

A Baroque Body! What the hell is that?

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From its origin in Italian cities such as Rome, Mantua, Venice and Florence, characterized by their taste for movement, dramatization and decorative exuberance, the Baroque is a complex aesthetic paradigm that aims to surprise and move the audience.

But our focus here is about the extent to which this informs the dancing body of these times, and the questions that are often asked concerning the practice of early dances: Did the practitioners of the so-called baroque dance have such a different body than today's dancers? Is it possible to reconstruct the way of dancing of men and women by closely analyzing the treatises and documents on Baroque Dance which have come down to us?; and especially - how can we dance today like people from the seventeenth/eighteenth centuries? And fundamentally, what is Baroque Dance?

Baroque/Barok: conventional terms

Many are the authors, writers, musicians, and dancers, along with the simply curious, who have tried to elicit some form of logic underscoring the persistent uses of the word « baroque » throughout time. These will be briefly mentioned in the following overview.

Most enduring is indeed the early traditional Iberian use of “barocco” to describe a “faulty” pearl whose imperfect shape triggered a lasting interest in the unusual and an aesthetics of irregularity: throughout the 18th century onwards, ‘baroque’ was associated with the unnaturalness of an object, including an artistic artefact. The term implies movement (as opposed to stability), of curved, flowing forms with a taste for extremes and the excessive.¹

While Wölfflin uses it in the 1880's in the context of architecture, French historian Victor Lucien Tapié, in his *Baroque et Classicisme* (1957), helpfully stresses the difficulties of pinning it down to a definition. In his « Le pli » (1988), French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, comes to the conclusion, among many others, that if « there is no *a priori* concept of the baroque », it is a concept always used in relation to ‘Classicism’ or ‘the Renaissance’ for the analysis of styles in architecture and painting.

In our time, it has also been taken from the nineteenth century German analysts and associated with ‘frühe Musik’, Early Music, limited to the ‘common-practice’ period: from Monteverdi's *seconda prattica* to Rameau and the advent of the *galant* or Rococo style. In the 1960s, dance and historical rhetoric students applied it to the court dance of the reign of Louis XIV, paralleling the use of the term ‘Baroque music’ for that written from Monteverdi to Rameau.

In her 1990s research writings, Eugenia Roucher has convincingly shown that the term *danse baroque* should be replaced by *la Belle Danse* (as in *bel-air*, *bon-air*, *belles manières*, *bel-être*, good manners, good looking), terms applied exclusively to aristocratic behavior.

¹Bianca Maurmyr, ‘De «la danse baroque» à «la belle danse» et retour: usages d’une catégorie’, *Recherches en danse*, 5 (2016), fn.5 - Dictionnaire of 1740. Meaning of an aesthetic taste with an unordered expressivity.

As early as 1641², dance theoretician de St. Hubert uses the term ‘beau, belle’ to define the concept, although the term Belle Dance already appears in sixteenth and seventeenth century French literature, in the works of Pierre Ronsard and François Rabelais.³

Over the past decades, through the extensive practical experience of our dance companies in the styles that preceded La Belle Dance, as well as our more recent work on *Instruction pour dancer les dances* (ca.1612)⁴, we have been able to determine that the ‘Bal’ in the court of Henri IV is radically different from that inherited from Thoinot Arbeau’s *Orchésographie*.

Effectively, the dancing style which then developed under Louis XIII (1589-1610), according to our own research based on *Apologie de la Danse* by François de Lauze (1623) and *Louange de la Danse* by Barthélémy de Montagut (1620) puts us clearly on the track to La Belle Danse. These treatises claim that one can learn how to dance with perfection by reading their **own** Method. They even speak of ‘science’⁵.

The questions remain: how can we, in our bodies of today, reconstruct what these dancing masters proclaim to be the True Method, the ultimate practice? Can I personally acquire or develop a Baroque Body, one like Marie de Médicis, la Montespan, Mlle de Subigny, or La Camargo?

II. Emergence & description: from le Bal de Cour to the Stage

In the early sixteen hundreds, dances of the previous century were still being danced for pleasure at the Court, especially brawls (*branles*) danced in a circle or in a chain. These pleasant diversions of the courtiers were always conducted under strictly observed behaviour pertaining to propriety and orderliness. These were considered to be of fundamental importance; this training was as much part of the military discipline of officers in the army as a civil one. Correct posture, elegant bowing, reverences and steps in proper proportions were strictly taught and strictly enforced in order to develop a noble and serious mien – always gentle, without **any** sudden, inappropriate or forced gestures.

