

Jacob Hall and other rope dancers on the continent, 1678-1682

Histories of the early modern English stage have devoted relatively little attention to the activities of such popular entertainers as puppeteers, acrobats, and rope dancers, many of whom plied their humble trade alongside, and sometimes in competition with, the more respectable dramatic representations in the theatre houses. As the authors of *The London Stage 1660-1700* have noted, “the lowest form on the artistic scale was rope dancing, essentially a demonstration of dexterity by a skilled performer who combined dancing with rope skipping and rope twirling” (Van Lennep cviii). It should come as no surprise, then, that of the many rope dancers alluded to in contemporary civic and other records only a handful have escaped complete anonymity. No doubt the most famous late seventeenth-century rope dancer was Jacob Hall (*fl.* 1662-1681), who regularly entertained audiences at the various London fairs and whose agility was greatly admired by Samuel Pepys (Van Lennep 141, 146, 189, 277, 288, 312). What little we know about Hall is largely derived from a few scattered references, and forms the substance of the two most recent accounts of Hall’s life and career—neither of which has added anything to the original *Dictionary of National Biography* (*DNB*) entry (Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans 7: 23-25; Hahn). In the present article I want to draw attention to two notarial contracts which have hitherto been neglected by theatre historians, the first shedding new light on a troupe of rope dancers led by Hall, the second relating to two other troupes operating on the continent, who have so far remained completely unknown. Preserved in continental archives but long since available in Dutch-language printed sources, these documents deserve closer consideration for what they tell us about the

composition, financial operations, and planned movements of the troupes concerned. Below I provide a complete but slightly modernized English translation.¹

I.

Die Decima septima febr [the 17th day of February] 1678.

Mrs Susanna Conincx, lawfully wedded wife of Jacob Hall, acting as her husband's proxy, on the one side, and Daniel van Schraven, on the other, known to me the notary undersigned, declare that they have mutually agreed on the following contractual obligations. The above-mentioned first party have agreed, for as long as they will be exercising their dancing and anything relating thereto in Brabant, Flanders, Germany and Holland, to bear the second party's expenses, [and pay for, *my add.*] food and drink, washing and wringing. In addition, the said first party shall pay for the second party's travel expenses, in whatever places they shall happen to be. The said first party shall also freely pay the second party five schellingen [Dutch shillings] a day whenever they will perform, and all expenses as stipulated before <whether they will perform or not>, for as long as they will be in the regions mentioned. And the above-mentioned first party shall also have to pay the second party the sum of four English shillings a day when they will be in Oxford and Bristol, in England; and ten shillings a day during the fairs of Bartholomew and Southwark, in London, i.e. when they will perform <as well as everything else freely as specified in greater detail above>. In fulfilment of all previous obligations both parties have committed their persons and possessions, present and future, without any deceitful intent. Actum Antverpiae presentibus Nivel Hall and Jan Baptista de Neeff testibus rogatis [Acted at Antwerp in the presence of Nivel Hall and Jan Baptista de Neeff, invited witnesses].

Signed: Susanna King, Daniel Van Schraven, J.B. Hamilton, Nots.

(Duverger 235; original contract preserved at Stadsarchief [City Archive] Antwerpen, *Notaris J.B. Hamilton* 1927, 1677-83, folio 3-3^v).

II.

Before me, Willem van Bommel, notary public, and the witnesses mentioned below, have appeared Willem Koffa, Anthony Kortijn, Jan Van[jer?], <master> ropedancers, now performing together at the fair in this town, on the one side, and Daniel van Scgrauwen and Johannes Palmer, also <master> ropedancers, <with Elonara Rijmers, housewife of Johannes Palmer and ropedancer>, on the other side, who have declared that they have entered into the following contract. Both parties, with their helpers and servants on either side, <excepting three servants belonging to the second party, unless they agree to continue in their present employment, namely Jan Nas for 5 fl a day, Jan F[?]onna for 4fl a day, and Anthony de Kete for 3 fl a day> will henceforth be one company, which they will afterwards split up and divide into two or three companies by mutual agreement. This arrangement will last up to and including the time of the next Amsterdam fair or for as long as both parties will be permitted to perform there. And all the profits made during that time will accrue to both parties, and be

