

*The Noverres of London and Norwich*

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Amanda and the Gang

## Note

I learned a great deal more about the Noverres after the publication of *Mr Noverre's Academy* in 2005. Ian Dye brought Charles Noverre and Sarah Stow to my attention. More information became available on the National Archive website. Augustin had four, not two, children, and three wives.

When Augustin established Francis in Norwich in 1793 he claimed that Francis had received tuition from Jean-Georges - on 'the Continent'. Given the state of English-French hostilities at the time, and the revolution, I thought Augustin's claim was unlikely. As it was necessary to know Jean-Georges' whereabouts over a period of years I have made a parallel account of Augustin and Jean-Georges.

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## 1 'No French dancers!'

In Autumn 1754 David Garrick began the negotiations which would bring Jean-Georges Noverre's ballet company from Paris to Drury Lane. Garrick was interested in Noverre's innovative work; it might out-class Drury Lane's incidental dances, but it would steal a march on Covent Garden. Noverre's major work, *Les Fêtes Chinoises*, would draw a fashionable audience smitten with the craze for chinoiserie.

The lawyers on both sides pursued a Byzantine path, procuring the most artistic marvels on the least sum possible. Noverre protested that he was better paid at the Opéra Comique, though it would be 'dark' during the London season. Garrick must decide how much he could afford quickly, for Noverre had a lucrative offer from the Bavarian court.

Terms were agreed, Noverre made a recce to Drury Lane and the lawyers fell to negotiating over décor and personnel. Patu, Garrick's *negotiant*, recollected in the course of finding enough female dancers 'three little trollops' whom he had seen dance in London. 'Woman', wrote Noverre to Garrick, 'is an expensive if common merchandise', Madame Noverre excepted: 'I could not live in London without my wife. See if she could be of use in your pantomimes; she would dance in my ballets.' He had summed up the differences between Garrick's dancers and his own.

Of Noverre's company of 60, 40 were British and a third of the rest were his family. Mme Noverre (née Marguerite Louise Sauvery) was 'useful'. Her sister Nanette Sauvery was a principal dancer. Noverre's reference to 'my little sister' may be to a Noverre or a Sauvery. 'Miss Noverre' was his six-year-old daughter, Claudine, who danced with a group of children. 'A little girl to dance Cupid' was younger still - this was normal at a time when Frederick Menage, aged three, danced Cupid at the Pantheon in 1791. Also in Noverre's company was his younger brother, Augustin, b.30 April 1729. Noverre himself was contracted to dance 'unless my accident should prevent my dancing', and to be paid as ballet master. He had broken his Achilles tendon and did not, in fact, dance in or after 1755.

Garrick's ambitions were overtaken by Franco-British hostilities which would lead to the Seven Years War. Ill-founded press reports of imminent invasion

provoked Francophobia. But there was France, and there was Paris, and the fashionable, educated and bilingual Parisophiles wanted their treat. Garrick issued a defensive press statement: Noverre was a Swiss Protestant, his wife and her sisters were German. The company were anglicised to Mr, Mrs, Miss and Master. But they were *from* France, and so was the enemy.

Noverre eased himself into the situation by presenting small incidental works: Miss Noverre and Young Pietro in *La Provençal*, a small group in 'a NEW DANCE by Signor Baleti, Mr Lauchery, Mrs Vernon and Miss Noverre'. The children, led by Claudine and Young Pietro, danced *The Lilliputian Sailors*. So far, so well received, but the major work eclipsed Garrick's own dancers, a mediocre corps de ballet' as Noverre saw them, and provoked riots.

The King chose for a Command performance on 8 November 1755 *The Fair Quaker of Deal* and the premiere of *Les Fêtes Chinoises*. Royal presence restrained the audience but there were shouts of 'No French dancers!' from the gallery.

*Fêtes* was next presented to an audience previously sweetened with *Much Ado about Nothing*. The fourth performance coincided with an opera night; the Nobility decamped to their boxes at the King's Theatre, and Drury Lane was held by the Francophobes whose threats kept the dancers in the wings.

On 18 November, following the tragedy *The Earl of Essex*, *Fêtes* was abandoned on 'the great destruction of Mr Garrick's plans and property' (Charles Burney). The auditorium and scenery were wrecked. In the armed *melée* on stage, in which performers tried to separate parties for and against 'French ballet' Augustin Noverre ran a man through. The victim would recover but, for the moment, reprisals were feared.

Garrick patched up his theatre and his house to which fighting had spread. More immediately the Noverres were hastily hidden. Accounts of what happened vary. Lynham and MacIntyre repeat C E Noverre's version: Augustin went into hiding in Norwich where Huguenot weavers provided sympathetic French-speaking cover. Lynham adds: 'The whole family went into hiding'. The fate of non-family company members is not mentioned. Chéruzel's version is: 'La famille, démunie, se cache à Norwich avec

Augustin et son épouse.’ Augustin had married within the year and his bride fled with him.

Hm... Hiding six people is very clever. Isn't a bit of the story missing? Why Norwich?

Perhaps one of Garrick's company had played in Norwich and knew of useful cover and a safe address. It may have been Garrick who knew; his father's family came from Bordeaux and he himself was bilingual. First Augustin, then the rest of the family, were bundled into coaches and sent to safety - out of the way of further damage.

Chéruzel says that Jean-Georges decided that Augustin should stay in England where he now had friends - possibly inferring an English bride - while the rest of the family returned to France. In effect Jean-Georges ejected Augustin from his ballet company. Of the 'épouse' there is no further mention or trace.

Jean-Georges may have returned to London very soon to gather up his company and present small works. *Fêtes* could not be presented again; the scenery was wrecked. Noverre had not yet returned to Paris by 13 February 1756; Patu wrote to Garrick on that date to ask when he might expect Noverre's return. The Noverres were, in fact, making amiable visits to the Garricks at Hampton. The wives were both dancers. The husbands praised each other as 'the Anacreon of England' and 'the Shakespeare of the Dance' - or more mischievously 'that most fantastic Toe'. They shared an ambition to prune the stage of excessive artifice.

In spite of the riot that he had provoked, Jean-Georges asked if he might return for the 1756/57 season. And in spite of Garrick and his financial manager, Lacy, advising against the proposal a smaller Noverre company returned for a less eventful season. Jean-Georges could be bone-headed in his pursuit of career and ideals. In this season and in the future he broke his contract when better fortune beckoned elsewhere. He asked Lacy for permission to leave in March 1757. Lacy did not pay him for work not performed. Madame Noverre wrote to Garrick with a sharp pen: they remained the Garricks' most cordial friends, but Mr Lacy did not sufficiently value M. Noverre.

Meanwhile, at Lyons Opéra Jean-Georges created his first ballets d'action, not frivolous divertissements but dance integral to the opera it accompanied, performed in rational costumes, not in stage versions of court dress, and without

masks. He published his theories in 1760 as *Lettres sur la Danse et sur les Ballets*, dedicated to the Duke of Wurtemberg who invited him to Stuttgart with generous financial inducements. There was no comparable patronage in London.

Jean-Georges was not the sole inventor of ballets d'action. John Weaver had explored similar ideas at an earlier date in England, but Jean-Georges was the practitioner of his generation who formulated naturalism in dance.

In 1767 he offered his services to Garrick 'if Lacy is not opposed', but he did not in fact return to Drury Lane in 1767 or in the future. His career lay in the opera house.

## 2 Augustin Noverre at Drury Lane

Augustin was so successful as a fugitive that, to this day, nobody knows where he hid in Norwich. His victim recovered and Augustin returned to London in or before Spring 1756 when both Noverre brothers were engaged through the agency of Garrick to give dancing lessons to William Windham's children and step-children. William Windham II (d1761) had been a friend and patron of Garrick since 1746, and Garrick stood patron to the Noverres. Windham's personal account books show four payments for dancing lessons (Figure 2.1). Bear in mind that payments may have been made some considerable time after the lessons.

On 24 May 1756 'to Mrs Garrick for Noverre teaching and stockings £15 - 8s'; and on 31 May 1756 'to Garrick for Noverre cadet '£4 - 4s'. I suspect that Jean-Georges taught Windham's step-sons, Bob and Billy Lukin, and Augustin taught Dolly Lukin and Bess Windham. Augustin's known pupils were 'young ladies' and men of his own profession. Jean-Georges apparently had to be (expensively) compensated for damaged hose. The tuition took place earlier, when Jean-Georges was still in London and when Bob and Billy were home from Eton. Other payments in the accounts - three times 'at ye play' - show that the Windhams were, as usual at this season, at their London house in Golden Square and not at their country seat, Felbrigg in Norfolk. the Garricks may have been acting as bankers because of the Noverres' alien status or because they were the agent.

On 15 July 1756 Windham paid 'to Noverre £2 - 12s - 6d'. Jean-Georges was now in Paris and the payment was made directly to Augustin. The smaller payment suggests that those in May included the 'entrance' fee required of beginners. Other payments show that the Windhams were in London.

On 23 May 1757 Windham paid 'Noverre £4 - 7s'. Again the Windhams were in London and had also hired a 'Musick master £3 - 9s - 6d'. Jean-Georges had cut short his Drury Lane season and left England in early March, so the Noverre in question was Augustin.

There are fewer entries in the 1758 accounts and the Windhams were at Felbrigg and not in London for the Winter/Spring season. There are no payments for dancing lessons.

Whilst building a private practice Augustin was also dancing occasionally at Drury Lane by or before 1757.

Lynham quotes an undated letter from Garrick to Mme Noverre in France; Garrick is anxious because he has not heard from Jean-Georges whom he knows to have written to Augustin. He fears he has offended Jean-Georges and declares that he certainly does not undervalue him. It appears to be a reply to Mme Noverre's sharp reproof of 7 March 1757. Garrick praises Augustin:

'... your Brother and Mr de Laitre are highly approv'd of and their Names are on our Bills at large every time they dance.'

de Laitre was 'a very good pantomime dancer', recruited in Paris by Jean-Georges for Garrick's company in 1755. He does not feature on any extant playbill and he may have moved on after 1757.

