

WALTZING THROUGH EUROPE

Attitudes towards Couple Dances in the
Long Nineteenth-Century



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Egil Bakka, Theresa Jill Buckland, Helena Saarikoski and Anne von Bibra Wharton (eds.), *Waltzing Through Europe: Attitudes towards Couple Dances in the Long Nineteenth-Century*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0174>

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ISBN Paperback: 978-1-78374-732-0

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-78374-733-7

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-78374-734-4

ISBN Digital ebook (epub): 978-1-78374-735-1

ISBN Digital ebook (mobi): 978-1-78374-736-8

ISBN XML: 978-1-78374-737-5

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0174

Cover image: *A Drunken Scene in a Dancing Hall with a Sly Customer Eyeing a Young Girl* (1848). Coloured etching by G. Cruikshank, after himself. Wellcome Collection, CC BY 4.0. Cover design: Anna Gatti.

4. The Waltz at Some Central European Courts

Egil Bakka

As discussed above (see Chapters 1 and 2), many of the books written about round dances circle around the outcries that these dances are morally unacceptable because of the tight embrace of, and closeness to, the opposite sex. The arguments include the view that the dances make women defenceless, that they are open to abuse, and that they are harmful to women's health. On the other hand, there are reports about dance crazes, endless enthusiasm, and, finally, in the later stages, nostalgic praise of the Waltz as a cornerstone of dance tradition and polite dancing.¹

This chapter proposes that there are other perspectives that may not be so explicitly present in the source material but that still deserve to be discussed; one of these is the dimension of class. If we assume that round dances were folk dances which somehow became fashionable, they would, at the beginning, have been seen by the elite as lower-class and vulgar. Accepting them would therefore threaten the social distinction of the upper classes. The class journey of some of these dances is therefore in many ways parallel to that of the bourgeoisie in this period. Another perspective is offered by the stereotypes about neighbouring countries and the feelings and attitudes that members of the higher classes in the different countries had towards each other. Dances could be seen as foreign and marked by the negative qualities

1 Theresa J. Buckland, 'Edward Scott: The Last of the English Dancing Masters', *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, 21 (2003), 3–35, <https://doi.org/10.3366/3594050>

of another nation, or they could be seen as highly fashionable or exotic due to the status of that country. The relationships between the empires and the nations they ruled were a key factor in how the round dances were seen, which is particularly apparent within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The national movements promoting Hungarian and Slavic languages and cultures would take different stances to different round dances, depending on whether they were seen as national or foreign.

Much research and historiography has concentrated on the dancing queen and the dancing king of earlier centuries. In the era of round dances, no dancing ruler has been canonised. The rulers still had their attitudes and relations to dancing, be they negative or positive. The influence of non-dancing rulers is also an interesting topic in dance history. In this chapter, I will present quick sketches of some main courts and rulers in the period of the Waltz. The idea is to exemplify alternative readings of attitudes to the dances, questioning the arguments about health and morality mentioned above.

This book presents chapters with detailed discussion of the reception of, and attitudes towards, round dances in various countries, many of which, at that time, were not independent. This chapter, however, offers a backdrop to unify the more diverse accounts that make up the main part of the book, surveying the reception of the round dances at some Central European courts. These were comparable environments that also interacted with each other, which lends a cohesiveness to the survey. The source material is anecdotal, and taken from the courts in Vienna, Berlin, Paris, London, and Saint Petersburg.² The concluding proposals and interpretations will hopefully be taken up by new studies that scrutinise unpublished, more substantial sources from the courts to further improve our knowledge of this period.

An important problem in dealing with German sources from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century is the fragmentation and complexity entailed by the division of political power in the country we now know as Germany, and the difference in attitudes to dance exercised by the different rulers. The number of courts changed from time to time, as did the influence of the different monarchs and princes. Several

2 Moscow was the capital city of Russia before 1732 and after 1917.

princesses and princes from small German courts became consorts for monarchs at the larger courts, as discussed below.

There were, however, two main centres of political power in the German lands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the Austrian court³ in Vienna and the Prussian court in Berlin. The reception of the round dances at these courts does not reflect what happened in other classes of society, nor necessarily other German courts, but it still conveys the attitudes and motivations that lay behind the scepticism or bans of the round dances.

The Prussian Court

During the 1770s and 1780s, when we can assume the Waltz was spreading and establishing itself in the German lands, Frederick II, also known as Frederick the Great (1740–1886),⁴ was king in Prussia. He and his queen consort had separate courts. His court comprised mainly men, a circumstance that did not favour social dancing. In his famous letter on education, the king mentions dance only twice, as a female activity, superficial, and unimportant.⁵

The attitude to dance at the Prussian court hardly changed during the short reign of the next royal couple, Frederick William II and Queen Frederica Louisa (1786–1797). During their reign, just before the woman who was to become the next queen of Prussia, Louise (1776–1810),⁶ married into the royal family, she and her sister danced the Waltz at a ball of the Prussian court, defying the prohibition against it. The queen consort, their mother-in-law to be, was shocked and refused to allow her own daughters to dance it.

3 From 1868 known as the Austro-Hungarian court.

4 Friedrich der Große.

5 Gustav Berthold Volz, *Historische, militärische und philosophische Schriften, Gedichte und Briefe*, with illustrations by Adolph von Menzel (Köln: Anaconda, 2006).

6 King Frederick William II kept company with other women than the queen, making court life irregular. See Wikipedia contributors, 'Frederick William II of Prussia', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 13 November 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_William_II_of_Prussia



Fig. 4.1 Postcard from Lith. Kunstanstalt Heinr. & Aug. Brüning, Hanau, 1901, on the occasion of the two-hundredth anniversary of the Prussian monarchy, picturing its kings between 1701 and 1901.⁷ Wikipedia, Public Domain, https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:200_Jahre_Preussen.jpg

7 The Waltz period started in Frederick the Great's reign (second row, first from left). The second king, Frederick William II, had a queen who banned the Waltz; the third



Fig. 4.2 Anna Dorothea Lisiewska, *Portrait of a Princely Family*, c.1777. oil on canvas, National Museum in Warsaw. The picture shows Frederick William II of Prussia with his family. This was the family Louise married into; her husband-to-be is the first from the left. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Lisiewska_Portrait_of_a_Princely_family.jpg&oldid=237421193

The Crown Princess Louise soon acquired a striking popularity, partly due to her friendliness to ordinary people. The royal couple bought the Paretz estate out to the countryside, where every year they held an 'Erntefest' for the villagers, and participated in rural dancing.⁸ This closeness to the countryside and to ordinary people was unusual for royals at that time, but it hardly changed the dancing practices at the court. Queen Louise died in 1810, after harsh times during the Napoleonic wars, which in many ways marked Prussia. Her husband Friedrich Wilhelm III was said to have little understanding for music and the arts, and Louise had to accommodate herself to the etiquette and protocol at the very stiff Prussian court.⁹ Louise herself, however, reported in her diary that she danced a Waltz with the Russian emperor Alexander I, when she and her husband met with him in Memel,

king, Frederick William III, was married to Queen Louise who danced the Waltz, and he attended the Vienna Congress. On the third line we find Wilhelm II who is celebrated in the middle, to the left his grandfather Wilhelm I and to the right his father, who ruled less than a year before dying.

8 Eilhard Erich Pauls, *Das Ende der galanten Zeit: Gräfin Voss am preussischen Hofe* (Lübeck: O. Quitzow, 1924), p. 157.

9 Gertrude Aretz, *Königin Luise* (Paderborn: Salzwasser-Verlag GmbH, 2013).

Lithuania in 1802.¹⁰ There is no mention of her husband dancing, but the Russian emperor was very popular with both of them for his kindness. Goethe's mother remembers in a letter to his son in 1806 that Queen Louise visited with her brother in 1790 and that they enjoyed the brief freedom from the stiff court etiquette, singing and dancing the Waltz.¹¹ In other words, the dancing of the Waltz was not a problem in itself, but to dance it at court balls was not permitted.

