

**ALLEGREZZA D'AMORE:
A COMPARISON**

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It is generally accepted that, where more than one version of a dance exists, any attempt at realisation should be based upon the choreography as it is presented in only one source. However, where different versions exist in several sources, it is equally valid that a careful comparison of the various choreographies may frequently throw some light on any problems and so help towards a satisfactory reconstruction. This is perhaps particularly relevant, for example, in reconstructing fifteenth century Italian dances where scribal errors are not unknown. Where the phraseology of the choreography is obscure, comparison may be helpful. When parallel sources have been written some twenty years apart, such comparison may well provide additional information – for example, on progressive step-practice or on the evolution of dance style. The two versions of *Allegrezza d'Amore*¹, published some twenty years apart, present just such an opportunity. Step-usage is different, the rationale behind the choice of steps has changed and the floor-patterns are subtly altered.

Although the earlier *Allegrezza d'Amore* was composed by M. Oratio Martire, the fact that Caroso includes it in his manual, *Il Ballarino*, may be taken to imply that, at that point, he did not object to Martire's choreography. Both the original version and Caroso's later revision are clearly the same dance. In both, three dancers, a man and two ladies, stand in triangular formation. In both, the basic floor pattern remains the same. However, an initial subtle difference is implied in the later version by Caroso's statement that the dancers actually begin the dance by taking hands in a circle. This would seem to suggest a rounding-off of the triangular corners, the imposition of a smoother quality: something which may underlie certain alterations in step-usage and in the series of exchanges which conclude the dance. At all times, however, in both versions, the centre of the triangle remains the constant focus for the dance.

DIFFERENCES

The differences between the two versions can be studied in three main areas:–

1. step-usage;
2. subtle variations in patterning;
3. the formalities of the conclusion.

Step-Usage

The most obvious changes in step usage take two forms and lie in certain relatively consistent alterations (perhaps revisions is a better word in this context). The most important derives from Caroso's earnest insistence, detailed as a recurring theme throughout the later *Nobiltà di Dame*,² on working towards the balance or perfect symmetry afforded by his "true mathematical theory" (*vera reghola, perfetta Theorica & Mathematica*). According to this theory, each foot should always do as much as the other, what moves to the left must also return to the right.

Therefore, he explains, the use in the earlier version of single sequences of 2 *passi* and a *cadenza* (Tempo 1, middle and end) was wrong, since such practice is clearly contrary to the rules. The need, now, in *Nobiltà di Dame*, is to dance according to ‘perfect theory’, evidenced by Caroso’s replacement of each occurrence of these single sequences by a balanced or paired sequence, be it of *doppii* or *saffici*.

Towards the end of Tempo 2, the rather curious circling movements, performed in *Il Ballarino* with six *battuti di Canario* for each turn, the sequence concluding with a single usage of 2 *passi* and a *cadenza*, have been replaced with a perfectly symmetrical arrangement of turns which utilise the complete sixteen bar phrase in a musically balanced manner. Similarly, at the end of Tempo 3, Martire’s single usage of a turning *spezzato* with *cadenza* is once again replaced with a matched pair of *saffici fiancheggiati*.

Also clear throughout Caroso’s revision is that many of his alterations in step-usage seem to be moving towards an increased use of steps which require a springing action. A clear example of this is his replacing of the lilting *spezzati fiancheggiati* with the more vigorous, sprung *saffici*. Strangely, this change to what may seem to be a more lively style is apparently contradicted, in both Tempo 1 and Tempo 4, by the curious alteration of the earlier, symmetrical usage of 2 *passi* and a *cadenza* to a simple *doppio minimo*, a much smoother step with no sprung action at all.

A Question of Origin

There may, however, be more in question here than simply the use of sprung steps. Another quite obvious alteration occurs in Tempo 2 and Tempo 4, where Caroso has replaced Martire’s *fioretti à piedi pari* with paired *fioretti* and *trabuchetti*. This cannot have anything to do with the symmetry required by *perfetta Theorica* since, in performing the two *fioretti* of the earlier version, each foot initiates a triplet in turn. Intriguing here is the fact that, although Caroso describes *fioretti à piedi pari* in Rule 33 of *Nobiltà di Dame*, as a more elaborate, sprung step, these particular *fioretti* are not used in any of the choreographies contained in this later book. A number of other steps are described in *Nobiltà* but do not appear in the dances. Sutton³ suggests that this may reflect Caroso’s acceptance of humanistic influences and the need to be aware of a philosophical as well as artistic origin for steps.

