, became king, taking the name Gustaf III. Tersmeden was made the galley squad manager a year later and remained for a few months in Stockholm. He experienced the *coup d'état* that Gustaf III conducted on 19 August 1772. Two years later, the anniversary of this event was celebrated in Karlskrona with a small party, to which, among others, the Count, Colonel H. Exc. Carl Fredrik Sinclair had been invited. Tersmeden wrote that the gentlemen at dinner 'had become more than unthirsty' and that they were quite cheerful. Sinclair, who held the highest ranking at the party, started the minuet with Countess Wrangel immediately upon entering the hall. Afterwards, '[s]everal followed their example, so that everything came in full swing'. After dinner, a new dessert was served. It was a melon, 'it was cut and was found to be as delicate as big'.

Tersmeden also lived in Stockholm for some time in 1774, in which year his son was appointed to a second lieutenant at the Queen's Life Regiment. Tersmeden decided that this achievement should be celebrated. Lacking suitable

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118 Pehr Stenberg, *Pehr Stenbergs levernesbeskrivning. Av honom själf författad på dess lediga stunder*. Del 1. 1758–1784, ed. by Fredrik Elgh, Göran Stenberg, Ola Wennström (Umeå: Forskningsarkivet vid Umeå universitet, 2014), p. 99, 186.

spaces in his temporary accommodation, he devised the idea of setting up a tent and ordered a chef to prepare a supper for sixty people. The guests gathered at seven p.m., and the serving staff filled their glasses for an hour. Then musicians came into the tent: ‘The minuet started with as many couples as could find a place to dance’. The party finished at four o’clock in the morning with a ‘long polska’ led by the youngest guests.

On this occasion, Tersmeden explicitly described for the first time that as many couples started the minuet as had room to do so. Perhaps this marked the declining importance of following a ranking order. Or this might have showed an increasing sense of social equality influenced by the contradances as so many couples danced simultaneously. Most likely, the reason for this forgoing of tradition was that this party had no royal guests nor any hostess—neither Tersmeden’s nor his son’s wife had travelled with them to Stockholm.<sup>119</sup>

### Peasant Girls and Boys Dancing the Minuet in Western Nyland, Finland, 1778

Previously, we have shown that the peasantry or the country people danced the minuet, in different parts of the Swedish empire, for example, in Uppland, Småland, Blekinge, Ostrobothnia, Västerbotten, and Lapland. The situation in Nyland in Finland was similar. Vicar Erik Lencqvist described a peasant wedding in Karislojo, relating that it was celebrated in two places—first in the home of the bride then that of the groom. The wedding was followed by a meal and then dancing:

Then the *föregångaren* begins the dance with the bride, who then takes up the groom, and so it continues until the time comes for the bride to leave and be taken to the groom’s home where she gets married out of doors. [...] Then they go with the violists at the front.

The ceremony was initiated by the *föregångaren* [literally the predecessor, in this case, the priest] who danced the first dance with the bride. After this dance by just the one couple, the bride invited the groom, and they also danced as the only couple. The guests then continued the dance, one couple at a time. When this round of dancing was complete, the party moved to the groom’s home to start with a meal. Then the dancing continued, and through the night, the groom and bride would be danced out of the unmarried state and into the married state.<sup>120</sup> Although Lencqvist did not name the dance here, he later gives this detail when describing the dancing and the dance repertoire of Western

<sup>119</sup> Tersmeden, *Gustav III och flottan*, pp. 95, 114.

<sup>120</sup> ‘Bröllops Seder i västra delen af Nyland och de Finnska Soknarne derstädes’, *Tidningar Utgifna af Et Sällskap i Åbo*, 1778, nos 11–14.



Nyland more generally: 'These people are very eager to dance at their parties, so no poor little peasant boy or maid exists who does not trust themselves to dance the minuet and polska; they do not rehearse any other kind of dance'.<sup>121</sup> The priest's observation is slightly condescending, explaining that the local peasant boys and girls did not try to learn other dances than the minuet and polska; however, it does show that these two were most popular dances in the repertoire of the countryside in Western Nyland at this time.

### The Minuet Danced in Helsinki and Saint Petersburg, 1779

The minuet and the contradances were the most popular dances in Helsinki in 1779. The British research traveller William Coxe (1747–1828) visited the city on his journey to Russia and was invited by the governor to a ball. He recorded that all the gentlemen and the ladies were wearing the new Swedish costume and mostly enjoyed minuets and contradances. Many of the company also spoke French. Gustaf III had introduced the Swedish costume the year before, and Coxe's memoir shows how quickly the costume had been accepted around the Swedish empire. The upper class in Helsinki, which was not yet the capital city in Finland, was as modern in their clothing as they were in the capital city of Stockholm. The same was true also of their dance repertoire.



Fig. 5.21 Portrait of William Coxe. Engraving by W. T. Fry after picture by W. Beechey. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William\\_Coxe\\_Engraving\\_by\\_W.\\_T.\\_Fry.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Coxe_Engraving_by_W._T._Fry.jpg), public domain.

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121 By 'boy' and 'maid', Lencqvist refers to the peasant's servants.

Coxe travelled on to Saint Petersburg, where he attended a ball held by the court to celebrate the birthday of the grand duke Paul Petrhovitch—Empress Katarina II's son, who later became Emperor. The ball opened with the minuet danced by the grand duke and his wife. Then, each invited a new partner to dance the second minuet, so two couples danced simultaneously. These four dancers next invited the prominent nobility the same way, so that the number of couples who danced simultaneously on the floor increased exponentially with each round. After the minuets, polska dances were danced, and these were followed by English contradances.<sup>122</sup> This is the only account I have found that describes this invitation method—one in which both the lady and the gentleman continued to invite new partners. It would be interesting to know how the polska was conducted at this event.

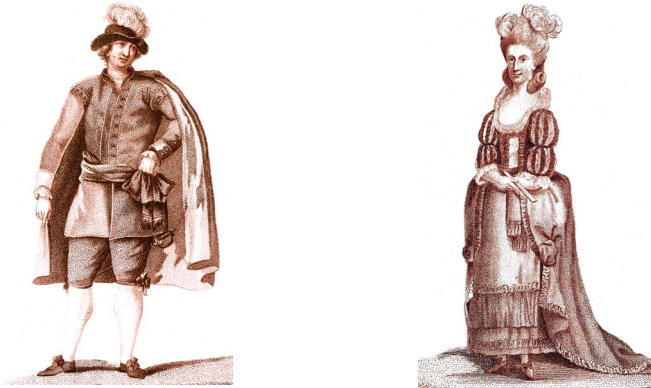


Fig. 5.22 and Fig. 5.23 The Swedish national costume was used in Helsinki, Finland, when William Coxe visited the city in 1778. Drawings of Swedish national court costumes from Coxe's book *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark* (1792). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:56\\_of\\_%27\(Travels\\_into\\_Poland,\\_Russia,\\_Sweden,\\_and\\_Denmark.\\_Interspersed\\_with\\_historical\\_relations\\_and\\_political\\_inquiries.\\_Illustrated\\_with\\_charts\\_and\\_engravings\).%27\\_\(10999106214\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:56_of_%27(Travels_into_Poland,_Russia,_Sweden,_and_Denmark._Interspersed_with_historical_relations_and_political_inquiries._Illustrated_with_charts_and_engravings).%27_(10999106214).jpg), public domain.

<sup>122</sup> William Coxe, *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark*, 4 vols (London: [n.pub.], 1792), IV, pp. 9 and 283–84.

## The Minuet Danced at the Court in Stockholm, 1779

In November 1778, King Gustaf III and Queen Sofia Magdalena had their first child, a son. They celebrated the birth at the turn of the year, after the queen had recovered and after her churching. For several days, an opera, festive suppers, and balls were held. Minuets were danced at these balls; the king and queen had been trained in the subtleties of the minuet since early childhood.

Gustaf III attended his first masquerade ball in 1749, when he was only three years old, and the then-Crown Prince was so accustomed to the dance that he danced ten minuets in a row while wearing white domino! In the same early years, he learned French, able to speak it like a native. By the age of eight, he attended dance lessons twice a week.<sup>123</sup> Sofia Magdalena was born in Denmark in July 1746, as the daughter of King Frederik V. When Sofia Magdalena was about six years old, the French dancing master Pierre Laurant was employed as royal court dancing master and a dance teacher for the Danish royal family.<sup>124</sup> No records have been found to indicate which dances the Danish King's children were taught, but we can assume that the minuet was among them.



Fig. 5.24 Alexander Roslin, portrait of King Gustav III of Sweden (1777), oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustav\\_III\\_\(1746-1792\),\\_King\\_of\\_Sweden,\\_in\\_coronation-rob\\_\(Alexander\\_Roslin\)\\_-\\_Nationalmuseum\\_-\\_15330.tif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustav_III_(1746-1792),_King_of_Sweden,_in_coronation-rob_(Alexander_Roslin)_-_Nationalmuseum_-_15330.tif), public domain.

123 Marie-Christine Skuncke, *Gustaf III—Det offentliga barnet. En prins retoriska och politiska fostran* (Uppsala: Atlantis, 1993), pp. 99, 138, 277.

124 Henning Urup, *Dans i Danmark. Danseformerne ca. 1600 til 1950* (København: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2007), p. 89.



Fig. 5.25 Lorens Pasch the Younger, portrait of Queen Sophia Magdalena of Denmark (c. 1773–75), oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sophia-Magdalena-av-Danmark\\_Droning-av-Sverige.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sophia-Magdalena-av-Danmark_Droning-av-Sverige.jpg), public domain.

The birth of an heir to the Swedish throne was a widely-celebrated event. Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd, the noble chamber servant of the king, recorded in his diary that celebrations and ceremonies lasted for eight days, between 27 December 1778 and 3 January 1779. On the final day, a gala was held that lasted all day. Then, at ten p.m., a *bal paré* [formal ball] began in the national hall. The ‘ruling people’ arrived at midnight, and the ball was opened by the king and queen.<sup>125</sup> The queen’s sister-in-law, Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta, found the event too sombre, writing that the dancing at the ball consisted of ‘long boring minuets and sad contradances that lasted until four o’clock in the morning and where all people were yawning. Although I like dancing, such solemn balls can almost give me a distaste of it’. The tedium was interrupted, however, when an accident occurred as the king led Queen Sofia Magdalena down to the dance floor. Hedvig wrote about the unusual event:

The queen was delighted with her evening. She is always timid when it comes to representation, and now also rather strange mischief happened to her. Just as the king gave her his hand to take her to the first minuet, she slipped at the descent of the stairs leading from the elevated place, where the royal armchairs are located, and she fell, causing great dismay. However, once the first consternation subsided, it was not possible not to grin at it all, which is quite common when such a small accident happens.

<sup>125</sup> Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd, *Dagboksanteckningar förda vid Gustaf III:s hof af Friherre Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd*, ed. by E. V. Montan (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1878), p. 335.

She [the queen] seemed to notice this, for she was then in a bad mood throughout the whole party.<sup>126</sup>

The minuets were initiated by the king and queen alone. From the diary of Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta, we learn that the queen was dancing the minuet and that she slipped down the stairs and fell over. Another commentator, the count Earl Adolf Ludvig Hamilton, was equally vague in his description of the celebration, saying that the heir's birth was celebrated with big balls such as 'the French practise'. He explained that 'some couples were called and danced the minuet for the rulers and the whole public'.<sup>127</sup> The answer to this cryptic entry comes from Ehrensvärd's diary: it appears that, after the first minuet, the guests danced one pair at a time, following the ranking, which amounted to seventeen minuets in total. Although Ehrensvärd listed who danced with whom, and in what order, he did not specify who invited or 'took up', in each round. Was it the woman or the man, or a woman and man in turn? Ehrensvärd gave only the names of the people. These are presented with their dates and titles in the Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: The minuets at the ball for the celebration of the royal heir's birth listed in Ehrensvärd's diary<sup>128</sup>

1st minuet	The ball was opened by King Gustaf III (1746–92) and Queen Sofia Magdalena (1746–1813)
2nd minuet	Prince Charles (Gustaf III's brother, b. 1748, later Charles XIII) and his wife, Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta of Holstein Gottorp (the diary-writer noted above who thought the minuets were boring)
3rd minuet	Prince Fredrik Adolf (Gustaf III's brother, b. 1750) and his sister, Princess Sofia Albertina (b. 1753)
4th minuet	Fredrik Brahe (1756–1826), <i>En av Rikets Herrar</i> ['One of the Nation's Gentlemen', a title introduced by Gustav III] and Countess Hedvig Catarina Piper, wife of Carl Gustaf Piper

126 Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta of Holstein-Gottorp, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlottas Dagbok: I 1775–1782*, trans. and ed. by Carl Carlson Bonde (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1902), p. 161.

127 Adolf Ludvig Hamilton, *Anekdoter till svenska historien under Gustaf III:s regering af Adolf Ludvig Hamilton*, ed. by Oscar Levertin. Svenska memoarer och bref IV (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1901), p. 100.

128 Ehrensvärd, pp. 335–36.

5th minuet	Ekeblad (Clas Julius?), Captain-Lieutenant of the Halberdier corps and Mrs. Ulrika Eleonora Örnköld, Queen's Lady of the Bedchamber, wife of Per Abraham Örnköld
6th minuet	Nils August Cronstedt (1753–1835), Lieutenant, cavalier at the Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf and Countess Ulla Fersen, the lady in waiting at the court and married to Nils V. Höpken
7th minuet	Claes Horn (1755–1823), Lieutenant, cavalier of the Duchess of Södermanland (Hedvig Charlotta Elisabeth) and Augusta Fersen, the Queen's Lady of the Bedchamber and wife of Count F. A. Löwenhielm
8th minuet	Axel Oxenstierna, Baron, Chamberlain, <i>En av Rikets Herrar</i> and Miss Louise Sparre
9th minuet	Adam Wachtmeister, <i>En av Rikets Herrar</i> , Captain, Lieutenant-colonel, and the Countess Hedvig Ulrika Dohna
10th minuet	Clas Rålamb, Court Equerry and the Countess Johanna von Lantingshausen, <i>hovdam</i> [court lady], wife of Albrekt Lantingshausen
11th minuet	Carl Axel Strömfelt (1740–1821), cavalier of Duke Fredrik, Chamberlain and the Countess Eleonora Wilhelmina de Geer
12th minuet	Evert Taube, Chamberlain and the Countess J. J. de Geer
13th minuet	Henrik Jakob von Düben, the supreme master of ceremonies and Mrs. Johanna Barbara Aminoff, who was married to Johan Fredrik Aminoff
14th minuet	Cederström (Bror?), Chamberlain of the Queen and Miss Ekeblad (Eva Magdalena?), the chambermaid of Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta
15th minuet	Adolf Louis Stierneld (1755–1835), Chamberlain of the Queen, with Miss Ebba Ulrika Beata von Rosen, maid of honor for Gustaf Adolf
16th minuet	Wilhelm Mauritz Klingspor (1744–1814), baron, Equerry for Prince Fredrik Adolf and Miss de Geer
17th minuet	Johan Fredrik Aminoff (1756–1842), Gustaf III's page, with Miss Maria Sofia Rosenstierna, maid of honour for Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta

They danced for four hours, from midnight until four a.m. Ehrensvärd discussed 'who was dancing with whom' in these seventeen minuets and why the couples danced in this order, but he did not give further details. Hamilton mentioned 'some couples' above, probably not the couples they would have expected in the first place. Taken together, these accounts suggest that the court of Stockholm followed the customs in Paris at the end of the seventeenth century when determining the dancers' order and deciding who danced with whom. Before the dance, the couples were 'mentioned' or 'listed' and then 'called' for their turn. Married couples did not dance together except for the king with the queen. The men married to ladies working at the royal households did not dance at all in this seventeen-dance round. After the minuets, what Ehrensvärd called 'ceremonial contradances' were danced. These, most likely, were also danced by one pair at a time, in a predetermined rank order.

An anonymous diary writer commented that etiquette was followed so strictly at this ball 'that the dancers in a minuet turned their backs at each other, not to turn their backs to the king'.<sup>129</sup> Minuet dancing usually required partners to watch each other throughout, but here, deference to the king was prioritized. Although the etiquette was followed carefully, the King himself did not always follow all the dancing rules. A writer who occupied a position close to the court wrote in his diary about the royal couple's dance, remarking that 'His Majesty dances without letting the constraints of the Art bind himself. The queen is dancing admirably'.<sup>130</sup>

King Gustaf III was a great admirer of French culture, and, during his reign, introduced stricter court etiquette similar to that which had been used at the court of Ludvig XIV. This emphasis on social propriety may account for the strict following of rank order and the unusually large amount of minuets included in this round. On the other hand, it is possible that the same rituals governing minuet dancing at the court continued to be followed throughout the 1700s. The minuet must have been danced during this period, though there is no written evidence to confirm this, otherwise those close to the court of King Gustaf III would not have known how to dance it. What is also evident is that the minuet had not fallen out of use in Sweden at this time but was prospering. One final note on this point is illustrative. When the new Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf—whose birth was celebrated with the above festivity—was eight and a half years old, in 1786, he danced the minuet during a visit to Helsingborg at a Ball in *Brunnshuset* at Ramlösa with the Colonel von Stauben's wife. From

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129 Bergström, p. 139.

130 Johan Fischerström, *En gustaviansk dagbok. Anteckningar för året 1773*, ed. by Gustaf Näsström (Stockholm: Bröderna Lagerström, 1951), p. 48.

this, we gather that the minuet continued to be included in dance lessons from childhood, at least for the noble classes.<sup>131</sup>

### The Minuet Danced by ‘Lapps’ in Northern Sweden, 1780<sup>132</sup>

In Pehr Stenberg’s autobiography, we have already learned that minuets were danced in Lapland in northern Sweden. The newspaper *Inrikes-Tidningar* confirms this in a brief note on the 1780 visit to Degerfors by the Russian imperial chamberlain count Georg Rumantzoff. The Count and his company travelled from Vaasa in Finland across the Kvarken to Umeå in Sweden. They continued north to Degerfors Chapel, intending to see ‘Lapps and reindeers’. Almost at Degerfors they were met by the teacher Anders Alenius and his brother, *Magister* Carl Alenius, *Rector* of Lycksele Lappmark School. Both were dressed in ‘Lapp costume’ and came to meet them with reindeer and *ackjor*.<sup>133</sup> After the words of greeting in French, the company continued to Degerfors Prästgård, where some ‘Lappish girls and boys in their festive costume presented themselves’ to the Count and his company.

After a meal, the company continued for half a mile in the forest to five ‘Lappish Households homesteads or *Kåtor*’ next to which one hundred reindeer had been gathered from the woods. When the Count had got to know about these people’s way of life and presented his gifts, the company returned to the farm of the priest, where the ‘Lapp boys and Girls’ appeared again and entertained the company by a dance performance of ‘Minuet and *Pålska*, which they danced their way’. The account noted that the group danced ‘to the music of a Cymbal, that the Capell Priest himself had prepared and played well’. The following day, the Count and his company continued the trip, first to Härnösand and then to Stockholm.<sup>134</sup>

This example shows that the minuets and polska, the primary dances of the day, were also danced by ‘lapps’ in northern Sweden. There, the young people were ‘called’ to entertain the company, and their dance style must have differed in some way from that of the ‘upper class’ since the writer notes that they danced in ‘their own way’. The intention was not to show anything local in terms of dance, as the minuet and polska were the most common dances in Sweden’s countryside. Perhaps the purpose was that the performing youth should show

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131 *Inrikes-Tidningar*, [Sverige], 24 July 1786.

132 ‘Lapp’ is the term used by Nordic people for the Saami people prior to the twentieth century.

133 *Ackjor* Sledges are sledges pulled by reindeer that were used by the Saami people for reindeers.

134 *Inrikes-Tidningar* [Sverige], 28 February 1780.



their clothes and their jewellery. By dancing, the role of the young people was to put the costumes 'in motion'. My interpretation of the situation is that it was essential for the 'Lapp' people to show, through dance, their status in costumes and jewellery. They sought to display that the youth of the neighbourhood were familiar with the modern dances. Dancing the minuet and polska to cymbal accompaniment was unusual, but this short note confirms that the inhabitants of Lapland danced the same dances as the rural population of Sweden in general.

### The Minuet Danced around Finland: in Turku, Satakunta, and Savolax, in the 1780s

The minuets were danced in different regions of Finland in the 1780s. The previously mentioned peasant boy Pehr Stenberg from Västerbotten stayed in Finland, studying at the Åbo Academy between 1779 and 1789. Stenberg had relatives in Turku and was allowed to participate in social life there, sometimes dancing minuets. In the autumn of 1780, he indulged himself by daily attending a dance school run by the city dancing master Carl Friedrich Eckenberg, where he learned 'minuets and contradances'. During the study period, Stenberg supported himself as a tutor, and in 1781 he became a tutor of a mansion in Satakunta in Western Finland, where he danced at weddings, quadrilles as well as minuets.<sup>135</sup>

In Rantasalmi in the province of Savolax, in the heart of Finnish Finland, the Haapaniemi School of Warfare was established in 1781 as the first in Finland. The education was four terms long, and from the beginning, it also included dance. The terms lasted from 1 February to 23 June and from 1 September to 15 December. School work lasted until five p.m. when the meal was eaten. Then the cadets were free until eight p.m. unless their time was taken up by 'gun exercise, dancing or swimming'.

According to the instructions for the War school, section fourteen: 'Dance teachers are summoned at least every second year and are paid by the school's saved funds, after the agreement reached with the teacher'. The dance teachers taught at school every second year and also worked at many other places. The first dance teacher whose name is known was Fredrik Forsmark. Born in Sweden in 1756, he had studied in Uppsala, lived in Stockholm, and had studied dance in France. Samuel Ceder, one of his students, explained in his diary that Forsmark taught dance in Finland, as well as in Russia. Ceder also became an academic dance teacher and city dance teacher in Turku from 1783 until he died in 1804. In

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<sup>135</sup> Stenberg, pp. 309 and 327.

1806, chamberwriter Herman Johan Wiblingen from Stockholm was appointed dance teacher at the War school.

The dancing masters of Haapaniemi, who also taught fencing, had a lower status than other teachers at the school. This is apparent from the examination rules, which state that the examiner and teacher were allowed to sit during the very long exam process, but the teachers in fencing and dance (and also languages) were required to stand. Later on, language teachers were also allowed to sit during the examination, while the dancing masters still had to stand. The final certificate awarded by the school mentioned that cadets developed strong dancing skills, in addition to insights into German, French, English, and Russian. One of these certificates notes that the cadet in question ‘profited from his particular proficiency in body exercises, such as Vaulting, Dancing, Fencing, and Riding’.

In Savolax, an intense Swedish cultural life flourished at this time. Jorois, Saint Michel, and Rantasalmi were called ‘Little Paris’. The city of Kuopio, established in 1787, was also an important place for dance. The upper class organised *assemblées* and dance events, in which teachers and students danced ‘ornate minuets’ and other dances. The cadets from Haapaniemi were sometimes housed with their teachers’ families, passing their days with conversations, games, and dancing, ‘for the cadets were tireless dancers’. Many officers stayed in Stockholm during the winter and participated in the court’s balls and parties. Haapaniemi’s last leader, Lieutenant Colonel Y. C. von Fieandt, had participated in the masquerade ball at the opera where a shot injured Gustaf III.

The most modern dances reached Savolax directly from Stockholm. Indeed, the first record of dancing the waltz in Finland, on Christmas Eve 1800, comes from this area. In 1802 King Gustav IV Adolf and Queen Fredrika of Baden visited eastern Finland and the War school, and an assembly was organised in Kuopio to honour the guests. The company included nine musicians, who played the dance music at all the places that the royal couple visited. During the holidays, the cadets stayed in their home areas, where they could spread their new knowledge, including dance.<sup>136</sup>

The minuet also spread to the rural population in the neighbourhood. Although evidence from this area is limited, there is evidence that the minuet was danced by the peasants of central and eastern Finland.<sup>137</sup>

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136 Samuel Ceder (1779–1833), *Diary*, Åbo Akademi University, Manuscript Department; E. S. Tigerstedt, *Haapaniemi krigsskola, dess lärare och elever. Anteckningar, handlingar, bref och matrikel*, ed. by E. S. Tigerstedt (Helsingfors: Söderström, 1910), pp. 82–151; Hirn, pp. 11–13, 119; Ernst Lampén, *Suomea maitse ja meritse* (Helsinki: Otava, 1918), pp. 163–70.

137 Petri Hoppu, *Symbolien ja sanattomuuden tanssi. Menuetti Suomessa 1700-luvulta nykyaikaan* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1999), pp. 187–91.

## Tersmeden Still Dancing in Karlskrona, 1784

Once again, I will return to Tersmeden's memoirs. The Admiral, at sixty-eight years old, was by this point an elderly man according to the measure of that time, but his pleasure in dancing had not diminished. On New Year's Day in 1784, the Lieutenant Colonel Eneskiöld gave a big ball and supper for over ninety people from Karlskrona's most prominent social circles. Tersmeden reported that the meal was served in two rooms in different rounds to allow the dancing to continue without a break. After the first round, *generalamiral* af Trolle had suggested that all the admirals with their wives should dance a contradance to prove their wives' vigour. These couples danced 'a sufficiently long contradance', and Tersmeden admitted that he and Trolle 'with our corpulent stomachs' became quite hot. The ladies, too, 'were warm at the end of the dance because they had put as much effort as they could in the waltzing'. People were impressed that Tersmeden, despite his advanced years, could waltz. This 1784 account is the first record I have found of the waltz being danced in Sweden.

A few years later, Tersmeden twice discussed the peasant girls' and peasant boys' dance, without mentioning the types of dances. On Pentecost 27 May 1787, he attended a party in Lyckeby, where a farmers' celebration was arranged. Tersmeden wrote that '40–50 peasant girls and peasant boys danced according to the custom of the country—and it was so animated that the steam came out like smoke from windows as well as doors'. We could ask which were the dances 'according to the custom of the country', but Tersmeden did not answer.

A month later, the company celebrated Midsummer's Day at Count Wachtmeister's at Johanneshus. The Count had 'summoned the all the people at his estate, who, in the evening, were treated and danced around a beautiful maypole erected on the yard, and played a lot of rural people's usual games'. Upper class and 'peasant girls and boys' danced together, which we have already observed several times. Unfortunately, Tersmeden did not mention which dances they danced together. At eleven p.m., Tersmeden and other guests went home, 'while the peasant's games and dances still went on with the full effort'.<sup>138</sup>

Tersmeden's published memoirs end at Christmas 1788. He died in 1797 at eighty-two years old.

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<sup>138</sup> Tersmeden, *Gustav III och Flottan*, pp. 222–23, 128, 138. The first mention of the waltz occurs in Finland under the name *Waltzen* in an anonymous notebook from 1779; Nallinmaa, p. 272.

## The Minuet Danced in Västerbotten, in the 1790s

I now revisit Västerbotten. The peasant Pehr Stenberg returned to his home city after completing his studies and dissertation at the Åbo Academy in Finland, and he became the priest for Umeå from 1792. Stenberg officiated at many weddings but also attended many others simply as a guest. In 1793, after visiting the Nordmalings pastor's farm in order to find a girl to marry, the he and his companions went on a visit to Olofsfors Bruk, where they were received by Inspector Bergmark and his wife, who was raised in Stockholm. The wedding of one the smiths at the mill was underway, and the inspector asked the company to come along. In Stenberg's description of the event, he noted that he danced the minuet with a girl with whom he was in love. He also commented on the proficiency with which the inspector's wife danced the minuet: 'But I have hardly seen anyone dancing the minuet as well as Mrs. Bergmark'.

The same year, he attended the wedding of '*Jungfru Bergqvist* with a non-commissioned officer Ahlqvist'. He and the other guests witnessed what Stenberg called an 'affecting scene' when, towards the end of the evening, the hosts, the elderly official Bergström and his wife, danced the minuet together. Stenberg wrote:

Seeing a 90-year-old couple who had lived happily together for a couple of years more than for the Golden Wedding, slowly and trembling, slipped to and fro over the floor, and, in mind, imagining the fate they had over such a long time. It was very tender, so that some women were tearful from looking at them, and I was also close to doing the same thing.

We might assume that the official and his wife had learned the minuet in their youth, which means that the minuet was known in Västerbotten since the early 1700s.

In 1795, Stenberg performed a wedding at a farm in Skravesjö, where he mostly spoke with the women and sat with them on the bench or in the chamber. In this, Stenberg demonstrated awareness of his social position when he recorded that he deliberately sat among them in order that everyone who wanted to dance with him would have the chance: 'I did the same at all weddings and kept mostly to the ladies'. Stenberg was expecting to be invited to dance, and he did dance. He probably thought it was an honour for the women to dance with him. According to Stenberg, the minuet was the most common dance in the countryside in the 1790s, but at the assemblies in the city of Umeå, the quadrille was the usual dance, and the minuet was rarely danced.<sup>139</sup>

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139 Stenberg, pp. 282, 299–300, 454, 363.

## The Minuet Danced in Stockholm in the 1790s and into the Nineteenth Century

The Count, military man, politician, and then *riksmarskalk* [Marshal] Axel von Fersen (1755–1810) also kept a diary. He wrote only sparingly about dancing, and much of his life was spent abroad. In 1770, as a fourteen-year-old, he travelled to Germany to finish his studies. He participated in a ball at the court in Braunschweig. There, von Fersen recorded how the guests danced some ‘minuets at the beginning of the ball, and Princess Augusta did me the honour to dance one of them with me’, so we see that the princess invited him. Afterwards, the party danced only English dances, and he wrote that ‘since I did not know them, I did not dance’. While studying in Uppsala, the young von Fersen had learned minuets but not English dances.



Fig. 5.26 Axel von Fersen, who was complimented for his minuet dance at King Gustav IV Adolf's coronation in 1800. Portrait by Lorenz Pasch the Younger. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lorenz\\_Pasch\\_the\\_Younger\\_Count\\_Hans\\_Axel\\_von\\_Fersen.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lorenz_Pasch_the_Younger_Count_Hans_Axel_von_Fersen.jpg), public domain.

Von Fersen returned to Sweden in November 1794, then thirty-nine years old. Although he rarely mentioned precisely what was danced, we still can learn something about the dance repertoire in the circles around the court during the last years of the 1790s. On Tuesday, 17 February 1795, he reported about a dinner: ‘Dinner and supper with the king, there was a ball, it lasted until half-past 6 a.m., which provoked me a lot I because I had to stay on’. He added: ‘They danced awfully’. He did not mention the first dances, which were probably minuets, but he names dances performed later in the evening that I have not found in other diaries I have studied:

*Kerauesen* and *Gallopaden* went on without stopping from half-past three to half-past six and might have gone on even longer if miss Klingspor(re), a lady waiting for the Duchess, had not fallen under the dance, because she could not breathe. They carried her away unconscious, and it all ended. Then there were only 10 to 12 ladies left, of which seven from the court.<sup>140</sup>

Another account from the same month comes from the Duchess Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta. She also did not describe precise dances but detailed a very full social schedule:

However, most of the time we have fun with dance, for which at least three or four evenings a week is dedicated, and that will probably continue all the way to Lenten. Monday is opera and then usually a ball in a private house, every second Tuesday I give a ball, Wednesdays the king has a little supper, and then there is sometimes a ball in the society. On Thursdays, there is always a ball at any of the 6 to 7 distinguished families who take turns to give such parties, these begin at 5 and end at 11, and the guests are invited only for refreshments and not for supper. The princess usually visits these events, but, as you know, I never do. Every second Friday is a ball is held by the princess and all Saturdays one by the king. She gives a ball the week when it has not been danced at my place.<sup>141</sup>

These balls and other dance events were significant and occurred at least three or four times a week. The Duchess did not attend balls held in private houses; she hosted one every other week.

After the death of Gustaf III, the throne was taken over by Crown Prince Gustav IV Adolf when he had come of age in 1796. Sweden's foreign policy recommended an alliance with Russia by way of a marriage between the new King and Princess Alexandra, the daughter of the Russian Emperor Katarina II. So, in 1796, the king went with Duke Karl and two other gentlemen to St. Petersburg to propose. To mark their arrival, a ball was held. It opened with a minuet danced by two couples: the king with the grand duchess Elisabeth (the wife of grand duke Alexander) and Duke Karl with the grand duchess Anna (the wife of grand duke Constantin). The King and Duke Karl had invited the women to the first minuet. The two grand duchesses, once they had danced, invited the

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140 Axel von Fersen, *Dagbok* I, ed. by Alma Söderhjelm (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1925), p. 19; Axel von Fersen, *Dagbok* II, ed. by Alma Söderhjelm (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1926), pp. 269–70.

141 Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta of Holstein-Gottorp, *Hedvig Elisabeth Charlottas Dagbok*. V 1795–1796, trans. and ed. by Cecilia af Klercker (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1923), p. 22.

other two gentlemen in the Swedish company, 'the barons Reuterholm and von Essen' for the second minuet. After the two minuets, contradances were danced.

Despite this ceremonial display, the tour to propose in St. Petersburg failed. The king eventually married Fredrika of Baden in 1797. Their union was celebrated extensively in Stockholm:

On the 12th of November at 6 in the afternoon, a *Bal Paré* was in the *Rikssalen* when the court was dressed in Gala. The king took the pleasure to start the bale with a Minuet with Her Majesty the Queen, and then with her Royal Highness the Duchess of Södermanland, and then with Her Royal Highness the Princess. The queen danced the Minuet with their Royal Highnesses, the Dukes of Södermanland and of Östergötland. Subsequently, a Quadrille followed which the King danced with the Queen, the Duke of Södermanland with the Royal Princesse, The Duke of Östergötland with the Duchess of Södermanland, Lord Greve Magnus Ericsson Brahe with the former *Stats-Fruen* Countess Stanislas Sparre, after which cavaliers and ladies were allowed to dance and continue the ball, which lasted till 10 o'clock, when dining took place at the table.<sup>142</sup>

At this celebration, the king danced three minuets in which he and his partner were the only couple on the floor. The queen then invited others to participate in two minuets, perhaps more. After that, a quadrille was danced by the most distinguished, and then the others were allowed to enter the dance floor.

The Queen's first child, one son, was born in 1799, and her churching was celebrated with a ball given by the bourgeoisie at the Börsen. Axel von Fersen explained: 'When we entered the hall, a march and then a minuet was played, but neither the king nor the queen cared for dancing but sat down in their armchairs when the contradances began'. The king and the queen had danced the minuet; it was when the contradances began that they were finally seated. Perhaps because the ball was held by bourgeoisie, the Royals could decide not to join in the contradances.

At the opening of the *Riksdag* in Norrköping the following year, in 1800, more minuets were danced. Von Fersen recorded:

The king danced with the queen and then with the wives Brahe, Carl Piper, and Claes Wachtmeister. The queen first danced with the ambassador, then with Chancellor, the Seneschal, and gentlemen Brahe, Wachtmeister, Carl Adam, Ruuth, Essen, me, and Claes Wachtmeister.

The king danced four minuets and the queen at least twelve. A newspaper shows that one couple at a time danced these minuets. The king danced first; then, the

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142 *Inrikes-Tidningar*, [Sverige], 6 September 1796, 14 November 1797.

queen continued to dance. Von Fersen carefully followed how ‘everyone’ danced. He considered that ‘the minuets were generally badly danced’. Two gentlemen had made themselves ridiculous, namely, the *Riksmarskalk* Oxenstierna and Count Claes Wachtmeister, ‘for they performed with pretention’. About his own ability to dance the minuet and about the skills of the royal couple, he wrote:

My vanity was flattered by the compliments from all directions, which I received for my minuets, both from men and ladies. The king does not dance well, but the queen so much better, and she was charming but so tired at the end, she could hardly stand on her feet. She was dizzy at the table but remained through the whole supper; it is incomprehensible that she, as ill as she was, could endure all these tiring ceremonies.

The queen danced the minuet with von Fersen. He does not name his other dance partners. Since he had so many compliments from all directions for his dance, and because he talked about ‘tiring ceremonies,’ he must have danced quite a number of them.

In von Fersen’s diary, I find that a ball taking place in February 1805 started with the polonese, rather than the minuet. It was a great ball that the garrison gave for the King in the *Børshallen* with nearly seven hundred guests, nobility, and citizens in attendance. The king, the queen, and the whole royal family arrived at the ball at seven o’clock. Von Fersen wrote:

A great polonese with words suitable for the moment would open the ball. I would open it with the *riksrådinnan* De Geer but the king with the duchess, the queen with the duke, and the princess with the *riksdrotsen* came and took place in front and joined in the dance.

It seems that von Fersen was overridden: he was supposed to open the ball with the polonese, however, the Royals took their place in front. Nevertheless, von Fersen seems to have enjoyed himself, writing that ‘Their Majesties retired at 10 p.m. and the princesses at half-past twelve, but the ball continued until 6 a.m. It was gorgeous and well organised’.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Axel von Fersen, *Dagbok IV*, ed. by Alma Söderhjelm (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1936), pp. 50, 95–96, 426; *Fahlu Weckoblad*, 3 May 1800.



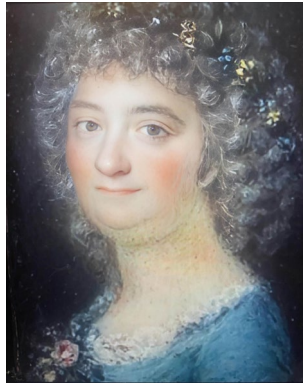


Fig. 5.27 Miniature portrait of Märta Helena Reenstierna, Årstafrun (1796). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maerta\\_Helena\\_Reenstierna.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maerta_Helena_Reenstierna.jpg), public domain.

From another diary that spans the turn of the nineteenth century, we learn that the minuet was danced in private contexts in ordinary upper-class homes. Its writer is Märta Helena Reenstierna (1753–1841), known as Årstafrun [the Årsta lady]. She lived at Årsta farm in the Brännkyrka parish south of Stockholm. She started her diary in 1793 when she was forty years old and had been married to Christian Henrik von Schnell (1733–1811) for eighteen years. She had given birth to eight children, but only one, her son Hans Abraham, reached adulthood. Her husband was twenty years older and did not appear to enjoy social life and dance much. Årstafrun, on the other hand, enjoyed the social life and sometimes mentioned which dances she danced and with whom she danced.

Her diaries are extensive, and the three published volumes include only a fraction of her daily notes. Although information about dance appears to be scant in the published diaries, they nonetheless paint a picture of the dance repertoire in private contexts. Årstafrun danced infrequently, but it must be remembered that, when hosting events at her own house, she had other tasks to consider. This could explain why she could not participate in the dancing.<sup>144</sup>

144 Märta Helena Reenstierna, *Årstadagboken* I. Diaries from 1793–1812, ed. by Sigurd Erixon, Arvid Stålhane, and Sigurd Wallin. Selection and explanations by Gunnar Broman (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1993); Märta Helena Reenstierna, *Årstadagboken*, II. Diaries from 1813–1825 (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1993); Märta Helena Reenstierna, *Årstadagboken* III. Diaries from 1826–39 (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1993). Since the published manuscript spans represent only a fraction of the diaries, it is possible that Årstafrun danced much more than we now know. A later edition of Årstafrun's hidden diaries, published by Kristina Ekero Eriksson in 2010 is also not complete. It gives virtually no information about what dances Årstafrun herself danced.

In August 1793, she, her husband, and her surviving son attended a dinner and evening meal at the home of goldsmith Vesterstråle. Two of the guests entertained the others with music on harmonics, violin, and transverse flute, 'when we also danced some minuets' until midnight. At the beginning of the following year, the fourteen-year-old son took lessons from a dancing master named Berner. There was often dancing at social events, and the diary writer noted some specific information about the dances. At one point, she wrote that a cheerful '*slängpolska*' was danced in a farmhouse and, another time, a 'farewell polska'. One New Year's Day, she danced eight to nine contradances. She also mentioned that her son saw the torch dance, and, at a wedding, she danced four quadrilles herself. In February 1802, we have a record that she danced a waltz with a Mr. Seipel, a man she did not know. Unfortunately, the Årstafrun did not mention when she had learned the waltz in any published manuscript.

In addition, the family often received guests at Årsta farm. On New Year's Eve 1796, they hosted a total of twenty-six people, an amount 'which filled a long table':

In the afternoon we first played Christmas games and towards 6 o'clock came a musician, the caretaker Törnblad, when the ball was opened with Polska, then minuet and finally Contradances, which continued until 10 o'clock, when the evening meal was served, and then a farewell *pour purie* was danced, after which all looked happy when they went home, and I was as well quite tired of much household trouble as well as of some quite good dancing, and we did not go to bed until after 2 a.m.

The dance started with Polska, then the minuet was danced and finally contradances. What is meant by 'a farewell *pour purie*' is hard to ascertain.

Among the guests was the family Bille. The Reenstierna family celebrated New Year's Eve with them two years later, in 1798, at a large party. Märta wrote, 'At 6 o'clock came three musicians, bad players, drunk and sleepy, despite this we danced quadrilles, Minuets, and Polska dances. I danced six quadrilles and four minuets'. In March 1800, the family had about fifteen guests on a Saturday. At this gathering an unknown Mr. Engström played the key harp, and the company danced 'Minuet, *Linvävdans* [Linen weaver dance] and some really good polska dances'.

In January 1801, the family had dinner with the merchant Lars Viborg, where there were seventeen people at the table. In the evening, a large number of additional guests arrived, whom Årstafrun did not know. The dance began at five o'clock p.m., and she came home twelve hours later. She reflected, 'I did not dance more than ten quadrilles and four minuets, so I was not the least tired, and out of these 14 dances I danced three quadrilles and a minuet with

*kamrer* [administrative officer] Vilskman'. Fourteen dances may not seem a small amount from today's perspective, but it may be that dancing with the twenty-five-year-old *kamrer* Vilskman invigorated her. When Lars Viborg's kitchen maid celebrated her wedding in October that same year, the party danced until three a.m. On that occasion, Årstafrun danced only one polska with *kamrer* Vilskman and, additionally, three quadrilles.

In March 1802, the Reenstierna family had invited the *actuarian* [actuary] Rylander, his wife and son, and Rylander's two brothers for dinner. One brother, Lieutenant Pehr Rylander, played and the other brother, Lieutenant Carl Johan Rylander, danced 'a Waltz and a Minuet' with Årstafrun. This was her final mention of the minuet and her first of the waltz, but her notes about dance become increasingly spare. In April 1804, she danced four quadrilles, and she also mentioned '*an Englois*'. Her husband died in 1811 and her son the following year. She was then fifty-nine years old. She continued to write a diary until the end of 1839, but there is no mention of dances in the published volumes.

Her diary reveals that the minuet had no particular position as the first dance at a private party but was danced instead as a general dance. The host in the house did not dance, but it is hard to say if this mattered. The writer only mentioned which dances she had danced, never giving an account of the entire dance repertoire. When she hosted guests at the house at the Årsta farm, she sometimes explained that she could not dance because she had to be in the kitchen. Among the musicians who played minuets, she mentioned an usher, a carpenter, a lieutenant, and some others who were 'drunk, sleepy and bad'.

In conclusion, we have seen that the minuet was danced in Sweden–Finland from the late seventeenth throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. The minuet was danced as general dance by all classes of society. It served the role of a ceremonial dance but became a general dance before it began to fall out of use.

## The Minuet in Sweden after 1800

As has been discussed previously, Sweden and Finland were parts of the same kingdom until the year 1809. In the war between Sweden and Russia in 1808–09, Sweden lost its eastern constituent Finland, which became an autonomous grand principality of the Russian Empire until 1917. In the following section, Sweden is examined separately, and I will return to Finland in another section.

Until around 1800, the minuet was danced in Sweden by royalty and circles close to the court, by the upper classes, and by the rural population. After this point, the minuet declined quite quickly among the upper class.

Sources of information about upperclass dance in the eighteenth century are mainly memoirs and diaries, and during the nineteenth century, the minuet was no longer mentioned in these. One such example of a diary from the beginning of the nineteenth century where the minuet is absent from the record is that of the Malla Montgomery-Silfverstolpe, composed between 1795 and 1830. She was born in 1782 and began to keep a diary when she was thirteen years old. Her memoirs were published in 1908 along with notes about her texts. Montgomery-Silfverstolpe attended countless events that included dancing, but she rarely mentioned which dances she danced. When dancing is discussed, the minuet was not one of those listed. Of course, we must be cautious about drawing firm conclusions from this, as it is difficult to know what has been omitted by the publication editors.

Some information about minuet dances in the upper class was published later, however. On one occasion, the minuet was danced at a golden wedding anniversary in Enköping in 1825 by the guests of honour—a seventy-year-old wife and her seventy-eight-year-old husband. The wife's niece wrote:

After taking coffee, they [musicians] played up to dance, which the old bridal couple opened themselves. Polska and minuets alternated with each other. The city mayor and the town's doctor stood out particularly in the later dance, which made me great pleasure.<sup>145</sup>

This upper-class party, as in the middle of the eighteenth century, included alternating polska and minuets. The ball was opened with a minuet danced only by the couple who were the most honoured among the company. Guests danced the minuet, which shows that it was still used when older people gathered. The niece thought the minuet 'made her great pleasure,' which could be interpreted to mean that she did not dance it herself.

In the rural environment, the minuet in Sweden was danced until the nineteenth century. Pehr Stenberg's autobiography once again serves as an important source. We have seen that he danced the minuet in different parts of Västerbotten during the 1770s and 1790s and that the minuet was used as far north as Torneå on the Finnish side. This continued into the nineteenth century. In December 1806, Stenberg described being in the wedding of some servants. There he danced 'above all minuets'.<sup>146</sup> We might interpret this to indicate that another type of dancing, in addition to the minuet, was also performed at this celebration.

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145 *Svenska Memoarer och Bref Utgifna av Henrik Schüek och Oscar Levertin*. Band X. Ur Clas Flemings papper (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers förlag, 1906), p. 164.

146 Stenberg, p. 432.

Minuet dancing sources from the nineteenth century are considerably fewer than those from the eighteenth century. Folklore narratives and archival material, which consists of answers to questionnaires, shows that the minuet was danced in some places into the 1830s and that memories of the minuet endured for the rest of the century.

In Småland, the 'very oldest' members of the community danced the minuet into the 1820s. This is evident from the notes of the farmer Lasses in Lassaberg (Lars Andersson, b. 1808) from Unnaryd. He described customs, including weddings, and seeing the minuet danced by the elders. Andersson wrote about the dance at the wedding:

Now finally, the so-called 'bride dance'. First, the bridal couple dance with each other, then the priest with the bride, next the bridegroom with the priest's wife, and then others, one after another. No one could avoid the bridal dance. If someone was unable to dance, he or she still had to walk around [the dancefloor] with the groom or the bride. This [custom] stretched as far as the ability of a child could permit [...] The oldest had a dance called 'minnewett'. It was quite ridiculous to see. I saw it once danced by persons of 70 to 80 years of age. It went exceptionally slowly because they would regularly make steps against each other.<sup>147</sup>

The bridal dance, a ceremonial dance, appears to have been danced by one pair at a time, until all the guests had danced. Andersson was a young man when he saw the minuet, and the dance seemed ridiculous to him. The couple seemed to him to make endless movements with their feet turned towards each other. From this account, we also see that this minuet was danced slowly.

From Västmanland, an account indicates that the minuet had fallen out of use in the 1820s because it describes a wedding where the bride danced a Polska as with the priest as the first dance. The bride danced a polska with the groom and, after that, the same dance with the groom's relatives. This record explicitly states that the minuet was hardly danced after 1830.<sup>148</sup> From this brief mention, we cannot determine whether the minuet had ever been the first dance at a wedding or used merely as a general dance in this community.

Nils Persson, from Vallkärra (north of Lund), recalled in 1940 that his mother had danced for him when he was a little boy, and his father had written down

147 Nils-Arvid Bringéus, *Unnarydsborna. Lasses i Lassaberg Anteckningar om folklivet i södra Unnaryd vid 1800-talets början*, Nordiska museets handlingar 68 (Stockholm: Nordiska museet, 1967), pp. 124–25, 150, 170; G. Djurklou, *Unnarboarnes seder och lif. Efter Lasse i Lassaberg Anteckningar* (Unnaryd: [n.pub.], 1874), p. 56.

148 Erik Bore, *Bärgmanslif i Början af 1800-Talet. Anteckningar från Nora och Lindes bärgslager*, Nyare bidrag till kännedom om de svenska landsmälen och svenskt folklif V.7 (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1891), p. 21.

the story. Dance researcher Börje Wallin in Helsingborg located the narrative. I reproduce it here:

My mother danced a dance for me when I was really small. She called it *Möllavillan*, and it was very ornate and delicate. She sang a particular melody to it too, but I do not remember it. However, she first walked out on the floor, so she got a lot of space. Then she put one leg behind the other and curtsied as the gentry used to do. Then she walked one step forward and one back, she like balancing or swaying. Then she walked a step with one foot, putting the other beside, one step with the other foot, put the other next to it, and so on. Then she walked around pretending to hold someone else, holding her hands high up in the air. Then she took a step to the side and the other foot past and then stopped. Then the same way in the other direction. Then to the right again and back. My dad wrote down these lines at old age, so I know more or less how it was. He said he had not seen anyone else than mom dancing this dance. After the steps to the side, she made the same step forward and then danced around again. Everything went very slowly and nicely. She stopped almost every step and looked around. I do not think there was more than this. At least, Dad did not remember more, and neither did I.<sup>149</sup>

Persson was born in Vallkärra in 1865, and his father, who documented the memory, was born in 1829. The mother whose dancing is described was born in 1840, so she would likely have learned the minuet in the 1850s, which shows that the minuet was still danced at that time. Alternatively, she may have learned the minuet in a dance school. The father had not danced the minuet, and he had not seen anyone other than his wife dancing it, so it follows that the minuet could not have been widely known. The mother's dance shared features with the ordinary minuet from 1700: she began dancing in the middle of the floor and made the traditional greetings, she followed the musical rhythm with its breaks, she danced around in the middle of the minuet with her arms up, and she turned in both directions.

The folk researcher Eva Vigström, who gathered information about the folklife in Skåne on behalf of the Nordic Museum in 1880, did not find any information about how the minuet was danced. Her conclusion is that: 'At this time, the minuet, here called *'melleveitt'*, fought its last fight against the intruding *anglås'*.<sup>150</sup>

149 The quote according to Börje Wallin's granddaughter Anna Björk.

150 Eva Vigström, 'Folkseder i Östra Göinge härad i Skåne', in *Bidrag till Vår Odling's Häfder*, ed. by Artur Hazelius, 2. Ur De Nordiska folkens lif 1 (Stockholm: Nordiska museet, 1881), pp. 49–74 (pp. 63–64).

## Mandelgren Describing and Documenting

Nils Månsson Mandelgren, a Swedish ethnologist (1813–99) born in the Väsby parish in Luggudde in Skåne, depicted the life of the local people in watercolours, drawings, and notes of various kinds; he even gave some information about dances. In an article from 1882, he explained how, in the 1820s, the minuet was one of the usual dances of the peasants at ordinary dance events. Mandelgren described Christmas parties in Luggudde and what was danced there:

The most commonly used dances were *slängpolskor*, waltz, and minuet, called the '*Möllevittten*' since seamen from Mölle fishing village introduced it. This last dance was a pantomime, in which a declaration of love was performed in an enjoyable manner. *Hallingen* was also danced, but much agility was required. In this dance or *polska*, the boy made high leaps and hit the heels together one or more times during the same jump, and when he turned his lady around, he sometimes threw his leg over her head. However, in the face of these daring movements, the beat of the dance must be carefully maintained.<sup>151</sup>

Mandelgren said that the most common dances were the '*slängpolska*, waltz, and minuet'. The lattermost was considered a pantomime because it seemed to involve the dancers making an amusing declaration of love. Coincidentally, the dance researcher Volker Saftien characterizes the nineteenth-century minuet in the same way, saying that it, more than in any other Baroque dance, suggests a subtle erotic proposal because it involves the couples' approach and retreat from one another and the couple turning along the Z-axis.<sup>152</sup>

The Mandelgren collection is located at the Folklife Archives of Lund University. Among its items is a 'register' of old dances that contains his vague description of the minuet. Judging by the elaborate handwriting typical of that time, the document was probably written around 1830, when Mandelgren worked as a decorative painter of his home village's farmhouses. Later, in about 1865 (to judge from the writing), he made various comments about dance. For example, he mentioned the '*polsk-menuett*', wrote that the '*Pålsk-Mölevitt* is first *Polska* and then *Mölevit*', and stated 'After the Minuet, they always danced a *Polska*'. In my view, the latest of these may refer to the custom that the minuet

151 Nils Månsson Mandelgren, 'Julen hos allmogen i Kullen i Skåne på 1820-talet', in *Bidrag till Vår odlings häfder* 2, ed. by Artur Hazelius. Ur de nordiska folkens lif 1 (Stockholm: Nordiska museet, 1882), pp. 1–19 (pp. 17–18). From his manuscript in Folklife Archives in Lund, it appears that the text is written in early youth and that he processed the long-awaited.

152 Volker Saftien, *Ars Saltandi. Der Europäische Gesellschaftstanz im Zeitalter der Renaissance und des Barock* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1994), p. 353.

was danced as the ceremonial dance at a wedding and was followed by the polska. When listing a dance repertoire on a paper marked 1865, he mentioned 'Möllevetten (minuet)'. From Mandelgren's notes, I glean the impression that two types of minuets had been used in Skåne.<sup>153</sup>

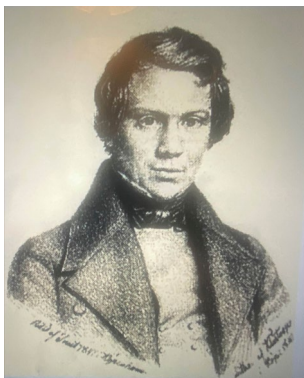


Fig. 5.28 Nils Månsson Mandelgren as a young man (1845). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mandelgren\\_1845.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mandelgren_1845.jpg), public domain.

Later still, Mandelgren showed more substantial interest in the minuet. During the 1860s, he had translated from German into Swedish two descriptions of how the minuet was performed, how it had originated, and that it was a court dance. One of the original texts he utilized was the first edition of *Katechismus der Tanzkunst* (1863) by Bernhard Klemm. The other was *Grundsätze der Aesthetische Bildung des Menschlichen Körpers* by Oskar Guttmann. Mandelgren did not indicate a year for this work, but its first edition was published in 1865. From both books, he also copied drawings that represented the minuet. Whether he traced these or redrew them freehand cannot be determined, but the pictures look very much the same.<sup>154</sup> It is also unclear whether Mandelgren had already done this translation work when his article was published in 1882. Perhaps he had planned to publish his notes on the minuet in his home region.

<sup>153</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 101–5; Mandelgren's collection, Folklife Archives (LUF), Lund University: 366, 362b, 363, 363b, 364. Thank you to the archive manager Göran Sjögård and Anna Björk at the Svenskt visarkiv for the production of the material.

<sup>154</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 101–5. Mandelgren's collection: Arkivnr. Mand 2:12–76:76, 2:12–78:78, 2:12–79:79.



## Evidence from Other Archives

Many people around Sweden held memories of the minuet in the twentieth century, as is evident from data in other archives. Some memories were collected by soliciting responses to questionnaires; others were recorded in some other context. The Dialekt and Folkminnesarkivet (ULMA) sent questionnaires to people in Uppsala in 1932 and the Nordic Museum (NM) to other groups during the 1940s.<sup>155</sup> Some respondents reported what they remembered of the dance. Others recounted the dance repertoire of older times. Some people recalled that the minuet had been danced as late as the 1870s.

From the province of Skåne, Olof Eriksson (b. 1883) replied to the questionnaire with a description of a situation in which he had been involved:

Minuet, I have seen dancing as *Äredans* [dance of honour], here in Höganäs 1919 (or around that time). It happened at a farewell party for the old boss of Höganäs. The participants in the minuet were in costumes, and the dance was performed immediately after dinner. The honour was well placed, and the couples repeatedly expressed their reverence for him during the dance.

When Eriksson explained that the dancers were costumed, he probably meant that they were dressed in eighteenth-century clothes and that the entire event mimicked a ball from Louis XIV's time. The boss, the 'target for the honour,' could have the position of 'king'. I do not think that people were wearing folk costumes. Although his narrative is not clear on this point, it shows, importantly, that the minuet was still danced in the early twentieth century. It is hard to know if the minuet had been a current tradition until then, or if it was taught by a dancing master especially for the occasion. I think that the latter is the more likely.

Many people replied to questionnaires from the province of Västergötland. One person told us that the minuet did not occur at the turn of the century, 'but the old people spoke of it as a mansion dance, the youth could not dance it'. Another person mentioned that it was danced occasionally, and a third wrote that at weddings, they danced first a bridal polska and then the minuet. A fourth person listed the repertoire and reported that, in the past, they danced the 'Waltz, *Slängpolska*, English, *Rill* and Minuet'. We will recall that the poet

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<sup>155</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 105–7; Swedish Institute for Language and Folklore (ULMA), Uppsala, 11151a, 14831, 2176: II, 3042, 35 222, 6659, 8192, kort 2, kort 5, kort 282; Nordic Museum (NM), Stockholm, NM III Danser I, NM III Danser 2, NM III Danser 3, NM III Danser 4, NM III Danser EU, NM nr 44.

Johan Runius, born in Västergötland in 1679, described ‘making S on the floor’ when he wrote about the minuet in the early 1700s.

In the province of Bohuslän, a woman (b. 1880) wrote to say that the ‘Polska, minuet, and *rellen* or *Schottis* were often danced’, while another wrote that the minuet was danced in the 1860s and 1870s. A third person said:

The minuet has not totally disappeared, it was danced only two to three decades ago. It was a so-called couple dance and was considered a nice dance. It appeared on distinguished balls and more prestigious events, the term ‘millevitt’ was used.

This account, from the 1940s, may indicate that the dance was still in use after 1910.

In the province of Blekinge, a man (b. 1862) said that the minuet was not common but was well known. It was danced in the 1880s mostly among the gentry. He had seen it danced and explained:

A beautiful dance, this couple danced it in pairs as well as solo, during the solo dance, the lady held up the long dress with her hands, at her knee height, during which her feet kept the beat moving forward and backed against her partner, as I was said, a beautiful dance and I can not describe all of its movement.

We have earlier noted from Tersmeden’s diaries that the minuet was a very usual dance in Karlskrona in Blekinge in the 1700s.

From the province of Uppland, one respondent wrote that ‘During the 1870s the minuet was danced’. I have previously described evidence from Uppland about minuet dances from the 1700s, in the upper class, and among the peasants, for example, from the Uppsala region and from Vaddö.

In the province of Värmland, a man answered the 1932 questionnaire with a list of the present dance repertoire: ‘Older dances like waltz, Polska, Jössehärads Polska, Polka, renländer, mazurka, and minuet. They dance, however, increasingly modern dances like jazz, *jumpa*, and foxtrot’. A second account from this region confirmed that the minuet was danced there into the 1900s.

In the province of Småland, a woman (b. 1881) wrote that the ‘[m]inuet was probably danced by the “previous” generation, in a gentry environment, I often heard of that dance as a child, but cannot remember it’.

From the province of Västerbotten, a response to the 1932 questionnaire stated that the dance repertoire in Degerfors was the ‘Polska, Waltz, Schottis, English, Kadriļ, and Minuet’. In Norsjö, the dances that occurred at Christmas were the quadrille, *tre man engelska*, minuet, and *Hamburger*. From Vännäs, a

person wrote about a wedding: 'After dinner, the dance took place. Earlier they danced, among other things, 'minuette, and "kadrilj" [quadrille]', furthermore the bear dance and the lapp dance appeared'.

In the province of Norrbotten, it was reported that the youth in Överluleå danced the waltz, hambo, polska, polkett, kadrilj, minuet and foxtrot. From Edefors, one wrote that the old dances were the minuet, *stopp*, and English. In Nederluleå, it was mentioned that the first dance at a wedding in the 1840s was a kadrilj, danced by four couples. Other dances that were listed from Nederluleå were the waltz, kadrilj, hamburger, minuet, and *angläsvals*. From Norrbotten, we can add the information from Pehr Stenberg's diaries that the minuet was danced in Torneå on the Finnish side in the 1770s.

Generally speaking, the minuet in Sweden seems to have been more viable in the northern parts of the country than in the southern regions. If we think about the fact that the Gulf of Bothnia over the years has been a uniting link between Sweden and Finland, we might see a connection with the viable minuet in the province of Ostrobothnia in Finland.

## Concluding Remarks

The minuet reached its zenith in Sweden and the eastern part of Finland in the 1700s. The minuet is not referred to as 'new' in any source: the minuet had been danced long before it was mentioned in the archives. The minuet took on different roles based on the social order of those participating. For the upper class, it was partly ceremonial—a dance used for opening their balls according to a ranking order—and partly used as a general dance at the ball. Among the peasantry, or among the rural population, the minuet was also partly a ceremonial dance—appearing as the first one in the wedding—and partly a general dance. It can be noted that the minuet was danced in Sweden from the late 1600s until the nineteenth century and was still known in the twentieth century.

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# 6. The Minuet in Finland after 1800

*Gunnel Biskop*

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Until 1809, Finland was part of Sweden. After the war between Sweden and Russia 1808–09, Finland became an autonomous grand principality under the Russian Empire until 1917, when Finland became independent. Until 1863, Swedish was the only official language in Finland, but since that year both Finnish and Swedish have been national languages. The majority of the Finns speaks Finnish. The Swedish-speaking population mainly reside on the coasts—along the Gulf of Bothnia and the Gulf of Finland—and toward the west in Ostrobothnia, southwest Turku and Åland, and southern Nyland (in Finnish: Uusimaa). Among the Swedish-speaking population, the minuet was and, in some parts of the country, continues to be a vital dance. By contrast, the minuet among the Finnish-speaking population was of lesser significance and fell out of use. In the following chapter, I will discuss the minuet among these language groups separately.<sup>1</sup>

## The Minuet as a Common Dance among the Swedish-speaking Population in Finland

I will begin with the minuet of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. Focusing specifically on the minuet of ‘ordinary people’ or the rural population, I will distinguish between the minuet as a common dance in society and the minuet as a ceremonial dance at weddings.

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1 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om Menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svensksbygder—under trehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015). (*The Minuet—The Loved Dance: About the minuet in the Nordic region—especially in the Swedish-speaking area of Finland—for three hundred and fifty years*). The text is mainly based on a chapter in the book.

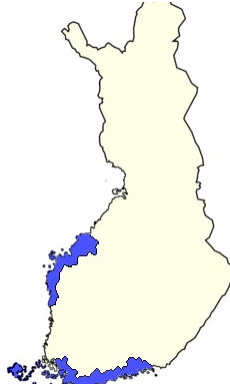


Fig. 6.1 The Swedish language area in Finland marked in blue. In the west Ostrobothnia, in the southwest Åland and Åboland, in the south Nyland. Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Svenskfinland.png>, CC BY-SA 3.0.

In Sweden, the minuet began to fall out of use among the upper class in the early 1800s, and the situation was the same in Finland. In Finland, this is shown in detailed diaries where many dances are mentioned, but not minuets. However, the dance teachers continued to have the minuet on their repertoire for a long time. In 1805 a dancing master at The Royal Opera in Stockholm, G. C. Drellström, arrived in Turku and taught 'minuets, quadrilles, waltzes, anglaises, and ballets and solo dances' in the city and the countryside. Some dancing masters had minuets in their repertoire, insisting that learning helped achieve a good body posture. A German dance teacher Adolf Meyer taught the minuet in addition to modern dances in 1835. An Estonian dance teacher Caroline Tyrong mentioned four years later, in 1839, that she taught the minuet and usual dances. She specifically taught children to dance. A Prussian dance teacher Theodor Georges taught in Borgå for a month 'Kachucha, Polka, Mazurka, Redova, Contre Dance, Minuet, Vals, etc' during his trip to St. Petersburg in 1849.<sup>2</sup>

Although the minuet was no longer a common dance among the upper class, the upper class could still dance the minuet in the nineteenth century, even as late as in the 1850s. One example is from Zacharias Topelius in Nykarleby, who wrote of dancing minuets and polskas at weddings of ordinary people in 1840. According to his account, older men and women in Nykarleby could still dance the minuet until the wee hours of the morning. Another example comes from Western Nyland, where the upper class at Fagervik danced the minuet in 1859.<sup>3</sup>

2 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 111, *Åbo Tidning*, 31 August 1805, 4 September 1805; *Helsingfors Tidningar*, 12 September 1835; 4 September 1839; *Borgå Tidning*, 16 June 1849.

3 Gunnel Biskop, *Zachris Topelius i dansens virvlar* (Vasa/Helsingfors: Finlands svenska folkmusikinstitut /Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 1998), pp. 132–33; Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 111.



Fig. 6.2 Peasant wedding in Ostrobothnia in Finland, c. 1808. Watercolour by C.P. Elfström. The Finnish Heritage Agency, Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.1F90D360E232F5D63D90BE41B6A1E749>, CC BY 4.0.

The collapse of the minuet's popularity took place throughout Europe, although in Germany, for example, attempts were made to revive it at the end of the nineteenth century. According to a Finnish newspaper, German dance teachers had already taken the first steps and made a publication in which the teachers were invited to work on reviving the minuet and gavott, which had already been taken up by the German imperial court. But, the text continued:

However, a simplification of these dances is predicted since, in their old condition, our dance audience would consider them tiresome, stiff, and too challenging to learn. The minuet that has been proposed is 'menuett à la reine', but with the change that the steps, which in the old form of the dance would form a Z, are exchanged, due to the large space their execution requires, for a single traverse with a change of place.<sup>4</sup>

The German court began to dance the minuet again. In Finland, this resurgence did not occur, however; the same belief—that the steps were challenging to learn has been—is seen throughout the Nordic region.

Among the rural population, the minuet has been danced in all parts of Swedish-speaking Finland. As an ordinary dance, the minuet was danced at everyday dance events and weddings after the ceremonial dances when all the wedding guests were allowed to dance. For many years, the minuet has been featured in popular tradition in Ostrobothnia in Vörå–Oravais–Munsala–Jeppo–Nykarleby, and in Lappfjärd and Tjock. In these regions, many minuets were also danced as ceremonial dances at weddings. In other parts of Ostrobothnia—from Närpes to Korsholm and from Pedersöre to Karleby—as well as in Nyland, the archipelago of Turku, and Åland the minuets fell mostly out of use in the

4 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 111; *Helsingfors Aftonblad*, 31 October 1893.

1860s and 70s; however, it did remain in prominent use in some regions until the 1890s.

## The 'Table End' and Its Meaning

As a part of the minuet dance formation, Finnish-Swedish descriptions often mention 'table end', which comes from the wedding context and refers to the table behind which the bride and bridegroom sat at their wedding. The minuet is danced in a longways formation, with women and men opposite each other. The couple who stood closest to the bride's table were called 'table-end couple', and the 'table-end' man had a role in leading the dance. He was required to know at which point of the music the dance should begin, which, according to a male informant in Oravais in Ostrobothnia in the 1990s, was the hardest thing about the whole minuet. The leader, also, was supposed to decide how many times one changed places with one's partner before one proceeded to the middle figure. The length of the minuet was not specified in the vernacular tradition. The 'table-end' man would also know when to give a signal to indicate the figure change. These signals varied in different regions. In Lappträsk in eastern Nyland, one said 'good midday' in Nagu; in Turku archipelago, men raised their hand; and in Ostrobothnia they stamped or clapped their hands. In some parishes in Ostrobothnia, the men made a series of stampings before clapping. To know when the stampings were to begin, different signals, again, were used depending on the village: sometimes it was a single stamp by the leader, in others it was by all or some of the men clasping hands.

After the turnaround in the middle of the minuet, the dance continued as before. To know when the dance would end, the signals were repeated. In Lappträsk, one said 'good evening', and, in Nagu, men raised their hand again. In Ostrobothnia, the sign was given by more stamping and clapping. There were also different ways to finish the minuet. Couples could pull down their joined hands twice before releasing them, or they could make a circle with the hands.

How long the music commonly played while couples were setting up, before the dance started, varied. From Vörå, it was reported that the musicians played the first reprisal twice, prompting the pairs to stand up. From Oravais, it appears that sometimes the music played longer and sometimes a shorter time before the dance began. In the 1940s, the melody was played once through. From Purmo, a statement suggests that dancers were to get in place while the music played first reprisals. In Jeppo, one found one's place in the line before the minuet music started and left the dancefloor before the Polska music started. From Tjock and Lappfjärd, accounts suggest that dancers moved to the floor while the musicians played through the melody.

If there were many people participating in the minuet and several longways formations were needed, there was still only one man in the first row who led the dance. This model suggests that there was a kind of ranking in minuet dancing—one based not on social position but the ability to dance. When the minuet was followed by a polska, the leader decided how long it was danced in each direction and when it was supposed to end, stamping as a signal.<sup>5</sup>



Fig. 6.3 The following images (6.3, 6.4a, 6.4b, and 6.4c) are a unique suite of images from a wedding in Vörå in Ostrobothnia in Finland in 1925. Photographs by Erik Hägglund. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS). In the first image, a wedding procession is seen. The bride has just been picked from the yard where she has been dressed. (ota135\_19160), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_ota135\\_19160?sid=3078898293](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_ota135_19160?sid=3078898293), CC BY 4.0.



Fig. 6.4a The bride and groom. (ota135\_19137), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_ota135\\_19137?sid=3078898293](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_ota135_19137?sid=3078898293), CC BY 4.0.

5 Yngvar Heikel, *VI Folkdans B Dansbeskrivningar. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 268 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1938), pp. ix, 415–17; Gunnel Biskop, ‘Små, små steg i Oravais. Om menuett och andra danser i äldre tid’, in *Orvas 2004*, Oravais Hembygdsförening (2004), pp. 42–47; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 112–16.



Fig. 6.4b The wedding guests gathered in the courtyard. (SLS 865 B 263), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B++263](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B++263), CC BY 4.0.



Fig. 6.4c The minuet is danced, in two lines. On the left is the bride and groom, with the bride wearing a tall crown looking straight into the camera. The young girls in the row on the right are wearing folk costumes that were reconstructed in the village some decades earlier. (ota135\_19159), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_ota135\\_19159?sid=3078898293](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_ota135_19159?sid=3078898293), CC BY 4.0.

## Polska after the Minuet

It was mentioned above that the minuet was followed by a polska. This latter dance will appear many times in my discussion, so there is a reason to briefly outline the phenomenon of what is called a dance-pairing. In Ostrobothnia, Finland, the polska is danced after the minuet even today, and we saw the same pairing above in discussion of the minuet in Sweden-Finland in the eighteenth century. The tradition of dancing the two dances together as first dances at weddings is longstanding in the lower classes. I call this the ceremonial dance or dances.

As a common dance of the upper class in Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Norway in the 1700s, and in Nyland in Finland, also in the nineteenth century, these dances were not paired together. Instead, the minuet and the polska were two separate dances that were danced independently of each other, even if they were danced at the same event. On the other hand, among the rural population,

the minuet could be followed by a polska. For example, this pairing of ceremonial dances is what we see during weddings in Sweden, Finland, and Denmark from the mid-eighteenth century.

During the ceremonial dances at weddings of ordinary people, two dances were danced. When the polska followed the minuet in the ceremony, there was a natural break between the dances, when the bride was handed over to the following person who would dance with her, or when the gift would be given over to her. These involved a process of 'handing over'—both the bride to the following person who would dance with her and a gift to the bride, such as a silver spoon or money. Originally, two polskas were danced in this case, and the handover took place between the two polskas. When the minuet became popular in the latter part of the eighteenth century, it took the position of the first polska, while one would still dance the second polska as before.

There is some evidence that a polska did not always follow the minuet in the ceremonial dances. This might be the case when the priest danced with the bride. The priest, who had wedded the couple, did not give any gift. The priest had another function: he had, according to popular beliefs, a protective effect against evil beings who might attack the bride, who were thought to be exposed to evil spirits.

In the area of Ostrobothnia with a Finnish-speaking population, the tradition of giving the bride a gift in the form of money during an intermission between the two dances persisted into the 1840s. Even after this custom faded, however, the minuet and polska continued to be danced one after the other. We often see in vernacular culture that customs and practices survive for a long time, even when people cease to remember or never knew their meaning. These dance traditions survived at weddings—and especially within the ceremonial dances—before they were utterly forgotten.

Today, minuets and polskas are danced consecutively, almost as one dance, in Ostrobothnia, a tradition which began in the 1950s when folk-dance groups began to perform the minuet. The intention was to prevent the audience from applauding after the minuet.

The various polskas that were danced after the minuet were structurally different. In the northern parts of Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, two couples typically danced together with crossed arms and making polska steps clockwise and anti-clockwise. The number of couples who danced together could vary. In the southern parts of Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia as well as in Nagu in the Turku archipelago, the polska was danced both in couples and in big circles with several dance patterns following each other.<sup>6</sup>

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6 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 269–73.





Fig. 6.5 The men in Ostrobothnia in Finland are perhaps on their way to a dance evening, 1922. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. Ostrobothnian tradition archive 135. SLS 865. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_%25C3%2596TA+135+foto+20093](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_%25C3%2596TA+135+foto+20093), CC BY 4.0.

## The Minuet—the Favourite Dance—in Ostrobothnia

A schoolteacher named Johan Hagman (b. 1858) from Munsala, wrote a colourful description of a common dance event in Christmastime in Ostrobothnia in the 1880s. He depicted popular customs and practices, giving a clear picture of a regular dance event with coffee, alcohol, food, and dance. The dance lasted for three days. Hagman wrote:

On Christmas day, nothing was done. One went to church, looked pious, ate oven porridge and pancake for dinner, and slept well all afternoon. But two days later, just after dinner, one saw one crowd after the other, young boys and girls, go to the gathering place, the girls dressed in checked woollen dresses and muslin scarfs, the boys in their best holiday clothes with feathers in the cap, long-necked pipes in their mouths and the tassels of the tobacco pouches hanging a half cubit out of the pocket. Terrible congestion soon arose in the cottage. It all resembled a fat dead mass, each stood there and looked stupid, and the boys whiffed with 'feel on the tobacco' mixed with lavender flowers so that the cabin was filled with clouds of smoke.

The youths hired a cottage for the dance event and asked two musicians to perform. The place was crowded, and after the musicians had rosined their bows and tuned their strings:

One, two, three, a fresh minuet starts. Now the rigidity is gone, now there is life and movement in the mass, and in the wildest hurry, anyone, who can use his elbows to get to the table end, grabs a girl and stays in a line. They stand in two long rows against each other, the girls in one, the boys

in the other, and wait for a suitable stroke of a violin to start dancing. So—a stamp of the boys, a swing with the arms, and—the minuet is in full swing. When this is over, a roaring polska follows, then a new minuet with a polska and so on in infinitely [...] one minuet and polska takes over another with a lot of stamps and handclaps. Those who do not have room to dance spend their time with jokes and cheerful conversation and express their opinion either admiring or criticizing any of the dancers. Due to the heavy congestion, it is almost impossible to stand still. One needs to move, and the whole mass is moving, and everyone is pushed forward like cogs in a wheel.<sup>7</sup>

The quote mentioned that the boys ‘at the wildest speed’ would reach the table end, honorary place. It was an honour to stand at the table end. The minuet was the favourite dance in Munsala, followed by the polska, but no one knew or remembered why.

Even in Vörå, the minuet was the most beloved dance at the same time. A sensual description of the minuet as a common dance at a wedding in Vörå was included in a novel by Hugo Ekhammar (b. 1880). Ekhammar was born in Helsinki, but he had seen people dancing the minuet when he was the principal of Vörå Folk High School 1907–08. He did not write about how the dance started at the wedding but started his account at the point at which everyone got to dance.

Ekhammar wrote enthusiastically about how the cottage had been decorated as a wedding hall as well as about the bride and the common dance:

The walls were covered with white sheets, the oven with white paper. There were two, three large mirrors on each wall, which reflected the moving mass on the floor. In the middle of the ceiling appeared the wedding cloth, made of a white sheet and a black side cloth inside, angled with this and with the fringes hanging down as well as from the sheet. Three wide-screen lamps hung on the ceiling and threw a clear shine over the tightly packed, sweaty human mass who danced and hopped a minuet in the crowd, partly stood on the floor and on the wall-mounted benches, where some also sat down in holes, formed between those who stood around them.

The tall crown of silver and golden brass on the proudly arrayed bride’s head made her the tallest of all, and taller, jollier, wilder than the other dancing women, she jumped and stepped towards her friend after the tones of the two musicians’ fiercely rubbed strings. To meet her, the groom stepped proudly and smiling in the dancing men’s line, which

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7 Johan Hagman, ‘Bilder ur folklifwet. Ungdomsnöjen’, *Wasa Tidning*, 15 July 1881; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 112–13.

rolled back and forth, turned to the side and returned, met and crossed over through the rolling women's lines and turned and continued in a constant wave-like motion. At a particular moment, the men stamped fiercely with their boots and clapped their hands with a huge bang. The floor swung violently with the dance, and the door to the potato store was kicked off by a heel or toe and must be guarded so that no one would fall into the black depth. The minuet ended with a swirling polska, danced in groups of four persons so that the brilliant brass lilies in the breasts seemed united to a golden wreath. [After the polska, other dances were danced.] But then, again, one wanted to dance the minuet, the dear dance, and again the men's and women's lines rolled against each other, crossed over, and swelled back to meet each other again.<sup>8</sup>

From Ekhammar's description, it is apparent that minuets were popular in Vörå in the 1910s. One also gets a good picture of how the dance progressed with participants crossing over to the opposite sides of the formation and of the men's great stamping and clapping, which signalled different stages of the dance. Ekhammar called the minuet 'the loved dance'.



Fig. 6.6 Musicians in Vörå in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1922. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. Ostrobothnian tradition archive 135. SLS 865. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_ota135\\_19707](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_ota135_19707), CC BY 4.0.

Ekhammar also wrote that the bride 'jumped' and 'stepped towards' her partner, movements that can be interpreted as pertaining to the minuet. When the dance researcher Yngvar Heikel documented dances in Munsala in 1927, he learned

8 Hugo Ekhammar, *Det norrfångna landet* (Helsingfors: Söderström & Co Förlagsaktiebolag, 1920); Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 117–18.

that the minuet was danced with fast hopping steps. In Jeppo, we see the same: it was stated that one hopped in the minuet. People talked about the 'hop minuet,' and the hop steps took place during counts 5–6 and 1–2, while at 3 and 4 one took walking steps, the whole minuet through.<sup>9</sup> In Jeppo, dancers even hopped in place before the minuet is started. According to an informant I interviewed in the 1990s, the minuet with hop steps was more used during the first years of the twentieth century than in the 1920s. According to another informant, 'the old' had said that they began to dance with hop steps in the minuet in the 1920s. In the 1930s, people often danced, or 'stepped out' the first half of the minuet and hopped the other half. Professor Lars Huldén, a well-known writer who was born and raised in Munsala, confirms this. He wrote, 'In Munsala, the minuet was often danced with hop steps during the other half of the dance, after the turning with hand in hand, with the order of the steps right, right, left, right, left, left'. This same phenomenon, wherein participants hop-stepped the second half of the minuet after the turning in the middle of the dance, is still practised by Jeppo dancers today.

The popularity of the minuet was witnessed by Yngvar Heikel, who was invited to a wedding in Jeppo in 1927, during his dance collection fieldwork. Heikel wrote that the minuet was so dominant that almost every dance was a minuet or polska. He also described the beginning of the minuet: 'Immediately when the music started, some thirty pairs rushed and set themselves in the line, because everyone wanted to get as close to the bridal couple as possible'. The bride always danced at the table end, and everyone tried to get to that direction.

In Kvevlax and Maxmo, the minuet was danced until the twentieth century. In Kvevlax, a source in 1932 stated that one danced the minuet, quadrille, *slätvals* [smooth waltz], polska, and singing dances at Christmastime events. Another informant (b. 1877) gave the following information about the common dance at a wedding in Kvevlax:

On the second afternoon at wedding those young people danced the minuet opposite to each other who had flirted with each other the night before [...]. This dance was followed with great curiosity by all. One would like to see who had flirted with each other and maybe become a couple.

In Maxmo, the minuet was also danced at the same time and is said to have forgotten by 1924.<sup>10</sup>

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9 Yngvar Heikel, *VI Folkdans B Dansbeskrivningar. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 268 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1938), pp. 30–31.

10 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 118–21; Yngvar Heikel, 'På folkdansforskning', in *Brage Årsskrift 1926–1930* (Helsingfors: Föreningen Brage, 1931), pp. 46–53; Heikel,



Fig. 6.7 Schoolgirls in Tjock in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1907. When Otto Andersson was on a music recording trip in Tjock in 1904, he was surprised that the people then still used the old costume. Photograph by Ina Roos. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.CA8EAA998D5E25E69490C69C7AEFC234>, CC BY 4.0.

In southern Ostrobothnia in Lappfjärd and Tjock, the minuet was the main dance when a folk music researcher Otto Andersson (1879–1969) documented folk music in the region in 1904. Andersson took part in a local dance event called ‘oppsito’ in Tjock, and he was astonished over its structure and repertoire. A significant number of the girls were dressed in local costumes, which was still a common practice in Tjock.



Fig. 6.8a People in Tjock in Ostrobothnia in Finland in harvest work, 1890. Photograph by Ina Roos. The Ostrobothnian tradition archive. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+146\\_ota146+foto+459](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+146_ota146+foto+459), CC BY 4.0.



Fig. 6.8b Adolf von Becker, *Dance Rehearsal* (1893). Finnish National Gallery, [https://finna.fi/Record/fng\\_nyblin.WSOY\\_S\\_IV\\_4-70,\\_25](https://finna.fi/Record/fng_nyblin.WSOY_S_IV_4-70,_25), CC BY-SA 3.0.

Andersson was also surprised that older people also participated in ‘*oppsito*’ and that the participants had brought something to eat that was shared during the evening. Moreover, he was astonished by the dance repertoire: ‘the strange thing about it was that there were almost no other dances than minuets’. He continued:

After the first minuet, I was expecting something else. But new minuets followed one after the other, only occasionally alternating with other dances. When I wondered if the dance continued like this only to demonstrate the minuets for me, I was told that ‘*oppsitona*’ used to go to just this way in this village. If the dances were somewhat uniform—though captivating enough by the style’s rarity—then the melodies were varied. The musician here, like elsewhere, puts an honor in favour of a rich repertoire.<sup>11</sup>

Andersson, born on Åland where the minuet had been discontinued, felt that the minuets were ‘somewhat uniform’. It is hard to say whether he meant they were similar or repetitious. The latter is more likely since he specifically comments that the melodies were varied. As an ‘outsider,’ he may not know that the minuet is danced in particular ways in particular villages. It is also interesting

11 Otto Andersson, *VI A 1 Äldre dansmelodier. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 400 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1963), pp. LV–LVI; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 120–21.

that Andersson, who was travelling to record folk music and subsequently saw the youngsters dance did not mention anything about the polska having been danced after the minuet. Thus, his accounts suggests that the polska was not danced after the minuet at everyday dance events.



Fig. 6.9 A wealthy peasant's farm in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1910–1960. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B 473. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+473](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+473), CC BY 4.0.

In the northern parts of Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, in Karleby, Kronoby, Nedervetil, Terjärv, Larsmo, and the town of Gamlakarleby, the minuet was common until the 1870s, when the *purpuri* [potpourri] became the main dance. A woman (b. 1839) from Kronoby explained that at everyday dance events, in the mid-1800s, participants danced ‘all night, polska and minuet’. About the common dance at weddings, she said:

The first day, girls and boys danced ‘with money’ with the bride, the other day, old men and women. One danced the polska — when the bride often wore out a couple of shoes — and minuet. When this dance ended, the bride would dance with goblets, big silver cups with drink, and sprinkle it on the guests [...]. One danced mostly polska and minuet — not purpuri.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the minuet was replaced by the *purpuri*. In 1893 in Kronoby, it was said that ‘in the past polskas and minuets were danced, but now the most common is purpuri, a dance with 6–8 figures, then polka and schottische’. Similar information comes from Terjärv, where the *purpuri* was replacing the ‘minett’ in the 1870s. In Gamlakarleby, it was said in the 1880s that the minuet had previously been the most common dance. Although the minuet was no longer danced there when Yngvar Heikel collected dances in the 1920s, there were people in the region who still knew it.



Fig. 6.10 Interior from a farmhouse in Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland. Photograph by Valter W. Forsblom (1916). SLS 269\_19. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+269\\_SLS+269\\_19](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+269_SLS+269_19), CC BY 4.0.

In Larsmo, the minuet was still danced in the late 1800s, but the *purpuri* eventually became the main dance. The minuet had been introduced in Larsmo at the end of the eighteenth century at the latest. This is evidenced by Eric Gustaf Ehrström's diary from 1811, which I shall examine in more detail in connection with the minuet's various forms. In 1929, a female informant in Larsmo (b. 1846) explained that, at the wedding, the dance began with what was called 'rosan', and minuets were danced later. She wrote:

But after the *rosan* there was common dance, *purpuri*, *polkamazurka*, and waltz until the evening meal [...]. On the third day, the closest relatives and acquaintances enjoyed themselves. They danced *polska* and minuets, the bride dancing with the groom's father and the groom with the bride's mother. All the old ones were on the move.

The 'rosan' was the initial part of the first *purpuri* at the wedding, and only it appeared in the first *purpuri*. It was danced only by the young people who made up the wedding party—the *pällhållare* [bridesmaids and groomsmen]. The minuet was still danced, but, interestingly, the dance of the bride and the groom's father and the groom and the bride's mother did not take place until the third day of the wedding celebration.

In central Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, especially in the region surrounding Vasa, the minuet disappeared earlier than elsewhere in this region. In the Replot archipelago, for instance, the minuet fell out of use as early as in the 1830s. Carl Johan Roos (b. 1815), who was the priest of Replot 1855–79, wrote in 1872 about weddings: 'The waltz has not yet become common and the minuet, this solemn dance, has disappeared more than fifty years ago. The wild *polska* keeps its place from the beginning to the end'. Roos was born in Kristinestad,



near to Lappfjärd and Tjock, so he knew what kind of dance the minuet was. When he spoke of the ‘solemn dance,’ he would probably have experienced the minuet as the first dance at a wedding in his native city. An early twentieth-century folklore researcher in Repolot, Wilhelm Sjöberg, also stated that, in the 1890s, the minuet no longer occurred in the region around Vasa.<sup>12</sup>



Fig. 6.11 Folk dancers in Helsinki perform a minuet from Vörå in Ostrobothnia in 1932. The man to the left dances at the ‘end of the table’ and has the leading role in the minuet. Photograph by Rafael Roos. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.

In Pedersöre, Purmo, Esse, and Vörå, the people danced minuets up until the twentieth century; and in Nykarleby, Jeppo, Munsala, Oravais, as well as in Lappfjärd and Tjock, they continued almost into the present. To these parishes, I will return with regard to the ceremony of weddings, where the minuet had a significant role.



Fig. 6.12a and Fig. 6.12b Tradition bearers from Munsala in Ostrobothnia in Finland have dressed in folk costumes to present their minuet and polska in Stockholm in 1987. Photographs by Stina Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.

12 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 116–22; Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland (SLS) archival material in Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 318; Carl Johan Roos, ‘Frieri och bröllop i Repolot’, *Budkavlen*, 1 (1925), 9–16.

## The Minuet as a Common Dance in Nyland

The minuet has been danced in all Nyland parishes, and some examples are highlighted here. As stated earlier, the minuet was usually called ‘minett’ in this locale. The diaries of the Priest Samuel Ceder (b. 1779) contain several pieces of information about the minuet between 1796 and 1804, in Turku and in Nyland. Ceder was the son of a farmer who lived outside Uusikaupunki in Western Finland. He attended Åbo Cathedral school in 1794 and then continued studying at the Åbo Academy University (Akademy in Turku). In Turku, he went to the dance school led by Fredrik Forsmark, the city dancing master, who we encountered above at Haapaniemi War School. Ceder graduated from the Academy in 1804 and was ordained a priest in Borgå the same year.

Ceder explained that, in 1796, when he was 17, he had been at a wedding in the countryside. There were many people at the wedding, among them the daughter of a wealthy merchant from Uusikaupunki, with whom he danced the minuet. He thus already knew the minuet when he came to Turku, enrolling in the dance school there specifically to learn more ‘modern’ dances. In his diary, Ceder said in 1803 that ‘I began learning the solo steps for the first time, as well as perfecting me in the ordinary steps’. The quadrille was the primary dance in Turku, according to his record. In February 1803, he probably attended dance lessons twice a day since he noted: ‘2 quadrilles in the morning and 2 in the afternoon’. On different occasions, he had danced ‘9 quadrilles’ or ‘eleven quadrilles’. In Turku, the minuet was on the decline.



Fig. 6.13 During a dance evening in Helsinki in 2019, the participants have fun dancing the minuet from Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland, with hops.  
Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © Gunnel Biskop.

In the spring of 1804, Ceder moved to Helsinge north of Helsinki to take up his position as priest. From here, he visited different villages. In the autumn, he recorded that he had danced the minuet. On 10 October, he attended a wedding, writing that he had danced ‘a minuet with mademoiselle Fredrika

and a quadrille with mademoiselle Walberg'. The next day he performed two marriages at the same event: one of the grooms was a dragoon and the other a farmworker. Ceder was invited to wed and dance. He stayed at the wedding until six o'clock in the morning, noting that 'everyone moved to Sonaby, I also wanted to enjoy myself'. The wedding was celebrated on two different farms. Because he had been invited 'to wed and dance', I deduce that he probably danced the first dance with the bride.

On Christmas day 1804, Ceder was invited to a dinner at the home of Lieutenant Sahlstedt, where he danced some quadrilles and minuets. Ceder was not married and wanted to find himself a wife. The lieutenant's sister, who sat next to him during dinner, looked like his 'ideal girl'; however, 'She did not invite me to the minet—but a lieutenant Lind had the luck two or three times—I danced with her a quadrille—maybe a minet as well—at 11 I went back home'. The lady was the partner who was supposed to invite to minuets. Probably, on this occasion, the minuet was danced by one couple at a time.

The following day, Ceder wedded another couple. Along with the church cantor, he was in the wedding yard and wrote: '[I] had dinner in Tolkbj, at Bökars. Danced a few minuets—I was puzzled if I should go to Qvarnbacka—danced a few more quadrilles'. This wedding also took place on two different farms, and he was unsure whether to go to the second location. The following day, the third day of Christmas, he was in Tavastby. A group of twelve people gathered at Gållbacka. It was 'quite fun, despite the presence of the reverend's wife'. He continued, 'even there was dancing—quadrilles, minuets, polskas, and so on'. Ceder mentioned the quadrille, minuet, and polska by name. His phrase 'and so on' may signal that there were also other dances. In 1805, Ceder moved to eastern Nyland and, from this point onwards, he does not write about his own dancing or mention any dances.

The minuet survived in the district of Helsinge well into the nineteenth century. In 1964, two informants born in 1885 and 1898, responding to a questionnaire, described memories in which minuets had previously been danced at a wedding in Helsinge.<sup>13</sup>

Another diary, written by the thirteen-year-old Jacobina Charlotta Munsterhjelm at Tavastby mansion in Elimäki, shows that the minuet was danced by servants. She wrote a few lines in her diary on Midsummer Day 1800, noting that 'after we had eaten the dinner, the servant girls danced a polska and some minuets'. The young diarist did not report anything about the music. Maybe the servants sang to their dance. Besides the polska and minuet, the thirteen-year-old mentioned långdans (anglaise), polska, and quadrille. Munsterhjelm

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13 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 122–23. A copy of Ceder's diary is available at the Åbo Academy University Library.

does record that she danced the waltz with her relatives on Christmas 1800 in Rantasalmi, a parish considered to be the most progressive in the province of Savo for its adoption of new dance styles.

In Strömfors, the minuet was merely one dance among many others in the 1830s. Of the dance at a wedding, one ninety-two-year-old informant remarked: 'After the meal, there is a dance in the hall, the "master of ceremonies" first asks the bride to a polonaise. Then follow the polska, old waltz, quadrille, danced very often, as well as the minuet'. She also described related customs, noting that the guests received a drink as well as cheese and bread when they entered the wedding house. Furthermore, the bridesmaids and groomsmen were supposed to consist of at least two couples. They carried burning candles in their hands as they accompanied the bride into the room, one couple walking in front of the bride and the other couple behind. In the neighbouring parish Pyttis, the minuet survived until the 1890s.



