

## JACOB HALL AND OTHER ROPE DANCERS AT THE HAGUE, 1679-1681

### Abstract

The present article is based on a number of unexplored notarial acts preserved in the City Archives at The Hague, which provide new information about Jacob Hall (fl. 1662-1681), the most famous of English rope dancers. Hall not only appears to have become a citizen of The Hague in 1679, he also envisaged continuing his professional career in the Low Countries, where in 1680 he entered into a partnership with Moritz von der Beck (ca. 1649–1694), a French manager-rope dancer/acrobat, who had tried his hand at various theatrical ventures in his home country. Agreeing to a temporary merger of their respective companies, both men set out their plans for joint appearances in Paris as well as London. Apart from affording a glimpse of the lives of the British and French performers the two managers had recruited, the archival records also reveal a good deal about the provisions laid down in rope dancers' contracts and refer in passing to the role played by Susanna King, Jacob Hall's wife, as the company's treasurer. The continued presence of British (and French) professional entertainers who entered into co-operation agreements with their continental counterparts attests to the significance of the Low Countries as the meeting-point for cross-Channel cultural exchange.

**Keywords:** Jacob Hall, Moritz von der Beck, English rope dancers, cross-Channel contacts, theatre history.

In the absence of any tangible evidence, the career of Jacob Hall (fl. 1662-1681), the most famous of seventeenth-century English rope dancers, has only been patchily accounted for.<sup>1</sup> Recent research has revealed Hall's presence in or around Antwerp in February 1678, where his wife Susanna King, acting as Hall's proxy, recruited Daniel van Schraven, a Flemish or Dutch rope dancer, who agreed for a seven-month period to co-operate with Hall's troupe in 'exercising their dancing and anything relating thereto' in Brabant, Flanders,

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<sup>1</sup> Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans, VII, 23-25; Hahn, 'Jacob Hall'.

Germany, and the Holland, as well as in Oxford, Bristol, and London.<sup>2</sup> While the 1678 agreement has brought to light the cross-Channel contacts of Hall, who virtually disappears from the English records around 1680, the same agreement also raises and leaves unanswered other questions relating to the entertainer's whereabouts at this time, the size and composition of his company, and the identity of its members. Evidence with respect to some of these issues is contained in a handful of hitherto unnoticed notarial acts, preserved in the City Archives at The Hague and dated in 1680 and 1681. Shedding light on an unknown episode in Hall's career, these acts reveal that Hall made The Hague his home for at least two years, from May 1679 until May 1681, and actively pursued his professional career by entering into a partnership with a pioneering French dancing-master. The same evidence provides us with rare glimpses of the lives of four other rope dancers, two of whom have remained completely unknown in the history of the British popular stage. Other, anecdotal, pieces of information in the archival records add to our understanding of the social environment in which seventeenth-century rope dancers practised their craft.

A discussion of the notarial acts alluded to must be preceded by the consideration of a 19th-century printed source overlooked by Hall's modern biographers. According to the French historian Auguste Jal, on 26 February 1679, in the church of Saint-Sulpice, in Paris, the christening took place of Susanne, third daughter of Jeanne Godefroy and 'Maurice von der Beck, *sauteur du Roy*' [the King's jumper].<sup>3</sup> The girl's godparents were 'Charles Allard, *baigneur du Roy*' [the King's bather] and 'Susanne Roy, femme de Jacques Hall, danseur de cordes' [rope dancer]—the baptismal record supplying the French translation of the godmother's surname King, as 'Conincx' had figured as its Flemish equivalent in the Antwerp contract drafted almost exactly a year earlier. The entry in the Saint-Sulpice register was signed 'Moritz von der Beeck, Alard, Susanne Hall'. Jacob's wife would not have

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<sup>2</sup> Vander Motten, 'Jacob Hall', 45-46.

<sup>3</sup> Jal, 164.

officiated as the godmother who gave the baby her baptismal name if there had been no prior ties of friendship between the Hall and von der Beck families. Despite the local vicar's apologetic amplification in the entry that Susanna King/Hall was neither a comedian nor a rope dancer, these ties were of a professional nature as well, for according to the same 19<sup>th</sup>-century historian, Hall around the time of the baptism performed at the Paris fair of Saint-Germain, which ran every year from 3 February until Palm Sunday.<sup>4</sup> This would have been in collaboration with von der Beck, making Jacob Hall one of a handful of identifiable British entertainers actors to have performed in France in the seventeenth century.<sup>5</sup>

By the time of his appearance in Paris, Hall must have settled down in The Hague, where on 15 May 1679 he took the oath and 'duly acquired' the rights of citizenship.<sup>6</sup> Whether this was granted to him free of charge as a foreigner of some standing or whether he paid the required fee the entry in the city's register does not show. Nor is it clear for how long Hall and his wife—not listed in the register—had resided in the city before he applied for, or became entitled to, citizenship status. Irrespective of the circumstances under which this was acquired, he would have perceived its benefits, which included the right to hold municipal positions, to join a trade guild as a master, or to institute legal proceedings. But citizenship also created obligations, especially the duty to assist in the defence of the city as a member of the *schutterij* or local militia.<sup>7</sup> On the same day that he took the oath as a citizen, Hall was sworn in as a member of the Saint-Sebastian's guild, under the orange-white-blue banner, one of six banners into which the urban guild had been subdivided in 1645.<sup>8</sup> That he acquired his double new status simultaneously may suggest that the local militia officers had been urged to replenish their dwindling ranks as soon as new citizens were created—citizenship being the

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<sup>4</sup> Jall, 470.

<sup>5</sup> Leathers, 3-7, 167.

<sup>6</sup> GAH1. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Oud archief 1313-1815, no. 1053, 'Borgerschappen', folio 9v.

<sup>7</sup> Frijhoff and Spies, 184-186.

<sup>8</sup> GAH1. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Oud archief 1313-1815, no. 1053, 'Schutters', folio 34r.

main requirement for membership in The Hague. The extant lists of individuals drafted into the Hague militia between December 1676 and April 1682 unfortunately provide no indication of their professions. As in other Dutch towns and cities, however, in The Hague too most militiamen would have come from the well-to-do middle classes: those selected in 1650 had been specialized craftsmen, possibly even of a slightly higher status than their peers in other cities. In general, then, they were ‘qualified citizens’ in good standing, who possessed at least the wherewithal to buy their own armour, including a musket and its fittings.<sup>9</sup> The manager of a company of rope dancers and probably a man of some means, Hall may have found it easy to convince Captain Simon Kievit, the recruiting officer, of his solvency and of the respectability of his profession.