In this instance, however, I suggest that the alteration reflects Caroso’s desire not only to make the dance more elegant through the introduction of more rounded and more elaborate footwork but also his wish to remove any step that could be interpreted as containing an element of noise. Is there any possibility that these apparently offending *fioretti à piedi pari* might have their derivation in a popular or folk tradition? What seems to be happening is, certainly, a deliberate move towards increased technical expertise. Caroso, now in his seventies, has become more concerned with the intricacies of footwork, more desirous to impress his pupils – or to have them impress their audience – with practised complexity than with sheer vitality and exuberance. Unfortunately, occasionally, these “improved” steps seem to take some of the energy out of the dance, replacing it merely with the subtleties of intricate footwork. The plus side of this exchange is the appearance of gentler, more rounded patterns. This is particularly clear in the “jousting” figure in Tempo 2, where the later use of *scorsi* allows the dancers,

especially the ladies, greater facility to travel the required distance along a more curvaceous track.

This conscious refining of steps may also underlie the removal of the sequence of twelve *seguiti battuti di Canario* seen in Tempo 2 of Martire's version. The same *battuti* do still occur in the later dance, in a relatively exposed position as solo steps. This gives them a certain prominence, perhaps as an exhibition of skill, but it also removes them from being an integral part of the actual movement of the dance. The longer sequences, used for the small turns, are replaced, in *Nobiltà di Dame*, with larger more sweeping turns, danced with *spezzati*, *passi minimi* and *saffici*. The effect is both gentler and more spacious.

PATTERNING

The first variation in patterning has already been mentioned – the subtle change in Caroso's later version to a softer, more rounded circular formation instead of the deliberately more angular triangle. Apart from the opening moments, however, this change has little real impact on the progress of the dance.

The Hey

A more obvious variation occurs in the performance of the *catena* or hey which opens the Third Figure or Tempo 3 of the *cascarda*. Since the floor pattern of the two *cascarde* is otherwise basically identical, it is interesting to consider both the problems which occur in trying to interpret this hey and the subtle changes in pattern which result from the instruction not to take hands.

The hey presents a problem of interpretation largely through the lack of detailed or accurate description. As one might expect in a male orientated society, the Man's role in initiating the hey is clearly explained – or so it would seem. But, the question of how the dancers should proceed after the Man's initial move is more problematic. In resolving this, a close analysis of the text and a comparison of the two versions is useful as they present both the dilemma and an eventual solution.

The description given in *Il Ballarino* reads as follows:

Nel terzo tempo, faranno otto Seguiti incatenati, passando l'Huomo in mezo alle Dame, & toccando la man destra alla Dama che sarà à man destra: & poi la sinistra all'altra Dama: il che faranno anco le Dame l'una dopò l'altra, trouandosi al fine delli detti Seguiti ogn'un'al suo luogo.

Il Ballarino: f. 108v.

It is clear that a chain (*catena*) or hey is intended. This is initiated by the Man who moves forward, giving his hand first to one Lady and then to the other. Less obvious is what follows. Which way should the Man turn? Where should the two Ladies go as they take the Man's hand?

