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# Conflict and Harmony: Phrasal Correlations between Dance and Music in Early Eighteenth Century France

Kimiko Okamoto

Introduction

It is generally believed that music and dance of the Beauchamps-Feuillet repertoire intrinsically share the temporal organisations — the beat, metre and phrase — but some scholars and practitioners have pointed out occasional cross-rhythms and cross-phrasing between the two arts.[1] Even when music and choreography constitute the same phrasal structure, the degree of the two arts' accordance is hardly universal. In this paper I will focus on phrasal relationships of music and dance, and illustrate varied correlations between the two arts, taking examples from works by Louis Guillaume Pécour, the most prolific choreographer of the repertoire. In the case of phrasal discrepancy between the two arts, I shall explore the implication of the discord as well.

'La Savoye' and rhetorical theories

My first example is 'La Savoye' (1700). Its musical phrasing is simple, with 4+4 bars all the way, and choreography seems to reinforce the phrasal simplicity with the shift of floor patterns drawn by the two dancers, which faithfully follows the musical structure. Looking closely, however, one notices subtle discordance in figure 1 (bars 41-48). The step sequence here (the [*pas de gaillarde – pas de sissonne*] x 2 + *pas de bourrée emboité – contretemp de gavotte*) makes a choreographic phrase of 3+3+2 bars against 4+4 bars of the music.
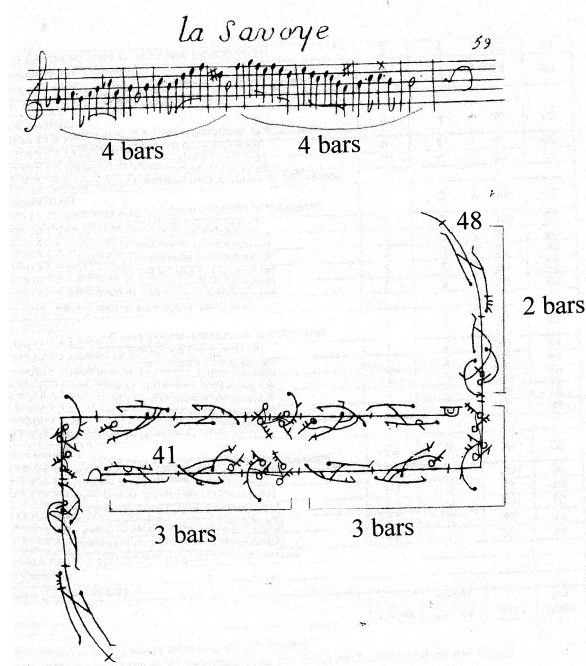
Figure 1 'La Savoye', (Feuillet, 1700, p.59)

This is not an isolated case of subtle phrasal discordance between music and choreography in the repertoire.[2] I would attribute the reason for this to rhetorical structure.[3]

Rhetoric, or theory of speech, had been regarded as the 'art of persuasion' since ancient Greece, and was common knowledge of the educated class in Europe from the sixteenth century. Structure was one of the major aspects of theory to achieve an effective speech. In summary, the orator introduces the main idea, corroborates and summarises it for the conclusion. The crucial point in theory is that the opponents' argument must be brought in and then refuted before the conclusion.

Rhetorical division		Functions in speech
Exposition	*Exordium*	Introduction
	Narratio	Narration of the theme of the discourse
	Propositio	Rendering the whole speech clear
Intrigue	*Confirmatio*	Corroboration of the theme
	Confutatio	Refutation of the opposition
Denouement	*Peroratio*	Conclusion with summing-up