divided as follows: three fifths to the first party and the remaining two fifths to the second. But until then all and any expenses, such as the hiring of servants, the building of booths,² the payment of fines for the benefit of the poor, with nothing else excepted, will be borne and paid for in common. Both parties have pledged punctually to abide by all the terms of this agreement, to which they have committed themselves and all their possessions, both in form and according to the law. And any party that should break the present contract will forfeit the sum of ten times one hundred guilders, one half in the amount of five hundred guilders to accrue to the party that will have observed the contract, and the other half for the benefit of the poor of the city or location where they will be. The parties have also agreed that if anyone during the time specified here were to be taken ill or be injured in falling down during a performance or in any other way, and be unable to play, [this person] will still receive payment as before. Recorded, agreed on and executed in Breda on 22 May 1682, in the presence of Boudewijn Cheeus <inhabitant> and Nowwel Dufoy, witnesses.

Signed: Willem Lenders Koffa, Antoni Kortin, Jean Van[sier?], Daniel Van Schraven, John Palmer, Ellenora Reimers, Boudewyn Cheeus, NFD this is the signature of Nowwel Dufoy, Quod Attestor W. Van Bommel. May 1682.

(van Roosmalen 306-7; original contract preserved at Stadsarchief [City Archive] Breda, *Notariële archieven*, inventory nr 0310, W. van Bommel, folio 117).

Primarily concerned with money matters, both documents are in the nature of labour contracts, drawn up well ahead of the planned performance days or periods. The February 1678 agreement laid down the financial responsibilities of Jacob Hall's company, represented by his wife, with respect to one Daniel Van Schraven, evidently hired to act as an agent organizing both their wide-ranging continental tour and their performances in Oxford, Bristol, and London, at Bartholomew and Southwark Fair, in August and September, respectively. The inclusion of Bristol in Hall's list of destinations may indicate that he planned to entertain audiences there at the St James Fair, held in July. Although, before 1642, "no evidence survives to connect local entertainment to the fairs directly", by the 1660s at least players, tumblers, rope dancers, and other entertainers had become a regular feature of the Bristol trade fairs (Pilkinton xxxii, lxxvi). Rope dancing had also been popular, although frequently prohibited by the authorities, in Oxford, where Anthony Wood paid 6d. to see "the Turk" on

19 February 1657, on 12 and 14 July 1658, and (another performer?) on 9 July 1660 (Rollins *Commonwealth* 68-69; Rollins *Contribution* 313-14).

Signed in Breda, in the Dutch province of Noord-Brabant, where the two companies of rope dancers concerned were in all likelihood appearing simultaneously at the Pentecost Fair, the May 1682 contract confirms the creation of a united company that was to be split up again into two or three parts after the Amsterdam fair at the end of September, or afterwards.³ While remaining tacit about the new company's destinations, the agreement essentially spells out either party's share in the profits and expenses—a three-fifths vs. two-fifths division, possibly reflecting company size prior to the merger.

Although neither the 1678 nor the 1682 agreement clarifies the performers' contractual obligations (which were no doubt recorded in separate contracts), both do provide information about the daily wages of some members, an aspect of the rope dancing profession about which we are poorly informed. The amount of five Dutch shillings which in February 1678 Hall and his wife proposed to pay Van Schraven for each of their acting days on the continent was the equivalent of 1.50 *f.* (guilders).⁴ In the absence of reliable evidence about rope dancers' wages, the only relevant point of comparison is the fees paid to Dutch dramatic actors in this period. E. F. Kossmann's list of actors and actresses who were intermittently under contract to the Amsterdam playhouse in the period 1669-1700 shows that wages could vary considerably, ranging from *f.* 1.10 per day for a minor actor like Jan Baptist Petit to *f.* 4.15 for Adriana Rigo (wife to the actor Nicolaas Rigo) and *f.* 6 for star actor Harmanus Koning, all three in 1680 (Kossmann 113-22). By this standard only, not counting his living and travel expenses which were also due on non-acting days, Van Schraven's remuneration may seem on the modest side, although it was vastly superior to, say, the weekly wages of *f.*

