



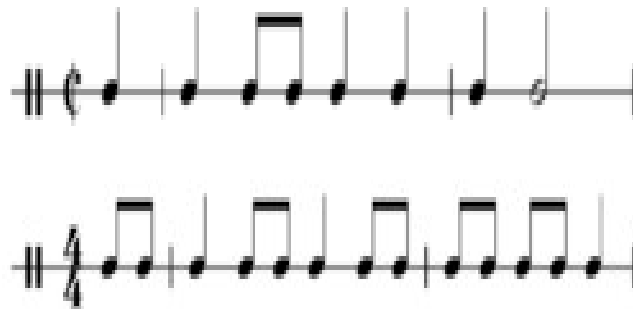
## Baroque Dance Forms

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Please see Web Version for videos: <http://beststudentviolins.com/BaroqueDanceForms.html>

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**Bourrée:** French origin common in Auvergne and Biscay in Spain in the 17th century. It is danced in quick double time, somewhat resembling the gavotte. The main difference between the two is the anacrusis, or upbeat; a bourrée starts on the last beat of a bar, creating a quarter-bar anacrusis, whereas a gavotte has a half-bar anacrusis.



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**Canarie (canary):** Fast dance from the Renaissance and Baroque eras. It was in 3/8 or 6/8 meter. The dance was named for the Canary Islands, the dance's place of origin.

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**Chaconne:** Variation on a repeated short harmonic progression, often involving a fairly short repetitive bass-line (ground bass) which offered a compositional outline for variation, decoration, figuration and melodic invention. In this it closely resembles the Passacaglia.

The ground bass, if there is one, may typically descend stepwise from the tonic to the dominant pitch of the scale, the harmonies given to the upper parts may emphasize the circle of fifths or a derivative pattern thereof. Though it originally emerged during the late sixteenth century in Spanish culture, having reputedly been introduced from the New World, as a quick dance-song characterized by suggestive movements and mocking texts, by the early eighteenth century the chaconne had evolved into a slow triple meter instrumental form.

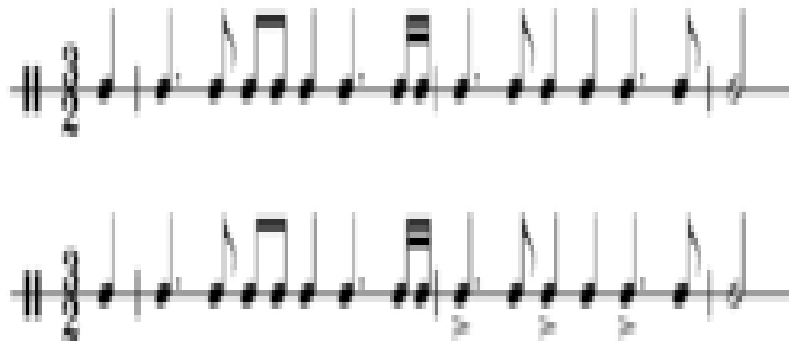
One of the best known and most masterful and expressive examples of the chaconne is the final movement from the Violin Partita in D minor by Johann Sebastian Bach. This 256-measure chaconne takes a plaintive four-bar phrase through a continuous kaleidoscope of musical expression in both major and minor modes. After the baroque period, the chaconne fell into decline, though the 32 Variations in C minor by Ludwig van Beethoven belong to the form.

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**Courante:** The courante, corrente, coranto and corant are some of the names given to a family of triple metre dances from the late Renaissance and the Baroque era. Modern usage will sometimes use the different spellings to distinguish types of courante (Italian spelling for the Italian dance, etc.), but in the original sources spellings were inconsistent. (In the Partitas of the Clavierübung, Bach use the different spellings courante and corrente to differentiate between the French and Italian styles, respectively.) However, in [\*Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach\*](#) by Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne, the courante and corrente are given separate chapters and treated as distinct dances. The courante had the slowest tempo of all French court dances, and was described by Mattheson, Quantz and Rousseau as grave and majestic, whilst the corrente may be fluid and virtuosic.

In Bach's unaccompanied Partita for Violin No. 2 the first movement (titled Allemanda) begins as if in 3/4 time in a manner one might initially perform and hear as a courante. The second movement is titled corrente and is rather lively. This may reflect a performance practice in which the second of paired courantes is played faster than the first. On the other hand, many "courante" movements by Bach are actually correntes as well: in the original engraving of the keyboard Partitas, movements are clearly labelled either "corrente" or "courante", but editors have frequently ignored the distinction. Although an indication of faster tempo appears to exist in Baroque composer Georg Muffat's instructions on Lullian bowing, his reference to the "rapid tempo of courantes" is a confusion in translation. A more literal translation of the text indicates only "the speed of the movement of the notes."

