When Angels Dance for Kings
The beginning of Scandinavian music theatre

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On the night of 7 October 1634 a *ballet* was performed at the royal palace of Copenhagen. It was not a ballet in the modern sense of the term; it was a *ballet de cour*, music theatre with elaborate scenery and stage machinery, a large amount of music and singing, and extensive dancing. It was sponsored by the Danish Prince Frederik as part of the magnificent wedding celebrations (known as the *Triumphus nuptialis*) for his brother, Prince-Elect Christian V and his bride, the Saxon princess Magdalena Sibylla. It was the very first performance of music theatre in Scandinavia,[1] and Heinrich Schütz, who was in charge of the musical side of the entire wedding celebrations, probably composed music for the show.[2]

When the Danish king Christian IV and two of his sons, the prince-elect and bridegroom Christian, and Frederik, the sponsor of the *ballet*, chose to stage a *ballet de cour* as one of the main entertainments of the wedding festivities, they were following traditions already flourishing at leading European courts. The purpose of this article is twofold: firstly, to reach an understanding of what they wanted to achieve by staging a ballet. Did they simply wish to copy the grand music theatre performances of leading European courts because the shows themselves were insignia of power and monarchical grandeur? Or did they see them as more flexible tools of communication through which they could also convey messages other than the pure display of power? And if the latter, what did they wish to convey? Secondly, and this is clearly related to the first purpose, the article seeks to explore how this onset of Scandinavian music theatre related to leading traditions of courtly music theatre in Northern Europe. In the course of this process I will also discuss the interpretations of the ballet offered by Mara Wade in her study of the *Triumphus nuptialis* of 1634.

Music theatre and courtly amateurs

A remarkable feature of the late Renaissance and early Baroque era is the emergence of various forms of courtly theatre in which music plays an essential role.[3] The

1 Performances of various kinds which to some extent included music were at this stage part of European theatre traditions. The case here, however, is theatre where music and dance constitute the essence of the genre, and is therefore referred to as music theatre.

2 Schütz had left his post at the Dresden court for the occasion and stayed in Denmark for a longer period. On Schütz' contributions to the wedding festivities and his further involvement with the Danish royal family see Mara R. Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis danicus. German Court Culture and Denmark. The "Great Wedding" of 1634* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 221–46.

3 For a brief introduction to these forms, see Kristin Rygg, *Masqued Mysteries Unmasked: Pythago-*

creation of opera is normally understood as the most important – and lasting – result of these developments, but two other forms were at least equally prominent in their own day, namely the French *ballet de cour* and the English court masque.[4] They share some basic characteristics. They were performed in the great halls of the royal palaces, and the audience consisted above all of royal families, nobility, ambassadors and other prominent guests from abroad. Members of the royal family and noble courtiers are the main actors in the shows; together with selected court singers and musicians they dance the roles of the mythic-allegorical cast stemming from Greek and Roman antiquity.[5] Speaking parts were taken by professional actors or amateurs who were neither noble nor royal. The imagery deployed in the dialogue and the scenography somehow implicate the monarch as semi-divine with power to command even the divine beings represented. Music and dancing are essential to both genres. Costumes, scenic designs and stage machinery made for the performances were extravagant and extremely costly. The French *ballets* and the English masques enjoyed great fame in their time, and they were sufficiently influential to make monarchs and artists of other courts and countries create entertainments which were clearly inspired by them.

While they have a lot in common, there are differences between the two genres. A theatrical form with dancing at its core, referred to as *ballet*, started to develop in the 1570s at the French court. The first show of this kind which becomes famous is *Ballet Comique de la Reine* in 1581.[6] It tells the story of the sorceress Circé who captures men and turns them into beasts, but is finally conquered. Several spectacular dancing scenes take place as part of the action, and a final *grand ballet*, a spectacular, choreographed dance with the whole cast participating, ends the performance. Because the show tells a coherent story with a happy ending, it is described as 'comique'.[7] Many *ballets* were performed in France during the century following the beginnings of the tradition, but for decades they formed a rather heterogeneous genre. Often they had the form of a *ballet à entrées*, where a unifying story is lacking and several groups of actors merely perform various tableaux including singing and dancing. Only from 1610 onwards was the more narrative form of *ballet comique* used

reanism and Early Modern North European Music Theatre, Dr.art. thesis (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Department of Musicology, 1997).

4 In the following I shall refer only to the English court masque as it develops under the reigns of James I and his son, Charles I, in other words from 1604 onwards. Entertainments from the earlier reign of Elizabeth are not taken into account.

5 A series of minor *ballets* are exceptions from this main trend. In these smaller entertainments the cast can consist of various groups of persons, animals, etc. See for example Margaret M. McGowan, *L'art du ballet de cour en France: 1581–1643* (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1963); Henry Prunières, *Le ballet de cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, suivi du Ballet de la délivrance de Renaud: Seize planches hors texte* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1914).

6 Balthazar de Beaujoyeulx et al., *Balet comique de la Royne: faict aux nopces de monsieur le duc de Joyeuse & madamoyselle de Vaudemont sa soeur. Par Baltasar de Beaujoyeulx, valet de chambre du Roy, & de la Royne sa mere* (Paris: Adrian Le Roy, Robert Ballard, & Mamert Patisson, 1582).

7 'Comique' did therefore not imply that it was a comical show. The opposite was 'tragique', which implied that the end would be tragic for the protagonist.

again on a few occasions, but the genre *ballet de cour* remained quite heterogeneous until the era of Louis XIV, that is after the great wedding in Copenhagen.[8]

In England quite varied forms of courtly entertainments were referred to as 'mask(e)s' during the sixteenth century, but shortly after James I and Anna became king and queen of England in 1604, a more unified court masque genre was established.[9] Two artists in particular were at the core of shaping this genre, the poet Ben Jonson and the architect Inigo Jones, and they would collaborate with the king's dancing masters, composers and other musicians in creating the shows. The masques differed significantly from the *ballets* in at least two respects; they included 'revels', and from around 1608 they also included 'antimasques'. An antimasque was a comic or grotesque section preceding the masque proper, preparing for the story of the masque by functioning as a kind of foil. Professional actors would play the rôles of the antimasque. The royals and the nobles, referred to as masquers, did not take speaking parts; their performance consisted in dancing their *rôles*. Court singers, musicians and choreographers would take *rôles* both in the antimasque and the masque proper.[10] Within the masque proper was the section called the 'revels'. Here the masquers invited members from the audience to dance and soon all spectators would be able to join in. This social dancing could go on for quite a long time before the masquers returned to the stage area to resume their roles and finish the play.

