

# Other French Dances

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Although most of the dances in Orchesography are bransles, Arbeau describes a number of dances that are not bransles.

These include the following types of dance:

- Pavanes
  - Galliards and Tourdions
  - Basse Danses
  - Courante
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## Music and Choreography

Arbeau in most cases does not give music for these dances (beyond a single line, or part of a single line), and in other cases does not give much in the way of choreography. For example, his description of the pavan only states that the dance has "two singles and a double forwards, and two singles and a double backwards", while his description of the courante only gives the step types, and not any specific choreography.

Modern day reconstructors of these dances have tended to embellish these dance descriptions and invent choreographies for them. These choreographies are what have tended to become danced as common dances in the SCA, and these are described in this book.

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## Other Music

There are also many pieces of pavan, basse danse, courante, and galliard music published in period in various arrangements. There are a lot of choreographies that have been written specifically to match one or another piece of music. The books of Pierre Attaignant, Susato, and Praetorius are good sources to find music to fit such dances to – Praetorius in particular published an almost ridiculous number of arrangements of courante, galliard, and volte music that can be used for creating choreographies in period style.

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# Pavanes

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The pavan is a slow, processional court dance. All pavanes have a common thread, that is they all have the same basic steps. The word pavan comes from "Padoanna", which is an ancient dance of Padua, in Italy. All pavanes are done in duple time.

Each pavan is commonly followed by a Galliard. The galliard for any pavan is often danced to the same tune as the pavan, but played at a much livelier pace, in triple time. Galliard tunes developed a character of their own during the time of Elizabeth I's reign (some of which I find too slow to be danceable).

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## Steps

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The basic steps of all pavanes is a set of three steps: Single-Single-Double. This is either SL-SR-DL (a pavan set left), or SR-SL-DR (a pavan set right). Most steps done in a pavan are done going either forwards or backwards.




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**SL -- Single Left, moving forwards.**

Step forwards on the left foot, then join feet, stepping forwards on the right foot.

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**SR -- Single Right, moving forwards.**

Step forwards on the right foot, then join feet, stepping forwards on the left foot.

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**DL -- Double Left, moving forwards.**

Step forwards on the left foot, then forwards on the right foot moving past the left foot, then forwards on the left foot, moving past the right foot, then join feet, stepping forwards on the right foot.

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**DR -- Double Right, moving forwards.**

Step forwards on the right foot, then forwards on the left foot moving past the right foot, then forwards on the right foot, moving past the left foot, then join feet, stepping forwards on the left foot.

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**SLb/SRb -- Single Left/Right moving backwards.**

These steps are the same as the singles moving forwards, except that they are done backwards.

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**DLb/DRb -- Double Left, moving backwards.**

These steps are the same as the doubles listed above, but the steps are done moving backwards.

In a pavan, a single takes two bars (left-together), and a double takes four bars (left-right-left-together).

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**Pavan Set**

A “Pavan Set” is a combination of single-single-double, done moving either forwards or backwards. This is the basic step unit of the Pavan – all pavans are simply pavan sets done over and over again.

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## A Basic Pavan: The Known World Pavan

This is an SCA choreography set to the Pavan music (Belle Qui Tiens Ma Vie), in Arbeau’s Orchesography. It is one of the most common dances done in the SCA.

This is often called the “Carolingian Pavan”, or just “The Pavan”.

1 - 8	SL SR DL	Pavan set forwards
9 - 16	SR SL DR	Pavan set forwards
17 - 24	SL SR DL	Pavan set forwards
25 - 32	SRb SLb DRb	Pavan set backwards

At this point, the gentlemen kneel, and the ladies continue the dance in a full circle around the men, still holding hands.

33 - 40	SL SR DL	Moving half way around the man, to end up facing backwards down the line, and on the opposite side to where you started.
41 - 48	SR SL DR	Moving back into position.

At this point, the men rise, and dance around the ladies in the same way:

49 - 56	SL SR DL	Moving half way around the lady, to end up facing backwards down the line, and on the opposite side to where you started.
57 - 64	SR SL DR	Moving back into position.

