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von

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## The »Demoiselle« Behind the Score

A Tentative Technical Portrait of M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot as She appears in the  
Choreographies Bearing her Name in the Pécour-Gaudrau Collection

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### Introduction

I remember a lecture in 1986 by Francine Lancelot at the Sorbonne in Paris, where I was a student:

The Feuillet notation surprises and irritates us [...] From whichever standpoint they may consider it [...] both the dancer and the researcher find themselves in front of an impressive monument. It surprises us with the ambition of its construction, it irritates us with its many uncertainties and ambiguities, it keeps its secrets or only reveals a few of them, thus hinting at more [...].

Why would we want to go further in reflecting upon it, given that we can work, read all ballroom and a few theater dances without much difficulty, make our reconstructions and create performances proposing our interpretations?<sup>1</sup>

Her provocative words back then were very inspiring, and as a matter of fact I have spent the past 20 years reconstructing dances of the Baroque repertory for school, research, and performance purposes, thus taking my reflection further on the path of notation analysis.

For all of us who reconstruct the 18<sup>th</sup>-century theater dance repertory, the score is the only evidence. In my opinion a reconstructed dance should be as far from a meaningless and fanciful improvisation as from a cold and aseptic exercise; to me, every reconstruction implies an initial phase of very rigorous analytical reading of the score and gathering of general information, followed by a more intuitive phase, in which different ways of reading the score come together. As Catherine Turocy says: »The process of reviving a dance from notation must be recognized as a full cultural exercise.«<sup>2</sup>

One of the ways to look at the Baroque repertory in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation could be the attempt to catch a reflection of the dancer behind the score. When approaching a Beauchamp-Feuillet notated dance, the reconstructor should not forget that it was once alive before being turned into signs on paper, and that there once was a dancer sweating to memorize it, for or with whom the dance was choreographed. In other words, we should try to look for the dancer behind the score, more than for some theoretical »truth« hiding behind the notation. We should try to walk backwards along the path that led the person who actually saw the dance through the process of condensing it into a score. I believe that signs contain more than just a quantitative

reflection of what the dancer did, and in this respect I would like to quote Ligia Pinheiro, from her paper *The Person behind the Symbols: What a Labanotation Score Can Reveal*, presented at the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Society of Dance History Scholars in 2002:

[T]he symbols of the notated score are more than mere representations of steps, levels, and directions; the symbols truly speak of the choreographic and movement style, as well as suggest insights to the personality of the individual who created the movements. In reading a Labanotation score you are able to not only reconstruct a dance, but also to come into contact with the choreographer's creative process. Such a close understanding of a choreographer is not possible through just historical research.<sup>3</sup>

What is said in the quotation about Labanotation could refer to scores in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation just as well. Behind each notated choreography stand a context – i.e., a character and an opera in which the dance was set – and a creative process performed by the choreographer and the dancer(s). All this eventually condenses into signs, and a good reconstruction should take into account all these different levels of reading.

### The Corpus

This paper attempts to catch a reflection of a dancer's technical identity by looking at the choreographies bearing her name within one specific collection of notated dances, i.e., the Pécour-Gaudrau collection.<sup>4</sup> We know little about Marie-Catherine Guiot. Pierre Rameau defines her as an «excellente danseuse» in the preface to his treatise *Le Maître à Danser*,<sup>5</sup> where she is portrayed as M<sup>r</sup> Dumoulin's «pas de deux» partner. She made her debut at the Opéra in 1705 and presumably retired in 1722.<sup>6</sup>

This collection contains a total of 39 dances and is divided into two parts; the first part consists of nine ballroom dances for two to four dancers, and the second part contains 30 theater dances: 21 are listed as «entrée», while the rest fall into the usual dance types, with three «gigues», one «sarabande», one «canary», one «musette», one «passacaille», one «loure», and one undefined dance (*La Paysanne*, musically a «forlane»).

M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot is the dancer most frequently named in the Pécour-Gaudrau collection, with

- seven dances «pour un homme et une femme», five with M<sup>r</sup> D. Dumoulin, and two with M<sup>r</sup> F. Dumoulin;

- five dances «pour deux femmes», all with M<sup>lle</sup> Prouost;

- four solos

(see Appendix). In his preface to the collection, Gaudrau writes:

At the beginning of every entrée you will find the name of the opera in which it was danced, and of those who danced it, I engraved them myself and I flatter myself to say that you will find the greatest accuracy in the steps as well as in rhythm, patterns, and music.<sup>7</sup>

We can trust him and assume that the dances bearing a dancer's name were actually in his or her repertory at the Opéra.<sup>8</sup> The collection was published around 1714, and in many cases the respective tragedy or the ballet was created a few years earlier, so we don't know how far the notated dances are from the original choreographies. We can guess that the dances were chosen because they suited the soloists' technical capabilities, so they would be able to display their virtuosity, thus making the dance worth recording in such a prestigious collection.