Fig. 6.14 Young people in Eastern Nyland in Finland play 'Last couple out'. Photograph by Gabriel Nikander, 1914. SLS 240\_12. Swedish Literature Society in Finland, [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+240\\_SLS+240\\_12](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+240_SLS+240_12), CC BY 4.0.

The language scientist Axel Freudenthal gives an eyewitness account of dance from his summer trip to Nyland in 1860. He stayed in Mörskom and wrote that 'the only pleasure at gatherings is dance consisting of the waltz, Swedish quadrille, minuet, polska, contredanse and so-called Swedish march, and in the summertime, swings as well as singing games under the sky, are the usual amusements'.

Snippets of information from different places suggest that men had their favourite songs for the minuet. For example, in Pellinge in Borgå archipelago, the men ask the musicians to play 'their melody' when dancing. This account also shows that the minuet was common in Pellinge.

In Esbo, too, the minuet was a common dance among other dances. The first dance at a wedding was a polonaise. The folklore collector Gabriel Nikander playfully described the following dances, saying that some were beautiful while others were not. Nikander wrote:

After the polonaise, an old waltz followed, then the evening's first Swedish quadrille, most like stamping, also danced matradura, a mixture of old française and väva vadmål [weaving dance]. Sometimes niemanengelska [reel for nine] and minuet, but most old waltz and quadrille. Someone knew the polka and danced it as a 'free spectacle', a beautiful dance with figures. Polkamazurka was danced badly, galloped by gentry only.

In Lojo in the 1910s, older dances included minuets, hamburgska and Swedish quadrilles, 'which sadly have now been forgotten'. According to information from 1918, weddings in Kyrkslätt often involved the following dances: 'old Swedish quadrille, minuet (in old times), waltz, reel and later niemanspolska [polska for nine]'. A parishioner from Tenala explained in the 1920s that, among old dances, there were 'purpuri and minuet, which should never have been lost'.<sup>14</sup>

### The Minuet as a Common Dance in Turku Archipelago

Previously, I mentioned that the minuet was danced in Turku since the 1740s; it continued to be danced there throughout the century. In 1797, the town's annual celebration was scheduled for 24 January, to coincide with King Gustaf III's birthday, and it was one of the most important events in Turku's entertainment. Åbo Tidning wrote that the celebration involved a concert followed by dancing, 'the dance took place, to which Concertmaster Ferling had composed a new minuet and contredanse, and thus [the dance] continued with mutual cheerfulness and ordinary food and drink, until midnight'.

In Turku, *Musikaliska Sällskapet i Åbo* (the Musical Society in Turku) was founded in 1799. Its members were often students at the academy who, after graduation, moved to other places, bringing their interest in music, melodies, and dances to various parts of the country, including in places that, today, are Finnish-speaking. Andersson created a list of forty pages of members, all of whom could play instruments. One of the violinists in the company's orchestra was Gabriel Hirn (b. 1782), who became a vicar in Kimito in 1824. Almost every Sunday, Hirn arranged a dance event at the vicarage for 'the more distinguished youth of the village'. The vicar himself played the violin, and his wife and mother

14 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 123–25; Jacobina Charlotta Munsterhjelm, *Jacobina Charlotta Munsterhjelm's Dagböcker 1799–1801*, comments and register by Bo Lönnqvist. *Folklivsstudier VII*. SLS 440 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1970), p. 65; Gabriel Nikander, 'Bröllop i Strömfors på 1830-talet', in *Brage Årsskrift IV*, 1909 (Helsingfors: Föreningen Brage, 1910), pp. 235–37 (p. 236); *Folkvännen*, 16 July 1862; *Brage Årsskrift VII*, 1911 (Helsingfors: Föreningen Brage, 1912), p. 154; 'Fornminnen från Kyrkslätt, antecknade vid hembygdskurserna år 1915', övertryck ur *Veckbladet* (Helsingfors, 1916); SLS archival material in Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 318.

of seven children Hedvig Charlotta (b. 1784), 'stamped the beat from the bottom of her heart'. Likely, the young people also danced the minuet. How early the minuet came to Kimito is hard to determine. Music had been part of the Kimito Ungdomsförening (youth association) since the 1890s; a local folk musician Gustaf Bohm (1836–1912) who was active in the youth association indicated that his father, grandfather, and grandfather's father had all been musicians. His great grandfather, born in 1734, was the most skilled musician. It is hardly too daring to say that the minuet was danced in Kimito in the late 1740s, as it then appeared in the region surrounding Turku and in Åland.

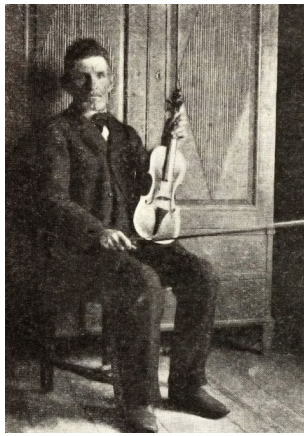


Fig. 6.15 The fiddler Gustaf Bohm in Kimito in Finland was the fourth fiddler in direct descent. Photograph by Otto Andersson. Archive of the Sibelius Museum. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustaf\\_Adolf\\_Bohm\\_%28Sm\\_5888%29\\_%2827113680084%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustaf_Adolf_Bohm_%28Sm_5888%29_%2827113680084%29.jpg), CC BY 2.0.



Fig. 6.16 Kimito Ungdomsförening in Åboland in Finland dances its minuet at a summer party, 1904. The schoolteacher Nils Oskar Jansson dances mainly in the row at the 'end of the table'. Photograph by Otto Andersson. SLS 105b\_70. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b\\_SLS+105b\\_70?sid=2972784501](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b_SLS+105b_70?sid=2972784501), CC BY 4.0.

The minuet was a common dance in the parish of Pargas until the 1870s. From Christmas to January 13, young people divided Pargas into different areas and each was tasked with arranging a dance. During one Christmas season, then, thirteen dance events were held. The assembled company danced 'polska, minuet and waltzes, in the 1840s quadrilles'. At weddings in Pargas, the dance began with a polonaise. This was followed by the minuet, quadrille, and 'triman-English' (reel for three). Later came the waltz, polka, and *stigare* (schottische).<sup>15</sup>

The minuet was also danced on the islands of the Turku archipelago. In Korpo, the minuet was a common dance during the 1840s. Lars Wilhelm Fagerlund (1852-1939), a later medical doctor and governor of the province of Åland, wrote in his account of wedding customs in 1878 that dancing began when the meal was finished. One danced 'in particular polska, waltz, minuet, schulsa, pater Mickel, reel, ryska [Russian], maskurát, Gustaf's skål, song dances among others'.<sup>16</sup>

In Nagu the minuet was a common dance as well. It was said that in the middle of the nineteenth century, one dance 'polska, hoppvals [hop-waltz], minuets, sjuls, hamburgska, etc'. Unlike his descriptions of dancing in Esbo, details are lacking in Nikander's discussion of the minuet in Nagu; however, he did devote attention to other wedding customs.

For example, in 1894, three travellers observed a minuet in Nagu at a common dance event. After the post-dinner coffee was drunk, the dance started with a waltz, and one couple after the other turned around on the bowing floor. Then the polka was danced and after that a quadrille. The travellers expressed a wish to see a special dance, namely the minuet, and this was fulfilled:

A seventy-year-old man, who, during the more lively figures, could barely prevent his gray hair strokes from falling from his bare scalp, brought to dance a silver-haired older woman, who was almost eighty, and the other dancers were no younger than forty years. Figures and compliments were performed as dignified and graceful as ever in Versailles's lavish

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15 Biskop, *Menuetten*, 128.

16 Ibid., 125–26; Otto Andersson, *Musikaliska Sällskapet i Åbo 1790–1808* (Åbo: Förlaget Bro, 1940), pp. 7, 174, 206; *Åbo Tidning*, 6 February 1797; N. O. Jansson, 'Ett bondbröllop i Kimito för 80 år sedan', in *Brage Årsskrift I*, 1906 (Helsingfors: Föreningen Brage, 1907), pp. 39–42 (pp. 41–42); Otto Andersson, 'Ett och annat om folkmusiken i sydvästra Finland', *Hembygden, Tidskrift för svensk folkkunskap och hembygdsforskning i Finland*, 3 (1912), 21–25; Hagar Nikander, *Pargasbygdens historia IV, Allmogekulturen*, Pargas historiekommitté (Pargas, 1970), p. 292; Heikel, *Dansbeskrivningar*, pp. 11–14; Lars Wilhelm Fagerlund, *Anteckningar om Korpo och Houtskärs socknar. Sommarstudier*, Bidrag till kännedom af Finlands natur och folk 28 (Helsingfors: Finska litteratursällskapet, 1878), p. 49.

salons during the eighteenth century, and this dance was the one whose looks brought us most enjoyment.

This writer knew that the minuet was danced in the village and that it originated in France.

The minuet survived for a long time in Nagu. At the end of the 1920s, Yngvar Heikel interviewed several people who could provide information about it. A woman born in 1854 knew the minuet well, Heikel said, and he was able to prepare a detailed description of the dance based on her account. In Nagu and Hitis, one bowed to the musician when one started the minuet and also when one finished it.<sup>17</sup>

### The Minuet as a Common Dance in Åland

As we discussed earlier, Carl Tersmeden danced the minuet in Åland in the 1740s. The minuet continued to be danced there until the 1870s. According to information from Hammarland in the 1910s, the first dance at a wedding involved the bride inviting the priest to dance. Then, the groom invited the bridesmaids to dance. One danced ‘polska, quadrille (after 1850), sometimes minuet’. Vendla Bergman (b. 1857) in Finström had seen the minuet danced at a wedding in 1868 when she was a child. No information is available about how the minuets were danced here.<sup>18</sup>

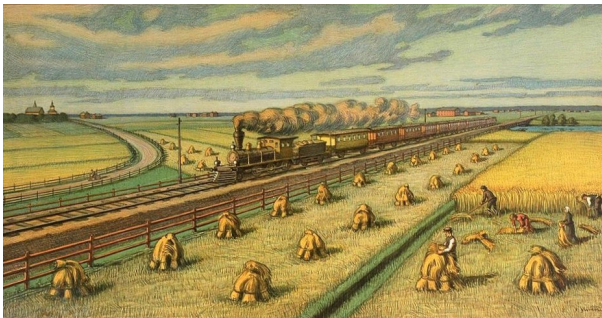


Fig. 6.17 View from southern Ostrobothnia in Finland, school poster by Vihtori Ylinen (1915). Vantaa City Museum, Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/vantaa.Arkisto:281:3>, CC BY 4.0.

17 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 126–28; Gunnel Biskop, ‘Danser i några reseskildringar’, *Folkdansforskning i Norden*, 35 (2012), 7–14; Fagerlund, p. 49.  
 18 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 128.



## The Minuet as a Ceremonial Dance among the Swedish-speaking Population in Finland

Dance activities at rural wedding were divided into two parts, consisting of a ceremonial part and a common part. Only certain people participated in the ceremonial part, which was executed strictly according to the traditional scheme. These initial ceremonies were entertainment but also an integral part of the marriage ritual, incorporating the bride and groom into a new community as a married couple. Thus, the ceremonial dances were also understood as a duty. When these were complete, the dance became 'common', that is, all the wedding guests were allowed to dance. During this second part, all had a chance to dance with the bride.

I will use the term 'ceremonial dance' for the first dance or dances of the wedding.<sup>19</sup> Rural people did not use this name but called them, among other things, 'duty dances'. This implies that certain people were obliged to perform these dances. Rural people also refer to the *pällhållardansen*, 'the *pällhållar* dance', or 'the dance of the *pällhållare* when describing those danced only by the *pällhållare* in the ceremonial part of the wedding. Some people speak of the *fördans* and the *föredans*, meaning the initial or fore-dance; these terms, in my view, indicate that these were dances that were danced before the 'common dance' when all the wedding guests were allowed to participate. However, there was much variation in these customs.

Participation in the ceremonial dances varied depending on the parish and even the village, and these rituals took different forms at different times. As well as the bride and groom, the priest, the 'master of ceremonies' (host), the maid of honour, parents, relatives, bridesmaids, and groomsmen could attend. In Ostrobothnia, bridesmaids and groomsmen were called *pällhållare* in Swedish, since they hold a scarf or a kind of a *baldachin*, which was called a *päll* above the couple during the wedding ceremony. These were the bride's and groom's unmarried relatives and friends, and the group originally numbered eight (four boys and four girls) but the practice later expanded to include more. The bridal couple decided the dancing partnerships in advance, and they also pre-determined which couple would be the primary, most honoured, one. Thus, there was also a ranking among the *pällhållare*, mainly based on family relations. The 'master of ceremonies' was the one who delivered the welcome speech. He decided where the guests would sit and controlled when everything should

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19 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 129–48. It seems that Tobias Norlind launched the concept of 'ceremonidans', for example in Tobias Norlind, *Svensk folkmusik och folkdans*, Natur och kultur 96 (Stockholm: Stockholms Bokförlag, 1930), p. 126. Then the concept is used by Carl-Herman Tillhagen and Nils Dencker, *Svenska Folklekar och Danser* (Stockholm: AB Bokverk, 1950), p. 478.

begin. He also made sure that the food was on the table and that the ceremony was followed carefully. As often still happens today, the maid of honour was the one who dressed the bride and was her helper during the wedding.

According to several pieces of information, the priest danced the first dance with the bride, and then the priest symbolically handed the bride to the groom. It is possible that the first dances with the priest were construed as a religious rite rather than mere dancing. The presence of the priest also had another meaning, namely, to protect against evil powers. Some accounts mention that the priest must attend the first dances for the marriage to be considered finalized.



Fig. 6.18 Adolf von Becker, *By the Hearth, an Ostrobothnian Courting Scene* (1871), oil. Finnish National Gallery, <https://finna.fi/Record/kansallisgalleria.5C435246C4784C3647D65AE63EED596D?sid=2972798628>, CC0.

## Features, Characteristics, and Conditions of the Ceremonial Dance

The symbolic function of the ceremonial dances was to transfer the bride and groom from one status to another: from unmarried to married. In 'the *pällhållar* dance', the bride's and groom's unmarried female and male relatives and friends danced in honour of the bridal couple. This could also be interpreted as a fertility rite. At the same time, the *pällhållar* dance distinguished the married couple from the unmarried youth—the bride and groom could never again participate in the *pällhållar* dance. The ceremony was a farewell, when parents and the closest family danced with the bride and groom. At the end of the wedding, in the so-called polska circles, which I do not deal with here, the new status often was visibly conferred on the bridal couple. This might be expressed, for example, in a change of attire or a change of the name of the bride and groom on the following day. The ceremonies' ultimate goal was to ensure that the bride and groom would be happy and that the couple would achieve prosperity and success. For them to be well, the ceremonies must be executed correctly and

proceed according to the tradition. Because the meaning of a wedding ceremony must be upheld, villages would not risk a negative outcome by deviating from established patterns?

The minuet, as the first ceremonial dance, was characterized by solemnity. This often meant it was danced slowly, as the priest Carl Johan Roos observed in Replot, Ostrobothnia, in the early 1870s. The ceremonial minuets included courteous bows and curtseys, and the ritual was conducted with great seriousness and reverence. Consequently, modifications were made to make it a somber dance. In Tjock, for example, the boys did not clap their hands during the minuets, but the leading dancer gave a signal in the middle of the dance only by snapping his fingers. Even during the following polska, no stamping was permitted. Otto Lillhannus stated that, in Lappfjärd during his grandfather's time around 1850, the minuet was so slow that 'the young people had difficulties [in order] to follow the rhythm of the music'.

The different tempos of the minuet distinguished its uses as a ceremonial wedding dance and as a common dance. With this reason in mind, it is easier to make sense of sources' very different information about the tempo and experience of the minuet. The slowness sometimes described may refer not only to the ceremonial dances but also to the bridal procession approaching the church and the bridal couple entering the church. Further, there were strict etiquette rules that elongated the entire proceeding. For example, one would never rush to sit down before the wedding dinner started because nobody wanted to be the first to do so. In their actions, guests were simultaneously conscious of their social positions and extremely careful to honour the ranking system.



Fig. 6.19 Wedding in Lappfjärd in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1907. Photography by Ina Roos. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.65ED6D94B58047CD314AD99D3D5E4545>, CC BY 4.0.

One of the ceremonies' conditions was economic; it was supposed that families could afford to hold a wedding that lasted for several, usually three to four, days. The ability to comply with this stipulation could be expressed in many different

ways, including in the number of wedding days and the number of guests, the lavishness of the food and gifts—clothing and jewellery—given by both host and wedding guests. During his fieldwork, Yngvar Heikel learned that much like the custom today wherein bridesmaids dress in matching colourful attire, in Lappfjärd, for each of the days of the wedding, female participants in the ceremonies wore a different colour of skirt: it was considered inappropriate to wear a blouse that had not been created specifically for a particular celebration. There is also evidence that many rules and customs strictly dictated the rural people's dress code for these events.

The duration of the dancing also extended the ceremony. Allowing each couple to dance two minuets—the latter one with a twirl throughout the dance before the dance was completed—was a further way of emphasizing prosperity. The whole village was involved in a large wedding with preparations and work of various kinds, including the giving and receiving of gifts. This elaborate process also likely produced competition; if one farm or village showed prosperity by hosting a big wedding, another farm or village may feel that they could not show anything less.

Crucially, the wedding was celebrated in one house, as opposed to the tradition that occurred among those who spoke Finnish in Central and Eastern Finland and Swedish-speaking people in Nyland. There, the wedding was usually celebrated in two houses: first in that of the bride then in that of the groom. The need to move the assembly may have curtailed longer ceremonies.

Another consideration for long ceremonies was the music. A reputable musician would not repeat a tune throughout the entirety of the wedding, which meant that the musicians had to have many minuets in their repertoire. In the parish of Oravais, one report explained that different bridal couples would have different bride minuet melodies. My interpretation is that, as long as a musician had an immense repertoire, there could continue to be many minuets in the ceremony. It was in the musician's interest to be regarded as reputable and, in the ceremonial dances, he was able to show off his skills.

When performed as a ceremonial dance, the minuet was danced in a series that was modelled on the customs of the seventeenth century. Accounts suggest that there were difference and similarities in how different regions organized the series. Changes were also introduced over time. Yngvar Heikel also painstakingly gathered information about how the dance began at the wedding in the early 1920s. Heikel was careful in his work, and he recorded the order that was followed in dancing the minuets and, often, who danced with whom. Unfortunately, he did not record the method of the invitation system, that is, who invited or picked up whom.<sup>20</sup>

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20 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 129–33; Lauri Honko, 'Riter: en klassifikation', in *Fataburen*, Nordiska museets och Skansens årsbok, ed. by Magne Velure (Stockholm:



Fig. 6.20 Tradition bearers from Tjock in Ostrobothnia in Finland, dressed in folk costume, dance their minuet at the seventy-fifth anniversary of Finland's Swedish Folk Dance Association in 2006. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © Gunnel Biskop.

### The Minuet as a Ceremonial Dance in Ostrobothnia

Several detailed descriptions of the minuet as a ceremonial dance originate from Ostrobothnia, where the minuet was practised longer than in other regions. There, ceremonial dances had a significant role. Heikel's documentation from the early 1920s explains how the ceremony was implemented. Interestingly, his records almost always show that a polska followed the minuet. However, from people who have themselves danced minuets at a wedding or have seen minuets danced, there is contradictory information regarding many instances when the polska was not danced after the minuet, specifically when/if the priest danced with the bride. I have earlier in the text presented my idea of the origins of this phenomenon.



Fig. 6.21 Folk dancers in Helsinki perform a minuet from Vörå in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1932. Photograph by Rafael Roos. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.

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Nordiska museets förlag, 1976), pp. 71–84; Pirkko-Liisa Rausmaa, 'Rituaalitanssit Suomessa', in *Musiikin suunta*, 14.4 (1992), 62–75; Biskop, *Orvas*; Heikel, *Dansbeskrivningar*, pp. 404–7.

### *In Nykarleby*

The oldest information about the minuet as a ceremonial dance at a wedding in Ostrobothnia is from Nykarleby in the 1830s. Young Zacharias Topelius wrote about the wedding in his diary, long before he began his novel-writing career. He was attending two weddings of the lower class of society, where the gift to the bride was still made up of money, handed over between two dances, minuet and polska.

One wedding, for a servant of the Topelius family, was held in 1837. Of that event, the nineteen-year-old Topelius wrote the following in his diary: 'I danced the minuet and polska with the bride and left my Riksdaler [coin], which was the main thing'. Since the giving of the *Riksdaler* was the most important part of the process, this account shows the dutiful element of the ceremony. After the wedding that had been held for her, the bride expressed her great pleasure that so much money had been given that the whole event was paid for.

Topelius attended a second wedding in 1840 and described an even older custom involving the giving of gifts to the bride. At this event, the bride had been a young woman from the cottage next to Topelius's home. She wore a high brass crown, and she invited Topelius to join the dance with her, which was the custom at that time. He wrote:

And we danced, Brita and I, a great minuet. And then a polska. These dances then alternated to great and continuous pleasure for the young couple, who, in exchange for their ceremonial bread and schnapps, earned more than 40 Riksdaler during that day.<sup>21</sup>

At this time, the tradition was still active that guests who 'paid' for the dance would be given bread and schnapps. This is a marked contrast to the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the service of alcohol was forbidden at weddings. It is also apparent from this account that the bride invited Topelius to dance, a tradition that dates back to the early-1700s.

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<sup>21</sup> Biskop, *Zachris Topelius*, p. 132



Fig. 6.22 and Fig. 6.23 Minuet danced at a party of an association in Helsinki, 2013.  
Photographs by Gunnel Biskop. © Gunnel Biskop.

### *In Munsala and Oravais*

Sofia Fågel (b. 1869) told about weddings in Munsala in the 1850s: ‘First the priest danced with the bride, then as a solo by bride and groom, and after that, with *pällhållare* so that only two couples were simultaneously on the floor’. Fågel did not mention a polska after the minuet, and neither did she specify whether the priest or the bride opened the dance with an invitation, but I believe the priest would have danced the first minuet, as he would have been the highest in rank among the guests. After the dance, the priest handed the bride to the groom, and the second minuet was danced solo by bride and groom. After that, the bride continued to dance with each groomsman, while simultaneously, the groom continued to dance with each bridesmaid in turn, with two couples on the floor at any one time. The bride always danced closest to the bridal table, which meant that every *pällhållare* boy was at the table end and decided, among other things, the length of the minuet. The number of *pällhållare* couples was probably at least four, with at least six minuets danced during the ceremony. According to Fågel, this process could last for a few hours.<sup>22</sup>

Seventy-five years later, Heikel received information from a wedding dresser Tilda Nyström (b. 1859) in Munsala that suggested significant changes in procedure. She said that the bridal couple danced the first minuet and the polska together, as the only pair on the floor. Then the bridal couple danced with each the *pällhållare*, corresponding with events in Fågel’s essay: two couples on the dance floor at a time. Finally, the bridal couple and all *pällhållare* couples danced first the minuet and then the polska. According to Nyström, the priest no longer attended the wedding dances.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 133.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

However, according to other sources, at least in Oravais, the priest continued to dance the minuet with the bride. Anders Lundqvist (b. 1851) and his wife Lovisa (b. 1850) told a folklore collector at the beginning of the 1910s that, after the meal, the relatives of the bridal couple relatives would dance the minuet with the bride and groom. They specified who danced with whom and in which order:

- 1) The bridal couple
- 2) The priest and the bride
- 3) The groom and the priest's wife (or the maid of honour)
- 4) The groom's parents with the bridal couple
- 5) The bride's parents with the bridal couple
- 6) The closest family
- 7) The *pällhållare* couples

Guests who had not been invited to this part of the wedding arrived at dusk, around eight o'clock, and they would also dance with the bride. The Lundqvists reported that these guests would pay up to five marks for the dance.

The folklore collector records that the first three minuets were danced by one couple and two couples danced the fourth and fifth minuets at the same time. The 'closest relatives' probably continued to dance with the bride and groom, still with two couples on the floor. In the seventh minuet, all the *pällhållare* couples danced simultaneously, probably with each boy dancing at the table end on his turn. The informants said that the number of minuets was only indicative, 'in fact, these dances can be expanded to a great number, such as the case today,' that is, in the 1910s. The minuet was danced as a ceremonial dance in Oravais in the 1950s.<sup>24</sup>

### *In Maxmo and Vörå*

A son of a farmer from Maxmo, Harald Öling (b. 1901), painted a good picture of the wedding customs and dances of the parish in a paper he wrote at Vörå Folk High School in 1920. It used to be common for the students to write about 'old times', providing a wealth of amateurishly collected information. Öling's

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.; Heikel, *Dansbeskrivningar*, pp. 405–07; SLS archival material in Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 318.



information came from interviews with his parents or grandparents. His paper contains details that have not been seen before, namely that the *pällhållare* were ranked. He wrote:

The bridal couple first danced alone. They danced a so-called minuet. After them, all who had held the *päll* were allowed to dance in the following order: those who were highest among the *pällhållare* danced first with the bride and groom. After they had danced, they switched over, so the following couple got to dance. The former took place as the last couple in the lead, and this was repeated until every couple had danced similarly. Then a march was played. The bridal couple left the dance floor then. The *pällhållare* began to dance in the same way as before until they all danced with each other. A farewell march was also played for them. Now the bridal couple returned to the floor again. Then the closest relatives were allowed to dance with the bridal couple. While this was happening, the rest of the guests enjoyed having a drink, etc. Then it was their turn to dance.

So the first minuet was danced solo by the bridal couple. After that, the bride and groom danced with each *pällhållare* couple, while the other *pällhållare* danced simultaneously. What is clarified here is that even the *pällhållare* danced in a specific order with the bridal couple. Whether the ranking was based on family or social status is not given. After each round, the *pällhållare* couple who had danced moved to the end of the row, and the bridal couple continued to dance with the following *pällhållare* couple. When the bride and groom had danced with all the *pällhållare* couples, the bride and groom left the dance floor during a march, and the *pällhållare* continued to dance minuets and change partners until everyone had danced with everyone, and all the boys had danced at the table end. Then the *pällhållare* left the floor with a march, and the bridal couple returned and danced with the closest relatives, probably two couples at a time. This custom of a 'march out and in' is rarely mentioned in other sources. According to Öling's notes, four *pällhållare* couples danced, parents and some siblings, and thus at least fifteen minuets were danced. This writer does not mention any polska.

In Vörå, the polska appeared as a ceremonial dance in the oldest history. The musician Fredrik Berg (b. 1847) wrote that the polskas were the only dances in ancient times, and the minuet was introduced much later. This is also evidenced by records of folklore traditions in Vörå from the 1910s. An informant born in 1828 mentioned: 'Bride and groom danced the first dance with each other, then with the parents. Each time, three polskas were danced'. A younger commentator, born 1853, said: 'The first dance was a minuet, it was danced by the bridal couple themselves, after which the bride and groom were to dance with parents and relatives. After that, the bride danced with all the guests'. A

third informant, born in 1892, stated that the bridal minuet was self-evident. It was danced by the bride and groom as the only couple. This was probably followed by a minuet danced by two couples simultaneously. When the guests danced with the bride, any number of couples might be on the floor at the same time.

There are also examples of the minuet as a ‘money dance’, where guests pay for the dance. One woman born in 1848 said: ‘When the dance then took place, one toasted after each minuet. Everyone who danced with the bride gave a coin, the boys 50 pence, the girls 25 pence’. At a wedding in 1887, the dance began with a waltz by the bridal couple:

Then the minuet followed with the couple’s parents. One minuet did hardly stop until a new one was tuned up. Then they kept on until the couple had danced with all the guests. Then it was the milk men’s and uninvited guests’ turn.

In this instance, the minuet with the parents were danced by two couples. How many couples danced at the same time after them was not specified.<sup>25</sup>



Fig. 6.24 The priest dances a minuet with the bride at the end of the eighteenth century. A detail of a painting from a wedding, Leksand, Dalecarlia, Sweden. Nordiska museet’s archive, Stockholm, all rights reserved.

### *In Ytterjeppo and Forsby*

From Ytterjeppo village, Anna Björkqvist (b. 1872) described the ceremonial dances. She was interviewed by Yngvar Heikel who reported that they not only discussed but danced the minuet enthusiastically and for a long time during their conversation, indicating that Björkqvist was competent in her dance. She explained that there were often ten *pällhällare* couples, and that the ceremonial wedding dances proceeded in this order:

<sup>25</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 134–36.

1. A minuet and polska were danced by the bride and groom alone, they danced solo.
2. A minuet and polska were danced by the bride and *pällhållare* boy No. 1 and by the groom and the girl No. 1. The two couples were simultaneously on the floor.
3. A minuet and polska danced by the bride with the boy No. 2 and the groom with the girl No. 2, still two couples on the floor.
4. Then the bride and groom continued to dance with all the *pällhållare* couples in turn; two couples on the floor at the same time.
5. From the second minuet, each *pällhållare* boy in turn stood at the table end when they were dancing with the bride. With 10 *pällhållare* couples, up to eleven minuets and polskas would have been danced by this point. But this ceremony was not yet complete.
6. The ceremony continued as all the *pällhållare* couples danced at the same time, without the bridal couple. First, all the *pällhållare* boys danced a minuet and polska with the corresponding girl, with pair No. 1 standing at the table end.
7. Then, all the *pällhållare* couples danced simultaneously again, but they changed partners so that the first *pällhållare* girl (No. 1) danced with the final *pällhållare* boy (No. 10), allowing the first *pällhållare* boy (No. 1) to partner with girl No. 2; the boy No. 2 with the girl No. 3; the boy No. 3 with the girl No. 4, and so on. Following this pattern, the wedding party switched partners for each round until all the *pällhållare* boys had danced with all the *pällhållare* girls.

When the bride was not on the floor, the *pällhållare* girl No. 1 was all the time closest to the bridal couple's table, and the *pällhållare* boys changed their place so that each could dance at the table end. All the *pällhållare* couples were able to dance ten consecutive minuets and polskas after each other. In this example from Ytterjeppo with ten *pällhållare* couples, a total of twenty-one minuets and twenty-one polskas were danced as ceremonial dances before the proceedings were finished and after this, the common dance could begin.

Sofi Norrback (b. 1847) from Forsby village reported an older custom when she explained that the first minuet and the polska were only played through by the musicians, without anyone dancing. This practice occurred in the early 1800s, including in southern Ostrobothnia when the polska opened the wedding dances. Then the bride and groom danced the first minuet and polska. After that, the bride and groom continued to dance with each *pällhållare* couple in turn, so that there were two couples on the floor at the same time. After that,

a march was played to usher 'the bridal couple out and *pällhållare* in'. All the *pällhållare* couples then danced the minuet and polska at the same time. Since there were at least four *pällhållare* couples at a wedding, at least six minuets would have been performed. The ritual of the bridal couple leaving the floor and the *pällhållare* entering it when a march was played was also mentioned above in Maxmo.<sup>26</sup>



Fig. 6.25 Minuet as a ceremonial dance at a wedding in Vörå, Ostrobothnia region, Finland, 1916. The minuet is danced by two couples at a time, with the bride and groom on the left. Photograph by Valter W. Forsblom. SLS 269\_58. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+269\\_SLS+269\\_58](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+269_SLS+269_58), CC BY 4.0.

### *In Pedersöre, Esse and Purmo*

From the parish of Pedersöre we glean somewhat different information. A 1930 account told that the bridal couple danced the first minuet but gives no further information about how the dance continued. Anna Lövhölm (b. 1860) from Pedersöre parish told Yngvar Heikel in 1928 that the minuet and polska were danced only once as a ceremonial dance by the following persons: the bride with the 'master of ceremonies', the groom with the wife of the 'master of ceremonies', the mother of the bride with the father of the groom, the groom's mother with the bride's father, and each *pällhållare* boy his corresponding partner. After these minuets, other dances, such as the polka, waltz, schottische, and mazurka were danced, while each *pällhållare* would dance any of these dances in turn with the bride or the groom. The *pällhållare* paid for the dance and got a drink.<sup>27</sup>

In Ytteresse village, the first minuet and polska were danced by the bridal couple, and at the same time, all the *pällhållare* danced with their partners,

<sup>26</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 136–37.

<sup>27</sup> Heikel, *Dansbeskrivningar*, p. 407.

Anna Lisa Ellström (b. 1858) reported. The bride danced the second minuet and the polska with the boy No. 1 at the table end. At the same time, the groom danced with the girl No. 1 and the rest of the *pällhållare* with their partners. The bridal couple then continued to dance with each *pällhållare* couple in turn, while the other *pällhållare* couples danced at the same time. This meant that every *pällhållare* boy had to dance at the table end and decide the minuet's length while dancing with the bride. For example, if there were six *pällhållare* couples, seven minuets and polskas were danced before the ceremony was completed. In Överesse village, ninety-year-old Sofia Portin Teirfolk (b. 1834), who was said to have a good memory, explained that two couples danced a minuet and polska at a time as a ceremonial dance.<sup>28</sup>

In Purmo parish, it was said that the bride and groom danced the first minuet and the polska with the bride's parents. Then the bridal couple danced with each *pällhållare* couple in turn, each time together with as many *pällhållare* couples, depending in this instance not on the number of participants, but on the size of the dance space. Also here, each *pällhållare* boy, in turn, danced at the table end.<sup>29</sup>

### *In Lappfjärd and Tjock*

In Lappfjärd and Tjock, the ceremonial dances lasted for several hours, and it was called *pällhållar dance*. At a wedding at the end of the nineteenth century, the number of *pällhållare* couples could be four, six, or eight. The first *pällhållar* girl had a particular task, as she would pick up the bride's white gloves when the wedding dinner started. Immediately after dinner, the *pällhållare dance* was performed, and after that, the female guests went home to change into other, presumably less constricting, clothes and returned for the common dance.

According to Otto Lill-Hannus (b. 1890) from Lappfjärd in the *pällhållar dance*, two minuets and a polska were danced in each round. I will return to this phenomenon of 'two minuets' later on. I assume here that the number of *pällhållare* couples is six:

1. During the first round — of two minuets and a polska — all *pällhållare* danced with their partners. The bridal couple did not dance. The No. 1 *pällhållare* couple danced at the table end.
2. During the second round, the *pällhållare* couples changed partners so that the boy No. 1 danced with the girl No. 2; boy 2 with the girl 3; boy 3 with the girl 4; boy 4 with the girl 5; boy 5 with the girl 6, and boy 6 with girl No. 1.

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28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

3. Then the *pällhållare* continued to change partners for each round so that each *pällhållare* boy came to dance with each *pällhållare* girl. Since there are six *pällhållare* couples in this example, six rounds have been danced thus far — twelve minuets and six polskas. The first *pällhållare* girl (No. 1) always danced near the bride table with the other girls in their places, while the *pällhållare* boys subsequently changed their position and danced at the table end in turn.
4. At this point, the bridal couple, who had not yet danced, entered the dance floor. The bride danced with *pällhållare* boy No. 1, the groom with *pällhållare* girl No. 1 and the rest of the *pällhållare* with their partners. When the bride was on the floor, she always danced closest to the wedding table, and the *pällhållare* boys danced at the table end as they danced with the bride.
5. Then the bride and groom continued to dance with each *pällhållare* couple, and the other *pällhållare* danced simultaneously.
6. As late as during the last round did the bride and groom dance together while the *pällhållare* danced with their partners.

With six *pällhållare* couples, this ceremony contained thirteen rounds—twenty-six minuets and thirteen polskas. Everyone, both boys and girls, got a drink for each dance, paying for the dance or alcohol by giving a gift to the bride.<sup>30</sup>



Fig. 6.26 Wedding in Lappfjärd, Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1909. The bride and groom with four pairs of their friends. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+146\\_ota146+foto+1101](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+146_ota146+foto+1101), CC BY 4.0.

The *pällhållare* always danced their local minuet, the minuet they had learned in their childhood or youth. Their musical accompaniment, however, varied. To the two minuets during each round, different tunes were played. A reputable wedding player did not repeat the same melody. Otto Lillhannus claimed that

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 405–06.

his musician grandfather Erik Ebb (b. 1814) had forty minuets, thirty polskas, and a number of waltzes in his repertoire.<sup>31</sup>

In Lappfjärd and Tjöck, as mentioned above, two minuets were danced in succession in the ceremony. One might wonder why this happened and how these minuets differed. The probable explanation is that, earlier in history, when there were only four *pällhållare* couples, the wedding ceremony was significantly shorter. In order to show wealth with a long ceremony, one could extend the proceedings by dancing two minuets, one after the other following by a polska. The first was danced in the usual way and the second with a swing (twirl), meaning that the dancers one turned (twirled), individually a lap around after changing places with the partner. The number of steps used for this twirl is not known, but the twirl was performed slowly. An informant from Tjöck told me in the 1990s that one had a lot of time to sit and watch the dancers and that and the women's skirts barely moved while twirling. This twirl occurred only during the ceremony when two minuets were danced. By varying the dance style with a twirl, the ceremony's extension, whose function was to demonstrate prosperity, was validated.

Later on, probably in the early 1900s, when six or eight *pällhållare* couples became the standard, the ceremony in Lappfjärd was shortened by determining that the *pällhållare* would change places with one's partner only three times before the turning with hand in hand in the middle of the dance floor. The couples continued similarly after that, changing places three times again, but each continued to dance two minuets (the latter with a twirl). Information from Tjöck suggests that the minuet and polska were danced completely during the ceremony, which could mean that there was no set number of times the dancers would change places.



Fig. 6.27 Four farms in a row in Tjöck in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1914. Photograph by Valter W. Forsblom. SLS 2351\_38b. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+235\\_SLS+235a\\_38b](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+235_SLS+235a_38b), CC BY 4.0.

31 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 140.

In sum, the ceremonial dances in Lappfjärd and Tjock was originally danced with four *pällhållare* couples. At that time, the ceremony was extended by dancing two minuets. Later, when there were more—six or eight—*pällhållare* couples, the ceremony was shortened by limiting the length of each minuet.

Yngvar Heikel also mentioned in connection with the minuet's description in Lappfjärd that one usually rested a while before the polska began. It is not clear if this was also true within the ceremonial dances, or only when the minuet appeared as a common dance. My view, however, is that Heikel was referring to the ceremonial dances and that, in the common dance, there was no polska after the minuet.<sup>32</sup>



Fig. 6.28 Tjock residents dance their minuet, with the bride and groom at the 'end of the table' during the arrangement of a traditional peasant wedding in Tjock, Ostrobothnia, Finland, 1987. Photograph by Stina Hahnsson. © Finland's Svenska Folkdansring.

## The Minuet as a Ceremonial Dance in Nyland

In Nyland, the minuet never occupied the same vital role in the ceremony as in Ostrobothnia. There are only a few notes that the minuet was used there as a ceremonial dance. One document stated that the minuets were the first dance at a wedding, and it was called a 'bridal minuet': 'It was danced first by the bride, groom, bridesmaids and groomsmen, after which the other guests continued'.<sup>33</sup> Who danced with whom and how many couples danced at the same time is not specified.

32 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 138–42; Yngvar Heikel, 'Allmogens dräktskick i Lappfjärd och Tjock', in *Brage Årsskrift XV–XVIII* (Helsingfors: Föreningen Brage, 1925), pp. 81–102; Heikel, *Dansbeskrivningar*, p. 18; pp. 405–6; Alfhild Forslin, 'Spelmän och bröllopsmusik från Österbotten', in *Sumlen*, årsbok 1978 för Samfundet för visforskning (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv och samfundet för visforskning, 1978), pp. 59–66.

33 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 142; Hjalmar Vonkka, 'Bröllop i Hälsinge under förra seklet', *Budkavlen*, 4 (1928), 115–17 (p. 117).



### In Eastern Nyland

On 3 November 1831, in Sarvlaks village in Pernå parish, Eastern Nyland, an eighteen-year-old nobleman named Carl Fredrik von Born took part in the wedding of his subordinates—a practice that was standard at that time. He recorded in his diary that ‘the newly-married danced together’ the first minuet while two musicians played the tune. The minuet was thus danced solo. Then, quadrilles were danced, ‘both Swedish and Russian,’ as well as waltz and *anglais*. Even in the neighbouring parish Liljendal, it was said that the minuet was performed as the first dance at the wedding.

In Pyttis parish, the minuet would always be the first dance at a wedding, according to an 1887 lecture by Gustaf Åberg (b. 1854). At that time, the polonaise had already taken over the role as a ceremonial dance, but the minuet continued to be used to open the dance proceedings. Åberg said that the bride would be invited by the priest, ‘or if he didn’t like dancing’, by the ‘master of ceremonies’. She was ‘then handed over to the groom, who in turn may lead the dance, etc’. The minuet was still danced in Pyttis parish into the 1890s.

Likewise, in Pellinge village, the minuet was a ceremonial dance during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The first minuet was danced by the bride and the ‘master of ceremonies’ and the second by the groom and the maid of honour. Then the father of the bride and the wife of the master of ceremonies danced, along with other relatives. The first minuets were danced solo, possibly two couples on the floor with the bridal couple as one of them. Then followed the waltz for everyone and when it was danced, ‘the so-called groom’s dance was played, which always consisted of a quadrille and after that polskas, waltzes, quadrilles, and minuets followed each other throughout the night’. It is rare that the ‘groom’s dance,’ a quadrille, was danced after everyone had been dancing.<sup>34</sup>

### In Western Nyland

From Western Nyland, an account gives an exact date for a minuet danced at a wedding: 1859. The wedding was held at Fagervik ironworks in Ingå parish to unite the employees Johan Lindberg and Anna Knagg. Lindberg was born in Fagervik in 1835 and was interviewed in 1926 when he was ninety years old. In the interview, Lindberg described his wedding at twenty-four years of age.

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34 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 143–44; Olle Siren, *Sarvlaks. Gårdshushållningen och gårdssamhället från 1600-Talet till 1900-talet*. Folklivsstudier XII. SLS 488 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1980), pp. 219–220; A. Lindroos and J. Andersson, ‘Ett bröllop i Pellinge, Borgå skärgård, för 100 år tillbaka’, *Hembygden, Tidskrift för svensk folkkunskap och hembygdsforskning i Finland*, 1 (1910), 155–59 (pp. 155–56).

Before the wedding, he had informed the owner of Fagervik mansion, baron Johan Fridolf Hisinger, that he was going to marry. Hisinger was pleased and offered a valued gift: 'the bride was given a wagon with two horses to go to the wedding'. This was an immense honour at that time. Lindberg proceeded to describe the wedding as follows:

Everyone who came paid something to the cash box. At my wedding, a lot was given, as much as 28 roubles. I invited the gentry to come, and nine came from the manor house. Nobody thought they were too eminent and mighty to dance with the workers. After the wedding, a minuet was danced to the tunes of two musicians. It was a custom at that time that the priest would dance the first dance with the bride.<sup>35</sup>

Lindberg invited gentry to the wedding, who came and danced with the ironworkers. His memories confirmed that the minuet was danced at the end of the 1850s in Western Nyland, both by ordinary people and gentry, and that these groups danced together. The money paid to the cash box at the wedding, twenty-eight roubles, was a significant amount at that time. According to the custom, half the sum was given to the poor people's fund and the other half to the church.

### The Minuet as a Ceremonial Dance in Turku Archipelago

There are only a few descriptions of wedding traditions from Turku archipelago that would indicate the minuet had a role. I have found two examples of the minuet as a ceremonial dance, and in both instances, the priest would participate.

#### *In Kimito*

A schoolteacher from Kimito, Nils Oskar Jansson (b. 1862), told the music researcher Otto Andersson in 1904 about dancing at weddings in the 1820s. According to Jansson, the most popular dances were 'Polska and "minuetten", the waltz and the "sjulsen" came later, "Vackra svägerskan" [a contredance] was probably danced quite early. All the other dances are from recent times'. His information about the dancing procedure at these weddings is as follows:

After the tables were cleaned and carried out, the dance took place. First, the five obligatory minuets were danced, and they had their unique names: the bride's, groom's, maid of honour's, bridesmaids' and groomsmen's. In these minuets, the priest must attend in order the

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35 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 145; *Västra Nyland*, 26 October 1926.

marriage to be considered fulfilled. [...] After these honorary dances, the common dance followed, in which all the guests and even people who were not invited but came to see the bride were allowed to participate as far as space admitted [...]. Finally, the crown was danced off the bride during a cheerful circle polska.

Jansson stated that there were five ceremonial minuets. These were required dances, with involvement of the priest, in order for the marriage to be considered fulfilled. These minuets also had unique names:

1. The bride's minuet
2. The groom's minuet
3. The maid of honour's minuet
4. The bridesmaid's minuet
5. The groomsmen's minuet

It is not clear who danced with whom, who invited to each dance, nor with whom the priest danced in each round. I suggest it worked like this:

For the first minuet, the bride invited the priest, whose rank was the highest of all the guests. The bride and priest danced solo (= the bride's minuet).

Then the priest brought the bride to the groom, and the following minuet was danced by bride and groom (= groom's minuet). Then the question comes: With whom did the priest now dance? I have concluded that the priest probably did not dance this minuet, and the bridal couple danced solo.

To the third minuet, the maid of honour invited the priest. They danced solo (= the maid of honour's minuet).

How the dance continued for the fourth and fifth minuets is more challenging to determine. For the fourth minuet, the girl who was first among the bridesmaids invited the priest and danced with him as the first couple at the table end. The bride danced with the first groomsman as the second couple. The other girls invited their partners (= the bridesmaid's minuet).

In the fifth minuet, the first groomsman perhaps danced with the bride as the first couple, and the priest with the first bridesmaid as the second couple. The other boys danced with their partners (= the groomsmen's minuet).

The terms 'bridesmaid's minuet' and 'groomsmen's minuet' probably refer to those who invited to the dance, following a French terminology convention from the latter part of the seventeenth century.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 146–48; Jansson, pp. 41–42. An example of the name of the dance after who was invited appeared in the 1970s in the dance of purpuri in



Fig. 6.29 Kimito Ungdomsförening in Åboland in Finland dances a minuet at a summer party, 1904. The transition steps are taken, and the ladies and gentlemen have turned on opposite sides. Schoolteacher Nils Oskar Jansson to the left. Photograph by Otto Andersson. SLS 105b\_66. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b\\_SLS+105b\\_66](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b_SLS+105b_66), CC BY 4.0.

### *In Houtskär*

In Houtskär in the Turku archipelago, it was also customary for the priest to start the dance at a wedding. According to Otto Andersson,

the first dance at a wedding in Houtskär was the minuet with the following polska. The priest first danced with the bride. When the dance was over, a plate was put on the table, and money was collected for the musician.

The dance started with a minuet, in which the priest danced with the bride solo.<sup>37</sup>

## The Minuet among the Finnish-speaking People in Finland

Among the Finnish-speaking population in Western and Southern Finland, the minuet was danced well into the nineteenth century. However, the dance never gained a much popularity. Most accounts of minuets come from the provinces of Nyland, Southwest Finland, Satakunta, and from the regions neighbouring the Swedish-speaking areas in Ostrobothnia. Fragmentary data is available from the provinces of Häme, Central Finland, Savo, and Northern Karelia.<sup>38</sup>

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Ostrobothnia. In girlspurpuri the girls invited and in boyspurpuri the boys invited; SLS 1119; Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 312.

37 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 148; Otto Andersson, *VI Folkdans A 3. Bröllopsmusik. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 402 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1964), p. LVIII–LVIV.

38 Pirkko-Liisa Rausmaa, 'Kansantanssit', in *Kansanmusiikki*, ed. by Anneli Asplund and Matti Hako (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1981), pp. 164–71 (p. 167).



Fig. 6.30 and Fig. 6.31 Finnish common people in 1803, The National Library of Finland, <https://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/32457>; [https://finna.fi/Record/doria.10024\\_32250](https://finna.fi/Record/doria.10024_32250), public domain.

In his doctoral thesis, Petri Hoppu detailed information about the minuet throughout Finland.<sup>39</sup> He listed information about the minuet among various groups of people in different parts of the country, including the named source and date of the information, taking Yngvar Heikel's extensive material as a starting point. Hoppu has also conducted his own fieldwork, and building on Hoppu's work, in the following, I pursue other evidence from Finnish Finland, emphasizing accounts that offer more than a mention of the minuet. With regard to dances at weddings, I have not separated examples in which the minuet is a ceremonial dance and a common dance because of the limited number of sources.



Fig. 6.32 Devotional time in a home in western Finland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The round, flat sourdough bread with a hole in the middle was strung on poles to dry under the roof. School poster by Vihtori Ylinen (1920). Vantaa City Museum, Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/vantaa.Arkisto:281:6?imgid=1>, CC BY 4.0.

39 Petri Hoppu, *Symbolien ja sanattomuuden tanssi. Menuetti Suomessa 1700-luvulta nykyaikaan* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1999).

Among the earliest information about the dancing of the minuet by the Finnish-speaking population comes from Loppi in southern Häme. There, Captain Magnus Wilhelm von Törne, staying at Kormu farm, described life in Loppi during the 1790s. Von Törne was born in Borgå and had moved in 1790 to the Kormu farm, which was owned by his brother. He began to make observations about life in the parish and sent his notes to the Åbo Academy University in 1800. He said about the people, among other things, that they did not neglect to arrange a party if there was only one reason to celebrate. Therefore, the people were happy to have a wedding, and the guests stayed for as long as the food and drink lasted. He noted that, in one instance, a bride was adorned with glitter. About the dance, von Törne said that polskas and minuets were danced in turn as long as the celebration continued.<sup>40</sup>



Fig. 6.33 Girl from Mouhijärvi in western Finland, drawing by Agathon Reinholm (1880). Postcard. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, public domain.

In Rauma in the province of Satakunta, the priest Frans Mauritz Ljungberg (b. 1806) recalled in the mid-1850s that three or four decades earlier, minuets and polskas had been the common dances in Rauma and the surrounding villages. At that time, the two dances were always danced together, beginning with the minuet and following with the polska immediately afterward. Ljungberg said the minuet was:

<sup>40</sup> Magnus Wilhelm von Törne, *Kuvaus Lopen Pitäjässä* (1790–1799), trans. to Finnish by Heikki Wuorenrinne (Loppi: Lopen kunta, 1990), p. 27.

A quiet and severe dance, danced slowly and very solemnly, [while] the polska, on the other hand, was fast and fiery, and the man and woman swung in furious speed while dancing it. Nowadays, these old dances have been replaced by gentry dances, such as waltz, quadrille, Bohemian polka, and mazurka. The younger generation does not even know how the minuet was danced.

According to Ljungberg, minuets and polska had been the common dances in the Rauma region in the 1810s. He had probably seen minuets at many weddings and had the ceremonial dances in mind when making this statement—in part because he felt that the minuet was danced slowly and very solemnly but also because the polska was danced afterwards.<sup>41</sup>

According to another description from Western Finland, the minuet or ‘minuetti’ was the only wedding dance in older times. The first minuet was danced by the ‘master of ceremonies and maid of honour’ and the second by the bridal couple, after which everyone was allowed to dance. Thus, the first two minuets were solo, and possibly ceremonial, dances. How many couples danced at the same time was not explained. The author said he received the data from interviews with eighty-year-olds who recalled weddings from their youth in the early 1800s which often continued for four days. The author also stated that the wedding parties varied in different regions, that the host would follow the old customs and habits if he or she could afford it, and that the minuet had been known there for a long time.



Fig. 6.34 People from Mäntsälä, Southern Finland, watercolour by Hilda Olson (1864). The National Library of Finland. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, public domain.

41 Frans Mauritz Ljungberg, ‘Rauman kirkkoherrakuntaa koskevia muistiin panoja’, *Satakunta Kotiseutututkimuksia*, 10 (1936), 98–133 (p. 131).



Fig. 6.35 Young couple from Säkylä, Southwestern Finland, watercolour by Hilda Olson (1864). The National Library of Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.D47BD6B5FE34B3D2EA6938C4B5804A19?sid=3078909972>, CC BY 4.0.

In Ikaalinen in Satakunta, Daniel Henrik Fingerroos (b. 1814) collected ‘old melodies of minuets, polskas and other dances that were played in the country’ and donated his collection to *Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura* (the Finnish Literature Society) in 1854. The fact that it was possible to compile such a collection is evidence that minuets and polskas were common dances. In addition, Fingerroos had also collected tunes in other places.<sup>42</sup>

A famous folklife documentarian, Henrik August Reinholm (1819–1883), was born in Rauma. He made notes of dancing in the 1840s. According to Reinholm’s records from Rauma and Ulvila, the dance was called the ‘minuvetta,’ and it had two different stages: ‘First the partners dance towards each other, take the fingertips while turning around, and then march towards each other’. Although the description is brief, one can recognize the structure of the ordinary minuet here.

From southwest Finland, Reinholm collected two pieces of pertinent information. The first piece of information is from Halikko, where the minuet or ‘minueti’ began in a circle, ‘then [the dancers] set themselves on two lines, [they dance] three times back and forth, the fourth time past’. The second piece of information comes from Pyhämaa. There, Reinholm noted that the minuet

<sup>42</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 173–76; Maunu A. Knaapinen, *Länsisuomalaisia naima- ja häätapoja*, Länsi-Suomi II (Helsinki: Länsisuomalainen Osakunta, 1890), p. 43, p. 51; *Rauman Lehti*, 6 July 1892; *Helsingfors Tidningar*, 13 September 1854.



was danced by common people as late as the 1830s to a tune that resembled the melody 'Se Dansmästar Mollberg, broder i vår Krögarstuga'.

Reinholm also mentioned that the 'minuvetta' was danced in Sjundeå in Western Nyland. He pointed out that the minuet had spread from the Swedish-speaking to the Finnish-speaking population. Furthermore, Reinholm said that in Pielavesi in northern Savo, the minuet, called 'leipuria' (baker), was danced to the melody 'En lång dragon'.<sup>43</sup>

Reinholm's most detailed description of the beginning of the minuet comes from Mäntsälä in eastern Nyland, where the minuet was called 'Pitkää' [pitkä = long]. He explained:

The men with the women to the right of them all [stand] in a single long line. The women holding the men's and their own raised hands move themselves to the opposite side, and the figures begin in a steady rhythm.

Here too one can recognize the form of the ordinary minuet, which begins with the women and men next to each other and offering greetings to each other.<sup>44</sup>

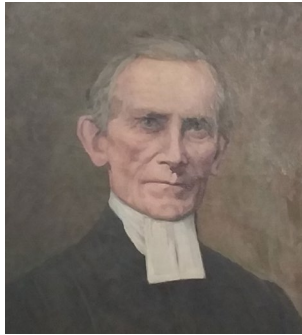


Fig. 6.36 Henrik August Reinholm collected dances in the 1840s and provided information on the minuet of the Finnish-speaking population in Finland. Portrait by Paul Bernhard Verner von Hausen (1904), oil painting. The National Museum of Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.46FEBE10A23F5BDDC36C1A5DEB373A11?sid=2972861067>, CC BY 4.0.

Ethnographic descriptions mention that the minuet was discontinued among the Finns in the mid-nineteenth century. For example, A. J. Hipping wrote in Vihti in Western Nyland in 1845 that 'the waltz and quadrille are slowly replacing the minuet,' and in Orimattila only the old people knew 'menuvietti' in the 1860s.<sup>45</sup>

43 The channel for new dances entering Savo's province was the military school in Haapaniemi, discussed in the previous chapter.

44 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 175–76; (MV) Museiverket, Reinholm's collection.

45 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 176; A. J. Hipping, *Beskrifning Öfwer Wichtis Socken* (Helsingfors: Frenckell, 1845), p. 156; F. A. Hästesko, 'Häätapoja Orimattilassa

The most comprehensive descriptions of the minuet dance among the Finnish-speaking population are available in two diaries. I have previously mentioned the diary of the peasant boy Samuel Ceder, who wrote of dancing the minuet at a 'peasant wedding' outside Uusikaupunki in Western Finland in 1796. Ceder was born in 1779 and later became a priest at the Åbo Academy University.

The second diary was written by the student Eric Gustaf Ehrström in the summer of 1811. He was the tutor of a family that visited Hauho in Tavastland. Together with the family, he attended wedding in the village of Kokkila, where he observed the minuet. This version seems to have had a different structure than the ordinary minuet. Ehrström's report is analysed in the section on the Nordic forms of the minuet.

Few minuet melodies are documented among the Finnish-speaking population. This is further evidence that the minuet did not play a significant role for these people.<sup>46</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

The minuet was quite popular in Finland's Swedish-speaking population, especially in Ostrobothnia. Among the rural population, the minuet was used both as a common dance and a ceremonial dance at weddings. Great importance was attached to the position boys and men held at the table end because this relied on knowledge and the ability to determine the minuet's length. Thanks to Yngvar Heikel's colossal work, we know today how the minuets were danced in the early twentieth century. His achievement was to record in detail the customs of the ceremonial dances at the wedding.

Among the Finnish-speaking population, the minuet had a minor role as a ceremonial dance at weddings. This may have been because the wedding was celebrated in two houses, first in the bride's home and then in the groom's home. Thus, there might not have been time for long, ceremonial events in both locations.

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puolivuosisataa sitten', *Kotiseutu*, 1 (1910), 230–35 (p. 233).

46 Eero Nallinmaa, *Barokkimenuetista Masurkkaan, Sävelmätutkimuksia* (Tampere: [n.pub.], 1982), p. 69.

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# 7. The Minuet in Norway

*Gunnel Biskop*

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The minuet spread to all the Nordic countries, including Norway.<sup>1</sup> Handwritten music notebooks from Norway are an early source of evidence. During the period of the later 1700s, the music in these notebooks is entirely dominated by minuets, according to Ånon Egeland.<sup>2</sup> One of these notebooks is by Hans Nils Balterud, a farmer in Aurskog east of Oslo, and was written from 1758 to 1772. It contains about 380 tunes, of which about 280 are minuets.<sup>3</sup> However, despite the abundance of records regarding minuet tunes, information about the dance itself is fairly minimal.

## The Minuet in Norway in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

In many published diaries from the 1700s, the writers mention that they had danced but neglect to specify what they had danced. One of these diarists was the Swedish geologist Baron Daniel Tilas (1712–1772). In addition to being active in Sweden, he also made several trips to Norway and Finland to study mining and ecology. His diary offers a depiction of folklife because he described, among other things, weddings and costumes.

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- 1 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—Ålsklingsdansen. Om Menuetten i Norden—Särskilt i Finlands Svenskbygder—Under Trehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015). [The Minuet—The Loved Dance describes the minuet in the Nordic region—especially in the Swedish-speaking population in Finland—for three hundred and fifty years]. The text is a translation into English of a chapter in the book.
  - 2 Egil Bakka, Brit Seland, Dag Vårdal, and Ånon Egeland, *Dansetradisjonar frå Vest-Agder* (Vest-Agder Ungdomslag/Rådet for folkemusikk og folkedans, 1990), p. 55.
  - 3 Jens Henrik Koudal, *For borgere og bønder. Stadsmusikantvæsenet i Danmark ca. 1660–1800*. Københavns Universitet (København: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2000), p. 548.



Fig. 7.1 Daniel Tilas described social life in Fredrikshald in 1749 in Norway, where the minuet was probably danced. Portrait by Olof Arenius (1750). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daniel\\_Tilas.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daniel_Tilas.jpg), public domain.

In 1749 he lived in Fredrikshald in southeastern Norway for many years. There Tilas participated in events in the social circles of two groups: the merchant class and the military officers and senior officials at the fortress of Fredriksten. His impression was that the two groups competed to arrange the most magnificent parties and banquets that extended into the morning hours. When he described the entertainments that the officers arranged, he felt compelled to mention as an example, ‘a concert and ball’ held weekly on Thursday evenings, ‘in purpose-oriented rooms, and which was among the most distinguished and respectable subscription events in the city’. Tilas recorded that it was attended by about forty couples, that is, eighty people, with each person paying two *riksdaler* for admission. A typical evening would proceed like this:

The concert began at 5 p.m. and lasted until 7 p.m. Then lots were drawn to form couples for the first set of dances, partly to avoid rank order disputes and partly so that everyone would have danced at least once. Once the first set was finished, everyone was free to dance with whomever they wished. Coffee and tea were included in the price and, at about 10 p.m., cold meats, and bread and butter. Should anyone want to have wine, it was acquired and billed separately. The ball was scheduled to finish at midnight, and just as the clock struck, the music would cease abruptly. However, as the young people were not always satisfied, it usually cost a contribution for the musicians of a *riksorts* from each male attendee, and dancing often continued until 6 a.m.<sup>4</sup>

4 A ‘riksorts’ was one quarter of a rixdollar. Daniel Tilas, *Daniel Tilas, Curriculum vitae I–II 1712–1757 Samt Fragment av Dagbok September–Oktober 1767*, ed. by Holger Wichman. *Historiska Handlingar*, del 38:1 (Stockholm: Kungl. Samfundet

Dancing occurred in shifts, as Tersmeden described in Sweden. Attendance to one of these weekly events was restricted, and everyone paid for themselves. No one was considered to belong to ‘those with the highest [social] rank’ who otherwise would have been expected to dance the first round: all were equal. Thus, the determination of the dancing order occurred via the drawing of lots. There were two reasons why they drew lots to determine who would dance first: to avoid disputes over rank order precedence and to ensure that everyone danced at least once. In my view, they likely switched partners during the round, so that everyone danced with everyone else before the next round began. The author’s use of the word ‘disputes’ shows the significance and rigidity of social ranking. Tilas did not mention what was danced on these occasions, but I am convinced that it was the minuet. He also danced at balls arranged by the merchants and emphasized how similar the events were despite being organized by the two different groups. Therefore, I believe that the merchants in Fredrikshald also danced the minuet in 1749.<sup>5</sup> Coupled with Nils Balterud’s music notebook from Aurskog which included a large number of minuets, Tilas’ diary fully supports the conclusion that the minuet was danced in Fredrikshald in 1749.

After the 1760s, more information is available about minuets in Norway. From the curricula of several dance teachers, we can gain an insight into what pupils learned at dancing schools in Christiania (modern-day Oslo), among other places. One of the dances taught was the minuet, as evidenced by advertisements in the first Norwegian newspaper, which began publishing in 1763. In 1770, C. D. Stuart from England, known as Madame Stuart, announced that she was teaching ‘Menuets’. Madame Stuart was a leading cultural personality who gave concerts and worked as a dancer, singer, and actor. In the same year, a peripatetic dance teacher, Martin Nürenbach, taught ‘Menuets, English Dances, and Solos’. In 1772, yet another dance teacher, Andreas Lie, came to Oslo to teach: ‘1) menuet according to the most recent method, 2) English dance with the correct original steps “released in this and the previous year”, 3) French

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för utgivande af handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia, 1966), p. 226–28.

Tilas was born at the Gammelbo mine in Ramsberg in Västmanland, Sweden. His grandparents were Urban Hjärke and Maria Swaan. The poem containing the first reference to the minuet in Sweden was dedicated to them on the occasion of their wedding in 1676.

5 The fact that Tilas did not name the dance may be because it was a given that it was a minuet and did not, therefore, need to be specified. By contrast, while visiting a market in Mora in Dalecarlia, Tilas had encountered a dance with which he was unfamiliar, and in, that instance, he named the dance. He wrote that he did not know the dance but learned it. It was called ‘Mora huppdantzen’. He was a quick learner and could quickly ‘step into the main dance’ in front of ‘an audience of several hundred’. To finish the event, the dancers participated in a chain dance. See Tilas, pp. 44–45.



Contradances, 4) Scottish Reels, 5) Solos with 12 variations'. That same year, dance teacher N. Brandt also came to Christiania, announcing that he would be teaching the 'Menuet, English and French contradances, Minuet-Dauphin Solo, Pas de Deux'. Attempting to distinguish himself from local teachers, Brandt insisted that 'only those, who have learned abroad, could dance adequately'.<sup>6</sup>

We can also gain insight into what pupils learned in Bergen, where Sven Hendric Walcke, a dance teacher, ran dance classes from the late 1790s into the 1800s. In 1783, in Sweden, Walcke published a book of dances, and in 1802 in Bergen, he published another book of dances containing English dances and contradances.



Fig. 7.2 Dance teacher Sven Hendric Walcke ran a dance school in Bergen, Norway. The image shows a page from a dance book he published in Sweden in 1783. Sven Hendric Walcke, *Grunderne uti Dans-Kåsten, til Begynnernes Tjenst* (Göteborg: L. Wahlström, 1783), <https://litteraturbanken.se/f%C3%B6rfattare/WalckeSH/titlar/GrunderneUtiDansK%C3%A5sten/sida/1/faksimil>, public domain.

One of Walcke's students was Johannes Carsten Hauch (1790–1872), later an author and zoologist in Denmark. Hauch related in his memoirs that a dance

6 Børre Qvamme, *Det Musikalske Lyceum og Konsertlivet i Christiania 1810–1838* (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 2002), p. 19. According to Sven Hirn, Nürenbach had previously visited Åbo, Helsingfors and Gothenburg, and returned from Christiania to Finland in 1773. One can assume that he taught the same dances in all those places. See Sven Hirn, *Våra danspedagoger och dansnöjen. Om undervisning och evenemang före 1914*. SLS 505 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1982), p. 14.

teacher came to Bergen and held dance classes for children. The lessons, which lasted for six to eight weeks, were attended by both girls and boys. Hauch and his younger sister were sent to these classes when he was not even ten years old.



Fig. 7.3 In his childhood, Johannes Carsten Hauch attended Walcke's dance school but did not progress further than the minuet steps in his dance education. Portrait of Hauch by unknown artist. Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HauchJC.jpg>, public domain.

Hauch wrote extensively about Walcke as a dance teacher, and since Walcke is mentioned in many contexts, I quote the text here:

This dancing master called himself Mr. Walke and was employed on the Ballet staff in Copenhagen. He was a real character, and it seemed ironic that he should be a teacher in that art in which inborn grace is the pivot around which everything else revolves, a dignity which no learned behaviour can replace. He was tall, dry, and very skinny, almost like a skeleton, his head was narrow and bald, and his limbs were so severely proportioned that every movement was ungainly. He stammered severely, yes, and sometimes his voice ultimately failed him, which was blamed on a problem with his tongue. When this happened, he would flail the air with his hands. This often caused his pupils to laugh, which upset him much. As a consequence, his mouth would seize up even more, so he gesticulated, even more, provoking even greater laughter. Most of the time, it ended with a couple of the boys banished to a corner to be jeered at and as a warning to the others. As a result, you could sometimes see five or six boys standing in the corners, and when the punishment needed to be more severe, Mr. Walke himself would tie the arm of the delinquent to a large chair with a handkerchief. However, as I recall, the ladies were never subjected to this punishment, although it was often they who laughed most. He could leap, and perform *entrechats*, and turn around in the air while simultaneously playing his little *pochette*. All this was

evidence of great agility and mobility, but it suited him poorly. However, he did know how to teach children so that they could participate in all the dances that were fashionable at that time in a short time.

As a dance instructor, Walcke did not seem to have physical qualifications on his side, but he nevertheless worked as a dance instructor in many different venues. His dance course was divided into classes. Hauch wrote:

The course was divided into three boys' classes and three girls' classes, into which everybody, as far as possible, was assigned depending on the progress made each day. My sister and I first started the course sometime after it had begun. My sister, who at that time had very light and graceful movements, made rapid progress; I, on the other hand, was plodding, and it cost me a lot of effort just to learn the five positions and so-called big [grand] and small [petit] battements that preceded the actual dance figures. The various steps, or where to place the feet to dance the minuet or a waltz or a so-called English dance, were drawn in chalk on the floor. For a long time, I did not get beyond the minuet step and was therefore placed in the third class, among the youngest children.<sup>7</sup>

Young Hauch had difficulty mastering the five positions and the big and small battements [leg movements], which the students had to learn before progressing to participating in the dances themselves. The dance teacher also indicated in chalk on the floor where the feet were to be placed. Unfortunately, the author did not progress beyond the minuet steps and was placed in the third class among the youngest children.

In the same period, in Stavanger, the minuet was danced in 'Det Stavangerske Klubselskab' [The Stavanger Club]. The company was chartered in 1784. Ten years later, its charter was revised, and several regulations were added in subsequent years. Ambiguities in their detail prompted questions from members. One of these questions was whether children should accompany members to balls. A response from 1795 stated that:

Whether the correspondent's minor and not yet confirmed children may attend regular Balls—NB. Only one at a time from each household—no one who cries, but only those who can dance the minuet or English [dance] properly without incommoding the company—and NB. not at festive occasions, as the attendance at these is large enough.

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7 C. Hauch, *Minder Fra Min Barndom Og Min Ungdom* (Kjøbenhavn: C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 1867), pp. 67–70. Citation 4.5.2004 from Nordisk databas, according to Kari Okstad.

This answer stipulates that the children should know how to dance ‘the minuet or English dance properly’ to attend general balls. In January 1796, the club’s constitution was amended to specify that a not-yet confirmed minor may participate in public balls if he or she ‘can dance without disrupting the dance’.

But by the beginning of the 1800s, it seems that the club’s balls were not conducted entirely according to the rules. It was decided in 1802 that:

at balls, English dances may not be danced by more than 12 couples at a time; that between every two English dances, three minuets be played, as long as someone steps forward to dance them; if no one steps forward to dance the first [of the three] minuets, then another English dance begins right away. To supervise this, the youngest Director will be present throughout the ball.

By ruling that only twelve couples may dance an English dance, the organizers probably wished to limit the length of those dances. There is an uncertainty in this statement as to whether anyone would come forward to dance the minuet, suggesting that not everyone was interested in it any longer. The minuet continued to appear in the 1823 edition of the regulations. The repertoire and the order of the dances is precisely specified:

the first two dances before and after the meal with four sequences, later at least two with four sequences between each with six [sequences]. After every two English dances may be played a minuet or a waltz, which must not last longer than 5 minutes, no other dance must last longer than 1 hour. There are precise rules and penalties in case of breaches of the regulations concerning sequences, quadrilles, and figures.<sup>8</sup>

Here, in 1823, it was decided that a minuet could be danced as an alternative to a waltz. Since it was necessary to regulate how long a minuet or waltz might last, it raises the question of whether the minuet was danced by one couple at a time, thus prolonging the time it took. Similarly, one can only speculate whether the waltz was danced by a few couples at a time, for a few turns around the floor, and then continued by other couples, which would prolong the length of the dance if there were many couples.

Lieutenant-Colonel Jens Christian Schröder described a dance in a private home in his memoirs. He gives an account of, among other things, the social

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8 Carl Christensen, *Træk af Det Stavangerske Klubselskabs Historie* (Stavanger: Det Stavangerske Klubselskab, 1915), pp. 8–19, pp. 24–25, p. 26; c.f. Trygve Wyller, *Det Stavangerske Klubselskab og Stavanger by i 150 år* (Stavanger: Dreyers Grafiske Anstalt, 1934), p. 155. Citation 20.5.2004 from Nordisk database, according to Egil Bakka. Thanks to Oddbjørn Salte who mentioned the source.

life in his parents' home at the Valde estate in Vestfold, southern Norway, in the early 1800s. Several members of the military lived in the village, and they customarily gathered at Christmas for dinner and dancing at each other's residences. On Christmas Day, they always convened at the home of Schrøder's parents. Schrøder wrote that red wine was drunk with the food and that guests sang at the table and collected money for the poor. He also described what was always danced:

In the evening, punch and beer were served. There was never a party at Valde at which, in the evening, my father did not lead a minuet, in remembrance of the old days and to honour the older guests, who all joined him on the dance floor, including an old aunt—sister to my maternal grandfather General Grüner. One would see the senior dragoon officers with big boots and big silver spurs advancing and retiring in their minuet. Only my father, I seem to remember, danced this noble dance with grace. After the Menuet, most of the younger and more agile dancers followed with the so-called 'springedans or Polskdans' with its leaps and capers.<sup>9</sup>

All the older people danced the minuet. The host, the father of the household, 'led' the dance; in other words, he danced 'as the first couple at the top of the set'. That honour was self-evident since the dance was held on his estate. It was also a given that the older generation had the first dance to themselves since one danced in order of social rank. After the more senior guests had danced, the younger guests were allowed to dance, and they mostly danced 'springedans or Polish dance'. At parties at Valde, the military officers wore their dress uniforms with boots and silver spurs and clearly caught the attention of a wide-eyed child.

According to a memoir by Johan Christiansen (b. 1832 in Askim in southeastern Norway), the minuet was losing its popularity in the mid-nineteenth century. He described the balls and how the ladies and gentlemen were dressed. About the dances, Christiansen wrote that they usually consisted of 'the Lancers, Francaise, Figaro, Waltz and Mazurka, and the older generation even danced the minuet, which they called "Mellevit"'.<sup>10</sup> Only the generation still danced the minuet at this time. Christiansen's account does not specify in which social environment this occurred.

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9 Hans Schrøder, *Oberstlieutenant Jens Christian Schrøders Erindringer*, Fra Svunden Tid. Norske breve, erindringer og dagbøger, bind 3 (Kristiania: Steenske forlag, 1924), pp. 16–17. Citation 10.5.2004 from Nordisk databas, according to Egil Bakka.

10 Johan Christiansen, *Mine Livserindringer af Christer* (pseudonym) (Christiania, 1908), p. 184. Cit. 5.4.2004 from Nordisk databas, according to Kari Okstad.

## The Minuet among the Rural Population during the Nineteenth Century

The minuet has also been danced in Norway at different times in different rural areas. In her memoirs, Gustava Kielland (1800–89), who was married to the parish dean Gabriel Kielland, described the minuet on Finnøy in Boknafjorden north of Stavanger. The dean's family lived on the island from 1823 to 1837.



Fig. 7.4 Gustava Kielland told about minuet dancing on Finnøy in Boknafjorden in Norway. Localhistoriewiki.no, [https://lokalhistoriewiki.no/wiki/Fil:Gustava\\_Kielland\\_01.jpg](https://lokalhistoriewiki.no/wiki/Fil:Gustava_Kielland_01.jpg), public domain.

She dictated her memoirs later in life, and they were published in 1882. In her depictions of weddings on Finnøy, she mentions that ‘mellevit’ was danced. Kielland wrote that it was often tricky to persuade wedding guests to be seated at the tables. People held back and were reluctant to be the first to be placed since the seating was arranged according to social status. Gustava and her husband Gabriel had the highest rank among the guests, and as a matter of course, would be seated closest to the bride and groom. Kielland explained:

When you arrived at the farm where the wedding was being held, you were received at the door by the master of ceremonies with a ‘stirrup cup’, ie. a glass of schnapps and a pretzel. After entering the room and greeting the bride and groom, their relatives, and the other guests, one was seated at the table. When it came to Gabriel and me, it was an easy task for the master of ceremonies, we were obviously to be seated closest to the bridal party. But the master of ceremonies had a great deal of difficulty seating the other guests, as social rank had to be strictly adhered to. He had to

ensure that each guest was seated correctly according to his or her rank. This was not always so easy for the master of ceremonies.

Kielland further elaborated on the seating arrangements, writing that the guests were possessed by a 'reticence demon,' which meant that most modestly preferred not to sit at the place to which the 'master of ceremonies' directed them but rather to be seated further away from the place of honour where the bride and groom sat. It became a verbal battle and a tussle that struck the recently-arrived minister's wife as comical. She was not aware of the custom, which was common in rural communities all over the Nordic countries.

During the day, dancing could take place outdoors, and in the evening, indoors. Kielland said:

In the evening, the hall was filled with guests, leaving only a small open space. There the bride would dance 'mellevit' with the groom and a couple of other close relatives; they did not have much room to move. The bride's dancing was stiff, stately, and careful because of the bridal crown, and her partner could not make giant leaps in the small space. I can still see our aged neighbour, Lars Fleskje, at his sister's wedding, gracefully and carefully dancing 'mellevit' with her in a similarly small space, with a little dribble of tobacco juice staining each corner of his mouth. All the guests had to see the bride dance 'mellevit'.<sup>11</sup>

This depiction indicates that the minuet was still customarily danced on the island in the 1830s.



Fig. 7.5 Finnøy Rectory in Norway. Painted by Thomas Fearnley (1826). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Finn%C3%B8y\\_av\\_Fearnley.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Finn%C3%B8y_av_Fearnley.jpg), public domain.

11 Gustava Kielland, *Erindringer Fra Mitt Liv* (Stavanger: Nomi forlag, 1967), pp. 123–26.

Kielland described two different weddings at which she had seen the minuet danced. At the first, she mentioned that the bride would dance minuet with the groom and then with 'a few others', maybe with two or three of the bridal couple's closest male relatives. My view is that the minuet here was danced one couple at a time. She further elaborated that the bride's dancing was stiff and stately because of the crown; this was undoubtedly true, but, in my opinion, Kielland was unfamiliar with the slow and graceful style of the minuet when it was used as the first dance at a wedding. The bride's dance partner, in that situation, would not make giant leaps. Kielland here recalled a second wedding at which an older neighbour, Lars Fleskje, danced the minuet gracefully and cautiously with his sister, the bride. Fleskje's minuet was danced in the correct style for the ceremonial part of the wedding dance. Fleskje is unlikely to have been mentioned were it not for the tobacco juice dribbling out of the corners of his mouth. It was common for everyone to see the bride dancing minuet.

From folklife depictions, it appears that the minuet continued to be part of Norwegian wedding customs well into the latter part of the 1800s. In Vest-Agder in southern Norway, it was still danced in 1886 at a wedding by some older women who requested it when they were contributing to the payment for the musician(s) since they felt they were too stiff and unsteady to attempt the more popular dances. By that time, the minuet, as well as the *tretur* and *fyrstur*, were considered 'resting dance[s]' and not suitable for a man to dance. Such a resting dance had to be followed by a faster dance, for example, a 'springdans'. This was still considered the norm around 1900.

Many accounts from Vest-Agder record memories of minuet dancing. A woman in Fjotland, who had seen a girl of confirmation age dance the 'melevitt' said, 'there were two of them; she turned her head so much'. Another remembered that a woman 'held out her skirts and turned on the floor with another dancer, either man or woman'. In a local folklife depiction, Jon Gunnuvson (b. 1835) described the elderly dancing the minuet:

I saw the melevitt once. It was at Ola Kjerran's wedding in Åmdal. There were three of them [dancing]. I think it was Torborg Åmdal, Ola from Hedningskjerret, and Eli Knibe. They took small steps towards one another and swayed out to the sides again. It was the most beautiful dance I have ever seen. It was just like a child's play. But young people never try mellevit. The steps are so tricky.<sup>12</sup>

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12 Jon Gunnuvson, qtd. in Bakka, *et al.*, pp. 52–53.



The depiction here is of three people dancing the minuet. Similar information was also given by a woman in Hægbostad, who had heard that ‘when they danced the melevitt, they were three dancers’.

From Kragerø, northeast of Vest-Agder, another report seems to indicate that three persons danced the minuet. Fredrik Hougen (b. 1820) included in his memoirs a funny story about the minister and headmaster Hans Georg Daniel Barth (b. 1814), who was known to be ironic, playful, and extremely agile. He could fold himself double and pretend to be ‘a dwarf’. He had done so during the Christmas holidays when families were visiting each other. Barth’s wife Charlotte had arrived at one such get-together around 1850 hand-in-hand with this ‘dwarf’: Barth himself. Both had mingled among the other guests, greeted everyone, and ‘participated’ in the minuet. Whether this stunt was or extemporaneous is not clear; however, the report indicates that people knew the minuet and knew it well enough for the absurdity to be entertaining. Hougen wrote:

After New Year, there was a big festive ball hosted by the town’s richest wholesaler. The host had enlisted the catechist [minister] to dance the minuet with him. The host’s other partner was the wife of Weibye, the head customs official. In her younger days, she had been a lady-in-waiting at the court in Stockholm and still carried herself with courtly demeanour. This piqued the ironically-inclined catechist. As the host with his courtly partner performed the solemn turns, the catechist made his most significant efforts to mimic them, dancing like a dwarf between the stately couple or rolling like a ball of wool around them to the great amusement of the whole company. They laughed till they cried.<sup>13</sup>

The minuet in question was a version for three dancers: the host with Mrs. Weibye and with the agile comedian Barth. The contrast was exaggerated because Mrs. Weibye had been lady-in-waiting in Stockholm and carried herself accordingly. It is probable that the host, the wealthy wholesaler, had not intended the minuet to be a comic spectacle but rather a majestic display. Taking the former lady-in-waiting and the minister as his partners, the host would not have expected antics from those of such comparatively high social rank.

In Gudbrandsdalen, the music of the minuet survived among musicians into the 1900s. The fiddler Trygve Fuglestad (b. 1902) could play a minuet, explaining that ‘I learned it from my mother. She told me that the boy and the girl each danced by themselves, the boy holding out his trouser legs with his

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13 Fredrik Hougen, *Kragerøminner*, 5 vols (Kragerø: Vestmars forlag, 1936–1941), iv, p. 551.

hands and the girl holding out her skirt'.<sup>14</sup> Klara Semb, who documented folk dances in Norway at the beginning of the twentieth century, heard about some people who could dance the minuet but did not want to demonstrate it for fear of 'giving it away'. Semb was not able to get a description.<sup>15</sup>

We do not know how the minuet was danced in Norway. It appears that there were two different versions: the ordinary minuet and a version for three dancers. I have not found a minuet for three people elsewhere in the Nordic countries. Therefore, it is interesting that the late-twentieth-century dance researcher Karl Heinz Taubert mentions a popular minuet for three to twelve individual dancers. Other popular versions were for two couples (*en quatre*), for four couples (*en huit*), for three couples (*en six*), and eight couples (*en ronde*).<sup>16</sup>

The minuet which was danced one couple at a time at the weddings in Finnøy could be similar to the ordinary minuet from the 1700s. This is also likely to be the case for the minuet seen by the German dancing master Friedrich Albert Zorn (1816–95) in Norway in 1836. Zorn worked as a dancing master in Christiania at the time.<sup>17</sup>



Fig. 7.6 In his youth, Friedrich Albert Zorn visited Hønefoss in Norway in 1836 and watched the minuet performed. Portrait of Zorn. Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek, <https://ausstellungen.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/tanz/items/show/98>, public domain.

14 Fuglestad, qtd. in Bakka *et al.*, p. 55.

15 Semb, qtd. in Bakka *et al.*, p. 55.

16 Karl Heinz Taubert, *Das Menuett. Geschichte und Choreographie* (Zürich: Pan, 1988), p. 30.

17 Friedrich Albert Zorn, *Grammatik der Tanzkunst. Theoretischer und Praktischer Unterricht in der Tanzkunst und Tanzschreibkunst oder Choregraphie* (Leipzig: J.J. Weber, 1887), p. 20.

Zorn later became a well-known choreographer and dance theorist. In his book, *Grammatik der Tanzkunst* (1887), he included details of the dances and dance steps. Zorn described the 'Menuet de la cour' [the minuet of the royal court], which I call the 'standard' minuet, noting how it has spread to many countries and to all royal courts in Europe, as well as to remote areas where one would not at all expect to see it. An example of one such place he gives is Norway. I have translated his words here:

The author was once very astonished to see the peasant boys and girls dancing it [the minuet] in an isolated Norwegian village (Høhnefossen), having travelled there to learn about the national dance of the area, the halling.<sup>18</sup>

The ordinary minuet, the court minuet, had thus spread to Hønefoss by 1836. Zorn had travelled there to acquaint himself with the Norwegian 'national dance,' the halling. There he saw boys and girls of the peasant class dancing the minuet. Hønefoss, which lies about sixty kilometers northwest of Oslo, was a tiny remote village. For this reason, Zorn was surprised to see the minuet being danced there. Unfortunately, he did not describe how these peasant boys and girls danced the minuet, but Zorn was only twenty years old at the time and had not yet begun his choreographic or theoretical work. He recorded his reminiscence of the minuet in Hønefoss in the 1880s. If the dance had been somehow different from the ordinary minuet, I suspect that Zorn would have mentioned it. Therefore, I think that the minuet in 1836 Hønefoss was very similar to the ordinary minuet.

## Concluding Remarks

In Norway, the minuet was danced by various social classes, as in the other Nordic countries. The minuet was danced there from at least the mid-1700s and was still being mentioned in the 1900s. Much evidence is to be found in music notebooks from the later part of the 1700s. Although the details given are sparse, it can be seen that the minuet was danced on larger estates and landholdings, it was danced solo [by one couple] as the first dance at weddings on a small island, and it was danced by young peasant boys and girls. Finally, in addition to the ordinary minuet, a version of the minuet existed which allowed for three dancers.

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18 Ibid., p. 183.

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# 8. The Minuet in Denmark 1688–1820

*Anders Chr. N. Christensen*

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The minuet was not only a dance, as Johann Mattheson (1681–1764) from Hamburg established in the 1730s. Three different sorts of minuets existed—those which were meant to be played, those which were meant to be sung, and those which were meant to be danced. He added that the best minuet melodies for the dance were found in France.<sup>1</sup> Mattheson’s view is not surprising as the French dances were viewed as superior among the dances of that time.

## The Minuet’s Arrival in Denmark

It is unknown precisely when the Danish court took up the minuet. By 1700, it possessed more than twenty folios of French music, several of which contained minuets; however, the minuet was undoubtedly danced at the court before this time. At the introduction of absolutism in 1660<sup>2</sup>, the court was very French-oriented and, as early as 1664, the Royal Chapel hired six French violinists. The earliest record of the dance is from 1663, when the young Prince Christian, later Christian V, entered into marriage with the princess Charlotta Amalia of Hessen-Kassel. A tribute poem for the occasion, written by Claus Hansen Bang to the French melody ‘Le muneve’ mentions the minuet.<sup>3</sup> The oldest Danish music source is from 1688, a tabulature book of dance music that includes five minuets composed by the organist Johan Lorentz. A Danish noblewoman, Christiana

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1 Jens Henrik Koudal, ‘Tradition og innovation’, in *En Vänskrift till Märta Ramstens 60-Årsdag den 25 December 1996*, ed. by Gunnar Ternhag (Stockholm: Språk- och Folkemnesinstitutet, 1996), pp. 49–55 (p. 50).

2 The Danish king took absolute power over the country through a coup.

3 Nils Schiørring, *Det 16. og 17. Århundredes Verdslige Danske Visesang Bind I* (København: Thaning & Appel, 1950), p. 351.

Charlotte Amalia Trolle, registered no fewer than fifty-one minuets in her piano book dated 1702.<sup>4</sup>

King Frederik IV of Denmark, who reigned in the early eighteenth century, danced the minuet. Elisabeth Charlotte, Duchess of New Orleans, wrote in a letter dated 2 May 1709:

I know the King of Denmark well.—He is very fond of dancing but has no ear and dances very badly. He jumped strangely around in the minuet—put his hat too low at his neck, started the minuet in one corner of the ballroom, and ended it in another. You cannot describe it as funny as he did it. You cannot resist laughing, being ever so sad when seeing this King dance.<sup>5</sup>

This unflattering portrait of the King of Denmark demonstrates how important it was to know how to dance the minuet at this time.

From the writing of Ludvig Holberg, we see that the Copenhagen bourgeoisie experienced 'minuet madness' from the 1720s. In 1734, the *Stadsmusikant* (town musician)<sup>6</sup> in Odense had three 'Menivet' books in his collection, which shows that minuet music had also reached the bourgeoisie in the provinces.<sup>7</sup> Holberg stated that, by 1750, intricate dances such as the *rigaudon* and *folie d'Espagne* were no longer used, rather '[o]ne finds only Taste for Minuets, English and Polish Dances, because these happen with more indolence, as those rather are like dancing on stilts'.<sup>8</sup>

But it seemed that during this period in Denmark, nearly everybody wanted to dance the minuet. In 1736, the pietistic King Christian VI<sup>9</sup> who disapproved of dancing, requested that the police perform a systematic search of houses in Vesterbro and Frederiksberg outside Copenhagen's ramparts. During this search, the authorities found 'a couple dancing the minuet' among the guests at the Frederiksberg Inn. From this account, we know that the ordinary population danced the minuet at the pubs in the suburbs of Copenhagen.<sup>10</sup>

4 Koudal, *En vânskrift*, p. 50.

5 Ralph Holm og Klavs Vedel, *Folkedansen i Danmark* (København: Vort Land 1947), p. 37.

6 A musician licenced by a town to provide all music there.

7 Jens Henrik Koudal, *For Borgere og bønder—Stadsmusikantvæsenet i Danmark* (København: Museum Tusulanum: 2000), p. 421.

8 Ludvig Holberg, *Epistler V*, comments by F.J. Billeskov Jansen (København: H. Hagerups Forlag, 1951), p. 36.

9 Pietism was a seventeenth-century movement for the revival of piety in the Lutheran Church.

10 Koudal, *For Borgere*, p. 475.

It may seem remarkable that the minuet spread so quickly to the peasants, but several examples point to this being the case. A teacher from the parish Sønder Omme in Western Jutland reported that his grandparents danced the minuet ‘at fine occasions’ in the 1740s. And a 1759 lawsuit involving people from a village near Roskilde noted that the youth demanded ‘Minuets and Polish Dances’ from the musicians at their summer party but were dissatisfied with a Stadsmusikant’s apprentice who could only play minuets ‘badly’. These demands at a mid-century party testify that the minuet caught on well with peasants in the area around Roskilde.<sup>11</sup>

Count Otto Ludvig Raben from Ålholm participated in feasts with his own peasants and mentioned several times what was danced. In 1768, he attended a peasant’s wedding and ‘danced the minuet with the bride’.<sup>12</sup>

## Peasants Danced the Minuet

Over the course of the eighteenth century, the dancing preferences of the court of the Roi Soleil found their way to the pubs of the towns and the celebrations of the peasants. A parallel development can be seen in the way that the trumpet spread from the princes’ courts to the peasants’ villages. Lorents Berg complained in 1782 in his music textbook:

It has happened to this Royal Instrument as to other magnificent things that only ought to be for the distinguished, *Zirater* [decorations] etc. The trumpet is misused in several places by poor people wanting to join in. In Denmark and Holsten, the peasants dance the minuets for 4 skilling in their clogs to the sounds of the trumpets.<sup>13</sup>

The organist Johan Ludvig Dauer seems to have shared this sentiment. The Stadsmusikant (town musician) Gorrison from Sønderborg in 1761 had leased him the right to provide the music on the island of Ærø but Dauer continuously had problems with dabblers playing at events without seeking permission or paying the fee required by law. Dauer normally charged four marks for playing for a dance event lasting twelve to fourteen hours. Instead of this, he was offered two marks, after which two dabblers played. Dauer grumbled about

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11 Koudal, *En våndskrift*, p. 51.

12 Jens Henrik Koudal, *Grev Rabens Dagbog—Hverdagsliv i et Adeligt Miljø i 1700-tallet* (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2007), p. 130.

13 Lorents Nicolai Berg, *Den første Prøve udi Instrumental-Kunsten* (Christiansand, 1782), p. 65.



the conditions on Ærø, writing in his letter of complaint: 'Elsewhere a musician apprentice can earn three to four rigsdaler, here on Ærø not even four marks'<sup>14</sup>.

A music book from 1772, the one which Dauer used as an instructional text to teach Niels Gottlob to play the violin, has been preserved. The book confirms the minuet's strong position on Ærø in 1700, as thirty-nine out of the one hundred and six melodies are minuets. Some of these are still published in music books from the present time. Most impressive is that one of the few Ærø melodies having survived up to today, No. 53 in Dauer's book, has been used for more than two hundred and twenty-five years.<sup>15</sup>

Several sources report on the popularity of the minuet in the country in the late 1700s. Niels Blicher published in 1795 an ethnographic description of the parish in central Jutland Vium, where he was a priest. About the dance at a wedding, Blicher wrote:

When the meal is finished, the tables are removed, and the dance starts and lasts the whole night. One of the most distinguished in the party first dances the minuet with the bride and then neatly leads her to the groom, after which the wedding couple dances first the minuet and then the Polish.— Later, two couples at a time dance and continually alternate between these two dances. The way of dancing seems cheap but funny enough to watch [...] for a while. The females move smoothly and quietly and sometimes drop out of step, looking modestly towards the floor most of the time. On the other hand, the males have their own and quite the opposite manners. Who can the best curtsy, stamp, hop, clap their hands, bow, lean sideways, and do artistic turns here is the greatest master of the dance.<sup>16</sup>

As Blicher reported, the peasants at the end of the 1700s had started to dance two couples at a time—a practise called minuet *en quatre*—except when the bride danced the ceremonial minuets.