The dance repeats as often as necessary to the end of the music.

In the Stomhold version of this dance the men do not kneel, and the couples drop hands during bars 33 - 64.

# **Galliards and Tourdions**

The tourdion is a light, quick 15th century dance in 32 measures which usually follows a basse danse. It was a simple, purer form which developed into the galliard. The latter veiled the simpler tourdion steps in elaboration and decoration, but became an entity danced by itself. The quicker tourdion was performed with lower, faster kicks (pied en l'air), while the slower galliard could allow higher kicks, for example the greve and the pied crosse.

The Galliard and Tourdion are both done to six beats, and have similar steps. Here are the basic steps:

- |      |          |  |
|------|----------|--|
| 1.   | kL       | Hop into the air, and land on the right foot, with the left foot extended (like a KL in a Bransle).                |
| 2.   | kR       |  |
| 3.   | kL       |  |
| 4.   | kR       |  |
| 5.6. | Capriole | Pause slightly, then take a larger leap, landing on both feet with the left foot in front of the right foot. (PL). |

The above sequence is called a "cinque pas" (five steps), and is repeated throughout the dance alternating with the following sequence, which is the same thing starting on the right foot.

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1. kR
  2. kL
  3. kR
  4. kL
  - 5.6. Capriole
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A common way of dancing the Tourdion after a Basse Danse is to dance 8 cinq pas travelling forwards, then 8 facing your partner, repeating until you run out of music or weet bix.

Galliards are done following a pavan. Often, each pavan music has a galliard piece following the same tune, but in 6/6 time.

There is theoretically some similarity between the galliard and tourdion, and the pas de brabant of the Burgundian basse danses, and the saltarello of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian Balli.

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## Galliard Variations & More Complex Galliard Steps

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To learn the endless variations of galliard figures, it is necessary to be conversant with the vocabulary from which they are named.

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### Abbreviations

k	Pied en l'air	low kick (front)
K	Greve	high kick (front)
Hk	Ruade (horsekick)	(back kick)
Ck	Ru de vache	cowkick (side kick)
Pc	Pied crouise	crossed kick (foot across other shin)
Bk	Campanello	bell kick (alternate pied en l'air/ruade on the same foot)
J	Saut majeur	high jump
jj	Saut moyen	medium jump
j	Petit saut	small jump
Cp	Capriole	jump, crossing feet in air
CS	Cadence	jump, followed by a Posture
P	Posture	walking pose (foot & hand on same side forward, other foot & hand back)
Mf	Marque talon	touch heel to ground
Mp	Marque pied	touch toe to ground
F1	Fleuret	2 rapid alternate low kicks followed by a normal pace high kick (kL kR KL)
Cn	Canary	low kick, marque talon, then quick marque pied.
Sf	Fleuret Croise (L)	(L) sideways step followed by quick (R) crossed kick, then normal pace low (R) kick
En	Entretaille	Forwards travelling step slipping one foot beneath the other
Pj	Pied Joints	Join feet together

**Notes**

At the start of each step in a galliard there is a small leap (Petit saut or *j*), which is included as part of the step unless it specifically states otherwise. For example, to do a kL, make a small leap onto the right foot (*j*) at the same time as kicking the left foot forwards slightly in a low kick (kL).

In learning some galliards it is frequently easier to have a small chant or "mantra" to go with the galliard. This can be recited quickly while making the steps. For an example of this, see the "overfoot variation" on the next page, which can be quite difficult to learn, but is much easier with the mantra.

## Five Step Galliard Figures

Each of these motions give rise to one or more galliard figures. They can be performed either moving forward, partners holding inner hands, for processing about the hall, or as a counterpassing variation if room is limited or expertise in elaborate steps is to be demonstrated.

Each of these galliard figures is shown starting on the left foot. In each case the second set of the figure should be repeated in the same way as the first set, reversing Right & Left.

