

# Mommy, where do dances come from?

Peter Durham  
(Trahaearn ap Ieuan)

## Arbeau's Orchesographie (1589) - Branle Double

Facsimile of original

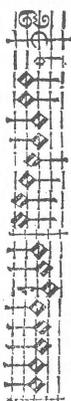
ORCHESOGRAPHIE  
dances'acquittent du tout comme ils peuuent, chacun selon  
son aage, & la disposition de sa dexterité.



Tabulature pour dancer les branles doubles.

Air d'un branle double.

Mouvements pour dancer  
le branle double.



Pied gaulche largy.

Pied droit approché.

Pied gaulche largy.

Pied droit ioinct.

Pied droit largy.

Pied gaulche approché.

Pied droit largy.

Pied gaulche ioinct.

Ces quatre pas  
font double a  
gaulche.

Ces quatre pas  
font vn double  
a droict.

DE THOINOT ARBEAV.

70

*Capriol.*

Ce branle double est bien facile à dancier: Mais il me semble que les danciers ne bougent d'une place, d'autant qu'ilz font a gaulche quatre pas, lesquels ils deffont a droit par autres quatre pas.

*Arbeau.*

Pour obuier à cela, ils font le double a droit plus restrainct, & ainsi gagnent tousiours auantage à la gaulche: En aucuns lieux, en lieu dudit double a droict, ils font vne reprise ou vn branle.

*Capriol.*

Les branles me plaisent, parce que plusieurs y preignent plaisir ensemble.

*Arbeau.*

Quand vous commencerez vn branle plusieurs autres se iointront avec vous, tant ieufnes hommes que damoiselles: Et quelquesfois vne qui est la derniere en la dance, prendra vostre main gaulche, & ainsi se fera vne dance ronde.

*Capriol.*

Celuy qui meyne le deuant de la dance, quand il ny a point de ronde, demeure-il tousiours le premier?

*Arbeau.*

Ouy bien souuent: Car il ne se treuve point d'autre qui avec sa damoiselle veuille presumer d'aller le premier, mesmemēt quand cest vn Seigneur de reputation, & sur lequel on ne veult pas entreprendre.

*Capriol.*

Quelle place prendra cestuy-cy qui voudra estre de la partie?

*Arbeau.*

Il le mettra à la queue, en prenant sa damoiselle par la main droite, ou bien treuera gracieusement quelque place entre ceux qui sont en la dance.

S ij

CAPRIOL

I have noticed that in good society they usually begin the dancing with a *branle*.<sup>86</sup> Tell me how these should be danced.

THE DOUBLE BRANLE

ARBEAU

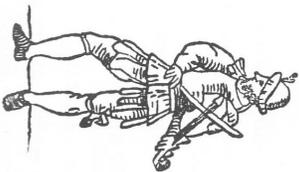
Since you already know how to dance the pavan and the basse dance it will be easy for you to dance branles in the same duple time, and you should understand that the branle is danced by moving sideways and not forward. To begin with, in what is called the double branle<sup>87</sup> you will perform one *double* to the left and then one *double* to the right; you are well aware that a *double* consists of three steps and a *pieds joints*. To perform these sideways, you will assume a proper bearing after the *révérence* of salutation, and, while keeping the right foot firmly in position, throw your left foot out to the side which will make a *pieds largis* for the first bar. Then for the second bar, keep the left foot firmly in position, bringing the right foot near to the left which will make a *pieds largis* that is almost a *pieds joints*. For the third bar, keep the right foot firm and throw the left foot out to the side which will make a *pieds largis*, and for the fourth bar keep the left foot firm and bring the right foot close to it which will make a *pieds joints*. These four steps, made in four bars or tabor rhythms, we shall call a *double à gauche*, and you will do the same in the opposite direction for a *double à droite*. Namely, while keeping the left foot firmly in position you will throw the right foot out to the side, which will make a *pieds largis* for the fifth bar. Then for the sixth bar keep the right foot firm and bring the left foot near to the right, which will make a *pieds largis* that is almost a *pieds joints*. For the seventh bar, while keeping the left foot fast, you will throw the right foot out to the side, which will make a *pieds largis*. Finally, for the eighth bar, you will keep the right foot fast and bring the left foot close to it, which will make a *pieds joints*, and these last four steps we call *double à droite*. And thus, in these eight steps and bars the double branle will be accomplished as you will see in the tabulation, and you will repeat from the beginning making a *double à gauche* and then a *double à droite*.

CAPRIOL

I hear Master Guillaume with his violin down in your little room. Give me the tabulation for a double branle and I will practise it to see if I perform it aright.

