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Ballet in writing: precepts and rules of composition for court ballets in France under the Ancien Régime (1581-1682)

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ABSTRACT – Ballet in writing: precepts and rules of composition for court ballets in France under the Ancien Régime (1581-1682) – This article seeks to understand the theoretical formulations that throughout the 17th century systematized court ballet as an art, a term defined at the time as a set of precepts and rules. After a brief discussion about the first dance manuals produced in modern Europe, we analyze the treatises, discourses and librettos that addressed ballet composition. From the works of Beaujoyeulx, Saint-Hubert, Marolles, De Pure and Ménestrier, among others, it is possible to appreciate the erudite principles and precepts that guided the practice of ballet composition in France under the Ancien Régime, as well as the inclusion of dance and ballet in the domain of written production and literate culture.

Keywords: **Court ballet. Dance treatises. Court society. France. Ancien Régime.**

RÉSUMÉ – Le ballet par écrit : préceptes et règles de composition des ballets de cour en France sous l'Ancien Régime (1581-1682) – Cet article cherche à comprendre les formulations théoriques qui, tout au long du XVIIe siècle, ont systématisé le ballet de cour comme un art, terme compris à l'époque comme un ensemble de préceptes et de règles. Pour cela, nous avons récupéré les premiers manuels de danse écrits en Europe moderne pour ensuite analyser les traités, discours et livrets qui portaient sur la composition des ballets. A partir des œuvres de Beaujoyeulx, Saint-Hubert, Marolles, De Pure et Ménestrier, entre autres, il serait possible de comprendre les principes et préceptes qui ont guidé la pratique de composition du ballet en France sous l'Ancien Régime, ainsi que l'insertion de la danse et du ballet dans le domaine de la culture savante.

Mots-clés: **Ballet de cour. Traités de danse. Société de cour. France. Ancien Régime.**

RESUMO – O balé por escrito: preceitos e regras de composição dos balés de corte na França do Antigo Regime (1581-1682) – O presente artigo busca compreender as formulações teóricas que ao longo do século XVII sistematizaram o balé de corte como arte, termo entendido à época como um conjunto de preceitos e regras. Após um breve arrazoado sobre os primeiros manuais de dança produzidos na Europa moderna, analisamos os tratados, discursos e libretos que versavam sobre a composição de balés. A partir das obras de Beaujoyeulx, Saint-Hubert, Marolles, De Pure e Ménestrier, entre outros, seria possível compreender os princípios eruditos e os preceitos orientadores da prática de composição desse espetáculo dançado na França do Antigo Regime, bem como a inserção da dança e do balé no domínio da produção escrita e da cultura letrada.

Palavras-chave: **Balé de corte. Tratados de dança. Sociedade de corte. França. Antigo Regime.**

Knowing the conceptions and practices of dance in the context of court society in Modern Europe, both social dance and its scenic forms, is an important element in understanding court ballet, defined as a production whose composition was based on the collaboration of several arts: poetry, music, painting, machinery and, above all, dance. This article will try to comprehend the theoretical formulations that systematized court ballet as an art throughout the 17th century, a term which at the time was considered a set of precepts and rules. Far from being an abstract and speculative theoretical corpus, such formulations had an eminently practical character, as they guided the ballet masters in the invention, composition and conduction of one of the most recurrent spectacles in the daily life of the 17th century French court. It may be said that these rules and precepts also guided the appreciation of ballets, since the same nobles who took part in the representation of ballets, alongside the ballet dancers, at other times watched the spectacle as an audience.

As far as the structure of the article is concerned, we will begin by outlining a brief inventory of the first dance manuals produced in modern Europe from the 15th century on, with the intention of determining to what extent these practices of writing of/about dance reveal the process of codification of gestures and the constitution of aristocratic dance as a *well-regulated art*, in the terms of the time. We will then analyze the writing practices of treatises, discourses and librettos that dealt with ballet composition, particularly the works of Beaujoyeulx, Saint-Hubert, Marolles, De Pure and Ménestrier, among others, as orienting models of this artistic practice.

From the reading and analysis of these treatises, librettos and discourses – documents that testify to the inclusion of dance and ballet in the domain of written production and literate culture – we propose a systematization of the erudite principles, rules and precepts that guided the practices of composition and representation of this dance spectacle in 17th century France. We maintain that understanding the principles and precepts that guided the composition of court ballets allows us to better understand and further analyze the choreographic and scenic forms of dance at that time, thus avoiding anachronistic readings and value judgments that cloud a historical appreciation of the conceptions and practices of dance.

In the development of this article we start from the methodological approaches of Cultural History, especially when it comes to the symbolic character and history of practices and representations (Burke, 2008; Chartier, 1990) of dance. Since our focus is on an aristocratic dance developed in modern Europe (especially in France in the 16th and 17th centuries), it is necessary to view it in the structuring context of a *court society*, according to sociologist Norbert Elias' formulations. For him, social and political relations in the French Ancien Régime were based on a meticulous codification of gestures and behaviors, as well as on the ceremonialization of behavior, social status and daily activities (Elias, 2001).

Also in terms of methodology, we highlight the central role of reading and analyzing written historical sources, especially ballet treatises and libretti, as well as reading and systematizing specialized bibliography on the theme. It is worth mentioning that the reflections in this article are part of our master's research on dance and court ballets as a prescriptive image of cosmic and political harmony in France between 1610 and 1661 (Couto, 2015)[1].

Dance becomes an "art"

It may be said that dance has always been present in the most diverse societies and cultures since the earliest times of history, whether as a more spontaneous or more codified practice. There is evidence of it in written accounts, images, oral traditions and material objects. All these historical sources show vague and sparse evidence, given the impossibility of a direct and/or material record of dance in its performative dimension.

Reports that mention dance in daily life, in some public/religious event or ceremony, are frequent in memoirs, poems, reports of festivals, papal decrees, ecclesiastical ordinances or prohibitions. However, in most cases, they are limited to evidence of this activity's presence in social life or, on occasion, include some brief description of it.

Until the beginning of the Western Modern Age, few were the discourses that elaborated or reported on the conceptions of dance, its uses and functions, codes and description. This made its historical study perhaps more difficult than the study of poetry, painting, and even music, especially in more remote historical time periods.

Mainly from the 15th century on, the theme of dance became more recurrent in the written works of the time, taking on new approaches, new forms and genres of writing in an increasingly detailed and systematic narrative. This is precisely because from that moment on dance began to be thought of as *art* in the modern and humanistic sense of the term, that is, taking up again the ancient notions of *ars*, *artificium* (Latin) and *téchné* (Greek) (Nicot, 1584, p.53).