### Analysis of the solos

1. *Entrée seul pour une femme dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot*
2. *Entrée pour une femme seul dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot*
3. *Gigue pour une femme seul dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a l'opera de tancrede*
4. *Entrée pour une femme seul dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a l'opera d'athis*

1. *Entrée seul pour une femme dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot*

Jean Baptiste Lully, *Atys*: tragedy created in 1675, repeated in 1678, 1682, 1689, 1690, 1699, 1700, 1702, 1708, 1709.<sup>9</sup>

Prologue: *Air pour les Nymphes de Flore*. The heading of the score does not establish a direct relationship between this choreography and the staging of the opera, so I agree with Jennifer Thorp when she says that «it is not impossible that either M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot danced it in the opera, or as an exhibition dance in a private performance, perhaps at Court»<sup>10</sup>.

Triple metre (Sarabande):<sup>11</sup> 35 bars, out of which 13 feature jumps, 17 contain turns (the turning signs mostly appear as ornament; only two «demi-pirouettes» are notated, although the dancer actually turns six times), and 11 bars end in balance; many times both the turning and the jumping signs appear within the same bar; there are very few standard steps, mostly used as transitions.

The dance is short and the choreography has very simple space patterns, despite the ornamented look of its notation. The whole dance is practically set on the center line, with just a circular pattern in the first page, in a very stable frontal perspective.

After the side-to-side presentation common to many solos – though in a rather ornate form with one turn and two «en l'air» steps – bar 3 shows an interesting combination of steps and hops, also including *Entrée pour une femme seul dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot* (solo no. 2) in bar 15, with a slightly different ending. Then follow five bars on the balance theme, with different kinds of «ouvertures de jambe» finishing «ouvert» ou «fermé», with or without final hop or balance. The step in bar 8 is identical to the one notated in bar 8/9 of the *Gigue a deux dancée par M<sup>r</sup> D. dumoulin et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a philommelle*

and a similar sequence also appears in bars 9/10 of solo no. 2, although in this case the sustaining foot is not notated. Observing the similarities between these notated bars has made this step actually difficult to read; the sign crossing over the path line behind the sustaining foot seems to suggest a turning action, but no turning sign is notated. The same question arises in two different dances, so this seems to imply poor reading on my part, rather than poor writing on Gaudrau's! Still, for me the question remains open as to what the differences are in movement contents. The next section features one bar of jumps («changements» with half turn) and 9 bars of traveling steps all with different turn signs among which the most uncommon is a «pas de gaillarde» beginning with a «pas de bourrée en présence». The use of this step in this case is unusual, as the «pas de gaillarde» is more commonly used in duple meter or in 6/8 ballroom dances like forlanes.<sup>12</sup> The next interesting sequence is on page 2, a «contretemps battu» in fourth position, ending with an «assemblé». This sequence shares the structure of a «pas de gavotte» (hop – step – step – «assemblé»), and is one of the most frequently used non-standard steps in the dances bearing M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot's name in the Pécour-Gaudrau collection. This step appears in 14 out of 16 dances,<sup>13</sup> both in duple and triple metre and it is a fairly common step in virtuosic dances altogether. Two «pas de bourrée en présence» are found in this dance, as well as in solo no. 2 and in one of the duets.<sup>14</sup> The last section of the solo features a jumping sequence of «assemblé» – «changement» – «coupé», repeated twice with a variation; this sequence appears also in bar 15 of solo no. 2. The end of the dance features the usual hop – «jeté» and «pas de bourrée» backwards, taking the dancer upstage center.

As Jennifer Thorp observed, this dance has a very graceful flavor and it is easy to imagine M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot in the «tasteful restraint she brought to the ornamented steps of the choreography»<sup>15</sup>. Technically speaking this not a challenging dance; in my opinion the virtuosity it displays has to do with the density and the well-balanced use of ornamentation.