Courante literally means running, and in the later Renaissance the courante was danced with fast running and jumping steps, as described by Thoinot Arbeau. These steps are sometimes thought to be broken up by hops between the steps, but this is not necessarily supported by Arbeau's confusing and contradictory instructions, which described each "saut" as resulting in the completion of a new foot placement.

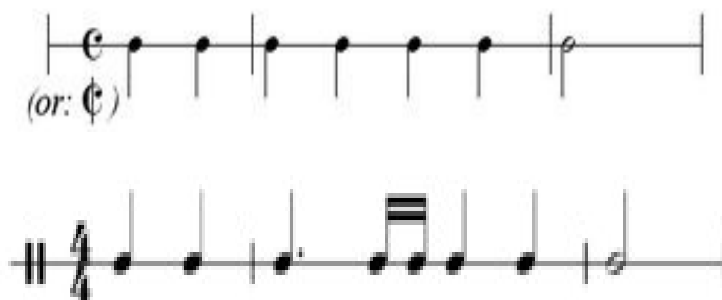


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**Forlane (forlana):** The furlana (also spelled furlane, forlane, friulana, forlana) is an Italian folk dance from the Italian province of Friuli Venezia Giulia. Friuli was at the time a Slavonic region, controlled by the Venetian republic, and the furlana may well have originated as a Slavonic dance. It dates at least to 1583, when a "ballo furlano" called L'arboscello was published in Pierre Phalèse the Younger's *Chorearum molliorum collectanea* and in Jakob Paix's organ tablature book, though its chief popularity extended from the late 1690s to about 1750 (Little 2001). The furlana is a fast dance, in duple-time 6/8, though one exceptional example proves to be in quintuple meter, underlining the Slavonic associations also suggested by its title.

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**Gavotte:** The gavotte (also gavot or gavote) originated as a French folk dance, taking its name from the Gavot people of the Pays de Gap region of Dauphiné, where the dance originated. It is notated in 4/4 or 2/2 time and is of moderate tempo. The distinctive rhythmic feature of the original gavotte is that phrases begin in the middle of the bar; that is, in either 4/4 or 2/2 time, the phrases begin on the third quarter note of the bar, creating a half-measure upbeat, as illustrated below:

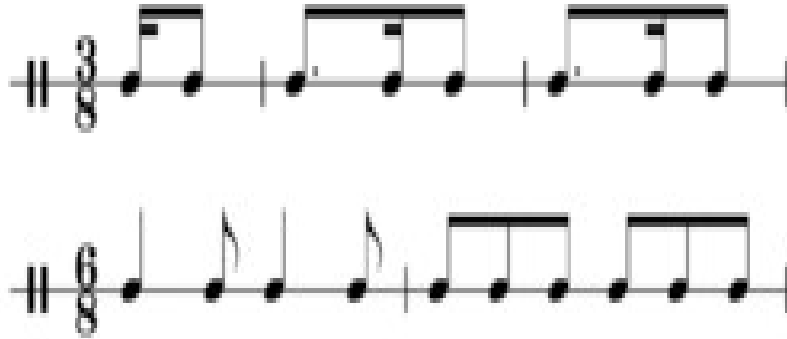


The gavotte became popular in the court of Louis XIV where Jean-Baptiste Lully was the leading court composer. Consequently several other composers of the Baroque period incorporated the dance as one of many optional additions to the standard instrumental suite of the era. The examples in suites and partitas by Johann Sebastian Bach are best known. When present in the Baroque suite, the gavotte is often played after the sarabande and before the gigue, along with other optional dances such as minuet, bourrée, rigaudon, and passepied.

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**Gigue:** A lively baroque dance originating from the British jig. It was imported into France in the mid-17th century and usually appears at the end of a suite. The gigue was probably never a court dance, but it was danced by nobility on social occasions and several court composers wrote giges. In early English theatre, it was customary to end a play's performance with a gigue, complete with music and dancing.

A gigue is usually in 3/8 or in one of its compound metre derivatives, such as 6/8, 6/4, 9/8 or 12/16, although there are some giges written in other metres (for example, the gigue from Bach's first French Suite (BWV 812), which is written in 4/4). They often have a contrapuntal texture. It often has accents on the third beats in the bar, making the gigue a lively folk dance.



