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Sixteenth Century Dances

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But what shall be said of Selmer (1844-1910), the most advanced pioneer of what may be called the New School? A mere enumeration of his works will show into what fields he has carried Norwegian art. The Carnival in Flanders lives again in his music,—the drinking bouts, the revellings, the dances, the amorous couples, are all faithfully portrayed. He is indeed the Berlioz of the North, and as fond as was Berlioz of bizarre themes and of large, bold outlines. Like Tintoretto in painting, he is always at his best when working on a large canvas. The grand ideas of the Greek Æschylus find a noble reproduction in the tone-pictures of Selmer. The giant nailed to the rock, the wrath of Jupiter, the horrors of the silent wilderness, the tortures of the vulture, the sublime courage and endurance of Prometheus himself—all are expressed in imposing and unexpected forms in the 'Prometheus' of this composer. Then when he debouches into the Oriental, and gives us the 'March of the Janissaries against Athens'—his noble baritone solo and chorus with full orchestra—how realistic, how overwhelming is the effect! Or when he sketches the carillons of Mechlin and Antwerp, how idyllic is his treatment! Selmer brought a new spirit into Norwegian music, and carried it into strange and marvellous fields of expressiveness.

There are however other masters of Norwegian music who may well stand second to Selmer or by his side—Haarklon, for instance, who has elaborated the Norwegian oratorio, having composed the great work, 'The Creation, Humanity, and the Messiah'; and Elling, another oratorio writer of less decided genius. Schjelderup has drawn on more familiar themes for his 'Midsummer Night on the Fjord,' and his Symphonic-poem 'A Sunday Morning,' which speaks the genuine Norwegian spirit. This latter composition may be compared with Sigurd Lie's 'Easter Suite.' Quite as essentially Norwegian are Ivan Holler's Idyll 'Hanskveld,' Ole Olson's Suite, 'Nidaros,' and Halvorsens' Suite, 'Vasantasena.'

The Suite seems the favourite form of the later composers, while if we go back to an earlier date we shall find cantatas and the music for dramas such as Hjelm's cantata 'The Light,' Udbye's music for the drama of 'Blom,' and Conradi's music for the drama of 'Gudbrandsdølerne,' the most popular and successful forms.

From this rapid survey we see how Norwegian music has long transcended the days of the simple Wandering Minstrels, and how loftily it soars. But as its themes change, let us hope that its true national spirit will not change and be forgotten, that the voice of nature, the primitive charms of hills and scenery, the pine tree forests, the smiling fjords—the scenes and spirit in which the art was cradled—will continue to live in all its future manifestations, and will ever be held in affectionate memory by the Masters of Norwegian Music.

In the posters announcing the recent concert of the Enniscorthy Choral Union (January 25, 1916) there appeared in large type: "The Lay of the Noll," by Ramberg. Conductor, Mr. J. W. Dry, Mus. Bach.'

## SIXTEENTH CENTURY DANCES.

BY MABEL DOLMETSCH.

Within recent years a number of people have laboured devotedly to collect the traditional old dances which have survived amongst our village folk. Doubtless these dances in the process of transmission through centuries have undergone many modifications. A study of old treatises on dancing should therefore prove helpful and interesting. I propose to describe some of the dances most in favour in England, France, Spain, and Italy during the 16th century. Much that is confused and incorrect has been written of late on this subject, chiefly because the writers, not being dancers, have made no attempt to perform these dances according to the minute descriptions in the 16th century treatises; they have instead reproduced and embroidered the opinions of others no better informed than themselves, namely, the late 17th century and early 18th century writers, whose authority is far from reliable, for at that time much ignorance prevailed concerning the dances of the 16th century. Feuillet, who wrote at the close of the 17th century an admirable treatise on the dances then in vogue, had never seen Arbeau's 'Orchésographie.' He says in his preface that it is mentioned in the 'Dictionnaire Historique de Furetière,' but that the book is no longer to be found. He imagines that Arbeau used a kind of notation to record his dances, akin to that which he himself brought to such perfection. This opinion was reproduced by Weaver. In reality Arbeau merely used certain names and abbreviations, to indicate, not exactly steps, but the elementary movements of which steps are composed. These indications were placed side by side with the notes of music with which they corresponded.

### THE SPANISH PAVAN.

Much more thorough are the works of the Italian ballet-masters of this epoch: that of Fabritio Caroso, the Venetian, published in 1581, and dedicated to Bianca da Medici, and that of Cesare Negri, published at Milan in 1604 and dedicated to Philip III. of Spain, which latter work is complete to the minutest details. Both the authors were old men, and give many dances of a much earlier date, some of which are even described as 'Ballo d'Incerto,' their origin being lost. Such a one is the 'Pavaniglia' or Spanish Pavan, given by Caroso, the tune of which was popular in England, for it is also to be found in 'Robinson's School of Musick' and the 'Fitzwilliam Virginal Book':

Ex. 1.

