JEWISH DANCING IN WEDDING PAGEANTRY AT PESARO, ITALY IN 1475

By A. William Smith

On Friday, 26 May, 1475 after a three-week journey from Naples, Camilla (or Covella) Marzano d'Aragona reached Fano, an area neighboring Pesaro.[1] (See map) Here, she and her entourae encountered maidens dressed in white, representing Diana and her twelve nymphs, who, after Diana's speech, accompanied the young bride-to-be on her journey. They met other groups along the way to Novillara, located within sight of the city of Pesaro, where the first dances occurred.

Throughout the history of Western civilization, descriptions of weddings have been recorded which include dancing. Few, such as the pageant in 1475 at Pesaro, contain references to choreographed dances that were social and political statements by Jewish communities. The choreographed dances in this pageant allegorically depicted the struggle of man as a civilized creature with man the barbarian, the struggle of man with nature, and, on another level, the struggle of the Jewish community to find and maintain acceptance in an often hostile world.

The dances added to the colors of the mosaic-like conception of court wedding pageantry, which also included processions, floats, decorations, allegorical tableaus, jousts, ceremony, music, and other elements. At a rich moment in history, the wedding of Constanzo Sforza and Camilla d'Aragona captured the spirit of an age in which each episode -- be it based on myth, history, astrology, or another theme -- of the pageant contributed to the overall picture, similar to the relationship of the individually painted panels to altarpieces designed in the same period.

In order to place the Jewish contribution of dance in the context of the celebration, a brief chronological overview of the wedding pageantry in 1475 at Pesaro will be provided.

These dances, danced by the groups welcoming Camilla et Novillara, described only with passing references, were probably of two types: some newly created to honor the bride, and several older dances similar to those conveyed in the dance treatises of Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro (Guglielmo, the Jew from Pesaro). Older dances would have provided a context for social interaction, albeit an interaction probably limited to Camilla and the young members of her entourage with youths from Constanzo's domain, since the major figures in the wedding pageantry would later receive their due moment of introduction according to the hierarchy of rank.

That people travelling from one place to another danced when they stopped for the night or a short stay was apparently common. For instance, when Ippolita Sforza and her new husband, the Duke of Calabria, passed through Firenze (Florence) on their way from Milano to Napoli in 1465, they danced at the house of Antonio di Puccio.[2]

Although Castelli suggests that either or both Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro, who was at Naples in 1474, and Giovanni Santi, who organized the festivities at the neighboring city Urbino in the same year, may have been at Pesaro in 1475, it is possible that the Jewish community at Pesaro itself provided dancers and choreographers, contributing to the dances at Novillara.[3] The community had the resources to provide extensive dancing later in the course of the pageant, and it is stated outright that the dancing was part of the Jewish contribution to the wedding. That a strong tradition of dancing must have existed in the Jewish community, above and beyond a few major Jewish figures such as Guglielmo or Giovanni, who are represented by extant choreographic descriptions, is suggested by the fact that another dance master came from Pesaro, "Joseph olim Moysi ebreus de Pensauro" (Giuseppe of Moses the Jew of Pesaro), recently shown by A. Veronese to have been active around 1467.[4]

SATURDAY 27 MAY 1475

The next day, Saturday, 27 May, Camilla and her party began the final part of their long journey to Pesaro, travelling on a road that was widened and leveled for the occasion. They were conducted to various castle-homes along the way, which were decorated, each having a covered passageway under which the riders stopped. Under each one of the nine or ten loggia-like structures, built especially for the occasion and roofed with fabric or with live or cut plants, there were speeches of welcome, wine, fruit, desserts of all types, and dancing by ladies.

Maidens dancing to honor the arrival of an important person is seen elsewhere, for instance in September 1477, when Cardinal Borgia went to Naples for the coronation of the Queen.[5] The dancing would have been presentational rather than social and thus choreographed for the occasion. However, from the brief citation, similar to that regarding the dancing on the night before, the exact nature of the movements cannot be determined.

That there may have been nine covered structures, each with a maiden or maidens dancing, which Camilla visited, may have been symbolic of the nine heavenly orders of angels or of the nine muses. They thus symbolized the divinity and/or artistic or intellectual enlightenment of Pesaro itself.