Completely different notions of movement (such as *glisser*), and unknown new steps (*coulade, favori, feuillet, fleuret, retirade*), appear in *Instruction pour dancer* (c. 1612). Most of these are found again in *Apologie*, such as: *glisse, glissade, assemblé, porté, coulé, coupé, temps en rond etc.* Are these the same steps with new or different names? Some of them (*chassé, battu*) convincingly resemble the steps of the next style which will be known as *La Belle Dance*. This new style is clearly under the influence of the refinement to be found in the Italian treatises from Ebreo to Caroso and Negri, and notably Ercole Santucci in his *Mastro da Ballo* (1614)⁶. In France, this refinement becomes more and more sophisticated and detailed, the *mouvements*

² Monsieur de. St Hubert, *La Manière de composer et faire réussir les Ballets* (1641), ed. Minkoff (Genève, 1993).

³ ‘La danse que l’on nomme la belle’ (1573), Académie de musique et de danse de Baif et Joachim Thibault de Courville, qui collaborent avec Ronsard, les musiciens Claude Le Jeune, Jacques Mauduit et Eustache du Caurroy. Pierre Ronsard (de), *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, Gallimard, éd. La Pléiade, 1993); François Rabelais, *Œuvres complètes (de La Pléiade)*, ed. M. Huchon (Paris, 1994).

⁴ *Instruction pour dancer*, An Anonymous Manuscript, éd. par Angene Feves, Ann Lizbeth Langston, Uwe W. Schlottermüller et Eugénia Roucher, Freiburg im Breisgau, Fa-gisis, 2000.

⁵ F. De Lauze, *Apologie de la danse* (Genève: Minkoff, 1977), p.24, originally published in 1623: «uiconque a l’imagination pleine de quelque science, il se peut faire entendre ou de voix ou d’écrit, sinon à tous, pour le moins à ceux de la profession».

⁶ Fabritio Caroso, *Nobilita di dame e Il Ballarino* (Venice, 1600); Ercole Santucci, *Mastro da Ballo* (Perugia, 1614); Esquivel Navarro, *Discursos sobre el arte del danzado* (Seville, 1642).

more precise, intimate, small and tightly regulated. Texts such as Balthasar Gracián's *L'Homme de Cour* (1647) and '*Le je ne sais quoi*' (suggesting some ineffable grace associated with the God-elected aristocracy) coming from Italy and Spain, also emphasize politeness, good manners and *savoir vivre*, always accompanied by ease, facility, airiness, clarity and precision. From these are drawn the basic principles of training for the Ceremony of 'Le Bal' at the court of Louis XIV.

In this sense, we move from the 'natural' (associated with a certain simplicity of execution) to a 'studied naturalness'. To make this clear, we will use the term 'stylised dance' to refer to this new studied naturalness. This is not to be confused with the 'natural dances' in Arbeau's *Orchésographie*, for which we will use the term without inverted commas (i.e. natural).

From a natural body towards a stylised body

In *Orchésographie*, the thirty five dances that serve as models for good dancing and demonstrate natural bodies are the round dances called *Branles*. These dances and Ballets or *Mascarades* show the interplay between the men and the women, and also promenading couples, including occasional suggestive references to animals (e.g. *Branse des chevaux*).

In 1610, Eymeraud⁷ provided descriptions of ten additional dances. Later, in for example Montagut's *Louange de la Danse* (1620) and de Lauze's *Apologie de la Danse* (1623), the suite of Branles is composed of six branles (brawls): this 'suite', is called 'le branle' in the court of Louis XIII and takes place at the beginning of the *Bal*.

Through de Lauze and Montagut's deep knowledge of the body are added technically-nuanced ideas, influenced by Italian concepts, that are gradually integrated in what we can call a style. These two treatises had many similarities in spite of their differences. The important difference is that *l'en dehors* (feet turned-out) becomes essential (as described by Negri⁸ and by Esquivel⁹). This technique, with its slides and up-steps, completely redefines the inherent, harmonious bodily proportions. The leg extension and the use - or not - of the *plié* (*bending*) contribute to the effectiveness and ease of the *élevé* (*rising*) and the *saut* (*jump*), as well as the *chassé* (*chase*). Notable is the use of the *mouvement sur le/les pieds* or half point and the flexible return to the floor. In time, this technique becomes the *ressort* (spring or bounce) described by Pierre Rameau's *Le Maître à Danser* (1725), and then the *moelleux* (flexibility) in the leg, which becomes a basic technique in classical ballet. Similarly, those steps which were called 'jumps' in Italian courts, become 'on point'.

