

FABRITIO CAROSO'S BALLETTI : “THE DANCER’S OWN LANGUAGE?”

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ABSTRACT: In the 16th Century, ladies and gentlemen of noble birth were taught from an early age the art of dancing, necessary to survive in the hierarchical world of the court. A neo-platonic perspective on dancing was at the core of renaissance thinking (humanism) and persisted throughout the 17th Century. In dance circles the principles of harmony and order in the cosmos, harking back to the classical world of Plato and Quintilian, were already well established in Italy by the end of the 15th Century. The *balli* were structures consisting of many different rhythmic sections throughout which a playful narrative of love, courtship and drama unfolded. By the second half of the 16th Century, two notable dancing masters, Fabritio Caroso and Cesare Negri, were beginning to record their teaching and advice in manuals, which serve as the first known comprehensive and detailed treatises on court dance. By the late 16th Century, the *balletto* still involved the theatricality of narrative and contrasting or varying emotions. It was still a performance or game for the spectators as well as for the dancers themselves, despite being performed in a social context. In this article, we take a closer look at 2 *balli* presented by Caroso: *Ardente Sole* and *Laura Soave*, showing that their structure was inspired by rhetorical principles.

KEYWORDS: Renaissance dance; Rhetoric; Fabritio Caroso; *Balletti*

OS *BALLETTI* DE FABRITIO CAROSO: A LINGUAGEM DA DANÇA?

RESUMO: No séc. XVI, a educação dos nobres previa o ensino da arte da dança, essencial para a sobrevivência no mundo hierarquizado da corte, desde a mais tenra infância.

Uma perspectiva neoplatônica sobre a dança estava no âmago do pensamento renascentista (humanismo), persistindo por todo o século XVII. Em círculos da dança, os princípios da harmonia e ordem do cosmos, remontando ao mundo clássico de Platão e Quintiliano já estavam bem delineados desde o séc. XV. Os *balli* consistiam em estruturas compostas por diversas seções rítmicas durante as quais se desenrolava uma narrativa de amor, cortesia e drama. Na segunda metade do séc XVI, dois notáveis mestres de dança, Fabritio Caroso e Cesare Negri, principiavam a registrar seus ensinamentos em manuais que constituem os primeiros tratados sistemáticos e detalhados a respeito da dança de corte. No fim do séc. XVI, o *balletto* ainda envolvia a narrativa teatral e o contraste ou variedade de emoções. Era ainda uma performance ou jogo para espectadores e para os próprios dançarinos, mesmo sendo apresentados em um contexto social. Neste artigo, são enfocados dois *balli* apresentados por Caroso: Ardente Sole e Laura Soave, evidenciando como suas estruturas foram inspiradas em princípios retóricos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Dança renascentista; Retórica; Fabritio Caroso; *Balletti*

Dancing is a kind of mute rhetoric by which the orator, without uttering a word, can make himself understood by his movements and persuade the spectators that he is gallant and worthy to be acclaimed, admired and loved. Are you not of the opinion that this is the dancer's own language, expressed by his feet and in a convincing manner. (ARBEAU, 1967 [1589], p. 16)

Thoinot Arbeau's treatise on dancing stresses the importance of dance in the 16th Century, when ladies and gentlemen of noble birth were taught from an early age the good manners and graces necessary to survive in the hierarchical world of the court. In 1600 the revered Italian dancing master, Fabritio Caroso, advises:

Solely that you honour anyone to whom you feel respect, a gentleman (should) doff his hat and hold it in his hand with that utter grace and beauty which may render him elegant, ... once it is doffed... he should pretend to kiss his own left hand. For since this is the hand belonging to the heart, he thus performs

an act of cordiality; consider also that by this behavior he will not only appear attractive and gracious to all observers, but will also escape any appearance of imperfection. (CAROSO, 1980 [1600], p. 64)

His neo-platonic perspective on dancing was at the core of renaissance thinking (humanism) and persisted throughout the 17th century. John Playford justifies his publication, *The English Dancing Master* (1651) by telling us that “the Art of Dancing... is a commendable and rare Quality fit for young Gentlemen, if opportunely and civilly used. And Plato, that Famous Philosopher thought it meet, that young Ingeneous Children be taught to dance” (PLAYFORD, 1651, p. 9).

Dancing was an art which was understood on different levels. It was not only a means of recreation, but an illustration in miniature of the workings of the world, dancers being compared to celestial bodies moving in harmony along their ordered paths in the universe. Sir John Davies, the lawyer, tells us in his *Orchestra: a Poem of Dancing, apostrophe on the art of dancing*:

*Learn then to dance, you that are princes born
And lawful lords of earthly creatures all.
Imitate them and thereof take no scorn,
(For this new art to them is natural)
And imitate the stars celestial;
For when pale death your vital twist shall sever,
Your better parts must dance with them forever.*
(DAVIES, 1947 [1594], p. 32)

Choreography during the renaissance was a highly sophisticated art form which, together with the other arts, reflected the aesthetic of the age and served as an effective tool to represent and communicate the social mores and the emotional preoccupations of its time. Dancing was an art which could persuade and influence – an invaluable asset at court (fig. 1).

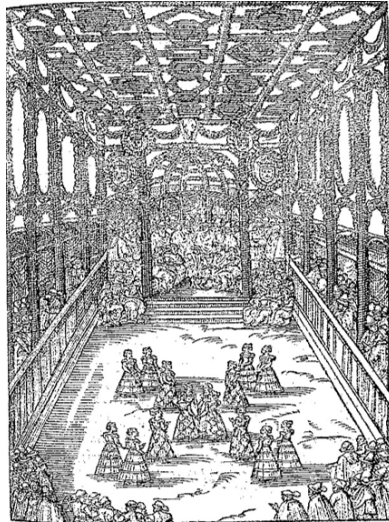


Fig. 1: Court dancing: ‘*Le Balet des Polonais*’ 1573. Spencer Collection. New York Public Library.