In this conception, "[...] art is primarily a set of precepts, rules, inventions and experiences that, once followed, allow things to be done successfully, making them useful and enjoyable"[2] (Furetière, 1690, n.p.). Art was thus regarded as a systematized technique subjected to a rational method, whose ability or faculty was acquired through the study and practice of this set of rules and specific precepts.

In the 15th century, a growing tendency towards the metrification of dance, deemed an exercise and entertainment for the nobility in European palace environments, became evident. This metrification corresponded to the structuring and regulation of forms, movements and gestures of the body, spatial figures and steps in close relationship with the poetic and musical metrics – the latter structured on the rules of polyphony and counterpoint[3]. Accordingly, pursuing the beauty and harmony of forms, dance goes through a systematization in order to balance and formally refine the body movements and figures, adapting and linking them to the musical and poetic metrics, essential elements on which the dances were composed (McGowan, 2008).

It was at this moment of growing regulation of technique and forms that dance began to be treated under new approaches, due to its new uses and the genres of writing that also began to constitute its space from then on: collections of musical scores for dance, treatises and manuals of a practical and methodical nature aimed at its instruction or even moral and philosophical discourses based on classical authorities. This increase in written documents on the theme of dance not only tells us about the recurrence of its practice but also about how it was conceived: its nature, forms, functions, as well as its importance and social value.

The vogue for dance can be perceived by the multiplication of compositions and collections of dance music since the beginning of the 16th century, such as the manuscript*Le livre des Basses danses de la Bibliothèque de Bourgogne*[4]. Such musical compositions circulated in the courts, which tells us of the increasing insertion of dance in courtly life. According to Margaret McGowan, Pierre Attaignant, the royal printer of music, was already publishing, as early as 1529, collections of *basses danses*, pavanes, gaillarde, and branles for chamber ensemble, harpsichord, and lute. There were also numerous musical publications by Adrian le Roy (between 1551 and 1558) and the "[...] books of *danceries*" published by Jean d'Estrées between 1559 and 1564 (McGowan, 1978, p. 29-30).

But it is mainly the treatises and dance manuals that appeared from the middle of the 15th century onwards that more clearly demonstrate the elaboration of a dance art. This is due to the peculiarity of the treatise: a discursive genre dedicated to the rational and calculated systematization of rules, precepts and classifications in order to contemplate both the theoretical and philosophical foundations of a certain art as well as its practical applications and artifices. According to Marina Nordera, in the process of "[...] reducing dance to art" - that is, the systematization of theoretical and technical knowledge in the written form of manuals and treatises – these written texts take on the value of heritage and authority within a predominantly oral tradition (Nordera, 2008).

The proliferation and intense circulation of these written documents from the end of the 16th century onward make evident the value and necessity of learning this art in the European courts. They also contain precious technical and formal information about steps, gestures and movements, the rules of good execution and posture, the characteristics of each type of dance, as well as the specificities of the way of dancing in different regions and courts.

This information comes in the form of textual descriptions, engravings, musical scores and tablatures.

Dance in writing: the first treatises and manuals

The first works written as dance manuals on record in Western Europe date from the *Quattrocento* and appear in the Italian Peninsula (Cf. Nordera, 2008 and 2017). Domenico da Piacenza, a renowned dance master in Ferrara, is said to have written his *De arte saltandi et choreas ducendi*[5] around 1425. From the Jewish master Guglielmo Ebreo (or Giovanni Ambrosio, his Christian name), there are still some versions of his manuscript *De pratica seu arte tripudiivulgare opusculum*[6] (1463; 1471-1474) and Antonio Cornazzano's manuscript *Libro dell'arte del danzare*[7] (c. 1455-1465). On the Iberian Peninsula, an anonymous manuscript dated around 1496 is preserved in the Catalan town of Cervera[8] (Lecomte, 2014, p.23). These treatises contain rules for performing the steps and descriptions of various social dances, as well as information about dances of a somewhat more dramatic character called *balli*.

Dance rules conquer the world of typography and Michel de Toulouze's manual, *L'art et instruction de bien dancer*[9], appears as the first printed work of its kind, around 1496 in Paris, and has been preserved to this day. The Provençal poet Antoine Arena published his treatise in 1528 in Lyon, dedicated to *basses danses* and branles[10], where for the first time information about dance behavior in France at that time appears (Lecomte, 2014, p. 40-41). Successively, a new batch of printed manuals and treatises emerges from the end of the 16th century. They introduce new dance rules and inventions, new elements and resources for dance instruction (in written practice), as well as information for the study of techniques, corporeality and scenic-choreographic forms of the time.

Published in Venice, *Il Ballarino*[11] (1581), by Fabrizio Caroso, presents the names of several steps and movements in its first part, followed by the rules and instructions for their execution, and in the second part, introduces several dance and *balli* compositions dedicated to various noble ladies. The manual includes engravings of positions and gestures, as well as suggesting the association of the dance steps with musical scores, in order to highlight the rhythm and cadence of the movements. In 1600, Caroso published his *Nobilità di Dame*[12], a corrected and expanded update of the first treatise, with added steps, dances, and further instructions directed especially to women's gestures and behavior.

In *L'Orchésographie* (1589)[13], a treatise in the form of a dialogue published in Langres and attributed to Thoinot Arbeau, the theoretical principles of an approximation between the arts are reinforced: the teaching of "[...] honest exercise of dance" is closely associated with music, which is evident in the explanations of the steps always related to the melody in the musical score. Arbeau established five foot positions, which would serve as the basis for the invention of steps in various dances, and compared the dancer to an orator: by attaching prominence to mimicry, the author defends the eloquent character of dance as mute rhetoric (Arbeau, 1589, p. 5). According to McGowan, Arbeau's treatise enables us to verify the relations between certain social dances – such as branles, pavanes and especially the *courante*– and scenographic dance forms of the time, especially the masquerades (McGowan, 1978, p. 32).

The dance master Cesare Negri published the second edition of his treatise *Le Gratie d'amore* (1602) in Milan, with the addition of new dance compositions which is why the work was given the title *Nuove inventioni di balli* (1604)[14]. In the first part of the treatise, Negri provides an exhaustive inventory of the names of lords and gentlemen who were excellent dancers in Italy in the sixteen hundreds, indicating the courts in which they danced. In the second part, he writes about the rules of courtly posture and gesture, such as how to bow, how to handle cloak and sword, or how a gentleman should take a lady's hand.[15]. It then describes the rules for performing various types of steps and jumps, with special dedication to the galliard steps. The third part describes dance compositions and the names of the ladies to whom they are dedicated. In short, it has a structure very similar to the treatises by Caroso.

