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VARIATION AND PERSISTENCE IN THE NOTATION OF THE *LOURE*  
"AIMABLE VAINQUEUR"

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**INTRODUCTION**

The *loure* "Aimable Vainqueur" was choreographed by Lois-Guillaume Pécour to an air from André Campra's tragedy "Hésione", which was premiered on December 20, 1700. The choreography was published by Roger-Aoult Feuillet in 1701 as a ballroom dance for a couple. This is the beginning of the preface (French modern spelling adopted):

*"Cette Dance a été composée à Marly le Carnaval dernier par Mr. Pécour où elle fut dansée devant le Roi par Mr. le Comte de Brionne et M.lle de Bernonville et par plusieurs autres Seigneurs et Dames de la Cour dont sa Majesté parut en être très satisfaite. Elle porte le nom d'Aimable Vainqueur parce qu'elle est faite sur l'Air des violons qui précède la Chanson d'Aimable Vainqueur dans l'opéra d'Hésione."*

(This dance was composed at Marly the last Carnival season by Mr. Pécour, and danced before the King by M. le Comte de Brionne and M.lle de Bernonville, and by several other lords and ladies of the court. His Majesty appeared to be very satisfied with it. The air is from the opera *Hésione* and precedes the chanson *Aimable Vainqueur*.) (1)

A few years later, a solo for a man, composed to the same music, was published in Pécour's 1704 collection of theatrical dances. A different version is found in another manuscript [F-Po/Rés. 817 (14)], that according to Francine Lancelot dates between 1700 and 1720. (2)

**OUR CORPUS**

To our knowledge, fifteen versions of this choreography exist today in the repertory of notated eighteenth-century dances, namely in:

- printed sources:

- |                                                 |                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1- FL/1701.1                                    | LM/1700-Feu                           |
| 2- FL/1704.1/31                                 | LM/1704-Péc ( <u>solo for a man</u> ) |
| 3- FL/1715.s, SHIRLEY                           | LM/[c1715]-Aim                        |
| 4- FL/1722.2/pièce 2, WEAVER, <i>The Louvre</i> | LM/[c1722]-Orc and LM/[c1730]-Orc     |
| 5- FL/1725.2/pièce 6, RAMEAU                    | LM/[c1725]-Ram                        |
| 6- FL/1728.1/pièce 6, RAMEAU                    | LM/[c1728]-Ram and LM/[c1732]-Ram     |
| 7- FL/1745.1/pièce 1, FERRIOL y BOXERAUS        | LM/1745-Fer                           |
| 8- FL/1760.1/pièce 24, MINGUET                  | LM/[c1760]-Nbl                        |
| 9- FL/1765.1/pièce 6, MAGNY                     | LM/1765-Mag                           |



- manuscripts:

10-FL/Ms02.1/pièce 3, A-Smi, Archives Moroda	LM/Ms-25
11-FL/Ms05.1/14	LM/Ms-20 ( <u>solo for a man</u> )
12-FL/Ms14.1/pièce 9, F-Po/Rés. 1163	LM/Ms-80
13-FL/Ms17.1/pièce 56, DESCAN, 1748	LM/Ms-30
14-FL/Ms18.1/pièce 5, F-Po/Rés. 934	LM/Ms-70
15-FL/Ms19.1/pièce 10, KINSKI, 1751	LM/Ms-110

- Musical source:

*Hésione, tragédie* by André Campra, libretto by Antoine Danchet. Paris, Christophe Ballard, 1700. *Second air [des Amans fortunéz]*; III, 5, p.58, F-Pn/Vm2 164.

According to Francine Lancelot, the choreography of the duet throughout the many different versions is basically faithful to the first source. Version 15 features very rich ornaments, mostly consisting of *double battus* and *ronds de jambe*; versions 5, 6 and 7 are notated according to Pierre Rameau's "*Nouvelle Méthode*". (3) Although the notation of the solos is interesting for its rich step vocabulary and rhythmic patterns, in this paper we will concentrate only on the notation of the duet.