One can only guess at the motives underlying Hall’s decision to establish himself and his family in The Hague. Perhaps he had already settled down on the continent at the time of the Antwerp contract, having provisionally abandoned London, where despite his continued popularity, he had repeatedly run into trouble with the authorities. Whatever reasons he may have had, his acquisition of citizenship suggests that, as of the late 1670s, he planned to make The Hague his permanent place of residence, and a convenient operating base for his tours in the Low Countries, France, and Germany. His recent disappearance from the English scene notwithstanding, Hall’s artistic ambitions had by no means faded, as is proved by a contract concluded at The Hague on 23 June 1680 and documenting the continuation of his professional association with Maurice von der Beck, which had presumably been initiated the previous year. I provide a slightly modernized English translation of the first of these:<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Knevel, 200-214.

<sup>10</sup> GAH7. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 371, folios 137-138. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. For the sake of comprehensibility, I have simplified the division into sentences and added a few words between square brackets. As in the translations below, I have also omitted some of the introductory and closing formulaic phrases as well as some synonymous expressions. Interlinear or marginal insertions are supplied between pointed brackets.

Today, on 23 June 1680 have appeared before me, Johan vande Plas, notary public, and before the witnesses mentioned below: Monsieur Mouris vande Beeck, French rope dancer, on the one side, and Jacob Halle, English rope dancer, on the other, who have contracted and agreed with each other as follows. Both parties will join together and unite their companies, in order jointly <or each separately> to exhibit their rope dancing performances at every fair, both in this country and elsewhere, in the same manner as they have done so far. This contract will take effect at the end of 's Hertogenbosch Fair and will last until Easter of the next year, 1681. All profits made by both parties will be evenly divided and enjoyed and if any damages were to occur, [the cost of] these too will be paid for evenly by either party. It has also been agreed that either party will have to pay for their travel, room and board, and other expenses, none excepted, and that for as long as this contract will last the party spending most will also have to pay more. If either one of both parties or [a member] of their respective company were to fall ill and be unable to exercise his trade, the emoluments will continue [to be paid] in the same manner as if he were in good health and had performed his duties. And the first party will have to transport himself and his troupe by 24 August to London, in order to perform there; the second party will have to travel to Paris by 10 August, in order also to perform there. And in case either of the parties were to break up this contract before Easter of next year, he will forfeit to the other party observing the terms of the said contract the sum of one thousand Carolus guilders ... Thus recorded in The Hague, in the presence of Joan Tomsson and Thomas Noris, witnesses. Signed: Jacob Hall; Moritz von der Beck; J. Thomson; the sign of Thomas Norris, X.

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Jacob Hall

Moritz von der Beck

J. Thomson

Thomas Norris

Jacob Hall's signature. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv.371, folio 138r (23 June 1680).

The rope dancer and acrobat Maurice von der Beck (Moritz von der Beek or Maurice Vondrebeck, ca. 1649–1694) figures prominently in the history of the French theatre and of late 17<sup>th</sup>-century popular entertainment, more particularly for the key role he played in the development of the Parisian *spectacles de la foire* or fairground spectacles.<sup>11</sup> In 1671 he had collaborated with Molière on the latter's *comédie-ballets*, court entertainments composed of 'everything the theatre can offer', as the dramatist summed up the essence of the genre.<sup>12</sup> An agile acrobat himself, since 1672 von der Beck had directed a company of twenty-four funambulists from various countries, whose performances had sufficiently impressed Louis XIV to earn von der Beck the title of 'the King's tumbler and vaulter in ordinary.'<sup>13</sup> In the late 1670s, in collaboration with the brothers Charles and Pierre Allard—sons of Charles Allard, godfather to von der Beck's daughter Susanna and von der Beck's mentor—von der Beck began to develop a type of comic variety show involving magicians, demons, and *commedia dell'arte* characters, whose antics were only meant to prepare spectators for the wild acrobatics of the leapers and equilibrists who were the real protagonists of these *divertissements*. Considered to be the collaborative effort of Charles Allard jr. and von der Beck, the anonymous play *Les Forces de l'Art et de la Magie*, first performed at the Saint-Germain Fair in 1678, is looked upon as the prototype of the genre and the forerunner of the French *opéra comique*.<sup>14</sup> After von der Beck's untimely death in 1694, Jeanne Godefroy (1658?-1710?), or the 'veuve Maurice' as she came to be called, continued her late husband's pioneering work in the area of the fairground theatre. From 1700 until 1706 she directed spectacles at the Saint-Laurent Fair in association with Charles Allard, and from 1707 until

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<sup>11</sup> Campardon, II, 114-115; Font, 48-55.

<sup>12</sup> 'tout ce que le Théâtre peut fournir', quoted in Russell, 58.

<sup>13</sup> '*sauteur et voltigeur ordinaire du Roi*', quoted in Campardon, II, 115. See also Leathers, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Campardon, I, 2-4; D'Alméras, 15-19; Font, 51.

shortly before her death, she continued the work on her own.<sup>15</sup> Even as early as June 1680, then, the acrobat and theatrical manager with whom Hall associated himself was by no means a run-of-the-mill entertainer of modest artistic ambitions.

The terms of the contract by which von der Beck and Hall agreed to join their companies together for a period of seven to eight months—from sometime in August 1680 (the end of ‘s Hertogenbosch Fair) until Easter 1681—were similar to those featuring in individual rope dancers’ contracts.<sup>16</sup> They included: more or less detailed specifications regarding their destinations (‘every fair, both in this country and elsewhere’); arrangements about the apportionment of the profits and the payment of expenses for travel, room, and board; the provision for the continued remuneration of ill or incapacitated performers (comparable to the financial aid extended by guilds to their members);<sup>17</sup> and the determination of the (mostly heavy) fine to be paid in case of a breach of the contract by either party—in the present case 1,000 Carolus guilders, the equivalent of about one hundred pounds.<sup>18</sup> With respect to the first of these terms, however, the parties agreed to perform together in each other’s home country during the remainder of the summer season, showing that Hall, despite his recently acquired citizenship, had not entirely given up on the idea of making appearances in England. Von der Beck’s troupe was expected to perform at Bartholomew Fair in London, which traditionally began on 24 August; and Hall’s at Paris, by 10 August, probably on the occasion of the Saint-Laurent Fair, which opened in late July and lasted until 29 September, the feast day of St Michael.<sup>19</sup> Hall was familiar with the St Bartholomew festivities, in which he had participated in the 1660s and where, according to one commentator, he had re-

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<sup>15</sup> Campardon, II, 114; Martin, 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> See the contracts included in Vander Motten and Roscam Abbing, ‘Seventeenth-Century English Rope Dancers in the Low Countries’.