In the decades leading up to the Great Wedding the court masque stands out as a much more unified genre than the *ballet de cour*. It is worth noting that, due to the similarities of the two genres, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, depending on who the writer was and even to whom he was writing.[11]

Music theatre as statecraft

That this kind of theatre has to do at least in part with the display of power is generally accepted among scholars. But the seminal studies of the English masque by Stephen Orgel are the first to explore its political implications on a larger scale.

8 For information about the history of the *ballet de cour* see for example McGowan, *L'art du ballet de cour*; Kristin Rygg, *Masqued Mysteries Unmasked: Early Modern Music Theater and Its Pythagorean Subtext* (Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon Press, 2000).

9 Sara Smart, 'The Württemberg Court and the Introduction of Ballet in the Empire', in J.R. Mulryne et al. (eds.), *Europa triumphans: Court and Civic Festivals in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), ii. 35–45. Courtly entertainments often called mask(e)s also took place during the sixteenth century. For information about these early forms, see esp. Enid Welsford, *The Court Masque; A Study in the Relationship between Poetry & the Revels* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962).

10 For more extensive descriptions of the masque genre, see for example Rygg, *Masqued Mysteries* (2000); Martin Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque and Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). The most extensive study of music in the English masque is Peter Walls, *Music in the English Courtly Masque, 1604–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1996). Excellent discussions of musical aspects of the masques are also provided in Peter Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: the Violin at the English Court, 1540–1690* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

11 See for example Sara Smart commenting on this mixing of terms in Smart, 'The Württemberg Court', 35–45.

He argues that the exploitation of the masque by the monarch is an extreme case of topdown strategy to enforce his own political power. The many aspects of the masques connected with philosophy and mythology are seen as constituents of a metaphorical, multimedial language serving the greater political allegory. The basic form consisting of three sections – the antimasque, the masque proper, and the revels as part of the latter – supports three illusions which are, according to Orgel, essential to the intended effect of the masque. 1) There is a contrast between the comic antimasque, representing the world of normal, flawed human beings, and the masque proper with its realm of divine beings, portrayed mainly by royalty and nobility. 2) The king is always given a role which makes him appear as semi-divine and as the commander of the divine beings of the masque, with the aim of persuading both the English nobility and powerful foreign guests of the king's divine right and ability to reign. 3) Through the revels the whole audience is included in the world of the masque proper and thus apotheosized into the divine realm of the king, his family and their closest associates, thereby experiencing an identification with the ruler and by extension with his politics.

According to this reading, this kind of theatre is primarily concerned with political discourse, or statecraft, and the masque stands out as the ultimate politicized poetics of absolutism. The *rôles* of the creative artists behind the masques are then subsumed under the greater goal; Orgel at one stage refers to the Jonsonian masque as 'an extension of the royal mind'.[12] This Orgelian understanding of the masque has been seminal for decades, and it has also inspired scholars working with similar types of court theatre in other countries.[13] The persistent influence from Orgel is also witnessed in Peter Walls' major study on the music of the masques, in which he basically integrates music into Orgel's analysis and interprets the role of music within this framework.[14] It should be added, though, that over the last decades prominent scholars such as Kevin Sharpe, Clare McManus and Martin Butler have explored very different and broader political aspects of the masques.[15] Likewise Georgina Cowart has put forward a new reading of the various political *rôles* played by the French *ballets de cour* during the times of Louis XIV, but the contributions of these studies will not be discussed in the present article.[16]

12 See for example Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 43 and 52; and Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 36–37, 63, and 76.

13 Mulryne et al. (eds.), *Europa triumphans* is a splendid example of how the Orgelian understanding still underlies much recent scholarship in this field.

14 Walls, *Music in the English Courtly Masque*; see particularly vii, 7, 8, and 12.

15 Butler, *The Stuart Court Masque*; Clare McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage: Anna of Denmark and Female Masquing in the Stuart Court (1590–1619)* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Kevin Sharpe, *Criticism and Compliment: the Politics of Literature in the England of Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

16 Georgia Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV & the Politics of Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

The Copenhagen *ballet*

Masked dances performed as courtly entertainments had occasionally taken place in Denmark before the Great Wedding, but nothing like a coherent theatre piece consisting of singing and dancing had ever been performed.[17] In spite of the fame Prince Frederik's *ballet* enjoyed in its own day, it does not hold a prominent position within Scandinavian music history. This is understandable: the music is lost, as are sketches showing scenery and costumes. There are only a few main sources giving us information about this *ballet*. The earliest is a booklet containing the actual texts of the solo songs and the choirs, and interpolated explanatory sections describing the action. This text was probably printed before the performance; the front page says that the *ballet* 'will be performed'. As was the case with similar texts printed in for example France and England it must have been intended as an explanation of the show for the audience, and of course as an artefact to commemorate a splendid occasion. This booklet is signed by Alexander Kückelsom (see Ill. 1).[18] He was probably of French origin and had come to the Academy of Sorø as a teacher and dancing master, but at this stage he was tutor to the royal children.[19] It is highly unlikely that he was the author of the poetic songs, but it is of course possible that he wrote the descriptions of the action which are printed in between the song texts, and it seems probable that he was the choreographer of the dances. Wade has shown that one of the songs for the *ballet*, 'Klagliedt dess Orphei vber seine Euridice', is extremely similar to a song composed by Schütz to the poem 'Galathee' by Martin Opitz (1597–1639),[20] but this fact gives no proof of a possible involvement by Opitz in writing for the *ballet*. The question of authorship is not essential to the discussions of the present article, however, and will not be pursued. But since the booklet was signed by Kückelsom, it will be referred to as the *Kückelsom Text* in the following.

