

# The Puzzle of the Squiggle

by Ian Gatiss

Those who have studied the musical notation in the 15th century Italian dance treatises will be familiar with the numbers, normally written beneath the notation, which indicate the repeats for each section of the music. This brief note is to call attention to the symbol  $\cdot\mathcal{S}\cdot$  which appears in the 'Domenico' MS (1) beneath the first section of *Leonzello* (2), the last section of *Giloxia* (3) and the third section of *Pizochara* (4). This symbol has often been treated as a number; for example, one has seen versions of the dance *Giloxia* in which the last section has been repeated five times (5). However, this interpretation is not convincing in either notational or choreographic terms; an examination of some other possible meanings may stimulate researchers to investigate the many other 'squiggles' which appear in these sources.

One of the fascinating characteristics of these texts is that beneath broad similarities there exist numerous inconsistencies in detail; much current research is concerned with the attempt to distinguish between scribal errors and variants reflecting differing versions of the same dance and therefore of its music. The symbol under consideration provides a good example of this: the three versions do not have exactly the same form, so are they the same symbol drawn under different circumstances, or are they fundamentally different, with different meanings? I believe that as yet we do not have enough evidence to decide between these possibilities. One way to approach the problem is to look for similar symbols in use in other music notation, in the hope that their meanings may provide clues.

One possible candidate is the *signum congruentiae* (6), which has various forms including  $\cdot\mathcal{S}\cdot$  and  $\cdot\mathcal{Z}\cdot$ , and is commonly found associated with pieces written in white mensural notation. It was used in polyphonic music to indicate points of correspondence between the parts; this was necessary where performers saw only their own line of music and could not easily check where they were in relation to other parts. This usage does not seem to relate to the circumstances of the dance music, in which the clearly defined sections provided frequent 'check points'.

The *signum* was used to indicate the points at which further voices entered in canonic writing; an example of this is seen in *Ah Robin* by Cornish (7). It is tempting to speculate that the symbol beneath the first section of *Leonzello* (fig. i) see Page 9 might represent the point at which the dancers began, following a brief musical introduction; it is interesting that this corresponds exactly to the *Intrata* given by Cornazano (8). There is no further support for this theory; there are no symbols in the 'Domenico' MS to correspond with the *Intrata* notes given by Cornazano for other *balli*, and this usage does not seem to apply in any way to the third section of *Pizochara* (9) (fig. iii) see Page 11, although it is possible to use the final section of the music for *Giloxia* (10) (fig. ii) Cover Pic as an introduction to the dance.

A very common use of the *signum* was as an indicator of a repetition of part of a section (usually the final section) of a piece of music. Examples of this are found in the basse danse setting in the 'Henry VIII' MS (11) and in Arbeau's notation for the branles *Pinagay* (12) and *Aridan* (13). This usage has continued to the present day, and is common in orchestral and dance band part-writing. It is difficult to reconcile this exact meaning with the location of the symbol  $\cdot\mathcal{S}\cdot$  in the 'Domenico' MS; however, it does seem possible, particularly in view of the location of the symbol, that the meaning is *something* to do with repetition. One suggestion, which might be investigated further, is that the symbol indicates *ambiguity* over the number of repeats of the music. Giovanni Ambrosio (14) indicates that the first section of *Lioncello* (15) is to be played three times; Guglielmo Ebreo (16) gives four. The last section of *Gelosia* has no repeat in either Ambrosio (17) or

Ebreo (18), but, as Sparti (19) has pointed out, one version of the choreography appears to require a music repeat. There is ambiguity of a different kind associated with the third section of *Pizochara*: the three versions of the music (20) include a variety of signs, some looking like a *signum congruentiae* and others more like a *diadema* (pause sign). A 'common-sense' explanation might be that this was a section which dancers might interpret in a variety of ways; therefore the musician would have to follow them very carefully, and adjust note values accordingly. Present-day players draw a 'pair of spectacles' sign over the music at points which require extra vigilance.

Although I am not suggesting that 15th century dance musicians would have played directly from the MS music in the treatises, there is a further interesting parallel between these sources and modern 'band' parts; some of the markings, especially the various numbers and 'squiggles', may have been inserted later than the first copying of the music. For example, examination of the music for *Giloxia* in the 'Domenico' MS (21) shows that six notes and a section-line have been inserted at the end of the first line of music; presumably they were omitted on the first copying. Also the symbol  $\cdot\mathcal{S}\cdot$  under the last section is much larger than the numbers under the other sections; whether this indicates a subsequent addition cannot be determined from microfilm: a detailed forensic examination of the MS itself would be necessary, and I am not aware of any such research having been published. If it were to be established that the texts had been corrected or 'edited', this would open up even more possibilities for the modern interpreter.

This brief note has set out to do no more than indicate some of the problems associated with one subsidiary symbol; I hope that further investigation of the variety of symbols to be found in the MS sources will be of assistance to those engaged in the reconstruction and performance of this fascinating and sophisticated repertoire.