Pavaniglia (Lute Tablature).

FABRITIO CAROSO, 1581.



Pavaniglia (Lute Tablature). CESARE NEGRI, 1604.

The Spanish Paven ('Fitzwilliam Virginal Book'). JOHN BULL.

(Same tune in 'Robinson's School of Musick,' 1609.)

The dance has sixteen strains. With the exception of the first, which begins with the usual deep reverence, and the last, which finishes in the same manner, all the strains keep their first and last four bars unchanged, the intervening eight bars being filled by a great variety of steps, which become more and more florid as the dance proceeds.

The man in these dances had frequently a more difficult part to perform, the lady being given easier and milder steps. Negri, in his directions for dancing the 'Corrente' (Coranto), says, 'If the lady cannot do the said *Passi in fuga* she will do the *seguiti ordinarij con saltino*, and instead of the *sotto piedi* she will make the *ripresa*, and instead of the *recacciate*, she will do the *fioretti spezzati*.'

#### THE GALLIARD.

In the galliard the man's steps required great agility and skill, whereas those of the lady were distinguished by lightness and precision without entailing the same amount of physical exertion, which would have been considered immodest. The foundation of the galliard was the *cinque passi*, or *cinque pace* as the English have it, which consisted of four steps and the cadenza—a high jump followed by a posture. Caroso says on this subject:

Although the name of *cinque passi* is an ancient corruption, there being actually but four steps and the cadenza, nevertheless, this being so, as I do not wish to appear superior, I will give them their usual name of *cinque passi*.

In 'Much Ado about Nothing,' Act 2, Scene 1, Beatrice says:

'Wooring, wedding and repenting is like a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque-pace. . . . and then comes repentance, and, with his bad legs, falls into the cinque-pace faster and faster till he sink into his grave.'

This mention of the bad legs of repentance refers to the four steps in the ordinary *cinque passi*, which consist of a kind of limping hop called by the Italians *zoppetto*, in which one of the feet was held in the air and put down after the beat. Caroso thus describes it:

The *Zoppetto* is done (beginning with the feet together, or otherwise as it may so occur in the galliard) by raising both feet, one rather high from the ground, and the other moving forward . . . the which effect has taken the name of the *Zoppetti*, because, holding one of the feet raised in front, one goes with the other hopping and jumping like a lame person.

These *cinque passi* could be reduced to two or three steps, being then performed slowly, or so far varied and increased in number that they required to be done *prestissimo*. Many other steps belonged to the galliard of this epoch: the *molinello* or little mill, which was the *cinque passi* performed in gyration; the *fioretti*; the *campanella* or little bell (so called from the swinging of the foot like a bell-clapper); the *capriola*, which was a high jump during which the feet passed and repassed one another three, four, and even five times; the *capriola spezzata* or 'cut caper' ('Twelfth Night,' Act 1, Scene 3, Sir Toby, 'What is thy excellence in a galliard, Knight?' Sir Andrew, 'Faith, I can cut a caper'); the *capriola intrecciata* or interlaced caper, corrupted by the French into 'entrechat,' under which name it is still performed; and many more. The galliard held such an important place in the dancing of this period that Negri devotes a whole section of his book to its intricacies. Here is an extract from his general remarks:

The cavalier about to dance the galliard, in a fête, with a lady, wearing his cloak and his sword, will let both corners of his cloak hang down. In passing down the ball-room, he will take off his hat low before the principal people of authority present, which he will do facing these noblemen. At the same time he will make a short reverence, carrying his body straight and bending his knees outwards to give grace. Going then to fetch the lady, he will stand in front of her in a straight line, with the right foot forward and will make a slow reverence as previously described. The lady will rise and will make the slow reverence with her left foot, with the same movements and grace as the cavalier, the which at the same time drawing back his left foot, will make another short reverence, to honour the lady. Then raising his right arm, and the lady her left, he will feign to kiss her hand with grace and decorum, taking the middle of the lady's hand, and holding it above his own. They will then pass before the principal personages, saluting them with a half-reverence [called by Arbeau *congé*] in passing. After this the lady will turn facing the cavalier, he standing with his right foot forward and she with her left, and, letting go her hand, he will feign to kiss it, making a reverence as before. Then, promenading a little, he will take his cloak by the border and arrange it as before explained, and will put his hand on the hilt of his sword as already described [to stop it from swinging]. Those who dance the galliard must carry themselves well. The dance finished, they will make the reverence together, and he will take the lady, kissing her hand with respect, and leading her to her place, repeating the same actions done in the beginning.