That brides passed through symbolic space on their way to the heart of town is seen in the 1487 wedding pageantry at Bologna where Lucrezia passed through seven triumphal arches where there were maidens representing the seven cardinal and theological virtues: hope, charity, temperance, justice, prudence, faith, and fortitude.[6] In general, there were symbolic areas, like concentric spheres, through which an honored person passed in order to arrive at the heart of the city hosting the pageant.

At various points along the journey from Novillara to Pesaro, Camilla and her group were joined by other groups of peole and, finally, by Constanzo. Sixty merchants and artisans with a pageant wagon shaped as a ship, complete with sails, joined the parade. At the gate of the city, Camilla was presented with keys.

The marriage party viewed another pageant wagon, this time of Pudicitia (Decency) with six women famous for their purity and maidens, dressed in white with their hair untied, holding lilies.

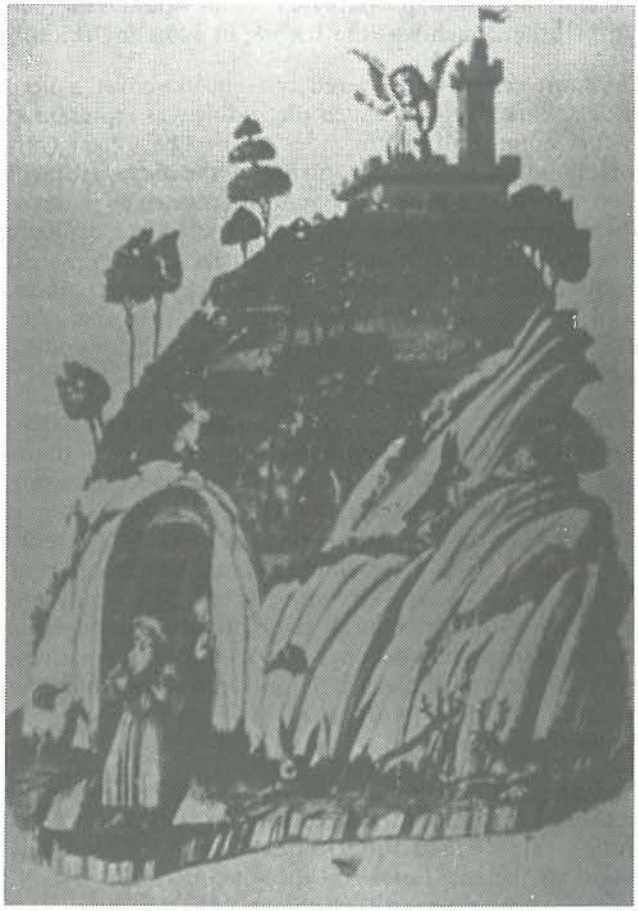
In a world of fortress-like city-states where gain was sought, power was utilized not only as raw, brute, military force, but also as subtly diplomatic and sometimes emblematic force. In a world of superstition and belief in transfiguration, a physical demonstration or enactment was thought, or hoped, to shape or influence events; some transcendental connection was thought to exist. An allegorical display was a recognition of the past and present and a prophylactic measure for the future.

There was probably a conscious effort not to duplicate exactly events from othr pageants. For instance, in a pageant at Urbino in 1474, six queens and twelve maidens danced around the woman representing Pudicitia.[7] That slight variations on traditional themes was a practice is seen in other art forms, notably in music and painting.

Under a golden baldachino Constanzo and Camilla headed to the palace preceded by sixty of Constanzo's men whose tasks were to clear a path through the crowds. The street to the palace, from the great gate of the surrounding walls until the court in the center of the city, was covered above with red, white, and blue fabrics displaying Constanzo's coat of arms. (See the diagram of the route of the procession through Pesaro.)

On the way to the center of town, the group came to a triumphal arch with a pole whose top was crowned with a large diamond with a flower, one of the symbols of Constanzo.[8] Two rotating iron sculptures, probably formed like wheels or their spokes, of dancing children (*spiritelli*) were attached to the pole. The flower at the top of the arch opened and a child (*spiritello*) gave a speech, similar to all of the others, in rhyme.

