Among the extant sources in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation, only a few German choreographies are known today (Table 1). The author was therefore very pleased to discover an unknown dance manuscript which belonged to the ducal court of Wolfenbüttel.¹

**Physical description of the manuscript**
The manuscript is 26 cm x 21 cm in size and is bound in brown leather with gold embossing. On the back is a paper label inscribed in ink with “Extr. 120.1”. Inside on the front cover a property notice is written in ink: “Ex Bibliotheca | D: Ferdin. Alberti | et| D. Antoniae Amaliae | Ducum Brunsv. ac Luneb.”² The book has an undecorated paste-down and contains sixteen folios, ten of them in original pagination.

The outline of the manuscript is as follows:

[f. I-II]: empty folios
[f. IIIr]: Title
[f. IVr-v]: Dedication
p. 1: Rigaudon [musical score]
p. 2: Menuet [musical score]
p. 3–6: Rigaudon [choreography for 2 gentlemen]
p. 7–12: Menuet [choreography for 1 lady and 2 gentlemen]
pp. 21–24: empty pages

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**Table 1. German sources containing dances in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, Title</th>
<th>Year &amp; Place</th>
<th>Dances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. H. P. I. H. P. Maître de Danse, Oder Tantz-Meister, Welcher lehret, Wie ein Taentzer, So die Fundamenta gefasset, Ohne Huelfe, sich selbsts die gebrauchlichsten Fransoeschen [sic] Taentze beybringen koenne⁶</td>
<td>1705 Glückstadt</td>
<td>4 danses à deux (2 of them of French origin)⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Dubreil, Danses Nouvelles Pour Lebal [sic] La Bavaroise Danse figurée pour deux personnes La Bavaroise Contre-Danse pour plusieurs personnes Selon la forme ordinaire […]⁵</td>
<td>[1715 or 1716] Munich</td>
<td>1 danse à deux⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Dubreil without title⁷</td>
<td>[1717] Munich</td>
<td>3 danses à deux⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gottfried Taubert, Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister, oder gruendliche Erklaerung der Franzoesischen Tantz-Kunst, bestehend in drey Buechern […]⁹</td>
<td>1717 Leipzig</td>
<td>5 danses à deux (3 of them of French origin)ⁱ⁰ 1 ladies’ solo (of French origin) 1 gentlemen’s solo (of French origin)⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivier, La princesse de Darmstadt¹⁰</td>
<td>[c. 1718/19] Rödelheim</td>
<td>1 choreography¹¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Dubreil, La Hessoise Darmstadt Danse Figurée a deux pour le bal &amp; contredance […]¹²</td>
<td>1718 Munich</td>
<td>3 danses à deux¹³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedrich Wilhelm Roboam de la Marche, Ballet dancè [sic] à l’occasion de l’heureuse retour […]</td>
<td>1726 Wolfenbüttel</td>
<td>1 danse à deux¹⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Dubreil, La Carlstadt Danse Figurée La Vandengeuse Contredanse […]¹⁵</td>
<td>1730 Munich</td>
<td>1 danse à deux¹⁶</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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¹ This article is based on a paper given at the 20th Annual Oxford Dance Symposium, New College Oxford, 17–18 April 2018. I am grateful to Jennifer Thorp and Michael Burden for inviting me to speak at the symposium.

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The transcription of the title page reads:


The next two pages contain the dedication from the dancing master, Friedrich Wilhelm Roboam de la Marche:17

“Monseigneur | L’heureux retour de Votre Altesse Serenissime | cause par tout une joye inextricable, | principalement auprès de Son Altesse | Serenissime Madame la Duchesse de | Brounsvic et Lunebourg | Bevern, Votre | très chere Epouse et | Messeigneurs et | Mesdames | Vos cheres Enfants, | comme aussi a | toute Votre Cour et domestiques. | Monseigneur comme j’y aye l’honneur et | la permission de m’y mettre parmi | le [pagebreak] | le nombre de ces derniers, je prend la liberté | d’y ajoüer très humblement ma part met- | tant | ce petit ouvrage aux pieds de Votre | Altesse Serenissime. | S’il ne vaut pas | la peine, d’être regardé du coté du | com- | positeur, je prie Votre Altesse Serenissime | très humblement, de considérer les Execu- | teurs, et de nous donner, en cet egard un | accueil favorable. | Cela animerait fort, | tous les deux parties de | s’encourager de | plus en plus, a se donner toute la peine | imaginable pour redresser les fautes, qui | s’y glissent, jusqu’a present; je suis avec | un zele tout particulier | Monseigneur | de Votre Altesse Serenissime | [left column:] Wolfenbuttel | ce Janvier | 1726. | [right column:] le très humble et très | obeissant Serviteur | FWR dela Marche”

Most choreographies of the 18th century only have the treble line notated on top of their pages. In the ballet’s manuscript, also scores of the dance music are added for the musicians (two voices: treble and bass): the rigaudon on p. 1 and the menuet on p. 2. The score of the rigaudon is also to be used for the contredanse as it can be seen in the melody of the choreography pages. Concordances could not be found; maybe the pieces were composed by the dancing master himself.

