RE-WRITE AND RE-CREATE THE FRENCH "BALLET DU TEMPS" (1654): KNOWLEDGE, HISTORICAL SOURCES, AND CREATIVE STRATEGIES

CHRISTOPHE ALVAREZ[1]

SUMMARY. This article discusses the author's process of reconstructing the "Ballet du Temps", one of the great court ballets of the French 17th century, danced by King Louis XIV in 1654, which has remained partially copied by Philidor. With the Violin 1 being the only remnant of what has been this Ballet, the article presents the issues raised during the musical rewriting, notably the harmonic formulation, the instrumentarium, the ornaments, among others. This study also recalls the fundamental aesthetic differentiation between the Ballet dances (called Entrées and Airs in the score) and the society dances, which, in the context of the choreographic reconstruction, implies a flexible approach in which expressing the dramaturgy of the Entrée is central.

Keywords: ballet de cour, recreation, French 17th century, performance study

Introduction

In the fall of 2019, after several months of a slow and painstaking reconstruction work, the music of the Ballet du Temps[2] sounded again, performed by the intAct ensemble (Canada) that I conducted, directed by choreographer Livia Gună, and danced by the corps de ballet of the Hungarian Opera of Cluj-Napoca (Romania). This ballet, forgotten until now, partially copied by Philidor, was nevertheless the fruit of the collaboration of the greatest artists of its time, and is the first work in which Jean-Baptiste

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[1] Tenure Faculty member at the "Gheorghe Dima" Music Academy, Piano Department, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Contact: christophe.alvarez@mail.mcgill.ca

[2] The complete rewritten score of the ballet, as well as the recording made with the baroque ensemble intAct, can be consulted on request; see the author's email address.

Lully officially participated as a composer by writing an "Entrée"[3]. Jean de Cambefort[4] also participated in the elaboration of this work by writing two sung arias placed after the two Overtures, of which, alas, one is lost. However, the entire poetry written by Benserade has come down to us through the booklet of the ballet distributed to the spectators on the day of its premiere in 1654. This article relates some of the questions and problems that accompanied the work of rewriting that I carried out, to complete the missing parts of this score, and to bring this work back to life in the most faithful and informed way possible by delving into the musical and theoretical science of the period, and then to proceed to its living restitution.

The Ballet de Cour is the genre that triumphed during the first years of Louis XIV's reign. It gave way to gallantry, a true mirror of the gentilhomme's ideal that everyone at the Court tried to achieve. It is a genre halfway between melodrama and buffoonish masquerade, reconciling different sources of inspiration, which cannot be categorized as either comic or tragic, because alongside mythological characters or allegorical heroes appears a whole comic world of cripples, drunks, gardeners, doctors, or peddlers. It combines poetry, music, plastic arts, theatrical dance so that each of its components contribute to its balance. Fiction is mixed with reality, the phantasmagorical and the imaginary play a dominant role and transport the spectator into an enchanted world. An extremely flexible genre by nature, it adapts to all occasions, sometimes noble and requiring long and costly preparations, sometimes improvised in a few days, lending itself to jest and masquerade.

Between the 1570s and 1580s, the attempts to recreate an original expressive ideal led by the Academy of Music and Poetry and the research of Jean-Antoine de Baïf on the invention of a music measured in the antique style, laid the foundations for a total art spectacle to which dance and painting would also be added. This fusion of the arts was to give birth to a new genre, the Ballet de Cour, which by its nature could express and represent the deepest mysteries of nature. To achieve such an absolute, the pooling of minds and talents was essential: the Ballet was therefore programmed from its birth to be a collaborative work. It was in 1582 that the first French dramatic ballet was born, the first true example of a court ballet that mixed music and dance

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[3] This is the only musical moment in the ballet whose five parts have come down to us, but in a separate collection compiled by Philidor in 1690, entitled "Ballets de Jeunesse".

[4] The composer of the sumptuous Ballet de la Nuit (1653) which had, the year before (1653), left such a mark on people's minds. The Ballet de la Nuit, also partially copied by Philidor, was recently recreated by the Ensemble Correspondances and its conductor Sébastien Daucé, who rewrote the missing orchestral parts and carried out a profound reflection on the instrumental practice of the period.

with poetry, under the impetus of Balthazar de Beaujoyeulx[5] and the dual influence of the humanist theories of the Academy of Music and Poetry, and of Italian shows. Beaujoyeulx dramatized the ballet through a continuous theatrical action in which music and dance participate. However, the evolution of the genre at the beginning of the 17th century will see the poetic declamation fade away - and with it the ideal of perfection in the antique style - in favor of a transmission of the dramaturgy by the only means of the movements and the music, consequently approaching much more the Opera than the comedy, This was particularly the case with the substitution of sung narratives for declaimed ones, which took place between 1602 and 1605[6], and with the creation of the Ballet d'Alcine in 1610, the first of a series of melodramatic ballets in which music plays a predominant role and supports the action. The genre of the melodramatic ballet is quite close to the form of the Ballet de Cour practiced under the reign of Louis XIV: a continuous action gives rise to the unfolding of several "Entrées", serious or buffoonish, in the middle of which are inserted sung narratives, before a Grand Bal, bringing together both the characters of the ballet and some talented dancers among the audience, ends the work in a grandiloquent way.

The Genesis of the Ballet du Temps

In 1652, tired of the Fronde of the Parisian bourgeoisie and then of the princes, it is an exsanguinated France yearning for peace and order, which triumphantly welcomes the return of the young Louis XIV. Around him, a brilliant and gallant Court gathered, enamored of entertainment and theatrical marvels. Mazarin seized upon the Ballet de Cour (the young King's passion for dance only strengthened its appeal) as a means of creating a climate of heroism and adulation around the monarch, to elevate his figure to the rank of incarnate divinity. It is the Ballet de la Nuit (1653), a spectacle of magnificence that lasted more than twelve hours, that symbolizes the first example of the genre, a true symbolic coronation of Louis XIV as he appears as the rising sun that chases away the night and its shadows. Following the Ballet de la Nuit, the Ballet du Temps was the first great spectacle staged after the coronation of the King in 1654. The King, accompanied by the best dancers of the court, dances this ballet composed of two parts and invented by

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[5] De Beaujoyeulx, Balthazar. *Le Ballet Comique de la Reyne (The Ballet Comique of the Queen)*. Ballard, Paris, 1582.

