THE FRENCH BALLET DE COUR AND ITS PREDECESSORS, 1400-1650

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS OF BALLET

The history of theatrical entertainments during the Middle Ages is extremely difficult to trace. This difficulty arises in part from the restrictions imposed by the Roman Church on anything considered mundane. Records that may have been kept were either destroyed or have not been found.

It is to be remembered that in this first chapter a period of nearly five hundred years is covered (eleventh to sixteenth century), and therefore only essential facts can be treated. Since no music to these earliest entertainments has been preserved, the present discussion must confine itself to the spectacular and literary elements.

Furthermore, it must be remembered that to draw accurate lines of demarcation between any two forms of entertainment is an impossibility because one tends to merge with the other.

The forms of entertainment to be discussed arise as a general rule out of the festivities that follow Christmas and Epiphany, i.e., the carnival. These forms are: momeries, entremets, jousts and tournaments, and the mascarades. Their development and evolution will be traced in both France and Italy and at those points where they merge with the descendants
of the ecclesiastical drama, namely, the mystery and miracle plays and the Sacre Rappresentazioni.

The Development of Ballet in France up to and during the Fifteenth Century

The origin of maskings and disguisings loses itself in the night of time. To celebrate the carnival during the Middle Ages, the people, disguised and wearing masks, abandoned themselves to all sorts of entertainments. They often roamed the streets dancing, shouting and carousing. This form of entertainment was called a momerie (mummery).¹

During the middle of the fifteenth century the clergy began taking part in these entertainments. To celebrate these festivities the people went to the cathedral to elect a bishop of fools amidst great merrymaking. The prelate of the church officiated at this election and gave his solemn benediction. In the course of these celebrations, the members of the clergy abandoned themselves to all sorts of follies and impieties. They assisted the holy services in "'masquerade and comedy clothing,'" and danced in the choir loft while the deacons of the church ate sausages and played with cards and dice.²


The Roman church soon prohibited these pagan, if very entertaining, activities. On March 22, 1444, the Faculty of Theology in Paris sent out a decree prohibiting the momeries and censuring the clergy energetically for their behavior. The decree stated that momeries were an invention of the devil and an abominous idolatry, "'a heresy condemned by the Father, the Councils, and the Holy Decrees.'"

In spite of the prohibition imposed by the church, the momeries were endorsed by the nobles, and the municipal authorities and the people continued to wear their bizarre disguises and to dance in the streets. During the fifteenth century the momeries changed. Unlike the earlier momeries that took place in the streets, they now became an entrance, into a hall, home or princely palace, of players who shouted, danced, and performed antics without mixing with the spectators.

At other times the momerie was used for gambling. The players carried dice and cards and communicated with the audience by means of signs. In these gambling momeries silence was observed, but the players would often laugh, dance and sing small harangues in verse form to the ladies.

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3Ibid., p. 24.


5Ibid.

6Ibid., pp. 4-5.
present. When momeries were used at princely gatherings, cheating was employed by the players so that the guests of honor might win. Cheating also occurred when momeries were given for the people but for a different reason. Here the decree against mummers was more strictly enforced, and the mummers felt fewer scruples about honesty.

It must be remembered that the momerie took many forms but generally consisted of a procession of disguised players. Little is available about momeries because the writers of the era were preoccupied with writing about wars, civil and foreign, and the political intrigues of the French court.

By the sixteenth century the type of momerie which involved gambling presented by disguised, masked and silent players became the standard type.

The momerie became associated with many forms of entertainment and plays a great part in the entremet, an entertainment very popular at the fastidious Burgundian court during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The word entremet was employed to designate the entertainment provided at a banquet. The scenery used in all entremets was approximately the same. A platform was built at one end of a hall, generally of two tiers, on which were lavishly decorated tables back of which the guests were seated. A dais draped in gold cloth held the guests of

7 Ibid., p. 6. 8 Ibid., p. 5. 9 Ibid., p. 2. 10 Ibid., p. 5. 11 Ibid., p. 6. 12 Ibid., p. 7.
honor. In front of this platform was the space in which the performance took place. At a signal from the host, the trumpets sounded and the players entered, in procession and accompanied by musicians. As a general rule the momerie was performed on a float in the shape of a tower, a chateau or a monster. The float stopped in front of the tables and the costumed and masked players descended and danced a *moresque* to instrumental music.  

The two new elements in the *entremet* were the use of floats and the *moresque*, a popular dance form of the fifteenth century. It is of interest to note that the use of floats can be traced to the ecclesiastical drama along with the use of the *moresque*.  

For further proof and clarification of these new elements it is necessary to discuss briefly the ecclesiastical drama and its descendants, the mystery and miracle plays. In France the ecclesiastical drama, which originated about the eleventh century, can be divided into two categories. The first of these comprises those liturgical dramas given in the church mainly by the clergy in simple dramatic form, using Latin prose, and known in the twelfth century as

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14 Cf. post p. 8.  
ludi, or reprezentationes. The second of these comprises those dramas of a semi-liturgical type, which by 1080 had made so much use of the vernacular as to be given, e.g., partly in French, partly in Provençal, and partly in Latin. The best examples of this latter type are the Vièrges sages et Vièrges folles, the Prophètes du Christ, the Juif Vôlé, and the Massacre des Innocents.

The mystery play belongs to this second group and is distinguished from the ecclesiastical drama as follows:

The mystery is represented in a theatre and by the laymen; it presupposes a theatrical idea; the liturgical drama is represented by the clergy, and is nothing but a dramatic play with no theatrical intentions. The mystery is the result of the invasion of the liturgical drama by the lay spirit; it marks a stage in the secularization of the religious theatre.

Some authorities view the mystery play as a result of the crusades. On returning from the Holy land, pilgrims and crusaders may have been inspired to form groups like the later Confrèries, in which they represented the many phases

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16 Lionel de La Laurencie, Les Créateurs de L'Opéra Français, p. 11.
17 Hastings, op. cit., p. 98.
18 La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 7. For the music used during the Massacre des Innocents, see example in Gustave Reese, Music in the Middle Ages, p. 196.
19 "Le mystère est représenté sur un théâtre et par des laïques; il suppose une idée théâtrale; le drame liturgique, représenté par des religieux, n'est qu'un jeu dramatique sans but théâtral. Les mystères résultent de l'invasion des drames liturgiques par l'esprit laïque; ils marquent une étape dans la secularization du théâtre religieux." Quoted from E. Coussemaker's, Drame liturgiques du moyen âge, (1850), by La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 12. See also Gustave Reese, Music in the Middle Ages, p. 197.
of the life of Christ, and the clergy soon accepted their help. 20

The mystery plays generally portrayed the events in the life of Christ and the Apostles, and the miracle plays the events in the lives of the saints. However, during the fourteenth century these two terms became interchangeable. In France and England they were both called indifferently mysteries or miracles, in Italy Sacre Rappresentazioni, and in Germany Geistspiele. 21

The scenery of the mystery play consisted largely of simultaneous settings, i.e., sets built on specified locations with the players moving from one to the other according to the event portrayed. This device was inherited from the ecclesiastical drama. Prevalent also was the use of machinery (floats) to transport players to and from the scenes. 22

Although the original ecclesiastical drama had been entirely intoned in plain chant, music in the mystery play was purely incidental and apparently consisted largely of interludes during which a choir chanted or declaimed passages closely associated with the action of the drama. 23

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20 La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 11.


mysteries became more and more secular, music played a greater part in the spectacle. However, this place was still, according to La Laurencie, not a very significant one.24

Instrumental music was used to announce the beginning of the mystery and to close the spectacle, somewhat like the overture and finale of the later ballet and opera. Instruments were used to accompany dances. As an example there is the Mystère de saint Louis, which contained an orléanaise, and the Passion of Jean Michel, dated 1486, in which a morisque or moresque was danced.25

The mystery play, with its elements—namely, floats, simultaneous settings, incidental music, some declaiming, and the moresque—seems soon to have merged with the entremet and became an integral part of its structure. Prunières states that during this period, i.e., the end of the fourteenth century and the beginning of the fifteenth century, the mumerie and the mystery play used in the entremet became mimed.26 The following examples of entremets are furnished to substantiate the foregoing suppositions.

In 1377, Charles V (1337-1380, House of Valois) gave a magnificent entremet in honor of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles IV (1316-1378). The action of this entremet took

24 La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 17.
place on two floats. One of these floats represented the city of Jerusalem and the other a church. On these floats were players, one group portraying Saracens, and the other group the crusader, Godefroy de Bouillon and his men. A battle then ensued between these two groups with the Christians emerging victorious. 27

On St. Valentine's Day, February 14, 1401, an entremet was given by the Duke of Orleans (1372-1407). The description of this entertainment we owe to Christine de Pisan (1363-ca. 1440) who has made its precise details available. 28 On a float was a goddess surrounded by nymphs, and accompanied by torch bearers. When the nymphs began singing, the goddess descended from the float, advanced toward the tables and addressed ballads to the audience while strewing the roses she carried in her arms. 29

Of interest in this example is a new element, i.e., the use of nymphs and the pagan goddess, which appears to be of Italian origin, as we shall see.

It can be surmised that Italy also possessed a form of the French entremet since the connection between the courts of Italy and the courts of France was a close one.

Further proof is found in the fact that the wife of the Duke of Orleans, the famous Valentine Visconti of Milan

27 Ibid. 28 Ibid., p. 14. 29 Ibid., p. 15.
(1366-1408), was an Italian. More than likely she brought many Italian servants with her into France.  

At Lille, on January 22, 1454, the Dukes of Burgundy and Cleves, offered a magnificent entremet with which to arouse favorable sentiment in the Burgundian and Flemish nobility toward the then all-important crusades. Much like other entremets, this entertainment offered as dramatic interest a fight between Christian and pagan forces. Of interest in this entremet was the unusual nature of the momerie given at the end of the entertainment. After all the guests had risen, the hall was cleared of all it contained, and the momerie appeared at the principal door. In front marched torch bearers, followed by the musicians playing on various instruments. Then a lady appeared magnificently dressed in white and carrying on her shoulder a "rolet" (apparently a placard or scroll) on which was inscribed in gold, the name Grâce-Dieu. In her suite were twelve cavaliers wearing gold masks and huge black velvet hats. Twelve veiled ladies accompanied the cavaliers each having on her shoulder an inscription denoting which of the twelve virtues she represented. After filing in front of the Duke of Burgundy, Grâce-Dieu handed a long speech to the Seigneur de Crequy, who read it in a loud voice. While this took place, she presented to the king the twelve virtues,
each in turn. When this was finished she retired from the hall leaving the cavaliers and ladies to dance.\textsuperscript{32}

Heretofore the dancers had performed on the floats but we see in this example a sharp break from tradition.\textsuperscript{33} La Laurencie considers this new way of commencing the general dancing as the prototype of the Grand-ballet of the seventeenth century court ballets.\textsuperscript{34} We shall see that this new way of presenting dancers and dancing is practiced in the sixteenth century French masquerades.\textsuperscript{35}

In 1457, the Hungarian ambassadors were visiting Charles VII (1403-1461) of France. To honor them the Comte de Foix gave a lavish entertainment at Tours on Monday before Christmas in the Abbey Saint-Julien. The entremet contained moresques, momeries and a mystery play performed by players costumed as savages (!). Music was furnished by voices, trumpets and bugles.\textsuperscript{36}

Dancing in court entertainments was indispensable, but research has failed to indicate the precise dance forms used. The moresque was perhaps the most often mentioned and from the available data seems to be the most frequently performed.

The moresque, morisque, moresca or moreschi, was as

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid. For complete details see pages 10-14.  
\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., p. 14.  
\textsuperscript{34}La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 26.  
\textsuperscript{35}Prunieres, op. cit., p. 14.  
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p. 9.
the name implies, a dance of Moorish parentage. Curt Sachs states that this dance "is one of the most difficult to classify and characterize in all dance history." In its early stages, this dance appeared principally in two forms. One, as a solo dance that "might have been danced by the princes of a Moorish court," and two, as a couple or group dance "whose motif was a sword combat between Christians and Mohammedans." However, during the fifteenth century the term *moresque* was used indiscriminately, and might mean any number of different "choral dances in double file formation." The choice of steps for the *moresque* during the Middle Ages seems to have been left to some extent to the performer. It consisted mainly of a march, with beats of the heels that permitted graceful evolutions across the room.

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38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., p. 335.
40 Prunières, op. cit., pp. 8-9. The English *Morris* dance apparently developed from the *moresque* by the sixteenth century. Sachs, op. cit., p. 336. Thoinot Arbeau (also known as Jehan Tabourot) in his *Orchesography*, first published at Langres in 1588, states: "In fashionable society when I was young, a small boy, his face daubed with black and his forehead swathed in a white or yellow kerchief, would make an appearance after supper. He wore leggings covered with little bells and performed a morris ["moresque"], wherein he advanced the length of the room, made a kind of passage and then moving backwards retraced his steps to the place from whence he had started. Then he executed a new passage and he continued thus making various passages which delighted the spectators." Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchesography* (1588), translated by Mary Stewart Evans, p. 177.
It is important to consider the jousts and tournaments of the fifteenth century since they furnish the future ballet certain theatrical elements, i.e., fighting for the love of a lady, combats, and a brilliant method of displaying costumes. It would be vain to cite all the examples available. It will suffice to say that all tournaments and jousts were governed by a common code of chivalry. These entertainments consisted mainly of a number of encounters by two richly dressed cavaliers, in which a number of lance or sword blows were exchanged. This finished, the participants retired to their respective tents. Scenery was non-existent. The elements of real importance were the intrigues which prompted these jousts or tournaments, and the way in which the cavaliers displayed their ancient and beautiful traditional dress. However, it is of interest to note that at times the cavaliers demanded exotic costumes instead of the traditional dress. From the evidence available these costumes generally seem to have been of oriental flavor, notably Turkish.

In 1468 to celebrate the marriage of Charles the Bold of Burgundy (1433-1477) to Margaret of York (1446-1503), Antoine (le bâtard) of Burgundy (1421-1504) offered a tournament. Prior to the event, the prince had offered to fight,

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42 Ibid., p. 18.
43 Ibid., p. 19.
over a period of nine days, any man who would present himself. Prunières states that the rules governing this tournament were more obscure than gallant. Among the participating cavaliers were several knights of the Dame d'Ille. These men at one time had been saved from the cruel injustice of a tyrant by Antoine, and had been presented to this lady. She demanded that these men show their love for her by giving at least one hundred lance blows and at least one hundred sword blows. Furthermore, she bestowed on them her emblem, the Arbre d'or (Golden Tree), and asked that they honor it by winning many trophies.