Figure 2 Summary of rhetorical structure

Since antiquity, this theory was applied to other art forms, such as music, where a contrasting theme and/or key is often introduced in the middle section, which is then resolved to the original before ending; that is an intrinsic feature of the fugue, sonata form and the like (Bonds, 1991).[4] Although this principle was not theorised in dance as such, Claude-François Ménestrier (1658/1967: 225; 1682: 257-58), Louis de Cahusac (1754: III, 149) and Jean Georges Noverre (1760: 19-20, 32-33) describe structures of the ballet, using the same idea and terminology as rhetorical theories, as to be outlined along the principal three sections: the exposition, intrigue (or *noeud*) and the denouement. As rhetorical theories clarify that each part of a piece of work (such as a section within a ballet or an opera) ought to be constructed in the same way as the whole in order to achieve organic unity, rhetorical influence is evident in notated dances, regardless of whether the dance is originally for the ball or theatre.[5] Although rhetoric is not a sole principle to construct a dance, rhetorical division is often perceived through thematic, metrical and phrasal manipulations of choreography. To my mind, the short phrasal discord between music and choreography was a way to bring in something contradicting, contrasting or unexpected.[6] As in 'La Savoye', dance soon retrieves phrasal concordance and finishes in harmony with music.

It is not only for the structure that dance applies rhetorical ideas but also the ways how steps are arranged remarkably resemble the techniques of word arrangement, called 'figures'. As seen in 'La Savoye', the repetition is a key factor to arrange steps, and there are various manners of repetition in rhetorical figures too. A short sequence of steps often forms a choreographic motif, which functions as a building block of a phrase. The same step-unit may persistently reappear at the end of phrases to articulate the end of phrases in the like manner of poetic rhyme (abc$z$/ def$z$/. Each letter represents a step-unit, such as the *pas de bourrée*, *contretemps de gavotte*, and the like), which is called *antistrophe* in rhetorical terms.[7] A choreographic motif ab may become a phrase aabb by repetition (*epizeuxis*[8]), which can be later diminished to a motif aa or bb by eliminating a half of the phrase (*eclipsis*[9]).

The step arrangement is often the sole factor to be accounted for the phrasal analysis of choreographies today, but as 'La Savoye' demonstrates, geometric patterns drawn by the dancers on the floor articulate the phrase, and so does the directional change of dancing bodies. Therefore, I will take these into account of my analysis too. On the other hand, musical phrases are discernible through the harmonic cadence as well as periodicity and natural dictions.
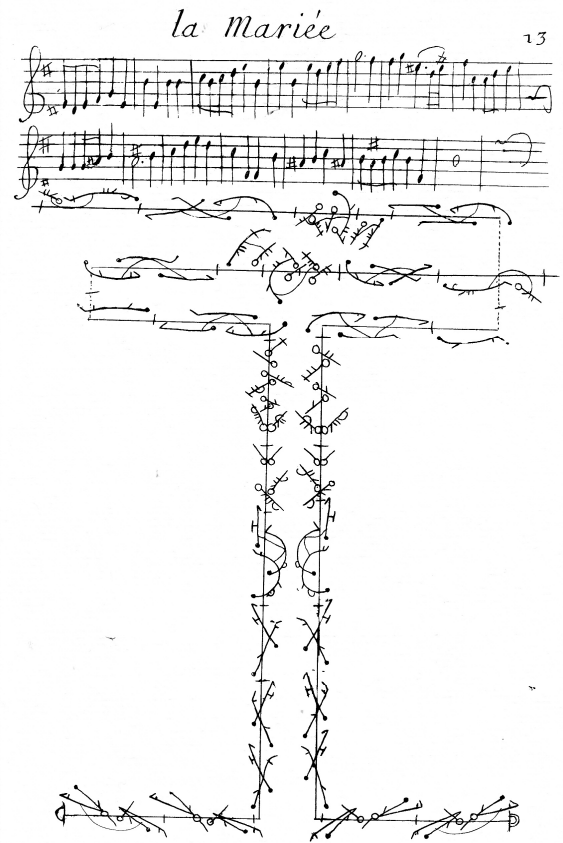
'La Mariée'