2.80 earned by a skilled worker at mid-century (Schama 619). But we have no way of knowing whether, in the brief period covered by the contract, Van Schraven did not supplement his income by doubling as a dancer himself (which he certainly was by 1682). The amount of 4s. (English shillings) per day which he was to earn during the company's appearance at Oxford and Bristol seems to have been a reasonable one, given that sixteen years later, as of the autumn of 1694, "the pay scale for principals" of the London United Company still began as low as 5s. per day (Hume 399). The amount of 10s., on the other hand, which Van Schraven was promised for each of the company's acting days in London evidently reflected their—no doubt justified—expectation of much higher takings at Bartholomew and Southwark Fair. In the summer of 1678, then, at which time both fairs had grown into two-week (or longer) events, Van Schraven could have earned the handsome sum of £ 12 for some twenty-four acting days. His salary and the amount of £ 5 that Jacob Hall paid from 1676 to 1680 to hire space as a booth holder at Bartholomew Fair must of course have represented only a small fraction of the total costs involved in staging their entertainments (Rosenfeld 1, 5, 71). Yet both the 1678 and the 1682 agreement testify to the contracting parties' intention to perform at the summer fairs, which always proved profitable, not just for "some of the low comedians" in London but also for the managers and the actors at the Amsterdam playhouse, for instance (Hume 399; De Lepper 149).

Judging from the terms of the May 1682 contract, one suspects that the rope dancers' wages were rather generous, given that Nas, [F?]onna, and de Kete, "servants" who would have been in charge of menial occupations, were paid a hefty *f.* 5, *f.* 4, and *f.* 3 per day, respectively.⁵ The wording of the marginal addition may imply that if they did not resign but chose to hang on to "their present employment", they could not lay claim to a pay increase under the management of the newly-formed company in the period covered by the contract. It

is not clear whether the magnitude of the compensation (*f.* 1,000) to be paid by the party reneging on the agreement suggests that, as was sometimes the case, other lucrative kinds of acrobatics (or even regular dramatic performances) were being envisaged. The phrase “their dancing and *anything relating thereto* [my italics]” in the 1678 contract and the allusion to the booths or stages in the 1682 contract certainly allow for this possibility. Or was the fine set at this high a rate simply to deter either party from jeopardizing the viability of the new company, what with all the expenses attendant upon “the hiring of servants, the building of booths” and the payments for the poor?

Whether the provisions in the 1678 and 1682 agreements were at all representative is impossible to say. But they undeniably followed the same pattern as the five related notarial contracts which were drawn up at Rotterdam on 3 and 10 September 1646 and 2 September 1647 by the troupe of travelling actors, styling themselves “master comedians”, led by the actor and dramatist Jan Baptist van Fornenbergh (1624-1697) (Haverkorn van Rijsewijk 151-57).⁶ In the first two of these the players: appointed, as a “medecompagnon” or “fellow company member” an agent entrusted with the task of travelling around in search of appropriate locations for performances and of securing the required licenses; promised to remunerate him at the same rate as three of the five founding actors signing the agreement; subsequently, on 10 September 1646, agreed to form a company for the duration of one year, without dissension or strife, in order to exercise, for the benefit of this company, the dramatic art and “all activities pertaining to it”; and declared that if any of the parties were to act contrary to the agreement, or abandon it altogether, he would not only be deprived of the company’s clothes, jewels, and goods (no doubt those used on the stage) but would have to

pay, for the benefit of the others, compensation in the amount of 250 Carolus guilders (the equivalent of *f.* 375), and be barred from joining any other troupe.⁷

These correspondences with the Antwerp and Breda contracts (occasionally couched in similar terms) demonstrate that companies of rope dancers, like those of strolling actors, operated as a “cooperative organization”, possibly under the management of the signatories describing themselves as “master rope dancers” (Baker 102). The 1682 contract, however, also highlights the social dimension of such agreements. Not only did the parties agree to reserve half of the compensation of *f.* 1,000 imposed on potential defectors for “the poor of the city”—a contribution to charity of one quarter to one third of the total takings was often exacted by Dutch civic authorities (Worp, 79; Sierman, 138)—but they also provided for an early form of unemployment benefit for any member incapacitated by illness or a fall. This was no gratuitous bonus, given the occupational hazards to which the dancers constantly exposed themselves. Risking their lives and limbs, and in so doing breaking the Biblical Commandment not to kill, was one of the reasons indeed why church authorities objected to this type of entertainment (Sierman 137).⁸ When Samuel Pepys had the opportunity to meet Jacob Hall himself at Southwark Fair on 21 September 1668, the acrobat told the diarist that he had had many “mischief[s] in his time...but never to the breaking of a limb”—but not all his colleagues proved so lucky (Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans 7: 23).⁹

The express concern with the individual artists’ well-being serves as a reminder of how imperfectly informed we are about their lives, professional careers, and whereabouts. Besides shedding light on the nature of the contractual agreements, the 1678 and 1682 documents are therefore of uncommon interest in adding at least details to what we know

about Jacob Hall and others, and in allowing us to identify a number of previously unknown performers.