The aim of this lecture-demonstration is to investigate the varying and/or persisting features of this dance, using the following parameters:

- a. Floor patterns and spacing
- b. Step vocabulary
- c. Distinctive steps
- d. Notation: the innovations of Rameau's "*Nouvelle Méthode*"

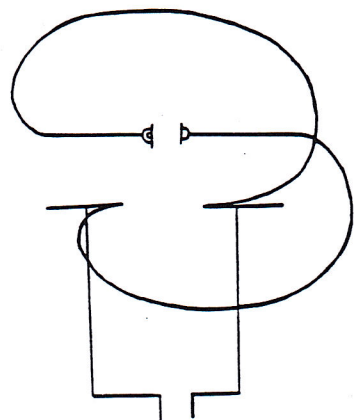
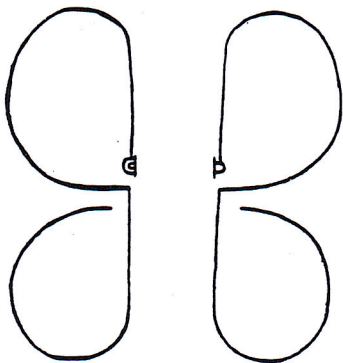
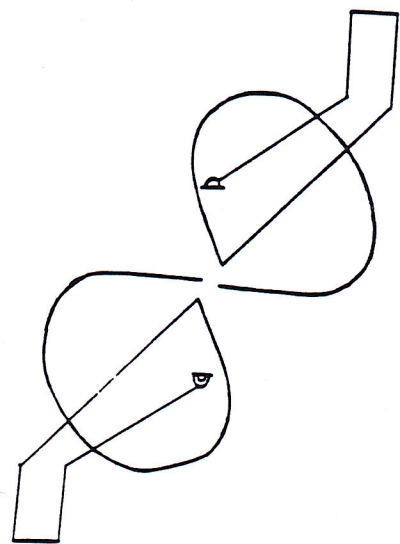
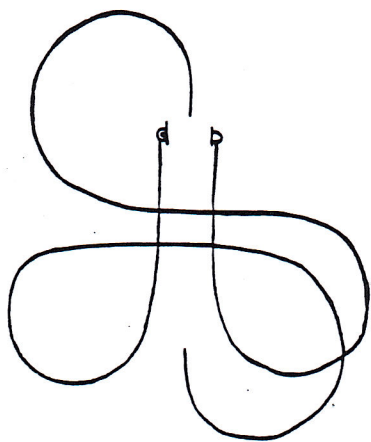
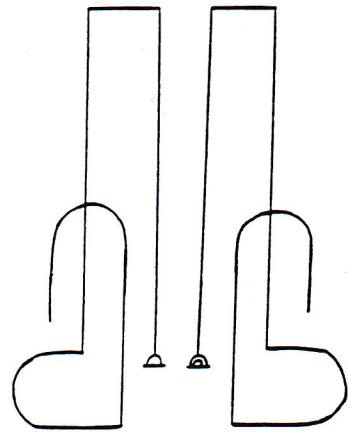
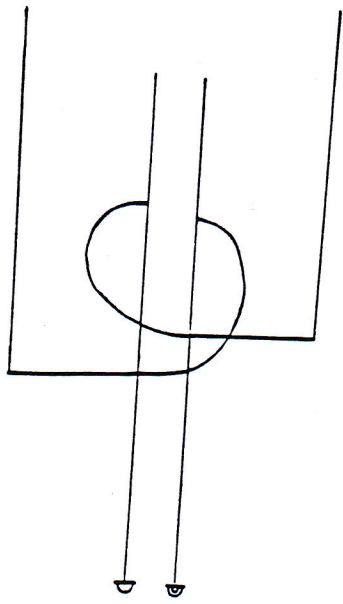
Dancing of the duet will follow (with Julie Andrijeski)

**a. FLOOR PATTERNS AND SPACING**

(Figure A - Floor patterns in version 1) Let us take a look at the floor patterns of version 1, after eliminating the virtual space, i.e. the dotted lines that allow more step notation space on the page, but do not describe the movement in the actual space. The spacing still looks consistent with the original outlook of the notation, since virtual space is only used in pages 1 and 6. The duet is composed along straight lines and curves, and is oriented along both axes of the space, with a significant presence of reflection- and rotation symmetry within the same figure (4). This is the case in pages 3, 4 and 6; in the other pages only reflection symmetry is used.