Arbeau cites Herodias’s daughter who “obtained her wish from Herod Antipas by dancing for him” (1967 [1589], p. 17) and Roscius Gallus, the most celebrated actor in Rome during the 1st century who, “by his employment of gesture and dumb show[...], could move the spectators...as much or more than Cicero had been able to by his eloquent orations” (ARBEAU, 1967 [1589], p. 17).

The Renaissance, as an artistic movement, certainly in terms of music, dance and the visual arts, is generally credited with having swept across Europe from Italy. In dance circles the renaissance principles of harmony and order in the cosmos, harking back to the classical world of Plato and Quintilian, were already well established in Italy by the end of the 15th Century. The renaissance dancing master of the *Quattrocento*, Domenico di Piacenza and his pupils Antonio Cornazano and Guilielmo Ebreo, left detailed manuals advocating the style and techniques for presenting the dances practiced by the nobility in their day, including many choreographies which demonstrated the steps and style of their time in action.

Their dance forms included the well-ordered *bassadanza*, “the Queen of measures,...the work of the Heavens” (PIACENZA, c. 1470, *apud* NEVILE, 2004, p. 79) and the *saltarello*. The more complex *balli* consisted of many different rhythmic sections throughout which a playful narrative of love, courtship and drama unfolded².

In Cornazano’s *Sobria*, a ballo a 6 for 5 men and a lady (fig. 2), for example, the dancers begin with a jolly, mischievous

2. 27 are his choreographies, the rest is attributed to his students and fellow dancing masters. In 1600 he lists 33 in *Nobilita* (plus 2 if one counts the 2 *contrapasso* dances which were previously termed *balletto* in *Il Ballarino* – all he now attributes to himself).

saltarello as they promenaded in couples – only one man has the lady as his partner.



Fig. 2: Music from *Sobria* (CORNAZANO, 1981 [1455], p. 45). Transcribed by Mary Criswick

The dance music changes to *piva* (fig. 3), as the front couple dance together and the other four men begin to surround them.



Fig. 3: *Piva*. (CORNAZANO, 1981 [1455], p. 21-22). Transcribed by Mary Criswick

In another mood change, a new section of *saltarello in quadernaria* (fig. 4) announces the attempt of the four men to tempt the lady away from her partner.

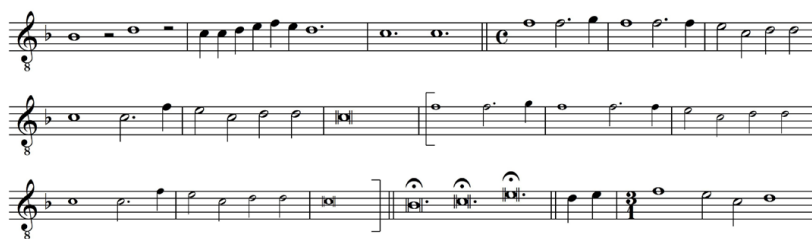


Fig. 4: *Saltarello in quadernaria*. (CORNAZANO, 1981 [1455], p. 21-22). Transcribed by Mary Criswick

This accelerates in a fast *saltarello* section (fig. 5), as the men surround the lady and her partner



Fig. 5: *Fast saltarello* (CORNAZANO, 1981 [1455], p. 21-22). Transcribed by Mary Criswick

This *saltarello* is followed by a return to *piva* (fig. 6), in which the couple are reunited and the hunters change places ready to dance again.



Fig. 6: *Piva* (CORNAZANO, 1981 [1455], p. 21-22). Transcribed by Mary Criswick

By the second half of the 16th Century, two notable dancing masters, Fabritio Caroso and Cesare Negri, were not only teaching and providing spectacles for the most notable families in Italy, but they were beginning to record their teaching and advice in manuals which serve as the first known comprehensive and detailed treatises on court dance (fig. 7). These manuals included written descriptions of dance steps, ornamentation, choreographies and their corresponding music scores, pictorial examples, advice on etiquette and information about key personnel and events from the Italian courts at the time.



Fig. 7. Cesare Negri: courteous dancing in *Le Gratie d'Amore*, 1604

Fabritio Caroso's *Il Ballarino* (fig. 8) appeared in Venice in 1581, followed in 1600 by a second volume, *Nobilita di Dame*, which updated and added to his first publication.



Fig. 8: Fabritio Caroso: frontispice of *Il Ballarino*, 1581

Two years later, in 1602, Cesare Negri's *Le Gratie d'Amore* (fig. 9) was published in Milan and followed by *Nuovo Inventione di Balli* in 1604.



Fig. 9: Cesare Negri: *Le Gratie d'Amore*, 1604

In many ways the format and content of Negri's manual corresponded to Caroso's books but there are many different choreographies and additional material appearing in Negri's work which lead us to detect national fashions and local differences.

The fact that these two dancing masters publish works which bridge the 16th Century and 17th Century provides an opportunity to view the gradual shift from two ages which we now, at a distance, perceive as separate eras, the renaissance and the baroque. Through their publications combined with other contemporary sources – Livio Lippi's *Libro di gagliardi, tordiglione, passomezzi etc* (1607), for example - we have 'snapshots' which show the gradual evolution of steps, style and geometrical structure from one age to the next. Even more helpful is the fact that Negri's last surviving book, *Nuovo Inventione di Balli* was reprinted into the 1630s and almost overlaps the first accepted 'baroque' dance publication in France, *Apologie de la Danse* published by François de Lauze in Paris in 1623.