The authoritative entries on Jacob Hall, by Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans (7: 23) and Hahn, respectively, record his paid relationship, in the late 1660s, with Charles II's erstwhile mistress Barbara Villiers, Lady Castlemaine. But it has never been suspected that by early 1678 the rope dancer had a lawful wife, whose nationality unfortunately cannot be established. The evidence in the notarial contract is decidedly ambiguous. Was Susanna Coninx, as the surname suggests, Dutch or Flemish? Or was "Coninx" merely the translation of the name "King" with which she—or the clerk to notary Hamilton, no doubt of British descent himself—signed the document?¹⁰ Whatever the answer may be, it seems safe to assume that Jacob Hall's wife was a dancer herself and a leading member, perhaps the co-manager, of an itinerant company, whose further history is unfortunately shrouded in mists.¹¹ Marriages between members of travelling companies were not unusual. And it has been suggested that "married members of a troupe were looked upon with more tolerance than ordinary actresses by authorities in countries other than Spain" (Graves 192). One can only speculate whether the likelihood of a more hospitable reception accorded to married performers played any part in the Halls' decision to take their company on its European tour. Whatever their motive may have been, the hiring of Van Schraven as an agent reconnoitring the terrain makes it a virtual certainty that there was a Hall/Coninx company in the first place, instead of only a husband-and-wife team. And one of the reasons why there are no records of performances by Jacob Hall singly in London or elsewhere in England from around

1680 may be that he and his company invested most of their time in touring the Low Countries and Germany well after the seven-month period covered by the 1678 contract.¹²

Why this contract was signed at Antwerp—in Hall’s absence—must also remain an open question. Was this the Halls’ make-shift place of residence after their marriage, and a convenient operating base almost equidistant from their English, Dutch and German destinations? Were they on a continental tour already, with Antwerp as one of their planned halting places? Although now no longer the bustling cultural centre that it used to be, the city would still have been an attractive destination, having welcomed circus acts and performances by travelling companies to its first permanent playhouse, the “Almoners’ Theatre”, opened in January 1661 (De Paepe 26-27). And in 1658 Charles II himself, in the final months of his exile, had been entertained there by a company of rope dancers led by one Jacobus Bro(u?)wer (Green 423). Or did Antwerp just happen to be the place where the Halls (or Susanna Conincx) crossed the path of Daniel Van Schraven, who had the professional experience and a sufficient command of foreign languages to secure on behalf of Hall’s company the required licences from both continental and English civic authorities? That Van Schraven did possess such experience is suggested by his title “master rope dancer” in the 1682 contract. It is this document which, in addition to Van Schraven’s, yields up the names of a number of hitherto unrecorded performers.

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Signed at a time when fairground performances in Breda had slowly begun to recover from the consequences of the Franco-Dutch War of 1672-78, the May 1682 contract was

concluded between what appears to be a Dutch and a mixed, English-Dutch, company of dancers (De Lepper). Identification of the three named members of the first party is complicated by the variant spellings and/or forms of their family names in the body of the text and in their signatures.¹³ And in the absence of any other evidence about the composition and earlier whereabouts of this company, it is impossible to determine their regional origins. I have been unable to trace “Willem Koffa”, who signed himself “Willem Lenders Koffa” (possibly adding his mother’s maiden name), in any other relevant Dutch archival document, even though his was an Amsterdam name of occasional occurrence in the late 17th century.¹⁴ We have no way of knowing whether “Anthony Kortijn”, or “Antoni Kortin” as he signed himself, was related to Antoine Courtin, the local French schoolmaster whose name appears with some regularity in the late 17th-century Breda records. Or was he the same person as the “Antonius Cortin”, son of Melchior and Barbara Las, who had been baptized at Bergen-op-Zoom on 21 April 1659? Given the divergent spellings, we are on even shakier ground with respect to the third “master rope dancer” named in the contract as “Jan Vanjer” (Vanier?) but whose signature may alternatively be read as “Jean Vansiev”, “Jean Vansier”, or possibly “Jean Vautier”. The surnames Vanjer and Vanier—the latter of Walloon origin—both appear in contemporary civic records at Breda, Delft, and Rotterdam but, as with the other two performers, this information sheds no further light on the rope dancer’s identity or his family affiliations.

