

Burgundian Basse Dance

Contributed by Woilgang Adolphus JÃfÃrger (Dominic JB Hunter)
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One of the most popular dance styles c. 1450-1500, occurring both as a separate dance style and as a tempo in the Italian repertoire – Domenico's ‘queen of mesures’. The name literally means ‘low dance’.

Sources

Italian Antecedents - many available, most comprehensive is:

"Fifteenth-century Dance and Music: Twelve Transcribed Italian Treatises in the tradition of Domenico da Piacenza Vol. II: Choreographic Descriptions with Concordances of Variants."

A. William Smith (trans. and annot.) Dance and Music Series No. 4, Wendy Hilton (Ed.)

Pendragon Press, NY (1995). ISBN 0-945193-57-2

Brussels Ms. 9085: Transcribed on the Web at:

<http://caagt.ugent.be/~vfack/ihdp/brussels.html> .

Translated and reconstructed in the Letter of Dance and available on the Web at:

http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/lod/vol2/trans_brussels.html

http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/lod/vol2/brussels_reconstruction.html .

Toulouze, Michel : 'L'art de instruction de Bien Dancer' Facsimile bound with Moderne Ms.: Editions Minkoff, Geneva (1985) ISBN 2-8266-0532-1.

Coplande, Robert : 'Manner of dauncynge of bace dauces' Transcribed in the Letter of Dance and available on the Web at:

http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/lod/vol2/translation_coplande.html .

Moderne, Jaques: 'S'ensuyvent Plusieurs Basse Dances tant Communes que Incommunes...' Facsimile bound with Toulouze Ms., see above. Introduction transcribed in the Letter of Dance and available on the Web at:

http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/lod/vol2/moderne_translation.html .

Salisbury Ms . Transcribed on the Web at:

<http://caagt.ugent.be/~vfack/ihdp/salisbur.html> .

The Letter of Dance:

c/o Bill Street Jr., 908 Reedwood Lane, Birmingham AL 35235 USA

Phone: (205) 836-4013, Email: ltrofdance@aol.com

Rendance Home Page: <http://www.rendance.org>

Steps in Brussels and Toulouze

Step reconstructions based on what we do in Edinburgh; in turn based on the reconstruction of the Brussels Ms. 9085 by in Letter of Dance 16 2-20 (June 1993). Step translations from the translation of Brussels Ms. 9085 in Letter of Dance 14 1-7 (July 1992), by Nathan Kronenfeld and Sue Gill.

Simples: 1/2 tempo (always as a pair).

"The two simple steps are done advancing and the first step is done with the left foot raising 1 the body and making a

single step forward, and the second step is done with the right foot and one must raise the body and step a little forward."

1 The Brussels Ms. has 'eslevant' (raising), whilst Toulouze has 'enclinant' (inclining).

We interpret this as two single steps forward, raising the body on the toes as if stepping over something. Note that the feet are not closed at the end of the step.

Doubles: 1 tempo.

"The first double step is done with the left foot; one must raise one's body and go three steps forward lightly, the first with the left foot, the second with the right foot, and the third with the left like the first. The second double step must be done with the right foot and one must lift one's body similarly…."

Three steps forward, rising onto the toes on the first step and staying on the toes until the last, when you sink back onto the whole foot. Again, no closing of the feet at the end.

Desmarche : 1 tempo per step.

"Firstly, a single desmarche ought to be made with the right foot retreating and is called the desmarche because one draws back, and ought to lift one's body, and bring the right foot back, close to the other foot.

The second desmarche must be made with the left foot, lifting the body and turning it a little towards the lady; and following, bringing the right foot near the left foot raising the body similarly.

The third must be done with the right foot like the first and must be done in the above mentioned place where the first is done."

Again, the Brussels Ms. has 'eslevant' (raising), whilst Toulouze has enclinant (inclining). Moderne and Coplande use reprise rather than desmarche

A single desmarche: step back onto the right foot, raising and inclining the body slightly as you do so, ending with the weight on the right. Then bring the right foot forward again and close it to the left, transferring the weight back to the left/both feet.

Three desmarche: the first as described above; the second begins similarly but by stepping back on the left. However, then draw back the right foot, bringing it to the left. In doing the first portion of the step, it is natural for the man to turn slightly away from the woman, so he needs to turn slightly towards her to counter this. The third desmarche is done as the first.

Branle: 1 tempo

"The branle must start with the left foot and end with the right foot, and is called a branle because one makes it shaking (swaying) with one foot towards the other."

Branle means to shake, to sway back and forth, to hesitate. Basse Franzesse (Italian 15th C) has two continenze in place of a branle. It is unclear what the step is....

We interpret the evidence, such as it is, as a small, slow step sideways to the left with the left foot, raising the body on the toes as you take the step, falling back onto the heels as the step ends. Then change weight from the left to the right foot.

General structure for Burgundian bassedances [Rb] [ss d x (ss) r y b] z

Introduction

only

(x = 1, 3, 5)

(y usually 3, sometimes 1)

(z = no. of sections)

R: Initial reverence

s: single,

d: double

r: desmarche, reprise

b: bransle If x = 1, 'petit' section.

if x = 3, 'moyenne' section.

if x = 5, 'grand' section.

Also unclassified phrases ssdr and ssdrdrb

If (ss) present, section is 'perfect', if (ss) absent, section is imperfect.

1. Alenchon

Structure:

Rb ssdr ssdddssrrrb ssdssrrrb ssdddssrrrb (Brussels).

Rb ssdddrrrb ssdrdrb ssdddssrrrb ssdrdrb (Toulouse).

Music: Arranged from tenor line by Andrew Casson du-Mont.

It will appear here when we have it in a suitable format.

2. Casule la Nouvele

Structure:

Rb ssddddrrrb ssdssrrrb ssddddrrrb ssdssrrrb ssdddrrrb (Toulouse only).

Music: Tenor line from Toulouse, accompaniment Anon. c.1480, adapted by Cait Webb.

Contacts: Dominic Hunter

dominic.hunter@tesco.net Cait Webb

bhw@stir.ac.uk