Relations between the music and the dance

The relationship with music is most important for finding and determining the *tactus* and the rapidity of steps, and *a-fortiori* how to execute them! We remember the 20th-century 'tradition' of films with dances from 'historic times'! The music is played extremely slowly, because it is

⁷ The ten additional dances from Eymeraud in *Instruction* (1610) are principally from dancing masters.

⁸ Cesare Negri, *Le Grazie d'Amore* (Milan, 1602; see for example: Tratto Segundo, Regola I: 'le punte de' piedi van poco in fuora').

⁹ Juan Esquivel de Navarro, *Discursos sobre el arte del danzar* (Seville, 1642); see 'puntas afuera'.

‘old’ and the notes are all white - with long and enormous reverences, and the couples joining hands with raised fingers!

Arbeau makes it clear that steps must be danced according to the beats and their rhythmic structure. He puts the musical notation in vertical position in order to place the steps with the notes. This gives a very relative precision, subject to the intelligence of the modern interpreter. He had worked out a notation which made it possible to match the step with its corresponding note. But in the manuscript *Instruction pour dancer* and in the two treatises *Apologie de la Danse* and *Louange de la Danse*, none of this is clear because there is no dancing notation, no musical notation or any description at all of the music!

The music by Mangeant¹⁰ and Praetorius¹¹ in ‘*la suite de bransles à l’ouverture du Bal*’ is as described in *Instruction*. This allows us to convert movements into real steps which fall on the notes. From this revealing process, we can determine specific techniques of coordinating music and muscles, although often in unexpected ways (such as in the *Branle simple*, for instance). Using the music of Praetorius (for *Instruction*) and of Bocan, Mersenne and others (for *Apologie*), we can reconstruct proposals for both treatises, which clarify each other!

Our own experience of dancing the *Orchésographie* has itself been of great help in working out the rhythms of the ‘branles’, while the relation with the music proved more complex than it seems. We had to study in detail both the logic of the body and – as they became clear – the complexity of the rhythms. Subsequently, in these treatises, we had to ask if the steps directly fit the musical pulses or do the musical rhythms have a structure of their own?

Our collaborator and director of music, Patrick Blanc, has demonstrated the importance of the music, and helpfully clarified the relations between the dances of the royal court and the music of the early seventeenth century. Together, we had to discover a new way of adapting steps to notes, a new way of using the measures of music, often uncovering ternary rhythms. This entailed, for example, alternating groups of one or two measures in order to fit the steps in. With the treatises always before our eyes, we experimented, little by little, with the various possible relationships, before choosing either what seemed to follow the earlier ways, or on the contrary, not the most logical, but the most apparently natural, i.e. stylized gestures. Despite this new complexity, an aesthetic logic which incorporated both physical and musical gestures emerged. In a later period, it became even clearer, thanks notably to Georg Muffat.¹²

Feuillet’s *Treatise of the Cadence* (1704) makes use of counts for each step by groups of binary or ternary rhythms. This is as precious a musical reference for the relation between steps and measures as the wonderfully detailed description given by Pierre Rameau. Feuillet specifies both positions and individual steps, each with their corresponding code for the arm gestures. And so, we see just how it all works! Movements are described precisely, gesture by gesture, step by step; with the arm codes coupled with the steps to enhance the rise and the jump. Both

¹⁰ Jacques Mangeant, *Recueil des plus beaux airs accompagnés de chansons à dancier, ballets, chansons folatres, & bachanales, autrement dites vaudevire, non encores imprimés* (1615): «les chansons à dancier sont accompagnées de toutes les qualités susdites a savoir de mesure, de rime & de raison» /‘the dance songs are accompanied by all the aforesaid qualities of meter, rhyme & reason’.

¹¹ Michael Praetorius, *Terpsichore* (Wolfenbüttel, 1612).

¹² In his *Florilegium I, Preface*, (Augsburg, 1695), Georg Muffat gives us many indications for the French style and suite according to Lully’s fashion and notably for bow strokes that help dancing.

authors display a thorough knowledge of the mechanics of the body and of the detailed technical skills required for effective and beautiful dancing.