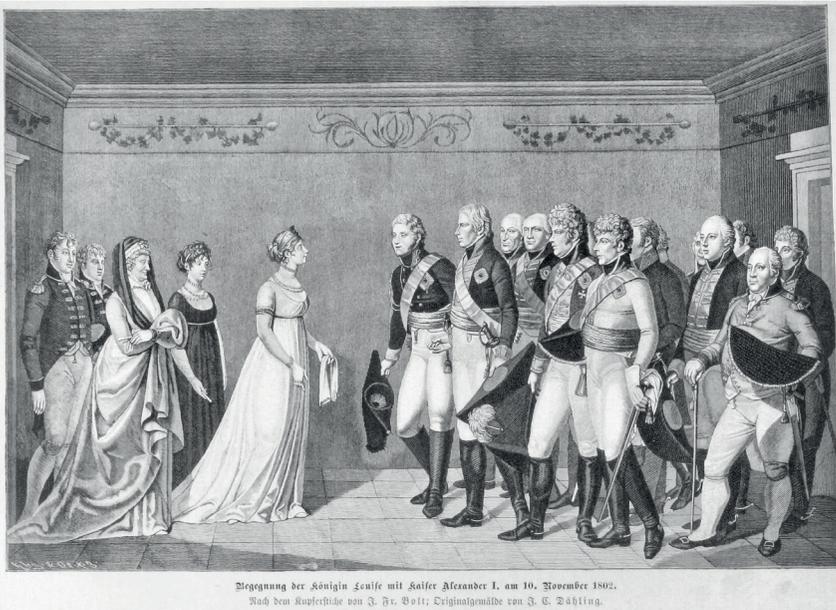


Fig. 4.3 An engraving by J. Fr. Bolt of a painting by J. C. Dähling, *Die Gartenlaube* [The Garden Arbor], 1883. Copper engraving. Reception of the Emperor Alexander I at Memel by their majesties Frederick William and Louise of Prussia in Memel, 1802. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Die_Gartenlaube_\(1883\)_b_785.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Die_Gartenlaube_(1883)_b_785.jpg)

Felix Eberty (1812–1884) grew up in Berlin in a bourgeois Jewish family and remembered that during his youth, ‘dancing was seen as a frivolous French amusement that was detested in the aftermath of the

10 Aretz, *Königin Luise*, loc 1068.

11 Katharina E. Goethe, *Briefe — Band II* ([n.p.]: Tredition Classics, 2012). Aretz, *Königin Luise*, loc 2065, loc 118.

liberation war [1813].¹² Eberty also refers to his aunt Hanna, 'who when she was young had been an attractive partner for the French officers'¹³ who preferred to invite her for "Ekossaise" and "C". The Waltz and the Galop are newer, even if the Minuet already was about to die'.¹⁴



Fig. 4.4 Heinrich Anton Dähling, *Friedrich Wilhelm III and His Family*, 1806. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Friedrich_Wilhelm_III._und_seine_Familie.jpg

It seems that Louise's little revolt as crown princess did not have any effect, and that the prohibition of the Waltz remained at the Prussian court until its end in the early twentieth century. We do not have sources

12 Felix Eberty, *Jugenderinnerungen eines alten Berliners* (Berlin: Hertz, 1878), p. 181, https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=IW7omnNaArAC&pg=PP7&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false. Translated from the German by Egil Bakka.

13 This will probably have been during the French occupation of Prussia in the early nineteenth century.

14 Eberty, *Jugenderinnerungen eines alten Berliners*, p. 106.

to confirm that the Waltz was banned throughout this period, but it seems that the Prussian king, Louise's husband, avoided the Waltz at the Vienna congress in 1814, together with the Austro-Hungarian emperor. The next two Prussian kings were strict and serious, and the last of them, Wilhelm I (1797–1888) had an aversion against dancing ministers, and criticised Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898) and his other ministers for dancing.¹⁵



Fig. 4.5 Anton von Werner, Coronation of Wilhelm I as Emperor of Germany in Versailles, oil on canvas, Otto-Von-Bismarck-Stiftung, 1885. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anton_von_Werner_-_Kaiserproklamation_in_Versailles_1871.jpg

Additionally, we have firm evidence about William II's practice in an account from his daughter, Princess Victoria Louise (1892–1980). This makes it likely that there was a more or less continuous ban on the Waltz all the way up to World War II, as Braun and Gugerli also assume.¹⁶

15 Anna Ebers, *Das Bismarck-Buch* (Paderborn: Salzwasser-Verlag GmbH, 1909), p. 72.

16 Rudolf Braun and David Gugerli, *Macht des Tanzes — Tanz der Mächtigen: Hoffeste und Herrschaftszeremonieell, 1550–1914* (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1993); Viktoria



Fig. 4.6 Postcard of Wilhelm II and his family, 1912. His daughter Victoria Louise is the furthest woman on the right. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kaiser_Wilhelm_II_Familie_main35.jpg

Duchess Victoria Louise relates her own experiences at the court balls of her father, Emperor Wilhelm II, where she first ‘came out’ in society in 1910:

The court ball was basically not a celebration of jubilant merriment but an act of representation. [...] For the young people the dance was nevertheless the main point. Dance is, however, not dance, for sure the present day’s youth would hesitate to describe the figures, chains and steps that were danced by the court community by this name. There were the Minuets, Gavottes, Francaises, Lancers, Polonaises and Quadrilles. Some of these dances were already [a] hundred years or more of age. My father valued their continued practice, and even decided that this or that dance should be reintroduced.¹⁷

Lily Braun (1865–1916) — a lady who was twenty-seven years older and frequented the Berlin court — confirms this, reporting in her memoirs that in her childhood, when she attended the dance school for

Luise, Herzogin, *Im Glanz der Krone* (Göttingen: Göttinger Verlagsanstalt, 1967); Pauls, *Das Ende der galanten Zeit*, p. 157.

17 Viktoria Luise, *Im Glanz der Krone*, p. 210. Translated from the German by Egil Bakka.

children connected to the court, the Waltz was not taught because it was considered inappropriate and therefore forbidden.¹⁸ This was during the reign of Wilhelm I, so we can assume that he maintained the ban on the Waltz. At a later stage, she relates episodes when she and her partner forgot about the prohibition and danced the Waltz regardless. Somebody present commented that the Waltz was only forbidden because nobody knew how to dance it; the couple was praised for their dancing and allowed to dance once more.¹⁹

The Prussian court even had a 'court Waltz', which 'was not more or less a Viennese Waltz, much more a kind of Galop'.²⁰ 'The Viennese Waltz was not considered to be suitable for the court at official balls. It was forbidden to dance it in the presence of the Emperor and Empress'. When the Emperor entered the dance hall, the Viennese Waltz was interrupted.²¹ Eduard von der Heydt (1882–1964), just ten years older than Victoria Louise, confirms and expands on her account:

In answer to my question, why an experienced dancer of [the] Waltz was not allowed to turn to the left, I was told that their Majesties had the opinion that it would look untidy; everyone should turn in unison to the right.²² The so-called Court Waltz at the official court balls was a Waltz in Galop tempo, and descended from the time of the old Wilhelm [I]. The impression of the 'prudishness' of the Empress Augusta²³ came from her court ladies [...] from whom she was inseparable.²⁴

Theresa Buckland discusses the unpopularity of reversing in British high society in the late nineteenth century, even though the Waltz was fully accepted.²⁵ Lily Braun also confirms the ban on the Waltz at the Berliner court in her childhood in the 1870s, stating that the children

18 Lily Braun, *Memoiren einer Sozialistin* (Altenmünster: Jazzybee Verlag, 2012), p. 48.

19 Braun, *Memoiren*, p. 204.

20 Viktoria Luise, *Im Glanz der Krone*, p. 213.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 215.

22 Theresa J. Buckland, *Society Dancing: Fashionable Bodies in England, 1870–1920* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 64 refers to the same restriction at the British court, where it was called reversing.

23 Wilhelm I and his Empress Augusta were Wilhelm II's grandparents, and the grandson took over after an interregnum of only ninety-nine days of his parents. Wilhelm II was chosen to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather's authoritarian style.

24 Eduard von der Heydt and Werner von Rheinbaben, *Auf dem Monte Verità: Erinnerungen und Gedanken über Menschen, Kunst und Politik* (Zürich: Atlantis, 1958), p. 100.

25 Buckland, *Society Dancing*, p. 64.

learned the Polka and the Francaise, but not the Waltz; the latter was prohibited as inappropriate even at children's balls at the court.²⁶

The new dances imported from the Americas, such as the Tango, were even more strictly banned. The Kaiser issued orders that no one should dance a Tango or Turkey Trot at the season's balls, nor 'go to the house of any person who, at any time, whether officers were present or not, had allowed any of these new dances to be danced'.²⁷

Wilhelm II's revival of old dances at his court had a nostalgic flair, in harmony with his wish for a splendour and grandeur that he could only find modelled in the past. Lily Braun reports how the Minuet was revived for a court ball, and how historical costumes were also made to grace the event.²⁸ It is paradoxical that this occurred at the same time as the budding folk dance movement. There are similarities as well as differences between the revivals, but it is difficult to ascertain whether there is any explicit connection between the two.



