

The Music

The Four Misure

A quick look at the music that follows will show sections marked in different *tempi* -- *bassadanza*, *quadernaria*, *saltarello*, and *piva*. Sometimes this assignment is obvious from the time signature; other times the choreography drives the categorization. But what do those indications mean?

Put simply, there are four *misure* -- types of measure -- that are used in *balli*. *Bassadanza* is the slowest and *piva* the fastest. In this book they correspond to the following time signatures:

- *Bassadanza*: 6/4
- *Quadernaria*: 4/4
- *Saltarello*: 6/8 or occasionally 3/4
- *Piva*: 2/4 or 6/8

Domenico apparently felt quite strongly that the correct ratio among these *misura* was 6:5:4:3 -- that is, that a *tempo* of *piva* was half the length of a *tempo* of *bassadanza*. We have found, as did Domenico, that many musicians are not sufficiently comfortable with the *misura* to accomplish this. We believe that using the ratio of 6:4:3:2, which results in a semibrevis always having the same duration regardless of *misura*, is very helpful to musicians.¹ Further, there is considerable controversy about whether Domenico's ratios were meant to be taken literally or were indications of a more general style of playing.² The accompanying tape generally uses 6:4:3:2, but we have indicated *misura* rather than ratios or modern tempo settings to aid musicians and dancers who prefer to explore other interpretations.

Instruments

The sources indicate several instruments used for the performance of *balli*. Most commonly mentioned is the combination of shawms and sackbuts, which would work well outdoors or in large rooms where the music needs to carry. A poem written in about 1454 lists the instruments used at a ball in Pergola: shawms, sackbuts, portative organs, and "sweet-sounding" strings: harps, lutes, viols, dulcimers, cithare, and a psaltery.³ Perhaps Gaugelli's grouping of the strings together indicates that they all played together, while perhaps some of the other instruments played alone or only with others of their types. Certainly loud and soft instruments would not have played together, at least if the latter were to be more than visually decorative.

A. William Smith cites a poem that describes festivities from April 1459 and lists trombones and "pifferi" (sometimes translated as shawms) as providing the dance music.⁴

Ambrosio indicates that the instrumentation dictates the style of dancing; in his discussion of how to recognize a good dancer, he says that if the same *ballo* is played several times, once each by shawms, organs, lute, harp, drum with flutes, "or whatever instruments", the dance should vary accordingly.⁵

¹ In some cases we have transcribed *piva* in 6/8 instead of 2/4; in those cases the notes must be played faster. All *piva* sections are labelled so that they can be distinguished from *saltarello* sections in 6/8.

² Sparti, page 65 note 11.

³ Sparti, page 51, citing a poem by Gaugello Gaugelli.

⁴ Florence B.N.C. Magl. VII.1121.

⁵ PnA lines 1186-1214.

Shawms and sackbuts work well for loud situations when available; consorts of strings can produce a (contrasting) quiet, intimate sound. Groups of recorders and flutes (the instruments were not generally distinguished in writings of this period) should work well, and in fact we have tried to make the arrangements comfortable for recorder players because recorders are such common instruments. Percussion of various sorts would also appear to be appropriate. Finally, mixing these instruments, or even varying instrumentation within a piece, would not appear to be out of place, and we have done so for some of the music on the accompanying tape.

Discography

These are all the recordings of 15th-century *balli* that we have used, or listened to sufficiently to figure that they are unusable, not including computer-generated music. For each cassette or CD we list only the *balli*, using the name that appears for that recording. If the name is more than a little different than what we use for that dance (such as *Jupiter*, which is also called *Jove* or *Giove*) we include the name that we use, in brackets.

The name of each piece will either be in **bold**, if it is usable without modification, or underlined, if it can be used with slight modification. Pieces that are not usable with our reconstructions, or for which our reconstruction would have to be modified heavily, will be included at the end of the list of pieces, with information on what makes them unsuitable for use with our reconstruction. Other information on the pieces is included in the Recordings section for that specific dance.

