Dance in the 1700s was a very common and social experience. Balls were held throughout the winter seasons and were taken quite seriously.[[1]](#footnote-1) These dances were used to bring together young people to meet and to bring together older people to meet once again. Dances have brought together couples to meet and begin relationships, work partners and started friendships among the ones attending. These dances were a huge aspect of the social lives of the people in this time, and regardless as to where they were from they all gathered to experience this. It has had a large amount of extreme changes to the current views on it and how it is expressed. Dance has had a positive effect on the social aspect on daily lives of Canadians in the 1700s.

Dance was first brought into the social lives of the European Explorers by influence of Native peoples.[[2]](#footnote-2) The Europeans that had come to Canada were fascinated by the dancing they witnessed the Native people doing.[[3]](#footnote-3) Natives had used dance as a form of light exercise and way to keep themselves healthy.[[4]](#footnote-4) Dance was not an isolated activity that was done, it went along with songs, theatre performances and other ceremonies and rituals.[[5]](#footnote-5) These type of dances involved a beat from a drum that changed throughout the song that was being sung, the dancers would move according to the beat of this drum.[[6]](#footnote-6) These people did not consider dance as much of an amusement, but as a way of life and a chance to connect with their peoples. Dance started to become an activity for these European Explores when the Native people began to influence the younger people, and encourage them to join in on their dances.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The first French ball was held on February 4, 1667 in Montreal.[[8]](#footnote-8) At this ball, the people gathered to feast and dance to an instrument called the hurdy gurdy.[[9]](#footnote-9) A Hurdy Gurdy is “a stringed instrument that produces sound by a crank-turned, rosined wheel rubbing against the strings”[[10]](#footnote-10) At this time the only dance that was a set dance was a dance called the Minuet.[[11]](#footnote-11) Often, these balls were given in exchange for receiving great respect or attention.[[12]](#footnote-12) If it was not affordable to through a ball for the entire family to attend, then only the younger people were invited to attend.[[13]](#footnote-13) Often the dancing was left up to the younger peoples as well, preferably younger women as they were still considered young and beautiful, “whilst young, are very pretty, but by the time they become mothers of a little family they lofe all their beauty, their complexions fade away, like their teeth begin to decay, and they hardly appear like the fame creatures.”[[14]](#footnote-14) however during the ball the older peoples provided performances. Each feasting had multiple dances, often the feasting occurring after the dances, with the dancing going all throughout the night and into the morning.[[15]](#footnote-15) Some dances were said to have been held at 8pm continuing into the next day and ending at 1am with a feast following at 2am.[[16]](#footnote-16) Often balls were given in exchange for receiving great respect or attention, sometime people whom were visiting would through a ball for the people who had host them and provided them with a temporary community.

The seriousness of dance was very different in Canada than it was in England.[[17]](#footnote-17) In an anonymous letter it was spoken of how serious dance was in Canada, they say that “in England, we dance for amusement, but in Canada ‘tis very serious business.”[[18]](#footnote-18) People danced with spirit and seriousness, it was not a joke and was not just for amusement purposes but a real competitive affair.[[19]](#footnote-19) In England the dances that they knew and danced were different than in Canada, in Canada it was strictly the Minuet at this time, however in England they also danced the Contredance, the Folies d. Esoagne and the Allemade.[[20]](#footnote-20) These dances were brought to Canada in later time, but remained in England during the 17th century.

Dance and music were highlights of social life in the winter seasons, these events were looked forward to very much.[[21]](#footnote-21) They occurred once a fortnight, which is once every two weeks, at least.[[22]](#footnote-22) One of the main events in the late 17th century was a masked ball. During that event, people of all ages would come together to dance under a hidden identity, a mask. This dance was known for bringing young female and males together, because they were anonymous for the evening, but the relationships did not tend to last past the night. These balls prompted many of the women to become more promiscuous and lead to a sense of sexual freedom because the identity of these women had been detached.[[23]](#footnote-23) A source claims that “The facial mask that hid the eyes and thus the soul transformed a women into a mere sexual object”[[24]](#footnote-24) I can understand how this could have been possible because it was so frowned upon to have any sexual relationships outside of a marriage, however I also can see how sexist this time must have been in relationship to the equality of men and women. This quote talks about how women alone were just sexual objects for men, whereas the men were also hidden, and I strongly disagree that the women should have been eyed upon as though they were just an object of use and not a human being with real feelings.

Masquerades were not approved by the clergy and priests.[[25]](#footnote-25) It was not approved because they involved dancing after dark, which was usually accompanied with drinking alcohol and gambling as well as sexual behaviours. At this time the idea of two peoples having sex before marriage was considered completely wrong and was seen as a sin throughout the community. God had commanded that the act of sexual behaviour was not to have been permitted until marriage, and once people had become under the influence and had a now hidden identity, they may act irresponsibly according the clergy. Many of the events that occurred on these nights were also massively frowned upon by clergy, and the idea of them being expected to happen was not accepted by any religious leaders.

Throughout time, dance has become more and more sexualized and not as much of a classical activity. Dance in the 1700s was often a set movement and was completely isolated to a man and a woman. Slowly as dance passed through time, we went from basic classy balls in which the minuet was danced, on to masquerades and then continuing on to more and more of an edgy type dance that is done now. Dance in the past was a much more of a social experience than it is now, it was an activity that was expected to continue on into old age. In present times, dance is not common, and the majority of the people who do any type of dancing are children and young adults.

Dance has had a positive effect on the social aspect of daily lives of Canadians in the 1700s. To conclude, I think it is easy to say that dance had a huge emotional and physical connection for people. It brought people together to dance and eat and enjoy each other’s company, it introduced couples to each other and built a sense of community.[[26]](#footnote-26) Often times people get very caught up in their own lives in present time and forget that things are much easier when you have a social activity like dances to bring you together. Dance made it very easy for people to reach out to their neighbors and get help if it was needed. Masquerades provided an escape from identify for both men and women, and helped them to experience an emotional connection instead of just a physical one.[[27]](#footnote-27) Dance has had positive effect on the social aspect of daily lives of Canadians in the 1700s.

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**Research Paper**

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