Musette. A small French bagpipe, the musette was descended from the Eurasian and Celtic forms and was popular in French court circles during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was bellows-blown and had four or five drones enclosed in a cylinder. It gave its name (from Old French *muser*, "to make music") to both a musical genre and a type of dance.

In the eighteenth century, the instrument was a symbol of the fashionable fad among the upper classes with the notion of Arcadia—an elusive mythic ideal of pastoral innocence and rustic pleasures. Jean Antoine Watteau (1684–1721) captured this concept in his *fêtes galantes* paintings; his earlier works sometimes portray dance accompanied by a *musette*. Along with the *vielle* (various medieval stringed instruments including the hurdy-gurdy) the *musette* is an *instrument champêtre* (country instrument). It was liked for its sweet, delicate sound, its small drones, and its relative ease of playing; it could be played by court ladies, who often affected elegantly pastoral costumes in pastel shades.

Musical pieces were composed in imitation of the sound of the *musette*. Their chief characteristic was a drone bass *(basse de musette)*; they have been variously described as pastoral, innocent, rustic, caressing, gentle, naive, or serene. These musical pieces called musettes were composed in duple, triple, and compound meters, and their melodies often employed intervals of a second. They were sometimes combined with other dance forms, such as *gavottes* and *menuets*, creating *gavottes en musette, menuets en musette*, and so on.

In opera and ballet, these compositions were used to accompany dances of a pastoral character. The danced or theatrical use of the *musette* occurs most frequently among French composers, although Handel (*Il Pastor Fido*, 1734) and Mozart (*Bastien und Bastienne*, 1768) also used them. Rameau wrote the greatest number—many of his *opéra-ballets* contain *musettes* in various meters—but musettes also appear in Destouches and Lalande's *Les Éléments* (1721); Destouches's *Callirhoé* (1712); Montéclair's *Les Fêtes de lété (1716)*; and Campra's *Les Muses* (1703) and *Les Âges* (1718).

No choreographies for Rameau's ballets and operas are known to survive. Indeed, only three choreographies of *musettes* survive, and only two are identified as such. The first *musette* to appear in Beauchamps-Feuillet notation is "La Muszette à Deux," choreographed by Guillaume-Louis Pecour for Destouches's *Callirhoé*. The dance was published by Michel Gaudrau in his collection of court and theater dances by Pecour (Paris, 1712). Choreographed for two women, this *musette* was danced at the Opera by performers named Prévost and Guiot. The four figures employ much of the standard Baroque theater dance vocabulary, including *pirouettes, tombés, changements*, a full-turn *contretemps*, and other steps. The music, *gavotte*, is in cut time (2/2), in the key of G, and in AB form. The choreography, which begins with an unusual step-unit *(pas composé)*, is characterized by rather rapid, delicate, skimming footwork, supported by calm, leisurely, dreamlike music with a fairly slow pulse. The dance starts with a brief echo sequence, continues mostly with mirror-image figures, and includes a passage toward the end with one dancer making unhurried half-pirouettes while the other circles around her. An exquisite choreography, it is full of turnings, shadings, delicate bendings and risings, finely wrought floor patterns, and suspended balances dropping into *tombés*. Perhaps the *pas composé* that begins this dance (and is found in only one other) was a characteristic of *musette* theater choreographies, but without more surviving examples a definitive judgment cannot be reached.

The only other surviving theater choreography that employs this unusual step and can be identified as a *musette* is found in the same collection of dances as "La Muszette à Deux" and is therefore also by Pecour. Entitled "Entrée pour un Berger et une Bergère," it is a couple dance from *Sémélé* (1709) by Marin Marais. The title page of this notation indicates that Guiot performed this dance at the Opera with her male partner Dumoulin. This *entrée* has four figures and an overall character and step vocabulary not unlike Pecour's *musette* for two female dancers. The music appears only in Marais's *Troisième livre* (1711), containing *Pièces de Violes*, as "La Muzette."

One more *musette* choreography survives, this one a ballroom dance for a couple published in the annual collections *(Petits recüeils annuels)* in Paris in 1724. Titled "La Musette par M. Pécour," it consists of three figures. The subtitle, given under the tune at the top of the first page, is "Premier Rigaudon"; "2e (second) Rigaudon" appears halfway through the dance. Typically, the first *rigaudon* is in a major key (G), and the second in a minor (g). Despite the subtitle, this tune, in 2/2 time, could be called a *gavotte* rather than a *rigaudon*, as the phrases begin with the half-bar upbeat common to *gavottes*. Each *rigaudon* is in ABA form. The choreography is fairly typical of ballroom choreographies found in the annual collections around 1720 and similar to other *gavotte* choreographies, frequently employing the *pas de gavotte*.

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

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How to cite this entry:
Margaret Daniels "Musette" *The International Encyclopedia of Dance*. Ed. Selma Jeanne Cohen and the Dance Perspectives Foundation. Oxford University Press, 2003. Case Western Reserve University. 24 December 2009 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t171.e1210>