There was also a description of the *ballet* which was part of the full published account of the wedding festivities. This account was first published in 1635 and issued in several editions, and will be referred to as the *Festival Account* in the following.[21] Both the *Kückelsom Text* and the *Festival Account* are in German. An account of all

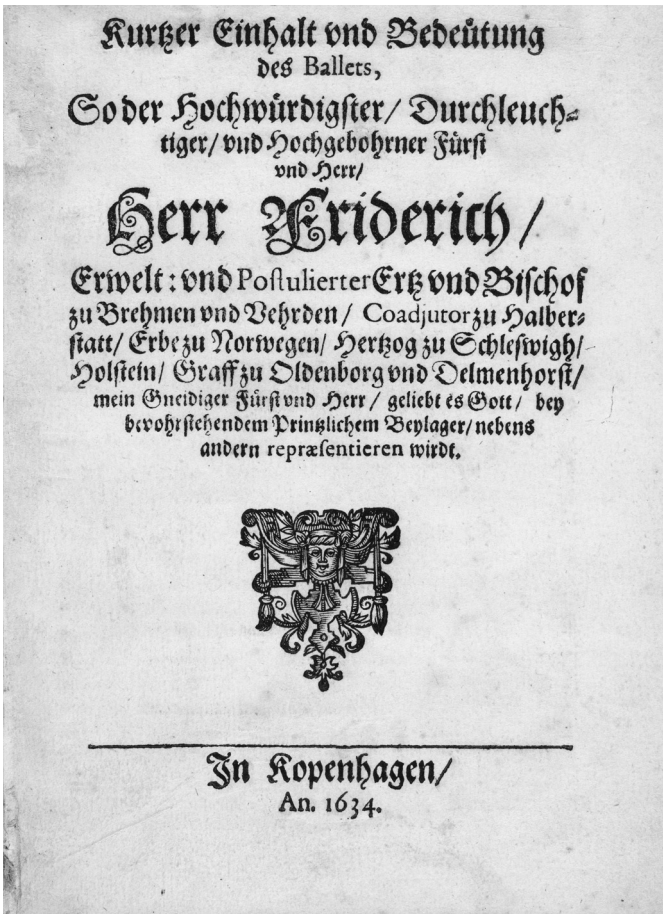
17 The lack of earlier entertainments which can be seen as music theatre was tested to as early as in Torben Krogh, *Hofballetten under Christian IV og Frederik III. En teaterhistorisk studie* (København: Povl Branner, 1939), 1–14. See also Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis*, 17–56 for information on courtly entertainments during the reign of Christian IV.

18 Anonymous, *Kurzer Einhalt und Bedeutung des Ballets, So der Hochwürdigster/Durchleuchtiger/und Hochgeborner Fürst und Herr Friderich/Erwelt und Postulierter Ertz und Bischof zu Bremen und Wehrden/Coadjutor zu Halberstatt/Erbe zu Norwegen/Herzog zu Schleswigh/Holstein/Graff zu Oldenborg und Delmenhorst/mein Gnediger Fürst und Herr/geliebt es Gott/bey bevorstehendem Prinzlichem Beylager/nebens andern repræsentieren wirdt* (Copenhagen: n.n., 1634).

19 Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis*, 68–69.

20 Martin Opitz, *Martini Opitii Weltliche poëmata, Der ander Theil* (Amsterdam: n.n., 1645), 324–29. Quoted from Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis*, 82–83.

21 Since details concerning the different publications are not important for the discussion in this article, readers are referred to Wade's extensive presentation of sources for further informaton; Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis*.



Kurtzer Einhalt vnd Bedeütung
des Ballets,
So der Hochwürdigster/ Durchleuchtiger/ vnd Hochgebohrner Fürst
vnd Herr/
Herr Friderich/
Erwelt: vnd Postulierter Ertz vnd Bischof zu Brehmen vnd Verden/ Coadjutor zu Halberstatt/ Erbe zu Norwegen/ Hertzog zu Schleswigh/ Holstein/ Graff zu Oldenborg vnd Delmenhorst/ mein Gnediger Fürst vnd Herr/ geliebt es Gott/ bey bevohrstehendem Printzlichem Beylager/ nebens andern repræsentieren wirdt.

In Kopenhagen/
An. 1634.

Ill. 1. Alexander Kückelsom, *Kurtzer Einhalt vnd Bedeutung des Ballets* (Copenhagen, 1634).

the nuptial festivities written in Danish was published in 1648, indicating a continued interest in the Great Wedding.[22] In addition, there is a brief commentary on the entertainment written by Charles Ogier, secretary to the French ambassador, in his diary from his journey to Denmark to take part in the wedding celebrations.[23]

Some aspects of the *ballet* and its music have been discussed in a few publications about music at the time of Christian IV.[24] Other than that, little attention has been given to this early Scandinavian music theatre till Mara Wade published her major

22 *Regiæ nuptiæ, eller Kort Beskriffuelse om huis sig vdi Stormectige oc Høybaarne Førstis oc Herris Christian den V. Danmarckis oc Norgis etc. Udvalde Printz, oc Høyb. Førstinde oc Frøicken Magdalenæ Sybillæ Fød Hertuginde aff Saxen, deris Brøllups Fest er tildraget* (Copenhagen: Jørgen Holst, 1637).

23 The diary is in Latin but translated into Danish and published as Charles Ogier, *Det store Bilager i Kjøbenhavn 1634* (Copenhagen: August Bang, 1969).

24 Angul Hammerich, *Musiken ved Christian den Fjerdes Hof: et Bidrag til dansk Musikhistorie* (Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen, 1892); Krogh, *Hofballetten*; Anne Ørbæk Jensen and Ole Kongsted (eds.),

study *Triumphus nuptialis danicus*. In addition to including a well of relevant sources she offers challenging interpretations of this and other shows from the nuptial celebrations and other courtly festivals.

The primary sources for Prince Frederik's *ballet* are not easily accessible and are hard to read. Modern publications containing accounts of the performance do not give sufficient information for the discussion that follows; a fairly detailed résumé is therefore given below.[25] It is divided into paragraphs to make the structure clearer. The paragraphs giving the content of songs are highlighted in grey, those without are summaries of the action-describing sections between the songs.

Résumé of the Copenhagen *ballet*

The introduction explains how Neptune through divine help has cleansed his oceans of monsters.[26] His ever watchful eye is securing peaceful and happy government for the fish in the oceans, the animals in the woods and all his subjects. All peace-loving people and the gods in particular rejoice. They are now gathering at his court to accept his bounteousness. And heaven and earth, the elements, animals, hills and trees are rejoicing over this happy gathering and even going there to join the banquet themselves.

A heavenly choir sings a 'Sonnet or invitation to dance and happiness', and there is dancing. This is a poetic description of night falling and the moon and the stars leading a dance. Pan starts playing his pipes, and everybody dances to his music as the wine is poured.

Pan and his satyrs dance with 'various satyric positions', while Invidia (Envy) makes a threatening appearance. Mars sounds an alarm, and Pan hides, frightened, in a cabin where Hercules has left his beloved Deianeira and gone hunting. Pan is instantly infatuated and tries to make love to her, only to be caught in the act by the returning Hercules. He takes Pan's tail from him to shame him forever and drives him back into the forest. All honour-loving people present are happy about this.