ARBEAU

This is most timely, let us go down and make him play his violin. All musicians are in the habit of opening the dancing at a festival by a double branle which they call the common branle, and afterwards they play the single branle and the gay branle and at the end the branles of Burgundy, which some people call branles of Champagne. The order of these four varieties of branle is determined by the three different groups taking part in a dance; the elderly who dance the double and the single branle sedately, the young married folk who dance the gay branle and the youngest of all, like yourself, who nimbly trip the branles of Burgundy. And every dancer acquires himself to the best of his ability, each according to his years and his degree of skill.



TABULATION FOR DANCING DOUBLE BRANLES

Melody of a double branle      Movements for dancing the double branle

*Pied gauche largi*  
*Pied droit approché*<sup>28</sup>  
*Pied gauche largi*  
*Pied droit joint*

These four steps make  
a *double à gauche*

*Pied droit largi*  
*Pied gauche approché*<sup>28</sup>  
*Pied droit largi*  
*Pied gauche joint*

These four steps make  
a *double à droite*

CAPRIOL

This double branle is very easy to dance, but it seems to me that the dancers never move from one place, inasmuch as they make four steps to the left which they cancel by another four steps to the right.

ARBEAU

To obviate that they make the *double à droite* shorter and thus they gradually move towards the left. In some places, instead of the *double à droite*, they make a *reprise* or a *branle*.<sup>a</sup>

CAPRIOL

I like branles because a number of persons can enjoy them together.

ARBEAU

When you commence a branle several others will join you, as many young men as do dances, and sometimes the damsel who is the last to arrive will take your left hand and it will thus become a round dance.

CAPRIOL

Does he who leads the dance always remain in the front when it is not a round dance?

ARBEAU

Yes, usually, because another dancer and his damsel would not care to

usurp his place, albeit that other were a renowned nobleman of whom none would care to fall foul.

CAPRIOL

What place should he take who wishes to join in the dancing?

ARBEAU

He should place himself at the tail end, holding his damsel by his right hand, or else, if agreeable to the others, find a place among those who are dancing.

CAPRIOL

Do I make no divisions in dancing these branles?

ARBEAU

It has always been held that the more sedately and slowly double branles were danced the better. All the same, it is not improper to make a *piéd en l'air gauche* on the first minim of the seventh bar, and on the second minim of the seventh bar a *piéd en l'air droit*. And on the first minim of the eighth and last bar a *piéd en l'air gauche* in readiness to resume and repeat from the beginning, holding the said *piéd en l'air gauche* through the last minim beat.

Continuation of the melody for a double branle

Movements divided as described above

*Pied gauche largi*  
*Pied droit approché*  
*Pied gauche largi*  
*Pied droit joint*

These four steps make  
a *double à gauche*

*Pied droit largi*  
*Pied gauche approché*  
*Pied en l'air gauche*  
*Pied en l'air droit*  
*Pied en l'air gauche*  
 Pause

These five steps make  
a divided *double à droite*

## CAPRIOL

Are there no other divisions made in double branles?

## ARBEAU

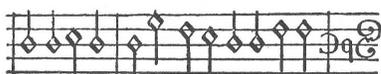
Young men of exceptional agility make divisions at their pleasure but I advise you to dance them soberly.

## THE SINGLE BRANLE

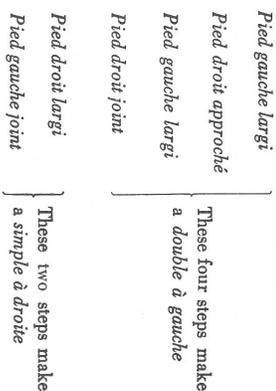
You will dance the single branle to the same duple time and with the same steps as those I have just described for the double branle, making a *double* to the left to commence with. But here is where they differ, instead of following the above with a *double à droite* you will perform a *simple* only, by making a *piéd largi* with the right foot and to conclude a *piéd joint* with the left foot. In this *simple* you may divide the four minims into three *piéd en l'air* and one rest, as we have just explained in reference to the double branle.

## TABULATION OF THE SINGLE BRANLE

Melody of a single branle



Movements for dancing the single branle



These movements with the feet touching will teach you that there are opposite movements, which we call *piéd largis*.<sup>48</sup> This is when both feet are on the ground with the weight of the body equally divided between them, but instead of touching one another they are separated. Not in an exaggerated and strained manner as were the feet of the colossus representing the statue of the sun, cast in copper by Colossus or Chares, pupils of Lysippus, and erected at Rhodes. It was seventy cubits<sup>49</sup> high, which is about one hundred and five of our Langres feet. This colossus had his legs as far apart as would be humanly possible and ships passed between them with ease.