Fig. 4.7 Adolph von Menzel, *Das Ballsouper* [Dinner at the Ball], oil on canvas, Alte Nationalgalerie, 1878. Menzel was close to the Prussian court circles, so this is probably a realistic representation of a meal at a court celebration in the late 1870s. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Adolph_Menzel_-_Das_Ballsouper_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

²⁶ Braun, *Memoiren*, p. 48.

²⁷ Giles MacDonogh, *Prussia: The Perversion of an Idea* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994).

²⁸ Braun, *Memoiren*, p. 210.

The Austro-Hungarian Court

From a twenty-first-century perspective, one would expect that the court in Vienna would have accepted and even embraced waltzing quite early. There are, however, sources that show the opposite, that the Waltz was forbidden at official court balls until the late nineteenth century.

It has been repeatedly claimed that there is a Waltz in the Opera *Una Cosa Rara*, with music by the composer Vicente Martín y Soler (1754–1806) (see Fig. 4.8) and libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749–1838).²⁹ The German dance historian Oskar Bie argues against earlier claims that this was the first Waltz to be performed,³⁰ but in our context the event might have some relevance. The opera had a tremendous success at its premiere at the Royal Burg Theatre in Vienna in 1786, during the reign of Joseph II (1780–1790).³¹ The monarch (b. 1741–d. 1790) promoted music and dance, and seemed to have directly engaged with the staging of the opera. He is said to have insisted on the carrying through of the staging, when the musicians complained about the music.³²



Fig. 4.8 Video: 'Martín y Soler: Una cosa rara (opera completa)', 2:45:45, posted online by Classicus Musicalis, *Youtube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtSFzFoUCoc&t=8251s>. This historically informed production was directed by Francisco Negrin, and was filmed at the Drottningholm Court Theatre of Sweden in 1993, with Nicholas McGegan leading the Drottningholm Court Theatre Orchestra. The dance scenes we are referring to start at 2:35:46, and the dance in question does not look like a Waltz.

Joseph II had strong ideas about fostering a more egalitarian society, and was radical in his care for the lower classes. He lifted censorship and curtailed the powers of the aristocracy and the Church. Presenting a dance of the lower classes on the stage might have harmonised well with his attitudes. The opera might therefore have contributed to making the Waltz more acceptable among the upper classes of Vienna.

29 Lorenzo Da Ponte and Vicente Martín y Soler, *Una Cosa Rara*, 17 November 1786, http://www.librettidopera.it/cosarara/a_02.html

30 Oskar Bie, *Der Tanz* (Berlin: J. Bard, 1919), p. 228.

31 John Platoff, 'A New History for Martín's "Una Cosa Rara"', *The Journal of Musicology*, 12 (1994), 85–115 (p. 85), <https://doi.org/10.1525/jm.1994.12.1.03a00050>

32 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

There are, however, no signs in the libretto, nor in the scores, of the word *Waltz* or similar terms. There is a melody that is definitely *Waltz*-like in recent recordings of the music, and here the libretto says: ‘scene nineteen: The above-mentioned [the actors already on stage]; enter Lille, and Ghita dressed without jackets with a little guitar etc. Two villagers bring out chairs adorned with flowers and offer them to the queen and the prince’.³³ Then follows a tribute to the queen, sung by the villagers and their soloists. This is the melody that sounds like a *Waltz*, but no dancing is mentioned. After a while, when the *Waltz* melody is finished, the village hero and heroine are dancing. At the end, there is a scene (‘Finale II (Seghidiglia)’ in which the hero and the heroine are still dancing, but this dance is said to be a *Seghidiglia*.

A second early source dates from 1801–1802, when the castrato singer Luigi Marchesi (1754–1814) visited the court in Vienna and came to be on very friendly terms with the Empress Maria Theresa (1772–1807), granddaughter of the famous Maria Theresa. Her mother, Maria Caroline, Queen of Naples was worried about his visit, saying that her daughter even danced *Waltzes* and *Polkas*³⁴ with Marchesi.³⁵ We cannot tell from the text if the main problem is the man or the dancing. Nonetheless, it shows that royals and members of the court might learn modern dances of their time, even if the rulers or the keepers of etiquette did not allow them in the official court context.

Firm evidence for the ban on the *Waltz* comes from the Vienna Congress. At least two sources suggest that *Waltzes* were played only when the Emperor Francis I (reigned 1804–1835) and the Prussian King had left the ball (see below). It is not likely that court practices changed during the reign of the next emperor (1835–1848), the epileptic and weak Ferdinand I. In an account of an unusually merry ninth anniversary party at the court in 1839, even his empress Maria Anna is said to have danced, ‘although she during her eight previous years at the court never took so much as a step of the *Waltz*’.³⁶

33 Da Ponte and Martín y Soler, *Una Cosa Rara*, http://www.librettidopera.it/zpdf/cosarara_bn.pdf. Quote translated from the Italian by Egil Bakka. There may of course exist other librettos or similar sources where a *Waltz* is referred to.

34 The term *Polka* is an anachronism, probably due to Rice’s translation.

35 John A. Rice, *Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792–1807* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 58.

36 Egon Caesar Corti, *Vom Kind zum Kaiser Kindheit und erste Jugend Kaiser Franz Josephs I. und seiner Geschwister* (Munich: Graz, 1951), p. 167.

The last Austrian emperor to enjoy a lengthy reign, Francis Joseph I (1830–1916) is reported to have been an elegant and eager dancer as a child and a young man.³⁷ Even from his court there is, however, an anecdote about the ban on the Waltz:

The Waltz, which Strauss and Lanner have made popular, was for a long time not considered appropriate even at the Viennese court. A beautiful story is told from the court ball, where the Waltz finally was danced for the first time. The young people present were entranced by the high-flown ring [of the music] and defied the directives. For the general adjutant (1887–1917) of the Emperor Francis Joseph, the Count [Eduard von] Paar, this seemed a sacrilege, a crime committed against the untouchable laws of the ceremonial. With indignation, he hastened to his master. ‘Your Majesty, in there they are playing the Straussian Waltz’. The Emperor slowly looked up at him and asked: ‘Well, does it give the people joy, then?’ and when the count affirmed, added: ‘If it gives them joy, then let them continue’.³⁸



Fig. 4.9 Josef Kreutzinger, *Portrait der Familie des österreichischen Kaisers* [Portrait of the Family of the Austrian Emperor], c.1805. Oil on canvas. Pictured are Franz I, later hosting the Vienna Congress, his queen Maria Theres, who danced with Marches, and the boy on the far left was to become Emperor Ferdinand I. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Josef_Kreutzinger_-_Kaiserliche_Familie.jpg

37 Corti, *Vom Kind zum Kaiser*, pp. 155–56.

38 Viktoria Luise, *Im Glanz der Krone*, p. 215. Translated from the German by Egil Bakka.



Fig. 4.10 Engraving after Richard Cosway, *The Italian Castrato Singer Luigi Marchesi*, 1790. National Portrait Gallery, London. He was a highly respected artist and a charming personality. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Luigi_Marchesi.jpg

Several persons at the court in Vienna wrote diaries or memoirs in which dance names such as the Quadrille, the Cotillion and the Francaise are mentioned, but not the Waltz.³⁹ In February 1874, Francis Joseph visited the Russian court; the Prince and the Princess of Wales as well as the Danish Crown Prince were also there. A report from a ball tells us that some round dances had been danced before the emperor entered. Then the emperor sat, watching two Quadrilles, before leading a Polonaise and leaving early with his court. We see the same pattern in several sources: the Waltz seems not to have been danced in the presence of the emperor, even if this was not explicitly stated or commented upon.⁴⁰



Fig. 4.11 Wilhelm Gause, *Hofball in Wien*, 1900. Historisches Museum der Stadt Wie. The nobility greets the Emperor Francis Joseph at a Court Ball in Vienna. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wilhelm_Gause_Hofball_in_Wien.jpg

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- 39 Mária Festetics, *Das Tagebuch der Gräfin Marie Festetics: Kaiserin Elisabeths intimste Freundin*, ed. by Gudula Walterskirchen and Beatrix Meyer (St. Pölten, Salzburg, Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 2014), pp. 152, 2550, 4325; Marie Valerie von Österreich, *Das Tagebuch der Lieblingstochter von Kaiserin Elisabeth 1878–1899*, ed. by Martha Schad and Horst Schad (Munich: Langen Muller, 1998), p. 108. It is possible that the Cotillion included Waltz or other round dances.
- 40 Francis Joseph I, Emperor of Austria-Hungary, *Seiner Majestät des Kaisers Franz Joseph I von Österreich Reise nach Russland im Monate Februar 1874* (Vienna: Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1874), pp. 62–63, <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/1624904.html>

There may well be sources that say the Waltz was not really banned at the court in Vienna, or that the material presented above is weak. The main point is that it challenges the impression that there was no reservation in the acceptance of the Waltz, and causes us to ask from where the resistance in court circles against the Waltz came. It is also striking to note that extensive searches have hardly resulted in any political cartoons or satirical pictures produced in the German lands in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In contrast, such pictures can be found in abundance in France and the United Kingdom in the same period.