Joachim Junge, who was a priest in Blovstrød north of Copenhagen, gave a similar description in 1798:

The peasants [...] always dance the minuet *en quatre*, except when there is a bride who must step forward. She then has the floor alone, first with the groom and after that with more, as she passes from hand to hand so that even lads sometimes must do villeinage in a minuet, first with smooth and later with some steps called Polish steps, which two peasants elsewhere name cheese and bread.—In the jumping dances you

14 Jens Henrik Koudal, 'Tradition og innovation', in *En Vänskrift till Märta Ramstens 60-Årsdag den 25 December 1996*, ed. by Gunnar Ternhag (Stockholm: Språk- och Folkemnesinstitutet, 1996), pp. 49–55 (p. 50).

15 Jens Henrik Koudal, 'Dansemusik fra Struensees tid' in *Årsskrift 2000* (Ærøskøbing: Ærø Museum, 2000), pp. 21–24.

16 Niels Blicher, *Topographie over Vium Præstekald* (Viborg, 1795), pp. 196–97.

never see more than two couples, because the English or here so-called row dances are not known by the peasants.<sup>17</sup>

## The King Asks a Young Girl to Dance the Minuet

The minuet danced by the bourgeoisie and the one danced by the Royal family were not dissimilar, and this is illustrated by an anecdote describing events in the 1790s. Frederik Barfod writes that his stepmother, Christine Charlotte Guldberg (1777–1826), was walking on the rampart with a friend and met King Christian VII (1749–1808). The king was schizophrenic and known to deviate from the standards of expected behaviour. He stood in front of the girls and, looking from one to the other, shouted to his adjutants, ‘A pair of damn pretty girls—look at her how lovely she is’, pointing to Guldberg. Finally, the king departed, and the girls fled from the rampart. Sometime later, there was a *bal paré* [masked ball] in the banqueting hall of Christiansborg. It was a custom that the townspeople would walk in the galleries during a *bal paré* to watch the dance and listen to the music.



Fig. 8.1 Minuet in the great hall on Christiansborg. It is probably the minuet that the royal couple is dancing at the picture, showing the celebration in the great hall at Christiansborg at the wedding of Christian VII to Caroline Mathilde on 8 November 1766. Engraving by Bradt after drawing by Jardin. *Kobberstiksamlingen*, Statens Museum for Kunst, <https://open.smk.dk/en/artwork/image/KKSgb8824>, public domain.

Guldberg was walking in the galleries during this ball with a family named Leth. It was not usual to dress up for this gallery walk since the purpose was to watch and not to be seen. Soon after arriving, however, she was spotted by

<sup>17</sup> Joachim Junge, *Den Nordsjællandske Landalmues Character, Skikke, Meeninger og Sprog* (Kjøbenhavn: Sebastian Popp, 1798), p. 180.

Christian VII who sent an adjutant up to bid her to come down immediately and dance the minuet with the king. Guldberg had to descend to the great hall and dance the minuet with the king: in her daily suit, a linsey-woolsey dress. She remembered seeing that the crown prince and the princess were both on the dancefloor but did not remember any other of her fellow dancers. The minuet had hardly ended before Guldberg hurried home, and she nevermore sat foot in Christiansborg. This account suggests that there were no significant differences between the minuet danced by the bourgeoisie and at the Danish royal Palace. It also indicates that, in the 1790s, the minuet was no longer danced by one couple at a time since Guldberg remembered dancing alongside the prince and princess but also other couples.<sup>18</sup>

## The Dance Teacher and the Minuet

Dance classes were advertised frequently in the earliest Danish newspapers, revealing the dance repertoire at the time in question.

In 1792, the former ballet master Johann Joseph Ehlenberger from Mecklenburg advertised in *Faber's Fynske Avertissements-Tidende*. He offered a dance class in Odense in the winter of 1792 with the following description:

When 12 cavaliers meet and select 12 ladies, then the cavaliers will pay for 16 lessons 2 Rdlr, but ladies are free. For this fee are taught 1) Menuette ordinaire, 2) Menuette figureuse, 3) Menuette Quarrée, 4) Menuette á la Reine, 5) Menuette Angloise, 6) Quadrille, 7) Angloise ordinaire, 8) Angloise with Pas francoises, 9) Quadrilles with Pas francoises, 10) Allemande figureuse, 11) Cosaque, 12) the German dance called The Waltzes, 13) the big Contredance called Oberon of 64 tours.

Ehlenberger offered yet more:

I also teach my pupils the choreography or the art of drawing the tours of the Angloises as well as the Quadrilles, just as my music, being really good and exquisite, is at their service for them to copy. In anticipation of the compliance with my wishes, I hope to acquire general applause soon.<sup>19</sup>

Ehlenberger (b. 1753 in Mecklenburg-Strelitz) was a former ballet master who choreographed several dance performances. He and his wife were part of a German dance troupe called Fribach's that was touring Nordic countries and had performed a few times in Odense. In the spring of 1792, the troupe

18 'Ole Skov, *Menuettens oprindelse 2—Danmark—Dansens og musikkens rødder 16'*, *Hjemstavnsliv*, 5 (1997), 12–15.

19 *Fabers Fynske Avertissements - Tidende*, nr. 63 (Odense, 1792).

was failing to attract sufficient spectators, so most of its members returned to Germany. Ehlenberger, however, remained in Odense and established a dance school. It is not known whether he had many pupils.<sup>20</sup>

As the building of a new theatre in Odense had recently finished, Ehlenberger was hired as a ballet master. The theatre had to close after only its second season, and Ehlenberger left the theatre in April 1796 and went to Hamburg to work. His wife and five children stayed in Odense. Unfortunately, however, his wife died on 15 May the same year, so Ehlenberger returned to Odense to restart the dance classes. Besides arranging one ballet for the theatre, he kept the dance school and taught the young people of Odense the art of ballroom dancing following a program similar to the one he advertised earlier. He continued teaching until he died in 1814.<sup>21</sup>

In October 1801, Stahl, a dancer at the theatre in Copenhagen placed a newspaper advertisement in which he announced ‘that he informs both children and adults of the minuet, English dances, minuet en pas de grave, French contradances, waltz with figures of the arms, Scottish dances, and in fencing.’<sup>22</sup>

Later, in May 1807, Stahl advertised his services in the *Aarhus Stiftstidende* as a teacher of ‘the minuet and the latest good ballroom dances’. Stahl also taught in Roskilde in 1807. A local person recalled that

[i]t was a great and strange event in our town when this ‘dancing master’, a figurant Stahl from the Royal Theatre, appeared in Roskilde.—Stahl had brought along wife and children. He was treated as a great welcome artist, and parties were given for him and the family.

At the end-of-season dance the pupil’s parents presented Stahl with a silver-teapot.<sup>23</sup>

## The Minuet in the Danish Clubs

The laws governing the clubs can be good sources for dance historians. This is the case even for the minuet. The earliest club laws were established at the end of 1700, when the minuet had disappeared from the repertoire of the bourgeoisie. By this point, the minuet had developed into a dance for many couples and not a dance for one or two couples at a time.

20 Ole Skov, ‘Danse- og musikhistorie. Lidt om danselærere i 17–1800 tallet’, *TRIN & TONER*, 87.4 (2016), 18–19 (p. 18).

21 *Ibid.*, 19.

22 Henning Urup, *Dans i Danmark—Danseformer ca. 1600 til 1950* (København: Museum Tusulanum, 2007), p. 159.

23 Urup, p. 162.

According to the laws of 'The United Musical Company' from 1796:

The balls should open with three minuets, to which the ball inspector should invite older persons who were not participating in the English dances. The inspector should also watch that the seats of the elderly are not occupied by others while the elderly are participating. If English-dancers refuse to leave the seats when requested by the aforementioned minuet-dancers, they must pay a fine of 2 Rd. to the company box.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, the club laws stated that, while the lead dancer in the first 'Quadrille' was to signal with both hands the completion of the dance, only the ball inspector could ask for the minuet to be brought to a close. The rules further specified that after the first three dances had been danced, three 'English Tours,' then two 'Minuets' and so on were to be played. A 'Contra-Tour' could be danced too but, since this was known to last for some time, it was advised to always make this the last dance.<sup>25</sup>

In the laws of 27 June 1800 of 'The Harmonic Musical Company', it was recorded that 'of contradances only one may be danced on each evening,' probably because the steps were too complicated. If a Quadrille row exceeded twenty-four persons, it was the habit to form two rows. Dancers at the top of the row should take a position near the bottom in the next dance.<sup>26</sup>

## Peasants and Citizens Lost Interest in the Minuet

Although the minuet largely fell out of fashion in the 1800s, conservative clubs continued to dance it. Bishop Kristian Hjort explained in a letter from 1817 that he had

participated in an old-fashioned ball here in the club and danced my six English dances and three minuets without any aching tendons during the next days.<sup>27</sup>

One night in February that same year, 1817, there was a ball in the club in Ribe. It was announced that 'by prior agreement, only minuet, English dance, contra dance, and simple waltz are allowed to dance'. It seems that this 'nice' club, which mostly consisted of married couples, had banned the Scottish dances,

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24 *Love for det forenede Musikalske Selskab* (Kjøbenhavn: Sebastian Popp, 1796), pp. 176–77.

25 Anders Chr. N. Christensen, 'Klublivet som dansehistorisk kilde', *Folkdansforskning i Norden*, 25 (2002), 34–37 (pp. 35–36).

26 *Love for det forenede dramatiske Selskab* (Kjøbenhavn: Niels Lund, 1802), pp. 44–45

27 Helga Stemann, 'Biskop Viktor Kristian Hjort', *Fra Ribe Amt*, 17 (1919), 141–92 (p. 187).

Wiener- and so-called zweित्रitt-waltzes, for being harmful to health and morality.<sup>28</sup>

In 1809, the dean Claus Mønnich in Lønstrup in Northern Jutland preached a sermon about the Bible story of the wedding at Cana, and is reported to have concluded in the following way:

And when he had led the groom, he had to dance with the bride. And what did he dance? The minuet? (Here, the dean grabbed his dress, spread it out to the side, made a step to the right, a step to the left and a step to the rear, at the same time setting the beat and tone by the words), Tinterlintint! Tinterlintint! Tinterlintint! But how do you dance? Firetur, Kehraus (here he did some hops and tramps to illustrate these peasant dances with disapproval), Hopetohop! Hopetohop! Therefore my devout fellow Christians, when you come to a feast and must and will dance, dance the minuet and not firetur or Kehraus because otherwise, the devil dances Kehraus with all of you right into hell. Amen.<sup>29</sup>

From this, we surmise that the Firetur, Kehraus, and other dances were overtaking the minuet in popularity, much to the great irritation of dean Mønnich. He associated the graceful steps of the minuet with heaven and the wild hopping of the Kehraus with hell.

## The Minuet of the 1800s

The dance teacher Jørgen Gad Lund (1796–1848) occupied a particular position as publisher of dance books. He was a dance student at the Royal Theatre under the tutelage of Antoine Bournonville until 1820. Later, he himself became an itinerant dance teacher, travelling all over the country. Lund published *Terpsichore, or a guidance for my dance pupils to keep in their memory steps and tours that they have examined by me* (1823), a book later expanded and republished in four editions. In *Terpsichore*, we find the earliest printed description of the minuet in Denmark. Lund detailed the minuet, step by step, as it was danced in the 1820s.<sup>30</sup>

Lund's description shows that the minuet changed at the beginning of the 1800s. The steps were unlike those of the Baroque: the steps went over two bars;

28 Peter Riismøller, 'Klasseskel, kroer og klubliv', in *Dagligliv i Danmark—Menigmand Får Mæle 1790–1870*, ed. by Axel Steensberg (København: Nyt Nordisk Forlag, 1963), pp. 285–308 (p. 299).

29 Anton Jakobsen, 'En Prædiken i Maarup Kirke 1809', in *Vendsysselske Aarbøger* (Hjørring: Historisk Samfund for Hjørring Amt, 1929), pp. 154–59 (p. 158).

30 Urup, pp. 176–77.

the first bar was stepped forward with the weight on the right foot during the whole bar, after that, three quick steps (left, right, left), and after that the weight on the left foot, then right, left, right and so on.

After giving these details of the minuet, Lund emphasized the character of the dance:

If you first can dance this with grace and dignity, then all the other dances will be easy. Every dance is dependent on fashion. But if even stormy dances have displaced the minuet, it certainly is and stays the most beautiful of them all.<sup>31</sup>

Among the dancers who worked as choreographers at the Royal Theatre was Poul Funck. He was appointed principal dancer in 1815 and, in 1828, created the dances for Heiberg's festive play *Elverhøj*.<sup>32</sup> The last act opens with a minuet, followed by several dances corresponding to the contradances of the 1800s. In the minuet initiating the celebration, he included typical minuet and contradance figures.<sup>33</sup> This minuet from *Elverhøj* is likely one of the best-known minuets today that are considered part of the Danish Royal Theatre's national repertoire.

Funck's version of the minuet has been danced in a slightly simplified version at dancing schools, folk high schools, and in folk-dance associations. It was published, among other things, by Else and Kristian Krogshede.<sup>34</sup>

## Concluding Remarks

Danish peasants lost interest in the minuet in the first half of the 1800s. Two sites in Denmark, however, are known to have kept the minuet tradition alive until the mid-twentieth century—namely, the Randers area and the island of Ærø south of Funen. In the Randers area, the dance was called 'Monnevet' and, on Ærø, the 'Mollevit'.

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31 Jørgen Gad Lund, *Terpsichore, eller En Veiledning for mine Danselæringer* (Maribo: Schultz, 1823), p. 24.

32 Urup, p. 153.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 241.

34 Else and Kristian Krogshede, *Folkedansen, Anstandsdanse og Menuetter* (Odense 1937).

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## PART III

# SOURCES ABOUT THE DANCE FORM AND HOW THEY WERE CREATED

The chapters in Part III systematically survey the sources that were produced to document the minuet as movement patterns. These sources mainly include descriptions, notations, and recordings. From the early eighteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century, dancing masters were the sole creators of these resources. However, in the early twentieth century, a new group of experts emerged: folk-dance collectors established themselves and added filming as a new documentation technique, particularly from 1970 onwards.

The sources produced by Nordic dancing masters are relatively modest and depend to a large extent on European sources, so these are surveyed as a part of the total picture of the minuet. One expression of the dance that is not given *primary* focus in this book is its variety of theatrical formats—but some of these sources are briefly surveyed.

As for the documentation from folk-dance collectors, the situation is reversed. The minuet disappeared in Europe; we have not been able to find any evidence that the ‘folk minuet’ had a continuous existence outside of the Nordic countries. However, because the folk minuet was documented in some rural communities in Denmark and Finland, it was folk-dance collectors who produced this documentation. On the other hand, due to the earlier disappearance of the folk minuet in Sweden and Norway, these folk-dance collectors did not manage to document corresponding material in their countries.

Thus these chapters discuss the creation (and creators) of the sources, as well as the context of their production and use. The collection and documentation of the folk minuet has particularly rich material that places the dance in its social context. The chapters give examples of notations and descriptions, and, where available, even the field notes of the collectors as an illustration of the variety of sources. Also included is a brief survey of works showing how the minuet music spread to the Nordic countries as well as a draft about how these were created.



# 9. Historical Examples of the Forms of the Minuet

*Elizabeth Svarstad and Petri Hoppu*

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Historical sources in the Nordic countries reflect the minuet's strong position in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Egil Bakka stated that the minuet was probably the dominant dance among the upper classes in the Nordic countries for most of the eighteenth century and went out of fashion sometime before 1800.<sup>1</sup> Around the mid-1700s, the minuet also gained a valued position in the culture of the lower classes of society in many places in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. And it never fell completely out of fashion among this group. As a folk dance, the minuet is still an on-going practice even today in some areas.

In this chapter, we first look at the forms of the minuet through European sources. We present how the French court minuet and its practice as well as different minuet forms are presented in selected Nordic sources from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Examples of sources that contain a remarkable amount of information on the minuet are a Norwegian manuscript from around 1750 with notes from a dance lesson, dance books by Swedish dancing master Sven Henrik Walcke, the dance book of Swiss dancing master J. J. Martinet from 1797 (translated into Danish in 1801), early nineteenth-century dance books from the Danish dancing masters Pierre Jean Laurent and Jørgen Gad Lund, as well as the 1886 manual of the Norwegian dance teacher Janny Isachsen.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Egil Bakka, *Europeisk Dansehistorie: For VK 1 og VK 2* (Oslo: Gyldendal undervisning, 1997), p. 117.

2 Martinet has the initials J. J. in the original French version whereas they are J. F. in the Danish translation.

## The French Court Minuet

The French court minuet, or the ordinary minuet, is a dance in 3/4 time and exists in several variations. As a ballroom dance at the French court in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, it was danced by one couple at a time. For many years, the standard minuet was the first dance to be performed at formal balls in France. It was danced by all couples that were present and in hierarchical order according to social rank. The French dancing master Pierre Rameau (1674–1748) described in 1725 how the minuet was organized at a so-called *bal réglé*. The king and queen would dance the first dance. Next, the queen would dance with the prince, or whoever was the next in the rank order before the prince would dance the next minuet with the princess. And so it continued down the hierarchy; each one danced, in turn, two minuets.<sup>3</sup> Since the courts were large, the session dedicated to the minuet must have lasted a long time. Only upon the completion of the minuets could the ball proceed with the other dances on the program.

In addition, as an obligatory part of the minuet, every couple had to perform proper bows and curtsies, so-called *reverence*, both before and after the dance. The reverence was first directed towards the king, and after that, the couple would bow and curtsy to one another. American musicologist Tilden Russell wrote that the minuet with its incorporated bows had the function as a formal opening ceremony at the court balls as well as a ‘show’ and a demonstration of status.<sup>4</sup> The hierarchy that determined the order of dancing couples, the room’s visibility, and the carefully and elegantly performed dance made the minuet very suitable within the ball’s formal frames and an arena for displaying gentility as well as dance skills.

In addition to the ordinary minuet, there were also minuets as a part of the theatrical dance repertoire, and several choreographies exist in Feuillet notation for either a couple—comprised of a man and a woman or of two men—or a solo man or woman. These minuets ranged from easier versions to more elaborate and technically advanced dances. Elements of minuets also appeared as part of compound dances, or suites, and contradances or parts of contradances.<sup>5</sup>

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3 Pierre Rameau, *Le maître à danser* (Paris: Jean Vilette, 1725; repr., New York: Broude Brothers, 1967), pp. 49–54.

4 Tilden Russell and Dominique Bourassa, *The Menuet de la Cour* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2007), p. 3.

5 The term contradance refers to a large dance form and paradigm of group dances popular in Europe and other parts of the world, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In English, they are sometimes referred to as country dances. They are danced in sets of dancers, usually composed of couples, with typically four up to sixty individuals in each.

The minuet's fixed form and its use of basic steps contributed to making it very suitable as a starting point in both dance and education. Even though it was technically advanced, it was more straightforward in its construction than many other dances in the eighteenth-century European repertoire. For example, dances such as the *sarabande*, *bourrée*, and *gigue* were choreographed from the beginning to the end with different steps and step combinations for each music bar, while also changing choreography for each specific piece of music. By contrast, the minuet could, or can, be danced to almost any minuet tune. Because it consisted of a limited system of figures,<sup>6</sup> the minuet could be danced with greater flexibility than these other aforementioned choreographed dances, in which every detail needed to be mastered to perfection. The minuet, despite its fixed form, allowed improvisation. Its figures could be repeated several times, according to the dancers' choice, and, as mentioned earlier, one could vary the dance steps with different versions of the minuet step and replace some of the minuet steps with other steps, such as the *pas de bourrée* or *pas balancé*, for example. But too many elaborations made the minuets very long, and the abovementioned ceremony of minuets opening a ball might last for hours. Rameau wrote in 1725 that he believed the minuets should be kept as short as possible: 'It is both reasonable and becoming to set some Limits; for though a Person never dances so well, the figure is still the same. Therefore the shorter it is made, the better'.<sup>7</sup>

## Different Forms of the Minuet

From the early eighteenth century, *bal réglé* became a common form of dance event among courts and high society in Europe. A key characteristic of these formal balls is that they were opened with a series of minuets. The standardised form of *menuet ordinaire* was common at courts all over Europe, with insignificant variations as the European eighteenth-century dance manuals witness.

However, the dancing of one couple at a time was not the only option in the ordinary minuet, although it was the most emblematic and best known. Several couples could share the dance floor as well. A German dancing master, C. J. von Feldtenstein, described in 1772 the latter kind of dancing in the following manner:

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6 The term figure corresponds mostly to the French term *tour*, and the Scandinavian derivation *tur*. The terms were used to signify the dance patterns corresponding to a reprise—usually eight bars of music but could also be used for shorter or longer sequences of a dance.

7 Rameau, *Le maître à danser*, p. 51.

When a whole row of dancers set themselves to dance so that all the couples will perform simultaneously and dance every figure of the minuet with the same tempo or rhythm at the same time, then a certain symmetry in one's eye is developed. [...] When a row wants to end their dance and a new row of dancers intends to enter the dance floor, the first ones finishing their dance with reverence but the others starting the minuet with an opening compliment immediately, then the dance hall is never empty[.]<sup>8</sup>

Thus, we can see that the minuet could be danced in a similar 'longways' set as one did in many contemporaneous contradances. Feldtenstein explained that, while dancing like this, the usual Z-figure needed to be danced in a more curved way to allow several persons to make it at the same time. Interestingly, this was the most typical arrangement for minuets among Danish and Finnish peasants.

According to Karl Heinz Taubert, the minuet could also be danced by several couples simultaneously, without following any specific formation, so that couples arranged themselves freely on the dance floor, facing their partners.<sup>9</sup> Taubert's interpretation, however, is based on an early-eighteenth-century picture, and its reliability is doubtful. We have not found other evidence confirming this kind of dancing although it may have been practised.

In addition to the ordinary minuet, new minuet choreographies were created. From the beginning of the eighteenth century until the French Revolution, approximately forty minuet choreographies were published: most of them were complex variations of the ordinary minuet, figured minuets (*menuets figurés*), and a few that originated in the theatre. While any minuet melody could accompany the ordinary minuet, figured minuets were connected to specific tunes.<sup>10</sup> In 1717, in his treatise, *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister*, Gottfried Taubert mentioned some examples that became popular during the eighteenth century: Menuet de [la] Cour, Menuet d'Anjou, and Menuet d'Espagne.<sup>11</sup> As a matter of fact, Menuet de la Cour survived in many forms until the twentieth century, gradually coming to represent the ideal of what the minuet had been and should be.<sup>12</sup>

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8 C. J. von Feldtenstein, *Erweiterung der Kunst Nach der Choreographie zu Tanzen* (Braunschweig: [n.pub.], 1772), p. 80.

9 Karl Heinz Taubert, *Das Menuett. Geschichte und Choreographie* (Zürich: Pan, 1988), p. 82.

10 Russell and Bourassa, p. 3.

11 Gottfried Taubert, *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister, Oder Gründliche Erklärung der Frantzösischen Tantz-Kunst* (Leipzig: Friedrich Lanckischens Erben, 1717), p. 379; about Menuet d'Espagne, see also Claude Balon and Jacques Dezais, *XIII Recueil de Danses pour l'Année 1715* (Paris: [n. pub.], 1714), pp. 8–14.

12 Russell and Bourassa, p. 18.

Contradances that became popular in Europe during the eighteenth century also influenced the development of the minuet. The contradances that were minuets, for example, *Le Menuet à quatre* [the Minuet of four (dancers)] and *Menuet en huit* [the Minuet for eight (dancers)] were both accompanied by minuet music and performed in longways or square formations containing minuet steps.<sup>13</sup>

The most famous publication of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English country dances, the roots for the European contradance paradigm, was John Playford's *The English Dancing Master*, which came out in several revised editions from 1651 to 1728. The total number of dances in the eighteen volumes is 1053.<sup>14</sup> The earliest editions do not contain minuets, but, in the later ones, one finds ten dances that are called minuets (see Table 9.1).

Table 9.1: Minuets in *The Dancing Master*<sup>15</sup>

Name	First Published
Mr. Lane's Minuet	1695
Mr. Lane's Trumpet Minuet	1696
Whitehall Minuet	1701
New Minuet	1710
Tunbridge Minuet	1710
Subligny's Minuet	1718
A Minuet Paspé	1726
Mrs. Booth's Minuet	1726
Pretty Peggy's Minuet	1726
Trumpet Minuet	1726

13 Raoul Auger Feuillet, *Ve Recueil de Dances de Bal pour l'Année 1707, Recueillies et Mises au Jour par M. Feuillet* (Paris: [n. pub.], 1707); Georg Link, *Vollkommene Tanzschule aller in Kompagnien und Bällen Vorkommenden Tänzen* (1796).

14 John Ogasapian, *Music of the Colonial and Revolutionary Era* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004), p. 102.

15 Scott Pfitzinger-Kumle, *Playford's Dancing Master: The Complete Dance Guide: An Exhaustive Collection, Catalogue, and Index of all Dances Published in Editions of the Dancing Master, 1651–1728* (2019), <http://playforddances.com>



These dances are typically danced with minuet steps and music with minuet rhythm, but otherwise, they are longways dances, common English country dances. In addition to these dances that have the word *minuet* in their names, some editions of *The Dancing Master* contain other dances with minuet steps and rhythm without any reference to *minuet* in their titles (Table 9.2).

Table 9.2: Other dances with minuet steps and rhythm in *The Dancing Master*<sup>16</sup>

Name	First published
The Marlborough	1706
Drive the Monsieur from Flanders	1710
Mademoiselle Dupingle [also known as Sabina]	1718
Beautiful Clarinda	1726
Belsize	1726
Love in a Mask	1726

Using minuet steps in contradance figures was not the only way these two different dance forms were combined. The Menuet/Minuet Congo or Minuet d'Hugger reuses the Z-figures and hand movements of the minuet while including various steps and rhythm of contradances in the same dance. That is, the minuet steps are absent. Although the descriptions of the Menuet Congo variations do not include music, the accompanying music was probably similar to that used in contradances rather than in the minuet. This type of combined-dance appeared in several countries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>17</sup>

## Notes from a Minuet Lesson

We now turn to Nordic manuscripts and publications from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and examine what they say about the minuet. The manuscript *Information i Dandsingen av Monsieur Dulondel* [*Information (Lesson)*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Anonymous, *The Extraordinary Dance Book T B. 1826. An Anonymous Manuscript in Facsimile*, Commentaries and analyses by Elizabeth Aldrich, Sandra Noll Hammond, and Armand Russell. Dance & Music Series No. 11. Stuyvesant (New York: Pendragon Press, 2000), p. 118; Brives, *Nouvelle Méthode Pour Apprendre l'art de la Danse Sans Maître* (Toulouse: [n.pub.], 1779), pp. 20–25; Saltator, *A Treatise on Dancing* (Boston: The Commercial Gazette, 1802), p. 73.

in *Dance by Monsieur Dulondel*, no date] contains notes on dance, and on the minuet especially. It even includes some Feuillet notation, which is a unique find in the Norwegian source material.<sup>18</sup>

Christopher Hammer (1720–1804), in whose collection the *Information i Dandsingen* manuscript was found, was a student at the Sorø Academy in Denmark from 1747 to 1748. According to historian and librarian Vegard Elvestrand, students there were taught so-called ‘noble exercises’ and other arts and activities. These noble exercises consisted of fencing, music, dance, horse riding, and arts, according to the Sorø Academy’s laws, as discussed by Vegard Elvestrand.<sup>19</sup> The manuscript may very well have been produced by someone connected with the dance teaching at Sorø. Elvestrand has the impression that the manuscript was written from dictation, but he does not think this was work done by Hammer himself, finding it unlikely that the young man went to a dance school for a general education that led him to become a civil servant.<sup>20</sup> Although information has not been found that connects the French master Monsieur Dulondel and Hammer to dance teaching at Sorø, it is somewhat likely that Hammer participated in dance lessons as dance occupied an active position in young people’s education and social life. Further, while there is no information showing that Hammer danced while he was living in Norway, he pointedly mentioned dance and, specifically, the minuet in his *Sognebeskrivelse over Hadeland*—an undated text describing life in the parish for which he acted as overseer.<sup>21</sup> The fact that he kept this and one other dance manuscript in his library does show that he had a particular interest in dance.

The *Information i Dandsingen* manuscript contains information on dance and dance instructions as well as how to perform bows and curtsies. Much of it concerns the ordinary minuet for one couple, which seems to have been the central theme of the dance lesson from which the notes are taken.<sup>22</sup>

The first part of the manuscript contains information about the relationship between the dance and the music. The next part contains data on dance technique in general, such as the five positions of the feet. These are described using Feuillet notation, showing first the positions of the left foot then those of

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18 Elizabeth Svarstad, ‘*Aqqratesse i alt af Dands og Triin og Opførsel.*’ *Dans Som Sosial Dannelse i Norge 1750–1820* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2017), pp. 176–88.

19 Vegard Elvestrand, *Generalkonduktør Christopher Hammer (1720–1804) og hans manuskriptsamling: Registratur, biografi, slektshistorie* (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2004), p. 193.

20 Ibid.

21 Egil Bakka, *Norske Dansetradisjoner* (Oslo: Samlaget, 1978), p. 27.

22 Special Collections, Gunnerus Library, The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), Trondheim: XA HA Qv. 80n. *Information i Dandsingen av. Mons. Dulondel.*

the right. The subsequent parts explain how to perform a *reverence*—the bow and curtsy that were an obligatory part of the minuet. Reverences were performed before the dance and after the dance, and European dance manuals describe the correct ways to make proper reverences for different situations. The description in Hammer's manuscript corresponds with instructions given by Taubert and Rameau and includes notes on how to take off and put on the hat.

The notes within this manuscript that concern the minuet focus on the Z-figure. There are also notes on how to hold the body, which also correspond with descriptions in Taubert and Rameau. Emphasis is placed on keeping the body straight, the arms turned a little outwards, the fingers a little rounded, and the feet turned outwards. One of the paragraphs in the manuscript concerns especially the turning out of the feet. It insists that 'If the [pupil's] feet cannot be well turned out, they must be forced by using a board'. There is also a drawing showing the foot signs in Feuillet notation and how the angle of the turned-out feet becomes wider when standing on the board, which is called a *tourne-pied* or a *tourne-hanche*. This method shows that well-turned feet were ideal for dancing correctly, forming the pupils' bodies, and developing an elegant way of standing and walking.

Towards the end of the manuscript, there is a note describing how one should learn to keep the beat by clapping the hands. The dancing master plays the *pochette*, a pocket violin, and the pupils practice the dance steps. Clapping was also advised by Rameau, who thought the practice useful in teaching the rhythmic difference between what he called 'a true and a false cadence'. The *pas de menuet*, Rameau explained, was performed to two bars of triple time wherein 'every first bar is the true cadence and the last the false'.<sup>23</sup> To distinguish these, he recommended clapping the right hand against the left hand to mark the true cadence and lifting the left hand to mark the false one.

The *Information i Dandsingen* manuscript contains a basic introduction to the eighteenth century's dance technique, the minuet as a dance, and some information about how to dance in general. It shows that dance teaching in Denmark in the mid-eighteenth century reflected the continental standard. The French dancing master Dulondel followed the French norm and his practice was likely influenced by Taubert.

## The Minuet in Sven Henric Walcke's Books

Sven Henric Walcke was a Swedish dancing master who worked a large part of his career in Norway from the 1790s to 1825. Walcke wrote two manuscripts

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23 Pierre Rameau, *The Dancing Master*, trans. by Cyril W. Beaumont (Alton: Dance Books, 2003), p. 66.

containing dances, and while in Bergen, he authored and published one printed dance book. These are valuable sources of insight into Norway's activity at this time. Walcke had also published two books in Sweden in 1782 and 1783. All five books contain information on the minuet.

### Walcke's Swedish Books

Walcke's book *Grunderne uti Dans-Kånsten* [*Basics in the Art of Dance*] was published in Sweden in 1783. Here, he emphasized the importance of taking lessons with a dancing master who, in person, can easily teach the minuet steps, the manner of asking someone to dance, the turning, the style of holding hands, whereas, in writing, all of those things are difficult to make clear. *Grunderne* also contains a remark that the dancing master will show both minuet steps and steps for contradances in geometrical drawings.<sup>24</sup> This information underscores Walcke's idea that to learn how to dance the minuet properly and to understand the ceremonial gestures connected with it, students must take lessons with a dancing master. The inclusion of the remark on geometrical drawings points to one of his teaching methods: several sources note that Walcke made drawings in chalk on the floor so that the students could practise the steps by themselves.<sup>25</sup>

Walcke did not explicitly explain the minuet step in his books, but he has mentioned the dance several times in different contexts. All of these contribute to painting a picture of the importance of the minuet in his practice as a dancing master and a teacher, and that also reflects the European situation regarding the minuet.

In the *Minnes-Bok uti Danskonsten* [*Memory Book for the Art of Dance*] (1782), Walcke has included a list of minuet rules. These concern the positions of the feet while performing the minuet steps, keeping the beat, the bending and raising of the legs, and the turning. For instance, the dancing partners should always have their faces turned towards each other; ladies should hold the dress with their hands with straight arms and relaxed fingers; when asking someone to dance, it should be done by taking a few light steps out on the floor then performing a bow while looking at the desired potential dance partner. These rules show that the minuet should be performed according to a wider set of norms, the teaching of which was also considered to fall within the remit of the dancing master.

24 Sven Henric Walcke, *Grunderne uti Dans-Kånsten, til Begynnarens Tjenst* (Götheborg: L. Wahlström, 1783), Chapter II.

25 Henrik Jørgen Huitfeldt-Kaas, 'Om Familien Brochmann i Norge', *Personalhistorisk Tidsskrift* 16 (1895), 249–274; Fredrik Sinding-Larsen, *Den Norske Krigsskoles Historie i ældre Tider* (Kristiania: Cammermeyer, 1900), p. 116; Carsten Hauch, *Minder fra min Barndom og min Ungdom: Med et Prospect af Malmanger Prestegaard* (København: Reitzel, 1867), pp. 68–69.

In the *Memory Book*, there is also a list of ten different kinds of minuets: the ordinary minuet, the single minuet, the double and single balance minuet, the *figuré* minuet, the *coupé* minuet, the masquerade minuet, the ballet minuet, the solo minuet, and a minuet for when royal persons are present.<sup>26</sup> Walcke does not give any additional information about or explanations of these types. It is therefore difficult to know the characteristics of the various minuets and to ascertain the difference between them. However, it is quite clear that the ordinary minuet is the French *menuet ordinaire*. The double balance (*'Dubbel ballance'*), *figuré*, and *coupé* minuets may imply versions with more elaborate steps and figures added to them. Taubert has described several different ways to replace the minuet steps with other steps, such as *balancés*, *contretemps*, or *fleurets*.<sup>27</sup> When many such replacements of steps and changes in the figures are made, the dance is usually called a 'figured minuet'.<sup>28</sup>

### The Single and Double Balance Minuet—Some Hypotheses

The adjectives 'single' and 'double' minuet do not make sense in themselves. Still, some possible interpretations of the dance called the 'double balance' may be reasoned out. These variations on the minuet may contain the step '*balancé*' and, in that way, could be an example of minuet steps being replaced, as Taubert has described. Alternatively, the names could imply that some parts of the minuet, or some minuet steps, should be performed on the same spot, similar to the concept of *balancé* in contradances. This minuet step then resembles a step in the Finnish minuet. Petri Hoppu has described a minuet step from Lappfjärd, Finland that has this characteristic:

Bar 1: Step forward with R foot (1), which has in the previous step been dragged past L foot. The step is toward partner, with toes pointed forward, and almost no swinging of the body. Move L foot lightly to heel of R foot (2), i.e., with no bodyweight. Step back with L foot (3) to original place.

Bar 2: Step back with R foot (4), with almost no body swing. Lift L foot, and return to the floor on the same spot (5). Drag R foot past L foot (6), ready to step onto it on the next beat.<sup>29</sup>

26 Sven Henric Walcke, *Minnes-Bok uti Danskonsten* (Nyköping: Carl Hasselrot, 1782), p. 12.

27 Taubert, *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister*, p. 617.

28 Email from Tilden Russell, February 2016.

29 Email from Petri Hoppu, November 2016.

Here, the dancer moves forward and back in the same step. This pattern may be similar to the steps included in the balance minuet.

### The Minuet in Contradances

In addition to the minuets resembling the ordinary minuet, there are numerous examples of elements of the minuet being integrated into contradances. A contradance may be a minuet from the beginning to the end, i.e., the whole dance may contain minuet steps and music. However, minuets can also be the last part, or final figure, of a contradance. This merging of dance types occurs in the Nordic countries as well as the European context. In the dance book published in Bergen, his *Book of Figure Dances* (1802), Walcke published contradances and some of the English dances have the minuet as one of their last figures.<sup>30</sup> Since there are no tunes in this book, it is difficult to determine how the dance may have related to the music. However, there is a description of the minuet as part of a contradance in a manuscript from 1804, where the music for the contradance is written in 3/8 time, which is the metre for waltz at this time. When the minuet comes, the music is changed to 3/4, reverting to 3/8 when the minuet part is over.<sup>31</sup>

That the minuet was an integrated part of the contradance repertoire implies that the minuet was well established in the dancers' repertoire. Otherwise, it would be too difficult for them to adapt their rhythms and movements to perform the minuet steps simply for a few bars between the figures of the contradance.

### The Squared Minuet

In addition to the relatively significant number of contradances wherein passages of the minuet are included within the rest of the figures, some contradances were made up entirely by the minuet, from beginning to end.

The squared minuet (*Den 4re kantede Menuetten*) is a notable find in the Norwegian source material in this regard: it is the only known description of a contradance that is wholly a minuet. It is a minuet for eight persons and is danced in a square formation as in a quadrille. The dance description from 1816 contains information for male and female partners for each figure of the dance.<sup>32</sup>

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30 Sven H. Walcke, *Toure-Bog af Engelsk- og Contra-Dandse for mine Eleve* (Bergen: Hans Kongel. Majestæts privilegerede Bogtrykkerie, 1802), [no page numbers].

31 Sven H. Walcke, *Dansebok*. (1804), Mus.ms. 295, National Library of Norway, Oslo, pp. 77–80.

32 Mus.ms. 299, Sven H. Walcke, 'Musik og Tuure Bog medelt[?] inhentede Lærdomme for mine Elever udi Dands og afgivet av mig S. H. Walcke Aaret 1816'

In the first figure, all couples perform a bow and curtsy. Then the dancers take their partner's hands. The descriptions of the subsequent figures specify several additional minuet steps, indicating when dancers are to move on the spot (dancing in place), towards the middle of the square, across the floor, or to turn and dance sideways and backward steps in different directions. These figures contain diagonals, corners of the square, and ways of turning and holding both hands, which points towards their origins in the ordinary minuet.<sup>33</sup> This source exemplifies how the classical minuet and its educational qualities were accommodated within the contradance.

## Martinet's Description of the Minuet Steps

J. J. Martinet was a dancing master in Lausanne who published the dance manual *Essai, ou Principes Elementaires de l'Art de la Danse* [Essay, or Basic Principles for the Art of Dancing] (1797). The book was translated into Danish and published in Copenhagen in 1801. It contains some paragraphs on the minuet among the information on how to stand, walk, and perform bows and dance steps.

Martinet's book marks a shift in the purpose of publishing dance manuals. Whereas earlier dance books were intended for pupils who had taken dance classes and might use the book to remember what they had learned, Martinet's book was directed also to those who wanted their children to learn to dance but did not have a dancing master to teach them. The ability to learn to dance the dancing masters' repertoire without necessarily taking dance lessons reflected a shift in the position of the minuet. What was once a skill and activity only for the court and the elite was being made accessible to the lower classes of society.

Martinet wrote that the minuet had been abandoned for a long time and was hardly used as a ballroom dance anymore. However, he stated that the minuet included all the basics of dancing and that it was easy to prove that one could not dance well if he or she had not learned the minuet. The minuet developed the limbs and gave a beautiful contour, power, and regularity to the movements and developed the balance. Martinet recommended practising the minuet to avoid stiff body postures and turns, unstable walking, and movements he liked those of mechanical dolls or automata. He thought that the minuet was to dance what the ABCs are to words and speech ('som A. B. C. for Ordene og Talen').<sup>34</sup>

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(1816), p. 45, National Library of Norway, Oslo.

33 For a transcription, see Svarstad, 'Aqquratesse i Alt af Dands og Triin og Opførsel', pp. 196–97.

34 J. J. Martinet, *Begyndelsesgrunde i Dandsekonsten: Bestemt til Nyttig Selvøvelse, og for de Forældre som ej Holde Dandsemester til deres Børn*, trans. by C. H. Lund (Kjøbenhavn: L. Reistrups Forlag, 1801), 22.

According to Martinet, the minuet consisted of three fundamental steps that repeated many times. The three steps were the forward step, the sideways step to the right, and the sideways step to the left. Martinet called these ‘complete steps’, explaining that a ‘complete minuet step’ consists of ‘bendings, slidings, [walking] steps, and stretchings’.



Video 9.1 ‘Ballet Glossary—Feet Positions’, The Royal Opera House. Uploaded by the Royal Opera House, 25 February 2011. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/55cc685e>

Martinet’s description of the minuet step starts from the third position with the right foot in front, a straight body and head with the chin pulled back, the shoulders pulled back, and straight knees. ‘Then bent [knees], slide the right foot forward into the fourth position, bent [knees], slide the left foot forward into the fourth position, then two steps, stretched in the fourth position forward.’ The knees must be extended after every bending.

Both slidings should be made together with the knees’ bending, so that the foot slid changeably with the tip [of the toes]. Place the ball of the foot straight in the fourth position so that one completed the first half with a bending and the second half with stretched knees in a slow and even movement in the time of first four quarter notes of both bars [of the minuet step].

This places each bending on the last two quarter notes of both bars. Both steps which comprise the minuet step should be made placing the feet in the fourth position, with a quick movement, and with straight knees on the last two quarter notes of the 2 bars, so that each step was performed to one beat of the bar.

The ordinary minuet step (Martinet)

Start from the 3rd position	
6	<i>plié</i>
1	slide the right foot to 4th position
2	<i>plié</i>
3	slide the left foot to 4th position
4	step with the right foot
5	step with the left foot

The sideways step to the right starts from the third position, then a *plié* slides the right foot into the second position, while the left foot remains in the same line



without lifting from the floor, stretching the dancer's knees until half the length of the second position after six inches (*tommer*) from the right foot. And in one movement, *plié*, then the left foot in the third position behind the right, and then two steps to the right side with straight knees, one step in the second position and one step in the third position behind the right foot.

The sideways step to the right (Martinet)

Start from the 3rd position	
6	<i>plié</i>
1	slide the right foot to 2nd position
2	<i>plié</i>
3	left foot in 3rd position behind the right
4	step with the right foot to 2nd position
5	step with the left foot to 3rd position behind

Concerning the sideways step to the left, Martinet wrote that the two steps in the sideways steps to the left are not equal steps like the sideways steps to the right. The left steps start from a *plié*, then slide the right foot into the fourth position forward and quickly pull the left foot with straight knees into the first position; then again *plié*, slide the left foot into the second position and then take two straight steps to the left side, one with the right foot in the third position behind the left and one with the left foot in the third position. This is the first complete sideways step.

The sideways step to the left, version 1 (Martinet)

Start from the 3rd position	
6	<i>plié</i>
1	slide the right foot to 4th position forward and pull the left foot to 1st position
2	<i>plié</i>
3	slide the left foot to 2nd position
4	step with the right foot to the left side, to 3rd position behind
5	step with the left foot to 3rd position

The second version of the sideways step to the left is described starting from the second position:

Starting with a *plié*, then placing the right foot behind the left in the third position so that one pulls quickly the same [foot, i.e., the left] backwards with the tip [of the toe]. Then one rises on both feet in the same position with relatively straight knees and holds [this position] for the rest of the '*plié* bar'. Then *plié*, slide the left foot to the second position and do two straight steps where one is performed with the right foot in the third position behind the left foot and the second step with the left foot in the second position.<sup>35</sup>

The sideways step to the left, version 2 (Martinet)

Start from the 2nd position	
6	<i>plié</i>
1	place the right foot behind the left in 3rd position and pull the left foot backwards
2	rise on both feet
3	<i>plié</i> and slide the left foot to 2nd position
4	step with the right foot to 3rd position behind the left foot
5	step with the left foot to 2nd position

Martinet wrote that the minuet belongs to the category of solemn [*alvorlige*] dances. This category included the pantomime, simple and figured minuets, *Menuet Dauphin*, *Menuet de la Cour*, two kinds of *passepieds*, and so on. As opposed to the solemn dances, he set the category of joyful [*muntre*] dances, which included, for example, *Entrées de ballet*, *branles*, *contradances*, and the waltz.<sup>36</sup>

## Pierre Jean Laurent's Minuet Drawings

A manuscript by the dancing master Pierre Jean Laurent called *Weiledning ved Underviisning i Menuetten* [*A Guide for Teaching the Minuet*] is preserved in the collection at the Royal Library in Copenhagen.<sup>37</sup> The text in the book can be dated to around 1816.<sup>38</sup> The manuscript contains a set of coloured drawings of a couple dancing the minuet, and dance scholar Henning Urup has published on

<sup>35</sup> Martinet, pp. 21–26.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31–32.

<sup>37</sup> Pierre Jean Laurent, 'Weiledning ved Underviisning i Menuetten tilligemed en kort Underretning om dens Oprindelse og Fremgang blandt forskjellige Nationer', Acc. 2012/28, Håndskriftsamlingen, Royal Danish Library.

<sup>38</sup> Laurent wrote in it that he had been receiving his pension for about 30 years, since 1786.

the manuscript several times.<sup>39</sup> Laurent included information on ancient dance history and some information about his career in the manuscript, but, apart from the images, he did not include in the manuscript any information about the minuet.<sup>40</sup> The Royal Danish Library has given us the permission to use the photographs of these drawings, taken by Elizabeth Svarstad, in our book.

In the manuscript, sixteen drawings depict a couple performing the minuet. Each illustration is coloured and is given an entire page in the book. In what follows, we have attempted to describe the pictures and give a sketch of the positions, figures, spacing, and the relationship between the dancers. Many of the drawing are relatively easy to interpret with regard to the movements of the dancers and their relation to the other's position. Some drawings, however, are less clear about how the dancers stand, in which direction they are moving, and where the feet are pointing. Our description, therefore, must be understood as one of several possible interpretations of these illustrations.

Throughout, the man is shown in a typical eighteenth-century costume with short pants, vest, and jacket in a light grey colour, all decorated with flower embroidery. His shirt is white with lots of ruffles, and he is holding a three-cornered hat. The lady's dress has an early-nineteenth-century style: it has a long skirt in a light and almost transparent fabric, with a ribbon or belt marking a high waist. Her dress is decorated with flowers, matching those in her hair. She is also wearing long white gloves.



Fig. 9.1 Laurent's drawing 1. The couple side by side, the man a little further back than the lady. They are facing front but looking towards each other. They are both standing on the left foot and pointing the right foot in front of the left. The man is holding his hat in his left hand. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad.

© Royal Danish Library.

39 See, for example Henning Urup, *Dans i Danmark: Danseformerne ca. 1600 til 1950* (Københavns Universitet: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2007).



Fig. 9.2 Laurent's drawing 2. The man stands in the first position performing a bow by bending his head forward. The lady stands in the third position with the left foot in front. She is curtsying by bending her knees to the side, and she is also looking down to the floor, still holding her dress with both hands. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.3 Laurent's drawing 3. The man stands on his right foot with the left foot pointed in front. The lady does the opposite, standing on the left foot and pointing the right foot in front. This picture shows the couple taking a step forward on the outer leg. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.

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40 The book shows clear signs of several pages having been cut out. It may therefore be possible that an eventual instruction of the minuet has been taken out, perhaps for the purpose of teaching the minuet. For a transcription, see Elizabeth Svarstad, 'Transkripsjon av og kommentar til Pierre Jean Laurents dansebok' in *Folkedansforskning i Norden*, 40 (2017), 14–19.



Fig. 9.4 Laurent's drawing 4. The couple stand facing each other. The man stands in the first position performing another bow, but this bow is directed towards the lady. The lady stands in the third position with the right foot in front, performing a curtsy by bending the knees in the same way as in picture number two, but now looking towards the man. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.5 Laurent's drawing 5. The couple stretch out the arm to the side; the man has stretched his right arm, and the lady has stretched out her left. They stand in the fourth position; the man on his right foot pointing the left foot in front, and the lady on her left foot with the right foot turned out to the side in front of the left. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.6 Laurent's drawing 6. Both stand in the third position with both feet on the floor. The left foot is behind, and the right foot is in front. They are holding hands and looking at each other. They are holding their arms relatively high. The man has slightly bent his elbow while the lady has her arm quite stretched. The man is still holding his hat in the left hand, and the lady is still holding her dress with her right hand. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.7 Laurent's drawing 7. The partners are still holding hands. They seem to always be in the third position, but they have now bent their knees, and they both seem to lean a little bit away from each other. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.8 Laurent's drawing 8. The man faces front, but he is now on the other side of the lady. He is standing in the second position on the right toe and pointing the left foot as if he has just taken a step to the right side. He is still holding the lady in his right hand and the hat in his left. The lady is now turned so that we see her back. She is standing on her right foot, pointing the left foot to the side. She holds the man's right hand with her left, looking at him. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.9 Laurent's drawing 9. The couple have released the hands. At this point, the man is standing but facing the back of the room so that we see his back. He is standing in the third position with his right foot in front. The lady is facing the front of the room, also standing in the third position with her right foot in front, holding her dress with both hands. This illustration most likely depicts the couple performing the Z-figure of the minuet. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.10 Laurent's drawing 10. The couple have passed each other, probably on the Z-figure's diagonal line. They both stand on their right foot, and their left feet seem to be pointed behind their right feet. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.11 Laurent's drawing 11. The couple are back-to-back. The lady is standing on her left foot, stretching the right foot in front. The man seems to be standing on his right foot, with the left foot pointed either behind or to the side. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.





Fig. 9.12 Laurent's drawing 12. The couple have turned around and face each other, but they stand in opposite corners. Both stand on the right foot, stretching and pointing the left foot to the side. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.13 Laurent's drawing 13. The partners have changed places, but they both stand on the right foot, pointing the left foot to the side. The man has lifted his right arm, in which he holds the hat, high up. The lady faces the back of the room so that we see her back. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.14 Laurent's drawing 14. The couple is depicted closer to each other. The man is standing on his left leg with his right leg in front and off the floor. The hat is on his head, and he is holding it with the left hand. The lady seems to be standing on her right leg, but with her left leg behind her. They seem to be about to pass each other back-to-back. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.15 Laurent's drawing 15. They are both standing on their right legs with their left legs pointed to the side (the man's foot seems to be a little more to the back than the lady's) as if they are performing a sideways step. The man is facing the back of the room while the lady is facing the front. The man has held his arm out to the side, and he seems to be about to lower the arm after putting the hat on his head. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.16 Laurent's drawing 16. The man and lady have changed sides. They seem to be standing on their left legs in *plié* with their right feet off the floor, about to take the next step to the right. The man faces the back of the room, and the lady is turned front, but they are looking at each other. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.17 Laurent's drawing 17. They are in almost the same positions as picture number sixteen, but they are now standing on their left legs, pointing their right feet in front. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.18 Laurent's drawing 18. The man and lady each stand on their right foot in *plié* with the left foot behind. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.19 Laurent's drawing 19. They stand on the right foot's demi-point with the left foot pointed to the side. The man is facing the back of the room, and the lady is facing the front. They seem to be standing in what is often called 'the corners' from where dancers start or end the Z-figure. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.20 Laurent's drawing 20. They each stand on the left leg with the right leg pointed behind and seem to be moving towards each other on the diagonal line from the corners in which they were standing in picture number 19. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.21 Laurent's drawing 21. They both stand on their left leg with the right foot lifted off the floor. They have changed places again, and now they are both stretching their right hand out to the side towards each other. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.22 Laurent's drawing 22. They stand on their right feet with their left feet pointed behind. They are holding right hands. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.23 Laurent's drawing 23. They stand on the right foot with the left foot pointed to the side or slightly back. They still hold the right hands but have moved closer to each other causing their elbows to bend as if they have moved towards each other and turned the left shoulder towards the middle. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.24 Laurent's drawing 24. The dancers each stand on their left foot with their right lifted off the floor as in the middle of a sideways step to the right side. They seem to move to or from the corner from where the minuet figures start or end, and they have their left arms stretched out towards each other. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.25 Laurent's drawing 25. They seem to stand in the first position almost side by side. They now hold left hands, and the man has bent his elbow so that the dancers are relatively close to each other. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.26 Laurent's drawing 26. The dancers each stand on their right leg, pointing the left to the side, and seem to move away from each other. They have let go of their partner's left hand, but they still hold their arms to the side as they are about to lower them. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.27 Laurent's drawing 27. The dancers are standing on their right legs with their left feet pointed to the side or behind. They seem to move on the diagonal. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.





Fig. 9.28 Laurent's drawing 28. They cross each other back-to-back in the middle of the room. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.29 There is no drawing No. 29 in the manuscript. The page may be missing, or Laurent may have skipped the number 29 by mistake. On other pages in the manuscript, Laurent has corrected the numbers, such as picture number 14 and 26, and 27. It is unclear whether a drawing number 29 is missing or not. In Laurent's drawing 30, the couple stands in the third position with their left legs in front. The man faces the front, while the lady faces the back of the room. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.30 Laurent's drawing 31. They each stand on their left foot in *plié* with the right foot lifted in front. They have both stretched out both arms and are about to perform the figure called presenting both hands. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.



Fig. 9.31 Laurent's drawing 32. They have both turned to face the front of the room, and the man holds the lady's left hand in his right hand. The picture shows the minuet's concluding position, and the couple appears to be about to perform the bow and curtsy. Photograph by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library.

## Jørgen Gad Lund's Minuet

Jørgen Gad Lund, as we have seen in earlier chapters, was a Danish dancing master who published a dance book *Terpsichore, eller: En Veiledning for mine Dandselærlinger til at beholde de Trin og Toure i Hukommelsen, som de under mig have gennemgaaet* [*Terpsichore, or a Guide to for my Dance Pupils for Remembering the Steps and Figures I have Taught Them*] in three editions from 1823 to 1833.<sup>41</sup> The book was first published in Maribo, Denmark in 1823, and a second and third editions were published in 1827 and 1833, respectively.<sup>42</sup> Lund included a description of a whole minuet for several couples, reproduced here in translation:

One stands side by side in the fifth position, the ladies on the right. One bends the knees, then slide the right foot to the side, pull the left [foot] to the [right], and perform a bow and curtsy [*Compliment*]. Now the man puts the left foot backwards to the fourth position, and the lady puts the right [foot backwards to the fourth position]. Then they turn towards each other by sliding the foot forward which had been in the fourth position into the third position. They take a step forward, the lady with the right foot and the man with the left. Then they each pull their other foot towards themselves and take another bow and curtsy.

The man offers his right hand to the lady, who puts her left [hand] in his. Then they take one step backwards, the man with the right [foot] and the lady with the left foot and then they take three faster steps so that these three [steps] do not take more than one bar. In the last [step], they turn and stand the way they started.

[They] take a slow step forward with the right foot, then take three quicker [steps], which starts on the left foot. The man leads his lady around, while she makes first a slow step, then three fast steps, another slow step, and then releases his hand while she steps back and stands on the side where they started the minuet. While the lady walks around, the man takes a slow step to the right side, then three faster steps around while turning his face to the lady. Again he takes a slow step, and then he steps back while letting her go, and [he] stands on the opposite side of where they started, facing his partner.

Now they perform the minuet steps, which are as follows: first, one bends the knees and slides the right foot to the side and stretch the left tip of the toe towards the floor, and this takes one bar. Then one takes

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41 Jørgen Gad Lund, *Terpsichore, eller: En Veiledning for mine Dandselærlinger, til at beholde de Trin og Toure i Hukommelsen, som de hos mig have gennemgaaet* (Maribo: C.E. Schultz, 1823).

42 Dancing master Poul Kaastrup published Lund's book in Thisted in Denmark in 1825 and dancing master Espen Hall later published the same book in three editions in Norway from 1831 to 1837.

three faster steps to the right side: starting with the left foot and pulling it behind the right [foot] in the fifth position, the right to the side again, and once more the left [foot] behind as before. This takes the second bar. Now a slow step to the right side, like the first time in the third bar, then slide the left foot backwards to the fourth position while turning the body towards the person with whom one is dancing with, and stretch the right tip of the toe towards the floor, and now the four bars are completed.

Now one slides the left foot forward to the third position while turning straight in (facing) the quadrille, rising a little on the toes and then lowering the whole foot again. This is the fifth bar. Now one takes three faster steps to the left side: bending the knees and sliding the left foot to the second position, then the right foot behind in the third [position] and again the left [foot] to the side so that they end the sixth bar with the right foot in the second position, the tip of the toe towards the floor.

Now one pulls the right foot backwards into the fifth position while bending the knees, rise on the toes, and lower the foot. This is the seventh bar. Now one takes three fast steps again to the left side, as before, and this is the eighth bar. One slides the right foot into the first position and then forward to the fourth [position] to carry the full weight of the body. The left [foot] must be stretched behind. This is the ninth bar. Then three fast steps across the floor, passing the [person] with whom one was dancing, who must be on the right side, Now the tenth bar is completed.

Again a slow step forward with the right foot in the eleventh bar, as in the ninth [bar]. Now one places the left foot in front in the fourth position, and slide then the right foot forward into the fifth position while turning to the left. Finally, one starts the steps to the right side again.

In the minuet, there can be as many couples side by side as space allows. When one has danced the steps some times on each side, then one must make sure, that when one is on the side where one was standing when one let go of each other, then, when one wants to go across the floor, then do a turn firstly holding the right hands. One raises the right arm while making a slow step forward on the right foot, then make the three quick [steps] while giving the hand to the person one is dancing with. Now take a slow [step] around and again three quick [steps] while letting go of each other and standing on the place where one started. After this, the steps are being done to the right side, then give the left hands to each other, precisely in the same manner as with the right [hand] previously.

At this point, the steps are being done to the right and left side and across the floor, passing each other. Now the man should be standing on the side where he started the minuet and the lady [should be standing] on the other side. Again to the right and left side. Then one raises the

arms and walk towards each other, taking one slow and three fast steps while giving each other both hands and stand facing each other. Then a slow step to the side, the man to the right, and the lady to the left. Then three quick steps to the same side and turn, in the same way they were standing when the minuet started.

Next, a step to the right side and take a bow and curtsy. Then [move] the foot backwards to the fourth position, like in the beginning: one now turns towards one another and makes a step to the side, like in the beginning, while taking a bow and curtsy to each other, completing the minuet.

While dancing the minuet, one must always keep one's face towards the one with whom one is dancing with. The body must be held very upright, though without being stiff. The lady holds her dress in her hands, and the man lets his arms hang at his side. You must endeavour to be careful and carry your body with becoming grace! Because this dance is the most important of all. If you can perform it with grace and grandeur, then all the other dances will be easy for you. Every dance is dependent on fashion, but even though more popular [*stormende*] dances have displaced the minuet, it still is the most beautiful of all.

## Janny Isachsen's Minuet

A dance manual was published by dance teacher Janny Isachsen (1835–94) in Christiania (Oslo) in 1886. Isachsen was an actress in Bergen and Christiania for twenty years, beginning in 1852. After leaving the stage, she became a dance teacher.

The book, *Lommebog for Dansende* [*Pocketbook for Dancers*], contains descriptions of several dances in fashion around the 1880s, such as the lancers, française, and fandango. Isachsen's description of the minuet shows that it still was in practice in being taught towards the end of the nineteenth century. The minuet is described in five sections: an introduction, three tours, and a conclusion. The different steps are also described.

The dance begins with the couples standing side by side in the first position. All the dancers take a step to the right in the introduction, then close with the left foot and perform a bow and curtsy (compliment). Left foot a step backward to face each other. Three small steps to the right and a compliment. Then the left foot to the left, walk three small steps with the right foot behind the left, then turn in to form a line. The man and lady give a right hand and turn three times, starting with the right foot and continue with three small steps to the right, always with the left

foot behind the right. Man and lady to the opposite places with three backward steps to form two lines of men and ladies on each line.

The first figure begins with a description of the long *pas menuet*: the men and women take one step and three small steps to the right and a compliment. Then make three short steps to the right, and then forward on the right foot while looking at each other. The same is repeated back again to the left until the lady and the man stand in front of each other.

The next paragraph describes a figure called *travacé*:

Step on the right foot and walk three small steps. All turn on the left foot and remain standing on the right, shoulder to shoulder. Again step out on the left foot, three short steps, turn back again into the opposite line.

The short *pas menuet* (with the right hand) is described as all take a step to the right, three small steps to the right, forward on the right foot looking at the man, back on the left, give the right hand, three steps towards each other, take hands, turn a whole turn, continue turning on the left foot into the opposite line.

The second and third figures are described in the same way as the first figure, except that in the second figure, the short *pas menuet*, they hold their partner's left hand within their own left hand and then hold both of their partner's hands in the third figure.

In the conclusion of the minuet, all take a step to the right, close with the left foot and a compliment. Take a step back on the left and stand in front of each other, three short steps to the right, and compliment. Take a step on the left foot again, walk three short steps with the right behind the left, turn in to stand on one line. Finish with a compliment.<sup>43</sup>

The instructions in Isachsen's manual describe a minuet that shares many similarities with the ordinary minuet. What is different is mainly that it is a dance for several couples at one time. According to the descriptions, many steps closely resemble those of the ordinary minuet. However, some of the Isachsen's minuet steps begin on the left foot, which would not happen in the ordinary minuet during the eighteenth century. The figures in this dance have the characteristic forms of an introduction and the taking of first the right hand, then the left, and then both hands. The *travacé* tours in between the taking of hands make the partners change places, and the pattern would correspond to the Z-figure of the ordinary minuet. The commonalities show the connection to the former

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43 Janny Isachsen, *Lommebog for Dansende* (Kristiania: Cammermeyer, 1886), pp. 30–37.

minuet, and at the same time, Isachsen's description offers information on the development of the minuet over the course of the eighteenth century.

The minuet Isachsen describes is extremely similar to that represented in Jørgen Gad Lund's book *Terpsichore*, which was published in Denmark several decades earlier. Isachsen's minuet may very well be an example of a development of Lund's minuet.

## Concluding Remarks

Sources for dance and music show that the minuet was both a dance practice and an educational dance taught by Nordic dancing masters. It was regarded as a classical dance with educational qualities. The ordinary minuet, *le menuet ordinaire*, was danced in the same way in the Nordic countries as elsewhere in Europe during the eighteenth century. Soon after the French Revolution in 1789, the minuet lost its status as the main dance at the ball due to its strong ties to the French aristocracy. Dancing masters continued to teach it, however, because they considered the minuet essential to the establishment of good posture and elegant movements. It was regarded as the best method for developing a strong technique and a sound basis for performing other dances in fashion, such as contradances and the waltz.

By presenting the French minuet tradition and giving examples of how it is reflected in Nordic sources, we have attempted to trace minuet practice in the Nordic countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as its development in use and popularity over approximately one hundred fifty years. The different pieces of information on the practice and the value of this dance in the sources presented here show the minuet's existence and indicate its importance in terms of repertoire, as a method for education and polite manners and for developing basic dance skills.

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# 10. The Minuet in the Theatre

*Egil Bakka, Elizabeth Svarstad, and  
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The minuet may well have grown from a theatre choreography based on inspiration and models from various sources. In this chapter we present some examples of minuets created for the theatre, and our aim is to shine some light on how the theatrical versions are related to the ordinary minuet.

In this context, we use the term 'staged minuets' to refer to minuets that were performed in front of an audience, whether on a stage in a theatre or at least in an arena, where there is a clear difference between the performers and the audience as opposed to minuets danced in social settings such as balls or dinner parties. Another characteristic of a staged minuet is that it involves some preparation. A choreographer must create or at least adapt the dance for use as part of a performance. Staged minuets imply some rehearsal time, in contrast to social dances, where there may not be defined borders between participants and spectators and where the dance more or less happens in the moment. In social dance occasions, for example, it might not have been decided in advance who will dance with whom or for how long the dance would last.

Choreographed and notated minuets from the eighteenth-century French tradition, like notated dances in general, can be characterized as either ballroom dances or theatre dances. Theatre dances include a more comprehensive vocabulary of steps and more elaborate techniques than those of the ballroom repertoire. In both types, many of the choreographed minuets include elements from the standard minuet: movement patterns resembling some of the usual minuet rounds, the introduction of the circles or the Z-figure, etc.

In a manuscript by Molière entitled *Le Mariage forcé, comédie et ballet du Roi, dansé par Sa Majesté le 29<sup>e</sup> jour de janvier 1664*, there is a *Menuet pour deux Espagnols et deux Espagnoles* [a minuet for two Spanish males and two Spanish females] in the handwritten scores for a *divertissement* with dance and music to be performed

after the comedy has ended.<sup>1</sup> Several scholars mention a score from 1664 as the first evidence of the minuet, which may be this one. Hendrik Schultze, however, refers to several minuets from the theatrical context that premiered in 1664 and subsequent years.<sup>2</sup> Comédie-ballet is a genre of French drama that, as in *Le Mariage forcé*, combines acting followed by ballet, many of them written by Molière, with music and dance created by Lully and Beauchamp.<sup>3</sup> They reached the peak of their popularity in the second half of the seventeenth century. The most famous, the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670), also had a minuet in the second act.

Francine Lancelot has registered only four ballet entrées written in Feuillet notation, which may mean one of several things: that the use of minuet in ballet entrées had decreased by the beginning of the eighteenth century, that already well-known versions were being used, or that ballet entrées were not of interest to the Feuillet notators.

Nevertheless, it seems that the minuet was used extensively in theatre scenes in the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> One particular utilization was in the Comédie-ballet, where the dancing came after the theatre part. Another way was to use the minuet as part of the action, in scenes where characters danced the minuet as a part of the narrative. An eighteenth-century genre that used the minuet in this way was the *comédies de vaudeville*.<sup>5</sup> The German music historian Herbert Schneider has edited an exciting article on minuet use in this genre. He mainly discusses the use of minuet airs in vaudeville songs and explains how they are often used in parodic or ironic ways.<sup>6</sup>

Parodies of older plays are also common. Schneider referred to a parody of *Les Indes Galantes* and also to other examples of re-presenting old material, such as *Le Prétendu* [*The Suitor*], a Comédie-Italienne from 1760. This is a three-act opera with spoken dialogue which imitated Charles-Simon Favart's 1738

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- 1 Molière, Despois, Eugène, Mesnard, Paul, *Oeuvres de Molière*, vol. IV (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1878).
  - 2 Hendrik Schulze, *Französischer Tanz Und Tanzmusik in Europa Zur Zeit Ludwigs XIV: Identität, Kosmologie Und Ritual; Hildesheim* (Olms Verlag, 2012).
  - 3 George J. Buelow, *A History of Baroque Music* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 169.
  - 4 David Charlton 'Minuet-Scenes' in *Early Opéra-comique Timbre Und Vaudeville. Zur Geschichte Und Problematik einer Populären Gattung Im 17. Und 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Herbert Schneider. Hildesheim, 1999', in *French Opera: 1730-1830: Meaning and Media*, ed. by (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 156-291.
  - 5 Narcisse Fournier, *Le Menuet de la Reine: Comédie-Vaudeville en Deux Actes: Représentée, Pour La Première Fois, Sur Le Théâtre Du Gymnase-Dramatique, Le 27 Janvier 1843* (Paris: Imprimerie de Ve Dondey-Dupré, 1843); Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, *Le Menuet de Danaé: Comédie-Vaudeville En Un Acte* (Paris: Beck, Libraire, 1862).
  - 6 David Charlton 'Minuet-Scenes' in *Early Opéra-comique*.

*opéra-comique en vaudevilles* entitled *Le Bal bourgeois*. Constant d'Orville described the minuet scene in *Le Prétendu* as follows :

A wealthy Bourgeois from Paris wants to give his daughter in marriage to a Provincial; this girl loves a young Officer by whom she is loved ... Arrives her dancing master, followed by the young lover ... our two lovers sing to the tune of their minuet that they still continue to dance, some verses on the embarrassment in which they find themselves. Finally, the father surprises the lover at the feet of his daughter ... Even if this scene resembles perfectly the minuet of the Opéra-comique, the Bourgeois Ball that is so famous, it was nonetheless applauded.<sup>7</sup>

In his article, Schneider provided many examples, noting characteristics of the minuet as used in theatre in the mid-eighteenth century. Although his interest in the minuet was largely musical, he also referred, at times, to the dance. For example:

'Minuet scenes,' as discussed below, cover various stage actions. Still, all rely on the dance concept to convey their different local meanings, which are connected principally with the idea of youthful love, either naive or ironic, and sometimes that of seduction. The signifier is the dance style itself, irrespective of the precise melody selected. It is worth emphasising how different this mode of dramatic communication was from the conventional method of parodying texted melodies [...].<sup>8</sup>

It would be interesting to see a more in-depth study of the relationship between the minuet as a social dance and as a staged dance through the eighteenth century, particularly one focused on differences of class and source material. Newspaper articles as well as letters and memoirs from the period that refer to balls are the most likely sources from which to glean an impression of how frequently the minuet was used in a social context. Texts for theatre plays and even other fiction literature, however, may tell us more about the attitudes to the dance and how it is used to signal class distinction. Such a study might give us a better understanding of why the minuet declined: did it fall from favour because of the French Revolution, or were other mechanisms at play?

## Two Examples on Choreographed Minuets in Feuillet Notation

The *Menuet à deux* [Minuet for two] is a couple dance for a man and a woman choreographed by Guillaume-Louis Pécour (1653–1729) and performed by the

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7 Ibid., p. 258.

8 Ibid., p. 259.

characters Mr. de Moulin l'Aîné and Mlle. Victoire in the *Ballet des Fragments de Mr. de Lully*.<sup>9</sup> With a prologue and five parts, the opera-ballet was composed by André Campra (1660–1744) and was first performed in Paris in 1702.

The music for the *Menuet à deux* is written in 3/4 time, and the Feuillet notation of the dance shows the bar lines corresponding to the 3/4 time. The tune has 32 bars, which implies a duration of only sixteen minuet steps since each step of a minuet takes two bars of music. For the first four bars, the dancers mirror each other, but, from the fifth bar onwards, the choreography changes to comprise only minuet steps and the *contretemps du menuet*.

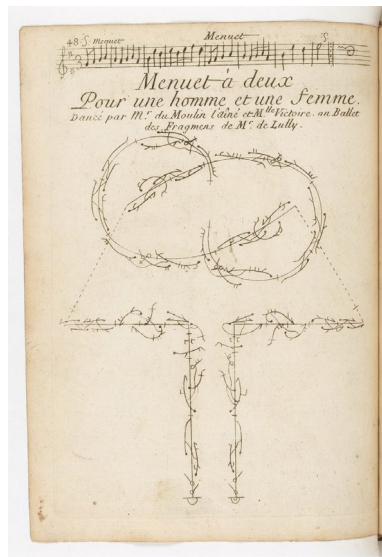


Fig. 10.1 *Menuet à deux* [Minuet for two]. A page displaying Feuillet notation. Gallica Digital Library, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b85914682/f62.item.r=recueil%20de%20dance%20pecour/f62.jpeg>, public domain.

Before the dance starts, the dancers stand side by side, facing the front of the room. During the first step of the dance, they turn to face each other and perform a *pas de gaillarde*. They start this step with opposite legs, which means that the man begins on his right foot, and the lady on her left foot. While keeping the same direction, they do two *balancés*: one forward towards each other and one backwards away from each other. To continue the choreography, starting each step on the right foot, the man stays on the left leg while the woman adds a step backwards on the left foot. The following steps are minuet steps in different

<sup>9</sup> Raoul-Auger Feuillet, *Recueil de dances* (Paris : [n. pub.], 1704), 48–50.

directions combined with *contretemps du menuet* forward and backwards. The dancers begin in place and then move away from each other, first in a clockwise circle towards one another and then on the same line; the lady comes forward and the man moves backwards before they change and perform the same steps in the opposite direction: the man comes forward and the lady moves backwards; when they have finished, they end the dance by changing places: performing two minuet steps turning around each other and returning backwards to their original places doing one *contretemps* and one minuet step.

This choreography has the qualities of the standard minuet in both the combination of steps and, to a certain extent, the figures, showing some characteristics of the minuet's fixed figures. Simultaneously, the choreography plays a bit more with the music and has more advanced steps than the standard minuet which usually consists primarily of the basic steps of the minuet.

Another example of a theatre minuet is the *Minuet perform'd by Mrs. Santlow*, choreographed by Antony L'Abbé (c.1667–c.1756) in 1725.<sup>10</sup> This minuet is a solo dance for one woman, and with its ninety-six bars of music, it is much longer than the *Menuet à deux*. Its choreography also differs from the *Menuet à deux* in the number of different steps. Also, it contains many more minuet steps. For example, the choreography starts with a dancer performing six minuet steps in a large circle counter-clockwise around the room. This circle resembles the standard minuet's introduction figure. It establishes some of the minuet's characteristics in both the floor pattern and the steps before the choreography develops into a more elaborate and advanced variation on the minuet theme. L'Abbé's choreography includes minuet steps in different variations and directions, *contretemps* and *balancés*, pirouettes and turns, *jetés* and other jumps, and quite a lot of flourishes with the legs, such as quick steps performed in double tempo to the music, circling of the leg, and lifting one foot off the floor. Such elaborations demand strong technique and agility and show a minuet elevated some levels beyond the ordinary and ballroom varieties.<sup>11</sup>

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10 Anthony L'Abbé, *A new collection of dances* (London: Le Roussau, F., 1725; repr., London: Stainer & Bell, 1991), pp. 17–21.

11 Still, the minuets may have been danced in a ballroom, as a common practice was to adapt dances from the stage to the ballroom in simplified versions. For an analysis of the *Menuet Santlow*, see Dora Kiss, 'Interpréter "le Menuet perform'd" by Mrs. Santlow"', *Recherches en danse*, 2 (2014), <http://doi.org/10.4000/danse.343>





Fig. 10.2 *Minuet perform'd by Mrs. Santlow*. A page showing the choreography. OpenEdition Journals, <https://journals.openedition.org/danse/docannexe/image/343/img-1.jpg>, public domain.

## The Minuet on the Nordic Stage

One theatrical arena where the minuet was included was the vaudeville or light opera. Henning Urup has studied some examples from plays that include the minuet as both music and dance during the second part of the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth century. Two plays by Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754), the *Mascarade* and the *Kilde-Reysen*, include minuets. *Fiskerne* by Johannes Ewald (1743–1781) also contains minuets.<sup>12</sup>

A later example of the minuet in the theatre is the dance included in the play *En Caprice* by the Danish playwright Erik Bøgh (1822–99). The play was hugely popular in Christiania (Oslo) around 1860 when the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) was the director at the National Theatre. Two of the play's characters are a female Spanish dancer and a dancing master or, rather, a parody of a dancing master. In one scene, he and the dancer discuss their dancing skills. One of the dances they talk about is the minuet, and she performs one for him. The play also includes a Spanish dance and the Norwegian halling. Some have wondered why *En Caprice*, a relatively simple play, became so popular. Elizabeth Svarstad and Jon Nygaard, theatre historian at the University of Oslo, suggest that some of the play's appeal can

12 Henning Urup, *Dans i Danmark: Danseformerne ca. 1600 til 1950* (Københavns Universitet: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2007), p. 132.

be explained by its inclusion of the dances. Since the minuet was well known to the theatregoers at the time—it had been almost an obligatory part of their education—the audience might have engaged with the play and the familiar dance repertoire. Invoking a kinaesthetic experience from the spectators' youth allowed them to enjoy the play on several levels.<sup>13</sup>

## The Elverhøj Minuet

The 'Elverhøj minuet' is a choreographed minuet created in 1828 for the play *Elverhøj*, but it became so popular that it continued to be danced outside of its original theatrical context for a very long time. Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791–1860) wrote the libretto for *Elverhøj*, and Friedrich Kuhlau (1786–1832) composed the music. The choreographer, Poul Funck (1790–1837), was a solo dancer at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen.<sup>14</sup> The play held the status as Denmark's national play for many years, and it has been performed at the Royal Theatre more times than any other play.<sup>15</sup>

Funck was born in Copenhagen and started at the Royal Ballet when he was eight years old, remaining there for all of his life. He was one of the more recognized dancers of the period and would have danced the minuet under the supervision of balletmasters such as the French master Antoine Bournonville (1760–1843). With Bournonville in this position, there was no break in the cultural stream connecting the minuet of French court ballet to the Royal Ballet in Copenhagen. In other words, Funck learned choreography that retained the characteristics of the older minuet forms. The Royal Ballet is known for its unbroken transmission of repertoire from the eighteenth century, which it facilitates by having new dancers learn the dances from their seniors. Similarly, the minuet in the play *Elverhøj* is connected by an unbroken chain of transmission in the theatre/ballet environment from the French court minuet. *Elverhøj* was first documented on film in 1939, and the film shows that the step patterns are different from most versions of reconstructed minuet and align with *svikt* (the up and down movements) in the Nordic folk minuet.

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13 Elizabeth Svarstad and Jon Nygaard, 'A Caprice—The summit of Ibsen's theatrical career', *Ibsen Studies* 16.2 (2016).

14 Urup, p. 153.

15 Sune Auken, Knud Michelsen, Marie-Louise Svane, Isak Winkel Holm, and Klaus P. Mortensen, *Dansk litteraturs historie, Bind 2, 1800–1870* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2008), pp. 280–82.

## The Elverhøj Minuet in Norway

The play *Elverhøj* was also performed in Norway. Two examples of newspaper advertisements show one performance was held in Kragerø in 1885 and the other in Christiania, in 1905. In both advertisements, the play's dances are mentioned explicitly, which may indicate their great popularity as that which would attract audiences to buy tickets.

The performance in Kragerø is also described in text next to the advertisement. This describes *Elverhøj* as a beautiful romantic play that has had great success. The costumes, like the dances, are deemed extraordinary: 'A group of young girls performed beautifully one dance while the whole ensemble performed two dances, a garland dance and the minuet, in the play'.<sup>16</sup>

On 28 November 1905, *Elverhøj* was performed in Christiania as a gala performance to celebrate the new king of Norway. Although almost a hundred years after its premiere, the play was chosen for this honour, perhaps, because it had originally been composed and created for the wedding of prince Frederik; who was to become king Frederik VII of Denmark, and princess Vilhelmine.<sup>17</sup>

The dances are also mentioned in the 1905 newspaper advertisement, but in contrast to the 1885 advertisement, two dancers are mentioned by name. This information may imply that the dancers, Fru Marquard Mikelsen and Hr. Danselærer Mikelsen, were the choreographers of the performance and perhaps also the dancers.

## The Elverhøj Minuet in the Twentieth Century

The choreography for the *Elverhøj* minuet became very popular with dance teachers in Denmark.<sup>18</sup> It is included in the dance instruction manual *Lærebog i ældre danse* [*Textbook of Old Dances*] published in Copenhagen in 1952. The book contains instructions for a range of different dances, such as couple dances, quadrilles, dances for children, and so-called older dances'. The *Elverhøj* minuet description in this manual shows a dance for ten couples and contains an introduction, a middle part of four minuets, and a conclusion. The steps in the dance are minuet steps, coupé, assemblé, polonaise steps, balancé, and a so-called menuet-balancé.

16 *Vestmar*, no. 48, 25 April 1885, <https://www.nb.no/items/c1c472265b8ef53d0d86499f6e95a433>

17 Auken, etc., pp. 280–82.

18 Jørgen Schou-Pedersen and Henning Urup, 'Menuet', in *Den Store Danske* (København: Gyldendal, 2009), <https://denstoredanske.lex.dk/menuet>.



Fig. 10.3 The dancers in *Elverhøi*, at Friluftsteatret, an open-air stage at Bygdø in Oslo, constructed specifically for a performance that premiered on 16 June 1911. Photograph by Rude og Hilfling, Nasjonalbiblioteket, <https://www.nb.no/items/274f0e2b6e15090b655256118a6f88a2?page=0&searchText=Elverh%C3%B8i>, public domain.

The minuet step is explained as a step consisting of four steps: one long and three short. It takes two bars and counts six beats. The forward step is performed by doing a *coupé* with the right foot forwards to the fourth position. Step forward on the first part of the bar and rest on the second and third part of the bar. Then walk three small steps on the toes left, right, left. Then lower the left heel by the end of the last step.<sup>19</sup>

The *coupé* is described as ‘after a bending (on the upbeat), in both knees, one foot glides from the first to the fourth position forward or backward, the weight transfers immediately to the other foot’.<sup>20</sup>

The minuet step to the side is explained as a *coupé* beginning with the right foot to the side in second position, moving the left foot behind the right foot in fifth position on demi-point, moving the right foot a short step to the right on demi-point, and placing the left foot behind the right foot in fifth position on demi-point, and finally lowering the heels by the end of the step, keeping the weight on the left foot.

The minuet balance (*‘Menuet-Balancé’*) is explained as the dancer taking a gliding step with the right foot forward in the fourth position and transferring the weight to the right foot on the first count. Then the left foot is pulled to the

19 ‘HF en Coupé frem i 4. Position, der trædes frem paa 1. Taktdel og hviles paa 2. og 3. Taktdel. Gaa 3. smaa Trin paa Taa VF., HF., VF., sænk v Hæl i Slutningen af sidste Trin’. *Lærebog i ældre danse*. Utgivet af Danse-ringen (København: P. Hansen’s Bogtrykkerie 1952), p. 27.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

third position behind and rises on the second count. On the third count, the dancer lowers and marks a light step on the right foot. The second part of the step is performed by gliding the left foot backwards to the fourth position on the fourth count and on the fifth and sixth count, closing the right foot in third position while raising, lowering and marking a light step on the left foot.<sup>21</sup> This step resembles the *pas balancé* described by Pierre Rameau and other dancing masters.

The right minuet is explained as minuet steps to the side twice and is counted to twelve, i.e., four music bars. The left minuet is likewise counted to twelve and is explained as gliding the right foot forward to the fourth position on the first count and resting on the second while pulling the left foot loosely to the third position behind. On the fourth count, the dancer walks sideways on the left demi-point, placing the right foot behind the left foot in the fifth position on the demi-point, and on the sixth count, stepping to the side on the left, first on the toe and then on the whole foot.

The second part of the left minuet is explained as the dancer swinging the right foot behind the left foot in the third position with light bending in both knees on the seventh count. On the eighth count, the performer stretches the knees and rises on the toes, lowering on the ninth count. Then on the tenth count the dancer steps to the side again on the left foot on demi-point, on the eleventh, they place the right foot behind the left in the fifth position on demi-point and on the last count the dancer walks to the side on the left foot, first with the toe then the whole foot.<sup>22</sup>

The full minuet (*Hel-Menuet*) is explained as a compound figure, consisting of one right minuet and one left minuet, which takes eight bars of music.

The half minuet (*Halv-Menuet*) is also a compound figure consisting of a minuet step to the side on beats 1 to 6, one *coupé* to the side on the right foot on count seven and eight, and on count nine a 1/8 turn to the left, pulling the left foot towards the right foot in the first position and bending both knees. The three last counts of this figure are completed by gliding the left foot backwards to the fourth position, then on the eleventh count, the weight is transferred to the back leg, and on the last beat, both knees stretch but leaving the right foot in front and tapping the right toe in the fourth position, and at the same time lifting either the left arm or both hands forward toward the partner.<sup>23</sup>

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21 Ibid., p. 27.

22 Ibid., p. 28.

23 Ibid. Dance teacher Elizabeth Svarstad bought a copy of this book from a Danish second-hand bookshop in 2007. Its first owner had been Olga Jensen, a Danish dance teacher in the middle of the nineteenth century. Jensen had written her

## Farmers and Ballet Students

There are some examples of the *Elverhøj* minuet having been performed in Norway in the social, not staged, context. In a description of a Christmas ball in 1909, it is mentioned as a formal dance that was performed after several ballroom dances including country dances, *feier*, English dance, *figaro*, and the waltz. After these dances, the young people had to leave the floor, and the older people took their positions. Simultaneously, the musician stood up with a certain stateliness and intoned the minuet from *Don Juan* or *Elverhøj*. The minuet they danced is described as so correct and so elegant that one would not think that those who were dancing were farmers.<sup>24</sup>

A search in the database of the Oslo Museum returns a hit of a photograph with the inscription 'Menuet av Elverhøj' written on the back.<sup>25</sup> It is dated 1916 in Harstad, Norway. The photo shows ten young girls dressed in rococo costumes, all in the same pattern and seemingly made of the same fabric. The hair is done neatly according to eighteenth-century hairstyles.



Fig. 10.4 *Den Nationale Scene* 'Elverhøj', 1926. Photograph by Selmer Malvin Norland. Oslo Digital Museum, <https://digitaltmuseum.no/021018379137/den-nationale-scene-elverhoi>, CC BY-SA 4.0.

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name on the first page of the book (together with the name 'Fredericia' and the date, 7 September 1952).

- 24 'Saa maatte ungdommen av gulvet, og de gamle stillede sig opp, medens Morten Døvingen strammede seg opp med en vis høitidelighet og intonerede menuetten af Don Juan eller Elverhøj. Og saa begyndte en dans så korrekt og elegant, at man ikke skulde tro, det var bønder som traadte den.' Kim Sivertsen, 'På Gausdalsvis', in *Bladet Folkemusikk*, 9 March 2011, <https://folkemusikk.custompublish.com/paa-gausdalsvis.4895864.html>; Holter, Wilhelm, 'Erindringer om mitt liv', in *Gausdalsminner*, 4 (Lillehammer: Gausdal historielag, 1991), pp. 62–84 (p. 81).
- 25 'Gruppebilde av unge dansere eller skuespillere' ['Group picture of young dancers or actors'], Digitalt museum, <https://digitaltmuseum.no/021018440293/gruppebilde-av-unge-dansere-eller-skuespillere/media?slide=0>.

The position of the dancers shows six dancers on the first row and four on the second row. They are standing two by two, slightly turned away from each other with their backs touching. The position resembles that of the description of the *Elverhøj* minuet in the *Textbook of Old Dances*.

## Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we have tried to reconstruct the role of the minuet in the theatre from the seventeenth to the twentieth century. The theatre, rather than the ballet, repeated references to the minuet for a very long time. In the eighteenth century, older theatre pieces were often remade in the form of a parody. Often, when the original play included a minuet, this dance scene was retained in the new version. We described the remaking of the minuet for the stage through such versions as the *Menuet de la Reine* and the *Menuet de la cour*, and then *Menuetten af Elverhøj*, a Danish choreography for a classic romantic theatre play which also became famous in the Nordic countries. These references, which are still repeated in theatre produced in the twenty-first century, have extended the aura of the minuet far beyond the time the *menuet ordinaire* was a social dance in towns and cities in the Nordic countries. Several of the theatre choreographies also transcended the theatres and were taken up in more or less social contexts by dancing masters or amateur performers and, even later, in historical dancing.

This chapter presented examples selected from a much larger body of sources. We hope that, though brief, it illustrates some key features of the theatre minuet. A more thorough investigation would likely reveal more interesting aspects concerning the staged minuet and paint a fuller picture. Such work is time consuming and demanding in terms of archival work and searching for information. Many sources, such as librettos, for example, contain information about the dance, or the dancers. Very often, however, the information given is sparse, only mentioning that 'they dance'.

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# II. Collecting Minuets in Denmark in the Twentieth Century

*Anders Chr. N. Christensen*

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In Denmark, minuet traditions were preserved in some parts of the country until the twentieth century. From the beginning of that century, examples were documented from three regions: the island of Ærø, islands of Lolland and Falster, and Randers region in Jutland. In the islands, several dances called minuets were documented at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Randers region, documentation started in the 1930s and continued sporadically until the 1980s. Danish minuets have been published in several folk-dance manuals, and many of them remain an active part of Danish folk dancers' repertoire today. Lolland and Falster are the southernmost isles south of Sealand. As the islands were relatively isolated in earlier centuries, many traditions stayed alive until the beginning of the 1900s. A bridge to Sealand was not built on Falster until 1937.

## The Mollevit from Ærø

The collection of folk dances on Ærø has, to a great extent, been focused on the Rise parish at the centre of the island, where the ancient dances have been best preserved. The farmer and fiddler Hans Andersen Hansen (1861–1953) and his family played a crucial role in maintaining the traditional minuet 'mollevit' on Ærø.<sup>1</sup>

## The Grüner-Nielsen Collection on Ærø

The first time the island was visited by folk music and dance collectors was in 1918, when the archivist Hakon Grüner-Nielsen (1881–1953) and his wife Ellen

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1 'Hansen, Hans A., musiker, Kalvehave. Nekrolog', *Ærø Avis*, 30 December 1953.

made an extended trip in August and September which included a visit to Ærø for the purpose of collecting examples.



Fig. 11.1 Ellen Grüner-Nielsen was the first in Denmark who attempted to describe a popular minuet on Ærø. Photograph by Julie Laurberg Gad, København (1918).  
© Dansk Folkemindesamling.

There, the Grüner-Nielsens encountered the ‘mollevit’, the traditional name for the minuet on Ærø. Theirs was the first effort in Denmark to document a surviving version of the baroque minuet. In a fair copy of the record from the year 1918, Ellen Grüner-Nielsen described the collection on Ærø:

Here we were so lucky to start in St. Rise and were shown to the farmer Hans Andersen, about 60 years old, who proved to be one of the best sources we could get. Both he and his wife helped us; she danced with me, he played, and my husband wrote melodies not written down. [...] I was with them at least three times on afternoons and evenings and had to go in vain several times.<sup>2</sup>

However, they found the ‘mollevit’ was not so easy to record, as she explained: ‘I had to use an amount of time to note it down, and it may be because when noting it, it possibly could be done much simpler and more manageable.’<sup>3</sup>

Ellen Grüner-Nielsen postulated that this might have been because she herself could not perform the minuet in the way it had been taught in the dance

2 DFS 1915/4 (7) Dansebeskrivelse og Melodier, renskrift 1930 af Ellen Grüner-Nielsens indsamling, Ærø 1918.

3 Ibid.

schools. When Ellen Grüner-Nielsen wrote down the dance, she had to dance with Hansen’s wife, while Hansen played along.

Once they showed me enough (my husband played), they both danced with much grace (he in clogs), but there were so many steps to notice that I did not get a real overview. I thought myself, that I did the steps precisely as they did, but probably there was a nuance in the beat or the movement that was different; they said the whole time that I had not the right step.<sup>4</sup>

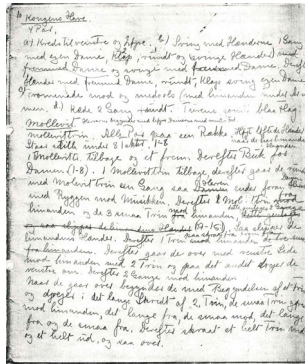


Fig. 11.2 Ellen Grüner-Nielsen’s original draft records of the Mollevit from Ærø, collected August–September 1918. This instance is the first time in Denmark anyone recorded a popular minuet. Det Kongelige Bibliotek DFS 1915/004 Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

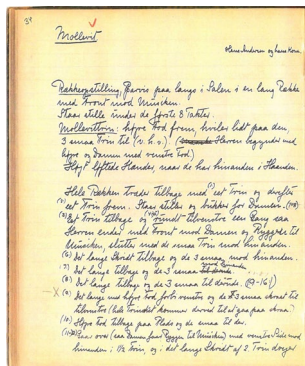


Fig. 11.3 Ellen Grüner-Nielsen’s transcription from 1930 of the Mollevit from Ærø, recorded in 1918. The photo shows only the first page of the description of the mollevit. Dansk Folkemindesamling ved Det Kongelige Bibliotek, DFS 1915/006, Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

4 Ibid.

Besides the mollevit, Ellen Grüner-Nielsen documented a 'Foredance', which, in ancient times, was danced after the mollevit when 'they should have a speedy one'. Her description explained: 'They swung their lady, then they went in the chain to the next lady, and every lady would then kiss the musicians and then her partner and such it went all the way around'. This dance disappeared in the mid-1800s. It is probable that it is a remnant of an old Polish dance or even a foredance to a Polish dance. In addition, at one time, a dance called 'Mollevit 3' was in existence. Hansen reported that he had seen it danced in his earliest childhood in the late 1860s but that, when he started gigging in 1870, it had passed out of use. He did not remember the music for the dance, but he explained it as a row dance where each man had two partners. Thus, as early as the mid-1800s, there were only a few people remaining who could dance the 'Mollevit 3'.<sup>5</sup>

### The Mollevit as a Ceremonial Dance

In the last half of the 1800s on Ærø, a strong emphasis was placed on the wedding couple learning to dance the mollevit prior to their wedding. The mollevit belonged to the ceremonial class of dances at weddings on the island. The dance took place in a large living room after dinner; when the room was emptied of furniture the musicians got ready and took seats in the corner. Shortly after that, the tones signalling the start of a mollevit sounded. At this point, the two best men and two closely related females led the wedding couple into the large living room. If the best men were the fathers of the bride and groom (as was often the case), they and their wives would dance the first dance alongside the bride and the groom.