A

Colonna





The whole dance could almost be read as a series of variations on the first page's choreographic theme, which features a phrase on the upstage-downstage direction, followed by a second phrase that balances the figure on the stage right-stage left axis. The repetition and development of this spatial theme is evident in the following pages. In page 2 the direction of the steps is reversed, but the figure is practically the same. In page 3, the two phrases are highlighted by the use of parallel patterns (bars 29-30) and subsequently of rotation- and reflection symmetry (bars 31-36). Page 4 features an uncommon and very effective diagonal line, around which develops a variation on the rotation/reflection theme. In page 5 the floor path draws a butterfly-like figure, in reflection symmetry and balanced on both axes. Page 6 features reflection- and rotation symmetry as well, and a very short opening phrase on the horizontal plan, mirroring the one in page 1. In the entire dance, only 11 bars are notated on paths parallel to the audience.

The dance consists of 76 bars. Twelve out of the thirteen versions of the duet choreography are divided in six pages containing respectively

- page 1) bars 1-14
- page 2) bars 15-28
- page 3) bars 29-36
- page 4) bars 37-52
- page 5) bars 53-60
- page 6) bars 61-76

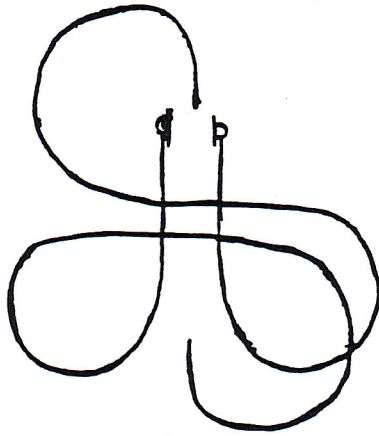
with no significant variation in the shape of the floor patterns. Although the figures might differ slightly in the way they are drawn or set into the page, they clearly reflect the same floor path and remain constant. The only exception is version 15, in the *Kinski* 1751 manuscript, which features a much ornamented version of the same choreography and a different division in pages. It is divided in seven pages and differs from the previous pattern between bars 15 and 36, which are divided in three pages instead of two, as follows:

- page 2) bars 15-22
- page 3) bars 23-28
- page 4) bars 29-36

(Figure B - Floor patterns Feuillet/Kinski) There are a few differences in the spacing of this section of the dance; the steps are spread out on one more page in order to make the notation of the ornaments more readable. Actually, the bars contained in pages 2 and 3 of version 15 fit on one page in all other versions. In page 4, the dancers split at the beginning of the figure, instead of both dancing upstage; the reflection symmetry originally found in the first bars is turned into rotation symmetry, therefore the figure begins simultaneously in two opposite directions. There is a difference in the spacing of page 5 (bars 37-52). Here, the unusual circular pattern oriented along two diagonal lines converging in the centre, which appears in all other versions, is notated with straight lines oriented along the central axis of the space in version 15. Also, in page 6 the "butterfly" figure appears on the page, but not in the actual spacing of the dance, because the paths diverge in the beginning; rotation symmetry is added to the reflection symmetry found in the original pattern.

