

Notes on Ercole Santucci Perugino's

Mastro del Ballo

1614

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The publication of Santucci's manuscript of dance from 1614 is an important step forward in our understanding of 16th century dance. It has been kicking around various private collections ever since. Fortunately for us, it was acquired in 1996 by the CarinaAri Library in Stockholm, which commissioned a facsimile edition, with an excellent introduction by Barbara Sparti.

The most useful part of this manuscript is the step descriptions. With the main known source of step descriptions being Caroso -- Negri copied from Caroso, and other sources only cover exotic steps -- Santucci adds a lot to our understanding of the most basic steps of 16th century dance.

How to buy it

This facsimile edition is still in print. The ISBN is 3-487-12683-4, and if you search for it on a book comparison website such as addall.com, it is for sale from 9 German websites, including the publisher (Georg Olms Verlag AG), for 88 euros plus shipping. It's also available from Amazon FR and Amazon DE. Worldcat says copies are owned by 14 libraries in the US (including my alma mater, Brandeis.)

The Transcription

As part of my project to prepare digital transcriptions (and concordances) of all 16th century dance materials, I incited a group of people to help me type and proofread this somewhat hard to read handwriting. (Please see the acknowledgments for the list of contributors.) This transcription is the

source of all the translations presented here.

Sparti's Introduction

Sparti's introductory article does an excellent job of covering most of the interesting points in the manuscript. In my notes below, I have drawn heavily from her work.

Description

The manuscript is hand-written, with blank spaces left for illustrations. It contains 214 rules for non-Galliard steps in the first part, 41 galliard steps and *passeggi*, 71 *Mutanze* for 2 to 8 tempi of *Gagliarda*, a few rules for women, and 9 dance choreographies.

The Steps

The first thing you'll notice about Santucci's steps is that most of the descriptions begin with your feet "in *passo naturale* with the left (or right) foot behind", which is not explicitly explained anywhere, but corresponds to the usual position for beginning a galliard step. For many steps he notes near the end that you can also do them *et anco trouandoti à piedi pari* ("and also starting with equal feet"). Like Caroso, Santucci says that you shouldn't stand with a lot of turnout, but Santucci explicitly calls for a little turnout, which agrees with the woodcuts in Arbeau, Caroso, and Negri:

*con le punte de piedi un poco in fuora, mà che non siano uolte tanto, che, che un piè guardi à
Leuante, l'altro à Ponente,*

with the toe of the feet a little out, but not that they are turned so much, that, that one foot views by the East, and the other by the West,

The above passage is a good example of how Santucci never copies Caroso; you might recall in Nobilta's *Regola Seconda* that Caroso admonishes his disciple to not point one foot north and the other south. On occasion it seems that Santucci is taking pains to not copy Caroso, and does not add anything new; in other instances there is clearly additional information. Some steps are clearly different in Caroso and Santucci.

One example of a step which is more clear thanks to Santucci is Santucci's Rule 54 (*della caminata strisciata per fianco*), which is a very clear explanation of a step similar to Negri's *ripresa minuta*, which

is used in dances such as Bizzaria d'Amore.

The *Salto del fiocco* (tassel jump) rule has an intro saying that the tassel should be raised *mà tenendolo alto da terra dui piedi incirca* "but keeping him high from the earth about two feet".

Santucci describes the *seguito ordinario* and *seguito semidoppio* similar to Caroso. In Negri, Pamela Jones theorizes that the labels for these steps were mistakenly changed.

Rules 177, 178, and 190: The *Seguito francese ordinario*, *alternato*, and *del Doppio francese*

Sparti does not comment about these steps in her introduction.

The *ordinario* and *alternato* are interesting mainly because Santucci says that they are used in the French Coranto (*perche si fa ordinari nelle Correnti francese*, "because he will do himself ordinarily in the French Coranto"). The simpler *ordinario* step is indeed extremely similar to Arbeau's Coranto Simple step, including ending the step with the feet together, which is unusual for an Italian step but usual for Arbeau's steps. Unlike Arbeau's description of a dance in light duple time, Santucci says that this step is done in *2 battute triple*, which means 2 measures of triple meter. Since there is a lot of Coranto music in the Renaissance and it's all in triple meter, and we all wanted to disbelieve Arbeau's duple meter, this makes us happy. However, doing a single in 2 measures of triple is slower than the usual SCA reconstruction of this step.

