

Balance and Sing Store Update ~ Spring 2016

The Playford Assembly



125 Early English Country Dances
1651–c.1820

Graham Christian

The Playford Assembly: 125 Early English Country Dances, 1651–c. 1820
by Graham Christian
Easthampton, MA: The Country Dance and Song Society, 2015
\$35, <http://store.cdss.org/product/1116-playford-assembly>.

Opening *The Playford Assembly* is like meeting someone for the first time but immediately feeling like old friends. Dancers familiar with Kate Van Winkle Keller and Genevieve Shimer's *The Playford Ball* will recognize the format of Graham Christian's eagerly awaited sequel which gathers together 125 historical dances that have become an integral part of the contemporary repertoire: 25 for the intervening years between the *Ball* and the *Assembly* and 100 in honor of the Country Dance and Song Society centennial. Tune and dance instructions appear at the top, with facsimiles, illustrations and commentary—in an easy-to-read, albeit small, serified font—artfully arrayed below.

The Playford Assembly should be an indispensable part of any dancer's library. Teachers gain in one volume a solid core repertoire reconstructed by Charles

Bolton, Tom Cook, Fried de Metz Herman, Christine Helwig, Colin Hume and Andrew Shaw in addition to Cecil Sharp, Pat Shaw and many others. The table of formation, key, meter, date and difficulty is a handy reference for programming. The glossary of formations, figures and steps makes this a good stand-alone volume for newer dancers, and Austen enthusiasts will find "A Trip to Netherfield: An Authentic Jane Austen Ball" of particular interest. Graham Christian's eminently readable and concise historical introduction brackets the dances themselves along with an extensive bibliography that includes databases and online sources.

Ultimately the reason any reader will return again and again to *The Playford Assembly* is the wealth of scholarship presented in the commentaries. Graham Christian cloaks his considerable dance, literary and musical expertise in an engaging and lively writing style. Each title offers us a glimpse into the society of its day and invites us to take a dance. Ever wondered what "Ore Boggy" meant, or what "Mrs. Savage's Whim" was, or craved the "News From Tripoly"? You'll find the answers, and so much more, in *The Playford Assembly*!

Review by Orly Krasner

New shipping schedule

Mail orders, donations and memberships are processed each work day, Monday–Friday, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. Books, recordings, etc., will be shipped from our store twice-weekly only, on Tuesdays and Thursdays.



B E L L S

As we go to press, the shipment of morris bells are on their way from England! We'll have notice of their arrival on our online store site, <http://store.cdss.org/>. Let the spring begin!

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