The music scores are followed in the manuscript by the ballet consisting of three dances – Rigaudon, Menuet, Angloise nommé L’heureuse retour – the first two written in Beauchamp-Feuillet notation, the latter one in Feuillet’s contredanse notation.

The dancing master Friedrich Wilhelm Roboam de la Marche

Friedrich Wilhelm Roboam de la Marche belonged to a dynasty of dancing masters who, in the 17th and 18th century, were employed at several courts throughout in Germany. He was the son of Ulrich Roboam de la Marche, who was a dancing master at the Wolfenbüttel court from 1658 onwards.18 Twelve years later he moved to Central Germany where he was employed simultaneously at the small duchies of Saxe-Zeitz and Saxe-Altenburg.19 Friedrich Wilhelm was baptised in Zeitz on 15 January 1671 and named after his godfather Friedrich Wilhelm III, Duke of Saxe-Altenburg.20 Father and son returned to Wolfenbüttel in 1689.21 The account books for that time are incomplete but Friedrich Wilhelm Roboam de la Marche is mentioned for the first time as a dancer in a libretto of a court ballet in 1691.22 Three years later he is mentioned in a church book entry where he appears as dancing master of the pages.23 He choreographed dances for the operas and the court ballets; in the latter he also acted as a dancer. Most likely he was co-editor of Bonnepof’s treatise Abregée des Principes de la Dance in 1705.24 De la Marche was also a dancing master at Wolfenbüttel’s knight academy Rudolph-Antoniana.25 Friedrich Wilhelm Roboam de la Marche died at the age of 64 in 1735.26

The dancing tradition in Wolfenbüttel

Among the German courts, the court of Wolfenbüttel has one of the richest dancing traditions.27 In 1612 Michael Praetorius’s famous dance collection Terpsichore was published in Wolfenbüttel. He dedicated it to his employer Duke Friedrich Ulrich. The late Duke Anton Ulrich, who reigned from 1685 to 1714, was a patron of arts and scholarship and made Wolfenbüttel into a “court of the muses”. He founded the Brunswick opera, which was the third public opera house in Germany. Anton Ulrich was also an important author who not only wrote lyrics and novels but also libretti for operas and Singspiele. There were regular performances of court ballets based on the French model. From the 1690s the dancing master Friedrich Wilhelm de la Marche was responsible for the ballets and the dance entrées at the operas. He shared this task with his colleagues Nanquier and Bonnefond, who wrote the aforementioned dance treatise. The latter was succeeded in 1710 by Ernst August Jayme, from whom a handwritten collection of contredanses is preserved.28 In the libretti and scenarios the dancers are not always mentioned but if it was the case, they were members of the ducal family or other members of the court.29 After the turn of the century fewer ballets were performed and when dancers are mentioned they are no longer aristocrats but employees of the court. A last highlight was the performance of a ballet in 1708 on the occasion of Duchess Elisabeth Christine’s marriage with the late emperor Charles VI. Its grand ballet was performed by 56 dancers.30 More than 17 years went by but only operas were staged. However, in January 1726 we have a surprise: the performance of a ballet by members of the Ducal family.

De la Marche’s Ballet

According to the dedication, the ballet was performed on the occasion of Ferdinand Albrecht’s return. He came from a lower branch of the House of Brunswick and because he was the Duke’s fourth son, he decided on a military career. He fought in the Austrian-Turkish war and in 1723 the Emperor awarded him with the rank of a field marshal. In 1735, he inherited the Principality of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel but died only six months later.31 Very few documents about Ferdinand Albrecht still exist but maybe the ballet title refers to a military mission he had just returned from. The dancers
of the ballet are also mentioned on the title page but they will be discussed later.

With the contredanse performed with six repetitions for the dancers to come back to their starting point, the whole ballet lasts only between six and seven minutes. De la Marche’s notation is accurate but he made several mistakes; for example, the turning signs are often written in the wrong direction (see discussion of the minuet below).

The rigaudon for two gentlemen is the most advanced of the three dances, but compared with other choreographies, not too difficult. It often uses repetitive structures (for example figure 1, bar 1–4), which makes it easier to memorise the choreography and has a restricted repertoire of steps. The first and the second page are mostly identical concerning the step sequences but they differ in the floor pattern (Figure 1).