A 6-verse song and dance of the Muses praises the banishment of Pan. The nymphs and the shepherdesses are happy because they need no longer fear his

Heinrich Schütz und die Musik in Dänemark zur Zeit Christian IV. Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Konferenz in Kopenhagen 10.-14. November 1985 (Copenhagen: Engstrøm & Sødring, 1989).

25 The ballet is described in a few modern publications. See for instance the appendix to Ogier, *Det store Bilager*, 133–36; and Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis*, 61–68.

26 Whereas Greek and Roman mythologies on a whole share the same group of main deities, their names are different in the two traditions. Poseidon is the Greek name for the god of the seas; Neptune the Roman. Hermes is the Greek name of the messenger god bringing divine information to the human world, Mercury the Roman; (Pallas) Athena is Greek, Minerva her Roman equivalent, etc. The documents concerning the 1634 wedding festivities mix names from both the Greek and the Roman tradition, and they also include different names for one god(dess), like Phoebus or Apollo, Pallas or Athena.

unwelcome advances. As the music sounds, a mountain on which the nine Muses are seated glides into the room. They descend and dance with complicated and graceful movements. Tired by their dancing, they retire to their mountain, which leaves the room while of one of the verses is being repeated.

The virtuous ladies of the woods have reminded Orpheus of the loss of his own beloved Eurydice, and sitting on a hill he sings a lament, also playing on his violin.

Orpheus' lament over Eurydice consists of 11 strophes. He grieves over the power of death which has killed his beloved so suddenly. His singing makes the birds and the woods sing, too, but to no avail; his light – Eurydice – is gone. Through Pluto's tyranny he has lost his happiness, and he will teach the natural world surrounding him to echo his lament.

As Orpheus sings his song of his grief over Eurydice, trees and hills follow him, dancing, as do animals both wild and tame. Invidia, however, cannot bear to see the consolation this brings to Orpheus. She calls on the Bacchantes. Making music with their thyrsus-wands and cymbals, in an ecstatic fury they tear to pieces Orpheus and the animals following him. The gods present are shocked and let four 'Génios' gather up the remains of Orpheus. Then three Pantaloons gather up the dismembered animals and thus cleanse the hall. As the gods now realize that Orpheus' unshakable love for his spouse is the reason for the hatred they have seen in action, they decree that out of Orpheus' ashes a new world and a new love shall arise. As Orpheus loved Eurydice, the first-born son of the Neptune will always love his Pallas Athena.

Mercury sings a song consisting of ten consoling verses. 'What is this sadness that has taken hold of the audience? Orpheus is not dead, he is alive!' His deeds will be sung till the last day comes. Although you cannot see him in his usual forests, hills, mountains, valleys and fields, he is not dead! What was mortal in him is dead, but his love, so chaste and pure, will not perish as long as this world lasts and the gods are in Heaven. Through Orpheus a new world will emerge in which the false, carnal love of Venus has no place. The true love of Orpheus will bless thousands of wedded couples, and Neptune's great son and his people shall experience this love. This love will also be experienced by Pallas, who cannot otherwise enjoy any other love. Cupid must leave, for his love is inadequate. He will be chased away by Atlas, who is going to bring the new world which harbours the new love.

The choir sings a sonnet of praise. The gods are hailed for having given a new and chaste love, and praise of Orpheus' virtue and art will be heard in the lands of Tigris and Parnassus. To prevent love and truthfulness and art from dying out, a new world has arisen from Orpheus' ashes, in which a chaste love lives that pleases God.

The grand ballet enters together with a highly accomplished Cavalier who, in spite of the fact that he had been serving Diana faithfully, is ensnared by the goddess Voluptas. Enslaved by lust he has remained with her as if asleep, under the guardianship of a dragon. But Fama has called upon the Virtues and, with the help of Pallas who has subdued the dragon, rescued him from the lure of sensual lust. Pallas, together with the freed Cavalier, goes to make sacrifices to the gods.

> Sonnet of thanksgiving for the sacrifice made by the Virtues and the redeemed Hero sung by a full choir: 'Praise be to the Highest, for the hero has been freed from all vices'. Let the triumphant song sound throughout nature even up to the heavenly castle!

Atlas arrives with the new world out of which the new Cupid promised by the gods comes forth.[27] He shoots his arrows into the hearts of the young Neptune and Pallas.[28] Because the light from Phoebus (an epithet for Apollo, particularly used when he appears as the god of Light/god of the Sun; my remark) now for a while has started shining through the rays of Pallas, without whom there would now be no light over our hemisphere, Apollo has left his heavenly abode and come to earth for a short while – also out of compassion for the wounded hearts to comfort them and rejuvenate their true love.[29] He seeks the company of the noblest gods, such as Jove, Hymen, Bacchus, and Morpheus, so that they all can celebrate the wedding.

> Phoebus' 15-verse wedding invitation to the gods praises the beauty and splendour of the new princess and urges the gods to take part in the celebrations, saying that everybody will want to praise the bride and the groom with hands, feet and exclamations of joy.

The performance ends with the *grand ballet*, in which at one point the dancers form the letters of the names of the bride and groom.

This is what the *Kückelsom Text* relates and to which the *Festival Account* basically agrees. Some details vary, but mostly these have no significance for the present article. In two instances, however, there are interesting differences. Where the *Kückelsom Text* says that four 'Génios' gather up the remains of Orpheus, the *Festival Account* says that four angels do this. Furthermore, it also states that an altar was provided for the sacrifice performed by Pallas and the Cavalier, and that the role of the

27 An additional piece of information is given in a different document, a letter that the king wrote to Mogens Pax which makes it clear that the latter's son, Christopher Pax, danced the role of the 'new Amor', the second Cupid. See Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis*, 81.

28 As the prince-elect had the same name as his father, he is now talked about as 'the young Neptune', whereas his father was referred to as 'Neptune' in the introduction.

29 Here there is a play with the usage of two names for the same god – both Apollo and Phoebus – thereby suggesting that the brides' shining light is comparable to that of Apollo/Phoebes, and that her light has made Apollo visit this earthly abode for a short while.

Cavalier was danced extremely well by one of Christian IV's sons, Ulrik Christian, and that Mercury was sung by the castrato Chelli from Venice; his performance was clearly judged to be impressive. We are also told that the *ballet* lasted two hours.