All this was put to very good use by the former researcher, late choreographer Francine Lancelot, who herself came up with many convincing suggestions of possibilities. We are thankful to have her catalogue¹³ of choreographies and authors.

Chorégraphie and *Le Traité de la Cadence* de Feuillet teach us the relations between steps and the rhythms (both duple and triple) for those reconstructing the original choreographies, thanks also to the invention of the musical chronometer - of Feuillet¹⁴! - and the discoveries by prolific scientists such as Etienne Loulié (1696), Joseph Sauveur¹⁵, L'Affilard¹⁶, Dozembray¹⁷, Jacques-Alexandre de La Chapelle¹⁸ (1737) and Henri-Louis Choquel¹⁹ (1762), the dancer and theoretician Alexis Bacquoy-Guédon²⁰ (1785); all these inventions cast light on Beauchamp and Feuillet's rule of 'one step per measure' as described in *Le Traité de la Cadence*. For instance, the tempo of the Bourrée is strictly given thanks to the *pas de sissonne* which consists of two actions per measure: jumps using the supple weight of the body on both two feet and on one foot. This rule guides us on the one hand to the rhythmic regularity of beat-by-beat for some steps, and on the other hand, to the rhythmic variety of the other steps which fit onto the music, but not in the same rhythms. A good example is the difference between a *pas de bourrée* with 3 actions after a *plié*, and a *pas grave* with three actions on the same measure, (*élevé, glissé and posé = rise, slide and march?*). after a *plié*.

The articulations (*pliés*) and the strong beats described with precision by Pierre Rameau²¹ and Feuillet - and notably the concept called *mouvement* (bending, to rise or jump), are in fact already mentioned in *Apologie* and *Louange*, even if they are not absolutely compulsory. The Italians, however, suggest the use of 'natural spacing', i.e the distance of a half - foot between the feet or between two steps. True virtuosity comes ultimately from the proportion of space and measure as a result of a mastery of the relation between body *mouvements* and music. Precision, ease and speed are the vital elements - always performed without forcing or any appearance of stress.

¹³ Francine Lancelot, *La Belle Dance. Catalogue raisonné (fait en l'an 1995) des chorégraphies en notation Feuillet* (Paris: Van Dieren, 1996).

¹⁴ Jürgen Kroemer, "'Le Cronomètre de Monsieur Feuillet': Absolute Tempoangaben eines barocken Tanzmeisters", *Österreichische Musikzeitung* 56/7 (2001), pp.23-28.

¹⁵ Joseph Sauveur invented l'échomètre, also called *Chronomètre*; see «Principes d'acoustique musicale» in *Mémoires de l'Académie Royale des Sciences* (1701).

¹⁶ Michel L'Affilard, *Principes très faciles pour bien apprendre la musique*, 5th ed (Paris, 1705).

¹⁷ Louis-Léon Pajot, comte d'Ons-en-Bray, *Description et usage d'un métromètre...*(Paris, 1732).

¹⁸ Jacques-Alexandre de La Chapelle, *Les vrais principes de la musique*, (Paris, 1736-1752), vol. 2, 41-56. His examples are supplied in Klaus Miehling, *Das Tempo in der Musik Barock und Vorklassik...* (Wilhelmshaven, 1993), pp.85-91.

¹⁹ Louis Choquel, *La musique rendue sensible par la mécanique* (2nd ed, Paris, 1762); facsim. ed, Minkoff (Geneva, 1972), pp.115-213.

²⁰ Alexis Bacquoy-Guédon, *Méthode pour exercer l'oreille à la mesure dans l'art de la danse* (Amsterdam/Paris, c.1785).

²¹ Pierre Rameau, *Le Maître à danser*, published in 1725 and reprinted and completed in 1748. See also *Abrégé de la nouvelle méthode dans l'art d'écrire ou de tracer toutes sortes de danses de ville. Dédié à son altesse sérénissime Mademoiselle de Beaujolais et mise au jour par le Sr. Rameau maître à danser* (1725).

The connection between *Natural, Refined, and 'The Baroque' Way* or How to make the new stylized dance look natural?