The dances in Caroso and Negri's publications display the wide variety of forms and structures which were popular in the Europe of their day. These choreographies ranged from simple ballroom promenades and 'mixers' to highly sophisticated structures based on the rules governing the classical art of rhetoric.

Caroso includes examples of the *bassa & alta* dance, *pavana* and *pavaniglia*, *passoemezzo*, *gagliarda*, *tordiglione*, *canario*, *cascarda*, *barriera*, *brando*, *spagnoletta*, *contrapasso*, *furioso*, the *ballo* and *balletto*. Negri adds the *corrente* and several examples of choreographies designed exclusively for the specific theatrical events he identifies in his *Trattato Primo* and *Trattato Terzo*.

Both dancing masters include social dances for 3, 4 or more persons in a style which we might nowadays term *country dance*. Caroso's *barriera* and *contrapasso nuovo* and Negri's *Il Cesarino* and *Lo Spagnoletto*, for example, demonstrate the typical format of country dancing wherein the man dances with both his own partner and with other ladies in the 'set'. They also include the typical country dance elements, such as advancing and retreating to greet the other couples; changing places using symmetrical floor patterns with an ultimate

‘resolution’ as the dancers finally end in their original places; turning both partners and ‘opposites’ (any other ladies in the set) using right hands, left hands and two hands (fig. 10).



Fig. 10: Cesare Negri: opposite position in *Le Gratie d'Amore*, 1604

The dances described by Caroso and Negri as *balletti*, however, (of which Caroso lists 52 in total.)³ are essentially theatrical and reminiscent of the Quattrocento *ballo* which Cornazano had described as:

[...] a composition of several measures in which all the natural material movements can be contained, each with its own fundamental characteristic, as for instance in *Mercantia* and *Sobria* [...] so that in one the lady gives audience to all and sundry... and in the other she looks to no one except he to whom she was first partnered. (CORNAZANO, 1981 [1455], p. 21-22)

By the late 16th Century, the *balletto* still involved the theatricality of narrative and contrasting or varying emotions. It was still a performance or game for the spectators as well as for the dancers themselves, despite being performed in a social context. But the form had evolved in a manner which reflected a more prescribed structure inspired by rhetorical principles and practice.

Whilst 15th Century *balli* were individual choreographies, each one specific to its music, Caroso's *balletti* were more homogenous in construction. Most begin with a duple section, usually *pavan* or *pavagniglia* and then modulate to a contrasting triple or compound duple rhythm, usually termed *sciolta*. Many contain a galliard section and then, either move to the *sciolta* or return to the duple section. Others, such as *Celeste Giglio* also have a *saltarello* or *canario* as a fi-

3. Plus 2 *balli* – 27 are his choreographies, the rest are attributed to his students and fellow dancing masters. In 1600 he lists 33 in *Nobilita* (plus 2 if one counts the 2 *contrapasso* dances which were previously termed *balletto* in *Il Ballarino* – all he now attributes to himself).

nal measure. The increasing number and variety of measures indicates an increasing sophistication and complexity, which shows the Italian *balletto* already to be an embryonic version of a form which will evolve to become the instrumental suite in baroque repertoire. At this stage, the music and the dancer are still working together to lead the spectators and fellow dancers through a range of contrasting opinions and emotions. By the 18th Century the music will leave the dancers behind and run on alone into the chambers, palaces and concert halls of the future.

So, let us look more closely at the renaissance preoccupation with rhetoric and its connection with Caroso's *balletti*. The interest in rhetoric arose from the discovery of Cicero's speeches and, in 1416, a complete copy of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. These discoveries prompted the rise and prevalence of humanist thinking. Cicero, in the 1st Century b. C., had championed both the language and the philosophy of Greece in Rome. He believed that a successful orator should be educated in all branches of learning and culture and emphasized the importance of using all forms of appeal - emotion, humour, irony and stylistic range, for example - in the art of persuasion. The Italian nobleman and courtier, Baldesar Castiglione, in his *Book of the Courtier*, published in Venice in 1528, expounded similar characteristics:

What the courtier especially requires in order to speak and write well, therefore, is knowledge, because a man who lacks knowledge and has nothing in his mind worth hearing has nothing worth writing or speaking. Then, it is necessary for him to arrange what is to be said or written in its logical order, after that, to express it well in words...shaping them to his purpose like wax... when the circumstances are opportune, he should be capable of speaking with dignity and emphasis, and of arousing our deepest emotions, kindling them and stirring them as the need arises (CASTIGLIONE, 1978 [1528], p. 77-78)

Quintilian, for whom the Emperor Vespasian created a chair of rhetoric in Rome, defined a clear structure for the orator's discourse and described a model for the perfect orator. Again, this is clearly echoed by Castiglione:

The orator needs some additional qualities ... These, in my opinion, should consist in certain movements of the entire body, not affected or violent but tempered by an agreeable expression of the face and movement of the eyes giving grace and expression to what is said, together with gestures which make as plain as possible the meaning and sentiments of the orator...he would be understood by all, since lucidity can go hand in hand with elegance. (CASTIGLIONE, 1978 [1528], p. 77)

The same principles are described in other treatises, like *Chironomia*, by John Bulwer (1644), which present gesticulations or hand gestures to be used to good effect in oratory (fig. 11).



Fig.11: John Bulwer. *Chironomia*, 1644

Interest in these works and the usefulness of such skills in the shifting political platform of Renaissance Europe led to the instatement of rhetoric at the core of an academic curriculum centred on the liberal arts, which was an essential part of the true courtier's education.