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**Loure (slow gigue):** Also known as the gigue lente or slow gigue, is a French Baroque dance, probably originating in Normandy and named after the sound of the instrument of the same name (a type of musette). The loure is a dance of slow or moderate tempo and in ternary meter (6/8, 3/4, or 6/4). The weight is on beat 1, which is further strengthened by the preceding anacrusis that begins the traditional loure.

In his *Musicalisches Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1732), Johann Gottfried Walther wrote that the loure "is slow and ceremonious; the first note of each half-measure is dotted which should be well observed". Examples of loures are found in the works of Lully (e.g., *Alceste*) and of Bach (e.g.: French Suite No. 5 and the Partita No. 3 for violin solo).

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**Menuet (minuet):** A minuet, also spelled menuet, is a social dance of French origin for two people, usually in 3/4 time. The word was adapted from Italian minuetto and French menuet, meaning small, pretty, delicate, a diminutive of menu, from the Latin minutus; minuetto is a word that occurs only on musical scores. The name may refer to the short steps, pas menus, taken in the dance, or else be derived from the branle à mener or amener, popular group dances in early 17th-century France. At the period when it was most fashionable it was slow, soft, ceremonious, and graceful.

The name is also given to a musical composition written in the same time and rhythm, but when not accompanying an actual dance the pace was quicker. Stylistically refined minuets, apart from the social dance context, were introduced—to opera at first—by Jean-Baptiste Lully, who included no less than 92 of them in his theatrical works, and in the late 17th century the minuet was adopted into the suite, such as some of the suites of Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel. As the other dances that made up a Baroque

suite dropped out of use, the minuet retained its popularity. Among Italian composers, the minuet was often considerably quicker and livelier, and was sometimes written in 3/8 or 6/8 time.

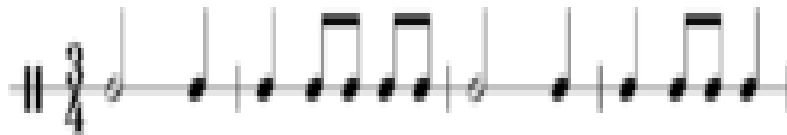
A minuet was often used as the final movement in an Italian overture. Initially, before its adoption in contexts other than social dance, the minuet was usually in binary form, with two sections of usually eight bars each, but the second section eventually expanded, resulting in a kind of ternary form. On a larger scale, two such minuets were often combined, so that the first minuet was followed by a second one, and finally by a repetition of the first. The second (or middle) minuet usually provided some form of contrast, by means of different key and orchestration. Around Lully's time, it became a common practice to score this section for a trio (such as two oboes and a bassoon, as is common in Lully). As a result, this middle section came to be called trio, even when no trace of such an orchestration remains.

The minuet and trio eventually became the standard third movement in the four-movement classical symphony, Johann Stamitz being the first to employ it thus with regularity. A livelier form of the minuet later developed into the scherzo (which was generally also coupled with a trio). This term came into existence approximately from Beethoven onwards, but the form itself can be traced back to Haydn. An example of the true form of the minuet is to be found in Don Giovanni.

### **Rounded binary or minuet form:**

**A :| |: B A or A'**

**I(->V) :| |: V(or other closely related)**



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**Passacaille (passacaglia):** A musical form that originated in early seventeenth-century Spain and is still used by contemporary composers. It is usually of a serious character and is often, but not always, based on a bass-ostinato and written in triple metre. The term passacaglia (Spanish: pasacalle; French: passacaille; Italian: passacaglia, passacaglio, passagallo, passacagli, passacaglie) derives from the Spanish pasar (to walk) and calle (street). It originated in early 17th century Spain as a Spanish: 'rasgueado' (strummed) interlude between instrumentally accompanied dances or songs. Despite the form's Spanish roots (confirmed by references in Spanish literature of the period), the first written examples of passacaglias are found in an Italian source dated 1606. These pieces, as well as others from Italian sources from the beginning of the century, are simple, brief sequences of chords outlining a cadential formula.

The passacaglia was redefined in late 1620s by Italian composer Girolamo Frescobaldi, who transformed it into a series of continuous variations over a bass (which itself may be varied). Later composers adopted this model, and by the nineteenth century the word came to mean a series of variations over an ostinato pattern, usually of a serious character. A similar form, the chaconne, was also first developed by Frescobaldi. The two genres are closely related, but since "composers often used the terms chaconne and passacaglia indiscriminately modern attempts to arrive at a clear distinction are arbitrary and historically unfounded".