Augustin's career at Drury Lane has to be pieced together from scanty evidence. He made occasional appearances - which would not have paid his rent - until the early or mid 1770s. His obituary in *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 1 September 1805, stated:

'He quitted the stage nearly at the same time as [Garrick] for the private exercise of his profession as a Master.'

Garrick retired in 1776, by which time Augustin was well established as a Master, teaching private pupils and fellow professionals. John Browne of Norwich advertised in the *Norwich Gazette*, 2 March 1775: 'He has received instruction at Noverre's in London.' John Browne taught 'use of the small-sword', which we must hope he did not learn from the accident-prone Augustin.

At this time Augustin lived - and presumably practised - in Surrey Street, off the Strand, the address which appears in his petition for Naturalisation in 1771. When he first went there is not known. He was still there in 1773 and moved to Great Marlborough Street by 1784. Further details of his removals and addresses will appear as we progress.

I am puzzled as to how Augustin became 'professed', which implies apprenticeship of about seven years to another Master to learn ball dances. Did it take place on the Continent before 1755, or in London after 1757? No such apprenticeship appears in the National Archives index for 1710-1760. He may have

studied with a master informally or he may have relied on his Noverre background to establish himself in a private sphere. I suspect he took the latter course; we shall find him fudging the issue very neatly at a later date.

Of his Drury Lane appearances there is evidence of only one in the Theatre Museum archive, but the theatre archive at Harvard may contain more. On 20 March 1761, for the benefit night of Mrs Pritchard: *The Mistake*, principals: Garrick, Mr King, Mr Palmer, Mrs Yates, 'End of the play (by particular desire of several persons of Quality) a Minuet by Mr Noverre and Mrs Palmer.'

Several persons of Quality play their usual role as a 'puff'. Any of the Quality bespeaking a performance expected their name to appear on the bills. The minuet was performed by order of the management.

Augustin appeared with the company stars. Mrs Pritchard, large and mature, is known to us from Zoffany's 1748 painting of the Macbeths in which Garrick looks absurdly young and slight. Mrs Pritchard had an enthusiastic following but was apt to drown the stage in excessive emotion. Mrs Yates was a petulant diva. Tom King was a company stalwart. 'Gentleman' Palmer was the husband of Noverre's partner, the former Hannah Pritchard.

In 1755 Hannah Pritchard, aged 16, was sent to Paris by Garrick to study actors and dancers. She boarded with the Noverres from whom she no doubt received dance instruction, and returned to London with the ballet company. She made her debut as Juliet in 1756, played Beatrice to Garrick's Benedick, and danced a Minuet at a Command performance. She married John Palmer in 1761.

Augustin is more evident in Garrick's letters but not to his credit. In 1774 Garrick asked Augustin to persuade Jean-Georges to return to Drury Lane. Jean-Georges was very busy collecting patronage in Europe. His ballet *Endymion* had been performed for Frederick the Great in Neustadt in 1770. A large sum of money failed to coax him to London. Garrick vented his exasperation to Richard Cox: 'the distance between us, and the Brother's inexperience of treaty making may have occasioned some blunder.' Garrick sent an agent to negotiate with Jean-Georges, now in Milan. A season in 1776 was agreed upon but did not take place. Milan Opera house burned down. Jean-Georges went to Vienna, and in 1776 to Paris with a letter of recommendation from Empress Maria Theresa to her daughter - and his ex-pupil - Marie Antoinette. Instead of going to Drury Lane

(which was quite outclassed) Jean-Georges became, on Marie Antoinette's order, Maître de Ballet at the Opéra, ousting those who thought the post theirs and held for life. Moreover the new Maître was only half French, and a protestant. The dancers were outraged by his demands that they act - only to have the audience laugh at them. Ballets d'action were received with derision. Later Jean-Georges was manoeuvred into a 'resignation'.

Augustin made a final blunder in Garrick's affairs in 1777. Garrick asked Augustin, in Paris on a visit, to buy certain books. Augustin muddled his commission and Garrick wrote to another Paris-based friend 'to correct ye blunders which Noverre jun. has made'. In spite of his exasperation Garrick hired Augustin to teach his nieces to dance at about this time.

Augustin's fellow dancers at Drury Lane fall into two categories. First, dancing actors, of whom Garrick was a leading example, praised by diarist Syllas Neville: 'How well, and with what Agility Garrick dances.' All actors were expected to sing and dance.

Secondly, those hired to dance. The men were often also dancing masters, as in Augustin's case - they would not have made a living otherwise. Mr Aldridge, on the bills c.1765 was probably Robert Aldridge, dancer/dancing master in Dublin c.1758, who later retired to Edinburgh and opened a dancing school. There were a number of Italian dancers: Signor and Signora Giorgi and Signor Taffoni. Garrick recommended 'Mr Giorgi' as dancing master for a Hackney boarding school on 6 March 1770. Signors Guidetti and Tioli appeared in the 1760s.

On 21 February 1769 the Giorgis appeared in 'A new Comic Dance' with Sieur Dagueville, a member of the D'Egville family of dancers/ballet masters moonlighting from the King's Theatre. Management deplored moonlighting; performers were forced to do it to make a living.

Women dancers led a precarious existence and little is known of some of them. Miss/Mlle Margaret Hidou/Hidoux from Paris appeared in 1770. Miss Tetley was Elizabeth Tetley who danced at Drury Lane from 1762 to 1771 when she became the second wife of Garrick's brother George, whose mistress she had been for many years. Mrs King, née Mary Baker, joined the company as a dancer with ambitions to act, always on hand to stand in for Mesdames Abingdon and Yates

when they were sulking, and always to be relied upon for an embarrassingly bad performance.

At Garrick's farewell performance on 10 June 1776 Signor Giorgi, Mr Slingsby (another moonlighter) and Mrs Sutton performed a 'Grand Garland Dance'. It is clear that dance at Drury Lane was incidental and not serious, a world away from Jean-Georges' ballets d'action.

I suspect that Augustin may have been involved in teaching the in-house children's troupe nurtured by Garrick for some time. Jean-Georges observed them with a jaundiced eye and wrote untactfully to Garrick on 7 May 1755:

'I saw ... twelve children whom M. Levier was making dance.

I would ask you not to neglect them. I will need them and make good use of them. I would like you to give them a Master ... your French supernumerary would be competent to teach them the steps necessary to my ballets.'

Usually billed as 'the CHILDREN' the in-house troupe danced with the Noverre company, but it was the in-house troupe alone who appeared on 15, 16, 29 and 31 December, the latter by royal Command, in 'The Pantomime Dance by the CHILDREN'. Given the season, they probably danced a harlequinade.

*The Lilliputian Sailors* of 1755 inspired Garrick's satire *Lilliput*, performed 17 times in 1756 by the CHILDREN and a tall adult, Astley Bransby, as Gulliver. The house was titillated and the critics were disgusted. The *Theatrical Examiner* deplored it: 'trifling, indecent, immoral, debauching the minds of infants', all the charges which would be levelled at *Bugsy Malone* in the 20th century.

The CHILDREN made fewer appearances as a troupe after such a sour reception, but the nursery continued to exist as a training ground and source of Cupid, Mamillius and Lady Macduff's children. They would have been taught to dance and, aside from M. Levier, who better to teach them than Augustin.

There may be a Noverre link with a projected dancing school at the King's Theatre, advertised on 2 March 1781: 'an Academy for Dancers for the Stage under M. Leger, Professed Dancing Master, Member of the Royal Academy in Paris.' In 1781/82 the ballet master at the King's was Jean-Georges, an old associate of M. Leger. It would be strange if Jean-Georges did not influence plans for the academy, but he left at the end of that season, the King's went into

administration, and, although it continued to function as a theatre, the academy seems not to have got beyond a plan.

Augustin, meanwhile, had left the theatre and was a reputable dancing master. He had his portrait painted during his Drury Lane years and it now hangs with family portraits in the Noverre Room at the Assembly House in Norwich. The painter is unidentifiable and it is in a rather naive style. Augustin wears a smart black suit, a tricorne pulled down to his eyebrows, and an air of mischief.

Ch2 to Maggie, 08 12 08; and again 17 12 08

### 3 Augustin's London practice and publications

Like other dancing masters, Augustin published books of dances. One is in the British Library, another is described by Lynham, and they give us some indication of Augustin's status. There may have been more dance collections, now lost.

c.1950 Lynham traced a copy of a book then in the possession of Mrs Farebrother, a Noverre descendent, but now apparently lost: '*Twelve Cotillons, two favourite Allemandes and six Minuets* adapted by Augustin Noverre, Marlborough Street, London. Printed for William Napier, corner of Lancaster Court, Strand, Price 2/6'.

Lynham names two of the cotillons, which take their titles from Jean-Georges' ballets, hence the adaptation. Grove gives the date of the ballets but nobody now knows who composed the music.

*La Fontaine de Jouvence*, from the ballet of that name first performed in Paris in 1754 and in which Augustin may have danced. It was to have been shown at Drury Lane in 1755 but its wreaths, cradle, and very young Cupid were overtaken by riots.

*La Toilette de Venus* (the ballet title adds: *ou les ruses de l'amour*) was a ballet d'action first performed in Lyons, 1758.

Lynham names three minuets, each one a tribute to Augustin's pupils and patrons: *The Hon. Miss Thynne's Minuet*, *Lady Charlotte Bertie's Minuet*, *Miss Garrick's Minuet*. Miss Thynne was the eldest daughter of a branch of the courtier Thynne family, but which branch it is impossible to say. Charlotte Bertie was a daughter of the Earl of Lindsey. She was a court habituée c.1787 and a box subscriber at the King's Theatre in 1787 and at the Pantheon in 1791.

