

**Loure.** A French Baroque court and theater dance, *loure* also refers to an optional movement of the instrumental suites. The word *loure*, which is probably derived from the Latin *lura*, a “bag” or “purse,” in Normandy referred to a bagpipe. The bags of the pipes were made from animals’ stomachs, and the peasants of lower Normandy called the stomach *la loure*. It has therefore been surmised that the music for the *loure* (also called *gigue lente*) was associated with the Normandy bagpipe; however, any original relationship between the *gigue* and *gigue lente* remains obscure.

At Louis XIV’s court (ruled 1643–1715), the *gigue* was used in the early *ballets de cour* (“court ballets”) of Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), while a piece titled “Loure” did not appear until his *Les Fêtes de l’Amour et de Bacchus* (1672). The first published *loure* is by Raoul-Auger Feuillet, disguised under the title “Sarabande Espagnole,” in his 1700 collection of his own dances. The music is from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme: Ballet des Nations* (1670). In French dance music, both the *gigue* and *loure* usually have a 6/4 time signature, and the predominant rhythm within the measure is . Their musical tempi, however, are markedly different, because twice as many steps are danced in one measure of a *loure*. The *gigue*, which contains many springing steps, is the liveliest of the Baroque dances, while the *loure* (the *gigue lente* [slow *gigue*]), with about one-third springing steps, is described as being one of the slowest and most majestic.

Some twenty-five examples of the *loure* are extant in eighteenth-century dance notation. With one or two exceptions, notably Guillaume-Louis Pecour’s ballroom dance “Aimable Vainqueur” [see below], they are virtuosic theater dances for men and women. Two *loures* by Pecour (1653–1729) are solos for a woman: his “Entrée pour une Femme,” danced by Mademoiselle Marie-Catherine Guyot in Theobaldo di Gatti’s *Scylla*, and the “Entrée Espagnolle,” published in 1704 and danced by Mademoiselle Marie-Thérèse Perdou de Subligny in André Campra’s *L’Europe Galante*. The choreography of the former has the circle for its choreographic theme. It begins with turning paths in space; then the dancer balances while executing *tours (ronds) de jambe en l’air*, the climax occurring when these are combined with whole *pirouettes en dehors* and *en dedans*. The choreography of the latter contrasts slow balances with quick springs. The *loure* was also referred to as a Spanish *gigue* and was frequently used for Spanish *entrées*, with the characteristic rhythm: A beautiful *loure* of moderate technical difficulty is Pecour’s *gigue lente*, danced by Monsieur Dumerail and Mademoiselle Victoire to the “Air des Graces” in Campra’s *Hésione*. The remaining *loures* are almost all virtuosic solos and duets for male dancers.

According to eighteenth-century dance theorists, the *loure* is a dance in quadruple meter, or time, that is, the dance has two *pas composés*, or *temps* (step-units), instead of the usual one, danced in a measure. The dancer is moving in triple meter, but making a strong duple beat with the rhythmic stress that occurs at the beginning of each step-unit: A *loure* will sometimes be written in 3/[4] time to clarify the triple-meter performance of the units as though to two measures of triple time.

The step-units are most frequently combined so that there is less activity on the quarter-note beats 2 or 5, or on both. This results in a long, rhythmic pull on beats 1 and 4, a quality also produced when two springs are made over three quarter notes. A step-unit of two springs is seldom repeated in a measure, and the following unit often has a step on each quarter note, the two combined giving a rhythm usually found in the melodic line; for example, in the least active measures, *élevés*, preceded by *pliés*, mark the duple beat: At the other end of the scale of activity, eighth-note rhythms are introduced into the step-units, often coinciding with a less active musical measure. For example, in the *loure* from *Scylla*: With two step-units in a measure, the cadential step occurs not on the downbeat but on the second half-note beat—the steps in the first half of the measure being quite active.

Musically, the *loure* is most frequently bipartite, with strains of diverse and often unequal lengths. The *gigue lente* from *Hésione* has a strain of ten measures followed by one of sixteen, while the two strains of a *loure* from Lully’s *Acis et Galatée* (1686) have nine and thirteen measures. The *loure* from *Scylla*,

with strains of four and eight measures, is exceptionally short. The musical repeats are usually A-A-B-B and, as in the majority of Baroque dances, a new figure is choreographed for each.

The two step-units in a measure make for extended dance figures with long inner phrases that, with their intricate step-sequences, make considerable demands on the dancers' powers of rhythmic phrasing and musicality. The long, slow swing of the duple beat and the smooth majesty of the dance must be maintained, even while the quickest step-patterns are being clearly articulated.

The most beloved ballroom *danse à deux* (couple dance) was Pecour's triple-meter *loure* "Aimable Vainqueur," composed to the air of that name from Campra's *Hésione*. Published in 1701, Pecour's new dance was composed at the royal retreat at Marly and first performed for the king by the comte de Brionne and Mademoiselle Bournonville. The king expressed great satisfaction, and the dance immediately became popular owing to the beauty of its air and choreography, which combine nobility and tenderness to evoke a refined and delicate atmosphere of love.

This *loure* is in triple meter, with one step-unit per measure, and the choreography flows in complete accord with the music. After the first four measures have fulfilled the required advance toward the Presence (the person or persons of highest social rank), the dancers focus almost entirely on each other, until the final steps and the Honours, after dancing, acknowledge the Presence once more.

The *loure* continued to appear in the operas of Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764). In instrumental music, the two most famous *loures* are in J. S. Bach's Violin Partita in E Minor and his French Suite in G Major.

See also **Ballet Technique, History of**, article on **French Court Dance**.

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