The British Court

The reluctance to waltz at the main German courts is not mirrored at the court in London, where Queen Victoria (1819–1901) is reported to have danced Quadrilles and the Waltz at her fourteenth birthday. She was an accomplished and eager dancer into her old age.⁴¹

The British royal family was tightly connected to Germany in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. On the male side, the King of Hanover ascended to the British throne as George I in 1714. This established a personal union of the thrones that lasted until 1837 through the reigns of five monarchs. George III, Queen Victoria's grandfather, was the first of them to be born and raised in Britain. On the female side, Queen Victoria's grandmother Queen Charlotte, her mother Princess Victoria, and the queen consorts of her two uncles and predecessors on the throne were all princesses from smaller German courts. Even Victoria's husband was German. English cartoons mocking royals and their German background are plentiful (see Fig. 4.12).

In fact, righteous indignation and personal malice may have been partly responsible for Lord Byron's satire 'The Waltz' (1812), yet its uneven tone, a mixture of humour and bitter mockery, and its many Regent-baiting and anti-Hanoverian allusions, both pointed and hidden, convey the anti-Germanic sentiments of an outraged English patriot as much as they do the grievances of an infirm celebrity or a puritanical

41 Helen Rappaport, *Queen Victoria: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), p. 113.

poet.⁴² Implicit in the poem is a running attack upon the Germanic invasion of English life and letters under the first four Georges; the Germanophobia found in the poem, however, is largely an extension of the poet's violent antipathy to the Waltz-loving Prince Regent.⁴³



Fig. 4.12 James Gillray, *Monstrous Crawls, at a New Coalition Feast*, 1787. Etching with aquatint. King George III dressed as an old woman, the Queen, and the Prince of Wales seated around a basin perched on the laps of the king and queen; they eagerly spoon the contents, representing gold coins, into their mouths. Pouches hanging from their necks like goitres are full, except for that of the Prince of Wales, whose pouch is empty. The gate to the treasury, in the background, is open. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monstrous_crawls,_at_a_new_coalition_feast.jpg

42 Byron suffered from a deformity of his right foot, giving him a limp and making dancing difficult for him.

43 The later King George IV (1762–1830).



Fig. 4.13 Thomas Phillips, *Portrait of Lord Byron in Albanian Dress*, 1813. Oil on canvas. Government Art Collection at the British Embassy, Athens. Lord Byron, was a leading British Romantic poet. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lord_Byron_in_Albanian_Dress_by_Phillips,_1813.jpg

Waltz: An Apostrophic Hymn was written in the fall of 1812, when Byron's hatred of the Prince had become so intense that it coloured all his thinking about Germany:⁴⁴

Although inspired by personal malice against the Regent, Byron's satire nevertheless accurately gauges the growing resentment in England against the German cast of English life. The frequent and malicious thrusts at the corpulent George IV reflect the attitude of many patriotic Englishmen who looked upon the corpulent George IV as the complete embodiment of German vulgarity and depravity, despite his attempts to reject his German ancestry.⁴⁵ The *Waltz*, 'this fiend of German birth, destitute of grace, delicacy, and propriety',⁴⁶ met with hostile opposition right from the time it was first danced at Almack's in about 1812. Loyal Englishmen shuddered when they thought about its perverting effects upon English manners and morals.⁴⁷

The strong attacks on the *Waltz* as German and vulgar did confirm that the British court already danced it, probably long before 1812, but this was the time when it began to gain acceptance. The elderly royal couple at this time, King George III and Queen Charlotte, who reigned from 1760 to 1820, were dancers, not least the queen,⁴⁸ but they belonged to the Minuet generation.⁴⁹ At a small party in 1778 we are told that the royal children made a small dance performance of a Minuet.⁵⁰ In 1811, their son became regent due to his father's illness, and he was the *Waltz*-lover whom Byron hated. He remained in power as regent, and ruled as King George IV from 1820. At his death in 1830, his brother William IV took over and, finally, in 1837, their niece Queen Victoria came to the

44 William Childers, 'Byron's "Waltz": The Germans and their Georges', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 18 (1969), 81–95 (p. 82).

45 Thomas Creevey, *The Creevey Papers*, ed. by Sir Herbert Maxwell (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1904), p. 47.

46 Mosco Carner, *The Waltz* (London: Parrish, 1948), p. 20.

47 Childers, 'Byron's "Waltz"', p. 82.

48 Walley Chamberlain Oulton, *Authentic and Impartial Memoirs of Her Late Majesty, Charlotte, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland: Containing a Faithful Retrospect of Her Early Days, Her Marriage, Coronation, Correspondence, Illness, Death, Funeral Obsequies, &c. &c. Interspersed with Occasional Anecdotes of the Royal Family, and Other Illustrious Personages. Including various Interesting and Original Particulars, Never before Published* (London: J. Robins and Co., Albion Press, 1819), p. 68.

49 Queen Charlotte came to Britain in 1761, probably too early for her to have learnt any *Waltz* at home.

50 John Van der Kiste, *George III's Children* (New York: The History Press, 2013), p. 18.

throne. There is, in other words, no sign of scepticism of the dance in the British royal family during this period, and with the family's close connections to smaller, probably more liberal courts in Germany, they could easily learn to Waltz. One of Queen Caroline's⁵¹ ladies in waiting reports rather viciously about a ball soon after Caroline's arrival in Britain to marry the crown prince George (later George IV) in 1795. She states that it was 'very difficult to get together personages sufficient to make up a ball', and that another German princess was not sufficiently attractive:⁵²

But what was my horror when I beheld the poor Princess enter, dressed en Venus, or rather not dressed, further than the waist. I was, as she used to say herself, 'all over shock'. A more injudicious choice of costume could not be adopted; and when she began to Waltz, the *terrae motus*⁵³ was dreadful. Waltz she did, however, the whole night, with pertinacious obstinacy; and amongst others whom she honoured with her hand upon this occasion, was Sismondi.⁵⁴ These two large figures turning round together were quite miraculous. As I really entertained a friendship for the Princess, I was unfeignedly grieved to see her make herself so utterly ridiculous.⁵⁵

From these accounts we can assume that the crown prince, as well as the crown princess, knew the Waltz already well before their wedding in 1795.⁵⁶ Unlike the main German courts, the English royalty probably took up the Waltz well before the upper classes. The scepticism of their German background, the lack of respect for the couple's looks and lifestyles, and the criticism of their separation and bitter fights made it difficult for the English aristocracy to accept them, but nothing could stop the Waltz.

51 Caroline of Brunswick (1768–1821).

52 Charlotte C. Bury, *Diary Illustrative of the Times of George the Fourth, Interspersed with Original Letters from the Late Queen Caroline, and from various Other Distinguished Persons* (London: H. Colburn, 1838), p. 85.

53 'Movement of the earth' [earthquake].

54 A Swiss historian who visited London in 1894–1895.

55 Bury, *Diary Illustrative of the Times*, p. 85.

56 He was thirty-two and she was twenty-seven, and they probably established their dance repertoire at the latest in their early twenties.