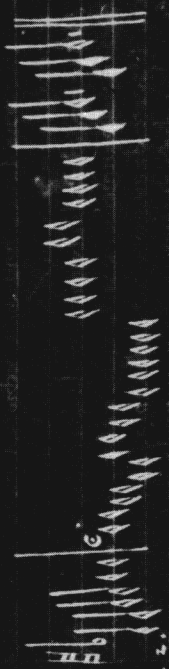
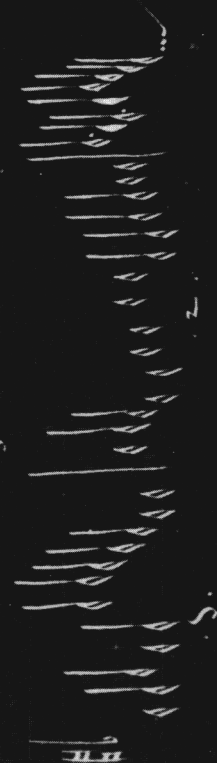
## REFERENCES

- 1 Paris MS of Domenico (Bibl. Nat. fonds ital. 972); 2 fol. 8v;
- 3 fol. 11r;
- 4 fol. 12r.
- 5 Sparti (*Early Music* August 1986, p.357) recognises the problem by giving the interpretation '?5'.
- 6 Apel (1942) *The Notation of Polyphonic Music 900-1600* Cambridge, Mass., p.94.
- 7 British Library MS Add.31922 (The 'Henry VIII' MS) ff.53v.-54r. Stevens, J.(ed.1973) *Musica Britannica* Vol.XVIII p.38.
- 8 Vatican MS of Cornazano (Bibl. Apostol. Vaticana capponiano 203), fol. 21r.
- 9 Domenico fol. 12r.
- 10 Domenico fol. 11r.
- 11 Stevens op.cit. p.68. Ward (*Early Music* 1976 p.137) corrected Stevens' interpretation of the *signum*.
- 12 Arbeau, T. (1588) *Orchesographie* Lengres fol. 75v.
- 13 op.cit. fol. 78v.
- 14 Paris MS of Ambrosio (Bibl. Nat. fonds ital. 476) 15 fol. 63v.
- 16 Paris MS of Guglielmo Ebreo (Bibl. Nat. fonds ital. 973), fol. 47r.
- 17 op.cit. fol. 63r.
- 18 op.cit. fol. 47v.
- 19 loc.cit.
- 20 Domenico fol. 12r; Ambrosio fol. 63r; Ebreo fol. 48r.
- 21 op.cit. fol. 11r.

fize cum uno dopio manni comenzando cum lo pe drito e afezma  
 se poi tutti dui li homini se moueno cum uno dopio suso el pe drito  
 ritornandosse in tempo de drito dopio tutti dui equali ala drita dona  
 Apreso se fa tempi dui de saltarello largi cioe uno de driti tempi  
 tutti tri in compagnia manni essendo equali poi la dona si se  
 afezma e li driti dui homini se moueno facendo laltro tempo  
 cum lo pe drito e scambiando posta cioe quello che e dala  
 mano sinistra de la dona u driticia u ala dona et quello che e  
 de la mano driticia de dritico ala dona facendo unamezvolta  
 sul canto drito e rimanendo equali ala dona e quello che pulla  
 de ala dritia dona facendo tutti tri la compagnia continente  
 due in comenzando sul pe sinistro.

Ancora nota che se fanno tempi sei de balladanza cioe tutti tri  
 fanno in compagnia duppi dui manni comenzando cum lo pede  
 sinistro poi se afezma la dona e li driti homini se moueno in lo  
 instante cioe lo homo che de la mane sinistra de la dona fa  
 uno dopio sul pe sinistro inanti laltro homo fa uno dopio  
 solo drito pe indietro e poi tutti dui ritornano ale poste sine  
 cum uno dopio suso el pe drito rimanendo equali ala dona  
 facendo continente due tutti tri in compagnia comenzando  
 al pe sinistro e una reuerencia suso drito pede de uno tempo  
 E nota che quello che ando inanti nel principio de dritia danza  
 rimane dritico nel fine e uolendola rifare el compagno da  
 denanti fine a questa danza.

L'onzello incanto



L'onzello uebrio a ballo e in uno homo cum la dona  
 prima fanno tutti dui amano tempi sei de saltarello o  
 menziando cum lo pe sinistro in mezza quadernaria e afezma  
 poi lo homo fa uno mouimento ala dona li responde cum uno a loco  
 et homo poi passa denanti ala dona cum uno tempo de saltarello largo  
 comenzando cum lo pe drito andagando equali ala dona dala sua  
 mano dritia dagando unamezvolta e afezma se poi la dona se  
 risponde cum quello medemo tempo de saltarello et mezvolta  
 ritornandole equali ala ma dritia del suo homo et e tutto qsto  
 sopraffisso mezza quadernaria e questa ltra pte seguente.

Nota che homo se parte dala dona facendo passi quattro tempi in  
 anti e uno dopio comenzando cum lo pe sinistro e afezma se poi  
 la dona el segue facendo li simili passi e duppi e afezma se  
 A preso nota che homo se parte dala dona e in inanti cum duppi  
 tri sul pe sinistro pure in mezza quadernaria e afezma se ala  
 dona poi lo segue cum li simili tri duppi e afezma se.

