

## Introduction to 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian Courtly Dance

The earliest manuscript that we have that describes how to do dances from Europe is *De arte saltandi et choreas ducendi* by Domenico da Piacenza, written sometime in the mid 1400s. Domenico was a prominent dance teacher at several northern Italian courts and started a style of dance continued by his apprentices. This style originated in Italy but we know through various records that nobles at other European courts danced in the Italian style throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The dances that we will be trying today in this style are *Anello*, *Petit Riens* and *Amoroso*. We may also try *Petite Rose*, or *Rostiboli Gioioso*.

### Steps (Italian name – English name – description)

These are the basic steps needed for *Anello*, *Petit Riens* and *Amoroso*.

*Sempio* – Single – a single slow step

*Doppio* – Double – 3 steps, takes twice as long as a single. Depending on the tempo of the music, there may be an additional “close”.

*Piva* – Piva – 3 steps like a double, in a very quick tempo, done in a skipping style

*Saltarello* – Saltarello – 3 steps like a double, done lightly on the balls of your feet with a hop at the end

*Riprese* – Set – a sideways step or double.

*Riverenza* – Bow – A bow taken by bending the knees but keeping the back straight and looking at one's partner. Don't bend at the waist or look down.

*Movimento* – rise, honor – a small unspecified movement to honor your partner. This is often interpreted as a rise onto the balls of your feet or a very slight bow.

\*Most steps start on the left foot unless otherwise specified, then alternate feet.

### *Petit Rose by Domenico da Piacenza*

*Petit Rose* is a dance for couples. It's a short, cute dance where you actually get to dance with your partner.

#### **Part 1: The Entrance**

→ Enter holding your partner's hand with 16 *pive*

#### **Part 2: Flirtation**

→ Man (person on left) *movimento*, woman (person on right) *responds*

→ Man turns in place with a double

→ Woman *movimento*, man *responds*

→ Woman turns in place with a double

#### **Part 3: Parading**

→ Together, a double forward on the left

→ Together, two single backwards, left then right

→ Repeat twice more

#### **Part 4: A Flourish**

→ Separate with 1 *saltarello* and return with another *saltarello*

### *Anello by Domenica da Piacenza*

*Anello* is a dance for two couples, one in front of the other. (The directions don't clearly specify the exact position so you may see some variations here.) It's a social dance where you can meet people, flirt a little, and chat while you show off your pretty garb and graceful steps.

#### **Part 1: The Entrance**

→ Enter holding your partner's hand with 8 *saltarelli*.

→ On the final *saltarello* the first couple will drop hands and turn to face the others, while the second couple will stop in place.

#### **Part 2: Saltarelli Exchange**

→ They acknowledge each other, the men performing a *movimento* and then the women responding.

→ The men change places with 2 *saltarelli*, turning at the end so that they face into the square.

→ They acknowledge each other, the women performing a *movimento* and then the men responding.

→ The women change places with 2 *saltarelli*, turning at the end so that they face into the square.

### **Part 3: Turn Exchange**

- They acknowledge each other, the men performing a *movimento* and then the women responding.
- The men turn in place with a double.
- They acknowledge each other, the women performing a *movimento* and then the men responding.
- The women turn in place with a double.

### **Part 4: Piva Weave**

- The men take 4 *pive* to go around behind their partners and back to their own places.
- The women do the same.

### **Part 5: Closure**

- The men perform a *movimento* and the women respond; all that again. The men do a *riprese* to the right (getting closer to their partner) and they take hands.

*\* If you plan to repeat the dance, the first couple will turn to face forward again in this part. Often the second time through it is done with the women doing each action first and the men following.*

### **Petit Riens ("Little Nothing") by Guglielm Ebreo**

This dance is a favorite in Atlantia and much of the SCA, and is often referred to as "Italian Bumper Cars" for its lively and silly nature. This dance follows a common pattern in 3 person dances of this era, of following the leader.

#### **Part 1: The Entrance**

- Holding hands with your line of 3 people, enter with 16 *pive* following the person on the left.

#### **Part 2: Runaway! ...and catch up**

- The first person continues away from the group with 4 *pive*.
- When they stop, 2<sup>nd</sup> catches up with 4 *pive*
- Last, the 3<sup>rd</sup> catches up with 4 *pive*.

#### **Part 3: Stomp away! ...and catch up**

- The first person leaves again with a double.
- 2 catches up with the same.
- 3 catches up with the same..

#### **Part 4: Reconciliation**

- 1 and 2 bow to each other
- 2 and 3 bow to each other
- All bow to all
- They back up 1 double, then come forward 1 double.
- All *riprese* to the left, then right, then turn in place. (Just a like a set and turn in English country dance.)

### **Amoroso ("Loving") by Guglielmo Ebreo**

Many Italian Renaissance dances follow a similar style to *Amoroso*, featuring couples dancing together and apart, with one partner chasing or showing off for the other. Dance served many purposes in the Renaissance, including being one of the few acceptable occasions for public interaction between young ladies and gentlemen. Think of *Amoroso* as a little love story told in dance.

#### **Part 1: The Entrance**

- Holding hands with your partner, with the gentleman on the left, enter with 12 *pive* together. (Different recordings and directions specify different # of *pive*, always multiples of 4. Follow the music!)

#### **Part 2: Flaunting It (Chase I)**

- The gentleman leaves his lady slowly and gracefully, showing off. Steps: 2 singles, 1 *piva*, 3 singles.
- The lady catches up to her gentleman with the same steps. (2S, 1P, 3S)

#### **Part 3: Prove Yourself (Chase II)**

- The gentleman leaves his lady quickly, almost running away. Steps: 3 *pive* and 1 single.
- The lady hurries to catch him with the same steps. (3P, 1S)

#### **Part 4: Flirtation\***

- The gentleman leaves his lady slowly and gracefully and turns to face her at the end. (2S, 1P, 3S with a turn on the last S)
- They bow to each other. (It actually specifies that he bows "until his knee touches the ground" but don't do it unless you're sure your knees will let you get back up!)

- The gentleman returns to his lady quickly, unable to be separated from her any longer. (3P and 1S).
- The lady leaves her gentleman slowly and gracefully and turns to face him at the end. (2S, 1P, 3S with turn)
- They bow to each other.
- The lady returns to the gentleman quickly – and he comes to meet her, turning so that she is on the left and will lead the next time through. (Lady 2P, then as she does a 3<sup>rd</sup> *piva*, the gentleman comes forward with 1 *piva* and turns to face the same way she is going, putting her on the left.)

**The dance repeats, with the woman leading each sequence.**

\* Some recordings only play the Flirtation sequence once. In that case, the gentlemen will leave and return and the lady will come up to meet, switching sides. She will then leave and return on the second time through.

**More Information**

If you are interested in learning more about this dance style, feel free to email me. If you are interested in learning more about dance in general, check out L'Academie Atlantienne de la Danse @ <http://dance.atlantia.sca.org/>

**Further Sources:**

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