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NEOPLATONIC AND PYTHAGOREAN NOTIONS OF WORLD HARMONY AND UNITY AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON RENAISSANCE DANCE THEORY

Günter Berghaus

Introduction

In the Autumn issue of 1987, Dance Research published Françoise S. Carter’s lecture on Celestial Dance, given at the Society of Dance Research earlier in the year. Dr. Carter analysed the concept of the harmony of the spheres and its tradition from Plato to the Renaissance period, and assessed its relevance to the history of dance.

Her discussion of the metaphor of the Celestial Dance contains a great deal of important, yet little-known material. However, her presentation of the Celestial Dance as a Platonic and Neoplatonic concept made no reference to the fact that the idea of the harmony of the spheres goes back to a much earlier school of thinking, which had its origin in Pythagoras. Plato is believed to have been influenced by this school through his friend Archytas. His elaboration of the concept in the Timaeus and Republica was of considerable influence on later generations, where an amalgamation of the Pythagorean and Platonic traditions was created. This syncretism makes it difficult and sometimes even impossible to establish exact distinctions between the two. However, writers belonging to the later Pythagorean school were instrumental in handing down the concept of celestial unity and harmony into Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. In the Renaissance period they were rediscovered as authorities, who had recorded Pythagoras’ teaching. They represented an influence that was equal to and ran parallel with that of Plato.

In response to Françoise Carter’s article I drew up an essay that outlined the areas I believed were missing from her treatment of the subject. Shortly after the copy was submitted to the editors of Dance Research, Ms. Carter handed in the article that was printed in the issue of Summer 1992. Her introduction contains many references to classical sources I had analysed in my essay in some length. It seemed unnecessary now to go over the same material for a second time. Therefore, on request from the editors of Dance Research, I re-wrote the first section of my essay, which in its present form only summarizes a few salient points of the Pythagorean
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tradition in the classical, medieval and Renaissance world. In the second part, I have restricted myself to discussing the influence of this philosophy on the dance theory of Renaissance Italy. This, I hope, will serve to complement Françoise Carter’s discussion of the French and English sources. I shall concentrate on the treatises of Guglielmo Ebreo and Rinaldo Corso, but also draw on some examples from the dance practice of the time which appears to reflect the theory of harmony of the period, and in particular the idea of the Union of the Arts that was derived from it.¹

The Pythagorean Concept of Kosmos and World Harmony

Reconstructing Pythagorean philosophy is an extremely difficult task, given the total lack of original texts by the founder of the school and the highly syncretic tendency in all later Pythagorean writers and their modern interpreters.² As far as we can deduce from the early sources, it was in the Pythagorean school of the 6th and 5th century B.C. that the early Greek concept of kosmos was given a unitarian harmonical design. Here, the universe appeared as an organic whole with all constituent parts only existing as components of their final summation.³ Pythagorean philosophy sought to explain the unity of cosmos by establishing a single principle that lies at the root of all things and constitutes the original cause of Being. This original principle (arche) behind the cosmos is supposed to be number (arithmos). The Pythagoreans believed that all things were commensurable in terms of number and that all elements of the universe relate to each other in proportion (harmonia) of number.

Aristotle reported in his Metaphysics (I.V.2) that for the Pythagoreans ‘all things have their whole nature modelled upon numbers, and that numbers seemed to be the principle of the whole cosmos. They supposed the elements of numbers to be the elements of all things, and the whole universe to be a harmony based upon number.’ And Philolaus (fragm. B6) said about the elements from which the cosmos is composed, that ‘it would be impossible for them to be set to order, if there had not supervened a fitting-together (harmonia) . . . It was necessary that they be bonded together by a harmonia such that the cosmos could be held in order.’

For the Pythagoreans, the whole cosmos is based on the
The proportionate dimension of a thing never changes. It is created from the product of its inherent properties. The metaphor is given physical extension. Chronological time (chronos) proceeds from eternity (aion), just as finite space proceeds from infinity. The metaphor for this process is creation. The act of creation establishes the monad in time and space. Time is a corollary product of the creation of the physical world, and it prevents the created universe from remaining static. The cosmos is dynamic, ever-changing. However, this constant motion is ordered. The dimension of temporality is structured just like the spatial world. The patterns of movement obey a scheme. All changes are phases in a predetermined cycle, they are chronological repetitions with proportionate propensities.

The Pythagorean concept of unity and harmony based on numerical principles offered plenty of material for aesthetic doctrine. Pythagoras was believed to have taught that concordant musical sounds could be represented as ratios of numbers. These ratios have the same proportion as the celestial orbs, and the sounds produced by their motions correspond to the notes of the musical scales. From this, it follows that musical harmonies are the same as the harmonies of the spheres. When applied to the plastic arts, these ratios can be found in the harmonic proportions of buildings, sculptures, etc. Also the harmonious and orderly motions in dance are related to the concord of the heavenly spheres and obey in their rhythmic structure the same numerical principles.
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When Pythagoras died, he left no corpus of writings behind. His school continued for several generations, and it was here that a syncretic body of Pythagorean philosophy was established. Through these pupils Pythagorean cosmology filtered through into the mainstream of Greek philosophical thought.

One of the most influential heirs of the Pythagorean system was Plato. His concept of cosmos, as described in the final chapter of his Republic and his dialogue Timaeus, are closely modelled on the Pythagorean concept of a mathematical harmony of the universe.6 Also in his aesthetics, where dance and music occupy a prominent position, the same concept of harmony and unity is employed to show how Man can be made whole again in body and soul.7 In Plato's ideal State, the educated man must be able to dance and sing well, and he will be trained in the art of 'noble' dances, which are 'proper and suitable' for the enjoyment and education of the citizens.8 In the Nomoi, Plato sought to put into practice what he emphasized in Timaeus:

Harmony, which has motions akin to those of our souls, has been bestowed by the Muses not with a view to irrational pleasure . . . but as a means to correct any discord which may have arisen in the courses of the soul, and to bring her into harmony and agreement with herself; and rhythm, too, was given by them for the same reason.9

Through the Platonic academy Pythagorean thought was transmitted to Hellenistic philosophy, from where it made inroads into Roman culture.10 Lucian's Peri orcheeos (c.160 A.D.) is a prominent example of how the amalgamation of Pythagorean and Platonic thought influenced dance theory:

1. 'The relation between musica mundana and musica humana', from Robert Fludd's Ultriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et maioris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia, vol. 2, Oppenheim, 1619, p. 93: The divine mind descends through the hierarchies of the universe and carries the nature of its components into the human body. Thereby, the microcosmos is made to correspond to the macrocosmos. The octave is the tie by which God links the musica humana to the musica mundana. The decreasing degrees of spirituality are ordered in three diapasons, which reflect the threefold division of the human soul: the spiritual sphere corresponds to the nine angelic hierarchies; the intermediate, or rational, sphere to the four elements. The descent from God to the human body goes through six stages: A pure mind, B intellect, C rational spirit, D middle soul, E vitalistic forces, F the body as receptacle for all things.
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Dance came into being contemporaneously with the primal origin of the universe, making her appearance together with Love — the love that is age-old [i.e. Hesiod's cosmogonic Eros]. In fact, the concord of the heavenly spheres, the interlacing of the errant planets with the fixed stars, their rhythmic agreement and timed harmony, are proofs that Dance was primordial.11

Dance, because of its mystic and divine origins, 'reaches to the summit of all culture' (ch. 35). It is 'a thing of utter harmony' (ch. 72) that unites in itself all arts, which otherwise only appeal separately to the eyes and ears (ch. 68).

In late antiquity, Pythagorean thought entered, mainly through the Neoplatonic schools of Plotinos, Iamblichos and Proklos, into the Christian world. The early Fathers of the Church, who had been brought up in the classical tradition, sought to reconcile Christian doctrine with philosophy.12

A syncretism of Pythagorean, Platonic and Christian thought was firmly established by St. Ambrose,13 St. Augustine,14 Boethius15 and Dionysius Areopagita.16 Due to the writings of these eminent churchmen and other scholars and commentators, Pythagorean cosmology survived in only slightly changed form well into the Middle Ages. Although the Aristotelian system was adopted by the Church as its official philosophical doctrine, Pythagorean principles of unity and harmony had already been so thoroughly incorporated into Christian theology that they survived — albeit under various guises — right through the Middle Ages.

However, during the period when the Aristotelian scholastic system reigned supreme, Platonic/Pythagorean philosophy of unity was not studied on the basis of the original sources, but only through the Christian interpreters.17 This was still the case in the transitional period of the Late Middle Ages, as Dante's Divina Commedia shows, where we find the Pythagorean cosmos in its Christian manifestation developed to perfection.18

A true revival of the Platonic thought was only inaugurated with Petrarch, who knew the Timaeus in the Latin translation of Chalcidius. He quotes this text and the testimonies of Plotinos, Porphyrios and others in De sui ipsius atque multorum ignorantia (1371)19 in order to convey an idea of 'the divine Plato' and the 'prince of philosophers', and to challenge the infallible authority of Aristotle. But Petrarch never learned more than the rudiments of
Greek. Therefore, the manuscripts he eagerly collected (and by the end of his lifetime be possessed no less than sixteen works of Plato in the original language)\textsuperscript{20} he was not actually able to read and understand — a fact that is almost symbolic of his attitude towards Plato.\textsuperscript{21} But nevertheless, it was through Petrarch and his pupils that the name of Plato was forever linked with the ideals of Italian humanism.

Renaissance Neoplatonism\textsuperscript{22} was given a foundation when the Greek scholars, who had come to Italy during the Councils of Ferrara (1438–39) and Florence (1439–42), began to publish a large number of editions and translations of Plato's works. To this they added commentaries and treatises, which caused widespread controversies and polemics amongst the academic community. One of these scholars, Georgios Gemisthos Pletho, who had written the seminal treatise \emph{De Platonicae atque Aristotelicae philosophiae comparatio} (c.1439),\textsuperscript{23} was probably responsible for Cosimo de' Medici's idea of founding a Platonic Academy in Florence. A decade later, another Greek scholar, Georgios Trapezuntios, published his \emph{Comparationes philosophorum Aristotelis et Platonis} (c.1455). But the real victory of Plato over Aristotle was won with Cardinal Bessarion's work \emph{Adversus calumniatorem Platonis} (1469). Bessarion demonstrated the affinities between Platonism and Christianity and proved that Plato, in fact, came closer to Christian truth than Aristotle. Bessarion's authority as a churchman and his scholarly and reasoned apology of Plato helped to establish a Neoplatonic basis of Renaissance philosophy.\textsuperscript{24}

It was from these foundations that Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola were able to develop their philosophy of unity and universal harmony, upon which so much of the later aesthetics and artistic practice of the Italian Renaissance were based.

Ficino,\textsuperscript{25} in his translations into Latin of the works of Plato, Plotinos and the Hermetic writers, introduced Neoplatonic thought into the mainstream of Renaissance philosophy. In his own writings he amalgamated Christian theology with a broad spectrum of Platonic thinking, thereby creating an original synthesis of both traditions. He repeated, albeit on a different level, the syncretic approach that had been practised by the Fathers of the Church. His concept of \emph{harmonia} is, as in the Pythagorean tradition (which he evokes repeatedly in his
2. *Templum Musicae*, from Robert Fludd’s *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia*, vol. 1 part 2, Oppenheim, 1617, between pp. 159–161. The illustration shows the ‘building’ of the world resting on musical foundations. On the left we see the monochord, whose animating force is Apollo, and whose measures are dictated by Chronos. The three towers on the right denote the hexachords, whose names, pitch and keys are indicated underneath between the columns. The harmonic proportions of music are marked on the numerical ‘chess board’ in the
commentaries *In Timaeum* and *In Phaedrum* and in his musical treatise, *De rationibus musicae*, a musical one. It is a metaphysical principle which lies at the basis of the cosmic order and is rooted in number. It is also a key concept in his aesthetics, which exercised a profound influence on many artists of the Renaissance period.

Ficino's unitarian philosophy was developed further by Pico della Mirandola. His *Heptaplus* (1489), a sevenfold commentary on the first chapter of Genesis, is the most fully developed exposition of Neoplatonic cosmogony. Pico absorbed much of Ficino's philosophy and shared all main tenets of Ficino's ontology. In his explanation of how Being is called into existence by God's will Pico again stresses the Pythagorean element in Platonic philosophy and reverts to the principle of number as the foundation of unity. 'God is called One because he is the beginning of everything, like unity is the beginning of all numbers', he says in *De ente et uno IV*, quoting Dionysius Areopagita, and in *Heptaplus* III.1 he refers directly to the 'modo pythagorico' when he explains the principle of creation.