### 2. *Entrée pour une femme seul dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot*

Theobaldo di Gatti, *Scylla*: tragedy created in 1701<sup>16</sup>; I, 5: 2<sup>de</sup> entrée pour les mêmes [Candiots]

6/4: 20 bars, of which 14 bars have jumping steps in them; 13 bars have turning steps, the turning signs mostly being used as ornaments. Only two full «pirouettes» are notated, although the dancer turns around nine times. Twelve steps end in balance. According to Francine Lancelot, due to the presence of two step units per bar, this choreography calls for a moderate tempo.<sup>17</sup> This is indeed unique to this dance and makes it altogether a difficult piece, since in order to respect the «elasticity» of a 6/4 rhythm, the tempo can be moderate, but not as slow as to completely tame the difficulty of the sequence! There is little use of standard steps, and the spacing is simple with overall frontal perspective.

The first page features the usual side-to-side beginning in an ornamented form with «demi coupé» – «assemblé» fourth, and «demi contretemps» – «contretemps battu» with 1/2 turn. This dance shares the same beginning steps with the duet *Entrée pour un homme et une femme dancée par M<sup>r</sup> Dumoulin D. et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a Méléagre*; however in the solo the sequence, made of three items, is repeated twice with two units per bar. Over the first two bars this provides an additional form of ornament in the phrasing, as the «demi coupé» happens the first time on counts 1-2-3, and the second time in the second half of the bar.<sup>18</sup> The «contretemps battu» with 1/2 turn is repeated three times in bars 1–8, which appear therefore as a jumping section of moderate difficulty. The second page is technically more demanding and features: a section of «ronds de jambe» / «ouvertures de jambe» (also found in *Entrée seul pour une femme dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot* [solo no. 1] and in *Gigue a deux dancée par M<sup>r</sup> D. dumoulin et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a philommelle*), a section of «pas de bourrée en tournant» with «assemblé», two full «pirouettes» with preparation, two «pas de bourrée en présence» (like in solo no. 1 and in the duet *Canarye dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> proust et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot au triomphe delamour*) framed by two very dense combinations of hops and steps similar to the one in solo no. 1. The end features more or less the same vocabulary as the previous solo, with hop – «jeté» and «pas de bourrée» backwards.

This dance is very demanding, and looks like a piece that a famous soloist would perform in order to show her proficiency in the most difficult step types: jumps, turns and balance.

### 3. *Gigue pour une femme seul dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a lopera de tancrede*

André Campra, *Tancrede*: tragedy created in 1702, repeated in 1707<sup>19</sup>

Prologue: Gigue (followers of Peace) in 6/4: 52 bars, out of which 28 bear jumping signs, and 13 have turns. Most of the turning signs are used as ornaments; the notation features one full «pirouette» and three more «pirouettes» divided into «demi-pirouette» and «sissonne» with 1/2 turn; altogether the dancer turns seven times. Nine bars finish «en l'air». The spacing is simple and the dance is set in the frontal perspective, with no circular pattern.

This is the longest of M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot's solos in the collection. It is a regular «gigue» featuring one step unit per bar. This dance is not very demanding unless it is danced at a fast tempo; «gigues» were supposed to be played «vite».<sup>20</sup>

The dance opens with a side-to-side presentation with «pas de bourrée» and «contretemps ballonné». The first page features a problematic step in bar 14, which looks like a full «tour assemblé», in which, however, the turn sign seems to be missing (the turn is necessary in order to do the «assemblé» like the notation shows, therefore we can assume it was the notator's mistake). Bar 18 shows a «jeté» – step sequence on a diagonal line, appearing also in three other dances in M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot's notated repertory,<sup>21</sup> sharing the same rhythm and a similar character: *Gigue a deux dancée par M<sup>r</sup> D. dumoulin et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a philommelle*, *Canarye dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> proust et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot au triomphe delamour* and

*Entrée de deux Bacchante dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> prouost et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a l'opera de philommelle* («canaries» were supposed to be played fort vite, and were very similar to »gigues«).

On the second page, the choreography displays some of the most typical »gigue« vocabulary, like a »batterie« section consisting of »contretemps battu« in fourth – appearing four times in this dance, but also in 14 out of 16 dances in the collection! – an »assemblé battu« and »changement«, a »contretemps en tournant«, appearing in 11 out of 16 of Guiot's dances. Bars 24–25 display two »pas de gigue«, followed by a turning sequence made of one full »pirouette en dehors« and three more »pirouettes« consisting of 1/2 »pirouette« + 1/2 »tour sissonne«, interrupted by a step/hop combination similar to a minuet step. However, the sequence is repeated on both feet, therefore loosing any formal connection to a minuet step (to be found also in *Entrée pour une femme seul dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a l'opera d'athis*, solo no. 4, bar 20/21). The end is in a rather usual form, featuring a »pas de bourrée en présence«, followed by a »contretemps«-hop and a »pas de bourrée« backwards taking the dancer upstage center.