Neither the *Kückelsom Text* nor the *Festival Account* makes it clear whether there was any spoken dialogue in the *ballet* performance. The introductory lines could very well have been spoken by a presenter, as was sometimes the case in the English masque. Some of the lines between the various songs and other musical pieces could also easily have served as a basis for spoken explanations, too. But perhaps the booklet produced for the show, and most likely distributed among the audience before the performance, was felt to give sufficient information together with the verses for the action to be understood.

Wade's interpretation of the *ballet*

There are good reasons for exploring possible influences of the English court masque on Prince Frederik's *ballet*: Jacobean masqueing was for many years largely centred on Queen Anna and her ladies, and she was the sister of Christian IV and the aunt of Prince Frederik. There were also a few musicians from England staying at the Copenhagen court for shorter or longer periods, and the converse,[30] and Inigo Jones, the main masque designer throughout the Stuart era, was in Copenhagen in 1603 and then had some contact with Christian IV on the king's visit to England in 1606.[31] Wade attaches great importance to these connections and especially to the 1606 visit to the English court by Christian IV, and to the visit by his brother Ulrik just after James' accession to the throne in 1604/5, and she finds significant influence from the masque on Frederik's *ballet*, particularly on two counts: the scenes with Pan and Orpheus are typical antimasques; and the social dancing following the *ballet* performance is seen as being the same as the revels of the court masque, where the noble masquers invited the audience to dance before they returned to the fictive, divine world of the masque proper and resumed their roles. These analyses create the foundation for Wade's further interpretation. Here she applies Orgel's basic reading of the masque to the *ballet*. According to him, the revels function as a means of making the audience identify with the world of the masque proper, that is with the royal family and the inner court circles. And this world shines the more beautifully because it is juxtaposed to the common world of the antimasque. In Wade's understanding the social dancing taking place after the *grand ballet* would then create a similar identification between the audience and the royal/noble masquers.[32]

30 Niels Krabbe, *Træk af musiklivet i Danmark på Christian IV's tid* (Copenhagen: Engstrøm & Sødring musikforlag, 1988), 40–42, 74–84. John Bergsagel, 'Danish Musicians in England 1611–1614: Newly Discovered Instrumental Music', *Dansk Årbog for Musikforskning*, 7 (1973–76), 9–20.

31 John Harris and Gordon Higgot, *Inigo Jones: Complete Architectural Drawings* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1989), 13–14; Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis*, 47–50 and 55–56.

32 Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis*, 73–80. I remain unconvinced by Wade's claim that Ulrik sponsored a masque and took part in its performance when he was visiting, mainly because sufficient information to support it is lacking.

There are several problems with this argument. Both Christian IV and his brother Ulrik visited the English court well before the first antimasque was created, and thus never saw one, and as a corollary the contact between Inigo Jones and the Danish king took place before the invention of antimasques, too. There is also a report suggesting that Christian had been extremely drunk at the masque performance which he attended.[33] If this is true, he would hardly have remembered the show well enough to inspire the creation of a similar performance, and if he actually was sufficiently impressed with the masque he attended to wish to have similar shows in his own court, why wait for almost thirty years to do so? His brother died in 1624, ten years before the mounting of the Copenhagen *ballet*, and it seems equally unlikely that he should have left descriptions of court masques that suddenly were taken as a basis for the *ballet* mounted ten years after his death. That a significant influence should have travelled through these two brothers to the 1634 show in Denmark therefore seems implausible for several reasons. But then there are no antimasques in Frederik's *ballet* either! On the contrary, the threatening, comic or grotesque elements run through the whole ballet as a scarlet thread. Such elements, however, are not at all alien to the French *ballets*, but there they are not singled out in isolated sections like antimasques.

There are two main points in Orgel's analysis of the significance of the revels. One is that the masque proper has been purged of everything inferior through the creation of the antimasque, and the masque proper has thus taken on a semi-divine character. The other is that because the revels are included specifically in the masque proper, the audience is drawn into the ficticious, divine world of the masquers precisely because they take part in the performance and are thus included in its world. The continuation of the play after the revels is therefore crucial to the function of this dancing. And this is not what happens in the Copenhagen *ballet* at all; there the audience dance after the show has ended, which was a perfectly normal procedure at a court feast. So there is no apotheosis of the audience into a royal, semi-divine world other than the elevation they may have felt on being invited to the feast, which is standard for any courtly entertainment. Further, Frederik's *ballet* has no strong focus on the king. He is briefly mentioned in the introductory lines, but other than that he is not implicated in the story at all.

All in all, it seems that Wade's Orgelian interpretation does not really fit the show which actually took place.[34]

33 See Butler, *Stuart Court Masque*, 126–27, and 400 n. 3, for a useful discussion on the sources regarding this occasion.

34 I would like to add, however, that Wade also offers a reading of this *ballet* as part of the larger wedding festivities. In this connection she sees the show as a representation of the element *earth*, but exploring the implications of such a larger framework in the present article would be impossible. See Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis*, 148–53.

A new interpretation

The most immediate meanings of the allegories of the *ballet* are obvious and thoroughly in tune with the tradition of Renaissance courtly spectacle. It does not take much imagination to recognize that the great Neptune represents Christian IV himself, who was after all king of one of the world's largest sea powers at the time. Hence 'the young Neptune' is the Prince-Elect and bridegroom, Christian V, and Pallas Athena can be none other than his bride, Princess Magdalena Sibylla.

The ascent to true love.

The main theme of the *ballet*, highly appropriate for a royal wedding festival, seems to be love.[35] First we are introduced to the vulgar, egotistic love of Pan who is capable of rape to satisfy his own lust. This love is conquered by the heroic Hercules and his love for Deianeira. The well-read among the audience would know that she was his third wife, and that Hercules had killed the river god Achelous to be with her. He had also saved her life, and clearly his love was of a much purer and more elevated kind than that of Pan.[36] But alas, in the long run he did not manage to stay faithful to her. Therefore his love could not serve as an allegory for ideal love either, and he disappears from the stage. Only the faithful love arising from Orpheus' ashes was sufficiently pure and noble to serve as an image for a love appropriate for the royal couple.

The fight between good and evil

Mingled with this ascent to true love is the strife between good and evil. Monsters have been cleared away by the powerful and peace-creating Neptune before the start of the show. Nevertheless Invidia continues to cause problems throughout. Naughty Pan is conquered by brave Hercules. Good Orpheus and his followers are slain by the Bacchantes frenzied through Invidia's vindictiveness, but Orpheus rises to new life through the help of benevolent beings, and the enslaving Voluptas with her servants are banished through the powers of the Virtues and Pallas Athena. Not surprisingly the Good always wins. And finally the new world arising from Orpheus' ashes of course signifies the future realm of the king- and queen-to-be, ruled over by purified love, where the divine powers of the queen are those of Athena, capable of forcing the evil powers of Voluptas to surrender.