The steps in the rigaudon are not too complicated, as it can be seen in figure 1. The steps do not contain ornamentations like battu or rond en l’air. The pas de gaillarde is the most advanced of the steps and can be found on p. 5 (Figure 2. The beginning of bar 1 is not notated correctly and has to be mirrored). However it is notated in an unusual way: the pas tombé lands on both feet and has a step at the end instead of a jeté. It seems like a pas de guillerde for beginners.

The rigaudon is followed by a small minuet, written for one woman and two gentlemen. The choreography is very easy: the dancers are travelling forward, before the lady circles around the left and then around the right gentleman. This is followed by the most advanced part of the choreography: the steps are danced sideways and the lady has therefore to do a halft turn (Figure 3. The turning signs for both gentlemen in bar 1 are written in the wrong direction). The minuet ends with a one hand turn by the lady with each gentleman. The choreography only uses pas de menuet à deux mouvements forward and sideways and no other minuet step variants, and once a pas balancé is notated (p. 4, bar 4). Despite its simplicity, the minuet is remarkable because it is a rare danse à trois (see conclusion).

The contredanse L’heureuse retour is a duple minor longways. As already mentioned, it uses the same music as the rigaudon. The danced figures are quite simple: after turns with one and both hands, the two dancing couples form a line to lead up before the first couple casts into second place where they finish the dance with a clapping figure.

The Dancers

At first glance the three choreographies do not seem very exciting owing to their simplicity, but soon they will appear in a different light. It is time to have a closer look at the dancers, who are listed on the title page: Karl, Anton Ulrich, Elisabeth Christine, Ludwig Ernst, Ferdinand and Luise
And finally, in the likely performed the minuet with her two younger brothers. too complicated steps. The future queen of Prussia most because this choreography has the more advanced, but not written for the two eldest princes, Karl and Anton Ulrich, pphies is now understandable. The rigaudon was surely danced were just children: performed the ballet for their father, in January 1726, these Great’s brother August Wilhelm. However, on the day they performed the ballet for their father, in January 1726, these dancers were just children:

- Karl (aged twelve)
- Anton Ulrich (aged eleven)
- Elisabeth Christine (aged ten)
- Ludwig Ernst (aged seven)
- Ferdinand (aged five)
- Luise Amalia (aged four)

With that in mind, the simplicity of the three choreographies is now understandable. The rigaudon was surely written for the two eldest princes, Karl and Anton Ulrich, because this choreography has the more advanced, but not too complicated steps. The future queen of Prussia most likely performed the minuet with her two younger brothers. And finally, in the contredanse even the youngest one, Luise Amalia, could participate.

Conclusion

Despite its simplicity, de la Marche’s small ballet is remarkable for several reasons. As shown at the beginning, it is one of only a few German dance sources using Beauchamp-Feuillet notation. Also, amongst extant choreographies, danses à trois are quite rare. So far only two dances were known: John Groscourt’s An Ecchoe for three ladies (1711) and Paysanne en sabots vient chercher des copeaux for a lady and two gentlemen from Auguste Ferrère’s ballet pantomime Les Bûcherons et les Sabotiers (1751). With de la Marche’s minuet for a lady and two gentlemen we have a further example of this rare cast of three dancers.

As we know from contemporary sources, the dance education of the nobility began at a very early age, as it was of great importance. Amongst extant choreographies there is evidence to support this, like the well-known Gavotte du Roy à quatre, which was written by Claude Balon for Louis XV when the king was five or six years old. Another example is the Slow Minuet by Thomas Caverley, which has the addition in the title “A new dance for a girl.” But due to the extent and degree of difficulty, it can be assumed that it was intended for a teenager.

At the Bavarian court, Max Emanuel II made his stage debut in 1669 at the age of six and a half; his dancing partner and sister Maria Anna Christina was eight years old. The Bavarian princes and princesses had dancing lessons three days a week, as education plans between 1676 and 1737 show. In 1692 the Ballet der Vier Jahrs-Zeiten was performed by Duke Anton Ulrich of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel’s children and grandchildren, above them Anton Ulrich von Sachsen-Meiningen and his sisters Eleonora Friederike and Elisabeth Ernestine, aged five, nine and eleven. Concerning young children, Gottfried Taubert wrote: ‘Dancing […] cannot be learned too early, after they are once of an age and strength capable of it. But you must be sure to have a good master […]’. The latter applies to de la Marche, because he was aware of the age and the capabilities of his pupils: The dances, which the six children from the Wolfenbüttel court performed in the ballet, are choreographed like pedagogic exercises depending on the age of the dancers. This new source gives an interesting insight into the tradition of performing ballets at the court of Wolfenbüttel and into the dance education of that time.

References

1. De la Marche, F. W. R. Ballet. D-W, Cod. Guelf. 120.1 Extrav. The manuscript is indeed mentioned in Otte, W.D. Die neueren Handschriften der Gruppe Extravagantes, Teil 2. Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1987 (= Kataloge der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel 18), p. 65, but because it was forgotten in the catalogue’s table of contents, the entry could only be found by coincidence. A digital copy of de la Marche’s manuscript is now available at http://diglib.hab.de/mss/120-1-extrav/start.htm (accessed 28 June 2020).