The bridal mollevit was danced by three couples with the wedding couple in the middle who received the most attention from the guests. Since it was customary for every young or old guest to have a turn dancing with the bride and groom, individual mollevits might be fairly short. Several records contradict this account, however, describing the bridal couple as dancing on their own.<sup>6</sup>

The mollevit had ceremonial significance not only at weddings but also at Shrovetide riding, which ended with dining and dancing. The following description is from 1900:

The first dance—the Minuet, the favorite dance of the Ærø residents—was danced by the King and Queen alone. In the second dance—a

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5 Ibid.

6 'Et Bondebryllup paa Ærø', in *Folkets Almanak* (København: N.C. Rom, 1911), [n.p.].

waltz—servants and outriders participated.—Hereafter, all who wanted to dance could do so.<sup>7</sup>

In the late 1800s, the bridal mollevit was replaced by a wedding waltz, a tradition that shifted across the whole country. On Ærø, various melodies were used for the waltz. Hansen reported habitually performing a melody called ‘Kirsten’s Waltz’. Although the mollevit had ceased to be a ceremonial dance at weddings by the early 1900s, it retained a high status. It was danced at all the major parties in the Rise parish. The mollevit was danced a short time after the wedding waltz and continued to be one of the highlights at weddings.<sup>8</sup>



Fig. 11.4 The musician Hans Andersen Hansen and his wife Anne Hansen, photographed together with children and children-in-law, were eager dancers and all of them could dance the mollevit (minuet). The family is photographed at the occasion of Anne and Hans Andersen Hansens’s Diamond Wedding on 21 July 1941. In the middle of the picture the diamond wedding couple, and the fourth man from the left is the son of the wedding couple, Jens Hansen, who was also a front dancer in the mollevit for many years. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

The mollevit continued to be danced in the 1930s and into the 1950s, but as the older generation, having danced the mollevit from their earliest childhood, disappeared, it became more challenging to implement. In several instances, many people wanted to dance the mollevit and lined up on the floor but were not confident enough to actually go through with it. After dancing only a little while, things fell apart, and the dancers stood discussing what had gone wrong. As late as the 1970s, musicians were asked to play the mollevit at a private party,

7 DFS 1906/43 1160 Fastelavnsskikke på Ærø. I.P. Lauritsen, Tranderup, Ærø 1918.

8 Christen Knudsen, Bregninge, Samtale med A.C.N. Christensen med oplysninger fra Johan Larsen, Rise.

but the dance could not be completed even this time. It all dissolved, and the dancers stood discussing in the middle of the floor.<sup>9</sup>

### Kjellerup Records the Mollevit in 1939–40

In 1939–40, more than twenty years after the Grüner-Nielsens' collection excursion to Ærø, Ane Marie Kjellerup, from Nyborg, also visited the island to record old Ærø dances including the mollevit. Kjellerup must have been unfamiliar with the earlier report where Ellen Grüner-Nielsen wrote:

Many of the dances [on Ærø] are so difficult that a follow-up collection, such as the one the FFF's collectors later introduced [by coming several years in succession] could have been greatly desirable; but perhaps it can be done yet.<sup>10</sup>

However, Kjellerup had an advantage: having attended Paul Petersen's dance school in Copenhagen, she already had practical and theoretical training as a dance teacher and some musical knowledge. She quickly connected to the folk-dance movement, but her actual collection of folk dances began with only a small number of dances that she was able to record in various places on Fyn. Her trip to Hindsholm in the northeast of Fyn in 1933, however, yielded a fine collection of dances that became the basis of her collection work.<sup>11</sup>

Kjellerup established a connection to the dancers and to Hansen on Ærø through a good friend who had been raised on the island. This friend brought together Hansen and four couples of dancers in Dunkær in Rise. All were exceptionally good dancers who used the dances when they met at parties in Rise. Her friend's relationship with the local population was of great importance. Kjellerup was convinced that without this assistance, the collection would not have been successful because it otherwise would not have been not easy to gain access to the daily lives of the residents on Ærø.<sup>12</sup> During her visit, Kjellerup recorded nine dances, which she published in the Association for Folk Dance Promotion's regional booklet, entitled *Old Dances from Fyn and the Islands* (1941).<sup>13</sup>

9 DFS mgt GD 1984/126-127. Samtale med spillemand Hans Albert Jensen, Skovby, Ærø og A.C.N Christensen.

10 DFS 1915/4/7. Hakon og Ellen Grüner-Nielsens danse- og musikindsamling på Ærø 1918.

11 Ane Marie Kjellerup, lydband og videobånd med samtale om hendes liv som danser og folkedanseroptegner. Indspillet af Per Sørensen.

12 Ane Marie Kjellerup. Telefonsamtale om danseindsamlingen på Ærø med A.C.N. Christensen.

13 *Gamle Danske fra Fyn og Øerne*. Samlet og beskrevet af Fru Ane Marie Kjellerup, Nyborg (København: Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme, 1941), pp. 52–71.

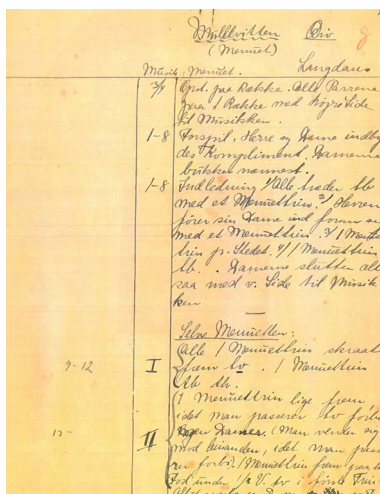


Fig. 11.5 Front page from Ane Marie Kjellerup's original recording of the Mollevit from Ærø 1939–43. Dansk Folkemindesamling ved Det Kongelige Bibliotek 1915/006, Kildematerialet til Gamle danse fra Fyn og Øerne 1941. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

Among the dances she documented were 'Mollevit', 'Contra with Mollevit' and 'The One with the Gap'. The latter two were quadrille dances with minuet performed to the last two repetitions of the music, which the residents of Ærø called 'Half Mollevit'. Other written sources show that dances with minuet as the two last figures were practised in Europe from the second half of the 1700s. With great skill, Kjellerup managed to document the steps, figures, and progress of the minuet and the two quadrilles with a minuet, which was not an easy task. She was the first Danish folk-dance collector to present a traditional minuet, the mollevit, in print.<sup>14</sup>

When the first edition of *Old Dances from Fyn and the Islands* sold out, and republication was planned in 1949, the Association for Folk Dance Promotion (*Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme*) wanted to revise the booklet. Small uncertainties had arisen about how the mollevit was to be danced. Therefore, the Association decided to send Svend Clemmensen, from its description commission, to Ærø to find answers.

The trip was intended to be on October 14–15, 1948. Clemmensen and Hans Nielsen from Hjallesø at Odense travelled together. On 14 October, they were to visit the folk-dance association Vippen in Marstal, and the next day they would seek out Hansen, who at that time was eighty-nine years old and lived with his

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 68–71.



son in Rise.<sup>15</sup> When Clemmensen and Nielsen arrived at the house, Hansen's daughter-in-law told them that the old one was taking a nap. When Hansen awoke, the pair explained their errand. Before long, Clemmensen and Nielsen were dancing to the tunes from Hansen's violin. At the point in the dance at which the rows swap positions, however, Hansen cried, 'No'. He could not say what was wrong about their dancing, only that it was wrong. They tried several more times, but nothing helped. They got a 'no' each time. Determined to help, Hansen inquired, 'When do you leave?'. The reply was 'Not until we have clarity about the mollevit.' Hansen asked his daughter-in-law to call other elderly dancers and ask them to join him the Dunkær Inn at eight o'clock that evening. During this gathering, the dancing continued for four hours. The elderly people from Rise danced to their hearts' content, and when there were doubts about the steps, Hans Nielsen and Clemmensen partnered with one of the older women.<sup>16</sup>

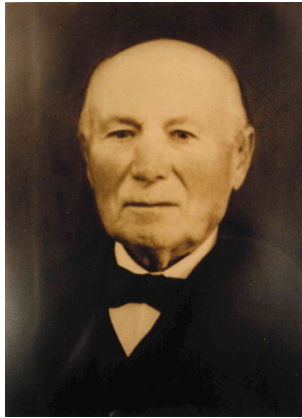


Fig. 11.6 The farmer and musician Hans Andersen Hansen in Rise on Ærø, 1948. Hansen was a central figure at the dance recording in 1918, 1939–40 and 1948. Photograph © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

The updated version of *Old Dances from Fyn and the Islands* (1949) contained additions and revisions to the description of the mollevit. For example, Clemmensen and Nielsen wrote that 'the partners were turned half toward the front, and the ladies had half their backs toward the front, as the mollevit was danced.' This is in contrast to the way Kjellerup explained that 'in the variation

15 DFS 1915/9/26-27. Breve fra Hans A. Hansen, Kalvehave, Ærø, og Ane Marie Kjellerup, Nyborg, til Svend Clemmensen.

16 Ole Skov, 'Dansens og Musikkens rødder 33. Menuetten på Ærø 2', *Hjemstavnsliv*, 12 (1998), 10–11.

only a half turn with the right hand and later a half turn with the left hand is danced, not a whole turn as described in 1941'.<sup>17</sup>

### Rhythm and Character of the Mollevit among the Residents of Ærø and the Folk Dancers

After Kjellerup published *Old Dances from Fyn and the Islands*, several dance instructors still had difficulties understanding the description of the mollevit. The folk-dance instructor Skjold Jensen was among those wanted to observe the dance first-hand. So he decided, together with his father and brother-in-law, to take a trip to Ærø to see how the mollevit had been danced there. They were referred to Hansen's son, the merchant and draper Jens Hansen in Ærøskøbing.



Fig. 11.7 Four generations gathered in Ærøskøbing. Sitting with his great-grandchild, is the musician Hans Andersen Hansen. Standing to the left, Jens Hansen, and his son, who managed the grocer's house with drapery at Ærøskøbing square. Jens Hansen was for many years the leading dancer of the Mollevit and was a tall and handsome dancer, leading the mollevit with great certainty. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

Jens Hansen embraced the visitors and showed them into his office, a lovely large room behind his shop, with brown linoleum on the floor. Then there was dancing. Hansen's brother-in-law played along. That experience became one of Jensen's greatest experiences when it comes to folk dancing. He was amazed by '[h]ow he [Hansen] could take the steps in compliance with the music. He had from his earliest youth got the movements and the music into the body. He

17 DFS 1915/9/26-D27 FFF, Kjellerup.

had grown up with it.' Hansen seemed to have the mollevit in his blood. Jensen observed, 'What is being danced today [in 1988 by Danish folk dancers] has nothing to do with the way my dear tutor from Ærøskøbing danced.' Jensen continued: 'I am not a native Ærø resident, but [I could still see that] he was completely empathetic in the rhythm with which the mollevit should be danced.' Jensen reported that Hansen's steps and rhythm were smooth and even, without much up-and-down movement, but with much turning or twisting of the body.<sup>18</sup>

On Ærø, a revival of the mollevit in folk-dance associations occurred in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Peter Henry Rasmussen was instrumental to this revival. While living in Odense, he had been a member of the Odense Folk Dancers—the same association in which Hans Nielsen from Hjallesø was an instructor, and the two were close friends. Nielsen taught Rasmussen how to dance the mollevit. When the latter moved to Ærø in 1947 after qualifying from the Ollerup Gymnastics School, he taught both gymnastics and folk dances, including the mollevit, to many students. This movement began to grow even before Nielsen had seen the mollevit danced by the elderly population in Rise. In 1950, Rasmussen included the mollevit on the program for the first local dance show, which was held at Tranderup Village Hall. Hans Andersen Hansen was in attendance. After the show, Hansen stood up and said that the steps were good enough, but there had to be more movement and rhythm in the dance.<sup>19</sup>



Fig. 11.8 Ingeborg Therkildsen came to Ærø from Jutland and married the farmer Ole Therkildsen in Rise. In a period after the second World War, Ingeborg and Ole Therkildsen participated in several dance events, where the participants mainly consisted of older people, and where the mollevit was danced every time. Photograph by Anders Chr. N. Christensen 1984. © Anders Chr. N. Christensen.

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- 18 *DFS mgt GD 1988/2*. Samtale om Mollevit fra Ærø med folkedanseinstruktør Skjold Jensen og A.C.N. Christensen.
- 19 Sara Rasmussen, Bregninge. Samtale om hendes mand, folkedansinstruktør Peter Henry Rasmussen med A.C.N. Christensen, 1984.

In yet another round of folk-dance collection conducted on Ærø in 1984, Anders Chr. N. Christensen was referred to Ingeborg Therkildsen, among others, as a source of knowledge about the mollevit. Therkildsen was originally from West Jutland but had married into one of the old Rise families who was fond of dancing. With these family members, she had attended some dance evenings held by the social association at the Dunkær Inn. Most of the participants were older people who met and danced the old Ærø dances. On each of those occasions, the mollevit was danced at least once.

To learn the mollevit, Therkildsen went with her husband to meet an older woman in the parish. After a few attempts to perform the steps, the woman said to Therkildsen: 'This one you will never learn'. Therkildsen realized that the woman was right:

I thought I could [dance] the mollevit, but I could not. I have enough self-knowledge today to see that I could not make those movements as the elderly could. It was an exercise. They had done it so many times.<sup>20</sup>

Therkildsen explained that she was not the only one who could not match the style of the dancers from Rise, mentioning that they sometimes danced together with the folk dance association Vippen in Marstal. When the elderly dancers from Rise watched the younger dancers from Vippen dance the mollevit, they pointed out: 'You may probably see that they do not have the rhythm in them the way they should have, as the elderly in our association'. Therkildsen clarified that, by this statement, the Rise dancers meant that they danced the mollevit differently: 'They danced with the whole body, and if the legs did not participate, the body did. [...] Seeing that was fantastic'.<sup>21</sup> Therkildsen could see for herself that the folk dancers did not dance with the unique rhythm of the elderly Rise dancers. When the latter danced the mollevit, their steps seemed to shift in relation to the music, as if they danced a little after the basic rhythm.<sup>22</sup>

The farmer and fiddler Hans Albert Jensen, from Skovby on Ærø, started playing for dances in the 1940s, and he played at more of the island's public and private parties than any other musician. Jensen said that, when he initially went out to play, the mollevit was danced at almost all the private parties in Rise, and that there were individual families who were very good at dancing it. His impression was that the mollevit was danced in a far more relaxed way at those parties than it was by the later folk dancers of 1984. He said: 'Yes, so it will be. It is a learned dance; it is crammed into your head'. The style was so different,

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20 *DFS mgt GD 1984/117*. Samtale om mollevit med Ingeborg Therkildsen, Rise, og A. C. N. Christensen.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

Jensen said, that they seemed not to be the same dance: ‘The old people had not the bending of the knee that has been added at the folk dance’. It seems that several folk-dance instructors had, over the years, incorporated into their mollevit a small bending of the knees on the second and sixth count where there originally was no movement.<sup>23</sup>



Fig. 11.9 The former farmer and musician Johan Larsen from Rise. From his earliest youth, Larsen had played the mollevit at private and public parties in Rise and on Ærø. He could perform two different melodies. Photograph by Anders Chr. N. Christensen 1984. © Anders Chr. N. Christensen.

### Mollevit Melodies

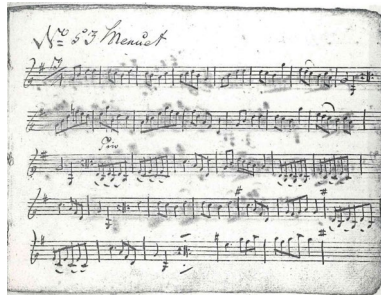


Fig. 11.10 Various minuet melodies were used on Ærø, but, over the generations, its inhabitants favoured a particular melody. The melody was written down in the earliest extant notebook in Denmark—one annotated *Notebook for Niels Gottlob*, commenced on 19 Februarii Anno 1772, Informant Joh. Lud. Dauer’. This notebook confirms the strong position of the minuet on Ærø in the 1700’s, since thirty-nine out of one hundred and six melodies it contains are minuets. Ærø Museum. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

For many years, the mollevit was not connected to a particular melody; a myriad of tunes had been used to accompany the same dance. Later, as

23 DFS mgt GD 1984/126-127. Samtale om mollevit med spillemand og gårdejer Hans Albert Jensen, Skovby, Ærø, og A. C. N. Christensen.

the mollevit gradually came to be played only once in the course of an evening, the number of melodies narrowed. Only two melodies survived in the living tradition up to 1990.

The most used mollevit tune on Ærø has been known since the latter half of the 1700s. It is found in the oldest preserved music book from the island, one that belonged to Niels Gottlob in 1772. Out of the one hundred and six tunes in the book, thirty-nine are minuets, comprising more than a third of the record. Several authors note in 1790 that the peasants transformed the minuet and danced 'minuet en quatre' a version in which two couples dance at the same time. Interestingly, such a 'Menuet en quatre' occurs in Gottlob's music book.<sup>24</sup>

The minuet tune referred to as the most used one on Ærø have many parallels known from the oldest preserved music books in Denmark.

## Minuet Traditions on Lolland-Falster

When the Association for Folk Dance Promotion published a new regional booklet entitled *Gamle Danse fra Lolland-Falster* (*Old Dances from Lolland-Falster*) in 1960, it was the eleventh in a series of works documenting folk dances from Denmark. The booklet contained descriptions of thirty-two dances from Lolland-Falster. In the first edition, two of these dances included the word 'minuet' in their title—namely, the 'Lang Menuet' [Long Minuet] and 'Menuet med Pisk' [Minuet with Whip]. The second edition of *Old Dances from Lolland-Falster* (1996) was expanded by eleven dances, one of which was an additional minuet, the 'Rund Menuet' [Round Minuet]. A total of three dances from Lolland-Falster have the word Minuet in the title.

The three dances are described as follows:

### **Long Minuet, Væggerløse**

Formation: Couples in two facing rows

Steps: Minuet steps

- a) The rows dance one minuet step towards each other without holding hands, and then one minuet step backward to their own places. This is repeated. The couples then give each other a right hand, and dance one round toward the left, stopping in place.
- b) All dancers form a half chain with opposite couples, and perform two minuet steps. Two couples half chain back to their own places, using two minuet steps.

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24 Jens Henrik Koudal, 'Dansemusik fra Struensees tid', in *Årsskrift 2000* (Ærøskøbing: Ærø Museum, 2000), pp. 21–24.

The same two couples dance with four minuet steps in a circle one round to the left, swinging the arms, beginning by swinging towards the center.

The dance is repeated at will, but during the final time, all couples form a grand circle dancing four minuet steps to the left (arms swung as before)

Johannes Egedal wrote down the dance based on information from Karen Suder, Fiskebæk at Marrebæk. His description became the basis for the printed version together with a description sent by Rasmus Toxværd, Væggerløse.<sup>25</sup>

### **Round Minuet**

Formation: Indefinite number of couples in a grand circle

Steps: Minuet steps

- a) Without holding hands, dancers perform one minuet step towards the centre of the circle and one minuet step back. This is repeated. The couples give each other a right hand and the couples dance one round to the left, using four small minuet steps. All dancers stop at their own place in front of their own partner.
- b) Couples then dance without holding hands around the circle as in chain with zig-zag.

The men dance counterclockwise minuet steps and the women dance clockwise minuet steps.

The zig-zag chain continues until the couples meet their partners. Then they form a grand circle holding hands, stop facing the center of the circle, and swing their arms in step to the music until the music concludes.

### **The Minuet with Pisk**

Formation: Couples in a circle facing forward with arms down at their sides

Steps: Minuet steps and running steps

- a) All dance four minuet steps forwards in the dance direction side by side with own partner. Then, with four minuet steps, the ladies dance one round right around the man from the above pair. Simultaneously the man dances one round right around the woman from the behind standing pair.

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<sup>25</sup> *Gamle Danse fra Lolland Falster*, 2. udgave, Samlet af: Kurt Clemmensen, Morten Hansen, Anette Thomsen og Ole Skov (København: Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme, 1996), p. 80.

At the first minuet step, the man turns right, and takes a step backward. After the fourth minuet step all stand side by side with the opposite dancer.

- b) Using four minuet steps, the man dances one round to the right around his partner. On the first minuet step, the woman turns around to her left, starting with a step backward. After the fourth minuet step, all dancers stand by their own partners facing the forward dance direction.
- c) 'The Pisk': The couples have a backcross grip, and take eight running steps in the dance direction, starting with the right foot. The couples then turn one round in place, the men backward and the women forward.
- d) The couples take eight more running steps. This is repeated, and the dance continues at will.

The dance, which is also known as *Mollevit med Pisk Væggerløse*, was recorded by Erik Jensen after Pouline Rasmussen and tailor Jørgen Rasmussen, both from Tårs.<sup>26</sup> The music was recorded after farmer and fiddler Jørgen Romme, Nørre Radsted.

The steps described for the three dances above are minuet steps. In a typical minuet, however, the male and female partners stand opposite each other and change places, as seen in the Minuet from Randers area and in the *Mollevit* from Ærø. The three dances from Lolland-Falster deviate from that practice; they have the form of contradances insofar as one couple faces another couple in row formation, couples dance in a round facing the centre of the circle, or partners dance side by side, facing the dance direction on a circular path.

In the next part of the chapter, I examine all of the records that underlie the descriptions of the minuets in *Old Dances from Lolland-Falster* with the objective of determining whether these dances have a relationship with the minuets from Randers and Ærø. Could the three dances above originally have been minuets with the more traditional formation in which the male and female dance partners face one other while they make the configuration?

### Rasmus and Karen Toxværd's Dance Records on Southern Falster

The earliest reports and records of the minuet from Falster were made by the siblings Karen (1853–1941) and Rasmus (1847–1923) Toxværd from Væggerløse on South Falster.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 58–60.





Fig. 11.11 The siblings Rasmus and Karen Toxværd, of Sillestrup, later Væggeløse. In the summer of 1873, Karen Toxværd was a pupil at Grundtvigs Højskole. From 1884 until her death she provided Evald Tang Kristensen and later Dansk Folkemindesamling with notes from Southern Falster. Rasmus Toxværd reviewed everything Karen submitted. He had a musical knowledge, and he wrote down all the melodies he learned from his father. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

They submitted their first folklore reports to the prominent folklore collector Evald Tang Kristensen in 1884. After the establishment of The National Collection of Folklore in 1904–05, the pair were diligent producers of folklore records. Karen submitted a vivid account collected from South Falster of the ceremonial Bridal Minuet as it was danced there in the mid-1800s:

Finally, the time came when the dance should start, and now everybody flocked to the upper room; even female cooks and dishwashers left their workplaces and placed themselves outside the windows to watch the bride dance. She danced the first minuet alone with her father, and when it was finished, he led her to the groom and asked him to 'loosen his hand', both here and on the whole. Then the bridal couple danced the next minuet alone. After that, the 'bridal circle' danced together with them, being the nearest related young people from both families, who in advance had been told with whom they should dance [...] [after the coffee break:] The musicians now split up so that half of them went to the barn followed by the young people, the older people danced in the living room, and in between, beer and brandy were offered. The dance went on with animation and endurance until the bright morning, waltz and scottish changed with the minuet, sorte-lam, and fangestykket. Yes, when it became animated, it was seven steps syvspring, and nikongersdans, tremandsril, and halvfemtetur.<sup>27</sup>

27 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svenskbygder—under trehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015), p. 200.

Hakon Grüner-Nielsen, who we have already discussed as a folk-dance collector on Ærø, worked as an archivist with responsibility for the music department at The National Collection of Folklore. In 1917, he circulated a request for information about old folk dances from Lolland and Falster and also asked if anyone knew Minuet or *Mælløvæt*, its local name. Grüner-Nielsen requested the following: 'we will be very grateful to receive descriptions of the mentioned dances or at least have information on addresses of people who may be able to give us some information.'<sup>28</sup>

Rasmus Toxværd responded to the call in February 1917, submitting four closely written folio sheets with the title 'Gamle Danse fra Sydfalster' ['Old Dances from South Falster']. These included information about the Mellevæt as it was danced partly as 'The Long Minuet' and partly as 'The Round Minuet'.

Toxværd wrote that the Long Mellevæt was danced only by two couples, who lined up at opposite ends of the living room:

As the music started, they went with their specific Mellevæt steps toward each other, without touching, firstly once around each other. Each couple then went towards each other, passed each other to the opposite end of the room, around each other, and likewise back again. This was repeated two or three times, and at last, the couples went towards each other and met midway.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that only two couples participated in this dance at a time might suggest that, earlier, the dance was connected to the ceremonial bridal minuet, which was danced first by the bride and her father alone. In South Falster, after the bride and the bride's father danced, the bridal couple danced, and after that the bridal circle, consisting of the young people nearest of kind from both families, joined the festivities. During this part of the dance, two couples at a time danced with the bridal couple. A letter from Toxværd to Grüner-Nielsen regretted the former's inability to help further with this dance:

Unfortunately, I cannot further describe the dance steps to 'Springestykket' as well as not to the 'Mellevæt.' I have seen them danced several times but did not get them learned, as I possibly was too slow-witted.<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, Toxværd recognized that the bridal minuet was danced as the Long Minuet. He had even heard that it was only danced by one couple—namely the bride and groom.<sup>31</sup> His description of the Round minuet was as follows:

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28 Hakon Grüner-Nielsen, 'Spørgsmål om Folkedans', in *Lolland-Falsters historiske Samfunds Aarbog V* (Nykøbing F.: Lolland-Falsters historiske Samfund, 1917), p. 151.

29 DFS 1915/4(7). Danseoptegnelser indsendt af Rasmus Toxværd, 1917, p. 4.

30 DFS 1915/4(7). Brev fra Rasmus Toxværd.

31 DFS 1915/4(7). Danseoptegnelser indsendt af Rasmus Toxværd, 1917, p. 4.

In the Round Mellevæt, as many took part as could get space and felt like it. They arranged themselves in couples in a big circle, went around each other and then to the middle of the room, still to the beat of the music, stamped, and returned back and round the neighbour. The men to the left and the girls to the right—out to the center and again back to the next neighbour and thus round the circle until everyone met the partner. Then the big circle was closed, and they swung the united hands back and forth standing at one place through some bars and thus the dance was finished.<sup>32</sup>

Karen and Rasmus Toxværd experienced the exceptional atmosphere of the dance:

In the Mellevæt where everyone went alone, it was appropriate to 'behave'. And now you should not say, 'Oh, how could the subdued and beggarly peasants of that time behave?' I only have seen the Mellevæt danced by older adults, but I assert that they could dance with grandiose, literally noble dignity. Mellevæt, Springestykket, and To-Tre- and Fireture stayed as commonly used dances for a relatively long time, which you may know from the fact that there were countless Mellevæts, Springestykker, and tours.<sup>33</sup>

Rasmus Toxværd, who played the violin, related that the Mellevæt and Springestykket remained in use as common dances for a relatively long time. He estimated that they were known until sometime in the 1870s because music books from South Falster published in the preceding decades included a number of minuets that were no longer recognised by 1917.

### Johannes Egedal's Collection on Lolland-Falster 1917 and 1919

Johannes Egedal (1891–1956) became a member of The Association for Folk Dance Promotion in 1915 and, in the following year, was sent on his first collection journey, a trip to Jutland, that lasted twenty-two days. Egedal travelled by bicycle, with his violin in front and a bag with his lunch box and notebooks on the luggage carrier. The trip was extensive; by the end, he had cycled around 1000 kilometres.

Egedal travelled to Lolland-Falster in 1917. Before he left, he received some instructions from Hakon Grüner-Nielsen and was recommended to visit the siblings Karen and Rasmus Toxværd in Væggerløse to fully understand the dances that Rasmus Toxværd had sent to The National Collection of Folklore.

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32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.



Fig. 11.12 Johannes Egedal, photographed in 1917 in connection with the collection of dances on Lolland and Falster. Egedal studied at the University of Copenhagen in 1917, hence the student's cap. The bicycle was his favourite mode of transport, on which he placed pump, a repair kit, bag, and violin, used for writing down the dance melodies. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

After Egedal had recorded what Karen and Rasmus Toxværd had been able to report, he was directed to visit Karen Suder (b. 1837) from Marrebæk, south of Væggerløse.<sup>34</sup> He described the minuet step after Suder's description in the following manner:

The step is a polka step (always start (with) Left) and then a step now when you rest partly on this foot and makes a small soft bending.<sup>35</sup>

This 1917 description was the first attempt to document the minuet step in the traditional folk environment. While it is correct that the dance step starts with the left foot, it is doubtful that it starts with a polka step and that the next step was one in which the dancer rests on the same foot. It was probably not Egedal who did not understand the minuet step, but rather it was probably Suder who did not remember. She was eighty years old at the time of his visit, and it may have been fifty years since she had seen the minuet danced. Suder was likely unsure about the steps; perhaps she only experienced the minuet as it was danced by the older generation. Egedal believed that the dance traditions on Falster had not stayed alive for as long as those in Jutland. What he had been able to record was more inaccurate and less copious than could be wished.

34 Ole Skov, 'Dansen og Musikkens Rødder 23. Menuetten på Falster-1', *Hjemstavnsliv*, 1 (1998), 20–21.

35 *DFS 1915/4(7)*. Johannes Egedal, *Folkedanse fra Falster og Lolland 1917 og 1918*, p. 12.

Karen Suder described the *Long Minuet* as follows:

Minuet 2/1-8/:9-14://15.24:/

Formation: 2 pairs opposite each other.

(No touch!) 2 I' 4 steps (1 forwards to the opposite dancer, 1 with the left hand to the opposite dancer, and 1 back/15-18/2 II' exchanges /19-24//15-20/ at meeting swinging arms and tramp with the right (light) /21-24/.

Karen Toxværd's mother had told that when the mood was high, the women spread their aprons while the men gave a stamp. Similar hints were found in Guldborg on Lolland (Jens Andersen), where they had a formation in rows.<sup>36</sup>

The Round Minuet was recorded by Egedal after Karen Suder, Marrebæk, and Rasmus and Karen Toxværd in Væggerløse:

They lineup in couples in a circle (they did not hold hands in the circle)

a.I. 2 times into (the circle) and back with 1 step

II. Round in couples holding one hand

b. They went in Zig-Zag in the circle (men counterclockwise, women clockwise) with one minuet step in each bar (a chain without giving hands), right foot in the peak of the bar! When this chain is finished, they form [a] 'Big Circle', stand still with the legs and swing the arms softly in [time with] the music's beat. Here ends the dance. (For the total dance, only minuet steps are used.)<sup>37</sup>

### Erik Jensen's Dance Collection in the 1940s and 1950s

Erik Jensen was a dairyman. Because of this work, he visited many places across Denmark. Jensen moved to Lolland in 1939 after being recruited by Saksøbing Dairy. From a very young age, he had engaged in folk dance through the gymnastic clubs that practised folk dance in the autumn. He also danced in a folk-dance team on Stevns that was managed by Elisabeth Andersen, collector and publisher of *Old Dances from Præstø County* (1939).<sup>38</sup> At a convention she explained that no descriptions of old dances from Lolland and Falster existed

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 *Gamle danse fra Præstø Amt*, samlet af Elisabeth S. Andersen 1939 (Fakse: Præstø Amts Folkedansere, F, 1954.

and challenged Jensen to take up the task. He started to ask the elderly people at a folk-dance event there if anyone remembered any old dances. Jensen met a few dancers who knew how to perform a few old dances. This was the beginning of Jensen's work. By the late 1950s, he had collected enough dances to fill a regional booklet. What Jensen forwarded to Svend Clemmensen from The Association for Folk Dance Promotion formed the basis of *Old Dances from Lolland-Falster* (1960).<sup>39</sup>

In *Old Dances from Lolland-Falster*, Jensen had published the Long Minuet and the Minuet with Pisk. Egedal's collection from 1917–19 provided one third of the Long Minuet, and he himself had found the other two thirds of the dance. Jensen received the middle third from the writer Helene Strange and the final third from an old pilot chairman in Gedser.<sup>40</sup> In the versions of the booklet from 1960 and 1996, the Long Minuet was described as a dance in which the couples stood opposite each other in two rows. An account from Væggerløse noted that it was danced by only two couples in the living room. However, Egedal found a hint of the Long Minuet in Guldborg on Lolland, where couples had lined up in rows.<sup>41</sup> Because the intention for the local booklets was to provide suitable dances for use in the Danish folk-dance network, their publishers decided not to include a dance was practised by only two couples at a time.

### The Minuet with Pisk

Jensen's documentation of the Minuet with Pisk included music, which he had written down from the fiddler Jørgen Romme in Nørre Radsted in northwestern Lolland's. A Tvariant of the melody can be found in a music book which had belonged to Anders Rasmussen of Nørre Radsted. Here, it is called 'Menuet med Polsk' ['Minuet with Polsk'] or 'Rasted Degn'.<sup>42</sup> The first two parts are clearly a minuet melody. From the third part, however, it becomes a Polsk melody. The title 'Polsk' is written above the third part.

Romme recommended Kirstine Hansen in Hjelm as someone who could help Jensen to learn the dance known as the 'Mollewit med Pisk' ['Mollewit with Pisk']. With Hansen, Jensen met an elderly man who also knew the dance. It took Jensen three visits to Hansen and her partner before he was sure enough about the dance to describe it.<sup>43</sup>

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39 Erik Jensen, tidligere mejerist og folkedanseoptegner, samtale med Per Sørensen, *Videobåndkopi*. Kamera Pia Sørensen. (Sakskøbing, 1991).

40 Ibid.

41 *DFS 1915/4(7)*, Johannes Egedal, p. 12.

42 *DFS 1906/36* Danse og Dansemelodier, Mortensen, 1943, p.48.

43 Jensen.

Jensen described the Pisk as an independent dance with eight running steps by dancers in pairs with a backcross grip forward in the dance direction. The couples then turned one round on the spot, the men backward and the women forward. Jensen understood that the Pisk was used as a 'second course' or a dance that came only after others such as the Snurrepiskan, Firetur with Pisk, Mollevit with Pisk, and others.<sup>44</sup> Probably, the Pisk had been called a Polsk earlier. We know from other recordings around Denmark that in the mid-1800s, it was likely a dance around on the spot. The Minuet *with* Pisk may be a further historical development of the minuet *followed by* Polsk. Danish sources from 1795 and 1798 stated that the peasants exclusively alternated between the minuet and Polish dances.

### Johannes Egedal's Observations

When Egedal recorded the old dances on Lolland and Falster in 1917 and 1919 he did not receive descriptions that were entirely comprehensible. On 27 November 1917, he wrote about his collection:

Regarding the actual work, I believe it could be said that there has been offered quite a lot more accuracy than the case was at the recording in Jutland 1916, but the result seems to me despite that not so good as recording [made in] 1916. The reason for this is double. Firstly, the old dances on Falster barely have stayed as long as in Jutland, and, secondly, a substantial increase of the number of informants has increased the uncertainty, as not all the accurate (if they exist) but also the less accurate informants have been the source. Unfortunately, I have not got as full written information from some of the informants as I could wish.<sup>45</sup>

When Jensen recorded the dances in the 1940s and 50s, very few people had actually danced the minuet. By 1960, he was familiar with the minuet step from the folk-dance movement on Ærø and in the Randers area, but he met very few people who were dancing the minuet steps on Lolland.

### Minuets from Lolland-Falster Today

Minuets today are danced as contradances with minuet steps, following the descriptions from *Old Dances from Lolland-Falster*. One question which arises is whether we can be sure that the recorders and informants saw and remembered

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> DFS 1915/4(8), Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremmes Arkiv, Folkedanse fra Falster og Lolland, samlet af Johannes Egedal (1917), p. 26.

contradances rather than minuets. Rasmus Toxværd did not make clear if the pairs stand opposite each other as a row of men and another row of women or whether they stand as couples facing towards each other. The fact that the Long Minuet only could be danced by two couples in the room may be a legacy from the *Minuet en quatre*—a version in which four people lined up so that the men stand opposite their partner, as the peasants had danced in the late eighteenth century. It may also be a legacy of the bridal Minuet, which, on South Falster, had been danced by first the father and the bride, then the bridal couple, then two couples at a time, consisting of the bridal pair alternating with a couple from the closest family. In Væggerløse, on Falster, the Long Minuet always was danced by two couples, four persons. The Round Minuet is quite clearly a contradance which everybody could join. What makes a minuet is that the music and the dance consist exclusively of minuet steps. The Minuet with Pisk recorded by Erik Jensen after Jørgen Romme, Nørre Radsted, Lolland, may originally have been a minuet danced solo, followed by a Polsk dance with two strokes. A variant of the melody is written down under the name ‘Minuet with Polsk’ in a music book belonging to Anders Rasmussen, Lolland.<sup>46</sup> It may be that Jørgen Romme and Kirstine Hansen only had seen the dance, and not participated in it. Therefore, they may only have been able to show the way the pairs moved and not the steps that were used.

We cannot definitively conclude whether the way that the dance was performed in 1917, 1919, and the 1940s, and the 1950s is the same as described in the booklets used now. Today, the Minuet on Lolland and Falster is described as a contradance: the man has the lady on his right side, but in the bridal minuet, traces of the earlier minuet are apparent when the man and woman take positions opposite each other. The earliest recordings of the minuet for two couples are not precise, and the steps they show differ from the minuet steps. This investigation reveals historical sources that suggest a legacy from the eighteenth-century dance figuration in which the man and woman stand opposite one another. Minuet melodies and dances probably developed from this ‘standard’ minuet form into a contradance form. When and why this development happened, one can only speculate. Perhaps the reason is that when the minuet was no longer a ceremonial dance connected with weddings, it lost its importance and, in this period, became a contradance.<sup>47</sup> Alternatively, those making the recordings may not have understood what the dancers explained or how they danced on the floor.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> DFS 1906/36. *Danse og Dansemelodier*, Mortensen, 1943.



Dances in the folk tradition continuously change. These changes may happen in the dance itself or because of a recorder's misinterpretation. Once written down in dance description, the version lives on in the folk-dance environment.

Today, the Long Minuet is very popular in the Danish folk-dance environment and is often danced.

## Minuet Traditions in Randers Area

The third Danish region where the minuet survived until the twentieth century was the Randers area of Central Denmark on the Jutland peninsula. Detailed documentation comes from the villages of Bjerregrav, Støvring, and Mellerup, north of Randers' town.

### The Bjerregrav Minuet

At the first national convention for Danish Folk Dancers in Skanderborg in 1930, a team of dancers from Øster Bjerregrav attracted great attention by dancing the minuet.



Fig. 11.13 From west of Randers, the Bjerregrav dancers show their 'Monnevet', a popular minuet, for the first time. The dancers wear their ordinary Sunday clothes, which included suits for the men, at the first Danish Folk Dance Event in 1930 in Skanderborg south of Aarhus. The photograph clearly shows how the couples exchange rows. The dancers turn their left shoulders forward in the dance direction so that the couples face their own partner, almost as in the Mollevit from Ærø. On the left are Madsine and Peder Jacobsen. He was the leading dancer who decided when the dance should stop and when the variation with giving hands should take place. Photograph © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

A spectator wrote:

It was quite breathtaking when a team of fine old peasants from Bjerregrav danced their old minuet. There were seventy-year-old people

among them, and they did not wear folk costumes but their normal Sunday clothes. The minuet they danced was in every respect admirable. The dance was continually going as syncopation against the beat.<sup>48</sup>

Poul Lorenzen, who was the first chairman of the organization Danish Folk Dancers and worked as a state forester, wrote of the minuet in 1978:

We sought in vain for several years and thought it was dying, but were told that some families in Bjerregrav west of Randers still danced it at celebrations as, e.g., silver weddings.<sup>49</sup>

He had received this information in the 1930s from another state forester who managed the Fussingø forest district and this contact put Lorenzen in touch with Jens P. Bugge in Bjerregrav.<sup>50</sup> Bugge assembled some dancers from Bjerregrav to teach the minuet to Lorenzen and some other folk dancers. Lorenzen found the dance very challenging:

We were well received and taught, but the dance, being a row dance, was not at all easy to learn, and concerning recording the minuet I nearly turned grey-haired before time. The older people comforted me at best, saying it was straightforward. You just work hard and follow the music. And remember the little drag with the foot.<sup>51</sup>

Lorenzen had to visit Bjerregrav several times before he had control over the dance.

In 1982, Anders Chr. N. Christensen was referred to two sisters who had danced the minuet over fifty years earlier for Lorenzen. Mette Christensen was ninety-three years old, and Kirstine Brøndum was ninety years old at this time. Both were living in Randers and had grown up in Sandby, a little south of Randers. Neither of the two knew the minuet from their home region. They explained that they had first seen it danced by the guests in Bjerregrav at Christensen's wedding in Sandby, in 1910. Both sisters learned the minuet after they got married to men from Bjerregrav who could dance it. Christensen and Brøndum claimed that they found the minuet difficult to learn and that some people in Bjerregrav never learned it properly.<sup>52</sup>

48 Achton Friis, *De Jydere Land*, Anden Udgave, 1. Bind (København: Grafisk Forlag, 1965), p. 227.

49 Poul Lorenzen, 'Et alvorsord om folkedansere, folkedragter og spillemandsmusik', *Hjemstavnsliv*, 3 (1978), 49.

50 *DFS mgt GD 1982/3-4*. Mette Christensen og Kirstine Brøndum f.1891, samtale med A. C. N. Christensen.

51 Poul Lorenzen, 'Folkedans i Danmark', *Aalborg Amtstidende*, 15 April 1931.

52 *DFS mgt. GD 1982/3-4*.



Fig. 11.14 The Bjerregrav dancers are lined up for a photograph at the Nordic Folk Dance event in Ålborg, 1937. On this occasion they danced in their finest clothes otherwise used only at special occasions such as weddings, silver weddings and funerals. These were black dresses for the women and diplomatic suits for the men. On the left is Peder Jacobsen who was the dancer in Bjerregrav. Photograph © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

From 1930 to 1938, Lorenzen had invited the traditional dancers from Bjerregrav to perform their dances at various events in Denmark. Although they danced only the minuet at the first show, later they also danced an old longways scottish. At these events, the dancers appeared in their ordinary clothes and not in folk costumes. At the first performance, they wore their Sunday clothes which included suits for the men. Later, they wore their finest clothes—those that were reserved for special occasions such as weddings, silver weddings, and funerals. These included black dresses for the women and frock coats for the men.<sup>53</sup>



Fig. 11.15 The dancers from Bjerregrav in rows with the leading dancers in front or in top of the row. Nordisk Folkedanserstævne 1937. Photograph © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

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53 Ibid.

After these performances of the minuet in the 1930s, there was a revival of interest in the dance among the people in Bjerregrav. However, as new families arrived in Bjerregrav in that decade, the younger generation did not learn the dance. One informant recalled that 'It even became a problem, that when musicians started playing the minuet, many ran out of the village hall and many did not like the minuet'. The minuet was danced at Christensen's wedding in 1937, and it was also danced later, but not, it seems, after 1942 when Peder Jacobsen died. Jacobson had led the minuet, and no informants could remember other leaders.<sup>54</sup>

### Performance of the Bjerregrav Minuet

Lorenzen also learned that the minuet was being danced in other communities. In 1978, he wrote:

Later the minuet also was found to be alive east of Randers. The steps are the same as in the Bjerregrav minuet and the dances are much alike, but not totally identical, and the melodies are different.<sup>55</sup>

Curiously, no preserved description of the minuet from Bjerregrav has been found. When *Old Dances from the Randers Area* was published in 1943, it did not contain any mention of the minuet from Bjerregrav.<sup>56</sup> Instead a description of a minuet from Mellerup northeast of Randers was published.

Christensen recalled that the co-publisher of *Old Dances from the Randers Area*, Søren Hornbæk, came several times and observed the dancers from Bjerregrav. When the dancers from Bjerregrav saw the folk dancers in Randers dancing the minuet they felt that the dance was changed.<sup>57</sup> Søren Hornbæk and those who prepared the description of the minuet for the booklet had not changed the dance, but the folk dancers danced the minuet as it was danced in Mellerup. Today, it is incomprehensible why the publishers of *Old Dances from the Randers Area* neither included these minuets nor described the differences between them, since the minuet was distinctive and central in the booklet. If they did not wish to present two nearly identical dances, they could have at least described their differences. The many differences between the minuets danced in Bjerregrav and Mellerup are extremely significant. According to the description from Mellerup, the signal to the first variation was given by the lead dancer by moving his hands around as if he was winding yarn; all men repeat

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54 Ibid.

55 Lorenzen, 'Et alvorsord'.

56 *Gamle Danse fra Randerseggen*, Andet Oplag (København: Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme, 1952), pp. 36–41.

57 *DFS mgt. GD 1982/3–4*.

this, and then all men delivered a clap at the first step in the first variation. In Bjerregrav, only the lead dancer clapped his hands. This clap occurred when the dance started, before the first variation, and before the termination. In contrast, in the towns northeast of Randers, the dance did not begin with a clap.<sup>58</sup>

In Bjerregrav, the minuet was never followed by a waltz or a firetur as had been common in the towns northeast of Randers.<sup>59</sup> In Bjerregrav, the dance ended by a compliment of the couples to each other, and then the minuet was finished without any specific dance following it.<sup>60</sup>

Another difference was in how the first variation of the minuet was performed. From the description of the minuet in eastern towns that appears in *Old Dances from the Randers Area* (1952), partners gave their right hand, and danced one minuet step clockwise and one anti-clockwise, and the couple ended by facing their partner.<sup>61</sup> In Bjerregrav, the first step of this variation finished sideways: dancers did not give a right hand but raised their right clenched fist and placed it their partner's right clenched fist. After this, a backward step was danced, and instead of dancing 'stomach to stomach' as Mette Christensen expressed it, each dancer had his or her left shoulder against their partner's left shoulder. This positioning is seen clearly in a photograph from 1930: when the dancers exchanged rows, they turned their left shoulders toward their partner as in Mollevit from Ærø. Some gave their partners both hands when exchanging rows.<sup>62</sup>

Another interesting observation that had emerged in the investigation in Støvring, northeast of Randers, as early as 1980 concerns the rhythmic character of the minuet. A description in *Old Dances from the Randers Area* stated:

One minuet step reaches over 2 bars. One counts 3 in the bar or 6 on each minuet step. At 2 and 6, no shift of foot, but a sink or a dwelling.<sup>63</sup>

These 'sinks' or 'dwellings' have become characteristic of the minuet dancing in the Danish folk-dance associations. Informants from Støvring reported that they neither sink nor dwell and had never seen the older generations make these kinds of motions. However, they did stand still on counts 2 and 6 of the minuet step.<sup>64</sup>

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58 Ibid.

59 *DFS mgt. GD 1980/24–25*. Albert Kjærgaard, Øster Tørslev, born in Mellerup, samtale med A. C. N. Christensen.

60 *DFS mgt. GD 1982/3–4*.

61 *Gamle Danse fra Randerseggen*, p. 41.

62 *DFS mgt. GD 1982/3–4*.

63 *Gamle Danse fra Randerseggen*, pp. 36–41.

64 *DFS video GD 1980/3*. Inge Bonde Jensen, Støvring.

The investigation in Bjerregrav in 1982 revealed that the minuet had the same character there as in Støvring: there was neither a dwelling nor a sinking on counts 2 and 6 of the minuet step. Christensen insisted that '[i]t must be smooth'. Kristine Brøndum concurred, and said 'You walked smoothly with small movements'.<sup>65</sup>

### The Use of the Minuet in Mellerup and Støvring, Northeast of Randers

In Denmark, the minuet tradition survived the longest in Mellerup and Støvring. Albert Kjærgaard is a key source for information about dancing in these areas. He was born in 1884 and lived his whole childhood and youth in Mellerup. Kjærgaard reported:

The minuet was played once or twice always when the young or the old held a ball. The older people, that is the married ones, had one ball a year, where they danced for two days, and then the minuet always was danced, but it was also danced when the young ones had a ball.<sup>66</sup>

At the turn of the century, all of the young people local to the area could dance the minuet. Kjærgaard recalled that others who moved into the community and who could not dance the minuet often sabotaged the dance by clapping their hands to drown out the music. Nevertheless, he explained:

the musicians in Mellerup were just as interested finishing the dance. Thus it always had been, and it always had been finished the right way by playing 'Kræn Skippers Firetur'. This was almost too much for the young generation, who then danced the waltz, which was 'Kalkmandens Vals'.

Kjærgaard had learned 'Kræn Skippers Firetur', a waltz melody, which was danced by the older generation. He noticed when the 'Firetur' started to disappear; the musicians played 'Kalkmandens vals' instead.<sup>67</sup>

The minuet played an important role at weddings in the 1800s. The wedding couple danced the bridal minuet, and it was also danced on the second day of the wedding to bridal couple was danced off the (unmarrieds') team. Informants described this rite of passage:

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65 *DFS mgt. GD 1982/3-4.*

66 *DFS mgt. GD 1980/24-25.*

67 *Ibid.*

The young couple switched from the young group to the married group. The bachelors should hide the groom, and the bridesmaids hide the bride. When they were found, a minuet was danced followed by a firetur at a smooth square in the open.<sup>68</sup>

Records from the 1800s report that 'They had a dram from the bottle during the minuet, going the row around while they danced.'<sup>69</sup> Kjærgaard witnessed the same thing in his childhood:

The brandy bottle went from mouth to mouth in the row of men while dancing the minuet. All men had a mouthful while dancing and passed the bottle to the next man.<sup>70</sup>

This tradition was also reported in Bjerregrav, where 'a bottle of cognac [was] brought by the waiter and from which all the men had a mouthful during the dance'.

Kjærgaard learned how to dance the minuet from a poor woman in Mellerup. She gathered him Kjærgaard, her son, and three or four other boys of the same age in her small room for lessons. He remembered:

She said, 'Now you may watch the legs', and pulled up the long skirts. This did not often pass at that time that anybody got a look at the legs. 'Then we could see how we should step.' During the learning, the boys sang.<sup>71</sup>

### The Minuet Tradition Disappears in the Randers Area

In the villages Støvring and Mellerup, about seven and ten kilometres northeast of Randers (near to Randers Bay) respectively, the minuet has stayed alive the longest. It survived nearly as long in surrounding towns—on the other side of Randers and Nørre Djursland—but began to disappear one or two generations earlier in those areas.<sup>72</sup>

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68 Ibid.

69 Evald Tang Kristensen, *Gamle folks fortællinger om Det Jyske Almueliv IV* (Kolding: Arnold Busck, 1891–93), pp. 77–78.

70 *DFS mgt. GD 1980/24–25*.

71 Ibid.

72 *DFS Fonogram GD 149*. Jørgen Arnt (1985). Telefonsamtale med A. C. N. Christensen. Fortalte, at der har været danset menuet i Allingåbro i 1932–33.



Fig. 11.16 The carpenter Jens Sloth from Dalbyover plays the Monnevet in connection with video recordings in Støvring and Mellerup, 1980. He was, at that time, the last surviving musician to have played the minuet at private parties in Støvring and Mellerup. Photograph by Svend Nielsen. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

When Kjærgaard left Mellerup in 1910, everyone there, including young people, could dance the minuet. When he moved to Hald, just eight kilometres away, in 1919, only four older couples could dance the minuet. These Hald dancers tried to teach some interested people to dance the minuet, but, as Kjærgaard explained, 'It is not so easy to learn. And no more could it'. Consequently, it was never danced at the celebrations in Hald, though, in earlier times (a generation before Kjærgaard arrived), it had been danced just as much in Hald as in Mellerup and Støvring.<sup>73</sup>

Another very informative account comes from Inge Bonde Jensen who was born in Lindbjerg near Støvring. She saw the minuet danced during her childhood at Christmas parties held in the Lindbjerg village hall in the 1920s. There, she reported, one could see the older people dance the minuet after the children had walked around the Christmas tree and played games. As the old couples lined up in two rows in their black clothes, they created a very elegant spectacle. Many continued smoking the long pipes while dancing and, at the end of the dance, they placed their mouthpieces into the buttonholes of their jackets to conclude the party by dancing the waltz.

Jensen had been taught how to dance the minuet by an aunt who also taught folk dance. But the minuet was not instructed in Mellerup. In the 1920s, the minuet was a dance that, like the waltz and rheinlaender, everybody knew. In the early 1930s, Jensen participated in several parties in Mellerup village hall, where it was always danced. This was her first great experience of dancing,

<sup>73</sup> DFS mgt. GD 1980/ 24–25.



standing one evening between her aunt and an older woman as they danced in long black skirts. ‘How she felt the rhythm of the minuet’.<sup>74</sup>



Fig. 11.17 The Monnevet danced in Støvring, a few kilometers northeast of Randers, in 1980. The couples are exchanging places so that the ladies return to the ladies' row. In front are Sigurd and Inge Bonde Jensen. Sigurd Jensen is the leading dancer who decides how long time the minuet should be danced, and when the partner shall give hand to own partner, a variation in the middle of the minuet. Photograph by Svend Nielsen © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

In 1937, Jensen married Sigurd Bonde Jensen. The couple moved to Støvring, where the minuet was danced by the older people at weddings or silver weddings in the village hall. By 1940, many of the young people in the community did not know the minuet, and this was felt to be great shame. Jensen offered to teach them. The first evening was all right, she recalled, ‘You can learn the steps by some teaching [...] but the rhythm—or whatever you may call it—and I think you must dance it for many years before you appreciate it’. Several couples learned the minuet, and thus it was danced in the 1940s and 1950s. Good orchestras continued to play minuet melodies. The last time it was danced at a private celebration was in 1962, at Jensen’s parents’ golden wedding anniversary.<sup>75</sup>

At the end of the 1970s, Kjærgaard and Jensen were contacted about their memories by The Fiddlers’ Museum and The National Collection of Folklore. In 1980, it became possible to record the minuet on video. Carpenter Jens Sloth played as five couples danced the minuet in Støvring village hall.

A small revival of the minuet took place in Støvring. The music was played at a few parties in Støvring, and five couples danced. One problem, however, was that the orchestras of the 1950—which consisted of violin, piano, and drums and were very capable of playing the minuet—were being replaced by an electronic

<sup>74</sup> DFS video GD 1980/3.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

organ. According to Jensen, 'It is not the same to dance the minuet to an electric organ as to a violin'.<sup>76</sup>



Fig. 11.18 Here, the front dancer, Sigurd Bonde Jensen, gives the signal for completion of the minuet or for all couples to give right hand to their partners. This is done by raising hands or forearms to breast height and turning the two forearms around. Note how the front dancer looks down the row to see if all have seen his signal. Photograph by Svend Nielsen, 1980. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.



Video 11.1 Minuet danced in Støvring. Filmed by Svend Nielsen, 1980. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. Uploaded by Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance, 5 March 2024. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/48a17325>



Video 11.2 Minuet danced in Støvring. Filmed by Svend Nielsen, 1980. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. Uploaded by Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance, 5 March 2024. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/8e6a59fc>



Fig. 11.19 Here, the couples are doing the variation in the middle of the minuet, where right hands have been given to their partners, and thereafter left hand given to own dancer. Here all the couples have given the left hand and are ready to dance into the basic figure of the minuet. Photograph by Svend Nielsen, 1980. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

76 Ibid.



Fig. 11.20 Here, the ladies are closest to the front, and the partners' row has moved furthest away from the front, and they are hereafter ready for changing the rows.  
 Photograph by Svend Nielsen, 1980. © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

The resurgence of interest in the minuet was brief. Jensen, because of illness, could no longer dance. Since then, the minuet has not been danced at private parties in Støvring. Inge and Sigurd Bonde Jensen, for many years, had been leading dancers in the minuet.

## Minuet Melodies

Formerly, countless numbers of different minuet melodies have been used. In 1800, for example, the minuet was such a favoured dance that many of the fiddlers from the area composed new minuet tunes. Among these was 'Niels Kragh's minuet'. It became so popular in the villages northeast of Randers that this new supplanted many of the older minuet tunes. Niels Kragh was born in Hald in 1841 and died in the same place in 1915.<sup>77</sup> 'Skaberens Minuet', which can be traced back to the end of the 1700s, was one of the melodies that was much loved and remembered in the Randers area.<sup>78</sup> In Mellerup, it was still played in 1935 when it was recorded on a phonograph in Fjellerup in North Djursland.<sup>79</sup>

In Bjerregrav, west of Randers, a fine musician named Kræn Lassen always played the minuet. He had a son who was also named Kræn Lassen. The younger Lassen continued the tradition of minuet playing and had his own orchestra. At parties in Bjerregrav, the orchestra had its own melody that was always used at parties. This was composed by Søren Nielsen Høegh, who had been born in 1820,

77 Peter Østergaard, 'Råby Hopsa', in *Historisk Årbog fra Randers Amt 36* (Randers: Nørhald Egns-Arkiv, 1980), pp. 88–92 (p. 88).

78 *DFS GD Fonogram 149*. Monnevet spillet af Johannes Munch, 1915.

79 *DFS 1906/134*. Brev fra Aage Sørensen, Mellerup, til Hans Ellekilde. 20.12 1935.

in Bjerregrav.<sup>80</sup> Høegh became a well-known dance composer whose melodies are found in music books preserved from the Randers area. After his marriage in 1853, Høegh moved to Over Hornbæk, south of Bjerregrav. The family moved to Værum, south of Randers, in 1869, and Høegh died there in 1882.<sup>81</sup>



Fig. 11.21 'Skaberens Menuet' ['The Creator's Minuet'] has been played many times in the region of Randers, and, in 1915, H. Grüner-Nielsen recorded a 'Skaberens Menuet' in Fjellerup in Nørre Djursland was played by the fiddler Munk. The melody can be traced back to the end of the 1700s: it was printed in court musician Schall's 'Arier og viser 1790' with lyrics by Jens Baggesen from 1786, 'Skaberen skuede den nyskabte Klode'. Photograph © Dansk Folkemindesamling.

In Støvring and Bjerregrav, newer nineteenth-century melodies have been played in the last period of the minuet for a dance which was much older. On Ærø, however, one of the minuet melodies can be traced back to the mid-1700s.

## Thoughts about the Preservation of Danish Minuet Traditions

The three areas of Denmark in which the minuet continued as a living tradition have similarities regarding the preservation of the dance, but they differ in relation to the minuet's form, history and current use. One cannot find any straightforward explanations for their survival.

The mollevit may have survived on Ærø because of the isolated location of the island. Rise parish, at its centre, had a different structure and status than the other parishes on the island. It was the largest parish, and contained the best-situated farms (between Ærøskøbing Iand Marstal). From ancient times, the farmers invested in shipping shares and earned money by shipping. Another

80 Niels Brøndum, Ålum, brev med indlagte erindringer af Christen Lassen, Bjerregrav, om Søren Høeg.

81 Niels Jørn Østergaard, 'Melodier fra tre Randers komponister: Frands Bek, Søren Høeg, og Christian Telling', in *Nordjysk Folkekultur* (Skørping: Foreningen for Musikalsk Folkekultur, 1997), [n.p.].

important factor was that families in Ærø continued to hold large celebrations that included drinking songs and old dances. In this social environment, the mollevit had a special status, which caused these families to continue the dance up to the present day.

Lolland and Falster are the southernmost isles south of Sealand. Like Ærø, these islands were relatively isolated for a long time, and many traditions stayed alive until the beginning of the 1900s. Falster did not get a bridge to Sealand until 1937. Thus, the local conditions created an environment which preserved the 'old dances' until they could be documented in the early twentieth century.

One of the reasons why the minuet tradition may have survived between Randers Bay and Mariager Bay is that the peasants in this area were relatively wealthy and conservative, with a strong interest in maintaining their distinctive dance. The Danish folklore researcher Evald Tang Kristensen made this observation one hundred fifty years ago:

In the area north of Randers certain customs and practices have kept strangely faithful up to our times as it is an old-fashioned and much-  
unaffected area.<sup>82</sup>

In Støvring and Bjerregrav, nineteenth-century melodies have been played to accompany a much older dance, which has meant that the musicians included minuets in their repertoire for much longer than in most parts of Denmark.

Communities' cultural conservatism and the flexibility of the musical repertoire may explain why the minuet has been preserved in living tradition in this region up to our time.

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<sup>82</sup> Evald Tang Kristensen, *Jyske Folkeminder, Elvte Samling. Gamle Viser i Folkemunde* (Viborg: F. V. Backhausen, 1891), p. 316.

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# 12. Collecting Minuets among the Swedish-speaking Population in Finland

*Gunnel Biskop*

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Among the Swedish-speaking population in Finland, the collection of dances began early. Victor Allardt was the first to document how the minuet was danced in Lappträsk in eastern parts of Nyland's (Uusimaa) province. He responded in 1887 to a call from Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland [The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland] (SLS) to collect folklore. Allardt's notes mostly describe the structure of the minuet.<sup>1</sup>

The Föreningen Brage i Helsingfors [Brage Association in Helsinki], founded in 1906 to promote Finnish-Swedish folk culture, carried out the actual collection of dances. As soon as the association's folk-dance group started its activities, the same year the association was founded, it began to gather information about folk dances from its members who were students and others who moved to Helsinki from the countryside. In 1907, some people from Ostrobothnia taught a minuet and polska from the parish of Oravais in their province to be included in the play 'Ostrobothnian Peasant Wedding' by Otto Andersson. In 1910, two Ostrobothnian students taught the minuet in their home village: Anna Krook, born in Oravais, taught a minuet from Oravais and medical student Thure Roos, born in Kristinestad, taught a minuet from Lappfjärd.

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1 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svenskbygder—under trehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015). The text is based on a chapter in the book and in the following: Gunnel Biskop, *Dansen för åskådare. Intresset för folkdansen som estradprodukt och insamlingsobjekt hos den svenskspråkiga befolkningen i Finland under senare delen av 1800-talet* (doctoral dissertation, Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 2012), pp. 281–87.



Fig. 12.1 The dance researcher Yngvar Heikel (1889–1956) documented minuets and other dances of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.DF54F64E5EE3D64C2D53EBCC86B8EA27>, CC BY 4.0.

The Brage Association sought to record the dances of a folk-dance group according to how the folk dancers danced them. The most challenging dance to both learn and to record was the minuet. Brage published a book called *36 Folkdanser* [*36 Folk Dances*] (1915) that included both dance instructions and melodies. Its primary contributors were Yngvar Heikel, Thure Roos, and Holger Rancken. Among the thirty-six dances included in the book, six were minuets: three from Ostrobothnia and three from eastern Nyland.

It was later shown that the Ostrobothnian minuets were incorrectly described by Brage. The collectors had learned the minuets from young people who had never led the dance and therefore did not know how to describe its beginning. Their information about the starting beat for the minuet, among other things, was misinterpreted and, consequently, the description incorrectly insisted that the dance began with the left foot on the first beat of the bar. These minuets were excluded from later publications with dance descriptions.<sup>2</sup>

## Yngvar Heikel Continues—with Paper and Pencil

Master of Arts Yngvar Heikel (1889–1956) made a strong contribution to the collection of dances in Swedish-speaking Finland. He was born in Helsinki

2 Gunnel Biskop, 'Brages danslag skördar och sår' in *Brage 100 år. Arv—Förmedling—Förvandling*, ed. by Bo Lönnqvist, Anne Bergman, Yrsa Lindqvist. Brage årsskrift (Helsingfors: Brage, 2006), pp. 80–119; Gunnel Biskop, *Dans i Lag. Den organiserade folkdansens framväxt samt bruk och liv inom Finlands Svenska Folkdansring under 75 år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2007), pp. 35–59; Gunnel Biskop, 'Från Brage till Heikel, Holm och Hahnsson—något om folkdansrörelsens betydelse för menuetten' in *Allt under linden den gröna. Studier i folkmusik och folklore tillägnade Ann-Mari Häggman 19.9.2001* (Vasa: Finlands svenska folkmusikinstitut, 2001), pp. 285–92.

to a father who served as director of the gymnastics establishment at the University of Helsinki. Heikel became a student in 1907, studying economics and mathematics then philosophy and the history of Finland and Scandinavia, graduating in 1915. He was a very active member of the Brage Association, acting as an occasional dance leader from 1910–19 and remaining its secretary from 1916 until his death. Beginning in 1921, he also worked as a statistician in various offices at the Bank of Finland. During the 1920s, he devoted himself to costume research and collected a significant amount of information about costume traditions in the Finnish-Swedish countryside.<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 12.2 Heikel visited Kimito in Åboland in the summer of 1924 and, by chance, came into contact with the members of the youth association. After them, he documented fifteen dances, among them minuet and polska. Photograph in Kimito by Otto Andersson (1904). SLS 105b\_66. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b\\_SLS+105b\\_66](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b_SLS+105b_66), CC BY 4.0.

After *36 Folkdanser* was published, Heikel used what he learned to document other dances on his own. The book had given him great practice in recording dances with paper and pencil. He realized the importance of following each partner's movements through the dance separately to capture the whole, often highly complex, dance pattern. Heikel had also built up knowledge of what figures could occur in different types of dances. The creation of *36 Folkdanser* had given him the skills to continue documentation.

In the 1920s, during fieldwork trips to collect information about folk costumes, Heikel also collected information about dances whenever he had time. He recorded the 'minett', as the minuet was called in the eastern part

3 Bo Lönnqvist, 'Yngvar Heikel som fältforskare', in Yngvar Heikel, *På forskningsresor i svenskbygden, Brage Årsskrift 1974–1986* (Helsingfors: Föreningen Brage, 1986), pp. 9–21; Yngvar Heikel, *VI Folkdans B Dansbeskrivningar. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 268 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1938); Yngvar Heikel, 'På folkdansforskning', in *Brage Årsskrift 1926–1930* (Helsingfors: Föreningen Brage, 1931), pp. 46–53; Yngvar Heikel, *På forskningsresor i svenskbygden. Brage Årsskrift 1974–1986. Med inledning och kommentarer utgiven av Bo Lönnqvist* (Helsingfors: Föreningen Brage, 1986).

of Nyland's province. In 1922, Heikel organized a questionnaire for Brage that was sent to approximately three hundred fifty peasant musicians in all parts of Swedish-speaking Finland to solicit information about dances. About one hundred twenty-five people responded, supplying detailed and accurate information in many cases. Heikel was probably among the first in the Nordic countries to use a questionnaire as a method for the documentation of dances.<sup>4</sup>

Sometimes dances were documented accidentally. This was the case, for example, during Heikel's folk costume fieldwork in Kimito in Åboland in the summer of 1924. He visited Kimito during a local song festival, where he expected to see many costumes. Simultaneously, Heikel was researching in Sagalund Ethnographical Museum, where he met the founder of the museum, a schoolteacher Nils Oskar Jansson (1862–1927). Jansson was also interested in old dances and had been teaching each generation since the 1890s. After the song festival, Heikel was invited to a dance hosted by the local youth association. Its members were Jansson's students, and Heikel asked them to perform the old dances Jansson had taught them. Heikel documented fifteen dances at the event, among them the minuet and polska.<sup>5</sup>

Between 1921 and 1926, Heikel carried out seven folk costume fieldwork trips in Ostrobothnia, but during these trips he did not have time to document dances. Nevertheless, he wrote, some of his informants 'talked about folk dances'. Heikel learned from them the order in which the minuets were danced during a ceremony at a wedding. Due to the lack of time, Heikel could not always record a dance in detail. This was the case when he received information about the minuet in Sideby in southern Ostrobothnia in 1924. He visited the eighty-seven-year old Olga Nummelin (b. 1837) who had been an instructor of old dances at a youth association. Heikel watched Nummelin dance the minuet while she sang the melody herself. Unfortunately, Heikel made no record of this minuet, so Nummelin's knowledge of the dance has been lost to history.

In December 1926, Heikel was commissioned by Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland to publish the dances of Swedish-speaking Finland. Heikel realized that the existing collected material had to be supplemented, and he proceeded to undertake an extensive, seven-year collection expedition (1927–33). He rode a bicycle around all parts of Swedish-speaking areas in Finland, in the provinces of Ostrobothnia, Nyland, Åboland, and Åland, recording dances. He began in Ostrobothnia, where he had not previously completed much collection work.

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4 Biskop, 'Brages danslag', pp. 87–94; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 169–70.

5 Heikel, *På forskningsresor*, pp. 92–97; Biskop, *Dans i Lag*, p. 54.



Ljunden  
 Inspektör Lindholm på  
 väla gick hemma från  
Degetorpe, har bott i Hel-  
 singe, var kunna dansa.  
 Lagerlund, Nyby när  
 Löje när, kunna dansa

Fig. 12.3a and Fig. 12.3b Heikel on a research trip. The bicycle was his means of transport through all of Finland's Swedish-speaking parishes. The association Brage in Helsinki, 1922. @ Föreningen Brage.

Heikel provided many detailed descriptions of the minuet: these are so precise that they can be easily interpreted and danced today. Such records are from the parishes of Tjock, Lappfjärd, Vörå, Oravais, Munsala, Jeppo, Nykarleby, Pedersöre, Purmo, Esse and Terjärv. In several parishes, he received conflicting details from multiple informants. In such cases, he included one complete record and, after that, noted only how the variants differed. Heikel received complete descriptions in Åboland—in Kimito and Nagu—as well as variants from different people. In Nyland, the most comprehensive accounts came from Lapträsk, Pyttis and Borgå in eastern Nyland.



Fig. 12.4 During his research trip to Ostrobothnia, Finland in 1927, Heikel had the opportunity to attend a wedding, where some thirty minuets were danced on the first day, and even more on the second day. Here, a newlywed couple in Vörå in Ostrobothnia are seated on a table, receiving congratulations, in 1925. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B 254. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+254](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+254), CC BY 4.0.

Heikel was extremely careful in his documentation work. He took notes on various details about how one informant's dance differed from another's. For example, from Munsala in Ostrobothnia, he collected six descriptions of the minuet from different informants. Heikel encountered the minuet twice in Munsala. First, during his folk costume fieldwork in 1925, he stayed in the parish of Petalax with a schoolteacher Oskar Langh (b. 1894) and his wife Edit (b. 1896 in Munsala). Heikel took general notes while Edit danced the minuet with her cousin, a schoolteacher Berta Sundius, who was also from Munsala. During his dance research trip in 1927, Heikel returned to the Langh couple, whom he called friends. Oskar, who played the dance melody, taught Heikel on this visit about how the minuet started, and about the relation between the dance and the music. Heikel also personally learned to dance the minuet and so was better able to write down its steps. Something he gained from two men in Munsala (b. 1878 and 1880) that he had not learned during his first visit was about the use of foot-stamping in the minuet. Edit and Bertha had not included the stamps when they performed the dance, since it was a movement performed exclusively by male partners. The women, consequently, were unsure about them.



Fig. 12.5 Tradition bearers in Lappfjärd in Ostrobothnia in Finland show the starting position in their minuet, 1973. Photograph by Kim Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.

Heikel met various informants in Ostrobothnia. Some had come to feel that dancing was a sin and did not want to show their knowledge. Other informants were working at the time Heikel came to visit them. Some interrupted their work to show some dancing, but others did not. In Oravais, for example, Heikel called on Mrs. Brita Jusslin, who he had met during his earlier folk costume fieldwork. Jusslin and her daughter were not quite sure about the minuet, which was probably because men were, by custom, dance leaders in the minuet. The women tried to help Heikel find others who knew the dance better than themselves. He wrote:

One of them came to persuade an older woman who worked in a nearby potato field to dance the minuet for me. But that woman was stubborn, did not want to be ridiculed; she probably thought it was a sin to dance and did not come despite many persuasive attempts, so we retreated, angered by such an unusual lack of understanding.<sup>6</sup>

But Heikel did not give up. He eventually located someone willing to dance the minuet. Heikel remarked, 'Then I got to Erik Alfred Knuters (b. 1878), who was said to be the best minuet dancer in the village and who danced with me while I was singing the melody'. In Vörå, he visited several old women to see the minuet: 'some hesitated and did not want to, but a couple danced with me in a little cabin, just about big enough that we could be there'. He described another case in this way:

An older woman that was already sleeping, I met early the next morning when she was by a drying barn to thresh. After much persuasion, she came with another older woman and danced the minuet a couple of times to me on the log floor. Still, no one else was allowed to watch.

After this, the woman would not dance anymore.



Fig. 12.6 Tradition bearers in Tjock in Ostrobothnia in Finland show the starting position in their minuet, 1984. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © Gunnel Biskop.

In a potato field in the village of Vexala in Munsala, Heikel found an eighty-seven-year old musician Jakob Fogel 'who was immediately willing and invited me in, he took the fiddle and tried to dance. But he did not remember.' Fogel's son then gathered local youth to dance the minuet in the evening. At this performance, Heikel saw that 'the people in their fifties had their distinctive way of stamping while the young people danced with violently many stamps.'

6 Biskop, 'Brages danslag', pp. 90–94; Biskop, *Dans i Lag*, pp. 54–59; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 165–70.





Fig. 12.7 During his research trips in the 1920s, Heikel talked to many elderly people. A woman in Tjock, in Ostrobothnia in Finland, knits at the beginning of the twentieth century. Photograph by Ina Roos. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.E028AD9127125A7F2B5C5500868BC2C3>, CC BY 4.0.



Fig. 12.8 Two women in Tjock in Ostrobothnia in Finland, show how to take hand in hand in the minuet, 1928. Photograph by Yngvar Heikel. SLS Folkmålskommissionen's collection no. 5 © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

Heikel cycled on and met two people in a potato field, aged seventy-three and sixty-three. He accompanied them to their house where they danced in their work boots and sang the melody themselves. In the parish of Kronoby, he met

a woman who had danced the minuet, but she did not want to show it. She wanted to go to the chamber but Heikel held her arm with a gentle hand. When Heikel left off, she said, 'Yes, goodbye now, but do not come here again'.<sup>7</sup>

Heikel observed differences in how much dancers turned their bodies in one direction or the other and in how stamping and clapping were used in the minuet. In Jeppo, he recorded seven different variations—as many as the number of informants he met. In practice, this meant that everyone had his or her own style. The differences were minor enough that people from different villages could dance the same dance together. Although dancers tended to follow a local way of dancing, they also developed individual styles.

Heikel sometimes mentioned that his female informants were unsure about the minuet. While recording the dances, he did not think about the fact that men were supposed to know and determine the different minuet figures. So, it is not surprising that the women were uncertain about them.



Fig. 12.9 Family in front of their farm in Vörå in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1923. Photograph by Erik Häggglund. SLS 865 B 381. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+381](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+381), CC BY 4.0.

During his fieldwork, Heikel made no notes about the minuet tunes. The folk music researcher Otto Andersson and others had previously recorded dance melodies between 1902 and 1907 in all Swedish-speaking areas in Finland, a total of over fifteen hundred melodies. Andersson published a selection of them, including two hundred and seventy-six minuets, in his volume *Folkdans A 1 Äldre Dansmelodier* [*Folkdance A 1 Older Dance Melodies*] (1963), which also contains polskas and polonaises. Of the minuets, one hundred and seventy-two are recorded as coming from Ostrobothnia, seventy from Nyland, twenty-six from Åboland, and eight from Åland.

7 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 169.

Munsala minuet med polska.  
 Beskrifven enl. Fru Edit Lång och frk Berta Sundius i Petalax, båda hemma från  
 Munsala. Stämningarna voro de i öka skräpa på, varför dessa beskrives enl. Anders  
 Wilhelm Neuman, f. 1878, och Emil Akerman, f. 1880, båda i Vexala.  
 Uppställning på två linjer, gossarnas till höger, flickorna till vänster från  
 första paret sett. Gossen gäller med sin högra flickans vänstra, får hålla le-  
 dig hand fritt hängande. Musik 1-3, 1-8, 9-16.  
 För beskrivning av dansen riknas till 6 inom varje taktpar. Dansen beskrives  
 Med 1 av sig kallade avsnitt med avseende å stegen motsvarande taktparen i VO-  
 rå menutten, men börjande på 5 i föregående text och slutande med xxx i den  
 nästare taktens, detta uppått stegen under ett sådant avsnitt bildas ett mer en-  
 betligt steg för sig. I slutet av avsnittet och börjar fot föres något avsnitt.  
 Musikten spelar upp med en ställa upp sig och dansen börjar på 5 i t. ex  
takt 8. Under avsnittet dansas sålunda: Under svängning med vänstre skeln framåt  
 tagas ett steg framåt med vänster fot, som lämnas med tåspetsen svängd något  
 snett åt höger/5// höger fot föres lätt intill den vänstra med tåspetsen i gol-  
 vet/6// höger fot föres tillbaka till sin förra plats under vändning till utgångs  
 riktningen/1// vänster fot föres bakom den högra/3// varpå den högre lämnas  
 snett framom den vänstra, något åt sidan från den senaste plats/4//.

YNGVAR HEIKEL

Fig. 12.10 Yngvar Heikel's description of the minuet in Munsala in 1927, prepared for the Swedish Literature Society, which demanded a rewritten version. SLS 503b, The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS). Photograph by Gunnell Bishop. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

In 1938, Heikel published *Folkdans B Dansbeskrifningar* [*Folkdance B Dance Descriptions*], which he had edited with scientific accuracy.<sup>8</sup> Heikel released all of the available material, including the fragments, with the names of the dance and figures that the peasantry of the respective village had used. The volume comprises a total of seven hundred and ninety-seven dance documents, including variants and fragments. There were sixty-five records of the first or other special dances at weddings. From the following parishes Heikel has a total of fifty-eight records describing the minuet, some, however, fragmentary: Tjock, Lappfjärd, Vörå, Oravais, Munsala, Jeppo, Nykarleby, Pedersöre, Purmo, Esse, Terjärv, Karleby, Kronoby, Kimito, Nagu, Hitis, Pyttis, Lapträsk, Borgå, Tenala, Snappertuna, Ekenäs, and Finström in Åland.

Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland demanded that Heikel's material be written cleanly on a type machine, with the original notes not retained.

8 In the introduction of the volume, Heikel described the history of folk-dance research and folk dance in Finland, as well as the principles guiding his collection work and publishing. He systematized the material according to the form of the dance. For each group, he organized the variations in a landscape. Heikel wrote about the environment and function of tradition and paid close attention to the presence of dances in time and space. He also used the material he received in response to the 1922 questionnaire. Heikel also took great care in recording information about his vernacular sources. He described the age, occupation and home village of each informant and the social environment in which the dance was practised. The personal data was obtained as part of his own collection, and he was permitted to use the questionnaire and the information in the biographical department at the Brages Press archive.



Fig. 12.11a and Fig. 12.11b Yngvar Heikel published his records in 1938 in volume VI *Folkdans B Dansbeskrivningar*. SLS 268, The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS). Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

Heikel’s work impacted the minuet, prompting it to flourish due to research and, later, documentation on film. Heikel also served as the editor of two later editions of dance descriptions, published by Brage for use by folk dancers, *30 Folkdanser* [*30 Folk Dances*] (1931) and *45 Folkdanser* [*45 Folk Dances*] (1949). The latter became the standard for use in the Finnish-Swedish folk-dance movement.<sup>9</sup>

## Minuets Documented on Film

Engineer Kim Hahnsson (1920–99), a chairman of the *Finlands Svenska Folkdansring* (central organization for Swedish-speaking folk dancers in Finland) for twenty-seven years, pioneered the use of film for the documentation of folk dances, including minuets. Hahnsson may have been inspired in this endeavour by an international folk-dance symposium he attended in Bergen, Norway in 1970. In the years following, Hahnsson began to film vernacular dances, folk-dance performances, folk-dance events, and other related occasions.

The first minuet Hahnsson filmed was the minuet and the polska from Lappfjärd. *Lappfjärd Spelmanslag* [a local group of fiddlers] celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1973 by presenting a program of old wedding habits, and people from Lappfjärd danced their minuet, which Hahnsson and his wife Stina (1927–2006) watched. Inspired, they contacted the dancers and, in the following year, filmed them dancing the minuet and the polska. The accompanying music was recorded simultaneously on an audio cassette. Stina Hahnsson

9 Biskop, ‘Brages danslag’, p. 91–94; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 169–70.

wrote a description of the dances following the recording and published it in Finland's Svenska Folkdansring's journal *Folkdansaren* in 1974. The minuet had undergone some changes, including in its steps, since 1928 when Yngvar Heikel documented it.



Fig. 12.12 The engineer Kim Hahnsson documented folk dance on film, including minuets. Photograph by Stina Hahnsson, 1993. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.



Fig. 12.13a and Fig. 12.13b Kim Hahnsson filmed the minuet in Munsala in 1985. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop after Hahnsson's film. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

The next minuet Hahnsson filmed was in the village of Vexala in Munsala. He learned of this group after the folk musician Erik Johan Lindvall (1902–86) played his fiddle at a course for folk-dance instructors in 1975. Again, the music was recorded simultaneously on a c-cassette. Hahnsson met Lindvall again in the summer of 1983 and filmed what the fiddler remembered of the minuet.

Hahnsson filmed the minuet in Jeppo on 2 July 1977. People from Jeppo had practised their minuet to perform it at a folk music event in Nykarleby. As in Lappfjärd, the minuet danced there had changed in the five decades since Heikel had visited.

Hahnsson documented two further minuets on film—one in Oravais in the summer of 1980, the other in Munsala in the summer of 1985.



Fig. 12.14a, Fig. 12.14b, and Fig. 12.14c Kim Hahnsson filmed the minuet in Jeppo in 1977, when Jeppo residents performed at a party. Screenshot by Gunnel Biskop.

© The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland began documenting vernacular dances on film in 1977 under the guidance of its then-archivist, Master of Arts Ann-Mari Häggman.<sup>10</sup> On 22 July, the group filmed the minuet in Lappfjärd and, during the same summer, they filmed the minuet in Jeppo with the same dancers who had danced at the aforementioned folk music event in Nykarleby three weeks earlier. The following year, 1978, saw the group film the minuet in Munsala.

The Folk Music Institute in Vaasa filmed the minuet and other dances at a public dance evening in Munsala in 1995, which had been initiated by Häggman.<sup>11</sup>



Video 12.1 Demonstration of a Jeppo minuet, polska, and Kockdansen (the Chef's Dance) in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1977. Directed by Ann-Mari Häggman; music and dance by Jeppo Bygdespelmän with dancers. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland [The Swedish Literature Society in Finland (SLS)], 7 May 2019. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/cb0156df>

## Concluding Remarks

One can assume that the minuet among the Swedish-speaking people in Finland is well documented. Thanks to Yngvar Heikel's extensive and detailed work, it is known how the minuet was danced in the early twentieth century. He revealed the complicated habits connected to the ceremonial dances at weddings. Later, film recordings provided insight into how the minuets were danced in the late 1900s.

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10 Ann-Mari Häggman, 'Filmen återger glädjen i dansen' in *Fynd och forskning. Meddelanden från Folkkultursarkivet 7*. SLS 496 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1981), pp. 157–82.

11 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 171–72.

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# 13. Minuet Music in the Nordic Countries

*Andrea Susanne Opielka, Petri Hoppu, and  
Elizabeth Svarstad*

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After the minuet began to assert itself as a fashionable dance around 1650 in France, it took about twenty-five years until it enjoyed increasing popularity among the nobility in the Nordic countries. Later, in the eighteenth century, the citizens in the cities and the peasants in the countryside were caught by minuet fever. The minuet's popularity and its specific appearance in the North are illustrated in handwritten music books written in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. These contain popular dance forms, and they reveal the rise, wide popularity, and decline of the minuet during the long eighteenth century. Many of these books were used over a long period of time, changing ownership several times, and being continuously updated with new tunes and dances. Their authors came from various backgrounds. Some were professional musicians such as town and military musicians; others were priests or farmers.

## Musical Life at the Royal Courts in Sweden and Denmark

French culture's influence was strong at the Swedish and Danish royal courts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among several other phenomena, the minuet, both as a dance and a musical form, was introduced early in the Nordic countries. In 1676 Favonius wrote a poem on the occasion of a noble wedding in Stockholm and mentioned, among other dances, the

minuet. This is the earliest evidence of the minuet in Sweden.<sup>1</sup> After the Peace of Westphalia (1648) and the Peace of Roskilde (1658), the country rose to become a major power in Europe. When Queen Kristina followed her father Gustaf II Adolf to the throne in 1644, court music's heyday began. Shortly after entering the throne, the art-loving monarch engaged a French ensemble with six violinists and a singer ('La Bande Française'). French music was extremely admired at the court, and this interest likely paved the way for the minuet to enter the culture of Sweden.<sup>2</sup>

From 1640 to 1718, various Düben family members held the office of court Kapellmeister, of whom Gustav Düben (ca. 1628–90) is of particular importance. In 1644 he took a study trip to Paris, where he experienced and closely studied the latest musical developments. Later, he laid the foundation for the famous Düben collection, which contains more than thirty thousand handwritten pages about twenty-three hundred musical works by over three hundred known composers and numerous unknown masters. The focus of the collection, which was created between 1640 and 1720, is North German church music. Still, it also contains French opera music as well as German and Italian instrumental music. The collection was bequeathed in 1732 to the University Library in Uppsala. It contains a good representation of the musical activities at the Swedish court. Among the small pieces of music by unknown authors, one finds four minuets. The small number indicates that the dance had just begun to establish itself in Sweden. Magnus Gustafsson estimates that the sheet music's minuet dates back to about 1660, and it follows the basic form with two eight-bar parts, which are repeated each time.<sup>3</sup>

While the music at the royal court in Copenhagen in the first decades of the reign of Christian IV (1577–1648) played a central role and the leading musicians were sent on the King's account for study trips to Italy and England, it lost its importance increasingly in the last twenty years of his reign. The reason was a devastating defeat suffered by Denmark in 1626 during the Thirty Years War, which resulted in military collapse and national bankruptcy, and the loss of one-third of the country's total land area. Later, however, Queen Sofie, who came from the court in Braunschweig to Copenhagen and had been an enthusiastic admirer of French culture from childhood, brought a new musical upswing and

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- 1 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svenskbygder—under trehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015), pp. 27–28.
  - 2 Erik Kjellberg, 'Die Musik an den Höfen', in *Musikgeschichte Nordeuropas*, ed. by Greger Andersson (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), pp. 87–104 (p. 95).
  - 3 Magnus Gustafsson, *Polskans historia: en studie i melodityper och motiöformer med utgångspunkt i Petter Duföas notbok* (Lund: Lunds universitet, 2016), p. 328.

a new geographical orientation. In 1654, a French dance band with six to seven members was hired at the court in Copenhagen, and it was initially run for ten years by Pascal Bence and then by Gaspard Besson.<sup>4</sup> It is probable that these French musicians also brought a new dance to Denmark, as the minuet was establishing itself as a fashionable dance in their homeland at the same time. The oldest reference dates back to 1667, when Claus Hansen Bang wrote a poem with the Danish King Christian V on Charlotta Amalia von Hessen-Kassel's wedding, adding a melody called 'Le muneve.'<sup>5</sup>

Thus, the courts in Stockholm and Copenhagen depended heavily on foreign musicians and brought particular interest to the French repertoire, which was well known and popular throughout Europe. When the great Swedish power was about to die out, after the Great Northern War (1700–21), musical life was given new impetus. To save money, the court chapels significantly reduced the number of musicians, but the increasingly emancipated bourgeoisie intensified its cultural engagement. A concert at the Hotel Stadt Hamburg in Copenhagen in 1727 and a concert at the Ritterhaus in Stockholm in 1731 laid the foundation stone for public concert life in the two metropolises.<sup>6</sup> The boundaries between courtly and popular music and between aristocratic and bourgeois activities became increasingly blurred. Simultaneously, the minuet found fertile ground, and in the second half of the eighteenth century, it became the most popular fashion dance in the Nordic countries.

## Town Musicians

In addition to the court orchestra members in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so-called town musicians played a central role in establishing the practice of secular music, some of whom were also known as city pipers. This office was a widespread European phenomenon in Scandinavia and Germany, Holland, England, and France. In addition to the organists and cantors, the town musicians were the most crucial urban music culture bearers. Their tasks were, among others, to direct the secular ceremonial music, to play for the military fleet, to assist the organists with church music, to blow from the tower at fixed times, to cooperate with the Latin School, and to teach music lessons to well-heeled citizens.<sup>7</sup> Fulfilment of these manifold obligations required the mastery of numerous instruments. town musicians were considered respected artisans,

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4 Kjellberg, p. 97.

5 Biskop, p. 179.

6 Andersson, *Musikgeschichte*, p. 102.

7 Jens Henrik Koudal, *For borgere og bønder—Stadsmusikantvæsenet i Danmark* (København: Museum Tusulanum, 2000), p. 133.

but they were inferior in status to the organist. They often employed several journeymen and trained apprentices with five years of experience to have enough musicians available for the tasks to be performed. Their salary was meagre. Some town musicians even received no fixed salary, surviving on free housing as payment.<sup>8</sup> However, in return for their services, they were usually granted the exclusive right to perform on private occasions. In particular, the celebrations and festivities of those with high social status could be very lucrative, so this monopoly position guaranteed the town musicians a sufficient income.

The form of music organization just described was prevalent in Denmark and Norway, which belonged to the Danish Empire. The earliest evidence of a municipal musician appointed by the mayor dates back to the year 1500 from Aarhus.<sup>9</sup> One of the oldest surviving musician contracts was completed in Ribe in 1569 with Hendrik Schølere.<sup>10</sup> From 1670, Danish town music was strictly regulated, and there were twenty royal privileged places, which were extended to twenty-six places by 1730. Due to the great importance of agriculture, the towns maintained very close relationships with the surrounding farming villages. Accordingly, the strictly regulated music system was also extended to rural areas so that each area included a town and the surrounding province. The end of this organizational form came in April 1800, when the Town Musicians' Office was merged with the Organists' and Cantor's Office by a royal resolution. The reasons for this decision were myriad. One was that instrumental music had become increasingly demanding since Beethoven, so that the artisans in demand were no longer those who were familiar with many instruments but those who specialized in a single instrument.<sup>11</sup>

In Sweden and Finland, which belonged to Sweden, the musical activities were organized differently from the outset. Here, the town organist played the central role. He was awarded all the musician's privileges. This included playing at weddings and hiring fellows to help him with the various activities. However, this regulation affected only the towns; the provinces remained unaffected. Therefore, there were no leases in rural areas as there were in Denmark.<sup>12</sup>

Dance music dominated the town musicians' and provincial musicians' repertoire, as one of their most important tasks was to play for dancing at festivities. Thus, they needed a wide-ranging catalogue that was always up to date and attuned to the latest fashion. For the dissemination of dance tunes, these musicians played a key role. Printed music was expensive and difficult

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8 Koudal, *For borgere og bønder*, p. 152.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

10 Andersson, *Musikgeschichte*, p. 104.

11 Koudal, *For borgere og bønder*, p. 197–98.

12 Andersson, *Musikgeschichte*, p. 110.

to obtain, so many pieces were passed on 'by ear' or by handwritten copies. Valuable references to the minuet's position in the repertoire of the eighteenth century are found in these numerous handwritten music books.

While organists were expected to compose their own sacred music, town musicians were rarely perceived as creative artists. For the most part, they confined themselves to performing functionally defined music as musicians. One of the most significant exceptions was the composer Georg Philipp Telemann, who held the post of Music Director in Hamburg.