Some puzzling features

This is of course a standard courtly allegory appropriate for a wedding celebration. There are, however, aspects of the story which are truly strange. At the time of the Great Wedding the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice was one of the most famous stories from antiquity and had already been used in three of the first operas ever made, *Euridice* by Peri and Rinuccini in 1600; Caccini's opera with the same name, also

35 The obvious love theme is also commented upon by Wade, *Triumphus nuptialis*, 147.
36 Ovid, *Heroides*, ix; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ix. 101–238.

with Rinuccino's libretto; and *L'Orfeo* by Monteverdi and Striggio in 1607. Orpheus with his superhuman musical powers lost his beloved wife Eurydice when she was bitten by a snake. Through his magical singing and playing he managed to pacify the guardian of the gates to Hades and thus descended to this realm of the dead hoping to bring his wife back to life. Here he sang with such a beauty that even the cheeks of the Furies were wet with tears, and Hades, the god of the underworld allowed him to bring Eurydice back to the human world. There was one condition, however: he must not turn around and look at her before they were both in the land of the living again. Overcome with fear that she was not following, he could not help himself and looked back. Eurydice therefore died a second time, and Orpheus was torn to pieces by bacchantes (or Thracian women).

Although there are many sources for this story, with many differing details, there are none that mention Orpheus being burnt and something new rising from his ashes![37] No other reworking of the story contains anything like that either. Also Mercury's claim that Orpheus is not dead, but alive, is rather strange.

There is also one allegorical figure that does not belong to the most common allegorical-mythological cast, Fama. However, she is included in Cesare Ripa's famous *Iconologia* from 1603,[38] but she makes a rather strange appearance in the *ballet*, since her natural task would not be to call the Virtues.

Further, the cast of the *ballet* consists entirely of mythological or allegorical figures, with three exceptions, namely the angels or 'Génios' gathering up Orpheus' remains, the Pantaloons gathering up those of the animals, and the Cavalier appearing towards the end of the show. His appearance introduces a new element which seems unnecessary for the main story; at this point the new world with the new love has already arrived. Admittedly he is connected with the presentation of Princess Magdalena Sibylla as Athena, but one would have thought that the introduction of the princess could have been obtained by other means earlier in the show, even in a more unified way, if that was what was wanted. So what exactly is he doing there? Moreover, considering that this is a *ballet de cour* the appearance of angels on the stage is extraordinary; they do not belong in this tradition at all. Nor are altars where sacrifices take place part of the French *ballet de cour* tradition. One could, of course, explain away these oddities by suggesting that the makers of the *ballet* were not sufficiently acquainted with the genre or the mythology and therefore got both content and form a little mixed up and then made up things as they went along. However, that does not seem very likely. The lavish wedding festivities alone abound with mythologically based elements and speak of a very thorough knowledge of the field on the part of the creating agents, as do so many of Christian IV's self-representations throughout his reign. That leaves us with the possibility that these oddities were there for a reason.

37 Jenny March, *Cassel Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (London: Cassel, 2002), 290–92.

38 Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia, overo Descrittione di diverse imagini cauate dall'anticita, & di propria inuentione* (Roma: Lepido Faey, 1603).

Secrets and cultural tropes

In his *Music as Cultural Practice*, Lawrence Kramer speaks not only of the interpretation of music, but of all interpretational acts, and he makes three points that are of particular relevance in our connection. Firstly, he says that

> We enable the interpretation of a text by depreciating what is overtly legible and regarding the text as potentially secretive, or at least as a provocation to understanding that we may not know how to answer. The text, in this frame of reference, does not give itself to understanding; it must be made to yield to understanding. A hermeneutic window must be opened through which the discourse of understanding can pass.[39]

Secondly, he discusses various types of such hermeneutic windows, and says that 'structural tropes' are 'ultimately the most powerful of hermeneutic windows'. And structural tropes 'cut across traditional distinctions between form and content [and can] evolve from any aspect of communicative change'. Further he points to how a network of structural tropes instigates processes of expressive activities where the object of interpretation becomes open to understanding. Thirdly, he stresses how we are likely to encounter and recognize such tropes precisely when the object of interpretation seems to be 'explicitly problematical', when we face 'breaking points' like for instance 'a surplus of pattern' or 'an excessive connection'.[40]

Alchemical tropes

This view of interpretational processes seems particularly appropriate in the case of the present ballet. The burning of Orpheus' dead body and a new world arising from his ashes is precisely such a breaking point, because it adds to a very well-known story a pattern which does not belong there at all. It also constitutes a cultural trope because it gives very specific hints at a different story which has a strong standing in a given culture: the alchemical tradition. Western alchemy can be traced back to at least 300 B.C. Superficially it is about seeking to make gold out of base metals, but at a deeper level it is a quest involving an ascent to higher spiritual levels together with the pursuit of chemical and medical knowledge. Alchemy has always been understood as an occult tradition and surrounded with great secrecy. This was still so at the time of the Great Wedding, but there was also a more general interest in alchemy, and many works connected with the alchemical tradition were published during the late Renaissance and early Baroque.[41]

The image of something rising out of the ashes is essential to alchemical thinking. The ash is first and foremost the incorruptible substance which is left after the

39 Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 6.

40 Ibid. 12.

41 For example, Lyndy Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. xix–xxi; Ioan P. Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, transl. Margaret Cook (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); and Stanton J. Linden, *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), esp. 149–247, all give good information about alchemical texts from this period.