L'en-dehors of both hips and feet, the *coulé*, the *glissé*, the equilibrium are already addressed in *Apologie*. But, more importantly, in *Le Maître à Danser*, Pierre Rameau will speak of the 'inclination' ('*pente du corps*'²²), which is used in certain steps, plus other new foot techniques. Under the influence of this new grammar (feet and hips turned out, *assemblé*, *coulé*, *coupé*, *glissé*, *chassé*, etc.), the body must become strictly regulated, controlled, and above all, with constant care for looking '*gracieux*' (*graceful*). Several arm codes are already depicted in *Apologie*. These become very precise in France, thanks to Beauchamp, and they are provided in *Le Maître à danser* by Rameau, who recognizes them as aids to the body for rising and jumping.

The expected embodiment of propriety and orderliness is now accompanied by the word 'small' as suggested by Italian masters, but the depiction of interplay between women and men in several dances persists in *Instruction* and even in *Apologie*: the two methods for Cavaliers and for Dames, and the single one for Cavaliers in *Louange*, are treatises of civility. Steps and dance for the Ball are described as being performed gradually (*insensiblement*), 'gently' (i.e. everything has to be '*doux*' - soft and sweet), compensating for the injunction of moderation for those with military training. Thus, the dance functions to bring refinement to the dutiful embodiment of civility.

The Italians express fundamental qualities of gracefulness as *ondeggiare* (i.e. light, very small and smooth movements up and down on the ground, like gentle waves) and *ombreggiare* (this appears to be bringing the shoulder forward along the same axis as the leg, as if projecting a shadow above the leg (as can be seen in images from painters²³ of the Middle Ages)²⁴. De Lauze's description²⁵, however, gives rise to questions: do the Cavalier and the Lady do the same movement? Or does his description refer to *contraposto* (i.e. with arms and feet moving in opposition as in walking)? If so, might he be performing 'ondeggiare' and 'ombreggiare'? With *contraposto*, we also have to consider equilibrium and disequilibrium (we must not fear to 'unbalance the balance' which is essential to the dance!).

The idea of 'accompaniment' (arms and hands with the step, direction of the head and gaze) leads us to conceive of the body as an expressive whole behaving at once in a friendly (or seemingly friendly) manner towards the good company. We can here point to movements that appear 'smooth and effortless' when expressing contradictory qualities, such as modesty and

²² The concept of 'la pente du corps' (slope of the body) in *Le Maître à danser* (1725) is announced by 'le corps dans son entier qui penche' (**the whole body is bending**) in *Apologie* (1623).

²³ Anonymous, Geoffroi de la Tour Landry, manuscript *Livre pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, XIVe, enluminures such as *Mariage Geoffroi duc de Bretagne et Havraise de Normandie*, *Heures de Charles d'Angoulême*, tapestries, *The Marriage of Louis de Blois and Marie de France*, manuscripts Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, etc...in *Le Livre du chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles* ([Reprod. En fac-sim.])/publ. D'après le ms. De Praes et de Londres par M. Anatole de Montagnon, BNF Gallica.

²⁴ We are thankful to Barbara Segal for this precise elucidation of the fifteenth century concept of 'ombreggiare' - not by opposing the step with the upper body, but by accompanying it on the same side as the step. See also Guglielmo Ebreo's *De pratica seu arte tripudii*, Barbara Sparti (éd.), Rev. Edn (Oxford:1993).

²⁵ In *Apologie*, de Lauze uses two different descriptions for the Cavalier and for the Lady: in walking three steps in *La Courante réglée*, the man's shoulder has to be turned a little forward (*en-dedans*), on the side of the advancing foot, while the lady is said **to be** 'withdrawing with the same gentleness, ever so slightly, the shoulder on the side of the foot which advances'.

assurance; gravity, nobleness and ‘*gayté*’ or nonchalance without any trace of affectation. All this requires the acquisition of considerable muscular strength: this will persist for a long time, down into classical ballet technique where effort must be invisible.

Contraposto...

It is worth reminding that the male dancer, the *Cavalier*, has often been trained as a swordsman, whether he be a royal guard or officer, or simply an aristocratic courtier. In fencing, the typically circular movements performed by the wrist and the arm are tightly coded, while the body moves along with subtle footwork. Might these curves and body subtleties that are characteristic of the fencer’s moving body bring us closer to the ‘baroque’ body?

Lastly, the choreographies that are notated after 1700 increasingly contain the lines, the changes of direction and the variety of steps and rhythms which are to become the codes of dancing eloquence.

Is Mannerism, a mix of volubility, diversity, richness? Or is Baroque, the harmony of contrasts?