*Miss Garrick's Minuet* is really a tribute to David Garrick. Miss Garrick is either his sister or his niece as he had no children of his own. His sisters can be ruled out; Jane d.1746, Magdelene d.1762 and never left Lichfield; Merial married in 1754. Miss Garrick is, therefore, the elder Garrick niece, Arabella (Bell) b.1753. Her sister would correctly be Miss Catherine Garrick (Kitty) b.1756. The childless David Garrick and his wife took a lively interest in their colleagues' children. When Colman's three-year-old son visited them in 1766 Garrick wrote: 'He is to make love to my niece Kitty and a plumb pudding.'

Arabella, Catherine and their three brothers, children of Garrick's brother George, were treated by their uncle as his own. He sent his nephews to Eton and gave his nieces a fashionable education. In 1771 Fanny Burney described Arabella as 'modest, reserved, quiet', while the beauty, Catherine, was 'all animation, spirit and openness'. In 1773 the sisters, aged 20 and 17, were sent to a select Paris boarding school run by Mme Descombes in the Faubourg St Honoré, where 'finishing' threatened to turn into one of Uncle David's comedies. Arabella was pursued by an officer of dragoons. Clandestine letters were intercepted by Mme Descombes and sent to Garrick who ordered his nieces home in June 1775.

The dragoon continued his postal pursuit of Arabella, who kept him dangling until 1778 when she married Captain Frederick Schaw late of the 60th Regiment of Foot. Arabella died in 1819. Catherine married a Mr Payne, but her marriage and death dates are unknown.

Augustin probably taught both sisters; they were treated equally by their uncle and known as 'the girls', whose cheeky response was to call him 'Fatty'. As to when Augustin taught them: a little polish before going to Paris, perhaps, or between 1775 and 1778.

The order of parts of the book: cotillons rather than minuets and no country dances suggests that it was compiled during the rage for Cotillon balls. It was published after Augustin moved to Great Marlborough Street between 1773 and 1784, but the dances would have been collected over a number of years. Miss Garrick may have become Mrs Schaw by its publication date. I don't think the combined information fixes either Augustin's removal date or the publication date which is not given by Lynham, but I think it was the earlier of the two extant books.

The British Library holds *A new March, Six New Minuets, six new Cotillons and two new Country Dances*, 3/6, to be had at Longman and Broderip, 26 Cheapside and T. Straights [the engraver] 138 St Martin's Lane. The BL dates the book '1785?'. Longman and Broderip sold musical instruments and were music publishers of repute. From 1785 they published annual collections of *Favourite Airs and Opera Dances*, making music from the King's Theatre available for domestic use in piano/violin/flute arrangements. Their customers were King's Theatre box-holders from whom they collected subscriptions. For a provincial

comparison with *A New March*, etc, the *Norwich Mercury* advertised annual collections of 12 or 24 country dances at 1/-, rising to 2/- by 1800.

On the title page of *A New March* is Augustin's address: 48 Great Marlborough Street (present-day W.1, running east from Regent Street). It was then a smart address; Augustin was doing well. By 1838, Charles Darwin lived in the street and described it as 'dingy'. Jean-Georges lived at no.40 during his 1787-89 seasons at the King's Theatre.

The book contains no dedication; Augustin already had patronage and paid tribute by dedicating dances to his patrons. Nor did he need to finance the book by raising subscriptions.

Some of the music is attributed to two popular composers. Unattributed pieces may be Augustin's own fiddle tunes or 'borrowed'. He did not raid his brother's ballets for this collection. The dances, spelled as printed are:

*March*: perhaps an entry for a pupils' ball. The composer, 'Mr Bartlémon' was François Hippolyte Bartélemon, of whom, more anon.

*Lady F. Finch's Menuet*, music by 'Kotzwara' - Frantisek Kotzwara, a Bohemian with a lurid reputation.

*The Hon. Miss Thynne's Menuet* by Kotzwara

*Miss Mawbey's Menuet*, unattributed

*Lady H Grey's Menuet*, by Kotzwara

*Miss Haynes' Menuet*, by Kotzwara

*Mr Noverre's Menuet*, by 'the most gentlemanly minuet dancer' as his obituary claimed. The minuets are not notated but composed for the accepted sequence of figures.

The Cotillons are unattributed but notated: *La Belle Assemble*, *Les Jolie Dame*, *La Jolie Flamande*, *L'Academie*, *Avril*, *Les Delies de Windsor*. The titles have been garbled by somebody with poor French. Augustin's spoken English was never good; cries of 'Goddem! Goddem!' indicated that he was lost for a translation.

The county dances are unattributed but notated: *Miss Gregg's Delight* and *Miss Stevenson's Fancy*.

Miss Thynne, Lady F. Finch and Lady H Grey belong to courtier families. Miss Mawbey was a politician's daughter. Augustin may also have taught their brothers,

but without paying flattering tribute. *Les Delices de Windsor* - as it should appear - looks as if Augustin was angling for court patronage but in this respect he was not his brother's equal.

François Bartélemon, b.1741 in Bordeaux, d.1808 in Surrey, was a composer and violinist, and head of a family of musicians. He came to London in 1764, worked at Drury lane, became a friend of Haydn and a member of the Society of French Migrants. He composed operas, burletta and incidental music. He became band-leader and composer at the King's Theatre in association with Jean-Georges.

Frantisek Koczwara, b.Prague c.1750, d.London 1791, was an itinerant musician who worked in London from c.1776. Like Bartélemon he played in the Concerts of Ancient Music patronised by George III ('Ancient', here, means more than 20 years old). In 1754 he composed *The Battle of Prague*, a popular concert item. He played double bass in the King's Theatre band. He was not a respectable connection for either of the brothers Noverre; he practised 'unusual vices' and died from auto-erotic asphyxiation whilst misbehaving in a brothel. His female accomplice was convicted of murder and hanged.

#### 4 Jean-Georges Noverre at the King's Theatre in the 1780s

In 1781 Jean-Georges was forced to 'retire' from the Paris Opéra but secured from the management an annuity. The Opéra burned down in June 1781 and the company relocated. He was now free to spend a season at the King's Theatre in London and he lived at 40 Great Marlborough Street, which might indicate that Augustin had moved to no.48 by this date. The brothers must have met often, but their private lives were exactly that; we know more about their professional than their personal lives. They cannot always have figured as the grumpy elder brother and the blundering sibling.

Jean-Georges brought with him a mainly French company which caused no xenophobic outrage at the King's, but his serious and tragic ballets disconcerted those who expected ballet to be a frivolous diversion. His ideal was that ballet should be an independent art and not the common embellishment of opera: divertissements at the end of each act and a more substantial piece as a finale. Worse still, opera house managements hitched inappropriate ballets to opera, which is why Mozart wrote his own ballet music for *Idomeneo*.

Mozart and Jean-Georges worked together to try to integrate opera and ballet, but they also failed to live up to their own ideals. Mozart's *Les Petits Riens* was intended as a ballet to accompany *Alexandre et Roxanne*. The score was planned with Jean-Georges, but the two works were never performed together. At the King's in 1781/82 Jean-Georges dispensed with Mozart's score and staged a new *Petits Riens* with music by Barthélemon, the King's band leader. So much for consistency.

*Alceste*, a serious ballet paired with the tragic opera *Giulio Bruto*, was received by the boxes with rapture. Jean-Georges modestly refused to take a curtain call in deference to London custom. The critics, however, were not so enraptured; Bowkitt of the *Morning Herald* wrote: 'Can anything be more ridiculous than to die dancing.' Competitors mocked what they could not achieve; a burlesque version was performed at the Royal Circus.

Four more ballets d'action were performed, including *Rinaldo and Armida* with the final immolation scene; *Adela of Ponthieu* in which a duel with axes and broadswords required coaching from Mr Angelo, the best riding and fencing master

in London. *Medea and Jason* was a rebuke to Vestris sen. who was Jason in Jean-Georges' original production and who had presented a pirated version at the King's in the previous season and so was first to present ballet d'action in London.

Jean-Georges did not neglect light entertainment. He devised dances and costumes for a Masquerade on 24 January 1782, commended by the *Morning Chronicle*: '... if Mr Noverre showed his skill in composing the dances he did not betray his taste in devising the dresses which were extremely well executed.' The corps de ballet had already been praised for their 'decent and uniform costumes', then an unusual regularity. Attention to detail included a fully lit auditorium for a rehearsal 'as for a performance'. Patrons demanded lighting during performance so that they could read their libretti - and study each other's dress. The tin-man, who managed the lamps, was paid per thousand lamps. Principal dancers, unlike singers, demanded full lighting for their benefit nights. Ballet was an expensive art. Masquerades were always 'brilliantly lit', hence the attention to costume. When the King's went into administration in the following season less money was spent on ballet. The ballet masters, le Picq and Dauberval, were a poor replacement for Jean-Georges. The *Morning Post* found le Picq's ballets 'pantomimical ... Lacking in grace and elegance'. His *Macbeth*, with Barthelémon's music based on Scottish folk songs, pandered to the boxes, whose occupants had also seen Mrs Siddons as the Scottish Lady that year.

By 1787, ballet standards at the King's had fallen to the equal of Drury Lane novelties: 'a fandango by Miss de Camp and Master d'Egville.' Children were cheaper. 'Let us have un ballet d'action!' begged *The Morning Post*.

In November 1787 Jean-Georges was persuaded to return although he protested that his health was poor and he was unable to compose dances for a masquerade. He presented *Adela of Ponthieu* - the duel filled the boxes and the coffers. On 29 January 1788 *L'Amour et Psyche* was such a success that it impressed the dance-unconverted Charles Burney: 'The effect of this ballet was very extraordinary.' Jean-Georges was carried on stage on the shoulders of his dancers to receive an ovation - and then criticised for offending London mores, although it was normal practice in Paris.

