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# Renaissance Dances In Latham's *Court Festival*

by John Wojcik

**C**ourt Festival by William Latham brings to life a portion of Renaissance and Baroque musical history by drawing upon the forms and styles of that period. The program notes give an excellent synopsis of this 1957 grade 3 composition.

*Court Festival* is in the form and style of 16th- and 17th-century instrumental dance music. All thematic material is original with the exception of "The Horses" Branle, which appeared in Arbeau's *Orchesographie*, a book from 1588 that details the movements of the dances. An intrada (literally entrance) is an opening piece of festive, march-like character. It first appeared in the music of Spanish composers in the middle of the 16th century, and

was later extensively used by North German composers.

The pavan and galliard were both known throughout Europe from the early part of the 16th century. Both are believed to be of Italian origin. Toward the end of the century they were invariably coupled, and this linking of dances led to the highly stylized Baroque dance suite. The pavan is a stately dance in duple meter, the galliard a sprightly dance in triple meter.

The branle was a very popular 16th-century dance. It was danced everywhere – in the country and the courts – and included singing, swaying movements of the body and hands, and pantomime. The branles vary considerably.

*William Latham, 1992*



Some are in duple meter, some triple. Some consist of repeated phrases, some do not.

In scoring, an attempt has been made to use the contrasting colors of the band. In many places typical antiphonal and echo effects have been used. Follow the directions in the score carefully and observe the variety of color called for in the percussion section. This is a most necessary adjunct to dance music, but do not overdo. Play with delicacy and grace.

Each part should be reviewed prior to the first rehearsal because only a condensed score is provided. The percussion and timpani parts call for particular attention. There are a variety of instrumental combinations, dynamics, and styles that will challenge both conductor and players. Staccato quarters should be played with a slight separation for a bounce effect but not so much that the forward momentum is lost. The ends of phrases and sections may tend to ritard, but the tempo should be steady unless otherwise indicated. The keys and forms are straightforward, and all phrases are four to eight measures long except in the Intrada.

### Intrada

Written in two-part form (AB) the Intrada has an unusual phrase structure, with the A section in 5 + 5 + 6 groupings and the B section in 6 + 5 + 4 + 4 groupings. The A section, measures 1-16, is march-like in character. The opening measure should be rehearsed in  $\frac{4}{4}$  time and gradually worked up to cut-time, emphasizing the eighth note.

The half notes in measure 2 should be separated at first and then less so until measure 4, giving the melody forward momentum.

Movement I, "Intrada"  
Measures 1-4



At measures 5 and 6 the ensemble should resume the separated style and emphasize the eighth notes. Measures 6-10 repeat the opening five measures at a softer dynamic; a diminuendo into the subito piano should be avoided. Younger players in particular tend to play more legato at softer dynamics, but a separated style with a strong airstream is best here. Likewise, the ensemble should play piano without crescendo through the downbeat of measure 11. Here a question and answer pattern between the brass and woodwinds begins. The brass play for two measures (11-12), and the woodwinds respond in measure 13. The style should be consistent between

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both groups with the only differences being timbre and dynamics.

The woodwinds tend to enter too loudly on the subito piano directly following the brass's forte. It is also a common mistake to enter early after the rests in measure 12, a problem that can be easily fixed if rehearsed in  $\frac{4}{4}$ . When the brasses respond to the woodwinds at measure 13, the entrance should be soft and rhythmically precise. As with the woodwind entrance in measure 12 brass players will tend to enter early and too loudly because of the crescendo that follows. The eighth notes at measure 15 should first be rehearsed without the tie to help students learn the rhythm.

The eighths should be played full length, but there should be a separation between the dotted quarter note and eighth note in measure 15. Students may cut the crescendo off too soon, but this tendency can be easily corrected.

The B section of the Intrada begins at measure 17 with the same rhythm as in measure one, but the style now leans toward legato with a change in instrumentation from full brass to first oboe and first clarinet and a softer dynamic of mezzopiano. The opening consists of block chords, but the B section begins with a flowing motive.