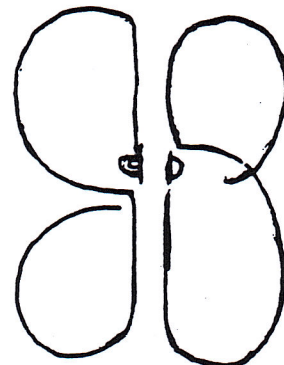
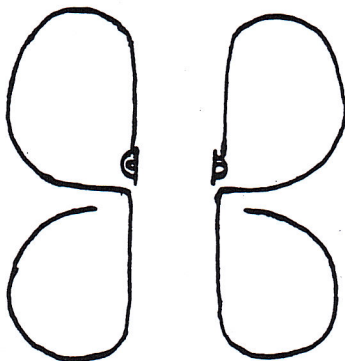
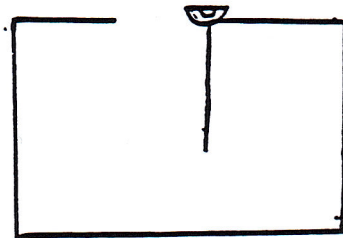
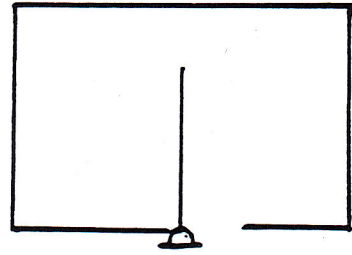
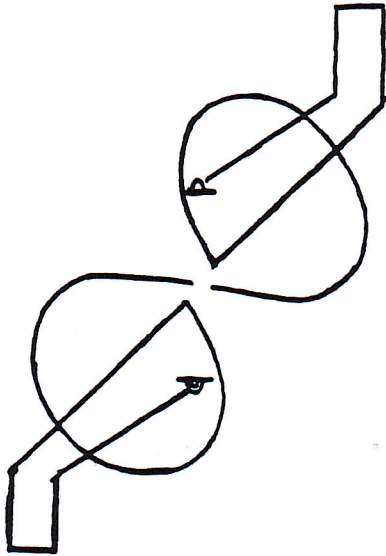
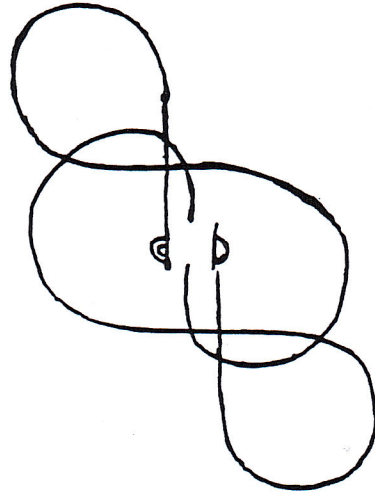
B

FEUILLET



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Colonna





## b. STEP VOCABULARY

The steps of our *loure* appear to be basically the same through all of the thirteen versions. Choreographically speaking, Pécour's step combinations remind us of his *sarabandes*, with a very high proportion of steps without jumps (the only ones used are *contretemps* and *sissonnes*), that belong to the standard codified vocabulary. We cannot identify a typical "*loure* step" nor a specific combination in the vocabulary used in this duet, which includes, in order of frequency: *pas de bourrée*, *contretemps*, *coupés à deux mouvements*, *pas graves*, *coupés*, *demi-coupés*, *chassés*, *balancés*, *sissonnes* and *pirouettes*.

The only difference in step vocabulary appears in version 15 (*Kinski* 1751 manuscript). This is basically an ornamented version of the same choreography, and it seems that the differences in the notation are justified by the ornamentation itself. All of the *coupés à deux mouvements*, *sissonnes* and *pas graves* bear a *double battu*, and the *balancés* are ornamented with a *double rond de jambe*. Nevertheless, the steps remain basically the same and are easily recognizable. The only definite variation is at bars 52-53 and 53-54, page 5. At the beginning of this figure, in all other versions the dancers have a *contretemps-demi coupé/rond de jambe*; in version 15, they have a *pirouette-glissé-double battu/rond de jambe*, repeated twice. The form of the composition is not altered, since the dancer turns away from the partner and back. In this case, however, a full turn is completed in the same direction instead of two half turns in opposite directions.

## c. DISTINCTIVE STEPS

The choreographic material available on *loures* is limited to seven *entrées de ballet* of high technical level, one ballroom dance (*Aimable Vainqueur*) and one movement in a multipartite form (*L'Obice*), therefore the corpus of notated *loures* is too small altogether to allow us to deduce any composition rules. However, by looking at the choreographies, we can attempt a few observations on how these dances were composed.

Altogether, it seems that in composing *Aimable Vainqueur*, the choreographer's attention was more focused on beautiful and well-balanced figures than on the invention of new, spectacular steps. However, this dance attained such popularity that it became an example for the technical description of the steps that it contains. For example, let us quote a passage from page 141 of Pierre Rameau's *Le Maître à Danser* (Paris, 1725), at the end of Chapter XXX, which describes the *coupez du mouvement*. This looks to me like the main theme-step in this choreography; pages 1, 2, and 3 begin with a *coupé à deux mouvements* on the vertical axis, and the same step is used again, horizontally, at the beginning of page 6. :

[...] on donne des exemples de ce pas dans l'*Aimable Vainqueur*; qui est une fort belle danse de Ville, ils y sont placez de différentes manieres & si à propos, qu'il semble que la jambe exprime les notes; ce qui prouve cet accord ou plutôt cette imitation de la Musique avec la danse, puisque l'on doit imiter la douceur des sons par des pas doux & gracieux.