[6] The disappearance of declamation will also produce the purification of the librettos of ballets in which will appear only the argument, the description of the spectacle, the sung words and some verses of spirit intended for the spectators.

Mr. Hesselin, Master of the Chambre aux Deniers. According to the commentaries of the time, the work lasts several hours and includes, in addition to the 30 "Entrées" arranged in two distinct parts, each with a respective Overture[7], at least two sung arias and a grand final ballet, the music of which has unfortunately been totally lost. It is probable that comedy, as well as Italian scenes associating several sung characters and supported by a choral mass, were incorporated as was the case in most ballets of this time. The first part features Peddlers followed by Moments, Minutes[8], Hours, Day and Night, Weeks, Months, Years and Centuries, and then the four Centuries, Iron, Brass, Silver, and Gold. The second and more mystical part consists of eleven Entries during which Astrologers, Uranus, the Past, Present and Future Times, the four Seasons, the seven Planets and finally the Elements led by four Deities follow one another.

In addition to the Overture and the sung arias, the Ballet du Temps is composed of two types of instrumental composition, on the model of the ballets of the same period and which will last until the disappearance of the genre: the "Entrées", the most numerous and diverse in terms of expression and character, and the Airs, in restricted number, placed after certain entries which they then come to punctuate in a more concise way and of a contrasting style[9]. Georgie Durosoir evokes this particularity by relating it to the practice of court ballet under Louis XIII. In this respect, the Philidor manuscripts that reproduce the sources of this period contain two types of titles, "airs for the violins" or also "airs for..." various types of characters, as well as dances explicitly named (bourrées, sarabandes, courantes, etc.) or implicitly under the generic term of "Entrée". The particularity of the Ballet du Temps and consequently the challenge inherent in its musical re-creation lay in the state of the Philidor manuscript, which contained only the violin top part, thus requiring the total rewriting of the four missing parts. As with many other Ballets of the first half of the 17th century, it is difficult to know the reasons that led to so many gaps in the copy[10], however, it is possible to

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[7] These pieces of pure instrumental music, which appeared around 1645, are solemn in character and consist of two parts in binary time, the first developing slowly in a four-beat rhythm, the second more rapidly in a two-beat unit, often alternating ₵ and 2. These are the precursors of the "Ouverture à la Française", which Lully would later generalize, considerably lengthening and developing the discourse and adding a final return to a slow part.

[8] Embodied on stage by little girls, the children of some of the dancers and musicians of the Court.

[9] In most cases, a common name is used to remind the association with the "Entrée" that precedes it with the title "Air for the same".

[10] If not for the time interval of at least 40 years that separates the creation of these Ballets from their inventory, which was only begun by Philidor in 1690. During these years, many scores were destroyed or damaged due to poor conservation or lack of care.

shed light on this question by recalling the mode of conception used during the creation of a Ballet de Cour, involving a diversity of contributors and a great dissemination of musical material. The first phase of composition is the melodic writing of a violin tablature[11] by the dancing master when he fulfills, as frequently, the two functions of choreographer-composer; the second stage is the establishment of a score in two staves, it can act as first stage if the choreographer is musically talented enough to write a bass under the melody which he invents, in the contrary case a musician writes this score according to the tablature of violin which was communicated to him or when the melody was transmitted to him orally by the dancing master[12]; finally, the two-stave score is passed on to one or more arrangers, members of the orchestra of the 24 Violons du Roi, who will be responsible for writing the intermediate parts so that the orchestra can play them. Of these three stages, the two-stave scores are, because of their conciseness, the ones that will be preserved, and sometimes even exported abroad the most easily. From the years 1655-60, the sources gradually became more precise, and although there are still incomplete examples, such as the Ballet des Plaisirs Troublés (1657) and La Revente des Habits (1661)[13], almost all of Lully's works were preserved with particular care.

The Question of the Musical Writing

The first task of this reconstruction was the musical rewriting of the Ballet du Temps. It was therefore necessary to rely on a conscientious study of the harmonic language of the time. Between 1645 and 1665, there were twenty years during which the art of music not intrinsically changed but became more refined and subtle. It sought a direction in which Lully would later become the leader. The music of the ballets of the middle of the century is a very particular mixture of functional and non-functional harmony, in which the two universes of modality and young tonality coexist in different ways.

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[11] The practice of violin tablatures is mentioned by Mersenne, Marin in l'Harmonie Universelle, Livre des Instruments (Universal Harmony, Book of the Instruments), Paris, 1636, p. 170, as well as by Trichet, Pierre in his Traité des instruments de musique (Treaty of musical instruments), Paris, 1640. See on this subject Lesure, François. Le Traité des instruments (Treaty of instruments), Société des Musiques d'Autrefois, Paris, 1957, p. 228.

[12] This two-stave score will serve as rehearsal material for the dancers, who will likely be accompanied by a small ensemble such as a violin, a basse de violon and a continuo instrument.

[13] The Ballet des Plaisirs Troublés is missing the Haute-Contre and Quinte de Violon parts, while for the Ballet de la Revente des Habits, only the melody and the bass remain.

The drawing of the melodic lines responds to the needs of the harmony while often conflicting with the metric accents induced by this progression and thus requiring recourse to the modal substitution. These shifts of accents, these suddenly disjointed lines, beyond the mere reinforcement of the choreographic expressiveness, testify to a real taste and research for the sound color that produces the use of a whole arsenal of false relations, the raising of the VIth degree in the minor tone, the mobility of the third, the modulations in the IIIrd degree, the use of the plagal ratio in the IVth degree on a footing of quasi-equality to the I-V ratio. A new theoretical criterion is introduced and occupies an increasingly privileged place in the theoretical discourse, that of the judgment of the ear, of what is pleasant and unpleasant to the ear. This freedom leads to the suggestion, in several composition manuals, of the transgression of rules for the benefit of the pleasure of the ear[14]. The novelty comes from the status given to dissonance. Around the middle of the 17th century, pleasure and perfection are generated by the harmony of opposites, consonance, and dissonance. This idea of diversity which considers consonances and dissonances testifies to the abandonment of the absolute classification of each interval according to the mathematical ratio.

