

Allemande. The term *allemande* (and the related terms *allemanda*, *alemana*, *almain*, *alman*, *tedesco*, and *Deutsche*), meaning “German,” applies to several different dances or types of movement in use between the fifteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The word seems to have been used primarily to denote characteristics that were either ascribed a German origin or considered to have uniquely German qualities. As a result, the history of the dance called *allemande* is more a history of the application of a term to various movement characteristics than a tracing of a single line of choreographic development.

In the fifteenth century, the writings of the Italian dancing masters Guglielmo Ebreo and Giovanni Ambrosio often applied the term *saltarello tedesco* (the German *saltarello*) to the *quadernaria*, a four-beat type of meter. Thus it would appear that by this time Italians already considered square meters to be a characteristic of German dancing, in contrast to their own preference for triple meters. In the Italian *balli* of this period, the *saltarello tedesco* was generally used as a section of a larger dance, set off from the rest by meter and character. The step associated with this meter consisted of a *doppio* (double) combined with a *movimento*, a gesture of the foot that may be the precursor of the *allemande* step described by Thoinot Arbeau a century later. Robert Copland's short *bassedanse* treatise, *The maner of dauncyng of bace daunces...* (1521), includes the steps (but no music) for a dance entitled “La Allemande.” As it uses the same five steps as all French *bassedanses*, it is difficult to know what was considered German about this dance. [See **Saltarello**.]

By the middle of the sixteenth century, a number of collections of dance music that included pieces called *allemandes* had been published by several printers, such as Gervaise, Phalèse, and Susato. These dances were all in duple meter and were often followed by after-dances in triple meter based on the same musical material. The first full choreography of an *allemande* was given by Arbeau in his *Orchésographie* (1588) along with its music, and, like the musical *allemandes* printed by Gervaise et al., it is in duple meter. Arbeau's *allemande* is a very simple processional dance for couples, consisting almost entirely of a repeated sequence of three walking steps done either forward or backward, followed by a *grève*, a movement in which the foot was lifted in the air. Arbeau describes it as a sedate dance known to the Germans and one of the oldest in France. Somewhat more complex variants of this basic processional dance can be seen in English instructions for several choreographed “*almains*” dating from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. There is also a choreographed *allemande* for two couples (“*Alemana d'Amore*”) in Cesare Negri's *Le gratie d'amore* (1602).

With the development of the suite and related forms, such as the *sonata da camera*, during the seventeenth century, the importance of the *allemande* as an instrumental composition increased dramatically. At the same time, the *allemande* as a dance disappeared. Although the processional form of the *allemande* may have continued to be danced in parts of Europe into the seventeenth century, in France, where developments in dance were occurring that were soon to make it the dance center of the Western world, the *allemande* existed as an instrumental piece only. As early as 1636 the Jesuit theorist Marin Mersenne stated that the *allemande* was not danced in France, and his contention was supported for the next century and more by French lexicographers, who defined the *allemande* as an instrumental form, in clear distinction to other dance types that were defined as dances.

Neither Jean-Baptiste Lully nor Jean-Philippe Rameau, the most important composers of ballet music in their respective periods, wrote a single *allemande* in any of their stage works. Nor is any trace of the *allemande* to be found among collections of dance music for the ballrooms of the French court. The single choreography in Feuillet notation entitled “L'Allemande” (Guillaume-Louis Pecour, 1702) is set to a tune that has nothing to do musically with the *allemande* of the instrumental suite and is labeled “*air anglais*” in André Campra's *Ballet des fragments de Mr. de Lully*. The title almost certainly derives from the use Pecour made of types of movement, most notably certain characteristic arm positions, that the French considered to be unique to the Germans. This choreography should thus be seen as a dance à *l'allemande* (“in the German manner”), that was done for a specific scene in a specific ballet. The

allemande of the instrumental suite pursued its own independent line of development.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, writers on dance began to take note of certain dances originating in southern Germany and Austria that were gaining in social importance and that differed notably from the dominant ballroom dances of the day—the minuet and the *contredanse*—in that the partners often moved in close embrace. Although in their homeland these dances were known by regional and descriptive names such as the *Ländler*, *Dreher*, *Schleifer*, and *Weller*, as a group they were called *deutsche Tänze* (German dances), or simply *Deutsche*. Most *Deutsche* were lively, turning dances in triple meter (the *Deutsche* composed by Franz Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart are all in 3/4 time), and they were important elements in the development of the waltz. [See **Waltz**.] Outside German-speaking areas, and sometimes even inside, the *Deutsche* were called *allemandes*. According to the Italian ballet master Giovanni Gallini,

The Germans have a dance called the *Allemande*, in which the men and women form a ring. Each man holding his partner round the waist, makes her whirl round with almost inconceivable rapidity: they dance in a grand circle, seeming to pursue one another: in the course of which they execute several leaps, and some particularly pleasing steps, when they turn, but so very difficult as to appear such even to professed dancers themselves. When this dance is performed by a numerous company, it furnishes one of the most pleasing sights that can be imagined.

(Gallini, 1762)

A somewhat different variety was described by the Leipzig dancing master Carl Pauli. According to him, the *allemande* was a triple-meter dance whose lightness, bold turns, pirouettes, and quick changes of arm position foreigners tried in vain to imitate. When the dance was introduced in Paris, where it became popular in the 1760s and 1770s, it was done quite differently from the German way, at least according to the French dancing master Simon Guillaume. The main interest of the French version lay in a series of joined hand positions through which the partners moved by passing under each other's arms, turning each other around, and passing behind each other's back. The steps to the dance were of secondary importance, judging from the perfunctory manner in which they are treated in French books describing the *allemande*, and seem to have been subject to some variation.

In his *Almanach Dansant* (1770), Guillaume described two *allemande* steps out of the several he said existed, the main one in 2/4 time, and another in 3/8. The supplement to Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1776) described a "limping" *allemande* step that consisted of a *plié* followed by two walked steps, a sequence of movements that strongly suggests a waltz step. French descriptions of the *allemande* and collections of *allemande* music suggest that the French *allemande*, unlike the triple-meter *Deutsche*, was almost always danced in 2/4 time.

In France the characteristic arm positions and turns of the *allemande* were soon incorporated into the *contredanse*. The figure called the *Allemande* indicated a turn in place in which the two partners stood shoulder to shoulder facing in opposite directions with the right hand of each crossed behind the back and holding the partner's extended left hand. (This same arm position was among those used by Pecour in his 1702 *allemande* choreography.) *Contredanses* that made extensive use of this and other movements from the *allemande* were known as *contredanses allemandes*, or sometimes simply as *allemandes*. The well-known engraving by Augustin Saint-Aubin called *Le Bal Paré* shows a *contredanse* of this type. The *contredanses allemandes* were immensely successful and were danced into the nineteenth century. The call of "allemand right" in American square dancing has its origin in these French dances.

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Rebecca Harris-Warrick

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