Unitarian philosophy in the 16th century was not the preserve of the Neoplatonic circle in Florence, but was widely spread and shared by other thinkers and writers, too. One of the most important treatises to deal with this concept was Francesco Giorgio's *De harmonia mundi*. The book is nearly encyclopedic in scope. At its foundation, again, was a mixture of Platonic and Pythagorean principles. For example, in chapter I.5.8, 'Ex unitate primi resultet in omnium consonantia', we can read:

The diversity of all creation and the multeity of formless parts would remain in dissonance, if they were not converted, by means of harmony, into unity. Consonance only occurs . . . when equal and unequal voices are joined in one concord. Consequently, the consonance of cosmic bodies occurs when equal and unequal things are brought to cohesion in that first consonance (which is God), and all things enjoy the benefit of his unity.

middle. Underneath we see Pythagoras in the smithy discovering the ratios of the several consonances. Above the triangular graph, Thalia points towards a polyphonic score. The upper region shows the heavens and the proportionate propensities of their perpetual movements. The harmonic fabric of the universe is reflected in the architecture of the building and its underlying geometric ratios.
The same harmonic and unitarian principle we find at the basis of the many cosmological treatises of the 16th century and, even more important, in the astronomy of the period. It is well known that the 16th century was a period of intense scientific and philosophical enquiry into the working of the universe. The names of Copernicus, Bruno and Kepler are firmly connected with the revolution in astronomical thinking, which led to the replacement of the Ptolemaic conception of the universe. However, this revolution did not destroy the fundamental notion of unity and harmony of the cosmos. There was diversity of opinion on a large variety of assertions: geocentrism or heliocentrism, mobility or immobility of the earth, closed or infinite universe. But when it came to the fundamental question of order of the cosmos, the unitarian tradition of thinking still reigned supreme. Copernicus, in De revolutionibus orbium coelestium, still assumes an ‘orderly arrangement of the universe, which creates a wonderful symmetry and a definite relation of harmony in the motion and magnitude of the orbs’.

Giordano Bruno eliminated the fixed and limited cosmos of his predecessors and instead posited an infinite universe with an infinite number of stars and planets. But all these everchanging elements in a limitless universe are still related to each other in an organic structure and a rational harmony of the whole. The eternal flux of the infinite number of finite particles adds up to a perfect unity of the stable whole. The universe, taken as a whole, has an unchanging universal substance that persists through change of its constituent parts. It transcends the everchanging world of matter, yet unifies and gives wholeness to the sum of its parts.

As becomes apparent from this outline of the tradition of Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy and cosmology, we can indeed presuppose a highly developed concept of unity and harmony in the Renaissance period. It will be now our task to examine the influence of this philosophy of harmony and unity on the theoretical foundations of dance in the Renaissance period. For where else could the ‘celestial ballet’ that God has created be reflected more adequately than in the choreographed movements of the human body?
The Concept of Harmony and Unity in Renaissance Dance Manuals

In the earlier part of the 15th century, a school of Italian Renaissance dance came into existence which was centred at the Sforza court in Milan, and has therefore been called *il ballare lombardo*. The foundations of this Lombard School of Dancing were laid by Domenico da Piacenza (or da Ferrara) and developed further by Antonio Cornazano and Guglielmo Ebreo (who also called himself Giovanni Ambrosio). Together they produced a system of dancing which remained the Italian form of court dance until the end of the 16th century. They wrote three dance manuals, which not only contained the main repertoire of Renaissance court dances, but also a body of theory, which has interesting ramifications with the aesthetics and philosophy of the period.

Domenico was born in Piacenza at the end of the 14th century and worked at the court of Leonello d’Este until 1450. Sometime after this date he transferred to Milan where he arranged, in 1455, together with his assistants Guglielmo and Cornazano, the festive balls for the engagement of Ippolita Sforza with Alfonso of Calabria. Domenico returned to Ferrara in 1456 and continued to work there until his death, of which we have no exact date. But Cornazano stayed at the Sforza court until 1465, establishing his master’s system of dancing in Lombardy and taking it, like Guglielmo, to other Italian courts.

Domenico’s teaching was laid down in a manuscript which was probably produced for the Ducal Library in 1455. The dances included in it were created over some twenty years, but the theoretical introduction appears to have been formulated in the 1440s. Domenico was still firmly rooted in the medieval traditions of philosophy, and he viewed dance through the eyes of a man trained in the scholastic system. In the introduction to this manual he quotes ‘el sauio Aristotel tractasse del motto alquanto in lo x° delheticha’ (1r: the sage Aristotle deals with movement extensively in the tenth chapter of the *Ethics* [i.e. the paragraph on locomotion in the Nicomachean Ethics, X.IV.3]) and how the sage argues that ‘questa arte zentille haedere inse buntade per natura e molte perazidenzia insua operatione’ (fol. 1v: this gentle art has in itself goodness through nature and in its functioning much by way of
accident). Applying this concept to dance, Domenico says that movements have to be divided into natural and artificial ones (naturali and acidentali), that is: movements that are beautiful by nature (‘adoptado per natura de beleza’ 1v), and others constructed by the intellect (‘delo intelecto da dio datto […] vogliando ti imparare e cauare elconstructo de questo zentille mestiero’ 1v). He repeatedly refers to other ‘argomenti boni e utri’ (good and true arguments) of the Peripatetic, and supplements them with the teachings of Boethius on the sepetm artes liberales and, in particular, his concept of misura.40

Cornazano’s manual bears the dedication date 1455. However, this first copy is lost and we have only a second redaction of 1465, preserved in the Vatican library as codex 203. The manual is a highly unoriginal product of a typical courtier, for whom dancing was only one of many occupations. Essentially, he goes over the same ground as Domenico, but omits the, by now unnecessary, philosophical justifications and enlarges on the technical details of dance steps and the rules governing their combinations.

Much more interesting in our context is the work by Guglielmo, whose thoughts on dance appear to have been influenced by more recent philosophical trends. Unfortunately, we know very little about his life.41 The autobiography in the appendix to the codex in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (fonds italien 476, fol. 72r–80v) lists his activities between 1444 and 1474 at the courts of Ferrara, Camerino, Pesaro, Ravenna, Milan, Bologna, Imola, Mantua, Padua, Urbino, Pavia, Forli, Naples, Venice, Faenza.42 His main patrons were the Sforza family; but he was also a frequent guest at the court of Ferrara, worked for Leonello d’Este, and towards the end of his artistic career became precttore of Isabella d’Este. Guglielmo’s autobiography of 147443 indicates that he produced choreographies for courtiers and professional dancers, and that he was involved in other theatrical activities, too. They include the whole spectrum of balli (dances), liveree di maschere (masked balls), moresche, giostre (tournaments), pasti and collazioni (banquets), entrate (entries), trionfi (triumphs), processions, allegorical tournaments, water fêtes and fireworks. Guglielmo achieved greatest esteem as ballerino and maestro di danza. In a letter of Costanzo Sforza of 1 August 1480 we are informed that he was regarded as ‘the foremost in his art’, who possesses ‘the best method and manner of teaching of anyone in the world … No one can be
found in Italy who is equal to him'. At an unknown date he converted to Christianity and took the name Giovanni Ambrosio and consequently improved his position by receiving a knighthood. We have no exact information about his education. But given his elevated artistic status, he will have had contacts with the humanist circles at the courts where he was employed. The theoretical premises of his dance manuals are so strongly influenced by Neoplatonic aesthetics that he must have had some