A look at the complete manuscripts of the ballets of this period is eloquent. The 24 Violins have a pronounced taste for harmonic harshness, rapid and unexpected crumpling. The examples are too numerous to believe in a fortuitous chance, or in an error or even a harmonic simplification in Philidor's copy as Prunières was suggesting[15]. The bias is voluntary and is manifested by frequent anticipations of resolutions, embroideries or escapes, or the use of passing notes on two dissonant parts, causing numerous consecutive fifths and octaves as well as other infringements of the rules of harmony such as the doubling of the bass of the sixth chord or the doubling of the sensitive of the dominant chord. Parallel fifths and octaves are frequent between the different instrumental parts and will also remain present in Lully's work for several years to come. I quote here some examples taken from the Cassel manuscript and reproduced by Ecorcheville[16]:

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[14] See De la Voye, Mignot. *Traité de musique (Treaty of music)*. 4ᵉ Livre, Paris, 1656.

[15] Prunières, Henry. *Le ballet de cour en France avant Benserade et Lully (Court ballet in France before Benserade and Lully)*. Henri Laurens, Paris, 1914, p. 211.

[16] Ecorcheville, Jules. *Vingt Suites d'Orchestre du XVIIe Siècle Français (Twenty Orchestral Suites of the French 17th Century)*. Editions Marcel Fortin, Paris, 1906.

E.g. 1

Reduction of several extracts of dance suites from the Cassel manuscript

Below I reproduce two excerpts from the Ballet des Fêtes de Bacchus (1651). Example 1) shows the anticipation of the resolution chord by the B escaping at the Taille de Violon (3rd stave). It also shows an example of the movement of the third of the D chord, thus modifying the modal implication. Example 2) shows the dissonance Eb-D playing on the ambiguity preceding the modulation to the 3rd degree by the late resolution of the D in the upper violin part, creating an indecision of harmonic notation 5 or 6. Moreover, the dominant chord in the 4th beat is tripled in sensitivity, which seems to be considered as a non-functional passing chord.

E.g. 2

Two "Entrées", from the Ballet des Fêtes de Bacchus, Ballard, Paris, 1651

The feeling of tonality in the music of this epoch is that of a transitional period. If the attraction of major/minor is strongly felt, the prestige of the old modes has not yet completely disappeared. For this reason, G minor is written with a single-flat key signature, to allow the sixth degree a freedom of alteration that will easily allow switching between several modes. The problem of tonality is posed but left in a voluntary form of irresolution. The two relative tones, the two modes of C and A, become entangled, altered, until a cadence momentarily affirms the rest on one of them. The thirds of the chords, the interval that can be transformed the most freely, thus fulfill the role of passage from one mode to another, from one tone to another. The alterations of these are not only made on the same voice, but also occur on two distant voices by using the principle of the false relation. The harmonic structure on the scale of the "Entrées" follows a clear and repetitive pattern: the tonic modulates to its dominant or relative at the double bar of the first part, then returns to the tonic at the end of the "Entrée". Numerous modulations or modal instabilities occur within each part of the "Entrées", using the dominant or subdominant, or borrowing from the third degree[17], or the seventh degree[18], giving the general impression of going nowhere because of their brevity and their constant reminder of the main tonic. The 11th "Entrée" P. II of the Ballet du Temps is particularly eloquent in this respect. More generally, I have tried to respect the practice of the time, which is that interior cadences are most often in minor because this character facilitates the continuity of the harmonic movement, and as soon as a more substantial rest is desired, they tend to become major.

Although, in the case of dances, the harmony never changes to the smallest rhythmic value, there are a few examples of this type, notably to introduce a cadence or when the melody requires it. This sparing use of acceleration of the harmonic rhythm probably implied a precipitation in the choreographic movement to reach a particular expression. Here is an example from the Ballet de Flore (1669):

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[17] Commonly used in minor "Entrées", due to the natural interval interpenetration of the modes C and A.

[18] In this case, there is an oscillation between the mode of A and the mode of D by the rise of the VIth degree.
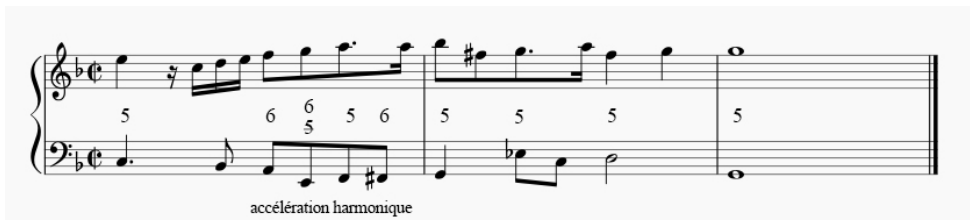
E.g. 3

Menuet pour les Mêmes, Ballet de Flore, Ballard, Paris, 1669, p. 28

If, when re-writing the Ballet du Temps, I was careful to respect the rhythm of the harmonic changes commonly used in the music of this period, I also included some moments of acceleration of which here is an example:

E.g. 4

Ballet du Temps, 1654, 12th "Entrée", Part II, m. 11-13

The melody never exceeds an ambitus of two octaves, which results in a low position for the left hand of the violin that almost never exceeds the first or second position, and which remains comfortable in view of the specific position of the instrument at that time, well below the clavicle. Moreover, given the absence of any major stylistic difference between Airs and "Entrées", it is not known whether these instrumental pieces had two distinct functions, for example one choreographic and the other not, or whether, during these