## Important Musicians in Norway and Finland

Since Norway was part of Denmark and Finland belonged to Sweden during the age of the minuet, neither country had sovereignty or a royal court. Musical activities outside the pastoral environment were dominated by the town musicians. The cultural opportunities to establish oneself as a composer and make a name were limited in the Nordic countries. Most town musicians did not write their own works because they would not have been recognised for doing so. An exception was Johan Daniel Berlin (1714–87), born in Memel within the current Lithuanian boundaries, but who came early to Copenhagen and served from 1730 to 1737 as an apprentice to the town musician Andreas Berg. Berlin then received the office of town musician in Trondheim, which he held for thirty years. In addition to this, from 1740 he was also active as an organist of two churches. Berlin shaped the cultural life in Trondheim by organizing concerts, developing musical instruments, and writing the first musical textbook in Danish, *Musicaliske Elementer* (1744). His interests went far beyond music: he also carried out meteorological and astronomical observations and worked as a map artist and architect. Though Berlin is best known for his musical compositions, unfortunately very few of these have been preserved: extant ones include three symphonies, a violin concerto, a sonatina, and various small pieces for harpsichord. Among these, one can also find a handful of minuets titled 'Minuet'.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, the violinist and composer Eric Ferling (1733–1808), born in Åbo in the Swedish-speaking part of Finland, stands out as a cultural force in the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1761 he began his duties as a violinist in the royal band in Stockholm, and twelve years later, he was promoted to concertmaster. Ferling regularly arranged his own chamber concerts in the Orangerie in Stockholm, where works by modern composers such as the string

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13 Karl Dahlback, *Rokokkomusikk i trøndersk miljø. Johan Henrich Berlin (1741–1807)*. Norsk musikkgranskning. Årbok, 1954–1955 (Oslo: Tanum, 1956), pp. 137–274

quartets of Haydn were performed. In 1790 he returned to his homeland to lead the newly founded Musical Society in Åbo as concertmaster and to promote the town's musical life. Some of Ferling's compositions have survived, including vocal music and two violin concertos, as well as a quadrille, three contras, and three minuets.<sup>14</sup>

## Danish Music Books with Minuets

One of the most well-known Danish music books was written by Jens Christian Svabo, who was born in 1746 to a pastor in the Faroe Islands. After graduating from the Latin School in Tórshavn in 1765, he went to Copenhagen. There he studied natural history and economics but was also interested in the Faroese language and literature. He became known through a historical-topographical description of his home islands, the first Faroese-Danish dictionary, and the tradition of fifty Faroese dance ballads. Svabo, however, also mastered the violin and, in 1775, began work on a music book in which he recorded melodies that he had heard in the bourgeois milieu in Copenhagen. When he finally returned to his homeland in 1800, he took the violin and the music book with him, and he likely played at dances in the small Faroese capital. As early as 1781, Svabo had reported: 'At festive weddings and amusements, especially in Tórshavn, the Faroese dance begins to become very out of favor, and instead, minuets, Polish, English, Scottish reels and country dances are introduced.'<sup>15</sup>

Svabo's music book was completely forgotten after his death and was only rediscovered in 1928 in an old house in Tórshavn. Today it is kept in the Faroese National Library *Føroya Landsbókasavn*. It consists of a cover sheet and one hundred and seventy-seven pages of notes. These contain melodies written not only in different pens and inks but also in varying styles of handwritings. Presumably, Svabo asked musician friends to enter songs they knew into his book. All melodies are unisonous and noted for violin. When starting the project in 1775, Svabo seems to have planned its structure as he noted thirty-eight minuets first. Later, however, the pieces and dances follow arbitrarily, presumably following the chronological sequence in which he happened to hear them. That the music book begins with minuets clearly shows the importance and absolute priority of this dance in the second half of the eighteenth century. In the further course of the manuscript, minuets appear regularly, the last of

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14 The Royal Swedish Academy of Music 2021, 'Eric Ferling', *Swedish Musical Heritage*, <https://www.swedishmusicalheritage.com/composers/ferling-erik/>

15 Jens Christian Svabo, *Indberetninger fra en reise i Færøe 1781 og 1782*, ed. by N. Djurhuus (København: C.A. Reitzel, 1976), p. 320.

them on the penultimate page. Altogether, Svabo wrote down forty-nine dances that he explicitly described as a minuet. In addition, other pieces have the character of a typical minuet but are not marked as such. Overall, the minuet tunes account for nearly thirty percent of the entire repertoire. The music book also contains various other dances such as *La Nouvelle Allemande*, *Polonaise*, *Dantz*, *Contra Dantz*, and *Englis*. The traditional minuets formally correspond exactly to the European tradition. They are simple and consist of two parts, both of which are repeated. The parts have an even number of bars and are often composed of eight + eight bars, eight + ten, ten + twelve, eight + sixteen, or twelve + twelve bars. However, it is striking that none of the minuets Svabo recorded contain a trio.<sup>16</sup>

The so-called *Music Book of the Brothers Bast* is one of the most extensive and representative sources from the eighteenth century in Denmark. It was created by Christian Frederik Bast (b. 1743) and Poul Danchel Bast (b. 1747), who grew up as sons of a pastor in Horslunde (Lolland) and received their first music lessons there. Later, they went to Copenhagen to study theology and financed their education by playing music for dancing at private parties and guilds of the bourgeoisie. Both subsequently stood as priests of distinguished parishes. The music book that now bears their name was written about 1763–82; it originally consisted of five individual notebooks that were later bound together in leather. Whether some of the three hundred and fifty tunes it contains originally come from the island of Lolland is no longer discernible. However, it is certain that the collection contains many dance tunes that were popular and that minuets and English dances dominate the repertoire. The Bast brothers' book offers several clear parallels with Svabo's music book. Again, the melodies were written with different pen and ink and in various handwriting styles. Presumably, the Bast brothers asked friendly musicians to record the tunes they knew in the book. All melodies, again, like Svabo's, are unisonous and meant for violin. Their book contains one hundred sixty-nine minuets, which is forty-eight percent of the total melodies. Of these minuets, almost precisely half consist of eight + eight bars, each repeated. Both parts have an even number of bars in the other minuets, with ten, twelve, or sixteen bars occurring most frequently. Although the music books of Svabo and the Brothers Bast were written in Copenhagen during the same period, there is a significant difference in minuets: while Svabo renounces the trio, the brothers Bast include fifty-nine minuets (thirty-five percent) with a trio.<sup>17</sup>

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16 Jens Christian Svabo, *Nodebog*. Manuscript (1775), National Library of the Faroe Islands, Tórshavn.

17 Brødrene Bast, *Violinmodebog* (1763–82), C II 5, 4°, Royal Library, Copenhagen.



Another revealing book belonged to the farmer's son and merchant Rasmus Storm (1733–1806), who spent much of his life in Fåborg on the island of Funen. Thus, his collection of melodies does not represent the bourgeois life in Copenhagen but provides information about life in the Danish province. We do not have any information about Storm's musical education, but it is clear that he was neither a town musician nor an organist and seemed to have only played music in his free time. From 1762, Hans Christian Mølmark had the right to play in the county Fåborg at festivals for the farmers. He was close friends with Storm and, occasionally, may have passed the privilege to him. Storm's music book was a book for violin players and was probably also used for teaching. From the repertoire, it can be dated to about 1760. Although the book comes from the countryside, its content is by no means provincial. Some of the tunes were also found in contemporaneous sources from metropolises such as Leipzig or other countries such as Finland. The book includes seventy-one melodies on forty pages, and they were written in fifteen different handwriting styles. The Polsk Dans and the minuet are the most commonly represented dances, with the thirty-six minuets making up over fifty percent of the entire repertoire. Many minuets have a stable structure with four- or eight-bar parts, but in one-third of the cases, six-, ten- or twelve-bar periods appear. Fourteen minuets in Storm's book contain a trio.<sup>18</sup>

As part of the publication of Storm's music book, Jens Henrik Koudal has examined in detail the extent to which the tunes included there are also found in other collections.<sup>19</sup> Twenty-one of Storm's tunes appear in other Danish manuscripts, though only three of his tunes appeared before 1821 in printed editions. Numerous parallels occur in music books created between 1740 and 1780 for the bourgeois or the academic middle class audience. The melodies in these works also appear in the collections of Jens Christian Svabo and the brothers Bast. More than a third of Storm's tunes must have been well known and widespread at the time. Due to the rapidly changing musical fashion, which spread from commercial city to commercial city, musical pieces had only a relatively short life of about thirty to forty years. Therefore, it is striking that the same melodies are found in music books from the same period, as if aspects of the social milieu or geographic proximity play only a minor role. Where the individual melodies originated and their composers are, in many cases, lost to history. However, the songs certainly spread rapidly, mainly through handwritten transcriptions or through audience members listening and repeating them. In some instances, the

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18 Jens Henrik Koudal, *Rasmus Storms Nodebog. En fynsk tjenestekarls dansemelodier o. 1760* (København: Kragen, 1987), p. 19.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24.

melodies changed, and variants coexisted side by side. A comparison of Storm's versions with the notes in other music books reveals some striking differences. These are so significant that Storm could not have known any of the other music books and copied directly from them. When writing down the melodies, he must have relied either on sources that no longer exist or on his memory.<sup>20</sup>

Koudal has also found sixteen of Rasmus Storm's minuets in other Danish music books, ten of them by Svabo and nine by the brothers Bast. Of particular interest is the minuet listed as 'No. 67' in Storm's book.<sup>21</sup> It appears on page sixty-eight of the Bast brothers' book and, without title and trio, on page eighty of Svabo's book. Furthermore, Hakon Grüner-Nielsen recorded it in 1918 as the 'Mollevit'—part of the living tradition he learned about through Hans Andersen in Rise on Ærø. The same melody also appeared with a dance description in the folk-dance book *Gamle Danse fra Fyn og Øerne* (1941).<sup>22</sup>

## Minuets in Norwegian Music Books

Several eighteenth-century music books also give information about the minuet's distribution in Norway, which was then part of Denmark. Professor Hans Olav Gorset at the Norwegian Academy of Music has shown in his research that minuet music held a central position in Norway at that time. Minuet tunes are well represented in Norwegian music books from this period. Indeed, more than fifty percent of the tunes in Gorset's main sources are minuets. The genre was dominant.<sup>23</sup>

The so-called music book by 'Peter Bang' bears this name on its front page along with the date 1679.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, it has not been possible to identify Peter Bang or even to determine if the name is not a pseudonym. The music book consists of one hundred and eight pages, which can be clearly divided into an older part and a newer part. The first melodies were probably not written before 1700, and some content-related aspects even point to a time as late as 1740. The music book was in use for well over a hundred years and eventually appeared in Bergen around 1850 but did not necessarily originate from this area. It contains

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20 Ibid., p. 26.

21 Ibid., p. 120.

22 *Gamle danse fra Fyn og øerne* (København: Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme, 1941).

23 Hans Olav Gorset, *Fornøylelig tids-fordriv. Musikk i norske notebøker fra 1700-tallet: beskrivelse, diskusjon og musikalsk presentasjon i et oppføringspraktisk perspektiv* (Oslo: Norwegian Academy of Music, 2011).

24 Peter Bang, *Notebok. Samlebind med dansemusikk for luth eller fiolin (1679)*, Norsk Musiksamling, ms 294:35a-c, National Library, Oslo.

dances, marches, psalms, and other small pieces in no particular order. About a third of the tunes are also found in other sources from the eighteenth century, and some of them were very common even over a more extended period of time. Of the hundred melodies in the older portion of the text, twenty-four are written in French lute tablature for viola da gamba and seventy-six appear in the ordinary notation for violin. About half of them are minuets.<sup>25</sup> The repertoire has similarities with the book of the brothers Bast and that of Rasmus Storm. These include a standard minuet (No. 5 in Storm; No. 13 in Bang Lautentabulatur and No. 19 in Bang treble clef notation), as well as a piece called 'Contiliong Menuet' (Bang No. 44), which bears the title 'Menuet de France' in Storm's book (No. 15). Besides this, Storm's 'Vindt Mølle Menuet' (No. 30) appears in Bang as 'La ere de Malte' (No. 15).<sup>26</sup>

The music book by Hans Nielsen Balterud (1735–1821), dated 16 April 1758, is also of great importance. Balterud came from Aurskog, east of Christiania (Oslo), and was a wealthy farmer, timber merchant, and mill operator. Also, he was an outstanding violinist and signed a contract in 1770 with Oslo Town Musician Peter Høeg, so that he was officially allowed to play at festivals in his area. It is also reported that Balterud played a minuet with his rich neighbour, Christopher Hareton, as a part of a bet. His music book consists of one hundred and sixty pages with three hundred and ninety melodies, some of which have survived only as fragments. The many corrections it contains show that it was meant for personal use. The book's two hundred and ninety-five minuets account for seventy-five percent of the repertoire, and these often feature the traditional form with two eight-bar periods and a trio. Most of them are anonymous, but two minuets are by Johan Henrik Freithoff, a violin virtuoso who later made his career in Copenhagen and was one of the most important Norwegian composers of his time.<sup>27</sup> Some of the traditional tunes have an extensive range of pitch, many accidentals, and require double stops. Sometimes it is even necessary to retune the instrument, e.g., in the two 'Menuet forstæmt' Nos. 372 and 379. The high level of musical complexity reinforces the level of Balterud's skill and the breadth of his repertoire, which included both the bourgeois music of the town musicians and the folk practice of the country players. The aforementioned 'Menuet de France' from Storm's music book is also found in Balterud's book with the title 'Polske Menuet' (No. 136).<sup>28</sup>

On 14 January 1751, Martinus Calmar (1727–60) began to write a music book for piano in which he included a total of ninety-three tunes on sixty-eight pages.

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25 Gorset, pp. 94–95.

26 Koudal, *Rasmus Storms Nodebog*, pp. 114–17.

27 Gorset, pp. 102–105.

28 Koudal, *Rasmus Storms Nodebog*, p. 116.

The Christiania-born musician was sent to Kongsberg to study with his uncle, the town musician Jørgen Otto Adler. Calmar's *Collection of Various Beautiful Pieces for Piano* consists of a mixture of original compositions and works by well-known composers such as Georg Philipp Telemann or Georg Friedrich Händel.<sup>29</sup> No doubt Calmar received a broad musical education and may, therefore, be considered a professional musician. Nevertheless, he also maintained close contacts with rural milieu and folk traditions. Calmar's music book is an exciting source because it is situated between great composers' printed works and handwritten music books. The twenty-seven minuets account for thirty percent of the repertoire and consist of a mixture of original compositions, anonymous traditional pieces, and a minuet by Telemann. Except for two minuets with a trio and a minuet with three variations, all melodies consist of a simple, two-part form. His composition 'Minuet No. 11' exhibits typical characteristics of Calmar's musical style. It is in F major and consists of two parts with ten + twenty-four bars. While the harmony is simple and the bass voice keeps the basic rhythm, the melody unfolds with certain virtuosity. His objective seems to have been to create small works of musical art and not simply serviceable-but-interchangeable dance tunes.<sup>30</sup>

Fascinating in this context is a minuet book by the Christiania town musician Peter Høeg, published in London around 1770 under the following title: *A Tabular System Whereby the Art of Composing Minuets Is made so Easy that Any Person, without the Least Knowledge of Musick [sic], may Compose Ten Thousand, All Different, and in the Most Pleasing and Correct Manner*. The work, addressed to the layperson, facilitates the creation of simple, musically correct minuets with two x eight bars. For each bar, the book offers forty-eight different options, one of which is chosen at will. The sixteen selected bars are then strung together—and the music is ready.<sup>31</sup> Balterud seems to have known and applied Høeg's Minuet Book. Gorset has shown that numerous bars of his minuets are identical to Høeg's timed suggestions.<sup>32</sup>

Two other examples of music books (without dance descriptions) that contain minuet melodies are the manuscripts *Samling av menuetter og engelskdanser* and Sven H. Walcke's *Dansebok*.<sup>33</sup> Both of these manuscripts are written for two violins and include a significant number of minuet tunes.

29 *Fra M. Calmars notesamling*, ed. by Anne Svånaug Haugen and Sigurd Hukkelberg (Kongsberg: Kongsberg spel- og dansarlag, 2001).

30 Gorset, p. 107.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 197.

33 *Samling av menuetter og engelskdanser*. (1781), Mus.ms. 7081, National library, Oslo; Sven H. Walcke, *Dansebok*. (1804), Mus.ms. 295, National library, Oslo.

Gorset's dissertation distinguishes between dance music and other types of music in his dissertation, but he maintains that approximately two thirds of the tunes in the sources he has used are dance music.<sup>34</sup> Since eighteenth-century Norwegian sources offer relatively few descriptions of the dance minuet, a question has been why there are so many minuets in the tune books. The large number of minuet tunes can be explained to a great degree by the dance practice and its need for accompaniment, despite the small amount of information describing minuet dancing.

## Minuets in Music Books from Finland

In Finland, minuet melodies are found in several handwritten music books from the early eighteenth century. The oldest one, the Tuulos manuscript (1720), which was found in Gothenburg, Sweden, has unfortunately disappeared. According to Finnish composer Heikki Klemetti who saw the manuscript in the early 1900s, it contained sixty-five melodies, of which fifty-five were minuets. Klemetti published one of the minuets as a facsimile and another one as his arrangement in a 1936 article entitled 'A New Old Music Book'.<sup>35</sup> The Finnish music scholar Eero Nallinmaa has suggested that the manuscript was brought to Finland between 1721 and 1730, that is, soon after the Russian occupation (1714–21) during the Great Northern War (1700–21).<sup>36</sup>

During the following decades, the minuet was the most popular dance melody form in music books found in Finland (see Table 13.1).

Table 13.1: Minuets in Finnish music books 1751–79

Manuscript	Year	Number of melodies	Minuets
Johan Forshell's Music Book <sup>37</sup>	1751	29	21
A. C. Öhrbom's Music Book <sup>38</sup>	1759	18	4
Untitled Music Book <sup>39</sup>	1766	47	21

34 Ibid., pp. 167–168.

35 Heikki Klemetti, 'Uusi vanha nuottikirja', *Suomen Musiikkilehti*, 14 (1936), 4–6.

36 Eero Nallinmaa, *Barokkimenuetista masurkkaan. Sävelmätutkimuksia* (Tampere: [n.pub.], 1982), p. 20.

37 Johan Forshell, *Notbok*. Manuscript (1751), University Library of Helsinki, Manuscript Collection.

38 A. C. Öhrbom, *Notbok*. Manuscript (1759), Sibelius Museum, Turku.

39 *Notbok 1766*. Manuscript (1766), University Library of Helsinki, Manuscript Collection.

G. Hannelius's Music Book <sup>40</sup>	1760s	30	14
Hinrich Jacob Bruun's Music Book <sup>41</sup>	1770s	40	16
Untitled Music Book 1779 <sup>42</sup>	1779	61	35

One of the most interesting of the above-mentioned music books is dated 29 January 1759, and it belonged to Anna Catharina Öhrbom from Taimo near Åbo (Turku). It gives information about the musical taste of the upper classes in the middle of the eighteenth century and contains eighteen melodies for piano, among which are four minuets (Nos. 9–12). The relatively small number could indicate that the French fashion dance was just beginning to establish itself in the vicinity of Åbo. However, Admiral Tersmeden's accounts imply that the minuet was already established by that time. Reporting on a picnic he attended in Beckholmen near Åbo on 31 March 1748, he wrote, 'The dance with minuets of the most distinguished ladies began at 7 o'clock and continued with contrasts'.<sup>43</sup>

The four minuets from Öhrbom's music book offer no surprises. They are designed as a traditional, two-part form without a trio. All phrases are regularly formed and consist of eight or twelve bars with repetition. The melody always sounds in the upper voice, while the left hand accompanies with simple chords. Comparison with the book of notes begun in 1779 by an anonymous musician suggests that the minuet tunes in Finland hardly changed since 1759. In this latter manuscript, now held at the Sibelius Museum, only the melody parts are noted, characterized by simple rhythms, many repetitions of sound, small runs, and broken chord progressions. Their structure is even more regular than the examples in Öhrbom's book of notes. Virtually all the minuets consist of two parts, each with eight bars, which are repeated. In some cases, the minuets include a trio.

In later music books, minuets are found significantly less often. The so-called *Pieni Nuottivihko* [*Small Music Booklet*] from the 1780-90s contains only two minuets out of thirty-eight melodies.<sup>44</sup> A manuscript for two violins from the turn of the nineteenth centuries has ninety-three melodies, of which only eight are minuets.<sup>45</sup> A music book written between 1802 and 1806 in Gamlakarleby for

40 G. Hannelius, *Notbok*. Manuscript (1760s), Sibelius Museum, Turku.

41 Hinrich Jacob Bruun, *Notbok*. Manuscript (1770s), University Library of Helsinki, Manuscript Collection.

42 *Notbok 1779*. Manuscript (1779), Sibelius Museum, Turku.

43 Otto Andersson, *VI A 1 Äldre dansmelodier. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 400 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1963), p. 36.

44 *Pieni nuottivihko* (1780s and 1790s), University Library of Helsinki, Manuscript Collection.

45 *Notbok* for two violins. Manuscript (turn of the 1700s and 1800s), Sibelius Museum, Turku.

Anders Lund contains a total of thirty-five dance tunes but only two minuets.<sup>46</sup> Anders Johan Skragge's manuscript from 1810 includes seven minuets out of one hundred and sixteen melodies, whereas Anders Juurela's manuscript from 1825 has only a single minuet among its one hundred and sixty-seven melodies.<sup>47</sup> In music books from later decades of the nineteenth century, minuets do not appear at all.

According to the manuscripts published before 1780, the minuet had almost no other competitors than Polish dances, which, in most manuscripts, are called Polonaises (*polonesse, polonoise*). The few other melodies that appear are marches, instrumental tunes, or country dances. Music books published around 1780 and into the early 1800s, however, suggest that a change in the repertoire happened over an astonishingly short time. The *Pieni Nuottivihko*, for example, is dominated by waltzes, and other manuscripts from the turn of the century contain many country dances. Nallinmaa cautioned us not to draw strong conclusions from the changes in music books since these texts do not give a reliable picture of the dance repertoire among the Finnish upper classes.<sup>48</sup> However, other sources support this conclusion, so, therefore, one could expect that the minuet did vanish quite rapidly at that time.

## A Stronghold of the Minuet: Swedish-speaking Finland

The Swedish-speaking part of Finland is one of the few regions in the north where the minuet has been preserved as a living folk-dance form. Therefore, there is a vibrant melodic tradition that includes younger forms.

An essential source for the melody tradition is the collection *Äldre dansmelodier* [*Older Dance Melodies*], which was published in 1963 by Otto Andersson and contained two hundred and seventy-six minuet melodies. Such a high number has not been handed down from any other Nordic country. Of these tunes, one hundred seventy-two are from the Ostrobothnia region, seventy are from Uusimaa, twenty-six are from Åboland, and eight are from Åland.<sup>49</sup>

Most of the melodies published by Andersson exhibit some of the minuet tradition's typical characteristics. For example, they are written in 3/4 time and consist of two parts, which are repeated. It is noticeable, however, that not a single tune contains a trio. Another unique feature is that some of the

46 Andersson, *VI A 1 Äldre dansmelodier*, p. 44.

47 Anders Johan Skragge, *Notbok*. Manuscript (1810), SLS 1348, Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, Helsinki; Anders Juurela, *Notbok*. Manuscript (1825), University of Tampere, Folklife Archives.

48 Nallinmaa, p. 49.

49 Andersson, *VI A 1 Äldre dansmelodier*, p. 109.

minuets have lyrics, and may have been sung as well as played. Further, both the tonality and the harmonic development and structure vary greatly. An odd number of bars in the phrases and a change between upbeat and downbeat are not uncommon. Occasionally, individual bars in 2/4 or 4/4 time are woven into the three-part minuet rhythm. Irregular periods of five, seven, or nine bars draw a clear parallel with Lully's early French minuets. However, this does not necessarily indicate a direct link between Paris and Swedish-speaking Finland. The peculiarity may have developed in the province, without awareness of customs in the French metropolis. The printed 'Menuet no. 116', recorded after A. Pettersson, consists of seven + five bars and is recorded in both 2/4 and 3/4 time. His popular, lively melody in C major creates a vivacious mood and is different from the court minuet's solemn tone.

### Minuet Fever in Sweden

In Sweden, the minuet enjoyed great popularity in the eighteenth century, but it could not prevail in the popular repertoire as in Finland in the long run. Numerous music books bear witness to a great minuet fever which only lasted until the end of the eighteenth century.

By 1911, Tobias Norlind examined the number of dances Menuett, Polsk, and Walzer in the Swedish journal *Musikaliskt Tidsfördrif* [*Musical Pastime*] and found that, between 1790 and 1799, forty-six percent of all dances were minuets, but then the frequency within ten years drastically decreased and fell to nineteen percent. At the same time, the waltz's frequency increased from two percent in the 1790s to thirty percent in the following decade.<sup>50</sup> Magnus Gustafsson has examined the content of nearly eight hundred handwritten Swedish music books for his comprehensive work *Polskans Historia* [*The History of Polska*] (2016), classifying some ninety thousand melodies. The sources cover a period from 1640 to 1880. Among the recorded dances, there are one thousand forty-six minuets (nineteen percent) dating before 1730 and 1840 minuets (twenty percent) from the period 1730–1810. After 1810, however, the number drops to only one hundred and ten minuets.<sup>51</sup>

An example of the absolute dominance of the minuet is the *Piano Book*, written between 1703 and 1727, by Professor Ternsted from Uppsala with a total of one hundred eighty-nine melodies, of which one hundred and fifty are minuets.<sup>52</sup>

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50 Gustafsson, p. 323.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 139–142.

52 Biskop, p. 38.



As in Swedish-speaking Finland, there is also a close link between the polska and the minuet in Sweden. Especially at folk weddings, the two dances often followed one after the other.<sup>53</sup> This close interaction also affected dance music. As the minuet fell further and further out of fashion in Sweden towards the end of the eighteenth century, many minuet tunes went through a transformation. They were slightly changed and then reappeared in the music books as polskas. Sometimes the terms *menuettpolskor* or *polsk menuett* were used, which indicate this conversion process. It even happens that the same melody in a music book is called a minuet, and in another book, a polska. For example, 'Minuet No. 73' from Sven Donat's *Gradebook* (1783–1801) appears as 'Polska No. 24' in a music book by Anders Petter Dufva from 1807.<sup>54</sup>

The Petter Dufva music book comes from northeastern Småland but is preserved only in a copy from the early twentieth century. Of the one hundred and ninety-one surviving melodies, twenty-nine are minuets, one hundred sixty-one polskas, and one waltz. Thus, the music book clearly shows that the minuet had lost its popularity at the beginning of the nineteenth century and could no longer prevail against the polska. The heyday of the waltz had not yet arrived in the Swedish province at this time.<sup>55</sup>

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## PART IV

# THE MINUET AS MOVEMENT PATTERNS

These chapters survey and analyze the movement patterns that are documented in the different historical sources described above. The standard minuet dance, *le menuet ordinaire*, and its derived social forms were taught to the upper classes in many European countries by dancing masters who sometimes made descriptions or notations. Additional descriptions come from twentieth-century folk-dance collectors. The question discussed here is how the different versions compare, and if and how the dance may have changed over time and from one geographical and social context to another.

As a conclusion, there is a discussion about how the source material can be viewed as a totality to enable principles of triangulation. What can we learn by combining the tools and theories used to study the mainly written material from the eighteenth century and the corresponding tools and theories used to study the folk material that is still available as movement practice?



# 14. Nordic Forms of the Minuet

*Gunnel Biskop*

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The ‘standard’ minuet, which has its roots in the classic court minuet (also called the ‘ordinary minuet’, or *le menuet ordinaire*) from about 1700, has been the longest surviving minuet in the Nordic countries. In this ‘original’ version, the minuet step begins with the right foot, the music is in 3/4 time, and one minuet ‘step’ consisting of four foot movements carries over two music bars. This minuet step and the structure of the dance follows the shape of the letter Z. Information about how the various stages of the dance are signalled is found in descriptions of the minuets in Finland and Denmark. In Finland, accounts come mainly from the Swedish-speaking areas in Ostrobothnia and Åboland (Turku archipelago) and, in Denmark, from Jutland and Ærø. These minuet’s structure is essentially the same as that of the standard minuet, although they are danced to different melodies. I believe that the minuet reached the Nordic countries at a very early stage.<sup>1</sup>

## The Ordinary Minuet in Finland

In Finland, the minuet was danced throughout the Swedish-speaking areas. In the Swedish-speaking regions of Ostrobothnia and the Turku archipelago, the minuet continued to be danced for so long that early-twentieth-century dance researcher Yngvar Heikel was able to record complete descriptions of several minuets. By ‘complete’, I mean that the descriptions are so detailed that they can still be interpreted and followed today. One of these minuets comes from Munsala in Ostrobothnia. At some point in time, a shift occurred among

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1 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svensksbygder—under trehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015). (The Menuet—The loved Dance. About the minuet in the Nordic region—especially in the Swedish-speaking area of Finland—for three hundred and fifty years). The text is (in the main) based on a chapter in the book.

dancers regarding the musical beat on which the minuet step began so that older and younger dancers in the same community danced differently. The older generations continued to start the minuet with the right foot on the first beat of the first of the pair of bars (that is, 1:1), while the younger generations started with the left foot on the second beat of the second bar (that is, 2:2). Heikel emphasized the younger generation's style of dancing.



Fig. 14.1a and Fig. 14.1b Tradition bearers in Munsala in Ostrobothnia in Finland dance their minuet, 1985. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop after film by Kim Hahnsson. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

Here I will focus on the description from Munsala, which Yngvar Heikel recorded in its entirety. Although he did not write complete descriptions of those instances in which the informant started with the right foot on the beat (1:1), he did mention the difference as a variation of the 2:2 version.<sup>2</sup> Heikel described the minuet from Munsala as follows:

*Formation.* Two opposite rows of dancers, gentlemen to the right, ladies to the left, seen from the first couple. A gentleman holds his right hand in the lady's left hand; everybody has their other hand hanging free.

*Note.* To describe the dance, it is counted to 6 during two bars. The editor [Heikel] describes the dance as consisting of what he calls 'sections' [in Swedish: *avsnitt*], referring to a time space of two bars, beginning

2 For information about how Heikel's descriptions were compiled, see Chapter 11.

on count number 5 of one bar and ending on count 4 in the next bar. This naming groups the steps into a coherent entity that allows them to be presented more clearly. The sections cover thus a timespan of two musical bars.<sup>3</sup>

*In the first section*, dance as follows. While bringing left shoulder forwards, step forwards onto left foot, with the toe pointing slightly to the right (5), touch toe of the right foot to the left foot (6), step on the right foot in its original place, while turning left shoulder back to former stance (1), step onto left foot behind right foot (3), step on the right foot in front of and slightly to the side of left foot (4).

*In the second section*, partners change places, maintaining handhold, and turning counter-clockwise as follows. Step on left foot forwards and past the right (5), step on right foot slightly in front of and perpendicular to the left foot (1), while turning to the left on the ball of the right foot. After completing the turn, step on the left foot behind the right foot (3) and take a step in place with the right foot (4).

*During the third section*, dance the same steps as in the first section.

*In the fourth section*, the same steps [as in the first section] are danced again, but with the difference that the left foot step on count (5) is taken diagonally forwards and to the left, release handhold on (3) and on the step with the right foot on count (4), turn halfway round to the right.

*In the fifth section*, Step left foot forwards and to the right of the starting position, turning completely to the right (5), touch right toe beside the left foot (6), step back with the right foot while turning halfway round to the left (1), step with the left foot to the left of the right foot while returning to original stance (3) and step with the right foot in place (4).

*During the sixth and seventh sections*, pass the partner on the left with the following steps. Step forwards with left foot (5), drag right foot past left foot (6) step forwards with right foot (1), drag left foot forwards past right foot (2), and step forwards with the left foot while turning left shoulder forwards (3), step forwards with the right foot while returning to start stance (4). Take a short step forwards with left foot (5), close right toe to left foot (6), step slightly to the right with right foot (1) and

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3 During each section, steps are taken in turns with left and right foot at 5, 1, 3, and 4, and the steps at 5 and 1 are taken as a rule with a small knee bend continuing at 6 and 2 respectively. When the other foot is taken to or past the first foot at 6 and 2, this is done with a light dragging on the floor. When the music starts, the couples place themselves in the dance formation, and the dance begins at 5, for example, during bar number 8.



turn completely around to the left on ball of the right foot (1-2), step diagonally left with left foot (3) with right foot step diagonally past and to the left of left foot (4). The dancers are now standing approximately in their original places.

*During the eighth section, dance the same steps as in the fourth section.*

As described above for the fifth to eighth sections, this series of steps is repeated an even number of times, for example, two or four times, always passing partner on the left.

Then the same series is played two more times, the boys at the cross-over to and from their original place stamp hard with the left foot on count (5), stamp lightly with right foot on count (6), and again stamp hard with the right foot on count (1) in the sixth section. In other words, three quick stamps at the beginning of each cross-over. When they return to their original place, the boys clap their hands once on count (1) while turning on the right foot in the seventh section and count (1) in the eighth section when stepping back on the right foot.

*In the following sections, dance the same steps as in the fifth section, but the boys clap hands once on count (1) when stepping back on the right foot, after which the left foot (3) and right foot (4) steps are taken as usual.*

Thereupon take a right hand in right thumb hold with a partner, and dance one full turn *clockwise* over the *following two sections*, with the following steps: a step forwards with left foot (5), drag the right foot forwards past left foot (6), step forwards with the right foot turned to the right (1) make a full turn to the right on the ball of the right foot (1-2); after completing the turn, touch the left foot to the right foot (3) and take a step in place with right foot (4), then repeat these steps to return to start position. *In the following sections*, while maintaining the handhold, step diagonally forwards and to the left with left foot (5) and then drag right foot and touch right toe to the left foot, while turning about  $\frac{1}{4}$  turn clockwise to stand close to each other with right thumb hold, tightly bent arms and elbows pointing down. Step backwards with right foot (1), step backwards with left foot (3), step with the right foot slightly to the right of its last position (4), and the dancers are back in their original positions. *During the following two sections*, dance one full turn *counterclockwise* with a partner, maintaining handhold and with the same steps as in the second section at the beginning of the dance, dancing the steps twice to return to their original places. *During the subsequent two sections*, the same steps as in the third and fourth sections are danced, releasing the handhold on count 3 in the fourth section.

Hereafter, the series of steps, as described for the fifth to the eighth section, is repeated an even number of times, after which they are repeated twice with the same stamps and claps as in the middle of the dance, after which the steps to the right are danced with a clap when stepping back on the right foot on count (1), then step left foot on count (3), and right foot on count (4) as described above. Then the dancers take one step with their left foot towards a partner (5) touch right foot to the left foot (6), after which the boy takes the girl's left hand in his right and 'turns off' the dance, that is to say, swings their joined hands a couple of times in a small circle clockwise from the boy's point of view. Then they dance polska.<sup>4</sup>

The minuet's length was not predetermined. Rather, the male dancer at the top of the set, closest to the table of honour (the 'head-table male') decided when to give signals for a switch to the next stage.<sup>5</sup> The minuets described from other parishes in Ostrobothnia and the Turku archipelago are similar in structure.



Fig. 14.2a and Fig. 14.2b Tradition bearers from Munsala in Ostrobothnia in Finland have dressed in folk costume to perform their minuet in Stockholm, 1987.

Photograph by Stina Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.

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- 4 Yngvar Heikel, *VI Folkdans B Dansbeskrivningar. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 268 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1938), pp. 28–29; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 233–38.
- 5 See the detailed discussion on this in the section on the minuet in Finland.

## The Ordinary Minuet in Denmark

It is often apparent from the accounts that early researchers found it difficult to describe the minuet. The problem was the same in Denmark. There, Ellen Grüner-Nielsen did not understand the minuet on Ærø in 1918, but, based on her notes, Ane Marie Kjellerup was able to complete the description in the late 1930s. Kjellerup's description was published in 1941 and was further supplemented by Svend Clemmensen in 1948.<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 14.3 Folk dancers in Denmark perform with a minuet from Randers in Jutland, 1950. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.



Fig. 14.4 Folk dancers perform the minuet from Randers at the Nordic folk dance convention in Aarhus, Denmark in 1946. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.

Kjellerup's revised description of the minuet on Ærø, with sheet music, was published in the second edition of *Gamle Danse fra Fyn og Øerne* (1941). The

6 Ole Skov, 'Dansens og musikkens rødder 33. Menuetten på Ærø—2', *Hjemstavnsliv* 12 (1998), 10–11; Anders Chr. N. Christensen, 'Monnevet og Mollevit. Menuettrationer på Randerseggen og på Ærø', in *Folk og Kultur. Årbog for Dansk Etnologi og Folkemindvidenskab* (København: Foreningen Danmarks Folkeminder, 1999), pp. 94–126, <https://tidsskrift.dk/folkogkultur/article/download/65922/94852>; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 239–43.

description was intended for use by folk dancers and differs markedly from Heikel's method of describing the minuet. The minuet on Ærø is described by Kjellerup as follows:

**Step: Mollevit steps in Ærø Mollevit.**

One Mollevit step is always danced over 2 bars of music and always starts with the right foot. The steps must not be stiff but a little bouncy and lilting. There are 3 different Mollevit steps, namely: forwards, backwards, and in place.

*Forward step:* 1 step forwards followed by a small pause on the right foot, followed by 3 small steps forwards (L R L), followed by a pause on the last step (L).

*Backward step:* like the forwards step, only danced backwards.

*The step in place:* 1 small step backwards and a pause on the right foot, close left foot to right foot but a little farther back, lift right foot slightly from the floor and set next to L, 1 step forwards and pause with L foot while turning the body slightly to R. (left shoulder forwards), and touch R foot beside L foot.

*Formation:* all couples in a row with right sides to the front.

The Man (M) with the Woman's (D) left hand in his hand.

Prelude.

Music

1-8 Men and Women bow and curtsy respectively;  
the women bowing more than curtsying.

Introduction.

1-2 All dance 1 Mollevit step backwards,  
3-4 man leads his partner in front of him with 1  
Mollevit step,  
5-6 everyone dances 1 Mollevit step in place,  
7-8 everyone dances 1 Mollevit Step backwards,  
dropping the handhold.  
The dancers now stand in 2 rows, the  
gentlemen to L and the women to the R seen  
from the front, with a small space between the  
two rows. — The Mollevit itself can begin.

Mollevit.

- 9–10  
 FIG. I. All dance 1 Mollevit step diagonally to the L, finishing facing own partner and L shoulder to the next opposite dancer on the left's L shoulder, i.e., men are half-turned to face the front, and women are half-turned with their backs to the front.
- 11–12 1 Mollevit Step diagonally back to the R to return to start position.
- 13–14 1 Mollevit step straight forwards, passing partner on the L (facing partner when passing),
- 15–16 FIG. II. again 1 Mollevit step forwards while turning halfway round to the L. Finish in front of own partner, on L foot and L shoulders towards each other.
- 9–10 FIG. III. 1 Mollevit step in place,  
 11–12 1 Mollevit step straight back.  
 The two rows have now changed places.  
 The dance continues with Figs. I, II, and III, for as long as desired, until the lead dancer (Man 1=head-table male), the next time he begins Fig. I, i.e., he must have his right side turned to the front, says to the men: "Shall we?" Then on the 1st step, he claps his hands. This can occur, e.g., when Fig. I begins for the 5th time.
- 1–4  
 FIG. I. 1 Mollevit step diagonally to L (Man 1 clapping on count 1).  
 1 Mollevit step diagonally backwards to R.  
 Instead of dancing Fig. II, now dance:
- 5–8 Giving R hand to partner, dance ½ turn clockwise, 2 Mollevit steps. Hands at shoulder height; partners close together.
- 1–2 1 Mollevit step in place (still holding hands).  
 3–4 FIG. III. 1 Mollevit step straight back (dropping hands).  
 5–8 FIG. I. 1 Mollevit step diagonally forwards to the L and 1 Mollevit step diagonally backwards to the R.

- 9–12 Turn again with a single handhold, this time giving partner L hand, ½ turn counter-clockwise, 2 Mollevit steps.
- 13–16 1 Mollevit step in place (still holding hands).  
 FIG. III 1 Mollevit step backwards (dropping handhold).  
 The dance continues, as in the beginning, with Figs. I, II, and III until man 1 again gives the signal, which this time means that the dance will end. This can occur, e.g., when Fig. I is about to begin again for the 5th time.
- 1–4 1 Mollevit step diagonally forwards to L (Man 1 clapping),  
 FIG. I 1 Mollevit step diagonally backwards to R.  
 Instead of Fig. II, now dance as follows:
- 5–8 Partners take two-hand hold, and dance 1 full turn clockwise, 2 Mollevit steps, on the last beat making a deep bow and curtsy to partner, and the dance is finished.  
 As is evident, it can end at quite a random place in the music, depending on how many times Figs. I, II, and III are danced. Throughout the dance, the women hold out their skirts. The Mollevit is usually followed by a waltz.<sup>7</sup>

This minuet from *Ærø* strongly resembles the standard minuet from the 1700s—namely, it includes the initial reverences and the initial formation transition into two lines.<sup>8</sup> In the standard minuet, women and men stood side by side after the initial reverence, after which the man led his lady in a half-circle to face him, dropped the handhold, and the steps of the minuet proper began. Here in *Ærø*, this is evident. Women and men stand next to each other and use eight bars for the reverences and eight bars for the lady and man to move into position opposite each other in two lines. Vestiges of this movement also remain in Finland in the minuet danced in Lappfjärd, and less so in that of Tjöck in Ostrobothnia.

7 *Gamle Danse fra Fyn og Øerne*. Samlet og beskrevet af Fru Ane Marie Kjellerup (København: Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme, 1941), pp. 68–71; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 239–43.

8 These features were not retained as clearly in the minuets in the Swedish-speaking areas of Finland.



Video 14.1 Minuet and polska from Lappfjärd in southern Ostrobothnia in Finland, performed by folk dancers from the regional folk-dance organization Östra Nylands Folkdansdistrikt. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Pargasit, 28 January 2013. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/55c38f65>



Video 14.2 Minuet and polska from Tjöck in southern Ostrobothnia in Finland, performed by folk dancers from the group Spjutsunds folkdanslag under the instruction of Lisbeth Ståhlberg. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Pargasit, 31 July 2013. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/016d02a6>

## Other Forms of the Minuet in the Nordic Countries

In addition to the standard minuet, later types of minuets were also danced in all the Nordic countries. These are variations that likely were fashionable at some time but did not survive long enough to be documented in detail in the early 1900s. Most of the following information comes from Finland. In my opinion, these later minuet variations did not gain popularity in the Swedish-speaking communities in Finland because the standard minuet had such a significant and important role in the ceremonial dancing at peasant weddings.

### ‘A Modern Minuet’ and no ‘Boorish Slängpolska’

A diary from 1811 offers the earliest information about how the minuet was danced in Finland. The relevant entry shows that the minuet in question was different from the standard minuet. Its author, Eric Gustaf Ehrström, was the first in Finland to explain, in a few words, how the minuet was danced.

Ehrström was born in 1791 in Larsmo in Ostrobothnia, where his father Anders (b. 1744) was a minister. His father came from Närpes and had first studied at Uppsala and later in Turku. His mother (b. 1757) was the daughter of a minister and came from Storkyro, Ostrobothnia. In 1805, the Ehrström family moved to Kronoby. Eric Gustaf and his brothers were schooled by their father until 1807 when Eric Gustaf was enrolled as a student at the Åbo Academy University at the age of fifteen.

While studying in Turku, Ehrström worked as a tutor for Krogius, a lawyer with six children. For six weeks in the summer of 1811, the his patron family stayed in Hauho in Tavastland with the patriarch’s sister, who was married to Dean Ivar Wallenius. Ehrström, just turned twenty years old, accompanied them in his position as tutor. In Hauho, there were forty ‘mansions’—residences of the

well-to-do—where the young man participated in the lively social environment of the Swedish-speaking ‘gentry’. His diary contains detailed daily entries that Ehrström addressed to ‘a good aunt’ living in Storkyro. The diary’s purpose, he wrote, was to ‘record those things that especially attract my attention’. Ehrström could also play the violin and had learned to dance the minuet at home. His diary provides evidence that the minuet was being danced in the areas of Jakobstad, Kronoby, and Gamlakarleby in the late 1700s and early 1800s.

Ten days after arriving at Hauho, on 26 June 1811, most of the gentry were invited to a peasant wedding in the village of Kokkila, the population of which was Finnish-speaking. The wife of Dean Wallenius had assumed responsibility for dressing the bride. The wedding took place on Prustila farm in Kokkila. The groom was from another village called Lehdesmäki. Ehrström described in detail the clothing and customs of the peasantry. About the wedding, he recorded:

As soon as the bride was dressed and the guests gathered, the wedding was held—followed by a meal. The meal lasted from 12 o’clock to 5 o’clock, because only one group at a time ate. The first group consisted of the gentry, the young couple, and as many of the bridegroom’s family as there was room for. After eating, which did not take much time, we got up, and another group took our place despite many dishes being served. This continued until all the guests had eaten. The bride’s family served at the table and did not eat with the guests at all. Once the first group had eaten, the dancing started in another cottage. Relatively few rituals were observed. No dance could consist of more than three couples.—Everyone should dance the minuet and a polska with his partner. Initially, they had danced the usual minuet with four steps, but now they have learned a modern minuet from Hattula, in which the couples do not cross over between each other, but both lines together swing sideways past each other after which everybody turns completely around—which looks quite ridiculous.<sup>9</sup> The polska has many sequences and is quite lovely. As I mentioned, it may not consist of more than three couples, but several polska sets can be danced at once if the room is large. I repeat that it is quite lovely. The sequences are beautiful, the steps quite dainty but challenging, and the dancers pay careful attention to each other. In one word: it is the most beautiful country dance, and it is no exaggeration to say it the most beautiful dance I’ve ever seen. I sense Aunt laughing, but come here, dear Aunt, and see it, and Aunt will agree with me, and happily take my hand when I invite Aunt [to dance it]. Aunt must not imagine it to be a boorish slängpolska, but a lively, modest, and attentive dance, in which, just as in a quadrille, one gets to rest occasionally as another couple takes its turn. Towards

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9 The publisher, Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, has omitted the sketch in the published edition, which I am including from the original manuscript that is available at Åbo Academy.





something, as in a quadrille. The steps were complicated for Ehrström to follow. In addition to the complicated nature of the movements, the steps and the sequences in what he understood to be the polska were new to him. Therefore, there must have been other steps and another variation of the polska than the one he had danced in Ostrobothnia and called a 'boorish slängpolska', with which, we can assume, the aunt was also familiar.

Ehrström stressed that there were three couples in a set. Such a model of the minuet explicitly danced by three couples, on which this could have been based, was described by Karl Heinz Taubert in his book *Das Menuett* (1988). There, the variation is called 'Minuet en six'<sup>11</sup>. According to Taubert, it was devised by Ernst Christian Mädél (b. 1776) in Erfurt, Germany and published by him in the book *Tanzkunst für die elegante Welt* (1805). Mädél's minuet is structured like a contradance with eight sequences of 'verse and chorus', in which both 'verse' and 'chorus' are danced with minuet steps, but which differ from the standard minuet step.

The initial formation in the 'Minuet en six', according to Taubert:

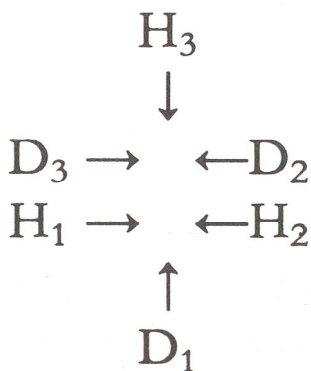


Fig. 14.5c The starting position in Menuet en six, according to Taubert. Design by Petri Hoppu.

Formation in the chorus of the Minuet en six, according to Taubert:

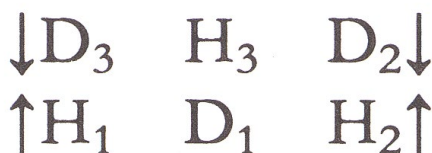


Fig. 14.5d The arrangement of the chorus in Menuet en six, according to Taubert. Design by Petri Hoppu

11 Karl Heinz Taubert, *Das Menuett. Geschichte und Choreographie*. Pan 168 (Zürich: Pan, 1988), pp. 43–50; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 259–261.

The dance was so unusual that it may have been difficult for Ehrström to understand which parts constituted a 'verse' and which portions were the 'chorus'. Ehrström may have perceived the chorus as a polska with 'many sequences'. The chorus in Taubert's 'Minuet en six' consists of four parts. The first part is a chain, or double figure of eight, danced by the two outermost persons [in each line], while the two people in the centre 'rest', as Ehrström expressed it. In the second part, the two people in the centre of each line dance a figure eight while the other four dancers rest. These elements fit well with Ehrström's description. The third part, called the 'triumphal arch', includes the people in the same line changing places with one another, which is somewhat reminiscent of Ehrström's diagram. That sequence also includes 'battements' which traditionally consisted of high kicks. Ehrström explained that the steps in the polska were challenging to complete, probably because he had not previously learned battements. The fourth sequence is danced in the lines and includes half a turn to one's partner. Ehrström wrote that the dancers turned 'completely around'. I do not find any reference to this movement in Mädel's minuet: it does, however, include a turn under raised arms, but otherwise only a quarter and a half turn. Taubert also wrote that one could vary the minuet by turning around completely.<sup>12</sup> It is also possible that the minuet Ehrström described was based on some other minuet, which is not included in Taubert's book.

This documentation of the minuet and polska in Finnish-speaking Kokkila in 1811 is remarkable and raises several issues, regardless of the dance's particular variation. The bride and groom, their relatives and friends, and the villagers were in a Finnish-speaking peasant environment within which everyone could dance the minuet. Whether or not the twenty-year-old Ehrström himself danced is not mentioned. Even the Swedish-speaking 'gentry' or upper class could dance it, though it was not typically danced at their gatherings. The Hauho 'gentry' included a deputy judge, a captain, and a colonel, with their respective families.

Two days after the wedding, about twenty young people, all of whom Ehrström identified in his diary, were invited to the home of Dean Wallenius. He wrote that they danced, ate, and played all day, but did not mention which dances were danced. This is likely because, from Ehrström's point of view, the dances were the usual ones and did not need to be specifically named. We see, from an 'addendum' to another account, however, that the Hauho 'gentry' danced 'Quadrille and Anglaise' and, on one occasion, a further quadrille was danced. Why did the upper classes here abandon a new dance, the new minuet, so quickly? At the same time, how did it happen that the peasantry adopted the new minuet so quickly? An answer to the latter question may be that the

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12 Karl Heinz Taubert, *Höfische Tänze. Ihre Geschichte und Choreographie* (Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1968), p. 182. Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 260.

neighbouring parish to Hauho—Hattula, near Tavastehus—was, in Ehrström’s words, ‘a conduit through which luxuries and regrettable customs gradually flow into the rest of Tavastland’.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 14.6 Ordinary people in Tavastland on their way into the church. R.W. Ekman, *Churchgoers* (1868), gouache on paper. Pori Art Museum, Finland. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:R\\_W\\_Ekman\\_Kirkkoon\\_k%C3%A4vij%C3%A4t\\_1867.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:R_W_Ekman_Kirkkoon_k%C3%A4vij%C3%A4t_1867.jpg), public domain.

It is not important whether or not Ehrström could distinguish between the different parts of the dance or if he could distinguish the minuet from the polska, even though he could play music. He mentioned nothing about the music; it was not something that caught his attention. Folk music researchers Tobias Norlind and Otto Andersson have suggested that minuets and polskas cannot always be distinguished one from the other.<sup>14</sup> What is important is that Ehrström clearly stated that the dance was new, that it was a three-couple dance, and that what he regarded as the ‘polska’ had many sequences and that the steps were difficult to dance (which suggests that he did not already know the steps). The most remarkable thing, in my view, is that a new dance, possibly devised in Germany around 1800 and first published in 1805, could be competently danced by the Finnish-speaking people in Kokkila in Tavastland, Finland in 1811, only six years later. Since all the wedding guests could dance it, including the groom and his relatives who came from Lehdesmäki, the dance must have been known in those villages for some time. If I have interpreted Ehrström correctly, that at least parts of the ‘Minuet en six’ were being danced in Finland, this information would contradict all previous

13 Ehrström, *Minnen af en Resa*, p. 48, p. 42; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 257–61.

14 Otto Andersson, *VI A 1 Äldre Dansmelodier. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 400 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1963), p. CXX.

theories as to when the minuet may have reached Sweden or Finland. It would also contradict existing theories about the routes by which dances were spread. My interpretation suggests that dances did not always come via the cities or even via the upper classes. Instead, it indicates how quickly a dance could be introduced by, for example, a dance teacher or a Hattula resident who might have stayed or perhaps studied in Germany. Or maybe a merchant, or some professional person, who had lived for a while in Europe? None of these scenarios is far-fetched.

Because Ehrström wrote about things that ‘particularly’ attracted his attention, he did not write about anything he considered usual. The dances popular among the gentry were usual, so he did not name or describe them. Whether or not the minuet he saw was the ‘Minuet en six’ really does not matter. Either way, the above argument suggests conclusions about the speed of dissemination.

In Denmark, versions of the minuet known as ‘Molle vitt 3’ are mentioned in accounts from the late 1860s. The informants remember it as dance with two different formations—one in two lines and the other in three lines, in which each gentleman had two ladies. Three sources from Norway also report that there were three people, not three couples, in the minuet, suggesting that this version also existed there.<sup>15</sup>

## Minuet and Polskaminuet—Different Variants

*Minuet: Flere par danser oberoende af hovarandra, alladivrad  
bestående sig tagas alltid med högra foten förut. De spelmannen  
böry ad andra repriens "Kvänga" de sig ett halft kvart. d. v. s. hvar  
och givind byta plats. Under 1<sup>ste</sup> och 4<sup>te</sup> turas hvar de hoar-  
andra i hand. under andra och tredje turas danser de fria och  
på längre afstånad från hoarandra. Minueten bear samman  
kommit ut bruket.*

*Polskaminueten ~~är en dans som vanligt m. 3/4. I de tre~~  
ställen de upp sig på två sidor (vis à vis), figurera och  
gå förbi ("genom") hoarandra. Silbakter på samman  
gäff turas lika som 1<sup>ste</sup>. 4<sup>de</sup> turas ad lika som andra. Enne*

Fig. 14.7a and Fig. 14.7b Victor Allardt's record of minuet and polska-minutt in eastern Nyland, Finland, 1887. SLS 1009. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS). Photographs by Gunnel Biskop. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

15 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 257–261.

In eastern Nyland (Uusimaa) in Finland, the minuet was called 'minett' and was danced until the latter part of the 1800s. Another minuet form emerged in this region around 1860 with the name 'polskaminett'. As I have pointed out earlier, my opinion is that newer forms of minuet gained popularity in places where the standard minuet did not have a ceremonial role in peasant weddings. This argument is supported by the following information from eastern Nyland, an area in which the minuet did not play such a significant role.

Victor Allardt, a schoolteacher in Lappträsk, encountered the minuet and polskaminuet in the 1880s when he notated dance melodies played by folk musician Hans Jakob Hansson (b. 1836) in Lappträsk. Allardt tried to describe how the two variants were danced. Whether he relied on information from Hansson or saw, possibly danced, these minuets himself, is not made clear. About the *minett* in Lappträsk in 1887, he wrote:

Several couples dance independently of each other, all in a row. Specific steps are taken, always with the right foot first. When the musician starts playing the second repeat, they 'turn' a half-turn, that is to say, men and women change places. During the 1st and 4th parts, they hold each other's hands. During the second and third parts, they dance individually and farther away from each other. The minett is seldom danced now.<sup>16</sup>

The minuet step itself was perhaps too difficult for Allardt to describe in words, but we are told that it begins with the right foot. He described holding hands at the beginning, changing places, and also holding hands at the end. During the 'second and third parts', when dancing further away from each other, it is likely that after the women's and men's lines had changed places and released the handhold, and some minuet steps were subsequently danced on the other side of the set before returning to the original side. Allardt does not mention the number of minuet steps at any stage of the dance. Nevertheless, characteristics of the standard minuet are apparent. When the description was later enhanced, it became evident that it was the standard minuet.<sup>17</sup>

Allardt's 1887 account of the second minuet, the Polishminuet (*polskaminett*), which appeared later, is as follows:

The first part is danced like a regular minuet

In the second part, they form two lines (*vis-a-vis*), *figuré*, and change places. [The dancers] return the same way

The third part is the same as the first

The fourth part is similar to the second. No more.<sup>18</sup>

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16 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 261–63; SLS 1009.

17 Heikel, p. 8.

18 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 262–63; SLS 1009.

It's difficult to know how to interpret this description. I would interpret that 'Ordinary minuet' refers to women and men taking minuet steps towards each other. In the second part, I understand that the couples stood side by side in two lines and danced a *figuré*, suggesting that there were at least two couples in the set, with each couple facing another couple, as in a contradance. When Yngvar Heikel and Holger Rancken published a more detailed description of the polskaminuet in *Lappträsk* in 1912, they noted that 'in this minuet the transition steps are danced as a kind of *figuré*', with four walking steps.<sup>19</sup> The polskaminuet involved no turning or swinging of the partner either in the beginning, middle, or at the end of the dance; further, four minuet steps were danced in place before the transition. All of this evidence gives the impression that this polskaminuet was a contradance.

Heikel provided two descriptions in which the dancers took four minuet steps towards each other before changing places. He has flagged one such description from Pyttis with a question mark. This may have been a polskaminuet. In Pyttis, the minuet was followed by 'Storpolska', a four-couple quadrille formation. The traditional Storpolska, following the minuet (in eighteen sequences), consisted of typical quadrille 'verse and chorus' sequences with a chain, without taking hands, as a chorus. It would seem logical that the minuet was for a set of four couples since a four-couple quadrille followed it or that two sets of two couples joined together for the Storpolska. As a model for the polskaminuet, I think the 'Minuet en quatre' might have been for two couples or the 'Minuet en Huit' for four couples.<sup>20</sup>

No variant of the polska occurs in the description, despite the name 'polskaminett'. However, in Denmark, there are also references to a quadrille being danced following the minuet. Types of Polsk-minuet are also mentioned both in Denmark and Sweden. On Fyn, in Denmark, both 'Mellevevt' and 'Polsk Melevet' are mentioned, but no descriptions of how they were danced are available. It is possible that these were two different variants specific to the area of eastern Nyland in Finland. In Sweden, Nils Månsson Mandelgren in Skåne also mentions both a minuet and a 'Pålsk-Mölevitt'. The polsk-minuet, it seems, become known in the area in the 1860s.<sup>21</sup>

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19 Heikel, p. 9.

20 Taubert, *Das Menuett*, pp. 70–76.

21 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 211, 214.



Fig. 14.8 A minuet may be danced in a ring. Elias Martin, *Dans på Sveaborg* [‘Picnic’ at Sveaborg] Fortress in Finland (1764), ink drawing. National Museum, Stockholm. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dans\\_p%C3%A5\\_Sveaborg\\_1764.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dans_p%C3%A5_Sveaborg_1764.jpg), public domain.

## Unpublished Descriptions of the Minuet in Finland

In his work *Dansbeskrivningar* [*Dance Descriptions*] (1938), Yngvar Heikel included not only complete dance descriptions but also incomplete descriptions, fragments, and mere mentions of dances. Therefore, it is both surprising and interesting that, as I shall next discuss, he made notes of, but left out of the publication, some information pertaining to the minuet. He presumably doubted the authenticity or veracity of the information, considering them unreliable. Yet Heikel could not have been familiar with certain variations of the European minuet, with their different formations and steps, since many of the sources available to today’s researchers did not exist in Heikel’s time or were not as readily accessible. I will analyze the notes here as Heikel wrote them; the sources are in his archives at Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.<sup>22</sup> Because his notes include the minuet steps and the starting formations of the dances, I will work through whether there were possible models among Europe’s fashionable dances for the dances described by his informants.

Heikel has two notes relating to quadrille sets. One relates to an account from Karl Hagert (b. 1859), a folk musician and land owner, in Sjundeå in Western Nyland. Heikel commented that the minuet Hagert described was like a quadrille in formation. Probably because Hagert admitted that he had seen this minuet danced only three times, Heikel flagged this information with a question mark.<sup>23</sup> The second note is from Pernå in eastern Nyland. Heikel

<sup>22</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 264–67; SLS 519; SLS 530; SLS 503; SLS 525; SLS 225.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 264.



commented that a woman (b. 1866) had only seen, never danced, the minuet but that she thought:

[...] that they [the dancers] stood in a square and that the girls from one side and the boys from the other first danced towards each other, followed by the other boys and girls from the same two sides. The steps started on the right foot, the women held out their skirts, they curtsied and bowed, took one another by the hand, and turned around. She did not remember anything else.<sup>24</sup>

Both of these notes may refer to a sequence in the 'Minuet en huit,' in which four couples dance in a square set and included the typical sequences of quadrille dances. Comparable formations in a square set, in which some sequences are danced with minuet steps, have been documented in Denmark.

From Pojo in Western Nyland, Heikel was provided more information which seems to show that two couples were needed to dance a minuet. According to the informant, the owner of Pehrsböle farm, Heikel attempted in 1897 to 'get old people to dance minett, two couples were supposed to dance it, but one person refused, so nothing came of it'.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps it was a polska-minuet because this could not be danced by only one couple.

From Borgå in eastern Nyland, there are two notes about the minuet step. One informant (b. 1867) described the steps completely different from those in the ordinary minuet. Unfortunately, Heikel did not note the description of the steps but instead said that the woman was not sure of them. He explained:

[She] specified that the steps were first taken to the sides starting to the left, then in a zigzag diagonally backwards, then in a zigzag forwards, then on the left past their partner with a turn to the right in the partner's place, after which the whole series was repeated so that you returned to your original position. Then they went forwards, took their partner by the right hand with a thumbhold, and turned clockwise, after which the same series of steps were repeated, and then the dance ended.<sup>26</sup>

It is possible that the dancers' steps to the left puzzled Heikel. This pattern of steps is more reminiscent of the Z-form minuet from 1700 than of the step pattern in other minuet choreographies. In the Z-form minuet, which Heikel presumably did not recognize, the first steps are danced sideways to the left. The dancers move forwards on the left past the partner to the opposite side, and the steps are repeated. Dancers also turn while holding hands with a

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24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

partner. A minuet step backwards is included in a minuet by the choreographer Rameau from 1725. Also, Taubert described the minuet step backwards, as well as explaining the minuet steps to the side and forwards.<sup>27</sup> In Sweden, there are some details in Mandelgren's description of the minuet in Skåne, which are reminiscent of the Heikel's note above, such as, 'each in opposite directions or forwards or farther apart backwards'.

The second note from Borgå in eastern Nyland is from the same informant. She mentioned that an old man wrote a figure '8' in the sand with his toe when he danced the minuet. It should be noted that the first version of the minuet, from the 1600s, followed a figure-eight pattern. Is it possible that this form of the minuet reached Borgå, Finland's second-oldest town? It may be possible since, at that time, Finland was part of Sweden. Alternatively, the woman may have been describing a version of the minuet that Eric Gustaf Ehrström mentioned as having been danced in Hauho, in 1811. If so, the 'Minuet en six' might be its inspiration. That minuet was danced by six people in two lines. In that version, participants dance a chain, without holding hands, and follow a path in the form of an eight. During the execution of the chain, it would be possible to draw an '8' in the sand with the toe. The minuet step is the usual type.<sup>28</sup>

From Nagu in the Turku archipelago, there is evidence of another different minuet about which Heikel also has not recorded much detail. His male informant (b. 1845) had danced the minuet but forgotten the steps. Heikel's recorded the following information:

They held each other by the right hand at the beginning of the dance and in the middle. When he was going to dance the minuet step, he alternately crossed one leg in front of the other, crossed over on the left, turned to the right, and took the steps without reference to the beat. After the minuet came a polska.<sup>29</sup>

According to Taubert, a cross-step was included in a minuet choreographed by Gottfried Taubert (no relation), who published a dance book in 1717. In this version, when a dancer steps to the left, the right foot is crossed either in front of or behind the left foot. Taubert pointed out that this dance teacher is the only one in the Baroque period who allowed the dancer to choose whether to cross in front or behind the weight-bearing foot.<sup>30</sup> From Finström on Åland, the 1960s

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27 Pierre Rameau, *The Dancing Master*, trans. by Cyril W. Beaumont ([1725]; Alton: Dance Books, 2003), p. 54; Taubert, *Das Menuett*, p. 84.

28 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 265.

29 Ibid.

30 Taubert, *Das Menuett*, p. 85.

researcher Viking Sundberg described a minuet with some similar step based on information from an informant born in 1882.<sup>31</sup>

From Hitis in the Turku archipelago, there is a description of a dance that begins in a circle. Heikel had received a letter from Erik Isaksson (b. 1869), a bank director and folk musician. Because Heikel does not cite the letter itself, but only makes reference to it, it may mean that Heikel did not believe that Isaksson's information could be correct. Heikel wrote:

The minuet was called minett. He had seen the minuet danced a few times, the last time in November 1886 at a wedding, when four couples in their 60s and 70s danced it. He thinks that all the couples first danced around in a circle but supposes that may be wrong. Then the women stood on one side and the men on the other. They formed couples holding each other by the left hand and began the steps with their right foot, but he did not remember which direction. He thinks that the dancers passed their partner on the right side and held hands with a thumbhold at least once during the dance, maybe on each side. Some light handclapping occurred, but no stamps, nor lifts onto the toes, but instead knee flexes, and occasionally the women held out their skirts. Bows and curtseys towards each other occurred, and both at the beginning and the end, everyone bowed to the musician. Afterwards, they danced a polska.<sup>32</sup>

The beginning of the dance is reminiscent of an English dance called the 'Sabina'. Dating from 1726, the Sabina includes a longways set formation for eight couples with a women's line and a men's line that includes minuet steps.<sup>33</sup> From Replot in Ostrobothnia, there is also a description that indicates that the minuet at some stage of the dance was danced in a circle. In 1898, Wilhelm Sjöberg, a folklife researcher, notated a minuet tune sung by Fredrika Gädde. She remembered that 'you first stood in two lines, which moved towards each other, and then in a second sequence, some of the dancers formed a circle'.<sup>34</sup>

H. A. Reinholm also made a note of a minuet from southwest Finland that began in a circle. Even in Denmark, there is a corresponding variant of a minuet in which dancers moved in a circular formation.

In Karleby in northern Ostrobothnia, Johan Werner Björk (1884–1967), noted a minuet that seemed to begin in a circle. Björk was studying at the University of Helsinki to be a physical education teacher, and at the same time, performed folk dances with Föreningen Brage [the Brage Association]. There he had,

31 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 265; *Beskrivning av Åländska Folkdanser* (Mariehamn: Ålands Ungdomsförbund, 1982), p. 60.

32 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 265–66; SLS 530.

33 Taubert, *Das Menuett*, pp. 66–68.

34 Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 266; SLS 66.

among other things, learned the minuet and gained an understanding of how the minuet was danced. He was also inspired to revive the minuet in Karleby, but the attempt failed when the young dancers could not learn the steps. In 1910, Björk recorded information about a minuet from Matts Heikkilä (b. 1838) who, in the 1860s and 1870s, had his own ship and traded with Stockholm. According to Björk's notes, the minuet Heikkilä remembered was danced as follows:

Everybody [starts] in a big circle, the girls on the inside. On the [second count, all dancers] lift onto the toes, hands in front of the chest, the second time above the head. On four, [they] bow and curtsy [to their partners]. When the partners change positions, elbow to elbow, [dancers] walk in a semi-circle, looking at each other politely. [Then they] march in four directions. [Then they form a] big ring in polska rhythm, [for] two to three bars. Then [the dancers' group] splits into two, [and] repeat. [More of the couples break away from the circle, until it is] down to two couple sets and then [all dancers return] back to the big circle.<sup>35</sup>

Probably a minuet step was taken at some point since Björk considered the dance a minuet. The starting formation is a big double circle, with the women on the inside. This may indicate some sequence in a contradance as well as the mention of 'march[ing] in four directions'—similar elements are found in a four-couple cotillion. The first half of the dance is a gigue [jig] and the other half is danced with minuet steps.<sup>36</sup> The sequence that might be the origin of the dance that Heikkilä mentioned which started with couples standing side by side in an open circle, and then the women were brought in to form one circle. References to 'the hands in front of the chest, the second time above the head' may indicate a sequence from a dance called allemande. According to Björk's note, this was followed by a dance in polska rhythm in a big circle, the big circle being divided into progressively smaller circles, down to two couple circles, and ended when everyone joined in one big circle again. No similar form of polska has been found in Ostrobothnia. One might speculate if Heikkilä had learned a 'modern' dance during his business trips to Stockholm.

We do not know what form the minuet had in the dances described in these unpublished notes. What we can see is that different fashionable versions of minuets also reached Finland. These versions spread and were danced by the population in the Swedish-speaking countryside.

35 Gunnel Biskop, 'Menuett i fyrkant eller i ring—också hos oss?', in *Folkmusik i förändring*. Folk och musik 1996 (Vasa: Finlands svenska Folkmusikinstitut, 1996), pp. 67–90.

36 Taubert, *Das Menuett*, pp. 57–60.

## To Twirl—a Way to Vary the Dance

In Chapter 6, it was explained that in Lappfjärd and Tjöck in Ostrobothnia, two minuets were danced one after the other as a part of ceremonial dances and that in the second minuet, one dancer turned (twirled) individually, that is, turned around after taking the cross-over step(s). This I have interpreted to mean that dancers varied the second minuet by turning after the cross-over step to emphasize that they were dancing two different minuets.



Fig. 14.9a and Fig. 14.9b Tradition bearers in Tjöck in Ostrobothnia in Finland twirl in their minuet at an event in Stockholm in 1987. Photographs by Stina Hahnsson.  
© Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.

This twirl was not unique to Lappfjärd and Tjöck but is also mentioned by informants in Oravais. There it was called ‘vingla på Jepo’ [stagger to Jeppo], which, in turn, may indicate that the turn was used also in Jeppo. Taubert mentioned that one could introduce variations in the minuet, among other things, by turning around individually. In the turn, one could use different steps, of which he provided examples, and with varying numbers of steps so

that the turn was faster or slower. For example, the turn may be executed over four counts with a quarter-turn on each count.<sup>37</sup> The origins of this turn are uncertain, but it may be that it was taken from the minuet variant described by Eric Gustaf Ehrström in his diary in 1811, as discussed above.



Fig. 14.10 Common people in Nyland in Sunday dress, c. 1808. Watercolour by C.P. Elfström. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.EDC778A5BFA4727EB8E5BC4D51C2ABF0>, CC BY 4.0.

### The Minuet in Contradances in Denmark and Hard-to-Interpret Notes from Sweden

Minuet steps have been included as a sequence or part of other dances, including contradances. In Denmark on Lolland-Falster, the minuet is part of 'menuet med pisk' [minuet with a whip, a couple dance], 'Lang Minue't [longways minuet, a longways set], and 'Rund Minuet' [round minuet, danced in a large circle].<sup>38</sup> On Ærø, the minuet forms part of 'Den med Gabet i' [the one with a break in it, a quadrille] and in 'Kontra med Mollevit' [contradance with a minuet, also a quadrille], the latter being also mentioned on Bornholm.<sup>39</sup> Another dance from Bornholm, the 'Longsomma Gjærted' [slow Gertrude, a longways set] also had minuet steps added later.<sup>40</sup>

37 Biskop, 'Menuett i fyrkant eller i ring', pp. 67–90; Gunnel Biskop, 'Om svängningen i menuetten i Tjöck', in *Folkdansaren* 52.1 (2004), 10–14; Heikel, p. 25; Taubert, *Höfische Tänze*, p. 182.

38 *Gamle Danse fra Lolland-Falster*, 2. udgave (København: Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme, 1996).

39 *Gamle Danse fra Fyn og Øerne*. Samlet og beskrevet af Fru Ane Marie Kjellerup (København: Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme, 1949).

40 Oral assignment by Anders Christensen on 11 February 2006.

Some notes and descriptions from Sweden are difficult to understand. Those from Skellefteå landsförsamling and from Skåne by Mandelgren, for example, are so unclear that it is a challenge to decipher how the dances might have been danced. An archive called the Philochoros Collection at Uppsala University Library includes another such description of a minuet. This description is from Luleå, and was composed by a Parliament member named Bergström in the summer of 1883. The cryptic description explained:

No introduction, two to six couples:

Original formation to the audience, leading the lady into place, bow and curtsey to partner [Struck out: 'Two lines of men and women, facing'. On the opposite page is a drawing showing a men's line and a women's line]

- 1) Balancé back and forth
- 2) Traversé giving hands and return to place
- 3) [Struck out: 'the whole line dances the same step'] starting with the right foot [Struck out: 'step starting with the left foot'] traversé step starting with left, and traversé giving hands, etc. (Left hand?) [Struck out: 'Reveranse'] Traversé giving two hands. Reverence: balancé with two hands, left hand released, greeting the audience Greeting to partner<sup>41</sup>

This account may have been recorded by Gustaf Sundström, who was from Norrland and was dance leader for the Philochoros folk-dance group, which consisted of students at Uppsala University. Features of the standard minuet are apparent: the initial formation beside one's partner, the man's bow to his partner, leading her to stand opposite him, thus forming a women's line and a men's line, and then the man and the woman switching positions with one another and returning to their original places. At the end, men released the left hand for a bow to the audience and the lady. The fact that the potential author of the note (Sundström) used French terminology could indicate that he had attended dance classes and had learned the French terms from a dance teacher who used them. It is equally possible that Bergström, the informant, had participated in dance classes in order to learn both the dance and the terminology, giving him the ability to describe the minuet using these words to Sundström.

## Mixing the Minuet and Polska

Some dance and music researchers believe that the minuet and polska were mixed.<sup>42</sup> Their observations often refer to the music, but they are not explicit

41 Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 107–08; Uppsala universitetsbibliotek, Philochoros collection.

42 For example, Tobias Norlind, *Svensk folkmusik och folkdans*, Natur och kultur 96 (Stockholm: Stockholms Bokförlag, 1930), p. 134; Andersson, *VI A 1 Äldre Dansmelodier*, p. 120.

about this. On the contrary, my research has not revealed any points of mixing in the dance forms anywhere in the Nordic countries during the time the minuet and the polska were part of the living tradition. Musically, the minuet and the polska have been closely related since the beginning of the 1700s, and several researchers have pointed out that minuet tunes were transformed into polska tunes. In my opinion, when the two dance forms fell out of use in large parts of the Nordic region, the melodies continued to survive, as they still do today.

Without the support of the dances, mixing and conversion within the music became possible. On the other hand, other minuet forms not directly derived from the ordinary minuet have not been transformed, such as polska-minuet. This I do not construe as mixing. Furthermore, the inclusion of minuet in sequences of some other dances, including both English longways set dances and quadrilles, I do not see as evidence of mixing between minuet and polska.

## Concluding Remarks

Throughout the Nordic region, the ordinary minuet has been the most common minuet form and the one with the greatest longevity. The prevalence of that form did not hinder later forms of the minuet from achieving popularity; minuets in both square and circle formations have been danced. Considering where the latter forms have occurred, one can see that there are regions in which the minuet did not play a significant, ceremonial role in peasant weddings.

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# 15. Minuet Structures

*Petri Hoppu, Elizabeth Svarstad, and  
Anders Christensen*

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This chapter examines the steps, figures, and overall structure of the ordinary minuet and its Danish and Finnish variations. A common narrative used to explain the minuet's emergence is that it evolved from a French folk dance called the '*Branle de Poitou*'. Dance teacher and historian Melusine Wood claimed that the originating dance was, more precisely, *Branle á Mener de Poitou*, a group dance with one couple at a time acting as a leading couple. In this dance, the dancers moved in a chain following the leading couple, creating a serpentine figure on the dance floor while dancing.<sup>1</sup> Wood suggested that the original minuet was danced by one couple at a time with similar steps and figures as in *Branle á Mener de Poitou* and that the serpentine figure evolved gradually into the 'Z-figure', the most important aspect of the dance which came to be called the minuet.<sup>2</sup>

This interpretation has been popular among dance history enthusiasts but it has also frequently been disputed, because, according to Julia Sutton, there is little real evidence to support it.<sup>3</sup> Music scholar David Tunley also has cast doubts on the link between the minuet and *Branle de Poitou*.<sup>4</sup> Other dances have been suggested as the minuet's potential predecessors. Karl-Heinz Taubert argued that the ceremonial introductions and closings, as well as the bounces and rises, were brought to the minuet from the *courante*, Ludvig XIV's favourite dance.<sup>5</sup> Sutton, for her part, believed the minuet's possible Italian origins to be

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- 1 Melusine Wood, *More Historical Dances* (London: The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing, 1956), p. 84.
  - 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.
  - 3 Julia Sutton, 'The Minuet: An Elegant Phoenix', *Dance Chronicle*, 8 (1985), 119–52 (p. 136).
  - 4 David Tunley, *Couperin* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982), p. 102.
  - 5 Karl-Heinz Taubert, *Das Menuett* (Zürich: Pan, 1988), p. 20.

the most persuasive interpretation. Unlike Wood, she hypothesized that the S-figure that preceded the Z-figure may have arrived in France with Italian dancing masters as early as the mid-sixteenth century. However, Sutton thought that any evidence concerning the geographical and chronological origins of the minuet figures was circumstantial, and there was no way to find conclusive proof for any theories about them.<sup>6</sup>

### *Le Menuet Ordinaire*

The ordinary minuet, *le menuet ordinaire*, was introduced in 1700 by Louis Pécour.<sup>7</sup> Previously it had undergone several decades of development, especially by the most famous seventeenth-century dancing master, Pierre Beauchamp, at the French court. According to Karl-Heinz Taubert, the minuet's main figure was first in the shape of an '8', then it later changed to a '2' or left-facing 'S'; only in Pécour's version was it changed it to a 'Z'.<sup>8</sup>

### Minuet Steps

The minuet consisted mainly of the basic step *pas de menuet* [minuet step]. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the minuet step reached the form that can be called 'classic', though with different variations. Gottfried Taubert named these *pas de menuet en fleuret* and *pas de cour*. In addition, new steps were developed throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

A minuet step has six counts, and therefore it uses two bars of music. This step contains four placements of the foot, or transfers of weight, and two bendings of the knee, called *pliés*. The minuet step is a *pas composé* [compound step], which means that it comprises two or more basic steps. The first part of the step is a *demi-coupé*: a step, and a *plié*. The second part of the minuet step is a *pas de bourré*: three steps and a *plié*. The minuet step always starts with the right foot for both the woman and the man, independent of which direction it is performed, whether it is forward, backward, to the right, or to the left.

The minuet step can be described like this [with counts noted in brackets]: one step forward with the right foot on the first count in the music [1], *plié* on

6 Sutton, pp. 138–40.

7 Tobias Norlind, *Dansens historia med särskild hänsyn till dansen i Sverige* (Stockholm: Nordisk Rotogravyr, 1941), pp. 59–60.

8 Karl-Heinz Taubert, *Höfische Tänze* (Mainz: Pan, 1968), p. 165.

9 Gottfried Taubert, *Rechtschaffener Tanzmeister oder Gründliche Erklärung der Französischen Tanz-Kunst* (Leipzig: Friedrich Lanckischens Erben, 1717), pp. 618–621; Taubert, *Das Menuett*, pp. 88–93.

the right foot on the second count [2], three steps forward on the third, fourth, and fifth counts [3–5] using a left foot, right foot, left foot pattern, and a *plié* on the left leg on the last count [6]. This ‘step’ is called the *pas de menuet à deux mouvements* because it contains two *pliés*. One *mouvement* consists of an *élevé* (a stretching of the leg while the dancer rises up onto the ball of the foot) and a *plié*.<sup>10</sup> This vertical movement is what in the Norwegian folk-dance terminology is called *svikt*.<sup>11</sup> The basic structure of the *pas de menuet* is presented in Table 15.1.

Table 15.1: The basic structure of the minuet step

Bar	Beat	Count	Movement
1:	1	1	Step with right foot
	2	2	<i>Plié</i>
	3	3	Step with left foot
2:	1	4	Step with right foot
	2	5	Step with left foot
	3	6	<i>Plié</i>

There are a significant number of variations on the minuet step where the steps and the *pliés* are organised in different ways during the bar, for example, the *pas de menuet un seul mouvement*, *pas de menuet en fleuret*, and *pas de menuet à trois mouvements*.<sup>12</sup> *Pas de menuet à trois mouvements* has a third *mouvement* on counts 5 and 6: a *pas jété* [a small jump]. Variations on the minuet step show different ways of elaborating a basic step by using different rhythms. Such varieties in marking the music create dynamics and tension in the relationship between the dance and the music.

Karl Heinz Taubert identified the basic *pas de menuet* as a hemiola since the even rhythmic movement (2+2+2) breaks the triple rhythm of the music (3+3).<sup>13</sup>

## The Basic Form

Several European dancing masters describe the ordinary minuet. Some of the most central descriptions are those by English dancing master Kellom

10 Rameau, *Le maître à danser* (Paris: Rollin Fils, 1748), pp. 67–70.

11 For an analysis of the vertical movements in the minuet step, see Egil Bakka, Siri Mæland, and Elizabeth Svarstad, ‘Vertikalitet og den franske 1700-talls menuetten’, *Folkdansforskning i Norden* 36 (2012), 38–46. See also Chapter 16 in this volume.

12 Taubert, *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister*, p. 618.

13 Taubert, *Das Menuett*, p. 89.

Tomlinson and German dancing masters Gottfried Taubert and Carl Joseph von Feldtenstein, in addition to Rameau.<sup>14</sup> The ordinary minuet had a standardised form of six figures, presented in Table 15.2.

Table 15.2: The basic form of *le menuet ordinaire*

1 <sup>st</sup> figure	Introduction
2 <sup>nd</sup> figure	Z-figure
3 <sup>rd</sup> figure	Presentation of the right hand
4 <sup>th</sup> figure	Presentation of the left hand
5 <sup>th</sup> figure	Z-figure
6 <sup>th</sup> figure	Presentation of both hands

In the first figure, the introduction, the partners hold hands and perform the first steps forward, and then they move around in a circle in the middle of the floor. After the circle is completed, they let go of their hands and move in opposite directions on a diagonal to end the figure standing in opposite corners.

Figure number two, the Z-figure, is the main part of the dance. In this figure, the partners begin by moving sideways along the edges of an imaginary square standing in opposite corners of the dance floor again. Next, they move forward towards each other on the diagonal line of the Z, they meet and pass each other in the middle, and after having reached the center, they continue to the place where the partner started the Z-figure. These movements on the floor create two parallel Z-figures as each dancer forms the shape by moving first to one side, dancing forward along a diagonal towards the partner, passing the partner as the dancer continues to the opposite end of the dance floor, and finally stepping to the side again to end the pattern.

According to Rameau, the Z-figure usually consists of six minuet steps (across twelve bars of music) during which the partners change places (see Table 15.3). However, there were variations to this structure, as English dancing master S. J. Gardiner explained in his book *A Dancing Master's Instruction Book*

14 Kellom Tomlinson, *The Art of Dancing: Explained by Reading and Figures; Whereby the Manner of Performing the Steps is Made Easy by a New and Familiar Method* (London: the Author, 1735); Taubert, *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister*; Carl Josef von Feldtenstein, *Erweiterung der Kunst nach der Chorographie zu Tanzen, Tänze zu Erfinden, und Aufzusetzen, wie auch Anweisung zu Verschiedenen National-Tänzen als zu Englischen, Deutschen, Schwäbischen, Pohnischen, Hannak- Masur- Kosak- und Hungarischen mit Kupfern nebst einer Anzahl Englischer Tänze* (Braunschweig: Carl Josef von Feldtenstein, 1772).

(1786).<sup>15</sup> Gardiner said that the standard figure consists of nine minuet steps, but the 'modern' figure, as he called it, of eight.

Table 15.3: The structure of the Z-figure

Bar	Movement
1–4	Two minuet steps to the left.
5–8	Two minuet steps diagonally forward, partners change places, passing right shoulders, turning left (in some descriptions right) at the end.
9–12	Two minuet steps to the right.

In the figure called the 'right-hand' presentation, the partners dance towards each other into the middle of the floor. They meet and then each holds the partner's the right hand and they dance in a circle together; they then release their hands and move in opposite directions performing a small half circle away from each other before they again face each other. In the figure called the 'left-hand' presentation, they again dance towards one another in the center of the dance floor, take each other's left hand, and dance one circle together before they move sideways to opposite corners of the dance floor to stand on the diagonal again. The next Z-figure is performed in the same way as described in the Table 15.3.

In the presentation of both hands, they move sideways, slowly circling towards each other, and then they hold both hands while dancing a full circle together. After the circle, they let go of one hand and turn to face the front of the room while they dance backward steps to complete the dance in their starting positions. When the dance is finished, they repeat the *révérence* (bows, honour) that marked the beginning of the dance.

The standardized form of six figures was developed and established by dancing masters employed at the French court, and it spread to other courts all over Europe. Only small variations occur in the different descriptions of the ordinary minuet offered in many of the European dance manuals from the eighteenth century.

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15 Madeleine Inglehearn, *Minuet in the Late Eighteenth Century: Including a Reprint of S. J. Gardiner's 'A Dancing Master's Instruction Book' of 1786* (London: Madeleine Inglehearn, 1998), p. 15.

## Danish and Finnish Minuets

Several minuets from Denmark and Swedish-speaking Finland are known today, and, to a great extent, they follow the form and structure of *le menuet ordinaire*. Some variations, however, exhibit remarkable differences. The dance style among ordinary people in the Nordic countries, documented in detail since the early twentieth century, differs clearly from that of the European courts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

It should be added, though, that according to Niels Blicher's late-eighteenth-century description, male dancers in the Danish countryside eagerly performed gestures and movements, which referred to the dance of the upper classes.<sup>16</sup> Later documents from Denmark do not mention this kind of behaviour in the minuet anymore.

### Minuet Steps

The basic structure of the minuet steps in most Danish and Finnish variations is similar to that of *pas de menuet*, and the main figure in these variations also resembles the Z-figure. However, the Finnish variations follow a pattern of eight bars of music instead of twelve bars.

The Danish variations follow the same structure as in the ordinary minuet. The main figure consists of six minuet steps (in Danish folk-dance terminology: *menuettrinn* or *mollevittrinn*) across the music of twelve bars. The minuet is danced in longways formation (men and women in opposite lines, Fig. 15.1).

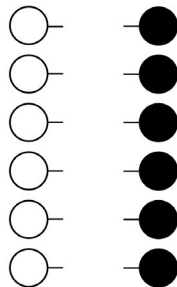


Fig. 15.1 Longways formation (black pin = male, white pin = female). © Petri Hoppu.

<sup>16</sup> Niels Blicher, *Topographie over Vium Præstekald* (Copenhagen: Søren Vasegaard, 1924).

Four steps are first danced in place or moving a little forward and backward, after which partners change places with two steps passing partner right shoulders and turning left on the opposite side. Following the descriptions from *Ærø* and *Støvring*, the beginning of the main figure is presented in Tables 15.4 and 15.5.

Table 15.4: The beginning of the main figure, *Ærø*<sup>17</sup>

Bar	Beat	Count	Movement
1:	1	1	The right foot moves forward on a diagonal to the left.
	2	2	Pause.
	3	3	The left foot follows the right foot and moves forward in the same direction.
2:	1	4	The right foot moves a little past the left foot in the same direction.
	2	5	The left foot continues a little past the right foot in the same direction; upon finishing, dancers turned to their partner and left side to the left side with the dancer to partner's right.
	3	6	Pause.

Table 15.5: The beginning of the main figure, *Støvring*

Bar	Beat	Count	Movement
1:	1	1	The right foot moves backward.
	2	2	Pause.
	3	3	The left foot moves backward a little past the right foot.
2:	1	4	Dancers step on the right foot in place while turning 1/4 to the right.
	2	5	The left foot moves forward past the right foot, and the right heel rises.
	3	6	Pause.

The Finnish variations' main figure differs from the Danish and ordinary minuet since the main pattern consists merely of four steps across eight bars of music. In most Finnish variations, partners first dance two steps toward each other,

<sup>17</sup> *Gamle Danse fra Fyn og Øerne* (Copenhagen: Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme, 1949), pp. 68–71.



following by partners changing places. Similar to the Danish variations, while changing places, partners pass right shoulders and turn left on the opposite side of the dance formation. In Finnish-Swedish folk-dance terminology, the first two steps are usually called minuet steps (in Swedish: *menuettsteg*), whereas the last two are called cross over steps (*övergångssteg*). Similar to Danish variations, the minuet is danced in longways formation as well.

Using the descriptions from Lappfjärd and Purmo, the beginning of the main figure is presented in Tables 15.6 and 15.7:

Table 15.6: The beginning of the main figure, Lappfjärd<sup>18</sup>

Bar	Beat	Count	Movement
1:	1	1	The right foot moves forward, turning the right shoulder very slightly forward.
	2	2	The left foot moves lightly to the heel of weight-bearing right foot, but no weight is placed on it.
	3	3	The left foot returns back to its original place.
2:	1	4	The right foot moves back, turning the right shoulder back.
	2	5	The dancer steps on the left foot in place.
	3	6	The right foot is dragged past the left foot.

Table 15.7: The beginning of the main figure, Purmo<sup>19</sup>

Bar	Beat	Count	Movement
1:	1	1	The right foot is dragged forward and to the right, turning the right shoulder slightly to the right as weight is placed on the right foot.
	2	2	The left foot moves lightly to the heel of the weight-bearing right foot.
	3	3	The left foot returns to its original place, turning the right shoulder back.
2:	1	4	The right foot closes left foot.

18 Yngvar Heikel, *VI Folkdans B Dansbeskrivningar. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 268 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1938), pp. 16–18.

19 *Ibid.*, pp 34–35.

	2	5	The left foot is dragged forward and to the left as weight is placed on the left foot.
	3	6	The right foot is dragged past the left foot in an arch forward and to the right.

The main figure of ordinary minuet consisted of twelve-bar structures, i.e., six minuet steps in each section. This form is found in the Danish minuets as well, whereas the Finnish minuets most often have an eight-bar structure. There are, however, also eight-bar structures in some Danish minuets, which are a part of a contra dance. The comparison of the different main figures is presented in Table 15.8.

Table 15.8: The comparison of the main figures

	Ordinary minuet	Ærø	Støvring	Lappfjärd	Purmo
<b>Basic step (starting upbeat)</b>	<i>Plié</i> -step- <i>plié</i> -step-step	Pause-step-pause-step-step-step		Drag-step-pause-step-step-step	
<b>Length of the main figure</b>	Z-figure 12 bars	Main figure 12 bars		Main figure 8 bars	
<b>Parts of the main figure: bars 1–4</b>	steps to the left	steps to the left and back	steps in place or to the left and back	steps in place	steps in place or sideways
<b>5–8</b>	changing places	changing places		changing places	
<b>9–12</b>	steps to the right	steps in place	steps to the left and back	N/A	

What is common in all three cases is the practice of changing places with one's partner. Otherwise, there are different ways of dancing the minuet steps towards the partner. The ordinary minuet involves practically constant movement, whereas both Danish and Finnish minuets include steps taken in place.

Moreover, in Danish minuets, dancers also move either directly or diagonally to the left and returning back the same route. In some Finnish minuets, especially in the Nykarleby region, they move clearly to the right and left before changing places. However, the Finnish type uses movements that are considerably shorter than those in the ordinary minuet or in Danish ones, lasting only one minuet step

or fewer in each direction. Minuets from the Nykarleby region differ from other documented Finnish minuets mostly due to their somewhat vague structure: the beginning of each step is not always easy to determine, and the directions of the steps as well as turning the upper body are considerably different from those in other Finnish minuets.<sup>20</sup> As we have discussed previously, some of these unique features of Nykarleby region minuets can be found in Danish minuets as well.

Minuet dancers in Swedish Ostrobothnia, when interviewed by Petri Hoppu, revealed that they do not use the concept of a 'minuet step'. They emphasized the relation between music and dance when asked how they knew how to dance correctly. According to Hoppu, the minuets in Nykarleby region and probably more commonly in a rural context have not been experienced as consisting of separate steps. The basis for dancing is, rather, the reiteration of the basic movement sequence of the minuet with four steps and two 'breaks' in a specific order and with specific relation to music.<sup>21</sup> Since the steps have not been seen as autonomous units, the dance has been flexible, making the multiple structure variations possible.