Whereas the Italian, French, and English galliards of this period had six beats in a bar, the Spanish galliard was in common time. The example given by Caroso contains no *cinque passi*, and but few of the other steps common to the Italian galliard. In two Spanish music-books—one by Ruiz de Ribayaz, published in Madrid in 1677, and the other by Gaspar Sanz, published in Zaragoza, 1697, containing examples of the most popular dance tunes of the time—all the galliards are in common time. I have come across English galliards of the beginning of the 18th century also in common time, but the dance had by this time lost its original character.

## THE FRENCH PAVAN.

The two Spanish pavans described by Cesare Negri, one as danced in Rome and the other in Milan, resemble closely that of Caroso referred to above; the tune of the Roman one is the same. They agree in keeping unchanged the steps of the first and last four bars of each strain, the variations being confined to the intervening eight bars. This is borne out by Arbeau in his explanation of the *Pavane d'Espagne*. The French pavan as described by Arbeau is very simple; the dancers only use two kinds of steps with which they advance and retreat or go in procession. The Italian pavan was much more elaborate, being arranged on the plan of the *passeggio* and the *mutanza*. The *passeggio* (or promenade) contained sequences of steps called *seguite*, which carried the dancers from one place to another, whereas in the *mutanza* they remained more or less stationary. Sometimes, while the man was doing a *passeggio* the lady did a *mutanza*, and then they reversed, and occasionally they did a *passeggio* or *mutanza* both together. A dance of this kind is described in Shakespeare's 'Henry VIII.,' in Act 4, Scene 2, where the visionary beings dance before Katherine as she sleeps. I will quote it:

(Sad and solemn music.)

The Vision. Enter, solemnly *tripping* one after another, six personages, clad in white robes, wearing on their heads garlands of bays, and golden vizards on their faces; branches of bays, or palm, in their hands. They first congee unto her, then dance; and at certain *changes*, the first two hold a spare garland over her head; at which the other four make reverend curtsies; then the two that held the garland deliver the same to the other next two, who observe the same order in their *changes*, and holding the garland over her head: which done they deliver the same garland to the last two, who likewise observe the same order; at which (as it were by inspiration) she makes in her sleep signs of rejoicing, and holdeth up her hands to heaven: and so in their dancing they vanish, carrying the garland with them.

The word 'changes' herein is the literal translation of *mutanze*, which might also be rendered 'variations' or 'mutations'; and the word 'tripping' should be taken in the sense in which Arbeau uses *trépigner*, meaning the dividing or elaboration of steps. Another kind of pavan was the *Passo e mezo* (English, 'passy measure pavan'). Arbeau mentions this variety in the following terms; the pupil Capriol says:

Cette dance de pavane est trop lourde et pesante pour dancier en une salle avec une jeune fille seul à seul.

The master replies:

Les joueurs d'instruments la sonnent aulcunes fois [sometimes] moins pesamment et d'une mesure plus légère, et par ce moyen elle se ressent de la mediocrité d'une basse danse et l'appellent 'passemaze.'

We find in Caroso a *passo e mezo*. It is arranged on the same plan as the Italian pavans, but with half the number of steps in proportion to the bars of music, so that a step which would take one bar in the pavan takes two in the *passo e mezo*, and the music is played fast.

## THE BRAWL.

There is another kind of dance mentioned in Shakespeare's 'Henry VIII.,' in Act 1, scene 4, where the King and some courtiers enter the Cardinal's palace attired as shepherds: 'Enter the King and others as maskers habited like shepherds; ushered by the Lord Chamberlain. They pass directly before the Cardinal, and gracefully salute him,' &c. This might have been a brawl similar to one given by Negri entitled 'Brando Alta Regina' and which originally formed part of a comedy performed at Milan before the Infanta Isabella of Spain, the Archduke Alberto of Austria, the Cardinal Diatristano, and many of the Milanese nobility. This brawl is for four shepherds and four nymphs. It is rather more ornate than the common brawls, for, forsaking the sideways movements habitual to that dance, and from which it derives its name ('branda' and 'bransle' meaning something which swings from side to side, such as a hammock), the dancers form in procession by pairs, and perform various evolutions, the nymphs making circles to the right and the shepherds to the left, after which they meet again in the centre and make fresh figures interspersed with changing of places. In the middle part the music changes to the tempo of a galliard, and the dancers perform the *cinqe passi* and other steps proper to that dance. The music then reverts to common time, in which the dance finishes.

Many of the dances of this time, which began in common time, had one or more strains in triple time, which were entitled variously, *Mutazione della sonata in gagliarda*, or *nel canario*, in *Salterello*, in *Sciolta*, and so forth, which meant 'Change of the tune to the tempo of a galliard, canaries, salterello,' &c., as in the following examples. *Sciolta* indicated a lively, agile movement.

Ex. 2. Bassa Ducale (Lute Tablature). FABRITIO CAROSO, 1581.