Airs, certain instruments were playing on the stage along with dancers. A look at the ballets written at the same time shows that the Airs characterize a musical moment that remains in the same representative unity as the "Entrée" to which they follow. Thus, in the Ballet des Plaisirs Troublés (1657), the 8th "Entrée", which describes the appearance of Turks, is followed by four Airs which develop a whole dramaturgy around the same unity of subject: afflicted Sultanas, Janissaries, muted Eunuchs, etc. One may conclude that an "Entrée" signifies the appearance of a new subject and that the Airs represent subtypes of this same subject; however, it is not known whether any scenic and musical implication was involved to differentiate them or whether this is merely a semantic variation. The Ballet du Temps contains four Airs named as such, as well as a "Sarabande pour les mêmes" which follows the 3rd "Entrée" and which can be included into this category. In addition to the unity of tone that characterizes them (G minor)[19], we also notice a motivic similarity using joint notes that relate to an ambitus restricted to the fifth note. Finally, and this is the most striking, it is the melodic resemblance that runs through these five musical moments, which also includes the only air that is reliably attributed to Lully ("Pour les mêmes," p. 28).

E.g. 5

Similarity of the melodic incipit of the Airs in the Ballet du Temps

Prunières deplores the "monotony", even "immobility"[20], of the music of the Ballets de Cour. It is true that it seems impossible to discern the emergence of singular artistic personalities when one goes through the "Entrées", as diverse as their subjects are, except for that of Lully, easily recognizable by his melodic and rhythmic inventiveness, and this as early as the Ballet du Temps,

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[19] Even when the entry to which they are linked is in major.
[20] Prunières, Henry. *Op. cit.*, Paris, 1914, p. 210.

which appears as his first official participation as instrumental composer[21]. However, despite the different characters of the "Entrées", gay or melancholic, lively, or slow, they resemble each other by their uniformity, they belong to a writing canon, a common practice anchored in the habit of an established style and deeply rooted in the collective musical unconscious. As a result, it is delicate, even absurd, to try to attribute the authorship of a particular "Entrée" to a specific composer when a ballet is the fruit of a collaboration of several of them, as is the proven case for the Ballet des Fêtes de Bacchus (1651)[22].

The Question of the Instrumentarium

Many questions remain as to the exact instrumentarium that was brought to take part in the ballets. On the subject, even the theorists of that time diverge. De Pure[23] advises, just like Mersenne[24], to leave to the violins the care to accompany the dance, being the only ones able to catch the legerity of the steps while preserving a great diversity of intonation. Nevertheless, De Pure deplores the tendency of the interpreters to the ornamental overload which he finds harmful for the choreographic realization[25]. On the other hand, Ménestrier[26] estimates that all the instruments can take part in the music of the ballets, although the violins are those which agree best with the movements of the body.

The music is always written in five parts, following the division of the 24 Violins du Roi into five registers whose balance will remain unchanged from 1636[27] until the end of the XVIIth Century: dessus (6 instrumentalists), haute-contre (4), taille (4), quinte (4), basse de violon (6). The orchestra of the 24 violins, in the 1650s, had already acquired a reputation in Europe for the quality of its technique and the diversity of the diminutions, ornaments and embellishments that it added to the musical parts of the "Entrées". According

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[21] It was the freshness of this characteristic individuality that caused him to eclipse all the other long-established court composers so quickly with prestigious careers.

[22] The composition of this ballet brings together no less than four of the best musicians of the Court: de Mollier, de Chancy, Verpré and Mazuel.

[23] De Pure, Michel. *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux (Idea of old and new performances)*. Paris, 1668.

[24] Mersenne, Marin. *Op. cit,* Paris, 1636.

[25] As soon as "the Entrée is begun, the purpose of the violin is only to play just in measure and movement without wanting to affect either passage or diminution", De Pure, Michel, Op. cit, p. 227.

[26] Ménestrier, Claude-François. *Des ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre (Ancient and modern ballets according to the rules of theater)*, Paris, 1682.

[27] It is Marin Mersenne who specifies for the first time the distribution in his *Harmonie Universelle, Traité des Instruments à Cordes (Universal Harmony, Treaty of String Instruments)*. Paris, p. 185.

to the testimony of De Pure, the orchestra of the 24 Violins played very quickly with "a legerity and tirades of the bow on each note"[28]. Mersenne affirmed already in 1636 that "the airs of the ballets and the violins excite because of their gaiety which comes from the promptness of their movements"[29]. The French bow of this time was short and light. There is no doubt that violinists had a technical mastery that allowed them to play with sensitivity and precision. The thumb had direct contact with the horsehair to be able to vary its pressure on it according to the type of articulation and attack desired. The rule of the bow tiré on the strong beat, and more generally at each resting point, dominates[30]. In three-beat measures, beats 2 and 3 can be pushed-pushed or pushed-pulled. This choice is dictated by the physiognomy of the phrase, in fact a push-push will act as a divided bow stroke and will produce a very short breath, while a push-pull - if it will allow to link the beats 2 and 3 - will on the other hand produce an important breath between the beats 3 and 1 of the following measure because of the reattack of the bow on the strong beat. This variation of bow strokes is particularly necessary in the Sarabandes or Courantes, which function in phrasal groups of 2 bars.

In addition to the "regular" orchestra, other musicians could join the dancers on stage, dressed in costume and masked, or the singers to support the arias; among them were a variety of instruments from plucked strings (lutes, theorbos, guitars) to winds (oboes, cornets, hunting horns, trumpets). Although the violins play the largest part, the role played by the winds is unknown when it is not directly specified in the title of the "Entrée" ("Air pour les Hautbois", "Air pour les Flutes"[31]). The choice of instruments during the performance seems to respond more to criteria of color contrast than to the fusion of timbres. Because of the imprecision of the theorists of the time and the absence of precise comments from the audience on this subject, we do not know how the oboes and flutes could join the violins when they were not accompanying the dancers on stage. It seems likely that the family of bright, clear winds (oboes, cornets, trumpets) were brought into the orchestra for war dances, country dances, and Overtures. Thus, in the Ballet du Temps, the 3rd "Entrée" Part I could have been sounded first by a group of oboes/bassoons,

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[28] Op. cit. p. 264.