The next example, 'La Mariée' (1700), begins with a striking discord between musical and choreographic phrases. In the opening A section of the music, sub-phrasing is not clearly determinable but the musical figure of bars 1-2 is replicated in bars 3-4 to make a unit of 4 bars (or 5, depending on how one treats the long high note in bar 5). Choreography, conversely, repeats the 3-bar step sequence of the *pas de gaillarde – contretemps ballonné* with the dancers changing the directions to face, making a 6-bar phrase against 4- or 5-bar phrase of the music (fig. 3).
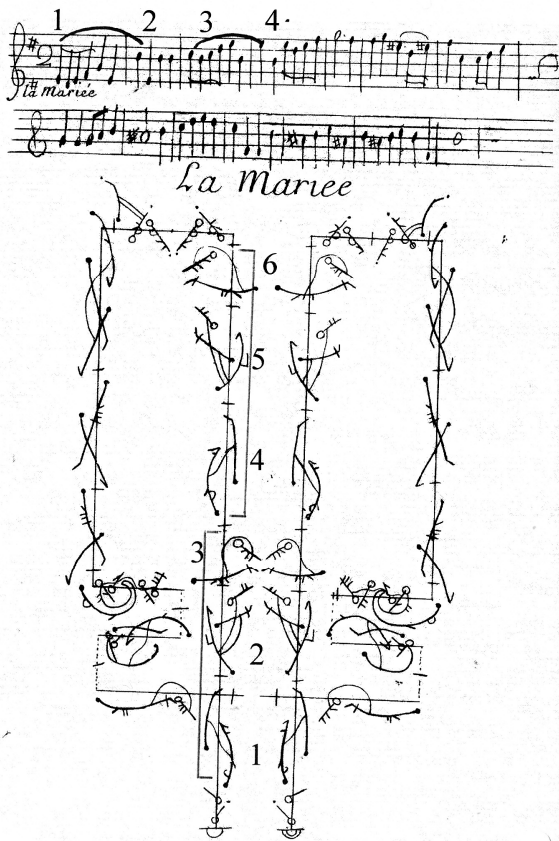

Figure 3 'La Mariée', (Feuillet, 1700, p.12)

Figure 4 (ibid, p.13)

Figure 5 (ibid, p.17)

While musical section A appears 4 times, phrasal conflict with choreography occurs only at the very beginning (fig.3). For the second time choreography creates a phrase of 4+5 bars, comfortably fitting to the music (fig.4); and for the third and fourth times, choreography makes long phrases of 9 bars with the cadence of the *pas de rigaudon* at the end, creating no discrepancy with the musical counterpart (fig.5 and 6).
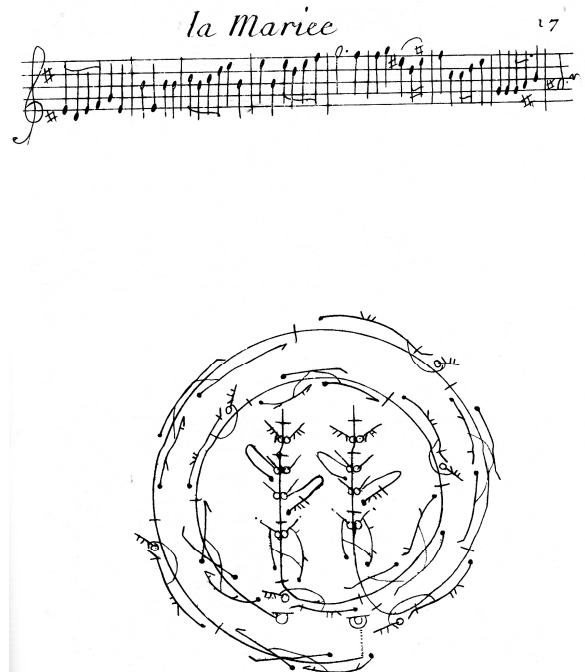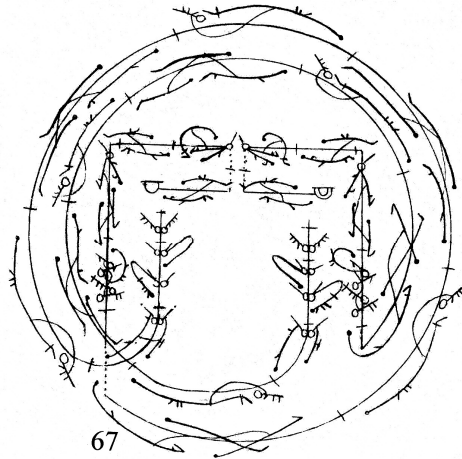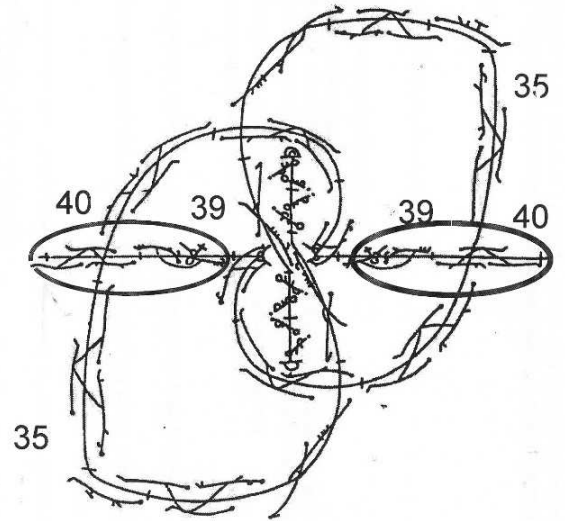
Figure 6 (ibid, p.18)