Philosopher's Stone has been subjected to the purgatorial fire, and it is the substance out of which the Purified Stone, the Phoenix, rises.[42] Lynn Abraham describes the idea of the Philosopher's Stone as

> the Arcanum of all arcane, possessing the power to perfect imperfection in all things, able to transmute base metals into pure gold and transform the earthly man into an illumined philosopher. It is the figure of light veiled in dark matter, that divine love essence which combines divine wisdom and creative power.[43]

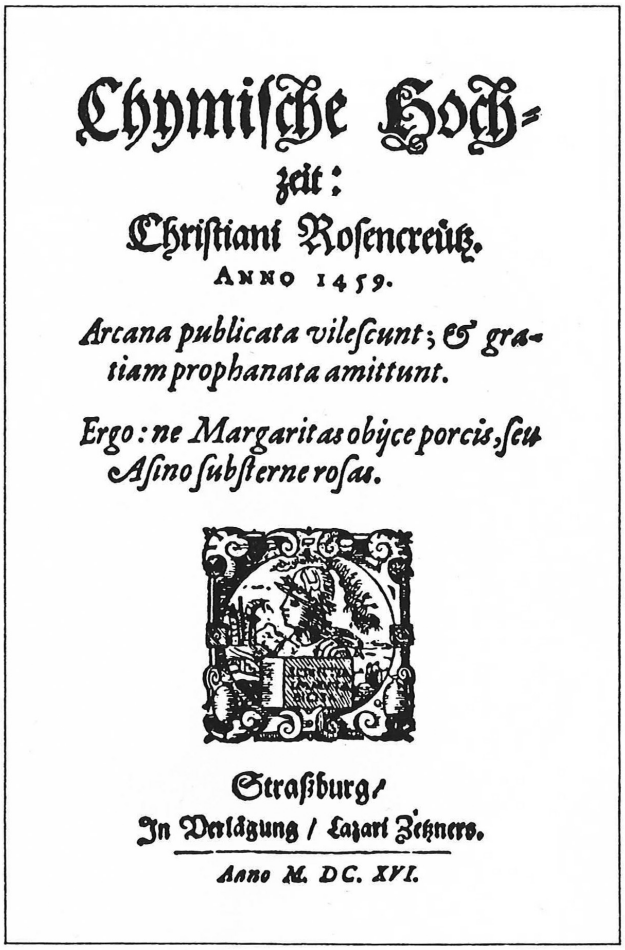
So the ash, then, is an even more purified version of these powers, and the Phoenix arising from it symbolizes the final stage of all alchemical transmutation, when the gold is made, the final resurrection.[44] One of the other characteristics of ash in alchemical understanding is that it can no longer be set on fire, therefore it is free of passion.

Interestingly, there is one more cultural trope arising from Orpheus' ashes. Alchemy was essential to the Rosicrucian movement of the early seventeenth century, and one of the three fundamental Rosicrucian texts is *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreütz anno 1459* (1616), written by Johann Valentin Andreae (see Ill. 2). In this long, Hermetic romance the body of the beheaded Philosophical Bird is burnt to ashes out of which the bodies of the king and queen in the story will be resurrected.[45]

A possible connection with Rosicrucianism also links up to other elements in the *ballet* story. In *The Chymical Wedding* Cupid serves as a special case. Christian Rosenkreutz is pricked with a dart by Cupid after he has accidentally seen the naked Venus, and this is clearly a necessary step in his process of initiation. In another tract which was generally seen as Rosicrucian, Robert Fludd's *Truth's Golden Harrow*, Cupid is used as a symbol for 'the love essence released by the Stone or Elixir'.[46] Also the strange appearance of angels is interesting in a Rosicrucian light. Angels do not hold a prominent position in alchemy or hermeticism in general, but they most certainly do in Rosicrucianism. Frances Yates repeatedly discusses the importance of angels in the various Rosicrucian tracts, and one of their tasks is to illuminate man's intellectual activities.[47] And finally, one of the three already mentioned fundamental Rosicrucian texts is the *Fama fraternitatis* – in which cherubim appear.[48]

Alchemical imagery, textual or pictorial, is rarely explicit. Rather it speaks in metaphors and has the character of information being revealed in veiled form. It also speaks through mirrors, as it were, although the pictures emerging in the mirrors are never exact renderings of what is mirrored. With this in mind a story on a deeper

42 Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, 12–13.
43 Ibid. 145.
44 Ibid. 152.
45 Johann V. Andreae, *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreütz anno 1459 Arcana publicata vilescunt: & gratiam prophanata amittunt. Ergo: ne Margaritas obiice porcis, seu Afino substernerosas* (Strassburg: Zetzner, 1616). See for instance the English translation by Foxcroft in Paul Marshall Allen (ed.), *A Christian Rosenkreutz Anthology* (Blauvelt, N.Y.: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1981), 67–162.
46 Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, 51.
47 Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1996), 223.
48 Ibid. 127.


Chymiſche Hoch-
zeit:
Chriſtiani Roſencreütz.
ANNO 1459.

Arcana publicata vileſcunt; & gratiam prophanata amittunt.

Ergo: ne Margaritas objce porcis, ſeu Aſino ſubſterne roſas.

Straßburg/
In Verlägung / Lazari Zetzners.

Anno M. DC. XVI.

Ill. 2. Johann v. Andreae, *Chymische Hochzeit: Christiani Rosencreütz* (Strassbourg, 1616).

level seems to emerge from the *ballet*. The king and queen arising from the ashes in Christian Rosenkreutz' wedding are admittedly themselves metaphors and not earthly royalty. However, the connection with the newly wedded king- and queen-to-be seems too obvious to be ignored, and the indication is that the royal couple are aspiring to the spiritual wisdom of alchemy or perhaps more specifically Rosicrucianism. This would also explain another strange feature of the *Kückelsom Text*. It claims that love purged of passion is the only love that Magdalena Sibylla can tolerate. Seen in an alchemical light this passage could signal that she is preoccupied with the path to enlightenment; not that she is incapable of feeling passion, even for her husband, which is a somewhat strange suggestion in a text for a wedding celebration.[49]

49 Although it should be added that in Elizabethan tradition the coldness of a virgin was a rather desirable feature.

In this new light the roles of the two Cupids are more understandable. In Mercury's song Cupid is chased away because his love is no longer sufficient. When the new Cupid enters as part of the new world brought in by Atlas, he reminds us strongly of the Cupid we encounter in Robert Fludd's *Truth's Golden Harrow*. About this pure love essence Fludd says: 'This Elixir is the true temple of wisdom, the impregnable castell of Cupid that powerful god of love' and in the *Chymical Wedding* Christian Rosenkreutz is pricked by Cupid as a necessary part of the initiation he is going through.[50] When the *Kückelsom Text* says that the new Cupid is shooting his arrows at Christian and Magdalena Sibylla, this may not only be a playful hint at their hopefully new-found love, but also, possibly, an indication that they are linked to a tradition of initiation. And when Fama calls the Virtues to help rescue the Cavalier, Fama can be more than the goddess of fame, she can also represent one of the leading Rosicrucian tracts.