If, with respect to the first (essentially Dutch?) troupe we are left with no more than three names, the available records allow us to reconstruct a somewhat more complete picture of the second troupe. As the May 1682 contract makes clear, the signatories John Palmer and “Ellenora” Reimers (Rijmers) were husband and wife. But it appears that they were also members of the English community at Delft, in the province of South-Holland—one of the

many foreign communities in a city recently described as a “smeltkroes van migranten” [“a melting-pot of migrants”, my translation]” (Verhoeven 342). Established in 1636, the English Reformed Church at Delft always had a small membership, numbering only about 103 baptisms until its demise in 1724, shortly after the death of the last English pastor (Sprunger 422-25). On 25 June 1679 Palmer’s daughter Eleonora had been christened there, the father being described in the baptismal register as “an English Surgion” (AD4 folio 2v).¹⁵ In having himself thus styled in a church document, Palmer may have hoped to make his trade as an entertainer more palatable to the Puritan authorities at Delft.¹⁶ But if, at this point in time, “surgery” was Palmer’s main profession indeed, it does not necessarily follow that he did not become a funambulist until after June 1679. As much as his sense of equilibrium his medical skills as a “surgeon”—the contemporary term for a wound-dresser—would have been valuable assets for anyone entering the rope dancing profession (see note 5 for a comparable linkage of both). What type of apprenticeship, if any, acrobats like Van Schraven, Palmer, and the others would have served before being entitled to call themselves “master rope dancers”, is another moot point. Perhaps the title was a self-conferred one, coined in imitation of the registered masters of the various guilds of artists and artisans at Delft and elsewhere and therefore designed to earn the profession a certain degree of respectability (Montias 99). But a lack of respectability must not be taken as a reliable indicator of the practitioners’ social origins. If the signatures underneath the May 1682 contract, including Palmer’s with its graceful flourishes, can be used as a measure of their education, all six dancers were literate.

There is convincing evidence showing that Palmer, through his union with Eleonora, had married into a family of rope dancers. The registers of the Old Church at Delft record the burial, on 1 February 1696, of “Poulus [Paulus] Rijmers, a master Rope dancer”—probably a brother to Eleonora—now living on Verwersdijk in this city (AD1 folio 123v). Paulus

Rijmers had practised his trade for a long time, together with his wife Maria Sasbout. In a deposition dated at Amsterdam on 27 September 1668, they appear as plaintiffs against one Claes (no Christian name given), who after a quarrel had threatened Maria Sasbout with bodily harm and insulted her and “the old scoundrel”, her husband (SAA).¹⁷ Apart from revealing something about the social circles in which they moved, this document proves that the Rijmerses in 1668 had a rope dancing booth, where the accused Claes played the part of the Fool. Testimony in support of the complainants was provided by Jan Van Putten, “supervisor of (the?) spectacle(s?)”—a city official or a dancer himself—and Denijs Jacobsz., a “jumper” or vaulter, presumably a member of Paulus Rijmers’ company.¹⁸ Professional as well as family ties further helped knit together the small Delft community of performers. When Daniel, son of Sasbout Rijmers (another brother to Eleonora?) and Maria Symons, members of the Evangelical-Lutheran community, was baptized at Delft on 12 May 1686, one of the witnesses was the ubiquitous “Daniel van S’graven”, John Palmer’s co-manager in May 1682.

The records of the English Church at Delft also turn up the name of one Ralph Appleby, who in view of the context can conceivably be identified with “Mr Appleby”, an acrobat known (by his surname only) from a handful of references in contemporary newsletters. “The famous Mr Appleby” displayed his skills to great applause at Bartholomew and Southwark Fairs from 1696 through 1699, and joined the rope dancer Edward Barnes (d. c. 1703) as a partner in 1698 and 1699. After the turn of the century, Barnes seems to have operated his booth alone and the advertisements do not mention “Mr Appleby” anymore (Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans 1: 92).¹⁹ In the 1670s, the Ralph Appleby I have uncovered at Delft appears as a witness in three entries in the baptismal registers of the English Church,