Fig. 4.14 George Cruikshank, *Merry-Making on the Regent's Birthday*, 1812. Print shows George, the Prince Regent, dancing and drinking at a lavish party with the wife of a man who sits with a dejected look on his face and holding a sheet of paper, 'Order of the day', which lists 'Breakfast — 2 to be HUNG at Newgate' with lunch, dinner and tea schedules followed by 'Supper — German fling, d [penny] sausage with bread, cheese & kisses &c &c, Dancing all night', with his feet resting on sheet music titled 'The black joke', while behind him stand two demon-like figures playing French horns, alluding to his present cuckold condition. Through an opening in the palace is a view of a gallows and poor persons seeking relief. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Merry_making_on_the_regents_birth_day,_1812_LCCN2003689159.tif

An article by William Childers discusses the early reception of the Waltz in England: [...] 'the year 1812 has been called "The Year of the Waltz"'.⁵⁷ Reminiscing about the introduction of the Waltz into the West End of London in 1812, Thomas Raikes describes its impact upon society: 'No event ever produced so great a sensation in English society as the introduction of the German Waltz. [...] Old and young returned to school and the mornings were now absorbed at home in practising the figures of a French Quadrille or whirling a chair round the room to learn the step and measure of the German Waltz'.⁵⁸ A second commentator

57 Peter Quennell, *Byron: The Years of Fame* (London: Reprint Society, 1943), p. 78.

58 Quoted in introduction to George Gordon Byron, *Waltz, an Apostrophic Hymn* (London: S. Gosnell, 1812), p. 476, [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Works_of_Lord_Byron_\(ed._Coleridge,_Prothero\)/Poetry/Volume_1/The_Waltz](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Works_of_Lord_Byron_(ed._Coleridge,_Prothero)/Poetry/Volume_1/The_Waltz)

on the English rage for Quadrilles and dancing parties is Lady Caroline Lamb, who was especially fond of the dance: 'we had them in the great drawing-room at Whitehall. All the *bon ton* assembled there continually. There was nothing so fashionable'.⁵⁹

A battle was fought with moral indignity against the new fashion. At the same time, an excited, frivolous enthusiasm arose. The two sides probably did not influence each other much; they were somehow incompatible as two sides of an argument. The critique of the first was partly political, aimed at German domination and a perceived lack of royal style; partly it was based in issues of morality and distinction. The second may have found its inspiration in reports from Paris that the Waltz was in fashion there, and from an exotic visit to London by the elegantly waltzing and good-looking Russian Tsar in 1814 (see the section below, 'The Russian Court').

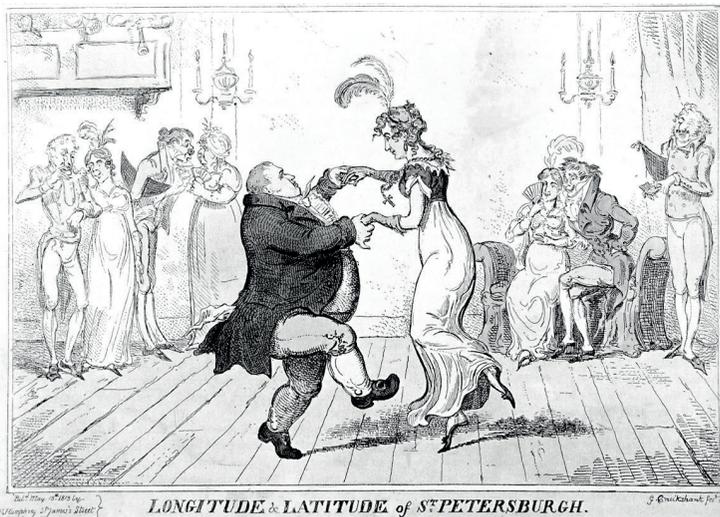


Fig. 4.15 George Cruikshank, *Longitude and Latitude of St Petersburg*, 1813. A caricature of Countess Lieven waltzing at Almack's. Countess Lieven was the one of the lady patronesses of Almack's and was the wife of the Russian Ambassador. (St Petersburg was then the capital of Russia.) Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=Waltzing+at+Almacks%2C+George+Cruikshank+&title=Special%3ASearch&go=Go#/media/File:Almack%27s_Longitude_and_Latitude.jpg

⁵⁹ Byron, *Waltz*, I, 476.

The French Court

The French Revolution that started in 1789 obviously influenced the French court decisively in the decades that followed. It does not seem likely that the Waltz was even in question at the court during the old regime. German research has pointed to the Ländler as a basis for the Waltz, and a French dancing master published a version of the Allemande with figures very similar to those of the Ländler as early as 1769.⁶⁰ The music he offers is 2/4, and the French seem to look at the pre-revolutionary Allemande and the Waltz as two very different phenomena. The French author Antoine Calliot (1759–1839) describes in retrospect the dancing and the dancing masters during and after the revolution in a book published in 1827. He witnessed the last years of the old regime, the revolution, Napoleon's reign, and the restoration, and his text seems to betray a sympathy for the old regime.



Fig. 4.16 Carle Vernet, a depiction of a couple dressed in French formal court styles, 1793. Detail from the series of the *Incroyables et Merveilleuses* [the incredible men, and the marvellous women], who were members of a fashionable aristocratic subculture in Paris during the French Directory (1795–1799). They held hundreds of balls and started fashion trends in clothing and mannerisms. This couple are dressed in the fashion *l'ancien régime*, showing a contrast to the new mentality of the revolution. Image scanned by H. Churchyard from Blanche Payne's *History of Costume* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1793-1778-contrast-right.jpg>

60 Simon Guillaume and Jacques La Hante, *Almanach dansant, ou positions et attitudes de l'Allemande. Avec un discours préliminaire sur l'origine et l'utilité de la danse* (Paris: chez l'auteur ruè des Arcis, 1769), <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8626149j/f41.item.zoomin>

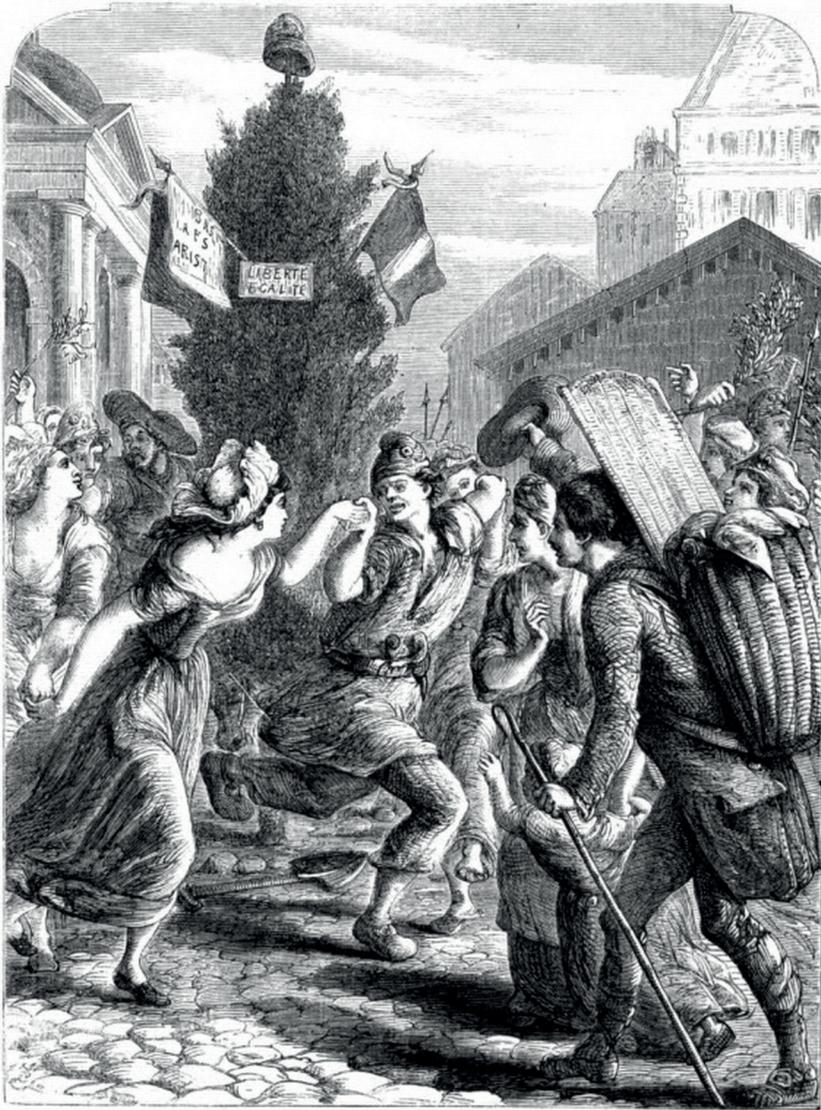


Fig. 4.17 John Cassell, *Sans Culottes dancing the Carmagnole*, 1865. Image from Cassell's *Illustrated History of England*, Volume 5 (London, Paris, & New York: Cassell Petter & Galpin, 1865), p. 613. The *sans-culottes* were people of the lower classes, militant partisans of the French Revolution, and this was their dance and song in particular at that time. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:P613_SANS_CULOTTES_DANS_THE_CARMAGNOLE.jpg

During the terrible days of the revolutionary government, since the male and female Jacobins⁶¹ were the only ones who danced, the great masters of the Minuet and Gavotte and Allemande found themselves condemned to a fatal rest of their bourse and forced to give place to Masters of an inferior order. [...]

After 9 Thermidor,⁶² joy and dancing were renewed with even more brilliance and among even more people, since they had been banned for such a long time. Then there was not a single young girl who did not hurry to take lessons in an art so uniquely suitable for making oneself distinguished in public and private gatherings.