At the end of the season, Jean-Georges and his dancers borrowed from the Opéra returned to Paris. The dancers were subjected to mean-spirited reviews.

Jean-Georges, looking for dancers for his next season at the King's, was involved in a plot to oust Gardel sen. from the Opéra. D'Auvergne of the Opéra management described Jean-Georges as 'grumpy ... drunk as a cab-driver.'

Jean-Georges returned to the King's for the 1788/89 season and lived, as usual, at 40 Great Marlborough Street. His ballet company was inferior because the King's refused to afford better dancers. Once again he found himself the target of riots, not because he and his dancers were French, but because they were 'wretched ... like heavy cavalry.' On 7 March 1789 'the ladies screamed and fainted ... the gentlemen became riotous, trashed the scenery and broke every lamp in the house.' The audience demanded that Jean-Georges answer for inferior entertainment. He replied:

'Point d'argent, point de ballet. La troupe ... n'est pas suffisante pour vous donner un spectacle très brillant ... la faute n'est pas à moi.'

You may well ask: was there no opera in this opera house? Answer 1: Yes, especially in the boxes. Answer 2: Yes, but the manager, Gallini, and he an ex-dancer, did not skimp on opera productions.

This episode demonstrates that the audience had an informed interest in dance. And it was not new; Dr Johnson's response to a night at the King's in Vestris' 1780/81 season is telling:

'Sir, I went to the Opera. Yes sir, I went to the Opera to see Vestris dance. I like to see any man do anything that he does better than all the world beside.'

In 1789 Gallini was forced to make amends; he hired Mlle Guimard from the Paris Opéra for 650 guineas for the remainder of the season. Guimard, not in her first youth, was dubbed 'the grandmother of the Graces' and caricatured as Mlle Grimhard.

Jean-Georges presented *Les Jalousies du Serail* to a barely placated house. By 21 May, when the ballet was included in his benefit night, he had left the country, ceding his benefit rights to Gallini. He missed the finale of this melodrama; on 17 June the King's Theatre burned down. (He seems to have quitted several posts leaving a slow fuse to act behind him.)

The company at the King's relocated. Mlle Guimard was offered a smaller contract and less pay. She became litigious and was sacked. She returned to Paris

and retirement. Jean-Georges would return to the re-built theatre in 1792 and his story will continue in due course.

CCh4 corrections made 23 01 09

## 5 Augustin's provincial practice and his family

I can find no proof of the legend that Augustin had a practice in Norwich. C E Noverre claims that Augustin 'took a house in The Chantry' and taught dancing at the Assembly House in 1755, which would defeat the object of his being in hiding at the time. He lived in The Chantry from 1803 to 1805, but there is no evidence that he taught at the Assembly House at any time. Chéruzel says that Augustin divided his activities between London and Norwich. No proof is offered, but Augustin did travel between London and Norwich when establishing his son Francis in Norwich. Lynham says Augustin retired to Norwich in 1776 and taught dancing at the Assembly House. Augustin retired from the stage at that date but he did not formally retire to Norwich until 1797. There is no proof that he practised publicly in Norwich at any time; there are no advertisements in the press until 1793 when he advertised on Francis' behalf and gave the impression that he was known in Norwich.

He may have run a provincial practice in the summer while his clients were away from London, but if so it was a private practice. Lynham spoke to Noverre descendants who repeated C E Noverre's claim: Augustin 'taught the Nobility of Norfolk' of which the known example is the teaching of the Windham children. He did this by personal recommendations by Garrick, and the Windhams may have recommended Augustin to their Norfolk gentry friends. But I suspect the teaching took place in or near London in the winter seasons. From the evidence of his dance collections, and aside from his teaching of other dancing masters, he seems to have taught only girls and 'young ladies'. Lynham quotes a Norfolk skipping rhyme:

Mr Noverre came from France

To teach the natives how to dance

In the London version of the rhyme 'natives' becomes 'ladies'. Augustin's practice was of a private nature; I don't think he ever held public (advertised) dancing classes in any location.

William Windham's connection with the Noverres requires one more note. Windham was an excellent linguist, fluent in French and, therefore, a useful go-

between. It may have been he who suggested and arranged for the safe-house in Norwich in 1755.

C E Noverre either did not know all of Augustin's life story, or he wrote less than he knew, and with errors. Neither he nor Lynham nor Chéruzel mentions Augustin's three marriages or his first and second sons: Augustin David who died young, and Charles, a London dancing master. I am grateful to Ian Dye for calling my attention to Charles and to Mrs Augustin the third. Further research expanded Augustin's family history but added little to the tale of his professional life.

Family Search website lists Augustin's marriage c.1767 to 'Mrs Augustin Noverre born 1747 in England'. This is 'Mary, wife of Augustin Noverre' whose portrait hangs in Norwich Assembly House. She cannot be Augustin's 'épouse' of 1755 when she was only eight years old. In 1767 she was 20 and Augustin was 38. I cannot find any details of the 'épouse' or of any children of that marriage.

Mary's portrait is by an anonymous artist and undated. Her hairstyle suggests c.1770. She wears oddments from a studio or stage wardrobe: pink sleeves, olive robe, ermine tippet and a headdress trying to be à la Turque but achieving English Bonnet. Her expression is disconcertingly blank.

Her brown hair is left to us in a mourning pendant given to Norfolk Museums in 1958 and now in the Costume and Textile collection in Norwich. The pendant raises questions. It is made of porcelain. On the front an urn and a weeping willow are painted in brown and framed in plaited brown hair. A gold inscription reads: 'Augn. David Noverre ob.26 November 1778 Ae 14.' On the back, also set in brown hair, is the inscription 'Mrs Noverre ob.12 July 1781 Ae 28.' This was first a mourning pendant for her son, worn by Mary, later also a mourning pendant for Mary. The inscribed 'Mrs' is not a worn version of 'Mary'. It may have belonged to a servant, perhaps Elizabeth Stevens 'my old and faithful servant' whom Augustin left to the care of his children in his Will.

The death dates are probably correct. If Mary was 28 in 1781 she was born in 1753. If Augn. David was 14 in 1778 he was born in 1764 when according to the pendant Mary was 11 years old, which is nonsense. If Family Search is correct, Mary, born c1747, was about 34 when she died and Augn. David was born when she was 17, three years before her marriage. Family Search is notoriously

'approximate'; the marriage may have taken place in 1764. Mary was buried in the churchyard of St Mary's Church, Teddington, Middlesex. Her headstone is inscribed 'Mary wife of Augustus Noverre, Esq 1781'. Augustus may be a mistake on the part of British History Online, the source of this detail, which is attended by further mistakes, but I am sure Augustin is the widower in question as the date tallies with other information.

But why Teddington when her marital parish was either St Clement Dane or St James Westminster after the move from Surrey Street. At this period Teddington was both a healthy retreat for London invalids and a fashionable place for an out-of-town villa. Mary may have been in poor health, or Augustin had acquired a villa in a fashionable location as a retreat from his work.

Augn. David may have been named in honour of Garrick who may have been his godfather. The pendant is the sole evidence of Augn. David's existence.

Family Search has a birth entry for Augustin and Mary's second child, Jane Louisa, born 'in England c1768'. We shall meet her again in Norwich. Her burial, registered in Taverham parish in 1808, gives her age as 40, i.e. born 1768.

Ancestry.com lists the birth of Louisa Mary Noverre in Norwich in 1768. There is no verifying entry in any Norwich parish register, but she may have been baptised elsewhere. She was probably born early in 1768 and did not survive. Jane Louisa, born later that year, was given the name of her dead sibling and always known as Louisa. The birth in Norwich raises the possibility that Mary was a native of Norwich and went home for the birth. No marriage entry for Augustin and Mary has been found in any Norwich parish register.

Their eldest surviving son, Charles Cornelius, was born in 1770, probably in London. His baptism was not registered in Norwich. He became a London dancing master, practising at 40 Great Marlborough Street. In 1793 the *Directory of the Nobility* - 'of' meaning 'for' - listed 'Noverre 40 Great Marlborough Street' without further details. Augustin at no.48 was not listed; he may have ceased to practise and he did not use directories to advertise himself.

It is possible that the 'Noverre' at no.40 was Jean-Georges, who stayed there when working at the King's. In 1793 he was marooned in England as an enemy alien, demoted from chevalier to citizen at home and known as 'Sir George Noverre' in England. He did not return to France until 1795.

The Noverres' occupation of 40 and 48 is curious. Augustin became a leaseholder in Norwich. He may have leased 40 and 48 and let 40 when not required by his brother until it became Charles' home and practice address.

Charles may have been trained by his father, but he learned advertising elsewhere. He is in *Holden's Universal Directory 1802*, *Holden's Triennial Directory 1805*, and *Holden's Annual Directory 1811*. He is both Cox and Box: 'Chas. Noverre, dancing master' in Trades and Professions, and 'Charles Noverre Esq' in Private Residences, both at 40 Great Marlborough Street. I have not found him in any other directories, Holden's or others.

On 12 November 1795 Charles married Anna Tadwell of Craven Hill, Paddington by special licence obtained on the previous day. They married at Charles' parish church, St James, Westminster. Perhaps the Tadwell parents disapproved of the match. Charles and Anna were of age and may have wished not to wait out the banns period. A notice of the marriage was placed in *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Ancestry.com lists Anna Matilda Noverre who died in Clerkenwell in 1851 and who may be Mrs Charles. Charles died between 1851 and 1861. They had four or possibly five children.

C E Noverre omitted Charles from his account of the family but bestowed a son of the same name upon Francis Noverre, a puzzle to which we shall return. Lynham also omits Charles, which is strange because, once found, Charles is quite conspicuous.