<sup>17</sup> Frijhoff and Spies, 206.

<sup>18</sup> Turner, ‘Money’.

<sup>19</sup> Isherwood, 24-25.

appeared on 3 September 1679.<sup>20</sup> From 23 June until Hall's arrival in Paris in early August 1680, then, both troupes would have continued to perform separately, in the Low Countries or elsewhere. And their joint appearances as one company presumably lasted until after Easter 1681. Two depositions relating to a lawsuit in which Hall became involved, dated 14 May 1681 (see below), were co-signed by von der Beck, confirming that he was still associated with Hall. Another, perhaps more revealing, clue as to von der Beck's intention to prolong his stay in the Low Countries is that on 3 May 1680, shortly before entering into (or renewing) the partnership with Hall and almost a year after the latter's acquisition of citizenship status, he too took the oath as a citizen of The Hague and as a member of the civic militia, under the white banner.<sup>21</sup> Von der Beck's decision to move the nerve centre of his theatrical activities to The Hague must obviously have been affected or inspired by the planned co-operation with Hall.

Mergers or unions concluded with an eye to the annual fairs were not uncommon. Based on the available evidence, however, mergers contracted on Dutch soil between foreign troupes, in this case English and French partners, seem to have been less frequent. Despite the relative brevity of their planned stays in London and Paris, both Hall and von der Beck would have found their investment in time, money, and effort well worth their while. The generous payments usually granted to rope dancers during the annual fairs testify to the fact that these were the most lucrative periods of the acting year. An agreement drawn up at The Hague in the spring of 1680 suggests that the French manager was already preparing for the summer season. On 30 April, von der Beck entered into an agreement with Charles Allard, François Courtel, Germain Cottin, and Jan Clausse, all 'vaulterers and dancers in the service of the King of France', who committed themselves to *continuing* [my italics] to work together as a

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<sup>20</sup> Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans, VII, 24.

<sup>21</sup> GAH1. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Oud archief 1313-1815, no. 1053, 'Burgers', folio 12v.; and 'Schutters', folio 39v.



company, from 1 May until 31 July 1680, in order to ‘perform at all fairs and display everything they are capable of.’<sup>22</sup> Three more performers, Louis De Lisle, Hugues Bonnefons, and Pierre Chaler, ‘assisting by playing the instruments as well as with other things’, also pledged to serve under von der Beck in the same period.<sup>23</sup> The wording implies that this was an extension of an earlier contract with these seven artists, one designed to give the manager the near-certainty that his troupe would not uncontrollably disintegrate. To this end, the fine determined on in case of non-observance of the agreement was a heavy one. Whereas von der Beck, on his side, agreed to pay one thousand Carolus guilders, the fine of 250 guilders settled on in principle for each of the four dancers could be higher or lower, depending on *their respective share* in the takings—implying that they were not necessarily paid the same amount. (Wages must have varied from one performer to the next, according to the number of acting days they accumulated and, possibly, the degree of difficulty of the skills for which the company had enlisted them.) The manager’s companion Allard was exempted from the payment of damages if his wife, evidently seriously ill, should die within the period covered by the contract—a protective measure current in rope dancers’ contracts.<sup>24</sup> The fine set for the three musicians was thirty-three ‘ducats’ (or guilders) each, a substantially lower sum than that owed by the dancers, and one presumably proportionate to their more modest earnings.

There is no evidence showing that the artists named in the April 1680 contract remained with the troupe after 31 July to become members of the united company under von der Beck and Hall, which started its operations in August. In after years, however, many of them were to make the successful transition from the rope dancer’s booth to the world of

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<sup>22</sup> Original: ‘springers en dansmeesters in dienste van de Coninck van Vranckrijck’; and ‘op alle kerremissen spelen, & verthoonen alle tgeene waer toe sij bequaem sijn’: GAH2. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 371, folios 93-94.

<sup>23</sup> ‘soo met spelen op instrumenten als anders’.

<sup>24</sup> See the contract made between Dutch entrepreneur-rope dancer Paulus Rijmers and one Richard Harnis on 19 July 1685, in Vander Motten and Roscam Abbing, ‘Seventeenth-Century English Rope Dancers in the Low Countries’, 22.

court entertainment. Styled ‘dancing-masters of the King of France’, three of the first four were to leave traces in the history of the French, the German, and the English theatres. Of Charles Allard, von der Beck’s collaborator of the first hour, little more needs to be said. François Courtel is perhaps the least likely to have stayed on much longer with the united company. He carved out a splendid career for himself at the Württemberg Court of Prince Regent Friedrich-Karl (1652-1698), whose dancing-master he was appointed on 5 June 1680, shortly after having been contracted by von der Beck. In this capacity, Courtel is known to have composed and arranged a French-style ballet, *Le Rendez-Vous des Plaisirs*, performed in October 1684.<sup>25</sup> Germain Cottin was probably the ‘Mr. Cottin’ who went on to reconnoitre the English theatrical world: by 1700 he had become ‘a dancer in Christopher Rich’s company at Drury Lane Theatre’, and provided entr’acte dances there until 1705.<sup>26</sup> Only Jan Clause, whom I have been unable to identify, may have passed into oblivion.

Of von der Beck’s three instrumentalists, who possibly doubled as dancers, two made their mark on the international scene. The artist who signed his name ‘Louis De lille’ was no doubt the ‘Mons. De Lisle’, who had featured as a dancer in John Crowne’s masque *Calisto*, lavishly produced in London in February 1675.<sup>27</sup> This may have made De Lisle the only performer with prior experience of English court spectacles, or even the traditional Bartholomew Fair festivities. The most notable, however, proved to be Hugues (Hugo) Bonnefons(d), whose mention in the April 1680 act is the earliest record that we have of him, preceding by about ten years the onset of his career as a ducal dancing-master at the Wolfenbüttel Court, the pre-eminent centre of German dancing culture.<sup>28</sup> He helped create the dances for the opera *Julia* and the musical drama *Cleopatra*, performed at Brunswick in 1690 and 1691, respectively, and in the course of the 1690s choreographed many other ballets,

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<sup>25</sup> Owens, ‘The Rise’, 101; Owens, ‘Not always’, 139-142.

