

The Platonic Theory of Ethos in Fifteenth-Century Italian Court Dance

Jennifer Nevile

One of the reasons why the dance manuscripts from fifteenth-century Italy are so important in the history of western dance is that they preserve a body of contemporary theoretical ideas, as well as a collection of practical choreographies. These dance treatises are the earliest surviving choreographies from Europe. While we know from references in literature (for example, Boccaccio's *Decameron*) that courtiers in previous centuries entertained themselves with dancing, we do not know anything about the dances they did, let alone what sort of movements were considered aesthetically pleasing to them.

The dance manuals of Domenico da Piacenza, Antonio Cornazano and Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro,¹ therefore, are a rich source of information on many aspects of the courtly dance practice of fifteenth-century Italy. For example, the theoretical sections of the treatises written by these three men contain the rules and mechanisms by which a courtier could, with diligent practice, perfect the art of dancing, chapters on the theory of the music, advice on deportment and behaviour when dancing, descriptions of the steps used to construct the choreographies, and in two manuscripts, an autobiography of the author.

In contrast, the dance manuscripts from Northern France and the Low Countries were anonymous, recording the steps in an abbreviated form under each note of the tenor line, with only a very small amount of explanatory material beforehand. They did not set out to present dance as one of the liberal arts, as did the Italian manuals, which placed the courtly dance within the mainstream philosophical tradition.

The choreographies recorded in the dance treatises were also more than just a record of the private entertainment of a small, elite group of people. The courts of the fifteenth century were seen as the places in which the best rules of conduct were codified, observed and enforced. This strictly defined code of conduct at the courts had a dual purpose: not only did it help maintain the order necessary for large groups of people to live together, it also helped to establish each court as a separate entity, a world of its own which was physically and culturally

distinct from the rest of society and from each other. (For example, the city palaces of the Italian nobility were separated from other parts of the city by the large squares which were built in front of them.) This physical separation, and the separation in terms of behaviour and deportment, helped each court to project 'an image of itself as mysterious and inaccessible; its power [was] enhanced by this double aim of seeming both very learned and very glorious'.² Thus, the rules and postural codes of courtly dance were part of the mechanisms by which the court made itself appear above and inaccessible to the rest of society. Dance was part of the ceremony and ritual that kept the court as an elite group, reserved and remote from the rest of society. Those outside the court were able to admire the activities of the court, such as the triumphal processions through the city, and the outdoor *feste* that often took place in the main piazza of a city, but they could not participate in the gorgeous spectacle.³

The courtiers believed that their superiority was to be demonstrated to the rest of society by the different way in which they moved, walked, danced, and even stood in repose. This is vividly illustrated by the remarks of Guglielmo Ebreo on the relative merits of the courtly and non-courtly dances.

La q[ua]lle agl'inamorati & generosi cuori et agli animi gentile per celeste inclinatione più tosto che per accidentale dispositione è amicissima & conforme: Ma aliena in tutto & mortal inimicha di vitiosi & mechanicoplebei: i quali Le più volte con animo corrotto & colla sclerata mente la fano di arte liberale & virtuosa scienza: adultera & servile: et molte volte anchora alle lor'inhoneste concupiscenze sotto specie di honestate La inducono mezana per potere cautamente al effetto d'alchuna sua voluptate danzando per venire.⁴

The art of dancing is, for generous hearts that love it, and for gentle spirits that have a heaven-sent inclination for it rather than an accidental disposition, a most amicable matter, entirely different from and mortally inimical to the vicious and artless common people who frequently, with corrupt spirits and depraved minds, turn it from a liberal art and a virtuous science into a vile adulterous affair, and who more often in their dishonest concupiscence under the guise of modesty, make the dance a procuress, through whom they are able to arrive stealthily at the satisfaction of their desires.⁵

This passage from the prologue to Guglielmo's treatise graphically illustrates how strongly the Italian courtiers of the Renaissance adhered to the traditional Pythagorean/Platonic conception of the 'noble ideal'. The art of dancing was part of this 'noble ideal' because the movements it demanded of its practitioners imitated virtue, as opposed to the

debauched actions of the common people, which only aroused them to vulgarity and licentiousness.