The French Arbeau's opinion that dancing is "a kind of mute rhetoric" highlights the universal understanding of the dancer as orator throughout the Europe of 1589 – it is not confined to Italy:

Are you not of the opinion that this is the dancer's own language, expressed by his feet and in a convincing manner? Does he not plead with his mistress, who marks the seemliness and grace of his dancing, 'Love me, Desire me'? And when miming is ad-

ded, she has the power to stir his emotions, now to anger, now to pity and compassion, now to hate, now to love. (ARBEAU, 1967 [1589], p. 15)

It is interesting to note here that Negri was working as a violinist and dancing master in France between the 1560s and 1580s!

That Arbeau, a French priest-cum-dancing master, wrote a treatise at all also demonstrates the influence of humanist thought on renaissance dancing masters. Jennifer Neville, in *The Eloquent Body* highlights the fact that the increasing distribution of texts concerning other liberal arts amongst the aristocracy necessitated an attempt to record the worthy, significant place which dance occupied in the life of the educated nobility – what we would now call ‘market forces’ were operating. Neville notes how dancing masters sought respectability for their art, pointing to how they

[...] appealed to ancient authorities to support their arguments, and embraced the dialogue form as a method to structure their work. Furthermore, in an effort to establish a mode of discourse for their dance practice, the dance masters discussed dance using the same concepts as did the humanists in their discussions of painting and sculpture. (NEVILLE, 2004, p. 10-11)

Dancing masters were, therefore, obviously educated in rhetorical principles themselves and were competent in crafting and executing choreographies based upon sound rhetorical practices. Since Cicero and Quintillian worked in Rome, it is no surprise that the Italian Caroso, who also worked in Rome, would be proud to rank himself alongside other great artists:

True perfection, however, requires one to be as supremely excellent in his work as the great Michel Angelo Buona Rota... Therefore, in this profession, all who follow it must do so according to basic laws and theoretical perfection, and not just because of [common] practice. (CAROSO, 1995 [1600], p. 133)

Fabritio Caroso is at pains to emphasize how his dances are properly constructed according to the “basic laws and the-

oretical perfection” to which he alludes. He points out that the foot which is placed at the rear should always be the next foot to advance (cf. fig. 12, by Negri). Anything else, he tells us, would be ‘false’ and he often ends his descriptions of step or etiquette descriptions with a warning against incorrectness and inelegance, as here with the *trabuchetto*:

There are some whose custom is to begin, as I said, the spring with the left foot, accompanying it by pulling the left foot behind suddenly and so rudely as to seem as if they were kicking wildly and then they do the same with the right foot, with the legs wide, which appears ugly and brutish to witness Thrashing wildly and striding in such manner is to be corrected and modified. (CAROSO, 1980 [1600], p. 36) Translated by Mary Collins



Fig. 12. Cesare Negri: feet position in *Le Gratie d'Amore*, 1604

But it is in Caroso’s *balletti* that we find a clear confirmation of the canons of rhetoric expostulated by Quintilian – *inventio*, *narratio*, *dispositio*, *actio* and *peroratio*. Within the *balletto* form the dancers certainly performed to each other in a manner termed by Caroso as *pedalogos* – conversations of the feet. These were usually danced to galliard (♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩) or canaries (♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩) rhythms. But there is much more to it than this. By looking at two of Caroso’s choreographies – *Ardente Sole* from his first book *Il Ballarino* and *Laura Soave* from his second publication *Nobilita di Dame* – we shall see how Arbeau’s statement that “dancing is a kind of mute rhetoric” is born out in the construction of these dances and how the format becomes more sophisticated between 1581 and 1600.

I. CHOREOGRAPHY OF *ARDENTE SOLE*

Ardente Sole begins, we are told, with the dancers standing as shown in fig. 13:



Fig. 13. Fabritio Caroso: *Ardente Sole* (*Il Ballerino*. 1581)

From the advice, which the Italian nobility are given by writers such as Castiglione, Negri, Dalla Casa and Caroso himself, the dancers are aware of the importance of making a good impression. By taking a position on the dance floor, the couple allow the spectators to make an initial judgement about them and conforms to the first of Aristotle's three 'proofs' (*techné*) - *ethos*. According to Aristotle's rules of rhetoric, *ethos* defines the character and credibility of the speaker before he embarks upon his arguments, which then allows the audience to consider them to be believable and convincing. The dancers here are thus placed in a context, which represents Aristotle's epideictic genre of civic rhetoric, a ceremonial genre wherein the speaker/presenter can demonstrate beauty and skill. Before they even begin to dance, their disposition is being evaluated by an audience who is aware of the advice from current etiquette manuals: "it is a very necessary thing (for a man) to have skill to put himself forth comely and seemly, in his fashions, gestures and manners". (DALLA CASA [1576] apud ROSS, 1977, p. 46) and from manuals of rhetoric:

The head, being the chief member of the body, has a corresponding importance in delivery, serving not merely to produce graceful effect, but to illustrate our meaning as well. To secure grace it is essential that the head should be carried naturally and

erect. For a droop suggests humility, while if it be thrown back it seems to express arrogance, if inclined to one side it gives an impression of languor, while if it is held too stiffly and rigidly it appears to indicate a rude and savage temper. (QUINTILIAN, 1922 [95 a.C.], XI, iii, 68-69)

So, the couple stands in a fashion which allows each dancer to present themselves both to one another and, at the same time, to the audience. Here, too, we recognize Quintilian's *inventio* – as the dancers set the context for the development and refinement of their forthcoming argument, or proposition. Quintilian's other canon, *pronuntiatio* – the manner in which they choose to deliver their oration – is evident in the way in which the dancers choose to dispose themselves at the start and when they begin to move.