<sup>26</sup> Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans, IV (1975), 6.

<sup>27</sup> Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans, IV, 297; Walkling, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Bennett, ‘Tanz’, 15-18.

pastorals, and musical plays.<sup>29</sup> Bonnefond had more than one string to his bow: in October 1698 he sent a formal request to the Duke to be allowed to found an academy instructing young ladies in the French language, in writing, music, sewing, ‘singing in the French manner’, and other subjects. Until recently largely neglected, Bonnefond’s *Abregée des Principes de la Dance* (1705), compiled a few years before his death, was ‘probably the first known attempt [at] a systematic summarised description of “Baroque” dance technique.’<sup>30</sup>

In April 1680 all of these achievements were still very much in the future but it may not be too farfetched to hypothesize that, in joining together his troupe with von der Beck’s, Jacob Hall had an eye to the versatility of the French artists he would be working with. The association with von der Beck would have given him the opportunity—or a further opportunity—to explore at first hand the full potential of the Parisian market, a target audience left unmentioned in the contract drawn up at Antwerp on 17 February 1678.<sup>31</sup> Part of the attractiveness of von der Beck’s company, consisting of dancers, acrobats, and musicians, may have resided in the variegated nature of their performances. Perhaps Hall had become interested in the potential of an increasingly popular form of entertainment that his own company had not engaged in but that von der Beck a few years later regarded as a worthwhile business venture, that of animal shows. On 22 April 1688, the von der Becks were to have their grievances recorded against one Duplessis and his wife, who had tried to sell them an English horse supposedly descended from a performing mare, which had recently appeared at the Saint-Laurent and Saint-Germain Fairs and was capable of executing the same extraordinary and curious tricks as its mother.<sup>32</sup> Having agreed to pay ‘only’ 1,400 ‘livres’ for an animal that was allegedly worth double the price, von der Beck and his wife had signed a

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<sup>29</sup> Chrysander, 193-196, 203; Mourey, 224-225.

<sup>30</sup> Bennett, ‘The Dance Book Authors’, 449.

<sup>31</sup> It has been claimed that Hall was one of the twenty-four dancers assembled by von der Beck in the early 1670s (see Martin, xvii), an assertion which I have been unable either to confirm or to disprove.

<sup>32</sup> Equestrian games had a longstanding tradition in Paris. See Leathers, 4-5.

contract for the creation of a society to manage the expected profits, only to discover afterwards that they had been duped and had grossly overpaid for the animal.<sup>33</sup> Whether von der Beck capitalized on the contemporary taste for the display of exotic or performing animals as early as 1680 cannot be ascertained. But his experiments with variety shows as of the late 1670s and the existence of the notarial act of April 1688 do not rule out the possibility. Often staged in combination with rope dancing and other performances and just as popular in the Low Countries as anywhere else, these circus-like novelties may have caught on with Hall and his company as well.<sup>34</sup>

One can only speculate about the advantages that, from von der Beck's viewpoint, were inherent in a union of both companies. Access to the London scene, facilitated by the taking down of administrative and language barriers, may have been an important consideration, although no such barriers had kept the French manager from scouting the entertainment landscape in the Low Countries. Complementarity may have been another. Some of Hall's performers may have mastered special aspects of their art as yet untried by von der Beck's performers, that had proved to be lucrative crowd-pullers.<sup>35</sup> Admittedly, any conclusions in this regard must be premised on a detailed knowledge of the composition of both companies, which would have been in a permanent state of flux and therefore impossible

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<sup>33</sup> Campardon, II, 115.

<sup>34</sup> De Lepper, 136-142; Vander Motten and Roscam Abbing, 'Seventeenth-Century Rope Dancers in the Low Countries', 18-20; and Roscam Abbing, *Rembrandt's Elephant*.

<sup>35</sup> Von der Beck's foresight as a manager, perhaps his desire to rejuvenate his troupe in the near future, is demonstrated by his recruitment of two local girls, one Magdalena Pitehine, age not given, on 4 June 1680, and one Catharina Foucquet, fourteen years old, on 7 June (see GAH4 Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 371, folio 125; and GAH5 Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 371, folio 129.) The former was indentured for a twelve-year period, the latter for a seven-year period. If they were meant to complete their training by the time they reached twenty-one, this would imply that Magdalena began her apprenticeship at the age of nine, a few years older even than some boys in her position. Although surviving apprenticeship contracts for girls are scarce, the June 1680 documents contain more or less the same provisions as those concluded with young boys. One of the more important terms was the restriction imposed on both Magdalena and Catharina not to enter the rope dancing profession as independent, self-employed performers until after the end of their training—a measure designed to protect the master's financial investments and to prevent undue competition on the part of his own pupils. For an analysis of contemporary indenture agreements, see Vander Motten and Roscam Abbing, 'Seventeenth-Century English Rope Dancers in the Netherlands'.

to reconstruct fully today—never mind the performers’ names featuring in the April 1680 agreement. But the identity of at least one rope dancer recruited jointly by Hall and von der Beck has been preserved in the archives at The Hague. On 24 June 1680, the day after the business partners concluded their co-operation agreement, the following contract was recorded before notary public Johan van de Plas:<sup>36</sup>

Today ... have appeared before me, Johan vande Plas, notary public, and before the witnesses mentioned below: Monsieur Mouris vande Beecke & Jacob Halle, both of them master rope dancers, of the King of France as well as the King of England, on the one side, & Jaecq Harres, also a rope dancer, on the other, who declare to have contracted and agreed with each other that he [i.e. Harris] will be in London with the first party by 24 August next and will there next to the first party and the others of his company perform at Bartholomew Fair, for as long as this fair will last. And for each performance day he will have and enjoy the sum of six English crowns & when this fair will be over he will be expected to transport himself to Siederick, or to any other location in England where the first party will play, in order to perform there as well for as long as the fair will last. And for this the first party will pay him the sum of five English crowns a day, and on the days when he will not perform he will not receive any money but will have to provide for himself in food, drink, and everything else by means of the six and five English crowns respectively, so that they, the first party, by paying the agreed daily sum, will be free of any other charges. And if either the first or the second party should want to break up this contract before it expires, the one who will break it up will forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds sterling. In fulfilment of the above both parties have committed their persons and goods, both their movable property and their real estate, both present and future, none excepted...Thus recorded at The Hague, in the presence of Joan Thomseij & Thomas Joons, witnesses. Signed: Jacob Hall, Morits von der Beck, the mark (V) of James Harris.<sup>37</sup>

‘Jaecq Harres’, unable to sign his own name, was undoubtedly the same James Harris who several years later, on 9 September 1689, was ordered to be apprehended in his home

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<sup>36</sup> GAH8. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 371, folio 139.