The dancing masters ran in all directions, their violins under their arms or under their coats, to go and teach their charming art from house to house and they did not return home before night, panting, tired and all covered in sweat. It was at this same time, when so many families deplored the tragic death of their leaders and of what that was most precious to them, that we saw dances established on the ground of the old cemetery Saint Sulpice. The dance teachers were more in vogue than ever during the consulate and the empire.⁶³ The court, the palaces the hotels, the residential schools of young ladies, the houses of bankers, in short, all doors were opened to them and all the beauties rushed to them to receive their lessons. It was a complete revolution in the choreographic art. Dancing masters occupied themselves in inventing new figures, new steps and new 'contredanses', or in borrowing from abroad what their genius could not invent, in order to instil trust in their skills and strengthen their reputation.

In this way the 'Walse', heavily executed by the male and female dancers from Germania, was imported to France to the despair of mothers and husbands. This lascivious dance was for many years the most fashionable dance at the grand houses and among the bourgeois. Today it is no longer much in use except in the most common balls and in the taverns.⁶⁴

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- 61 Led by Robespierre, the left-wing Jacobins, supported by the *sans-culottes* of the Parisian working class, established a revolutionary dictatorship, the Reign of Terror.
- 62 On nine Thermidor, year II (27 July 1794), there was a parliamentary revolt that led to the fall of Maximilien Robespierre. The revolutionary fervour and the Reign of Terror then collapsed.
- 63 The French Revolution is considered to have ended in 1799 when Napoleon overthrew the Directorate. He established power during the Consulate period (1799–1804). Then came Napoleon's empire (1804–1814/15).
- 64 Antoine Caillot, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des mœurs 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>. Translated from the French by Egil Bakka.

Even if Napoleon did take dance lessons in his youth, in Paris as well as in Valence, he never became a skilled dancer.⁶⁵ An episode reported by the French imperial family around 1810 gives an impression of their relaxed attitudes to the Waltz. At the time of this episode, Napoleon's two sisters, his adopted son, and the lover of his oldest sister are all in their late twenties, except the lover who is around twenty-five, a good-looking, cocky army officer well known for his audacity. This man insists that he wants to dance a Waltz with the hostess, who is his mistress, even if the next dance on the programme is a 'contredanse'. The viceroy, Napoleon's son, is about to dance with the other sister and calmly asks the conductor to keep to the programme, smoothing over the scandalous behaviour of the lover. The problem does not seem to be the Waltz, but that a nobody dares to interfere with the programme.⁶⁶

An anecdote from a writer whose mother worked for the Empress Josephine may not be true in detail, but is still realistic in its basic points. In 1810, Napoleon is waiting to receive his new wife from Austria. His niece says that all Germans want to dance the Waltz, and as a good husband he should be ready to dance it with his wife. Napoleon admits that he is not good at it, but tries to dance with his niece who knows the dance well. He manages to dance some rounds, quite awkwardly, but becomes so dizzy that he has to sit down, saying that his wife will have to be content that he dances the Monaco with her. This is a simple Contradance he knows.⁶⁷ Napoleon understands that he needs to dance sometimes, but he recognises his lack of skill, which is mentioned in several sources.⁶⁸

65 John Holland Rose, *Napoleon: Lefnadsteckning efter nya källor*, trans. by Ernst Lundquist, 2 vols (Stockholm: Hugo Gebers Förlag, 1907), I: p. 115.

66 Georgette Ducrest, *Mémoires sur l'impératrice Joséphine, sur la ville, la cour et les salons de Paris sous l'Empire* (Paris: Georges Barba, 1863), p. 74, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6310101z.texteImage>

67 Emile Marco de Saint-Hilaire, *Napoléon au bivouac, aux Tuilleries et à Sainte-Hélène anecdotes inédites sur la famille et la cour impériale* (Bruxellès: Meline, Cans, 1845), p. 159, <http://books.google.com/books?id=rZUvAAAAMAAJ>

68 Gertrude Aretz, *Napoleon und die Gräfin Maria Walewska* (Hamburg: Severus Verlag, 2013), p. 25; Louis Constant Wairy, *Mémoires de Constant, premier valet de chambre de l'Empereur, sur la vie privée de Napoléon, sa famille et sa cour* (Paris: Ladvocat, 1830), p. 271.



Fig. 4.18 Ivan I. Terebenev, Russians teaching Napoleon to dance, etching, Bodleian Library, 1979. Translation of caption: 'You tried to make us march; we now will make you dance'. Napoleon's dancing is more often shown figuratively than in a real-life context. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bodleian_Libraries,_Russians_teaching_Napoleon_to_dance-_Napoleon_Bonaparte_premier_consul_s%27est_rendu_%C3%A0_Notre_Dame_pour_y_entendre_la_Saint.jpg

Jean-Michel Guilcher in his very advanced study of the French Contradance describes how the social importance of dance varied through the decades after the revolution, and how the prominence of highly ambitious and advanced dancing by the few gave way to a far more relaxed attitude that enabled everybody to join in.⁶⁹

In summary, there is little, if any, sign of any condemnation of the Waltz at the French court during Napoleon's reign. He was a parvenu ruling half of Europe, and, being a mediocre dancer, to see dancing skills as a distinction valued at court was not in his interest; likewise, it is hard to believe that issues of morality were of any concern for him.

⁶⁹ Jean-Michel Guilcher, *La contradanse et les renouvellements de la danse Française* (Paris: Mouton., 1969), p. 160–61.

The Russian Court

If one seeks to find a dancing European ruler from the early nineteenth century, the Russian emperor Alexander I (1777–1825) would be a very good candidate. He reigned from 1802–1825 and contemporary sources from court circles in other countries are full of praise for his kindness, friendliness, good looks and dancing skills.⁷⁰ German newspapers reported on his impact, and how he charmed the English ladies and boosted the popularity of the Waltz during his visit to London in July 1814.⁷¹ He is said to have introduced the Waltz in the famous Almack's with one of the patrons there, the Russian Countess van Lieven.⁷²

The old 'Oberhofmeisterin' at the Prussian court, Sophie von Voss, reported on her visit to the Russian court in St. Petersburg in January 1808. She danced the Polonaise several times, even with the emperor.⁷³ Whether the Tsar avoided the Waltz out of respect for the Prussian guests, or the Prussian protocol keeper avoided mentioning the Waltz, is hard to tell. The German philologist, Aage Ansgar Hansen-Löve, sums up the arrival of the Waltz:

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 wave of appropriation and is to be understood as a new break from tradition. So, the introduction of the bourgeois Waltz took place during the Napoleonic wars at the court of the tsar.⁷⁴

70 Gertrude Aretz, *Königin Luise* (Paderborn: Salzwasser-Verlag GmbH, 2013), loc 3037; Sophie Marie von Voss, *Neunundsechzig Jahre am preußischen Hofe: Aus den Erinnerungen der Oberhofmeisterin Sophie Marie Gräfin von Voss* (Berlin: Berlin Story Verl., 2012), p. 188.

71 *Friedensblätter: Eine Zeitschr. für Leben, Litteratur und Kunst* (Vienna: Schaumburg, Schallbacher, Mayer, 1814), p. 165, https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=YhPAAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

72 Ibid; Judith Lissauer Cromwell and Dorothea Lieven, *A Russian Princess in London and Paris, 1785–1857* (Jefferson NC; London: McFarland & Co., 2007), p. 41.

73 Voss, *Neunundsechzig Jahre am preußischen Hofe*, p. 346.

74 Aage Ansgar Hansen-Löve, 'Von der Dominanz zur Hierarchie im System der Kunstformen zwischen Avantgarde und Sozialismus', *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach*, 47 (2001), 7–36 (p. 7). Translated from the German by Egil Bakka.



Fig. 4.19 Gerhard von Kügelgen, *Dorothea, Princess of Lieven*, 1801. Oil on canvas. Private collection. A Russian noblewoman and wife of the Russian ambassador to London, 1812 to 1834. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerhard_von_K%C3%BCgelgen_-_Portrait_of_Princess_Dorothea_von_Lieven_\(1801\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerhard_von_K%C3%BCgelgen_-_Portrait_of_Princess_Dorothea_von_Lieven_(1801).jpg)

It seems that the Waltz was introduced quickly and very early at the Russian court. Probably Alexander I knew it even before he became Tsar in 1802, since the Prussian Queen Louise reports in her diary that she danced the Waltz with him that year.⁷⁵ It is worth noting that his grandmother Catherine the Great (1729–1796), who brought him up, was herself raised in a princely house in Germany. She was inspired by

⁷⁵ Aretz, *Konigin Luise*, loc 1068.