With the *riverenza* grave and two *continenze*, the dancers formalize this introductory presentation and begin the section termed by Quintilian as the *exordium*. The word, *exordium* derives from the Latin term meaning 'to urge forward' and is the introductory portion of six parts in an oration which make up the rhetorical discipline known as *dispositio* – the arrangement of arguments to be presented by the rhetor. Here, the dancers must decide on their strategies for their introduction – should their opening be direct and forceful, for example, or more subtle and introspective? Should they proceed light-heartedly or more seriously?

Caroso next follows on to demonstrate *narratio* justly abiding by the rules of rhetoric. With two perfectly balanced sequences of two *passi gravi* and one *seguito ordinario*, the dancers move forward from the head of the room to its centre, where they literally take 'centre stage' in order to begin presenting their arguments, As they state their case or intention, Caroso amplifies the dramatic impact by accelerating the pace in the 2nd tempo, where the *passi* are replaced by one internally balanced sequence of two *ordinarii* (fig. 14).

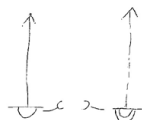


Fig. 14. Caroso: *ordinarii*

Next comes an interesting play on words, almost a joke or visual representation of the term *divisio* or partition, as the dancers take their places in order to begin listing their arguments they literally divide. They drop hands and move apart (with the usual ceremonies of politeness and respect) so that the repeated sequence of two *ordinarii* has a new dynamic and literally a new direction. Etiquette demands an honouring or acknowledgement upon greeting or leaving one's partner and this is fulfilled by two *puntate*, in the new positions, one forward and one back. Like birds in a courtship dance or gladiators in the ring, these *puntate* become a stylized challenge before the competition of arguments and counter-arguments begins. The *riverenza* which they make together (fig. 15) is reminiscent of the salutes made by gladiators before engaging in combat.



Fig. 15: Caroso: riverenza

The 2nd tempo develops the idea of the ritual in gladiatorial combat as the dancers draw closer in a teasing oblique fashion to make formal honours, touching hands in an sensual display (fig. 16). The mood is soft and romantic, but is suddenly interrupted as the couple draw apart once more.

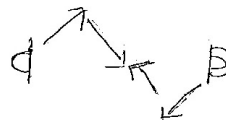


Fig. 16: Caroso: formal honours

In the 3rd tempo, we see a development of this courtship or 'teasing' behavior as the dancers come close together. They touch hands enticingly whilst changing places before abruptly changing the dynamic again, swirling out around their left shoulders to take up their new places with a more urgent synopated step, the *seguito spezzato* and a *cadenza* of challenging *trabuchetti* – a step so named because of its resemblance to the medieval war machine – the catapult (fig. 17). They are

now truly ready for the arguments to begin. Caroso is here sculpting the phrasing and offering the dance-orators the opportunity to provide further articulation.

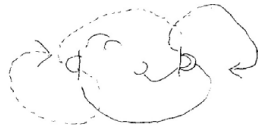


Fig. 17: Caroso: trabuchetti

Depending upon their emotional response to their partner, to the audience, to the music and to their own mood at the time, the dancers can utilize all the techniques of the orator, Aristotle's second step, 'pathos' for example, - the use of emotional appeals in order to alter the audience's judgement. As Quintilian states:

There are many things which (gesture) can express without the assistance of words. For we can indicate our will not merely by a gesture of the hands, but also with a nod of the head: signs take the place of language in the dumb, and the movements of the dance are frequently full of meaning, and appeal to the emotions without any aid from words. The temper of the mind can be inferred from the glance and the gait. (QUINTILIAN, 1922, XI, iii, 43)

And Matteo Palmieri (fig. 18), in his treatise *Vita Civile* (1439, printed in 1528), echoes Quintilian's thoughts on the way in which gesture can be used to speak:

For example, a haughty glance signifies arrogance, a lowered means humility, while to lean to one side indicates sorrow...In walking one must consider one's age and rank. One must not walk too upright, nor make one's steps...of such gravity that one appears pompous. (apud NEVILE, 2004, p. 87)



Fig. 18: Matteo Palmieri, by Cristofano dell'Altissimo (1552). Florence: Uffizzi Gallery.

The combination so far of the dancers' virtuosity, their acting ability, the music and the choreography all serve to appeal to the audience and elicit a response. Perhaps they are already taking sides to decide who will be the victor in the competition they know is about to take place? Which dancer will most sway the audience? Are the partners separated forever or will they become a couple once more?

Now the stage is set; the man delivers the first argument. He dances a solo variation and displays his skill to both partner and audience alike. Caroso assigns him a *passomezzo* sequence, itself a reminder that the music for *Ardente Sole* is one of the many arrangements on the popular *passomezzo antico* ground. Here again, he can employ all the qualities which Cicero and Quintilian advocated for the perfect orator. Cicero gives us a glimpse of some of these qualities in his description of the style of Marc Anthony, an esteemed orator of his day:

You know what Antonius' type of oratory is like. It is vigorous, vehement, excited in delivery..., intense, precise, to the point, lingering on each and every aspect..., intimidating, begging, displaying the greatest possible variety without ever satiating our ears.. (CICERO, 2001, III,32)