It would be logical for Augustin to establish an older son in London and then a younger son, Francis, in Norwich. If the same process was used in both cases, Charles would have been in practice c1790, aged 20.

On 8 February 1771 Augustin's petition for Naturalisation was presented to the House of Lords by Thomas Noel, Viscount Wentworth. An intermediary was involved and I suspect he was that champion networker David Garrick. The petition was passed on 20 February: 'given as desired'. A clerk has scribbled 'soit fait comme il est desire', at the top of the document.

In the petition Augustin presents himself as a gentleman and a protestant. His profession is not mentioned. He had taken the Oath of Allegiance and he was now to be regarded as if he was English by birth and born to English parents. He might

now hold property, except from the Crown, and he could leave property to his heirs. He was barred from holding civic office or military rank.

Naturalisation may have been a prudent step towards providing for his family. His address, as it appears on the petition was 'Surry Street in the Strand'. The Noverres evidently rented a house there, which included Augustin's practice room, but now they could lease or buy property. The petition names Augustin's place of origin, Paris, and his parents, Hans George Noverre and Maria his wife.

Augustin's youngest son, Francis, was born on 19 July 1773 and baptised at St Clement Danes, the Noverres' parish church: they were still at Surrey Street.

During the rest of that decade Augustin taught private pupils and others of his own profession, including John Browne of Norwich. In 1777 he bungled Garrick's commission in Paris where he may have been visiting his brother and learning the latest dances. By the 1780s he was publishing collections of dances and apparently well-to-do professionally and financially.

His private life was less fortunate; Mary died on 12 July 1781. On 10 January 1784 he married his third wife, Sarah Stow, a widow, by special licence obtained on 8 January. Both parties were parishioners of St James Westminster where they married. This tells us that Augustin had moved to Great Marlborough Street by this date. Yes, another special licence, and there are more to come in the family. Perhaps it was just a matter of expedience. Nothing more is known of Sarah, apart from her death on 3 March 1786, notified in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, to which I think Augustin must have subscribed.

In the early 1790s Augustin set up his sons in practice, no mean undertaking as they both began practice in fine accommodation. Augustin was clearly better off than the average dancing master and he may have had a commercial sideline although there is not a hint of what it was. Property is a possibility. but only post-naturalisation. Jean-Georges was also a distiller, though not very successful - that explains the 'drunk' and 'grumpy' allegations. Francis Noverre would later have several commercial interests in Norwich.

At last, in 1793, we have evidence of Augustin in Norwich, advertising Francis' practice - the subject of the next chapter. Augustin gave his address: at Mrs Milligan's, 2 Chapelfield Lane, where Francis, too, would lodge for a short time.

Augustin calls himself 'Mr Noverre of London', to which he soon returned. There is a suggestion that he was well known in Norwich, but this may be 'puffing'.

In 1797 Augustin left London to live with Francis at 2 Assembly House Yard. They were jointly assessed for Poor Tax in the St Stephen's Churchwardens Accounts. No address is given, but Francis' first payment is noted 'late Ashill'. The relevant directory lists: Ashill, wine merchant, 2 Assembly House Yard, Chapelfield Lane. In 1803 Augustin moved to The Chantry and father and son were separately assessed for Poor Tax.

The Noverre addresses lay within a hundred yard stretch of Chapelfield Lane between St Stephen's Church and the Assembly House. Mrs Milligan's was next to the church, Assembly House Yard entrance was four doors away, The Chantry a few steps further with its back to the Assembly House. 'Development' has obliterated all the addresses unless Augustin's house in The Chantry is the present day Chantry Cottage, Chantry Lane.

This leaves us no wiser about Augustin's professional life in Norwich. If he came to Norwich between 1755 and 1793 he stayed in lodgings, worked privately, did not advertise his presence and left no official trace of himself.

## 6 Francis Noverre arrives in Norwich

The following notice appeared in the *Norwich Mercury* on 31 August 1793:

DANCING ACADEMY. Mr Noverre of London, wishing to establish his SON in Norwich, and having been greatly encouraged by his Friends to such an undertaking, begs leave to acquaint the Ladies and Gentlemen of this City and County that his son, Mr F. Noverre, has just arrived from the Continent (where he has been for some time under the tuition of his uncle Sir George Noverre) and intends opening an Academy for young Ladies and Gentlemen on or before Michaelmas next, of which timely notice will be given by Mr Noverre, whose present address is at Mrs Milligan's in St. Stephen's. Mr Noverre has not a doubt but that his son's assiduity in his profession will give perfect satisfaction to any Lady or Gentleman who may honour him with their support.'

First, the useful facts: Augustin has a temporary address in Norwich. His base is London, which enhances his status and the tone of the advertisement. His encouraging friends may have been exactly that, or a 'puff' commonly used in advertisements - as anyone reading it would have known.

Augustin is apparently very deft for one who was not at ease with spoken English, but he may have read and written English fluently. I suspect Francis wrote the notice, but it carries more weight with Augustin's name on it.

Jean-Georges' English alias seems to have been generated by his family, not his theatre managers. His niece, Louisa, used it when annotating a letter from her uncle congratulating her on her marriage. The use of the anglicised version in 1793 is understandable, the sansculottes have taken to regicide and are to be loathed, but emigrés and distinguished aliens currently received sympathy in England.

And England is where 'Sir George' has been since December 1792. In the current state of hostilities he is interned as an enemy alien, and he lives with his nephew Charles in Great Marlborough Street.

Francis may have 'just arrived from the Continent' - but not from his uncle's recent tutelage. Possibly he has not come from France, where he, too, would have been interned awaiting an exchange or in search of a sea-captain to be bribed for a passage home.

Where and when might Francis' tuition fit into his uncle's recent history? At the end of the 1788/89 season at the King's Jean-Georges went home to Triel, Seine et Oise. The King's burned down and opera/ballet in London went through three years of chaos during which time Jean-Georges remained in France. This is the most likely time for Francis to have been taught by his uncle 'on the continent'.

When Jean-Georges returned to the re-built King's in December 1792 cross-channel travel was permitted. Jean-Georges and his French dancers travelled on valid passports. The dancers from the Paris Opéra had formal leave which two of them, the Hilligsberg sisters, abused by remaining in England for good.

The King's season opened on 26 January 1793. On 2 February the English press reported the execution of Louis XVI and London reacted with revulsion and monarchism. On 16 February the King's presented an additional divertissement by Jean-Georges: a 'Pas de trois et de quatre' to the 'Favourite Air of God Save the King, with variations'. Jean-Georges, who had enjoyed Marie Antoinette's patronage, must have feared for himself and for his family in France, but he did not keep his head down; on 23 April he presented the spectacular *Iphigénie en Aulide* with its huge cast and processions, after which he took a curtain call and was crowned with laurels to great acclaim.

When the season ended in June Jean-Georges was interned 'for the duration'. Madame Noverre, in France, was hard put to prevent the authorities - who had issued Jean-Georges with a passport - from requisitioning his property, including the Opéra annuity, and declaring him a traitor. Jean-Georges insisted to the authorities that he travelled legitimately and intended to return home when it was possible. He did not return until 1795.

If Francis was 'on the Continent' and under his uncle's tuition before December 1792 he may have returned to London with Jean-Georges. Therefore 'he has been for some time' in London, plotting a crafty advertisement with his father, in which his uncle may have colluded. More to the point, after the King's season ended in June Jean-Georges, marooned in London, would have had time to teach his nephew, if, in fact, he ever did so.

There is no hard evidence of Francis' early life before his arrival in Norwich as a professional dancing master. When his uncle was living in Great Marlborough Street in 1788, Francis would have been 15 years old, in training for his profession and ideally placed for extra tuition from his uncle, but I suspect that his Master was his father. Dancing masters often had training in stage dancing, but there is no evidence that Francis appeared with his uncle's ballet company; it wasn't his milieu.

So why all the persiflage? The advertisement in the *Mercury* was just an elaborate 'puff'.

Francis was twenty when he came to Norwich. He boarded for a time with Mrs Milligan. Chase's *Directory*, 1783, gives her address, as previously noted, but does not include her in the list of boarding-house keepers. Her status is not clear. By the end of the year Francis moved to Assembly House Yard; his first Poor Tax payment was made at Christmas 1793. His sister Louisa may have lived with him as housekeeper; on 11 February 1798 at St Stephen's Church she married Richard Mackenzie Bacon of Taverham, proprietor/editor of the *Norwich Mercury*. Francis, who gained a useful brother-in-law, was a witness of the marriage together with Harriet Brunton whom he would shortly marry. The third witness was H. Day whom I cannot identify, except for his membership of a family active in civic affairs. We have to assume that Augustin was present to give his daughter away.

Francis reinforced his professional beginnings in Norwich with an advertisement in the *Mercury* on 20 September 1793. The style is so similar to that of Augustin's advertisement that I am sure Francis wrote both of them. Mr F. Noverre has the honour of acquainting the Ladies and Gentlemen ... that his DANCING ACADEMY commences at the Assembly Rooms on Tuesday next for young Ladies and Gentlemen, and will be continued on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 2 o'clock. Terms 1 guinea per quarter and 1 guinea entrance, but no entrance will be required of those who have been taught by other masters. Private tuition and schools attended. Mr Noverre is to be bespoken with at Mrs Milligan's.' The terms quoted are standard for the period. 1 guinea per quarter covered two lessons a week by the early 1800s.

Behind the genteel suavity a battle was being fought. Norwich already had dancing masters in plenty and while they kept the rules regarding fees they

poached each others' territory like a set of pirates. The practice of longest standing was that of Edward Christian whose father, grandfather and great-grandfather had run a dancing school at 3 Redwell Street. They had succeeded to the practice originated by John Boseley dating back to 1693. Francis Noverre challenged a century-old practice which had once been fashionable but was now in decline. It was also encroached upon by John Browne, Augustin's ex-pupil, who had recently moved to 12 Redwell Street. I suspect that the Noverres knew what was going on in their own profession in Norwich. Augustin and Francis may have done a recce before Augustin's notice appeared in the press. They knew where the weak spot was and they were in the fortunate position of being able to afford the best and most fashionable premises.

