

- The Problem of Negri's Term *fioretto spezzato*. -

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In the third treatise of *Gratie d'Amore* Negri turns his attention to the *balli*. He gives first a letter code for abbreviations to step names; then he describes the steps for the *balli*. In his accounts of the dances he uses both his abbreviations and the full names of steps. However there is an apparent discrepancy in the case of *fioretto* and *seguito spezzato*. In the table of letter codes he includes:

Li fioretti spezzati per un' .SP.

Li fioretti in saltino per un' .F.

There is no abbreviation for *seguito spezzato*. In the section on step descriptions he provides for:

seguito spezzato (Rule 12)

seguito spezzato al canario (Rule 15)

fioretto ordinario (Rule 24)

fioretto battuto al canario (Rule 25)

There is no description for *fioretto spezzato*. On examination of the dance descriptions, we find that he uses *.SP.*, *fioretti .SP.*, *fioretto in saltino*, *fioretto in gagliarda*, and *.F.*. The *seguito spezzato* does not feature in his usage of step names. In "Il Canario" and *canario* sections of dances he uses *fioretto .SP. schisciati* and *fioretti .SP. del Canario*, but not *seguito spezzato al canario*. Along with the *seguito ordinario*, the *fioretto spezzato* is one of the most common steps in his *balli*. We know from the works of Caroso and Lupi that the *seguito spezzato* is one of the most common steps in their *balli*. There are two means of explaining this discrepancy: either Negri has omitted to describe a basic dance step or *fioretto spezzato* and *seguito spezzato* are synonymous terms in his usage. I wish to show that the latter explanation is the more likely. I will refer firstly to the evidence of Negri's own usage of the term, and then put this in the context of the general picture of sixteenth century dance vocabulary.

Before proceeding here is a brief explanation of the *spezzato* and *fioretto* steps. The *seguito spezzato* is a step forwards on the flat of the foot, the following foot closing up behind with a small rise and fall in closing. The *fioretto* is a hopping step which results in a change of weight; a *fioretto battuto* is a stamping step resulting in a change of weight. Negri describes the *fioretto* fully in his second treatise on galliard steps; the *fioretto ordinario* for the *balli* is virtually identical but must be executed more gently.

Fioretto spezzato is not only a very common step, it also occurs as a travelling step. It is usually found in pairs, followed by a *seguito*, i.e. in the "two singles and a double" pattern. Examples of this can be found in the majority of *balli*, e.g. "So Ben Mi Chi Ha Bon Tempo" Figure 1, 2 and 5; "Leggiadra Marina" Figures 1, 2, 8; "Il Bianco Fiore" Figure 1. Often the word *fioretti .SP.* is used at the beginning of a dance and then the code *.SP.* for the rest of the dance. Dancers make progressions up and down the room, hays, chains and turning figures with *spezzati* and *seguiti*. In "Il Canario" p. 198, after the opening honours, dancers are instructed to perform *dodici fioretti .SP. schisciati* to move forward, to turn with right arms linked and to separate to the head and foot of the dance ready for the *mutanze*. The most likely step for this is the *seguito spezzato schisciato al canario*, as any extant version of the *fioretto* is either stationary or with limited travel.

In "La Corrente" we find a useful clue to the meaning of *fioretto spezzato*. Negri indicates from the beginning that the dance is lively and energetic by saying that the gentleman may lay aside his hat and sword. The gentleman then proceeds to dance his own sequence of steps comprising *sottopiede*, *recacciate* and *passi in saltino*. Negri says the lady may not be able to manage these steps and may substitute the *seguito ordinario in saltino* for *passi in saltino*, *ripres* for *sottopiede* and *fioretti .SP.* for *recacciate*. Thus he is suggesting moderate and smooth steps for hopped steps. In this context it seems very likely that *fioretti .SP.* are *seguiti spezzati* as a *fioretto* step would be no genuine alternative to a *recacciata*. A useful parallel can be found in *gagliarda* and *passamezzo* variations when the lady often uses *seguiti* and *seguiti spezzati* in a smooth, graceful *mutanza* in contrast to the elevated and rapid steps of the gentleman.