3. This Ballo fatto con vera Regola, perfetta Theorica, & Mathematica from Fabritio Caroso's Nobilita di Dame, Venice 1600, is a rare example of a floor pattern to be reproduced in a dance manual. The dance is executed by three ladies and three gentlemen, and is meant to interpret a piece of music set to some verses of Ovid.
access to these sources. But where exactly he received this knowledge cannot be said with any certainty.

Guglielmo begins his treatise\textsuperscript{47} by citing opinions of the Ancients on the ‘mundo della musica’ (world of music 3v), i.e. the ‘dolce canto & suaue suono dalchuno ben concordato instrumento’ (sweet song\textsuperscript{48} and soft sound of any well-tuned instrument 4r), and how ‘la dolcezza & uirtu di questa uaga & suaussima scienza hanno al mondo fatto singularissimi effetti et meraugliosi mouiamenti’ (the sweetness and virtue of this pleasing and most gentle science has produced in the world the most unique effects and roused the most wonderful emotions 4v). His sources reveal how the ‘dolce consonanza’ (sweet consonance 3v) of music provides ‘a tutti nostri sensi singular conforto’ (to all our senses a singular comfort 4r), ‘summo piacere’ (supreme pleasure 4v) and ‘aglinfermi spiriti & alle contristate menti leticia singulare’ (the greatest joy to infirm spirits and afflicted minds 5v). Because of this ‘singularissima efficacia’ (most singular efficacy 5r) music deserves the highest status in the system of the seven liberal arts:

La quale arte intra le sette non e la minore annumerata anzi come scienza liberale se mostra sublime et alta, & da douer seguire come laltre dignissima. et quasi al humana natura piu che alchuna dellaltre aptissima & conforme (4r).

[This art is not a minor one within the system of the \textit{septem artes liberales}, but rather reveals itself as a liberal science of sublime and high value, from which follows that it is as dignified as the others. It is nearly more germane and suited to human nature than any of the others.]

The example of David shows that ‘festeuole & honesto danzare & colharmonia del dolce canto’ (festive and honest dancing in harmony with sweet music 5r) are closely linked, and Orpheus teaches us that ‘la dolcezza del suo suaue suono’ (the sweetness of his gentle music 3v) and ‘la forza di quella melodia’ (the force of this melody 4r) will automatically move people to dance. Guglielmom has no doubts about ‘la grande excellenza & suprema dignitate della scienza [della musica] dalla qual larte giocunda et dolce effetto del dazare [sic] e naturalmente proceduto’ (the great excellence and supreme dignity of the science of music, from which the joyful art and pleasant effect of dancing is a natural product 5v).

If dance is a ‘natural product’ of music, how is the one
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generated from the other? In the *proemium* he offers some highly original thoughts on the 'psychology' of dancing:

danzare non e altro che una actione demostratua di fuori di mouimenti spirituali li quali si hanno a concordare colle misurate et perfette consonanze dessa armonia: che per lo nostro audito alle parti intellettie & a i sensi cordiali con diletto descende: doue poi si genera certi dolci com-mouimenti: i quali chome contra sua natura rinchiusi si sforzano quanto possano di uscire fuori: & farsi in atto manifesti. Il qual atto da essa dolcezza & melodia tirato alle parti exteriori colla prop[ri]a persona danzando si dimostra quello q[uais?]i con la uoce & colharmonia con-gionto & concordante che dal accordato et dolce canto ouero dallascal-tante et misurato suono. (5v–6r)

[Dancing is nothing other than an action that shows outwardly the spiritual movements, which must agree with the measures and perfect concords of harmony. These descend into our intellect through our hearing and to the senses of the heart with delight. There, they produce sweet commotions, which are against their nature imprisoned and endeavour as much as possible to escape and to reveal themselves. This act draws to the outside this sweetness and melody and expresses them through our dancing body. It proved itself to be united and in accord with the voice and the musical harmony, which arise from the harmonious and sweet song or the measured sound we are listening to.]

From this definition we can take it that a) dance has a spiritual origin, b) it is in concordance with measured and perfect harmonies, c) these harmonies relate to our intellect and to our emotions, d) the harmonies give us pleasure and stir our affections, e) these affections seek to find exterior expression, f) the dancing body is a manifestation of these feelings, and g) the dancing must be executed in perfect harmony with the measured sound of song and instrumental music.

Dance as a ‘demonstrative action of spiritual movements’ is based on harmonic structures, which join the human world (including the arts) with Nature. There exists a universal harmony which is ‘alla nostra natura & alla composizione delli quatro elementi grandemente colligata.’ (closely linked to our nature and to the composition of the four elements 4v). It finds expression in polyphonic music, whose harmonies work like the balanced composition of the four Empedoclean elements, fire, air, water and earth: ‘canto e principalmente fundato & firmato in quattro uoci principali le qual sonno concordante & conforme alle quattro nostre elementale compositioni par la qual concordanza hauemo lessere et sustentamento del nostro uiuere’ (music is principally
based on and fixed in four principal voices, which are concordant and like the four Elements. Because of this concord we exist and sustain life 15r). There is a great harmonical chain that joins Nature and human existence.

Guglielmo's description of the nature of dance places the main emphasis on the principle of harmony and concord. In the first chapter he defines 'la scienza & arte del danzare' (the science of art and dancing) as 'vn atto dimostratiuo concordante alla misurata melodia dalchuna uoce ouero suono' (a demonstrative act concordant with the measured melody of any vocal or instrumental music 7v). It requires 'vna dolce & misurata concordanza di uoce & di tempo partito con ragione' (a sweet and measured concord of voice and rationally structured rhythm 8r), and 'per lo quale bisogna che la persona che uuole danzare: si regoli et misuri & a quello perfettamente si concordi ne i suoi mouimenti si et in tal modo che i suoi passi siano al ditto tempo et misura perfettamente concordante & colla ditta misura regulati' (against which the person who wants to dance has to regulate and measure himself and with which he sets his movements in concord. This happens in such a way that his steps follow the same beat, so that they are perfectly concordant with the measure that regulates them 8r).