It should be added that the popular momerie seems to have infiltrated even into the more pretentious forms, and Prunières states that they were often seen during the course of a tournament or joust.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the influences from Italy introduced into the general order of the court entertainments, (momeries, entremets, jousts and tournaments), elements taken from the ancient classic drama and from mythology (pagan gods and goddesses, nymphs, satyrs, etc.). Religious subjects (Christian forces against evil), intrigues, combats, etc., were abandoned for subjects dealing with the divinities of Greece and Rome, and the badly

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organized dances (moresques) gave way to graceful dances (balli and balletti) executed by nymphs and satyrs.⁴⁷

Prunières states that this change is more superficial than real, but the men of the French Renaissance did not seem to recognize in the new mediums the ancient entertainments of their fathers, but believed in good faith that these pleasures were genuine innovations brought to them from Italy.⁴⁸

The Development of Ballet in Italy up to and during the Sixteenth Century

Heretofore the discussion of entertainment forms has been restricted largely to France and Burgundy. However, other European countries, namely, Italy, Spain, Austria and England, possessed entertainments that much resembled those given at the French and Burgundian courts.⁴⁹ Italy and France developed these amusements to a far greater extent than any of the other countries mentioned perhaps because of the love of worldly pleasures so characteristic of the Latin and Gallic civilizations.

Parallel to these common entertainments, i.e., entremets, mimed mysteries and momeries, parades of allegorical characters, floats in strange forms, there existed in the many towns of Italy different but characteristic forms

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 19-20. ⁴⁸Ibid., p. 20. ⁴⁹Ibid.
peculiar to that one locale. It would be safe to surmise that these different forms had some influence upon the pastimes already established at the Italian courts.50

Among these characteristic local forms were the fifteenth century Florentine canti and trionfi, forms that somewhat resembled the ancient French momerie.51

In the canti, the participants, wearing very realistic masks and costumed as fishermen, hunters, shepherds or salesmen, roamed the streets of Florence accompanied by a group of musicians. Upon reaching a certain destination the players performed in the following manner. A group of young men and a group of young women sang songs in an antiphonal style whose words commented on future amourous adventures. There is some evidence to prove that the young ladies in the canti were young men disguised as women. The clever workmanship of the Italian masks would make this more or less convincing.52 The maskers in the canti walked and at night were accompanied by torch bearers on horseback. As a general rule floats were reserved for the trionfo, an entertainment form much more elaborate.

The trionfo was used to celebrate great occasions such as the entrance into Florence of foreign royalty. Trionfi consisted largely of lavishly decorated floats on which

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50Ibid. 51Ibid., pp. 20-21.

52"Ce sont apparemment des hommes habillés en femmes. La perfection des masques italiens rendait vraisemblables ces travestis." Ibid., p. 21.
were choruses who sang of the actions and deeds of the allegorical characters represented. The use of choruses on floats was distinctive, since in France none of the floats carried choirs. Although subjects such as the Twelve Virtues, Religion and Justice were used, the trionfi generally portrayed deities such as Paris and Helen, Ariane and Bacchus, Love and Jealousy, and the four Seasons.53

It is to be noted that the canti carnascialeschi (carnival songs), a form created and perfected under Lorenzo de Medici (1449-1492),54 were not used as part either of the trionfi or of the later mascherata, but existed as an independent form.55

The canti and trionfi were amusements given and indulged in by the royalty and the upper social classes. However, there is some evidence to prove that the canti were later abandoned to the people.56

It can be surmised that these Florentine entertainments employed some pantomime. Research however, has failed to indicate how much pantomime was employed, or whether there was dancing. It would seem possible that street dancing

53Ibid., p. 22.
55Prunières, op. cit., p. 22.
56"Par un singulier retour, les canti seront, un siècle plus tard, abandonées par les courtisans à la populace." Ibid., p. 23.
took place in the canti, but the available data have failed to confirm this.

The Italian mascherata makes its appearance at the beginning of the sixteenth century. This new masquerade form was more complex and contained interesting dramatic elements. In the mascherata floats were not used, and dance, music and poetry were employed in close association with unified dramatic action and restricted to one location, i.e., the hall of a palace.

A rare surviving account of a mascherata describes one given in Rome during the carnival of 1521. Fifty servants, richly dressed in satin, held the torches that illuminated the interior of the Château Saint-Ange. Pope Leo X (1475-1521) and his court saw the entertainment through the windows. For decoration, there was a simple pavilion dressed in silk at one side of the hall. The performance began with eight female dancers who executed a moresque. This finished, one of them detached herself from the group and raising her voice, praised Venus in the popular ottava rima form, asking if there were a lover worthy of such beauty. Eight monks then entered and danced a second moresque accompanied by tambourines. Upon finishing the dance they brought Cupid from the pavilion and followed him to the throne of his mother (Venus). Venus gave the monks a magic potion and to her son a bow and arrow. Cupid then showered the monks with arrows and they ran hither and thither in anguish. The magic
arrows took effect and the monks began addressing gallant sayings to Venus. She then commanded that they show their valor in combat. The holy men removed their habits and appeared magnificently dressed in satins and silks. A furious battle then ensued and the winner escorted Venus out of the hall. \(^{57}\)

Prunières wonders why a dramatic form such as the mascherata did not develop, and states that the possible reason was that the Italians much preferred the less formal pleasures offered by the canti, trionfi, and other popular entertainments. \(^{58}\)

The Italians developed other types of masking. Of note was a form that originated at the courts of Modena and Ferrara, in which the maskers wore long flowing robes and cowls. Thus in the guise of monks they would penetrate the balls, and without revealing their identity, court and dance with the ladies. This form, known in Italy as the cappelletto alla ferrarese, came to be known in France as the masquers. \(^{59}\)

There is some doubt as to how this manner of masquerading was brought into France. Perhaps the most likely possibility is that it was brought over by the men in the expeditions of Charles VIII (1470-1498) and Louis XII (1462-1515), who were in Milan about 1494-1495. There is no doubt that these monarchs attended Italian masquerades. In fact, Louis XII was

\(^{57}\)Ibid., pp. 24-25.  \(^{58}\)Ibid., p. 25.  \(^{59}\)Ibid.
offered a banquet by Jehan Jacques Trivulzio at Milan, on May 30, 1507. The Frenchmen were probably quite surprised when uninvited maskers entered and began to take part in the entertainment.60

Some confusion has arisen between the masquers and the mascarades, a form derived from the Florentine canti and trionfi. Part of the confusion arises from the similarity in names, and part from the plain overlooking of facts and the placing of too much emphasis on the masquers, a form really belonging to the history of social customs rather than to art forms, and not enough on the mascarade, a true predecessor of the dramatic ballet. Prunières cites in particular the historian Reyher, who emphasizes the masquers in his work on the English Mask, and fails to show how such a dramatic form as this evolved from an entertainment whose only purpose was to mask and to dance.61

Parallel to the development of the Italian forms already presented (canti, trionfi, mascherata), was a form of interlude (intermedio) very important because of its influences in the French court entertainments of the sixteenth century.

60 Ibid., pp. 26-27.

61 "Ce sera la seule critique que nous adresserons à M. Reyher, auteur d'un livre riche en faits et en idées sur les Masques anglais. Lorsqu'on a terminé le chapitre Ier sur le Mask et les fêtes de Cour et qu'on commence le chapitre II, Un ballet à la Cour d'Angleterre, on n'arrive pas à s'expliquer comment un genre dramatique aussi déterminé que le Mask anglais a pu sortir d'un usage aussi peu dramatique que celui de se masquer et de se déguiser pour danser." Ibid., p. 27.
However, for clarification of the evolution of the intermedio, it is necessary to recede chronologically to the fifteenth century, and discuss its predecessor, the Sacre Rappresentazioni (sacred representations).

The Sacre Rappresentazioni originated in Florence and much resembled the French mystery play. Henderson states that the Sacre were the outgrowths of the medieval lauda, and that their development took place between 1470 and 1520. The lauda (or laude spirituali) was the name given to the Italian hymns sung by the Disciplinati de Gesu Christo (also known as laudesi), lay fraternities organized for the purpose of flagellation, a horrible atonement practiced during the Middle Ages. The lauda had a quite direct and simple approach not heretofore known in the Italian hymns.

Henderson's statement in part substantiates D'Ancona's theory that the Sacre were products of the mating of the Divozioni (name of the fourteenth century laude) and the festivities of St. John's Day, the patron saint of Florence. The Sacre Rappresentazioni contained diverse elements, such as Christian themes intermixed with pagan mythology, together

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62 William James Henderson, Some Forerunners of Italian Opera, p. 27.
63 Gustave Reese, Music in the Middle Ages, p. 237.
with elements of crudely constructed comedies. The Sacre were also used as a medium of instructing the youth unwilling to be educated.67 These plays were performed in the church or in the churchyard, generally between vespers and dusk by young people belonging to the "Societies of Piety."68 The Sacre were played in Rome until 1539, and in Florence until 1566. An end was put to these plays because in Rome the crowd, following the close of the performance, would sack the Jewish quarter.

Naturally, these productions were full of perversions, and the pagan immodesty of those times was boldly displayed, as in a performance of 1541, at San Domenico di Sessa, where in La Creazione di Adamo ed Eva, the author, a canon, played Adam stark naked, and was an enormous success. More daring still was the Spectaculum divi Francisci, played at Naples at the beginning of the sixteenth century, where a friar in the part of St. Francis played a scene of seduction, also unclothed.69

During the sixteenth century the Sacre Rappresentazioni disappeared and made way for the classic comedy (commedia) and the pastoral.70

Unlike the French Mystery play where music was of an incidental nature, the Sacre were full of continuous song, floats for scenic effects, interludes (intermedi) where dances were introduced without apparent purpose,71 and dialogues recited by costumed actors. It is of interest

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67 Reeves and Freedly, op. cit., pp. 63-64.  
68 Rolland, op. cit., p. 36.  
69 Ibid., pp. 39-40.  
70 Ibid., p. 68.  
71 Ibid., p. 39.
to note that the players in the intermedi used elements common to all heretofore discussed entertainments, except the mask. Research has failed to divulge intermedi that were given with masks. In this respect they were faithful to the traditions of the ancient French mystery play.

The simple intermedi became more and more elaborate, using many characters, multiple scenes, and handsome settings. The favorite subjects were pastoral in content, with shepherds and shepherdesses giving the intermedi a peaceful, sometimes even melancholy, atmosphere.\(^7\)\(^2\)

The interest in pagan mythology during the Italian Renaissance made the religious festivals of the Middle Ages seem archaic, and brought forth the comedies and tragedies of ancient Greece in which the intermedi could blossom.\(^7\)\(^3\)

The intermedi grew popular while the Sacre were abandoned.

The intermedi were used between the acts in theatrical representations. The poet Lasca (Anton Francesco Grazzini, 1503-1548) vainly fought the intermedi since he upheld that they made dramas poor and graceless. Trissino (1478-1550) in his Poetica, lamented the fact that these intermedi so

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\(^7\)\(^2\)Reeves and Freedly, op. cit., p. 67.

\(^7\)\(^3\)Prunières, op. cit., p. 29.
full of songs and dances became a comedy within a comedy and destroyed the overall unity of a drama.\textsuperscript{74}

From his examination of the records available of Poliziano's (1454-1494) Orfeo, Niccolò da Corregio's (1450-1508) Cefalo, and five comedies by Plautus (254?-184 B.C.) given in 1502, Prunières states that these works contained lyric intermedi, and that in Plautus' comedies the intermedi contained in addition to a moresque of a type heretofore unknown in which costumed dancers mimed a combat in rhythm, the first models of combattimenti (combats) and balletti.\textsuperscript{75} The word ballet (or balletti) during the sixteenth century did not have the same meaning that it does today, i.e., a dramatic representation employing scenery, music, a definite category of steps, action, drama, some pantomime, and generally excellent unity. At that period it might have either of two meanings: (1) rhythmic pantomime executed to music (the meaning apparently employed by the Italians), and (2) a figured dance performed by costumed dancers who executed predetermined steps (the meaning apparently later employed by the French).\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} "Nelle commedie che oggidi si rappresentano, s'inducono suoni e balli e altre cose, le quali dimandano intermedi; e talora s'inducono tanti buffoni e giocolari, che fanno un'altra commedie; cosa incovenientissima, e che non lascia gustare la dottrina della commedia. \textit{Poetica}, VI." Quoted by Prunières, \textit{ibid.}, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 29-30.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 30-31.
About 1518, the comedy *La Calandra* by Cardinal Bibbiena (1470-1520) was performed which contained *intermedi* at the end of each act, based on mythology and completely unrelated to the action of the drama. In the first *intermedio* a warrior appeared and danced a *moresque* during which he fought a bull with dragons teeth which was trying to destroy the sons of the earth. The second *intermedio* presented a naked Venus on a float, followed by Neptune and underwater gods who later performed a *brando*. The last tableau consisted of a declamation by Love and a concert of vocal and instrumental music.  

There are many such examples that can be cited, but it suffices to say that *intermedi* were used in the works of Giraldi Cinzio (1504-1573), Ludovico Dolce (1508-1568), Giustiniani (1388-1446), and in the pastoral dramas of Alberto Lollio (1508-1568), Agostino Argenti (d. 1576), and the illustrious Torquato Tasso (1544-1595).  

It has been obvious that music and spectacle far overshadowed any other element in the sixteenth century Italian theatre. Rolland implies that there are many reasons for this, namely, political and religious conditions of the country, religious reforms, i.e., the Roman Catholic Inquisition which imposed innumerable restrictions upon literature and the other arts and artists, as well as the conquest of Italy by foreign countries. All these factors

had a tremendous influence on the free spirit of the Renaissance. 79

What Italy had developed in the theatrical arts during the Renaissance was by the middle of the sixteenth century in decadence. Poetry became but a means of flattery, the comedy a means of ridicule, and the tragedy was abandoned because of a common superstition that seeing one brought bad luck. Since three such important elements were in decadence, it was natural for the creators of entertainments to place emphasis on other aspects of theatrical representations, i.e., on music and spectacle. The outgrowth of all this was that the energies of the creators of the Italian theatre were centered in developing another art form, that is, the Italian pastoral. 80

In its fundamental nature, the pastoral theatre is as lyrical and musical as the sacra rappresentazione, because its origin, the Latin eclogue of the Renaissance, was equally lyrical. The ecloghe rappresentative were flourishing in all Italian courts during the High Renaissance and received a stronger dramatic touch from the peasant scenes and farces of the popular

79"All this movement went forward until about the time of the sack of Rome. Soon afterwards Italy began to fall under the power and thought of Catholicism; and the second half of the sixteenth century is a long way from being a period of free-thought. One of the most striking types of this time is Tasso, an unfortunate man who strangely mingled his pleasures with his piety, who tortured himself with religious terrors, and who went to the extent of believing himself damned, and of going to the Inquisitors at Ferrara, Bologna, and Rome, in order to denounce himself and others, and to ask for punishment." Rolland, op. cit., pp. 53-54, see also pp. 52-69.

80Ibid., pp. 52-69.
theatre, and a more closely knit form from the tragedies and comedies of the rising Italian literary stage. Once having entered within the compass of the theatre, the pastoral plays could not escape the attention and experimentation of the classical scholars and classicistic poets, and they were soon subjected to the Aristotelian rules. With Tasso's Aminta (1573) and Guarini's Pastor Fido (published in 1590) the pastoral play reached a form that was henceforth to serve as a model to all subsequent authors. The libretti of the first operas depended on these works, from which they took the pretention of representing the renewed tragedy of antiquity. The pastoral play has, then, two lyrical ancestors, a fact which explains its only mildly dramatic nature. It is a mixture of dramatic narration, lyrical poetry, and song, rather than drama proper. Its dialogues and lyrical choral parts swing naturally into music at the very moment when the playful and graceful assumes a little of the pathetic, and it was thus that the pastoral play created a new genre, the melodrama, which carries us immediately into the field of opera.