([...] examples of this step are given in the *Aimable Vainqueur*, which is a very beautiful ballroom dance. The steps are set in different ways and so appropriately, that it looks like the foot expresses the notes. This proves the agreement, or the imitation of Music with dance, since the sweetness of the sounds must be imitated with sweet and gracious steps.)

This choreography is quoted, in the same dance manual, in the description of two other steps: *sissonne* and *chassé*. Let us read about them:

(page 158): [...] *au premier saut vous retombez sur vos deux pieds, sans que les genoux soient pliez; mais vous pliez après pour faire le second saut, ce qui peut se nommer pas de Sissonne coupé; parce que l'on s'arrete pour plier, au second saut ce pas est placé dans differens couplets de l'Aimable Vainqueur. Et comme c'est une mesure à trois tems lent, ce pas doit estre fait de cette maniere; parce qu'il remplit mieux la mesure; & exprime mieux la cadence.*

([...] after the first jump you will fall on both feet, without bending your knees. You will bend them to do the second jump, which can be named *pas de Sissonne coupé*, because one stops to bend the knees at the second jump. This step is found in different *couplets* of the *Aimable Vainqueur*, and since it is a slow triple meter, this is the way this step should be done, because it fills the measure better and fully expresses the cadence.)

The same step is described in Rameau's second book, *La Nouvelle Méthode* (Paris, 1725), as follows:

(page 76): *Mais il se trouve un autre pas de Sissonne dans l'Aimable Vainqueur, qui se fait différemment, parce qu'au premier tems on retombe les genoux tendus; & au second on plie & l'on saute, tel qu'il est écrit dans cette danse, que j'ai écrit suivant le sentiment de l'Auteur*

(There is a different *pas de Sissonne* in *Aimable Vainqueur*, which should be executed differently, because at the first beat one falls with stretched knees. At the second beat, one bends and jumps, just like it is notated in this dance, which I composed following its Author's feelings.)

Although the step appears only three times throughout the whole choreography (bars 11-12 and 25), how distinctive these *sissonnes* must have been to "make the manual"! However, only version 9 (Magny 1765) bears the pause signs in the notation for all three *sissonnes*; versions 1, 3, 4, 12 and 14 only feature pause signs for the *sissonnes* at bars 11-12, and versions 5, 6, 7, and 13 have no pause signs at all. All *sissonnes* are notated with no links between signs to indicate rhythm; version 9, features links between the feet describing one jump to indicate contemporary action, but not between the step signs to indicate relative duration.

Describing the *chassés* at bars 53 and 57 of page 5, the beginning of the "butterfly" figure, here is what Rameau writes in *Le Maître à Danser*:

(page 178): *Il s'en fait encore un autre en allant de côté, de même que ceux qui sont placez dans l'Aimable Vainqueur au cinquième couplet, dont il y en a trois de suite pour remplir une mesure, ce qui marque les trois tems d'où la mesure de cet air est composé; mais ce genre de pas est à proprement parler des jettez en chassez, ce qui se va voir par la maniere de le faire.*



(One can still do it sideways, like the ones in the fifth *couplet* of the *Aimable Vainqueur*. There are three of these to fill one bar, which marks the three beats composing the measure. This kind of step should properly be named *jettés en chassé*, which will show by the way it is executed.)

#### **d. NOTATION: THE INNOVATIONS OF RAMEAU'S NOUVELLE METHODE**

The *Abbégé de la nouvelle Méthode, dans l'art d'écrire ou de tracer toutes sortes de danses de ville*, by Pierre Rameau, was first published in 1725, with twelve choreographies of some of the most famous dances, including *Aimable Vainqueur*. It was re-issued in 1728 and 1732, with a few more choreographies. Rameau intended it as a set of rules and signs that would make the Feuillet system easier and more accurate; he even included a whole section in which he compared the steps written in the *nouvelle* or the *ancienne* fashion. However, in 1732 the *Académie Royale de Danse* obliged Rameau to withdraw his new notation system and agree to comply with Feuillet's old one in any further publication.