European influences in the arts, and gave Alexander a tutor who taught him English in addition to the standard foreign languages at that time, French and German.⁷⁶ Alexander's mother Maria Feodorovna (Sophie Dorothea of Württemberg 1759–1828) arrived in Russia in 1776, so even if his grandmother probably did not know the Waltz from Germany, his mother may well have known it. According to the German Johann Joachim Bellermann, who visited the Russian court in 1781–1782, she loved dancing, but he only mentions the Waltz as a German dance and not as something that was danced in Russia at that point.⁷⁷ Maria Feodorovna and her husband also undertook a grand tour of Europe starting in 1781, which lasted more than a year. During this tour they would certainly have encountered the Waltz, and the royal party would most likely have picked up new dances. Dancing masters may have contributed to their knowledge, but this was before the first descriptions of the Waltz by the dancing masters.

Hansen-Löve's idea that the change from the Minuet to the Waltz was a change from aristocratic to bourgeois dance at the Russian court transfers a pattern that may have relevance in Western Europe to a context in which it hardly fits. The Minuet and the Waltz were foreign dances, just as the country dances were. Russian histories do not refer to any Russian bourgeoisie that would have the strength to influence the culture at the court in this period. It is hard to believe that the Waltz would make any big difference there, and the 'Mazurka' mentioned is hardly a round dance, but rather the aristocratic Polish Mazur with its complex group formations. The most aristocratic dance around 1800 may have been the Polish Polonaise, with its pompous walking around the dance floor in royal and aristocratic style, which did not require dancing skills. Alexander was much in favour of the Polonaise (see below), and it is more likely that the Russian court contributed to its spread in Germany than vice-versa.

76 Wikipedia Contributors, 'Alexander I of Russia', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 24 November 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_I_of_Russia; Adrien-César Égron, *Vie d'Alexandre Ier, Empereur de Russie, suivie de notices sur les Grands-Ducs Constantin, Nicolas et Michel par A. E. [Égron.]* (Paris: F. Denn, 1826), p. 210.

77 Johann J. Bellermann, *Kurzer Abriss der Rußischen Kirche nach ihrer Geschichte, Glaubenslehren und Kirchengebräuchen: aus Bemerkungen über Rußland in Rücksicht auf Wissenschaft, Kunst, Religion, und andere merkwürdige Verhältnisse* (Erfurt: Keyser, 1788), pp. 327, 345, https://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb10782010_00005.html



Fig. 4.20 Gerhard von Kugelgen, *The Emperor Paul I with his Family*, oil on canvas, Pavlovsk State Museum, 1800. This was painted a few years after Catherine the Great died, during the short reign of her son Paul I and his wife Maria Federovna. The young man standing first from the left at the back of the group is their son Alexander I who two years later became the Emperor of Russia. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Family_of_Paul_I_of_Russia.jpg



Fig. 4.21 Dmitry Nikolaevich Kardovsky, *Ball at the Assembly Hall of the Nobility in St Petersburg*, 1913. The ball was held to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Romanov family in 1913. Organisers tried to revive the tradition with a ball in Old Billingsgate Hall, London. It might be seen as a parallel to the revival attempts at the Prussian court at the same time. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ball_at_20s_by_Kardovsky.jpg

Courts of Europe Meet: The Vienna Congress, 1814–1815

After Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated and forced to abdicate in the spring of 1814, the famous Congress of Vienna was summoned in September the same year. It was renowned for its sumptuous balls and its social life, and a congress diary was published in the *Friedensblätter* [Peace Magazine]. This tells us about the arrivals of the celebrities, such as ministers, diplomats and top military officers, but particularly royalty. The kings of Denmark and Württemberg arrived early and the Russian emperor and empress and the Prussian king some days later, as did the king and queen of Bavaria. The Austrian emperor and empress hosted the congress and many glittering events. France and England were represented only by diplomats, and the Swedish regent Bernadotte is also not mentioned. The *Friedensblätter* stresses a personal friendship between the king of Prussia, the emperor of Russia, and the emperor of Austria-Hungary, and describes one of the balls:



Fig. 4.22 Johann Peter Krafft, *Declaration of Victory After the Battle of Leipzig, 1813, 1839*. Oil on canvas. Deutsches Historisches Museum. Tsar Alexander I, Emperor Francis I and Friedrich Wilhelm III are receiving the message that they have defeated Napoleon. They were later the three top Royal figures at the Vienna Congress. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1839_Krafft_Siegesmeldung_nach_der_Schlacht_bei_Leipzig_1813_anagoria.JPG

On the 9th October, there was a court ball — a ‘Redoute paré’ [masked ball] for 4000 participants. It started at 8pm, and at 10pm a procession of the made their entrée, led by the emperors and kings. The usual dances stopped at the royal entrance, and were succeeded by a March with trumpets. Then the music changed to a Polonaise, in which many of the highest-ranking members of the ball participated. The dance consisted of free quick walking⁷⁸ to the hand of a lady of the gentleman’s choosing. Then the dancers progressed in a long line through the length of the ballroom and in many directions, and made many smaller or longer breaks. The Russian Emperor Alexander was the soul of this dancing; he and other high-ranking guests initiated the Polonaise throughout the evening. This continued until midnight, when many of the older, most high-ranking people had left, and staff served exclusive refreshments. Around three o’clock in the morning the dancing began again and then particularly the Waltz was favoured.⁷⁹

The French Count Garde-Chambonas wrote detailed memoirs from the congress. He gives a parallel description of a court ball, probably the same, and confirms the royal entrance and the Polonaise, which he characterises as inevitable. He also says that the orchestra started playing Waltzes after the ‘departure of the “souverains”’.⁸⁰

This organising of the court balls, with the Polonaise danced while two German rulers were present, seems to have been typical at the congress. There are more comments about this:

Notwithstanding the variety of musical forms advertised as the Russian emperor’s favorites [sic.], Alexander’s preferred terpsichorean exercise seems to have been the Polonaise. Despite the name, this dance had a dual function in the period almost as Russian national music and official Romanov court music. It was the Polonaise, rather than the Waltz, that most characterized Congress ballrooms.⁸¹ Waltzing did go on, and one could say quite a bit about it in connection with the Congress, but its distinguishing dance was actually the Polonaise, considered at the time the epitome of aristocratic elegance.⁸²

78 In German, ‘[...] freyen raschen Gange’.

79 *Friedensblätter*, p. 190.

80 Auguste Louis Charles, Comte de La Garde-Chambonas, *Fêtes et souvenirs du congrès de Vienne, tableaux des salons, scènes anecdotiques et portraits, 1814–1815* (BruXelles: Société typographique belge, A. Wahlen, 1843), p. 75, https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=pf0LAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&ad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

81 Brian E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna Power and Politics After Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 88.

82 Vick, *The Congress of Vienna*, p. 51.



Fig. 4.23 Video: Polonaise at the Pushkin Ball, 2011. The ball is held in honour of Aleksandr Pusjkin 1799–1837 in Catherine Palace in Tsarskoe Selo (in Pushkin, near St. Petersburg). ‘Polonaise (Pushkin Ball 2011)’, 4:51, posted by Khasanov1988, *Youtube*, 19 October 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3e1OH1BpjA>

The wife of the Danish ambassador complained that the dancing was dull at the ball given by the Danish king, the Polonaises were not amusing, and the other dances too short. The Danish king and the Russian emperor continued to dance through the night, so that their staff worried about their health. Most of the royals mentioned above were in their forties; the hostess, the empress of Austria-Hungary was the youngest at twenty-seven, followed by the Russian empress and emperor at thirty-five and thirty-seven.