The *Seguito francese alternato* is considerably ornamented, making twice as many motions in the same time as the *ordinario*. This fits with the notion that the step takes 2 measures of triple meter; there is adequate time to do a division. Again the step ends with closed feet. Santucci (I think, the translation is a bit obscure) notes that this step is used only in Corantos.

The *Doppio francese* is a step that appears in Nobilta as a step description (*doppi alla Francese*) and in 4 dances. This step in Caroso begins with 2 trabs and 3 passi, and in Santucci it is 3 trabs and 2 passi. In both cases the description is vague enough that it is fairly unclear what is going on.

I ran out of time preparing for this class to go into too many details about other steps, but as you can see I have numerous translations.

The Choreographies

Santucci introduces all kinds of great new steps, but he doesn't seem to use them in the choreographies. In fact, most of the dances are similar to those in other sources, and moreover are more like choreographies in *Il Ballarino* (1581) than *Nobilta di Dame* (1600). Even though Santucci claims to have

"*Moderata*" (Florio defines this verb to mean "to moderate, to temper") several of the dances, they also harken back to 1581 and don't use any significant new steps. Many of the dances are not as symmetrical as the ones in Nobilta, and there are repeated sections which do not start on the "other" foot. Sparti says that there are interesting innovations in the *mutanze* in the Canario and Pavaniglia, which I have not translated.

Allegrezza d'Amore

This dance appears once in each of Caroso's manuals.

Alta Regina

Although this choreography is attributed to Caroso, Santucci's version contains a combination of the 2 different versions in Caroso's 2 manuals. (Negri also has a dance with this name.) Caroso calls this dance a *cascarda*; Santucci never uses that word.

Barriera

A dance with this name appears 4 times in Caroso's 2 manuals, once in Negri, once in the Vatican "Chigi Manuscript", and once in Antonio di Fiorenza. Caroso attributes one of the Il Ballarino Barrieras to Battistano, who was perhaps his teacher. The Barrieras in Negri and di Fiorenza resemble this Battistano Barriera, as does the one in Santucci.

Sparti attributes the name to *giostra della barriera*, which she translates as "tilting in the lists". One hopes that she's familiar with combat at the barrier, in which two combatants on foot fight at a waist-high barrier. This was fashionable from the 14th through the 16th centuries.

The most interesting part of Santucci's dance comes at the end, where he explains that this dance can be danced by more than the minimum one couple. This is very unusual in 16th century dancing; the hints in various manuals is that almost all dances were danced by a minimum number of people (and hence the format of the Caroso-style balls occasionally seen in the SCA). Chiranzana (for a line of couples of indefinite length) and Contrapasso Da Farsi In Ruota (for a circle of couples) are the rare exceptions. But in this dance, the description finishes with:

Noting, that this Barrier, they can do in four, in six, in eight, and more, in the manner it will occur...

Santucci is describing the sort of environment that we often do 16th century dances: as many couples or sets as will.

Contrapasso

There are four versions of Contrapasso in Caroso, one in the Vatican Chigi manuscript, and no mention of this dance in Negri. Santucci attributes this dance to Compasso, who wrote a manual of galliard variations in 1560, many years before Santucci's 1614 manuscript.

Santucci's Contrapasso is for 3 couples in a circle, which is similar to the two of Caroso's dances and the Contrapasso in the Vatican Chigi manuscript that have the "rose hey". However, the other figures of the dance are much more similar to Caroso's *Contrapasso Da Farsi In Ruota* "Contrapasso which is done in a circle" in Nobilta. (This version of Contrapasso is commonly danced in the West.)

Three aspects of this dance are unusual. The first is that Santucci calls for music in 2 at the beginning of the dance. Santucci doesn't include any music, and the music in Caroso is in 3 throughout, although it is oddly notated in 2.

The second is that at the beginning, the "Man that will have charge of the festival" is the one who does the inviting, and then he doesn't necessarily dance the dance. These words *carico della festa* don't appear elsewhere in Santucci, although *carico* does appear once in Negri, and *festa* appears 4 times in Nobilta and 12 times in Negri. It's unclear from the Italian if the man doing the inviting actually plays the music or not.