A solution is perhaps conceivable from the information supplied in the earlier text, the clue lying in the words 'which the Ladies also do, one after the other' (*il che faranno anche le Dame l'una dopo l'altra*). Because the instructions clearly state that the hey is to be performed by all three dancers with 8 *spezzati*, the "which the Ladies also do, one

after the other” cannot refer to the steps. It must, therefore, refer to the floor track. This we can accept as being defined by the Man as he first moves forwards, passing between the Ladies. His actions are clear – as he goes forwards, he offers and takes first right hands with the Lady on his right and then left hands with the other Lady. This second action throws the Man into a left turn at the foot⁴ of the dance. In order to take the Man’s right hand with her right hand, the right-hand Lady will have turned towards the back. As her hand is released, she will find herself virtually in the Man’s place at the head of the triangle. From there, the apparently cryptic instruction – that the Ladies should *do the same* as the Man – becomes comprehensible. The first Lady, she who stood to the right of the Man, can now move forwards, offering her hand to someone on her right and then someone on her left, exactly as the Man did. The only person to whom she can offer her right hand is the second, or left-hand Lady, who must, therefore, already have crossed the centre line of the dance in response to taking left hands with the Man. She will then move through the first Lady’s place, following the track of that Lady, towards the ‘head’ of the dance ready to play her part in the hey in her own turn. In other words, each lady must begin a similar movement pattern to that performed by the Man, initiating that move from the Man’s original place. This gives the hey what might be termed a “North-South” orientation rather than an “East-West” one: a Figure of 8 which has the centre of the dance as its focal point and its ends at the head (*capo*) and foot (*piede*).

At this juncture, an analysis of the later text throws interesting and corroborative light on this realisation.

The description of the hey in *Nobiltà di Dame* reads thus:

Nel terzo tempo, faranno otto Spezzati incatenati, & il Cavaliere, che guiderà, passerà per mezzo alle Dame, voltando à man sinistra; & la Dama che starà à man sinistra passerà per mezzo, & volterà à man destra di quella che starà à man destra del Cavaliere, & così parimente seguirà l'altra voltando à man sinistra del Cavaliere: auertendo di non toccar mai le mani come si faceua prima, perche non è ben fatto: di modo che fatti che hauranno gl'otto Spezzati, ogn'uno si ritrouerà al suo luogo.

Nobiltà di Dame, p 207

The text of the later dance is phrased differently in two particular aspects. There is, towards the end, the explicit instruction ‘not to take hands as was done before, since that was not well done’ (*come si faceua prima, perche non è ben fatto*). We might assume that this admonition should not greatly affect the actual floor pattern of the hey but rather imply that it remains virtually identical. However, we should consider whether this change may have any further implication for the dancers.

As before, the three dancers are to perform eight *spezzati*, in a hey. However, the Man is now instructed not merely to move forward, passing between the ladies, as before, but then to turn to his left. This seems to confirm the previous realisation, that the Man veered to his left as a result of taking left hands with his left-hand Lady. We may also assume that both Ladies will, as before, begin to move at the same time. That the second phrase of the instruction refers to the left-hand Lady rather than to the right-hand one seems to indicate some possible variation. Certainly the left-hand Lady must, as

before, move out of her place if the Man is to turn to his left. If she is to move between her partners and turn both to the right of the right-hand Lady and to her own right, we may also assume that the right-hand Lady has not stood still all this time. The only clear instruction given to her, the left-hand Lady, however, is that she should turn to the left of the Man, somehow following the other or right-hand Lady as she does so. (*& cosi parimente seguirà l'altra voltando à man sinistra del Cavaliere*)

If we recall the instruction from the earlier text that the Ladies should do as the Man did, *one after the other*, the phrase '*cosi parimente*' becomes comprehensible as an instruction to the left-hand lady to do as the right-hand Lady will have done. This implies that the right-hand lady must already have done the same as the Man – that is, moved forwards and turned to her left in her turn. Suddenly, the pattern of the hey is clear and does indeed echo the earlier version. Each dancer, in turn, will make an identical move forward, passing between the two other dancers and turning to the left, just as the Man did initially. The intermediary instruction to the left-hand Lady is deliberately there to ensure that she should pass between her fellow dancers then turn right in order to arrive at the Man's position, the head of both the triangle and the dance, to perform her part of the pattern. In doing so, she will follow the right-hand or first Lady who will already have made her move, in order of precedence.

The result in the earlier dance was a perfect hey or reel of three, much as we understand and still perform them today. In the later version, however, the hey does indeed trace a subtly different pattern. The general "North-South" orientation still exists as the main axis of the hey. All the dancers still pass through the central, axial point. What changes is the increased emphasis on the "East-West" alignment, as the dancers, released from the need to take hands, find greater freedom of movement.