## CAPRIOL

It is not without reason, then, that it was counted one of the world's wonders and it was a great pity that fifty-six years later it collapsed as the result of an earthquake. I should like to have seen it to verify whether, as has been writ-

ten, there were few people to be found who could encircle its thumb with their arms. But this tale aside, I quite understand how you wish the *piéd largis* to be placed, neither too far apart, nor too near nor touching one another.

PIEDS LARGIS<sup>a</sup>

# Playford's English Dancing Master (1651) - Gathering Peascods

Facsimile of original

(96)

**Gathering Peascods** *Round for as many as will*




Goe all two Doubles round, turne S. That back a- gaine .:	Men hands, and goe round in the inside, and come to your places . We. as much .:	Men meet and clap hands, We. as much, while the men goe back, men meet againe and turne S. .: We. meet, men meet, while the We. goe back, We. meet againe and turne S. .:
Sides, turne S. That a- gaine .:	As before, the We. going first .:	As before the We. meeting first .:
Armes all, turn S. That againe .:	Men hands as at the first.	Men meet as the first time .:

## A T A B L E Explaining the Characters which are set downe in the Dances.

*A Double is foure steps forward or back, closing both feet.*

*A Single is two steps, closing both feet.*

*Set and turne single, is a single to one hand, and a single to the other, and turne single.*

D.	<i>Is for a Double.</i>
S.	<i>Is for a Single.</i>
Wo.	<i>Stands for woman.</i>
We.	<i>Stands for women.</i>
Cu.	<i>Stands for Couple.</i>
Co.	<i>Stands for Contrary.</i>
2.	<i>Stands for second.</i>
3.	<i>Stands for third.</i>
4.	<i>Stands for fourth.</i>
.	<i>Stands for a straine playd once.</i>
.:	<i>Stands for a straine playd twice.</i>
.::	<i>Stands for a straine playd thrice, &amp;c.</i>

These Characters expresse the Figure of the Dance.

- ) This stands for the Men.
- o This for the women.



# Burgundian Basses Danse manuscripts—Alençon

The top illustration shows a page from the Brussels manuscript; the lower dance is Alençon. The lower illustration shows Toulouze's version of the same dance.

*M. 10000*

**A**mour a xxx notes a iii mesures.  
 ♯ b ♯♯ d z ♯♯ d d d ♯ z z z b ♯♯ d ♯ z z z b ♯♯ d d d ♯ z z z b ♯

**A**lençon a xxx notes a iii mesures.  
 ♯ b ♯♯ d z ♯♯ d d d ♯ z z z b ♯♯ d ♯ z z z b ♯♯ d d d ♯ z z z b ♯

*Alençon*

**A**lençon a xxx notes a .iiii  
 z b a d d d z z z b a d z d z b a d d d

mesures.  
 ♯ z z z b a d z d z b.

**A**portingaloyle a  
 z b a d d d z z z b a d z d z

# Caroso, Negri, and Contemporaries—Contentezza d'Amore

Here's the description of the dance in Caroso's Nobilta di Dame:

250 DELLA NOBILTA DI DAME LIB. II.



## CONTENTEZZA D'AMORE BALLETO IN LODE DELL'ILL<sup>MA</sup> ET ECC<sup>MA</sup> SIG. GIULIA ORSINA CONTI DVCHessa DI POLI.

1582.1583  
1583.1584

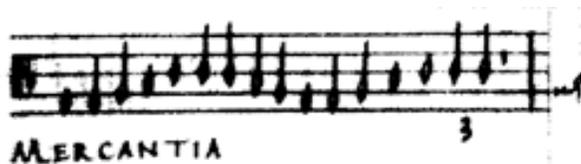
**S**TANDO le persone all'incontro con amendue le mani pigliate, come se hà nel presente dissegno, faranno la Riuerenzà lunga à tempo del Suono, & due Continenze breui; poi faranno al lato sinistro due Riprese, due Trabucchetti, & un Seguito breue: il medesimo faranno al lato destro per contrario. Ultimamente il Cavaliere lascierà la man destra della Dama, con far le solite cerimonie, & faranno la Riuerenzà come la prima, principiando ogni cosa col piè sinistro, poi col destro.