Various sections present the theme in sequence, changing only in timbre; the dynamic and style of each voice should match with emphasis on the eighth notes in each pattern. At measure 23 students tend to abruptly cut off and over-emphasize the quarter note on the first beat. It should receive no more emphasis than the quarter in measure 22 and be released simply by stopping the air stream.



idiosyncrasies of that period, I tried composing in that style. I wrote four dances and called the whole suite *Court Festival*.

*Is there anything in that score you wish you had notated differently?*

Oh no, I'm completely happy with it. I wouldn't change a note.

*Are there any common mistakes in how the piece is interpreted?*

I don't care for overly dramatic crescendos or ritardandos because that is foreign to the style. In this case, it would be helpful for a conductor to do some research on music from the time period that the piece emulates.

*How have you seen music change over the years?*

When I was teaching, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, classical music was much different than it is today. There were numerous radical experiments being tried, and I tried them all. I sense that there is now a return to what I would call pretty music. I remember students who were petrified that they might write something that sounded beautiful. This fear has disappeared, and people are writing music that would have seemed old-fashioned by earlier standards in this century. I think it's a healthy trend and not uninteresting. I write some pretty old-fashioned music now.

*Do you prefer to write for a particular instrument or type of ensemble?*

You might think so from looking at my catalog because roughly 40% of it is for band, but this is a consequence of all the commissions I received for writing band works. I started writing band music way back in the 1950s, and I composed a couple of marches that became instant hits. It was kind of easy. I really don't have a favorite idiom though. My favorite idiom is whatever works best for the idea I have at the time.

*Do you feel that band directors now overlook some of the great music of the past in the effort to always play something new?*

I don't think that there is any great danger in looking for new works. I'm trying to think of what the great band literature of the past is. Aside from John Philip Sousa, there aren't very many immortal works for band, I'm afraid. That's not meant as a derogatory statement; it's just an outgrowth of the educational nature of band music.

*What are your favorite hobbies?*

At the age of 82 my favorite hobby now is making the 40-mile trip to Arlington with my wife to visit our great grandson. He's about 3 years old now. Our granddaughter presented us with a very lovely child. □

Measures 22-23

Musical notation for Measures 22-23. The score is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. It features a single staff with a treble clef. The notation includes a + Cornet part. The dynamic marking is *ff* Tutti.

The remainder of measure 23 and measures 24-25 should continue in the same vein, although it is important to note the change to a fortissimo dynamic and higher register. The accented half notes continue until measure 26. This change in articulation may require some rehearsing.

Measures 28-31 repeat the sequence first played in measures 17-20 but at a different pitch level. The accompanying parts beginning in measure 30 present new material that gives momentum to the end of the B section.

Measures 28-31

Musical notation for Measures 28-31. The score is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. It features two staves: a treble clef staff for Woodwinds and a bass clef staff. The dynamic marking is *mp*.

Musical notation for Measures 28-31. The score is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. It features two staves: a treble clef staff for Horns and Trombones, and a bass clef staff. The dynamic marking is *mp*. A *cresc.* marking is present above the treble staff. The dynamic marking *ff* is present at the end of the section.

A crescendo begins in measure 30 and progresses from mezzopiano to fortissimo in only two measures. Rehearse this passage until all players perform the crescendo evenly. Define the length of the quarter notes clearly so that a unified bounce effect can be achieved. Although the eighth notes should be sustained to propel the music to its conclusion, the final two measures of the B section (34-35) should ritard on the repeat.

Measures 34-35 rit. 2nd time

Musical notation for Measures 34-35. The score is in 2/4 time and B-flat major. It features two staves: a treble clef staff for Tutti and a bass clef staff for Timpani. The dynamic marking is *ff*.