The listing of distinguished dancing courtiers that begins Negri's treatise seems to have been emulated by the Spaniard Juan de Esquivel Navarro in the first dance manual printed in Spain: *Discursos sobre el arte del dançado*[16] (1642). The Iberian essayist also lists the names of courtiers skilled in dance and famous masters in the kingdom. Navarro's focus, however, is on the figure of the dance master and the description of the schools and didactic methods, an aspect that had not been addressed by the literature of the genre until then. In both Negri's and Navarro's works, the novelty of the names listed allows us to build webs of personal courtly relationships based on dance and the ball viewed as a privileged environment of sociability.

Returning to France, the treatise *Apologie de la danse*[17](1623), by François de Lauze, combines scholarly discourse and historical and apologetic narrative with practical instructions for learning to dance, distinctly presented for ladies and gentlemen. De Lauze places great emphasis on the notion of social decorum in dance: he highlights the difference between the dance skills of a courtier and a professional dancer, advising the former not to take on steps that are too difficult, elaborate or leaping, typical of the *danse par haut* (jumping steps dance), and not befitting the nobleman's status.

These treatises were widely circulated in the courts of various regions of Europe, and were reprinted, reedited and translated into other languages throughout the 17th century, as well as being part of the collections of the lordly and royal libraries. In a recent survey, Nathalie Lecomte (2014, p. 92 and 224) lists 23 treatises and collections of dances written between 1515 and 1623, in the main courts of Italy, France, Spain and England, which shows the process of consolidation of dance as an art and also its social importance.

The conception of dance as an *art* in Modern Europe had definite implications. Once regulated, formalized and systematized in increasingly specific (corporal and graphic) codes, the domain of this art became restricted to a group of initiates who knew and practiced its rules, codes and forms. Once this systematization was constituted as a written and printed register, dance entered the domain of erudition and literacy, thus becoming reserved for a privileged social stratum. In this way, the art of dance helped demarcate the social distinction of a particular group of individuals, since access to literate content and the learning and *refinement* of gestures did not extend to the population as a whole.

From the 15th century on, with the formation of societies and court etiquette, especially in the Italian, French and Burgundian courts, *metrified* dance gradually consolidated itself as an erudite dance. It became the property and symbol of a social stratum that sought to define its hierarchical superiority both through intellectual and aesthetic-artistic refinement (based on the canons of classical ancient culture) and through the elegance and distinction of the body, behavior and gesture. The multiplication of dance manuals in parallel with a series of treatises on civility (Elias, 2011) from the 16thcentury onwards, contributed to "[...] the construction of the figure of the courtier-dancer as a corporal, moral and political ideal and testimony to the fact that dance participates in the process of 'civilizing' the nobility" (Lecomte, 2014, p. 24).

Dance as *art*, in the terms and context of the 16th century, became one of the mainstays of courtly nobility, who claimed and practiced it as a hallmark of their social hierarchy. In the same way, dance spectacles and entertainment, and here we refer especially to court ballets, gain in popularity and were increasingly recurrent at the French court from the end of the 16th century on. Therefore, ballets were also conceived and precepted as an art, which resulted in an ample written production (treatises, librettos, discourses) that aimed to establish specific rules of composition, as well as linking them to erudite precepts and decorum, characteristic of the courtly environment.

In this context, dance and ballet were theorized as poetic arts, according to the Aristotelian tradition, as *mimesis* for their imitative character of nature and the passions of the soul (Aristotle, 2008). As such, their principles and rules came to be considered analogous, comparable and influenced by those of the other poetic arts – such as painting, music, theater and poetry.

It is necessary, therefore, to focus on the set of rules and precepts of ballet composition that allow us to understand it as an art, in the sense of the time, and that allow us more depth and property in its analysis and interpretation. The relatively late character of the writing of treatises and discourses aimed at establishing the rules of the *ballet de cour* genre, in relation to the use and recurrence of this spectacle since the end of the 16th century, does not entail the absence of compositional rules and a supposed spontaneity. On the contrary, it seems to us that such written works came to systematize empirical knowledge that, for a long time, had been spread and transmitted orally – and it is not too much to emphasize that the oral tradition would remain very important in choreographic composition even after the institution of written treatises.

The art of composing ballets: treatises and discourses

The term *ballet*, derived from the Italian *balleto*[18], is used in 15th and 16th century manuals to designate a *small ball*, but it could also designate a composition of dances with some scenic intention related to a fragile dramatic plot or pantomime – it could be performed either in a ball or in a show (Lecomte, 2014, p. 25). According to Lincoln Kirstein, only under the influence of French humanism, from the second half of the 16th century, did the term *ballet* begin to refer to entertainment with greater dramatic unity, greater coherence and an elaborate plot around a certain action, such as the French *ballet de cour* and the English genre *masque* (Kirstein, 1977, p. 816).

In fact, it was after the libretto of *Ballet Comique de la Reine* (1581), by Balthasar de Beaujoyeulx (1535-1587), that *ballet* began to be seen as a specific genre of choreographic spectacle, whose composition should obey certain rules and standards in order to provide it with beauty, cohesion and coherence. The term ballet would still be used in the sense of a dance or small theatrical choreography, but it began to refer, at the same time, to the overall show and to its danced parts (entrances). However, we are interested here in its designation as a genre of spectacle and, because of the effort to define its rules of composition, as art.

While dance treatises and manuals had been published as early as the 15th century, circulating with great popularity at the end of the 16th, it is noteworthy that it was only in 1641 that the first treatise on court ballets *La manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets* was published[19], written by Nicolas de Saint-Hubert. It was only in 1682 that another specific treatise on the genre would be published, *Des ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre*[20], by the Jesuit, Claude-François Ménestrier (1631-1705) – this time of a more aesthetic and historical character, and which put forward the setting of rules and precepts of composition. Between the treatises of Saint-Hubert and Ménestrier there is a long interval of 41 years, a period of intense ballet production in the French court.

However, this time interval cannot be taken as an absolute silence about the rules, precepts and reflections on ballet composition. Some works contributed appreciations on the genre, even if this was not the focus of their objectives. In his *Memoirs* (1657), the abbot Michel de Marolles (1600-1681)[21] dedicates the *Ninth Discourse* to ballets: the author presents his general appreciation of this entertainment in an effort to characterize the genre, describing and commenting on a few specific ballets[22] (Marolles, 1755). The abbot, Michel de Pure (1620-1680), in his work *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux*[23] (1668), also dedicates part of his reflections on *old and new spectacles* to ballet (De Pure, 1972). Meanwhile, in works prior to his iconic treatise, he makes pertinent comments on ballets in *Remarques sur la conduite des ballets*[24] (1658) – a preface to the report on *L'Autel de Lyon* –, and also *Des representations en musique anciennes et modernes* (1681)[25] (Ménestrier, 1972).