Nel secondo tempo, passeranno insieme con la man pigliata, & non al modo di prima, che passeggiava prima la Dama, e dopo il Cavaliere: dico che era falso il Ballo; però bisogna, che amendue facciano due Passi puntati breui, con due Passi semibreui, & un Seguito breue, principiar doli col piè sinistro: gli medesimi faranno per contrario, sì gli Passi puntati, come gli altri Moti, principiandoli col piè destro. Dopo si voltaranno in prospettina all'altro capo del luogo oue si ballarà, senza lasciarsi, facendo due Trabucchetti graui d'una battuta l'uno, & tre prestì, fatti à tempo di due battute,

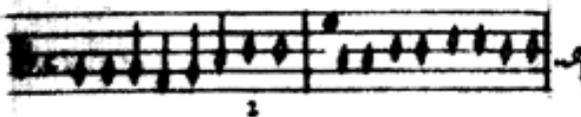
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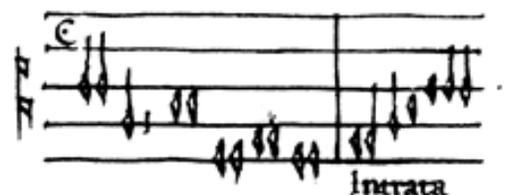
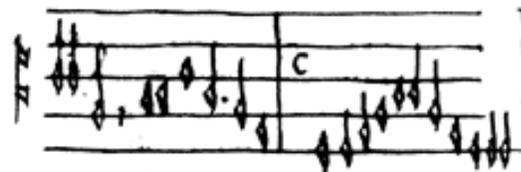
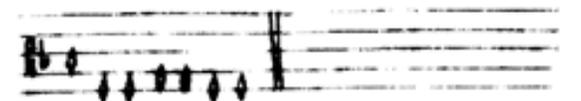
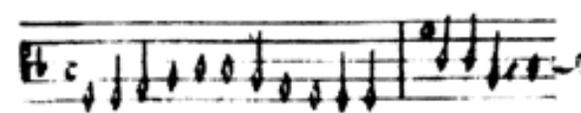
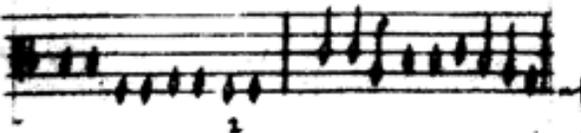
## Domenico and Students—Mercantia



Left is part of the music and text for Mercantia from Cornazano.



Right is the music, from the Guglielmo Ebreo ms. in Paris.



**M**ercantia e ballo appropriato al nome che una sol donna danza con tre homini. e da audientia a tutti gli ne fossero pare assai come quella che fa mercantia da tanti. et comincia così. La donna e a mano con uno homo tanche al tri dui homini dietro loro a mano amano. In tale ordine fanno un

My translation below is based on a transcription of the text from Ebreo ms.

First do eleven tempi all four together, & the woman goes with one man, & the other two together: the woman should be with the couple in front & they stop. Next the men at the back should separate with six riprese sideways, the one going to the left hand and the other to the right. Next the woman does a half turn to the left hand. The man her partner goes forward with three doppii starting on the left foot, and the woman comes to remain with the other two men in a triangle. And next the man that is to the right departs with two sempii and one doppio starting on the left foot, & comes to touch the hand of the woman, and then turns to the right hand with two sempii & a doppio, starting on the right, and returns to his place, where he was. Next his partner that is to the left hand does the same. And note that the woman should do a volta tonda to turn, when the first man comes to touch her hand. And she should do this same to the second man. Next the top man should do a half turn to the right side. & then the men at the bottom take hands and do two singles & a double with the right foot in front, & change their places. Next that man which is at the top departs with two tempi of saltarello beginning with the left and finishing on the right. And he goes next to the woman. And then the woman turns toward the man, and the man touches her hand with a reverence on the left. And next the same man goes to the left hand of the woman. & he comes to take the man that is on the right hand with two singles and a double beginning on the right. And he who was on the left hand comes to take the woman with these same steps, and he remains with the woman.

# Banys (Gresley) dances — Esperans

At top, the music for Esperans and Bayonn from John Banys's notebook; below, the instructions for Esperans. This transcription of the text is from David Fallows' article in the RMA Research Chronicle.

Esperans de tribus: Trace. All the 6 singlis with a trett. Then the fyrst man goo compas till he come behend, whil the medyll retrett thre, and the last 3 singlis, and the medil 3 singlis, levying the last on the left hand, and the last 3 retrettes. Thus the medill endyth before the last in the meddist and the ferst behynd. Thus daunce 3 tymes, calling every man as he standdith.

After the end of the trace, the ferst 3 furth outward turnyng ayen his face. Then the last contur hym, and the medill to the fyrste; and then the first to his place.

Then the last to the medyll and the medyll to the last mans place.

The first and last chance place whil the medyll tornyth.

Al at onys retrett 3 bake. Bak al at ons.

Then the first turne whill the last turne in (in) his own place.

Then al togeder thre furth.