Caroso's suggested variation offers scope for the type of varied pattern and dynamics, rhythmic interest, ending with the bold concluding *cadenza* passage used elsewhere in his *passomezzo* choreographies. In addition to the techniques outlined by Cicero, the gentleman can add ornamentation to the steps (examples of popular methods are listed copiously in Negri's *Le Gratie d'Amore*) or use *rubato*, just as musicians do to introduce subtlety or syncopation to the rhythm. In this way, the dancer's steps become another line of the music. Alternatively, the gentleman is at liberty to utilize inventiveness to introduce variety by improvising a variation of steps composed by himself – as recommended in the *De Duplici Copia Verborum et Rerum* of Erasmus (c1512). Quintilian affirms this practice:

It is often expedient and occasionally becoming to make some modification in the time honoured order...for they involve a certain departure from the straight line and have the merit of

variation from the ordinary usage. (QUINTILIAN, 1922, II, xiii, 8-9 and 11)

One of the most well-known doctrines of the Sophists involved the technique of argument and counter-argument so that, in true neo-Platonic fashion, every argument could be countered or balanced by an opposing argument. In *Ardente Sole* the lady presents her counter-argument simultaneously, although it is a sequence Caroso has used as a true reply in other *Passomezzo* choreographies, (*Dolce Amoroso Fuoco* for example), where the lady dances her solo in response to the man's variation. Again, this is an opportunity for the dancers to employ *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio* so that we literally see *actio*, the canon relating to delivery, effectively in action. Thus, the oration can be delivered in a way both gracious and pleasing to the audience.

The dancers proceed to change places as before, balancing the pattern and the footwork in true neo-Platonic fashion by performing it *per contrario*, one of Caroso's favourite expressions (fig. 19)! By repeating their variations on the other foot and to the other side they are not truly introducing new arguments; they are simply reaffirming them using the rhetorical device of *accumulatio*.

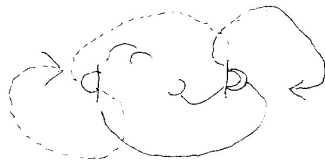


Fig. 19: Caroso: *per contrario* pattern

Having both stated their case and attempted to persuade, as Arbeau observed: “does he not plead with his mistress..., ‘Love me, Desire me?’” with the lady in turn having the power “to stir his emotions, now to anger, now to pity and compassion, now to hate, now to love?” (ARBEAU, 1967 [1589], p. 16).

They come together to resolve their differences. Caroso has moved to the fourth part of the rhetorical scheme – *confirmatio*. The material given in the narration and division is now validated and confirmed. The two dancers become a couple once more as they take both hands tracing out in a

single motif the geometrical pattern representing unity and the motion of the celestial bodies of the cosmos – the circle. They separate again only to turn back and circle per contrario in true and just fashion, but here Caroso introduces a final tension as they finish the figure once more apart and with an ‘accidental’ step, the trabuchetto, which suggests attack, confrontation or emphasis (fig. 20).



Fig. 20: Caroso: trabuchetto

In the final strain of the passomezzo antico ground, the dancers move obliquely forward instead of directly (fig. 21).

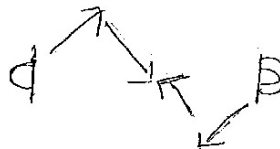


Fig. 21: Caroso: oblique movement

Now reunited they move toward the audience for the peroration - the conclusion - to await the response to this oration (fig. 22).

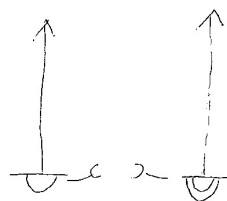


Fig. 22: Caroso: peroratio

Despite the sophistication of this choreographic model, Ardente Sole is a dance with a relatively simple structure. Worth mentioning, however, is the significance of its structure and the geometry of its floor patterns, because of its obvious

similarity to the structure and geometry of a notable baroque dance, the ballroom minuet. With its opening presentation, separation to opposite sides of the room, presenting of each hand in turn, then both hands, and the final coming together for the peroratio, *Ardente Sole* is a template for the dance which dominated baroque dance floors across Europe for almost a hundred years!

2. CHOREOGRAPHY OF LAURA SOAVE

In 1600, almost twenty years later, Caroso includes a few balletti in *Nobilita di Dame* with far more sophisticated structures and more diverse rhythm schemes. These dances are the real forerunners of the baroque instrumental suite, a genre which Bach, amongst other notable composers, explored widely. His orchestral suites, cello suites and violin partitas, for example, can be directly traced to their Italian antecedents, the balletti. One notable balletto in Caroso's 1600 publication is *Laura Soave* which he choreographed to the popular *Gran Duque ground*, famed for its appearance in *La Pellegrina*⁴, the intermedio performed in the Uffizi Palace in 1589 for a Medici wedding.

4. 23 through a 1591 printed edition by Cristofani Malvezzi an almost complete version of *La Pellegrina* (produced 1589) is known to have survived.



Fig. 23: Caroso: beginning position of *Laura Soave*

Before the dance even begins, we are aware that this is not a usual balletto. The dancers stand at opposite ends of the ballroom – at the head and the foot – and not beside one another as a couple (fig. 23). Immediately this positions them

as two equal individual beings standing poised like two opposing armies ready for battle. Caroso's use of 'inventio here establishes an immediate tension and combative context.

As in *Ardente Sole* and as in most other balletti, they honour each other with a *rivrenza* and acknowledge the audience with two *continenze*. Because they are not standing side by side as a couple, each dancer now faces the spectators as a soloist. The music, a solemn *pavaniglia*, evokes an air of majesty and grandeur. Considering that the opening of this dance is a pavan, *inventio* here establishes exactly what Arbeau associates as the function of a pavan, that it is "a dance of decorum and measured gravity." He goes on: "the pavan is used by kings, princes and great noblemen to display themselves in their fine mantles and ceremonial robes [...] Pavans are also used in masques to herald the entrance of gods and goddesses in their triumphal chariots or emperors and kings in full majesty." (ARBEAU, 1967 [1589], p. 59).