We are not concerned with the Italian pastoral except to say that it was the predecessor of the opera in Italy, and that this genre greatly influenced the seventeenth century ballet de cour. The Italian pastoral was not known in France until the last thirty years of the sixteenth century, when it was brought over by a group of Italian players, the Comice Gelosi. As we shall see in Chapter II, Tasso's Aminta was apparently given in Paris sometime after its initial performance in Italy in 1573.

*"Ma il Pastor Fido, quantunque condotto a termine già entro al 1583, non fu pubblicato, dopo lungo lavoro di lima, se non verso la fine del 1589 a Venezia con la data del 1590, e, per quanto pare, non fu rappresentano prima del carnevale 1595 a Crema." Guarini, Battista, Enciclopedia Italiana, Vol. XVIII.

81 Paul Henry Lang, Music in Western Civilization, p. 332.
In making a summary of Italian influences that carried over into the sixteenth century French court entertainments, it can be said that Italy contributed two categories of entertainments: (1) the *mascarade* (a form derived from the Florentine *canti* and *trionfi*, rather than from the *mascherata*)\(^8\) with its entrances of maskers in serious or grotesque costumes and floats that represented pagan or allegorical themes; and (2) the *intermedio* with its sung recitations, pastoral content and figured dances. The *mascarade* replaced the ancient *momerie*, and the *intermedi* the *entremets* of the court. As we shall see the *mascarade* and the *intermedio* were two of the elements from which the court ballet was fashioned.

The Development of Ballet in France during the Sixteenth Century

Of all the French rulers who went into Italy, Francis I (1494-1547) was the one who became the most enthusiastic over Italian culture. He brought back to France Italian dancers, painters, sculptors and musicians. At the palace of Fontainbleau, already full of frescoes by Rosso (1494-1540) and Primatice (1504-1570), were given entertainments like those found at the Italian courts.\(^3\) Unfortunately, complete records of these festivities are not available, but it is known that in 1534, Nicolas of Modena, "painter, sculptor and maker of masks" was in charge of designing the

\(^8\)See ante pp. 18-19.  
\(^3\)Prunières, op. cit., pp. 35-36.
sumptuous and bizarre costumes for the king and his court. The records show that this man at one time received thirty-five livres for making "six masks of corsairs to be used at the wedding of the Count of Saint-Paul." The late fifteenth century Italian pastime, the cappelletto alla ferrarese (known in France as the masquers, see ante p. 19) became popular in France sometime during the early part of the sixteenth century, and appears to have been somewhat abused. It seems that many scandalous scenes took place at balls where the masquers entertained the ladies behind tapestries. On May 9, 1539, Francis I set out a decree stating that anyone would be arrested if masks and disguises were found on their person. However, this decree was not enforced, and a few years later, the Martial d'Auvergne prohibited only "merchants and people of low class" from masking.

84 "peintre, sculpteur et faiseur de masques. Comptes des bâtiments du Roi, II, 242." Quoted by Prunières, Ibid., p. 36.


87 "aux marchands et gens de basse condition." Quoted from the Arresta Amorum by Prunières, Ibid.
Henri II (1519-1559) seems to have been very fond of masking. Once during a Mardi Gras, the king and some young men from his court ran through the streets on horseback, costumed and masked, attempting to see who could be the most foolish. On a similar occasion the Monsieur de Nemours made his horse ascend the great steps of the Palais de Justice and descend the steps of the Sainte Chapelle, a feat considered inimitable.

Both Charles IX (1550-1574) and Henri III (1551-1589) continued to practice this pastime. They roamed the streets on horseback, disguised generally as women, wearing masks of the finest quality with veils of gold and silver, followed by disguised singers, instrumentalists and torch bearers. These nocturnal promenades, very interesting to the students of mores and the history of costumes, did not have a direct influence upon the dramatic court ballet, but they show the origin of the disguises so popular in those court entertainments.

Before labeling the masquers as a development from the ancient momerie which they somewhat resembled, it is necessary to take two facts into consideration. One, that in the sixteenth century the momerie was used to designate gambling presented by disguised, masked and silent players (see ante

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88 Philip de Savoie, (1490-1533)?
p. 4), and two, that the use of the word masque, and its derivatives masqueries, masqueurs, masquiers, and masquarades did not appear in France until the first years of the sixteenth century. The best distinction between the ancient mome ries and the masquers is that "the masquerades [masquers] were nocturnal, brave, joyous, pleasant, foolish, costly . . . the mome rie full of cheating, subtle, full of jokes . . . "

Taking place in France at this time, i.e., the sixteenth century, was the evolution of the Italian forms (canti, trionfi and intermedii) that paved the way for the court ballet. According to Prunières, the défilés à grand spectacle appeared during the middle of the sixteenth century and go to mark the transition period in France between the float procession of the Middle Ages and the float procession of the sumptuous masquerades of Italian ancestry (the future mas carades à grand spectacle). Apparently these défilés were not properly of Italian descent but contained elements developed in Italy. Such défilés à grand spectacle were given at Brussels in 1544 for the queen of France, Eleanor of Austria (1498-1558), and at Lyon in 1549. At Rouen in 1561, Henri II and Catherine de Medicis were offered one of these

91"La Masquarade y est dite nocturne, brave . . . joyeuse, plaisante, folâtre, coustueuse . . . la Mome rie basteleuse, subtile, farcuse . . . Épitaphes de M. De La Porte, parisien (1571) (Res. X, 19 )." Quoted by Prunières, Ibid., p. 37.

92Ibid., p. 40.
défilés. Prunières states that the scenery used in this amusement shows the influence of the neo-antique movement taking place in Italy, i.e., the revival of the ancient Greek comedies and tragedies. However, this neo-antique influence was not fully felt until the court poets, Jodelle (1532-1573), Mellain de Saint-Gelais (1487-1558), Daurat (1508-1588), Ronsard (1524-1585) and Baïf (1532-1589), began to take part in the preparation of court entertainments.93

During and after the reign of Henri II (1519-1559) the French mascarades appeared. These mascarades were forms derived from the Italian canti and trionfi, and may be subdivided into three categories: (1) the mascarade whose object was a recitation; (2) the mascarade whose object was the display of a figured dance; and (3) the mascarades à grand spectacle, which much resembled the défilés à grand spectacle, given in the open air or in a large hall, at tournaments or jousts and at royal entrances.94

93Ibid., pp. 40-41. Referring to the défile given at Rouen in 1561, there is an interesting discrepancy in chronology committed either during the printing of Prunières' book or by Prunières himself. Henri II died in 1559 and so could not have possibly been at Rouen in 1561. La Laurencie dates this entertainment as given in October 1550. See La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 30.

94In referring to mascarades Prunières also used the term mascherata, a use of terminology that could cause some confusion, i.e., using an Italian word for a French form. However, it is to be noted that the Italian form known as the mascherata did not develop, and so could not have possibly influenced the French court entertainments (see ante pp. 18-19). Obviously Prunières employed mascherata synonymously with the latter mascarades since they were of Italian ancestry and the term mascherata is used by Italian writers of the period to refer to French mascarades.
The first type was generally given at night in a hall or garden of a castle, and formed one of the essential elements at princely receptions, and at such events the maskers would often comment in their harangues upon the political situations of the day. The recitations for these mascarades were written by the best court poets and these writings have been preserved, but unfortunately detailed descriptions of these entertainments have not. However, there are records to substantiate the fact that such a type of mascarade was given for Henri II at Lyon in 1549; another by the Cardinal of Lorraine (1524-1574) at Blois in 1556 (April 22); one at Saint-Germain for Henri II on December 21, 1557; and one at Toulouse in 1565 for Charles IX (1550-1574). Prunières states that this type of mascarade (also known as mascarade à récit) was very popular in France after 1550, and was constantly given at the court, sometimes well prepared, sometimes impromptu.

In the second type of mascarade, i.e., one whose object was dancing, the maskers after the performance distributed to the ladies present leaflets on which were verses of a

95 Prunières, op. cit., p. 46.
96 Ibid., p. 48.
97 Ibid., p. 49.
98 Among the dances for these mascarades may have been the Branle du Haut Paroisse of which Arbeau writing in 1588 says: "This branle is danced by lackeys and serving wenches, and sometimes by young men and damsels of gentle birth in a masquerade, disguised as peasants and shepherds, or for a lark amongst themselves at some private gathering." Arbeau, op. cit., p. 136.
serious, burlesque, obscene or gallant nature. The purpose of these verses was either to compliment the dancers or to praise the beauty of the ladies. This use of leaflets with printed verses (a practice also present in the mascarades à grand spectacle) was the main attraction of these entertainments, and according to Prunières, the prototype of the seventeenth century ballet-mascarades and ballet-à-entrées.99

The third type of masquerade, the mascarade à grand spectacle consisted of long processions of floats with costumed players that represented allegories or diverse mythological scenes. These processions of floats passed slowly in front of a reviewing stand which held the court, and occasionally stopped to be admired. This gave occasion for the players on the floats to sing and deliver tirades about the merits and deeds of the allegorical or mythological characters represented. It soon became customary for the court poets to write the poetry used in the mascarade à grand spectacle. Occasionally this poetry was printed and distributed to the ladies of the audience. It would be safe to surmise that this custom years later initiated the usage of the vers pour les personnages du ballet, a practice that existed as long as the court ballet itself.100

99Prunières, op. cit., p. 50.

The most famous example of this type of masquerade was the *Mascherata dell'Autore*, performed on June 26, 1574. The players on the main floats, representing *Audace* (audacity), *Soupçon* (suspicion), *Inquiétitude* (disquiet), and *Perséverance* (perseverance), were accompanied by musicians disguised as shepherds. Finally came four kings and queens magnificently dressed in the ancient Greek and Roman manner. They were paired off, holding hands, and each carried a symbol which portrayed one of the four elements. The first was a pearl, representing water; the second a rose, representing the earth; the third an arrow, representing the air; and the last a branding iron, representing the fire. Four dwarfs served as pages to the queens and four savages as pages to the kings. The procession stopped, the kings and queens dismounted and performed a *brando* for eight. To conclude the entertainment all the players performed a gigantic *brando*.

Prunières states that the *mascarade à grand spectacle* was not popular in France as an entertainment form in itself, but because it served as a pretext for other amusements.

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101 It is possible that they performed a pavanne since Arbeau, writing in 1588, says: "Pavans \( \text{pavannes} \) are also used in masquerades to herald the entrance of the gods and goddesses in their triumphal chariots or emperors and kings in full majesty." Arbeau, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

102 In the seventeenth century court ballet, this custom of all the participants dancing at the end of the entertainment was named the *Grand-ballet* (see *entremet* given in 1454, ante pp. 10-11). Prunières, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

It seems that this type of masquerade became nearly an indispensable part of the tournaments and jousts of the sixteenth century. The general procedure of the sixteenth century tournament or joust highly resembled the procedure of the same amusement given at the fifteenth century Burgundian court, and differed only in that in the sixteenth century the mascarade à grand spectacle was added, making the tournament a display of not only petty intrigues, but also of elaborate costumes and scenery.

The essential quality of all the mascarades à grand spectacle was that they emphasized the visual aspect with rich costumes and elaborate floats, and left poetry, music and dance to a more or less incidental capacity.

The Italian intermedio appeared in France after 1550. The poets Ronsard (1524-1585) and Baif (1532-1589) seemed to have been the first in France to employ this new medium. This enthusiasm for Italian forms was prompted no doubt since the queen was an Italian (Catherine de Medicis), and by the interest of the musical and literary circles of France over the revival of the ancient Greek comedies and tragedies taking place in Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

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104 Cf. ante pp. 13-14.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., p. 50.
For clarification it is important that the essential qualities of the intermedio be kept in mind. The intermedio was not an independent form, but was interpolated between the acts or at the close of a comedy or tragedy, contained sung recitations, was pastoral in content, employed figured dances, and as far as research has been able to indicate, contained no use of masks.

Prunières cites as an early example of this new medium in France, the comedy with intermedi given by Catherine de Medicis (1519-1589) at the carnival of Fontainbleau in 1565. This comedy was about the "beautiful Genièvre of Ariosto [apparently a character in Ariosto's Orlando Furioso] and given in honor of Madame d'Angoulême and her suite." To close the performance, a player representing Love entered the stage and sang, followed by a player as Charity who recited a verse. 108

It is interesting to note that the figured dances used in the Italian intermedi were not particularly popular in the intermedi given in France, but were transferred from this theatrical medium and became an indispensable part of those court mascarades whose object was dancing. 109

109 Ibid., p. 52.
The presence of Italian dancers and choreographers at the French court in part explains this vogue for the Italian figured dances.110 These Italian artists were brought into France after the conquest of Milan by the French during the sixteenth century. Milan had been more or less the training center for dancers and choreographers of sixteenth century Italy.111 In fact, one of the most famous dancers and choreographers of Italy, Pompeo Diabono was engaged to come to France by the Maréchal de Brissac (Charles I de Gossé, 1505-1563), the conqueror and administrator of Piedmont. Diabono accepted and came to France in 1554. He became an immediate success at the court and was not only a favorite of Henri II (1519-1559) but also of his successors Francis II (1544-1560), Charles IX (1550-1574) and Henri III (1551-1589). Others that came from Milan to France were Virgilio Bracesco and Ludovico Talvello, followed a few years later by Giovanni Pietro Gallerio, Gio., Francesco Giera, Gio., Paolo Ernandes and Bernardo Tetoni.112

The most popular Italian figured dances at the French court were the brando113 and the balletto. These dances employed binary and ternary rhythms freely and were not

110Ibid., p. 53.
111Ibid., p. 52.  
112Ibid., p. 53.

113"The Branle, which the Italians called brando and the English brawl or round, has taken its name from the old balancing movement." Sachs, op. cit., p. 383.
governed by a fixed pattern, a feature the choreographers took advantage of by introducing variations in steps and movement. 114

The brando like the moresque was a theatrical dance and not performed by society. However, the many forms of the balli and balleti, dances equivalent to the contradances and quadrilles of the seventeenth century, were extremely popular in the salons. During the sixteenth century the French called all dances balletes (equivalent of Italian balletti), without distinguishing between balli, brandi or balletti. 115

The most famous entertainment given at the French court during the reign of Charles IX (1550-1574) was when his mother, Catherine de Medicis (1519-1589), honored the Polish ambassadors on August 19, 1573.

This entertainment, named the Ballet des Polonais, began with the entrance of a float on which were mounted sixteen ladies, representing the sixteen provinces of France. After the float had circled the hall, the ladies left the float, formed a military arrangement, advanced toward the king and queen, and danced to music by thirty violins that played "a very pleasant warlike air." 116 The dance completed, the

114 Ibid., pp. 52-53.
116 "un air de guerre fort plaisant." Quoted from an unidentified source by La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 61.
ladies presented to the king, queen and guests of honor enameled plaques on which were designs of the products of each province. Dent states that a dialogue in Latin used in this performance was set to music by Orlando Lassus.