Bel Danzare = *Il Bel Danzare, Dances of the Courts of Europe circa 1500*, Sirinu. Dolmetch Historical Dance Society, 1995. Cassette. A book is available to accompany this.

Belfiore, **Figlia guielmina (Fia Guielmina)**, Bel reguardo, Amoroso,
Laltra fia guielmina (Fia Guielmina), **Rossina (Voltati in ca Rosina)**, **Giove (Jupiter)**.

Between = *Between the Lines*, On the Mark, 1996. CD.

Mercantia, **Petit Vriens**.

Cour = *La cour du Roi Rene (At the Court of King Rene)*. Ensemble Perceval, Arion ARN 68104. CD.

Ballo Jelosia (Gelosia), **Ballo Lioncello (Leoncello)**, **Ballo Mercantia**.

Dances Courts 2 = *Dances from the Courts of Europe (2) Italian Renaissance (15th C) and Caroso and Negri Dances*, Eglinton Productions. Cassette. Accompanies the Nonsuch Early Dance booklet by Peggy Dixon.

Anello, Gelosia, **Mercantia**, Jupiter, Prexoniera, Verceppe.

Pieces we don't suggest using with our reconstructions are:

Rostibolly: The tune used is rather different in places, as they use a related piece of music ("Hoppertanz" by Johannes Weck) rather than the music in the dance sources

Sobria: This is very much made to fit their reconstruction - not advised with ours.

Dances Courts 9 = *Dances from the Courts of Europe (9) First Supplement (1989) : 12th-19thC*, Eglinton Productions. Cassette. Accompanies the Nonsuch Early Dance booklet by Peggy Dixon.

Ligiadra, Leoncello

Tesara: there are enough differences that it would be better to stick with their reconstruction for the dance, rather than trying to adapt ours.

Danzare = *Danzare et Sonare*, The Longslade Consort. The Longslade Consort TLC 7. Cassette. A book is available to accompany this. (Available from Diana Cruickshank, same address as Dolmetch Historical Dance Society.)

Petit Vriens (Petit Riens), Anello, **Gelosia - 1st version**, **Figlia Guielmina - 1st version**,
Amoroso, Verceppe, **Gracioso**, **Rossina (Voltati in ca Rosina)**, Leggiadra,
Figlia Guielmina - 2nd version.

Gelosia - 2nd version, 5 times: This is a version of Gelosia for five couples, but played differently than we suggest it should be done. Section V is played five times, and the dance is repeated five times, but Section II is still only played twice.

Eloge du vin et de la vigne, La Maurache. Arion CD ARN 68248. CD.

This CD has three dances, Gelosia, Amoroso, and Anello, but they are played as a suite, with the wrong internal repeats (usually none at all). None of them are therefore usable.

Forse = *Forse Che Si, Forse Che No*, Ferrara Ensemble. Fonti Musicali fmd 182. CD.

Verceppe, **Lioncello**, **Voltati in ca Rosina**, **Tessara**, **Rostiboli gioioso**, Anello, Giove (Jupiter), Pinzochera, Gelosia, **Petit Riense**, Spero, La figlia di Guielmo (Fia Guielmina)

Light = *Light of the North*, Lady Marian of Heatherdale. Heather M. Dale, privately produced. Cassette.

Amoroso, **Vita di Cholino**.

Mesura = *Mesura et Arte del Danzare. Balli Italiani del Quattrocento*. Accademia Viscontea i Musicanti. Ducale CDL 002. CD

Leoncello, Marchesana, Anello, **Colonnese**, Verceppe, **Petit Riense**, Voltate in ca Rosina, **Rostiboli Gioioso**, **Grazioso**, La fia Guglielmina (Fia Guielmina), A Florence la joyose cite/Helas la fille guillemin (Fia Guielmina), **Gelosia**, **Mercanzia**, **Sobria**.