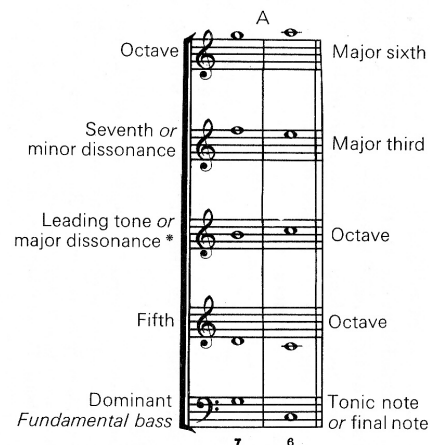**Figure 7** 'Le Rigaudon des Vaisseaux', (Feuillet, 1700, p.39)

This dance seems to me to conceive a structural narrative by means of the phrasal relationship of the two arts: presenting a conflict at the beginning, which is resolved into reasonable harmony, and concluding in perfect concordance, perhaps depicting an evolving relationship of a married couple.
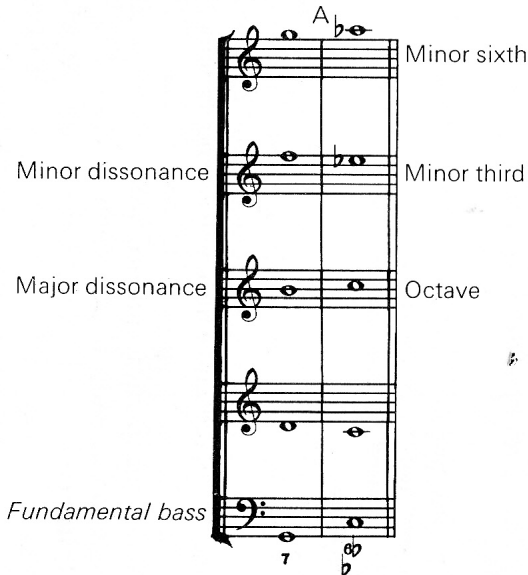
'Le Rigaudon des Vaisseaux'

When the dancers draw a large and simple geometric pattern on the floor, the completion of the pattern produces a sense of closure, or the ending of a phrase. Using this effect, my next example 'Le Rigaudon des Vaissaux' (1700) produces a deceptive impression that its musical and choreographic phrases are discordant but in fact they are concordant all the way.

In bars 35-38 the two dancers draw a large spiral together, which completes with the dancers facing each other at its centre (fig. 7). Despite the sense of completion at this point, the music is still running towards the cadence.

The dancers suddenly change their directions away from each other to perform a cadential sequence of the turning *contretemps ballonné – pas de bourrée* in bars 39-40, to the true musical cadence. The effect of this passage reminds me of the deceptive cadence of music.

*The major dissonance is formed by the major third of the dominant.

Figure 8 Deceptive cadence in the major mode Rameau, 1722/1971, p.72

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**Figure 9** Deceptive cadence in minor mode (ibid.)