Here are a few differences between Feuillet's and Rameau's notation systems:

- 1) Rameau introduces the use of the *demi-position*, i.e. a separate symbol for the supporting foot. This is not really an innovation, in that this information was expressed in the first part of the step sign in the Feuillet system.
- 2) Rameau introduces the sign < which indicates that the toes are on the ground, but with no weight. In the Feuillet system, this was obtained with a dot.
- 3) Rameau invents the sign for the *demi-jeté*. This is a true innovation, since in the Feuillet system there is no sign for the steps which are à *demi sautez* (half-jumped), like the *coupé à deux mouvements* and others.
- 4) Rameau modifies the turn signs, the only innovation being that he places them near, instead of on the step sign.
- 5) Rameau introduces a few extra duration signs, that bear a close relationship to the music notation. For example, steps beginning with a white "head" are longer than those beginning with a black one. This was actually obtained in the Feuillet system with the use of simple, double, full and partial links between steps.

In our corpus of choreographies, three versions are notated according to Rameau's *Nouvelle Méthode*. We know from our previous observations that the structure of the *loure "Aimable Vainqueur"* appears to remain unchanged throughout a corpus of notations stretching over 64 years. This choreography is so stable, that it allows us to perform a kind of test on the evolution of the notation system.

Versions 5 and 6 are actually the choreography as it appeared in the second part of *La Nouvelle Méthode*; the choreography is indeed "translated" into Rameau's new notation system, but not much is added to how much we know about it. All along the notation, little "m"s (for *mesure*) indicate the bars or cadences. The steps have white or black "heads" in order to express duration, but we definitely miss the bar lines and the links, and the little curly rotation signs are not easier to read than Feuillet's. The choreography is identical to all other versions, except version 15.



Version 7, which is the choreography as it appears in Ferriol y Boxeraus' treatise *Reglas Utiles para los Aficionados a Danzar...*, published in 1745, is also written according to the *Nouvelle Méthode* and appears unchanged. Along the floor patterns, the notation features the signs used by Ferriol to indicate the duration of a musical bar: "c"s, for *compàs*.

After looking at Rameau's *Nouvelle Méthode*, it appears that his concern was more formal than really revolutionary in terms of contents. In general, it looks like the notation system gets loaded with new signs that express unnecessary details without allowing for any significant increase in the information given. Besides, the separation of the actions of the supporting- and gesturing leg appeals to our 20th century- analytical approach to movement but this was probably not necessary to the 18th-century readers, and not consistent with the fundamental structure of the notation system itself.

The fact is that the Feuillet system, to begin with, was not intended as a system of movement analysis, but more as a sort of shorthand that experienced dancers would use just to refresh their memory on a choreography, or to learn a dance for the next ball. In other words, the users of the original scores already knew how to dance their steps before deciphering them from the paper, and all they needed to do was understand what kind of step it was and what technical alterations were required. It is possible then that Rameau might have felt the need for a more analytical approach to movement, because the technique was evolving so fast, that a shorthand notation system was rapidly becoming inappropriate.

## CONCLUSION

This choreography's life is as long and adventuresome as most of us would like our own to be, and *Aimable Vainqueur* was even awarded the gift of immortality through Feuillet's and Rameau's notation systems. It is really exciting to see how constant this choreography remains through 64 years, through the many dancers who performed it, and through so many different hands which notated it. It is the best possible tribute that could be paid to the memory of its author, Louis-Guillaume Pécour, in these years in which so much of our dance production remains un-notated and does not even attempt to last beyond the limits of a theatre season or a festival. Maybe this should be particularly thought-provoking as we approach the year 2000, when the dance community will celebrate three hundred years of dance notation!

## NOTES:

- (1) Translation quoted from HILTON, Wendy, Dance and Music of Court and Theatre, Pendragon Press, 1997.
- (2) LANCELOT, Francine, La Belle Danse, Catalogue Raisonné fait en l'an 1995, Van Dieren Editeur, Paris, 1996, p. 296.
- (3) *Ibid.*, p.36.
- (4) For the use of the terms "reflection symmetry" and "rotation symmetry", I am referring to the paper *Regular and Irregular Figures. Symmetry in Baroque Dance Choreographies*, presented



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by Carol G. Marsh at the 1997 annual meeting of the Society of Dance History Scholars. Another article has been published on this subject by Ken Pierce and Jennifer Thorp, using the same terms. Unfortunately, I am unable to give the exact bibliographic reference.

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