Fioretti designated by *.F.*, *fioretti in gagliarda* and *fioretti in saltino* are used in galliard sections or as part of hopped or energetic sequences. For example, "So Ben Mi Chi Ha Bon Tempo" Figure 2: *due fioretti gagliardi e tre passi in saltino*; "Bassa delle Ninfe" Figure 6: *due fioretti contratempo gagliardi, e tre .P. in saltino*. When the *fioretto di gagliarda* occurs in smoothly danced sequences it is not as part of a "two *spezzati* and one *seguito*" motif. For example "Alta Somaglia" *due .F. di gagliarda e due .P. e due .T. brevi*; "L'Alemana d'Amore" *due fioretti di gagliarda innanzi, è due .T. alla sinistra, è alla destra*.

Observations on Negri's usage of the term *fioretto spezzato* leads to the conclusion that it is synonymous with *seguito spezzato*. If this conclusion cannot be accepted the alternative is to invent a step as Negri has not given an account of the step, or left any clues for a reconstruction. No other master employs the term *fioretto spezzato*. There are a few steps required in his *balli* which he does not describe, (for example, the *insegnata*) but they are rarely used steps, whereas *fioretto spezzato* is very common.

When assessing Negri's usage it must be borne in mind that the dancing master's art was not regulated and controlled in sixteenth century Italy. Our expectations are perhaps governed by the terminology of modern ballet which is an international code understood by all practitioners. There is however a great consistency of terminology in the seventeenth and eighteenth century dance treatises as a result of two influences: the regulating spirit of the French Académies and the spread of published texts. As far as we can judge, the professional world of the Italian dancing master consisted of a loose network of schools and individuals setting up shop and taking up positions in households as the opportunity arose. The art was learnt by being a pupil with an established master, and the dancing master's life was a mobile one. We know of no dominant master or formal association. There is no reason to expect dancing masters to use the same names for steps and the substantial congruity of the extant treatises is quite remarkable. However they include some differences. The step that Caroso calls *seguito ordinario* in *Il Ballarino* is called *seguito grave* by Negri; the step Caroso calls *seguito semidoppio* is called *seguito ordinario* by Negri. Lupi seems to be acknowledging alternative terminology in the first piece of advice at the beginning of his treatise:

Where I have written *zoppetto* in some parts they are called *tranghi*; in place of *scorsi trito minuto*; instead of *dainetti* they say *capriollette spezzati di un piede al'tro'*; . . .

He lists eleven items in all. This is particularly interesting as Lupi's book appears to be addressed to other dancing masters, rather than gentlemen. In his second book *Nobiltà di Dame* Caroso elaborates and modifies the dance vocabulary for his own purposes. This makes a complex picture for today's researcher as the dance steps have also undergone subtle changes. The *seguito spezzato* has changed a little; the *seguito* (as a double step) to which it belongs has been renamed *seguito semidoppio ornato*.

Sixteenth century Italian dance vocabulary is very consistent. This is particularly useful when working on the steps and dances of Lupi and the Florentine manuscripts where steps are not described, because nearly all names match with steps given in detail in Caroso and Negri. However, exceptions exist, as mentioned above, which make sense of the occurrence in Negri of *fioretto spezzato* instead of *seguito spezzato*. Finally it should be pointed out that all masters frequently use the adjective alone: *spezzato* for *seguito spezzato*. No confusion arises because only one other step employs this adjective: the *capriola spezzata*. Negri has chosen the abbreviation *.SP.* for *fioretto spezzato*, revealing that the adjective is more important than the noun. This can only serve to emphasise that the *fioretto spezzato* is Negri's phrase for *seguito spezzato*.

1. Firenze, Archivio di Stato: Carta Stroziana, Serie I, 22. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, ms. Magl. XIX, 31. Transcribed Gino Corti *Rivista Italiana di Musicologia* ed. Olski, Firenze, Vol. XII, no. 1, 1977, p. 73.