2. The manuscript is already mentioned in the handwritten Catalogus Alphabeticus Bibliothecae divi Ferdinandi Alberti Ducis Bruns. ac Lynneburg from 1726 (D-W, BA I 635, p. 244).


4. Own notation system. Die alte passe-pied and Die Bourgogne had already been published by Feuillet in

Figure 3. Menuet, p. 10

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http://diglib.hab.de/mss/120-1-extrav/start.htm
1700. Whether the other two dances are from I. H. P. or from foreign sources that have not been preserved is unclear.

The manuscript also contains twelve contredanses. One of the danses à deux and one contredanse are from Dubreil’s print 1715/16.

The source also contains a contredanse.

The manuscript also contains twelve contredanses. One of the danses à deux and one contredanse are from Dubreil’s print 1715/16.


The source also contains a contredanse.

D-Mbn, Bibl. 646.

17. The manuscript also contains twelve contredanses. One of the danses à deux and one contredanse are from Dubreil’s print 1715/16.

Gigue à deux. Folie d’Espagne pour une femme and Sarabande pour un homme were published by Feuillet in 1700 respectively 1704. According to Taubert, two other danses à deux are also by Feuillet (Taubert, G. Rechtschaffener Tantzmeister, oder gründliche Erklärung der Frantzoischen Tantz-Kunst […].) Friedrich Lanckischens Erben, Leipzig, 1717, pp. 598 and 604), but no originals have survived. The two remaining dances possibly originate from Taubert himself.


19. Appointment in Altenburg of the dancing master Ulrich Roboam de la Marche (2 November 1670 and another record not dated), Staatsarchiv Altenburg, Altes Hausarchiv X, No. 59. The second record of both shows that he was also employed in Zeitz (Moritz of Saxe-Zeitz was the guardian of the young Friedrich Wilhelm III of Saxe-Altenburg). See also Werner, A. Städtische und höfische Musikpflege in Zeitz bis zum Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts. C. W F Siegel’s Musikalienhandlung, Bückeburg and Leipzig, 1922, p. 86. This dual employment is unknown in the recent secondary literature about Ulrich Roboam de la Marche. In some older publications it is erroneously written that he was active in Halle-Weissenfels. With Friedrich Wilhelm III’s death in 1672, the branch of Saxe-Altenburg became extinct in the direct male line and was split between Saxe-Gotha and Saxe-Weimar. It is to be assumed that from then on de la Marche was then only employed in Zeitz.


21. Appointment in Wolfenbüttel of Ulrich Roboam de la Marche (12 January 1689), NLA WO, 3 Alt, No. 601, f. 49r–50v. The NLA WO and Mourey by mistake indicate that this was Ulrich the Younger, a different person (Mourey, M. T. ‘Dancing Culture at the Wolfenbüttel Court.’ In: Schroedter, St., Mourey, M.T. and Bennett, G. (editors): Baroque Dance and the Transfer of Culture between France and Germany. Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, Zürich and New York, 2008, pp. 390–411, here p. 408). Firstly, the comparison between the dancing master’s signature on Wolfenbüttel records until 1670 and since 1689 clearly shows that they are in the same handwriting. Secondly, in both cases he also bears the title of secretary. Also, there is not a single entry in the church books concerning a younger person of the same name. Ulrich Roboam de la Marche was buried in Wolfenbüttel on 23 May 1696 (Funerals in the church Beatae Mariae Virginis 1668–1700, f. 281r. NLA WO, 1 Kb, No. 1310).


23. Marriage of Friedrich Wilhelm de la Marche 15 February 1694 (Marriages in the castle church of Wolfenbüttel 1693–1709, f. 108r. NLA WO, 1 Kb, No. 1332). Mourey, M. T. ‘Dancing Culture at the Wolfenbüttel Court.’ In: Schroedter, St., Mourey, M.T. and Bennett, G. (editors): Baroque Dance and the
Transfer of Culture between France and Germany.
Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, Zürich and New York, 2008, pp. 390–411, here p. 410 wrote by mistake that de la Marche was appointed as page dancing master in 1697. The records Mourey refers to (NLA WO, 4 Alt 19, No. 1101) are only single payment receipts. An appointment record of de la Marche is not preserved and the account books in that period are incomplete.


26 He was buried on 30 September 1735 (Funerals in the church Beatae Mariae Virginis 1734–1747, f.17r. NLA WO, 1 Kb, No. 1319).


29 For the well-known La Bourgogne, published in 1700, one can occasionally read that it was danced by the twelve year old Duchess of Burgundy at her wedding in 1697, but there is no proof of that.