Nota che homo se parte dala dona cum tempi tri in mezza de tutta  
 danza facendo tempi dui e duppi dui comenzando cum lo pede  
 sinistro e poi la dona segue drito homo cum quelli medemi tempi  
 duppi afirmandose.

Ancora nota che homo piglia la dona p mano facendo insieme  
 tempi sette de balladanza cio prima re prese due comenzando col  
 pede sinistro e duppi dui e re prese due et afezma se facendo homo  
 uno mouimento ala dona respondendole cum unaltro bquali mo  
 uimenti sono tempi dui in mezza quadernaria fine.

"Photo. Bibl. Nat. Paris."

LEONZELLO (fig. i)

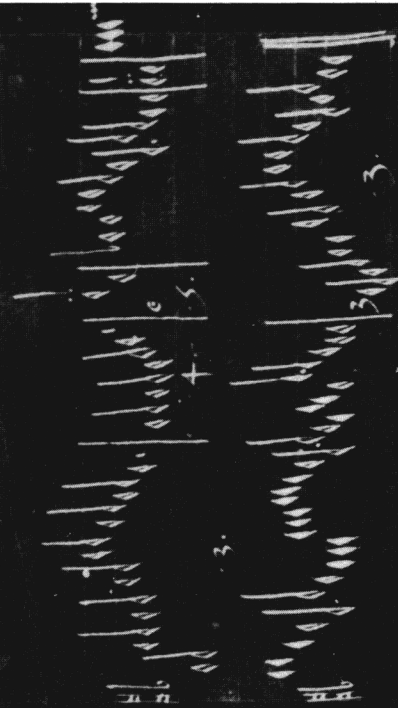
Domenico, fonds ital, 972, fol. 8v.

tavolo in misura quadrataria partandosi con lo pe drito e un ap-  
 ricio la prima dona e li se sterma  
 Apricio nota ch lo homo ch e de mezo alato la man drita dela  
 dona si le parez epala de nanti ala dita dona con dupy tri fuco  
 el pe sinistro in misura quadrataria ritrouandose el dito homo ap-  
 io la dona de drito crotandone la man drita con una trieta  
 entria e a fermaliz

Ora nota ch lo homo ch huera p man la dita dona de drito fa  
 tempo uno de saltarelo in misura quadrataria començando con lo  
 pe drito et andugando/dietro ale spalle de la dona de dietro Et troua  
 equale ala dona de dietro ale spalle de la dona de dietro Et troua  
 equale ala man sinistra  
 Apricio nota ch lo homo ch e de mezo alato la man drita dela  
 dona si le parez epala de nanti ala dita dona con dupy tri fuco  
 el pe sinistro in misura quadrataria ritrouandose el dito homo ap-  
 io la dona de drito crotandone la man drita con una trieta  
 entria e a fermaliz

Apricio nota ch lo homo ch huera p man la dita dona de drito fa  
 tempo uno de saltarelo in misura quadrataria començando con lo  
 pe drito et andugando/dietro ale spalle de la dona de dietro Et troua  
 equale ala dona de dietro ale spalle de la dona de dietro Et troua  
 equale ala man sinistra  
 Apricio nota ch lo homo ch e de mezo alato la man drita dela  
 dona si le parez epala de nanti ala dita dona con dupy tri fuco  
 el pe sinistro in misura quadrataria ritrouandose el dito homo ap-  
 io la dona de drito crotandone la man drita con una trieta  
 entria e a fermaliz

Pizochara in cunto di sonar



Pizochara a ballo e ua in homini quatro e quinto done  
 M prima dono uno homo e una dona p mano che uenero a ess-  
 do pe quatro e uno laxe dieste dio pe lina da laltre p spa-  
 tio de passi tri mouandose tutti de compania e fazando tempi  
 xij de pua poi tutte quatro le done la fazmano lina dretto  
 laltre L quatro homini le moueno fazando tempi quatro  
 de pua dintorno ala dona sua començando col pe sinistro tornab-  
 rando ale poste sue a fermandose Poi tutte dieste quatro  
 done le moueno tutte incompagnia fazando altri quatro tempi de  
 pua dintorno ali suoi homini començando col pe sinistro tornab-  
 ale poste sue a fermandose e tuttanolta che se moueno tutti dretti  
 homini e dieste done cum li dretti quatro tempi de pua passine de  
 mantua cioe l homo ala dona sua e la dona alo suo homo  
 Or nota che tutti quatro li homini fano una vincerita cum lo pe-  
 drito indietto duntempo de lassadanza tocando la man drita dretti  
 homini ala sua dona e mouese li homini fazando tempi xij de  
 lassadanza cioe una represa sul pe drito cum la dona sua moueno  
 la sandola poi e fazando passi sempre dritti e dup q. xi. començando

"Photo. Bibl. Nat. Paris."

PIZOCHARA (fig. iii)

Domenico, fonds ital, 972, fol. 12r.