Because students tend to ritard the final measures of the B section both times, it may help to isolate these final measures to teach the distinction in tempos. On the second time around the ritard can be enhanced by a division of beat two at measure 34. The timpanist, who plays the final three quarter notes, should be cued because this player initiates the ritard. The eighth note in the melody at the end of measure 34 will fall into place once the timpanist becomes comfortable with the ritard.

## Pavan

The Pavan follows a three-part form (ABC) clearly delineated by repeat signs. The tenuto marks on the half notes and the piano dynamic in the first measure contrast with the first movement. Note that the snare drum part should be played with snares off. The half notes should receive slightly more emphasis than the quarters, and the notes should resonate for a light, smoothly flowing style without abrupt cut-offs.

The grace notes in the melody at measure 4 should be emphasized.

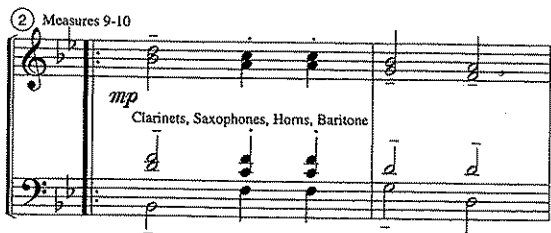
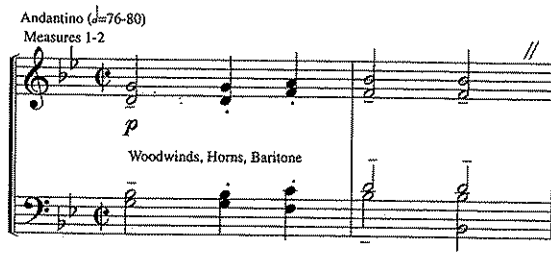


The subito mezzoforte at measure 5 contrasts the opening. The quarter notes in measure 6 should again be separated. Emphasize the subtle placement of the eighths in the tenor line.



In measure 7 the timpani enters to fortify the close of the A section, a part that should be clearly audible without dominating the other parts.

The B section begins at measure 9, and the theme is essentially the A material in melodic inversion with a mode change to B<sup>b</sup> major.



The mezzopiano dynamic is slightly louder than at the beginning, but style in all parts remains the same. The changes in instrumentation require some rehearsing for consistency in style. The quarter notes in the soprano and tenor lines in measure 11 should be released on the first half of the beat so that they resonate; the notes should be played long

enough to give the tone substance. In measures 12 and 15 staccato eighths on the pickup to beat two in the bass line should be played full length with the tongue separating the notes. A subito mezzoforte at measure 13 begins the momentum to the end of the B section. Although this is essentially a repeat of measure 9, the change of instrumentation makes style consistency a concern.

The third and final section of the Pavan begins at measure 17 with a subito mezzopiano, a change of instrumentation, and the introduction of several new elements.



All lines in this passage have independent melodies with different rhythms and articulations, especially in measures 17-18. The bass line takes on a flowing character in contrast with the separated style of the soprano line and the tenuto marks in the alto. Measures 18-21 should be played as a four-measure phrase despite the tendency to end the phrase in measure 18. The bass line is often abruptly cut off on the final note of the four-note slur beginning in measure 17. Measure 20 contains a crescendo from mezzopiano to forte, the quickest crescendo in the piece.

The final four measures of the Pavan should be played without a ritard.

William Latham playing piano with his great grandson, Todd.



Measures 21-24  
col 8<sup>vo</sup>



The separated style at measure 21 contrasts the flowing style at measure 22. The eighth notes in the alto should be emphasized and the half notes in measure 23 played tenuto. The final measure lacks the third of the chord, a common trait of Renaissance music; this occurs throughout the suite and calls for careful tuning of the perfect fifths.

### Galliard

The Galliard also follows a three-part form, and the quarter notes should be played in the same bouncing manner. The half notes, in contrast, should be played tenuto. At the quicker tempo this gives the music forward momentum. At measure 3 the eighths in the tenor should be emphasized, and in measure 4 the half notes should be released after the dotted-quarter note.