including the one for John Palmer's daughter Eleonora (25 June 1679, see above)—giving a direct link with the family of rope dancers.²⁰ Although, as a rule, witnesses' professions are not provided in these entries, is it too far-fetched to hypothesize that this was none other than "Mr. Appleby", the acrobat? Is it imaginable that long before his heydays at the London fairs in the 1690s he had already carved out a career on the continent, as a member of the Dutch-English company at Delft? The issue is both clarified and complicated by an additional piece of evidence. On 13 June 1643 the Delft registers record the publication of the marriage banns of "Raephe Applebij, Englishman" to Lysbeth Willems, a widow (AD6 folio 114). If this Appleby (a relatively young man in 1643?) and the one acting as a witness to the three christenings in the 1670s are the same individual, they are admittedly unlikely to be the "Mr Appleby" who stunned audiences with his acrobatics as late as 1696. If, as I presume, Ralph Appleby and "Mr Appleby" were identical, then the "Raephe Applebij" of the 1640s may have been the acrobat's father or an older relative. In either case, the 1643 entry strongly suggests that the Applebys had a long-standing connection with the city of Delft and its family-based group of English-Dutch performers.

As far as its composition is concerned, Hall's company appears to have held on—or reverted—to a tradition initiated by early- and mid-century wandering players. From around 1636 English actors in the Low Countries, such as William Roe (*fl.* 1645) and John Payne (*fl.* 1646), had entered into short-term agreements with their Dutch counterparts and performed with them widely throughout Holland and Germany (Junkers 20-21; Albach 57, 59). After mid-century the English lead—and presence—in such mixed companies gradually passed into the hands of the Dutch; this marked the end of the era of the English strolling player, who was soon all but absent from the companies of wandering players in Germany and elsewhere (Worp 75; Bachrach 35). Whether this development also applied to other types of performers

the evidence examined here does not allow us to determine. It would seem, however, that as late as 1678, Hall's company of rope dancers at least did not conform to the trend, either in the nature of its (mixed English-Flemish) management or in the scope of its planned journeys. And, while preparing to travel a less extensive circuit, the mixed company created in 1682 by Willem Koffa and John Palmer also continued to draw on the resources of a small English community, probably long established at Delft, whose origins and artistic exchanges with the homeland, however, one can only speculate about.

Admittedly, the 1678 and 1682 notarial contracts are no more than snapshots raising many questions which, for the time being, must remain unanswered. But they do allow us to catch some fascinating glimpses of the professional activities of the three companies of rope dancers concerned—showing the terms of their merger and their movements, their financial operations, composition, and even the social background from which one member appears to have been recruited. The contracts provide us with a positive answer to the question, recently raised in connection with a Bristol playbill of the 1630s, as to “whether adult women also may have appeared as tumblers or dancers”; they also confirm that at least some troupes of travelling players were “built around family groups and paternal relationships” (Astington 163-64). Directly or indirectly, these documents furnish new details about the careers of an English star performer such as Jacob Hall and, possibly, “Mr Appleby”. And they yield up a number of previously unknown names, including those of Susanna King/Conincx, Daniel van Schraven, and John Palmer and his wife Eleonora Rijmers, who henceforth deserve to be added to the list of late seventeenth-century popular entertainers.

Notes

¹ For the sake of comprehensibility, I have simplified the division into sentences, added or explained a few words, and indicated some doubtful readings (followed by a question mark) between square brackets. I have also capitalized forenames and family names. Marginal and interlinear insertions in the original texts, denoting important additions or afterthoughts, are placed between pointed brackets.

² The original reads “het timmeren van speelen”, literally “the carpentering of plays”. According to the *Woordenboek van de Nederlandse Taal* [Dictionary of the Dutch Language], one of the old meanings of the word “spel” (modern plural “spelen”) is “anything required for a performance” or, more specifically, a “fairground booth”.

³ Pentecost Sunday in 1682 fell on 17 May.

⁴ All values derived from “Guide to Seventeenth Century Dutch Coins, Weights, and Measures” ; and “Money in the 17th century Netherlands”.

⁵ Where and how such servants were recruited is not clear but in England, at least, they could sometimes be drawn from more dignified occupations. In October 1695 one Edward Green, who had been apprenticed to Roger Gately, a surgeon, was discharged from his indentures because Gately had “compelled the said Green to be a rope-dancer, tumbler, and jackpudding” (Hardy 41).

⁶ van Fornenbergh’s long and distinguished career has been fully traced by Ben Albach.

⁷ Steep compensations were not uncommon among continental travelling actors. In the contract for cooperation, for instance, concluded by Abraham Mittalat de La Source’s “Troupe des Comédiens de la Reine de France” on 15 March 1669 the compensation was assessed at “mille livres” (Liebrecht 277).