The art of dance, as it was devised by Guglielmo, embodies the doctrines of Pythagorean and Neoplatonic philosophy of numbers and proportions. His measured system of dance fulfils all the requirements Plato sets out for a true art that reflects the eternal goodness and the absolute beauty of God's creation. Dance as a harmonic art is for Guglielmo a 'virituosa contemptatione' (virtuoso contemplation 6r) of the universal harmonies around us. It offers insight into the rational order of the movements of the cosmos. But it can only do so, if the dancing is equally perfect, for which 'chiara & demostratiua ragione' (clear and demonstrative reason 6r) is required. Like all arts, good dancing requires training, practice and experience. Clear rules and guidelines are needed, 'le qual seruino non solamente in questarte: ma in tutte laltri liberali' (which serve not only in this, but in all other liberal arts 20r). For this reason, he outlines in several chapters what he considers to be the main rules of the 'honest and virtuous science of dancing', hoping that thereby 'potra ciascuno facilmente & con securita in ogni festivo luogo con summa laude danzare & tal
uirtute optimamente exercitare’ (everybody can dance with ease and confidence in any festive place, earning the highest praise, and exercise most excellently this virtue 6v).

Guglielmo believes in the rational order of things, from which beauty, goodness and virtue are derived. In terms of dancing it is therefore essential to distinguish between the ‘science’ of dancing and the irrational, ugly and obscene dances of uneducated country folk (19r). Goodness of dancing depends on the goodness of the dancer. His virtuous mind and lofty sentiments, combined with a trained and developed intellect, make him a person whose body and mind are in harmony with each other. He can therefore ‘tune in’ with the harmony of the world around and express both in the harmony of music and dancing.49

Dance, therefore, is a medium that unites the human and the natural world, mind and body, intellect and feeling, and different arts, in particular the art of movement and the art of music (‘el danzare sia tratto & originato da essa melodia chome atto demostratuito della sua propia [sic] natura. Senza la qual harmonia ouero consonanza larte del danzare niente seria ne fare si poria’: Dancing is drawn and born from music as an outward show of its true nature. Without this harmony or consonance the art of dancing would not be anything, nor could it be done 16r). Guglielmo rejects the idea of dancing without instrumental or vocal music, because the one is naturally derived from the other (16r–16v). But later (19r) he agrees that movements with a precise rhythmic order are a ‘cosa naturale’ (natural thing), while the use of music is ‘accidentale’ (accidental), but nevertheless ‘commen-datiua’ (commendable). The union between both arts is desirable, because both are based on the same rhythmic and harmonic principles, they both appeal to our senses, our intellect and our emotions, they both have an interior and an exterior side to them, they both effect human beings in similar ways and have similar functions (i.e. ‘porgere al cuore conforto et notrimento per sua propia [sic] natura’: to profer comfort to the heart and nutrition to his own nature 15v). But they are not identical. In their form and substance they are both autonomous and independent of each other.

Unfortunately, neither Guiglielmo nor any of the other dance masters make any mention of the union with other arts in theatrical dancing. They are all aware that dances are not only
there to be performed, but also to be watched, and that they must be composed in a manner pleasing ‘alla moltitudine di resguardanti’ (to the multitude of spectators 14v). For that reason, décor, costumes, musical accompaniment and dramatic expression of the dancers were factors each dancing master had to take into consideration in his choreographies.

That such dances could indeed provide a ‘magnifico spettacolo’ is expressly stated in a description of a banquet held in Pesaro in 1475, where we can read about a piva danced by 120 youths, which ‘era el più splendido et el più magnifico spetaculo che fosse mai veduto, veder leuar tante bandiere et capi di castelli et penne et cisti d’oro, tuti ad un tempo et cun degna misura’ (was the most splendid and magnificent spectacle ever seen, with so many banners and trimmings and feathers and golden filigree, all moving at the same time with dignified rhythm).50

In the case quoted here, the costumes and props related to the occasion of a festive meal. Normally, the dancers were wearing the same clothes as during the rest of the evening. But because many dances were meant to express certain emotions, they could take on a distinctly dramatic or pantomimic character.51 The manuals therefore included instructions on which kind of attitude or facial expression the dancers had to adopt. This means that during the dance the courtiers assumed a character and played a role which differed from their everyday selves. They interpreted in theatrical terms the theme of the dance (usually indicated by the title) and performed not only a social etiquette, but represented a dramatic action. From there it was only a small step for the ballo to develop into a balletto narrativo.

Although these court dances could become highly theatrical in character, they differed from the mythological and allegorical dances, whose execution lay in the hands of ‘saltatores non vulgares’ (real dancers, not amateurs), as one memorial book said.52 The costumes, props and scenery employed were specially designed for the performance. But how much the dance movements differed from the balli nobili is impossible to judge.

The same applies to the ballo in maschera and the moresca. The Masked Balls were performed by courtiers, but the costume and mask allowed them to step outside their court roles and perform dances which in form and spirit differed from the ceremonial dances that were part of the normal court life. The moresca53 was
originally a dance for professional artists, who imitated the battles between Moors and Christians. The martial element expressed in the form of duels or sword fights lost its significance in the 15th century and was replaced with an emphasis on strange costumes, exotic masks, or comical behaviour. The *primo ballerino* or *maestro di danza* was often employed as *buffone* (not dissimilar to the later *Arlecchino*), and other roles could be played by highly trained and therefore virtuoso amateur dancers from the court society. In the 16th century they were regularly performed as *intermedi* and could even be related to the theme or plot of the main play.

Because of these developments in 16th-century dance it is impossible to draw an exact line between ceremonial and theatrical dances, although they clearly differed in spirit and function. Bearing in mind that the dance masters were responsible for choreographing both types of dance, it is likely that they made use of the same choreutic material for both occasions. The surviving documents make it clear that the execution of theatrical dances must have been more elaborate and more virtuoso than ceremonial court dances, and that the scenic apparatus was far more sophisticated. But as to the relation between the theatrical, dramatic, choreutic and musical elements, the dance masters kept their professional secrets under closed lid and have abstained from any theoretical statements on the topic.

However, I have been able to find one document, which reveals that in Renaissance dance circles (and we can speak of properly organized circles, as one documented *societas in docendo tripudiare ac cantare* in Florence indicates) theoretical discussions on the aesthetics and ethics of dancing did take place, and that the participants in these debates were not cut off from the current philosophical trends.