Movement III, "Galliard"  
Measures 3-5



Rehearse measure 4 to check that the eighths in the tenor match the eighths in the soprano. In measure 5 the eighths should crescendo slightly as they ascend to add momentum. On the repeat, the dynamic drops from forte to piano, and despite the significant change in instrumentation, the style and note lengths should be consistent with the first presentation.

The B section begins in measure 9 at a slightly higher dynamic level and with a more active bass line.

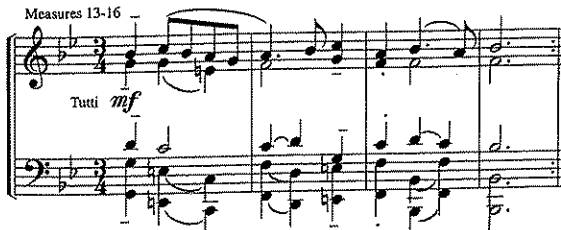
Measures 9-12



The tempo and octave displacements deserve special attention, and practice at a slower tempo will help players to achieve a consistent and resonant performance. The eighth notes in the tenor (measures 9 and 11) should also be emphasized. The crescendo at bar 12 leads to mezzoforte and tenuto quarter notes on the tutti. The slurred descending quarter notes in measures 13-14 tend to end

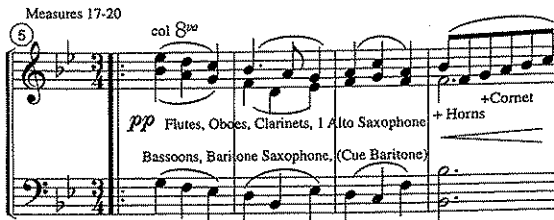
abruptly. The final quarter of each two-note slurred pattern should resonate, and this also applies to the two ascending quarter notes in the bass line at measure 15. The tenuto mark on the quarter note of beat three in measure 14 is also noteworthy. The chord in the final measure of the Pavan lacks the third, and intonation is again a concern.

Measures 13-16



The C section of the Galliard begins in measure 17 at pianissimo. Only the woodwinds play at the beginning, and notes should be performed in a flowing style. Because of the slur patterns, phrasing will become choppy unless players avoid the tendency to end phrases at the end of each measure.

Measures 17-20



Students should strive for seamless four-measure phrases. The horns and cornets enter in measure 20 to add substance to the measure-long crescendo. The unified texture allows emphasis on the eighths, which should be played cantabile. The final four measures begin at bar 21 with an ensemble forte, and the texture increases for a fuller, more lush sound. The seamless phrasing should continue, although players tend to over-emphasize and abruptly cut off the second quarter note in each two-note slurred pattern. These notes should be sustained for smooth phrasing at this tempo.

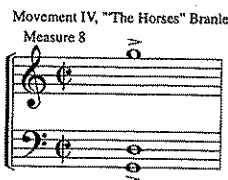
### "The Horses" Branle

The branle uses a five-part form, and instrumentation changes are the only differences between repeated sections.

A	B	A	B	A
1-16	17-24	25-40	41-48	49-end

The branle begins in G Mixolydian. The quarters should be played virtually full length with the tongue separating the notes to create a bouncing effect. If played too short the tone will have little substance. The half notes in measure 4 should be separated by a more definitive space, but do not over-emphasize the accents. The whole notes should be played in four-measure phrases to match

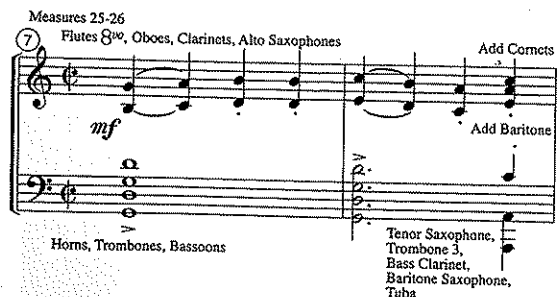
the melody. A slight lift off each note immediately before attacking the next will emphasize the separated style and produce a crisp bagpipe effect. The whole notes also require careful tuning because the intervals are fifths and octaves. When measure 8 arrives, the tuning will be even more challenging.