The Christians had always held classes and scholars' balls at their own premises. The Assembly House was a smarter address at a higher rent. There is no precedent for the event advertised by Edward Christian in the *Mercury* on 22 September 1793.

'Mr Christian's Annual Ball for his Pupils, Friday next, Assembly House, 6pm. Tickets 6/- from Mrs Back at the Rooms.'

After this additional expense Edward retreated to his own premises from which he issued a defensive challenge in the *Mercury* on 28 September.

'MR CHRISTIAN having been solicited to open a private ACADEMY for giving instruction in REELS, SCOTCH STEPS and present modes of COUNTRY DANCES, begs leave to inform ... he will for 3 months give attendance 2 evenings every week at his own rooms for that purpose. NB. 1 evening for ladies, 1 for gentlemen.'

Segregation seems counterproductive but it was common practice in dancing schools.

No further capital letters were fired by either side. Edward remained at Redwell Street in a practice which lingered. In 1794 he advertised in the *Mercury*. 'Mr Christian denies he intends to retire.' (He was then only 44, but twice Francis' age). Shortly afterwards John Browne issued a copy-cat notice. Evidently their pupils were disappearing in the direction of young Mr Noverre. When John Browne died in 1799 debts were called in; the pupils who stayed with him failed to pay him.

Francis held the high ground and the best premises. He advertised in the *Mercury* on 20 September 1794:

‘Mr Noverre has the honour of acquainting Ladies and Gentlemen ... his FIRST ANNUAL BALL, since his establishment here will be held at the Assembly Rooms, 25 September. Tickets 5/- from Mr Noverre, St. Stephens, near the Playhouse Plain. No admittance without a ticket. Room opened at 5pm. Dancing to begin at 6.30 pm.’

Francis’ direction is confusing; it could be domestic (Assembly House Yard), or professional. Playhouse Plain was the area in front of the Assembly House and not, perversely, the area in front of the neighbouring theatre.

Francis won the opening skirmish and the battle. Edward Christian moved his diminishing practice to 11 Redwell Street a few years before he died in 1804. In 1805 Mr Bailey bought the practice from Edward’s widow and moved it upmarket to 1 St. Stephen’s Street, where his galleried Great Room was often let for concerts. When Bailey retired in 1812 Francis bought his practice to add to his own and employed Bailey’s assistant, Mr Harwood. In 1813 Harwood defected to set up his own practice in Sir Benjamin Wrench’s Court. This well-sounding address, serially used by dancing masters, was actually the Great Room of the Lobster Inn. Francis remained in practice at the Assembly House, a location for which, once established, no further ‘puffs’ were needed.

## 7 Francis Noverre at home and at work

In the previous chapter I located Assembly House Yard as if it were a proved fact. In fact I think I have located it, after a great deal of help, and I stand by my assertion.

Assembly House Yard has disappeared to the extent of not even appearing on lists of disappeared Norwich Yards - re-named, rebuilt, blitzed and demolished. It was in St Stephen's parish, near the Assembly House and the theatre and it opened off Chapelfield Lane, which was later re-named as Theatre Street. The O.S. map of 1883, scale 1:500, shows a block of buildings on the corner of Theatre Street and The Chantry (later Chantry Lane). There is a yard in the middle of the block with access to Theatre Street and to Chantry Lane.

A photograph from George Plunkett's archive shows the block of buildings well before they were demolished c.1964 (Figure 7.1). An old road sign to The Chantry is still present. On the Theatre Street side of the block, reading from L. (St Stephen's church) to R, there are two arched entries, the rectangular entry to 8 Theatre Street, and then an entry to a yard of Georgian buildings then known as Chantry Court. (Figure 7.2 . This may have been a gentrification contemporary with Mr Christian's yard at 3 Redwell Street becoming Clement Court in 1816. In both cases a new street frontage hides older buildings accessed by an archway with a grille in its head. Chantry Court did not get a dated keystone.

A photograph of the interior of Chantry Court shows one dwelling on each side and one ahead, facing the entry, which was then the Mass Radiography Unit: it has a handsome Georgian entrance, a tablet between the lintel and pediment which may have held a signboard. I think this was 2 Assembly House Yard (Figure 7.3). A map of 1957 shows that the Radiography Unit occupied the width of the block, the entrance section is the middle third. Eileen Pennington, who remembers visiting the Radiography Unit, recalls a handsome interior with panelling.

Returning to the Theatre Street photograph: to the right of the yard entrance is 10 Theatre Street, once occupied by Mr and Mrs Back, the managers/caretakers of the Assembly House. No.10 occupies the site on the corner of Theatre Street and Chantry Lane beyond which is the garden wall of Chantry Cottage which abuts the east side of the Assembly House. Mrs Milligan's

house was once off the left hand side of the photo but had been demolished by 1850.

Now, back to 1797 when Augustin left London to live with Francis - and it is possible that this was when Louisa came to Norwich. Father and son were assessed for Poor Tax on the basis of rent. Francis' rent was £8 per quarter, Augustin's was £10. The assessments were bracketed to show joint occupancy.

On 18 March 1798 Francis married Harriet Brunton, daughter of the manager of the Theatre Royal, at St Stephen's church. The witnesses were Augustin, Louisa Brunton, the bride's actress sister, and John Brunton, the bride's father, who signed the bond of consent as Harriet was only nineteen years old.

Not all of Francis' and Harriet's children survived to adulthood: Augustin, b.29 December 1798, became a dancing master in Bury St Edmund. He married a music impresario's daughter and became locally known as a violinist. He moved to Kennington, London, c.1840 and emigrated to Toronto in 1855 where he was dancing master at a girls' boarding school and ran a dancing academy. Of his eleven children, two daughters taught music but none of his sons followed their father's profession. Augustin taught dancing and calisthenics until 1880 and died in 1883.

Harriet Finch, b.6 September 1804, died aged 14. At the age of 8 she finished a sampler which now hangs in Strangers' Hall, Norwich.

Francis, (known as Frank) b.24 August 1804, succeeded to his father's practice. He married Sophia Swallow by special licence on 26 June 1833 at her parish church, St Pancras, London. Of their eleven children, his sons were musicians and dancing masters and two daughters taught music. C E Noverre was Frank's son.

Louisa, b.8 March 1809, remained single and became a governess, living for a time with her widowed mother.

John, b.10 April 1811, inherited his grandfather's talent for unintended GBH; he shot a man in the eye at a shooting party - a pratfall in the pursuit of upward mobility. He bolted to Canada and later settled at Wayne, Indiana, where he still lived in 1870.

William, b.1 June 1813, may have died in childhood. Nothing more is known of him.

Elizabeth, b.25 August 1819, became a governess. She retired to Cley with her sister Louisa who died in 1897. Elizabeth died in 1900.

Finally, Charles Cornelius, who presents us with a puzzle. C E Noverre and Lynham put him at the head of their lists of Francis's children, as if he was the eldest child, but neither account gives Charles' date of birth. His baptism was not registered at St Stephen's church. But not all births were registered and not all parish registers have survived. C E Noverre says Charles Cornelius became a dancing master in Kensington, and Ancestry.com lists Chalres C. Noverre of Kensington who died in June 1857. Perhaps he was born in London at the house of his Uncle Charles who became his godfather and for whom he was named.

But I am not convinced Francis had a son called Charles Cornelius. I think C E Noverre confused his relations and his readers by transferring biographical details from Charles son of Augustin to a non-existent son of Francis. There are two possibilities:

There was one Charles Cornelius, son of Augustin, b.1770, practised in Great Marlborough St, married Ann/Anna Tadwell (possibly Anna Matilda Noverre, d. Clerkenwell 1851). In the 1851 Census return Charles C Noverre, widower, and his daughter Mary live as visitors/annuitants in a boarding house in Thames Ditton. They may later have moved to Kensington where Charles C Noverre died in 1857. He does not appear in the 1861 Census.

Alternatively, there were two Charleses, but they were father and son. As we have seen, the Noverres liked to pass on family names in identical order. Grace Mary A Noverre's daughter was - Grace Mary A, which must have led to fun at home. I can identify four, perhaps five, of Charles senior's children from genealogy websites (not always reliable) but not, as it happens, a Charles jun. I think there was one Charles, son of Augustin, born in 1770.

The Noverre portraits in the Assembly House include Opie's undated portrait of two of Francis' children as infants. Both wear high-waisted nursery frocks and could be boys or girls. It is not possible to identify them.

By the time this portrait was painted Francis had gone up in the world professionally and domestically. *The Universal British Directory* 1793-8, lists him in the Trades section at Chapelfield Lane (ie Assembly House Yard). He was not in Peck's *Directory*, 1802, but was working as usual. By 1803 he advertised his

practice twice a year and his pupils' ball annually. He was now well established and had given up puffs and capital letters. The *Chronicle*, 15 January 1803, advertised 'Mr Noverre's Academy will open on Tuesday 18 January.' A similarly bald notice appeared in July. His pupils' balls were held in winter on his teaching circuit, advertised in the *Mercury*, 26 November 1803:

'Mr Noverre's Balls, Yarmouth 1 Dec. Beccles 2 Dec. Norwich 8 Dec. Tickets from Mr Noverre 5/-'

His circuit remained the same for years; he held classes in Beccles and Bungay on the morning and afternoon of the same day.

By Christmas 1803 Augustin had leased a house in The Chantry a short distance from his son. Which house it was is a mystery; it is never named or numbered. In Augustin's Will it is 'the house in which I now live'. The Chantry consisted of six dwellings of which Chantry Cottage, abutting the Assembly House, is the sole survivor.

