

David Wilson, *The Basse Dance Handbook: Text and Context*. Pendragon Press, Hillsdale, NY, 2012. ISBN 978-1-57647-160-9, ix + 303 pp. 19 figures

Published posthumously, Wilson's critical review of the known sources for the French Basse Dance serves as a worthy monument to a dance scholar of high calibre and indefatigable industry. Delivered camera-ready to the publisher, receiving minimal editorial guidance, the document is also highly consistent in its scholarly procedures.

The heart of the book, following three short introductory chapters, is the presentation of each one of the seventeen sources. Chosen by Wilson for the light they throw on the style of Basse Dance associated with France, rather than with Italy, they comprise in chronological order: *Nancy, Ambrosio, Gratia Dei, Toulouze, Cervera, Brussels, Salisbury, New York, Florence, Stribaldi, Coplande, Arena, Moderne, Caroso, Arbeau, Madrid* and *Tarrago*. For each source, the reader is presented with a transcription of the original side by side with his translation (or modernisation of the English), as well as all the music when present. Scholars of the basse dance are therefore given access to a number of sources that are otherwise challenging in language, availability or condition. A photographic reproduction of a page accompanies each transcript. Every source is provided with a bibliographical introduction to the original text, previous facsimiles, transcriptions and translations and scholarly discussion. Wilson goes on to provide an introduction to the nature of the source. A commentary follows each transcription/translation, analysing the information, with a statistical summary. The commentary may include discussion of the musical notation, where present, and further information on the song sources for music and other versions of a particular dance. Véronique Daniels contributed the music commentary, threaded throughout the book to illuminate the sources that include music notation. Wilson's analysis, continued in the conclusion and the three appendices, is objective and meticulously referenced: it is also shaped by the possibilities

of reconstruction for which he had first-hand experience, without embarking on specific guidance to this.

The whole repays careful and concentrated attention, as Wilson has provided connections between different sources, views and informative documents. His translations and interpretations of the source material are judicious, but scholars have here a substantial platform on which to base their own. Furthermore, the extent and nature of previous scholarship in this field is clearly identified.

Editing in collaboration with Wilson might have ironed out a few details. The only index provided is to the dances: an index to key topics is always useful. Choice of words for dance concepts is tricky. In Chapter 3 Review of Sources, the mid fifteenth century Basse Dance (of Toulouze and Brussels) is designated 'standard' as is the mid-sixteenth century Basse Dance Commune (of Arbeau): a confusion which is partially solved later as Wilson adopts the original term Basse Dance Commune more frequently than Standard Basse Dance. Key aspects of practice are embedded in other discussions: appendix C on the French Basse Dance in Art is actually a strong argument for the French Basse Dance not being a processional form. So some editing guidance may have made the document more informative to readers new to the subject, but cause no real problem for the experienced ones.

*The Basse Dance Handbook* is a model of dance scholarship, enriching understanding and appreciation of a significant dance genre. It also deals with a dance currently more appreciated in the imagination than in practice. The publication should stimulate new interest in performing the dances and sharing perspectives on their interpretation and currency. This is a handbook that will be an essential guide for a very long time.

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