#### 4. *Entrée pour une femme seul dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a l'opera d'athis*

Jean Baptiste Lully, *Athys*: tragedy created in 1675, repeated in 1678, 1682, 1689, 1690, 1699, 1700, 1702, 1708, 1709<sup>22</sup>

Prologue: *Air pour les Nymphes de Flore* (listed as »gavotte« in the 1709 edition of the score). According to Jennifer Thorp,

the Gavotte is probably the solo that Guiot danced in either the staging of November 1708, or that of November 1709, or both, since they are the only years prior to 1713 when she is known to have performed in *Athys*. The first page of the dance notation is headed *Entrée pour une femme seul[e] dancée par Mlle Guiot a l'opera d'athis*, and the tune engraved along the top of the notation is in the same key as in the scores of the opera,<sup>23</sup> so we can perhaps assume a direct connection between this choreography and the opera. M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot appears in Parfaict's cast lists for both the 1708 and 1709 productions, as a Nymph of Flora. In the listing for 1708 she is accompanied by four other female Nymphs of Flora, and four male Followers of Flora; and her name heads the list of Nymphs, which suggests a solo role. In the listing for 1709 she is the only dancer named. The music for the Gavotte occurs twice in the Prologue, so it is quite possible that one playing was for a group dance, and the other for her solo. Or she may have danced a solo section within a group dance.<sup>24</sup>

Duple meter: 28 bars, 20 of which bear jumping signs, and nine feature various degrees of turning, which make the dancer turns around five times, although only one full pirouette is notated as such.

Page 1 is altogether a jumping sequence (»contretemps en tournant«, »soubresauts« in third, »temps levé en promenade«, »sissonnes«, »contretemps battu«, two turning »jetés«) in which the turning ornament is added three times (»contretemps«, »temps levés« and »jetés«). The »temps-levés en promenade« can be found also in two other dances: 2.<sup>me</sup> *Entrée des festes venitienne dancée par les mêmes* and *Entrée de deux Bacchante dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> prouost et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a l'opera de philommelle*.

The second page displays the same character, except for bars 15–19, in which the choreography features »glissades«, »ouvertures de jambe«, and a full »pirouette en dehors«. The same step-hop sequence already seen in solo no. 3 appears here and is also repeated on both feet, therefore loosing any formal connection to a minuet step. The dance finishes with the usual backing up towards upstage center (»chassés«) and a »pas de gavotte en tournant« with a full turn; this is the only »pas de gavotte« of the choreography, and of the four solos altogether. However, this step combination appears in nine out of the twelve duets and it is interesting to notice how freely Pécour uses it, since the step appears in dances musically notated in 2, but also in 6/4 or 6/8, which, although formally comparable to a »gavotte«, convey a very different character and relate more to the »gigue«-like dances than to the »gavotte«- or bourrée-like typical duple-meter choreographies.

### Conclusion

Although M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot is probably the dancer most frequently named in any dance collection in the Beauchamps-Feuillet repertory, the corpus still seems too small to allow any conclusions. However, I would like to offer the following observations concerning the reconstruction M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot's repertory:

- The solos seem short; the Pécour-Gaudrau collection lists a total of six solos »pour une femme«, one of which does not bear the name of a dancer (*Gigue pour une femme sul non dancée a Lopera*, 104 bars). Four are attributed to M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot (20–52 bars), and one to M<sup>lle</sup> Subligny (*Passacaille pour une femme dancée par M<sup>lle</sup> Subligny en Angleterre delopera darmide*, 149 bars). On the other hand, the duets featuring M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot appear to be comparable in length to the rest of the duets in the collection.
- Rhythmically speaking, M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot is cast in five dances in 6/4 (two solos and three duets), four duets notated in 2, three dances in 4 (one solo and two duets), three dances in 6/8, and just one triple-meter dance (solo). The rest of the collection features five duets in 6/4, three duets in triple metre, and one in 4, as well as three solos in triple metre, one in 2, and one in 6/4. Her favorite meter appears to be 6/4 or 6/8. Maybe this has to do with the kind of roles in which she was preferably cast; if this were the case, we might well imagine M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot to have been a brilliant and graceful dancer, rather than a soloist surpassing her colleagues in dramatic roles. According to Jennifer Thorp, between 1705 and 1717 M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot was cast in so many graceful characters, such as a Grace or other »Grace-related« roles, as to hint at a possible danger of her being typecast.<sup>25</sup>
- Spacewise, it seems that while her duets are comparable to the rest of the duets in the collection, her solos feature a remarkably simpler use of the space than the other solos, showing more interest in the invention of steps than in the invention of new floor patterns.