The next event the party encountered was of two giants attired in ancient armor who bowed to the procession. When the procession finally came to the town square in front of the palace, the participants saw a six-sided fountain from which wines flowed from the shouldered vases of sculpted figures placed in niches. The use of the fountain in the pageant supports the hypothesis regarding the symbolism of the nine places with dancing maidens outside the city, since a fountain was associated with that of Helicon from which a drinker became poetically inspired. This imagery of nine muses and a fountain would be echoed later in the pageant. (See the



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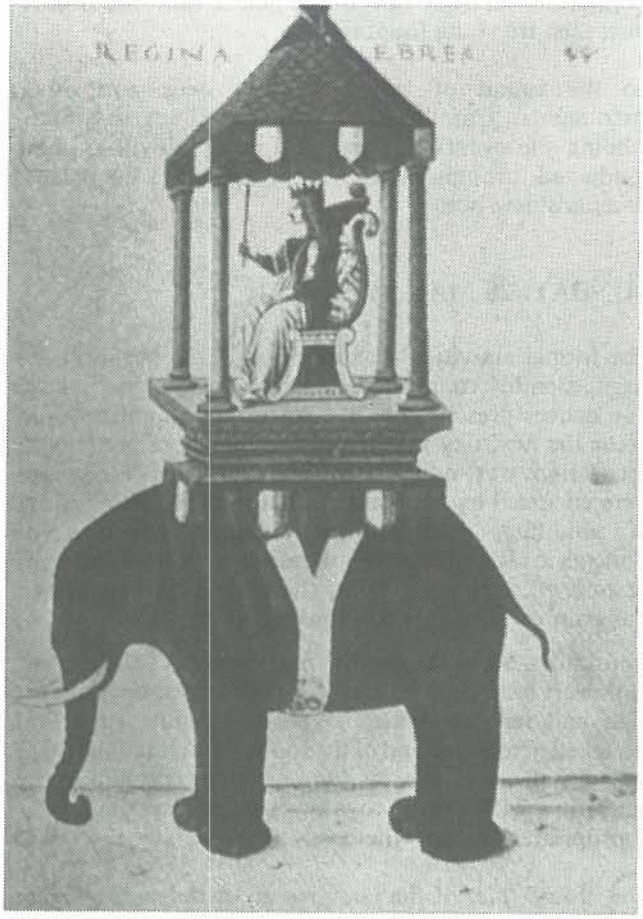

Queen of Sheba

diagram of the front view of the palace that would have been seen from the fountain.)

To the sound of ringing church bells and other instruments, Camilla was met by Ginevra Sforza, echoing the events the night before at Novillara, and conducted through an arch of the arcade of the palace, Camilla's new home.

SUNDAY, 28 MAY 1475

The formal activities on Sunday, 28 May, began in the large assembly room on the second floor of the palace. The dances presented by the Jewish community would occur the next day in this same room whose layout and decorations were noteworthy. The four walls of the room were encircled by two painted festoons simulating those of antiquity with painted heraldic emblems of Constanzo. Rich, beautiful tapestries or cloths (*panni di razza belli*) were hung below the second festoon, which was painted about six feet lower than the first.

Constanzo, Camilla, and the participants of the highest rank were seated on an elevated platform about five feet high and ten feet wide, covered with fine rugs that stretched across one end of the room. The end of the great hall, a hall over twice as long as wide, containing the platform with this royally backed seating, was appropriately called "the head" *(capo).*

The "foot" *(pie)* of the large room, or the end opposite the head of state, had a nine-tiered display cupboard on which sat fine silver and golden objects. This demonstration of opulence was standard in palace households, and many treasured wedding gifts undoubtedly ended up on such open, shelf-like tables.

At one corner of this same wall was a grand-sounding organ that was placed on a bench. A balcony for musicians was placed along one of the long walls. Apparently this was a permanent fixture since it was supported by columns of stone. Next to this balcony was a wooden one for the ladies of the court, who lacked enough status to be seated on the tribunal platform.