Three octaves separate the two Gs with a fifth above the bass. Tuning to the lower pitch will help to alleviate pitch problems; the fifth should be tuned after the G. The eighths starting in measure 9 should be slightly emphasized, and the half note in the bass line at measure 15 should be played with some separation, followed again by full-length, bouncy quarters.

The B section begins in measure 17 with forte brass answering the mezzopiano opening. The mode has shifted from G Mixolydian to G minor. Styles, articulations, and note lengths should be consistent with the opening measures. A subito piano coupled with more active tenor and bass lines occurs at measure 19.

The eighths in the alto should be slightly emphasized, and in measure 20 the slurs in the soprano and alto lines may be overlooked the first time around. Alert students to this change in the articulation pattern, and caution players against abruptly releasing the final quarter in measure 20. This will be a natural tendency given the anticipation of the subito forte that follows in measure 21. Measures 21-22 repeat the material of measures 17-18, and measure 23 is a variation of measure 19 with the addition of eighths in the bass that should be emphasized. Measure 24 modulates back to G major and leads to a return of the A section in measure 25 with increased instrumentation. Note the chords in the bass clef.



The fourths and fifths in this passage call for careful attention to intonation. The full instrumentation, particularly on the pickup to measure 27, makes it challenging to maintain the mezzoforte

dynamic. Establish a consensus on dynamic range with the ensemble. Latham intends an increase from mezzoforte to subito fortissimo at measure 41. In measures 26-27 emphasize the eighths in the inner parts. Measures 29-30 repeat measures 25-26, but measure 31 uses more active rhythms in the bass line, including eighth notes that should be emphasized. The fourths and fifths in the chord at measure 32 again call for attention to intonation.

In measure 33 the dynamic increases to forte as the triangle enters and the cornets and first and second trombones rest. The dynamic should be accurate so that the fortissimo at measure 41 is not overshadowed. The straightforward rhythms and styles remain consistent with the original statement of the A section. At measure 41 the B section returns at fortissimo, and the brass and woodwinds again play in a question and answer format. The brass perform for two measures, and the woodwinds answer at mezzopiano in measures 43-44, a scheme that is repeated in the next four measures. Styles and articulations should be consistent between both groups as the only differences should be in dynamics and timbre. At measures 49 the full ensemble performs together for the first time with cymbal crashes to underscore this climactic point in the suite. The octave displacements in the bass clef chord and the chords in measure 53 and 56 call for special attention to intonation.

The repeat of the A material, which starts at measure 49, involves more active parts for the bass clef instruments, especially in measures 54 and 55. In measure 51 eighth notes occur on every beat with the exception of beat two, and those playing eighths on beat one should understand how their lines begin an even flow of notes. This also applies in measure 55, although here the steady flow of eighths begins on the pickup and continues through the end of the measure.

Styles and articulations in the final eight measures should be consistent with earlier presentations of this material. The ritard in the final two measures should be conducted without subdividing the beat; a steady tempo is the goal. As the ritard progresses the quarters should lengthen with some separation. If the quarters were played as short as they were at the quicker tempo, the ending would lose momentum and sound choppy and unmusical.

The wide variety of instrumental combinations, styles, and subito dynamics makes *Court Festival* a challenging and instructive piece for both grade 3 and more advanced ensembles. *Court Festival* is a joy for performers and listeners alike. □

*Court Festival*, Suite for Concert Band by William P. Latham, a grade 3 work. © 1957 by Summy-Birchard Music. Available through Warner Bros., 15800 48th Avenue, Miami, Florida; 305-620-1500, fax 305.621.4869.