[29] Op. cit. *Le Livre des Chants (The Book of Voice)*, p. 172.

[30] Mersenne was the first to discuss its value, see *Harmonie Universelle, Livre des Instruments (Universal Harmony, Treaty of String Instruments)*, Paris, 1636, p. 185.

[31] This is the case of the "Concert donné à Louis XIII sur des airs choisis de différents ballets" in 1627, which includes several "Entrées" whose instruments are explicitly named. Marie-Françoise Christout suggests that the oboes were associated with the violins during the final Grand Bal, see on this subject Les Ballets-Mascarades des Fées de la Forêt de Saint-Germain et de la Douairière de Billebahaut (The Ballets-Mascarades of the Fées de la Forêt de Saint-Germain and the Douairière de Billebahaut), *Revue d'Histoire du Théâtre*, 1961, p. 16.

before being taken up by the violins; the 8th "Entrée" P. I could have benefited from the alliance of winds and strings in order to reinforce the peasant character of this bourree; the pomp of the 11th "Entrée" P. I would gain in brilliance by the use of trumpets underlining the warlike character of this march[32]; the use of flutes could have supported the sweetness and the nostalgia which emanate from the 3rd "Entrée" P. II; in the 7th "Entrée" P. II, the addition of oboes/bassons would do justice to the expression at the same time pastoral and martial which characterizes this piece. These are only examples and guesses; moreover, it seems likely that several percussion instruments were also employed to support or contrast the rhythmic physiognomy of the dances, thus adding an extra dimension to the choreography. The group of percussion instruments was varied and allowed a great deal of latitude in the choice of its use, among the drums (simple, veiled, or clear), castanets, bells, tambourines, bass drum, Chinese hat. A large piece of flexible sheet metal that could be shaken or struck with a mallet could reproduce the rumble of thunder and the impact of lightning.

The Question of Ornaments

In ballet, the music does not flow with the same freedom as in instrumental pieces intended for the chamber, it must be condensed and submitted to the choreography. An "Entrée" is a short, precise piece, often playful even when it is meant to be majestic. One feels a tug-of-war between the pretensions of the virtuoso instrumentalists and the needs of the choreography. The nakedness transcription of these pieces makes us see even more forcefully the place that the arrangement, the variation, the ornamentation occupied in the practice of the 24 violins, diminutions by which they could let their technique and their expressiveness show. According to De Pure: "It is necessary to push the agréments a little further than those used for the voice, that they carry a well-expressed passion, a particular liveliness and that they always have something high and cheerful."[33] There is no direct source that presents and makes explicit the practice of diminutions as realized at this time by the 24 Violins. Philidor's copies are laconic and use only the + sign to mark the main cadences. Mersenne gathers several embellishments practiced in a melody that he varies in a somewhat stiff and artificial way, of which I reproduce below an extract[34]:

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[32] A similar martial rhythm is found in the Ballet des Fâcheux 1661, p. 76, p. 80 as well as in the Ballet des Plaisirs Troublés 1657, p. 14 and p. 30, Philidor manuscripts.

[33] Op. cit. p. 264-265.

[34] Mersenne, Marin. *Harmonie Universelle*, *Livre des Instruments (Universal Harmony, Treaty of Instruments)*. Paris, 1636, p. 248.

E.g. 6

Diminished melody following Mersenne's proposal

Also cited as an example by Mersenne, the treatise of the lutenist Jean Basset[35] offers other examples of ornamentation:

E.g. 7

Some examples of ornaments by Jean Basset

Finally, Jean Millet's treatise[36], describing the practice of diminutions as "the essence of the beautiful use of singing", gives a relatively detailed account of the ornaments commonly used in the Air de Cour. He proceeds to classify them under two distinct groups and indicates that they proceed either from *traits de gorge* or from *ports de voix*. He proposes the term
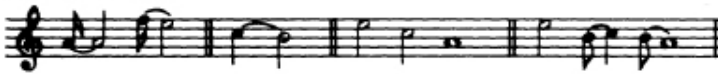
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[35] Ibid, p. 76-90.
[36] Millet, Jean. *La Belle méthode ou l'art de bien chanter (The Belle méthode or the art of singing well)*. Paris, 1666.

avant-son for those that precede the ornamented note, and *reste-du-son* for those that follow it, as well as the term *roulade* for those that form a combination of both.

E.g. 8

Avant-son and reste-du-son

He also determines several types of *roulades*:

E.g. 9

Roulades

He calls *tremblement* the type of ornament applied to long notes such as those preceding cadences and gives an example that is related to both the *trill* and the Italian *groppo*:

E.g. 10

Tremblement

To reconstruct the meanders of this art, one must draw on these treatises while keeping in mind that the examples given remain essentially theoretical and are more learning exercises than models to be imitated. Therefore, if the practice of particular ornaments could justify and attenuate certain harmonic hardnesses present in the scores of the ballets, the problem with which the interpreter is then confronted is to determine up to what point he/she can try to mask some of these frictions and consequently on which aesthetic level he/she chooses to place the interpretation: plastic beauty of the form to the detriment of the letter, or highlighting of the salient edges taken as signifying the personality of these works but being exposed then to the risk of blindly following a potentially faulty partial copy.

A Choreography with Many Faces

Ephemeral works, intended for fleeting pleasure, danced only once for most of them, the ballets cruelly lack a detailed description of their dramaturgy. References to the dances in the libretti are not frequent, and when they are rarely named, no description is given. The only mention of "Entrée" or Air precedes the designation of the protagonists taking part in the dance and the score provides little insight into its notation: very summary indications of ornamentation, position of repeat bars and signs of repetition which often need to be re-evaluated, no indication of instrumentation or dynamic variation. The manuscripts transmitted by Philidor reveal more of the atmosphere than they allow for a clear identification of the scenic and choreographic development. Moreover, choreography, like music, is often a collective work shared between several dance masters. Of oral tradition, it was transmitted through the intermediary of talented teachers, until Louis XIV founded the Royal Academy of Dance in 1661, entrusting thirteen of the best Master of Dance with the task of codifying and developing the principles that preside over choreographic evolutions. Pierre Beauchamp[37], the King's dancing master and composer[38], fixed the five basic positions and seems to have been the first to invent choreographic notation, although the paternity of this system was later claimed by Feuillet at the beginning of the 18th century[39].