The deceptive cadence was theorised by Jean-Philippe Rameau in 1722, which is a pattern of chordal progression that manipulates our sense of closure in music. In 'Le Rigaudon des Vaissaux', the music itself does not apply the deceptive cadence but choreography produces a similar effect by completing a large floor pattern before ending a phrase. Exactly the same cadential sequence appears once again in bars 74-75 (fig. 10). These significant passages mark the end of the two major rhetorical sections, the Exposition and the Intrigue, as if to seal off these sections by pulling both ends of a piece of string into a knot.[10]

'Entrée seul pour une femme' from Atys

I have discussed so far how phrasal discrepancy with music is manoeuvred in choreography. In some dances, however, choreography meticulously mirrors details of complex musical phrasing. My last example is the 'Entrée seul pour une femme' (c.1713) from Lully's opera *Atys*. The music is in the rondeau form of irregular phrasal structure: A B A C A A (5+7+5+8+5+5 bars). Choreography articulates the end of each section with a pause or a closed position of the feet: concluding A1 and A3 sections with a pause on one foot; marking the end of A2[11], B and C sections with the feet together in fifth
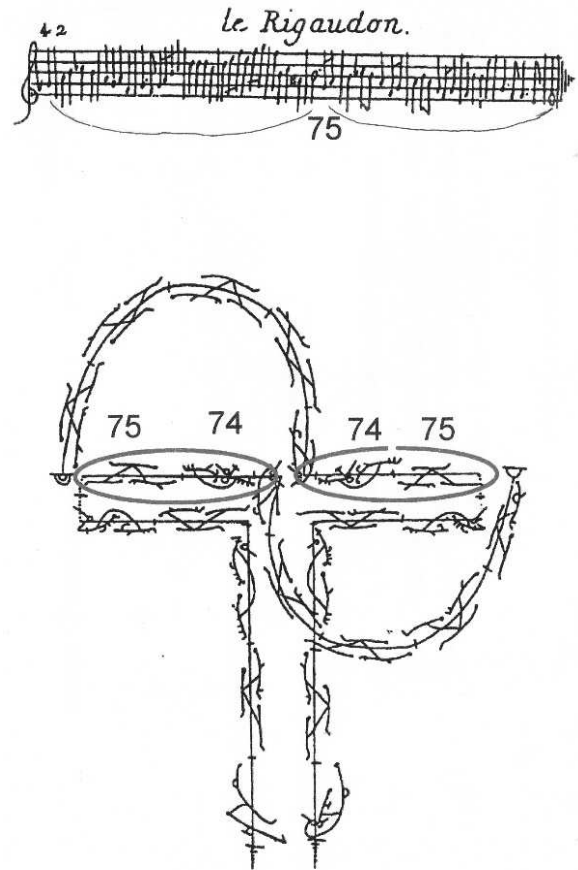
Figure 10 'Le Rigaudon des Vaisseaux', (Feuillet, 1700, p.42)
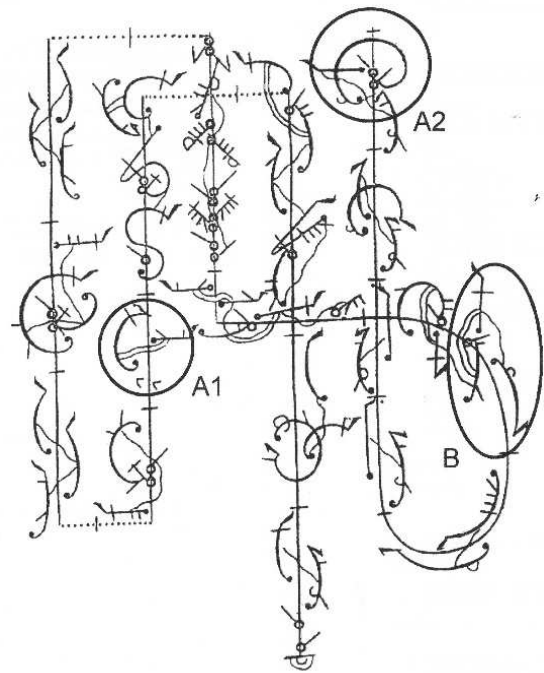
Figure 11 Entrée seul pour une femme (Gaudrau, c.1713, p.67) The markings indicate the end of each section.

position, whereas A4 fades out with the *pas de bourrée* backwards as the conventional ending of theatre dances.