1.	Cinq-pas (five step)	kL kR kL kR CSL
2.	Ruade-Entretaille	HkL KR HkL KR CSL. This is the French "bell-step" from Orchesography.
3.	Ru de Vache	CkL CkL CkL CkL CSL
4.	Pied Croise	PcL PcL PcR PcR CSR
5.	Campanello	BkL BkL BkL BkL CSR  The Italian "Little Bell" step. Execute this pattern with partner's (L) sides opposed. Note: one Bk (L) = k & Hk in one beat.
6.	Fleuret	FfL FfR CSL
7.	Side-crossed Fleuret	SfL SfR CSL
8.	Over-foot variation	kL PcR HkL kR CSL mantra: "kick cross back kick change".

It is possible to choreograph your own galliard using specific patterns of galliard variations. This example I saw listed as the "Earl of Salisbury Galliard".

1.	(16 measures)	Cinq-pas counterpassing (twice)
2.	(16 measures)	Pied Croise.
	A.	Cinq-pas counterpassing (once)
	B.	Overfoot variation
3.	(16 measures)	Cinq-pas counterpassing (once)
	A.	Side-crossed fleuret
	B.	Cinq-pas counterpassing (once)
4.	(16 measures)	
	A.	
	B.	

## Eleven Step Galliard Figures

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Instead of dancing each 6 beat galliard measure as one sequence of 5 steps, and then reversing the steps for the next 6 beats, a galliard sequence can be derived by taking 2 measures of 6 beats each, and performing 11 steps in the 2 measures.

At the end of the first measure, instead of performing a cadence followed by a posture for 2 beats, each beat is used for a single step. The cadence and posture are done at the end of each second measure only. Therefore, 6 steps are done in the first measure, and 5 in the second measure for a total of 11 steps.

Some of these variations are simple extensions of the 5 step galliards. These are the easiest to perform, because the 5 step sequence is just extended for a further measure before the cadence:

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1. Onze-pas (eleven step) kL kR kL kR kL kR kL kR kL kR CSL
  2. Fleuret FIL FIL FIL FIL CSL
  3. Side crossed Fleuret SfL SfR SfL SfR CSL
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Other eleven step galliards are more complex, being formed from larger combinations of the galliard steps:

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4. (From Orchesography) HkR KL HkL KL HkR KL HkL KR HkR  
KL CSR  
mantra: back front swing swing back  
front swing kick swing kick change.
  5. (From Orchesography) HkR KL HkR KL PR KR PL KL HkL KL  
CSR  
mantra: back front back front down up  
down up swing swing change.
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# La Volta

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This dance is basically a galliard variation, although it can contain other steps. The dance is for a single couple or as many couples as will.

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## The Steps

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### VSL -- Volta Step Left

The basic La Volta galliard figure is as follows:

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1.	kL	Kick Left
2.	SL	Step Left
3, 4.	J	Large Leap
5.	Pj	Feet Together
6.		Pause

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A right Volta step (VSR) begins with the right foot.

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### Vt -- The Volta Turn

1	kL	Kick Left
2	SL	Step Left
3 - 6	Leap and spin.	

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## How to do the Leap and Spin

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### Body Position

This is something best shown, not learned from a book, but here are some notes on how I do the leap and spin in the Volta:

Firstly, the man and lady must be standing close together – touching at the hips. The lady will need to be close enough to sit on the man's thigh.

This can be done with the lady on the man's left side (improper position), or the lady on the man's right side (proper position). Whether you do this proper or improper is up to you. Arbeau first describes the turn done improper, and then says it can also be done proper. The iconographic evidence from the period (paintings of couples dancing La Volta) show the dance being done in either stance, although this could be a matter of artistic license as much as anything else.

My recommendation (and this may not work for everyone) is that the turn works best done proper if the man is right-handed, and improper if the man is left-handed.