This entertainment, according to Prunières, is very hard to classify in relation to the forms heretofore presented at the French court. The title itself causes some consternation. Heretofore none of the court entertainments had been named ballet. Although as has been said before, the French called all dances ballet without making any distinction as to type, there is a possibility that the use of this term here meant to indicate that the entertainment employed popular Italian figured dances. Prunières somewhat confirms this supposition by saying that the Ballet des Polonais was, "but very modestly, the vogue and triumph of the figured dance in France."

It is evident that the Ballet des Polonais marks a stage in the development of theatrical entertainments and paves the way for the Ballet-Comique de la Reine. This entertainment certainly contained nothing new since all the

117 Prunières, op. cit., pp. 55-56.
118 Dent, op. cit., p. 13.
119 Prunières, op. cit., p. 56.
120 "... mais plus modestement la vogue et le triomphe en France de la danse figurée." Ibid.
121 Ibid.
elements used have heretofore been employed in court spectacles, but at least it shows that the court musicians, dancers and poets, were in a process of experimentation.

The Ballet-Comique de la Reine, as we shall see in the next chapter, was an original work. However, before concluding this chapter, it seems imperative to make a brief summary of the materials from which the court entertainments of the seventeenth century were fashioned.

For the sake of clarification it is necessary to draw some definite lines of demarcation between forms, although they were not always observed in practice. The purpose of this is to place certain characteristics of certain forms in categories so as to make analysis easier. It must be remembered however, that these forms discussed developed continuously over a period of approximately four hundred years, and with a certain amount of reciprocation of forms between both France and Italy.

In France the momecie furnished the future court ballet with the beginnings of the traditional procession, costumes and masks. The entremet and its influential predecessor, the mystery play, began the use of floats, rudimentary scenery, some dancing, declamation and incidental music. The tourna-ments and jousts furnished the chivalrous combats and intrigues, and a brilliant manner of displaying costumes. The mascarades à grand spectacle developed the art of spectacular floats and costumes, carried over from the Italian
canti and trionfi. The mascarades with recitations developed the poetic content and the talent of the writers of the court. The mascarades whose purpose was dancing, developed the Italian figured dances and the vers pour les personnages du ballet. The most important element contributed by the Italian canti and trionfi was the use of allegorical or mythological characters taken from the ancient Greek and Roman mythology. All these forms had one characteristic in common, namely, that they were not truly theatrical in the sense of being presented on a stage. As a general rule they were presented in a hall, a garden, at other entertainments, or out of doors.

On the other hand the Italian intermedi was a form that can be said to be theatrical in the sense that it was given generally in a theatre and between or at the end of the acts of a comedy or tragedy. The intermedi and its predecessor, the Sacre Rappresentazioni, furnished the sung recitations, songs, figured dances and the very important pastoral content, with its simpleness, and melancholy quality that greatly influenced the esthetics of the court entertainments in France.

And finally, the sixteenth century Italian revival of the ancient Greek comedies and tragedies had a tremendous effect on the artistic circles of France, and was partly if not totally responsible for the creation of the Ballet-Comique de la Reine.
CHAPTER II

THE BALLET-COMIQUE DE LA REINE

Before going into the Ballet proper, it seems advisable to first present some background of the causes that brought about the creation of this entertainment.

The rediscovery and study of the ancient classic Greek comedies and tragedies during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is known today as literary humanism. The term humanism was applied to the movement in which there was a breaking away from the chains of ecclesiastical authority of the Middle Ages, and in a sense a revolt against scholastic theology and philosophy. Literary humanism seems to have started sometime during the fifteenth century, but its full impact was not felt until the sixteenth century, particularly in France.

In the arts, mainly literature and music, humanism prompted the writing of Horatian odes; experiments in chromaticism and enharmonic tones; interest and revival of Greek theory; and during the latter part of the sixteenth century in France, the creation of the vers mesuré
(measured verse),\(^1\) based on the classic Latin and Greek pentameters.\(^2\)

Lang states that

the birth of humanism is the awakening of Italian national consciousness to an independent leadership of European culture. This nationalism is, of course, not identical with our modern conception of the term, as Latin nationalism was still embedded in medieval universalism, which had been widened and deepened by the addition of classical elements. The idea of universal culture, the avowed aim of humanism, was again an old medieval thought, but what the Middle Ages had sought to establish through the church was now attempted outside the church, again signifying a distinct break with the past.\(^3\)

The terms humanism and Renaissance have sometimes been used in separate senses, i.e., humanism to mean the study and cultivation of the classics, and Renaissance to refer to "artistic activity."\(^4\) However, Lang states that "if considered from a true perspective, with the issues carefully weighed, humanism and Renaissance represent a unity."\(^5\)

The fact that the arts depended upon literature for guidance, in itself implies a certain dependence on each other. In Italy, literary humanism came first, but the other arts followed closely, and these classic influences

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\(^2\)Henry Prunières, \textit{Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully}, p. 64.

\(^3\)Paul Henry Lang, \textit{Music in Western Civilization}, p. 171.

\(^4\)Ibid.

\(^5\)Ibid.
can be seen in the painting, sculpture and architecture in the late fifteenth century.\(^6\)

Humanism was not a sudden movement devised by any one man, however brilliant he might have been. Lang states that it "originated from a profound desire for a glowing expectation of a new era, a longing for a second youth."\(^7\) Neither Rome nor Greece had been forgotten; rather had they lain dormant until a new awakening. Virgil, Ovid, and Horace were read in all the countries of Europe throughout the Middle Ages.\(^8\)

The humanist movement did not appear in French literature until the beginning of the sixteenth century. Lang divides this movement in France at this time into two categories, i.e., one known as Italianism and the other as humanism.\(^9\)

Italianism was the upshot of the French expeditions into Italy, caused by the jealousy of France over the splendid culture of the Italians.\(^10\) The French went into Italy about 1494-1495 when the Italian Renaissance was at its height, and apparently believed that by imitating the Italian culture they could capture it as their own. French humanism did not

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\(^6\)According to Symonds the Renaissance, as far as painting is concerned, culminated between the years 1470 and 1550. The end of the fifteenth century marks the first climax in the art, and the first half of the sixteenth century the second. John Addington Symonds, *A Short History of the Renaissance in Italy*, pp. 225-226.

\(^7\)Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

\(^8\)Ibid.

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 216.

\(^10\)Ibid.
occur until the expeditions of Francis I (1494-1547) who, as we have seen, brought an army of Italian artists into France about 1515. With these Italians came the interest and study of the ancient Greek classics.\textsuperscript{11}

One of the fruits of the humanist movement in France was the Pléiade, a group of seven poets, led by the illustrious Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585), "a student of art, seriously seeking for a new beauty in style."\textsuperscript{12} Other members of the group were Jean Daurat (or Dorat) (1508-1588), Joachim Du Bellay (1522-1560), Remi Belleau (1528-1577), Jean-Antoine de Baïf (1532-1589), Étienne Jodelle (1532-1573), and Pontus de Th Yad (1521-1605).\textsuperscript{13}

The term Pléiade came from Greecian mythology, in which the seven daughters of Atlas, Alcyone, Celaeno, Electra, Maia, Merope, Sterope and Taygeta, were transformed into the group of seven stars so named, with the seventh star (Merope) concealing herself because she had loved a mortal.\textsuperscript{14}

The central ideal of this Pléiade was the union of poetry and music in the ancient manner of the Greeks, i.e.,

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.  \textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 252.  \textsuperscript{13}L. Petit de Julleville, Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature Française, Vol. III, p. 144.  \textsuperscript{14}There were two other such Pléiades in French literature, one at the time of Charlemagne (742-814) and one under Louis XIII (1610-1643). "Pléiade," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed., Vol. XVIII.
music whose metric scheme depended upon the rhythms established by the ancient classic pentameters.\textsuperscript{15}

According to Romain Rolland, Ronsard loved music and loved especially to sing and hear sung his verses, calling music better than poetry, and musicians and poets both sacred children of the Muses. That without music poetry had no grace, as much as music without the melody of verses was inanimate and without life.\textsuperscript{16}

Ronsard was the first to find a rapport between the sonnet, heretofore considered an independent literary form, and music. He was also opposed to "singsong" and insisted on "polyphonic settings for his verse."\textsuperscript{17}

About 1550 poetry and music came to a union of sorts. Clement Janequin (ca. 1485-post 1559) had given some attention to the quality of verses used in his compositions. Clement Marot (1495-1544) had also some intentions of "marrying his verses to lute music."\textsuperscript{18}

A publication of 1552 contained sonnets set to music, written by the greatest chanson writers of the period,

\textsuperscript{15}The first publication of this group came in 1549 under the title of \textit{Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française}. Apparently this work was written by Joachim Du Bellay.

\textsuperscript{16}"et principalement aimot à chanter et à ouyr chanter ses vers, appelant la musique soeur puisnée de la poésie, et les poètes et musiciens enfans sacré des Muses, que sans la musique la poésie estoit presque sans grâce, comme la musique sans la melodie des vers inanimé et sans vie." Quoted from Claude Binet's \textit{Vie de Ronsard} by Romain Rolland, \textit{Histoire de L'Opéra en Europe avant Lully et Scarlatti}, p. 234.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Lang}, op. cit., p. 254.

Clement Janequin, Muret,\textsuperscript{19} Certon (ca. 1510-1572), and Goudimel (ca. 1505-1572).\textsuperscript{20}

The poets of the Pléiade desired an academy of poetry and music to educate the artists and public in the practice and appreciation of the ancient classic art.

Sometime during the end of 1567, Jean-Antoine de Baïf\textsuperscript{21} completed his first plans for the academy and was joined by his friend and musician, Joachim Thibault de Courville in an effort to convince the public of the need of such an academy.\textsuperscript{22} Charles IX received a petition made by Baïf and Courville for the academy, and issued them letters of patent on November 15, 1570.\textsuperscript{23} However, the French Parliament rejected the petition of Baïf's on the basis that it "tended to corrupt, soften, unbridle and pervert the youth."\textsuperscript{24} This petition was sent to the diverse Parisian faculties of learning for approval, and in January 1571 was rejected by the University of Paris. Nevertheless, the king ordered

\textsuperscript{19}Presumably this is the French humanist Marc-Antoine Muret (1526-1585).

\textsuperscript{20}Lang, op. cit., p. 254. Goudimel was killed at the St. Bartholomew massacre, August 28-31, 1572.

\textsuperscript{21}Baïf was the natural son of Lazarre de Balf, born in Venice in February 1532. Baïf, like Charles IX of France, was half Italian, since his mother was a Venetian. It is not known when he came to France nor where he was trained. Rolland, Histoire de L'Opéra en Europe avant Lully, p. 234.

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 235. \textsuperscript{23}Ibid., p. 236.

\textsuperscript{24}"tendoit à corrumer, amolir, effrener, et pervertir la jeunesse." Quoted from an unidentified source by Rolland, ibid., p. 238.
the academy to be established with Balf as director. Thus in February 1571, the Académie Françoise de Poesie et de Musique was founded.  

The academy met at the home of Balf. Here were presented concerts attended by Charles IX, and about 1576 the members met in the cabinet of the king twice a week. Later Charles IX's brother and successor Henri III, appears also to have frequented these meetings. Lang states that besides the help given by Charles IX, this academy was also supported by the dowager queen Catherine de Medicis, as well as the Dukes d'Anjou and Alençon.

The members of this academy worked diligently toward their goal, i.e., the union of poetry and music, but little of their work has been preserved. Unfortunately, they were not allowed to copy manuscripts, some manuscripts were lost, and many were destroyed by a fire at Balf's home, so that the exact nature of their efforts is obscure.

Balf's main attempts were centered around trying to promote the practice of the vers mesuré which was a late sixteenth century practice of setting poetic texts to music in a rhythm which reproduced exactly

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25 Historians often cite this academy as an "important landmark in the history of French letters," when a careful reading of the statutes will prove otherwise. This academy was mainly concerned with music. Lang, op. cit., p. 303. See also Rolland, Histoire de L'Opéra en Europe avant Lully, footnotes pp. 236-237.

26 Rolland, Histoire de L'Opéra en Europe avant Lully, p. 239.

27 Lang, op. cit., p. 303.

28 Ibid.
the strong and weak syllables of the text, by giving
the former the exact double duration of the latter.29

Unlike modern poetry which is qualitative, i.e., based
on the distribution of stressed and unstressed syllables,
the *vers mesuré*, like the ancient Greek and Latin verse, was
quantitative, based on the distribution of long and short
syllables.30

Baif seems to have claimed the creation of the *vers
mesuré*, but Lang states that all Baif accomplished was "to
use it systematically, and I was J the first to point out
the possibilities of a liaison with music."31

The first attempt at *vers mesuré* had been made in Italy
during the fifteenth century, but it was not until 1539 that
a work was published on this topic, namely, Claudio Tomelei's
*Versi e Regole di la Nuova Poesia Toscana*.32 It was not
until 1562 that a work on the subject appeared in France,
i.e., *Manière de Faire des Vers en françois, comme en grec
et en Latin* by Jacques de la Taille.33 La Laurencie and
Julleville maintain that a work in France on "determining

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30 Prunières, *op. cit.*, p. 60. See also Manfred


32 Tomelei was the founder of the *Accademia della Nuova
Poesia* where only the practice of *vers mesuré* was allowed.

33 La Laurencie dates this work as being published in
1573. Lionel de La Laurencie, *Les Créateurs de L'Opéra
Français*, p. 48.
the prosodic quantity of the French syllables"\textsuperscript{34} appeared in 1497, namely, the \textit{Art de m\text{"e}trifier fran\c{c}ais} by Michel de Boteauville.\textsuperscript{35} So, it remains a question who began the practice of the \textit{vers mesur\é}.\textsuperscript{36}

It is of interest to note that Balf was preoccupied not only with the measuring of music and poetry, but also with the possibility of making the dance obey the same rules. Balf wanted the gestures and steps of the dance to follow the note values employed in the songs and instrumental music, in this way bringing about the union of music, poetry and dance. Apparently this idea originated in France with Balf, and the contemporary Italian choreographers do not seem to have attempted it.\textsuperscript{37} Yet to put his theory into effect, Balf must have had some help from the Italian dancers and choreographers of the court.

It can be surmised that, since both Balf and Ronsard were so close to Charles IX, they knew both Pompeo Diabono and Virgilio Bracesco, Italian dancers and choreographers, and favorites of the king.\textsuperscript{38} However, it seems strange that...

\textsuperscript{34}"d\'{e}terminer la quantit\'{e} prosodique des syllabes françaises," \textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.} See also Julleville, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol. III, p. 205.

\textsuperscript{36}It seems that as a literary form, the \textit{vers mesur\é} was highly criticized by contemporaries, but practiced by the sympathizers of the humanist movement. Lang, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 254.

\textsuperscript{37}Prunières, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 64-65.