It is curious that all these theoretical works on ballet were written *belatedly*, if we consider the enormous quantity and variety of court ballets that had already been performed since the end of the 16th century.[26]Ménestrier himself states that it is "[...] amazing that for so many centuries, in which so much useful work has been done to refine and perfect the arts, we have remained without rules and precepts for the composition of ballets" (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 1) – which, by the way, shows the ignorance or disregard of Saint-Hubert and Marolles' writings. The absence of specific treatises until the publication of Saint-Hubert's work, and after between 1641 and 1682, could generate the mistaken impression of a lack of composition precepts and rules, that is, of an arbitrary, free and experimental genre, "[...] without rule or theory, with no other judge than pleasure, and no other goal than collective satisfaction" (Durosoir, 2004, p. 11), which often justifies the current depreciative evaluation of court ballet as a minor or futile spectacle.

It is a fact that uses and practical experience also assume an important normative function insofar as they offer models of composition, themes, forms and technical resources to be reproduced from previous experiences (Durosoir, 2004, p. 24) – which is true in the tradition of the performing arts in general. Just as the Aristotelian notion of *theory* is not opposed to practice because it is viewed as *active contemplation*, we consider it fitting to think that dance knowledge is also instituted and systematized in the body and in choreography. In this regard, Mark Franko sums it up very well:

> The late development of a theory of dance comes, at least in part, from our ability to admit that theory is inherent to the act of dancing itself. Not only is theory a means of organizing ideas about dance, but the very fact of dancing is itself a theoretical act. Dance theory does not come 'after' choreography; it is constitutive of choreography. (Franko, 2005, p. 49).

Although we agree that, until the middle of the 17th century, the precepts for ballet composition are less rigid and its forms seem more varied than in other performance genres of the time (tragedy and comedy, for instance), the study of the sources presented here does not allow us to suppose, however, that ballet was devoid of rules, systematization or theory. However, we believe that the establishment of principles and rules for court ballet is not restricted to the oral and empirical tradition – a dimension not easily accessible to historical research –, but can also be found, in the sphere of literate culture, in other genres than the few treatises: notably the aforementioned works (Marolles, 1755; Ménestrier, 1658 and 1972; De Pure, 1972) and the ballet libretti themselves.

The libretto as ballet composition model

Marcel Paquot, in his article about the theoretical precepts of *ballet de cour*, had already proposed approaching the nature and rules of ballet through librettists (especially Beaujoyeulx) rather than the so-called *theorists* of ballet, namely Marolles (1657), De Pure (1668) and Ménestrier (1682) (Paquot, 1957). According to the author, such theoretical works present certain limits to the comprehension of ballets from the late 16th century and the first half of the 17th century. These treatises and discourses were part of a context in which the conceptions of the genre were being transformed, in a process of framing the forms and uses of ballets to the rules of comedy and opera.

From the mid-17th century, court ballet is said to have been reoriented to the genre of the *comédie-ballet*[27] of Lully and Molière and a composition practice increasingly submitted to the control of the Academies[28] (of music, poetry, and dance) – systematizing institutions of knowledge and artistic production that were more solidly constituted at that time. As such, Paquot argues that these theoretical writings on the genre inform more about the reorientation of conceptions, precepts and taste than about the character of the ballets in their first seventy years – which was more easily observed in the librettos of the performances themselves (Paquot, 1957).

The libretti were intended to describe the spectacle, presenting its plot, its structure of entrances and characters, the verses of the sung poems, and, when appropriate, the courtiers and ladies who played the roles. Some of them are even more complete, consisting of explanatory prefaces, discourses, and considerations. This can be seen in a few librettos by Guillaume Colletet[29] or at the start of the libretto from the *Ballet de la Prosperité des Armes de France* (1641), for example, which outlines a synthetic definition of the genre: "Ballets are silent comedies and must therefore be divided into acts and scenes; the recitatives separate the acts and the entrances of the dancers are the scenes" (Lacroix, 1868-1870, p. 34). Moreover, more elaborate librettos present engravings, musical scores, or even detailed descriptions of the scenery, costumes and/or the performance itself – in the case of librettos published after the spectacle has been performed, in the form of a report or account.

The libretto appears, therefore, as a privileged source of information about the structure, rules and forms of ballet composition. This means that we must understand it beyond its function as a record of a past event, but rather as a possible way to establish theoretical foundations and rules of the genre. It is true that its form does not fit into the deliberative rhetorical genre, into which treatises and manuals of modern written culture fall. However, the librettos became models of emulation and ended up exercising this prescriptive function, even if indirectly and unpretentiously.

The study of these sources allows us to affirm, as a consequence, that the set of librettos composes a prescriptive body of ballet that is complementary to the treatises. Above all, due to its systematic and exemplary content, the libretto is especially effective as a model and guideline for composition, since it relates to the most practical and everyday dimension, in the context of the invention of court entertainment.

Knowing the theoretical principles, the precepts and the rules that guide both the composition and the appreciation of a ballet is fundamental to understand its forms and meanings – which are not separated from the French social and political dynamics in the 17th century. To this end, we have at our disposal a set of sources composed of treatises, discourses and very detailed librettos[30]that systematize the precepts of ballet invention. From this point on, we will try to introduce the erudite principles, composition precepts, and main elements that characterize court ballets, based on treatises, theoretical discourses, and librettos.

The theoretical and erudite principles that guide ballet composition

Claude-François Ménestrier begins his treatise stating that "[...] of all the spectacles and entertainment that the Greeks invented or perfected, there is nothing more universal than ballet" (Ménestrier, 1972). By attributing the invention of ballet to the ancient Greeks, the treatise writer ascribes authority to the modern spectacle, drawing a line of continuity that links ballet to Greek drama, considered the great model of total spectacle.

Similarly, such a reference appears in verses by the poet Billard in the libretto of the *Ballet Comique de la Reine*: "Beaujoyeulx, the first who from the ashes of Greece / Made reborn the purpose and skill / Of the compassed and measured ballet" (Beaujoyeulx, 1582, n.p.). Beaujoyeulx's invention is praised as a recovery of the classical Greek tragedy, lost since antiquity, that could be revived in ballet, whose design, function, and form (set to the old) would be the same as before.

This attribution of ballet's origin to the ancient Greeks, which should not be naively taken as objective historical data, is a topic repeatedly mobilized in practically all discourses on the genre. It shows the humanist aspirations that, since the early 16th century, sought to revive ancient Greek drama – or, perhaps, the desires and assumptions that modern literati projected onto ancient Greece.