Thus the behavioural precepts as enunciated by the dance masters were inextricably tied to the Pythagorean/Platonic view which prevailed in the Renaissance concerning the nature of the cosmos. This meant that reality in some sense consisted of, and was to be comprehended through, numbers. The effect of this belief on musical thought lasted until the eighteenth century.⁶ Through this belief that numbers were the principles and elements of all things, philosophers were able to form a unified system, with all parts of nature, including mankind, connected through number and proportion.⁷ Musical harmony (*musica instrumentalis*) was seen to be an earthly imitation of the natural harmony, or system of ratios, that constituted the organization of the cosmos; that is, *musica mundana*. The harmony of human music was also the imitation of the proportions that bound together mankind's body and soul in a balance of opposite elements (*musica humana*).⁸

Thus the Middle Ages inherited from the Pythagoreans the belief that numbers themselves, and their arrangement in the correct ratios, or proportions, were 'presumed to be true, beautiful and good';⁹ that is, ultimate perfection—the noble ideal of temperance and moderation. Certain ratios, such as the octave, 1:2, the fifth, 2:3, and the fourth, 3:4, were held to be beautiful and harmonious, while others were evil and discordant. Similarly, certain rhythms were held to be good as they induced virtue in mankind and drew the soul towards divine contemplation, while other rhythms produced drunkenness, laziness and other defects of character.¹⁰ Music, therefore, had the property of being able to influence the moral character of mankind either for the better, or to his detriment.¹¹

But what did Plato and the other Hellenic philosophers mean when they used the term 'music'? In Plato's time the concept was much broader than today: it embraced music, poetry and dance, the latter including both gesture and deportment. So, when Plato says that music is capable of having moral power over the temperament and character of mankind, he is referring to the combination of what we call poetry, music and dance, or more generally, the performing arts. Thus, not only should the sounds of an instrument or a voice ideally reflect the music of the spheres, but so should the movements of a dancer in body as well as soul. People reveal their knowledge of good and evil, and also the character of their soul, by the music they choose and the dances and movements they perform. To the Renaissance mind, dance and morality were closely connected:¹² 'dancing as a

courtly and social activity, like music and eloquence, prepares the mind for the recognition of Virtue since it imitates Virtue itself'.¹³

I would like to give a brief summary of the important characteristics of this dance tradition. Above all, the choreographies recorded in the treatises are social dances: they are for both men and women, and were performed by the courtiers themselves. Thus the dances were primarily for the enjoyment of the participants, not for the titillation of a non-participatory, unskilled audience, who wanted to be dazzled by feats of skill and daring. The noble style was not exhibitionist, but rather more of a partnership in sharing an ideal to which all who performed contributed equally. A second important characteristic of this style is that each dance had its own arrangement of steps and floor pattern, and therefore its own music.

There are two genres of dances recorded in the treatises, the *balli* and the *bassedanze*, each with its own characteristics. The *balli* were constructed of short sections of differing speeds and metres (for example, what we now call $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{8}$). These sections did not fall into any regular groupings, such as four or eight bar phrases, as the most important determinant of phrase length was the choreography of each particular dance. This is illustrated in Figure 1, which gives the length and time signatures of the sections of the *ballo, Mercantia*.

Figure 1: *Mercantia*

12 bars of $\frac{3}{4}$ at $\downarrow = 126\text{mm}$
6 bars of $\frac{3}{4}$ at $\downarrow = 56\text{mm}$
12.5 bars of $\frac{3}{8}$ at $\downarrow = 56\text{mm}$
2 bars of $\frac{3}{8}$ at $\downarrow = 84\text{mm}$
4 bars of $\frac{3}{4}$ at $\downarrow = 56\text{mm}$
0.5 and 4 bars of $\frac{3}{8}$ at $\downarrow = 56\text{mm}$

Both the dancers and the musicians, therefore, had to be able to change from section to section with no pauses, no hesitations, or no upbeat to establish the new tempo. In other words, the choreographies were extremely subtle, sophisticated, and required diligent practice, and a good memory. The children of the nobility would have started dance lessons when they were very young, as they were appearing in public by the age of ten or eleven.