A third note is that Santucci calls for steps named *dattilo* and *Spondeo*, which are named after poetical "feet". These steps don't appear in any Caroso or Negri choreography, do appear in the "rose hey" woodcut in Nobilta, in which they are accompanied by music notes in 2, which is a bit odd as Caroso's music for this dance is clearly in 3.

Translations

The following pages present some rough and extremely literal translations of some interesting parts of Santucci, including 5 dances and 38 rules. These translations were prepared using a tool which I developed which mechanically looks up Italian words in a dictionary and presents all the possibilities along with their parts of speech, gender, number, etc. (Many Italian words have multiple translations.) I then made up an extremely literal translation, phrase by phrase. As you can see it could use some cleanup -- I have kept verb tenses and genders which are incorrect for English -- and I have kept all of the overly-common reflexive pronouns. This translation ought to be ideal for helping you understand the nuts and

bolts of what Santucci has to say.

The English translations are all drawn from John Florio's 1614 dictionary, which is online and searchable at my website.

Several idioms have been applied to these translations:

Dropping hands is said to *belasciaranno la mano*, literally "leaving the hand."

Many steps can be repeated "on the other side" starting with the opposite foot. This is indicated by phrases such as *e cosi potrai fare per contrario*, literally "and thus you will be able to do by the contrary."

Occasionally you end up with or can optionally begin a step with "equal feet", which is *et anco trouandoti à piedi pari*, "and also finding himself by equal feet". Also, sometimes you close one foot to the other to form equal feet; this is indicated with a phrase like *al paro col destro*.

si chiama cosi is literally "it is names itself thus", and is used at the end of steps to describe why a step is named something. I have translated it "it is called thus".

As is common in Caroso and Negri, *all'incontro* is used to indicate facing your partner. Literally it is "to meet", but it doesn't indicate that you necessarily move towards each other.

in prospettiva is left untranslated. Nobody knows what it means. See Sparti, p. 40

e femandosi la Dama/Cavaliero indicates that the Woman or Man is standing still while the other does something.

Spacing is somewhat sketchy in this era, and so word pairs such as *o vero* need to be combined, or you will translate it as "or true" instead of "or else".

The ordinary hands (*la mano ordinaria*) are the Man's right hand under and holding the Woman's left.

inalborato is used to indicate "rising" or "raised". Florio gives the meaning as "to become a tree", and this word does not appear in my modern Italian dictionary.

The verb *callare* -- "to grow hard, brawnie, or callus" -- is used to mean something related to putting feet onto the ground, but I did not have time to compare to this verb's usage by Caroso and Negri to work out a better translation.

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References

Ercole Santucci Perugino, *Mastro da Ballo*, 1614. Facsimile edition edited by Barbara Sparti, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, Germany. Referred to in my text as "Sparti".

This material will appear on the web soon at <http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/santucci/>

Regola xxv de Passi in Aere.

A fare il passo in aere, trouandosi, col piè sinistro inalborato inanzi, come si uede nella seguente figura, lo posarà in terra, e nel posarlo inalborarà il destro, e chiamasi così, peche sempre si tiene inalborato l'uno, e l'altro piede, e potrà farsi anco p. contrario.

Output for Rule 25 from my translation tool:

A	preposition	dative: by, through, for, per, at, in the, etc etc.
fare	verb infinitive	to do
il	article masc sing	the
passo	verb I	to pass
l	noun masc sing	passo
in	preposition	in, into, at, also, with
aere,	(not in lexicon)	aere
trouandosi,	-ing + him/her/themselve	to find
col	preposition	with, with the
piè;	noun masc sing	foot
sinistro	adj masc sing	left
inalborato	past part. -ing masc	[to rise] to become a tree...
inanzi,	preposition	[forward] before, sooner, rather [alt spelling]
come	adverb	[like] how, in what manner, why? as, even as, so as
l	noun unknown sing	manner, way fashion
si	adverb	yet
l	pronoun	himself/themselves [singular or plural, reflexive]
uede	verb he/she/it	to see, to look, to behold, to view.
nella	preposition	in + the fem sing
seguinte	pres part. -ing sing ??	to follow
figura,	noun fem sing	a figure, a shape