## The Basic Form

The basic form of *le menuet ordinaire* can be found in most Danish and Finnish minuets, although its different parts are presented differently. They do not contain the reverence towards the spectators at the beginning and in the end, but otherwise, the resemblance is evident. The basic forms of the four Danish and Finnish-Swedish examples are presented in Tables 15.9–15.12.

Table 15.9: The basic form, Ærø<sup>22</sup>

1 <sup>st</sup> part	Introduction: A reverence to one's partner. Steps in place.
2 <sup>nd</sup> part	Main figure.
3 <sup>rd</sup> part	Hand figure: Holding right hands, couples make a half-turn clockwise. Holding left hands, couples make a half turn counterclockwise.

20 Petri Hoppu, *Symbolien ja sanattomuuden tanssi: Menuetti Suomessa 1700-luvulta nykyaikaan* (Helsinki: SKS, 1999), pp. 331–41.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 411–15.

22 *Gamle Danse fra Fyn og Øerne* (Copenhagen: Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme, 1949), pp. 68–71.

4 <sup>th</sup> part	Main figure.
5 <sup>th</sup> part	Finale: Partners grasp both hands and make a whole turn clockwise. A reverence to one's partner.

Table 15.10: The basic form, Støvring

1 <sup>st</sup> part	Introduction: The introduction is danced only by the first couple, who make a whole turn to the left with four minuet steps.
2 <sup>nd</sup> part	Main figure.
3 <sup>rd</sup> part	Gentlemen make a signal by rotating their fists in front of their chests, and later they make a hand clap as a signal. Hand figure: Holding right hands, couples make a half-turn clockwise and then return. Holding left hands, couples make a half-turn counterclockwise and return.
4 <sup>th</sup> part	Main figure.
5 <sup>th</sup> part	Finale: Holding right hands, couples make a half-turn clockwise and return. Couples perform a reverence and then stamp the floor.

Table 15.11: The basic form, Lappfjård<sup>23</sup>

1 <sup>st</sup> part	Introduction: All dancers stamp in place at the beginning of the minuet. The couples make a half-turn clockwise holding right hands.
2 <sup>nd</sup> part	Main figure.

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23 Heikel, pp. 16–18.

3 <sup>rd</sup> part	Gentlemen make a signal by clapping their hands.  Hand figure:  Holding right hands, couples turn clockwise, stamping twice at the beginning of each minuet step.  Holding left hands, couples turn counterclockwise in a similar manner.
4 <sup>th</sup> part	Main figure.
5 <sup>th</sup> part	Gentlemen make a signal by clapping their hands.  Finale:  Holding right hands, couples make a half-turn clockwise.  All dancers stamp in place and finish the dance by performing a reverence.

Table 15.12: The basic form, Purmo<sup>24</sup>

(1 <sup>st</sup> part)	No specific introduction: dance couples remain still in the longways formation hand in hand, waiting for the dance to begin.
2 <sup>nd</sup> part	Main figure.
3 <sup>rd</sup> part	Hand figure:  Holding right hands, couples make a half-turn clockwise, starting with gentlemen's stamp and clap.  Holding left hands, couples make a half-turn counter-clockwise.
4 <sup>th</sup> part	Main figure.
5 <sup>th</sup> part	Couples each take a step with the right foot towards the partner (gentlemen clapping), ending with feet together.

The beginning of the Danish and Finnish minuets takes place either in one line, with couples hand in hand and facing the same direction, or in two lines, with partners facing each other. The first type is found in the variations from *Ærø* and *Lappfjärd*, where the gentleman leads the lady to the opposite side before the main figure starts. In *Ærø*, there is a reverence towards the partner before this. The *Støvring* variation starts with one couple turning counterclockwise hand

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24 Ibid., pp. 34–36.

in hand before the main figure. The variation from Purmo does not include any specific introduction, but the dance begins immediately with the main figure.

The main figure similarly takes place in all examples, including the ordinary minuet. It contains minuet steps in place, minuet steps sideways or forward and back, and minuet steps in which partners change places with the partners. Typically, the partners pass each other on the left, and they often turn toward each other while passing. The figure can be repeated as long as the gentleman (in the ordinary minuet) or the leading gentleman/all gentlemen (in other examples) wish.

Before the next part, couples begin by turning, hand in hand; then the gentleman or gentlemen make a gesture raising one hand (ordinary minuet) or give a signal such as clapping, stamping, or rotating their hands (other examples). In the Danish variation from Støvring, gentlemen first rotate their fists and, immediately before taking their partner's hand, clap. The most complicated signals take place in several Finnish variations from the Nykarleby region where they typically consist of one signal stamp by the leading gentleman, followed by a series of several stamps by all the gentlemen; this is repeated followed by three more handclaps by all the gentlemen before they each extend a hand to their partner.<sup>25</sup>

The hand figure in the middle of the dance is found in all the examples. In the ordinary minuet the partners first hold right hands and make a circle and then immediately hold left hands and make a circle the other direction. The Danish minuet variations have the same feature of turning when holding first the right and then the left hands. In most Finnish variations, one can find several examples where the partners turn only when they are holding their right hands, although the examples from Lappfjärd and Purmo do contain instances of turning while holding both the right and left hands. The variation from Lappfjärd is closest to the ordinary minuet in that turns while holding right and left hands are completed immediately one after the other, whereas in other examples, several minuet steps are danced between the turns.

After the main figure, which is repeated similarly as at the beginning, the finale of the minuet is danced. In the ordinary minuet, this is done first with partners joining both hands and turning clockwise around, after which they return to their starting positions. Also, in both Danish examples, the partners turn while holding both hands. In contrast, in all known Finnish variations of the minuet, partners either hold one hand and turn clockwise or just finish the dance facing each other, with or without holding hand in hand. In Danish and

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<sup>25</sup> Hoppu, p. 359.

Finnish minuets, the dancers stand in a longways formation facing each other at the end of the dance, rather than side by side as in the ordinary minuet.

## Concluding Remarks

In sum, it can be said that the overall structure of the ordinary minuet is found in most Danish and Finnish vernacular minuet variations. The three basic elements analysed here—the minuet step, main figure, and basic form of the dance—have remained recognizably similar over the centuries, although their details may vary. This shows that these three basic elements are the most fundamental elements of the ordinary minuet from the dancers' perspective. The reiteration of their structured combination creates the embodied experience of the dance.

Of course, there is more to the minuet than these elements. When it comes to style or dance technique, the differences between the ordinary minuet and its Danish and Finnish counterparts become significant. Ordinary people who do not learn the minuet in dance schools may omit the sophisticated steps or lack graceful arms. Some features of the minuet may have fallen out of use in the rural tradition over the centuries, as they have not been preserved in a literary form. Nevertheless, the basic elements are learned through imitation and embodied experiences while observing others or participating in dances.

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# 16. New Perspectives on the Minuet Step

*Egil Bakka, Elizabeth Svarstad, and  
Siri Mæland*

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This chapter discusses how the knowledge about the Nordic folk minuet, made available in this book, may give a broader basis for interpreting the historical sources regarding the basic French eighteenth-century minuet step. The Nordic minuet forms have been in continual use since the seventeenth century and are still used as folk dance and on the stage.<sup>1</sup> There is a striking structural resemblance between these forms and the minuet as a court dance. The knowledge of how the minuet is being danced in Nordic tradition, found in the Nordic Folk Minuet as well as at Danish Royal Ballet, will cast new light on the minuet step described in earlier centuries.

## Main Sources for Reconstructing *Le Menuet Ordinaire*

Earlier parts of this book have already scrutinised the sources available for the reconstruction of *le menuet ordinaire*: The descriptions by the dancing masters are practically the only ones used in historical dance circles. From the Nordic research environment we now bring in a large material of film recordings with traditional dancers who have their dance in direct unbroken line of transmission since the seventeenth century. There are still a large number of folk dancers transmitting the knowledge from these people. In addition there is an unbroken historical connection sustained by the Royal Ballet in Copenhagen via the theatrical work *Elverhøj* (see Chapter 10).

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1 We use 'folk dance' in the sense of traditional dancing in rural society including the mirroring of this dancing by the revival folk dance movement.

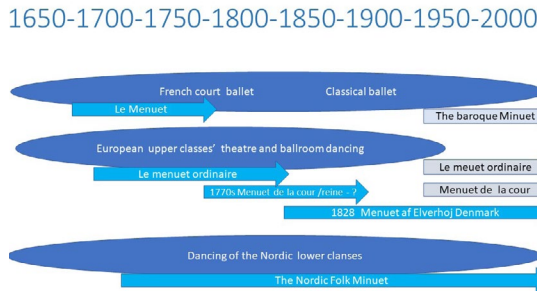


Fig. 16.1 Schematic illustration by Egil Bakka of the context where forms of the minuet were transmitted (dark blue), duration of the minuet forms (light blue) and reconstructions (grey).

In addition, we will thoroughly describe how a tool developed in Norway, the '*svikt* analysis', may be helpful in the comparison and interpretation of the verticality in the minuet step of past and present.<sup>2</sup> The tool departs from a study of the locomotion mechanics and therefore speaks to the function of the *mouvement* and the distribution of *pliés* (bending) and *elevés* (rising) in eighteenth century dance descriptions. Based on physics and anatomy, the *svikt* analysis is, in its basic principle, not culturally constructed. It therefore has the potential to be applied to any type of human locomotion, including that which is described in historical sources.

The historical material we will use for our experiment is:

- The description of Minuet in Pierre Rameau's *Dancing Master* (1748)
- Feuillet notation of the minuet step for *le menuet ordinaire*
- Feuillet notation from Kellom Tomlinson in 1735
- William Hogarth's informal description of the vertical movements in the minuet from 1772<sup>3</sup>

Keeping the *svikt* patterns of the folk minuet in mind, we identify the vertical movements in all four versions above with *svikt* analysis. The *svikt* is comparable

2 Egil Bakka and Siri Mæland, 'The Manipulation of Body Weight for Locomotion—Labanotation and the Svikt Analysis', in *The Mystery of movement: Studies in Honor of János Fügedi*, ed. by Dóra Pál-Kovács and Vivien Szónyi (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2020), pp. 286–308.

3 William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty: Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste*. by William Hogarth (London: Printed by W. Strahan, for Mrs. Hogarth, and sold by her at her House in Leicester-Fields, 1772).

to the signs for *pliés* (bending/sinking) and *elevés* (rising) in Feuillet notation: ‘Sinkings are the Bendings of the knees. Risings are when we rise from a Sink or erect our selves’.<sup>4</sup> Taken together, a *plié* and an *elevé* is called a *movement*.<sup>5</sup> A *movement* corresponds clearly to the Norwegian concept of a *svikt*.

From our experience as researchers and as dance practitioners and teachers, we know that dance descriptions and notations do not include all aspects of the movement pattern they try to convey. This contention is based on our practical experience and knowledge, which also contributes to the analysis. By adding new interpretations of old sources we juxtapose more understandings of the past, presenting them as a multitude of possibilities.<sup>6</sup>

## The Project History

The idea of using folk versions and principles of biomechanical locomotion to aid the interpretation of historical minuet descriptions originated with Egil Bakka.<sup>7</sup> He felt that baroque and historical dance in general seemed strained and lacked the flow that is considered an asset in most other types of dance. By reconstructing dances from other kinds of dance descriptions, Bakka learned that it was necessary to compare textual accounts of dances with ordinary practices as it seemed hardly possible to translate words and symbols into meaningful movements without being able to refer them to a related dance practice. He presented some of these ideas at a workshop of Nordic and French dance historians in Paris in June 2008, which was also a point of departure for this book. Some of the subsequent development of these ideas has been a sub-project of this book.

To test his ideas, Bakka invited Elizabeth Svarstad, a dancer trained in ballet, baroque dance, and Feuillet notation, to form a joint project. Bakka’s research assistant at that time, Siri Mæland, also participated at oral presentations to assist

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4 ‘Plié, est quand on plie les genoux. Elevé, est quand on les étend.’ Raoul-Auger Feuillet, *Chorégraphie* (Paris: [n.pub.], 1701), trans. by and qtd. in John Weaver, *Orchesography* (London: [n.pub.], 1706; repr. Bologna: Presso Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1983), p. 2.

5 Wendy Hilton, *Dance and Music of Court and Theatre. Selected Writings of Wendy Hilton* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1997), p. 75.

6 Lena Hammegren, ‘Many Sources, Many Voices’, in *Rethinking Dance History: Issues and Methodologies*, ed. by Geraldine Morris and Lorraine Nicholas (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 136–47.

7 György Martin had already use to folk dance material in the interpretation of historical chain dance descriptions; Martin, György, ‘Die Branles von Arbeau und die osteuropaischen Kettentanz’, *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 15 (1973), 101–28.

in the introduction of *svikt* analysis. Svarstad and Mæland started an experiment that involved each performing a version of the minuet step—first, from the perspective of a ballet dancer, then from the perspective of a folk dancer. The subproject has been presented several times, mostly in the framework of the book project.<sup>8</sup> Its ideas, thus, have been discussed, questioned, and commented on by researchers and expert practitioners from many parts of the field of dance. Some of these scholars have embraced the project ideas; others have been provoked or sceptical. The discussions, comments, and feedback have been important for the development of the theory and an article.<sup>9</sup>

While engaging feedback from dance experts, the Bakka, Svarstad, and Mæland worked in tandem to develop the practice. At one point after performing the minuet regularly, Svarstad was asked by a musician with whom she had worked closely for many years whether something had changed in the way she danced the steps. This musician is not only educated in baroque music, but also plays for folk dances, and dances herself. Her observation was very interesting, suggesting a visible bodily development in Svarstad's execution of the minuet step. Although Svarstad has studied baroque dance for many years, her involvement in the *svikt* analysis changed the way she performs the bendings and stretchings of the minuet.

## Historical Dance—Baroque Dance

Much current interest in the minuet is rooted in the historical-dance or baroque-dance movement, which started in the 1950s when pioneers reconstructed dances from the eighteenth-century European courts. Melusine Wood in England, Wendy Hilton in the US, Francine Lancelot in France, and Karl-Heinz Taubert in Germany were among the leading pioneers, dancers, and educators who contributed to the work in the beginning.<sup>10</sup> They and others collected, analysed, interpreted, and reconstructed dances from historical sources, producing books, manuals, and videos, starting clubs, networks, and workshops, and also creating professional companies and dance performances. Although these researchers

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8 Svarstad and Mæland also presented the project at the conference 'La danse française et son rayonnement (1600–1800)' in Versailles in 2012. See <https://chateauversailles-recherche.fr/francais/colloques-et-journees-d-etudes/archives-1996-2020/colloques-et-journees-d-etudes-101/la-danse-francaise-et-son.html>

9 For a draft version of the article, see Egil Bakka, Siri Mæland, and Elizabeth Svarstad, 'Vertikalitet i den franske 1700-talls menuetten', *Folkdansforskning i Norden*, 36 (2013), 38–46.

10 Melusine Wood, 'What did they really Dance in the Middle Ages', *Dancing Times*, 25 (1935), 24–26; Francine Lancelot, *La Belle Dance: Catalogue Raisonné Fait En l'an 1995* (Paris: Van Dieren, 1996); Karl-Heinz Taubert, *Höfische Tänze: Ihre Geschichte Und Choreographie* (Mainz: Schott, 1968).

sought to create as precise and truthful a picture as possible of the dances they reconstructed, the new field of dance studies succeeded in compiling only what dance scholar Mark Franko described in 1989, perhaps a bit too harshly, as ‘shadowy and insubstantial renditions of a period’s choreography’ that were ‘characterized by a condescending attitude to audience and performer alike’.<sup>11</sup> Strong convictions from different personalities about which interpretations are right or wrong were transmitted and reinforced by reiteration. The risk in such cases is that successors and students will look at the well-established reconstructions as ‘historical truths’ and tend not to distinguish precisely and consistently between

1. The actual dancing that happened in the eighteenth century and the nineteenth- and twentieth-century sources produced directly from experience of this dancing
2. Later interpretations of eighteenth-century sources coupled with the actual dancing resulting from such interpretations (historical or baroque dance/dancing)

It is essential to make these distinctions because conflating the two phenomena contributes to authorising interpretations as ‘historical truths’ rather than treating them as more- or less-supported proposals about how dances of the past can be understood and danced.

The historical or baroque dance represents all that one has been able to reconstruct using sources originating from the European court societies and aristocracy. Therefore, the material covered by the term ‘baroque minuet’ may also refer back to specific choreographies and the general social dance material. The *menuet ordinaire*, which is the object for the comparative analysis in this chapter, was, without doubt, the most frequently used in the eighteenth century. It is, however, only one of the many dances named ‘minuet’ that was danced at that time and later taken up by baroque dancers. Many dancing masters described it, and indeed, several of them used many pages for their explanations. Some of the dancing masters have described the dance in words, such as Gottfried Taubert in 1717, Pierre Rameau in 1725, Kellom Tomlinson in 1735.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Rameau demonstrated the figures of the minuet by arranging the words on the page

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11 Mark Franko, ‘Repeatability, Reconstruction and Beyond’, *Theatre Journal*, 41.1 (1989), 56–57, [www.jstor.org/stable/3207924](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3207924)

12 Pierre Rameau, *Le maître à danser: Qui enseigne la manière de faire tous les differens pas de danse dans toute la régularité de l’art, & de conduire les bras à chaque pas* (Paris: Rollin fils, 1748); Kellom Tomlinson, *The Art of Dancing Explained by Reading and Figures: Whereby the Manner of Performing the Steps is made Easy by a New and Familiar Method* (London: Printed for the author, 1735).

in the shape of each figure's performance both spatially on the dance floor in relation to the partner. Tomlinson included a minuet written in Feuillet notation.

### Limitations of Dance Notation and Description

Despite all of this, dance descriptions and notations will rarely include all aspects of the movement pattern they try to convey.<sup>13</sup> What they contain depends on when and where they were written and also on the competence of the writer. Aspects that may seem evident in the environment or irrelevant for the target audience sometimes are omitted. Some aspects are beyond the understanding of the time or beyond the notator's ability to describe, and, therefore, the writer may exclude, simplify, or misrepresent them. In addition, even if descriptions do not simplify and reduce some aspects of a practice by relying on some prior knowledge, they can easily become incomprehensible because of their complexity. This is not so problematic if the reader knows similar dances, can see them performed, or is learning them (in-person) from the notator. The notation then acts as a memory aid or can advance understanding of the movements. Thus, no dance notation and no interpretation of a dance stands totally on its own; basic presumptions are built in on both sides. We, as readers of historical documents, therefore, need to have an awareness about the writers' presumptions, including not only the ideal but also the ordinary way dancers carry their bodies. If folk dancers are asked to dance a ballet choreography or ballet dancers are asked to dance a traditional dance from the village, the resulting dances will differ from the usual styles practiced. Changes in the character of each dance will be evident because the 'movement habitus'<sup>14</sup> of one group is so different from that of the other. Good descriptions or notations can reflect some of these differences; none will be able to capture all of them.

First, we need to think about the presumptions and the 'movement habitus' of the dancing masters at the French court in the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. At this point, classical ballet was still in its early stages. The technique and movement conventions changed considerably in the following two hundred years, up to 1950. However, the starting reference point (or 'movement habitus') for pioneering researchers and interpreters of historical dance was the mid-twentieth-century version of classical ballet.

Having pointed out some of the challenges in working with written sources of information about dances from the past, we will apply our new interpretation

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13 We are not discussing what professional dance notators can or cannot do with the tools of the present, but rather what are usual limitations of descriptions and notations.

14 The movement aspects of a person's habitus.

to the first lot of our source material—namely, versions of the minuet step recorded in Feuillet notation.

## Feuillet Notation

Feuillet notation was developed in the seventeenth century by Pierre Beauchamps, who was a dancing master at the court of Louis XIV. Beauchamps developed a system of signs and symbols for writing choreographies created for the ballroom, or for the theatre. Later, his student Raoul-Auger Feuillet published the system in the book *Chorégraphie, ou l'art de décrire la danse* (1700). The system was used in a vast number of collections of dances in the first half of the eighteenth century. The term 'Beauchamps-Feuillet notation' occurs, but this method is most often referred to, merely, as 'Feuillet notation'.<sup>15</sup>

Feuillet notation provides information about the dancers' steps, the relationship between the dance and the music, the floor patterns traced by dancers' movements, and the relationship between the dancers. The notation seemingly presents the dancers' actions in detail.

The Feuillet notation system was designed not to preserve but to distribute choreographies. Members of the court were expected to learn a certain number of new dances each year while maintaining some of the dances from previous years. This gave a repertoire of dances to perform at balls. Having learned how to read the dance notation system, members of the court could study the choreographies themselves, and courts in other countries could learn new dances without depending fully on a dancing master. In the early eighteenth century, most choreographies for the court were short-lived pieces, and new dances were created frequently. Such dances differ from the regular minuet in that they were composed of different steps and combinations of steps for each bar. The regular minuet, on the other hand, consisted mainly of the basic minuet step, six fixed figures, and a certain degree of improvisation was possible within the figures.

A minuet step written in Feuillet notation shows

1. the body of the dancer,
2. the tract, or floor pattern,

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15 Raoul-Auger Feuillet, *Recueil de Dances* (Paris: Auteur, 1700); Feuillet, *Chorégraphie Ou l'Art de Décrire la Danse, par Caractères, Figures et Signes Démonstratifs* (Paris: M. Brunet, 1701); Guillaume Louis Pécourt and Raoul-Auger Feuillet, *Recueil de Dances: Contenant un très Grand Nombre, des Meilleures Entrées de Ballet de M. Pecour, Tant Pour Homme Que Pour Femmes, Dont la Plus Grande Partie Ont Été Dancées à l'Opera* (Paris: Gregg, 1704).



3. the beginning of the step marked by a black spot,
4. the movement of the feet,
5. the bending marked by a small slash [/],
6. the stretching or extension of the knee marked by a short horizontal stroke [-],
7. the placement of the foot marked by a small side stroke representing the foot from the heel to the toe and turned outwards. The relationship with the music is shown by marking the bar line as small horizontal lines on the floor pattern line.
8. thin lines binding together the different steps in a step unit. These tracts, or liaison lines, make it easier and quicker to recognise entire step units, for example, the minuet step, which consists of four placements of the feet on the floor shown as one entity.

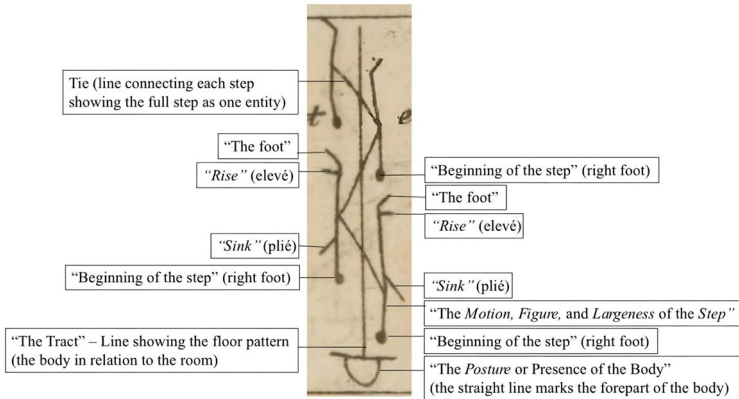


Fig. 16.2 The minuet step in Feuillet notation from Feuillet, *Chorégraphie* (1701), p. 90. Explanations of what each of the signs represent. Quotes from Feuillet (trans. Weaver), *Orchesographie* (1706), public domain.

The graphics-based notation system shows explicitly how the steps are composed, but the actions underlying the notation are only implied. The people who performed these dances in the eighteenth century knew how to execute the steps because they took classes with a dancing master. This bodily knowledge is, of course, lost, and attempts to translate words and symbols into action are rife with challenges.

Today, the movements we make based on reading and interpreting the sources will never be corrected or supervised by the dancing master, thus we must accept that we will never know if we are even close to executing the steps

in the same way as in the eighteenth century. Hence, in order to reconstruct the movements of the feet, legs and body, we maintain that looking to a bodily transmitted dance tradition over time, such as the Nordic folk minuet, may bring us closer to the bodily and organic expression of eighteenth-century dancers.

In this attempt to apply the *svikt* analysis to the minuet step written in Feuillet notation, as we will show later in the chapter, we concentrate on the ordinary minuet step danced forwards. Eighteenth-century sources indicate that there are several ways to perform a minuet step. The *menuet ordinaire* is described in many sources, and as we read Rameau, Tomlinson, and Taubert, we find the step described with bendings on count six and count two.<sup>16</sup>

Explaining the different kinds of minuet steps, Rameau began describing what he called the true *pas de menuet*. It contains four steps and three movements (bending and stretchings) and has a *demi-coupé echappé*, which is a small leap, at the end of the step. He continued, however, to state that since this step requires a very strong instep; it does not suit everyone and is not used very much. He then proceeded to explain a simplified version of this step consisting of only two *mouvements* (bending and stretchings):

It begins with two *demi-coupés*, the first being made with the right foot, the second with the left, followed by two *pas marchés sur la demi-pointe*, the first with the right foot, the second with the left [...] in making this last *pas* the heel must be lowered to the ground, to enable the knee to be bent in preparation for another *pas*.<sup>17</sup>

Rameau described the manner of performing this step in a more detailed way where the vertical movements are more explicit:

Having then the left foot in front, let it support the weight of the body, and bring the right foot close to the left in the first position. **Bend the left knee** [6] without letting the right foot touch the ground. When the left knee is sufficiently bent, move the right foot to the fourth position front, at the same time rising *sur la demi-pointe*, **straightening both knees** [1] and bringing both legs together as shown in the fourth part of the *demi-coupé* (Fig. 26), called the equilibrium or balance. Then lower the right heel to the ground to keep the body steady and at the same time **bend the right knee** [2], without allowing the left foot to touch the ground, and move the latter to the fourth position front and rise on the left *demi-pointe*, **straightening both knees** [3] and bringing both legs together in balance. Then execute two *pas marchés sur la demi-pointe*, the first with the

16 Pierre Rameau, *The Dancing Master*; Kellom Tomlinson, *The English Dancing Master*; Gottfried Taubert, *Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister*.

17 Pierre Rameau, *The Dancing Master*, pp. 52–53. The descriptions of bendings and stretchings are underlined by the author.

**right foot** [4], the second with **the left** [5], lowering the left heel to the ground after the second, in order to have the body firmly placed ready to begin another *pas de menuet*.<sup>18</sup>

The bold face sections and numbers in brackets that Rameau included in this quotation indicate the vertical movements of the minuet step. In the figure below these parts are connected to the signs for those actions in the Feuillet notated minuet step. The numbers refer both to the vertical movements and the beats in the music.

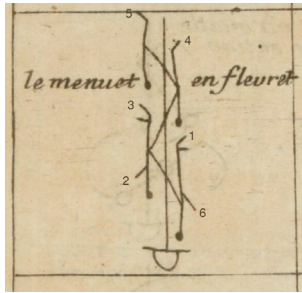


Fig. 16.3 The minuet step as shown in Feuillet, *Chorégraphie* (1701), p. 90 (numbers added by the authors), public domain.

- 6: 'Bend the left knee'
- 1: 'straightening both knees'
- 2: 'bend the right knee'
- 3: 'straightening both knees'
- 4: 'the right foot'
- 5: 'the left'

Although the dancing masters' descriptions of the minuet step is quite comprehensive, they lack accurate information about certain details concerning accents, rhythm, timing. More critical to our argument, the Feuillet notation system does not contain detailed information about the level and duration of *plié* and *levé* (bending and stretching of the knees). Certainly, the notation shows bendings and stretchings of the knee and when the dancer should be on demi-point. But it is not capable of capturing details such as *how much* bending and stretching the dancer should use while performing various steps and positions, nor does it capture the duration or the quality of the movements. Rameau simply

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 53, emphases in original.

stressed the importance of showing a clear difference between the bending and stretching:

in regard to the bends these should always be well marked, especially when learning them, because they make a dance more pleasing; whereas, if they be not marked, the steps can hardly be distinguished and the dance appears lifeless and dull.<sup>19</sup>

The performance of bending and stretching the knee and the rising on demi-point and lowering of the heel is therefore very much left to interpretation and will be dependent on factors such as the dancer's understanding of the notation, technique, and style, as well as the dancer's bodily experience, training, and so on.

In baroque-dance technique, when dance is reconstructed from such descriptions, the interpretation has the potential to become literal, leading to a stiff dance posture. The minuet step is often seen performed with very straight knees. Yet, that is Rameau's explicit prescription if we were to understand it literally, and it may seem challenging to question it and suggest an alternative reading.

### *Svikt* as an Analytical Tool

Our suggestion for an alternative approach and interpretation of the eighteenth-century description of the minuet step is to take scientific studies of human locomotion into consideration. Studies of regular walking ('gait-studies') in adult humans show a vertical movement cycle for the hips.

All scientific studies of locomotion show vertical movement patterns created by the manipulation of body weight. The Norwegian social anthropologist and folk music and folk-dance researcher Jan Petter Blom studied stylistic differences in the Norwegian *bygdedans* (regional dance) in the 1960s.<sup>20</sup> He found that the dancers' footwork is comprised of 'sequences of alternate stretching and bending movements of the legs achieved by rotational movements round three axis: the hip, knee and ankle' while the vertical movements of the centre of weight, *the dance meter* were a central rhythmic marker in different regional dances.<sup>21</sup> He proposed ways of notating this type of footwork (see Figure. 16.4). On the basis of Blom's work, Bakka developed a more descriptive analysis system of a

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19 Rameau, *The Dancing Master* (1725), p. 100.

20 Blom, Jan-Petter, 'Diffusjonsproblematikken Og Studiet Av Danseforme', in *Kultur Og Diffusjon: Foredrag på Nordisk Etnografmøte, Oslo 1960*, ed. by Arne Martin Klausen ([Oslo]: Universitetsforlaget, 1961), pp. 101–14.

21 Jan-Petter Blom, 'The Dancing Fiddle: On the Expression of Rhythm in Hardingfele Slåtter', *Norsk Folkemusikk*, 7 (1981) p. 305.

different step type, the *svikt* analysis system.<sup>22</sup> A *svikt* is an analytical term for the rise and fall of the centre of gravity while dancing. A *svikt* pattern is the wave one might draw by watching this rise and fall.<sup>23</sup> The *svikt* analysis system was developed to support textual-based dance descriptions and to be used by the folk-dance movement in Norway and was based upon observation rather than measurements.<sup>24</sup> In their analysis Blom and Bakka break up the vertical waves into a movement down: a bending ( $\setminus$ ) and a movement up: a stretching ( $/$ ). A bend and a stretch becomes a total *svikt* ( $\setminus /$ ). One of the differences between them when it comes to notation is that Bakka describes the *svikt* pattern but not the amplitude (the size of the curve's elements), while in Blom's notation he also prescribes the amplitude, or at least a generic amplitude.

Walking	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Music 3/4</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pace</td> <td>S S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Svikt</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unit of length</td> <td>1   2   3   4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Supporting foot, Placement</td> <td>V H fram fram</td> </tr> </table>	Music 3/4		Pace	S S	Svikt		Unit of length	1   2   3   4	Supporting foot, Placement	V H fram fram	
	Music 3/4											
Pace	S S											
Svikt												
Unit of length	1   2   3   4											
Supporting foot, Placement	V H fram fram											
Waltz	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Music 3/4</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pace</td> <td>S T S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Svikt</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unit of length</td> <td>1   2   3   4   5   6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Supporting foot, Placement</td> <td>V H V fram inntil fram</td> </tr> </table>	Music 3/4		Pace	S T S	Svikt		Unit of length	1   2   3   4   5   6	Supporting foot, Placement	V H V fram inntil fram	
Music 3/4												
Pace	S T S											
Svikt												
Unit of length	1   2   3   4   5   6											
Supporting foot, Placement	V H V fram inntil fram											
	Egil Bakka	Jan Petter Blom										

Fig. 16.4 Notation of the vertical movements of the centre of gravity (shown graphically as straight lines) in waltzing and walking illustrated by Blom and Bakka. Bakka's figures show one bar of music as this corresponds to the dance step. Blom's figures show the regularity of the *dance meter*, using 'vals' to show three bars of triple meter in music and dance. For English readers: V = *Venstre fot* [left foot], while H = *Høyre fot* [right foot]. *Fram* is the Norwegian word for 'forward', while *inntil* is the Norwegian word for 'close' or 'in place'<sup>25</sup>

As shown in the gait studies above, the body's vertical movements—the lowering and lifting—are necessary for locomotion. Each shift of weight from one foot to the other will include some vertical movement. With the understanding that the

22 Egil Bakka, *Danse, danse, lett ut på foten, Folkedansar og Songdansar* (Oslo: Noregs boklag, 1970).  
 23 Egil Bakka, 'Analysis of Traditional Dance in Norway and the Nordic Countries', in *Dance Structures. Perspectives on the Analysis of Human Movement*, ed. by A. L. Kaepler and E. I. Dunin (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2007), p. 108.  
 24 Turid Mårds, *Svikt, kraft og tramp: En studie av bevegelse og kraft i folkelig dans* (Trondheim: Rff-sentret, 1999), p. 115.  
 25 Egil Bakka's illustration in Klara Semb, *Norske Folkedansar. Turdansar* (Oslo: Noregs boklag, 1991), pp. 83, 93; Blom, 'The Dancing Fiddle', 305.

*svikt* is a precondition for locomotion and is, thus, continuously present through a dance process, comes the wish to monitor and represent this aspect continuously. This is a deviation from the Feuillet system in which the vertical movements are notated only where it is enlarged in the dancing for decorative purposes.

## The Vertical Pattern in the Minuet Step

In what follows, we will discuss how the minuet step written in Feuillet notation could be interpreted through the perspective of the *svikt* analysis. The Nordic folk minuet has a *svikt* (bending and stretching) consistently on each beat of the music:

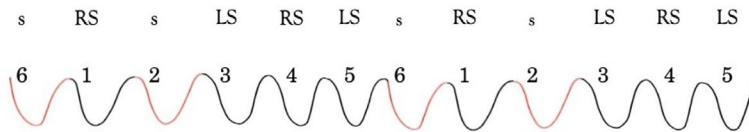


Fig. 16.5 *Svikt* analysis of two forward minuet steps performed from left to right. The numbers mark the beats of the music, the letters mark the *svikts* (bendings and stretchings), and the red parts of the curve shows the bendings highlighted in eighteenth-century dance descriptions and Feuillet notation of the minuet step.

Design by Egil Bakka and Elizabeth Svarstad.

Because the structure of the eighteenth-century minuet has remained more or less unchanged in the Nordic folk minuet, it seems reasonable to assume that the vertical pattern would be similar in both of these versions. There is some variation within the 'eighteenth-century' and 'folk' instances, but there is clear consistency in the overall shared structure. Based on this hypothesis, our question is whether a minuet step with six *svikts*, as we know it from the Nordic folk versions of the minuet, can be reconciled with the descriptions found in eighteenth-century sources.

The English painter William Hogarth (1697–1764) has written a surprisingly explicit description of the minuet in his book *The Analysis of Beauty* (1772) that concentrates on the vertical movements and their aesthetic value:

The ordinary undulating motion of the body in common walking (as may be plainly seen by the waving line, which the shadow a man's head makes against a wall as he is walking between it and the afternoon sun) is augmented in dancing into a larger quantity of *waving* by means of the minuet-step, which is so contrived as to raise the body by gentle degrees somewhat higher than ordinary, and sink it again in the same manner lower in the going on of the dance. The figure of the minuet-path on the floor [Fig. 16.6, number 122] is also composed of serpentine lines [Fig. 16.7, number 49] varying a little with the fashion: when the parties by

means of this step rise and fall most smoothly in time, and free from sudden starting and dropping, they come nearest to Shakespear's [sic] idea of the beauty of dancing, in the following lines,

– What you do,  
 Still betters what is done, –  
 – When you do dance, I wish you  
 A wave o'th' sea, that you might ever do  
 Nothing but that; move still, still so,  
 And own no other function.<sup>26</sup>



Fig. 16.6 William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, plate 2 (1753), etching. The figure of the minuet path on the floor in drawing number 122 in upper left corner. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Analysis\\_of\\_Beauty\\_Plate\\_2\\_by\\_William\\_Hogarth.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Analysis_of_Beauty_Plate_2_by_William_Hogarth.jpg), public domain.

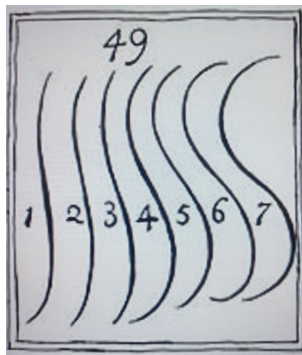


Fig. 16.7 Serpentine lines from William Hogarth's *The Analysis of Beauty*, plate 1 (1753), etching. In the scale of them, number 4 is called by Hogarth 'The Line of Beauty'. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Serpentine\\_lines\\_from\\_William\\_Hogarth%27s\\_The\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Beauty.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Serpentine_lines_from_William_Hogarth%27s_The_Analysis_of_Beauty.jpg), public domain.

26 William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, p. 147. The excerpt is from Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale*.

Hogarth's description of how to detect the 'waving' motion in the dancing corresponds strikingly with the principles of the *svikt* analysis. The focus on movement offers a method for interpreting the sources in our own bodies.

The waving motion is not so apparent when reading Rameau's description of the minuet step, nor when looking at the Feuillet notation of it separately. However, Hogarth's observation of how the head moves indicates the vertical movements of the body while dancing and substantiate our idea of using analysis of the *svikts* to link notation with the traces of the eighteenth-century minuet that survive in the Nordic folk minuets.

In the illustration below we have combined the notation of the minuet step written in Feuillet notation with the *svikt* curve of the danced minuet step (marking the waving undulation motion as the dancer performs the step).

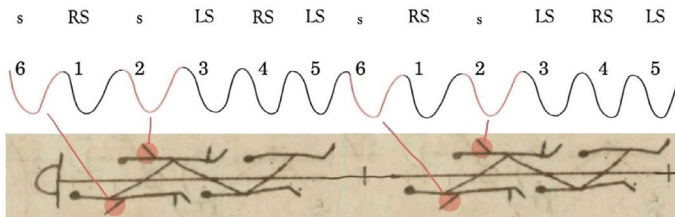


Fig. 16.8 *Svikt* analysis and Feuillet notation of two forward minuet steps. Red markings show the highlighted *svikts*. *Svikt* curve by Egil Bakka and Elizabeth Svarstad. Notation images from Feuillet, R.-A., *Chorégraphie* (Paris, 1700), public domain.

The graph shows two minuet steps forward, read from left to right. The *svikt* curve is constructed according to Bakka's analysis of the Nordic folk minuet, and it plots all the *svikts* regardless of their degree or size. The two double *svikts* (on counts 2 (RSs) and 6 (LSs)) are highlighted.<sup>27</sup> The Feuillet notation underneath the *svikt* curve corresponds to the action of the feet in the same two forward minuet steps. The notation provides information about the direction for the dance steps and how the feet should be placed on the floor—four foot-transfers in each step. The short slashes in red circles for each of the first two movement symbols indicate the bending and the associated stretching, or *plié* and *elevé*. The red lines point to the corresponding foot transfers in the *svikt* curve above each. We note that the *svikt* curve shows a *svikt* for all six counts in the minuet step, while the Feuillet notation does not cover the bending and stretchings naturally inherent in foot transfers or when walking.

<sup>27</sup> A simple *svikt* (S) refers to one *svikt* done on one pace, double *svikt* (Ss) is two *svikts* performed on the same pace, the first on the right foot (R) and the second on the left (L).



As we showed when discussing the gait studies earlier, locomotion mechanics require that the body must be lifted and lowered for the transfer of weight. From this point of departure, there needs to be more than the two down-up movements shown in Feuillet notation and Rameau's descriptions, but not necessarily as many as the six that we find in the Nordic folk minuets. A likely explanation for why some of the technically required downs and ups have been omitted from the notation is that the dancing masters and notators only wanted to stress the largest downs and ups which served a decorative function. Notators might not have thought it necessary to mark the downs and ups of what may have been more or less normal walking. We know from folk-dance descriptions that notators tended to describe the unusual or the deviations from the ordinary.

Hogarth's description mentioned a larger quantity of waves than in walking and that 'this step rise and fall most smoothly in time', which seems to suggest a continuity of waves—not four as in the four paces but six as a regular pulse aligned with the six beats of the music

For this reason, we argue that the Feuillet notation marks the steps with *plié* and *elevé* at the beginning that take two beats each, because these stand out as more extensive than the remaining steps that were closer to ordinary walking steps. We argue also that the dancing masters tended to describe the extraordinary rather than the ordinary. This interpretation leads us towards the *svikt* pattern of the Nordic folk minuet, even if *svikts* are not danced with any apparent difference in amplitude there.

Thus, if we compare the vertical patterns in the Feuillet notation with Blom's notation, it may have been important for Feuillet to indicate which steps had larger amplitude (*plié* and *elevé*) than others. But how does one measure or signify gradations of this kind of amplitude? How deep is deep? A bit deeper than normal, as deep as the dancer can manage, or just a clearly emphasised bending? It is also worth noticing that sources tell us that the minuet has been danced with an apparent elevation, above the ground. Correspondingly, in some versions of the Nordic folk minuet dancers were jumping. This practice confirms that large down-and-up movements were not alien to the dance, and, as Hogarth wrote, referring to elevation, they were a bit larger than seen in walking.

If we look at the folk minuet's structural elements, there is a striking resemblance to the minuet as a court dance. Similarly, we can make comparisons with other dances found in older sources and in folk dance. One example may be the waltz that came to the Nordic region mostly via dance teachers. The structural similarity between what the older sources tell and what is practised in traditional folk and social dance settings is striking.

A final and essential point to make about Hogarth is his insistence upon smoothness, that dance should be 'free from sudden starting and dropping'.

When a dancer intends to raise sharply onto the toes or sink precisely down on the heels, the result is just such a sudden starting and dropping. Many dancing masters too, among them Rameau, stressed that dancing and social behaviour should be natural:

I hope that in guarding against defects no one will be so stupid as to appear stiff or awkward, which faults are as bad as affectation; good breeding demands that pleasing and easy manner which can only be gained by dancing.<sup>28</sup>

What it means to be beautifully natural, unaffected and not stiff will, of course, depend upon the conventions and aesthetics of the specific time and environment. Nonetheless, it is difficult to reconcile the rigid movements of many historical dancers with Rameau's and Hogarth's ideals.

Advanced folk dancers may possess more of the qualities desirable in an eighteenth-century dancer. As such, they hold the keys to help reconstruct the minuet as it was danced at this time, using the *svikt* technique. In our oral presentations and embodiment of an alternative interpretation of the eighteenth-century minuet, we have experimented, therefore, with how large a vertical amplitude would have been performed in folk dance. Other material that has survived through continuous tradition, such as the *polonaise*, allows the drawing of better supported interpretations. The *polonaise* has a clearly marked upbeat with bending of the knee on the last of the three beats in the music. This movement may be similar to the *plié* (bending) in the minuet step, and it appears in similar relation to the minuet music. This step was also known in the dance school circles in the Nordic region.<sup>29</sup> The *polonaise* step, therefore, might be another example of a source supporting the alternative interpretation of the vertical movements of the minuet.

Constant waves lend a softer quality to the movements. We suggest that the raising on the toes is only one easily visible trait of wave producing, which the dancing masters used to describe the movements down and up in an easily understandable way. In usual locomotion the movements down and up are in a continuous flow, sinking and rising are not starting and stopping. The understanding that you put your foot down then rise back up upon it creates the very particular starts and stops that are characteristic of rigid recreations of historical dance. In natural locomotion, the sinking and rising occur while the foot is moving to a new place and continues while it is placed and receives the shift of weight. A rising conceived and performed as a separate movement is different from one that is part of a continuous flow. A small experiment may

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28 Pierre Rameau, *The Dancing Master*, p. 2.

29 Klara Semb, *Norske Folkedansar. Turdansar* (Oslo: Noregs boklag, 1991), (p. 91).

illustrate the problem: we try to describe ordinary walking in the terminology of the eighteenth century:

Try to walk like this: put your right foot forward, step on it and raise on demi-pointe. Put your left foot forward and step on it and raise on demi-pointe. (The corresponding sinking is often not mentioned). Following these instructions is likely to result not in a natural but an exaggerated type of walking movement with bigger vertical movements than usual. The experiment recreates the tendency, when interpreting verbal descriptions, to treat raisings (and lowerings) as isolated movements. It produces a locomotion quite peculiar to much of historical dance and hardly ever seen elsewhere.

It is evident from references by dancing masters that the down-and-up movements of the body were essential traits of the dances in the eighteenth and even earlier centuries.<sup>30</sup> The simplistic way in which these movements are described, however, does not make a strict reading trustworthy. Taken literally, only the ankle movements are required for getting on the toes, and knees are kept straight. Therefore, general mechanics of locomotion, dances passed down through continuous practice, Rameau's general call on the natural, and Hogarth's more holistic description are all needed modifiers to the literary reading. We claim that it will allow for softer, more evenly undulating movements and for efficiency and strength to be applied in the movement production.

As we have suggested above, this collecting and application of different approaches can be seen as a method of triangulation. The idea of this method is to look at the dance from different angles. This multi-method approach serves to secure the theoretical validity of an investigation by using several methods to investigate the same matter. Between two points, one can draw a line; by adding a third point, one can make the lines cross or intersect. Just as fishers at sea have three points of reference to mark and relocate the position of a good fishing spot, this method of triangulation can guide us closer to an interpretation and closer to the matter we are investigating. It is essential to point out that the method will not yield one final and absolute answer. The method is a tool to help thinking about and understanding something better and to see more clearly what might otherwise be unclear.<sup>31</sup>

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30 Volker Saftien, *Ars Saltandi* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1994).

31 Tschudi, Finn, 'Om nødvendigheten av syntese mellom kvantitative og kvalitative metoder', in *Kvalitative Metoder i Samfunnsforskning*, ed. by Harriet Holter and Ragnvald Kalleberg (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1996), p. 122.

## Concluding Remarks

The authors here criticise the practice among many dance historians for concentrating on one dance genre and one type of source. Although there were strong class divisions in earlier centuries and theatrical and social dance stood apart, the dances and the dancers belonged in the same world, and there was interaction between them.

When material from different source categories is combined, the methodologies used to guide the combination become essential. We apply, on one hand, triangulation, and on the other hand we apply gait studies and *svikt* analysis. Such studies show that the early-seventeenth-century experts did not understand the mechanics of locomotion sufficiently to describe it fully. This problem recurs when experts seek to reconstruct movements based on such descriptions and notations. An analysis of the mechanics of vertical movements during locomotion was not available to early dance notators nor to twentieth-century historians who collected vernacular accounts. The relevance of these mechanics for dance analysis was only discovered when the Norwegian anthropologist Jan-Petter Blom adapted findings from such studies to the field of dance analysis, more specifically to the analysis of Norwegian folk dance, in 1961.<sup>32</sup>

This approach has brought us to a series of proposals and contentions about the practical interpretation of various aspects of the seventeenth-century court dances that challenge the conventions and assumptions of many groups attempting to recreate historical dance and baroque dance.

1. We propose that the minuet steps are based on a usual mode of locomotion similar to walking and that they, therefore, had regular *svikt* patterns of ups and downs throughout.
2. We propose that dancing masters would only describe the larger decorative bendings and stretchings since they did not understand the vertical patterns' mechanics and did not see smaller bendings and stretchings as relevant.
3. We propose that the minuet step, even in the seventeenth century, had six *svikts* following the Danish and Finnish folk minuets and similar patterns in the Danish ballet tradition of the *Elverhøj* minuet.
4. We suggest that the tendency to interpret the Feuillet notated minuet steps with foot transfers but without a marked bending should be

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<sup>32</sup> Jan-Petter Blom, 'Diffusjonsproblematikken og studiet av danseformer', in *Kultur og Diffusjon: Foredrag På Nordisk Etnografnotte, Oslo 1960*, ed. by Arne Martin Klausen ([Oslo]: Universitetsforlaget, 1961), pp. 101–14.

reassessed. On the basis of the *svikt* analysis and due to mechanics of locomotion, we believed that also the eighteenth-century minuet step had a natural movement down and movement up on all six counts. The notators, most likely, refer to the highest level of a foot transfer, either the beginning where the foot takes on weight or at the end when it moves the weight to the next foot, or even to both points, without paying attention to—and, thus, without explicitly mentioning—the lowering of the body that, to some degree, must happen between the changes of support. Hogarth confirmed this by saying that the minuet involves a slightly greater raising and lowering of the body than occurs in ordinary walking.

5. When the notation shows the vertical movement as a raising up on the toes and putting the heels down on the floor, we propose that this is a simple way of explaining more complex movements involving the entire body. Again, as Hogarth pointed out, the raising and lowering of the dancer's body was to be performed 'most smoothly' [...] 'and free from sudden starting and dropping'.
6. We propose that a sudden starting and dropping would result from isolated movements in ankles and knees as opposed to movements intended to raise and lower the whole body by using all joints and thus coinciding with Rameau's ideal of dance that is not stiff or affected but 'natural'.
7. Our proposal for performing minuet steps would result in smoother waves, a more efficient take-off for each lifting of the body, and a more powerful dance, with soft and quite large down and ups, which may have been of different amplitudes.

We hope our discussions and reflections on the mechanism of locomotion, on the minuets that have survived through continuous transmission into the twenty-first century, and on a description independent from the seventeenth-century dancing masters can inspire further investigations into dances of the past.

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## PART V

# POST REVIVAL—THE LATE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

Earlier chapters have dealt with the use of the minuet up into the early twentieth century, emphasizing the collection of the folk minuet and the revival activities in the folk-dance organization as a very important stage. The following chapters deal with new developments from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, such as the establishing of a historical dance movement and the interpretation of historical sources into dance practice, which also includes the creation of a Swedish minuet. Another noteworthy trend is the development of ever-more advanced staging and choreographing based on folk-dance material, including the minuet.





# 17. Minuet Memories and the Minuet among the Swedish-speaking Population in Finland today

*Gunnel Biskop*

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In some parishes of Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnia, the minuet survived longer than in other parishes. There, the minuet was danced at weddings and parties, not once or twice at each event but many times. In Oravais, for example, in the summer of 1933, ‘at least 30 minuets were danced on the first day of the wedding, and even more the other day’, according to the dance researcher Yngvar Heikel.<sup>1</sup> Several other parishioners recalled minuet dancing during this period. One is Professor Lars Huldén (1926–2016). He recalled a wedding in Munsala at the end of the 1930s at which guests ‘danced seventeen minuets in succession, with polskas between them, of course’.<sup>2</sup> At that time, villages of Munsala challenged each other in minuet dancing.

In the 1930s, some youth associations, such as Jeppo Ungdomsförening, decided that the minuet should be danced at common dance events to help ensure that it was not forgotten. People in Jeppo also managed to keep the minuet alive. Ann-Mari Häggman documented residents there dancing the minuet in film in 1977.<sup>3</sup> She recalls that about twenty persons between the ages of twenty and seventy-five attended the recording site and danced the minuet.

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- 1 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svenskbygder—under trehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdanring, 2015). This chapter is mainly based on this book.
  - 2 Lars Huldén, ‘Danser som jag minns’, *Folkdansaren*, 3 (1984), 7–10.
  - 3 Ann-Mari Häggman, ‘Filmen återger glädjen i dansen’, in *Fynd och forskning. Meddelanden från Folkkultursarkivet* 7. SLS 496 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1981).

Häggman observed that the participants seemed to appreciate the improvised dance performance:

One danced quickly and unintentionally, generally in an unorganized manner with swinging arms, improvised hops, and stamping. Most dancers hopped the whole other half of the minuet, only a few elder ones danced with calm steps from start to finish. The dancers' facial expressions—as they are preserved on the film—testify to an unprecedented dance pleasure.



Fig. 17.1 The minuet from Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland was danced by soldiers at the front during the war in the 1940s. Here, it is danced on a sunny afternoon in 1978 on a church hill in Oravais. Photograph by Stina Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.

## Bertel Holm's Stories

In the mid-1990s, I interviewed several older men about minuets in Ostrobothnia.<sup>4</sup> They were all veterans and had been in the war fought between Finland and the Soviet Union in 1941–44. One of these men was Captain Bertel Holm (1915–97) who came from the city of Vaasa (in Swedish: Vasa). As a young man, he had begun to dance in Vasa-Brage's folk-dance group, and the first minuet he learned was the Oravais minuet. This was the beginning of his enthusiasm for minuets. He worked in the parishes of Lappfjärd, Tjock and Oravais, teaching folk dances in these places for some time. After the war, Holm worked in Vaasa and participated again in Vasa-Brage's folk-dance group. He arranged a summer gathering in Vaasa in the summer of 1945 for the *Finlands Svenska Folkdansring* (Finnish-Swedish Folk Dance Association, the central organization for the

4 Gunnel Biskop, 'Bertel Holm och menuett i krig och fred', *Folkdansforskning i Norden*, 24 (2001), 13–15.

Swedish-speaking folk dancers in Finland). Through his useful contacts with Tjöck, Lappfjärd, Munsala, and Oravais, he succeeded in persuading tradition-bearers from these places to come to the gathering (called the *folkdansstämma*) to show their local minuets. This increased the significance of the dances, as the tradition-bearers became aware of the value in their minuets.<sup>5</sup>



Fig. 17.2 Captain Bertel Holm kept spirits up among the soldiers at the front during the war in the 1940s by having the men sing, play, and dance the minuet. They had six violins with them at the front. Gunnel Biskop's collection. Photograph, public domain.

Holm proved to be a significant friend of the minuet, even using it in such unusual situations as the war. During the fighting in Finland's easternmost province Karelia, Holm was a machine-gun company commander within Infantry Regiment 61. The company consisted mainly of men from Oravais. Holm greeted his soldiers with the words 'Finus, finus sun, and summer,' even amid the most challenging situations. Hence, he received the nickname 'Finus'. Holm also lifted the mood among his soldiers by having them sing, play, and dance the minuet. He considered this a survival strategy, helping his soldier to think about something other than the horrors they were facing in battle. Many times they danced on lawns, one veteran recalled. Another veteran told about a situation when Holm cheered the boys:

After the fighting at Sântämä, we marched to Tohmajärvi. It was a long march along untidy roads. Many soldiers could not make it with the marching pace of the others but stayed behind. The horses were also exhausted because they did not have the easiest task to get along with

5 A similar situation occurred in Denmark in 1930, when dancers from Bjerregrav in Jutland had come to Skanderborg to perform their *menuet* for folk dancers at a folk-dance meeting. See Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 205–08.

the heavy carts on the broken roads. When we arrived, Finus set up a minuet dance in the middle of the road. And, of course, some other wackos joined him. We would always sing Sillanpää's march song [a famous Finnish military march during the war] when we marched. Such was our commander.

During a military advance, Holm played a harmonica and told his men that if they went to heaven during the march, it would be done under song and music, another veteran told me. Holm mentioned that they had six violins in the company, and when they moved, the players left them hanging from the carts with the machine guns. One of the veterans said that Holm forced him to bring his violin, even though he could not play, but he learned to do it during the war. Holm also learned to play the violin during the conflict.

Holm told me that the violin music lifted the mood and brought memories from home to the dugouts. '[O]ne played most Oravais and Vörå minuets with polska,' he said. In an interview in the early 1990s, Holm explained what they once decided to do with the violin music at Shemenski during the trench warfare in 1943. One day, the company had access to loudspeakers, which were used to entice Russians to defect to the Finnish side. They started to play violin music—bridal marches and waltzes—through the loudspeakers, and the Russian soldiers responded with a shower of grenades. On another day, however, their violin-playing prompted a more musical answer, when the enemy replied with accordion and song. 'We're not gonna shoot now', Captain Finus commanded, 'Not a shot!'<sup>6</sup>

Life on the frontline, because it involved much waiting, could be boring. Whenever possible, artists and theatre groups would travel to entertain the soldiers. The folk-dance group of Vasa-Brage made such a trip to perform at Svir on 4–8 June 1943. It is not apparent from available sources whether Holm was responsible for or participated in the visit. The annual report of the dance group included a description of how they danced and performed while Russian grenades were exploding in the surrounding area:

On June 4, 4 ladies and 3 men leave, while additional participants come from the front. The trip to Svir takes two nights and one day. The program consists of speech, music, folk dances, and folk song dances. General rehearsal will occur during the daytime in the regiment's newly built canteen, which accommodates 300 men. The expected participant fails to arrive, but another folk dancer saves the situation. During the rehearsal, Russians shoot grenades in the area, but the rehearsal can continue as

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6 Göta Vester, 'Dialog', *Orvas 1994*. Oravais Hembygdsförening (1994); Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 150.

none of them meets the building. After the rehearsal, Colonel Heinrich's dugout will be visited. At the beginning of the party, the Russians start shooting again, but the party must be held since the men are gathered. The dance group performs its best dances in front of the regiment's approximately 250 Ostrobothnians and officers and Lottas [members of an auxiliary paramilitary organisation for women in Finland], and they achieve the best contact ever with the audience. The trip is due for special reasons already the following morning. The journey leaves a memory for life at all the participants.<sup>7</sup>

This folk-dance performance was not the only one held on the frontlines. A veteran in Munsala, Per Rögård (1923–2008), explained in an interview in 1985 how, at Finus's call, he had been involved with the minuet at the front:

Even at the front, we danced the minuet, but we were only men there. It was in Russian Karelia once when our Finland-Swedish unit went marching past a place where a Finnish unit had constructed a dance pavilion and performed folk dances with men only as dancers. They then asked us if we knew any folk dances, while Bertel 'Finus' Holm shouted: 'Come on boys, those who can do the minuet.' Five couples got together, and we received a lot of applause from the Finns as well.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that there were five couples meant that ten men in the company could dance the minuet.

In a letter to me, Holm said that before the demobilization in November 1944, the minuet from Oravais was danced on various occasions, including as their final act as a company. To his soldiers, who had been together for three years and five months at the front, Holm gave an order that 'the one who could not dance the Oravais minuet won't be released to "civil"'. According to Commander Holm, the men obeyed this last order, dancing their final minuet together at Jeppo railway station before they were separated.

It was not only Holm who danced the minuet under challenging situations. Lars Huldén has said that in 1944 he was seventeen years old when he was summoned to the war. While he and other seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds from Ostrobothnia headed south by train to the frontline at Karelia, the train stopped at Haapamäki station. At the same time, a train came from the south, stopping at the same station. In that train, there were some boys from Munsala on their way north, home on leave. When they met each other at the station in Haapamäki, they danced the minuet and sang the music.<sup>9</sup>

7 *Brage Årsskrift 1946*; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 149–53.

8 Ulf Smedberg, 'Videobandare bjöds på Munsala-menuett', in *Vasabladet* 6 June 1985.

9 Huldén, 'Danser som jag minns'; Biskop, *Menuetten*, p. 152.



Fig. 17.3 The bank director Edvin Lygdbäck in Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland talked about his memories of minuet dancing in interviews. Gunnel Biskop's collection. Photograph, all rights reserved.

## Edvin Lygdbäck's and Others' Stories

Through Holm, I made contact with some of his soldiers who had participated in the minuet dancing during the war. One of them was the Oravais bank director, veteran Edvin Lygdbäck (1923–2001). He was nineteen years old when he was ordered to the front to join Finus's company in 1942. Lygdbäck went out to the war already knowing the minuet and said that he danced it whenever Holm 'asked for something'—his description of Holm's whims. He was present when, in 1943, Holm arranged a 'minuet night' and taught the dance in the military canteen in Svir. Those who could already dance the minuet helped to teach others who could not: 'We could spend an entire hour dancing minuet,' Lygdbäck recalled. He also remembered dancing the Oravais minuet with the others on a bridge near Lotinapelto when the unit moved to Viborg.

Lygdbäck also shared with me his memories of the minuet and other dancing from the time before the war. He explained that it was considered necessity for young people at the time to know how to dance the waltz, schottische, polka, and minuet. The minuet was taught by imitation rather than formal instruction: one watched someone older and simply started joining in. While still learning, children were directed to a place at the lower end of the minuet row during weddings. Lygdbäck said that he had learned the dance at a wedding in 1935 when he was twelve years old. The person who taught him was his grandmother's sister, who had been born in 1866. He recalled that this 'aunt' had unsoled boots of thin and soft leather on her feet and danced very softly and neatly: she did

not hop. Describing the ‘dance education’ he received on the third day of this wedding, Lygdbäck remembered that ‘[t]he musician would have some spirits, the aunt also had, there were three to four women in the yard, and everyone drank some spirits. The musician sat down and played his two-row accordion all day’. This is how the twelve-year-old boy had learned to dance the minuet.



Fig. 17.4 Wedding entourage in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1934. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B 259. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+259](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+259), CC BY 4.0.



Fig. 17.5 Wedding in Ostrobothnia in Finland. The bride and groom toast with the guests while the fiddlers play, 1922. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B 258. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+258](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+258), CC BY 4.0.

Another who also danced very softly was Lygdbäck’s grandmother. He described her movement in the minuet in the following way: ‘she smoothed more, danced neatly, pulled out of the beat, left behind, got back to the beat again’. Lygdbäck incorporated this gentle quality into his dancing and felt that it was important for better understanding the minuet’s meaning: it was a kind



of devotional feeling in the body. The minuet was considered a finer dance than some others in the late 1930s, he explained. Those who knew it felt superior to others who did not. Lygdbäck also thought that the minuet was not just a dance, but a display of skill used by the boys to impress the girls. Besides, they were proud to have the dancing skills. In his youth, all the 'real boys' could dance the minuet. Not all had Lygdbäck's skill. Those who knew they were not among the best stood in the middle or farther away from the table end, towards the lower end of the row. This was natural, and there was nothing special about it. Everyone preferred to dance next to someone who knew the dance.

Lygdbäck recalled some variety in how the minuet was danced. Most typically, he explained, it was danced using ordinary steps in the first half and steps with hops in the other. However, older people could dance without hopping. He had also danced the minuet in a way that involved hopping from start to finish.

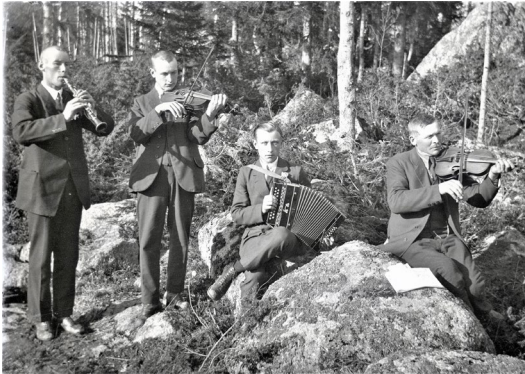


Fig. 17.6 Dance orchestra in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1922. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B ÖTA 135, 20097. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_%25C3%2596TA+135+foto+20097](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_%25C3%2596TA+135+foto+20097), CC BY 4.0.

As the number of transitions in a minuet was decided by the leading man, a signal was needed to communicate when the stampings should begin. When Lygdbäck held this lead position, dancing at the table end, the signal used was that the whole row of men would join hands. If there were two rows of dancers, the second row could be at an angle with the first one, but this second row still followed the decisions of the leading man in the first row. All would keep an eye on him as the dance proceeded to know when to begin the stamping. The leading man was never allowed to 'go sleeping', as Lygdbäck expressed it; he must remain alert and elevate the other dancers' moods. Sometimes men in that leadership position would spontaneously 'cry out' when they got into the spirit

of the dance. It was also important, he remembered, that the man at the table end needed to dance with a girl who also knew what to do. All girls could not dance the minuet, he remembered. The polska was danced in two ways, 'slow polska and faster polska'. During the dance, perhaps most during the polska, the men would shout but the women did not, Lygdbäck reported.<sup>10</sup>

In Lygdbäck's youth, two to three minuets were danced at common dance events. Over time, the number of minuets during a dance night reduced as dance orchestras began to grow and could not play the minuet. Lars Huldén had similar experiences from the 1940s, recalling a time when it was no longer certain that an orchestra would play the minuet at a common dance event. Huldén said dancers tried to demand a minuet, explaining that

there were a few couples who went to stand at the table end, as it was called, and others got up after them. It was considered the musicians had to play the minuet. And when orchestras that could not or refused to play the minuet appeared in the 40s, those who love the minuet reacted with annoyance.<sup>11</sup>



Fig. 17.7 In Munsala in Ostrobothnia in Finland, the minuet survived into the 1990s. Here, tradition bearers, dressed in folk costume, perform in Stockholm in 1987. Photograph by Stina Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.

Lygdbäck's wedding, in 1946, was a big, three-day event with five hundred guests. After the ceremony, they toasted the bridal couple and swayed to the accompanying music. Coffee and the first meal were consumed at the wedding house. Then the party moved to the building that housed the youth association, with two musicians leading the procession and playing a bridal march. There,

<sup>10</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 153–56.

<sup>11</sup> Huldén, 'Danser som jag minns', p. 8.

the dancing started with a bride's waltz, and during the second waltz, the closest family joined the dance. Lygdbäck gave further details:

After 3-4 dances of tango, schottische, waltz or foxtrot, someone sat at the table end and then the minuet started. Then followed 12 minuets in succession, then one was supposed to have fitness, the bride always as the first couple, the groom as the second. Then again, other dances between, then one or two minuets again. If the bridal couple was not on the floor first, it was a violation of the etiquette.

Many other people also mentioned that it was common at weddings in the latter part of the 1940s for up to fifteen minuets to be played in succession, with several rows dancing at the same time. Generally speaking, the minuet experienced a boost after the war, as nostalgic feeling towards one's home region was intensified.



Fig. 17.8 Several hundred wedding guests gathered in the yard for photography in Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1937. At this time, many minuets were danced and the fiddler played different melodies for each minuet. Photograph by Erik Häglund. SLS 865 B 431 The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+431](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+431), CC BY 4.0.

Corroborating Lygdbäck's account, Ann-May Nystedt (b. 1942) from Oravais confirmed that it was poor etiquette if the bridal couple was not first on the floor. In her memories from the 1950s, the bride was invited first and danced every dance. When a married male guest asked the bride to dance, the groom would look for that guest's wife and invite her to dance as the second couple. When an unmarried male guest invited the bride to a dance, he told the groom which woman to invite. This custom was also noted by a male informant (b. 1894) in his responses to a 1964 questionnaire.<sup>12</sup> Nystedt also recalled that the first two

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<sup>12</sup> SLS 803:25.

men changed places for the second minuet so each could dance with the bride, while the others in the row danced with the same partner for the duration of both dances.



Fig. 17.9 The author, Professor Lars Huldén, grew up in Munsala in Ostrobothnia in Finland. He learned to dance the minuet as a child and told about his memories in texts and in interviews. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, 1984. © Gunnel Biskop.

As I have discussed, it was customary to learn the minuet during childhood. Huldén's account described the situation in which he learned the minuet in the mid-1930s:

In elementary school, when we were ten, twelve, we used to practice in the minuet on the breaks, especially after a wedding, where the children had been involved late into the night and made their observations. We used to troll or sing [...]. Actually, I learned it on my own on the cowshed floor on a spring day when we cleaned calf and sheep cribs. I loaded the cart, and someone else drove. We had two coaches, and the horse was fastened for them in turn. If I was quick, I could get the load ready before the rider was back with the horse and the next empty cart. In the meantime, I practiced the minuet. The middle of the dance was the hardest part. But in the end, I got everything right.<sup>13</sup>

The minuet could also be a loud dance. Huldén explained that, in the 1930s, shouts of joy could be heard from the boys as they hopped up and down during the latter part of the minuet. He said that the shouts and stampings on Saturday nights from the youth association house could be heard one kilometre away. Yngvar Heikel wrote that the polska was danced similarly, accompanied by loud shouts, full of the joy of dance. About the tempo of the polska, Huldén said:

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13 Huldén, 'Danser som jag minns', p. 8.

In the polska, it's like a skill test to pull up such a speed that someone or someone loses the footsteps and everything breaks down. [Swedish eighteenth-century troubadour] Bellman already talks about throwing a rival out of the polska after the beat'.<sup>14</sup>

Everyone tried to keep up with the fast pace.

Nystedt learned to dance the minuet when she was eight years old, in 1951. She also had memories of how to improvise in the minuet. She had seen two men improvise at a wedding in the 1950s: while crossing over to the opposite side of the formation, they would dance between the rows for a while, finally reaching their places. This provoked laughter from the audience. These improvisers, who she called 'great dancers', were born in 1909 and 1904. The younger was the groom's father. The two men took turns dancing with the bride at the table end for fifteen to sixteen minuets in succession. The laughter was a sign of approval; these 'great dancers' improvised following local norms, since a father would not embarrass himself at his son's wedding. Not just anyone could improvise in this way.

Christine Julin-Häggman, in Jeppo, told me about similar events, saying that it was common for the most skilled dancers to improvise and do tricks. She had memories from weddings in the 1950s and from her own wedding in 1985 of dancing the minuet in two long rows: 'I remember one man who stood and brushed his legs just like a horse before the dance started. It was widespread. The most skilled dancers who knew what they were doing dared to do small tricks as well'.

Nystedt said that the table end position had a high status in the 1950s. When the music started playing, people shouted 'minuet, minuet' and 'rushed to the table end, standing up and turning their arms and waiting for the row to get complete'. She also said that there was a break between the minuet and the polska. This break allowed time for one couple to 'crawl' to get together with a second couple and for all the couples in the row to form a star with another couple. In conjunction dance instructors' wishes, musicians started playing the polska immediately after the minuet so that the audience would not begin to applaud between the minuet and the polska.

Nystedt also pointed out that everyone felt it was essential to have good body posture in the dance. One was not supposed to be 'crooked' but to hold up the body unashamedly. She related that one time, in the middle of a minuet performance in the 1910s, her grandmother (b. 1886) apparently thought that her sister did not have a right attitude and did not hold up her body correctly.

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14 Lars Huldén, 'Får man hoppa i menuetten?', *Folkdansaren*, 6 (1984), 3–10.

What did Nystedt's grandmother do? She jabbed her sister with her elbow in the side and erupted: 'Behave yourself!'<sup>15</sup>

Edvin Lygdbäck had a firm opinion about how the minuet had come to Oravais. He thought it had come through Kimo's ironworks in the 1700s. He told me:

Kimo ironworks was a state in the state, governed by the mining counselor [a high-rank honorary title in Sweden at that time] in Stockholm. A priest in Oravais could not punish an employment officer. At the ironworks, they spoke their dialect, they had their traditions, they were nice people, they had the silver buckles on the shoes and the walking sticks.

The implication is that workers from Stockholm had brought their traditions, including their dances, to Oravais.

It is peculiar that so many details in these memories of the twentieth century describe traditions that go back to the beginning of the eighteenth century: invitation, changing dance partners, and the importance of body posture, apart from the minuet steps themselves. This observation prompts the question: Can the minuet in Ostrobothnia have been danced in an unbroken tradition from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the present? I can only give an affirmative answer to this. After all, the form of the minuet also goes back to the ordinary minuet.



Fig. 17.10 In dancing, the shoes were worn out, especially if someone danced a minuet for two days at a wedding. A cobbler fitting a shoe with a new heel in 1921. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865\_ota135\_19815. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_ota135\\_19815?sid=2976468705](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_ota135_19815?sid=2976468705), CC BY 4.0.

<sup>15</sup> Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 156–58

## Long-lasting Dance

Several reasons might explain why the minuet has been danced for such a long time in some Ostrobothnian parishes. One explanation is that the minuet was danced and appeared in all situations, both at common dance events and weddings (both within the ceremonial part and as a common dance for guests). I like to think that the main reason was the minuet's position as a ceremonial dance: as a *pällhållare* dance—as it was called in Ostrobothnia—at the wedding. It is typical for more traditional customs to survive primarily at weddings.

The very long ceremonial portion of the wedding ceremony required the hosts to adequately possess enough finances to allow for several days' celebrations. It was also crucial that the Ostrobothnia weddings were celebrated in the same house—in one place—as opposed to the customs of the Swedish-speaking population in Nyland [Uusimaa] and the Finnish-speaking population in general, where the wedding was celebrated in two farms, first in the home of the bride then in that of the groom. Because no moving was required in Ostrobothnia, there was time for longer ceremonies. It was also significant that many priests were willing to dance. The priest danced the first minuet with the bride. The introduction of the ceremony was almost a ritual led by a priest. The ceremony was seen as an injunction, a duty, more than a pleasure. There was also a certain kind of ranking in the order of the *pällhållare* [bridesmaids and groomsmen] at the wedding, even regarding the dance skills in general, and there were codes and concepts that were a part of tacit knowledge passed down in the village.

The minuet's strength was that the dance could be shaped according to the situation in which it occurred: as a single couple's dance, two or more couples at the same time, or by the entire assembly. Consequently, the minuet was both a couple and a group dance. Common people could make the minuet a dance of their own within local norms by altering, for example, the number of couples that danced in the ceremony. Furthermore, the minuet was danced at different paces—slowly and graciously with devotion and solemnity when used in the ceremonial part of a wedding and more quickly, and joyfully, sometimes with hilarity and intensity, as a common dance.

I would like to say that the minuet was a 'men's dance'. Although it is danced in couples, a man directed the dancing from the table end. The minuet allowed the man in this position to display his dance skills, to show off. It also allowed those who did not yet have the required skills to dance by providing a place further away from the table end. The male partner took the leading role in specific situations, such as when, as a groom, he danced the minuet with his bride at his own wedding. Then the groom stood at the table end, and he was

the leading man. Before the marriage, the groom had probably participated in the *pällhållare* dance at previous weddings and even danced with the bride. In such situations, he took turns with the other young men to lead the dance from the table end. Women also showed off their dance skills, first in the *pällhållare* dance and later as a bride themselves.

The *pällhållare* dance was an exciting moment that young men and women anticipated from their childhood. Because they were watched closely, they took pains to learn to dance. There were, of course, some men—a groom or a *pällhållare* youth—who could not dance the minuet, and they could ask a close relative to dance instead, according to information from Oravais and Lappfjärd. But that was probably not something that was the most desirable option.<sup>16</sup>

War veteran Edvin Lygdbäck had told me that, in the 1930s, the boys were proud to know the minuet. The minuet was also a dance for all ages—from young children who ‘tumbled’ around the dining corner to the oldest grandfather dancing with the grandson’s young bride. A prerequisite for the long life of the minuet was, of course, that there were musicians who could play minuets and polskas and had a sufficiently large repertoire for different situations. Unfortunately, the dance orchestras who could not play minuets and polskas in the 1940s contributed to the minuet’s decline.



Fig. 17.11 ‘It was simply the case that if you couldn’t dance a minuet, you weren’t a real man,’ said a war veteran Per Rögård in Munsala in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1985. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop after a film by Kim Hahnsson. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.

In Jeppo, Viktor Andersson (1901–74), a leading musician, explained that the fast pace of the minuet demanded great vitality from players. He stated in a 1974

16 SLS 803:24; Aina Wadström, ‘Frieri- och bröllopsbruk’, *Hembygden, Tidskrift för svensk folkkunskap och hembygdsforskning i Finland*, 2 (1911), 80–90; Biskop, *Menuetten*, pp. 159–61.



interview that he 'had to play the minuet faster and more vigorously to compete with the newer dances'.<sup>17</sup>

I think the war veteran Per Rögård in Munsala answered why the minuet has lived so far in time in Ostrobothnia. He said, in 1985, 'It was simply so that if you could not dance the minuet, you were not a real man.'<sup>18</sup>

In the latter part of the twentieth century, when the minuet was no longer danced as a ceremonial dance at weddings, the men who once danced at the table end were often the same ones who sought to keep it alive as a common dance. This is what happened in Munsala in the 1960s when the musician Erik Johan Lindvall (1902–86) began to teach the minuet to keep the tradition going. He taught Bror Spåra (b. 1935) how to stand at the table end. Together with his wife, Spåra continued to learn the minuet during the 1980s. When Spåra stopped dancing at the table end and stopped learning the minuet, it was not danced as often anymore. However, in the Ostrobothnian minuet regions, there are still people who can dance the minuet. Minuets are danced at parties of various kinds, such as weddings, birthdays, and other gatherings. There are also special dancing evenings, where the minuet has the leading role.



Video 17.1 Tradition bearers from Jeppo in Ostrobothnia in Finland play and dance minuet and polska at the Nordic folk dance event NORDLEK 97 in Vaasa in Finland 1997. The folk music group Jeppo Bygdespelmän plays under the direction of Christine Julin-Häggman. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by segasovitch, 5 April 2012. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/c85115c4>

Today, enthusiasts have a significant role in keeping alive knowledge of minuet dancing. In Jeppo, music teacher Christine Julin-Häggman occupies this role. She teaches dance and music to children and young people in schools in Jeppo and leads several groups of young musicians of different ages. These dancers perform their minuet at various events, such as concerts, weddings, hometown feasts, and festivals. Jeppo is known today for having many musicians, and several of them have been nominated to the level of 'Master Musicians' at the Folk Music Festival in Kaustien. It is common for the musicians to learn the melodies on their own. In Oravais, Ann-May Nystedt is the tradition-bearer of the minuet, and she, together with her husband Olof, has been the driving force for decades. In southern Ostrobothnia in Tjock, Ann-Mari Ahlkulla was the one who led the minuet dance into the twenty-first century.

17 Häggman, p. 169.

18 Smedberg.



Video 17.2 Minuet from Jeppo in Ostrobothnia in Finland. The group Jepokryddona perform at Kaustby Festival while master folk musician Christine Julin-Häggman and Lars Engstrand play a minuet. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by KulturÖsterbotten, 13 July 2019. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/98697a2f>



Video 17.3 Minuet and polska from Tjock in southern Ostrobothnia in Finland. The old clothing, which today is called 'national costume', survived in Tjock in southern Ostrobothnia until the 1940s. After this time, the tradition bearers have continued to dress in national costumes when they perform their minuet and polska. Here, Tjock residents present their minuet at a fiddlers' gathering (spelmansstämma) in 2019. Music by Tjock Spelmanslag. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Jessica Westerholm, 9 May 2023. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/0c33910f>

## The Minuet within the Organized Folk Dance Movement

The minuet has been danced in popular tradition until the present day in Ostrobothnia, but it also has been danced in an organized form within the folk-dance movement from the beginning of the twentieth century. When the Föreningen Brage i Helsingfors (Brage Association in Helsinki) was founded in 1906, the minuet was one of the dances immediately included in the dance repertoire. The same year, people from Oravais taught the minuet from their home region for the theatre performance 'Österbottniska bondbröllopet' ['Ostrobothnian Peasant Wedding']. From 1906 to 1937, nearly fifty performances were given. Members of Föreningen Brage i Helsingfors learned of minuet variations from students who moved to Helsinki: one that Brage started dancing was the minuet from Lappfjärd, and over time the minuet from Vörå also became popular.<sup>19</sup>

Although the minuet's length was not predetermined in popular tradition but decided by the leading man, the folk-dance movement published guidelines establishing how many transitions were to be danced before the middle part of the minuet and how many further transitions were to be danced before the

19 Gunnel Biskop, 'Brages danslag skördar och sår', in *Brage 100 år. Arv—Förmedling—Förvandling*, ed. by Bo Lönnqvist, Anne Bergman, and Yrsa Lindqvist. Brage årsskrift 1991–2006 (Helsingfors: Brage, 2006), pp. 80–119.

performance ended. However, the group continued use the traditional signals to indicate the switch. Determining the set length was the only change made to the traditional style of popular dancing by the folk dancers. There were practical reasons for this: when several groups performed the minuet at the same time, it was thought that all groups should be in the same phase of the minuet, that is to say, start the minuet at the same time, dance the middle part at the same time, and end at the same time.



Fig. 17.12 Folk dancers from Brage in Helsinki perform with a minuet from Purmo in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1983. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © Gunnel Biskop.

Today, the minuet is danced in every folk-dance group around the Swedish-speaking areas of Finland, and every folk dancer in this network, young and old, can dance the minuet. These folk-dance groups belong to the central organization of Finland's Svenska Folkdansring. Within it, a *riksinstruktör* [national instructor], together with a group of experts, sets a dance itinerary for each year. Finland's Svenska Folkdansring's annual dance program always includes a minuet, sometimes two. The same minuet usually remains on the program for three to four years. The national instructor teaches the dances on courses to local instructors and musicians. Learning starts from the basics, with the rhythm and steps, and then covers the minuet's different phases. Through this method, the local instructors learn more about the traditions of the minuets as well. The local folk-dance instructors then teach the minuet dances and traditions to their folk-dance groups.<sup>20</sup>

Within the folk-dance movement, the difficulty lies in interpreting the descriptions and teaching the minuet. However, Finland's Svenska Folkdansring is in a rare position in this regard. The frames of reference for interpretation of the descriptions and the transmission of minuet traditions have existed as

20 Gunnel Biskop, *Dans i lag. Den organiserade folkdansens framväxt samt bruk och liv inom Finland's Svenska Folkdansring under 75 år* (Helsingfors: Finland's Svenska Folkdansring, 2007); Gunnel Biskop, 'Menuetten i Finland's svenskbygder efter 1850', *Folkdansforskning i Norden*, 36 (2013), 15–30.

unbroken from when the minuets were recorded in the 1910s and by Yngvar Heikel in the 1920s. Heikel, who recorded the minuets, also taught them all until the 1950s. After that, the national instructors, who had been pupils of Heikel, continued the practice. All of the national instructors have learned from the previous generation and have had practical dance knowledge. They have also educated themselves to become folk-dance instructors, and they have thus adopted a frame of reference to interpret the descriptions and teach the minuet.



Fig. 17.13 and Fig. 17.14 Folk dancers from Finland's Svenska Folkdansring perform a minuet from Oravais in Ostrobothnia during the Europeade 2017 festival in Turku. Photograph by Timo Hukkanen. © Timo Hukkanen.

Folk-dance groups meet once a week under the guidance of their local dance instructor who teaches the dances. Characteristically, folk-dance instructors have been dancing in junior teams since childhood and have been trained to serve as instructors. Like those working on the national level, these local instructors also have practical knowledge and reference frameworks to interpret the dance descriptions. Here, geographical variations of the minuet in different areas enter the picture. The source of the minuet culture in Finland's Swedish-speaking areas is Yngvar Heikel's work *Dansbeskrivningar* [*Dance Descriptions*], 1938, a work discussed earlier in Chapter 11. The instructors can use this source and interpret a particular minuet's record and teach it in their group. The minuet may be different from that set on the Finland's Svenska Folkdansring's yearly

itinerary. Some folk-dance groups specialize in minuets from different areas, whereas others may dance the same minuet year in and year out.

Like the folk dancers, the folk-dance musicians also go to the source material. They use Otto Andersson's recordings of melodies, choosing from among his two hundred seventy-six published minuets a melody from the same geographic area as the dance it will accompany.<sup>21</sup> In the folk-dance groups, they try to dance the minuet as recorded, but each performance is a one-off phenomenon: each performance differs from the others. Plus, within each dancing group, individuals have their own styles.



Video 17.4 Minuet and polska from Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland. Demonstration video for the Finnish groups at Europeade 2017 in Turku in Finland. Folk dancers from Haga Ungdomsförening (the Haga Youth Association) and Föreningen Brage i Helsingfors (the Brage Association in Helsinki) dance. Note: the minuet is a little shortened for audience performance. Uploaded by Europeade 2017 Turku, 2 December 2016. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/919a8e6c>



Video 17.5 Minuet and polska from Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland. Two hundred folk dancers from Finlands Svenska Folkdansring perform the minuet at Europeade 2017 in Turku in Finland. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Pargasit, 23 June 2019. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/11191d0e>

The purpose of Finlands Svenska Folkdansring is to sustain dance traditions, including the minuet, from different regions. Minuets from different parts of the Swedish-speaking areas of Finland differ slightly from each other. Even various villages within the same area could vary in detail from each other. Finlands Svenska Folkdansring tries to preserve the breadth of this minuet culture by encouraging the dancing of minuets from different areas. Folk-dance groups perform the dances, including the minuet, at countless exhibitions for audiences at parties and events of various kinds and festivals. The minuet is also performed jointly by all Swedish-speaking folk dancers at the Finlands Svenska Folkdansring's *folkdansstämma*, an annual three-day summer gathering. This event always ends with a celebration performance for the audience, and it is common for the dancers to dress up in folk costumes at these performances.



Video 17.6 Minuet and polska from Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland. Folk dancers from Finlands Svenska Folkdansring perform in Jakobstad, 2019. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Ralf Karlström, 29 June 2019. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/ed779e86>

21 Otto Andersson, *VI A 1 Äldre dansmelodier. Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning*. SLS 400 (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1963).

The Swedish-speaking folk-dance groups do not perform only in their own country. They join triennial Nordic folk-dance summer gatherings, so-called NORDLEK, arranged by turns in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as in the autonomous territories of the Faroe Islands, Greenland (belonging to Denmark) and Åland (belonging to Finland). During these gatherings, folk dancers from the Nordic countries also dance the minuet. Each NORDLEK also ends with a big dance performance. At these performances, Swedish-speaking folk dancers from Finland through the ages have danced the minuet.



Video 17.7 Folk dancers from Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, Finland, perform at NORDLEK in Steinkjer, Norway in July 2012. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by folkblueroots, 10 March 2012. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/d97e7b68>. See the minuet at timecode 1:20.

Besides surviving through performances, minuets are danced in everyday social contexts, when folk dancers come together for socializing, such as Christmas parties, birthday parties, and other private parties. In such cases, man number one—as the leading man is called within the folk-dance movement—determines the minuet’s length, as the tradition dictates. Some special arrangements are also organized for folk dancers and people who have not danced the minuet. At such events, the minuet is taught from the basics, and students only dance this one dance for an entire day.



Fig. 17.15 and Fig. 17.16 Minuet is danced today in various contexts. The minuet line stretched throughout the ballroom as the guests danced minuet from Oravais. Gunnel Biskop, author of this text, in a white blouse, celebrated her 50th birthday in 1993. Photographs by Viola Stjernberg. © Viola Stjernberg.

Tradition bearers that I have spoken with have emphasized that people like to dance next to someone who knows the minuet well. This same tendency has been found in historic sources around the Nordic region. During the fifty years I have danced the minuet as a member of a folk-dance group, I have realized the importance of the partner and those who dance beside me. When everyone knows the minuet and follows the rhythm, then everyone enjoys the dance, holds up their body with strong posture, and is proud of the dance. The experience one feels in that moment is almost indescribable. Through eye contact with my partner and with people around me, and by dancing and waving together as a whole row, I sense the rhythm in the air and the proximity of the others without necessarily looking at those who dance next to me. Such a nonverbal sense of togetherness with the group was likely felt by dancers in the past. The exhilaration of the shared experience and feeling also helps to explain why the minuet has survived through the centuries.



Fig. 17.17 The minuet from Oravais is danced with hop steps at Gunnel Biskop's doctoral dinner, 2012. Photograph by Karin Långbacka. © Karin Långbacka.

The minuet in Finland's Swedish countryside is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Finland signed the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Intangible Heritage in 2013. The goal of the Convention is, among other things, to list, recognize, and protect the living heritage. The National Board of Antiquities is responsible for the implementation of the listing in Finland. In 2017, for the first time, it became possible to apply for a tradition to be included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland, and among the phenomena included by the Ministry of Education and Culture was the minuet.

## Concluding Remarks

In Ostrobothnia in Finland, some people know how to dance the minuet today. The minuet is continuously on the teaching syllabus within organized folk-dance groups, and all Swedish-speaking folk dancers in Finland can dance the minuet. It is danced in folk-dance groups and in private gatherings. The minuet is also frequently performed for the public, in Finland, in the Nordic countries, and at festivals worldwide.

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- Wadström, Aina, 'Frieri- och bröllopsbruk', *Hembygden, tidskrift för svensk folkkunskap och hembygdsforskning i Finland*, 2 (1911), 80–90
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# 18. Minuet Constructions and Reconstructions

*Anna Björk and Petri Hoppu*

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Unlike in Denmark and Swedish-speaking Finland, the vernacular or popular minuet did not survive in the continuous tradition of Sweden and Finnish-speaking Finland sufficiently long for it to be documented in detail. Although it had been danced since the seventeenth century, the vernacular minuet disappeared rapidly towards the end of the nineteenth century, and in neither Sweden nor Finnish-speaking Finland do any detailed descriptions exist. However, thanks to intensive co-operation among Nordic folk-dance organizations, Swedish and Finnish folk dancers were able to watch Danish and Finnish-Swedish minuets performed at various events, so they knew the dance and how it has appeared since the early twentieth century. Thus it is conceivable that Danish and Finnish-Swedish from times past minuets influenced the recent emergence of new minuet forms among Swedish and Finnish folk dancers.

In Sweden today, the minuet is a popular dance within some folk-dance settings. It is danced at social dance events, taught in dance workshops and courses, and is often used in folk-dance performances. The minuet was reconstructed by Börje Wallin, one of the non-scholar folk-dance researchers who influenced the dancing and the dance repertoire within the folk music revival in Sweden in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in Sweden, the minuet went from being a pre-modern dance to becoming a part of today's repertoire of the urban folk-dance communities. This first part of the chapter will describe Wallin's process of reconstructing this dance.

The minuet experienced a different re-emergence in Finnish-speaking Finland, where folk dancers created new folk-dance choreographies for the stage beginning in the mid-twentieth century. During the last decades of the

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1 Börje Wallin was the grandfather of Anna Björk, one of the authors of this chapter.

century, choreographers started to compose minuets wherein Finnish-Swedish minuets were given prominence. The latter part of the chapter will examine the role and significance of these minuet constructions or compositions within the Finnish folk-dance movement.

## Börje Wallin and the Reconstruction of the Swedish Minuet

At the end of the nineteenth century, the older social dances—such as the polska and the minuet—gradually disappeared from the dance floor. The repertoire of social dancers started to change as new dances from America gained popularity in Sweden. Simultaneously, a new dance movement emerged through the establishment of folk-dance groups focused on performance. The repertoire of these groups consisted of new dances created in a folkloristic style choreographed directly for stage performances, and, to a certain amount, older social dances performed in a standardized style. Gradually, these dances were considered to be Swedish ‘folk dances’.<sup>2</sup>

In the middle of the twentieth century, a few folk dancers started to search for the traditional social dances of the past. The work of these non-scholarly dance researchers constituted the basis for the folk-dance revival in Sweden in the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> One of these researchers was Börje Wallin from Helsingborg in the south of Sweden. He grew up as a dancer in a folk-dance group founded by his father. Wallin regularly went to Denmark to dance, visiting Danish folk-dance groups at social dance events, and there he noticed the difference between the Danish and the Swedish folk-dances. According to him, the Danish ones made more sense as traditional social dances. Their structure had more repetitive elements, which made these dances easier to learn and thus more suited to the social dance situation.<sup>4</sup>

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2 Göran Andersson, ‘Philochoros—grunden till den Svenska folkdansrörelsen’, in *Norden i dans: folk, fag, forskning*, ed. by Egil Bakka and Gunnel Biskop (Oslo: Novus, 2007), pp. 309–18; Linnea Helmersson, ‘Inledning’, in *Eldsjälarna och Dansarvet: Om Forskning och Arbetet Med att Levandegöra Äldre Dansformer*, ed. by Linnea Helmersson (Rättvik: Folkmusikens hus, 2012), pp. 8–19.

3 Helmersson, ‘Inledning’.

4 Svenskt visarkiv SVAA20160515BW001. Most of the facts about Börje Wallin in this text originated from an interview with Wallin’s family members who were a part of his research.

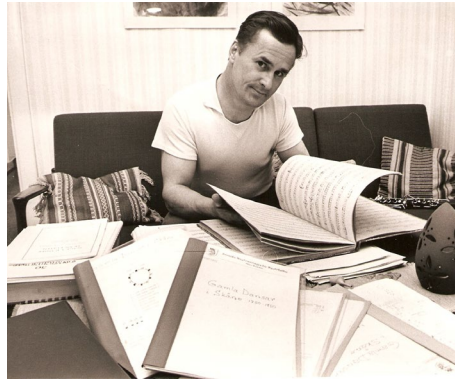


Fig. 18.1 Börje Wallin. © HBG-BILD.