<sup>37</sup> The witnesses John Thomson, Thomas Jones, and Thomas Norris (mentioned in the act dated 23 June 1680) may have been members of Hall’s company but I have found no trace of them in the notarial records at The Hague.

country, together with six others, for acting ‘Drolls, and the Dancing upon the Ropes without takeing any Lycence.’<sup>38</sup> While hired to perform with the united company at Bartholomew Fair, from 24 August 1680, Harris unlike his fellow-performers was not required to appear in Paris by 10 August, possibly because he was bound to another employer until then. The period covered by the June 1680 contract, although not specified, was a characteristically short-term one. At the end of Bartholomew Fair, Harris was expected to betake himself to ‘Siederick’ Fair (presumably the notary clerk’s Dutch bastardization of ‘Southwark’), beginning on 7 September and lasting for about two weeks by 1680, or to any other place in England where his masters would choose to appear. His remuneration was rather generous by comparison to what other qualified performers we know of made around the same time: 6 crowns, i.e. thirty shillings, or about fifteen guilders, for each acting day at Bartholomew Fair; and five crowns, or twenty-five shillings a day for each acting day at Southwark Fair, which was clearly expected to bring in more modest takings.<sup>39</sup> Even so, the relatively high rates suggest that Harris was regarded as a safe investment by both the King of France’s and the King of England’s rope dancer, even though we have no indication as to what his specialty(ies) may have been.

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For almost a year the notarial records do not yield any further information about Jacob Hall’s stay in The Hague or his professional activities. Then, on 14 May 1681, two acts (both signed by Hall and von der Beck) were passed before notary Alexander Ennis, which reveal that Hall had become entangled in a court case involving the widow of a local inn-keeper, one

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<sup>38</sup> Milhous and Hume, I, 274.

<sup>39</sup> Vander Motten, ‘Jacob Hall’, 48-49.

Margaret Sinnebonne. Suing Hall for debt, she had taken a request for the confiscation of his goods to the caretaker of the *Kloveniersdoelen*, the sumptuous buildings housing the shooting-range used for practice by the militiamen.<sup>40</sup> In the first of these acts Hall appointed Gabriel Valette, a prosecutor at The Hague, to defend his interests and endowed him with the power of attorney to have himself replaced in all cases which might be brought against his client in the future.<sup>41</sup> In the second act Valette had his appointment as the former's surety confirmed, and waived the so-called *beneficium ordinis*, the 'privilege by which a surety [Valette] ... could call on the creditor [Sinnebonne] to sue the principal debtor [Hall] first, and only to sue the sureties for that which he could not recover from the principal.'<sup>42</sup> Described as a 'citizen and a member of the civic militia', Hall promised to indemnify the surety for his expenses and for the cautionary money he had advanced, and committed his persons and goods to the payment of this indemnification. That Von der Beck co-signed both documents as a witness strongly suggests that he was at this point in time still associated with Hall and probably familiar with the facts in the case brought against the latter.

Further particulars are contained in a deposition made by two military men a month later. The document is worth quoting in full for what it tells about the Hall's dispute with Mrs Sinnebonne and a number of related matters:<sup>43</sup>

On 14 June 1681 have appeared before me Pieter van Roon, notary public...and the witnesses mentioned below: Mr Jan Stuart, soldier in his Highness's Guard, and Joris Graij, soldier in his Highness's bodyguard, both of a competent age, who upon the request of Margaret Sinnebonne, inn-keeper on the Spuij [street] in this town, have declared it to be true and genuine that Henry Howard has lodged in the house of the appellant from early May until

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<sup>40</sup> Knevel, 308-310; 156-159. Sinnebonne may have believed, rightly or wrongly, that the militia's 'small' court-martial, instituted in The Hague in 1661 for the purpose of settling minor disputes between its members, had the authority to deal with her complaint against Hall.

<sup>41</sup> GAH11. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 538, folio 553.

<sup>42</sup> GAH11. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 538, folio 557; Cochran, 38.

<sup>43</sup> GAH12. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 585, pp. 220-222.

the month of July of last year, and that he has been provided and looked after by the appellant with food, drink, board, and other things, and taken care of by her during his illness until the day of his decease, after which he was committed to the earth at the appellant's expenses. [They have also declared] that Henry Howard aforementioned has for a number of consecutive years served Jacob Hal, master rope dancer, in the capacity of clown of the play; that the same Hall, in addition, had hired Howard [promising] to provide for him everywhere he went with his said master, whether healthy or ill, whether he acted or not, and to pay for his food, drink, travel expenses, lodging and laundering. Accordingly, Howard aforesaid, being ill, has been brought to the appellant and committed to her care by the aforesaid Mr Hall's housewife, on account of the fact that in the house of Mr Jacob Dresselaar, on Heerstraat in this town, where Hall and his family resided at the time, there was insufficient room or opportunity to take proper care of the ill man. [The witnesses have also declared that] the aforesaid Hall's housewife has agreed with the appellant to cover all the expenses; and Joris Graij aforesaid in particular has stated that Mrs Hall has often sent him to the appellant in order to insist, on her behalf, that Howard be given whatever he liked of food or drinks as well as some pocket-money in case he wanted to go out. [Gray has also stated] that after Howard's decease Mr Hall has sent his servant Nevill Hall from beyond Dordrecht to hand over to the appellant the sum of thirty guilders, with the express command that she [i.e. Sinnebonne] arrange a decent burial, for which he [Hall] would properly defray all the expenses. The witnesses have further stated that, during the illness of his aforesaid servant, Mr Hall has often visited the appellant's house in order to console and encourage Howard, and that he and his housewife have eaten and slept there, realizing all too well that Howard had been accommodated there by his wife. Also, that Mr Hall aforesaid never meddles with any business, all of which he usually leaves to his housewife, who takes care of everything and holds the purse strings and is entirely free to dispose of the finances so that he himself, Hall, has to demand some money from his wife in order to buy himself a cup of wine. For with respect to bills and other matters, everyone is accustomed to approaching the wife instead of the husband and to making agreements with her. Mr John Stuart specifically declared that, on behalf of the appellant, he has personally drawn up, on behalf of the complainant, a bill of ninety-six guilders and fifteen stuivers, which was signed by the deceased in his own hand and thereafter sent to Arnhem; and he [Stuart] has in his possession a letter from an officer in the Maastricht garrison proving that Mr Hall has stated that the appellant would not fail to receive what was due to her in respect of the deceased Mr