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[37] Described as one of the best dancers of his time, he regularly appeared alongside the King and the professional dancers Mollier and Verpré, performing the most technical "Entrées". His career as a choreographer began with the Ballet des Plaisirs Troublés (1657).

[38] He is notably the author of all the music for the Ballet des Fâcheux (1661), danced at Vaux le Vicomte on the eponymous play by Jean-Baptiste Molière.

[39] Feuillet, Raoul. *Chorégraphie ou l'Art de décrire la Danse (Choreography or the Art of describing Dance)*. Paris, 1700. Let us point out that a lawsuit opposed Feuillet to Beauchamp, however lost by the latter, who had disputed him the invention of the choreographic notation.

The recreation of a court ballet of the first half of the 17th century is therefore hampered by the absence of concrete sources on the choreography itself. To better understand these successive dances and the spirit they may have carried, it is necessary to have recourse to additional documentation both upstream and downstream of the work, including the anonymous treatise *Instruction pour dancer les dances cy-après nommées*[40], *l'Harmonie Universelle* of Marin Mersenne[41], *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets* of M. de Saint-Hubert[42] and the *Remarques pour la conduite des ballets* of Ménestrier[43]. Written between 1612 and 1658, they evoke the ballets, the dances, the technique of their time and, for some, indications of style. But here again, many questions remain unanswered in the face of the particularly unique and protean character of the Ballet de Cour. If for a long-time society dance had a considerable role in the Court Ballet, they gradually lost their raison d'être in the face of the progressive professionalization of imitative dance and the disappearance of geometric figures[44]. The society dances were then reserved for the Grand Bal that closed the Ballet and in which many amateur dancers from among the spectators participated. In this respect, François de Lauze[45] establishes a clear differentiation between the professional baladin and the man of court and advises the latter against any attempt at difficult steps so as not to offend the beauty of the "vrai air qu'on doit observer"[46]. The professional baladin is also the one who performs the burlesque dances, who seeks, by various somersaults and impressive gestures, more to astonish his public than to make them laugh. The Ballets de Cour are essentially group dances. It is rare to see the performance of a soloist or a couple. Most Entrées involve three or more dancers simultaneously, and in the Grand Bal, many performers gather on stage.

Mersenne devoted several chapters of his great treatise *l'Harmonie Universelle* to the ballet de cour. He recommends tuning the air to the subject

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[40] Anonyme. Darmstadt library, 1612.

[41] Mersenne, Marin. *L'Harmonie Universelle (Universal Harmony)*, Paris, 1936.

[42] Saint-Hubert. *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets (The Way to compose and have ballets succeed).* Paris, 1641.

[43] Ménestrier, Claude-François. *Remarques pour la conduite des ballets (Notes for the performance of ballets).* Paris, 1658.

[44] Before 1640, the spectators were arranged in tiers, on the three sides of the rectangle defined by the hall. The best seats were those located on the top, to have a plunging view on the scenic space. Later, the elevation of the stage and its placement at the back of the hall made the geometry described by the steps and positions of the dancers invisible to the spectators, thus causing the abandonment of this conception of horizontal figures.

[45] De Lauze, François. *Apologie de la danse et parfaite méthode de l'enseigner (Apology of the dance and perfect method of teaching it)*. Paris, 1623.

[46] Idem, p. 46.

and then specifies the ways "to make the dances to be the most beautiful"[47]. He thus compares the steps of the dancers to the dance of the stars, and then imagines a teaching of astronomy, geometry, architecture by ballet practice. He describes the steps used to dance the gavotte, the sarabande, the courante, the gaillarde, or the branles but depicts the Ballet de Cour as a genre where "all sorts of movements of the feet are mixed at discretion and according to the science of the author of these dances"[48]. This confirms once again the unique and protean character of the theatrical dance proper to the Ballet de Cour and whose Entrées cannot be categorized in a succession of steps proper to ballroom dances. Likewise, Ménestrier clearly distinguishes between society dances and the Ballets de Cour by the expressions that the latter suggest and that must be transmitted by the dancers. Moreover, he brings an additional element in the separation of these two genres, by affirming that the music of the Ballet de Cour must be written according to the actions and the passions that the choreography represents and not the opposite as it is practiced in the ball. He thus declares that "the airs are for the movements and not the movements for the airs"[49]. What distinguishes the ballroom dance from the "Entrée de Ballet" is the expressive and descriptive dimension that the latter carries, even the character of pantomime which is one of the common features of the Ballet de Cour. In the words of Michel de Pure, "gestures and movements signify what could be expressed by words"[50]. Unfortunately, the detail of the expressive character of the Entrées is unknown to us because of the absence of notated choreography, and the laconism of the librettos. The Great Bal that closes the work is an entertaining "feast for the eyes"[51], whose dramaturgy is accomplished using a "choreography". from which the dramaturgy accomplished at the end of the ballet is absent. Thus, the particularity of the Ballet de Cour is the transformation of ordinary dances into quite singular units, freed from the rules of traditional movements, and whose steps are infinitely varied according to the expression of the subject of the Entrée[52]. Ordinary dances are used only rarely, when the dramatic situation requires it, but here again in most cases, the characteristics of several dances are intermingled within the same Entrée; thus, it is not

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[47] Mersenne, Marin. Op. cit. 1636, p. 158.

[48] Idem, p. 10.

[49] Op. cit., p. 206.

[50] De Pure, Michel. I*dée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux (Idea of old and new performances)*. Paris, 1668, p. 58.

[51] In the words of Prunières, Henry. *Le ballet de cour en France avant Benserade et Lully (Court ballet in France before Benserade and Lully)*. Henri Laurens, Paris, 1914, p. 168.