\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 66-67.
none of the preserved records of the Académie indicate that Diabono, Bracesco, or any of the other Italian dancers ever frequented the meetings at Balf's house on the Rue Fossés Saint-Victor.  

According to Prunières, Balf and his collaborators were planning to present an entertainment employing the vera mesuré, but this work was never given because of the religious wars in France during the end of the sixteenth century. The question arises as to what this entertainment would have presented in the way of innovations. The members of the Académie might have been trying to revive the "musical drama" of the ancient Greeks. Perhaps had they succeeded in their project the members of the Académie might have anticipated the experiments of the Florentine Camerata, a decade or so later, that eventually produced the beginnings of modern opera. This question, unfortunately, remains unanswered.

Besides the poets of the Pléiade, the Académie also included many well known musicians as members. Two of the better known musicians were Jacques Mauduit (1557-1627) and Claude Le Jeune (ca. 1528-1600). Le Jeune was a brilliant musician whose best known work is a musical setting to Ronsard's Le Printemps. Lang implies that his talent

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39Ibid., pp. 67-68.  
40Ibid., p. 62.  
41Lang. op. cit., p. 303.
was somewhat subdued by having to adhere to the *vera mesuré* practiced by the Académie. Jacques Mauduit was no less talented, and is known for his *chansonnnetes mesurées*.

Prunières states that Balf, Thibault de Courville and Claude Le Jeune were familiar with the music used during the great *joust-mascarade* given on August 20, 1572 to celebrate the marriage of the King of Navarre (Henri IV, 1553-1610) to Marguerite de Valois (1553-1615). According to Prunières, this festivity marked the apparent reconciliation between the Huguenots and the Roman Catholics.

It seems that Baltazarini (Beaujoyeulx) was in charge of preparing this entertainment, and as we shall see later on, this man was most influential in the preparation of the Ballet-Comique de la Reine. Unfortunately, no records of the *joust-mascarade* have been preserved.

About 1577 the royal support given the Académie was suspended and the group disbanded. In this connection Lang states that "the typical Gallic traits of character finally asserted themselves, and music and poetry in the short-lived Academy were soon replaced by éloquence and philosophie."

The creation of the *air de cour* and the dramatic

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45 *Ibid*.
recitation (récit)\(^{47}\) were the real contributions of the Académie to French music. According to Grout, the airs de cour may be defined thus:

short strophic songs, sometimes with a refrain, for one or more voices with lute accompaniment, which were cultivated in France in the late 15th and in the 17th century. They are in simple syllabic style and in binary form. The texts are chiefly love poems in affected précieux language, some of them in vers mesuré.\(^{48}\)

Before going any further it seems important to again take into consideration two factors of the utmost importance. One of these factors was the intermedi that appeared in France about 1550, and the other Torquato Tasso's pastoral drama, Aminta (1573). They both had a tremendous effect on the theatrical world of France.

As we have seen in Chapter I, the intermedi were first used in France by Ronsard and Baiff, and it can be surmised that some intermedi were given at the meetings of the Académie.

Rolland mentions that Baiff presented entertainments at the meetings of the Académie much like the ones given in Venice, and that these entertainments were not "a question

\(^{47}\)The dramatic recitation was developed a hundred years later by Jean-Baptiste Lully. Frunières, op. cit., p. 59. "The peculiarities and the slow development of the French recitative were due precisely to the difficulty of fusing the affective Italian declamation with the quantitative meters of French poetry." Bukofzer, op. cit., p. 142.

of sung tragedies, but rather of lyric morceaux intercalated in the spectacles and accompanied by music."

The Italian artists at the court prompted some enthusiasm over this medium, not to mention that the dowager queen Catherine de Medicis was an Italian, and probably very fond of Italian entertainment forms.

The French poets and writers travelled to Italy, and probably corresponded with Italians in the same field, keeping abreast in this way of the artistic developments in that country. Balf seems to have gone to Italy at one time, and the illustrious Torquato Tasso came to France in 1571.

Aminta, according to Symonds, marks the culmination of the development of the pastoral drama in Italy. This drama seems to have become extremely popular after its first presentation in Italy in 1573, and all the countries of Europe became anxious to see it. Although there are no

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49"question de tragédies chantées, mais sans doute de morceaux lyriques, intercalés dans des spectacles, et accompagnés de musique." Rolland, Histoire de L'Opéra en Europe avant Lully, p. 239.

50No dates available.

51With the Cardinal Luigi d'Este. Arrived in February and left in March of that same year. Prunières, op. cit., p. 80.


53Grout dates this work as given in 1583. However, this appears to be either a typographical error or carelessness on the part of the author. See Donald J. Grout, A Short History of Opera, Vol. I, p. 35. The Enciclopedia Italiana states that Aminta was given in 1573. See Umberto Bosco, "Torquato Tasso," Enciclopedia Italiana, 1st ed., Vol. XXXIII.
preserved records to substantiate any supposition that Aminta was performed in France, Prunières states that it apparently was.\textsuperscript{54} It seems that a group of Italian professional players, known as the Comice Gelosi, came to France, and might have given Aminta as part of their repertoire since they were the first to present this work in Italy.\textsuperscript{55}

The Gelosi first came to Paris during the reign of Henri II (1519-1559), and apparently also during the reign of Henri III (1551-1589).\textsuperscript{56} Unfortunately no records have been preserved of the names of the entertainments given by these players, nor the conditions under which they were presented to the French public. Prunières states that the entertainments given by the Gelosi were comprised mainly of works dealing with mythological intrigues, and contained intermedi full of singing and dancing.\textsuperscript{57} However, it is known that Henri III (1551-1589) on his trip to Venice was offered an entertainment given by the Gelosi, with poetry by Cornelio Frangipane and music by Claudio Merulo (1553-1604).\textsuperscript{58}

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\textsuperscript{54}Prunières, op. cit., p. 80.
\textsuperscript{55}Tasso's Aminta, was first given by the Comice Gelosi on July 31, 1575, on the Isle of Belvédère for Alphonse II d'Este (1533-1597) and his court. Ibid., pp. 79-80. See also Dent, Foundations of English Opera, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{56}Prunières, op. cit., p. 81.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., pp. 80-81.
\textsuperscript{58}Ibid., p. 81.
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We now have the four main elements from which the Ballet-Comique de la Reine was fashioned, i.e., the traditional court mascarades, the Italian intermedi, the impression on French taste of the pastoral drama, and the all important humanist theories of the Académie Française de Poesie et de Musique. As we shall see later in a description of the Ballet-Comique, it contained simultaneous settings, movable settings, elaborate costumes, intermedi with declaimed and sung recitations, gods and goddesses of ancient Greece and Rome, pastoral characters and elements, and measured music and dancing.

The Ballet-Comique was not the creation of one man, although one man assembled it. The real creator was the combined influence from many different sources. Balf was not responsible, nor was Balthazard de Beaujoyeulx, but the latter got the credit. The Italian Balthazard de Beaujoyeulx (d. 1587), born Baldassarino del Belgioso or Baltazarini, came to France as the conductor of a group of violin players about 1554-1555, brought over by the Maréchal de Brissac. 59 He became an immediate success at the court, not because he was a good musician, nor because he played the violin well, but because he was a clever man and an excellent courtier. 60

59 Maréchal de Brissac also brought over the famous dancer Pompeo Diabono about this same time, i.e., 1554-1555.

60 Prunières, op. cit., p. 79.
He served as valet de chambre to Mary Stuart, Charles IX, the Duke de Alençon, Henri III, and in 1567 served the dowager queen Catherine de Medicis in this same capacity. Apparently Beaujoyeulx kept up with what was taking place in the artistic circles of France, but there is no available data to prove that he ever frequented the Académie. Prunières implies that Beaujoyeulx must have known some of the players in the Comice Gelosi while this group was in France. Anyway, Beaujoyeulx must have known a great many people of influence, and perhaps have taken part in a few intrigues, to have such a responsibility as the Ballet-Comique de la Reine placed on his shoulders. This entertainment must have been one of the most expensive undertakings of the court and of Catherine de Medicis. Rolland states that this entertainment cost the court somewhere between three million six hundred thousand francs and five million francs.

Some explanation seems necessary why so obscure a person as Beaujoyeulx was employed to direct such an entertainment, when most of the talented poets and musicians of the Pléiade and the Académie were still alive and very much in the eyes of the public. Prunières explains it by saying

61 Mary Stuart married Francis II of France (1544-1560), who died shortly afterwards.
62 Prunières, op. cit., p. 79. 63 Ibid., p. 80.
that the entertainments for the marriage celebrations of the Duke de Joyeuse to Mademoiselle de Waudemont were many, and that the Ballet-Comique was only one of these entertainments. It seems Ronsard and Baïf were busy writing poetry for the tournaments and mascarades, and that Le Jeune was occupied writing music for these same entertainments. Consequently, Beaujoyeulx was entrusted with the Ballet-Comique. He was placed in charge of the artists who created the costumes and scenery, composed the recitations and the vocal and instrumental music; and the choreographers and dancers who created and performed the dances.

The story for the Ballet-Comique was the Greek tale about Circe, and this entertainment is often referred to by many simply as Circe. Beaujoyeulx furnished the outline of the story and the verses were written by a certain La Chesnaye. Prunières believes that this La Chesnaye may have been in reality Agrippa d'Aubigné (1552-1630) using a pen name. It seems that in an obscure passage in his Histoire Universelle d'Aubigné claimed to have written verses for a presentation of Circe in 1573, but that the entertainment had been cancelled by the queen because of the expense. It appears likely that d'Aubigné might have written the verses for the

65Ibid.
66They gave the Ballet des Polonais instead, see ante p. 39.
67Prunières, op. cit., p. 76.
presentation in 1581, but unfortunately this question remains a conjecture.

The music for the Ballet-Comique was written by one De Beaulieu. Little is known about this man, except that he won a prize for composition (Puy de musique d'Evreux) and that he had a beautiful bass voice. He knew Thibault de Courville, and it can be surmised that he frequented the Académie. Anyway, he carried into effect in this entertainment the humanist theories on measured music. Beaulieu received help from the musicians of the royal chamber and especially from one Salmon, a singer and valet de chambre to the king. Salmon it seems had also received a similar prize (Puy de musique d'Evreux) in 1575. How much each of these contributed to the music for the entertainment is not known. Prunieres surmises that Beaulieu wrote the airs and sung recitations and that Salmon the instrumental music. The practice of having two composers contribute their talents toward one entertainment seems to have been a common practice in France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so why should it have been different with the Ballet-Comique? The original designs for the scenery and costumes were made by Beaujoyoulx and executed by Jacques Patin, the "painter to the king."

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68Ibid., p. 87.  
69Ibid., p. 88.  
70"peintre du roy," quoted from an unidentified source by Prunieres, Ibid.
In the preface of the Ballet-Comique, Beaujoyeulx explained that Ballet meant a "mixture of geometric designs using many persons"\(^7\) dancing to music by instruments. It can be surmised that by "geometric designs" he meant the Italian figured dances so popular at the French court. He also states that the dancing was joined to a comedy,\(^7\) so as to make a perfect unity. He insisted that music and verse were written in the ancient classic manner and that "no verses were recited without music."\(^7\) This was a true humanist viewpoint.

The scenery used was of two types,—the simultaneous settings and the movable settings. The simultaneous settings consisted of the Bocage du Pan and slightly back of it a group of illuminated trees, placed to the right of the hall.\(^7\) On the left was the Voute doree resembling a cloud formation in which were placed the singers and instrumentalists.\(^7\)

\(^7\)"meslanges géométriques de plusieurs personnes," quoted from the Avant-propos to the Ballet-Comique de la Reine, by La Laurencie, Les Créateurs de l'Opéra Français, p. 63.

\(^7\)"It should be noted that comique did not mean comical, but was the generic term for dramatic." Bukofzer, Music in the Baroque Era, p. 142.

\(^7\)"... ne récitait point ses vers sans musique." Quoted from the Avant-propos to the Ballet-Comique de la Reine by La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 63.

\(^7\)When facing the hall. See also simultaneous settings, ante p. 7.

\(^7\)La Laurencie states that these singers and instrumentalists were forty in number. La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 68.
These musicians were used to answer in an echo manner the recitations of the players. At the extreme end of the hall was the garden of Circe, back of which could be seen her palace. The movable settings consisted of several cloud formations apparently suspended over the hall, one float in the shape of a fountain, one in the shape of a hill with a forest, and one float for the goddess Minerva.

Although the date for the performance was set for the week of September 18-24, 1581, the Ballet-Comique was not given until October 15, 1581. In September other festivities such as mascarades, balls, and tournaments had entertained the public.

Some nine or ten thousand spectators gathered in the Grand Salle of the Bourbon Palace around ten in the evening and saw for the first time a truly dramatic court entertainment, with music, dance and poetry combined with at least a semblance of unity. The title was:

*Ballet-Comique de la Royne fait aux nocees de Monsieur le Duc de Jouveuse et de Mademoiselle de*

76 There were passageways in the garden so that the players could make entrances and exits into the palace. Prunières, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

77 These cloud formations were apparently moved by some sort of intricate machinery. The Italians particularly excelled at this type of stage setting.

78 Prunières, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
Vaudemont sa soeur.* Par Baltazar de Beaujoyeulx, valet de chambre du Roy et de la Royne, sa mère. 79

On a dais facing the hall sat Henri III and his mother, Catherine de Medicis. Around them sat the other royalty and the court. The Ballet-Comique opened with an overture 80 played by an orchestra hidden behind Circe's palace. This orchestra consisted of "oboes, cornets, sacquebouttes, trombones, and other sweet instruments of music." 81

Following the overture came a prologue (a kind of harangue) given by a gentleman that Circe had imprisoned. He pleaded with the king to break the chains of imprisonment, which the king did. Circe then appeared and showed her anger toward the king for having set her prisoner free. Following this came the first intermedio. Three mermaids and one triton entered and sang a chorus in four parts entitled "Ocean père chenu," that was answered by the Voute dorée in an echo chorus in five parts, "Allez, filles d'Achelois."

Then, an enormous float, the Fontaine de Glaucus, entered on which were many players, among them twelve

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*Not Joyeuse's sister, but the queen's sister.


80This overture has not been preserved. La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 65.

81"hautsboys, cornets, sacquebouttes et autres doux instruments de musique." Quoted from an unidentified source by La Laurencie, ibid.
naiads, the god Glaucus and the goddess Thétys who carried a lute. Escorting this float were the singers from the king's chamber disguised as tritons, carrying and playing on lyres, lutes, harps and flutes. The float stopped and all the players on the float sang "Allons, compagnes fidèles." Following this, Glaucus and Thétys sang a dialogue entitled "Nais que me sert Thétys," with the tritons joining in a refrain at the end of each couplet. This finished, the twelve naiads descended from the float, the float retired to the back of the palace of Circe, ten violin players dressed in white entered, and the twelve naiads danced accompanied by this group.

Suddenly Circe began singing from the back of her garden an ancient folk song "le song de la chochette." The dancers stopped, Circe entered and froze the naiads immobile.

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82 The naiads were: the queen Louise, the princess of Lorraine, the duchesses of Guise, Nevers, de Joyeuse, de Mercœur, d'Aumale, and other ladies of royal birth. Prunières states that these ladies were the real heroines of the Ballet-Comique. Prunières, op. cit., p. 91.