Moreover, A section of music contains hemiola in bars 3-4, which is mirrored by choreography in the opening and final sections.
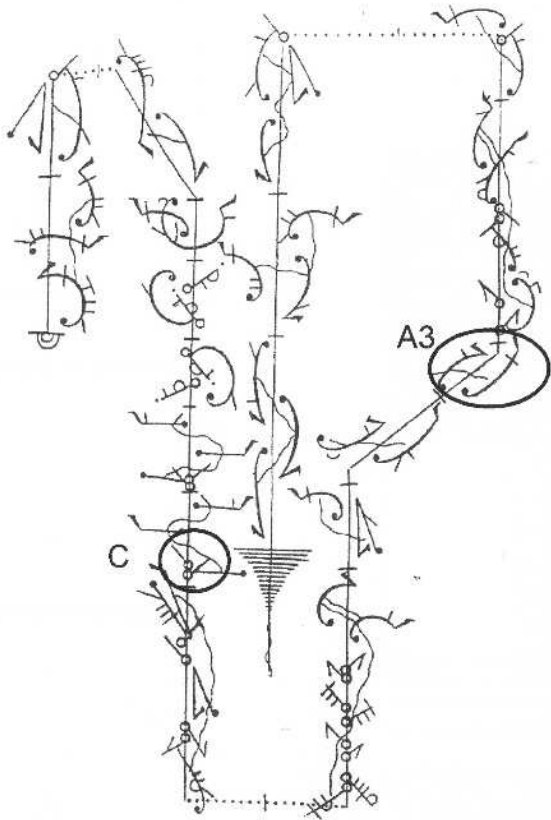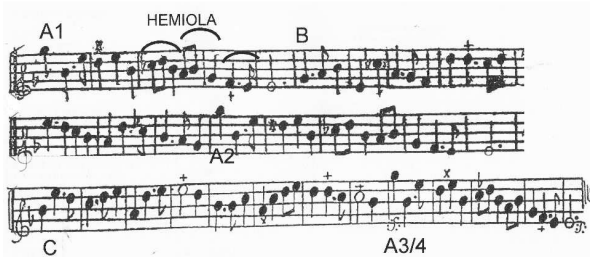

Figure 12 (ibid. p.68)

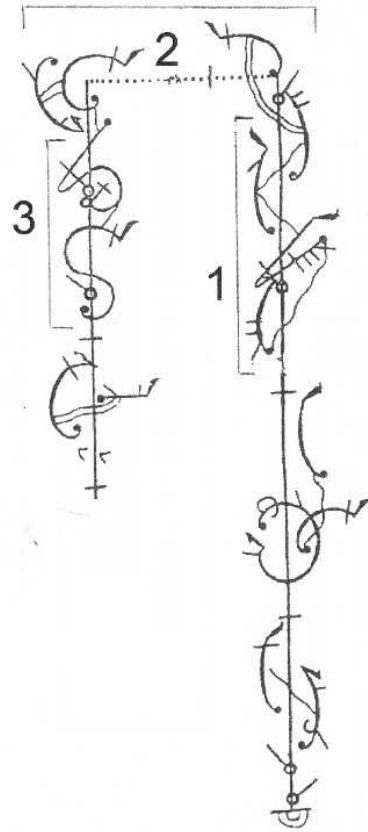**Figure 13** Music from Atys, Prologue (ibid. p.67-68)
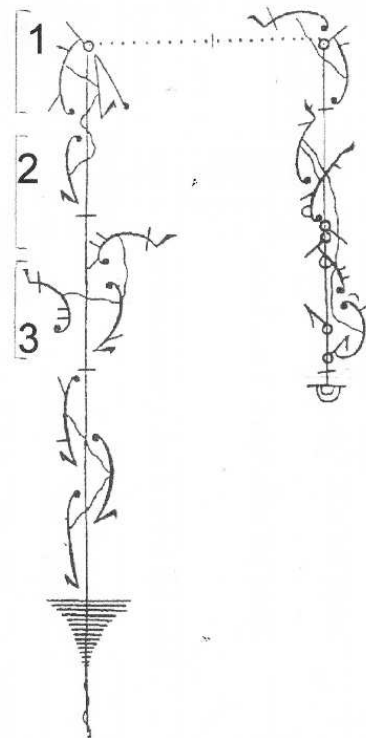