Realizing that a great many of the dances performed by his folk-dance group had never been a part of a traditional vernacular dance repertoire, Wallin started to search for the older social dances from southern Sweden. He interviewed and filmed older people and searched for information in archives and literature.<sup>5</sup> Some experienced dancers and musicians interested in dance research regularly visited his home, and there they discussed his work, tried out the dances, and searched for even more source material. They recovered some dances from accounts of living persons, while others were revived from literature and archival material, including written dance descriptions, comments, or narratives about dance events and descriptive sketches. Wallin continued this work for the rest of his life and disseminated his research results to dancers through dance courses and other dance events. Today, these dances are again a part of the thriving folk-dance movement.

### The Minuet and the Reconstruction Process

During the seventeenth century, the minuet spread in Europe, and just as in Finland and Denmark, the minuet was not only danced by the upper classes in Sweden but also by the lower classes. Unlike in Finland and Denmark, however, there are no film recordings of the minuet in Sweden, only a few written descriptions. There are, however, strong indications that the minuet had been a popular dance. It was often mentioned in memoirs, letters, poetry, and documents about a particular district's weddings or local traditions. There are

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5 Linnea Helmersson, 'Börje Wallin', in *Eldsjälarna och Dansarvet: Om Forskning och Arbetet Med att Levandegöra Äldre Dansformer*, ed. by Linnea Helmersson (Rättvik: Folkmusikens hus, 2012), pp. 314–15.

also testimonies of the minuet in archives.<sup>6</sup> Another indication is the frequency of minuet melodies in the handwritten tune books of folk musicians. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the minuet used to be a popular melody type. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the number of known melodies drastically decreased—at the same time that the waltz was introduced and quickly gained popularity.<sup>7</sup> In a newspaper article about dancing in the south of Sweden in 1810, it is stated that the most popular dances were the slängpolska, the waltz, and the minuet.<sup>8</sup> It seems that the minuet disappeared at the end of the nineteenth century. However, in archive questionnaires from the 1930s and 1940s about dance traditions, many respondents still remembered the minuet being danced.<sup>9</sup>

In his search for the social dances of the past, Wallin found some minuet descriptions from southern Sweden. Assisted by musicians who already knew local minuet melodies, he started to reconstruct the dance in the 1970s. His primary sources were the archival material of Nils Månsson Mandelgren, a Swedish ethnologist, and some notes from Nils Persson from Vallkärra.<sup>10</sup>

The method Wallin used for reconstructing the minuet was as follows: to read the descriptions closely, to question and discuss what each informant really meant by his or her words, and then to practice the dance repeatedly for a long time—until the music and the described moves made sense together. Then he would repeat the process, reading and discussing the material and dancing again. Wallin found that the way the minuet was described had similarities

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- 6 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svensksbygder—under trehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015), pp. 99–108.
  - 7 Magnus Gustafsson, *Polskans historia: en studie i melodityper och motioformer med utgångspunkt i Petter Dufvoas notbok* (Lund: Lunds universitet, 2016), pp. 323–40.
  - 8 Folklivsarkivet, Lund. Mandelgren 1882, and Mandelgrenska samlingen, 3:12:7. 'Slängpolska' is a Swedish couple dance with origins in the oldest version of couple dance in Sweden, which is evident because the part of the performance where dancers spin around happens while they remain in place on the dance floor rather than while they move around the dance floor like the waltz. Since the folk-dance revival, slängpolska has again become a popular dance.
  - 9 Institutet för språk och folkminnen, Dialekt- och folkminnesarkivet i Uppsala (f.d. ULMA), Frågekort 39 Danser.
  - 10 Mandelgren's collection is situated at the Folklife Archives of Lund University. However, the question concerning Nils Persson's notes is more complicated. The carpenter Nils Persson was born in 1865 in Vallkärra, close to Lund in southern Sweden. Wallin found notes about Persson's mother dancing the minuet. At the Nordic Museum in Stockholm, there are notes about dancing made by Persson, but none contain the exact quotation that Wallin claims to have found. A former archivist at the 'Dialekt- och ortsnamnsarkivet' in Lund also claims to have had contact with Nils Persson about dancing. To this day, the quotation Wallin cited in his reconstruction has not been found in any archive.

with the minuets in Denmark and Finland. Here is one example of the minuet descriptions he used:

Both turned around. They retook each other's hands, briefly, they let go again, after that figure, each in the opposite direction or forwards or further apart from each other. The figure was serious, slow tempo, no jumps, the feet were moved close to the floor. [...] After that figure, they retook each other's hands—let them go again, turning separately again.<sup>11</sup>

Taken out of its context, this description may seem confusing. But in comparison with the Danish and Finnish minuets Wallin had been used to dancing, it made sense.

The minuet Wallin reconstructed consists of an opening figure followed by two motifs: a *figuré* and a *change of place*.<sup>12</sup> He interpreted one of the Swedish minuet descriptions as being a couple dance.<sup>13</sup> He also combined the minuet with *slängpolska* since he found notes about *slängpolska* being danced in connection with the minuet.<sup>14</sup> In full, the Wallin minuet is performed like this:

### **I: The minuet (Music: minuet)**

The dancers start with *slängpolska* turning, followed by an opening minuet figure. After this, the dancers vary between the two motifs—*figuré* and *change of place*—until the music stops.

### **II: The *slängpolska* (Music: *slängpolska*)**

The dancers dance a *slängpolska*.

As mentioned in Chapter 2 of this book, the minuet had many different names. In Skåne one finds the terminology *möllevitt* and *möllavillan*. Wallin chose to call his reconstructed minuet *möllevitt* instead of *menuett* to point at the variety of dance names in earlier centuries.

The minuet of Börje Wallin has been taught in courses and workshops since the 1980s, and it has spread across Sweden. Whether the dance is similar to the minuet of the past or not, one may never know. Wallin handled his source

11 Mandelgren's collection. Folklife Archives, Lund. [Author's translation.]

12 A '*figuré*' is an expression used within Swedish folk dance referring to dance figures where two people dance together, facing each other but without embracing or touching each other. See Börje Wallin, *Gamla Dansar i Skåne, Polskor* (Helsingborg: Sonja and Börje Wallin, 1992), [Booklet + DVD].

13 For example, one source said: 'Any number of couples danced at once, but each couple alone by itself.' Mandelgren's collection. Folklife Archives, Lund. [Author's translation.]

14 Mandelgren's collection. Folklife Archives, Lund.

material accurately, but his primary concern was the dance feeling comfortable and pleasant to dance, wanting to bring it back to the present-day dance floors.<sup>15</sup>

## The Swedish Minuet Today

After an interlude of almost one hundred years, the minuet is being danced again: not in a rural context anymore, but by the Swedish folk dancers of today. However, it is again danced as a part of the same dance repertoire as in the early nineteenth century, with, for example, the waltz and slängpolska—as mentioned in the quote from the newspaper article about the most popular dances in 1810. The minuet has become a popular dance in both participatory and performative settings. Today, the minuet is taught at workshops, courses, and in different forms of folk-dance education, for example, at the Stockholm University of the Arts, where it has a strong position in the dance repertoire of the folk-dance programme.

As a social dance, the minuet is mostly danced in the south of Sweden. In addition, Wallin's daughter Karin Wallin, who often plays minuet at dance events, claims that there is almost always at least one or two couples dancing the minuet no matter where in Sweden she happens to be playing.<sup>16</sup> As a staged folk dance, the minuet has become a popular dance, both in folk-dance groups and independent folk dancers performing folk dances.

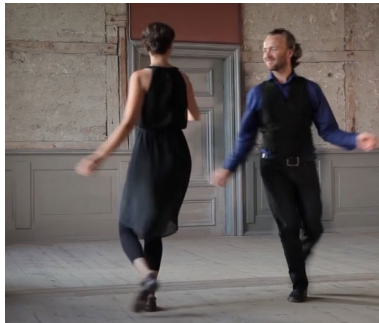


Fig. 18.2 Anton Schneider and Petra Eriksson have worked diligently to develop the Börje Wallin minuet for stage performances. Film photographer: Henrik Peel.

© Henrik Peel.

15 Svenskt visarkiv. SVAA20160515BW001

16 Karin Wallin is a well-established folk musician who was the leading musician in Börje Wallin's research projects and dance courses from the middle of the 1970s and onwards.

Just as the style of other Swedish folk dances has changed through the revival process, the reconstructed minuet has also partly changed over the last twenty years, being influenced by different dance teachers and performing folk dancers. Some dancers have developed ways of varying the minuet step, but the most evident change is to movements of the body, particularly, the arms and legs. Wallin had a relatively moderate dance style, influenced by notes in the source material and the minuet style he had seen in Denmark. Nowadays, the minuet is danced in varying styles, including Wallin's.

## The Minuet in Finnish Youth Associations' Folk Dance Groups

The minuet is a popular dance among Finnish folk dancers today, but it has not had an equal status all the time and everywhere in the country. The field of Finnish folk dance is dispersed, comprised of several associations whose backgrounds differ significantly. Most importantly, folk dancing associations are organized according to the language, that is, Finnish and Swedish. Moreover, nowadays, most Finnish-speaking folk dancers belong to three organizations, of which only one is exclusively a folk-dance organization, whereas the two others have other activities.<sup>17</sup> Finnish Youth Associations is one of the latter type. Nevertheless, it counts the largest number of folk dancers among its members in Finland. It also arranges the only regular folk dance festival in the Nordic countries, Pispalan Sottiisi (Pispala Schottische).<sup>18</sup>

Youth associations are local societies that are united under a national umbrella organization called Finnish Youth Associations. The first Finnish youth association was founded in 1881. Initially, the purpose of these associations was to educate young people in the countryside, to raise 'good people and proper citizens' according to their motto.<sup>19</sup> During the first decades, social dancing was considered harmful, and the associations tried to find other activities that could replace it among the youth. First, they promoted singing games in their events and later also folk dances.<sup>20</sup> Gradually, folk dance became one of the most

17 Petri Hoppu, 'Folkdansföreningar i det finska Finland', in *Norden i Dans: Folk—Fag—Forskning*, ed. by Egil Bakka and Gunnel Biskop (Oslo: Novus, 2007), pp. 478–80.

18 Jaakko Numminen, *Yhteisön voima. Nuorisoseuraliikkeen historia 5. Kansanliike elää* (Helsinki: Suomen Nuorisoseurat, 2011), p. 542, pp. 585–91.

19 Jaakko Numminen, *Yhteisön voima. Nuorisoseuraliikkeen historia 1. Synty ja kasvu* (Helsinki: Suomen Nuorisoseurat, 2011), pp. 89–90, p. 148.

20 Jaakko Numminen, *Yhteisön Voima. Nuorisoseuraliikkeen Historia 3. Seuratoiminta* (Helsinki: Suomen Nuorisoseurat, 2011), pp. 406–7.



popular activities in many of these associations, together with theatre, music, and sports.

The first folk-dance groups within the youth associations appeared at the turn of the twentieth century, but it was not until in the 1930s that the inclusion of these groups became commonplace in many parts of the country.<sup>21</sup> In youth associations, folk dances were initially used for educational and civilizing purposes, and although their activities had a strong nationalist character, the preservation of a national folk-dance repertoire did not belong to its primary activities. Folk dance was seen primarily as a form of performance, similar to theatre, which led to the development of staged folk-dance arrangements. As such, the youth associations have not collected folk dances (though some of its members have done so independently), and it has published folk-dance books only occasionally.

As early as in the 1940s, the youth associations displayed a tendency towards creating stage folk dances that many claimed did not belong in the published (and accepted) folk-dance canon and should not be promoted. During this time, one of the most prominent folk-dance instructors in the youth associations, Ms. Helvi Jukarainen, composed her first folk-dance youth choreographies, for which she was strongly criticized.<sup>22</sup> Despite this, Jukarainen continued her work after the Second World War until the 1980s. And because she was employed by youth associations, first by the national central organization and later by a regional organization, her influence was significant among youth associations' folk-dance groups.<sup>23</sup>

### Minuet as a Part of the Repertoire

The minuet as a folk dance is associated with Swedish-speaking Finland. On the contrary, minuets were very uncommon among Finnish-speaking folk dancers until the late twentieth century, when their popularity started to increase rapidly.

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- 21 Ibid., pp. 545–49. The first youth association with folk dance was Kimito ungdomsförening in Southwestern Finland, but it belonged to the Swedish-speaking youth organization which is separate from the Finnish Youth Associations; Adéle Weman (alias Parus Ater), 'En folklivsforskare', *Föreningen Brage, Årsskrift 2* (Helsingfors: Föreningen Brage, 1908), pp. 23–29.
- 22 Correspondence between Jukarainen and Ms. Anni Collan, one of the early pioneers, publishers, and folk-dance collectors in Finland, reveals that Jukarainen's activities were regarded as totally inappropriate. Collan stated that Jukarainen's choreographies would destroy the original Finnish folk dance. (Correspondence between Anni Collan and Helvi Jukarainen 1947–1948. Private archive.) It must be stated that even the Finnish folk-dance canon—the published dances—contained choreographies or arranged folk dances (see Hoppu, 'National Dances').
- 23 Numminen, *Yhteisön Voima*, 5, pp. 594–95.

Like other folk-dance organizations, the Finnish Youth Association publishes an annual folk-dance performance; they have been doing this since the 1940s, and it still happens today.

The first time a minuet appeared in the yearly dance programme was in 1969. The Minuet from Oravais, a version performed in the musical drama 'Ostrobothnian Peasant Wedding' from 1906 and later published in several Finnish-Swedish folk-dance books, was added to the performance program. Ms. Sirkka Viitanen, the Finnish Youth Association's cultural secretary, translated the instructions from Swedish into Finnish. The same minuet was also a part of the folk-dance routine celebrating the organization's centennial twelve years later, in 1981. In addition to this particular minuet, only instructions of the Minuet from Tjock were published in an annual program of the youth associations before the 1980s: this took place in 1972 and, again, was made possible by Viitanen's translation.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, several other minuets, including those from Nagu and Vörå, were translated into Finnish and incorporated into the repertoire of the youth associations' folk-dance groups. Moreover, these minuets were not merely introduced in the annual programs. The Finnish Youth Association arranged annually international folk-dance courses, which were extremely popular at that time, and Finnish-Swedish folk-dance instructors were invited to teach various dances, including minuets. Consequently, minuets became an essential part of many groups' repertoire.

Shortly after Finnish-Swedish minuets began to be introduced in youth associations to a more considerable extent, folk-dance instructors also began to compose new minuet choreographies which all followed a similar format. This can best be traced by examining programs of a folk-dance choreography contest, which was arranged as a part of the biannual Pispala Schottische festival. The first contest was organized as part of the first festival in 1970. Very little information has been saved about the competitions during the 1970s, but we do know that these events did not have a stable organization at that time and the themes could differ from year to year.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, at several festivals, no contest was arranged at all. However, since 1984, the competition has followed a somewhat consistent format excluding 1990 when the format differed from other competitions and the festivals occurring from 2003 to 2009 when the gatherings were arranged at the Pispala Schottische biannual autumn festival Tanssimania (Dance Mania).<sup>25</sup>

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24 Ibid., pp. 591–92.

25 Programs of the Pispala Schottische choreography contest 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2009. Pispala Schottische Archive, Tampere, Finland.

Table 18.1: Minuets at Pispala Schottische folk-dance Choreography Contest 1984–2009

Year	Name in Finnish	Name in English
1984	<i>Saariston menuetti ja polska</i>	Archipelago Minuet and Polska
1988	<i>Menuetti ja polska Träskändasta</i>	Minuet and Polska from Träskända
1990	<i>Asuntilan menuetti ja polska</i>	Asuntila Minuet and Polska
1992	<i>Kuortaneen menuetti ja polska</i>	Kuortane Minuet and Polska
2003	<i>Minuee</i>	Minuet
2005	<i>Viiden askeleen menuetti ja valssi</i>	Five Step Minuet and Waltz
2007	<i>Jäähyväismenuetti</i>	Farewell Minuet
2009	<i>Iltatunnelmia (Menuetti) ja jälkipolska</i>	Evening Atmosphere (Minuet) and After Polska

From the documents available since 1984, we can see that there were dances called a minuet in most of these contests (see Table 18.1 above). Considering that it was not until at the beginning of the 1980s that minuets even became common among the youth associations' folk-dance groups, it is remarkable that several new minuet choreographies were composed regularly throughout the decade and beyond. In most cases, the minuet was followed by a polska, which is still typical of Finnish-Swedish minuets danced by Finnish folk-dance groups today, and in only three instances the minuet was a standalone piece or followed by a waltz.

### Kuortane Minuet and Polska

The best-known folk-dance teacher in youth associations during the last decades of the twentieth century was Mr. Antti Savilampi, who composed two of the minuets mentioned in Table 18.1: Kuortane Minuet and Evening Atmosphere, both of which were followed by a polska. Kuortane Minuet, from 1992, has been danced regularly by several folk-dance groups since its inception. We shall have a closer look at its background and structure in the following analysis.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The analysis of Kuortane Minuet is based on the video recording at Pispala Schottische choreography contest in 1992. The video is found in Pispala Schottische Archive, Tampere, Finland.



Fig. 18.3 Folk-dance group Kiperä premiering Kuortane Minuet at Savoy Theatre, Helsinki, 1992. Photograph by Petri Mulari. © Petri Mulari.

The melody of Kuortane Minuet was composed in the late 1980s by Markku Lepistö, while he was a student at the department of folk music of Sibelius Academy (the music university of Finland). Professor Heikki Laitinen explained that he asked Lepistö to compose a minuet and polska honouring Lepistö's home region, Kuortane, as an assignment for a musical composition course.<sup>27</sup> Later, Lepistö collaborated with Savilampi in the late 80s and early 90s, and one of their joint artistic projects was Kuortane Minuet and Polska, which Savilampi choreographed in 1992.<sup>28</sup> Savilampi worked as a physical education instructor of The Finnish Youth Association until 1993, and folk dance was his primary area of expertise. Therefore, during his partnership with Lepistö, he was familiar with the minuets published in annual programs and others that he became acquainted with through his contacts with Finnish-Swedish folk dancers. His participation in the Kuortane Minuet project shows influences from several Finnish-Swedish minuets, especially those from Tjöck and Lappfjärd: the basic step, basic figure, hand figure, as well as the introduction and ending have similar features as in these minuets, although they have also been modified and altered in many ways. The dance takes place in a typical longways formation, with ladies and gentlemen in opposite lines, each dancer facing his or her partner. This formation is changed in the middle of the dance and at the end of the performance the original formation is restored.

The basic step of Kuortane Minuet consists of steps during two 3/4 bars as in most minuets: a step with the right foot (1), a step with the left foot (3), a step with the right foot (4), and a step with left foot (5) or a *chassé* step beginning with the left foot (5–6). The latter option including a *chassé* step during the two

27 Heikki Laitinen, November 28, 2016, personal communication.

28 Antti Savilampi, July 17, 2018, personal communication.

last counts of the minuet step is similar to a minuet basic step found in Lappjärd, published in 1984.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the dance contains *balancé* steps sideways, which resemble similar steps during the middle part of the minuet from Tjöck, as well as variations of the basic step.

The basic figure of the dance consists of twelve bars, which is typical of Danish and but not Finnish-Swedish minuets (Table 18.2). The figure starts in longways formation.

Table 18.2: The basic figure of Kuortane minuet

Bars	
1–2	Dancers take one basic step towards their partner, turning firmly to the left.
3–4	Dancers return to their starting positions, turning right with three steps (right, left, right, 1–3) and a <i>chassé</i> step (4–5).
5–6	Dancers again take one basic step towards their partner with <i>chassé</i> .
7–8	Dancers return to the longways formation, turning left with a basic step with <i>chassé</i> .
9–10	Partners pass by one another on the right with a step onto the right foot (1), take three <i>balancé</i> steps (left, right, left) sideways while facing their partner (2–4) and end with a <i>chassé</i> step (5–6).
11–12	Dancers turn to the left with four steps (left, right, left, right, 1–4) and a <i>chassé</i> step (5–6).

The overall form of the dance is presented in the Table 18.3.

Table 18.3: The form of Kuortane minuet

Introduction
The dance starts with dancers entering the stage with couples in a row. When all the couples have entered the stage, the dancers turn to face their partners in a diagonal longways formation. Partners pass by one another on the right similarly to bars 9–12 in the basic figure: this resembles the latter part of the introduction in the minuets from Tjöck and Lappjärd.

29 Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, *70 finlandssvenska folkdanser. Instruktionshäfte 4* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 1984).

Basic figure
The basic figure begins, and it is danced three times, and then bars 5–6 in the basic figure are danced, and during the third count of the first basic step, gentlemen clap their hands. Dancers turn, curving to the left and approach their partners again with a step with the right foot and a <i>chassé</i> step, which are repeated.
Hand figure
Partners hold their right hands and turn clockwise with similar steps (twice) during the bars 9–10 in the basic figure. Having released their hands, dancers turn, curving to the left and approach their partners. Partners hold their left hands and turn counterclockwise with three <i>balancé</i> steps (right, left, right, 1–3), a <i>chassé</i> step and a quick step (4–5) and a step (left, 6), which is repeated ending with a <i>chassé</i> (4–5) and a step (6). Similar figures are found in many Finnish-Swedish minuets, including those from Tjöck and Lappjärd. Finally, the dancers pass one another on the left, first turning firmly to the left and then making a slow pirouette to the right.
Extension figure
At this point in the music, an improvisation section begins, and at the same time, the dancers leave the longways formation and start to dance in four lines, each containing two couples. First, ladies dance towards each other and gentlemen follow suit. Then the first lady dances with the second gentleman and their partners also switch. The couples move briefly back to the longways formation, passing by one another on the left just like at the end of the hand figure, leaving the formation again. The extension figure is ended with a reel of four, dancers coming finally back to their starting positions in the longways formation. During this figure, chosen steps vary frequently, but from the final reel of four until the end of the figure, dancers generally take a step with right foot following by a left <i>chassé</i> step.
Basic figure and the finale
The music starts from the beginning once more, and the dancers repeat the basic figure twice. However, at the end of the second basic figure, dancers hold their right hands and make a half-turn clockwise. The gentleman guides his partner under his arm as she spins in a half-turn the right, and the dance is ended with a deep bow and curtsy. This feature, minuet ending with a half-turn hand in hand, can be found in the published minuets from Tjöck and Lappjärd as well. A <i>polska</i> immediately follows.

Savilampi's Kuortane Minuet is a combination of influences from published Finnish-Swedish minuets and his original artistic contribution. The choreography follows the music's main structure, but the twelve-bar basic figure differs from

the eight-bar phrases of the melody. Although the dance contains the most salient features of Finnish-Swedish minuets, its distinctive stage-dance character is seen, for example, in its strict form, stylized movements, and raised hands, all of which are unfamiliar in social forms of minuets.

## Concluding Remarks

Under the influences of the living traditions in Denmark and Swedish-speaking Finland, Swedish and Finnish folk dancers created new minuet practices during the last decades of the twentieth century. What connected them was the appreciation of the dance form and the desire to reinstate it in dancers' active repertoires. However, solutions for revitalizing the minuet clearly differed in these countries. It is thus possible to see two different methods for integrating the minuet into national folk-dance fields.

The contemporary Swedish minuet is an example of how a social dance of the past, which was transmitted only by archives and literature, was reconstructed in the Swedish folk-dance revival of the 1970s. It is now, once again, a part of the vivid dance scene. Quite the opposite, new minuet choreographies in the Finnish Youth Association are made for stage purposes only, and the choreographies are popular in folk-dance performances. In addition, the Swedish minuet is only occasionally seen at social folk-dance events in Finland, usually when there is Swedish polska dancing involved.

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# 19. New Forms and Contexts of the Minuet in the Nordic Countries

*Göran Andersson and Elizabeth Svarstad*

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This chapter discusses various revivals of the minuet in the Nordic countries. In this context, we use the term *revival* to mean attempts to bring back into practice dances that are about to lose their position as regular social dances or that have been out of use so long that they can only be reconstructed from descriptions or composed as new dances with particular references to historical sources. In this sense, the Nordic revivals started in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and aimed mainly at resurrecting folk dances.

A study of the social background of the pioneers interested in reviving theatre dance, ballroom dance, and folk dance in Norway, Finland, and Denmark shows that their ancestors were often farmers, countryside teachers, or clergymen. On the other hand, ancestors of Swedish pioneers were more likely to have been academicians or aristocrats, or at least to have occupied a higher level in the social hierarchy than in the other Nordic countries.<sup>1</sup> This may explain why the Swedish folk-dance movement (as opposed to movements in other countries) shows more interest in the upper classes' dances. Folk dancers introduced a special concept to distinguish these particular performances from regular folk dances. Swedish folk dancers called this *högreståndsdanser* [dances of the upper classes]. In the other countries, similar terms mark similar phenomena: in Denmark *anstandsdanse*, in Finland sometimes *salonkitanssit* (in Finnish-Swedish: *salongsdanser*), and in Norway *storgårdsdanser* or *eller stildanser*.<sup>2</sup> The importance of those dances in Sweden and the efforts to revive them began much earlier

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- 1 Egil Bakka, 'Class Dimensions of Dance Spaces: Situating Central Agents Across Countries and Categories', in *Nordic Dance Spaces: Practicing and Imagining a Region*, ed. by Karen Vedel and Petri Hoppu (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 129–58.
  - 2 The Norwegian folk-dance collectors and publishers did not differentiate between dances used at the small mansions and the dances used at the peasant cottages.

than in the other countries. For that reason, these are given a significant amount of space in the following section.

## The Minuet as a Part of the Repertoire of Historical Dances

Although the minuet ceased to be popular among the upper classes in Nordic countries at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it continued to be danced among ordinary people. Still, it fell into more and more disuse, so much so that in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was performed only in select areas of Finland and Denmark. A news item from 1867 reported how a couple, sluice inspector Uddman and his wife, who were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary in Vänersborg:

Very few would have preserved one's body mobility and almost juvenile happiness like the respected 85-year-old in his senior years; yet, when he hears an old familiar melody, he participates with joy in a minuet, polska or so-called engelska trippen, these dances, which now belong to the tradition, were the most appreciated in his youth.<sup>3</sup>

This means that, at Uddman's marriage in 1817 and for some time to come, the minuet was still common, but it had become by 1867 'an old-fashioned melody at the gold[en] wedding'. Another example confirming a change in the minuet's status is a letter from Jakobstad in Finland, dated 7 July 1865, in which the author wrote about a midsummer wedding that had just been celebrated:

Common dances were: a kind of polonaise, waltz, polka, 'with the hook,' and pot-pourri. [...] The older people were merely spectators but complained of little dissatisfaction that the old peasant dances, such as polska and minuet, were now forgotten.<sup>4</sup>

The Swedish-speaking Ostrobothnian coast in Finland is regarded as one of the core regions when it comes to the minuet in the Nordic countries, but, in some areas within Swedish-speaking West Finland, the minuet was already in decline at this time.<sup>5</sup> As is clear from the examples above, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the popularity of the minuet continued to decline. During

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3 'Guldbröllop', *Barometern*, 2 October 1867, p. 2.

4 'Jakobstad den 7 juli 1865', *Åbo Underrättelser*, 13 July 1865, pp. 1–2.

5 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om Menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svensksbygder—under rehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015), p. 112.

the second half of the nineteenth century, 'the old peasant dances' were all but forgotten.

Dance schools and traveling dance teachers, however, continued to include a minuet in their repertoire. An example of this phenomena is the school of *Dramatiska teatern* [Dramatic Theatre] in Stockholm. In 1890, it held a public rehearsal during which a minuet was performed to show the student results of their dance lessons.<sup>6</sup> Of course, there might be several other different reasons for the retention of the minuet in this school. Among other things, it was believed that learning the minuet contributed to good body knowledge and posture.<sup>7</sup> A Swiss dance teacher Martinet,<sup>8</sup> whose book was translated into Danish in 1801, wrote the following:

For a long time, the minuet has been abandoned, and it is almost no more used as a social dance; however, it does include all the basic rules of the art of dance, and it is effortless to prove that one cannot dance in a mediocre manner, much less well, when one is not taught in it. This dance develops the limbs, gives them a beautiful outline, power, and regularity in the movements.<sup>9</sup>

One might expect to get the same training and body knowledge from any of the popular dances at that time. Could it be that the name 'minuet' itself held a special status, so much so that the concept remained well known? For example, there are dance descriptions in which the dance is called 'the minuet', but the steps and movements are decidedly un-minuet-like. Another explanation could be that the dance teachers, in many cases, were performers at some theatre houses, perhaps primarily in Sweden and Denmark, and they toured around the Nordic countries to reinforce their often relatively meagre incomes. Many of their productions included a minuet or at least a dance called by that name. The best known of these is a minuet from the play *Elverhøj* by Johan Ludvig Heiberg with the music by Friedrich Kuhlau (1828), or Alexandra-Minuet, which was to be taught in Karlskrona.<sup>10</sup> It should be mentioned that the minuet from *Elverhøj*

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6 'Teater och Musik', *Aftonbladet*, 29 May 1890, p. 3.

7 Biskop *Menuetten*, p. 111.

8 Martinet has the initials J. J. in the original French version whereas they are J. F. in the Danish translation.

9 J. J. Martinet, *Begyndelsegrunde i Dandsekonsten, Bestemt til nyttig Selvøvelse, og for de Forældre som ej holde Dansemester til deres Børn* (Copenhagen: L. Reistrups forlag, 1801), p. 21.

10 *Dansskola i Carlskrona*, *Blekings-posten*, 21 June 1864, p. 1; 'Dansinformation', *Carlskrona veckoblad*, 31 July 1861, p. 3; 'Diverse', *Jönköpingsbladet*, 14 January 1845, p. 4.

is still today included in the training package of dance teacher education of the Danish dance schools' organization.<sup>11</sup>

Yet another explanation might be that there were only a few fashionable dances at the time and, therefore, a dance teacher simply extended his repertoire with dances that were not in everyday use. Staged folk dances, or 'national dances' as these were often called, including dances from the rest of Europe, often appeared on the dance teachers' advertised syllabi. One example declared, 'Besides, a few character dances will be rehearsed for the final ball'.<sup>12</sup> Another promised to teach '[t]he Spanish national dance La Cachucha and the English sailors' dance "The Merry Sailor Boy"'.<sup>13</sup>

In Sweden, several national dances were choreographed by Anders Selinder, who was a ballet master at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm from 1833 and 1856 (with an interlude between 1846–50).<sup>14</sup> After each dance school course, a final ball was organized, which began with a dance recital where the students presented their newly acquired knowledge. Selinder's choreographies, such as *Vingåkersdans*, *Halling*, *Daldans*, *Fryksdalspolska* and *Jössehäradspsolska*, were perfectly suited for this purpose.<sup>15</sup> Anna Skousgaard, a well-known dance teacher in Sweden, wrote in her memoirs about working for her mother as an assistant dance teacher and how she taught a minuet for two couples within this capacity. The occasion is not precisely dated, but Skousgaard opened her dance school in 1917, so this occasion was before that, probably during the first half of the 1910s: 'We practiced the neat tours under the mother's supervision. The final of the Minuet was a dramatically interpreted duel between the two cavaliers'.<sup>16</sup> Because the minuet was slightly different from other dances, it might have been experienced by the audience as spectacular. It was performed at not only final balls but also other public balls.<sup>17</sup> As mentioned earlier, we cannot judge by these references to 'minuets' exactly which type of minuets were danced or even if they resembled anything we might call a minuet at all.

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11 De Danske Dansskoler (2017), *Uddannelse i standard- og latinamerikanske danse, samt børne- og ældredanse*, [https://www.dedanskedanseskoler.dk/fileadmin/ddd/documents/uddannelser/DDD\\_s\\_standard\\_\\_latin\\_uddannelse\\_2017.pdf](https://www.dedanskedanseskoler.dk/fileadmin/ddd/documents/uddannelser/DDD_s_standard__latin_uddannelse_2017.pdf)

12 'Dansinstitut', *Härnösandsposten*, 24 September 1880, p. 1.

13 'Slutbal', *Blekinge-posten*, 19 February 1864, p. 1.

14 Göran Andersson, 'Anders Selinder, nationalromantikens företrädare inom svensk dans', in *Norden i Dans*, ed. by Egil Bakka and Gunnel Bishop (Oslo: Novus, 2007), pp. 206–14 (p. 206).

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16 Anna Skousgaard *Slutbal: Minnesanteckningar Från Min 60-Åriga Bana Som Danspedagog* (Helsingborg: Schmidts Boktryckeri, 1974), p. 38.

17 'Bal masque', *Göteborgs-Posten*, 11 February 1865, p. 1; 'Skyttegillet barnbal', *Tidning för Wenersborgs Stad och Län*, 4 March 1890, p. 2.

During the nineteenth century, no dance book with a description of the minuet was published in Sweden. In Denmark, by contrast, minuets were published in several dance books throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Norway, one dance book in Norwegian with a description of the minuet was published in the nineteenth century and none in the twentieth century (see Table 19.1).

Table 19.1: Nordic Dance Books with Minuets during the 1800s and 1900s

Publication	Year	Author or publisher	Additional information
<i>Begyndelsesgrunde i Dandsekonsten</i> [ <i>Basics in Dance Art</i> ] <sup>18</sup>	1801	J. J. / J. F. Martinet, Switzerland	Translated into Danish by C. H. Lund.
<i>Terpsichore</i> <sup>19</sup>	1823	Jørgen Gad Lund, Denmark	The book came later in two more editions.
<i>Veiledning for mine Dandselæringer</i> [ <i>A Guide for My Dance Students</i> ] <sup>20</sup>	1825	P. J. Kaastrup, Denmark	According to Gad Lund, this was a copy of his book.
<i>Anvisning til at danse 'Menuet,' 'Les Lanciers'...</i> [ <i>Instructions for Dancing the Minuet, Les Lanciers...</i> ] <sup>21</sup>	1875	Vilhelm Balling, Denmark	
<i>Veiledende Text til Familieballet Før og Nu</i> [ <i>Guiding Text for Family Ball Past and Present</i> ] <sup>22</sup>	1877	Paul Petersen, Denmark	

18 Martinet, *Begyndelsegrunde*.

19 Jørgen Gad Lund, *Terpsichore, eller en Veiledning for mine Dandselæringer til at beholde de Trin og Toure i Hukommelsen, som de under mig have gjennemgaaet* (Maribo: C. E. Schultz, 1823).

20 P. F. Kaastrup *Veiledning for mine Dandselæringer til at beholde de Trin og Toure i Hukommelsen, som de under mig have gjennemgaaet* (Thisted, 1825).

21 Vilhelm Balling, *Anvisning til att Danse 'Menuet,' 'Les Lanciers,' 'Française,' 'Jule-Kvadrille,' 'Les Prince Impériale,' 'Eugenie-Kvadrille,' 'Sextur,' 'Jernbane-Kvadrille' samt 28 forskellige selskapsdanske tillige med 75 in-teressante og let udførlige Kotillons-Ture* (Copenhagen: Herdah, 1875).

22 Paul Petersen, *Veiledende Text til Familieballet Før og Nu* (Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansens Forlag og Eiendom, 1877).

<i>Lommebog for Dansende</i> [A Pocket Book for Dancers] <sup>23</sup>	1886	Janny Isachsen, Kristiania, Norway	
<i>Regler for god tone og danseanvisning i de fornemste turdanse</i> [Rules for Good Tone and Dance Instruction in the Most Prestigious Round Dances] <sup>24</sup>	1900	A. G. Sandbæk, Denmark	Sandbæk appeared mostly in Norway and Sweden, and his books were published in Norway as well.
<i>Svenska Folkdanser och Sällskapsdanser</i> [Swedish Folk Dances and Ballroom Dances] <sup>25</sup>	1933	<i>Svenska Ungdomsringen för Bygdekultur</i> [Swedish Youth Association for the Rural Culture]	The first edition came out in 1923 but the minuet was not included until 1933 edition.
<i>Lærebog i Moderne og Ældre Danse</i> [Textbook in Modern and Older Dancing] <sup>26</sup>	1943	Fredie Pedersen, Denmark	The book contained the minuet as well as other dances of the time, such as the Quick-step, Slow-fox, Tango, etc.
<i>Lærebog i ældre danse</i> [Textbook of Older Dances] <sup>27</sup>	1944	<i>Dansk Danseforbund</i> (Danish Dance Association)	
<i>Lærebog i ældre danse</i> [Textbook of Older Dances] <sup>28</sup>	1952	<i>Danseringen</i> , an association of dance educators in Denmark	Reuses the name and much of the same content as the previous publication.

23 Janny Isachsen, *Lommebog for Dansende: Til Støtte for Erindringen ved Menuet, Française, Lanciers, Fandango med flere af de Mest Brugelige Nutidsdandse: Samt Anvisning Til Nogle Cottillontoure* (Kristiania: Alb. Cammermeyer, 1886).

24 A. G. Sandbæk, *Regler for God Tone Og Danseanvisning i De Fornemste Turdanse* (Copenhagen: [n.pub.], 1900).

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## The Minuet within the Swedish Folk-Dance Movement

The early folk-dance movement in Sweden dates back to 1880 when a few students at Uppsala University started the Students' Dance Association; in 1884, the group adopted what seemed the more-worthy name 'Philochoros'. Philochoros still exists today, and many students are introduced to Swedish folk dance through it. Currently, both women and men are members, but during its first decades it was a male-only association. Women were not excluded, but only a few female students attended the university at this time. As more women pursued higher education and grew interested in becoming part of the association, however, its existing membership considered their pursuit a problem. In 1910 the statutes were changed to open the membership only to 'every male academic citizen', which meant that women were specifically excluded from joining for a period of time.<sup>29</sup>

As early as May 1881, a full-evening program had been rehearsed, and it was performed four times at Uppsala Theatre. The group's originally plan for the event included a minuet, but this dance was removed and not performed (for reasons unknown). In the following year, however, performances were given in Uppsala and Gävle, and a *Menuet de la reine* was danced in the program. Despite the association's extensive and well-ordered archives, this is, unfortunately, the only information it contains about the minuet. That the minuet was danced by the association from its earliest years, however, shows the influence of its first dance teacher, Carl Peschel Barowiak, who had it in his repertoire. Born in Szczecin, Barowiak danced at various theatres in Poland, Germany, and St. Petersburg. He arrived in Sweden as a dance teacher via Finland in 1861. After the first performances of the organization in 1881, Barowiak departed because of dissatisfaction with the repertoire as well as financial problems. Hilding Sandström, a member of Philochoros, took on the role and was named *maitre de ballet*.<sup>30</sup>

Another early folk-dance association, Svenska Folkdansens Vänner [Swedish Folk Dance Friends] (SFV), founded in 1893, included a minuet on the program. From its beginning, SFV had a collaboration with Skansen, the large open-air museum in Stockholm, founded in 1891, which was a suitable environment for holding dance balls (*lekstuga*) and other events. This association also performed dance programs in Skansen, including one, in 1934, entitled *Dansen genom tiderna* [*Dance through Time*].<sup>31</sup> They were assisted by Valborg Franchi, who was

29 Andersson, 'Anders Selinder', p. 209. Women were allowed as members in 1931.

30 Mats Wahlberg, '1880-talet', in *Philochoros 125 år—Minnesskrift utgiven av föreningen Philochoros*, ed. by Mats Wahlberg and Katarina Korsfeldt (Uppsala: Philochoros, 2005), pp. 9–21 (p. 12).

31 Monica Norberg, 'Dansövningar, uppvisningar och lekstugor', in *Svenska Folkdansens Vänner 1893–1993*, ed. by Gunnar Benediktsson (Stockholm: Svenska



the premier dancer at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm and, between 1924 and 1949, leader of its ballet school. Franchi choreographed a minuet for SFV, which they then included on their repertory.<sup>32</sup>

As I mentioned earlier, *Svenska Folkdansringen*, the umbrella organization for a large part of Sweden's folk dance, also includes the minuet among the ballroom dances in its repertoire.

## High Society Dance

In the middle of the twentieth century, some became more interested in high society dance, such as the minuet, in the Nordic countries. Small groups were formed who danced these historical dances, but the trend was also reflected within the national dance organization. The folk-dance association *Folkungagillet* in Linköping became interested in these dances quite early. They formed groups that practiced historical dances, and the minuet was an essential element. One reason for this may have been that during the years 1941–45, Count Magnus Stenbock (1911–2007), the chairman of Östergötland's district of Ungdomsringen, and his mother, Countess Louise Montgomery, were interested in dancing. During her childhood, Montgomery had watched the servants who worked in her family's mansion amuse themselves with their dances. Countess Montgomery was the chairperson of Östergötlands-Holaveden Hembygdsring for a period in the 1930s.<sup>33</sup>



Fig. 19.1 Count Magnus Stenbock. Photograph by C. G. Holm. Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=32866932>, CC BY-SA 3.0.

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Folkdansens Vänner, 1993), pp. 29–41 (p. 35).

32 *Dansboken* (Stockholm: Svenska Folkdansens Vänner, 1992), p. 170.

33 'Östergötlands-Holavedens Hembygdsring', *Hembygdén*, July 1932, p. 21.

Count Stenbock was primarily interested in the old extinct mansion life and sought to revive some of its customs. During his studies in Stockholm, he led a dance club for an association that was devoted mainly to 'court dances from the eighteenth century'.<sup>34</sup> It is difficult to get a clear picture of how Stenbock had acquired knowledge of historical dance. What we can surmise is that it developed through contact with the dancer and the choreographer Baron Carl-Gustaf Kruuse af Verchou as both men lived in Stockholm at the same time and belonged to the same social class. As early as the 1940s, people in the Östergötland district were inspired by with Stenbock to engage with historical dances. This fruitful collaboration was probably facilitated by Folke Kennryd, a dance instructor both at the district and on a national level and also a district chairman from 1958 to 1979.<sup>35</sup> *Folkungagillet*, founded in 1944, was also created for those who were interested in dance-historical events as a result of close contact with Countess Montgomery and Count Stenbock. The initiators within the association were Ulf and Marianne Ohlsson.

Knowledge of the minuet, concerning both its history and its performance, was not deep or widespread during the 1960s. It was difficult for dance-interested amateurs to learn about the minuet because the only knowledge that did exist was concentrated in the world of theatre. Members of *Folkungagillet* made contact with the Finnish dancer and choreographer Kerttu Thorén, who was active at *Östgötateatern* (Östgöta Theatre) in Norrköping. Through Thorén, the association received an interpretation of a minuet retrieved from *Le maitre á danser* by Rameau and a minuet known as *Liten Menuett [A Small Minuet]* that had been choreographed by the dancer and dance teacher Ronny Johansson, probably around 1967.<sup>36</sup> Johansson was born in Riga, which was also where she grew up in a cosmopolitan upper-class environment and received training in dance. In 1912, when Johansson was twenty-one years old, the family moved to Stockholm. She began her studies in theatrical dance with the artist Olga Raphael-Linden. To further her education, Johansson moved to Dresden, where she took lessons from Heinrich Krölller. After her long dance career, she worked at *Dramatens elevskola* as a teacher, among other things. She organized summer courses and invited prominent international teachers in the 1950s and 1960s, in cooperation with the *Svenska Danspedagogförbundet* [Swedish Dance Education Association], an organization she initiated.<sup>37</sup>

34 Maria Waxegård, 'Greve Stenbock ur tiden', *Norrköpings Tidningar*, 5 May 2007, <https://nt.se/nyheter/norrkoping/artikel/greve-stenbock-ur-tiden/jnw7xq4j>

35 *Folkdansringen* (2018), <http://www.folkdansringen.se/ostergotland/Historik.htm>

36 *Några Sällskapsdanser Från 1700–1800 Talen* (Linköping: Folkungagillet, 1987).

Johansson, somewhat contradictorily, is seen as a legend in Swedish modern dance.

37 Birgit Boman, *Amasoner och Trollpackor: Fyra Svenska Danskonstnärer Under Mellankrigstiden* (Stockholm: Carlssons Bokförlag, 2001).

## Nordic Groups with a Focus on Historical Dances

In the 1960s, the popularity of folk dance and folk music began to rise in the Nordic countries, prompting the publication of several works containing dance descriptions. A compendium of dance history, *Folkdans*, was an educational text published in Sweden in 1969 to be used by the increasing number of people interested in dance. Its authors were, among others, Ivo Cramér, a choreographer who created ballets based on historical themes, Folke Kenneryd, and Henry Sjöberg, one of Sweden's best-known dance researchers. The book contained an initial section on the minuet from a theoretical perspective, following by a description of the minuet step, and descriptions of two minuets.<sup>38</sup> More accessible study material followed in *Folklig Dans* [*Vernacular Dance*] (1972)—a series of three books, of which part two dealt with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and included descriptions of the minuet.<sup>39</sup>

Although these were textbooks of Swedish folk-dance, their historical perspective contributed to a strong upward trend in interest in historical dance. After their publication, several folk-dance associations added historical dances into their repertoire. These included the Farandole, forms of the Branle, and, of course, baroque dances like the minuet; the associations also included popular dances of the twentieth century such as the Charleston, Lambeth Walk, etc. In 1996, the *Forum för Historiska Danser och Musik* [Forum for Historical Dances and Music] was formed as an umbrella organization for the dance groups who performed historical dances in Sweden. It was founded by Stig and Eleonor Larsegård with the assistance of Sjöberg, leading author of *Folklig Dans*. Through a previous collaboration between Swedish and Norwegian groups, several local Norwegian groups also became members of the new Swedish organization. In August 2017, thirty-four groups who were dancing historical dances joined together via the Forum. Further groups exist, but these are not affiliated with the national organization.<sup>40</sup>

Groups specializing in historical dances were also formed in Norway and Denmark and, to a lesser extent, in the other Nordic countries. Their development in Norway followed a similar trajectory to that in Sweden insofar as interest in high society dances within the folk-dance movement gradually led to the organization of specialized groups, which focused only on historical dances. In 2000, *Nettverket for historisk dans i Norge* [Network for Historical Dance in

38 Ivo Cramér and others, *Folkdans* (Stockholm: Brevskolan, 1969), p. 295.

39 Henry Sjöberg, *Folklig dans 2: 1600-och 1700-talens dansformer* (Jönköping: Brevskolan, 1972), p. 54.

40 *Forum för Historiska Danser och Musik*, <http://www.forum-historiskdans.se/foreningar.html>

Norway] was founded. By the summer of 2017, nineteen groups were affiliated with this network and were collaborating on various issues and arrangements regarding historical dances.<sup>41</sup> In Denmark, cooperation between groups that dance historical dances has been more informal. No more than ten of these groups existed in the country in 2017. These have no umbrella association of their own, but most belong to one of the two general folk-dance organizations located in Denmark. Such groups with historical dances as their main repertoire have prompted interest in locating and interpreting dances from handwritten dance books from the second half of the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century. Printed dance books from the same period are also used to expand the repertoire. The development path for interest in historical dancing is similar in the remaining Nordic countries. It should be remembered that the work to recover and share these dances is undertaken primarily by amateurs, and the amount and level of knowledge varies. One big difference between these groups is how they interact with the dances. As noted previously, historical dances were first primarily performed in various ways, and the dancers still participate in these events. However, balls are currently often held at which attendees participate only in historical dances, and these events have become more and more popular.

One reason why interest in historical dances grew in the Nordic countries in the early twenty-first century might be traced to an event in Stavanger, Norway, in 2000. At the thirty-second annual Nordic folk-dance gathering, a dinner was followed by historical dancing. Smaller meetings of interested dancers had already taken place at the event in Vejle in 1991 and in Linköping in 1994, where short courses and balls emphasized historical dances. After the event in Stavanger, however, a historical ball (including dance course), became a fixture on the agenda at Nordic folk-dance events.<sup>42</sup> Every two years since 2005, two enthusiasts in Denmark, Per Sørensen and Ole Skov, have arranged week-long courses in historical dances at the folk high school in Snoghøj. About seventy-five percent of the participants come from the Nordic countries, which confirms that interest has increased.

In addition to the groups practising historical dances in Norway, there are so-called *stildans* ['style dance'-groups]. These usually derive from folk/traditional dance societies, with amateur dancers being led, more or less, by professional dance teachers. Some of the most active groups in Norway are *Akershus slottsdansere*, *Oslo historiske dansegruppe*, and *Trondheim Balldans*.

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41 *Nettverket for historisk dans i Norge* (2018), <http://www.historiskdans.com/>

42 *Ibid.*

The dance group *Akershus slottsdansere* was established in 1993 to perform dances from the history of Akershus Castle. With historical costumes and under the leadership of choreographer Brit Ingrid Wang (1941–2016), the group participated in historical plays arranged by *Stiftelsen Akershus Festning for Kunst og Kultur* [Akerhus Castle Foundation for Arts and Culture], lead by actress Gudrun Waadeland (1937–2020). Its members are passionate amateur dancers and historians; some have participated in the group since its inception. Wang specialized in historical dances at the Norwegian academy of dance in Oslo and studied later with the Swedish dancer and choreographer Regina Beck-Friis (1940–2009) and the English dancer and choreographer Mary Collins. Wang was a teacher in historical dances at *Statens balletthøgskole*, *Statens teaterhøgskole*, and *Den norske balletthøgskole* for many years. Through her teaching, the group added the court minuet by dancing master Pierre Rameau to their repertoire which was instructed by Wang and by her student Elizabeth Svarstad.<sup>43</sup>

The Ringve International Summer Course in Early Music has been held yearly since 1978.<sup>44</sup> For many years, the course was held in Trondheim, and later it was moved to Sund Folkehøgskole at Inderøy. Collins was the dance teacher, and this role was then assumed by Svarstad. The course has often included different minuets from French, German, and English sources, including ordinary minuets, choreographed minuets, and minuet country dances. Also, Collins has reconstructed and taught the *Menuet d'Anjou* by the early-eighteenth-century dancing master IHP (only the initials of the name are known).

*Oslo historiske dansegruppe* is lead by Per Kristian Elvestad. He is a former ballroom dancer and has specialized in historical dances. The group was established in 2007 and have participated since then in workshops and balls.<sup>45</sup>

According to Jon Andreassen, a member of several amateur dance groups and also an instructor in the field of amateur historical dance, these groups do not often perform minuets. The minuets on their repertoire are a minuet reconstructed by Dag Vårdal, and two Danish minuets: a choreography called *Menuett fra Strandby* and a traditional minuet *Molevitt fra Ærø*. They have also used *Mr. Lanes Trumpet Minuet* from Playford a few times.<sup>46</sup>

*Trondheim Balldans* is a group of amateur dancers in Trondheim. The group was established in 2007 as a cooperation between two organizations,

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43 'Akershus Slottsdansere', *Akershus Slotts Venner*, <https://www.slottsvenn.no/akershus-slott-og-festning/andre-foreninger/akershus-slottsdansere>

44 'Ringve International Summer Course in Early Music', *Ringve Musikmuseum*, <https://ringve.no/ringve-international-summer-course>

45 'Oslo historiske dansegruppe', <https://historiskdans.no>

46 Jon Andreassen. Personal communication. SMS to Svarstad, 22 April 2019.

*BUL i Nidaros* and *Folkedanslaget i Malvik*, to promote period ballroom dances.<sup>47</sup> *Trondheim Balldans* has quite an extensive repertoire of dances, and part of their purpose is to show how social dance developed through history. In 2010, the researcher and musician Eva Hov suggested that the minuet should be added to their repertoire. Although she had in mind the *menuet ordinaire*, the group members decided that they wanted a dance for more than one couple at a time so they began to study the *menuet à quatre*. To connect it to Trondheim, they performed to minuet music composed by Johan Daniel Berlin, who worked in Trondheim in the eighteenth century. Hov arranged the dance for four couples, and the group performed it for some years. In 2012, they prepared another minuet, the *Menuet de la reine*, to perform at the folk-dance gathering NORDLEK in Steinkjer. This minuet, which is danced in rows, remained on their repertoire for many years after 2012.<sup>48</sup> The group has yet another minuet on their repertoire called 'The Beethoven Minuet'. According to Hov, the dance is not a minuet but contains what she describes as a 'star figure' and steps resembling the foxtrot. Swede Lars Abrahamsson choreographed the dance in 1967, and it was danced in his dance group *Les Perruques Blanches* until the 1990s.<sup>49</sup>

## Semi-professional Groups

In parallel with the amateur groups, semi-professional groups emerged in the Nordic countries in the late twentieth century, first mainly in the Stockholm area in Sweden. This movement was led by the English dancer and choreographer Mary Skeaping, who was the ballet manager at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm 1953–62, and a choreographer at Drottningholm's eighteenth-century theatre for a series of ballets in historical styles. Skeaping had a broad historical dance knowledge, which she passed on to her assistant Regina Beck-Friis. Beck-Friis continued to deepen her understanding of historical dances and, in turn, acted as a choreographer for various performances at Drottningholm Palace Theatre.<sup>50</sup> Beck-Friis was also a teacher of historical dance at *Danshögskolan* [University College of Dance], which belongs to Stockholm University of Arts today.

47 *Trondheim Balldans*, <http://www.trondheim-balldans.com/46663501>

48 Eva Hov, Personal communication, email to Svarstad, 22 April 2019.

49 Eva Hov, Personal communication, email to Svarstad, 10 April 2018.

50 Mary Skeaping and Anna-Greta Stähle, *Ballett på Stockholmsoperan* (Stockholm: Nordstedt Tryckeri, 1979).



Fig. 19.2 Mary Skeaping. Unknown photographer. Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22118866>, public domain.

Beck-Friis was the main author of the books *Dansnöjen Genom Tiden, Västeuropeiska Danser Från Medeltid och Renässans* [*The Pleasure of Dance through Time, Western European Dances from the Middle Ages and Renaissance*] (1980) and *Dansnöjen Genom Tiden, Från Barock, Rokoko och den Gustavianska Tiden* [*The Pleasure of Dance through Time, From Baroque, Rococo and the Gustavian Era*] (1998).<sup>51</sup> Presenting both history and several dance descriptions, these textbooks were addressed to students who possessed a completely different skill level than the audience of previously published textbooks. To follow these dance descriptions and learn the steps, dance training or exceptional amateur experience was required. Consequently, those who studied historical dances in Danshögskolan founded dance groups with members who could perform dances using steps from Beck-Friis's books rather than the simplifications found in other sources. The first such semi-professional group was *I Saltarelli*, which Beck-Friis started in 1976 to use for practice runs when developing her books.

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51 Regina Beck-Friis, Magnus Blomkvist, and Birgitta Nordenfeldt, Birgitta, *Dansnöjen genom tiden 1. Västeuropeiska danser från medeltid och renässans* (Arlöv: Akademilitteratur, 1980); Regina Beck-Friis, Regina, Magnus Blomkvist, and Birgitta Nordenfeldt, Birgitta, *Dansnöjen genom tiden. Från barock, rokoko och den gustavianska tiden* (Lund: Historiska Media, 1998).



Fig. 19.3 Regina Beck-Friis. Photographer and year unknown. Svenskt Porträttarkiv, <https://portrattarkiv.se/details/sj9PGLAlnmUAAAAACyZCA>, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Even in Denmark, dance groups continue to exist to suit those with different skill levels. A leading figure in these groups, with wide experience of historical dances in Denmark, is Jørgen Schou Pedersen. He studied musicology at the University of Copenhagen and has since graduated as an instructor in historical dances at *The Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society* in England, where he is now also a teacher. He also conducts basic research and is often hired as a lecturer in historical dance. Schou Pedersen runs performing groups in Renaissance and Baroque dance. He teaches historical dance at The National Theatre School and Copenhagen Music Conservatory; he also leads amateur groups at different levels.<sup>52</sup>

## Appendix

The following is a list of the minuets or, more precisely, the dances where ‘minuet’ is included as part of the name and is danced by groups (primarily amateur groups) around the Nordic countries. This list is not complete because the dances vary over time. Moreover, some dances are used more frequently than others.

1. *Menuett* or *Stora menuetten* [*Great Minuet*], retrieved from Svenska Ungdomsringen’s book *Svenska Folkdanser och sällskapsdanser* (1933 edition). In 2002, a thesis was completed at Danshögskolan in Stockholm on the so-called ballroom dances in the 1933, 1944, and 1952 editions of this book. It was found that *Menuett* did not have any named originator or creator. The dance consists of five figures plus

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52 ‘Jørgen Schou Pedersen’, *Anello*, <http://www.anello.dk/joergen.html>



an introduction and ending. Furthermore, it is stated that the minuet is not described in any of the Swedish sources used for comparison. It is danced in a square setup and contains figures that occur in country dances. The compliments (reverences) described are also not directly equivalent to other sources.<sup>53</sup> Mats Wahlberg, archivist at Philochoros's archive in Uppsala, believes that the *Menuett* was the same dance as was on the repertoire during the 1890s with the name *Hofkadrilj* (*Court Quadrille*) and that the name change occurred in 1899. Both *Hofkadrilj* and later *Menuett* were danced together with Old Polka. The minuet in Philochoros's repertoire in the 1880s was a dance for a solo couple, and when it was performed the group asked one of the Royal Theatre's female dancers, Mrs. Christiansen, to partner with one of the male dancers of the group.<sup>54</sup>

2. *Minuet*, Rococo dance, choreography by Valborg Franchi for Svenska Folkdansens Vänner (see text above).
3. *Small Minuet* by Ronny Johansson, Kerttu Thorén (see text above).
4. *Court Minuet*, after a basic description from Rameau, *Maître à Danser* (1734), processed by Kerttu Thorén (see text above).
5. *Minuet Sabina*, performed longways with minuet steps from *The English Dancing Master* (1718). This interpretation appears first in the compendium *Folkdans* (1969) and then in *Folklig Dans 2* (1972).<sup>55</sup> There are two descriptions for the same music, one slightly clear and one somewhat more complicated which goes by the name *Mademoiselle Dupingle*.<sup>56</sup>
6. *Signora Auretti's dance*. This dance is also included in the compendia *Folkdans* and *Folklig Dans 2*. The full title is *Menuett (Signora Auretti's dance)* by Johann Adolph Hasse (1699–1783). Hasse was a German composer who created the music for *Menuett (Signora Auretti's dance)*. The dance description is a translation from English and taken from Evelyn Porter's book *Music Through the Dance* (1937). The various

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53 Eva Arnehall and Eva-Christina Söderman, 'Sällskapsdanser i "Gröna Boken"' (unpublished bachelor's thesis, University College of Dance, Stockholm, 2002), pp. 7–10.

54 Frithiof Holmgren, 'Philochoros: Ett företal', in *Philochoros 1880–1980*, ed. by Mats Wahlberg (Uppsala, 1980), pp. 7–18 (p. 13); 'Teater och Musik', *Stockholms Dagblad*, 8 May 1883, p. 5.

55 Sjöberg *Folklig dans*, p. 56.

56 John Playford, *The Dancing Master*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 3 vols (London: John Young, 1718), vol. 2.

dance examples given in the book are written largely by Marjorie Woolnoth.<sup>57</sup>

7. *Beethoven minuet*, part of degree project by Lars Abrahamsson, completed at the ballet academy in Gothenburg in 1968–69.
8. *Menuette* by Magnus Stenbock (see text above).<sup>58</sup>
9. The minuet of *Elverhøj*. This minuet is from the play *Elverhøj* by Heiberg, which premiered in 1828. The choreographer is Poul Funck, and the minuet starts the big party dance in the final act and is followed by several dances. The minuet step used is strikingly similar to the step Jørgen Gad Lund uses in his minuet description. There are both typical minuet and country dance figures in the minuet of *Elverhøj*, and some are performed by groups of four.<sup>59</sup> Ballet master Hans Beck at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen arranged a simplified version of the minuet in 1920 for educational purposes.<sup>60</sup>
10. *Menuetpolonaise*, from A. G. Sandbæk's book (see text above), revised by Dag Vårdal. Except for the name, the dance has nothing in common with the minuet. Many of its figures seem to be derived from nineteenth-century country dances.<sup>61</sup>
11. *Æbeltoft Menuette*.
12. *Minuet from Christiania*, an interpretation by Dag Vårdal, in collaboration with Torun Riise and Folke Flateland.<sup>62</sup>

In Sweden, there is also an eighteenth-century society called *Gustafs skål* which convenes a group of enthusiasts primarily interested in the second half of the eighteenth century. Its activities include dancing. *Gustafs skål* and the dance group *Branicula*, based in Uppsala, have several minuets on their repertoire.

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57 Evelyn Porter, *Music Through the Dance: A Handbook for Teachers and Students, showing how Musical Growth has been Influenced by the Dance Throughout the Ages* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1937), pp. 45–46.

58 Folke Kennryd, *Kontradanser, Menuett, Gavott: En samling högreståndsdanser upptecknade och sammanställda av Greve Magnus Stenbock, Herrborum och Balettmästare Friherre Karl-Gustaf Kruuse af Verschou* (Norrköping: Stencilupplaga, 1968).

59 Henning Urup, *Dans i Danmark: Danseformer ca.1600 til 1950* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2007), pp. 153, 241–42.

60 *Laerebog i aeldre danse* (1952).

61 Dag Vårdal, *Francaiser og Quadriller fra norske dansebøker* (Bærum: Eget forlag, 2005), p. 93.

62 Dag Vårdal, *Menuett i form etter Janny Isachsen, Christiania 1886* (Bærum: Eget forlag, 2017).

1. *Menuet de la Reine* from Feuillet which is also used in some other groups.
2. *Menuet de Chevalier* from Feuillet.
3. *Menuet du Rameau* (Z-minuet). This dance is known in other groups by the name 'Court Minuet'.
4. New Minuet (Playford, 15th ed).
5. *La Petite Jeanneton*.<sup>63</sup>
6. *Menuet a Quatre* [Minuet for two couples].
7. *Lange Menuett* [Anglaise for several couples].
8. *Menuett Mouliné* [line dance].
9. *Menuet amoroso* [Minuet for three persons], choreographed by Anna Löfgren.
10. *Minuet a Jig* by Mr. Holt.
11. *Menuet de village* (for two couples).
12. Mr. Lane's *Trumpet-Minuet* (Playford, anglaise).<sup>64</sup>

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63 Anna Löfgren and Wilhelm Dahllöf, *Samling af svenska turer till utvalda dansar för nytta och nöje sammanställda* (Stockholm: Wilhelm Dahllöf, 2017).

64 Danssällskapet Branicula (2018), <http://www.upp17.n.nu/danser>

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# EPILOGUE





## 20. Some Reflections on the Minuet

*Mats Nilsson and Petri Hoppu*

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Our journey into the world of the Nordic minuet is about to end. What can we now say about this dance? What kind of conclusions, if any, can we make at this point? Are we able to grasp the actualizations of the minuet, whether in text or with our bodies?

It is now time to reflect upon the minuet's structural, social, cultural, and historical dimensions and our own embodied dance experience. As active folk dancers we have danced various minuets from the Nordic countries. Our explicit knowledge matters, but so does our tacit knowledge—namely, the skills and movement-awareness in our bodies. Our bodily engagement is essential when understanding both other people's knowledge and our own somatic knowledge.<sup>1</sup> The dance we observe is deeply connected to the dancing we perform. Both observation and participation are part of a dialogic relationship between the people involved in the activities. As in dance research, dancing as an action has ontological and epistemological consequences for those involved; in this discipline, scholars not only acquire information about dance, but their work is, above all, an exploration into dance and even research as dance.<sup>2</sup> All these perspectives are

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- 1 Deidre Sklar, 'Reprise: On Dance Ethnography', *Dance Research Journal*, 32.1 (2000), 70–77 (p. 71); Mats Nilsson, 'Participatory Dancing—the Polska Case', in *Dance and the Formation of Norden, Emergences and Struggles*, ed. by Karen Vedel (Trondheim: Tapir, 2011), pp. 131–50 (pp. 135–37); Petri Hoppu, 'Encounters in dance and music, Fieldwork and embodiment', in *(Re)Searching the Field, Festschrift in Honour of Egil Bakka*, ed. by Anne M. Fiskvik and Marit Stranden (Bergen: Fakhbokforlaget, 2014), pp. 151–59 (pp. 151–53).
  - 2 Timothy Rice, 'Toward a Mediation of Field Methods and Field Experience in Ethnomusicology', in *Shadows in the Field, New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, ed. by Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 42–61 (pp. 56–61); Mats Nilsson, *The Swedish Polska*, translated from Swedish by Eivor Cormack and Jill Ann Johnson (Stockholm: Svenskt visarkiv/Musikverket, 2017), pp. 110–13.

included in this chapter which is the conclusion of our journey, a reflection on this project and on our experience as dance scholars and dancers.

## The Start

Where does a minuet start, and where does it end? This question underlies much of our research on the minuet in Nordic countries. A second aspect is the emotional association of the minuet to a dance with positive connotations, as this genre is generally perceived as a dance denoting dignity and high social status. A third feature identified in this book is the fact that the basic movement structure of the minuet resonates on some level, prompting us to associate special emotions and values with the minuet as a dance or a way of dancing.

The minuet has high social value as dance, but the same is true for minuet music, whether it is performed together with choreography—as a dimension of dance—or without choreography, for example as a part of a piano sonata. One intriguing aspect about the choreography and the music is that, despite sharing the same name, they do not always follow each other. The name ‘minuet’ is applied to dances that don’t have the figures and steps that we identified as essential features of the dance. On the other hand, some dances have basic minuet steps and movements, but they are not called ‘minuet’. Concerning minuet music, there must be an openness to understanding how, and even if, the dance follows the music structure. There are minuet tunes, but the minuet is danced to other music as well. The phenomenon that dance, music, and labels do not directly correlate is certainly not unknown in the broader field of popular dance.<sup>3</sup> Since the minuet was once a popular dance, we have realized through this research that the relationship between its choreography, music, and title cannot be taken for granted.

Form and structure are not enough to define the essential nature of the minuet, but it has many more facets. Our conclusion is that the minuet is what emerges when values, movements—especially the steps—and the music in different historical and social contexts in Europe are combined.

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3 Mats Nilsson, ‘Dancing names—a neverending story’, in *(Re)Searching the Field. Festschrift in Honour of Egil Bakka*, ed. by Anne Margrete Fiskvik and Marit Stranden (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2014), pp. 419–27; Mats Nilsson, ‘Dans är musik i rörelse’, in *Lekstugan. Festschrift till Magnus Gustafsson*, ed. by Mathias Boström (Växjö: Smålands musikarkiv/Musik i Syd, 2015), pp. 223–29.

## Minuet Dancers

The minuet in its original form is generally considered to be a French court dance, in fashion in the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup> However, as several researches have shown in this text, the dance likely originated as a French folk dance, perhaps some version of a branle popular since the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Whenever it started, Europe's royal courts elevated the minuet to a position of primary importance, a popularity probably due to its dual use as a social ballroom dance and as a ceremonial dance performance. The Swedish royals were no exception, and the Francophile King Gustaf III (born 1746, reigned 1771–92), for example, is said to have danced the minuet with pleasure.

The minuet is likely to have spread from the continent to Scandinavia via aristocrats who travelled to Europe for pleasure or diplomacy. Since the aristocracy and gentry did not reside only in capital cities but possessed estates and manors in the countryside, the dance was able to also spread to other groups in society. The joint participation in different festivities in the local communities by servants of the court and agricultural workers further enabled the advance of these new dances from the gentry and royal court to the 'folk'.<sup>6</sup> Thus the minuet became popular among ordinary and rural people, though, as will be explained later, this phenomenon did not occur everywhere.<sup>7</sup>

The minuet seems to have become established as a court dance from its folk-dance roots at the French court of King Louis in the mid-1600s, and to have faded by the time of the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15. When the diplomats, kings, and members of the military who took part in these peace talks after the Napoleonic Wars went to parties and balls, the waltz was the preferred

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- 4 Gunnel Biskop, *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om Menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svenskbygder—under trehundrafemtio år* (Helsingfors: Finlands Svenska Folkdansring, 2015), p. 16; Eric McKee, *Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp. 55–56; Tobias Norlind, *Dansens Historia. Med särskild hänsyn till dansen i Sverige* (Stockholm: Nordisk rotogravry, 1941); Matts Stenström, *Dansen. Dess utveckling från urtiden till danspalatsens tidevarv* (Stockholm: Lars Hökbergs förlag, 1918).
  - 5 Ivo Cramér, Henry Sjöberg, Folke Kenneryd, Ingemar Johansson and Rolf Heinemann, *Folkdåns: ett kompendium* (Stockholm: Brevskolan, 1969).
  - 6 This was not the only way dances spread from upper to lower class groups. For some time there had been contacts on many social levels: tradesmen, craftsmen, soldiers, sailors, ambassadors etc. See Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).
  - 7 Magnus Gustafsson, *Polskans historia. En studie i melodityper och motivformer med utgångspunkt i Peter Dufos Notbok* (Lund: Lunds universitet, Avdelningen för musikvetenskap, 2016); see also Jan Ling, *A History of European Folk Music* (New York: University of Rochester Press, 1997).

dance.<sup>8</sup> Whenever minuets occurred during these proceedings, the French and English participants were said to have smiled as they regarded the dance as an expression of old-fashioned affectation.<sup>9</sup>

However, even if the minuet disappeared from the royal and gentry balls and fell out of fashion during this time, it continued to be danced at popular events. Especially in Denmark and Swedish-speaking Finland, the minuet was preserved among ordinary people until it was filmed and documented in the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Examples of this preservation are harder to find in Sweden and Norway. A few sources from the nineteenth century refer to the minuet, suggesting that the dance was still known in these countries, but it seems to have disappeared during the industrialization period. Swedish and Norwegian sources from the early twentieth century make no mention of the minuet.

The popular minuet came to life again in Sweden, however, during the late twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> In the 1960s, some Swedes, particularly the folk-dance specialist Börje Wallin, started to search for traces of a popular minuet in Sweden. Wallin also studied the continuous tradition of minuet dancing in Denmark and Finland to aid his understanding of the Swedish text sources he was able to find.<sup>12</sup> Since 1990, the minuet based on Wallin's research has been danced in at least three different contexts. This minuet is performed in folk-dance groups, at folk music festivals, and in folk-based theatre dance performances. The process of Swedish minuet (re)construction tells a story of a highly-valued dance, a dance form that needed to be reborn, one way or another. In the Nordic folk-dance history, this is exceptional, though not unprecedented.<sup>13</sup>

## The Minuet as Choreography

The minuet is a couple dance dominated by one basic figure; this type of dance in Swedish is called *figureringsspardans* [figuring couple dance].<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless,

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8 McKee.

9 Karl-Heinz Taubert, *Das Menuett* (Zürich: Pan, 1988).

10 Biskop.

11 See Chapter 18.

12 Linnea Helmersson, *Eldsjärlarna och dansarvet. Om forskning och arbete med att levandegöra äldre dansformer* (Falun: Folkmusikens hus, 2012).

13 The creation of the Norwegian song-dance tradition at the beginning of the twentieth century followed a somewhat similar development trajectory. See Anne Fiskvik and Egil Bakka, 'Trading Dance Fields', in *Dance the Formation of Norden. Emergences and Struggles*, ed. by Karen Vedel (Trondheim: Tapir, 2011), pp. 59–105 (p. 65).

14 *Nordisk Folkedanstypologi, En Systematisk Katalog Over Publiserte Nordiske Folkedanser*, ed. by Egil Bakka (Trondheim: Rff-centret, 1997).

there are many ways to dance the basic figure. Manuals and textbooks describe the minuet as a couple dance with walking and figure motifs, always performed slowly and gently, and without rotation or whirling are found in the polska, polka, or waltz. There are few tactile contacts and, when these occur, it only the partners' hands that touch.

In many regards, the minuet shares similarities with the contradances on the British Isles when it is danced in a longways formation. Men and women face each other, making the same figures, but otherwise the couples do not interact. The lines move back and forth, and the lines change side, following a pattern resembling the letter Z or S.<sup>15</sup> In another motif, the lines move sideways and parallel: the dancers in the line walk after each other in one direction, turn, and go back again. However, the steps of the minuet and contra dances differ from each other. While the British dances used 'walk', 'run', 'shuffle', and similar steps, the minuet is based on the French branle simple step.<sup>16</sup> Chain and circle dances in the Faeroe Islands, the Balkans, and other parts of Europe also use the branle simple step, but with different tempos and in different directions.<sup>17</sup>

Minuet music is usually assumed to be in 3/4 metre (although 3/8, 6/8, and 6/4 have been used), which fits easily with the step's six movements. According to some researchers, however, dancing is not always in sync with the music.<sup>18</sup> One often dances on the pulse without concern for the formal musical beat, as in a basic foxtrot step wherein two slow and two quick steps are danced during one and a half 4/4 bars.<sup>19</sup>

One question that has been raised with regard to the minuet is, assuming it started in the European courts as a couple dance, when did it become a dance in line like the contradances? The popular minuet in Denmark and Finland is always danced in line formation, and we also have information that similar practice was used among the European nobility.<sup>20</sup> When we have danced the Bourrée in France and a similar dance (the Frezian) in Slovenia, we have had use for our ability to dance the minuet.<sup>21</sup> In those cases, dancers are also organized in rows and do not interact with the other couples, like the performance of the minuet in Denmark and Finland and like the contradances *anglaise*.

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15 Cramér, et al.

16 6 parts in the step—3/4 music two bars—6 or 8 steps in a sequence over and back.

17 Lisbeth Torp, *Chain and Round Dance Patterns. A Method for Structural Analysis and its Application to European Material* (Köpenhamn: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1990).

18 McKee, p. 16.

19 CentralHome, *Dance Steps: Foxtrot* (Centralhome.com, 2018), [https://www.centralhome.com/ballroomcountry/foxtrot\\_steps.htm](https://www.centralhome.com/ballroomcountry/foxtrot_steps.htm)

20 See Chapter 9.

21 See also Chapter 2.

Today in Sweden, the reconstructed minuet often includes a polska turn ‘on the spot’ [slängpolska]. This motif is like the ‘swing your ladies’ movement found in contra dances. Whether this minuet-polska combination has a historical basis is unclear; it may be a product of the revival process suggested by structural similarities in the music of the minuet and the polska. Also, a polska or ‘pisk’ is often included as a final motif in the minuet danced in Finland and Denmark—as we have seen in previous chapters.

## Meanings of the Minuet

So far, we have discussed the minuet as a dance structure or dancing experience. Now, to investigate the meanings of the minuet, we take a step back to consider the dance’s larger social and cultural context. We need to first look at the minuet’s symbolic dimension. Since dance is an effective symbol, those who hold power in a society often wish to control it. For example, at eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century peasant weddings in Nordic countries, ceremonial dancing with the priest as the first dancer was a manifestation of the existing social hierarchy.<sup>22</sup>

Dance does not function solely as a symbol. First and foremost, it consists of movements, sensations, touch, and emotion. When we regard dance as a symbol, we emphasize its explicit character as a means of communication, a kind of movement language. But it is important to recognize that symbols operate cognitively; they do not uncover embodied, affective aspects of dance. Referring to the body as much more than an extension of thinking, Michael Polanyi stated, ‘you know more than you can say’.<sup>23</sup> There is always an implicit, hidden, or unconscious dimension to what we think of as human knowledge.<sup>24</sup> It is not only what we know in our heads but also what we can do—what we feel in our bodies—that belongs to our understanding.

This is easy to understand when one investigates the minuet: few of even the most experienced dancers can explain what happens when they dance the minuet, but no spectator can deny their skill. The minuet should not be seen

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22 Petri Hoppu, *Symbolien ja sanattomuuden tanssi. Menuetti Suomessa 1700-luvulta nykyaikaan* (Helsinki: SKS, 1999), pp. 38–40, 53–54. Contemporaneously, the upper classes in Poland created five national dances to symbolize a mythical Polish character. Roderyk Lange, ‘Some Notes on the Anthropology of Dance’, *Dance Studies*, 1 (1976), 38–46.

23 Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1966), pp. 4–5.

24 Mario Biagioli, ‘Tacit Knowledge, Courtliness, and the Scientist’s Body’, in *Choreographing History*, ed. by Susan Leigh Foster (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 69–81.

merely as a precise choreography but a living phenomenon that is actualized at dance events and in dancing bodies. And it is amazing how powerful these dancing bodies are: people want to join them, dance together, touch, and be touched. There is no dance without people who want to dance.

Taking the interaction between the symbolic and embodied meanings into account, the minuet can be analyzed as both presentational and participatory dancing.<sup>25</sup> At the royal courts in the eighteenth century and in theatre art dancing, the presentational dimension dominates. On stage, at the theatre, it is the audience who watches the dance that feels entertained. At a royal ball, the king and queen and the nobility demonstrated their dancing skills for each other in the minuet. The steps and dance motifs are elaborate and complicated performances of status equally oriented towards the audience around them. Popular dance events, on the other hand, emphasize the participatory dimension. Here the step in a more basic form survives, and dancers play with many figures and formations with their partners. The energy of this dance is projected from within the dancing couple's dynamics. Participatory dancing is inward-facing, oriented towards one's partner and one's self, whereas presentational dancing is more outward-facing.

The relation between the minuet's presentational and participatory dimensions is reflected in the dance structures, styles, and practices. A formal and strict choreography often implies controlled and disciplined dancing, reinforcing symbolic aspects: discipline creates power and stability, manifested in the dance's explicit symbolism. The less formal dance structure in participatory dancing, by contrast, enables improvisation, individual variations, and, consequently, changes in the dance. Note, however, that structural patterns can be found in even the most informal and improvisational dancing, implying that dance methods are not arbitrary.<sup>26</sup>

At any rate, a looser structure makes it harder to control the dance, which means that it is not all that useful as a symbol. Rather, the meanings in participatory dance are more related to the dynamics of dancing, the embodiment, and enjoyment of dance. Symbols of dominance lose their power if their users, in this case, minuet dancers, can change the form of a potential symbol. Those with power, whether they have been dancing masters or

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25 See Andriy Nahachewsky, 'Participatory and Presentational Dance as Ethnochoreological Categories', *Dance Research Journal*, 27.1 (1995), 1–15; Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life. The Politics of Participation* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

26 Roderyk Lange, 'The Dance Folklore from Cuiavia', *Dance Studies*, 12 (1988), pp. 6–22.



folk-dance instructors, often want to maintain the importance of the symbolic and stable as it legitimates their status.<sup>27</sup>

## Values of the Minuet

The meanings of the minuet, thus, can be traced back to its symbolic as well as its embodied dimensions. This, however, does not explain how the dance could remain attractive over several centuries. The minuet is an exceptional case in the sense that, even though it developed in the seventeenth century, its popularity surged within different groups of people in Europe and America for hundreds of years. Today, it still appears in various contexts as an object of active dancing. One might say that the minuet never lost its symbolic power, even if was not enjoyed or appreciated as much during certain periods of time. Instead of studying its origins or appearances as separate phenomena, we should try to identify the trajectories that have contributed to its enduring significance.

In this, we can follow Arjun Appadurai's ideas about the circulation of forms and forms of circulation. Forms refer to various phenomena that can be moved from one location to another and, in being moved, are given new meanings and messages. Essentially, the circulation of forms contributes to the construction of the 'local' by connecting it to the 'global'. Local practices do not exist in a vacuum; that is, they are affected by global flows, which have their own trajectories, depending on the context of their appearances. As Appadurai emphasized, a 'locality' is not just an accidental site of fusion but something that includes a mutual transformation of circulating forms.<sup>28</sup> Dances like the polka, quadrille, salsa, or minuet can be seen as such forms.

Forms of circulation have various trajectories, which explains how phenomena travel between different parts of the world. Not everything travels everywhere, but forms enter contexts where they are appreciated and approved at some level: they find significance in how they are manifested in cultural and local practices. According to Appadurai, localities are not fixed sites but they 'are temporary negotiations between circulating forms, and are thus not scalar subordinates of the global, but the main evidence of its reality'.<sup>29</sup>

Appadurai understands cultural trajectories to pass through different 'regimes of value in space and time'. To accomplish this, he explained that '[w]e have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed

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27 Hoppu, pp. 38–45; see also Anya Peterson Royce, *The Anthropology of Dance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

28 Arjun Appadurai, 'How Histories Make Geographies: Circulation and Context in a Global Perspective', *Transcultural Studies*, 1 (2010), 4–134.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

in their forms, their uses, and their trajectories'.<sup>30</sup> According to David Graeber, 'value' refers to how we choose to represent the importance or meaning of a specific phenomenon and how we organize our social worlds according to particular ideals. Value is generated through action or the process of creation itself, and it always emerges within a social context. People enact the significance of their efforts to themselves through value. To be valued, a phenomenon must be continuously compared to something else, and this takes places through dynamic processes and negotiations.<sup>31</sup>

The question of value is inextricably connected with the history of the minuet and its forms of circulation. The minuet has spread throughout different parts of the world for centuries, and it has been valued highly again and again in each new context. This repetition does not imply that the values assigned to the minuet have been arbitrary; rather, it shows that the minuet has been a part of many narratives that have created strong symbolism around the dance. Moreover, the forms of circulation have been connected to a specific European high culture. The dance did not spread to all social classes of Western civilization, but it did spread to a comparatively great extent in the Nordic countries. Why did this happen?

If we take, for example, the peasants in Southern Finland, we can see that the minuet was popular among them from the late eighteenth until the early nineteenth century, retaining some popularity even later.<sup>32</sup> There is no evidence at all, however, that the minuet was practised by contemporaneous Estonians who resided on the other side of the Gulf of Finland.<sup>33</sup> The economically independent peasants in Finland could be part of the circulation of dance forms that crossed all the social classes during the latter part of the eighteenth century, an era during which the peasants' standard of living rose significantly while much of Finland was part of the kingdom of Sweden. Conversely, Estonian serfs, later villeins, retained a different social structure: subordinated by their German-speaking landlords, they were excluded from this cultural exchange.<sup>34</sup>

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30 Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 3–63.

31 David Graeber, *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value. The False Coin of Our Own Dreams* (London: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 45–46, 86–87, 254.

32 Hoppu, pp. 260–61.

33 For example, Herbert Tampere does not mention the minuet in his comprehensive collection of Estonian folk instruments and dances, *Eesti rahvapillid ja rahvatantsud* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1975).

34 Ea Jansen, 'The National Awakening and the Estonian Nation', in *Estonia: Identity and Independence*, ed. by Jean-Jacques Subrenat (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 83–106. The serfdom was replaced by *villeinage* in Estonia in 1802, which improved the peasants' living conditions. Irja-Gea Kukk, *Our Land, Our Surveying Story. A*

The minuet and its values could thus live on in Finland, at dancing events that combined dance participation, history, and social context.

However, the connection between the dance and society's values is not a simple narrative, even when it comes to the minuet. The minuet was a popular dance among Danish peasants since the eighteenth century, but their social status was different from that of their counterparts in Norway, Sweden, and Finland during that time. The Danish *Vornedskab* [*villeinage*], an obligation for farmers to remain on the estate where they were born and there take over a farm, was a social structure that never existed in other Nordic countries. Although it was abolished in Denmark in 1702, it was soon followed by the corresponding *Stavnsbaand* [manorial bondage]. All peasants between the ages of fourteen and thirty-six (later four and forty) were forced to stay on the estate where they were born. It was not until 1788 that the restriction was repealed and several other reforms Danish society were enacted.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the Danish peasants' position was comparable with Estonians until the late 1700s, but the former still adopted the minuet while the latter did not.

One possible explanation for this disparity is that the Danish peasants' position might not have been as subservient as it appears. In other words, perhaps the contrast between different social classes in Denmark was not as structurally important as in other parts of Europe, including Estonia. Consequently, the upper social classes' dance culture in Denmark may not have been exclusive, and the peasants may have been able to observe it and perhaps even enter it before the last decades of the eighteenth century. Moreover, development within rural Denmark continued to be robust as early as the latter part of the 1700s. Clearly the Danish rural people maintained their self-awareness before the peasant liberation in 1788. Documents show that the Danish peasants were able to promote their rights and act politically long before the abolition of the *Stavnsbaand* and, therefore, that they regarded themselves as respectable people despite their low social status.<sup>36</sup> And, as respectable people in Danish society, they allowed themselves to dance the minuet.

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*Short Journey Through History* (Tallinn: Estonian Land Board, 2020), p. 21, [https://maaamet.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2021-09/Maa-amet\\_2020\\_ENG.pdf](https://maaamet.ee/sites/default/files/documents/2021-09/Maa-amet_2020_ENG.pdf). Villeins had more rights than serfs: for example, they could hold their own property. However, they still lived under several legal restrictions that differentiated them from freemen and they remained tied to their lord's land. Martyn J. Whittock, *A Brief History of Life in the Middle Ages* (London: Running Press, 2009). p. 30.

35 Birgit Løgstrup, 'Stavnsbånd 1733–1800', in *Danmarkshistorien.dk* (Aarhus Universitet, 2011), <http://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/stavnsbaand-1733-1800/>

36 Birgit Løgstrup, 'Danish Peasants Making Politics in the Eighteenth Century' in *Scandinavia in the Age of Revolution: Nordic Political Cultures, 1740–1820*, ed. by Pasi

With this example, we can see that even in the case of dance, and the minuet in particular, the question of value is closely connected to power relations in society. The specific forms through which power is manifested affect the politics of value as well as the processes through which dance becomes practice among certain groups of society but not others.<sup>37</sup> That the minuet has been known among peasants in all the Nordic countries proves that these countries have had a unique social structure, enabling dance forms to circulate relatively freely. Although these countries were class societies during the time the minuet was first flourishing, and different classes had dance events of their own, dancers and particularly musicians could cross the class boundaries and adopt new dances.

### The Feeling of the Minuet

As we consider concepts of meaning and value, we must not forget that we are talking about dancing, embodied action. Meanings and values are produced and reproduced through actions, and it is toward dancing bodies we turn our final attention.

We, the authors of this chapter, are dancers of the Finnish, Danish, and the reborn Swedish minuet. The minuet provides participants with an extraordinary feeling because of the repetitive, contemplative flow it requires. This feeling also occurs in other types of dancing, but it is the combination of calmness of movement juxtaposed with the intensity of music which is unique to the minuet. The flow created by the intense calm produced by performing slow, repetitive movements is very different than the kind of flow we feel in the rotating, whirling steps of a polska.

When dancing minuet in line, as is the case with most documented versions in Nordic countries, there is a strong feeling of togetherness produced by participating in a collective of moving dancers. Each person dances in the same manner, even without a fixed order, simply because they know the dance structure. Yet, even in this sameness, there are possibilities for small individual improvisations when passing a dance partner or turning when the lines shift direction.

Combining minuet with a 'slängpolska' (couple turning on the spot) gives the dancing an even greater dimension. The contemplative, slow minuet gives way to the whirling, ecstatic slängpolska. Partners first have no tactile contact,

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Ihalainen, Karin Sennefelt, and Michael Bregnsbo (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 291–302.

37 Julia Elyachar, *Markets of Dispossession: NGOs, Economic Development, and the State in Cairo* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005).

then they move close to each other, embrace, and turn together as one unit, often at high speed compared to the figures in the minuet.

Noteworthy is also the mental connection forged between dance partners. Even without this tactile connection or eye contact, one feels the closeness of and interacts with the other. This feeling of mental tension is especially present in minuet dancing as part of a couple rather than in line. For many dancers, this is an integral part of the minuet.

### ... and the End

In the beginning, the question was: *where does a minuet start and where does it end?* This seemingly simple question is as hard to answer as the basic one underpinning this book: *what was and is the minuet?* Minuet dancing started somewhere in early modern Europe, in the seventeenth century, as a combination of a branle step and a couple dance with organized steps and movement and without tactile connection, all while changing places and flirting. As stated repeatedly, the minuet has mostly retained these structural features for centuries, but it has also sometimes changed quite radically, at least to some extent.

The ceremonial dance at weddings, for example, can be seen as a manifestation of stability: under the eyes of the elders of a community, the structure of the dance has not changed much, creating an atmosphere of the *status quo* in society. On the other hand, the minuet structure has experienced significant structural changes when the dancing has been free, as in the Swedish minuet revival of the twenty-first century. However, even with these significant adjustments, the basic, overarching dance structure has remained largely untouched.

The control and the stability of dancing are made explicit in discourses of the minuet that emphasize the dance's calm and dignified character. In order to accomplish this, more lively and vivid variations either have been ignored, or they have been taken into the discourse and made explicit: they have been given a strict structure and, in this sense, have been 'tamed'. The reality of dancing, the action, however, is somewhat different from this discourse.

Power, stability, and discourse can be seen as symbolic dimensions of the minuet. The minuet as a precise choreography with specific denotations has a character and meaning one can articulate and explain. Thus, it has been a symbol of order, whether in a political, national, or educational sense. Yet the dance also has opposing dimensions that cannot be easily put into words. The minuet encompasses something that cannot be uttered, something whose meanings are found in the act dancing itself. Although scholars often legitimize the minuet through its symbolic meanings, the ultimate reason for dancing cannot be found anywhere other than in dancing, in social bodies.

The minuet and its meanings have lived on at dance events at which the dance, its history, and social context have been combined. To the participants, this dance has held symbolic value, strongly connected to their social reality, but it has been, above all, something that they have enjoyed. The minuet's symbolic dimension has been essential to its preservation in the Nordic countries in multiple contexts throughout the centuries. But it was only through its vast popularity as dance, movement, and embodied experience among different groups of people that it was able to survive for such a long time.

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# List of Illustrations

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- Frontispiece The minuet is danced as a ceremonial dance at a wedding in Vöörä, in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1916. The minuet is danced by two couples at a time, with the bride and the groom on the left. Photograph by Valter W. Forsblom. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, CC-BY 4.0. p. vii
- Fig. 1.1 The minuet. Pierre Rameau, *Maître à danser* (1725), engraving. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rameau\\_menuet.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rameau_menuet.jpg), public domain. p. 8
- Fig. 2.1 George Henriot's watercolour *Minuets of the Canadians* (1807) seems to confirm that the minuet was danced even in Canada. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Minuets\\_of\\_the\\_Canadians\\_-\\_TPL.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Minuets_of_the_Canadians_-_TPL.jpg), public domain. p. 25
- Fig. 2.2 Marten van Cleve, *A village celebrating the kermesse of Saint Sebastian in the lower right corner there are groups of upper-class people celebrating side to side with the peasants* (between 1547 and 1581), oil on panel. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marten\\_van\\_Cleve\\_-\\_A\\_village\\_celebrating\\_the\\_kermesse\\_of\\_Saint\\_Sebastian,\\_with\\_an\\_outdoor\\_wedding\\_feast\\_with\\_guests\\_bringing\\_gifts.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marten_van_Cleve_-_A_village_celebrating_the_kermesse_of_Saint_Sebastian,_with_an_outdoor_wedding_feast_with_guests_bringing_gifts.jpg), public domain. p. 28
- Fig. 2.3 Frontispiece and title page from Moliere, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1688). Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BourgeoisGentilhomme1688.jpg>, public domain. p. 30
- Fig. 2.4 Lieselotte von der Pfalz introduces the Prince Elector of Saxony to Louis XIV in 1714. Louis de Silvestre, *König Ludwig XIV. empfängt den späteren König von Polen und Kurfürsten von Sachsen August III* (1715), oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis\\_XIV\\_1714.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis_XIV_1714.jpg), public domain. p. 36
- Fig. 2.5 Louis XIV, his son, grandson and great-grandson, the later Louis XV with his governess. French school, *Madame de Ventadour with Louis XIV and his Heirs* (c. 1715–1720), oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis\\_XIV\\_of\\_France\\_and\\_his\\_family\\_attributed\\_to\\_Nicolas\\_de\\_Largilli%C3%A8re.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Louis_XIV_of_France_and_his_family_attributed_to_Nicolas_de_Largilli%C3%A8re.jpg), public domain. p. 37

- Fig. 2.6 Fred Barnard, *The Mob in Paris dancing La Carmagnole* (1870). p. 38  
La Carmagnole was a chain dance with singing popular among common people during the French revolution, known from 1792. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T2C,\\_Fred\\_Barnard,\\_The\\_Carmagnole\\_\(III,5\).jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T2C,_Fred_Barnard,_The_Carmagnole_(III,5).jpeg), public domain.
- Fig. 2.7 Execution of deposed French King Louis XVI, anonymous p. 39  
eighteenth-century engraving, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ex%C3%A9cution\\_de\\_Louis\\_XVI\\_Carnavalet.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ex%C3%A9cution_de_Louis_XVI_Carnavalet.jpg), public domain.
- Fig. 2.8 Marguerite Gérard, *La Duchesse Abrantes and General Junot* (c. p. 40  
1800), painting. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marguerite\\_G%C3%A9rard\\_-\\_La\\_Duchesse\\_Abrantes\\_et\\_le\\_General\\_Junot.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marguerite_G%C3%A9rard_-_La_Duchesse_Abrantes_et_le_General_Junot.jpg), public domain.
- Fig. 2.9 *The Prince's Bow* (1788), etching after Frederick George Byron. p. 41  
Satire on greetings with hat, targeting particularly the later King George IV. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Prince%27s\\_bow.\\_\(BM\\_1868,0808.5697\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Prince%27s_bow._(BM_1868,0808.5697).jpg), public domain.
- Fig. 2.10 The bride Princess Luise kisses the forehead of a well-wisher p. 42  
from the crowd. The Oberhofmeisterin von Voss at the left. Woldemar Friedrich, [untitled] (1896). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prinzessin\\_Luise\\_k%C3%BCsst\\_ein\\_M%C3%A4dchen\\_aus\\_dem\\_Volk.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prinzessin_Luise_k%C3%BCsst_ein_M%C3%A4dchen_aus_dem_Volk.jpg), public domain.
- Fig. 2.11 Georg Cristoph Grooth, portrait of Friedrich Wilhelm von p. 43  
Bergholtz (1742), oil. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrich\\_Wilhelm\\_von\\_Bergholtz.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrich_Wilhelm_von_Bergholtz.jpg), public domain.
- Fig. 2.12 Mikhail Petrovitch Klodt, *Terem of tsarevnas* (1878). Wikimedia, p. 44  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Terem\\_tsareven\\_klodt.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Terem_tsareven_klodt.jpg), public domain.
- Fig. 2.13 Anonymous, Queen Caroline, wife of King George IV, is p. 45  
greeted by people from Marylebone (c. 1820), etching. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Queen\\_Caroline,\\_wife\\_of\\_King\\_George\\_IV,\\_is\\_greeted\\_by\\_Wellcome\\_L0050927.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Queen_Caroline,_wife_of_King_George_IV,_is_greeted_by_Wellcome_L0050927.jpg), CC BY 4.0.
- Fig. 2.14 Anonymous, portrait of Eugène Arnold Dolmetsch, playing p. 49  
the lute (1897), lithograph. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Print\\_\(BM\\_1903,1006.7\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Print_(BM_1903,1006.7).jpg), public domain.