[52] De la Voye Mignot in turn makes a clear differentiation between the common dances and the "Entrées de Ballet". See De la Voye, Mignot. *Traité de musique* (*Treaty of music*). 4th Book, Paris, 1656, p. 21-22.

uncommon to see a Bourrée transformed into a Courante, or a Gavotte abruptly interrupted by a Menuet. Depending on the figures and the steps, the composer moves from a binary to a ternary measure, adding or removing measures to the carrures[53]. If the "Entrées" appear relatively short as noted in Philidor's manuscripts, it is because they were probably repeated and consequently added of ornaments and diminutions as many times as necessary until the choreographic evolution was completed. Unfortunately, we do not know if all or only specific parts of the "Entrées" were repeated, nor do we know the details of what was allowed to vary (perhaps even the nuances, or even the instrumental texture by alternating soli-tutti within the 24 violins, or violins-woodwinds response?)

Musical Cues for a Choreographic Reconstruction

The "Entrées de Ballet" differ from society dances in their non-uniformity; however, they employ the same vocabulary of steps. Just as the musical score is a kind of skeleton that musicians will later decorate, the basic steps common to the Belle Danse as it will be defined later in the 18th century, are present and constitute the technical reservoir from which the master dancer-composer draws his inspiration when he elaborates an original choreography. In this respect, the study of the characteristic rhythms of ordinary dances is necessary to try to recreate[54] a scenic dramaturgy.

Mersenne produces a list of the main rhythmic movements that characterize the dances by presenting them first in a simple form (i.e., containing a maximum of three syllables), then in a compound form (from four syllables and beyond). Thus, for example, a double trochee is composed of two connected trochees (LCLC), a choriambic combines a trochee and an iamb (LCCL), a choreobachic is a trochee and then a bachic (LCCLL). When Mersenne evokes the association of syllables with notes, we must consider them from the point of view of harmonic movement. It is the transfer from one chord to the other or its inversion that constitutes the syllabic change; the passing notes will divide the syllable into smaller units and must not be considered for the establishment of the rhythmic movement. Mersenne then classifies these rhythms according to metric units: thus, binary units (C, ₵, 2) will contain the movements CC, LL, CCL, or LCC, while ternary units (3/2, 3) will consist of groups LC, CL, or CCC. As such, the choreobachic movement (particularly

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[53] This produces within the parts of the "Entrées" many asymmetrical carrures of a length of 7, 9, 11 or 13 bars.

[54] The term reinvent would nevertheless be more appropriate because it is indeed a question here of imagining a new scenic evolution starting from a pre-existing technical crucible but unable to restore identically the physiognomy of the original choreography.

used in the Gavottes or Rigaudons) will be used in binary units, while the double trochee (LCLC), the antispaste (CLLC), the choriambic (LCCL) or the hegemeolien (CCCLC) will characterize the ternary units. I reproduce here the list of the principal movements established by Mersenne in his *Livre des Chants*[55] :

Simples:	**Compounds:**
Pyric (CC) QQ	Procelematic (CCCC) QQQQ
Iamb (CL) QW	Choriamb (LCCL) W QQ W
Trochee (LC) WQ	Antispaste (CLLC) QW WQ
Tribrache (CCC) QQQ	Double Trochee (LCLC) WQ WQ
Dactyl (LCC) W QQ	Hegemeolien (CCCLC) QQQ WQ
Anapeste (CCL) QQ W	Choreobachic (LCCLL) WQQ WW

Vossius' treatise[56] brings Greek rhythmics - as assimilated to music by Mersenne - closer to the different passions it evokes, and thus allows a clearer definition of the choreographic spirit:

Pyric (CC)	**Light and voluble**
Spondee (LL) and Molosse (LLL)	Grave et slow
Trochee (LC)	Soft and tender
Iamb (CL) and Anapeste (CCL)	Proud, vehement, warlike
Dactyl (LCC)	Joyful, cheerful
Antispaste (CLLC)	Hard and robust

If at the beginning of the 17th century, the rhythmic movement is mainly located in the upper part of the violin, the bass will, towards the middle of the century, participate more and more actively in the rhythmic physiognomy in a form of dialogue which includes relays of figures between the two parts, or an opposition by contrast which produces deliberate shifts of accents. The question of the courantes is particularly eloquent in this respect. Most mid-century courantes have a harmonic rhythm that establishes the division of the unit of measure into binary or ternary time. Indeed, although these dances are written in 3/2 time, the distribution of accents is often ambiguous, and it is not uncommon to find measures that are cut according to the 6/4 unit. The relationship between bass and treble then generates a complex

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[55] Mersenne, Marin. Op. cit: *Livre des Chants (Book of the Voice)*. Paris, p. 163-180.
[56] Vossius, Isaac. *De poematum cantu et viribus rhythmi (On the poetry of songs and the power of rhythm)*. 1673, translated by Peter Martens, Ashgate, New York, 2013.

ambivalence which can take the form of a hemiola in one or the other part; by the simultaneity of the change of metric accent, it then becomes impossible to define whether the hemiola applies to the ratio 3/2 to 6/4 or vice versa. Here is an example of a courante written by Lully and integrated into the Ballet des Fâcheux (1661), followed by two examples from the Ballet du Temps to illustrate both the variations in metrical accents and the cases of hemiolas. The courantes of the Ballet du Temps never begin on the first beat. They always use the characteristic unit Q Q. E as a melodic lift, but if the melody remains on a long value in the first part of the bar at 3/2, it is up to the other parts to start the movement of the courante.