Figure 14 Choreographic hemiola to A1

Figure 15 Choreographic hemiola to A4

In my view, the tightly coherent phrasal relationship between music and choreography is the compositional theme of this dance, which is presented at the beginning and recapitulated at the end, in keeping with the rhetorical principle.

Conclusion

Unlike dances of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, choreography of the early eighteenth century forms its own phrasal structure independent of the musical counterpart, producing various relationships between the two. As classical compositions were to represent Neoplatonic harmony, all Pécour dances retrieve phrasal concordance before ending, to corroborate unity of the two arts, and the process from discord to concord produces an abstract narrative. In other words, the achievement of the intermedia harmony can thus create an abstract plot, regardless of whether the dance is for the ball or part of a large dramatic composition. To my mind, both conflict and harmony were meaningful under the aesthetics of French classicism, where dance and music together created a greater whole.[12]

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Rameau, Jean-Philippe. *Traité de l'harmonie*, Paris: Christophe Ballard, 1722; trans. Philip Gossett as *Treatise on Harmony*, New York: Dover Publications, 1971.

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End Notes

[1] To mention a few, Wendy Hilton (*Dance of Court and Theater: the French Noble Style 1690-1725*, Princeton, 1981), Betty Bang Mather (*Dance Rhythms of the French Baroque*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987) and Meredith Little / Natalie Jenne (*Dance and the Music of J. S.* Bach, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1991) discussed cross-rhythms and cross-phrasing of the minuet while Anne L. Witherell (*Louis Pécour's 1700 Recueil de dances*, Ann Arbor, 1981) discussed cross-phrasing of 'La Mariée' and 'La Conty'. Barbara Segal analysed hornpipe choreography, focussing on its cross-metrical aspect ('Hornpipe and Hemiola: Dance Rhythms in Triple Time Country Dances' in: *Rothenfelser Tanzsymposium Tagungsband Fagisis*, Freiburg, 2008, 183-195; 'The Hornpipe: a Dance for Kings, Commoners and Comedians' in: *Proceedings of the seventh DHDS Conference*, St Albans, 2009, 33-43).

[2] The same feature is observed in the 'Autre Entrée à deux' (Little and Marsh Catalogue no 2640), 'Entrée seul' (LMC5060), 'La Nouvelle Gaillarde' (LMC6340), 'La Petite Bourée' (LMC6820) by Pécour and 'La Nouvelle Mariée' (LMC6360) by Feuillet. It is important to note that the discrepancy between musical and choreographic phrases occurs only once in the similar points of choreography of these dances, suggesting that it was deliberate rather than a whim or mindless of the music-dance relationship.

[3] Structural analysis of notated dances applying rhetorical theories is not my innovation; its early attempts appeared in the 1980s and 90s, which were based on narrative interpretation of the dancing bodies according to choreography (e.g. by B. B. Mather, A. Régine and J. L. Schwartz). Those based on compositional parameters have been attempted by Ricardo Barros and myself after the turn of this century: Barros, R. *Dance as Discourse, the Rhetorical Expression of the Passions in French Baroque Dance*, Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010; Okamoto, *Between the Ancient and the Modern,* 2005; 'The Structure of the Passacaille in Defence of Rhetoric' in *Tanz im Musiktheater — Tanz als Musiktheater*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würtzburg, 2009, 149-161; 'The "Passacaille of Armide" Revisited:

Rhetorical Aspects of Quinault's'/Lully's *tragédie en musique*' in *Historical Dance: The Journal of the Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society*, vol. 4-2, 2012, 11-18.