In early scholarship, attempts to formally differentiate between the historical chaconne and passacaglia were made, but researchers often came to opposite conclusions. For example, Percy Goetschius held that the chaconne is usually based on a harmonic sequence with a recurring soprano melody, and the passacaglia was formed over a ground bass pattern, whereas Clarence Lucas defined the two forms in precisely the opposite way. More recently, however, some progress has been made toward making a useful distinction for the usage of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when some composers (notably Frescobaldi and François Couperin) deliberately mixed the two genres in the same composition.

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**Passepied:** A 17th- and 18th-century dance that originated in Brittany. The term can also be used to describe the music to which a passepied is set. The music is an example of a dance movement in Baroque music and is almost always a movement in binary form with a fast tempo and a time signature of three quavers (or eighth notes) per bar, each section beginning with an upbeat of a single quaver. Passepieds occasionally appear in suites such as Handel's Water Music (Suite No. 1 in F) or J.S. Bach's Overture in the French Style for harpsichord where there are two Passepieds in minor and major keys respectively, to be played alternivement in the order I, II, I.

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**Rigaudon:** Also spelled rigadon, rigadoon, a French baroque dance with a lively duple metre. The music is similar to that of a bourrée, but the rigaudon is rhythmically simpler with regular phrases (eight measure phrases are most common). Also spelled Rigadoon, it is a sprightly 17th-century French folk dance for couples. Traditionally, the folkdance was associated with the provinces of Vavarais, Languedoc, Dauphiné, and Provence in southern France, and it became popular as a court dance during the reign of Louis XIV. Its hopping steps were adopted by the skillful dancers of the French and English courts, where it remained fashionable through the 18th century. By the close of the 18th century, however, it had given way in popularity as a ballroom dance (along with the passepied, bourrée, and gigue) to the minuet.

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**Sarabande:** The sarabande (It., sarabanda) is a dance in triple metre. The second and third beats of each measure are often tied, giving the dance a distinctive rhythm of quarter notes and eighth notes in alternation. The quarters are said to corresponded with dragging steps in the dance.

The sarabande is first mentioned in Central America: in 1539, a dance called a zarabanda is mentioned in a poem written in Panama by Fernando Guzmán Mexia. Apparently the dance became popular in the Spanish colonies before moving back across the Atlantic to Spain. While it was banned in Spain in 1583 for its obscenity, it was frequently cited in literature of the period (for instance in works by Cervantes and Lope de Vega). Later, it became a traditional movement of the suite during the baroque period, usually coming directly after the Courante. The baroque sarabande is commonly a slow triple rather than the much faster Spanish original, consistent with the courtly European interpretations of many Latin dances. This slower, less spirited interpretation of the dance form was codified in the writings of various 18th century musicologists; Johann Gottfried Walther wrote in his *Musicalisches Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1723) that the sarabande is "a grave, somewhat short melody," and Johann Mattheson likewise wrote in *Der Vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739) that the sarabande "expresses no passion other than ambition".

The sarabande form was revived in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by composers such as Debussy and Satie and, in different styles, Vaughan Williams (in Job) and Benjamin Britten (in the Simple Symphony). In 1976 ex-Deep Purple organist Jon Lord based his album Sarabande entirely on the concept of a baroque dance suite. Performed by the Philharmonia Hungarica and a selection of rock musicians (including Andy Summers on guitar, who would later join The Police), the album mixes classical and rock influences. One of the best-known sarabandes is the anonymous La folie espagnole whose melody appears in pieces by dozens of composers from the time of Monteverdi and Corelli through the present day.

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**Tambourin:** A piece of music that imitates a drum, usually as a repetitive not-very-melodic figure in the bass. A tambourin itself is a small, two-headed drum of Arabic origin, mentioned as early as the 1080s (noted as a "tabor" in Roman de Roland). It was played together with a small flute (galoubet, flaviol).

A tambourin, as a dance, hails from Provence. It was accompanied by a pipe and, curiously enough, a tambourine (modern meaning), which is also called a "tambour de Basque." A tambourin as a concert piece is lively and in duple meter. Jean-Philippe Rameau wrote many of them as parts of his operas. The most famous one is his Tambourin in E Minor from his Pièces de Clavecin, originally from his opera Les fêtes d'Hébé (1739).

From: [Wikipedia article](#)