

Originally published on Facebook 5/2/2018

Uncommon East Kingdom Awards: The Order of the Terpsichore

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Hello boys and girls – do you know what time it is? It’s time for another episode of Uncommon East Kingdom Awards with Eloise. (Enjoy the moderately clever lead-ins – I’m going to run out of them any minute now.)

Today’s installment brings us to the Order of the Terpsichore.

East Kingdom Law

IX.D

1. There are Orders of Honor in the East Kingdom, and their recipients are known as Companions of their respective Orders.

- a. Companions of each Order of Honor will rank equally with Companions of the other Orders of Honor in the Order of Precedence.
- b. Except as otherwise expressly stated below, scrolls for induction into Orders of Honor are optional.

Here is what Law says about the Terpsichore:

5. The Order of Terpsichore (established October 6 A.S. 14, 1979, by Vissevald and Embla)
 - a. This award, signified by a token chosen by The Crown may be awarded to recognize a gentle's consistent and unselfish devotion of his talent to helping a great many others acquire a knowledge and understanding of dance and polite court movement.
 - b. Companions of the Order are encouraged communicate among themselves in order to expand their collective repertoire.

I have always rather enjoyed the name of this award. In Greek mythology, Terpsicore is the Muse of dance, and her name translates from the Greek as “delight in dancing.” From the little I know of heraldic research into the authentic construction of Order names, I’m not sure if it would pass today, but I enjoy it – and it makes her one of only two Muses whose names I can remember offhand.

The Terpsichore is another award that I remember being more common in my “youth” that isn’t seen as much anymore. Let’s look at the law! It is “to recognize a gentle’s consistent and unselfish devotion of his talent to helping a great many others acquire a knowledge and understanding of dance and polite court movement.”

The first thing that strikes me is that this section could use a language cleanup. The next thing that strikes me is that this is yet another award where the letter of the law and customary usage appear to have deviated some over the years. I, and I suspect many others, have always thought that the Terpsichore is an award given for either skill in dance, OR research in dance, OR teaching dance, OR (most likely) some combination of those. But if you read the actual language, this is a teaching award. And not teaching on a small scale, but more of a big-picture impact: “a great many others.”

I think – and I beg you all, gentle readers, to remember that other than the snippets of Law, everything in this series are Opinions According to Eloise – that this is a case where we need to look at this award in the context of its time of establishment. This award, and the Order of the Troubadors discussed elsewhere were established together at the same time. It was Anno Societatis 14 – 1979. The Order of the Maunche, for excellence in the arts, is only three years old. The Kingdom itself is only eleven years old. At this point in our history, I have to imagine that broad impact has the greatest value in the arts. We're less concerned about WHAT people are dancing than that they ARE dancing. Because then, as now, as in history, dance is a hallmark of a noble court. And so an Order of Honor is created to encourage people to get lots of people dancing. I'm going to say again – note the "I have to imagine." I wasn't there. I don't know. But it's fun to speculate.

Nonetheless – fast forward to the current day. The common usage for the Terpsichore is to recognize contributions to the dance community, be it the research of authentic dances, skill in performing them, or – hearkening back to its roots – the teaching of dance to others. Again, like with the Troubadors, I note that there is no requirement for authenticity. So if someone is teaching Caroso or Arbeau – I will swoon with delight as I write them in. If they're teaching Playford as an easily accessible, fun gateway to get people involved – I'll smile as I write them in (I have a soft spot for Playford.) The Time Warp in a "medievalish" fashion? You have fun kids, but I'm not writing a recommendation for that.

And fear not! This award applies to all forms of dance, not merely European court dances. So that person you know doing amazing things with Middle Eastern dance? Or Hungarian peasant dances? Or Egyptian dance? Or Indian Bharatanatyam? Write them in! And you know what else – go learn from them. Dancing is fun! I miss dancing, and need to start again.

Once again, there is no badge or token specified in either law or the armorial and ordinary, but customarily the token given with the award is a bell. I have seen both cup shaped bells and "jingle" style bells given out.

And at this juncture, I'm going to give a shout out to all the Morris dancers out there: STOP TRYING TO SNEAK INTO COURT WEARING ALL YOUR BELLS. It never works, and it's just annoying. Either admit that you're disrupting the proceedings and jingle your bells with panache, or admit that someone else is currently the center of attention and either take them off or stay to the side. The same applies to the people out there who just wear lots of bells to wear lots of bells.

Ahem. Where was I? Right – tokens. The traditional tokens when awarding a Terpsichore are bells. I've seen everything from a delicate bell pendant to a camel bell the size of both my hands. And because many people wear bells for personal or aesthetic reasons, this is another award where it behooves us to check our assumptions at the door... and then check the Order of Precedence. And yet again, remember – none of this is about what I think is worthy, or what you think is worthy. It is about what the Royalty, in their sole discretion find worthy. Our jobs, as subjects of the East are to write letters to the King and Queen convincing them of our point of view. Remember those "persuasive letter" units in school? Put those skills to work!

Some current subjects of the Barony Beyond the Mountain who are members of the Order of Terpsichore: Salaamallah the Corpulent, Dinsdale of Northumbria, Su'ad al-Raqqasah, Karrah the Mischievous.

The various East Kingdom awards are described here:
<https://seneschal.eastkingdom.org/docs/EKLAW.pdf>, beginning on page 24.

The Order of Precedence may be found here: <https://op.eastkingdom.org/op.php>.

You can recommend people for ANY award here:
<https://surveys.eastkingdom.org/index.php/945932/lang-en>.

#uncommoneastkingdomawards

The bell can be found here:
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/465605?sortBy=Relevance&when=A.D.+500-1000&where=Europe&ft=bell&offset=0&brpp=20&bpos=1&fbclid=IwAR23JJLDFb0M-UDRk6qLzQQSyjRXik9ahJdIaZtWh1Py0NaGjG4qvISLEc8>.

