

## Musical Performance

### Ex Arca

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**Bransle d'Ecosse:** a dance melody from Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchesographie*, published in Langres in 1589, setting by Joseph Casazza 1990.

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### Piece: Bransle d'Ecosse

Thoinot Arbeau's *Orchesographie*, published in Langres in 1589, is a collection of dance instructions that includes a suggested tune for each of the dances. Some of the dances, such as the mimed bransles, were probably danced to specific pieces of music. Others may have been danced to a variety of tunes, with Arbeau's melody being simply a suggestion. The piece we will perform is comprised of two tunes suggested by Arbeau for inclusion in a suite of Scottish bransles.

The bransle was a popular dance among the upper classes, although Arbeau does state that bransles were danced by the servant class also. It was customary to begin a ball with a bransle, or a suite of bransles. Some bransles may have been traditionally danced by specific groups of people. For example, Arbeau states that, "The elderly solemnly dance the double and single bransles...the youngest of all lightly dance the Burgundy bransle," although his comments may be more at social commentary.

### Setting: Joseph Casazza, 1990

Joseph Casazza's informative website, "Music for the Dances in Arbeau's *Orchesographie*", contains a concordance of period settings for each of the dances included in Arbeau's work. Joseph Casazza states that no period setting is known for the melody given for the Bransle d'Ecosse. Casazza offers his own four-part setting, which we have chosen for performance. (See attached)

### Instrumentation:

**Recorder:** Huber pearwood Model II soprano. A tapered bore, baroque fingering recorder, intended as a substitute for the straight bore renaissance recorder.

**Flute:** Gemeinhardt closed hole keyed silver C flute. This is a modern instrument, intended as a substitute for the wood open-hole renaissance transverse flute.

**Guitar:** Taylor model 514-C. This is a modern instrument, intended as a substitute for the renaissance cittern, which was a metal stringed single- or double-coursed instrument.

**Lap dulcimer:** privately commissioned cherrywood piece by Grant Shoemaker, Fayetteville, NY Praetorius ('Syntagma musicum,' 1618) describes the *scheitholt*, an instrument nearly identical to the Appalachian lap dulcimer. Like the lap dulcimer, the *scheitholt* used brass strings, of which all but one were drones, the highest string being stopped against brass frets with a small stick. Our instrument differs from a period instrument in that it uses modern machine-head tuning mechanics.

**Tambourine & bodhran:** shallow, single-head frame drums are believed to be of near eastern origin, and date to pre-Roman times in Britain and Gaul. They were used throughout Europe in the middle ages. Our tambourine differs from a period instrument in that it lacks a parchment head. Our bodhran differs from a period instrument in that it has tuning mechanics and a synthetic head.

### Arrangement:

The usual practice within the SCA is to treat the two melodies suggested by Arbeau as one piece, with the first melody as the A section and the second melody as the B section. This arrangement is intended as a performance piece, rather than an accompaniment to dancing. As such, we have chosen to include four repeats of the usual A+B, preceded by an A-section introduction, and followed by two repeats of the A-section as a coda. We have distributed the parts around the instruments and crafted the dynamics to heighten the interest for our listeners and the challenge for ourselves.

Introduction [A-section only]: flute (melody), guitar (tenor), dulcimer (drones and percussion)  
Pass 1: recorder (melody), flute (alto), guitar (chords)  
Pass 2: recorder (melody), flute (tenor), guitar (chords)  
Pass 3: flute (alto), recorder (tenor), guitar (chords)  
Pass 4: flute (melody), recorder (alto), guitar (tenor) – [dulcimer drone on B-section]  
Pass 5 [A-section only]: dulcimer (melody & drones), guitar (chords), tambourine (percussion)  
Pass 6 [A-section only]: dulcimer (melody & drones), guitar (chords), tambourine (percussion)  
Bodhran ad lib. throughout.

## **Bibliography**

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