Howard<sup>44</sup> ... Thus recorded at The Hague, in the presence of Adriaen Pieters and Johan van Roon, clerks and witnesses. Signed: John Stewart and X, Joris Gray's mark.

Stewart's and Gray's testimonies, made upon the request of Margaret Sinnebonne and relating to events which took place between early May and July 1680, establish that Jacob Hall's acrobatic shows featured a clown figure or fool, a character which had been played for several years by Henry Howard, a hitherto unknown British performer. The fool's inclusion in Hall's cast of characters is a valuable clue to the comic elements included in his shows and lends credibility to an undated (and spurious?) bill, probably dated in the 1670s. Reported by John Payne Collier, this bill advertised not only Hall's troupe's 'Excellent Dancing and Vaulting on the Ropes; with Variety of Rare Feats of Activity and Agility of Body upon the Stage' but also 'the Witty Conceits of Merry Will.'<sup>45</sup> The part of Merry Will—or Merry Harry in Howard's case—would have fitted seamlessly into the type of vaudeville-like entertainment which Hall possibly envisaged staging in collaboration with von der Beck. But Howard was not fortunate enough to display his talent for clownish acrobatics to fairground audiences, for he died in July 1680, shortly before the united company began its operations. Quite possibly, James Harris, contracted on 24 June, had been hired as a replacement for the ailing Howard.

The circumstances of the latter's death, as reported by Stewart and Gray, co-lodgers of Howard's, allow us to catch glimpses of the day-to-day running of a rope dancers' company not usually reflected in official documents. Clearly, Jacob Hall had kept the promise made in the labour contract with Howard, a trusty and long-standing company member, that he would

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<sup>44</sup> It is not clear why the bill should have ended up in Arnhem or at the Maastricht garrison. Either these towns were two of Hall's destinations on a tour with his company through the Low Countries—as the reference to Nevil Hall's being sent from Dordrecht may imply—or they were the frontier towns where Hall served as a member of a detachment of militiamen from The Hague. Such detachments were summoned on a regular basis by the Republic in order to defend the national borders. See Knevel, 252-270.

<sup>45</sup> Highfill, Burnim, and Langhans, VII, 24.

provide for him in sickness and in health, wherever they would travel. When Howard fell ill and was brought to Sinnebonne's inn because there was insufficient space in the house of one Jacob Dressler (or Dresselaar), a local master tailor, where Hall's family stayed, the manager and his wife continued to tend to his needs, supplying him with food, drink, and pocket-money, and offering him consolation during his sickness.<sup>46</sup> After Howard's decease, Hall sent Nevil Hall, one of his servants, 'from beyond' Dordrecht with some money to help the inn-keeper defray the expenses she had incurred over the past two or three months and to ask her to give Howard a decent burial.<sup>47</sup> Part of the bill, drawn up by Stewart and amounting to some ninety-six guilders, was to remain unpaid, however, leading Margaret Sinnebonne to initiate her lawsuit against Hall about a year later.

Although mainly concerned with Hall's unpaid bills, the notarial act of 14 June 1681 casts light on Susanna King's part in the events culminating in the dispute with the inn-keeper and, especially, on the central position she occupied in the troupe managed by her husband and herself. 'Holding the strings of the purse', it was King who had made the financial arrangements on Howard's behalf with Mrs Sinnebonne—according to the deponents a responsibility entirely in keeping with her role as the company's treasurer. That Jacob Hall himself 'never meddle[d] with any business', and had to ask his wife for a few *stuivers* in order to get himself a cup of wine, argues either his utter lack of interest, or indeed his incompetence, in all matters relating to the non-artistic aspects of his profession. Perhaps Susanna King, if well-off, was the company financier, as we know another rope dancer's spouse was in 1685.<sup>48</sup> That 'everyone' was accustomed to appealing to 'the woman' instead of 'the man' and 'to making agreements with her' may indicate that Mrs Hall was also in

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<sup>46</sup> Dressler's profession is mentioned in a sale catalogue of his goods: see GAH. Notarieel archief, inv. 585 (26 October 1680), folios 110-111.

<sup>47</sup> Nevil Hall had been a witness to the February 1678 contract signed at Antwerp (see opening paragraph).

<sup>48</sup> Vander Motten and Roscam Abbing, 'Seventeenth-Century English Rope Dancers in the Low Countries', 22-23.

charge of hiring new company personnel, as she did in the February 1678 contract made in Antwerp with Daniel van Schraven. Whether the important managerial role ascribed to Susanna King in the June 1681 deposition implies that she never trod the boards herself, as the vicar of Saint-Sulpice noted in February 1679 (see above), is by no means certain. But it does establish beyond any doubt that, like other rope dancers' wives, she acted both as her husband's proxy and his autonomous co-manager, and possibly as a fellow-entertainer.<sup>49</sup>

By all accounts, Hall's treatment of Howard had been a considerate and humane one, even if the manager had not quite fulfilled his pecuniary obligations. What the notarial act tells us about Hall's personality is definitely two-sided: the morally upright disposition that made him a generous people manager may well have gone hand in hand with a total ignorance of financial *savoir faire*. At any rate, Howard's sad fate throws into relief the stark reality behind the ostensibly pro-forma concern with the well-being of individual rope dancers—apprentices or accomplished artist—evinced by the security clause(s) included in their contracts. That the honouring of such agreements on the part of company directors was never a matter of course appears from two other notarial documents, both involving a British master rope dancer whose activities have been touched on in recent research.