83 Glaucus and Thétys were played by Beaulieu and his wife.

84 Known today as "Amaryllis." Of this song, only the following opening notes were employed in the Ballet-Comique. The subsequent measures were altered:
A clap of thunder resounded through the hall, and Mercury descended on a cloud, having been sent by Jupiter to break the magic powers of Circe. He sang the recitation "Je suis de tous les dieux le commun messager," and gave the immobile naiads and tritons a magic potion which brought them back to life. Circe was not to be outdone. She then touched Mercury with her magic wand, and all the players, tritons, naiads and Mercury, became immobile.

Following this a procession of diverse enchanted animals entered from the garden of Circe and after going around the hall exited.

Eight satyrs then entered and sang accompanied by flutes, answered by the choir in the Voûte dorée. Then, a float resembling a wooded hill entered on which were dryads, who addressed supplications to Pan to break Circe's spell on the naiads. Pan promised to set them free, and the satyrs sang again.

Successively, the Four Virtues entered and two of them sang a duet called "Dieux de qui les filles nous sommes," followed by Minerva on a float pulled by a griffin. Minerva held a lance in one hand, and the head of Medusa in the other. The float stopped and the Voûte dorée sang. Following this, Minerva demanded from Jupiter that he show his authority.
Jupiter entered on a cloud, and the Voûte dorée sang "O bien-heureux le ciel." Jupiter responded with an air "En ta faveur, je vien ici des cieux." He then descended from the cloud and approached the Bocage occupied by Pan apparently happy and playing on a flageolet. This irritated Minerva, and she reprimanded Jupiter for showing such lack of concern, and for allowing Circe to enchant Mercury and the naiads. Jupiter commanded Pan and eight satyrs to drive Circe out of her palace. Pan and his companions armed themselves with sticks, stormed the palace and drove Circe out into the hall. Circe became Jupiter's captive, all the enchantments were broken, and the players rejoiced. Then all the players danced the Grand-ballet. After finishing the Grand-ballet, the naiads and dryads bowed to the queen, who then presented to her husband a medallion of gold. The ladies in the Ballet-Comique then offered like medallions to the men of royal birth present at the entertainment. The

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85 La Laurencie states that this chorus was in syllabic counterpoint. La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 68.

86 This air contained four verses.

87 This summary was taken from La Laurencie, op. cit., pp. 64-68.
princes rose and danced with these ladies. When this was finished the royalty left since it was very late.

The orchestra used during the Ballet-Comique consisted of flutes, oboes, cromorne (an instrument of the clarinet family), trumpets, cornet, sacquebouttes (trombones), one harp, three lutes, one drum, one organ, and a flûte de Pan. For the dances, the music was scored only for first and second violins, third violin (contra), tenor (alto) and bass.

In general the music was very dull since it offered little or no variety. Of real interest, however, was the dialogue sung by Glaucus and Thétys and the instrumental dances. The music was predominantly in a minor tonality with final cadences into major, with a few sections in

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88 Here a quotation from the original manuscript mentions that they danced bransles and other dances usually performed at great entertainments. Prunieres, op. cit., p. 93.

"At the beginning of a ball there was always a series of at least three bransles in definite order: the sedate branle double for the older people, the more lively branle simple for the younger married couples, and the rapid branle gay for the young people. Gliding, skipping, running--this series of three prescribed by Arbeau, Mersenne replaces in 1636 with a suite of six: (1) Branle simple, (2) Branle gay, (3) Branle à mener ou de Poitou, (4) Branle double de Poitou, (5) Branle de Montirandé, (6) Gavote." Sachs, World History of the Dance, pp. 384-385.

89 Three o'clock in the morning. Prunieres, op. cit., p. 93.

90 The available microfilm copy of the music for the Ballet-Comique de la Reine has proved rewarding to a degree. Unfortunately, the score has been reduced for piano by the editor Weckerlin, but in spite of this handicap, something of the original was captured.
major. The keys used were C, F, d minor, D, g minor, G, occasionally e minor, E, a minor, and A. Modulations were abrupt, and so were the cadences. The purely instrumental dances\(^9\) employed much more variety than the vocal music, in both rhythm and tonality. The vocal range was very limited, extending from G to A\(^2\).

There were two dialogues for soprano and bass (Glaucus and Thétys), one bass solo (Mercury) and one tenor solo (Jupiter). The score also contained six choruses, two refrains to dialogues and two sets of instrumental dances. The bass airs were dull and static, but the soprano airs were more florid. The music was void of contrapuntal techniques of any consequence. Rhythmically the score was uninteresting. It employs binary and ternary rhythms, with movement of the individual voices in whole notes, half notes, quarter notes, occasionally dotted eighths followed by sixteenths, some scale passages of eighth notes, and in one section (i.e., Glaucus' first section of the first dialogue), the use of successive triplets.

"Océan père chenu," sung by three mermaids and one triton, is scored for four voices and instruments, in d minor

\(^9\) The dance tunes are harmonized continuously in five parts with no attempt at counterpoint or variety of any kind. The dances evidently were very elaborate, and there are constant changes of rhythm which are most bewildering to anyone who reads them merely as music. But we must remember that they were intended as accompaniments to complicated evolutions, and would become much more intelligible when presented to the eye as well as the ear." Dent, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 16-17.
with an abrupt final cadence into G, and in 4/4 time. The response and echo to "Océan père chenu," "Allez filles d'Achelois," sung by the Voûte dorée, is scored for five vocal parts and five instruments, in g minor and later G, and in 4/4 rhythm. Following this is another chorus sung by the players on the Fontaine de Glaucus, the "Allons compagnés fideles," scored for five vocal parts and accompanied by lyres, lutes, harps, flutes, in g minor and G, and in 4/4 rhythm. The dialogue "Mais que me sert Thétys," is scored for bass and soprano solos, each singing a couplet followed by a response from the tritons. The rhythm changes from 4/4 to 2/4, in the keys of g minor, G and D. The vocal line is rather florid at times for both bass and soprano. The dialogue concludes with ascending scale passages with a somewhat majestic ending. There are two dialogues in this section, one not marked as to performance tempo, but the other with the marking of Andante. Mercury's air "Je suis de tous les dieux le commun messager" is scored predominantly in C, and in 3/4 time. Here the activity is confined to the accompaniment.

Following this is a chorus in five parts, followed by a dance scored for instruments, at the end of which occurs the "son de la clochette" (Cf. ante p. 64). The rhythm is 4/4, and the piece is in C, A, E, ending in C. The satyr's chorus "Les nymphes à notre voix," is arranged for four
voices and flute accompaniment in F, and in 4/4 time. This is followed by a choral response from the Voûte dorée in an echo manner, for five voices unaccompanied. The key is F and the measure signature is 4/4. The satyr's chorus is then repeated.

"Dieux de qui les filles nous sommes," a duet for two of the Four Virtues, is accompanied by lutes, and is in C, in 4/4 time. This is followed by an orchestral response for five instruments, in C and in 4/4 time.

The chorus sung during Minerva's entrance is for six voices, i.e., two sopranos, one alto, two tenors, and one bass. It also is scored for six instruments, in F and in 4/4 time. "O bien heureux le ciel," the chorus sung when Jupiter enters, is in five vocal parts doubled by instruments, and performed by all the forty musicians in the Voûte dorée. It is predominantly in C and in 2/4 time. Jupiter's solo "En ta faveur je viens ici des cieux," for tenor, is in F and in 4/4 time. Of special interest is the final Grand-ballet scored for five violins, composed in the keys of E, e minor, A, and with the following pattern in time signatures: 2/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/4, 2/4.

Although to modern eyes and ears the Ballet-Comique de la Reine would seem incredibly dull, it must be remembered that it marked a great step forward in the evolution of the French musical theatre. From this entertainment
sprang the seventeenth century ballet de cour,92 and with the influences brought over with the first Italian operas during the middle of the seventeenth century, the beginnings of the French opera.

The Ballet-Comique de la Reine was heard throughout Europe and was the subject of many imitations. In France there were many subsequent ballets-comiques, but on a much smaller scale since the country was impoverished by the expense incurred during the religious wars in the latter part of the sixteenth century. The writers of the period, although preoccupied with writing about the political intrigues and upheavals, occasionally mention these entertainments, but fail to give accurate descriptions.93 However, some of the poetry used in these entertainments has been preserved. For example there is a livret (a booklet containing poetry used in an entertainment)94 of a ballet given in 1592,95 and some records to substantiate the fact that two royal ballets were given the following year.96

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92 It is of interest to note that the term ballet was not used to designate a dramatic representation until after the performance of the Ballet-Comique de la Reine. Prunières, op. cit., pp. 94–95.

93 Ibid., p. 94.

94 These livrets contained the vers pour les personnages du ballet, see ante p. 34 and post p. 92.

95 Ballet de Chevaliers François et Béarnois représentée devant Madame à Pan, le 23e jour d'août 1592. Ibid., p. 95.

96 One of these ballets was called the Ballet de Madame de Rohan. Ibid., p. 96.
Prunières states that these ballets were on allegorical and patriotic themes, in which music was sacrificed to poetry, sung recitations were rare, and that the airs used had little connection with the action of the drama. Apparently the ballet-comique became somewhat of a literary genre.\(^97\)

It is important to note that the ballet-comique as a literary genre was developed not in France, but rather in England. It seems that this form went to the British Isles sometime during the end of the sixteenth century, and came to be known as the mask or masque. Here it became a diversified comedy in which the music and the entrance of the dancers were closely associated with the action of the drama. In England poetry was extremely important in these entertainments and seems to have employed the best talent available in that field, since both Ben Jonson and Milton wrote poetry for the masque.\(^98\)

A totally different conception of the ballet-comique developed in France and Italy during the seventeenth century. In these countries poetry was sacrificed to music and dance,

\(^{97}\)Ibid.

\(^{98}\)Ibid., p. 96-97. Of the two writers Ben Jonson wrote more poetry for the masque than Milton. According to Nicoll, it appears that Milton may only be credited with one masque, Comus, given on September 29, 1634, between the years 1603-1641. The list of masques by Ben Jonson is much too extensive to cite. See Allardyce Nicoll, Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage, pp. 215-217, for complete list of masques given at the English court between 1603-1641.
and as we shall see in Chapter III, the players in these entertainments expressed themselves totally in gesture and in song, making this form seem more like the future French opera than a comedy.\(^99\)

CHAPTER III

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY BALLET DE COUR

During the reign of Henri IV, i.e., 1589 to 1610, many entertainments were given at the French court. These entertainments were of diverse types, including dramatic ballets which we shall later discuss, Italian masquerades, and buffooneries of all sorts. Unfortunately the records preserved of these entertainments are quite incomplete as to details, and leave a great deal to be surmised.\(^1\)

Apparently, from the turn of the century until about 1605, the *mascarade à grand spectacle* was completely abandoned, and there seemed to be a merging of the *ballet-comique* with the *mascarade* given in the gardens or in palaces.\(^2\) Apparently the reason for this mating was the necessity for economy on court expenditures imposed by the expense of the religious wars at the end of the sixteenth century.\(^3\)

This new form of court entertainment Prunières classed as the *ballet-mascarade*.\(^4\) This type of ballet was not given in one place alone, but the whole performance was taken from

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\(^1\) Henry Prunières, *Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully*, p. 103.

\(^2\) See ante pp. 32-33.

\(^3\) Prunières, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 99.
one city to another. They were given in theatres, in private homes or in halls. Scenery was not particularly important, but music and dancing were. The performance of these ballet-mascarades had a fairly set pattern, namely, the violins would form the first entrée (entrance), with the instrumentalists in bizarre costumes. Following this group came other instrumentalists apparently also costumed. Then came the pages carrying torches who then arranged themselves around the space in which the dancing was to take place. The first group of dancers entered in quadrille formation, danced and exited, followed by a second group and then a third. After the performance the maskers removed their masks and danced with the ladies present. Apparently also a recitation of some sort sometimes preceded the whole performance. Beaumont characterizes the ballet-mascarade thus:

The ballets consisted of entrées at different intervals of groups of masked persons in costume who, having executed their dance, made place for their successors. When all groups had danced the whole of the dancers took part in a grand ballet. After this the dancers raised their masks and a ball began.

One of the best examples of the ballet-mascarade was the Mascarade de la foire Saint-Germain given about 1606.

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5 For example when one performance was given in Paris, this same performance was also seen at Fontainbleau and at Saint-Germain.

6 Prunières, op. cit., p. 100.

7 Ibid.

The performance began when a small boy entered and sang a recitation. After this recitation a player entered costumed as a mid-wife and danced. Then the *homasse* announced in the recitation entered. The *homasse* was a mannequin in the shape of a large woman decorated with all sorts of mirrors, combs and jewelry. At this sight, the mid-wife brought astrologers into the scene, and they danced. Upon finishing the dance, the players gave the ladies in the audience an Almanac. Then came an *entrée* of painters, who in their dance pantomimed painting. Following this came another *entrée*, and another, etc... The performance was closed as usual with a Grand-ballet.

Not only figured dances were performed during the entrees of the ballet-mascarades, but also small farces, pantomimic scenes, bodily combats (wrestling?) and acrobatic acts.

9"Je suis l'oracle
   Du miracle
   De la foire Saint-Germain
   C'est une homasse
   Qui surpasse
   Les effects du genre humain." Quoted from Prunières, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

10Ibid.

11The Orchesographie of Thoinot Arbeau, first published at Langres in 1588, contains the descriptions and instructions of the figured dances used in France during the late sixteenth century, and more than likely these dances were also used during the seventeenth century.

Apparently the ballet-mascarade may be characterized as a ballet given anywhere, bizarre or burlesque in content, using any pretext as an excuse for an entrance of dancers, acrobats or for a recitation.

As we have seen in Chapter II, the Ballet-Comique de la Reine employed some spoken recitations. However, during the early part of the seventeenth century, i.e., from about 1601 to 1605, the spoken recitation was abandoned and the sung recitation took its place. Apparently no preserved records indicate that spoken recitations were used in court ballets after 1605. 13 Prunières states that this transformation may be attributed in part to the presence at the French court of Ottavio Rinuccini, the Italian librettist, 14 and Giulio Caccini, the Italian musician. 15 Both of these men knew the Italian style rappresentativo, 16 and influenced the French court musicians toward the adoption of the sung recitation.

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13 The Duke of Nemours tried to revive the spoken recitation in 1626, but he was not successful. Prunières, op. cit., p. 107.

14 Lang states that Rinuccini was the first librettist for the Italian operas. Paul Henry Lang, Music in Western Civilization, p. 337.

15 The poet Ottavio Rinuccini (1562-1621) and the singer Giulio Caccini (ca.1546-1618) were members of the original Florentine Camerata Bardi. These men apparently were present at the court of Henri IV. Some say that Rinuccini was the lover of Marie de Medicis before she married Henri IV, and that this affair was the reason for his presence at the French court. Henry Prunières, L'Opéra Italien en France avant Lulli, p. xxviii.

