

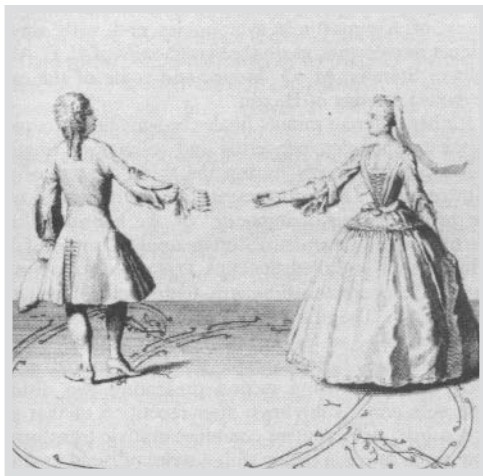
The Classical Minuet in Various Forms

“Z” pattern of the minuet, showing pattern for dancers with verbal instructions for steps.⁹



The most popular social dance in 18th-century Europe was the **minuet**. Many **keyboard minuets** were used for actual dancing while others were **stylized**; they had characteristics of the dance, but were not intended for dancing.

Books of **choreographic notation** were published in the early 18th century describing the court dances. In the minuet, a couple moved through an elaborate floor pattern along an imaginary letter Z.⁸ When they passed in the middle, they presented right hands, turned and moved to opposite corners. Next, they presented left hands, and concluded with both hands.



Presentation of the right hand in a minuet. Engraving from Kellom Tomlinson's *The Art of Dancing* (18th century)

It could take months to make these patterns appear effortless. Those who could not perform in a graceful, dignified way were considered social failures. Originally danced by only one couple, at a later time, couples danced it simultaneously, circling each other holding right hands, then left, and finally the man led with both hands.

Most minuets were 16–32 measures in length. However, according to descriptions of the time, it took 100 measures to complete the dance. Accompanying **musicians repeated sections, improvised variations, or performed several minuets in succession.**

Professional Women Musicians in the 18th Century

By the late 18th century, professional female musicians were **singing** in operas and court ballets, **appearing as instrumentalists** and **teaching music** to the nobility. Their most popular instruments were piano, violin, harp and guitar. A few women composed, and others were involved in music publishing and piano manufacturing.

⁸The “Z” was adapted by dancing masters from its original “S” (the sign for the Sun King, Louis XIV).

⁹Pierre Rameau, 1725.

Elisabetta de Gambarini was known in London primarily as a professional singer who performed in many of George Frideric Handel's (1685–1759) oratorios. She was also an organist, orchestral conductor and composer. This minuet is from her sixth *Sonata for Harpsichord*.



Minuet form: binary or two-part

Sections: \parallel : A \parallel : B \parallel
 I V I I

(In binary form, the first section cadences on a V chord.)

Minuet in F Major

Allegretto

Elisabetta de Gambarini
 (1731–1765)

SECTION A

The musical score is written for harpsichord in F major, 3/4 time. It consists of two sections, A and B, each with a first ending and a second ending. Section A begins with a forte (f) dynamic and features a melody with slurs and fingerings (1, 4, 1, 2, 3, 5, 1, 4). The bass line consists of quarter notes. Section B begins with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic and features a melody with slurs and fingerings (3, 1, 3, 1, 3, 1, 3). The bass line consists of quarter notes. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, dynamics (f, mp, mf), and fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Ⓐ Throughout this book, the editor suggests that all notes not marked with a slur be played nonlegato, with a slight separation. See the Foreword (page 3) for further details on 18th-century articulation.

*“I tell you before God, as an honest man,
that your son is the greatest composer I know,
either personally or by repute.”*

Franz Joseph Haydn in a letter to Leopold Mozart²⁹

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Mozart was a genius from birth, playing keyboard melodies at age 3, performing publicly and composing by age 5. At age 6, he was taken on his first concert tour where he performed with his older sister, **Nannerl** (1751–1829).

Composed while on tour in Zurich when Mozart was 10 years old, he never gave this piece a title. On that trip, he also performed in Amsterdam, Brussels, Paris and Munich.

Klavierstücke in F Major

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756–1791)

K. 33B

Allegro

mf p mf

6 dim. p

11 p

16 mp f

21 dim. mp