In a contract signed before notary public Samuel Favon on 14 May 1680, Sijmontje Jacobs Overduijn, a widow, agreed to apprentice her son Jan Jans van Dijck to 'Johannes' Palmer, master rope dancer, 'at present in this city', for a period of nine consecutive years.<sup>50</sup> The terms of the agreement were some of those current in contemporary apprenticeship contracts. The boy, whose age was left unspecified, was to be trained in the 'art of dancing on the rope, jumping, vaulting, and all matters relating thereto.'<sup>51</sup> Palmer was to make provisions

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<sup>49</sup> On the role of women in contemporary society, see Frijhoff and Spies, 192-194.

<sup>50</sup> GAH3. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 733, folio 83.

<sup>51</sup> 'de kunst vant danssen opde koort, springen voltigeeren ende alle het verders t'geene daeraen dependeerende'

for room, board, and clothing, ‘nothing excepted’, in return for which Jan Janssen owed his master the obedience ‘befitting a proper young man and pupil’ and had to promise to serve his full term of nine years.<sup>52</sup> If his master or his wife were to die within this period, the boy would have to serve the remainder of his term under the surviving partner, subject to the payment of a fine of 100 ducats ‘to the second party or his housewife.’<sup>53</sup>

None of the names of young apprentice rope dancers mentioned in the few Dutch indentures that have emerged so far have ever been identified as adult performers, or indeed traced at all, in documents of a later date.<sup>54</sup> The case of Jan Jans van Dijck, however, proved an unfortunate exception to the rule. On 2 October 1680, at the request of the widow Overduijn, mother and guardian of her son, five of her neighbours made a deposition relating to Jan’s demise.<sup>55</sup> Two of them declared that they had visited the bed-ridden boy, found him spitting blood, and had asked him whether he had injured himself falling off the rope, ‘as this was his profession.’<sup>56</sup> After some hesitation, the young apprentice told them that after his fall the master, ‘by the name of Pamer’ [sic], had ‘very barbarically and savagely’ beaten him with a cane all over his bare body, so that he was covered from head to toe in blue lashes.<sup>57</sup> All witnesses declared that, to their great consternation, after the boy’s death they found many stripes on his body, ‘one next to the other.’ In addition, the first two witnesses heard the physician who had examined the body conclude that the neck veins had been torn to pieces and that the blood issuing from the wounds must have ‘flooded’ the heart.

Less than five months after entering his nine-year apprenticeship, then, Jan Jans van Dijck had been violently beaten to death by his master for failing to properly execute some

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<sup>52</sup> ‘gelijk een goet jongel[ing] ende leerlingh toestaet te doen.’

<sup>53</sup> ‘ten behoeve vande tweeden comparant <offte desselffs> huijsvrouw.’

<sup>54</sup> Vander Motten and Roscam Abbing, ‘Seventeenth-Century English Rope Dancers in the Netherlands’.

<sup>55</sup> GAH9. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 585, folio 95.

<sup>56</sup> ‘vermits dit zijn Exercitie was.’

<sup>57</sup> ‘dat ... zijn meester met namen Pamer hem seer barbarisch & wreet hadde geslagen.’

exercise on the tightrope. I have found no evidence indicating that the boy's mother took any legal action against Palmer, who obviously entertained a very idiosyncratic view of the 'obedience' owed him by his pupil. Despite the physician's incriminating findings, Palmer may have escaped scot-free, his reputation as a master unscathed. Judging by the stylish signature in the May 1680 indenture, Johannes/John Palmer was the same entertainer and member of the English community at Delft who was still practising his trade in May 1682, when he co-founded a Dutch-English company of performers at Breda, together with his wife Eleonora Rijmers, a daughter of the Dutch rope dancer-entrepreneur Paulus Rijmers.<sup>58</sup> The cruel irony is that in the baptismal register recording the christening of Palmer's daughter Eleonora, on 25 June 1679, the father had been styled 'an English Surgion', or wound-dresser.<sup>59</sup> One can only guess at the number of contemporary apprentices who were treated in like manner and whose young lives, in Thomas Hobbes's memorable phrase, turned out to be 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.'<sup>60</sup>

Leaving aside the sheer tragedy of the case, the May 1680 indenture of apprenticeship confirms the conclusion arrived at in previous research that British rope dancers active in the Low Countries not only hired themselves out as servants to Dutch or other masters but were often trainers, managers or co-managers in their own right. In the course of his (presumably brief) stay in The Hague, Moritz von der Beck, as I have pointed out, was even then on the look-out for young talents to integrate into his company. Others, who like John Palmer had married into a Dutch rope dancing family, became artists-managers hiring local children as apprentices in a long-term effort to perpetuate or expand their professional activities. Given

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<sup>58</sup> The ornate capitals 'J' and 'P' in Palmer's signature as well as the 'I' with the long, curly ascender render it almost certain that this was one and the same individual. One of the witnesses to the May 1680 act was 'Antone de keter', mentioned as a servant to Palmer in the Breda agreement. In the May 1680 contract, the addition next to Palmer's name, 'jeegenwoordigh alhier', implies that he was not a permanent resident of The Hague.

<sup>59</sup> Vander Motten, 'Jacob Hall', 47, 52-53.

<sup>60</sup> Hobbes, 65.

the rapid turn-over of company personnel—what with illness, sudden death, accidents, defection, short-term contracts, and competition—one surmises that Jacob Hall during his stay in The Hague did likewise. But admittedly, the archival evidence documenting his recruitment of Dutch performers has yet to emerge, as has the evidence allowing us to follow his trail after June 1681.

Viewed from a distance, both the October 1680 testimony on behalf of the widow van Dijck and the June 1681 deposition by Stewart and Gray remind us of the instability, litigiousness, and general uncouthness of the social surroundings in which most rope dancers plied their trade. This is illustrated in a statement made by Henry Howard on 19 June 1680, a few weeks before his death, together with one James Rosseter (Rossiter), a painter.<sup>61</sup> At the request of Mr Sinnebonne, publican, the two men declared having recently witnessed the rowdy behaviour of one Richard ‘Pamer’, a master-rope dancer (and a relative of John Palmer?), who had entered Sinnebonne’s inn, gone into a back-room, and ‘rudely kissed and improperly treated’ a young woman he had never seen before.<sup>62</sup> When the inn-keeper’s wife protested his indecency, saying ‘this is an honest house, or did you think this is a brothel?’, Palmer called her a whore, ‘threw a glass of beer at her while she was suckling her baby, and injured her so that the blood trickled down her face.’<sup>63</sup> Waving a stick at the inn-keeper, Palmer in his drunken rage also threatened to smash the glasses.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> GAH6. Gemeentearchief Den Haag. Notarieel archief, inv. 585, folio 52.