The poets and musicians of the Academy of Music and Poetry in particular, coordinated by Baïf, undertook poetic experiments and attempts to unite poetry and music, seeking to adapt metrics and melody based on inspiration in Greek antiquity. The intention was to amplify the effects of both arts, which would become even more powerful if combined. The aspiration to the principle of uniting the arts is evident in the preface to the libretto of *Ballet Comique de la Reine*: Beaujoyeulx proposes to merge the genres of ballet and comedy, which give the spectacle its title, as well as to amalgamate music and poetry (Beaujoyeulx, 1582, preface).

The idea of court ballet as a revival of the ancient Greek drama, in a "[...] compassed and measured ballet" (Beaujoyeulx, 1582, n.p.), as well as the possibility of reviving its goals and effects, outlines the forms and meanings of the genre. Ballet appears, in the eyes of its French contemporaries, as a genre that is essentially composite and especially effective in its effects, since it is the only one capable of fusing poetry, music, dance, and painting. Thus structured, ballet produced intense effects to the point of overflowing the stage itself, extending into social life.

In the libretto of *Ballet Comique*, Beaujoyeulx expresses his intention to merge all the arts, to "[...] interweave poetry and music," mixing them with comedy, decoration and dance – to which he attributes "[...] first title and honor":

> Thus, I have enlivened and made ballet to speak, and made comedy sing and resonate: and by adding various representations and ornaments rare and rich, I have satisfied, in a well-proportioned body, the eyes, ears, and the understanding (Beaujoyeulx, 1582, n.p.).

Just as the ancient tragedies were believed to have been, it is clear that this principle of fusion of the arts in a *well-proportioned body* sought to stimulate and please all the senses and the intellect. In fact, the modern theorization of the poetic arts, based on Aristotle (384 B.C.- 322 B.C.), Horace (65

B.C.- 8 B.C.) and modern thinkers, postulated that it was easier to touch reason through the senses, since the mobilization of human passions would render the will more docile to absorb ideas and discourses. Following the *docere-delectare* topic, the 17th century representations and diversions sought to unite the serious and the pleasant, truth and fantasy, rational and sensorial. Their intention was to *teach by pleasing*, or to *please by teaching*. This notion appears clearly in the preface to the libretto of the *Ballet du Grand Demogorgon* (1633):

> And since poetry, music, and dance were invented to make truth more friendly to the senses, which must take it to the spirit, they are like golden pills and so well do they hide the truth that, naive as they may be, one must help the spirits to demonstrate their mysteries. (Grand Pré, 1633, n.p.)

The postulations of Aristotle, Horace and Plutarch (46 A.D. - 120 A.D.) on poetic art have grounded several discourses, with emphasis on the analogies between poetry and painting, based on the topic *ut pictura poesis*. This famous Horacean premise proposes to bring the two arts closer by establishing that painting is *mute poetry*, just as poetry is *speaking painting*. As imitative forms, their assumptions and precepts could be corresponding and interchangeable.

The comparison between these two *sister* arts, which employed different means to the same end, served as a theme for several discourses, resulting in the production of a vast argumentative repertoire. Plutarch had already signaled the possibility of extending the reasoning to the other arts, which was discussed by 17th century scholars. Recalling the Greek poet Simonides (556 B.C. - 468 B.C.), Plutarch proposes the substitution, in the Horacean saying, of painting for dance:

> Thus, it would be necessary to transfer Simonides' words from painting to dance, since dance is silent poetry and poetry is a talking dance (...). Between dance and poetry all things are common, one and the other participate in everything, both representing the same thing, in the same way as songs for dance (...), in which the representation is made more effective, on the one hand by gestures and mimics and, on the other, by words. (Plutarco apud McGowan, 1978, p.12)

Just as dance could be understood by the ancients as *silent poetry*, capable of *speaking* through gestures, modern thinkers like Guillaume de Colletet (1598-1659) could consider it as an *image in movement*, or even as *animated poetry*. Compared to a canvas or to a discourse, dance is capable of *expressing* and *showing* human passions, actions and thoughts:

> If the ancients called poetry a talking painting and painting a silent poetry, following their example we can call dance, and especially that which is practiced in our ballets, a moving painting or an animated poetry. As poetry is a veritable canvas of our passions, and painting a discourse that is in fact mute, but nevertheless capable of awakening everything that slips into our imagination: so dance is a living image of our actions and an artificial expression of our secret thoughts (Colletet, 1632a, n.p.).

In another libretto from 1632, Colletet clearly uses the Horacean formula of correspondence between the arts to propose a rapprochement between music and dance. The author views the two arts as different ways of manifesting the divine principle of harmony. Accordingly, he conceives dance as "[...] music for the eyes" and affirms that it is possible "[...] to hear a movement", especially in ballet, when music and dance merge:

> But here you will hear it and see it [the harmony] at the same time, so you will be able to see that it is not incompatible to make a music seen or a movement heard. Therefore, it is understood that dance is nothing but music to the eyes, just as harmonic voices are to the ears, and, the two together, a harmony for one and the other (Colletet, 1632b, p.3-4).

Similarly, Ménestrier frequently resorts to the analogy between dance, painting and poetry. Ballet as "[...] the most perfect species of dance" (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 18) is compared to a dramatic poem[31], and its rules should be established according to the precepts of painting. To defend this idea, the Jesuit once again evokes the authority of Horace:

> Ballet is a painting because it is an imitation, and Horace had long said that it was on painting that poetry should be ruled, so that poetry is a talking painting and painting is a silent Ut picture poësis erit. The rules of a ballet are therefore similar to those of a painting. (Ménestrier, 1972, p.82)

It is therefore possible to notice, in the formulations by thinkers of dance in the 17th century, the development of an idea corresponding to the Horacian topic: a *ut pictura saltatio*. The comparison between ballet and painting goes further: because it is constituted of the danced movement, ballet was conceived as a *living painting*, or even an *image of action*. According to Marie-Thérèse Mourey (2009), this systematic analogy could be understood as a "[...] poetics of the animated image". As on a canvas, ballets represented images, drawings, colors, and symbols through the decoration, stage elements, and the costumes. Beyond this, ballet had the ability to transform static images (of a painting) into animated images, by means of the dancers' movements, gestures, and spatial displacements – which made it possible to express even better the actions, passions, and even abstract notions in its procedural movement (Mourey, 2009, p.15). As the Jesuit put it:

> But ballet has one advantage over painting, since painting has only one moment, in that all its figures always remain in the same situation (...), unlike ballet, which is a whole sequence of movements that follow one another. (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 157)

Based on this, ballet theorists and apologists built the argument of ballet's superiority over painting and other arts, since dance added movement to figures and life to representations. The *poetics of the animated image* stems from the understanding of ballet as a *living painting*: a poetics of the dynamic image, invested with meaning and life through dance movement, which had particular and even more persuasive potentialities, being capable of producing an impressive effect even before any rational interpretation (Mourey, 2009).