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**Hand holds**

There are a couple of possible hand-holds. These are as follows:

- Arbeau says that the man holds the lady by the back, and by the busk point at the front of her gown. The lady places one arm across the man's back and holds his shoulder, and uses the other to steady her skirts. Of course this only works if the lady is wearing a gown that has a useful busk point.
- Where the lady is tall enough relative to the man (and the important thing is her body length relative to his, and that her arms are long enough), the lady puts her near-side arm across the man's shoulders, and brings her other arm across in front of the man's shoulders to hold her near side hand. In doing this she will put her weight onto the man's shoulders. The man will put his near side arm around the lady's waist, and places his hand on her hip. The man takes the lady's near side hand (now on his shoulder) in his other hand, and pulls down on it slightly to lock her into place.
- Where the lady is taller than the man (especially if there is a considerable height difference at the hips), then she can extend her left arm past the man's shoulders and take it with her right hand, across the front of his body. This will help her put more of her weight onto the man's shoulders, which makes the lift easier from the man's point of view.
- A shorter lady will need to place her near side hand on the man's near side shoulder, and use this to lift. Her other hand can be used to hold her skirts in place. This keeps the lady more upright but does require more lifting effort on the part of the man (with his leg), so really only works where the center of gravity is closer to the man. The lady should still take care to push down on the man's near side shoulder as she leaps and is lifted by him.
- Where the man is much taller and/or heavier than the lady, he may need to use his far side hand to help with the lift. He can do this by reaching across his body and placing this hand under her skirts as she leaps.

The hand hold that you use will normally be dictated by the height and weight difference between the man and the lady. Experiment with these different holds until you find one that works for you and your partner.

The idea behind the hand hold is to transfer as much weight as possible onto the man's shoulders during the spin. Physiologically, men are much better equipped to carry weight on their shoulders than they are on their hips relative to ladies.

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**The knee lift**

The man basically at this point will be lifting the lady by his near side leg. I will describe this from the point of a right-handed man dancing in proper position – reverse “left” and “right” in the section below if you are dancing improper.

The man turns his right knee outwards, and lifts his right leg, so that the lady sits on his right thigh. The man makes sure that his weight is on his left leg after stepping forwards on to it – this then becomes the pivot point for the dancers as they complete the turn.

The lady leaps, and the man uses his arm, leg, and shoulders to lift her, and the couple spins.

The man should then turn through 270° keeping the couple balanced on his left leg while doing so.

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**Some points to note about the leap and spin:**

The man should not bring his right leg up too quickly or else he will end up kicking the lady in the backside!. He should bring his leg up slowly underneath her and allow her to sit on it.

The man may need to use his left arm for balance – this is usually the case where the lady is heavier than the man.

All of the above takes a lot of practice – do this dance with a partner you are familiar with!

**Height, weight, and balance**

Depending on the relative height and centers of gravity of the man and lady, the man may need to bend his left leg more to get his right thigh up and under the lady. A tall man will need to bend his left knee quite a lot to get his right leg under a short lady.

## A Basic Volta

**The Sequence**

A basic volta sequence is to do four volta steps forwards, then four volta turns. This is repeated until the end of the music.

## Maeve's Coronation Volta

This volta was choreographed by Maeve ni Iaschata for the first Coronation in the Kingdom of Lochac. It is for 2 dancers, starting side by side.

1 – 4	Vt x 4	The man and the lady independently (i.e. Not in the turn position) do four volta turns. The man starts by hopping forwards and making a $\frac{3}{4}$ turn over his left shoulder to end in front of his starting position and facing right. The lady starts by hopping into the man's place and making a $\frac{3}{4}$ turn to face forwards. Then continue this 3 more times to end up back in place.
5	HkL kR HkR jL Cadenza	Galliard sequence: kick swing change swing change. End with a cadenza and taking positions for a volta turn.
6 – 9	Vt x 4	4 volta turns.
10	Vt	Dropping back to proper position, the man and lady independently do a volta turn, diagonally outwards away from each other.
11	Vt	Independently do a volta turn diagonally back in towards each other
12 – 15	Vt x 4	4 volta turns.
16	HkL kR HkR jL Cadenza	Repeat the earlier galliard sequence from bar 5.
17 – 32	Repeat	Repeat the entire dance.