How then did the worldview of the dance masters find expression in their choreographies? Did the 'true, beautiful and good' ratios (1:2, 2:3, and 3:4) of Pythagorean thought form any part of this dance tradition, and what do the dance treatises tell us of the aesthetic

parameters of the art.

The most obvious effect on the dance style of the Pythagorean view of the cosmos is seen in the music of the *balli*. As mentioned before, this genre alternated between sections of differing tempi and time signatures. The four different combinations of metres and speeds were called *misure*; the slowest being *bassadanza misura*, the next fastest called *quaternaria misura*, then *saltarello misura*, with the fastest of all of them called *piva misura*. These are listed in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The Four *Misure*

<i>bassadanza</i>	Ⓒ	Ⓔ
<i>quaternaria</i>	C	$\frac{3}{2}$
<i>saltarello</i>	O or Ⓒ	$\frac{3}{2}$ or Ⓔ
<i>piva</i>	C or Ⓒ	$\frac{3}{2}$ or Ⓔ

In the theoretical section of their treatises, Domenico and Cornazano go to a great deal of trouble to explain the proportions between these four *misure*.

Note well (and I beseech you to open the virtue of your intellect in order to understand) what the *misura* of motion is, and also how movements are composed upon the *misura* ... And above all, under the general heading of *misura* there are four particular kinds. The first, which is slower than the others, is called by the name *Bassadanza* ... and in these [four] *misure* consist the movement of the dancer and of the musician, from the slowest to the fastest.¹⁴

Domenico especially is extremely precise in his explanation, giving the ratios in a verbal/written form, and also in a symbolic form, using the common mensuration and proportion signs of his day. Domenico is most insistent that *bassadanza misura* is the basis of all the other three *misure*, and that the speeds of the other *misure* are derived from it. He states that *piva misura* is three-sixths faster than *bassadanza misura*, or for every two steps of *piva* one can do one step of *bassadanza*. This produces the ratio 2:1, one of those representing perfection. *Saltarello misura* is said to be two-sixths faster than *bassadanza misura*; that is, the time taken to complete four bars (or four steps) of *bassadanza misura* is the same as that taken by six bars of *saltarello misura*. This produces a ratio between *saltarello* and *bassadanza misura* of 6:4, or 3:2, another of the beautiful and harmonious proportions.

Quaternaria misura is described as being one-sixth faster than *bassadanza misura*, which produces a ratio of 6:5; that is, for every

six bars of *quaternaria misura* one can play (or dance) five bars of *bassadanza misura*. It is with this ratio that the pattern is broken, as this is not one of the correct proportions. As I mentioned before Domenico also described the relationship between the four *misure* in a symbolic manner. When the relationship between *quaternaria* and *bassadanza* is considered using this method of representation, the ratio between *quaternaria misura* and *bassadanza misura* is 4:3, the same as that of a fourth, and also an harmonious proportion.

Since the ratio 3:4 is 0.75 and 5:6 is 0.83, the difference between these two types of descriptions is not great. It is my opinion that Domenico persisted with the method of description which produced the 5:6 ratio because it was easy to describe in words; that is, 'one-sixth faster, two-sixths faster, three-sixths faster', and also because it was so close to the harmonious proportion of 4:3.

The importance of these ratios in the dance masters' philosophical stance is vividly illustrated by Cornazano in his treatise, where he depicts the ratios in the form of a ladder diagram (V: f.10^r). If one measures the rungs of the ladder on this illustration one finds that the ratios of their lengths are exactly the same as the ratios of the relative speeds of the four *misure* as expressed by Domenico.