Music Leonardo = *Music in the Age of Leonardo da Vinci*, Ensemble Claude-Gervaise, Musica Viva MVC 1022. Cassette, also available on CD, but there are only 4 tracks for the 22 pieces, so can be difficult to use.

Rostiboli Gioioso, Giloxia (Gelosia), **Pizochara**, La fia Guilmin (Fia Guielmina).

La Vida de Culin (La Vita di Cholino) is also on this recording, but it is the full song, which has a third part not needed for the dance. It would need to be spliced to fit our reconstruction.

Music Richard = *Music from the time of Richard III*, The York Waits. Saydisc CD_SDL 364. CD.

Anello, Amoroso.

Mercantia is also included, but we don't consider it usable. There are only two repeats, the speeds chosen are uncomfortable, and the last five sections were sufficiently hard to follow that we can't even specify if they can be adapted or are merely confusing.

Musica XV = *Musica del XV secolo in Italia*, Ars Italica, Tactus TC 40012201. CD.

Rostiboli gioioso, A Florence/Helas la fille/en ma chambre (Fia Guielmina).

Musica Italiana = *La Musica Italiana del XV Secolo*, Sine Nomine. Quadrivium SCA 040. CD.

Amoroso.

This also has La Vida de Colin (La Vita di Cholino), which is the song related to the dance. It has a third section not included in our reconstruction, which would have to be removed in order to make it usable

Ren = *Renaissance Dances*, Lionel Rogg, positif organ and The Ancient Instrument Ensemble of Zurich. CBS Records, YT 60036. Cassette.

La Fille Guilmin (Fia Guielmina).

Return = *Return of the Pipers*, The Philadelphia Renaissance Wind Band. Newport Classics NPD 85567. CD.

Ballo "Amoroso" (Amoroso).

Rose&Nefr = *Rose & Nefr Dance Tape 2*, Jararvellir Music Guild, privately produced. Accompanies the Rose & Nefr Dance Manual.

Anello.

Also has Verceppe, but this recording has enough differences (including the *bassadanza* sections being played at the same speed as the *saltarelli*, only playing 8 instead of 12 *saltarelli*, for Section I, not playing Section I at the beginning of the repeat, but only at the end, and Section II is 7 instead of 6.5 bars) that we don't suggest using it with our reconstruction.

SCA Dance = *SCA Dance Musicke Vol II*, The Companions of St. Cecilia, privately produced. Cassette. A book is available to accompany this.

Gelosia

Sonare = *Sonare et Balare, Dances from 15th c. Italy and France*, The Bedford Waits. The Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society, 1990. Cassette. A book is available to accompany this.

Anello, **Belreguardo Novo (Belreguardo)**, L'altra fia guielmina (Fia Guielmina), Giloxia (Gelosia), **Gratioso**, Legiadra, Pizochara, **Rostiboli Gioioso**, Spero.

To Celebrate = *To Celebrate a Prince, Dances of the time of Lorenzo de Medici*, Alta. Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society, 1992. Cassette. A book is available to accompany this.

Vercepe, Prexonera, **Ingrata**, **Leonzello Vechio & Novo (Leoncello)**, **Colonese**, **Tesara**, Marchexana, **Gratioso**.

La Vida de Colin, Sine Nomine. Quadrivium. CD.

The only ballo on the CD is Petit Vriens. It is nice and lively, but the repeat pattern is wrong, so is unusable.

Viva Rey Fernando, Renaissance music from the Neapolitan Court 1442-1556, Hesperion XX Jordi Savall, Veritas VER 5 61222 2 PM 516. CD

There are two pieces on this CD, neither of which we advise using. Figlie Guilielmin (Fia Guielmina) is played throughout as a *bassadanza* - it can work, but is quite tricky, and will need a bit of adjustment. The other piece is labelled as Collinetto, but is actually La Vida de Colin (Vita di Cholino). It has a third section which is not used in our reconstruction.

Cassettes produced by the Dolmetsch Historical Dance Society can be ordered from:

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