The theorists' arguments suggest that dance could surpass the other arts both in its imitative possibilities and intensity. This peculiar poetic efficacy of dance was supposed to be sustained by the gestures and movements of the body, capable of conferring "[...] life" to images, so expressing the nature of things, the "[...] actions, customs and passions," the purely intellectual notions and the "[...] most concealed mysteries of nature" (Ménestrier, 1972 p. 40-41). For Ménestrier, only ballet could express, in the same performance, both the inferior actions (comedy) and the actions of great men (tragedy), mixing the historical and the fabulous, the serious and the ridiculous, the heroic and the satirical, as no other genre was able to do (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 53-55, p. 124).

The idea that dance could "[...] express everything" and ballet "[...] represent everything" appears widespread in the mindset of the time and underlies, for example, Michel de Pure's perception of such art as a kind of painting that reflects the world and history, revealing the mysteries of nature and morality (De Pure, 1972, p. 211-212). Dance was believed to be capable of encompassing a vastness of subjects and areas (McGowan, 1978, p. 14). Marin Mersenne (1588-1648), a French theologian and mathematician, advocated the great usefulness of dance in medical treatments, as well as a very effective means in the study of celestial movements (through the spatial figures of dance) and applied sciences, such as mechanics and perspective, even advocating dance as a universal language (Mersenne, 1636, p. 159-160).

As we have tried to demonstrate, all these erudite principles – the restoration of ancient Greek drama, the fusion of the arts, analogies between poetry, painting and other poetic arts, a poetics of the moving image and an eloquent art – appear clearly in the treatises, librettos and discourses on ballets to define the genre and guide its composition, presiding over and circumscribing the eminently technical and practical rules. We will deal with the latter below.

Precepts and rules of ballet composition

Nicolas de Saint-Hubert, dance master, begins his short treatise *La manière de composer et faire réussir les ballets*, legitimizing the importance of dance as one of the three main exercises of the nobility, just like riding a horse and handling weapons:

> [...]dancing is one of the three principal exercises of the Nobility (...) Everybody knows that to educate a young Gentleman it is necessary for him to learn to ride a Horse, Handle weapons, and Dance. The first increases dexterity, the second courage, and the Last grace and disposition (...). (Saint-Hubert In: Couto, 2020, p. 476)

With this statement, the author reiterates the importance of dance in the education of the nobility and in courtly sociability, which places it in a logic of conception and appreciation governed by erudite, discreet and literate rules and principles. In this first treatise of *ballets de cour*, Saint-Hubert postulates the main rules and characteristics of the genre, as well as very practical recommendations and important technical issues in the elaboration and realization of a ballet (Roucher, 1999, p. 380-381). Ballets are classified by the number of entries as *small, beautiful*, and *grand* (*Royal ballets*). According to the nature of the theme, they are defined as *serious* or *grotesque*.

The author defines six main and necessary aspects for the invention of a ballet: the theme, the music, the dance, the costume, the machines and the order (Saint-Hubert In: Couto, 2020, p. 476). And he develops his comments, rules and considerations about each one of them.

By postulating these six elements, the treatise writer demonstrates, first of all, that he conceived the genre according to the humanist principle, already discussed here, of uniting the arts: poetry (present in the theme, recitatives and arias sung), music (both vocal music and music for dance), painting (in the decoration, scenery and costumes), the engineering of the stagecraft and the dance itself. These same elements will remain central in the discourses subsequently published, which demonstrates the permanence of Saint-Hubert's systematization.

For Saint-Hubert, the key to making a beautiful ballet was to find a good theme, depend on it and submit to it all the rest (Saint-Hubert In: Couto, 2020, p. 477). De Pure also identifies in the theme "[...] the soul of the ballet," viewing it as a defining element that gives "[...] nourishment and movement" to the poet's spirit and ideas (De Pure, 1972, p. 214). Ménestrier conceived three kinds of themes (or *subjects*): the historical (which in general referred to ancient history, but could also allude to episodes from modern history), the fable-like or mythological and the poetic or allegorical, themes which could and should be combined (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 53).

In this way, a single genre would be capable of expressing many different kinds of things: natural things, events, epic poems, moral teachings, or even pure whimsy, as in some burlesque ballets. Still, poetic, allegorical, and moral themes were considered the loftiest. Regardless of the choice of theme, ballet should cause awe and pleasure, which was to be achieved by the grace of the novelty and the accuracy of the imitation (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 113). In fact, "[...] to be beautiful, it is necessary that it [the theme] has never been done", that it be new (Saint-Hubert In: Couto, 2020, p. 477).

If the principles of novelty and diversity should guide the invention of any spectacle, they were considered essential in the composition of the court ballets, because it was expected that they should always present something new and diverse. It is not coincidental, therefore, that all the treatises and discourses on ballets emphasize the description and/or precepts of the scenic apparatus, the decoration, the characterization of the characters (costumes, accessories and movements) and the machines. For Saint-Hubert, costumes and machines are as important as dance and music. De Pure discusses costumes, masks and machines in specific sections of his treatise (De Pure, 1972, p. 285-304) and Ménestrier considers it essential to pay attention to the stage apparatus, which includes decoration, costumes and machines (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 212-223 and p. 245-257). Michel de Marolles, on the other hand, points out how neglecting the decoration could jeopardize an entire performance (Marolles, 1755).

This insistent concern with the scenic apparatus and the description of the characters reveals the period's taste for ornament, artifice and spectacular impact. But beyond this taste, the scenic apparatus is essential to the composition of allegories as *living emblems*, which have a central role in the representation, insofar as it highlights the iconic elements (of the character and the setting) that infuse the scene with meaning. In this sense, Saint-Hubert insists that costumes, decorations, and machines are always adequate and convenient to what they represent: "[...] they need not necessarily be beautiful, as long as they are made according to the theme" (Saint-Hubert In: Couto, 2020, p. 481), to which he offers a series of examples.

According to Ménestrier, movements and gestures are also essential means to define the characters, always based on an allegorical and preceptual repertoire of expressing things "in a mute way" (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 153).

Dance, movements and gestures are, therefore, regarded as important elements of poetic and allegorical construction in the representation of nature or of men's actions, affections and customs:

> It is through movements that ballets imitate things, imitating through movements the actions of men, their affections and customs, just as they imitate the natural movements of animals and those that receive, naturally or violently, all other bodies (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 153).