Two important principles in the courtly dance style of fifteenth-century Italy are *varietà* (variety) and *grazia* (grace). They imbued every aspect of the style (for example, how a dancer moved and how he or she performed the steps), and were intimately connected with the larger concept of *misura* or proportion. We have seen how the numbers which bound mankind to the cosmos were expressed in the music of the *balli*, but their effect on the dance style did not end there. In the dance treatises the concept of proportion was conveyed by the term *misura*, which was used to refer to:

- (1) the ratios between the relative speeds of the different musical sections of a *ballo*;
- (2) the measuring out of the dance space—*mesura da terreno*;
- (3) the proportioning of the movements of the body. (This latter meaning of *misura* had a wide vocabulary of terms which were used by the dance masters to describe the particular movements of the body necessary for this style; for example, *maniera*, *aere*, *ondeggiare*, *campeggiare* and *grazia*.)

Cornazano, for example, says that the proportioning of the body comes about through the movement of the whole body rising slowly and descending quickly.

The Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics

In the dance one does not only observe the *misura* of the sounds, but also a *misura* which is not musical but is different from the others. It is a measure of space in the elevation of the rise and fall; that is, one must always rise in such a way as not to break the *misura*. *Ondeggiare* is nothing other than a slow rising of the whole person and a quick descent.¹⁵

Domenico agrees, adding that the movements of the dancers always should be measured, moderate and should avoid the two extremes of excessive movement or too little movement.

But in order for these movements of the body to appear acceptable they had to contain the qualities of grace and diversity. For example Guglielmo comments that:

because keeping [the steps] low to the ground, without rising and without *aiere*, the dance will be shown to be imperfect and outside of its nature. Nor will it appear to the by-standers as worthy of grace and of true praise.¹⁶

while Cornazano says:

Diversità di cose is to know how to dance the dances with variations, and not always to perform them the one way; and thus to have the steps ... [performed] in diverse ways: and that which is done once must not be done immediately a second time.¹⁷

These two principles of *grazia* and *varietà* had a wider application than just the dance manuals. In 1435 Leon Battista Alberti finished his treatise on painting. His own translation of his Latin work into an Italian version appeared in 1436,¹⁸ almost exactly the same time as Domenico's dance treatise is believed to have been written. The two treatises, one on dance, the other on painting, show remarkable points of congruence in theory and philosophical outlook.

For example, Alberti's use of the word 'grace' closely agrees with that of the dance treatises. As in the latter, Alberti most frequently uses the word when referring to the movement of figures in a picture: for example, 'the painting ought to have pleasant and graceful movements, suitable to what is happening there'.¹⁹ Concerned to describe how a painter should create human figures, and how every part of these figures should express the appropriate attitude or emotion, Alberti concludes:

Thus, in every painting take care that each member performs its function so that none by the slightest articulation remains flaccid ... Therefore the painter wishing to express life in things will make every part in motion—but in motion he will keep loveliness and grace. The most graceful movements and the most lively are those which move upwards into the air.²⁰

Alberti's last sentence here mirrors Guglielmo's explanation of *aiere*. Throughout his treatise Alberti impresses on the artist that the foundation of painting is observation of nature. Since Alberti was concerned to present painting as an art that had 'always been most worthy of liberal minds and noble souls',²¹ his ideal painting would be the depiction of a higher social class or type of human nature, rather than an inferior one. Hence the movements which he saw as graceful, and which he said should appear in noble works of art, would belong to that same higher social class: the class that actually participated in the dances recorded in the treatises. Therefore it seems that the dance masters' term *aiere* did not describe a type of movement peculiar to those who danced, but rather a way of moving that was an accepted part of the noble ideal of the higher social classes at that time.

Alberti was also concerned that paintings should contain *varietà*, both in the diversity and contrast of colours, as well as in the attitudes of the figures. He warns: 'be careful not to repeat the same gesture or pose'.²² This admonition is identical to Cornazano's rule of *diversità di cose*, by which each step when performed more than once must be subtly varied so as not to appear identical with what had immediately preceded it.

