
Canario Variations

Negri

Negri's Canario is a single set of figures published as a choreographed dance. Each figure contains an advancing *mutanza* (variation), and a *ritarata*, or retreating section. Negri's music for Il Canario is 17 bars long, and each *mutanza* can be fitted into one repeat of the music, often leaving the last bar as a pause. The *mutanze* and *ritarate* are often repeated on alternate feet, usually in the pattern advance, advance, retreat, retreat, although the pattern advance, retreat, advance, retreat does appear.

By presenting the dance as a single choreographed piece, Negri sets the structure of the dance. There is an introduction, a couple of alternating *mutanze* and *ritarate* (two for the man, two for the lady), and another section done together where the man and the lady exchange places. The dance then continues with two more *mutanze* and *ritarate* each, and then a concluding figure where the dancers come together.

Choreography

In choreographing a canario, therefore, it is important to set the pattern first. A pattern similar to Negri's, or perhaps simpler or even longer could be set, although Negri's Canario is approximately 12 minutes long done at a reasonable pace, and anything longer would be exceedingly tiring.

Once the pattern is set, it becomes a matter of picking or improvising some Canario patterns.

Lupi

There are several sources for this dance other than Caroso and Negri. Livio Lupi di Caravaggio published a book titled *Libro di gagliarda, tordiglione, passo e mezzo, canarii e passeggi...* in 1607, which contained a large section on galliards and tourdions, as well as a section on the Canario.

The third section of Lupi's book covers Canary variations. It is divided into two parts, titled *Mutanze di Canari* and *Passeggi di Canari*. The first section contains 26 pages of relatively long variations, each of which is followed by a much shorter *ritarata*. In most cases the *ritarata* contains elements of the *mutanza*, however it is usually slower and contains fewer steps. This is also typical of Negri's *mutanze*.

The *passeggi* in the second part are shorter pieces of canari which can be either danced as shorter *mutanze*, or strung together into longer *mutanze*, either in an advancing *mutanza* or a *ritarata*.

Improvisation

Both Negri and Lupi's canari are full of such short sequences. One set of steps or short *passeggio* could become a "signature" piece for a particular dancer, being used regularly in his or her impromptu canario displays. There are regular themes that recur throughout each of Negri's and Lupi's *mutanze* that were obviously signature pieces of the dance masters themselves.

Improvisation then becomes a matter of learning (or inventing) particular *mutanze* based on *passeggi* that the dancer is familiar with.

Selected Passeggi from Lupi

Passeggi

Lupi's book contains 35 short canario passeggi numbered 1 - 35, and one quite long one (36). I have reconstructed a few of them here.

Translation notes

Lupi seems to use the words *dritto* and *manco* as opposites, in the place of *destro* and *sinistro* which are used to indicate right and left by the other authors. The meanings of these words are in fact "straight" and "lack" or "missing", so these seem to indicate opposite concepts. They possibly mean front or leading foot, and back or trailing foot, so that instead of having to repeat each passeggio he can give the detail for it once only and then it can be done with the same instructions on opposite feet.

The terms appear to be similar to those used in Italian fencing manuals of the time, to refer to "forward" and "refused" stance, which are two methods of standing relative to the hand that is holding the sword.

I have translated these words as "leading" and "trailing" respectively. In the notation I have left them as "L" and "R".

Length of passeggi

The length of Lupi's passeggi appear to vary. Some I have best been able to reconstruct as 12 bars, while others are 4 or possibly 8 bars long. Since there appears to be a fair amount of Canario music in 16 and 32 bar variations, as well as Negri's 17 bar variation, it is probable that these passeggi were assembled, on the fly as it were, into a longer variation.

For example, a 12 bar passeggio could be combined with a 4 bar passeggio to fit 16 bars of music. Repeated on opposite feet it could make 32 bars of music. A simple 4 bar passeggio repeated 4 times on alternate feet could also make a 16 bar mutanza.

It does appear that Lupi's passeggi were the building blocks of his own, and other larger mutanze.

1

Un seguito spezzato con il manco, con due trabuchetti ichisati, e due battute, con il dritto, e manco, con un triglio battuto con il dritto, con due coruetti a deitro col manco, e dritto, con tre battute d'un piede a l'altro.

1 - 2	SzR	Spezzato with the trailing foot.
3 - 4	TbL TbR	Two trabuchetti, sliding rather than jumping.
5	Stamp L, R	Two stamps.
6	Triglio L	A beaten triglio.
7 - 8	Coruetti R, L	Two coruetti, both to the direction of the trailing foot, the first with the leading foot and then with the trailing foot.
9 - 10	Stamp R, R, R	Three stamps on the trailing foot.
11 - 12	Stamp L, L, L	Three stamps on the leading foot.

