



The reproduction of The Tabourot coat of arms is taken from *L'Armorial Coloriè d'Hozier*.

*To Maître Guillaume Tabourot, Sieur of Agreements, son of that great man and wise teacher Etienne Tabourot counsellor to the King and Sire and his Procurator at the Bailiwick of Dijon.<sup>a</sup>*

*When I was last in Dijon and saw the coat of arms of your distinguished family, upon which appear a lion sable on a silver chief and three drums with a gold chevron on an azure field<sup>2</sup>, I was reminded that among the discarded and unsorted papers which I gathered up long since<sup>b</sup> by Thoinot Arbeau of Langres, my first tutor, there were certain writings wherein the drum was mentioned. I resolved, forthwith, to send these to you straightway upon my return to the said Langres.*

*Upon closer perusal of these sheets, I found that they dealt principally with dancing and incidentally with the drum. I have printed them in their entirety to offer you despite the fact that the said Sieur Arbeau forbade me to do so, saying that such things as he had scribbled merely to kill time did not merit printing, much less presentation to you. However, I believed that in taking this liberty I might have the good fortune to convey to you my warm desire to be of greater service.*

*Your humble servant,*

*JEHAN des PREYZ.*

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DIALOGUE UPON THE DANCE AND THE MANNER OF DANCING  
by THOINOT ARBEAU, residing at Langres."

CAPRIOL

I come to pay you my respects, Monsieur Arbeau. You do not remember me, for it is six or seven years since I left this town of Langres to go to Paris and thence to Orleans.<sup>b</sup> I am an old pupil of yours, to whom you taught computation.

ARBEAU

Indeed at first glance I failed to recognize you because you have grown up since then, and I feel sure that you have also broadened your mind by manliness and learning. What do you think of the study of law? I pursued it in bygone days myself.

CAPRIOL

I find it a noble art and necessary in the conduct of affairs, but I regret that while in Orleans I neglected to learn fine manners, an art with which many scholars enriched themselves as an adjunct to their studies. For, on my return I have found myself in society, where, to put it briefly, I was tongue-tied and awkward, and regarded as little more than a block of wood.

ARBEAU

You took consolation in the fact that the learned professors excused this shortcoming in recognition of the learning you had acquired.

CAPRIOL

That is so, but I should like to have acquired skill in dancing during the hours between my serious studies, an accomplishment which would have rendered my company welcome to all.

ARBEAU

This will be an easy thing by reading French books in order to sharpen your wit and by learning fencing, dancing and tennis that you may be an agreeable companion alike to ladies and gentlemen.

CAPRIOL

I much enjoyed fencing and tennis and this placed me upon friendly terms with young men. But, without a knowledge of dancing, I could not please the damsels, upon whom, it seems to me, the entire reputation of an eligible young man depends.

## ARBEAU

You are quite right, as naturally the male and female seek one another and nothing does more to stimulate a man to acts of courtesy, honour and generosity than love. And if you desire to marry you must realize that a mistress is won by the good temper and grace displayed while dancing, because ladies do not like to be present at fencing or tennis, lest a splintered sword or a blow from a tennis ball should cause them injury. You remember Virgil's lines that tell of Turnus and his mistress, the beautiful Lavinia, daughter of King Latinus.<sup>a</sup>

*Illum turbat amor, figitque in virgine vultus:  
Ardet in arma magis<sup>3</sup> etc.*

And there is more to it than this, for dancing is practised to reveal whether lovers are in good health and sound of limb, after which they are permitted to kiss their mistresses in order that they may touch and savour one another, thus to ascertain if they are shapely or emit an unpleasant odour as of bad meat. Therefore, from this standpoint, quite apart from the many other advantages to be derived from dancing, it becomes an essential in a well ordered society.

## CAPRIOL

I have sometimes pondered what you have just said and deemed it not without cause that games and dances had received recognition by the State. But it has chagrined me to find that many have condemned dancing, have even judged it shameless and an effeminate pastime, unworthy of the dignity of a man. I have read that Cicero reproached the consul Gambinius for having danced. Tiberius drove the dancers from Rome. Domitian dismissed any member from the Senate who had danced. When Alphonse, King of Aragon, saw the Gauls delight in dancing he reprimanded them. The holy prophet Moses was provoked to wrath upon seeing the children of Israel dance.

## ARBEAU

For everyone who has belittled dancing, scores of others have praised and esteemed it. The holy prophet, King David, danced before the Ark of the Lord and the holy prophet Moses was not angered to see dancing, but grieved that it should take place around a Golden Calf and become an

act of idolatry. As for Cicero, he had varicose veins and swollen legs and condemned that which he was unable to do himself, saying that he disliked to see those dance who were fasting. Appius Claudius commended dancing after his triumph. Indians worship the sun with dances, and those who have travelled in the New World report that the savages dance when the sun appears upon the horizon. Socrates learned dancing from Aspasia. The Salii,<sup>4</sup> very noble priests of Mars, danced at their sacrifices. The Corybants<sup>5</sup> in Phrygia, the Lacedaemonians and the people of Crete always went into battle dancing. Vulcan engraved a dance upon a shield as a symbol of beauty.

