

This program is dedicated to sharing the originality, diversity, inventiveness, virtuosity, and energy of the many forms of dance during the Renaissance, in the 15th and 16th centuries as seen in the courts of France, Burgundy, and Italy.

The first part immerses us in the refined and courtly world of the Italian's 15th century, at the crossroads of the late Gothic era and the early Renaissance, featuring sophisticated and aristocratic dances that were documented in the earliest dance manuscripts. The performance then moves on to an episode evoking the military rivalry between King Louis XI of France and the opulent Duke of Burgundy, culminating in the latter's death in 1477.

The 16th century saw the emergence of rich musical and choreographic repertoires, which flourished at balls and festivities as joyful as they were elegant, in major cities, royal castles along the Loire, and the European courts of England and Germany. This period also witnessed the rise of intermedii and «masquerades,» imaginative court spectacles featuring allegorical, mythological, and comedic characters. It provides us with the perfect opportunity to showcase the complexity of variations, the virtuosity of steps, and the musicality of compositions that formed the foundation of Western stage dance.

For this program, we incorporate various families of wind instruments, often depicted in historical iconography in connection with dance:

- The oboe family—“high” instruments whose powerful sound is associated with royal authority. Alongside violins in the 16th century, these were the instruments of dance.
- A complete family of bassoons, whose tonal range, sitting between high and low instruments, was perfectly suited to late 16th-century Italian ballet music.
- Families of recorders, whose crisp articulation makes them ideal for lively dances such as the branles.

*Notes by Denis Raisin Dadre*