The document I am referring to is a short and little known 'Dialogue on Dance' by Rinaldo Corso, printed in Venice in 1550. Its main purpose was a defence of the art of dancing against the indictment of being 'molto sciocco, & senza sale' (very foolish and trivial 4r) and of enticing people to immoral behaviour. The author's mouthpiece, called Cirneo, agrees that there are occasions when dancing has indeed shown such traits, but that these festivities are a degeneration or aberration of what once was a lofty, virtuous, even sacred art form. The dances of plain country folk have nothing in common with the original character of
dances, because these were inspired not by *pazzia*, but by *furore*, which is a divine gift. 'Et così Poeta, chi Balla bene, come chi fa bene versi. Onde tal furore merta il nome di Sacro.' (He who dances well is a poet just like he who writes fine verses. Therefore, divine inspiration deserves to be called holy 10v). He compares dance with the other theatrical arts and finds many similarities. They are all based on the principle of imitation. But what is dance imitating? In its outer form, it imitates human behaviour and has therefore a dramatic structure similar to a five-act play. But underneath it imitates a more fundamental principle, that of 'sweet, perfect harmony'. For Corso, dancing consists of

mouimenti del corpo fatti secondo la proportion del tempo . . . egli si viene à partire, & à misurare il tempo con grandissimo diletto, di chi stà à vedere. Et aggiuntoui il suono ne sègue quel la doppia, & soae armonia, che Homero disse esser perfecta. (10v)

[Bodily movements carried out according to proportional timing. The dancer undertakes to structure and measure the rhythm to the delight of his spectators. Adding music to it, one arrives at this doubly sweet harmony, which Homer calls the perfect one.]

It is a fundamental characteristic of dance that it joins opposites into perfect unity. To start with, 'nel ballo congiugnesi la destra dell 'huomo alla sinistra della Donna, & così rappresentasi l vn'union perfetta della natural humana' (in dancing the right hand of the man joins the left of the lady, thereby representing the perfect union of human nature 5r). Furthermore, it brings to agreement the beauty of the soul and that of the body, as already the Ancients knew: 'saui estimarono il Ballo esser vn'Armonia dell'animo, & del corpo ben composti insieme' (the sages judged dancing to be a harmonious union of a well-compounded body and soul 11v). Dancing is held to be beneficial for human beings, because it educates towards harmony. In fact, it is viewed to be a central human trait that differentiates man from the animal world (13r). The human being is a reflection of God's perfect creation, just like dance is a reflection of the order and movement of the whole universe:

Quando (si come scriue Dante)
 l'amor diuino
 Mosse da prima quelle cose belle;
 Esso apparue con quell' antico amore, & considerarono, che i muouimenti delle stelle erranti, e l continuo girar de Cielì, li quali seco traggon le fisse,
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accomagnati da quel tâto, & si dolce suono, che noi per l'angustia, & debolezza de nostri sensi caper non possiamo, fosse vn numeroso ballo, & pien di ragione. (13v)

[When, as Dante says (in Inferno I, 39–40), divine love first set those beautiful things in motion, it appeared with this old love (i.e. Eros). It was believed that the movement of the planets and the eternal motion of the skies around the fixed stars, accompanied by this ever-so-sweet sound, which we — because of the narrow and feeble abilities of our senses — cannot hear, was regarded a rhythmical dance following a rational order.]

This is Pythagorean and Platonic notions of world harmony put in a nutshell and applied to the art of dance! The author goes even one step further and derives from this unitarian concept of harmony the need to unite in dance the other arts:

Nell'arte dell'ballare son tutte l'altre arti vnite. Et comminciando dalla Pittura con tutte le simili, elle ci sono, perciò che voi vedete questi, che ballano, & saltando finger tutti gli arti, & accomodar le membra in quàì modi è vogliono. Della Musica è chiaro, ch'ella è nel Ballo. Mà eeci insieme, quell'arte, la qual ne insegnà i costumi, che se tenere à memoria quel, che v'ho' detto di sopra, nò si còcede il fare alcuna sconueneuolezza nel ballo. (16v)

[In the art of dancing all other arts are united. From painting to all other similar arts, they are all (contained) in it. For that reason, you can see the dancers imitating all other arts, when they arrange their movements in the many ways one can choose. Music, obviously forms part of dancing. Together, these arts establish the manners, which — if you bear in mind what I said before — do not allow any unseemly oddities in dance.]

As these quotations from the works of Guglielmo and Corso indicate, the harmonical principles of the movement of the stars — which Pythagoras reflected on — and their translation into aesthetic terms — as Plato and the Neoplatonics proposed — were given concrete representation in the dances of the Renaissance period. Connected to this principle was the idea of a union of the arts. Theatrical dance as a composite art form was an ideal medium to fulfil this dream. However, an examination of how close the theatrical practice of the era came to this ideal, would require a detailed analysis in a separate essay. Suffice it here to state that the close integration of dance and music was often guaranteed by the personal union of maestro di ballo and composer (Cesare Negri being the best known example). If the choreographer did not write the music and lyrics himself, he availed himself of other artists who were more experienced in those arts.
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As a good example of such a close collaboration between three artists I only mention the *Giuoco della cieca*, which served as an intermezzo in the 1602 version of Guarini’s *Pastor fido*. The author informs us how the poet composed the text of this ballet-scene: first he had an expert devise the ballet choreography incorporating therein an imitation of those actions peculiar to the familiar game of blind-man’s buff. This ballet was then set to music by Luzzascho, an outstanding composer of our time. Finally the poet set the words to this music. (...) All this would appear impossible to do and perhaps quite beyond belief if he had not done it many other times in other ballets made even more difficult by a subject of which he was not the author, unlike this one. For in these other ballets he had not only the job of putting words to music, but also of determining from the actions of a dance an argument with the features of a plot.59

In these creations, the arts of music, poetry and dancing were closely interwoven. If one adds the brilliant costumes, the colourful scenery, and the complex machinery, one can imagine that the resulting performance worked upon the audience like a *Gesamtkunstwerk* and could indeed be interpreted as a perfect and harmonious reflection of the ‘celestial ballet’ God has created. During the Renaissance period, the philosophical and aesthetic foundations were established for the development of a complex and sophisticated art of dancing. Neoplatonic philosophy and Pythagorean cosmology were integral and key elements of this art. At the end of the Renaissance period, Sir John Davies produced a famous ‘poetics’ of dance, where he attempted to describe Terpsichore’s creations as ‘the shadow’ of the ‘heavenly state’, thus expressing and summing up many of the concepts discussed in this essay:

17 Dancing, bright lady, then began to be,
   When the first seed whereof the world did spring,
   The fire, air, earth, and water, did agree
   By Love’s persuasion, nature’s mighty king,
   To leave their first discorded combating,
   And in a dance such measure to observe,
   As all the world their motion should preserve.