Alberti also shared Domenico's concern that the movements of a dancer should not fall into either extreme: neither wild, flailing movements, nor so little movement that the dancer's body appears wooden and lifeless. For example, when Alberti discusses how painters should portray movement in the figures they draw, he asserts:

You will find that in expressing too violent movements ... some think to be praised because they hear that figures appear most lively which throw about all their members. For this reason their figures appear hackers and actors without any dignity in the painting. Because of this they are ... without grace and sweetness ... As I have noted, movements should be moderated and sweet. They should appear graceful to the observer rather than a marvel of study.²³

Thus for both the dance masters and Alberti, *grazia* was used to refer to a quality which was ascribed to particular movements of the body, which, in the dance manuscripts, were called *maniera* and *aiere*, an essential component of which was a rising movement. In order to dance 'gracefully' the steps had to be performed with this rising movement, along with the three principles of variety, diversity, and keeping to the mean of the movement.

The last glimpse that we can obtain as to the aesthetic qualities expected of a courtier by the dance masters, is given by Guglielmo in

his chapter on the behaviour desired of young ladies. Here we learn that the deportment of young women was different to that expected of their male counterparts, as gentlewomen had to be more moderate and virtuous than the men.²⁴ The manner of the young lady must be *dolce* (gentle and pleasant), *moderata* (tempered), and *suave* (solemn); the movement of her body must be *humile* (humble) and *mansueto* (mild or tractable); the carriage of her person must be *degno* (worthy) and *signorile* (noble); and she must be light on her feet, with her gestures well formed.²⁵ The carriage of the head was very important in establishing the correct bearing for a courtier, especially for young ladies. It was considered improper to allow the eyes to wander around the room, looking at all and sundry: for most of the time young ladies were expected to virtuously look at the ground, but without hanging their heads on their chests, and always keeping them held straight up.²⁶ Guglielmo's differentiation between the quality of the deportment of the male and female courtiers is confirmed by Leon Battista Alberti's description of the most suitable movements for men and women:

The movements and poses of virgins are airy, full of simplicity with sweetness of quiet rather than strength ... The movements of youths are light, gay, with a certain demonstration of great soul and good force. In men, the movements are more adorned with firmness, with beautiful and artful poses ... Thus each one with dignity has his own movements to express whatever movements of the soul he wishes.

Since it was considered aesthetically pleasing for men and women to carry themselves in a manner appropriate to their age and gender, one would hypothesize that this differentiation would also apply to the choreographies themselves. For example, were certain steps or a particular *misura* consistently associated with one gender or the other? Was the majority of choreographic activity always assigned to men, or was it shared between the two sexes? Did men always initiate a new floor pattern or cause a change in the dramatic situation in a dance? Were roles ever exchanged between men and women? And finally, did men and women share the more difficult parts of a choreography, or were those parts always assigned to men?

When we look at all the *balli* and *bassedanze* that are recorded in the treatises, we find that there are no steps or *misure* that are consistently assigned to one gender. The matching of one *misura* with one gender may well happen in a single dance, but in another dance the opposite may occur. For example, sections four to eight of the *ballo, Verçeppe*, consists of alternating sections of *saltarello* and *bassadanza misure*, with the men moving in the *saltarello* sections,

and the women moving in the *bassadanza* sections. On the other hand, in the *ballo*, *Pizochara*, Domenico has choreographed the men to weave around the women in the slow *bassadanza* section, while the women flirtatiously weave around the men with *saltarello doppi* in *saltarello misura*. The nine natural steps, of which the *balli* and *bassedanze* are composed, are performed by both men and women, with no step being favoured by one gender.

Evidence for the surprising equality of men and women in a choreographic sense is that when a dance was repeated the women would often take over the men's role in the repeat, and vice versa. This often meant that in the repeat it would be the women who would initiate the action, and the men would follow their lead.

Although all the dance masters were male, their choreographies did not show a bias towards their own gender. The choreographic action was shared equally between men and women, with neither gender being merely treated as a foil for the other.²⁷ The women did not spend large amounts of time standing watching while the men paraded in front of them, exhibiting their strength and skill in jumps and turns and flourishes.