# Courantes

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Courantes are another type of early period dance. Courantes are documented in Arbeau's Orchesography although there are many sources for Courante (or Coranto) music, and a few modern scholars have choreographed their own versions. One of these is presented here.

## Steps

Courantes are danced with their own style of steps, being courante steps. These are singles and doubles done with hops in them.

All of the Courante steps can be done sideways (in which case the notation indicated will be used), or forwards (in which case the notation SLcf/DLcf/SRcf/DRcf will be used), or backwards (in which case the notation SLcb/SRcb/SRcb/DRcb will be used).

### **SLc -- Courante Single Left (2 beats)**

1	JL	Preliminary hop, bringing your left foot into the air.
2	SL JR and close	Step on to your left foot. Slight hop on left foot, and bring your right foot up towards your left foot, landing with feet together.

### **DLc -- Courante Double Left (4 beats)**

1	JL	Preliminary hop on your right foot.
2	SL	Step on to your left foot.
3	JR	Hop on your left foot.
4	SR	Step on to your right foot.
5	JL	Hop on your right foot.
6	SL	Step on to your left foot.
7	JR and close	Slight hop on your left foot, and bring your right foot up towards your left foot landing with feet together.

### **SRc/DRc -- Courante Single/Double Right**

These steps are done in the same way as the Singles and Doubles Left, except with the feet reversed.

### **Rv -- Reverance**

A simple French Reverance, as used for French Basse Danses and Bransles is used.

## Courante a la Lochac

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Dancers begin in a single line, with couples standing side by side.



<b>Introduction</b>	1 - 4	SLc SRc	End by dropping hands.
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<b>Theme</b>	In this section, the men and the ladies dance at the same time.
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1 - 8	Men DLc DRc	The men perform a double left to the left side, then right to the right side.
1 - 8	Ladies DLcf DRcf	The ladies dance forwards with a double left then a double right, away from the men, to end up facing away from them.
9 - 12	Both SLc SRc	Both dance a single left then right side to side.
13 - 20	Men DLcf DRcf	The men dance forwards, to finish behind the ladies.
13 - 20	Ladies DLc DRc	While the men are dancing up behind them, the ladies dance side to side.
21 - 24	Men DLc	The men move to the ladies' left and finish facing the ladies' left.
21 - 24	Ladies	Do not move, look away from the men, to the right.
25 - 28	Men DRc	The men dance back around to the right, finishing to the ladies' right.
25 - 28	Ladies	Do not move, look away from the men, to the left.
25 - 28	Men	Do a half turn over your left shoulder to face the other way.

Repeat the above section, with the ladies acting in the way of the men, and the men acting in the way of the ladies, as follows:

29 - 36	Ladies DLc DRc	End this sequence with a half turn over your left shoulder to face the backs of the men.
29 - 36	Men DLcf DRcf	End this sequence with your backs to the ladies.
37 - 40	Both SLc SRc	Both dance a single left then right side to side.
41 - 48	Ladies DLcf DRcf	The ladies dance forwards, to finish behind the men.
41 - 48	Men DLc DRc	While the ladies are dancing up behind them, the men dance side to side.
49 - 52	Ladies DLc	The ladies move to the men's left.
49 - 52	Men	Do not move, look away from the ladies, to the right.
53 - 56	Ladies DRc	The ladies dance back around to the men's right.
53 - 56	Men	Turn to face the ladies, and reverance

# French Basse Danse

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The most easily accessible source for French Basse Danse material is the Orchesography of Thoinot Arbeau. There are a number of basse danse books and manuscripts, which give more information than Orchesographie.<sup>1</sup>

Arbeau gives the music for only one Basse Danse, being Jouyssance Vous Donneray. However, it does make the statement that Basse Danses fall into two main categories, being regular and irregular. Jouyssance Vous Donneray is a regular basse danse, Arbeau gives the steps for several of the irregular basse danses, the music can be obtained from various sources of the period.