18 Since when they still are carried in a round,
   And changing come one in another’s place;
   Yet do they neither mingle nor confound,
   But every one doth keep the bounded space
   Wherein the dance doth bid it turn or trace.
This wondrous miracle did Love devise,
For dancing is Love's proper exercise.

20 How was this goodly architecture wrought?
   Or by what means were they together brought?
   They err that say they did concur by chance;
   Love made them meet in a well-ordered dance!

23 Reason has both their pictures in her treasure;
   Where Time the measure of all moving is
   And dancing is a moving all in measure

26 What eye doth see the heaven, but doth admire
   When it the moving of the heavens doth see?
   Myself, if I to heaven may once aspire,
   If that be dancing, will a dancer be.

96 Lo! This is Dancing's true nobility,
   Dancing, the child of Music and of Love;
   Dancing itself, both love and harmony,
   Where all agree and all in order move;
   Dancing, the art that all arts do approve;
   The fair character of the world's consent,
   The heaven's true figure, and th'earth's ornament.

110 Concord's true picture shineth in this art,
   Where divers men and women ranked be,
   And every one doth dance a several part,
   Yet all as one in measure do agree,
   Observing perfect uniformity;
   All turn together, all together trace,
   And all together honour and embrace.60

NOTES

1 For a more detailed discussion of the concept of the Union of the Arts in the Renaissance period see my essay 'Theatre Performances at Italian Renaissance Festivals: Multi-media Spectacles or Gesamtkunstwerke?', in Ronnie Mulryne & Margaret Shewring (eds.), Italian Renaissance Festivals and Their European Influence (New York, 1992).

2 My brief delineation of the main tenets of Pythagorean thought is based on Peter Gorman, Pythagoras: A Life (London, 1979); James A. Philip, Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreans (Toronto, 1966); Walter Burkert, Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism
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7 *See Laws* 653e–654a and the rest of Book 2 for a discussion of the effect of the 'order in movements, which we term rhythm and harmony' on human beings.

8 *See Laws* 654b, 802a, 813b. A detailed discussion of the distinction between noble and improper dances is given in Book 7, 814e–816d.

9 *Timaeus*, 47d–e.

10 Of fundamental importance — also for transmitting the Pythagorean and Platonic concept of world harmony into the Middle Ages — was Cicero's *Somatic Scip Ionis* and Macrobius' commentary on it, Ovid's last book of the *Metamorphoses*, and Martianus Capella's *De nuptis Philologice et Mercurii*. For Pythagorean influence on Roman culture see Alberto Gianola, *La fortuna di Pitagora presso i Romani dalle origini fino al tempo di Augusto* (Catania) 1921 and Leonardo Ferrero, *Storia del pitagorismo nel mondo romano* (Turin, 1955).

11 *Ibidem*, ch. 7.

12 *See the chapter on Pythagoras in Justin Martyr's Exhortation to the Greeks* (Cohortatio 19), which was of considerable influence on later Christian writers. On the continuation of Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy in the Middle Ages see Leo Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony* (Baltimore, 1963), Kathi Meyer-Baer, *Music of the Spheres and the Dance of Death* (Princeton, NJ, 1970); Barbara Münzel-
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of Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy into aesthetic language has been demonstrated by Leo Spitzer, loc. cit. (note 12).


A rare exception was the School of Chartres, which for this reason was of paramount importance for Medieval art, architecture and literature. See Otto von Simson, The Gothic Cathedral 2nd edn (New York, 1972).


See Francis Petrarchae . . . opera quae extant omnia (Basileae, 1581), vol. 2, 1052.


Klibansky sums up Petrarch’s attempts, and failure, to read the Greek manuscripts in his possession: ‘Like the prophet, he saw the object of his desire, but was unable to grasp it.’ Klibansky, The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition, 1981 edition, p. 70.

The development of Neoplatonic thought in the early Renaissance has been described in Nesca A. Robb, Neoplatonism of the Italian Renaissance (London, 1935), and most recently by James Hankins, Plato in the Italian Renaissance, 2 vols (Leiden, 1990).

See John Wilson Taylor, Georgius Gemisthus Pletho’s Criticism of Plato and Aristotle (Menasha, WI, 1921).


On Ficino see Paul Oskar Kristeller, The Philosophy of Ficino (Gloucester, MA, 1964).


See Opera omnia Ioannis Pici Mirandolae, 2 vols (Basileae, 1572–1573) or the modern edition of Eugenio Garin, De hominibus dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno, e scritti vari;
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(Florence, 1942). Some of the key texts are also available in English: Pico della Mirandola, On the Dignity of Man, On Being and One, Heptaplus, translated by C. G. Wallis, P. J. W. Miller, D. Carmichael (Indianapolis, 1965).

29 Franceschi Georgi ... De harmonia mundi totius cantica tria (Venetiis, 1525), fol. M1v.

30 Giovanni Battista Riccioli’s Almagestum novum, astronomiam veterem novamque complectens (Bologna, 1651) contains on page XXVI–XLVII a chronicon duplex astronomorum, vel astrologorum, cosmographorum, aut polyhistorum, qui astronomica, vel cosmographica propius attigerunt, which names 137 astronomers from the 15th and 16th centuries.

31 For a general history of astronomical thinking from the Greeks to the early modern period see John L. E. Dreyer, History of the Planetary Systems from Thales to Kepler (Cambridge, 1906).

32 The continuation of harmonical and unitarian thinking from antiquity to the Enlightenment has been demonstrated most succinctly in Rudolf Haase, Geschichte des harmonikal en Pythagoreismus (Vienna, 1969).


35 There is, of course, an extensive specialist literature on Renaissance dance. Amongst the more general works I should like to mention Patrizia Catelli et al. (eds), Mestra et arte del danzare: Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro e la danza nelle corti italiane del XV secolo, Exh. cat. (Pesaro, 1987); Ingrid Brainard, The Art of Courtly Dancing in the Early Renaissance (West Newton, MA, 1981); Mark Franko, The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography (c.1416–1589) (Birmingham, Alabama, 1986); Mabel Dolmetsch, Dances of Spain and Italy, 1400–1600 (London, 1954).

I should like to express my gratitude to Diana Cruickshank and Lieven Baert, whose knowledge in the reconstruction of Renaissance dances has been a great help to me, particularly when it came to clarifying some of the more obscure technical terminology employed in Renaissance dance manuals.