Benches were sat on the floor on both sides of the center area that was left open for dramatic presentations, dancing, and other forms of entertainment. And also on the lowest level, behind these benches, were five rows of bleacher seating for the spectators of the lower ranks. These bleachers probably extended along both long sides of the room.[9] Although it is not specified in the Pesaro account, the women probably sat on one side and the men on the other. Such was the seating in 1488 at Urbino.[10]

The entire ceiling was covered by a tent-like cover, a piece of dark blue fabric on which the zodiac was represented in the center; and on the sides of the two longer ends corresponding to the head and foot of the room, a total of 2500 stars with golden rays were either sewn or painted. The center of the fabric where the zodiac was depicted contained a trap door from which courld descend representations either of a golden sun or of a silver moon, who, during the banquet that began in the later afternoon, addressed the noble couple and their wedding guests.

At eleven o'clock a.m. on Sunday, 28 May, Pandolpho Collenucio addressed the assembled group in an hour-long oration about marriage. Other speeches soon followed, concluding the secular part of the formal exchange of vows. In an orderly manner, the assembly left the great hall for the church where the other part of the formal exchange of vows occurred with ritual and ceremony. After the church ceremony, the participants retired to their chambers in order to refresh themselves, returning at three o'clock p.m. to the great hall that now also contained nine tables, each seating twelve guests for the wedding banquet.

From the trap door in the ceiling cover -- the "heavens" -- descended the golden figure of the Sun who gave a short oration. This signaled that the serving of the food was about to begin. Later in the banquet, the Moon, represented as a woman, also gave a short oration. The meal was of two parts, the Sun presiding over six courses and the Moon over six more, symbolic of the cycle of time.

Before each course was served, two youths representing Castor and Pollux made an announcement of the god or goddess who supposedly sent the several dishes of food forming the courses of the meal. They were followed by the deity's representative and, of course, many waiters with elegantly arrayed food.

Because much of the meal had to be prepared over wood-burning stoves, the banquet lasted about seven hours. To make the waiting enjoyable, at times acrobats performed and, at others, the players in the balcony or the performer at the organ filled the hall with music.

After the twelve courses in the meal, a figure representing the Influence of Fortune gave to the guests candies in the form of money from the symbolic container that he carried.

The Sun returned through the trap door to address the assembly with the final speech of the evening, indicating that there would be the festival of a mountain (*la festa de uno monte*) on the following day. The last part of his poetry can be translated into English prose as follows:

> From the furthest parts of the Indies is detached a stray[11] and rich mount, in whose heart burns kindness, and has love won by you.
>
> It is filled with wild animals, new people, and gold, gems, and expensive and precious jewels such that each considers itself to be your treasure.
>
> It certainly is miraculous and unusual, that to this festivity run rocks and mountains that carry hidden riches inside.
>
> Constanzo now has been joined in matrimony to Camilla. Thus the heavens with all the elements respond to your wishes with goodness and quickness.
>
> In order to make them contented with your domain, go, therefore, and rest. Then, return tomorrow, and be alert in order to see the mountain and its gifts.

MONDAY, 29 MAY, 1475

After everyone had gathered in the great hall, a painted mountain constructed of wood, with representations of bushes and animals on the outside and hollow on the inside, came onto the open floor.

The use of mountains in pageantry is seen in other late fifteenth-century pageants. At Bologna on Monday, 29 January 1487, a mountain was rolled onto the floor containing Diana and her eight nymphs.[12] At Milano on 13 January 1490, there was a large mountain containing gods at one end of the hall for a Festival of Paradise *(festa del paradiso).*[13]

Out from the mountain leaped a dancer in a lion costume who mimed the role of the ferocious beast. He so easily jumped from table to table that the spectators may have likened him to the real creature that few, perhaps, had ever seen.[14]

A dancer exited a mountain in the pageant of 1487 at Bologna, who also imitated a lion.[15] A lion was portrayed in 1475 at Torino, but it is difficult to determine if there was mime.[16]

In the Pesaro pageant, next came a horrible-looking savage covered with hair. He carried a club and tried to capture the lion. The choreography demonstrated the skill of the primitive man in attempting to capture the lion and the beast in turn, defending itself.

Twelve wildmen and others dressed in lion and bear costumes participated in a pageant at Viterbo in 1462.[17] Wildmen were seen also at Torino in 1475.[18] Certain themes utilizing lions and wildmen were popular in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, but were seen much earlier. For instance, in 1393 at a wedding pageant in Northern Europe, six figures wore wildmen costumes.[19]

At this point in the 1475 Pesaro pageant, two youths came, from two recesses seeming like grottos in the wooden mountain, and began dancing.