Rinuccini was very fond of the French court ballet and imported this form of entertainment into Italy, particularly Florence and Mantua. The air de cour was also very popular in Italy, but we shall discuss this musical form later on. Francini, the Italian machinist, was also at the French court approximately at the same time as Rinuccini and Caccini, and introduced the French to this type of stage setting, i.e., using mechanical devices for floating cloud effects, sudden changes of scenery, apparitions, etc. As we have seen, the Ballet-Comique de la Reine used this type of setting (classified as the movable setting), and it was apparently used throughout the early part of the seventeenth century, but did not become an indispensable part of court entertainments until after 1641.

In spite of the popularity at the court of the ballet-mascarade, the ballet-comique was not abandoned. Although no complete records have been preserved of any of these ballets, musical and poetic records of the reign of Henri IV seem to indicate that in 1607, 1608 and 1610 such 

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17 On June 14, 1608, the Mascherata dell'Ingrate was given in Mantua which contained no spoken recitations, and the action was expressed in gesture and in song. Prunières states that this entertainment shows that the French ballet that had been imported into Italy had adapted itself well to the musical recitation. Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 106.

18 With the ballet given by Richelieu in 1641, the Ballet de la Prospérité des armes de France, Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 161.
entertainments were given at the court, and that they used allegorical and mythological subjects. 19

In 1608, the Ballet des trois ages was given which contained several entrées introduced by choral music instead of a recitation. 20 Another ballet-comique was given in 1609, called the Ballet de la Reine. Little is known about this ballet except that the music was preserved, 21 and that the queen played the role of Beauty accompanied by nymphs. The performance began with the arrival of a naiad who sang accompanied by a chorus. The performance ended when Renomée entered and sang a long recitation, with lyrics by Malherbe and music by Chevalier. 22

The Ballet de Monseigneur le Dauphin, given in 1610 was also of the ballet-comique type. Unfortunately, the preserved records are fragmentary, and the whole performance cannot be reconstructed. The ballet began with a sort of patriotic


20 The music was by Vincent. Airs en tablature de luth de Bataille, Livre V (1614) pp. 26-28 contain the music for this ballet. This same music may also be found with all parts completely written out in the Airs à quatre de Different auteurs, Paris, Pierre Ballard, 1613, Bibl. Roy. de Bruxelles, fonds Fetis 2318. Prunieres, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 108.

21 Music to three of the récits used were preserved (music by Chevalier) in the Airs en tablature de luth de Bataille, Second Book. The music to the dances used may be found in the Robert Ballard Collection, Mazarin Library, 4.7613. Prunieres, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully.

prologue sung by Victory praising Henri IV, and wishing France a thousand prosperities. Then Victory sang praises to the Dauphin. This recitation was in couplet form with alternate sections between solo voice and chorus.\textsuperscript{23}

On January 17, 1610, a ballet was given which somewhat shows both the burlesque quality of the ballet-mascarade and the pastoral quality of the ballet-comique. This ballet was the Ballet de Monseigneur le duc de Vandesme\textsuperscript{24} given at the Louvre. The opening scene was a prologue set in a forest. One player as "Messire Gobbemagne" entered accompanied by three violin players costumed as Turks. From the forest appeared pages costumed as green\textsuperscript{25} monkeys and carrying torches. Then the pages and the musicians descended into the hall. The musicians took their places on a sort of podium and the monkeys (pages) performed a bizarre dance. Upon finishing it, they left the hall.

Following this the entertainment began. The magician Alcine entered playing on a lute, accompanied by nymphs who performed a dance. Alcine then sang to the king with the nymphs joining in at the end of each couplet. In this song Alcine told of having transformed cavaliers into hideous and

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{24}Apparently also known as the Ballet d’Alcine.

\textsuperscript{25}The color green seemed to have been very popular during the early seventeenth century in all the court ballets. Lionel de La Laurencie, Les Créateurs de L’Opéra Français, p. 127.
grotesque objects. Then Alcine and the nymphs exited. Two bulls and two giant women entered and disclosed that they were really four enchanted naiads. Following this four nymphs appeared from two grotesque flower pots and two owls. Four dryads then emerged from two giant viols and two giant windmills. These eight players performed a dance followed by a buffoon dance by eight satyrs.

Alcine and her nymphs entered and became very angry at what they saw. Alcine then sang to the king lamenting the fact that her prisoners had escaped enchantment. She blamed the king for this since he was so powerful. While this scene was taking place, the nymphs walked around in a disorderly fashion feigning sadness.

The scenery for the last scene had an enchanted palace in the background. In front of this palace stood twelve enchanted cavaliers, who all at once became animated and assaulted the palace. By assaulting the palace, they broke their enchantment, and all the players in the entertainment joined in the Grand-ballet.26

Prunières classes this ballet as the first example of the ballet-melodramatique, i.e., a ballet with smooth action, exposed by pantomime and sung recitations, with serious or

26 The music for this ballet may be found in the Phillidor Collection under the title Ballet des Moulins à Vent et des Pots à bouquets danse par Mons. de Vandesme, l'an 1610. The recitations may be found in the three books of the Airs de Bataille. Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, pp. 112-113.
buffoonous entrées and finished by the traditional Grand-ballet. 27 Apparently the ballet-melodramatique was but the mating of the ballet-comique with the ballet-mascarade. To substantiate this supposition was the fact that both the Ballet-Comique de la Reine and the Ballet de Monseigneur le duc de Vansosme employed the same dramatic action, i.e., a magician whose prisoners were set free at the end of the performance.

There were other ballets of the melodramatique type that used the same dramatic action as mentioned above. One of these was the Ballet des Argonautes given in 1614, and another the Triomphe de Minerve given in 1615. 28 This ballet Prunières states was allegorical in content, with excellent music and with poetry by Malherbe. Apparently its success was due, however, to "machines, changes of scenes, and the disposition of dancers." 29 The creator of this ballet was the poet Durand, at that time the provincial controller of wars.

The most famous and interesting of all ballets-melodramatiques was the Delivrance de Renaud given at the Louvre

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28 The minute description of this ballet may be found in the Tome IV of the Mercure français, p. 9, and in the lettres de Malherbe of February and March 1615. Ibid., p. 115.

29 "machines, mutation des scènes et disposition des danseurs." Quoted from an unidentified source by Prunières, Ibid.
on January 29, 1617. There seems to be some question as to who was the creator of this ballet. Francini was the Italian machinist in charge of the scenery, with the musicians Guedron, Gabrielle Bataille, Boesset and Mauduit in charge of the recitations, dialogues and choruses.

Apparently this work was given in a theatre since the preserved records state that the stage was connected with the auditorium by means of inclined runways. The musicians and singers were placed on both sides of the theatre, apparently not on stage, but rather to the sides of it. The performance opened with a sort of overture sung by a chorus. After the overture, the scene was disclosed showing Renaud reposing at the foot of a wooded hill, surrounded by demon spirits whose duty it was to protect him. The demons then performed a lengthy dance and exited with Renaud to the back of the wooded hill. Two cavaliers then entered and performed a dance accompanied by trumpets. The action of the dance portrayed the attempt on the part of the cavaliers to scale the wooded hill. The scene then miraculously changed to the enchanted gardens of Armide which contained spouting fountains. These same

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30 Some say it was the poet Durand, but it seems unlikely since the livret for the Delivrance de Renaud was so far superior to the livret used in the Triomph de Minerve. Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully.

31 Mauduit was then director of the Académie Saint-Cécile. He, as we have seen, was a member of the Baif Académie, and Prunières states that he hadn't as yet abandoned the theories practiced by the Académie. Ibid.
cavaliers, now armed with magic wands, touched the spouts and the water ceased flowing. Suddenly a naked nymph appeared from one of the fountains, and in a musical recitation begged the cavaliers to leave Renaud and Armide in peace. Six monsters appeared from the gardens, and a long battle ensued between the cavaliers and the monsters, with the monsters emerging victorious. The scenery at the back of the stage opened and disclosed Renaud reposing on a bed of flowers. Renaud then sang of his fortune, i.e., not being captured, and left the enchanted gardens.

Armide then appeared, and became quite angry over the fact that Renaud had left. She asked the monsters where he could have gone. Instead of answering the monsters performed a bizarre dance. Following this the scene changed to a deserted cavern.

Into the hall came a float representing a small forest on which were "sixteen players dressed as ancient cavaliers." These men were the soldiers of Renaud searching for their general. Then a magi, disguised as a hermit, entered and told of the deliverance of their hero. Following this came a hymn of rejoicing performed by all the musicians.

The scene changed and revealed on the right side of the stage giant palm trees and on the left a tent containing the

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32"seize personnes vestues en cavaliers antiques."
Quoted from an unidentified source by Frunieres, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 118.
cavaliers of Godefroid de Bouillon. These cavaliers then performed the Grand-ballet.\textsuperscript{33}

In this example we find allegorical and pastoral elements, bizarre entrées and the portrayal of religious personnages, that, as we have seen, were so popular in the fourteenth and fifteenth century French entremés\textsuperscript{34} i.e., the portrayal of crusaders.

Silin states that this entertainment employed professional singers for some of the roles.\textsuperscript{35} This was a great step forward in making the French lyric theatre a professional institution rather than a purely amateurish one, a characteristic true of most of these court entertainments since a great many of the roles were portrayed by noblemen and other members of the court.

Apparently the poet Durand was very influential in the creation of the ballet-melodramatique. Unfortunately, research has failed to indicate exactly what role he played in furthering these entertainments, except perhaps that as a politician he saw that they were given. Prunières states that after his death\textsuperscript{36} the ballet-melodramatique continued

\textsuperscript{33}Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, pp. 116-119.

\textsuperscript{34}See ante p. 9 ff.

\textsuperscript{35}Charles I. Silin, Benserade and his "Ballets de Cour," p. 191.

\textsuperscript{36}He was executed on July 16, 1618.
to develop. The popularity of this form was also due to the fact that De Luynes, a favorite of Louis XIII, was well known for portraying roles in these ballets, and that he was apparently partial to this form of entertainment.

Other melodramatic ballets were given, such as the Folie de Roland (1618), L'Adventure de Tancrède en la forest enchantée (February 12, 1619), and the Ballet de Psyché (1619). 38

Prunières states that about 1620 the court ballet (ballet-melodramatique) reached the halfway mark between the ballet-mascarade and the future ballet-à-entrées, which as we shall see, resembled each other greatly. The ballet-melodramatique apparently satisfied the French taste for expressive dancing and spectacular theatre. However, from about 1620 to 1625 this form went into decadence. 39

This decadence first became apparent in the Ballet d'Apollon (1621) particularly in dramatic content. The mythology and allegory were extremely obscure and the music by Antoine Boesset was poor compared with the music written for Tancrède and Psyché. Prunières also states that the recitations used had little or no connection with the action.

37 He played Renaud in the Delivrance de Renaud. It seems that the young king (Louis XIII) also portrayed a role in this ballet. Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 116, see also p. 119.

38 Ibid., pp. 119-121.

39 Ibid., pp. 121-122.
of the drama. Le Ballet de la Reyne représentant le Soleil given the same year, also had the same characteristics. The recitations and dances alternated with choruses, instrumental and vocal music, which had no particular relation to the action of the drama. After a long lyric scene used as a prologue, the ballet was performed in four parts, each representing one of the seasons. The Grand-ballet was danced by players representing the twelve hours of the day. Prunières states that this ballet was the beginning of the popular ballet-à-entrées, which as we shall see, was nothing but a lyric and choreographic form that contained little or no dramatic unity. ⁴⁰

After 1621 the ballet-melodramatique disappeared, a form that had been popular for some ten years at the French court. It can be surmised that this form of ballet was the best produced, as far as unity was concerned, during the early part of the seventeenth century. The ballet, from this date on remained a disjointed affair until the advent of Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) and his reforms. De Luynes died and with him went the popularity of the ballet-melodramatique. ⁴¹

Apparently the ballet-mascarade that had been so popular during the reign of Henri IV did not disappear. There are preserved records to substantiate the fact that although this

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 123. ⁴¹Ibid., p. 124.
form was more or less abandoned by the court, it was very popular in private homes. The Duke of Nemours was apparently very fond of this burlesque and bizarre type, and after the death of De Luynes, brought it back to the attention of the court. 42

The ballet-mascarade inherited or took the spoils of the ballet-melodramatique, and became a more or less new form. This new form was the ballet-à-entées, which may be properly called the ballet de cour (court ballet), not because of any particular musical or dramatic merits, but rather because of its immense popularity at the French court until about 1656. Prunières characterizes them as consisting of the general structure of the ballet-mascarade with its initial récit followed by entées, and with a choral introduction preceding the Grand-ballet. 43

This plan of performance first appeared in the Ballet des Vouleurs, danced by the king at the Louvre during the carnival of 1624. The most often quoted example of the ballet-à-entées are the Ballet des Fées des forests de

42Ibid.

43Ibid. Beaumont states that "it [the Grand-ballet] was sometimes danced by ladies, sometimes by noblemen, but in the ballets in which the king elected to dance, a proceeding no means rare, no woman of whatever rank took part." Beaumont, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

44Louis XIII (1610-1643). Under Louis XIII the ballets "... were marked by a characteristic departure from good taste." Beaumont, op. cit., p. 13.
Saint-Germain (1625) and the Douairière de Billebahaut given in 1626.

The Ballet des Fées des forêts de Saint-Germain was given at the Louvre on February 11, 1625. This ballet was in five parts representing Music, Players, Dance, etc. The performance began when the Fairy of Music "sent his Recitation before him" and then made his entrance. With him was an enormous mannequin representing Music. Several entrées followed which contained military musicians who danced and played on horns at the same time. Then came Spanish guitar players who played the guitars as fast as they danced. All the other entrances were much like the ones already named, i.e., a recitation followed by entrées with dancers dancing and playing on instruments. Then came the final Grand-ballet.

The Douairière de Billebahaut, given at the Louvre in February 1626 was much the same. This ballet was in four parts representing the continents of America, Asia, Africa and Europe.

45 This was one of the first ballets given by the Duke of Nemours, who until his death in 1632 was in charge of the royal ballets. Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 126.

46 "envoye son Récit devant elle," quoted from an unidentified source by Prunières, ibid.

47 A print that may be seen in Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 208, shows a scene from this ballet. It shows four Indian bagpipe players following an exotic lama pulling a set of Chinese gongs. It is interesting to note the French conception of an American Indian. Furthermore, it seems hardly likely that an American Indian of that period had ever seen Chinese gongs.
It seems important to discuss the dramatic plan on which most ballet-à-entrées were built. For example, if a ballet had as its theme "All things obey silver," the ballet would be in three separate parts, i.e., "silver," "obey" and "All things." Each part was considered as a whole and treated the general elements as well as the specific elements of the subject. For example, "silver" would consist of guns, medals, emblems, and the people who used them; "obey" would be represented by servants, adorations, dependences and all the ideas derived from these; and "All things" would show the effects and tyranny of silver and the miseries of money lovers, and so forth. There is here apparently a strong resemblance to the modern charade.