Thus, while the actual choreographies did not differentiate between women and men, the precepts laid down in the theoretical chapters of the dance treatises were carried onto the dance floor by the different manner in which men and women performed the same steps, although this nuance of performance style can hardly be recreated today. Men were not given a dominant role in the choreographies; they did not always initiate the action; the steps and *misure* that are used in the choreographies were performed by both men and women, as were the more difficult parts of the choreographies. Nonetheless, from the theoretical chapters we may infer that men were expected to be able to provide a more virtuosic display, with more jumps, accidental steps, or ornamented *piva doppi*. This probably owed as much to their less restrictive clothing than to any idea that women were not skilled enough to manage these steps.

Conclusion

The rules according to which courtiers were expected to move on the dance floor, applied also to every other part of their daily life. The posture when dancing was not assumed just for that activity, only to be cast aside when the performance was over: it was always the courtiers' 'natural' manner of moving, the noble and temperate manner which

The Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics

helped to distinguish them from those who did not belong to the elite. Thus the actions of the dancer that were embraced by the concept *grazia* were those which the court approved, as they were essential to the 'noble style', the realization of the 'beautiful and good' proportions in movement. The fact that the dance masters saw the importance of these bodily movements as going beyond that of enabling the performers to present themselves in a pleasing light to their peers, is because dance was an ordering of movements of the human body which were concordant with the proportioning of the music which accompanied it. All the manifestations of *misura* were, for the dance masters, ways of expressing in sound and movement the fundamental truth and beauty of the cosmos—its numerical essence. As Guglielmo says in the prologue to his treatise:

La qual virtute del danzare non è altro che una actione demonstrativa di fuori di movimenti spiritali: Li quali si hanno a concordare colle misurate et perfette consonanze d'essa harmonia: che per lo nostro audito alLe parti intellectuali & ai sensi cordiali con diletto descende: dove poi si genera certi dolci commovimenti: i quali chome contra sua natura richiusi si sforzano quanto possano di uscire fuori: & farsi in atto manifesti.²⁸

The virtue of dancing is an action demonstrative of spiritual movement, conforming with the measured and perfect consonances of a harmony that descends pleasurable through our sense of hearing to the intellectual parts of our cordial senses; there it generates certain sweet movements which, as if enclosed contrary to their own nature, strive to escape and make themselves manifest in active movement.²⁹

Appendix

Domenico da Piacenza: *De arte saltandj & choreas ducendj De la arte di ballare et danzare*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fonds it. 972. Sigla used Pd.

Antonio Comazano: *Libro dell' arte del danzare*, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Codex Capponiano, 203. Sigla used V.

Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro: *Guilielmi Hebraei pisauriensis de practica seu arte tripudii vulgare opusculum, incipit*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fonds it. 973. Sigla used Pg.

Giovanni Ambrosio: *Domini Iohannis Ambrosii pisauriensis de practica seu arte tripudii vulgare opusculum faeliciter incipit*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fonds it. 476. Sigla used Pa.

Guglielmo Ebreo: *Ghuglieimi hebrei pisauriensis De Practicha seu arte tripudij vulghare opusculum feliciter incipit*, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, codex Magliabecchiana-Strozziano XIX 88. Sigla used FN.

Guglielmo Ebreo: *Qui chominca elibro Ghulielmus ebreis pisauriensis de praticha seu arte tripudii volghare opusculum*, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, codex Antinori, A13. Sigla used FL.

Guglielmo Ebreo: *Ghuglielmi ebrej pisauriensis de praticha seu arte tripudi vulghare opusculum, feliciter incipit*, New York, New York Public Library, Dance Collection, *MGZMB-Res. 72-254. Sigla used NY.

(Guglielmo Ebreo) Siena, Biblioteca Comunale, Codex L. V. 29. Sigla used S.

(Guglielmo Ebreo) Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Codex Ital. 82, a J 94. Sigla used M.