- The choreographies feature all kinds of difficulties. If the solos in this collection were intended to display a soloist's virtuosity, we can say that M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot was probably not afraid of jumping, repeatedly holding a balance with an »en l'air« foot, or of turning. However, Pécour seems to make a rather constant and creative use of turning in the choreographies for M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot, both as an ornament and a virtuoso figure per se. To my knowledge, her solos number among the very few compositions featuring two full »pirouettes« one after the other. For example, the *Passacaille d'Armide* from the same collection features a more complicated and original use of jumps, but is not as daring in the turns, and although it is a much longer solo, there is just one full »pirouette« at the end of the dance.
- Some steps seem very typical, such as the »temps levé en promenade« and it would be interesting to broaden the study and see if they appear elsewhere.
- The duet *Entrée de deux Bacchante* danced par M<sup>lle</sup> prouost et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a l'opéra de philommelle features what seems to be the playing of a tambourine. This is one more feature that deserves further investigation, although to my knowledge this is the only choreography other than the *Chaconne d'Arlequin* in which the notation suggests the use of an object.

Many steps can be said to appear very frequently in Pécour's choreographies for M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot, such as the »contretemps battu en tournant« and the »contretemps battu« in fourth. Yet however tempting this may be, I think we should be very careful in identifying any of them as a specialty of M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot. The path of choreographic and notation analysis leads to the comparison of as many sources as possible. This could therefore be the beginning of a broader study in which the technical profiles of famous Baroque dancers, as they appear in various dance collections, can be compared. For example, we can see that M<sup>lle</sup> Subligny appears to have been the »primadonna« of the Pécour-Feuillet II<sup>me</sup> *Recueil*,<sup>26</sup> and Mrs. Santlow dominates the English collection by L'Abbé.<sup>27</sup> This might eventually lead us to a clearer understanding of different styles of choreography or shed new light on the dancing technique before the moment the Beauchamps-Feuillet system began to be an inadequate tool for the needs of the fast-evolving ballet technique, at the border between »dance noble« and »ballet d'action«.

## Notes

- 1 LANCELOT: *L'écriture Feuillet*, p. 19 (my translation).
- 2 TUROCY: *The spirit of eighteenth-century ballet*, p. 11.
- 3 PINHEIRO: *The Person Behind the Symbols*, p. 107.
- 4 PECOUR/GAUDRAU: *Nouveau Recueil* (All translations by the author).
- 5 RAMEAU: *Le Maître à danser*, p. xv.
- 6 For a study of M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot's dancing career, see BAUGUËSS: *The Search for Mademoiselle Guiot*; and BAUGUËSS: *An eighteenth century dance reconstruction*.
- 7 PECOUR/GAUDRAU: *Nouveau Recueil*, preface.
- 8 LITTLE/MARSH: *La Danse noble*, p. 112.

- 9 LANCELOT: *La Belle Dance*, p. 152.
- 10 THORP: *The notion of grace*.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 On the use of »pas de gaillarde« in French and Italian ball dances, see COLONNA: *Danza barocca oggi*, p. 156.
- 13 The only Guiot dances in the collection in which this step does not appear are the *Entrée d'un pastre et d'une pastourelle* danced par M<sup>r</sup> f. dumoulin et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot au festevénitienne and the *Entrée pour une femme seul* danced par M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot, both in 6/4.
- 14 *Canarye* danced par M<sup>lle</sup> prouost et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot au triomphe delamour.
- 15 THORP: *The notion of grace*.
- 16 LANCELOT: *La Belle Dance*, p. 154.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 On the use of phrasing and rhythm as ornament see COLONNA: *Les Chaconnes d'Arlequin*.
- 19 LANCELOT: *La Belle Dance*, p. 155.
- 20 Ibid., p. LVI.
- 21 *Gigue a deux* danced par M<sup>r</sup> D. dumoulin et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a philommelle; *Canarye* danced par M<sup>lle</sup> prouost et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot au triomphe delamour; and *Entrée de deux Bacchante* danced par M<sup>lle</sup> prouost et M<sup>lle</sup> Guiot a l'opéra de philommelle. These three dances share the same rhythm and a similar character; a 6/8 »entrée« may well be compared to a gigue, and »canaries« were supposed to be played »fort vite«, and were very similar to »gigues«.
- 22 LANCELOT: *La Belle Dance*, p. 156.
- 23 LULLY: *Alys*.
- 24 THORP: *The notion of grace*.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 FEUILLET: *II<sup>me</sup> Recueil de Danses de Bal pour l'année 1704*.
- 27 L'ABBÉ: *A new collection of dances*.