Beauties of the body, spiritual beauty

De Lauze’s instructions, like those of Arbeau and Rameau, already were intended to improve the body, either by hiding its faults or by enticing it to strive for perfection. The word ‘*grâce*’ is used everywhere to express the harmonious combination of seemingly contradictory qualities: unity and simplicity, variety and unity and contrasts like the surprise of irregular rhythms - an idea coming down from the (ancient?) Greeks. The dictionary of Furetière clearly establishes that ‘*Grâce*’, usually associated with the aristocracy being exclusively endowed with God’s grace, also points to the good temper, the demeanor of a courtier, their ways of speaking, moving and dressing that are most agreeable to the company around them.

The ‘Bal à la française’ provides a theatrical framework for the aristocratic couple to find ways of ruling and harmonising their steps and jumps to gracefully embody the elegance associated with civility at court under Louis XIII, then Louis XIV.

We would here like to underline the difference between early seventeenth century dance conventions and their later practice, going into the eighteenth century. In the ball under Louis XIII, to achieve perfection, the dancers must form a unified ensemble, aiming at the unity reached in dancing all together like one single body such as in the ‘bransle’. In contrast, the Bal at the Court of Louis XIV puts couple after couple on stage before the King and his courtiers, starting with the King’s own couple - and including the occasional *solos* or duos of theater dances in unexpected moments. So the technical level becomes that of professional dancers. The company of courtiers becomes the public and therefore no longer has the pleasure of dancing in a group - except in the *bransle* which is danced at the beginning at the court of Louis XIII and, later on, in the *Contredances* coming from England at the court of Louis XIV!²⁶

²⁶ «Les Anglais en sont les premiers inventeurs, toutes Contredanses d’Angleterre que l’on trouvera dans ce Recueil sont autant de pièces originale choisies entre les plus belles,...» in Raoul-Auger Feuillet, *Recueil de contredanses* (Paris, 1706).

Later, l'Abbé De Pure²⁷ defines La Belle Dance as follows: 'a certain refinement in the steps, the carriage and in the entire person [...] eyes are necessary, also beautiful examples provided by the best instructors [...] the ears are very useful.'

In 1661, Louis XIV creates the *Académie Royale de Danse* and the situation changes significantly by putting the professional dancer in his ballets on stage 'front and center!' Hence, the dance no longer represents actual persons, but rather characters, situations, passions and feelings, in short: Drama!

My personal 'good Masters' are and will remain mostly the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century treatises by de Lauze, Pierre Rameau, Sol, Tomlinson...

I try, at least, to follow them, step by step, to learn their basic grammar - but I remember too what I want to do, and I tap into all their insights as my means for dancing!

Contemporary texts on bodies speak of natural movements when these are made effortlessly and with simplicity. When dancers walk, they are deeply also aware of moderation and the necessary proportions in the steps. The question is more to discover and explore what Rameau calls 'contrasts': between high and low, arm positions and steps, various symmetries of figures; to find the meaning, the significance, in the musical and choreographic phrases in the directions of head, body and eyes. Dance rules are not arbitrary but carefully considered in order to establish and maintain a certain logical organization. Is this to be called Baroque? Classical? I am not able to say.

It seems to me that what matters most is to peruse carefully the technique of a discipline, deduced and derived from the technical ideas, descriptions and hints that come down to us in the texts. Only through feeling indeed, i.e. *imagining* the feeling associated with these gestures, these figures, can we begin to bridge the gap between our bodies and those of hundreds of years ago. Slowly and uncertainly, we can immerse ourselves in those physicalities, and in the best cases, we can feel what these actions might have meant to those strange dancing creatures of another time. From these feelings, accumulated, and seen from a distance, can we use the great gifts of our human imagination and animal curiosity, put *our* illusions to one side and see what magic *they* wrought - dancing La Belle Danse of *their* illusions.

Maybe we are now able to fully engage with the marvelous definition of de Lauze of 'l'être, le bien-être, le bel-être' (i.e. being, well-being, elegance) as a practice, or maybe as a style? Or even a way to be?

Perhaps, we are here touching upon and reaching out to that curiously formed and beautifully deformed behavior that we love to call *Baroque!* Like the form that the sculptor perceives in the rough block of stone before carving it, might the Baroque body be considered as that emerging from centuries of exploratory practice which have sought to bring out the potential of the dancing body to reveal beauty?

²⁷ Michel de Pure, [Abbé de Pure], *Idée des spectacles anciens et modernes* (Paris, 1668).