Notes

- 1 For a list of the nine manuscripts which contain the complete dance treatises of Domenico, Guglielmo and Cornazano, see Appendix.
- 2 Sergio Bertelli, Franco Cardini and Elvira Garbero Zorzi, *The Courts of the Italian Renaissance*, trans. Mary Fitton and Geoffrey Culverwell, New York and Oxford, 1986, p.18
- 3 One example of the opportunities of the populace to observe the ceremonies of the court is the celebrations that took place in Naples in 1473. On 16th May Sigismondo d'Este (brother of Ercole) entered Naples with his retinue of over five hundred people to collect Eleonora d'Aragona, his brother's promised bride. The court moved to the Piazza dell'Incoronata, where two stands of seats had been built at the sides of the square, with a capacity for over 20,000 people. A stage had been erected in the centre of the piazza for the King, the court, and his guests. Then music began to sound and Eleonora opened the dances. Various ceremonies followed, then a march past of the delegation from Ferrara, who presented Ercole's gifts to Eleonora, followed by a procession of all the knights who were to fight in the next day's joust. About two hundred people, preceded by trumpets, then paraded past the centre stage, all carrying dishes of marzipan and other types of confectionery. Clelia Falletti, 'Le feste per Eleonora d'Aragona da Napoli a Ferrara (1473)', in *Spettacoli conviviali dall'antichità classica alle Corti italiane del '400*, Centro di studi sul teatro medioevale e rinascimentale, Viterbo, 1982, pp.272-73.
- 4 Pg. ff.6^v-7^r.
- 5 Otto Kinkeldey, *A Jewish Dancing Master of the Renaissance: Guglielmo Ebreo*, 1929, repr. Brooklyn, N.Y., 1966, p.8.
- 6 Robert M. Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King: France in the Seventeenth Century*, Ithaca, N.Y., 1973, p.11.
- 7 As Heninger says: 'The items of nature are organized according to mathematical proportions or (the same thing) musical harmony'. S. K. Heninger Jr., *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics*, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, p.76.
- 8 For more on *musica instrumentalis*, *musica humana* and *musica mundana*, see Heninger, pp.101-02, and also Chapter 2 of that book, pp.146-200.
- 9 Heninger, p.76.
- 10 Isherwood, pp.6-7.

The Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics

- 11 For the mechanism by which music had this power to influence mankind, see Edward A. Lippman, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece*, London and N.Y., 1964, repr. New York, 1975, p.55.
- 12 See Sir Thomas Elyot's treatise on the *basse danse*, *The boke named the Governour*, published in 1531, in which he equates each step of the *basse danse* with a particular virtue. Thus the branles represent maturity, the singles prudence and industry, the reprises circumspection, the doubles election, experience and modesty, and the reverence represents honour.
- 13 Mary Chan, *Music in the Theatre of Ben Jonson*, Oxford, 1980, pp.130-31.
- 14 Pd, f.3^r and f.3^v.
- 15 For a more detailed explanation of the four *misure* see Jennifer Nevile, *The Courtly Dance Manuscripts from Fifteenth-Century Italy*, PhD dissertation, University of New South Wales, 1992.
- 16 V, ff.8^v-9^r.
- 17 Pg, f.10^r.
- 18 V, f.3^r bis.
- 19 Leon Battista Alberti, *Della Pittura*, trans. John Spencer, London, 1956.
- 20 Alberti, p.80.
- 21 Alberti, p.74.
- 22 Alberti, p.66.
- 23 Alberti, p.77.
- 24 Alberti, pp.80-81.
- 25 The fact that Guglielmo saw fit to devote a whole chapter to the behaviour of young ladies, but not to that of young gentlemen, shows how important the exercise of the art of dancing was for women in fifteenth-century Italy.
- 26 Pg, ff.16^v-17^r.
- 27 Pg, f.17^r.
- 28 Alberti, p.80.
- 29 One period in the history of Western dance where this was the case was in nineteenth-century Romantic ballet, where the male role dwindled to one of being a mere support for the famous ballerina, both physically lifting and carrying her around the stage, and also metaphorically speaking, in that all the attention, praise and adulation by the public was focused on the female dancer. See Deborah Jowitt; *Time and The Dancing Image*, San Marino, Calif., 1988, pp.40-42 and 57.
- 30 Pg, f.5^v.
- 31 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, Oxford, 1985, p.60.