- Fig. 5.1 Portrait of Werner von Rosenfeldt (1639–1710). Engraving probably by Nils Strömcrone (1720). National Library of Sweden. Wikipedia, [https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Werner\\_von\\_Rosenfeldt#/media/Fil:Werner\\_von\\_Rosenfeldt\\_SP138.jpg](https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Werner_von_Rosenfeldt#/media/Fil:Werner_von_Rosenfeldt_SP138.jpg), public domain. p. 88
- Fig. 5.2 Portrait of Poland's king Stanislaw Leszczyński (1677-1766), by Jean Girardet. National Museum in Kraków, oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stanislaw\\_Leszczynski1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Stanislaw_Leszczynski1.jpg), public domain. p. 93
- Fig. 5.3 Portrait of King Charles XII by David von Krafft (1706), oil painting. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karl\\_XII\\_1706.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karl_XII_1706.jpg), public domain. p. 94
- Fig. 5.4a and Fig. 5.4b The doctor Johan Linder in Sweden wrote in his book in 1711 that, unlike the Polish dance, the minuet did not provide enough exercise. A few lines of text from the book, Johan Linder, *Tankar om surbrunnars kraft och verkan*. Andra upplagan (Stockholm: [n.pub.], 1718). Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, public domain. p. 95
- Fig. 5.5 In 1712, the poet Johan Runius (1679–1713) urged his twelve-year-old student, a count, to follow the tempo of the minuet. Lithograph by Johan Henric Strömer (1847). National Library of Sweden. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johan\\_Runius.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johan_Runius.jpg), public domain. p. 97
- Fig. 5.6 When the Swede Nils Reuterholm came to Paris in 1698, one of the first tasks was to attend a dance school. Portrait of Reuterholm by Ulrika Fredrica Pasch. Lithography (1847). National Library of Sweden. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nils\\_Reuterholm\\_x\\_Ulrika\\_Pasch.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nils_Reuterholm_x_Ulrika_Pasch.jpg), public domain. p. 98
- Fig. 5.7 Ulrika Eleonora, Queen of Sweden (1712–1720), and the people at court, amused themselves in 1719 by dancing minuets and country dances. Painting by Georg Desmarées, National Museum, Sweden. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ulrika\\_Eleonora,\\_Queen\\_of\\_Sweden\\_Georg\\_Desmarées.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ulrika_Eleonora,_Queen_of_Sweden_Georg_Desmarées.jpg), public domain. p. 102
- Fig. 5.8 View from northern Ostrobothnia in Finland. Watercolor by C.P. Elfström, ca 1808. The Finnish Heritage Agency, Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.738e0950-e6f5-4412-8168-c2b0a7723653>, CC BY 4.0. p. 103
- Fig. 5.9a Portrait of Admiral Carl Tersmeden. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carl\\_Tersmeden.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carl_Tersmeden.JPG), CC BY-SA 3.0. p. 106

- Fig. 5.9b The title page of Tersmeden's memoirs *Amiral Carl Tersmedens memoarer — I Fredrik I:s Sverige*, ed. by Nils Erdmann (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1916). Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, public domain. p. 106
- Fig. 5.10 Her Royal Highness Lovisa Ulrika opened a ball in 1744 by beginning a minuet with Count Carl Gustaf Tessin. Portrait by Lorens Pasch the younger (1768), oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luise\\_Ulrike\\_in\\_blue.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luise_Ulrike_in_blue.jpg), public domain. p. 114
- Fig. 5.11a View from Åland. School poster by Vihtori Ylinen (1913). Vantaa City Museum, Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/vantaa.Arkisto:281:10>, CC BY 4.0. p. 116
- Fig. 5.11b Fiddlers at a peasant wedding in Södermanland, Sweden, c. 1820. From the Fogdösviten, drawing by Carl Philip Sack, in *The Nordic Museum's and Skansen's Yearbook 1947*, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1268761/FULLTEXT01.pdf> (p. 80), public domain. p. 116
- Fig. 5.12 View from southwest Finland, school poster by Vihtori Ylinen (1920), Vantaa City Museum, Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/vantaa.Arkisto:281:7>, CC BY 4.0. p. 93
- Fig. 5.13a and Fig. 5.13b Dance at a peasant wedding in Södermanland in Sweden, c. 1820. From Fogdösviten, drawings by Carl Philip Sack. Sten Lundwall, *The Nordic Museum's and Skansen's yearbook, 1947*, pp. 81, 82, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1268761/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, public domain. p. 94
- Fig. 5.14 *Dancing children*. Painting by Lorens Pasch the Younger (1760). National Museum, Stockholm, <https://artvee.com/dl/dancing-children/>, public domain. p. 121
- Fig. 5.15a Elias Martin, *Two Schoolboys*, Yale Center for British Art. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elias\\_Martin\\_-\\_Two\\_Schoolboys\\_-\\_B1975.4.887\\_-\\_Yale\\_Center\\_for\\_British\\_Art.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elias_Martin_-_Two_Schoolboys_-_B1975.4.887_-_Yale_Center_for_British_Art.jpg), CC0 1.0. p. 122
- Fig. 5.15b Antoine Pesne, *The Masquerade Ball*, detail. Finnish National Gallery. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antoine\\_Pesne\\_-\\_The\\_masquerade\\_ball\\_-\\_S-2005-67\\_-\\_Finnish\\_National\\_Gallery.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antoine_Pesne_-_The_masquerade_ball_-_S-2005-67_-_Finnish_National_Gallery.jpg), CC0 1.0. p. 123
- Fig. 5.16 and Fig. 5.17 Minuet was danced in Ostrobothnia in the middle of the eighteenth century. C.P. Elfström, *pohjalaismies pyhäpuvussa* [Ostrobothnian man in Sunday clothes] and *pohjalaisvaimo pyhäpuvussa* [Ostrobothnian wife in Sunday clothes] (c. 1808), watercolour. The Finnish Heritage Agency <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.8F997E0D8CF823CB4AF6B017CAB4C83B>; <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.704378AD4F66F992F11AC27548BA4A23>, CC-BY 4.0. p. 124

- Fig. 5.18 C.P. Elfström, *naisväkeä saunassa* (1808), watercolour. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.54B146C40871A17D93997EBAD7E1A088>, CC BY 4.0. p. 125
- Fig. 5.19 Carl Frederik von Breda, portrait of the Sweden's king Gustav IV Adolf (1784). Postcard of oil painting. National Museum, Stockholm. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, public domain. p. 126
- Fig. 5.20 Ulrica Fredrica Pasch, portrait of Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm (1776). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustav\\_Adolf\\_Reuterholm,\\_1756-1813\\_\(Ulrica\\_Fredrica\\_Pasch\)\\_-\\_Nationalmuseum\\_-\\_38888.tif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustav_Adolf_Reuterholm,_1756-1813_(Ulrica_Fredrica_Pasch)_-_Nationalmuseum_-_38888.tif), public domain. p. 132
- Fig. 5.21 Portrait of William Coxe. Engraving by W. T. Fry after picture by W. Beechey. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William\\_Coxe\\_Engraving\\_by\\_W.\\_T.\\_Fry.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Coxe_Engraving_by_W._T._Fry.jpg), public domain. p. 144
- Fig. 5.22 and Fig. 5.23 Drawings of Swedish national court costumes from William Coxe's book *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark* (1792). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:56\\_of\\_%27\(Travels\\_into\\_Poland,\\_Russia,\\_Sweden,\\_and\\_Denmark.\\_Interspersed\\_with\\_historical\\_relations\\_and\\_political\\_inquiries.\\_Illustrated\\_with\\_charts\\_and\\_engravings.\)%27\\_\(10999106214\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:56_of_%27(Travels_into_Poland,_Russia,_Sweden,_and_Denmark._Interspersed_with_historical_relations_and_political_inquiries._Illustrated_with_charts_and_engravings.)%27_(10999106214).jpg), public domain. p. 145
- Fig. 5.24 Alexander Roslin, portrait of King Gustav III of Sweden (1777), oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustav\\_III\\_\(1746-1792\),\\_King\\_of\\_Sweden,\\_in\\_coronation-rob\\_\(Alexander\\_Roslin\)\\_-\\_Nationalmuseum\\_-\\_15330.tif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustav_III_(1746-1792),_King_of_Sweden,_in_coronation-rob_(Alexander_Roslin)_-_Nationalmuseum_-_15330.tif), public domain. p. 146
- Fig. 5.25 Lorens Pasch the Younger, portrait of Queen Sophia Magdalena of Denmark (c. 1773–75), oil on canvas. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sophia-Magdalena-av-Danmark\\_Droning-av-Sverige.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sophia-Magdalena-av-Danmark_Droning-av-Sverige.jpg), public domain. p. 147
- Fig. 5.26 Axel von Fersen, who was complimented for his minuet dance at King Gustav IV Adolf's coronation in 1800. Portrait by Lorenz Pasch the Younger. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lorenz\\_Pasch\\_the\\_Younger\\_Count\\_Hans\\_Axel\\_von\\_Fersen.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lorenz_Pasch_the_Younger_Count_Hans_Axel_von_Fersen.jpg), public domain. p. 156
- Fig. 5.27 Miniature portrait of Märta Helena Reenstierna, Årstafrun (1796). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maerta\\_Helena\\_Reenstierna.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maerta_Helena_Reenstierna.jpg), public domain. p. 160
- Fig. 5.28 Nils Månsson Mandelgren as a young man (1845). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mandelgren\\_1845.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mandelgren_1845.jpg), public domain. p. 167

- Fig. 6.1 The Swedish language area in Finland marked in blue. In the west Ostrobothnia, in the southwest Åland and Åboland, in the south Nyland. Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Svenskfinland.png#>, CC BY-SA 3.0. p. 178
- Fig. 6.2 Peasant wedding in Ostrobothnia in Finland, c. 1808. Watercolor by C.P. Elfström. The Finnish Heritage Agency, Finland. <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.1F90D360E232F5D63D90BE41B6A1E749>, CC BY 4.0. p. 179
- Fig. 6.3 A wedding procession. The bride has just been picked from the yard where she has been dressed, 1925. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. ota135\_19160. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_ota135\\_19160?sid=3078898293](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_ota135_19160?sid=3078898293), CC BY 4.0. p. 181
- Fig. 6.4a The bride and groom, 1925. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. ota135\_19137. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_ota135\\_19137?sid=3078898293](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_ota135_19137?sid=3078898293), CC BY 4.0. p. 181
- Fig. 6.4b The wedding guests gathered in the courtyard, 1925. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B 263. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B++263](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B++263), CC BY 4.0. p. 182
- Fig. 6.4c The minuet is danced, 1925. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. ota135\_19159. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_ota135\\_19159?sid=3078898293](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_ota135_19159?sid=3078898293), CC BY 4.0. p. 182
- Fig. 6.5 Ostrobothnian men with bicycles, 1922. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. Ostrobothnian tradition archive 135. SLS 865. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_%25C3%2596TA+135+foto+20093](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_%25C3%2596TA+135+foto+20093), CC BY 4.0. p. 184
- Fig. 6.6 Musicians in Vörå, 1922. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. Ostrobothnian tradition archive 135. SLS 865. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland, [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_ota135\\_19707](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_ota135_19707), CC BY 4.0. p. 186
- Fig. 6.7 Schoolgirls in Tjöck in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1907. Photograph by Ina Roos. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.CA8EAA998D5E25E69490C69C7AEFC234>, CC BY 4.0. p. 188
- Fig. 6.8a People in Tjöck in Ostrobothnia in Finland in harvest work, 1890. Photograph by Ina Roos. The Ostrobothnian tradition archive. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+146\\_ota146+foto+459](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+146_ota146+foto+459), CC BY 4.0. p. 188

- Fig. 6.8b Adolf von Becker, *Dance Rehearsal* (1893). Finnish National Gallery, [https://finna.fi/Record/fng\\_nyblin.WSOY\\_S\\_IV\\_4-70\\_25](https://finna.fi/Record/fng_nyblin.WSOY_S_IV_4-70_25), CC BY-SA 3.0. p. 189
- Fig. 6.9 A wealthy peasant's farm in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1910–1960. Photograph by Erik Häggglund. SLS 865 B 473. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+473](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+473), CC BY 4.0. p. 190
- Fig. 6.10 Interior from a farmhouse in Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland. Photograph by Valter W. Forsblom (1916). SLS 269\_19. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+269\\_SLS+269\\_19](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+269_SLS+269_19), CC BY 4.0. p. 191
- Fig. 6.11 Folk dancers in Helsinki perform a minuet from Vörå in Ostrobothnia in 1932. Photograph by Rafael Roos. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring. p. 192
- Fig. 6.12a and Tradition bearers from Munsala in Ostrobothnia in Finland present their minuet and polska in Stockholm in 1987. Photographs by Stina Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring. p. 192
- Fig. 6.12b
- Fig. 6.13 During a dance evening in Helsinki in 2019, the participants have fun dancing the minuet from Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland, with hops. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © Gunnel Biskop. p. 193
- Fig. 6.14 Young people in Eastern Nyland in Finland play 'Last couple out'. Photograph by Gabriel Nikander, 1914. SLS 240\_12. Swedish Literature Society in Finland, [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+240\\_SLS+240\\_12](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+240_SLS+240_12), CC BY 4.0. p. 195
- Fig. 6.15 The fiddler Gustaf Bohm in Kimito in Finland. Photograph by Otto Andersson. Archive of the Sibelius Museum. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustaf\\_Adolf\\_Bohm\\_%28Sm\\_5888%29\\_%2827113680084%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustaf_Adolf_Bohm_%28Sm_5888%29_%2827113680084%29.jpg), CC BY 2.0. p. 197
- Fig. 6.16 Kimito Ungdomsförening in Åboland in Finland dances its minuet at a summer party, 1904. Photograph by Otto Andersson. SLS 105b\_70. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b\\_SLS+105b\\_70](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b_SLS+105b_70), CC BY 4.0. p. 197
- Fig. 6.17 View from southern Ostrobothnia in Finland, school poster by Vihtori Ylinen (1915). Vantaa City Museum, Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/vantaa.Arkisto:281:3>, CC BY 4.0. p. 199
- Fig. 6.18 Adolf von Becker, *By the Hearth, an Ostrobothnian Courting Scene* (1871), oil. Finnish National Gallery, <https://finna.fi/Record/kansallisgalleria.5C435246C4784C3647D65AE63EED596D?sid=2972798628>, CC0. p. 201



- Fig. 6.19 Wedding in Lappfjärd in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1907. p. 202  
Photography by Ina Roos. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.65ED6D94B58047CD314AD99D3D5E4545>, CC BY 4.0.
- Fig. 6.20 Tradition bearers from Tjock in Ostrobothnia in Finland, p. 204  
dressed in folk costume, dance their minuet at the seventy-fifth anniversary of Finland's Swedish Folk Dance Association in 2006. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © Gunnel Biskop.
- Fig. 6.21 Folk dancers in Helsinki perform a minuet from Vörå in p. 204  
Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1932. Photograph by Rafael Roos. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.
- Fig. 6.22 and Minuet danced at a party of an association in Helsinki, 2013. p. 206  
Fig. 6.23 Photographs by Gunnel Biskop. © Gunnel Biskop.
- Fig. 6.24 The priest dances a minuet with the bride at the end of the p. 209  
eighteenth century. A detail of a painting from a wedding, Leksand, Dalecarlia, Sweden. Nordiska museet's archive, Stockholm, all rights reserved.
- Fig. 6.25 Minuet as a ceremonial dance at a wedding in Vörå, p. 211  
Ostrobothnia region, Finland, 1916. Photograph by Valter W. Forsblom. SLS 269\_58. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+269\\_SLS+269\\_58](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+269_SLS+269_58), CC BY 4.0.
- Fig. 6.26 Wedding in Lappfjärd in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1909. The p. 213  
bride and groom with four pairs of their friends. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+146\\_ota146+foto+1101](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+146_ota146+foto+1101), CC BY 4.0.
- Fig. 6.27 Four farms in a row in Tjock in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1914. p. 214  
Photograph by Valter W. Forsblom. SLS 2351\_38b. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS). [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+235\\_SLS+235a\\_38b](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+235_SLS+235a_38b), CC BY 4.0.
- Fig. 6.28 Tjock residents dance their minuet, with the bride and groom p. 215  
at the 'end of the table' during the arrangement of a traditional peasant wedding in Tjock in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1987. Photograph by Stina Hahnsson. © Finland's Svenska Folkdansring.
- Fig. 6.29 Kimito Ungdomsförening in Åboland in Finland dances p. 219  
a minuet at a summer party, 1904. Photograph by Otto Andersson. SLS 105b\_66. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b\\_SLS+105b\\_66](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b_SLS+105b_66), CC BY 4.0.
- Fig. 6.30 and Finnish common people in 1803, The National Library of p. 220  
Fig. 6.31 Finland, <https://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/32457>; [https://finna.fi/Record/doria.10024\\_32250](https://finna.fi/Record/doria.10024_32250), public domain.

- Fig. 6.32 Devotional time in a home in western Finland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. School poster by Vihtori Ylinen (1920). Vantaa City Museum, Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/vantaa.Arkisto:281:6?imgid=1>, CC BY 4.0. p. 220
- Fig. 6.33 Girl from Mouhijärvi in western Finland, drawing by Agathon Reinholm (1880). Postcard. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, public domain. p. 221
- Fig. 6.34 People from Mäntsälä, Southern Finland, watercolour by Hilda Olson (1864). The National Library of Finland. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, public domain. p. 222
- Fig. 6.35 Young couple from Säkyä, Southwestern Finland, watercolour by Hilda Olson (1864). The National Library of Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.D47BD6B5FE34B3D2EA6938C4B5804A19?sid=3078909972>, CC BY 4.0. p. 223
- Fig. 6.36 Henrik August Reinholm collected dances in the 1840s and provided information on the minuet of the Finnish-speaking population in Finland. Portrait by Paul Bernhard Verner von Hausen (1904), oil painting. The National Museum of Finland, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.46FEBE10A23F5BDDC36C1A5DEB373A11?sid=2972861067>, CC BY 4.0. p. 224
- Fig. 7.1 Daniel Tilas described social life in Fredrikshald in 1749 in Norway, where the minuet was probably danced. Portrait by Olof Arenius (1750). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daniel\\_Tilas.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daniel_Tilas.jpg), public domain. p. 230
- Fig. 7.2 Excerpt from Sven Henric Walcke, *Grunderne uti Dans-Kånsten, til Begynnarens Tjenst* (Göteborg: L. Wahlström, 1783), <https://litteraturbanken.se/f%C3%B6rfattare/WalckeSH/titlar/GrunderneUtiDansK%C3%A5nsten/sida/I/faksimil>, public domain. p. 232
- Fig. 7.3 Portrait of Johannes Carsten Hauch by unknown artist. Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HauchJC.jpg>, public domain. p. 233
- Fig. 7.4 Gustava Kielland told about minuet dancing on Finnøy in Boknafjorden in Norway. Localhistoriewiki.no, [https://lokalhistoriewiki.no/wiki/Fil:Gustava\\_Kielland\\_01.jpg](https://lokalhistoriewiki.no/wiki/Fil:Gustava_Kielland_01.jpg), public domain. p. 237
- Fig. 7.5 Finnøy Rectory in Norway. Painted by Thomas Fearnley (1826). Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Finn%C3%B8y\\_av\\_Fearnley.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Finn%C3%B8y_av_Fearnley.jpg), public domain. p. 238
- Fig. 7.6 In his youth, Friedrich Albert Zorn visited Hønefoss in Norway in 1836 and watched the minuet performed. Portrait of Zorn. Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek, <https://ausstellungen.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/tanz/items/show/98>, public domain. p. 241

- Fig. 8.1 Minuet in the great hall on Christiansborg, ca. 1766. Engraving by Bradt after drawing by Jardin. Kobberstiksamlingen, Statens Museum for Kunst. <https://open.smk.dk/en/artwork/image/KKSgb8824>, public domain. p. 249
- Figs. 9.1–9.31 Drawings of a couple dancing the minuet from Pierre Jean Laurent's manuscript *Weiledning ved Underviisning I Menuetten* [A Guide for Teaching the Minuet]. Photographs by Elizabeth Svarstad. © Royal Danish Library. p. 274
- Fig. 10.1 *Menuet à deux* [Minuet for two]. A page displaying Feuillet notation. Gallica Digital Library, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b85914682/f62.item.r=recueil%20de%20dance%20pecour/f62.jpeg>, public domain. p. 302
- Fig. 10.2 *Minuet perform'd by Mrs. Santlow*. A page showing the choreography. OpenEdition Journals, <https://journals.openedition.org/danse/docannexe/image/343/img-1.jpg>, public domain. p. 304
- Fig. 10.3 The dancers in *Elverhøi*, at Friluftsteatret, an open-air stage at Bygdø in Oslo, constructed specifically for a performance that premiered on 16 June 1911. Photograph by Rude og Hilfling, Nasjonalbiblioteket, <https://www.nb.no/items/274f0e2b6e15090b655256118a6f88a2?page=0&searchText=Elverh%C3%B8i>, public domain. p. 307
- Fig. 10.4 *Den Nationale Scene 'Elverhøj'*, 1926. Photograph by Selmer Malvin Norland. Oslo Digital Museum, <https://digitaltmuseum.no/021018379137/den-nationale-scene-elverhoi>, CC BY-SA 4.0. p. 309
- Fig. 11.1 Ellen Grüner-Nielsen. Photograph by Julie Laurberg Gad, København (1918). © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 314
- Fig. 11.2 Ellen Grüner-Nielsen's original draft records of the Mollevit from Ærø, collected August–September 1918. Det Kongelige Bibliotek DFS 1915/004 Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 315
- Fig. 11.3 Ellen Grüner-Nielsen's transcription from 1930 of the Mollevit from Ærø, recorded in 1918. Dansk Folkemindesamling ved Det Kongelige Bibliotek, DFS 1915/006, Foreningen til Folkedansens Fremme. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 315
- Fig. 11.4 The musician Hans Andersen Hansen and his wife Anne Hansen, photographed together with children and children in-law, 1941. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 317
- Fig. 11.5 Front page from Ane Marie Kjellerups's original recording of the Mollevit from Ærø 1939–43. Dansk Folkemindesamling ved Det Kongelige Bibliotek 1915/006, Kildematerialet til Gamle danse fra Fyn og Øerne 1941. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 319

- Fig. 11.6 The farmer and musician Hans Andersen Hansen in Rise on Ærø, 1948. Hansen was a central figure at the dance recording in 1918, 1939–40 and 1948. Photograph © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 320
- Fig. 11.7 Four generations gathered in Ærøskøbing. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 321
- Fig. 11.8 Ingeborg Therkildsen. Photograph by Anders Chr. N. Christensen 1984. © Anders Chr. N. Christensen. p. 322
- Fig. 11.9 The former farmer and musician Johan Larsen from Rise. Photograph by Anders Chr. N. Christensen 1984. © Anders Chr. N. Christensen. p. 324
- Fig. 11.10 A minuet from *Notebook for Niels Gottlob*, commenced on 19 Februarii Anno 1772, Informant Joh. Lud. Dauer'. Ærø Museum. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 324
- Fig. 11.11 The siblings Rasmus and Karen Toxværd, of Sillestrup, later Væggeløse. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 328
- Fig. 11.12 Johannes Egedal, photographed in Copenhagen, 1917. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 331
- Fig. 11.13 The Bjerregrav dancers show their 'Monnevet' for the first time at the first Danish Folk Dance Event in 1930. Photograph © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 336
- Fig. 11.14 The Bjerregrav dancers are lined up for a photograph at the Nordic Folk Dance event in Ålborg, 1937. Photograph © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 338
- Fig. 11.15 The dancers from Bjerregrav in rows with the leading dancers in front or in top of the row. Nordisk Folkedanserstævne 1937. Photograph © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 338
- Fig. 11.16 The carpenter Jens Sloth from Dalbyover plays the Monnevet, 1980. Photograph by Svend Nielsen. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 343
- Fig. 11.17 The Monnevet danced in Støvring, 1980. Photograph by Svend Nielsen © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 344
- Fig. 11.18 The front dancer, Sigurd Bonde Jensen, gives the signal for completion of the minuet or for all couples to give right hand to their partners. Photograph by Svend Nielsen, 1980. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 345
- Fig. 11.19 The couples doing a variation in the middle of the minuet. Photograph by Svend Nielsen, 1980. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 345

- Fig. 11.20 The ladies are closest to the front, and the partners' row has moved furthest away from the front, and they are hereafter ready for changing the rows. Photograph by Svend Nielsen, 1980. © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 346
- Fig. 11.21 The score of the 'Skaberens Menuet' ['The Creator's Minuet']. Photograph © Dansk Folkemindesamling. p. 347
- Fig. 12.1 The dance researcher Yngvar Heikel (1889–1956). The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.DF54F64E5EE3D64C2D53EBCC86B8EA27>, CC BY 4.0. p. 354
- Fig. 12.2 Kimito Ungdomsförening in Åboland in Finland dances its minuet at a summer party, 1904. Photograph by Otto Andersson (1904). SLS 105b\_66. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b\\_SLS+105b\\_66](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.SLS+105+b_SLS+105b_66), CC BY 4.0. p. 355
- Fig. 12.3a and Yngvar Heikel on a research trip. The association Brage in Helsinki, 1922. @ Föreningen Brage. p. 357
- Fig. 12.3b
- Fig. 12.4 A newlywed couple in Vörå in Ostrobothnia in Finland are seated on a table, receiving congratulations, in 1925. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B 254. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+254](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+254), CC BY 4.0. p. 357
- Fig. 12.5 Tradition bearers in Lappfjärd in Ostrobothnia in Finland show the starting position in their minuet, 1973. Photograph by Kim Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring. p. 358
- Fig. 12.6 Tradition bearers in Tjock in Ostrobothnia in Finland show the starting position in their minuet, 1984. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © Gunnel Biskop. p. 359
- Fig. 12.7 A woman in Tjock, in Ostrobothnia in Finland, knits at the beginning of the twentieth century. Photograph by Ina Roos. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.E028AD9127125A7F2B5C5500868BC2C3>, CC BY 4.0. p. 360
- Fig. 12.8 Two women in Tjock, in Ostrobothnia in Finland, show how to take hand in hand in the minuet, 1928. Photograph by Yngvar Heikel. SLS Folkmålskommissionen's collection no. 5 © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. p. 360
- Fig. 12.9 Family in front of their farm in Vörå in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1923. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B 381. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+381](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+381), CC BY 4.0. p. 361

- Fig. 12.10 Yngvar Heikel's description of the minuet in Munsala in 1927, prepared for the Swedish Literature Society, which required a rewritten version. SLS 503b, The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS). Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. p. 362
- Fig. 12.11a and Yngvar Heikel published his records in 1938 in volume VI p. 363  
Fig. 12.11b *Folkdans B Dansbeskrivningar*. SLS 268, The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS). Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.
- Fig. 12.12 The engineer Kim Hahnsson. Photograph by Stina Hahnsson, 1993. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring. p. 364
- Fig. 12.13a and Kim Hahnsson filmed the minuet in Munsala in 1985. p. 364  
Fig. 12.13b Photograph by Gunnel Biskop after Hahnsson's film. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.
- Fig. 12.14a, Kim Hahnsson filmed the minuet in Jeppo in 1977. Screenshots by p. 365  
Fig. 12.14b, and Gunnel Biskop. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.  
Fig. 12.14c
- Fig. 14.1a and Tradition bearers in Munsala in Ostrobothnia in Finland dance p. 390  
Fig. 14.1b their minuet, 1985. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop after film by Kim Hahnsson. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.
- Fig. 14.2a and Tradition bearers from Munsala in Ostrobothnia in Finland p. 393  
Fig. 14.2b have dressed in folk costume to perform their minuet in Stockholm, 1987. Photograph by Stina Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring.
- Fig. 14.3 Folk dancers in Denmark perform with a minuet from Randers in Jutland, 1950. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring. p. 394
- Fig. 14.4 Folk dancers perform the minuet from Randers at the Nordic folk dance convention in Aarhus, Denmark in 1946. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring. p. 394
- Fig. 14.5a Excerpt from Eric Ehrström's manuscript. Photograph by p. 400  
Gunnel Biskop. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.
- Fig. 14.5b A drawing from Eric Ehrström's manuscript. Photograph by p. 400  
Gunnel Biskop. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland.
- Fig. 14.5c The starting position in Menuet en six, according to Taubert. p. 401  
Design by Petri Hoppu. Formation in the chorus of the Minuet en six, according to Taubert:
- Fig. 14.5d The arrangement of the chorus in Menuet en six, according to p. 401  
Taubert. Design by Petri Hoppu
- Fig. 14.6 Ordinary people in Tavastland on their way into the church. R.W. Ekman, *Churchgoers* (1868), gouache on paper. Pori Art Museum, Finland. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:R\\_W\\_Ekman\\_Kirkkoon\\_k%C3%A4vij%C3%A4t\\_1867.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:R_W_Ekman_Kirkkoon_k%C3%A4vij%C3%A4t_1867.jpg), public domain. p. 403

- Fig. 14.7a and Fig. 14.7b Victor Allardt's record of minuet and polska-minett in eastern Nyland, Finland, 1887. SLS 1009. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS). Photographs by Gunnel Biskop. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. p. 404
- Fig. 14.8 Elias Martin, *Dans på Sveaborg* ['Picnic' at Sveaborg (Fortress in Finland)] (1764), ink drawing. National Museum, Stockholm. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dans\\_p%C3%A5\\_Sveaborg\\_1764.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dans_p%C3%A5_Sveaborg_1764.jpg), public domain. p. 407
- Fig. 14.9a and Fig. 14.9b Tradition bearers in Tjock in Ostrobothnia in Finland twirl in their minuet at an event in Stockholm in 1987. Photographs by Stina Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring. p. 412
- Fig. 14.10 Common people in Nyland in Finland in Sunday dress, c. 1808. Watercolour by C.P. Elfström. The Finnish Heritage Agency, <https://finna.fi/Record/museovirasto.EDC778A5BFA4727EB8E5BC4D51C2ABF0>, CC BY 4.0. p. 413
- Fig. 15.1 Longways formation (black pin = male, white pin = female). © Petri Hoppu. p. 422
- Fig. 16.1 Schematic illustration by Egil Bakka of the context where forms of the minuet were transmitted (dark blue), duration of the minuet forms (light blue) and reconstructions (grey). p. 434
- Fig. 16.2 The minuet step in Feuillet notation from Feuillet, *Chorégraphie* (1701), p. 90. Explanations of what each of the signs represent. Quotes from Feuillet (trans. Weaver), *Orchesography* (1706), public domain. p. 440
- Fig. 16.3 The minuet step as shown in Feuillet, *Chorégraphie* (1701), p. 90 (numbers added by the authors), public domain. p. 442
- Fig. 16.4 Notation of the vertical movements of the centre of gravity (shown graphically as straight lines) in waltzing and walking illustrated by Blom and Bakka. p. 444
- Fig. 16.5 *Svikt* analysis of two forward minuet steps performed from left to right. Design by Egil Bakka and Elizabeth Svarstad. p. 445
- Fig. 16.6 William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, plate 2 (1753), etching. The figure of the minuet path on the floor in drawing number 122 in upper left corner. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Analysis\\_of\\_Beauty\\_Plate\\_2\\_by\\_William\\_Hogarth.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Analysis_of_Beauty_Plate_2_by_William_Hogarth.jpg), public domain. p. 446
- Fig. 16.7 William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty*, plate 1 (1753), etching. Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Analysis\\_of\\_Beauty\\_Plate\\_1\\_by\\_William\\_Hogarth.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Analysis_of_Beauty_Plate_1_by_William_Hogarth.jpg), public domain. p. 446

- Fig. 16.8 *Sviikt* analysis and Feuillet notation of two forward minuet steps. Red markings show the highlighted *sviikts*. *Sviikt* curve by Egil Bakka and Elizabeth Svarstad. Notation images from Feuillet, R.-A., *Chorégraphie* (Paris, 1700), public domain. p. 447
- Fig. 17.1 The minuet from Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland danced in 1978 in Oravais. Photograph by Stina Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring. p. 458
- Fig. 17.2 Captain Bertel Holm. Gunnel Biskop's collection. Photograph, public domain. p. 459
- Fig. 17.3 Edvin Lygdbäck. Gunnel Biskop's collection. Photograph, all rights reserved. p. 462
- Fig. 17.4 Wedding entourage in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1934. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B 259. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+259](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+259), CC BY 4.0. p. 463
- Fig. 17.5 Wedding in Ostrobothnia in Finland. The bride and groom toast with the guests while the fiddlers play, 1922. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B 258. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+258](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+258), CC BY 4.0. p. 463
- Fig. 17.6 Dance orchestra in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1922. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B ÖTA 135 foto 20097. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_%25C3%2596TA+135+foto+20097](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_%25C3%2596TA+135+foto+20097), CC BY 4.0. p. 464
- Fig. 17.7 Tradition bearers from Munsala in Ostrobothnia in Finland perform in Stockholm, 1987. Photograph by Stina Hahnsson. © Finlands Svenska Folkdansring. p. 465
- Fig. 17.8 Wedding guests gathered in the yard for photography in Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1937. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 B 431 The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_SLS+865+B+431](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_SLS+865+B+431), CC BY 4.0. p. 466
- Fig. 17.9 Professor Lars Huldén. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop, 1984. © Gunnel Biskop. p. 467
- Fig. 17.10 A cobbler fitting a shoe with a new heel in 1921. Photograph by Erik Hägglund. SLS 865 ota135\_19815. The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland (SLS), [https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865\\_ota135\\_19815?sid=2976468705](https://finna.fi/Record/sls.%25C3%2596TA+135%252C+SLS+865_ota135_19815?sid=2976468705), CC BY 4.0. p. 469

















- Fig. 17.11 Per Rögård and other tradition bearers in Munsala dance their minuet, 1985. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop after a film by Kim Hahnsson. © The Society of Swedish Literature in Finland. p. 471
- Fig. 17.12 Folk dancers from Brage in Helsinki perform a minuet from Purmo, Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1983. Photograph by Gunnel Biskop. © Gunnel Biskop. p. 474
- Fig. 17.13 and Fig. 17.14 Folk dancers from Finlands Svenska Folkdansring perform a minuet from Oravais in Ostrobothnia during the Europeade 2017 festival in Turku. Photograph by Timo Hukkanen. © Timo Hukkanen. p. 475
- Fig. 17.15 and Fig. 17.16 The minuet is danced at Gunnel Biskop's 50th birthday, 1993. Photographs by Viola Stjernberg. © Viola Stjernberg. p. 477
- Fig. 17.17 The minuet from Oravais is danced with hop steps at Gunnel Biskop's doctoral dinner, 2012. Photograph by Karin Långbacka. © Karin Långbacka. p. 478
- Fig. 18.1 Börje Wallin. © HBG-BILD. p. 483
- Fig. 18.2 Anton Schneider and Petra Eriksson have worked diligently to develop the Börje Wallin minuet for stage performances. Film photographer: Henrik Peel. © Henrik Peel. p. 486
- Fig. 18.3 Folk-dance group Kiperä premiering Kuortane Minuet at Savoy Theatre, Helsinki, 1992. Photograph by Petri Mulari. © Petri Mulari. p. 491
- Fig. 19.1 Count Magnus Stenbock. Photograph by C. G. Holm. Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=32866932>, CC BY-SA 3.0. p. 504
- Fig. 19.2 Mary Skeaping. Unknown photographer. Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22118866>, public domain. p. 510
- Fig. 19.3 Regina Beck-Friis. Photographer and year unknown. Svenskt Porträttarkiv, <https://porträttarkiv.se/details/sj9PGLAlnmUAAAAAACYzCA>, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. p. 511


# List of Videos

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Please note that many of the following videos are hosted by third parties and so their ongoing availability cannot be guaranteed.

- Video 2.1 The minuet in a 2001 Zurich production of W. A. Mozart, p.23  
*Don Giovanni*, complete opera with English subtitles. Uploaded by Pluterro, 5 November 2017. YouTube,
- 
- Video 2.2 'The Treskowitzer Menuett', Dancilla website (2020), <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/ead1d1a8> p. 23
- 
- Video 2.3 Das Kuhländler Mineth. Folk dancers safeguarding heritage p. 24  
from Kuhländchen perform eleven dances. Uploaded by Wir Sudetendeutschen, 30 April 2020. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/d7079ef1>
- 
- Video 2.4 Music by Jean-Baptiste Lully from *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, p. 31  
'Menuet pour faire danser Monsieur Jourdain' [Menuet to make Monsieur Jourdain dance]. Uploaded by Vlavv, 24 December 2010. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/4d73077b>
- 
- Video 2.5 Branle des Poitou, from Luther Hochzeit. Uploaded p. 31  
by kaltric, 14 June 2014. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/0ab38173>
- 
- Video 2.6 Branle du Poitou (par Chacegalerie), Les Clouzeaux. Uploaded p. 31  
by Bedame Trad, 18 December 2018. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/86ea3111>
- 

- Video 2.7 A jota dance, by the group 'La Calandria' for a fiesta in Torre del Compte on 20 August 2011. Uploaded by maxxyvidz, 20 August 2011. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/2dd07cec> p. 32  

- Video 2.8 A jota aragonesa dance, by Jorge Elipe and Elena Algora at the national jota contest in Zaragoza, Spain 2013. Uploaded by proseandpoetry, 2 May 2014. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/f0622713> p. 32  

- Video 2.9 Seguidilla de Huebras dance, by Grupo Folklórico Abuela Santa Ana, from Albacete, La Mancha, Spain. Uploaded by Folk Dances Around the World, 8 September 2011. Youtube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/1a152e4c> p. 33  

- Video 2.10 Fandango antiguo castellano dance, by folk ensemble Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, from Alcorcon, Madrid, Spain. Uploaded by Folk Dances Around the World, 25 March 2009. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/4f22dfdc> p. 33  

- Video 2.11 Gaillarde dance, by historical dance ensemble TIME OF DANCE. Uploaded by AltaCapella, 18 March 2012. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/0efb4761> p. 33  

- Video 2.12 Bourrée 3 temps d'Auvergne dance, by Gregory Dyke and Cynthia Callaou. Uploaded by Tirn0, 19 April 2013. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/34ce1b13> p. 33  

- Video 2.13 Resian dance, by Gruppo Folk Val Resia in Moscow, Russia on 9 November 2015. Uploaded by Gruppo Folk Val Resia, 10 November 2015. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/53faf208> p. 33  

- Video 9.1 'Ballet Glossary—Feet Positions', The Royal Opera House. Uploaded by the Royal Opera House, 25 February 2011. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/55cc685e> p. 271  


- Video 11.1 Minuet danced in Støvring. Filmed by Svend Nielsen, 1980. p. 345  
 © Dansk Folkemindesamling. Uploaded by Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance, 5 March 2024. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/48a17325>
- 
- Video 11.2 Minuet danced in Støvring. Filmed by Svend Nielsen, 1980. p. 346  
 © Dansk Folkemindesamling. Uploaded by Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance, 5 March 2024. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/8e6a59fc>
- 
- Video 12.1 Demonstration of a Jeppo minuet, polska, and Kockdansen (the Chef's Dance) in Ostrobothnia in Finland, 1977. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland [The Swedish Literature Society in Finland (SLS)], 7 May 2019, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/cb0156df> p. 366
- 
- Video 14.1 Minuet and polska from Lappfjärd in southern Ostrobothnia in Finland, performed by folk dancers from the regional folk-dance organization. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Pargasit, 28 January 2013. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/55c38f65> p. 398
- 
- Video 14.2 Minuet and polska from Tjock in southern Ostrobothnia in Finland, performed by folk dancers from the group Spjutsunds folkdanslag. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Pargasit, 31 July 2013. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/016d02a6> p. 398
- 
- Video 17.1 Tradition bearers from Jeppo in Ostrobothnia in Finland play and dance minuet and polska at the Nordic folk dance event NORDLEK 97 in Vaasa 1997. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by segasovitch, 5 April 2012. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/c85115c4> p. 472
- 
- Video 17.2 The group Jepokryddona perform the minuet from Jeppo at Kaustinen Folk Music Festival, 2019. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by KulturÖsterbotten, 13 July 2019. Facebook, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/98697a2f> p. 473
- 
- Video 17.3 Tjock residents present their minuet and polska at a fiddlers' gathering (*spelmansstämma*), 2019. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Jessica Westerholm, 9 May 2023. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/0c33910f> p. 473
- 

- Video 17.4 Minuet and polska from Oravais in Ostrobothnia in Finland. p. 476  
 Demonstration video for the Finnish groups at Europeade 2017 in Turku. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Europeade 2017 Turku, 2 December 2016. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/919a8e6c>
- Video 17.5 Two hundred folk dancers from Finlands Svenska Folkdansring perform the minuet and polska from Oravais at Europeade 2017 in Turku, Finland. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Pargasit, 23 June 2019. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/11191d0e>
- Video 17.6 Folk dancers from Finlands Svenska Folkdansring perform the minuet and polska from Oravais in Jakobstad, 2019. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by Ralf Karlström, 29 June 2019. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/ed779e86>
- Video 17.7 Folk dancers from Finlands Svenska Folkdansring perform the minuet from Lappfjärd at NORDLEK in Steinkjer, Norway in July 2012. The minuet is included in the National Inventory of Living Heritage in Finland. Uploaded by folkblueroots, 10 March 2012. YouTube, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/d97e7b68>. See the minuet at timecode 1:20

# Map of Locations

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Map of Nordic Countries. Based on Brooke Vibber's map of Europe. Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=658689>, CC BY-SA 3.0

For an interactive version of this map showing the locations mentioned in this book, see <https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1sjCj3PvJT5ZVBInEeinlGqrBUd6SBY&ll=60.39835628715837%2C6.983384426482591&z=4>





# About the Authors

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**Petri Hoppu** (PhD) studied ethnomusicology at the University of Tampere, Finland and graduated in 1995. He continued his studies in Tampere and wrote his doctoral thesis (1999) on the minuet in Finland. Today he is a Principal Lecturer at the Oulu University of Applied Sciences and Adjunct Professor (Docent) in dance studies at Tampere University. His areas of expertise include theory and methodology in dance anthropology as well as research of Skolt Saami dances, Finnish-Karelian vernacular dances and Nordic folk-dance revitalization. He has been a project manager of several research projects, including *Dance in Nordic Spaces* (2007–2012) and *KariTaMus* (developing common pedagogy for folk dance and music, 2021–2023). He has written several peer-reviewed articles and co-edited the book *Nordic Dance Spaces: Practicing and Imagining a Region* (2014) with professor Karen Vedel and *Dance Research Journal* 52 (1) Special Issue *In and Out of Norden—Dance and the Migratory Condition* (2020) with professor Inger Damsholt. He has been the editor of the only annual Nordic folk dance research journal, *Folkdansforskning i Norden*, since 2002. He has been on boards of international dance scholars' associations and giving lectures at universities in Europe and the US.

**Egil Bakka** was the founding Director at the Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance (1973–2013) and is professor emeritus of dance studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. He built and chaired the programme for dance studies at his university and initiated the NOFOD Nordic master programme with Danish, Finnish, and Swedish colleagues and the Choreomundus Erasmus international master's in dance Knowledge, Practice and Heritage with colleagues from France, Hungary, and the UK. He was the first academic coordinator of both masters. Bakka has held many positions as chair or board member of national and international organisations, institutions, research projects and conferences, has seven honorary memberships and prizes, and is Commander of the Royal St. Olav Order. He has conducted extensive fieldwork in Norway and the Faroe Islands and had tasks in the UNESCO environment with the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Publications: Bakka, Egil et al. ed., *Waltzing through Europe: Attitudes Towards Couple Dances in the*



*Long Nineteenth-Century* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2020); Bakka, Egil, 'Dance and Music in Interplay: Types of Choreo-Musical Relationships in Norwegian Heritage', in *Diverging Ontologies in Music for Dancing European Voices V*, ed. by Ardian Ahmedaja (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2023), pp. 29–50.

**Anne Margrete Fiskvik** (PhD) works as professor of dance studies at the Department for Musicology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim. Previously a professional dancer and choreographer, she has pursued an academic career, and, today, her main research areas are within dance and music history. She has been interested especially in Norwegian theatre dance and itinerant practices during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Fiskvik was a member of the research projects *Performing Arts between Dilettantism and Professionalism (pArts)* and *Dance in Nordic Spaces*. Fiskvik is also a certified dance movement therapist and interested in health aspects of dance. Her most recent publication is the edited issue of *Dance Articulated* 8 (1) Special Issue *Dance. A way towards health and well being* (2022). Some of her recent publications dealing with dance historie(s) include the co-edited anthology *Performing Arts in Changing Societies: Opera, Dance and Theatre in European and Nordic countries around 1800* (London: Routledge, 2020) as well as the article 'Renegotiation Identify Markers in Contemporary Halling', published in *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 52 (1), (2020).

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**Gunnel Biskop**, born in Karleby, Finland, is a retired editor from Kemira Ltd in Helsinki (1968–2003). From a young age, she has participated in a folk-dance group and has danced all the traditional minuets recorded in Finland. She is on the board of *Finlands Svenska Folkdansring*. Alongside her full-time work, she studied folklore and ethnology at Åbo Akademi university and finished a Master of Art degree in 1990. In the field of dance, she has published five books, contributed to fifteen anthologies, and written over a hundred articles. Her PhD thesis is called *Dansen för åskådare. Intresset för folkdansen som estradprodukt och insamlingsobjekt hos den svenskspråkiga befolkningen i Finland under senare delen av 1800-talet* (Åbo Akademi 2012) (Dance for an audience. The interest in folk dance as a stage product and object of dance collecting among Swedish-speakers in Finland during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century). Her book *Menuetten—älsklingsdansen. Om menuetten i Norden—särskilt i Finlands svenskspråkiga bygd—under*

*trehundrafemti år* (The Minuet—The Loved Dance. About the minuet in the Nordic region—especially in the Swedish-speaking area of Finland—for three hundred and fifty years) was published in 2015. Since 1990, she has participated in the projects of *Nordisk forening for folkedansforskning* (Nordic association for folk dance research) and served on its board. Together with Egil Bakka et al (eds), she co-edited *Norden i Dans. Folk – Fag – Forskning* (Oslo: Novus 2007).

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'The Manipulation of Body Weight for Locomotion—Labanotation and the Svikt Analysis' (2020), in Pál-Kovács and Szőnyi (eds) *The Mystery of Movement: Studies in Honor of János Füge*.

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**Anna Björk** (MA) is a research archivist at the Centre for Swedish Folk Music and Jazz Research in Stockholm, where she works with the dance collections, for instance 'Arkivet för Folklig dans' (Archive for popular dance). She holds a degree in Swedish folk dance and an MA in Contemporary Dance Education from Stockholm University of the Arts. Her master's thesis *Folkdansaren och arkivet: traditionsbärande som kritisk arkivpraktik* (The folk dancer and the archive: tradition bearing as critical archive practice) investigates the knowledge transmission in the interchange between dancer and archive, where different folk-dance bodies understood as archives—both living dancers and bodies in text and image—meet. She also works as a dance teacher, teaching Swedish folk dance and folk-dance pedagogy.

**Andrea Susanne Opielka** (PhD) studied musicology, art history, and German literature at the universities of Heidelberg and Bochum. In the winter of 2002–2003, she wrote an MA thesis on Faroese dance under the supervision of Eyðun Andreassen, professor of ethnology at the Faroese university. This was followed by a PhD thesis on dance games and singing games *Färöische Tanzspiele: Herkunft—Verbreitung—Tradition* (Saarbrücken 2009), which was also published in Danish in 2011. Since 2004, Andrea Susanne has been a member of *Nordisk forening for folkedansforskning* (Nordic Association for Folk Dance Research) and in 2008 was elected to the association's board as the Faroe Islands' representative. She is a member of Niff's writers' group, which, among other things, published the book *Norden i Dans* in 2007. Since 2008, Andrea Susanne has also been linked to the *Nordic research network for vocal folk music* and regularly participated in the network's seminars. She has also examined minuet music and written articles about it. Lectures have taken her, among other places, to Frankfurt, Kiel, Greifswald, Vienna, Copenhagen, Gothenburg, Växjö, Stockholm, Lahtis, Bø,

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**Elizabeth Svarstad** (PhD) is an Assistant Professor in baroque dance at The Norwegian Academy of Music. She holds a Master of Arts and a PhD in dance studies from The Norwegian University for Science and Technology. Educated as a dancer at The Norwegian Academy of Ballet, she works as a dancer, choreographer, and teacher and has participated in and created a vast number of performances in Norway and abroad. Among her research articles are 'Traces of Dance and Social Life: A Dance Book and its Context' in *Relevance and Marginalisation in Scandinavian and European Performing Arts 1770–1860. Questioning Canons*, ed. by Randi Margrete Selvik, Svein Gladsø, and Annabella Skagen (London: Routledge, 2021); 'Dance and Social Education in Early Nineteenth-Century Christiania' in *Performing Arts in Changing Societies*, ed. by Randi Margrete Selvik, Svein Gladsø, and Anne Margrete Fiskvik (Taylor and Francis, 2020); 'Kort Udtog: A Danish Translation of Gottfried Taubert's Kurtzer Entwurf Der Nutzbarkeit Des Künstlichen Tantz-EXERCITII (1727)', in *Tauberts Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister (Leipzig 1717)*, ed. by Hanna Walsdorf, Marie-Thérèse Mourey, and Tilden Russell (Verlag Frank & Timme, 2019); and, co-authored with Jon Nygaard, 'A Caprice—The Summit of Ibsen's Theatrical Career', in *Ibsen Studies* 16.2 (2016), 168–85.



# Index

- 2/4 time 52, 383  
3/4 time 5, 23, 27, 61–62, 260, 269, 302,  
382–383, 389, 491, 525  
3/8 time 62–63, 269, 525  
4/4 time 52, 383, 525  
6/4 time 62, 525  
6/8 time 63, 525  
Åbo 95, 103, 113, 136, 142, 152, 155,  
193, 196, 221, 225, 373–374, 381, 398  
accent (musical) 52, 442  
acrobats, acrobatics 73–74, 76–78  
actors, actresses 73, 80, 231, 292, 508  
Adolf Fredrik, King 125–126, 142  
advertisements 72–73, 78, 81, 231,  
250–251, 306, 500  
Ærø 247–248, 254, 313–325, 327, 329, 334,  
336, 340, 347–348, 377, 389, 394–395,  
397, 413, 423, 425, 428  
affectation 449, 524  
Åland 5, 114–117, 120, 123, 177, 179, 189,  
197–199, 356, 361–362, 382, 409, 477  
allemand, allemande 21, 37, 61, 63, 86,  
89, 250, 375, 411  
America 482, 528  
amplitude 444, 448–449  
*ancien régime* 6, 9, 39, 40, 41, 42. *See*  
*also class*  
Andersson, Otto 53, 116, 188–190, 196,  
217, 219, 353, 361, 382, 403, 476  
*anglais, anglaise* 41, 140–141, 162, 165,  
170, 178, 194, 216, 250, 375, 402, 514,  
525  
anti-clockwise (steps or turns).  
*See* clockwise (steps or turns)  
Appadurai, Arjun 528–529, 533  
Arbeau, Thoinot 29, 31  
aristocracy 7, 34, 42, 44, 66, 71, 294, 371,  
437, 523. *See also class: upper*  
arm movements, arm positions 139, 141,  
165, 276–277, 280–281, 285, 287, 291,  
308, 345, 493  
assemblies, *assemblées* 38, 100–101, 127,  
132–135, 153, 155, 203, 470  
Association for Folk Dance Promotion  
318–319, 325, 330, 333  
Bach, Johann Sebastian 51, 64, 68  
*balancé* 261, 268–270, 302–303, 306–308,  
414, 441, 492–493  
balance minuet 268–269  
ball 8, 23, 25, 37, 39, 43, 66, 79, 92–95,  
100–101, 105, 108, 110, 112–114, 120–  
121, 125, 127, 130, 132, 134–136, 140,  
144–148, 150, 153–154, 156–159, 161,  
163, 168–170, 230–231, 234–236, 240,  
249, 252, 260–261, 271, 294, 299, 301,  
309, 341, 391–392, 419, 439, 500–501,  
503, 507–508, 523–524, 527  
ballet 29, 31, 34, 36, 40, 48, 50, 61, 80–81,  
102, 128–129, 178, 233, 250–251, 268,  
273, 300, 302, 305, 309–310, 433,  
435–436, 438, 451, 500, 503–504,  
506, 509, 513  
    *comédie-ballet* 29–30, 299–300  
ballroom 45, 246, 303, 439, 477  
ballroom dance 48, 61, 251, 260, 270,  
299, 309, 497, 504, 508–509, 511, 523  
*bal paré* 147, 158, 249  
baroque music, dances 5, 7, 10, 34, 50,  
61, 63, 68, 166, 253, 314, 409, 435–437,  
443, 451, 506, 510–511  
Bartók, Béla 67  
Bast brothers 375–378  
battements. *See* leg movements, leg  
    positions  
beat 33, 46, 52, 61, 96, 109, 141, 166,  
169, 197, 253, 266–268, 271, 307–308,  
315, 330, 332, 337, 354, 390, 397, 409,  
419, 423–424, 442, 445, 448–449, 463,  
468, 525  
Beauchamp, Pierre 31, 300, 418  
Beckholmen 117, 381  
Beethoven, Ludwig van 67–68, 372,  
509, 513  
bending of the knee or knees 271, 291,  
324, 410, 435, 441–442, 449  
bendings and stretchings 271, 434–435,  
441, 445, 447

- Berg, Andreas 373
- Bergen 74, 77–78, 232–233, 267, 269, 292, 363, 377
- Bizet, Georges 67
- Bjerregrav 336–342, 346–348, 459
- Björk, Johan Werner 410–411
- Blekinge 87–88, 90, 132, 138, 143, 169
- Blom, Jan Petter 443–444, 448, 451
- Bonaparte, Napoleon 37, 40–42, 45
- Borgå 178, 193, 195, 221, 357, 362, 408–409
- bourgeoisie 11, 39, 43, 71, 91, 92, 107, 125, 158, 246, 249, 250, 251, 301, 371, 374, 375, 376, 378. *See also* class: middle
- Bournonville, Antoine 253, 305
- bow, bowing 6, 88, 96, 127, 136, 139, 184, 202, 248, 260, 265–267, 270, 276, 289–290, 292, 395, 397, 410–411, 414, 421, 493
- Brahms, Johannes 67
- branle 29, 31–34, 273, 506, 523, 525, 532  
*Branle de Poitou* 29–31, 417
- bridal couple 163–164, 187, 200–202, 206–213, 216, 218, 222, 239, 316, 328–329, 335, 341, 357, 463, 465–466
- bride 40–41, 86–87, 112, 119, 137–139, 143, 164, 180, 183, 185–187, 190–191, 194–195, 199–201, 203–213, 215–219, 221, 225, 237–239, 247–248, 253, 316, 328–329, 335, 342, 399, 402, 466–468, 470–471. *See also* bridal couple
- bridesmaids 191, 195, 199–200, 203, 206, 215, 217–218, 342, 470
- Brossard, Sebastian 29–30, 62–63
- brudsåta. *See* maid of honour
- Campra, André 302
- ceremonial dance 67, 100, 104–105, 109–110, 119, 127, 137, 139, 150, 158, 162, 164, 167, 170, 177, 179, 182–183, 200–205, 207–212, 215–218, 220, 222, 225, 239, 248, 267, 316–317, 329, 335, 366, 398, 400, 405, 412, 417, 470, 472, 523, 526, 532
- chain dance 32–34, 44, 325–326, 332, 402, 406, 409, 417, 435, 525
- Charles XII, King of Sweden 91–94, 99, 101, 103
- chassé* 491–493
- childhood 6, 43, 97, 111, 122, 131, 135–136, 139–140, 146, 151–152, 155, 168, 170, 196–197, 201, 213, 222, 247, 305, 316–317, 321, 341–343, 356, 359, 370, 457, 464–465, 467, 471, 475, 487–490, 498, 504
- children 36, 44, 77–80, 91, 99, 105, 122, 126, 138–140, 146, 158, 160, 164, 169, 178, 197, 199, 233–236, 239, 251, 270, 306, 343, 398, 462, 467, 471–472
- choreography, choreographies 10, 16, 23, 26, 31, 35, 38, 48, 50, 61, 90, 242, 250, 260–262, 299, 301–306, 310, 408–409, 437–439, 455, 481–482, 488–491, 493–494, 500, 504–506, 508–509, 512–514, 522, 527, 532
- Christiania 72, 74, 77–78, 231–232, 241, 292, 304, 306, 378–379, 513
- Christmas 107, 109, 116, 118, 121, 126, 128–130, 134, 141, 153–154, 161, 166, 169, 184, 187, 194–195, 198, 236, 240, 309, 343, 477
- circle dance 9, 111, 128, 133–134, 180, 183, 201, 218, 223, 299, 303, 326–330, 332, 393, 397, 400, 407, 410–411, 413, 415, 420–421, 429, 525
- claps, clapping 180, 185–186, 202, 248, 266, 340–341, 361, 392–393, 396–397, 410, 427–429, 493
- class 12, 28, 35, 74, 100, 105, 124, 127, 155, 181, 216, 242, 301, 451, 505, 529–530, 531. *See also* ancien régime
- lower 5, 6, 10–12, 22–23, 28, 34–35, 45, 54, 71, 88, 100, 105, 116–119, 123, 128–129, 132, 135–139, 141, 143–144, 152–155, 166, 169–170, 182, 205, 225, 242, 247–249, 253–254, 259, 262, 270, 325, 330, 334–336, 348, 356, 362, 369, 398–399, 402, 405, 415, 483, 498–499, 523, 526, 529–531. *See also* farmer
- middle 71. *See also* bourgeoisie
- upper 8, 11–12, 22–23, 28, 33–35, 42, 45–46, 54, 71, 81, 86, 88, 90–92, 99–101, 104–105, 116, 129–132, 136, 138, 144–145, 151, 153–154, 159–160, 162–163, 169–170, 178, 182, 259, 328, 369, 381–382, 387, 402, 404, 422, 426,

- 483, 497, 498, 505, 525, 527, 530. *See also* aristocracy; *See also* nobility
- clockwise (steps or turns) 183, 303, 326, 332, 340, 391–393, 396–397, 408, 426–429, 493
- composers 29, 51, 61, 64–66, 68, 99, 347, 370, 373, 376, 378–380, 512
- concerts 65, 67, 99, 139, 196, 230–231, 371, 373, 472
- contradance, contra dance 14, 27, 31, 34–35, 38–39, 66, 79, 101, 108–111, 117–118, 121–123, 125, 128, 131–135, 138, 140–141, 143–145, 147, 150, 152, 158, 161, 178, 195–196, 217, 232, 250–252, 254, 260, 262–264, 267–269, 273, 294, 327, 334–335, 374–375, 413, 425, 525–526
- Copenhagen 75–77, 233, 246, 248, 251, 270, 273, 305–306, 318, 331, 370–371, 373–376, 378, 433, 511, 513
- costume 6, 100, 144–145, 151–152, 168, 188, 229, 274, 306, 309, 337–338, 355–356, 358, 393, 465, 476, 508
- counterclockwise (steps or turns) 183, 303, 326, 332, 340, 391–392, 397, 426–428, 493
- country dances 14, 34, 46, 263–264, 309, 374, 382, 399, 508, 512–513
- coupé* steps 306–308, 418, 441
- couple dance 5, 7, 12, 24, 30, 32–34, 54, 164, 169, 248, 301, 306, 403, 413, 485, 524–525, 532
- couples
- back to back 278–281, 288, 310
  - change places 27, 180, 214, 280, 282, 284, 293, 327, 336, 344, 391, 396, 400, 405, 420–421, 423, 425, 429, 467
  - face each other 24, 27, 276, 280, 292, 302, 340, 421, 428–430, 485, 492, 525
  - face front 274, 396, 421
  - face same direction 428
  - hold hands 28, 187, 214, 267, 270, 277, 285–286, 289, 325–326, 332, 345, 396–397, 405, 408–409, 414, 420–421, 426–429, 493
  - in a line 27
  - in a row 395, 492
  - pass each other 5, 279, 281, 291, 392, 420, 424, 429, 492
  - side by side 224, 274, 286, 290–292, 302, 326–327, 377, 397, 406, 411, 430
- courant, courante* 32, 61, 63, 86–88, 102, 417
- court 5–6, 8, 10, 15–16, 21, 25–26, 29–39, 42–46, 50, 61, 71, 73–75, 80, 91, 101, 108, 114, 145–146, 149–150, 153, 156–158, 162, 167, 179, 240, 242, 245, 247, 259–261, 270, 305, 369–371, 373, 383, 389, 418, 421–422, 433, 436–439, 448, 451, 505, 508, 512, 514, 523, 525, 527
- court dances 6, 8, 10, 16, 32–33, 44, 46, 167, 433, 448, 451, 505, 523
- Craelius, Magnus Gabriel 136–139
- curtsy, curtsyng 139, 165, 202, 248, 260, 265–266, 270, 275–276, 289–290, 292, 395, 397, 408, 410–411, 414, 493
- dance classes, lessons 38, 40, 71–72, 78–79, 81, 90, 98, 106, 140, 146, 151, 161, 193, 232–233, 250–251, 259, 265, 267, 270, 342, 414, 499, 505
- dance descriptions 50–51, 269, 336, 354, 363, 377, 379, 407, 434–435, 438, 444, 448, 475, 483, 499, 506, 510, 512
- dance events 100, 135, 153, 157, 166, 179, 184, 188, 190, 196, 198, 247, 261, 322, 333, 336, 338, 363, 457, 465, 470, 481–483, 486, 494, 507, 527, 531, 533
- dance forms 12, 24, 26, 29, 33–34, 49, 54, 66, 81, 264, 369, 382, 415, 494, 524, 529, 531
- dance history 14, 27–28, 50, 274, 417, 506, 524
- dance manuals 15, 48, 77, 121, 253, 259, 261, 266–267, 269–270, 290, 292–293, 306, 313, 373, 377, 409, 421, 488–489, 501, 506–507, 510, 525
- dance music 51–53, 65–67, 140, 153, 245, 380, 384
- dance performance 62, 129, 151, 250, 363, 436, 458, 461, 477, 481, 489, 494, 523–524
- dance repertoire. *See* repertoire
- dance scholarship 7, 12, 80–81, 273, 437, 522



- dance schools 97–98, 152, 165, 193, 231, 251, 254, 265, 314, 318, 449, 500
- dance teachers 14, 33, 38, 71–72, 79–80, 91, 140, 146, 152–153, 178–179, 231–234, 253, 259, 292, 306, 318, 404, 409, 414, 448, 487, 490, 499–500, 503, 505, 507–508
- dancing masters 15, 25, 27, 29, 34–35, 38–39, 46–47, 51, 71–79, 90–92, 96–98, 101–103, 106, 113, 121, 133, 136, 139, 141, 146, 152–153, 161, 168, 178, 193, 233, 241, 251, 257, 259–261, 266–267, 270, 273, 290, 294, 301, 304, 308, 310, 387, 418–421, 433, 437–440, 442, 448–452, 508, 527
- dancing solo 94, 115, 118, 137, 169, 178, 193, 206, 208, 210, 216, 218–219, 222, 242, 260, 268, 303, 305, 335, 512
- Debussy, Claude 67–68
- Denmark 5–6, 11–12, 14–15, 26, 53, 74–76, 146, 182–183, 232, 245–247, 253–254, 257, 259, 265–266, 290, 294, 305–306, 313–315, 324–325, 332, 334, 336, 338, 341, 347–348, 369–373, 375, 377, 389, 394, 404, 406, 408, 410, 413, 422, 459, 477, 481–483, 485, 487, 494, 497–499, 501–502, 506–507, 511, 524–526, 530
- Egedal, Johannes 326, 330–334
- Ehlenberger, Johan Joseph 250–251
- Ehrensward, Gustaf Johan 147–148, 150
- Ehrström, Eric Gustaf 191, 225, 398–404, 409, 413
- Ekhammar, Hugo 185–186
- elevé* 434–435, 442, 447–448
- Elverhøj* 254, 305, 306, 307, 309, 310, 433, 451, 499, 513. *See also* minuet: *Elverhøj*
- embodiment, embodied experience 6, 10–12, 16, 53, 430, 449, 521, 526–528, 531, 533
- English dances 156, 169, 231–232, 234–235, 251–252, 263–264, 269, 309, 375, 410
- Falster 313, 325, 327–335, 348, 413
- fandango 32, 292
- farmer 88, 94, 135, 154, 164, 193–194, 207, 229, 309, 313–314, 320, 323–324, 327, 347, 369, 376, 378, 497, 530
- Faroe Islands 5, 374, 477
- Fauré, Gabriel 67
- Feuillet notation 46, 48, 260, 265–266, 300, 302, 434–435, 438–442, 445, 447–448
- fiddle, fiddler 124, 240, 313, 323, 327, 333, 344, 346, 347, 363, 365, 463, 466. *See also* violin, violinist
- fieldwork 187, 203, 220, 355–356, 358, 361
- figures 5, 7, 38, 41, 48, 96, 108, 180, 190, 196, 198, 224, 234–235, 251, 254, 261–262, 264, 266, 268–270, 274, 290, 293, 299, 303, 308, 319, 355, 361–362, 402, 409, 417–418, 420–430, 437–439, 442, 445, 485, 491–493, 509, 511–513, 522, 524–525, 527, 532
- Finland 5–6, 11–16, 26, 53, 74, 76–79, 85, 95, 102–105, 112, 114, 117–118, 120, 123, 125, 127–128, 130, 132, 135, 142–145, 151–153, 155, 162, 170, 177–179, 182–183, 193, 200, 203, 219–220, 222–223, 225, 229, 257, 259, 268, 353–356, 358–363, 366, 372–373, 376, 380–384, 389–390, 393, 397–398, 403–407, 409–412, 422, 458–459, 461–465, 471, 474–479, 481, 483, 485, 487–488, 490–491, 494, 497–498, 503, 524–526, 529–530
- Finlands Svenska Folkdansring 363–364, 458, 474–476
- Finlands Svenska Folkdiktning 116
- first dance 89, 110, 119, 137, 139, 143, 152, 156, 162, 164, 170, 182, 192, 194–195, 199–201, 208, 215–217, 219, 236, 239, 242, 248, 260, 316, 400, 423, 503
- first position 272, 275–276, 286, 291–292, 308, 441
- folk dance 10, 12, 15–16, 22–25, 28, 49, 53, 129, 183, 241, 254, 257, 259, 313, 318–319, 321–325, 329, 332–334, 336–337, 339–340, 343, 353–354, 356, 363–365, 377, 382, 387, 395, 410, 414, 417, 419, 422, 424, 433, 435–436, 438, 443–444, 448–449, 451, 455, 458–461, 473–479, 481–483, 486–491, 494, 497, 500, 503–504, 506–507, 509, 521, 523–524, 528

- revival 42, 48–49, 322, 339, 344, 433, 455, 481–482, 484, 487, 494, 497, 526, 532  
 Föreningen Brage i Helsingfors 353, 410, 473  
 four couples 110, 170, 241, 318, 406, 408, 410–411, 509  
 fourth position 271–272, 276, 290–292, 307–308, 441  
 foxtrot 169–170, 466, 509, 525  
*française* 236, 292  
 France 7, 32, 36, 38–39, 42, 46–47, 54, 61, 67, 71, 92, 100–101, 140, 152, 199, 245, 260, 369, 371, 378, 418, 436, 525  
 Fredrik I, King 107–108, 113–114  
 French Revolution 6–8, 37, 39–40, 42, 67, 262, 294, 301  
 Fyn 318–321, 377, 394, 406  
*Gamle Danse fra Fyn og Øerne* 377, 394  
*gavotte* 37, 86, 89, 95, 103–104, 179  
 Germany 38, 67, 156, 179, 251, 371, 401, 403–404, 436, 503  
*gigue* 61, 63, 89, 95, 103, 261, 411  
 Gothenburg 78, 98, 104, 380, 513  
 Greenland 5, 477  
 groom 41, 86, 89, 112, 119, 137, 138–139, 143, 164, 180, 185, 191, 199–201, 203, 206–213, 215–218, 225, 237–239, 248, 253, 316, 328–329, 342, 399–400, 402–403, 466, 468, 470–471. *See also* bridal couple  
 groomsmen 191, 195, 200, 215, 217–218, 470  
 Grüner-Nielsen, Hakon 313–316, 318, 329–330, 377, 394  
 Gustaf III, King 131, 142, 144, 146, 148–150, 153, 157, 196, 523  
 Gustafsson, Magnus 370, 383  
 Gustav IV Adolf, King 153, 157–159  
 Häggman, Ann-Mari 457–458  
 Hahnsson, Kim 358, 363–365  
 Hamilton, Adolf Ludvig 148, 150  
 Handel, Georg Friedrich 68  
 hand figure 426–429, 491, 493  
 Hansen, Hans Andersen 313–315, 317, 320–322, 377  
 Hansen, Jens 321–322  
 hat 5, 40–41, 110, 246, 266, 274, 278, 280–281  
 Haydn, Joseph 64–65, 67–68, 374  
 Hedvig Elisabeth Charlotta 147–149, 157  
 Heikel, Yngvar 15, 123–124, 186–187, 190, 199, 203–204, 206, 209, 211, 215, 220, 225, 354–366, 389–390, 395, 406–410, 457, 467, 475  
 Helsinki 114, 120–121, 123, 126, 144–145, 185, 193, 353–355, 410, 473–474, 491  
 von Hessen-Kassel, Charlotta Amalia 245, 371  
 Hipping, A. J. 224  
 historical dance 7–8, 12, 14, 16, 47–51, 310, 433, 435, 438, 449–451, 455, 498, 504–511  
 Holm, Bertel 458–462  
 hop, hopping 23, 185, 187, 198, 248, 253, 458, 463–464, 467, 478  
 Huldén, Lars 187, 457, 461, 465, 467  
 Iceland 5, 477  
 improvisation 62, 261, 439, 458, 468, 493, 527  
 Italy 63, 71, 370  
 Jensen, Erik 322, 327, 332–335  
 Jensen, Hans Albert 323–324  
 Jeppo 179–180, 187, 192, 357, 361–362, 365–366, 412, 457, 461, 468, 471–472  
 jump, jumping 23, 33, 80, 89, 97, 166, 185–186, 233, 236, 238–239, 246, 248, 303, 419, 441, 448, 485  
 Jutland 247–248, 253, 313, 322–323, 330–331, 334, 336, 389, 394, 459  
 Kielland, Gustava 237–239  
 Kjærgaard, Albert 341–344  
 Kjellerup, Ane Marie 318–321, 394  
*La folie d'Espagne* 87, 89–90, 95  
*lanciers* 236, 292  
 Lappfjärd 179–180, 188, 192, 202–203, 212, 214–215, 268, 353, 357–358, 362–363, 365–366, 397, 412, 424–425, 428–429, 458–459, 471, 473, 491–493

- leading dancers 202, 252, 321, 336, 338, 339, 340, 344, 345, 393, 396, 417, 464, 471, 473, 477. *See also* table end
- Leczinsky, Stanislaus, King of Poland 92–93
- leg movements, leg positions 33, 166, 234, 267, 302–303, 308, 402, 409, 419
- Lindvall, Erik Johan 365, 472
- line formation 24, 27, 32, 165, 186, 194, 223, 293, 302, 397, 399–400, 402, 404–406, 409–410, 414, 422, 428, 440, 445–447, 450, 491, 493, 525, 531
- Linné, Carl von [Linnaeus] 109, 130, 135
- long dance 62, 109, 112, 128, 140–141, 505
- longways formation 180–181, 262–264, 338, 410, 413, 415, 422, 424, 428, 430, 491–493, 512, 525
- Louis Ludvig XIV, King of France 5, 7, 29–30, 34–36, 39, 61, 150, 168, 417, 439
- Louis XV, King of France 36, 38
- Lund, Jørgen Gad 89–91, 112, 140, 164, 166, 253–254, 259, 290, 294, 501, 513
- Lygdbäck, Edvin 462–466, 469, 471
- maid of honour 119, 137, 149, 200–201, 207, 216–218, 222
- master of ceremonies 149, 195, 200, 211, 216, 222, 237–238
- de Maupassant, Guy 6–7, 13
- mazurka* 44, 169, 178, 191, 196, 211, 222, 236
- Mellerup 336, 339, 341–343, 346
- melody 15, 52, 61–62, 96, 99, 103–104, 116, 130, 139, 165, 180, 189, 195–196, 203, 213, 223–225, 245, 248, 262, 301, 314, 317, 324–325, 331, 333, 335, 339, 341, 344, 346–348, 354, 356, 358–361, 371, 374–384, 389, 405, 415, 466, 472, 476, 484, 491, 494, 498
- menuet-balancé* 306–307
- menuet, menuett 15, 21, 23, 25–26, 29, 39, 46–48, 67, 231–232, 236, 242, 261–264, 266, 268, 273, 293–294, 299, 301–303, 306–310, 325, 333, 378, 383, 387, 389, 401, 413, 418–419, 422, 426, 433–434, 437, 441–442, 501, 503, 505, 508–509, 511–512, 514
- d'Anjou* 262, 508
- de [la] Cour* 47, 242, 262, 273, 310
- d'Espagne* 246, 262
- le menuet ordinaire* 15, 25, 46, 250, 261, 268, 294, 310, 387, 389, 418, 422, 426, 433–434, 437, 441, 509
- minett 190, 193, 355, 405, 408, 410
- minuet 5–16, 21–27, 29–37, 39–48, 50–54, 61–68, 71, 73, 78–79, 81, 85–96, 98–105, 107–119, 121–153, 155–170, 177–200, 202–225, 229, 231–232, 234–242, 245–254, 257, 259–271, 273–294, 299–310, 313–316, 319, 325–348, 353–359, 361–366, 369–371, 373–384, 387, 389–390, 393–395, 397–415, 417–430, 433–443, 445, 447–449, 451–452, 455, 457–479, 481–494, 497–506, 508–509, 511–514, 521–533. *See also* mollevit; *See also le menuet ordinaire*
- as main dance 188, 190–191, 294
- court 15, 21, 242, 259–260, 305, 383, 389, 508
- Danish 21, 313, 422, 424–426, 429, 508
- Elverhøj* 254, 305–306, 309–310, 451, 499
- en, a quatre* 263, 509
- en huit* 241, 263, 406, 408
- en six* 241, 401–404, 409
- Finnish 268, 425–426, 428, 430, 485
- Finnish-Swedish 481–482, 489–494
- Long 325, 329, 332–333, 335–336
- main figure of 286, 418, 422–425, 428–430
- Polskaminuet 404–406
- Round 325–326, 329–330, 332, 335, 413
- slow 531
- Swedish 455, 485, 494, 524, 531–532
- with Pisk 326, 333–335, 413
- minuet step 5, 24, 46, 61, 234, 261, 263–264, 267–271, 290, 293, 302–303, 306–308, 325–327, 331–332, 334–335, 340–341, 389–390, 401, 405–411, 413, 418–422, 424–430, 433–434, 436, 439–443, 445, 447, 449, 451–452, 469, 487, 492, 506, 512–513, 522
- mollevit 21, 254, 313–325, 327, 333–334, 336, 340, 347–348, 377, 395–397, 413

- Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 22, 51, 62, 65–68
- Munsala 123–124, 179, 184–187, 192, 206, 357–359, 362, 364–366, 389–390, 393, 457, 459, 461, 471–472
- music 5–6, 14–15, 22–24, 26–28, 30–32, 34, 46, 48, 50–53, 61–68, 86, 91, 96, 99–100, 103–104, 109, 113, 117, 119, 125, 130–131, 133, 135–136, 139–140, 151, 153, 161, 180, 187–188, 190, 194, 196, 202–203, 217, 229–231, 240, 242, 245–250, 257, 261, 263–265, 269, 294, 299–300, 302–305, 308, 313, 316, 319, 321, 323, 325–327, 329–330, 332–333, 335, 337, 341, 344, 347, 358, 361, 363, 365–366, 369–384, 389, 391, 394–395, 397, 403, 414–415, 418–420, 422–423, 426, 436, 439–440, 442–445, 448–449, 460–461, 465, 468, 472, 481, 484–485, 488, 491, 493, 499, 506, 509, 512, 522, 524–526, 531
- music books 15, 104, 247–248, 325, 330, 333, 335, 347, 369, 373–384
- musicians 30, 34, 48, 51, 62, 65, 73, 87, 89, 99, 103, 107, 109, 115–118, 123–124, 127, 130–131, 135–138, 143, 153, 161–163, 180, 184–185, 189, 195, 197, 199, 203, 208, 210, 214, 216–217, 219, 230, 239–240, 246–248, 309, 316–317, 320, 323–324, 328, 339, 341, 343, 346, 348, 356, 359, 365, 369–376, 378–379, 381, 405, 407, 410, 436, 463, 465, 468, 471–472, 474, 476, 483–484, 509, 531
- nobility. *See* class: upper; *See* aristocracy
- Nordic region 5–7, 10–16, 21–23, 32, 54, 71, 73–77, 80–81, 179, 229, 238, 241–242, 250, 257, 259, 269, 294, 310, 356, 369, 371, 373, 389, 398, 415, 422, 448–449, 477–479, 487, 497–499, 504, 506–507, 509, 511, 521–522, 526, 529–531, 533
- Norlind, Tobias 135, 383, 403
- Norway 5, 11–12, 14, 53, 71–73, 76–78, 81, 101, 182, 229–231, 236–237, 239, 241–242, 257, 259, 265–267, 306, 309, 363, 372–373, 377, 404, 434, 444, 477, 497, 501–502, 506–507, 524, 530
- Nürenbach, Martin 72, 77–79, 231
- Nykarleby 52, 178–179, 192, 205, 357, 362, 365–366, 425–426, 429
- Nyland 132, 135, 143–144, 177–180, 182, 193–195, 203, 215–217, 219, 224, 353–354, 356–357, 361, 404–409, 413, 470
- Nystedt, Ann-May 466, 468–469, 472
- Odense 77, 246, 250–251, 319, 322
- opera 22, 63, 66, 80, 101, 146, 153, 157, 178, 300, 302, 304, 370
- Oravais 179–180, 192, 203, 206–207, 353, 357–358, 362, 365, 412, 457–462, 466, 469, 471–473, 478, 489
- Oslo 72, 229, 231, 242, 292, 304, 307, 309, 378, 507–508
- Oslo historiske dansegruppe 507–508
- Ostrobothnia 103, 110, 123–125, 143, 170, 177, 179–180, 182–184, 188, 190–191, 200, 202, 204–205, 210, 215, 219, 225, 353–354, 356–361, 382, 389–390, 393, 397–398, 400–401, 410–412, 426, 457–458, 461–467, 469–475, 479
- Oxenstierna, Axel 90, 149, 159
- pällhållar* dance 200–201, 212
- pällhållare* 191, 200, 206–215, 470–471. *See also* bridesmaids; *See also* groomsmen
- Paris 35, 40, 63, 97, 150, 153, 301–302, 370, 383, 435
- pas de menuet* 266, 418–419, 422, 441–442
- Passepiéd* 30, 87, 95, 273
- peasantry. *See* class: lower
- Pécour, Louis 90, 96, 102, 301, 418
- Persson, Nils 164–165, 484
- Petter Dufva, Anders 384
- Pettersson, A. 383
- Playford, John 34, 263, 508, 514
- plié* 271–273, 283, 289, 418–419, 425, 434–435, 442, 447–449
- polka 1, 5, 32, 54, 57, 169, 178, 190, 196, 198, 211, 222, 331, 462, 498, 512, 525, 528
- Polonaise* 100, 112, 159, 195–196, 198, 216, 306, 375, 382, 449, 498
- polska 12, 17, 52, 86–89, 93–95, 99, 109, 111–112, 115–117, 119–120, 122–124, 126–129, 131–138, 140, 143–145,

- 151–152, 161–164, 166–170, 173, 180–183, 185–187, 190–192, 194–196, 198–199, 201–202, 204–206, 208, 210–212, 214–215, 217–219, 221–222, 353, 355–356, 363, 366, 383–384, 393, 398–404, 406, 408–411, 414–415, 460, 465, 467–468, 472–473, 476, 482, 490–491, 493–494, 498, 521, 525–526, 531, 535, 543, 550, 555–556, 562
- priest 79–80, 98, 103, 115–120, 136–137, 139–144, 151, 155, 164, 183, 191, 193, 199–202, 204, 206–207, 216–219, 221, 225, 248, 369, 375, 469–470, 526
- purpuri 190–191, 196, 218–219
- quadrille, *kadrilj* 93, 140–141, 152, 155, 158, 161–162, 169–170, 178, 187, 193–196, 198–199, 216, 222, 224, 235, 250, 252, 269, 291, 306, 319, 374, 399, 401–402, 406–408, 413, 415, 512, 528
- Rameau, Pierre 46, 63, 260–261, 266, 308, 409, 420, 434, 437, 441–443, 447–450, 452, 505, 508, 512, 514
- Ranke, Anna Catharina 77, 79
- Randers 254, 313, 327, 334, 336–337, 339–342, 344, 346–348, 394
- ranking system 110–112, 117–119, 126–127, 131, 137–138, 140, 142–143, 148, 150, 170, 181, 200, 202, 208, 230–231, 260, 470
- Rasmussen, Anders 333, 335
- Ravel, Maurice 67–68
- Reel 41, 196, 198, 232, 374, 493
- repertoire 5, 8, 10–11, 25, 44, 65, 73, 76, 88, 102–103, 107, 111, 116–117, 123, 130, 132, 136, 140, 143–144, 156, 160, 162, 167–169, 178, 188–189, 203, 214, 235, 250–251, 254, 260–261, 269–270, 294, 299, 305, 313, 348, 371–373, 375–376, 378–379, 382–383, 439, 471, 473, 481–483, 486, 488–489, 494, 499–500, 503–504, 506–509, 512–513
- Reuterholm, Gustaf Adolf 132–135
- Reuterholm, Gustaf Gottfried 109
- Reuterholm, Nils 97–98
- reverences 95, 96, 139, 140, 168, 202, 260, 262, 266, 397, 421, 426, 427, 428, 512. *See also* bow, bowing; *See also* curtsy, curtsying
- rhythm 52, 62, 78, 95, 165, 202, 224, 262, 264, 266, 322–323, 340, 344, 379, 383, 411, 419, 442–443, 474, 478
- riksrådsinnan Arnell 133
- rounds of dancing 108, 121–122, 128, 130–131, 154, 213, 231, 299, 325–327, 334
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 29–30, 62–63
- Runius, Johan 96–97, 169
- Russia 9, 11, 22, 43–45, 85, 99, 103, 112–114, 144, 152, 157, 162, 177
- sarabande* 30, 61, 63, 86, 102, 104, 261
- Savilampi, Antti 490–491, 493
- schottis, schottische 169, 190, 198, 211, 462, 466
- Schubert, Franz 67
- second position 271–273, 291, 307
- signal 67, 180–181, 194, 202, 252, 301, 316, 339, 345, 393, 397, 427–429, 464, 474
- Sinclair, Carl Fredrik 142
- singing 73, 78, 85–86, 89, 91–92, 98, 101, 103, 109, 115–116, 118, 133, 165, 187, 194–195, 236, 301, 342, 356, 359–360, 459–461, 467, 487
- Sjöberg, Wilhelm 192, 410
- Skåne 129, 132, 140, 165–168, 406, 409, 414, 485
- slängpolska 111, 131, 161, 166, 168, 398–399, 401, 484–486, 526, 531
- social dance 25–28, 34, 41, 44, 46, 54, 81, 299, 301, 310, 437, 448, 451, 481–484, 486–487, 494, 497, 499, 509
- solo dance. *See* dancing solo
- stamps, stamping 180–181, 185–186, 196–197, 202, 248, 330, 332, 358–359, 361, 392–393, 410, 427–429, 458, 464, 467
- Stavanger 74, 234, 237, 507
- Stenberg, Pehr 79–81, 141–142, 151–152, 155, 163, 170
- Stenbock, Magnus 504–505, 513
- Stierneld, Adolf Louis 149
- Stockholm 73, 75, 86, 89–92, 101, 103–104, 107–109, 113, 118, 120–121, 126, 134–135, 142–144, 146, 150–153, 155–156, 158, 160, 178, 240, 369, 371,

- 373, 393, 411–412, 469, 484, 486,  
499–500, 503–505, 509, 511
- Støvring 336, 340–344, 346–348, 423,  
425, 428–429
- Svenska Folkdansens Vänner 503, 512
- svikt*, *svikt* analysis 15, 305, 419, 434–436,  
441, 444–445, 447–449, 451–452
- Sweden 5, 11–12, 14, 16, 50, 53, 74–75,  
77–80, 85, 87–88, 91, 93, 95–99, 101–  
105, 108–110, 112–114, 116, 118, 120,  
123–124, 127, 130, 132, 138, 145–146,  
150–152, 154, 156–157, 162–163, 168,  
170, 177–178, 182–183, 209, 229, 231–  
232, 257, 259, 267, 369–370, 372–373,  
380, 383–384, 404, 406, 409, 413–414,  
469, 477, 481–486, 497, 499–504, 506,  
509, 513, 524, 526, 529–530
- table end 180, 184–185, 187, 206–208,  
210, 212–213, 218, 225, 464–466, 468,  
470–472
- Taubert, Gottfried 47, 262, 409, 418,  
420, 437
- Taubert, Karl-Heinz 50, 241, 262, 266,  
268, 401–402, 409, 417–419, 436, 441
- tempo 52, 62–64, 66, 202, 262, 303, 467,  
485
- Tersmeden, Carl 102, 104–123, 126–132,  
138, 142–143, 154, 169, 199, 231, 381
- Tessin, Carl Gustaf 92–93, 114
- theatre 6, 15, 28, 63, 72–76, 78–79, 81,  
129, 251, 253–254, 257, 260, 262,  
299–301, 303–305, 310, 433, 439, 451,  
460, 473, 488, 497, 499–500, 503–505,  
509, 511–513, 524, 527
- third position 271–273, 275–278, 288,  
290–291, 308
- Tjock 179–180, 188, 192, 202, 212,  
214–215, 357, 359–360, 362, 397, 412,  
458–459, 472, 489, 491–493
- Trondheim 74, 373, 507–509
- Trondheim Balldans* 507–509
- trumpet 100, 117, 247
- Turku 95, 102–103, 112–113, 117–118,  
152, 177–180, 183, 193, 196–198, 217,  
219, 381, 389, 393, 398, 409–410, 475
- turns, turning 9, 54, 67, 94, 98, 130, 137,  
150, 157, 164–166, 186–187, 198, 214,  
223, 235, 239–240, 248, 266–267, 270,  
280, 290–293, 303, 310, 320, 322, 327,  
334, 337, 340, 361, 391–393, 395–396,  
398–400, 402, 406, 408–409, 412,  
421, 423–424, 426, 428–429, 440,  
468, 471, 477, 485, 492–493, 531.  
*See also* clockwise (steps or turns);  
*See also* counterclockwise (steps or  
turns)
- Uppsala 88, 90, 93, 95, 98, 102–103,  
105–107, 130, 132, 135, 152, 156,  
168–169, 370, 383, 398, 414, 503,  
512–513
- Urup, Henning 273, 304
- Vårdal, Dag 508, 513
- Västerbotten 132, 141, 143, 152, 155,  
163, 169
- vertical movements 419, 434, 441, 442,  
443, 444, 445, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451,  
452. *See also* *svikt*, *svikt* analysis
- violin, violinist 86–87, 109, 115, 119,  
124–126, 129, 135, 137, 139–140, 161,  
185, 196, 245, 248, 266, 320, 330–331,  
344–345, 370, 373–376, 378–379, 381,  
399, 459, 460. *See also* fiddle, fiddler
- von Fersen, Axel 156, 158
- Vörå 103, 179–180, 185–186, 192, 207–  
208, 357, 359, 361–362, 460, 473, 489
- Wachtmeister, Adam 149
- Wachtmeister, Claes, Count 154, 158–159
- Walcke, Sven H. 232–234, 259, 266–269,  
294, 297, 379
- walking steps 23, 187, 406, 448
- Wallin, Börje 165, 481–487, 524
- waltz 6, 23–24, 35, 38, 43–45, 51–52, 67,  
140, 153–154, 161–162, 166, 168–170,  
178, 187, 191, 195–196, 198, 209, 211,  
214, 216–217, 222, 224, 234–236,  
250–253, 269, 273, 294, 309, 317, 328,  
340–341, 343, 382–384, 397, 444, 448,  
460, 462, 466, 484, 486, 490, 498, 523,  
525
- weddings 22, 40, 85, 86–89, 102, 105, 110,  
112, 118–119, 125, 136–138, 141–143,  
152, 155, 161–164, 167–168, 170,  
177–180, 182–183, 185, 187, 190–196,  
198–207, 209–217, 219–222, 225, 229,

237–239, 241–242, 247–248, 253, 306,  
316–317, 335, 337–339, 341, 344, 353,  
356–357, 362–363, 366, 369, 371–372,  
374, 384, 398–400, 402–403, 405, 410,  
415, 457, 462–463, 465, 466–473, 483,  
489, 498, 526, 532. *See also* pällhållare;  
*See also* bridal couple; *See also* bride;  
*See also* bridesmaids; *See also* groom;  
*See also* groomsmen; *See also* maid  
of honour

young people 36, 107, 129, 136, 151, 152,  
187, 191, 197, 198, 202, 230, 239, 251,  
265, 309, 328, 329, 341, 343–344, 354,  
359, 402, 462, 472, 487

youth associations 355, 457, 488, 489, 490

Z-figure 96, 166, 179, 262, 264, 266,  
278–279, 283, 293, 299, 389, 408,  
417–418, 420–422, 425, 514, 525

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Cameron also produced the PDF and HTML editions. The conversion was performed with open-source software and other tools freely available on our GitHub page at <https://github.com/OpenBookPublishers>.

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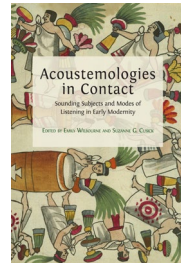
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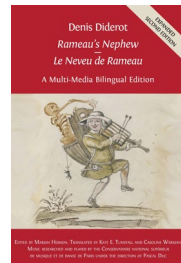
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