<sup>62</sup> ‘een seeckere Juff[rou]w onbeschaemt soenende ende onbehoorl[ijk] handelende.’ Mr Sinnebonne, still alive in June 1680, must have died shortly afterwards, leaving his wife to sue Hall for an unpaid bill a year later (see above).

<sup>63</sup> ‘ghij bent hier in een eerlijck huijs, off denght ghij, dat ghij hier in een bordeel sijt.’; ‘en met eenen een glas bier nam, en goeijde haer (en het kint aende borst hebbende) tselve int aengesight, questende haer sodanigh...dattet bloet langhst aengesight quam neerloopen.’

<sup>64</sup> A vivid instance of life imitating art, Howard’s and Rossiter’s graphic description of the incident is reminiscent of genre paintings by Jan Steen and Adriaen Brouwer, whose *Tavern Scene* (ca. 1635) highlights a drunken customer’s indecent assault on a young woman—a motif common in the painter’s work and in contemporary visual arts, in general. See Lichtert, 186-187.

Allowing for the brawl caused by Palmer, Mrs Sinnebonne's explicit insistence on the difference between what modern historians have described as 'good' and 'bad' taverns is indicative of the social purposes she felt were being served by her own establishment, representing the former kind.<sup>65</sup> To British expatriates such as Jacob (and Nevil) Hall, James Rossiter, Henry Howard, and Richard Palmer, Sinnebonne's tavern would have been a locus for the celebration of pleasant conviviality with their fellow-countrymen. In the absence of a rope dancers' guild with an assembly-room of its own, however, it may also have functioned as a meeting-place where artists and performers negotiated the drafting of contracts with masters and patrons, before having them enacted by a notary public.<sup>66</sup> The larger meeting-place was of course the Low Countries itself, which in addition to exiles, soldiers, merchants, and diplomats, must have harboured a substantial community of British entertainers. The recently discovered contracts—probably no more than the tip of the iceberg—co-signed by Dutch and British rope dancers in The Hague, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam, Breda, Delft, and 's Hertogenbosch leave little doubt in this respect.

### *Conclusion*

As far as Jacob Hall is concerned, the evidence examined here elucidates a stage in his career that has remained completely unexplored. His appearance(s) in Paris, his citizenship of and stay in The Hague, and his co-operation with von der Beck in 1680 and 1681—providing us, incidentally, with the only known samples of his signature—prove him to have been a more international artist than suspected. Highly informative, Hall's co-operation agreement with von der Beck rehearses the provisions relating to the length of their co-operation, their destinations (Paris and London), the acting locations and periods (the traditional fairs), the apportioning of the profits, and the fine to be paid in case of a breach of contract. While the

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<sup>65</sup> Hell, 39-49; 251-261.

<sup>66</sup> Hell, 139-148; Van Bruaene and Van Bouchaute, 15-19.

profit motive was undoubtedly a prime consideration, we can only speculate about the *artistic* motives the managers had for uniting their companies—or continuing a collaboration dating back to at least early 1679. At first sight of no more than secondary significance, the casual allusions to Hall’s wife as the company’s treasurer (rather than her uninterested husband) in the June 1681 deposition by Stewart and Gray highlight the crucial part played by women in rope dancers’ troupes, which often tended to be family-based.<sup>67</sup> Rare in their kind, the May and June 1680 indenture agreements made by von der Beck for the training of two aspiring female dancers corroborate this finding and substantiate the existence of career opportunities for women in this particular profession. But if the June 1681 testimony foregrounds Susanna King’s role as the company’s financial manager, it also affords us a glimpse of Jacob Hall’s personality, more particularly the generosity of his demeanour towards a performer in his employ—the kind of ‘personal’ information seldom revealed by official documents.

The archival records, finally, add appreciably to our knowledge of British and French popular entertainment and theatre history. To the list of recently identified rope dancers—John and Nicholas Browne, Henry Godson, Robert Fisher, John Palmer, and others—the acts add those of James Harris, Henry Howard, and Richard Palmer, whose names may henceforth be included in the annals of the late seventeenth-century British stage. The same holds true for Moritz von der Beck, whose citizenship of The Hague and theatrical activities in the Low Countries are here first revealed, and whose dancers-instrumentalists are by the same token rescued from near-complete oblivion. In the witnesses’ depositions preserved in the acts dated 19 June 1680 and 14 June 1681, Richard Palmer and Henry Howard, one of Hall’s men, actually acquire a profile of their own—a profile delineated well enough to convey something of the social ambient in which both men exercised their profession.

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<sup>67</sup> Vander Motten and Roscam Abbing, ‘Seventeenth-Century English Rope Dancers in the Low Countries’, 22-23.



Although they cover no more than a two-year period, the notarial acts at The Hague shed light on an interesting aspect of cross-Channel exchanges in the performing arts, demonstrating that the international artistic scene was as tightly knit as the political one. As opposed to the dwindling share of British wandering *dramatic* actors in the running of mixed continental companies in the latter half of the century, British rope dancers such as Jacob Hall, it is here confirmed, continued a tradition of co-operation begun decades earlier, with many of them often taking the lead as managers or co-managers of (temporarily) united troupes.<sup>68</sup> Collaboration between British and continental companies of rope dancers, be they Dutch or French, and effected with an eye to lucrative business opportunities, seems indeed to have been the rule rather than the exception. While these artists' role as cultural carriers has long been neglected, the fact that many of their contacts were established, and not a few of their contracts signed, in Dutch towns and cities is in itself convincing testimony to the significance of the seventeenth-century Low Countries as a cultural cross-roads.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Begemann, 'De Engelse komedianten', 409.

<sup>69</sup> For a broader treatment of the issue, see Gibbs, 'The role'; Haley, *The British*; and Vander Motten and Smith, 'Intellectual Entrepôts'.

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