Ex. 3. La sua Sciolta. LUTE





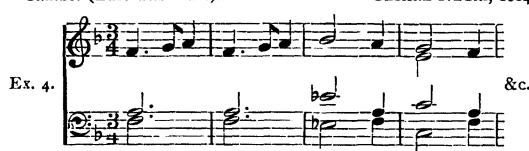
## THE CASCARDA AND THE CANARIES: THE HAY.

Two very lively dances much in favour during the 16th century were the *cascarda* and the *canaries*. The *cascarda* contains frequent high jumps or *cadenze*, whence its name, the verb *cascare* meaning 'to fall.' Naturally after a jump one must fall down again, but the instructions are to alight airily on the tips of one's toes, bending the knees slightly outwards to give the better grace. Even in performing the plainest steps the dancer is exhorted to give them the utmost possible grace and beauty, and to *pavoneggiare*—that is, to glorify himself like the peacock. In the *cascarda* the two dancers mostly face each other, and move in a circle a great part of the time.

The *canaries* was a lively dance much like the jig. Its peculiarities are the heel and toe step, the stamp, and the swishing slide; as Arbeau says, 'comme si on marchoit dessus un crachat, ou qu'on voulust tuer une araignée.' Thus such steps as the *fioretti* and *seguiti* when introduced into the *canaries* were transformed by stamps, 'as though putting on one's shoe,' or rapid slides. The tunes for this dance are very gay. The one given by Negri is also to be found in a collection of English tunes published in the 17th century under the title of 'Canaries or the Hay.' The tune given by Arbeau is obviously derived from the same, but written in common time. Here are the opening bars of the three versions:

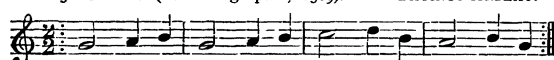
Canario (Lute Tablature).

CESARE NEGRI, 1604.



Ex. 5. Canaries ('Orchésographie,' 1589).

THOINOT ARBEAU.



Ex. 6. The Canaries or the Hay ('Musick's Hand-Maid,' 1678).



This expression 'the Hay,' often to be met with in Playford's *Dancing-Master*, is derived from *faire la hays*, which meant, in its simplest form, that while the dancers stood in a row, one of their number wound in and out, passing in front of one and behind the next. *La hays* means the hedge.

## THE MEASURE.

The *measure* so often referred to in English literature is a species of dance of medium speed, neither very grave nor very gay, such as the *basse dance*, the *allmaine*, and all kinds of *entrées* and

*ballets*. It is in common time, with usually one or two strains in triple time. This kind of dance is called in Italian *mezza* or *messa*. Arbeau calls it *danse médiocre*.

## ETIQUETTE OF COURT DANCES.

The etiquette to be observed in court dances was very strict. We are told by Caroso that a man must never dance without his cloak and his sword, as it is *bruttissima* to do so; and that the lady must take care not to lift her train with her hand, unless forced to do so by having to dance in a very crowded place. More liberty was allowed when a dance formed part of a masque or play. Negri describes the costumes, stage properties, &c., of the symbolic personages in a masque of his own composition which was performed in 1574 before Don John of Austria. Amongst these, two of the characters, 'Suspicion' and 'Solicitude,' were nude.

## AN ARISTOCRATIC ACCOMPLISHMENT.

Whereas dancing as an art nowadays is relegated to professional dancers, in the 16th century it formed part of the education of persons of quality. Negri gives the names of the great ladies and gentlemen who had studied under him since the opening of his school in Milan in 1554. Amongst them were some of the highest in the land. There were also great professional dancers who acted as teachers to these noble ladies and cavaliers, and who had visited all the Courts of Europe, receiving handsome emoluments. As a result, dancing at this time had become very cosmopolitan.

## Occasional Notes.

In a paragraph with this ominous 'BACH'S heading the musical critic of the MISDEMEANOURS.' *Evening Standard*, writing of the recent wonderful performance of Bach's Chaconne (transposed for the viola) by that fine artist Mr. Lionel Tertis, says:

Not one musician in a hundred would be prepared to admit that Bach ever did wrong, but in his music for solo stringed instruments he frequently gives us passages that, considered purely as sound, are really horrible.

This is a very strong indictment, for after all we must consider music as sound, although we sometimes sniff at some of its eccentricities. But more, much more, follows. It is said that:

The only way to test this is to use a strong effort, imagine the performer away, and consider the music in the abstract—a thing that nobody does.

This method of testing is rather mystifying to plain, non-transcendental, stodgy folk like ourselves, and as, moreover, nobody so far has tried the remedy, we are unable to ascertain by inquiry how it makes one feel. Perhaps Mr. Percy Scholes might be induced to start a Bach-string-solo-appreciation cosy corner on these lines in the *Music Student*?