36 See Alberto Gallo, ‘Il “ballare lombardo” (circa 1435–1475)’, Studi musicali, 8 (1979), 61–84; and A. Potremoli & P. La Rocca, Il ballare lombardo: Teorie e prassi coreutica nella festa di corte del XV secolo (Milan, 1987).

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Because of the many inaccuracies in the printed editions, I have preferred to work with the original manuscripts.

38 The older literature of Domenico always gives the date 1416, which is however a misinterpretation of the old shelfmark 'MCCCXXXVI'. The manuscript is now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris: Fonds italien 972.

39 This distinction is repeated on fol. 2r: 'Elsaio Aristotele dice in lo x° che in tutte le cosse e alcuna buntade naturalmente e intedilecto e alcuo bene'. This does not appear to be a direct quotation. I think that Domenico refers to Nic. Eth. I.VI:2: 'But Good is predicated alike in the categories of substance, quality and relation;' yet that which is by itself, or substance, is prior in nature to the relative, which seems to be a sort of offshoot or accident of substance'. He combines this with Aristotle's reasonings on virtue and art in II.I.3–7, i.e. that 'the faculties given us by Nature are bestowed on us first in a potential form; we exhibit their actual exercise afterwards... Were this not so, there would be no need for teachers of the arts'. In terms of dance this means for Domenico that Nature has given all humans the gift to move (the substance), but to turn it into an art (the offshoot, or accident), practice and tuition are required. This polarity between the substantial and the accidental became a common trait in all subsequent dance manuals. Cornazano says on page 6v: 'El dançare contiene in se nou mouimenti naturali et corporei et tre accidentalii', and Guglielmo reasons that 'essendo tal scienza di danzare cosa naturale et accidentalii' (19r), the latter needs 'nel humano intelletto bene imprimere' (6r).

40 'Sapiamo noi che la mexura e parte de prudentia et e ne le arte liberale / No sapiamo che la memoria e madre de la prudentia laquale se aquisita per lunga experientia / no sapiamo che questa virtu e parte de armonia e de muxicha' (2v).

41 The most up-to-date biographical information can be found in the collected papers of the symposium Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro e la danza nelle corti italiane del XV secolo. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Pesaro 16/18 luglio 1987, a cura di Maurizio Padovan (Pisa, 1990); Pontremoli La Rocca, Il ballo lombardo, 44–64, and Alberto Gallo, 'L'autobiografia artistica di Giovanni Ambrosio (Guglielmo Ebreo) da Pesaro', Studi Musicali 12 (1983), 189–202.

42 See Alberto Gallo, 'L'autobiografia artistica di Giovanni Ambrosio', 191–92. His artistic career appears to have begun in 1437 in Urbino on the occasion of the marriage of Federigo da Montefeltro and Gentile Brancalone, alluded to in the Paris codex, f. ital. 973, fol. 22v. The reason for commencing his curriculum vitae artisticae with the year 1444 is likely to be the fact that this was the date he became apprenticed to Domenico da Piacenza, who, in 1444, in Ferrara, organized the marriage celebrations of Leonello di Nicolò d'Este with Maria di Alfonso d'Aragona.

43 In the Paris manuscript, f. ital. 474.

44 The letter is reprinted in Barbara Sperti, 'Questions Concerning the Life and Works of Guglielmo Ebreo', in Maurizio Padovan, Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro e la danza nelle corti italiane, pp. 46–7.

45 See the documents in Ada Melica, 'Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro, Maestro di Ballo del Quattrocento', Rassegna Musicale 29 (1959), 51–60.

46 The catalogue of the library of the Montefeltro in Urbino contains an entry of a now lost codex, entitled Ioannis Ambrosii Equitis Aurati et Chorearum Praeceptoris Excellentissimi Liber Materna lingua Compositus de Arte et modo saltandi sive Choreas Ducendi. See Alberto Gallo, 'L'autobiografia artistica', p. 195.

47 There are altogether nine copies extant. I use the codex in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris: Fonds italien 973, originally belonging to the Sforza library, and produced by Pagano da Rho in 1463.

48 The term canto does not only mean 'song', but is also generically used for 'music'.

49 See 19r–19v and 23r–23v.

50 Le nozze di Costanzo Sforza e Camilla d'Aragona celebrate a Pesaro nel Maggio 1475.
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Narrazione anonima (Florence, 1946), 45. Preceding the dance there was another 'bellissimo et superbo spectaculo' (39) depicting the movements of the planets 'Cum l'orden lor per lo celeste regno' (41) and how 'cum altre girarchie, che in cel fe' dio. El mouer lieto de sue habitacione. El zodiaco et le lucente stelle. Facendo signi, et pace et unione'. (44) Such 'celestial ballets' would have been rather unthinkable without the influence of Pythagorean philosophy of unity and harmony of the universe.


52 Gabrieli Paveri Fontana ad Antonium Guidobonum ducalem apud Venetos oratorem nuptialis celebrato (1455), in Emilio Motta, Nozze principesche nel quattrocento: Corredi, inventari e descrizioni (Milan, 1894), 57–66 (66).


54 However, Castiglione insists in Il Cortegiano II. 11 that the moresca is not suited for the courtier to be executed in public.

55 See, for example, the types of performances Guglielmo was involved in, and which he documented in his autobiography quoted above.


57 It is seldom mentioned in dance histories, and copies seem to be quite rare. I use the second edition in the BNC Florence: Pal 12. 11. 1. 13, which has the title: DIALOGO DEL BALLO DI RINALDO CORSO [Vignette] In Bologna per Anselmo Giaccarello, M D LVII. and consists of 20 fol: A–E4, paginated only on recto leaves: 2–20. This work carries on the last page the date 'Correggio il 17. di Gennaio. 1554,' and is introduced with a dedication 'All' Illvstrissimo Principe il primo Genito d'Vrbano', dated 'Il XXVii. di Maggio. M D LVI.' The BNC Florence also preserves a copy of the first edition in the Raccolta Tordi, which was printed 'IN VENETIA Per Sigismondo Bordogna; M D L V.' (16 leaves: A–D4, pag. 3–16 on recto only; the text is undated and there is no dedication). The pamphlet was published in response to Simeon Zuccolo da Cologna, La pazzia del ballo, Padua 1549 (there exists a reprint of 1969 in the series Biblioteca Musica Bononensis). On Corso see the Dizionario biografico degli Italiani, vol. 29 (Rome, 1983), 687–90.

58 On page 18r he acknowledges the fact that there are abstract dances, but also these are imitative, he says, in as much as they follow the sound of music.