At his new address Augustin paid £10 quarterly rent. Francis paid £8 as before, but he also paid £9 land rent, which must have been for Augustin and by an agreement with his father, for when Augustin died in August 1805 he left the lease of his house to Francis 'to reside therein'. It is clear from the Churchwardens' Accounts that Francis moved to The Chantry by midsummer 1805 when he paid £10 rent (rising to £12 in 1806) plus £9 land rent. He was now the leaseholder of a home with stables and a garden and more space for his family. And immediate proximity to the Assembly House.

C E Noverre says that Francis lived for time in the East wing of the Assembly House. I think he means Chantry Cottage, which abuts the East wing.

Seventy years later Frank W B Noverre (Francis' grandson) lived at 3 Chantry Lane, which can be identified from Colman's *Directory* 1879. It was on the East side of Chantry Lane, facing the East wing of the Assembly House and Chantry Cottage and it was not Augustin's former house.

Francis' practice expanded to a partnership, first with Mr Nicholson in 1805 and, after Harwood's defection, with Francis Lambert. In 1805 Lambert published his *Treatise on Dancing*. It shows an understanding of the physiology of movement whether applied to dancing or the correction of knock-knees. It was probably

derived from Augustin's 'simple and scientific method' as handed on by Francis, who may have followed his father and his uncle in the study of anatomy.

Francis became a respected citizen of Norwich and in 1809 became a director of Norwich Union, founded in 1797. For a few years he and his brother-in-law Richard Bacon had an interest in Taverham Paper Mill.

In 1812 Francis moved his family into the West wing of the Assembly House. He now lived and worked at a very elegant address, and he was shortly to re-brand himself. In his son William's baptismal registration in 1813 Francis' occupation is that of 'dancing master'. In Elizabeth's baptismal registration Francis is a 'gentleman' though still in practice as a dancing master.

This brings us to the familiar argument: could a dancing master also be a gentleman? They had long claimed such status on account of their profession. They feature in parish registers as gentlemen/dancing masters - as if the clerk was not too sure. The gentry whom they taught ridiculed them as 'hop merchants' and paid them for a service; they were not their equal but they might be gentlemanly.

Pigot's 1822 *Norwich Directory* made one decision regarding status as a matter of changing social outlook: dancing masters, Francis included, were raised from the Trades section to that of Teachers and Professors, which suggests the discarding of the hop-merchant image.

Pigot's 1830 *Directory* listed Francis and Frank as dancing masters. Frank succeeded to the practice when his father retired in 1837 but Francis lived in the West wing until he died on 5 January 1840. Frank and his wife then moved to the West wing from the hotel in which they had been living in Rampant Horse Street, the Eastern continuation of Theatre Street and about 100 yards from the Assembly House.

Frank, a man of substance and another director of Norwich Union, bought the West wing of the Assembly House and added to the west side his own Assembly Room which, at 70 x 30 ft, was larger than any other room in the Assembly House. He sold his stables and part of his garden during the development of the area south of the Assembly House, which became more urbanised but even now is still known as Chapelfield Grove.

Frank's Assembly Room later became the Noverre Cinema and is now a multi-purpose function room of the Assembly House. The Noverre portraits hang on the walls and survey meetings, examinations and, very properly, Playford Balls and the more festive of the Norwich Early Dance Group's occasions. On the base of an exterior door jamb are carved the initials of male Noverres of Frank's generation and their descendants.

## 8 Interesting relations

In 1906 C E Noverre presented to Norwich Union Life Insurance Society a document which featured portraits of Francis and Frank Noverre, among the first and later directors of the Society. The document displays armorial bearings which it seems the Noverres had recently achieved, and there is a tribute to 'the Earl of Craven (Francis' brother-in-law), 'Trustee of the Society from 1809 to 1825, together with the Craven bearings.

Is Francis' expression one of smug satisfaction, because his wife's sister, the actress Louisa Brunton, married the Earl of Craven in 1807? Or is it a gleeful chortle? In 1825 the notorious courtesan, Harriette Wilson, published her *Memoirs*, and they began: 'I shall not say how I became, at the age of fifteen, the mistress of the Earl of Craven.'

It is impossible to know how much the Noverres knew about the Earl's background, but here is the story.

Harriette was fifteen when she embarked on her career as a Cyprian in 1801. At first she had the Earl's younger brother in her sights but, being a canny girl, she shifted her target to William the Earl. She thought him 'safe'. He was thirty, a career soldier and owner of vast swathes of Berkshire and a London residence in Charles Street.

Installed in Ashdown Park, Berkshire, and satirically observed by Jane Austen in a letter to Cassandra, Harriette discovered that 'safe' meant achingly dull. She laughed at the Earl's nightcap and yawned as he drew plans of his past military engagements to entertain her. Moved to Brighton, she was bored by his sailing and sought for a replacement. Having no sense of propriety, she invited the Prince of Wales to visit her. He demanded that she visit him in London. She refused and lit, instead, upon nineteen-year-old Frederic Lamb, son of Lord Melbourne. Craven did not tolerate rivals and had thrown her out by the end of 1801. She moved on to trawl the aristocracy, several future statesmen, Lord Byron and Wellington, who she thought 'looked like a rat catcher'. Her *Memoirs* were a means of extorting money from her ex-lovers when she was hard up. Those who did not pay up in order to be omitted were exposed. Wellington's retort: 'Publish and be Damned', is the most famous shrug in history.

Wellington could outsmart a wilful baggage. Craven was out of his depth and a dullard. His military life had no fame; he bought his way up the ranks. He is not of political note. His life combined dullness with scandal, and he was a child of a scandalous marriage.

His father married Elizabeth Berkeley when she was sixteen. She bore six children whilst deceiving him with a succession of lovers for which he ejected her from his vast acres whilst maintaining his own mistress.

Elizabeth took her youngest child, Keppel, fled to the continent to write and travel, and became the mistress of the Margrave of Brandenburg, Anspach and Bayreuth. She called herself Margravine in spite of the existence of the lady bearing that title lawfully.

When their respective spouses died in 1791 Elizabeth 'went into weeds on the first day and into white satin and many diamonds on the second.' She and the Margrave married in Lisbon in October 1791, moved to London and set up palace at Brandenburg House, Fulham where they could look down on her former husband's bijou love-nest, Craven Cottage. Brandenburg House had a chapel for the Margrave and a theatre for Elizabeth, who led the demi-monde in a riotous party attended by the Prince of Wales and ignored by Polite Society and her son William, the new Earl.

After the Margrave's death in 1805 Elizabeth resumed her travels abroad, and Brandenburg House acquired another notorious resident, Queen Caroline.

Now to return to the Noverres and Bruntons in Norwich. John Brunton, father-in-law of Francis Noverre and manager of the Theatre Royal, was voted out of office by the theatre proprietors in 1800. By 1804 he was manager of the Theatre Royal, Brighton and patronised by the Prince of Wales and the Earl of Craven. In 1805 and 1806 Brunton's actress daughter Louisa played in summer seasons at her father's theatre. She had followed two of her sisters to Covent Garden, making her debut on 5 October 1803. She was a beauty with arch charm, but after an initial success she was demoted to secondary roles.

Craven probably saw Louisa at Covent Garden as well as at Brighton. He gave chase - or she did - and on 12 December 1807 they were privately married at his London house. Louisa played The Bride to a small audience and she never acted again. If she had looked forward to moving among the aristocracy she was

disappointed, for most of them ignored her. She spent much of her life on the Craven acres in Berkshire. When her father retired in 1811 her parents moved to Berkshire to enjoy Louisa's elevated circumstances.

Suppose that Louisa and the Earl set out on their wedding journey in 1808, in the course of which they visited the Noverres in Norwich. While the sisters engaged in nursery chat, for Louisa was pregnant, Francis, about to become a director of Norwich Union Life Assurance Society, saw in Craven and his wealth a man useful to the Society as a Trustee. This event may, of course, have happened in London or Berkshire. I suspect that Freemasonry connected Craven, Brunton and Noverre. It was the social and commercial glue of the period and a strong force in the army, in which Craven was still a serving officer.

The Noverres and Bruntons may have been worldly enough to know about Craven's scandalous baggage and not to care, given Louisa's establishment and the uses to which Craven wealth might be applied.

In January 1825 Harriette Wilson's *Memoirs* were published and Craven was exposed to notoriety, in spite of which he was made General soon afterwards. He died that summer, not from dullness.

The Noverres may not have read the *Memoirs* and they may not have cared about the scandal. C E Noverre made a point of cherishing his family's grand (if questionable) connection. As for Francis Noverre, his portrait shows a smug man who knows a wicked story.

## 9 Augustin and Jean-Georges retire

Augustin was 68 years old when he moved to Norwich to live with Francis in 1797. I think he had retired professionally, but it is hard to tell because of the private and unadvertised nature of his practice. He does not appear to have been in practice with either of his sons at any time. The era of Messrs Noverre, or Noverre and son, begins with Francis and Frank.

It may be significant that Augustin did not retire to Norwich until after Jean-Georges left London for the last time. The 1793/94 season at the King's did not begin until January 1794. There is a gap of six months after the end of the previous season in which Jean-Georges was in England, probably chez Charles or even chez Augustin, but there is not a clue as to where he was and what he did at this time.

In 1794 at the King's Jean-Georges had choreographic help from D'Egville and a mediocre company best suited to rustic nonsense such as *L'Union des Bergères*. A more adventurous *Pigmalion ou la statue animée* was 'promised in a few days' but never presented.