FORMALITIES

Caroso's introductory chapters in *Nobiltà di Dame*, describing the process of a ball and ballroom etiquette, are given some support at the opening of his own version of *Allegrezza d'Amore*, when he mentions that the gentleman will be holding a flower because he has just finished dancing *Ballo del Fiore*. Also interesting in this respect is Caroso's statement that, when inviting his two lady partners on to the floor, the man should be certain that they know how to do it. This is relevant to a consideration of the second major alteration in patterning which occurs at the very end of the *cascarda* because it is closely associated with Caroso's desire to maintain these ballroom formalities.

The Ending

Caroso's predilection for ending a dance as it began belongs firmly in the renaissance tradition but is also evident throughout both the earlier fifteenth century repertoire and in the baroque period. In adhering to the etiquette of the late sixteenth century ballroom, Caroso frequently exclaims, in *Nobiltà di Dame*, over his earlier "errors" in permitting a lady to begin a dance on the "wrong" side of her partner. Here, in *Allegrezza d'Amore* where there are three dancers, there is an interesting variation to this need to finish as one began. While, in *Il Ballarino*, the dancers are specifically instructed to end the dance standing *in triangolo come stavano nelprincipiar'il Ballo* (in a triangle, as

they stood to begin the dance), in *Nobiltà di Dame*, they are directed (albeit somewhat vaguely) to end in different places. This alteration is given some support by the opening wording of both choreographies. In the earlier version, the dancers are asked to stand *in triangolo*; the later trio begin the dance *in ruota* (in a circle). However, although both dances do, indeed, end as they began, *in triangolo*, the three dancers of the later version are no longer in their original places.

The final sentence of the later version provides the reasoning for this alteration. The Gentleman, according to the opening phrases of the choreography, has just completed *Ballo del Fiore*. After the final *Riverenza*, Caroso instructs him to offer the flower which he carries to the first Lady he invited on to the dance floor, she who danced on his right. He must then courteously escort the second Lady to her place. It would thus be natural that the second Lady should, at that moment, stand at the Man's right hand.

In order to allow for this alteration in the dancers final positions, some alteration is also required in the progress of the place-changes. As in the description of the heys, the phraseology in the choreographies is somewhat obscure.

Il Ballerino: f. 108v

Finalmente passando l'Huomo per mezzo alle Dame, farà due Passi presti scorsi, con la Cadenza, ponendosi al luogo della Dama che le starà a man destra:

la quale farà anch'essa il medesimo, andando al luogo dell'Huomo:

& la Dama che starà alla sinistra, passando anch'essa in mezo, & andando nel luogo dell'altra Dama, farà il medesimo che haranno fatto gli altri:

i quali tutti doueranno trouarsi in triangolo, come stauano nel principiar'il Ballo: & finire la Cascarda, con il far'insieme gratiosamente la Riverenza.

Nobiltà di Dame: p. 208

Ultimamente il Cavaliere passerà per mezzo all Dame facendo due Passi puntati, ponendosi al luogo della Dama che le starà à man destra:

il medesimo farà la Dama che le starà al lato destro, andando al luogo del Cavaliere;

l'altra anderà al luogo dell'altra Dama,

i quali tutti si ritroueranno in triangolo, & con fare la Riverenza breue come la prima, finiranno à tempo del Suono gratiosamente questa bella Cascarda.

To begin at the end, although both dances conclude with a *Riverenza*, it is clear that, in the later version, this is to be done, as was the one at the beginning of the *cascarda*, in the time of a breve, in four full bars of music.

Secondly, it is also clear that, as in the previous hey, the series of exchanges is initiated by the Man, moving, first, in conjunction with the Lady on his right hand. In neither choreography is there a complete statement of the sequence of moves nor any indication of the actual number of exchanges. Musical logic, together with the rhyth-

mic requirements of the steps given in the later version – 2 *passi puntati* for each move – demands that, in this instance, there can only be three exchanges. However, since this cannot allow the dancers to return to their original places, as required in the earlier version, it becomes evident that that sequence must, indeed, have four moves, each of which is performed with 2 *passi scorsi* and a *cadenza*.