This had already been pointed out by Saint-Hubert, who reinforced the importance of both dance and costumes in the definition of the characters: "[...] since ballet is a mute comedy, the costumes and the actions must allow one to recognize what is represented" (Saint-Hubert In: Couto, 2020, p. 480). It seems clear to us that the author understands that different human and social types necessarily have different bodies and gestures. Hence, such particular characteristics should be conveniently represented in the dance: "It is necessary to submit the dance and the steps to the music, to the entrances, and not have a wine-maker or a water-carrier dancing like a knight or a magician" (Saint-Hubert In: Couto, 2020, p.479). This explains the need to "[...] take the time to study the steps and the entrances," and not leave them to improvisation (Saint-Hubert In: Couto, 2020, p.480).

According to Ménestrier, ballet doesn't need to obey a unity of action or a coherent plot, like tragedy and epic, but only a unity of theme and design. The coherence and unity of ballet thus consist in all its parts maintaining a relation with the whole: not because they represent a single action, but because they all refer to the same theme (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 114). This aspect leads us to another important element, which Saint-Hubert called *order* and Ménestrier named *conduction* or *economy* of the ballets:

> The economy of ballets is the just distribution of a whole into its essential and decorous parts, the proper arrangement of causes, effects, properties, circumstances, events, sequence of fables as well as examples and imaginations of the same theme. (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 135)

This conception of specific *parts* that refer to a *whole* is what guides the structure of ballet in entrances (*entrées*)[32].Through the entrances the disposition of the sub-themes, characters and elements of a ballet is organized, aiming to ensure novelty and beauty through the diversity of entrances, "[...] in the variety of figures and uniformity of steps" (De Pure, 1972 p.237). In order to guide the harmonious disposition of all the parts and ensure the balance between them according to the theme, Saint-Hubert insists on the importance of the *ballet order master's* function, who is responsible for the conception and coordination of the ballet in its entirety: "[...] for on his good conduct the success or failure of the spectacle depends entirely" (Saint-Hubert In: Couto, 2020, p. 4784). Just as an orator organizes his topics in the construction of a speech (device), this *order*, or *economy*, provides the ballet inventor with the best way to link the themes, images, scenic resources and allegories, to better evidence his intent.

Among all these precepts, one aspect stands out because it presides over all the elements of the composition and is summarized by De Pure: "[...] the first and most essential beauty of a ballet aria is convenience, that is, the just relationship that the aria must have with the thing represented" (De Pure, 1972 p.260). The idea of convenience serves to fit and adjust all the elements of the ballet, submitting each of them to all the others. This aimed to ensure the verisimilitude of the representation and the required decorum, adjusting the representation to the environment and the circumstance in which it is situated, as well as to the subjects that participate in it.

It is important to point out that the treatises and discourses discussed here show these precepts and rules by means of numerous and frequent examples: both excellent and unsuccessful ballets are cited, excerpts and aspects that either illustrate success or deserve disapproval. If these examples reveal interesting details to us today – such as a good or bad dance performance, the materials used to make costumes, or even the themes and development of certain entrances – it seems to us that they should also enlighten the masters and dancers of that time on very practical aspects of ballet composition.

Thus, we reiterate that the effort to elaborate ballet precepts in writing through treatises and librettos is not opposed to the practices of composition; on the contrary, these texts have a practical character and directly guide the artistic practice of scenic dance.

Final considerations

The theoretical effort undertaken by Saint-Hubert, Ménestrier, De Pure and Marolles – and librettists such as Beaujoyeulx, Grand Pré and Colletet – to define, classify and preceptualize ballet, demonstrates not only a growing interest in the choreographic spectacle from 17th century France, but also a search for the definition and legitimization of ballet as art (poetics), according to the prevailing conception of that time. As such, according to Christout, "[...] one perceives a new concern for order and method. Respecting the inherent freedom of the genre, one seeks to specify its own laws and, also, the limits of its domain" (Christout, 2005, p. 150).

In short, throughout this paper we have tried to show the process by which dance and especially ballet were systematized as an art form. Central to this process is the production of written (and printed) documents in the form of manuals, treatises, librettos and discourses. This translation into the field of writing has very relevant implications for the theorization of dance and ballet, which inserts them in a larger context of knowledge systematization in modern Europe. These precepts and written rules that we call the *theoretical corpus* of ballet were evidently of a practical nature, since they guided ballet masters in the invention, composition and conducting, as well as in the appreciation of this spectacle, so present in the daily life of the French court in the 17th century.

Understanding the precepts that guided the composition of court ballets allows us to better understand and further analyze the choreographic and scenic forms of the dance spectacles of that time. Once the rules and constituent parts of this genre are understood, as well as what its contemporaries considered good and convenient (or what was disapproved of and discouraged), space is made for historically contextualized considerations and superficial and anachronistic conclusions are avoided.

In this context, in which dance and ballet are inserted in the court society, characterized by the codification of behavior also expressed in the domain of literate culture, the French nobility appropriated these arts as powerful symbolic artifices through which they constantly sought to reaffirm their social distinction and political hegemony in the France of the Ancien Regime. One cannot lose sight of the fact that the effort to draft and systematize meticulous rules and artistic precepts was closely related to monarchical power, insofar as court spectacles were at the service of the king and had very clear political messages, as well as strategies to reaffirm social and political pacts that aimed to keep the French court in harmony (Couto, 2015).

It is certain that the erudite principles, precepts and rules of composition of the ballets were devised with the intention of better realizing their rhetorical-poetic objectives of moving affections and persuading the court involved in this choreographic ceremonial that was ballet. Therefore, it is clear that the study of court dance and ballet in the Modern period belongs to the larger scope of a study of the practices and representations of monarchic power and the society that legitimates it.

Notas

[1] The master's research was funded by FAPESP, an institution that also made possible much of the documentary research carried out in French historical archives through the Research Internship Abroad Program-BEPE (2014).

[2] Translated from the original French.

[3] On the various dance types at the beginning of the Modern era, their aesthetic, social, musical and choreographical characteristics, see Bourcier, 2001 and Nevile, 2004.

[4] *Book of 'low dances' from the Library of Burgundy*. This manuscript from c.1500 is kept in the Royal Library of Belgium. It refers to the so-called *basses danses* nobiliary dances in slow tempo and performed with steps gliding on the floor, without lifting the body in leaps, which was considered more solemn and appropriate to aristocratic dignity. In this work, dance rules are associated with musical examples.

[5] *The art of dance and choreography*. Domenico da Piacenza, **De arte saltandi & choreas ducendi**, c. 1425. Paris, National Library of France, Ms. Italian Fund

972. A digitized version of this manuscript, as well as most of the treatises cited here, can be accessed via the BNF's Gallica digital portal.