⁸ On 26 August 1685 Sir Robert Southwell MP (1635-1702), in a letter to his son, commented on Bartholomew Fair, “Here, you see the rope-dancers gett their living meerly by hazarding of their lives; and why men will pay money and take pleasure to see such dangers, is of separate and philosophical consideration” (Thornbury 345).

⁹ In January 1740, the rope walker Robert Cadman, “descending from the steeple of St Mary Friars, Shrewsbury...lost his balance, fell, and was killed” (Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans 3: 7).

¹⁰ In the baptismal registers of the Antwerp parish of Sint-Andries (St Andrew’s), I have located a Susanna Coninx, daughter of Melchior Coninx and Johanna Leunis, who was christened on 7 March 1641, and would therefore have been almost thirty-seven in February 1678—an age at which rope dancing was physically still manageable (IPPA). But I have found no trace of a marriage record for this Susanna Coninx. That she was Hall’s wife is therefore no more than a possibility.

¹¹ Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans note that one Stephen Scudamore, according to the Lord Chamberlain’s accounts, “joined the rope-dancing troupe of William Fuller and Jacob Hall in 1699 [misprint for 1669]” (5: 424; 13: 243). Whether this was the same troupe as the one alluded to in the 1678 contract, is not clear. The “Nevil Hall” who acted as one of the witnesses to the contract (without signing it) must have been one of Jacob’s relatives—and a performer himself? The other invited witness, Jan Baptista de Neeff, was probably the Antwerp painter and a member of the famous Guild of St Luke, who was registered as paying his dues in 1673-74 (Rombouts and van Lerius 435).

¹² Hahn notes that “there are no references to his performances after 1681”. While literary references to Hall’s dancing continued into the early 1680s, the last English record of a performance appears to be one dated 4 September 1679. Hall’s payments for space hired at Bartholomew Fair continued until 1680 (Rosenfeld 5).

¹³ My search for the family names below, in their variant spellings, has mainly concentrated on the Dutch Open Archives Website.

¹⁴ Was he a descendant of “J. Jansz Kassa” (or “Kaffa” ?), a minor Amsterdam actor who had been active in the local theatre between 1648 and 1650 (Kossmann 121)? Or was he related to Andries Leenders Coffa (1653-1741), a musician born in Zutphen, Gelderland (“Stamboom Caffa”)?

¹⁵ In 1657 the city had built a new “Theatrum Anatomicum”, where all city surgeons, with their pupils, were given the opportunity once a week to attend lectures on anatomical theory and practice (van Bleyswijck 572).

¹⁶ Sprunger (425) points out that the “Delft church kept up an energetic program of worship and discipline, at least into the 1680s. Offenses of adultery, drunkenness, neglecting of sermons, and such like, were dealt with severely”.

¹⁷ There can be little doubt that Rijmers and Sasbout were originally from Delft: two of their children had been baptized there, on 1 June 1636 and 22 November 1637, respectively (AD2 folio 181v; AD3 folio 17). One of the

witnesses on the latter date was a Jacob Brouwer. Could he have been the rope dancer whose troupe performed for Charles II in 1658?

¹⁸ Family ties may also have existed between the Van Schravens and Willem Lenders Koffa. The birth register of the Roman-Catholic Church of Breda records the baptism, on 22 January 1707, of Johannes, son of Petrus Van Schraven and Maria Willems Lenders (BHIC folio 82).

¹⁹ A single-sheet, untitled advertisement of uncertain date (“At Mr Barnes’s Booth”) announces the spectacle, during Bartholomew Fair, of “[t]he famous Rope-Dancers in Europe, being Four Companies joyn’d in One, viz. the *English, High-German, French and Morocco*”. The English company, being “Mr. *Appleby* and Mr. *Barnes*”, is cried up as “the two Only Famous Men in the whole World, for Tumbling and Rope-dancing”. But only Barnes’ acrobatic bravura is extensively described, which is perhaps an indication that Appleby was at this point no longer actively performing in the company led by him and his partner.

²⁰ The first one, recording the christening of Catharine Bushell, daughter of John Bushell, is dated 24 January 1672; the second, recording the christening of Jacoba Allan(e), daughter of James Allan(e), is dated 25 October 1676. A co-witness in the June 1679 entry was Marie Rijmers, no doubt a relative of Palmer’s wife (AD4 folio 2v).

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