Lord Howe's victory over the French fleet, the Glorious First of June, involved Jean-Georges in flag-waving on behalf of the country which held him prisoner. A celebratory programme given on 23 and 24 June and 1, 3, 5 July consisted of:

- 1 *La Serva Padrona*. One-act opera by Paisiello in which the star was Mme Banti.
- 2 A violin concerto in place of the usual second ballet, incorporating the melodies of *Rule Britannia* and *Hearts of Oak*.
- 3 *La Vittoria*, cantata by Paisiello, adapted for the occasion, Mme Banti as the Goddess of Victory.
- 4 *Grand Allegorical Ballet* by 'Sir George Noverre', including a hornpipe by Mlle del Caro - in travesty.
- 5 *Rule Britannia* and *God Save the King* sung by Mme Banti.

The 1794 season was officially Jean-Georges' last at the King's but he remained interned in England. Onorati was ballet-master in 1795 but Jean-Georges choreographed 'the pantomime and dances' for an opera after-piece, *Ati et Cibebe* by Cimarosa. It was performed on 14 May at the benefit night for Mme Morichelli, the opera buffa star - making a bid for the opera seria position held by

her rival, Mme Banti. *Ati et Cibele* was an avant-garde work in which Jean-Georges achieved his wish to integrate opera and dance. The work was for one singer, Morichelli, as Cibele, and one dancer, Mlle del Caro in travesty as Ati.

The scenario lives up to the notion that opera succeeds by excess. Ati, the platonic beloved of Cibele, was put in charge of her temple on condition that he remained a virgin. He fell in love with a nymph and Cibele's wrath drove him to insanity and self-castration. Violets grew from his spilt blood. The myth is a gift to a daring choreographer; the rites of Cibele include ecstatic dances, madness and self-mutilation. Ati is often represented with a tambourine; Jean-Georges could at last dissociate the popular Tambourine Dance from the tarantella. He may also have tried to make a serious travesty role.

Travesty was what ballet had become at the King's, mostly as an attempt to regain the attention of the audience from the rival opera divas. As well as del Caro's Ati and her hornpipe there were the Hilligsberg sisters in a Pas Russe and a Scotch Reel, both performed in travesty. I don't think *Ati et Cibele* was ever performed again, but it was a startling exit line for Jean-George.

He returned to France later in 1795. By late 1796 he was living in Paris near the Opéra, poor and in need of employment. The authorities who had requisitioned his savings were happy to praise 'Citoyen Noverre whose talents are universally known and have been so valuable to the Théâtre de la République'. In 1797 he was promised the post of Maître de Ballet at the Opéra ballet school and a 200-franc payment was authorised, but the Directorship of the Opéra changed hands and plans for the school stalled. Jean-Georges eventually recovered 600 of his lost 3000 francs after an exchange of 'salut et fraternité' letters with the authorities.

On 1 December 1798 Jean-Georges became Head of the School of Dance but apparently without much active participation in it. By 1803 he had retired with his wife to St Germain en Laye where they lived near another remarkable survivor of the revolution: Madame Campan, once secretary to Marie Antoinette, now mistress of a boarding school for girls of good Republican family.

Jean-Georges was invited to rehearsals of *Medée*, revived for Vestris junior's benefit night on 12 April 1804, but after three rehearsals he made a grumpy exit and complained about poor standards and shabby treatment to the Opéra

director. He could insist on high standards only with a pen in his hand, and he now revised and expanded *Lettres sur les arts imitateurs* published in 1807.

He died in St Germain en Laye on 19 October 1810. Elizabeth MacLachlan of Toronto, his great-great-grandniece, writes ruefully ‘... not only is J-G’s gravesite under the market place, but the house where he died has been replaced by the railroad station.’

Augustin enjoyed a comfortable retirement. His will, detailed below, gives us some idea of his material circumstances at The Chantry where he had Francis’ future in mind and his family a few steps away. There is little to tell us how he spent his last years aside from sitting to Joseph Clover for his portrait. It was painted before 1804 when Clover left Norwich to study with Opie in London. Perhaps Augustin graced Francis’ pupil balls like Mr Turveydrop senior while Francis played must-dash-now Prince Turveydrop.

Augustin died on 23 August 1805 aged 76. He was buried at St Stephen’s and his memorial is dedicated to ‘Augustin Noverre Gentl.’ His obituary in *Bell’s Weekly Messenger* in London 1 September, with almost identical versions in the *Norwich Mercury* and the *Norfolk Chronicle* must have been the work of Francis and Charles.

‘Augustin Noverre Esq ... a native of Switzerland ... . He was considered the most finished, elegant and gentlemanly minuet dancer that ever appeared. He quitted the stage nearly at the same time as [Garrick] for the private exercise of his profession as a Master, and by his simple and scientific method of instruction has done more to advance his art than any other man. He was esteemed by his pupils amongst whom were most of the Nobility of the Kingdom.’

Augustin’s nationality is fudged. He was born in Paris to a Swiss father and a French mother. Evidently his nationality at birth was decided by paternity. His father was an officer in the Swiss army. Father and son claimed the status of gentleman from their respective professions. The Norfolk obituaries make no reference to Augustin’s local teaching.

He made his last Will a fortnight before he died. It is a pragmatic Will: his executors were Francis and Louisa, who were near at hand. Charles was left objects of value: a gold watch, chain and seals; and three pictures, one of which was by the scenic artist Louthembourg. This seems a curious way to treat one’s

eldest son, unless Charles was already provided for. If Augustin had property holdings in London (such as the two Great Marlborough Street houses, one of which Charles lived in) they may have been made over to Charles at an earlier date.

Louisa received 'my Irish Annuity wherein she is nominee', household linen, wearing apparel, household goods and 'pictures, paintings, prints and drawings'. Augustin seems to have had an interest in fine art but I don't think it amounted to a lucrative sideline.

Francis was left the lease of the house in The Chantry, the appurtenances of the house, garden and stable, and the garden plants. No horse or carriage is mentioned; perhaps this was something to which Francis aspired.

Francis and Louisa were left equal shares of money remaining after the payment of debts and fees. If there was a deficit they were to bear it equally.

Augustin left the care of 'my old and faithful servant, Elizabeth Stevens' to his three children, 'trusting that she shall not at any time during her life want a reasonable and proper maintenance.'

No manservant is mentioned. The will was proved on 26 February 1806.

Comparisons are inevitable. From the time their careers diverged in 1755, Jean-Georges and Augustin worked in separate spheres but shared certain aims. At Drury Lane Augustin worked in a gaudy, riotous and rackety world, nobility in the boxes and prostitutes parading in the foyer. At the King's Theatre, which also staged plays, oratorios, concerts and masquerades, Jean-Georges found a gaudy, riotous elite, dissatisfied with second-best and with a capricious interest in singers and dancers - to the despair of musicians such as Charles Burney. Jean-Georges was at home in this world, Augustin was not, and he left it to make a good living at a smart address.

Both brothers sought patronage from high society because that was how their work prospered. Jean-Georges occasionally turned dancing master to please his patrons. He taught Marie Antoinette and her brother as children when his patroness was their mother Empress Maria Theresa. In the same period, on 16 February 1774, Sir Robert Keith, British ambassador in Vienna, wrote to his sister:

‘... sixteen couple of our chosen belles and beaux put themselves under the direction of the great Noverre in order to learn from him one of the prettiest figure dances.’

But such commissions were an occasional diversion from Jean-Georges’ real concern: his ambitions for ballet and his ballet students.

Jean-Georges never achieved in England the patronage which he won on the Continent. He may have hoped for royal patronage with his flag-waving ballets of 1793/4, but it was his dancers who went to court. In 1791/2 Pierre Gardel received a royal command to give dancing lessons to the Prince of Wales. He also arranged dances for a ball given by Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire. In the previous season Vestris senior gave dancing lessons to the Duchess. They devised the Devonshire Minuet, which Vestris tweaked a bit and inserted in the ballroom scene of *Ninette à la Cour*. The Duchess attended the ballet but left immediately after ‘her’ dance to the disgruntlement of the audience who had come to watch the notoriously spendthrift Duchess.

Augustin achieved the patronage of the Earl of Lindsay, to whose daughter he dedicated a minuet. Francis achieved by a kind of accident the patronage of the Earl of Craven, but that was for his extra-curricular activities.

Augustin remains a fugitive figure. We have his portraits and one of his dance collections, but ‘Goddem’ aside, we do not hear him speak. A piece of him remains in a mourning brooch, given to Norwich Museums in 1908 and described thus:

‘... oval mourning brooch, central part of woven fair hair surrounded by seed pearls; gold convex back engraved Augustin Noverre d. Aug 25<sup>th</sup> 1805 aged 76.’ In Clover’s portrait Augustin wears his own hair, fair not grey. His date of death is recorded as 23 August elsewhere.

Augustin probably applied his exasperated ‘Goddem’ to recalcitrant pupils but he does not seem to have shared his brother’s bad temper. Jean-Georges’ backstage behaviour was recalled in the *Reminiscences* of Michael Kelly, a singer and co-manager at the King’s in 1793. At a performance of *Iphégénie en Aulide*, Kelly, masked, was in the wings waiting to take part in a procession for which horses had been hired from Astley’s to draw a chariot. Astley’s supplied the

ostlers, but they were drunk. Kelly took charge of the horses and restrained them too loudly. Also in the wings was Jean-Georges:

‘But he was a passionate little fellow, he swore and tore behind the scenes ... he might really have been taken for a lunatic ... [He] gave me a tremendous kick, “Taisez-vous, bête!” exclaimed he.’

Kelly unmasked and Jean-Georges discovered that he had kicked the management. ‘He made every possible apology’, but it is easy to see why it was his dancers, not their master, who went to court.

The choleric but distinguished ballet master died impoverished leaving an artistic reputation whilst being corporeally obliterated by urban development. None of his children followed his profession. Augustin founded a dynasty of well-regarded dancing masters. He was commemorated by them with a handsome memorial in St Stephen’s church, Norwich, which is still to be seen today.

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