It would be fruitless to present all the examples available of the ballet-à-entrées since they were all very much alike. It suffices to say that they were court favorites from this date on (1626) for nearly thirty years. The general structure of these ballets did not change until the

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48 During the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715) "the ballet still continued to be a spectacle composed of dancing, music and singing, but now it passed from restricted performance at Court to the public theatre. The themes were inspired by Greek and Roman mythology. Actually the ballets were operas with opportunities for dancing, the dancing being subservient to the singing. The personnel consisted of men alone, the women's roles being taken by youths of feminine build, whose faces were concealed by masks, at this time a fixed part of the dancers costume." Beaumont, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

49 For a more detailed discussion of this see La Laurencie, Les Créateurs de L'Opéra Français, p. 73.
influences brought over with the first Italian operas given in Paris about 1645-1647\textsuperscript{50} were felt in these court entertainments. Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) was the man who introduced into these entertainments duets, trios, scenes with dialogues,\textsuperscript{51} orchestral pieces\textsuperscript{52} and general dramatic unity. Lully was the man who blended the French taste for ballets de cour with their growing inclinations toward opera, and made the first stronghold of a distinct lyric form, which today we know as French opera.

Before concluding this chapter, it seems advisable to summarize briefly. As we have seen in the examples of the ballets-comiques, the emphasis in this form was on allegorical or mythological dramatic content, and during the latter part of the sixteenth century, on declaimed recitations, which, as we have seen, completely disappeared during the early part of the seventeenth century. During the early years of the seventeenth century came the ballet-mascarade, a form in itself derived from the union of the ballet-comique with the popular court mascarade. The ballet-mascarade emphasized

\textsuperscript{50}Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 245. The Italian operas were introduced into France by the Cardinal Mazarin. In 1645 La Finta Pazza was given, followed by Cavalli's Egisto in 1646, and Rossi's Orfeo on March 2, 1647. Paul Henry Lang, Music in Western Civilization, p. 379.

\textsuperscript{51}Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 246.

\textsuperscript{52}Lang, Music in Western Civilization, p. 382.
music and dancing, and was bizarre or burlesque in dramatic content. Unity in these ballets was rare. The ballet-comique did not entirely disappear, but apparently joined with the ballet-mascarade to form the ballet-melodramatique, which contained elements of both, plus emphasis on music, dancing and dramatic action. After being popular at the court for a period of about ten years, the ballet-melodramatique disappeared, and along with it, the ballet-comique. The ballet-à-entrées then emerged, a form in reality a pot-pourri of the earlier ballet-mascarade with elements left over from the ballet-melodramatique. This form, as has been said, ruled the court taste for over thirty years, and changed only with the coming of the Italian opera and the reforms imposed by Lully.

It can be said that all ballets, whether comique, mascarade, melodramatique, or à-entrées consisted of four parts, i.e., entrées, vers, récits and a Grand-ballet. All entrées were mute, and were the only portions of the ballet in which the dancing and pantomime took place. The dancing and pantomime in these entrées sometimes were related to the drama and sometimes they were not. The vers, often included in the program distributed to the audience, explained the movements and actions of the ballet. The récits were sung by players who did not dance. The Grand-ballet consisted of

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53 Known as a livret. See vers pour le personnages du ballet, ante pp. 34 and 71.
a suite of dances, given as a general rule at the end of the performance, in which the king, the princes and nobles danced, all masked and wearing plumed head-dresses. 54

Although we are not particularly concerned with costumes and scenery, something should be said about them. Little is known about costumes except through examinations of prints and writings of the period. Prunières states that the types of costumes were determined by the rank of the performer taking part. 55 Consequently costumes as a general rule had little connection with the total effect of the drama represented. For example, if a dancer was portraying an ambassador his costume would be made of linen. However, if a nobleman was portraying a beggar his costume would be made of satin or silk. 56 Red, blue and green were the colors used in the costumes of musicians, torch carriers and other personnel of low rank. However, what gave the players their true characterizations were the masks. 57 All players wore masks.

The scenery for the ballets de cour evolved from the simultaneous setting, used during the eleventh century ecclesiastical drama and later in the sixteenth century Ballet-comique de la Reine, to the successive setting, i.e., one

54 La Laurencie, Les Créateurs de L'Opéra Français, p. 76.

55 Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 179.

56 Ibid.

57 Apparently during the Grand-ballet the nobles that danced always used black masks. Ibid., p. 163.
set placed back of the other on one locale, preferably on a stage. Apparently the ballet-comique used the simultaneous setting, while the ballet-melodramatique preferred the successive setting. The ballet-à-entrées used the movable setting, i.e., machines for special effect, but this type of setting did not become popular until after 1641. The dances used in the ballets were of a varied nature. The figured dances used by the members of the court, such as the pavanne and the galliard were not used during the entrées, and when they did appear, they were of an episodic character and for a special effect. The entrées apparently used figured dances and pantomime devised by the choreographers of the court. Little is known about these dances mainly because they were not recorded. The art of the dance has never succeeded in finding an accurate manner of setting down on paper movement and gesture. Floor patterns do exist.

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58 Also known as the fixed setting. Appeared first in 1596 in an Italian pastoral, Arimène. Ibid., p. 146.
59 It must be remembered that the ballet-mascarade did not use scenery nor consider it important.
60 Floats may also be classed as movable settings.
61 The movable setting, as we have seen, was used in the Ballet-Comique de la Reine, ante p. 61.
62 See footnote 101, ante p. 35.
63 La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 127.
64 Ibid., p. 126. For a better description see Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, pp. 163-179.
but this is only a meager measure by which the dances could
be recreated. Even today, much is left to the imagination
and ingenuity of the choreographer in recreating a dance of
the past. Most dances were transmitted from master to student,
thus leaving a very wide margin for error when again the dances
were taught to someone else.

It is of interest to note what some of the writers of the
seventeenth century thought about ballet. These writers were
mainly concerned with the rules governing the writing of the
vers for the court ballets, and the present historians name
them "theoricians." Among these "theoricians" were Saint-
Hubert (1641), De Pure (1658) and Marolles. De Pure wrote:
"It ballet was a mute representation where gestures and
movements expressed what could be said in words." Marolles
states that

the Ballet, as we know it, was nothing but a mute comedy
where all actions were presented by dancing and dress,
without speaking, except in recitations that were sung
... and recitations would not appear ordinarily
except when the acts were begun and before the Grand-
ballet.67

65 La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 72.
66 "C'est une représentation muette où les gestes et les
mouvements signifient ce qu'on pourrait exprimer par des
paroles." Quoted from De Pure's Idée des Spectacles, Paris,
1668, by La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 72.
67 "le Ballet, à bien prendre, n'est autre chose qu'une
comédie muette où toutes les actions se représentent par la
danse et par les habits, sans parler, excepté dans les Récits
que si chantent ... et ne paroissent d'ordinaire qu'un com-
mencent des actes et devant le grand ballet." Quoted from
M. de Marolle's, Memoirs, Amsterdam, 1760, by La Laurencie,
op. cit.
The poets who wrote the vers for the court ballet were many. Among them may be cited Jean Bertaut, La Roque, Sorel, Porcheres, Estoire, Collelet, Marherbe, Sigonges, Saint-Amand, Bordier, Corneille and the famous Isaac de Benserade. The poetry produced by the majority of these men was not great. Actually they had no intentions of making the court ballet a literary genre as the English had done during the latter part of the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century. To them the court entertainments were merely divertissement, and to be treated as such. Isaac de Benserade was the only poet who thought of the ballet de cour as a serious means of expression, and through his efforts alone, this form of entertainment became more of a literary genre than it heretofore had been. However, it must be remembered that Benserade did not change the ballet de cour as a musical form, a phase of development we are particularly interested in.

It suffices to say that the poetry used in the seventeenth century ballet de cour were of many types, noble or vulgar, serious or comic, realistic or allegorical.

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68 For one court ballet, the Chateau de Bicêtre. Ibid.
69 See ante p. 72.
70 Appeared in the French firmament of letters about 1651.
71 For an excellent personal history, discussion and contributions made by this poet, see Silin, Benserade and his "Ballets de Cour."
72 La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 72.
As a general rule the composers for the ballet de cour held important positions at court. During the early part of the seventeenth century the better known court composers were Pierre Guedron (d. 1621), Henry Le Jeune, Antoine Boesset (d. 1643), Vincent, Bataille, Auger and Moulinie. The latter part of the seventeenth century brought forth Jean-Baptiste Boesset (d. 1685) the son of Antoine; Jean de Cambefort (1605-1661), Guillaume Dumanoir, Michel Lambert and Jean-Baptiste Lully.

The musical elements of the court ballets comprised vocal and instrumental numbers. Prunières states that vocal music was of two types, i.e., monodic and "polyphonic" recitations (also known as récits à voix seule) used to comment on the action of the drama, and the measured songs (choruses) for one or more voices to accompany dancing.

The recitation for solo voice (récits à voix seule) were used, as we have seen, in the Ballet-Comique de la Reine. La Laurencie states that this form of recitation came from the Italian intermedio and soon became an indispensable part of the Vingt-Quatre Violons du Roi.

73 Chief of the Vingt-Quatre Violons du Roi.

74 Manfred F. Bukofzer, Music in the Baroque Era, pp. 143-144.

75 Presumably by "polyphonic" Prunières means music for more than one voice.

76 Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 231.
of these court entertainments. De Pure said of the recitation, "the recitation is an ornament strange to the ballet, but popular taste has made it necessary."

The main purpose of the recitation was to explain the action of the ballet, no matter what type of drama was being represented. La Laurencie states that the recitation "formed an essential episode of the intrigue."

Although the recitation for solo voice had originally been governed by the rules imposed by the Académie of Balif during the latter part of the sixteenth century, about 1608 these rules were broken. Apparently from this date on (about 1608) during the recitations only one melody was written that served twenty or thirty verses. The musicians wrote music that fitted the first verse, but from then on it was up to the performer to accommodate the other verses to the music. This demanded skill and excellent diction from the performer. It was not until about 1635 that Pierre de Nyert made the musicians conscious of the necessary rapport between music and prosody, i.e., that music must follow the inflection of

77 La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 114.
78 "Le récit est un ornement étranger au ballet, mais que la mode a généralisé et qu'elle a rendu comme nécessaire." Quoted from De Pure's Idées des Spectacles, Paris, 1668 by La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 115.
80 Music governed by the classic meters of the Roman and Greek poetry. See ante p. 49.
words during a recitation. All recitations were accompanied and as a general rule in a chordal style using stringed instruments.

Bukofzer states that aside from the choruses and recitations the vocal music included the air de cour.

The air de cour represents a huge literature which was published by the famous presses of Le Roy and Ballard. It swept the whole of Europe in the seventeenth century; it prompted in England the short vogue of the English ayre and provoked innumerable imitations in Germany.

Dialogues between solo voice and chorus were popular. As we have seen, the Ballet-Comique de la Reine employed them as did most of the ballets during the reign of Henri IV and Louis XIII.

Choruses were very popular, and served as a general rule the same purpose as the recitations, i.e., to comment on the

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82 Prunières states that unfortunately the transcribers have failed in conserving the retournelles that preceded these recitations. Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully, p. 239.

83 "The air de cour was originally not so courtly as its name seems to imply. In the first printed collection (1571) the publisher and lutenist Le Roy reports that the air de cour was formerly called voix de ville, a term from which the French vaudeville is probably derived. These courtly and civil songs for solo voice and lute constituted the French parallel to the Italian and Spanish renaissance song." Bukofzer, op. cit., p. 145. See ante p. 53.

84 Responses from the Voûte Dorée, see Chapter II.

actions of the drama. These choruses could also announce the entrances of dancers (entées) and comment on the action of the dancing. In these choruses destined to accompany dancing, the rhythmic patterns employed were varied.

Actually, little is known about the music of the ballets de cour since only a small percentage of it has been preserved. The best known collection of this music is the Philidor Collection. Even so, much about the music of these ballets has to be surmised.

The instrumental music in the ballet de cour served many purposes, but generally was used to introduce dances and to accompany them. These entées consisted as a general rule of first a slow march followed by faster rhythms. During the slow march the dancers entered, and then began the dance proper with the faster rhythms. However, after 1620 these entées varied somewhat in form. This instrumental music was generally played by the Vingt-Quatre Violons.

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86 Prunières, Le Ballet de Cour en France avant Benserade et Lully.

87 Ibid., p. 242.

88 The Philidor Collection contains many of the entées for the ballet de cour danced after 1598 to the first years of the reign of Louis XIV. Tome II contains the music to seventy-two entées of the ballets de cour given during the reign of Henri IV. Tome III contains fifty-four ballets of the reign of Louis XIII. Tome IV contains the first ballets of the Louis XIV period. La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 103.

89 La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 105.
Although originally the scores for these entrées contained only two written lines, i.e., soprano and bass (Collection Philidor, Tome II, of the Henri IV reign), later all five parts were written out (Tomes III and IV).  

The overtures to the ballets de cour might be instrumental as in the Ballet-Comique de la Reine (1581) or choral, as in the Delivrance de Renaud (1617). It is interesting to note that after 1640 the ballets contained overtures that began with a slow movement followed by a rapid one. The first example of this may be found in the Ballet de Mademoiselle (1640). La Laurencie states that this form originated in the sixteenth century with the association of the slow pavanne and the fast galliard. Other examples of this overture may be seen in the Ballet des Rues de Paris (1641) and in the Festes de Bacchus (1651).  

90 Ibid., p. 103. Bukofzer states that this group of players were extremely important since they represented the first permanent orchestra of the seventeenth century. "... the orchestras in Italy and in other countries were as a rule only solo ensembles, the grande bande / Vingt-Quatre Violons du Roi / consistently reinforced all five parts and thus established the practice of the modern orchestral doubling, celebrated at the time as an amazing innovation." Bukofzer, op. cit., p. 146.

91 La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 103.

92 The Italians called them sinfonie, the French overture. Bukofzer, op. cit., p. 147.


94 La Laurencie, op. cit., p. 105.
It has by now become apparent that the French in their ballets de cour had all the essential elements of the future French opera. These court entertainments contained allegorical and mythological dramatic content, lavish scenery and costumes, sung recitations, choral music, instrumental music, embryonic overtures and the indispensable dancing. All the ingredients for French opera were present, but the results were yet feeble. Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687), as has been said before, was to cleverly combine the French taste for these poorly organized court entertainments with their inclinations toward Italian opera and produce a nationalistic form of lyric theatre.

Ballet as a form independent from opera did not develop until the eighteenth century, a development caused by the ideas on dancing exposed by Jean George Noverre (ballet d'action). Noverre upheld that ballet should represent a story by movement and gesture alone, with music serving as an accompaniment and strictly in a secondary capacity. His ideas were accepted and ballet over the centuries has developed into a rich and varied means of expression.

For those interested in Noverre's (1727-1809) reforms on the ballets, see Cyril W. Beaumont's translation of Jean George Noverre's Letters on Dancing and Ballets (originally published at Stuttgart in 1760), from the revised and enlarged edition published at St. Petersburg in 1803, London, C. W. Beaumont, 1930. This volume contains a series of excellent letters on the esthetics of dancing besides being a rare document about the evolution of this art form during the eighteenth century.
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