[6] *On the practice or art of dance*. Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro, **De pratica seu arte tripudii vulgare opusculum**.,1463. Paris, National Library of France, Ms. Italian Fund 973.

[7] *Book on the art of dance*. Antonio Cornazzano, **Libro dell'arte del danzare**, c. 1465. Rome, The Vatican Apostolic Library 203.

[8] The manuscript is kept in the municipal archive of the city. (ECam, Fons notarial 3, 3). Cf.: NOCILLI, C. **El manuscrito de Cervera**: musica y danza palaciega catalana del siglo XV. Barcelona: Amalgama Edicions, 2013.

[9] *Art and instruction to dance well.*

[10] A scanned copy of Antoine Arena's *Ad suos compagnes qui sunt de persona frantes, bassas danses et branles praticantes*, dated 1538, can be found on the BNF's Gallica portal.

[11] *The ballet dancer*.

[12] *Nobility of ladies*.

[13] *For an English edition of the work with an introduction by Julia Sutton, see ARBEAU, Thoinot.* ***Orchesography***. *Translated by Mary Stewart Evans. With a New Introd. and Notes by Julia Sutton and a New Labanotation Section by Mireille Backer and Julia Sutton. New York: Dover, 1967. For a version translated into Spanish, see ARBEAU, Thoinot.* ***Orquesografía***: *tratado en forma de diálogo*. Versión castellana del texto inglés traducido por Cyril W. Beaumont de la edición original publicada en Langres, en 1588. Buenos Aires: Centurion, 1946.

[14] *The Graces of love* (1602) and*New dance inventions* (1604).

[15] On the relationship of learning to dance with etiquette and the importance of body eloquence in courtly gestures, see Burke, 2000, p. 91-112.

[16] *Discourses on the art of dance*.

[17] *Apology for dance*.

[18] According to Ménestrier's formulations, the name *ballet* comes from a Greek term which means to *throw*, from where the French term balle comes from, which refers to a *ball*, an object that he claims was used in ancient dances (Ménestrier, 1972, p. 39). Michel de Marolles also defined the term ballet according to the Old French: "I have no doubt that *Bal* and *Ballet* have the same origin and that both derive from *Baller*, which means dancing and jumping in Old French, according to the notes of a scholar in his work Origines de la langue française" (Marolles, 1657, p. 110 e 111).

[19] *The way to compose and make successful ballets.* Only two copies of Saint-Hubert's little treatise are currently preserved: one in the Mazarina Library (68146 Rés.) in Paris, and the other in the Library of the Royal Conservatory of Liège (L071/3F04) in Belgium. A facsimile edition (now out of print) with commentary by Marie-Françoise Christout was published in 1993 (Saint-Hubert, 1993). We have recently published a commented translation of Saint-Hubert's treatise, from which we have taken the excerpts quoted in this article(Couto, 2020).

[20] *Ancient and modern ballets according to the rules of theater*.

[21] The French clergyman Michel de Marolles (1600-1681), abbot of Villeloin between 1626-1674, left a vast written work that ranges from translations (of the Bible, Ovid, Virgil, and Seneca, among many others), history, memoirs, and genealogies, to catalogs of engravings. In his Memoirs, organized in three volumes and published in 1657, his inclusion in court and salon life is clear. Notably, having frequented the learned circle of Mlle. de Scudéry, the author describes ceremonies, shows, and daily life in the court, and talks about his relationship with prominent lords and scholars. In this work, Marolles dedicates his *Ninth Discourse* to ballets, presenting his general opinion on such entertainment in an effort to characterize the genre, describing and commenting on a few specific ballet performances. At the end, he also presents four conceptions of ballets he wrote in the form of librettos, which, nonetheless, we cannot be sure were ever performed.

[22] At the end of his discourse, Marolles also presents four conceptions of ballets he wrote in the form of librettos. We cannot be sure, however, if these were ever performed.

[23] *Idea about old and new spectacles*.

[24] *Considerations on conducting ballets*.

[25] *On ancient and modern musical representations*. There is also the treatise *La pratique du théâtre* (The practice of theater), published in 1657 by the abbot d'Aubignac (D'Aubignac, 1972), which touches on the theme of ballet, making only brief mentions of it.

[26] According to the inventories by McGowan (1978, p. 251-309) and Durosoir (2004, p.146-151), it is possible to identify about 500 ballets performed between 1581 and 1643, the end of Louis XIII's reign.

[27] The *comédie-ballet*, a genre much appreciated in the court of Louis XIV, represents an attempt to associate music and dance to an autonomous theatrical action, in a way that the dramatic function dominates the other arts, considered accessory (Durosoir, 2004, p.111). According to Paquot, this new orientation results in a loss of autonomy of the *ballet de cour* genre, since, within the framework of comedy and opera, ballet loses its specific forms, dynamics and defining characteristics - such as the participation of the nobility in the performance, for instance (Paquot, 1957, p. 197).

[28] On the constitution of the Academies in France in the 16th century, the main topics of academic debate and the network of scholars and artists involved, see Yates, 1947.

[29] *Ballet de l'Harmonie (1632), Ballet des Effects de la Nature (1632) and Ballet des Cinq sens de la Nature (1633).* Most of the court ballet libretti are now digitized and available for public consultation on the BNF's Gallica digital portal.

[30] Besides Beaujoyeulx's *Ballet Comique de la Reine* (1581), there are other very detailed librettos, with prefaces, discourses and/or commentaries. This is the case of the librettos of the *Ballet de Monseigneur le duc de Vendôme* (1610), the *Ballet Le Triomphe de Minerve* (1615), the *Ballet de la Délivrance de Renaud* (1617),

the *Ballet des Effets de la Nature* (1632), the *Ballet du Grand Démogorgon* (1633), among others.

[31] Comparisons of ballet to theater in the same analogical structure as Horace's saying are recurrent in seventeenth-century writings. Both Saint-Hubert (1993, p. 16) and the abbot of Marolles (1755, p. 113) characterize ballet as "[...] a mute comedy", while De Pure also defines it as "[...] a mute representation, in which gestures and movements signify that which could be expressed by words" (De Pure, 1972, p. 210).

[32] The essential unit that makes up the structure of ballets is the *entrée*, or *entrance*. The number of entrées can vary greatly, so a grand and ingenious ballet would have a greater number and variety of entrées. In some ballets the entrées are divided into parts, although this is not a rule. From the mid-17th century, libretti begin to distribute the entrances into *acts*. This practice coincides with the moment of reorientation of the genre towards the *comédie-ballet* of Lully, Benserade and Molière, when the ballet begins to be precepted under the rules and forms of comedy.

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