Indeed, the very role of Mercury takes on a new character seen in this light. He is of course one of the stock figures in any mythological cast. But he is also *the* central God in alchemy. He is present at every stage of the alchemical process, and he carries the divine love essence which kills falsehood and allows truth to arise. When Mercury in the *ballet* sings about Orpheus not being dead, but alive, he speaks as the god of purification, the god who knows about transmutation from fleshly mortality to immortality. When he speaks of the new world and the new love arising, he is undoubtedly referring to the quest for spiritual development which is essential both to alchemy as such and to the Rosicrucian movement.

This reflects back on other aspects of the *ballet* as well, and the field of ancient mystery traditions opens up. It is obvious that for a theatre performance which has love and its development to higher stages running through it as a scarlet thread, it makes sense to take Pan who revels in sensual lusts as a point of departure. But why choose Hercules to represent the next stage of love? Not that it seems a bad choice, but with the whole field of mythology to choose from, there may be a specific reason behind the choice of Hercules. And by implication, why specifically choose his third wife, Deianeira, to be included? Could this be yet another reference to ancient mysteries where the neophyte had to go through various trials, two of which have left traces in ordinary language since we speak of 'going through fire and water'? To win Deianeira, we remember, Hercules actually had had to kill the river god. This must surely count as conquering water. And then Orpheus, in this very special *ballet*, also goes through the most gruesome ordeals thinkable and is finally purified – through fire, and this is what finally brings new life, and the mysterious proclamation that he is not dead after all.

This line of interpretation also helps explain the presence of the Cavalier. Why is he inserted into a theatre performance as the single human being playing a major role with a mythological and allegorical cast surrounding him? At first he is enslaved by the lustful life in Voluptas' world, but then he is freed through the influence of the Virtues and of Athena. This again corresponds with ancient mysteries and their

50 Quot. from Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, 51.

Renaissance revival, where precisely virtue and the qualities of Athena – who reigns over the sciences and music – are needed to aid the human soul in its ascension to a purified, higher spiritual consciousness. Through the presence of the Cavalier it is made clear that the spiritual quest presented through the *ballet* is valid not only for the mythological cast, but for ordinary human beings.[51]

Seen in this light the angels and the altar become more understandable. We shall probably never know who actually wrote the *Kückelsom Text*, or whether this author had originally written 'Génios' or 'angels', or, perhaps, whether the author of the *Festival Account* might have misunderstood what he was seeing and taken génios to be angels, or whether the writer found the possible difference insignificant. Perhaps that does not matter. What is important, is that in the scene where Orpheus' torn limbs are collected, this is done by benevolent higher beings with the capacity to bring about a metamorphosis where new life on a higher level arises. This process implies an encounter with the sacred, which is made visible through the presence of the altar. There are also text fragments like 'till the last day dawns' and 'the heavenly castle', references to a divinity higher than the mythological ones, and generally a hymn-like quality in several of the songs which also contributes to a sense that the play fundamentally is about spiritual development and religious experience.

It may be of further interest to note that the inclusion of an altar and the performance of a sacrifice in courtly theatre is not unique to this show. Sara Smart mentions that the same is also present in a Stuttgart *ballet* in 1617 written by Weckerlin, and she suggests an influence from masques written for the wedding of the English princess Elizabeth and Frederick V, Elector Palatine of Rhine, by Beaumont.[52] However, this is far from the only instance of such an occurrence. The insertion of elements indicating that a religious ceremony is being performed is a prominent feature of the Early Stuart masquing era.[53] This is perhaps the strongest indication that there has been significant and specific influence of the English masque tradition on the first Danish *ballet*. How this influence might have travelled is hard to know. Publication of English masque texts made many of them accessible on a scale very unusual for courtly entertainments. Most important were the two publications of Ben Jonson's masques, the first arriving in 1616 and the second containing his later masques in 1631.[54] But perhaps equally important is the web of contacts between intellectuals, artists, musicians, authors and courtiers. The paths of information and inspiration in such a web are often untraceable; it is often only through their results that some of the exchanges which have taken place can be sensed.

The music which sounded in the first Scandinavian music theatre performance is still silent. But the choice of Orpheus as one of the main protagonists, as the one who goes through a metamorphosis to new life and divine love, is hardly a

51 See Rygg, *Masqued Mysteries* (2000), 53–74 and 180–214, for a thorough discussion of such initiation based upon ancient mystery traditions.

52 Smart, 'The Württemberg Court', 40–42.

53 Rygg, *Masqued Mysteries* (2000).

54 For publication details, see for example Ben Jonson, *The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

coincidence. Although the transformation taking place depends partly on the help of higher beings, the fact cannot be ignored that it is Orpheus, the ultimate master of music, who has become ready to undergo metamorphosis. This may also indicate part of the meaning of the spectacles presented through the ballet: a reign where the pursuit of music and the arts may lead to the development of a higher consciousness is proclaimed. And it could be said that there were three kings watching the angelic dance which is preparing for the ascent to the highest love: the reigning king; his eldest son, the bridegroom, who had already acted in the capacity of king on several occasions and was supposed to become king, but who died before his father; and then Frederik, the sponsor of the *ballet* who actually turned out to become the future king.

Conclusion

In one sense this *ballet* is a celebration typical of leading Renaissance courts, and as far as form is concerned, it is undoubtedly a version of the French *ballet de cour*. Apparently unrelated scenes actually form a coherent narrative and thus the entire show as such is more typical of the *ballet comique* than the *ballet à entrées* tradition. But the performance can be assumed to be more than a celebration of royal power. It signals that a new era is to be expected in which rulership is based on spiritual ideals related to alchemy and probably even Rosicrucianism. The question therefore arises to what degree this represented the ideas of the royal Danish family – or some of its members – at that time. Only further research can answer that question.

Summary

The first music theatre performance in Scandinavia, the so called *ballet* given at the royal wedding in Copenhagen in 1634, is explored in this article. The first main question is what the royal family and the various artists working for them wanted to achieve by staging this *ballet*. The second main question is how this onset of Scandinavian music theatre was related to leading traditions of courtly music theatre in other North European courts, primarily those in England and France. In this connection Mara Wade's interpretations of the Copenhagen *ballet* in her study *Triumphus nuptialis* are discussed.

The article shows that as far as form is concerned, the Copenhagen performance is clearly structured like a French *ballet de cour*. However, the actual contents demonstrates that the potentiality of the performance as political propaganda is hardly exploited, whereas signs linked to occult trends like alchemy and Rosicrucianism are manifold, indicating that these trends were essential to at least parts of the royal family itself. In this respect the first music theatre performance in Scandinavia also shows surprising influence from the English court masque.