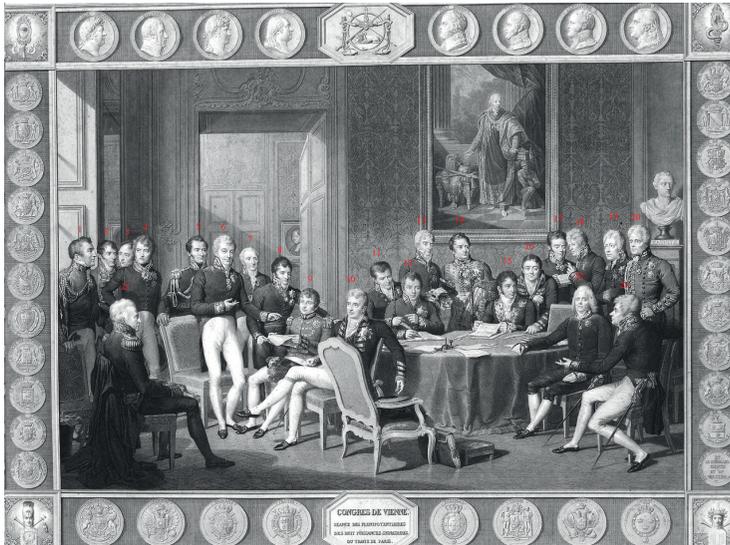


Fig. 4.24 Jean Godefroy, after Jean-Baptiste Isabey, *Delegates of the Congress of Vienna*, 19th c. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Congress_of_Vienna.PNG

Garde-Chambonas also reports from several other balls: the Russian ball offered a performance of traditional Russian dances, and then Russian

and Polish ballroom dances were performed, such as the Mazur.⁸³ At the ball given by the principal British diplomat's wife, her husband, Lord Castlereagh, a man in his mid-fifties, showed off his English dancing: but the sight of him 'dancing a "Gigue" with his big frame, lifting his long thin legs in time to the music, was more of a spectacle than an entertainment'.⁸⁴ There is no report of a ball hosted by the Prussian king, and the Austro-Hungarian emperor presented a Venetian ballet at one of the balls he hosted.⁸⁵ One wonders if the banning of the Waltz at the German courts was mainly an issue of distinction, to keep up the court standards of *l'ancien régime* in France. If so, they would try to retain old dances such as the Minuet, focus on ballet, and avoid the round dances of the bourgeoisie. Even the presentation of 'national dances' given by other countries was apparently absent.



Fig. 4.25 Forceval, *The Congress*, 1814–1815. Vinck Collection, National Library, Paris. A caricature of the Vienna Congress. In the centre, Austria, Russia, and Prussia are represented by their three rulers, balancing on tip-toes. To the left, Talleyrand is observing, leaning against the wall, and next to him the British Lord Castlereagh hesitates. The two people on the right represent smaller nations. Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Forceval-Congr%C3%A8s_de_Vienne_1814-815.png

83 La Garde-Chombonas, *Fêtes et souvenirs du congrès de Vienne*, p. 448.

84 Ibid., p. 431. Translated from the French by Egil Bakka.

85 La Garde-Chombonas, *Fêtes et souvenirs du congrès de Vienne*, p. 36.

Summary

Popular twentieth-century histories of dance, offering broad accounts of the development of particular dances, often suggest that England and France took a long while to accept the Waltz after it had already been established in Germany. The English pioneer of the history of ballroom dancing, Philip J. S. Richardson, writes in his well-referenced dance history: '[the Waltz] was first seen at Almack's about 1812, introduced in all probability by travelled aristocrats, who had seen it on the Continent where, as was to be the case in England, it met with very strenuous opposition'.⁸⁶ The Austrian-American dance critic and professor Walter Sorell writes: 'The list of the Waltz's condemnations is endless. England did not accept this dance before 1812, and for a long time it was forbidden in many parts of Europe. France, whose cultural reign was identified with the past, was most strongly opposed to the new dance; its dance teachers, of course, disapproved of it most vehemently'.⁸⁷

This understanding seems commonsensical, and all the condemnations seem to offer a strong support. Therefore, it is paradoxical that my discussions above about the Waltz at the main European courts suggests more or less the opposite. The German courts prohibited the dance, whereas other courts had few reservations about it. Of course, what happened at court did not represent what happened in the rest of the country, not necessarily even among the aristocracy. It is, however, questionable whether resistance to the Waltz can be measured by the number of indignant statements. More relevant would be the influence and power that the protesters had. Indignation is also salacious, and therefore well suited to spice up more sober source material, and might be somewhat overrepresented in dance histories. It could also be argued that dance enthusiasts hardly bothered to take moral indignation seriously and that they ignored condemnations and prohibitions that were not enforced. Therefore, the lack of replies does not mean that most people were in agreement. Indignation and acceptance or enthusiasm are not expressed in comparable ways, and acceptance is rarely explicitly

86 Phillip J. S. Richardson, *The Social Dances of the Nineteenth Century in England* (London: H. Jenkins, 1960), p. 63.

87 Walter Sorell, *Dance in Its Time* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1981), p. 205.

expressed. Finally, most people cared little about the arrival of new dances; they would just adopt them when they were needed.

We have seen that the Waltz was probably prohibited at the two main German courts through the nineteenth century. That does not mean that it was prohibited in the smaller courts, in any of the states, or even at all court events in Berlin or Vienna. The British crown prince and princess, however, seem to have favoured and danced the Waltz fifteen years before it became acceptable among the British upper classes. They were criticised for this, because, not only did the dance have connections with Germany, but they themselves had strong ties to Germany, which many leading people in Britain disliked. France had undergone a dramatic revolution, and overturned a monarchy that had been a model for court life. That style and the most demanding of the old court dances were not relevant any more during Napoleon's reign. There were, of course, dance teachers and members of the aristocracy who regretted the loss of the old style and the old dances, and disliked the new. There is, however, no evidence that Napoleon, who did not master the Waltz, even hesitated to accept it. Finally, the Russian court was very open to European influences: Catherine II and several other German princesses had married into the court, and teachers from Germany and France taught their children. During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the Russian emperor, true to his upbringing, was renowned as the most sociable, good-looking and skilled dancer of the Waltz among European monarchs.

The round dance paradigm had two parallel sets of impulses; those transmitted by the dancing masters, the 'Walzen'; and a set that existed among the lower classes, particularly in the Nordic countries, the 'Drehen'. The first type of dance is well represented in most European countries, and is relatively stable in terms of form. The second type did not seem to achieve recognition in polite society, even if German dance experts mention it during the decades before and after 1800. This type reverted to folk culture and influenced the Nordic countries heavily and Poland to some degree. The Schottische was, as far as I know, the only dance with Dreher elements that spread through most of Europe.

Much of the literature presented about round dances is about their origin, the precursors to the Waltz, before exploring how this dance grew to fame and spread. Several books also emphasise the resistance

to and the outcry against the Waltz as immoral and harmful to health, particularly for young ladies. This introductory chapter has considered material about the European courts and their reception of the Waltz. The sources are not much more than a small selection of anecdotes, so the intention is obviously not to rewrite the history of the Waltz and the round dances. It is, however, an attempt to propose some new readings and some new perspectives, toning down earlier scholarly attention on the noisy cries about morals and health, and questioning their influence.

There are the stereotypes about relationships between neighbouring countries, which tend to colour attitudes to the neighbour's dances. There are rulers' conflicting ideals about how to be distinguished from their subjects, competing with a wish from some of them to be close to the people. Within this complex tangle of influences there is also the question of 'national' dances, that is, dances that originate from the country itself, adapted for use as the social dances of the upper classes. This kind of national dance is particularly typical in Poland. The desire to copy the most prestigious examples of foreign culture faced some competition from the national romantics, but not necessarily at court level.

Finally, one must consider the style and 'personality' of rulers and their courts, and their ideals. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, *l'ancien régime* was no longer the model for aristocratic social life, at least not in France. Napoleon increased the pomp and splendour at court throughout his reign, and the Bourbon Restoration tried to return to the past with little success. France lost its unquestioned leadership in matters of courtly fashion.

The sources from Napoleon's court do not reveal any direct reservations about the Waltz, even if Antoine Calliot is nostalgic about the masters of the old dances and their distinction, and slightly critical of the Waltz and the 'heavily dancing' Germans who brought it. The nostalgia for *l'ancien régime* did not seem to hinder the acceptance of the Waltz, which conquered France in less than a decade with the approval of her ruler and his court.

The English court, which had kings of German descent, also did not seem to have had any second thoughts about the German Waltz. The queen-to-be learned the dance from a young age and practised it with

her German cousins when they visited. How typical and widespread was the dislike Lord Byron voiced for the 'German' king and the German Waltz, it is difficult to say. Byron's anger seemed as much rooted in politics and a personal grudge against a regent of German descent as in moral issues.

It is even possible that it was the Russian Tsar, rather than the German relatives of the royal family, who made the Waltz fashionable among the English upper classes. The Tsar's Waltz with Queen Louise of Prussia in 1802 suggests its very early acceptance in Russia. In some ways Alexander I and Queen Louise were the waltzers who had a particular aura during the first decades of the nineteenth century.

If we are to believe that the Waltz was banned for some one hundred years at the main courts of its place of origin, Germany, this is a striking situation. A deeper analysis is needed first to confirm that situation, and secondly to suggest the explanation for it. Finally, we must look into questions of distinction, of balance between foreign and national ideals and perhaps even of the personalities of rulers and the ambiance of courts.

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