E.g. 11

A Courante showing the alternation of rhythmic division 3/2, 6/4

E.g. 12

Courante from the 9th "Entrée" of the Ballet du Temps, Part I. Note in ms. 2 the hemiola character sought by the ambiguity of the harmonic movement of the bass, while in ms. 4 the principle is reversed

E.g. 13

Courante of the 9th "Entrée" of the Ballet du Temps, Part II. Note the hemiola on the cadence of ms. 4

I wish to reproduce here a quotation from Michel de Pure that is particularly eloquent on the choice of tempo: "There is, however, a certain movement that one is obliged to keep in all ballet arias and in all those of any kind of dance, and especially in French music. I say French because I have noticed that foreigners have slower and more singable movements. The ballet air must not be so suspenseful, nor so languid, as it might be if it were to be sung."[57] The vagueness that emerges from this text is a common feature of most performance commentaries, or treatises of the time. One of the problems facing the modern performers of the Ballet de Cour, both musicians and dancers, is the question of tempo in relation to the metric units indicated on the score. The nebulosity of the units of measurement is evoked

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[57] Op. cit. p. 264-265.

by many theorists. Antoine de Cousu[58], Etienne Loulié[59] and Saint-Lambert[60] recommend using a 2:1 ratio to quantify the relationship between ₵ and C, but they do not specify to what extent the tempo should vary when changing from ₵ to 2, as is sometimes the case within the same "Entrée". In the case of the triple meter, the 3/2 and 3 units commonly used in ballets of this period define two tempi, one with the half-note as the unit of measure, the other with the quarter note, the latter usually being faster than the former because it is beaten to the measure. However, in the case of the sarabande, which is one of the most representative dances of this unit of measure, one wonders about its characterization in the Patent Letters of the King to establish the French Academy of Music in 1669, which distinguish no less than three types of sarabands: the grave, slow and noble; the bohemian, gay and fast; the French, of an average tempo situated between these two. Regarding the metric unit 2, Hotteterre gives a definition that sheds light on its expressive characteristics and the way in which it should be interpreted: "The two-beat measure noted 2 is beaten in two equal beats and is usually lively and piqué. The eighth notes are played unevenly.[61]" This would likely be a metrical unit implying a possibly faster tempo than ₵, and its general character is agile and nervous[62]. There are five occurrences of metric unit 2 in the Ballet du Temps, respectively in the 5th "Entrée" P. I, 6th "Entrée" P. I (it is likely that these two "Entrées" were intended to be linked)[63], in the 8th "Entrée" P. II, and in the 11th "Entrée" P. II (employing sixteenth-note descents whose virtuosic character was intended to make a great impression). The fifth occurrence is in the second part of the Ouverture P. II. Here we find a particular case in which Philidor's copy could be questioned: indeed, the melodic physiognomy, the intervallic jumps which characterize it, seem to indicate an expressive climax in the form of a cadential liquidation which evokes a return to the original slow tempo, more than a metrical contraction;

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[58] De Cousu, Antoine. *La Musique Universelle (Universal Music)*. Paris, 1658.

[59] Loulie, Etienne. *Éléments ou principes de musique (Elements or principles of music)*. Paris, 1696.

[60] Saint-Lambert. *Les Principes du clavecin* (*Principles of the Harpsichord)*. Paris, 1702.

[61] Hotteterre, Jacques. *l'Art de préluder sur la flûte traversière (the Art of prelude on the traverso)*. Paris, 1719, p. 58.

[62] However, Hotteterre's treatise is a late work which, in view of the constant and rapid changes in the musical language of the 17th century, does not allow us to state with certainty that this unit of measure was practiced as such in the 1650s.

[63] These two "Entrées" are composed of continuous eighth-note lines and even sixteenth-notes, which suggest, in the case of the choice of a lively tempo, the technical mastery that the 24 violins must have had. In addition, Philidor transcribes the differentiation made between simple eighth notes (but which must be played unequally if Hottetere is to be believed), and the dotted eighth note rhythm whose dotted character must consequently be extremely exaggerated in order to contrast with the inequality practiced elsewhere.

the adoption of such a choice implies not only the observation of an error in the copy, but transforms this piece into one of the very first apparitions, certainly embryonic, of the model of tripartite "Ouverture à la Française".

In many cases, it appears that an "Entrée" can make sense by being played both fast and slow. The example of the 9th "Entrée", 2nd Air P. I of the Ballet du Temps is eloquent in this regard. With a metrical unit of ₵, it has some of the rhythmic characteristics of a Bourrée in its main cadences but does not have the usual lift at the beginning of the piece, although it appears at the beginning of each new phrase. However, many Branles have a similar physiognomy, and the question of their tempo is much more complex than for the Bourrée. De Lauze describes the Branle[64] as a dance genre particularly suited to the expression of what would later be defined as the Belle Danse: a happy mixture and perfect balance between vivacity and nonchalance, control, and passion. In this case, this Entrance could be performed in a tempo of 65 to the half-note, as well as 85 to the half-note. To leave this ambiguity open, I chose to draw the bass line accordingly so that the harmonic rhythm could remain coherent in both tempi. As can be seen from these examples, it is impossible to define general tempi from metric units. Only the conscientious study of the melodic and phraseological drawing, of the harmonic course and its variations within a measure, makes it possible to release an affect, a spirit that the interpreter and the choreographer must decode to carry out choices.

Conclusion

The years 1610-1660 were the work of a veritable artistic revolution, from the precepts issued by Zarlino and taken up by Mersenne and Descartes, in which we see a profound reflection on the notions of reason and passion, of control and effusion of feelings. Under the reign of Louis XIV, the Ballet de Cour will evolve inexorably towards the Opera, and the French Opera will become classical by its intelligibility which necessarily unites it to its dramatic counterpart: the theatrical Tragedy inherited from the antiquity. The Opera will try to concretize the original and ideal sketch carried by the Ballet de Cour at its creation, a total art expressing the harmony of the spheres and the universality. The rise of Jean-Baptiste Lully - who knew better than anyone else how to project the King's aesthetic thought musically - would bring about the appearance of a symmetrical, balanced, intelligible art. What the

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[64] Group of several dances of popular origin, representing various regions of France, very frequently practiced at the Court, very widespread in the Ballets, and whose choreography will become extremely stylized.

music gained in melodic beauty, it temporarily lost in harmonic inventiveness; what it gained in formal stability, it lost in textural richness. The choreographic variety that characterized the Ballets de Cour will diminish as it becomes more specific within the Tragédie Lyrique. Moreover, the recurrent practice of a limited number of society ballroom dances will lead, towards the end of the 17th century, to the fusion and disappearance of several dances, then considered as minor or fallen into disuse, within great archetypes like the Menuet, the Courante, or the Sarabande.

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