As the dance begins, Caroso has immediately established the dignity and, in terms of *inventio* the context and credibility of the dancers and the oration – the ensuing oration thus has the appropriate kudos. This is indeed a dance worthy of the Medici Grand Duke!

The exordium is similarly elongated and more complex. Instead of the usual promenade into the centre of the room, the dancers are immediately engaged in a figured *pavaniglia* sequence, the pattern of which employs the symmetry of the step sequences to describe a geometrical figure (fig. 24).

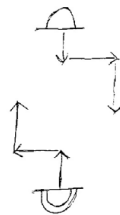


Fig. 24: Caroso: pavaniglia

This at first appears to conform to the usual laws but when the dancers begin to repeat the step sequence *per contrario*, the audience discovers that they are continuing to mirror one another but in a new figure (fig. 25).

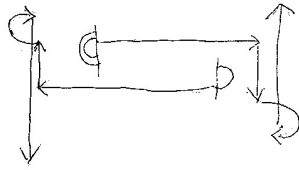


Fig. 25. Caroso: per contrario step sequence

Caroso is playing here with the rules of balance and symmetry within the musical phrases, just as Pécour will do later in the 17th Century – an example of Quintilian’s ideas on figura (the concept of shape) and its subcategory schema. The interesting flexibility, which Caroso seems to be aware of here, is that while schema denotes change, it is not merely the change of one position to another but also the change from one figure to another. This concept is also taken up by Mark Franko in *Writing Dancing 1573* where he states that “schem’ indicates ways to generate nuanced meanings by inflecting those figural givens” (apud FRANKO, 2001, p. 192). The steps employed in the exordium here are strikingly virtuosic, demonstrating the god-like character evoked from the beginning (*inventio*).

In the B section of the music added tension results from the introduction of *seguiti spezzati* as the two dancers find themselves inextricably drawn together to become a couple at last (fig. 26).

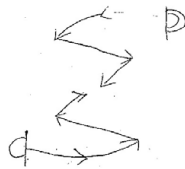


Fig. 26. Caroso: *seguiti spezzati*

Thus, it is not until the second playing of the pavan music that the dancers begin to state their case, now moving together as one – *narratio* (fig. 27).

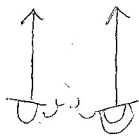


Fig. 27. Caroso: *narratio*

Further ornamentation and virtuosic steps demonstrates once again the use of *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio* within this section. Laura Soave also necessitates the dancers drawing upon *memoria*, another rhetorical canon, reminiscent of Cornazano, almost one hundred years earlier: “you must have Memory (*memoria*) so as to remember the steps you are about to perform...” (CORNAZANO, 1981, [1455], p. 18).

This is a long dance with numerous sequences of complex footwork and spatial intricacy – (*partire de terrano*) ‘division of the ground’ or ‘use of space’ – which was also designated by Cornazano as an essential skill for a dancer. He says:

Use of space is understanding how to take into account the appointed area in which you are to dance, diligently calculating the space and steps which you will perform there, being master in the art of using space, and above all else this must be carried out with a joyousness of spirit. (CORNAZANO, 1981, [1455], p. 18)

Again, in the B section, Caroso increases the dynamic and intensifies the virtuosity by introducing the *grosso* followed by *fioretti*, an increasingly popular sequence in Caroso’s 1600 publication. Although popular, it is quite obvious that this type of footwork was not for the faint hearted. Its virtuosity was obviously prohibitive, as often Caroso offers a much simpler alternative set of steps which, he says soothingly, may be used instead! As in *Ardente Sole*, the dancers now separate and take up their positions for the first argument. This time, however, the music supports the fact that we are now stating the arguments distinctly and have moved on from *narratio*. The music is now played with the same melody but in *galliard* rhythm, establishing a principle which will become fundamental in baroque suites – that each dance movement will depict its own distinct character’ (*Les Caracteres de la Dance*; by Jean Féry Rebel, 1715, epitomizes this function).

Laura Soave’s *Galliard* section follows much the same pattern as *Ardente Sole*, insofar that each dance engages in a dialogue, each partner dancing variations and both dancers dance at the same time. Here, the gentleman begins, stating his first argument; this is followed by the lady. He makes the first argument starting on the left foot; she reposts with a confirmation of the same argument.

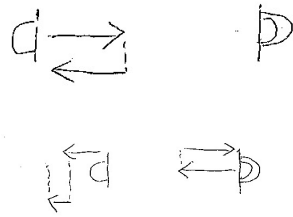


Fig. 28. Caroso: argument and confirmation

In simple galliards and in most balletti, the man and lady usually take turns and each dancer performs a solo display for the other. At first this appears to be the case. The lady is told:

While the man is dancing his variation, the lady should not stand still, but should pretend to adjust her train with graceful elegance, put on her gloves or, if it is summer and she holds a fan, make some beautiful move with it so that she does not look like a statue. With all these assorted natural movements she will make appear gracious and will be appreciated and loved by all who see her. (CAROSO, 1980 [1600], p. 113, translated by Mary Collins)

She conforms to the usual pattern of individual display, joining the spectators in witnessing her partner's virtuosity. On a separate level, however, because she is also an orator, Caroso clearly reminds her that she is still on display and is still an orator herself acting out her own message in order to influence and persuade, "love me, desire me...admire me". She would no doubt be aware of Palmieri's injunction that "excessive movement, or lack of any movement, was a sign of a soul full of moral defects". (apud NEVILE, 2004, p. 23)

The sophistication and virtuosity of the footwork within the mutanzas is highlighted once more as Caroso reassures the lady: "if she does not know how to do the groppo or fioretto, she can do this graceful variation instead.." (CAROSO, 1980 [1600], p. 113, transl. Mary Collins). Trabuchetti are the most difficult springs and balances he assigns for ladies who find the more masculine movements difficult.