Museus and Orpheus wished the hymns they had composed in honour of the gods to be sung to the accompaniment of dances. Bacchus conquered the Indies by three kinds of dance. In the primitive church there was a custom, which has survived into our own times, of dancing and swaying while chanting the hymns of our faith, and it may still be seen in several places.<sup>a</sup> Castor and Pollux taught the Carians to dance. Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, taught the Cretans a dance called the Pyrrhic to aid them in battle. Epaminondas used dances very skilfully in the clash of battle, so that his men marched as one against the enemy.<sup>b</sup> Xenophon tells us that dances and masquerades<sup>c</sup> were arranged to welcome the military leaders of Cyrus.<sup>c</sup> Kings and princes are wont to command performances of dancing and masquerades to salute, entertain and give joyous greeting to foreign nobles. We take part in such rejoicing to celebrate wedding days and in the rites of our religious festivals, in spite of the abhorrence of reformers, which latter deserve to be fed upon goats' meat cooked in a pie without bacon.<sup>d</sup>

## CAPRIOL

You fill me with a longing to learn to dance and I regret that I have not devoted many idle moments to it, for one can take honest pleasure without becoming tainted by vice or evil habits. I remember that the poet numbers the dancers among the happy ones, saying in the sixth book of the Aeneid,

*Pars pedibus plaudunt choreas et carmina dicunt.*<sup>7</sup>

## ARBEAU

You can moreover quote Our Lord (St. Matthew Chap. XI and St. Luke Chap. VIII) when he reproached the Pharisees for their obstinacy and ill will. 'We have piped unto you and ye have not danced'.

I suggest that you should do as Demetrius, who, though wont to condemn dancing, upon witnessing a masquerade representing Mars and Venus in love admitted that it was the most beautiful thing in the world. You can quickly regain the time you have wasted, especially as you are a musician and dancing depends upon music, one of the seven liberal arts, and its modulations.

## CAPRIOL

Then I beg of you to teach me about these things, Monsieur Arbeau, because I know you are a musician, and in your youth won a reputation for good dancing and dexterity in a thousand sprightly steps.

## ARBEAU

The noun dance comes from the verb to dance, which in Latin is called *saltare*. To dance is to jump, to hop, to skip, to sway, to stamp, to tiptoe, and to employ the feet, hands and body in certain rhythmic movements. These consist of leaping, bending the body, straddling, limping, flexing the knees, rising upon the toes, twitching the feet, with variations of these, and further postures of which Athenaeus,<sup>a</sup> Celius,<sup>b</sup> Scaliger<sup>c</sup> and others make mention. At one time masks were worn to accentuate the gestures of the character represented. Lucian has written a treatise on the subject where you can study his theories more fully.<sup>d</sup> Julius Pollux has also devoted a long chapter to the matter.<sup>e</sup>

## CAPRIOL

I believe I have read these authors at some time and others like them. If I remember correctly, they refer to three kinds of dance, one grave called Emmeleia,<sup>f</sup> one gay, which was known as Kordax,<sup>g</sup> and another combining gravity with gaiety called the Sikinnis.<sup>h</sup> They speak also of the Pyrrhic dances<sup>i</sup> and divers others. I remember a reference to several kinds of masquerade, particularly to one they called the Trichoria<sup>j</sup> which consisted of three choirs, made up respectively of old men, youths and little children, who sang 'We have been, we are and we shall be'. I have a general notion of it all but I should like to be shown what steps and movements were used, pray teach me.

## ARBEAU

Anthony of Arena, a native of Provence, has set down what you wish to know in macaronic verse.<sup>k</sup>

## CAPRIOL

In the lines you mention he refers to the movements that must be followed in branles and basse dances only, and to the dancers' deportment, but the demands of metre have obscured his meaning which is why I ask you to enlighten me further.

## ARBEAU

As regards ancient dances all I can tell you is that the passage of time, the indolence of man or the difficulty of describing them has robbed us of any knowledge thereof. Besides, there is no need to trouble yourself about them, as such manner of dancing is out of date now. Why, even the dances seen in our fathers' time were unlike those of today and it will always be so because men are such lovers of novelty. It is true that we can compare the Emmeleia to our pavans and basse dances, the Kordax to galliards, tordions, lavoltas, gavottes, branles of Champagne and Burgundy, gay branles and mixed branles, the Sikinnis to double or single branles, and the Pyrrhic to the dance we call buffens or mattachins.<sup>a</sup>

## CAPRIOL

I foresee then that posterity will remain ignorant of all these new dances you have named for the same reason that we have been deprived of the knowledge of those of our ancestors.

## ARBEAU

One must assume so.

## CAPRIOL

Do not allow this to happen, Monsieur Arbeau, as it is within your power to prevent it. Set these things down in writing to enable me to learn this art, and in so doing you will seem reunited to the companions of your youth and take both mental and bodily exercise, for it will be difficult for you to refrain from using your limbs in order to demonstrate the correct movements. In truth, your method of writing is such that a pupil, by following your theory and precepts, even in your absence, could teach himself in the seclusion of his own chamber. And to begin with, I would ask you to tell me in what esteem dancing is held by the majority of honourable men.

## ARBEAU

Dancing, or saltation, is both a pleasant and a profitable art which con-