Arbeau's distinction between a regular Basse Danse and an irregular one is that for a regular Basse Danse the main part of the dance (excluding the retour) contains 80 bars (20 quaternions). In each 4 bars (one quaternion) the dancers perform either a double, two singles, a Reprise, or a Branle. In the Basse Dance Jouyssance vous Donneray, there are 80 bars to the main part of the dance, and 48 to the retour, therefore it is a regular Basse Danse. Patience also has 80 bars, but Arbeau explains that this is an irregular Basse Danse anyway, without stating why.

Three of the irregular Basse Danses are shown here. These Basse Danses are given for interest's sake only. Arbeau states that they were rarely danced, and only dancers who wanted to show off their memory skills (and no doubt endurance) would request one of these dances at a ball.

Each of these dances (as well as Jouyssance) concludes with a Conge. This is a brief (1-beat reverance), done by facing in to your partner by swivelling your feet, and giving a quick nod of the head, also bending very briefly and slightly at the knees and the waist.

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## **Confortez-moi**

Rv Br  
SS D SS Rp Br  
SS D SS Rp Br  
SS DDD SS Rp Br  
SS D SS Rp Br  
Conge

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## **Toute Frelorei**

Rv Br  
SS D SS Rp Br  
SS DDD SS Rp Br  
Conge

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<sup>1</sup> Including Arena, "Ad suos ...", which I really must have a proper read of someday! I don't care much for his style of writing, however, which is a bit hard on someone whose cognitive science is 400 years out of date.

**Patience**

Rv Br  
SS D Rp D SS Rp Br  
SS DDD Rp Br  
SS D SS Rp Br  
Conge

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## Basse Danse Steps

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**SL/SR/DL/DR –  
Single/Double  
Left/Right**

These steps are all done moving forwards in the same way as for a pavan. Where a SL is followed by a SR, the two steps are done together, in one flowing motion, and not as two separate steps. Two singles, or one double, are done to 4 bars, or one quaternion.

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**Rv -- Reverance**

The reverance for a Basse Danse is done to four bars. It is basically a longish bow to your partner, moving one foot back, and bending forwards at the waist.

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**Br – Branle**

Branle comes from a French word meaning to move from side to side. Here is how the Branle is done according to Arbeau:

On the first bar, turn the body to the left.

On the second bar, turn back to the right, glancing outwards at the spectators

On the third bar, turn back out to the left

On the fourth bar, turn back to the right, glancing towards your partner.

The movements are done with the body only, keeping the feet together.

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**Rp -- Reprise**

A reprise in the French Basse Danse is done in four bars. There are several different versions of the reprise floating about, here is my interpretation of what Arbeau says:

On the first bar, the dancers raise their right foot very slightly, and shake their feet as if shaking the snow off their boots.

On the second bar, repeat the above with the right foot.

On the third bar repeat the above, but this time with the left foot.

On the fourth bar repeat the above with the right foot once again.

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## Jouyssance Vous Donneray

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This is a more complex Basse Danse than some, and certainly more complex than the majority of the French and Burgundian dances shown here.

The dance consists of two parts, the main Basse Danse and a Retour. Each part concludes with a Conge, or brief (1 bar) reverance, done to a high point in the music.

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**The Basse Danse sequence is:**

Rv Br			
SL SR	DL	Rp DL	Rp Br
SL SR	DL DR DL	Rp DL	Rp Br
SL SR	DL		Rp Br
Conge			

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**The Retour is:**

Br	DL		Rp Br
SL SR	DL DR DL	Rp DL	Rp Br
Conge			

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Laid out as above, the dance is a little easier to remember. The main dance sequence consists of Single-Single-Double-Reprise-Double-Reprise-Branle. If you can remember this, then starting with the Reverance and the initial Branle, the dance becomes this:

1. Dance sequence.
  2. Dance sequence with two extra doubles inserted.
  3. Dance sequence with a Reprise-Double removed.
  4. Conge.
  5. Double-Reprise-Branle sequence. (The last three bits of a dance sequence).
  6. Dance sequence with two extra doubles inserted. (The same as 2).
  7. Conge.
-