8

Una battuta in balzetto con il manco, un'altra con il dritto, con due battute con il manco, e dritto, con un trabuchetto tracacciato con il manco.

1-2	Stamp R, L	Two stamps, kicking the foot up at the end of each one.
3	Stamp R, L	Two stamps.

4 TbR Trabuchetto.

10

Un seguito spezzato con il manco, un'altro con il dritto, singendo di andarinanti, e tornar in dietro con quattro battute caminate con il manco, altre quattro caminate con il dritto, con un trabuchetto rebattuto al manco, con due seguiti battuti con il dritto, e manco.

1 – 4	SzR SzL	Two spezzati, moving forwards.
5 – 6	Beaten step x 4	Turn around and walk back towards your starting place with 4 steps, stamping each one, turning to your trailing side.
7 – 8	Beaten step x 4	Turn back towards your leading side, returning to place with 4 more stamped steps, finish by facing forwards again.
9 – 10	TbR, 2 beats.	Do a trabuchetto to your trailing side, ending by stamping your foot down as you close the trabuchetto, and then stamping again with the closing foot.
11 – 12	BsL BsR	Two beaten steps in place.

26

Recacciata con il dritto, zopetto, e fuga tracacciata inanti, & a dietro farla due volte con il manco, un passo schisato a dietro con il manco, due balzettini schisati con il dritto inanti, tre battute d'un piede a l'altro

1	RcL	Recacciata on the leading foot.
2	ZpR	A zopetto (small kick)
3 - 4	PsL PsR PsL PsR	Walk forwards (the word used means “escape”), starting on the leading foot. I have used four small passi.
5 - 8	SsL KR SsR KL	Two sliding steps, forwards, with a kick at the end of each one (sliding forwards again slightly in each kick).
9 - 10	Stamp R, R, R	Three stamps on the trailing foot.
11 - 12	Stamp L, L, L	Three stamps on the leading foot.

Selected Passeggi from Negri

Looking at the structure of the mutanze in Negri's Il Canario, it becomes apparent that it too is built from shorter building blocks.

Negri appears to have “theme” passeggi, which are mostly 4 and 8 bar sequences that either repeat through the dance, or are reintroduced with some small variations. For example, many of the passeggi in the advancing mutanze are copied in form in the ritarate, while being different in style between the forward and backward variations.

I have selected a few pieces of passeggi from Negri's Il Canario which can be used either alone, or combined effectively with the ones listed from Lupi.

1	Tap L L L	Tap with left foot: heel, toe, heel.
2	Tap L L	Tap with left foot: toe, heel.

3	BkL	Kick backwards with the left foot.
4	CdL	Left Cadenza.
1 - 2	RcL RcR	2 recacciate, left then right.
3 - 4	BsL BsR	Two seguiti battuti.
1	FL(R)	Fioretti "contratempo", that is a Fioretti done with the left foot moving to the right.
2	Stamp R R	Two beats with the right foot, one forwards and one to the side.
3	Stamp R, SpR	Stamp backwards with the right foot, then do a sottopiede to the right.
4	CpL	Capriole finishing on the left foot.
1	Stamp R R	Raise the right foot high, then stamp it level with the left foot, then behind it (with the middle of the right foot level with the left heel).
2	Stamp R R	repeat the above.
3 - 4	SpR CpL	Right sottopiede, left capriole with a cadenza

Ritarate

1 - 2	Stamp L R	Take two stamping steps backwards, first by stamping the left foot behind the right foot, then the right foot behind the left.
3 - 4	Stamp L R L	As 9 - 10, but quicker with 3 stamps.
5 - 8	repeat	Repeat 9 - 12 above, starting with the right foot.
1 - 16	PsGL PsGR PsGL PsGR	4 Passi Gravi backwards, stamping the foot after each one (the stamping motion is the foot down part of the passo).
1 - 4	PsGL	Turn right shoulder to partner, then step to the left with the left foot, stamping the foot.
5 - 8	RmL	Reprise minuta away from partner.

Selected Passeggi from Caroso

Caroso's mutanze are not all obviously built from shorter building blocks like those of Negri or Lupi, but are much simpler in construction.

Caroso appears to be the odd man out in the use of the 16th C canario, however his Il Canario appeared 20 years earlier than that of Negri or Lupi and it is probable that the style changed over time. Caroso's second book, *Nobilta di Dame*, was published at about the same time as Negri and Lupi's books, however it did not contain a canary.

1	1 – 8	BsL BsR x 4	8 seguiti battuti, moving forwards
3	1 – 2	Stamp, Stamp, BsL	2 stamps and a beaten sequence, on the left foot
	3 – 4	Stamp, Stamp, BsR	Repeat the above on the right foot.
	5 – 16	Repeat x 3	Repeat all of the above 3 more times.