In the galliard, therefore, Caroso reasserts the dominance of the male and in doing so, once again pays tribute to the

Medici Grand Duke for whom the music was written – this oration is working on many levels.

The gentleman's next variation is not a second argument as one might suppose, but one which Caroso stresses should be "the same as was done before" though now starting on the right foot, according to the rules. Interestingly, he also affirms that although the man might wish to dance a new variation or argument with "other different actions", this would not be "according to the rules" – the neo-Platonic principles of harmony and balance therefore seem to outweigh the need for variation and diverse arguments to enrich the oration! The lady repeats what she danced before, also *per contrario*. In order to be successful rhetors the dancers must therefore find interesting ways to vary their performance during the repeats with ornamentation, for example, or by varying their gestures or demeanor.

Following on from this, the lady is given the most simple steps and floor track whilst the man simultaneously proceeds to state his second argument. Now, as in *Ardente Sole*, Caroso has the man dancing at the same time as his partner. Caroso terms this variation a *terminata*; it is much easier in terms of footwork but just as rhythmically complex, involving hemio-las as before. The sequence of two tempi is repeated internally – the two tempi being repeated to conform with the *per contrario* tradition – and it incorporates *mezze riverenze* to suggest his admiration of the lady's dancing and his deference to her beauty as she parades with *doppii* before him.

During the final strain of the galliard, the two dances mirror one another, casting around each shoulder in order to invite and acknowledge applause for their efforts and, on a more practical level, to draw breath before the next section!

The *saltarello* section which follows is an opportunity for both dancers to present their next argument jointly, celebrating their union with virtuosic sequences of rhythmic complexity (fig. 29).

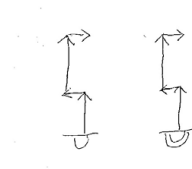


Fig. 29. Caroso: rhythmic sequences

The dynamic has changed once again; the increased speed of delivery of steps combined with the clever ornamentation of the accompanying saltarello rhythm suggests a mood of excitement, celebration and sexual chemistry between the dancers. Each attempt to separate is overpowered by the compelling corinto steps, which draw the couple together again so that they end the section with a flirtatious sequence of almost flamenco-like sensuality (fig. 30).

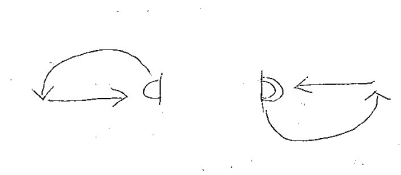


Fig. 30. Caroso: corinto steps

It is in the final section, the canario, that Caroso gives us a direct reference to the application of rhetoric within the dance. He tells us :

And from these actions, which are known by all, is derived the name 'Pedalogue' (Pedalogo). For example, when two people speak together they are said to have a Dialogue (Dialogo). In this dance, the Gentleman does a step or a variation and the Lady replies. Hence, the name Pedalogue (Pedalogo) is given to describe the conversation of their feet. (CAROSO, 1980 [1600], p. 115, translated by Mary Collins)

Sure enough, the canario is composed of two rhetorical arguments by the gentleman, each one echoed or confirmed by the lady. A brief moment of further flirtation, while the couple dance together, separates the two given arguments. Each argument is repeated once more, giving scope for elocutio and pronuntiatio yet again. Caroso here displays his knowledge and consummate use of adiectio, one of the four fundamental operations outlined in the anonymous text *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Adiectio is the formation of a figure of speech by means of repetition or expansion. Each variation or argument in the canario section of Laura Soave not only repeats but builds dynamically.

Once again, respecting the neo-Platonic desire for order and balance, each dancer repeats the given argument per contrario. This pattern also demonstrates the role of opening and

closing statements, question and resolution or, in rhetorical terms, *refutatio* and *confirmatio*. Indeed, the entire *canario* reinforces the use of these devices which were deployed earlier in the *Galliard* sections. When one thinks that the *canario* as a dance is often said to be a variant form of the *galliard* and that the *canario* rhythm is itself a variant of the *saltarello*, we begin to appreciate quite on how many levels this choreography is operating rhetorically and how cleverly Caroso has constructed this highly sophisticated *Balletto*.

Ultimately, echoing the concluding figures of the *Saltarello* section, the dancers separate and are drawn together once more with an accelerating energy. The *peroratio* consists of a rising and falling dynamic – a last erotic breath as the final *Passi Puntate* herald a return to the majesty and authority of the *inventio*. Taking hands at last, and we are surely now persuaded that they are truly a worthy couple to be admired and applauded, the dancers make their farewell in a final climactic *riverenza breve*. How can the audience fail to be moved by this or persuaded that these two are really god-like creatures before them?

* * *

Fabritio Caroso, amongst other notable Italian dancing masters, was therefore clearly well versed in the rules of classical rhetoric studied so assiduously by renaissance aristocracy. His mastery pervades his choreographies, becoming more complex, more subtle and more sophisticated between 1581 and 1600. His *balletti* provided a structure, a platform on which each individual dancer could display his or her own individual skills as ‘mute orators’. In this manner, Caroso assisted the gentry in their bid to win admiration, popularity and social success. His *balletti* were truly “the dancers’ own language”. Through his artistry, then, Caroso was indeed, as he proclaimed, their “humble and devoted servant”.

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