[4] To mention a few references, Gregory G. Butler discusses rhetorical elements in the fugue ('Fugue and Rhetoric' *Journal of Music Theory*, vol.21, 1977: 49-109), and Anton Reicha explains the sonata form in reference to rhetorical principles (*Traité de haute composition musicale ou cours de composition musicale*, 1826: vol.2, 299). Eric J. McKee analyses Viennese waltz, which typically presents sharp contrasts before ending, in line with rhetorical structure (*Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz: a Study of Dance-Music Relations in ¾ Time*, India University Press, 2012: 111-12).

[5] This excludes multipartite dances, where individual sections are too short to conceive a structural pattern within, and the selection and arrangement of the dance type for each section do not suggest any structural model.

[6] 'Oddity' in choreography is introduced by other methods too: by shifting the floor pattern from angular to circular (e.g. 'La Bourrée Dauphine' and 'La Nouvelle Vénitienne' by Pécour); turning symmetrical floor patterns of couple dances to asymmetrical (e.g. 'La Madalena' by Feuillet, 'La Bacchante' by Ballon) or to non-symmetrical (e.g. 'La Médicis' by Feuillet); by introducing alternating solo passages ('Aimable Vainqueur' by Pécour, 'La Bouflers' by Ballon); with the emphasis on a contrasting step sequence (e.g. 'Le Branle allemand' by Pécour, 'Le Rigaudon de la Paix' by Feuillet); or the lack of a step sequence which appears in all other sections within the dance ('La Bourée Dauphine' by Pécour, 'Rigaudon' by Ballon).

[7] A definition of the *antistrophe* reads: 'When the like sound is iterated in the endings' (Sonnino, 1968: 63).

[8] A definition of the *epizeuxis* reads: 'A repetition of the same word or sound immediately or without interposition of any other' (ibid: 174-75).

[9] A definition of the *eclipsis* reads: 'When the word omitted may be clearly gathered from the context… Of a similar kind… are those passages in which words are decently omitted to spare our modesty…only one word and that of obvious character is missing' (ibid: 72).

[10] This dance contains another instance where dancers conclude a geometric figure (bar 61) before the end of musical phrase, followed by a 2-bar cadential sequence at the true musical cadence (bars 62-63). It appears in the Intrigue, though not at the end of it, and the cadential step sequence is different from the cases discussed in my main argument. This is to set up the Confutatio section, by reflecting the key feature of this dance in an altered form.

[11] I would consider the end of A2 section to be on the second beat of bar 17 in fifth position of the feet, regarding the following *pas marché* sideways as a preparatory upbeat for the next *sauté*, overlapping between the two sections.

[12] It may be adequate to add here the fundamental issues raised by delegates of the conference after the presentation of this paper. The first was a question whether compositional elements analysed in this paper were perceived by eighteenth-century audience. I would imagine it was more likely so than by today's audience because music and dance were both essential subjects of education for the nobility at the time. With their life-long experiences of dancing and music-making of this genre from childhood, the aristocratic audience would have been attuned to details of choreography and music. Fundamentally, however, arts of the classical eras were conceptual, where the creator's intention and appreciators' perception were not considered to be separate. Compositional elements, such as dance-music relationships, were not intended to 'appeal' to the audience but expected to be appreciated, to some extent at least.

The second was to question the relevance of compositional analyses like these for dancing today. In my view, compositional analysis is necessary to comprehend how individual dances are designed to work as a microcosm, only through which can we grasp the genre as a whole. Some researchers endeavoured to find rules/patterns in eighteenth-century choreography in vain without referring to aesthetics of the time; they concluded that there was no such thing as coherent 'choreography' in this repertoire but dance was made of merely random series of steps and floor patterns. The more dances I analyse, however, the more convinced I've become that dances of the Beauchamps-Feuillet repertoire make good sense in relation to their music, and rhetoric is one of the key concepts which help us to decipher them. Rhetoric was essential knowledge of the educated class in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which became a mind-set of the time. It is no longer the case today, which is the exact reason why the awareness of those theories is important for us in order to understand compositions from the distant past. For further discussion of this matter, see my argument in: Okamoto, 2005, vol.1, 82-84.

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