It is worth noting that this alteration in step-usage creates its own variation in dance style. The 2 *passi scorsi* are, at one and the same time, more fluid, because they offer more steps than the 2 *puntati*, and yet more abrupt, because of their shorter duration. The punctuation introduced by the deliberate use of the ‘on-the-beat’ *cadenza* adds to that effect. That this must be Caroso’s intention can be deduced from the fact that the *scorsi* are described as using the time of two *passi* and not that of the more usual *doppio*.

The actual progress of these exchanges is difficult to comprehend in either version of the dance. The initial instructions in both versions are clear – that the Man should move between the ladies and to his right, into the place of the right-hand Lady – who is to move, presumably simultaneously, into the Man’s vacated place. This is the opposite direction to that prescribed in the earlier *catena*. Nor can what follows be described as a hey. The actual description is cryptic in the extreme!

In *Il Ballarino*, the Lady on the left is instructed to pass between (*per mezzo*) the other dancers in her turn and to proceed to the place of the ‘other’ Lady. (*andando nel luogo dell’altra Dama*) The wording in *Nobiltà* is even more cryptic: *l’altra anderà al luogo dell’altra Dama* (the other (lady) goes to the place of the other Lady). One might be forgiven for asking who went where! Once the Man and the first or right-hand Lady have changed places, there is a choice of destination for the left-hand Lady – either to go to the Right-hand Lady’s original place or move into the one she currently holds after her own exchange with the Man. The qualification, given in the later text, that the Gentleman should escort the second or original left-hand Lady back to her place at the end of the dance, gives a strong indication as to the dancers’ final positions and offers a solution to the order of the exchanges required to achieve this. The stress on each move being made into someone’s *place* is relevant here. If the left-hand Lady is to move to the *position* of the “other Lady”, she must change places with the Man as he makes his second move into her vacated place. There remains a choice in making the third exchange for which there is no help in the text. In both versions, however, the Gentleman will move three times, always to his right, anti-clockwise, once round the triangle. It would seem logical, therefore, in view of the fact that the basic floor-pattern for both versions remains remarkably consistent, that the Man should follow the same sequence in both dances. In the later version, he will make three changes with the Ladies, moving consistently anti-clockwise round the triangle. This leaves the last four bars of the music for the *Riverenza breve*. In the earlier dance, after following the same sequence of exchanges, the ladies will make the final exchange themselves to return to their original places – using for that additional exchange the same musical phrase which has been allocated in the later dance to the more formal *Riverenza*.

CONCLUSION

Whatever the complexities of analysis, interpretation and realisation, both Caroso and Martire before him have created two lively, entertaining dances. Yet each has entirely its own character. In performance, it becomes evident that the earlier dance has a more relaxed style, uses slightly less floor space and is highly social, in a sense that we understand readily today. The later dance has become somewhat more formal, not merely because the dancers no longer take hands in the hey but because there is a certain punctiliousness in the use of the correctly balanced figures. This creates a different relationship between the dancers. The character of the *cascarda* is still social; the dancers still interact positively one with the other. But the later version demonstrates a more ceremonial attitude through its use of the deliberately balanced correctness and loses something of the quality of relaxed enjoyment more readily experienced in the earlier version. Caroso's own version of this attractive *cascarda* does, however, gain in refinement, in elegance and, more particularly, in a sense of spaciousness.

NOTES

- 1 Caroso, F. *Il Ballarino*, 1581. *Allegrezza d'Amore – cascarda* di M. Oratio Martire; f. 108. Caroso, F. *Nobiltà di Dame*. 1600. *Allegrezza d'Amore – cascarda*; p. 206.
- 2 Caroso, F. *Nobiltà di Dame*. 1600. Facsimile, Arnaldo Forni Editore 1980. p. 104
- 3 Sutton, J. *Nobiltà di Dame*. OUP, 1986, p. 46.
- 4 Caroso, like his contemporaries, uses the term *capo* (head) of the dance for the point at which it begins and *piede* (foot) for the furthest forward point to which the dancers will move.