They wore silk costumes extending to mid-thigh. One was green, the other, a shade of blue called *alexandrina.*[20] Fringes of gold adorned the costumes, and streamers or tassel-like ornamentations decorated the sleeves at the elbows. The leggings and shoes were similarly colored, but with hand-sewn embroidery. The dancers' headpieces and hair were golden; one had the head of an eagle, the other, of a lion. The dancer in blue either wore a mask or had his face painted with blue and decorated with gold; the other's mask or face was green with gold.

These two performers danced in the styles of the countries that they represented, but the chronicler does not tell us what those countries were.[21] In the latter half of the fifteenth century, interest typically was expressed in the customs and dances from other courts and lands.

The awareness of foreign dance steps appeared in the terminology, for instance, of the extant second version of Antonio Cornazano's dance treatise first written in 1455. He used the terms *todescho* (Germanic), *spagnoli* (Spanish), and *brebant* (from Brabant, an area north of Burgundy).[22] In the latter part of the century, in 1490 at Milano, groups of men and women or boys and girls, dressed, each group differently, in costues of Spanish, Polish, Hungarian, Turkish, Germanic and French peoples and danced stylistically appropriately.[23] Thus, the portrayal of dancing from different lands was probably not new to 1475 Pesaro.

After dancing awhile, the two dancers in their green or blue costumes with lion or eagle headpieces retreated to the mountain grottos. They must have symbolically overcome the other two beastly characters.[24]

The allegory of this episode can be seen as manifold. First, the dancers dressed in blue and green were different from the savages because they were civilized and not heathens. If the dancers in blue and green overcame the savages, the allegory can be generalized to include the idea that rationality should always rule over crudeness, that law should replace barbarian responses. Such a message would have been very prominent, not only for all citizens, but specifically for those of Hebrew descent since misunderstandings and racial and theological intolerance existed in parts of Italy.[25] The expression of one thing triumphing over something else is seen in almost every artistic creation dating from the period.

In June 1473 at Rome, a dance depicting a struggle between Hercules with his friends and centaurs, after the latter had made advances to the nymphs accompanying Hercules and his friends, ended with Hercules triumphant.[26] The beastly centaurs with their shields and clubs were driven from the performing space, an action symbolic not only of Hercules' strength, but of law over chaos. In January 1476 at Rome, the "virtues" fought the "vices" *(se ballo cum spade in mano li viciosi)* and won.[27] Hence, from these two selected examples, the theme of something good conquering something less desireable was expressed in pageantry before and after the wedding in 1475 at Pesaro.

If the two dancers from the mount vanquished their adversaries, the episode would also symbolize that people such as those contained in the mount might be of assistance to Contanzo in overcoming obstacles.

The next episode of dancing, which could perhaps be considered a continuation of the former, involved at least ten dancers. Five dancers in blue and five in green, dressing exactly like the first two, entered, carrying gilded and painted boxes probably representing treasure chests. These boxes contained sugar candies in the form of pearls, gems, and other jewels, predicted, in the last speech on the previous day, to be found in the mount. The ten dancers stylishly performed a beautiful *moresca,* a dance said in the account to consist of several *misure,* contrasting rhythms that had their own speeds, and danced with noble leaps and gestures causing the gold trim of the costumes to sparkle.

Performances of a *moresca* (pl. *moresche*) are documented to have occurred at various places at various times. For instance, in 1459 at Venice, two beautiful *moresche* were performed.[28] In the first, five or six dancers in strange costumes danced *ala moresca* with swords. In the second, four nymphs with bows and arrows danced *ala moresca.* In 1473 at Rome, after supper a *moresca* was performed.[29] In 1487 at Bologna, a girl with a flower in her hand, followed by eight youths with darkened faces and wearing bells, danced *ala moresca* with much grace.[30]

Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro wrote in a dance treatise dated 1463 that if a student studied the dance theory and practiced, then he would be able to dance perfectly Germanic, Greek, *Schiavo* (Slave), and *Morescho* (Moorish) dances as well as dances of other countries.[31] Unfortunately, there are no extant choreographic descriptions that are identified as *moresche.* The *moresca* at Pesaro in 1475 was described as having several rhythms, and in this sense, is similar to a *ballo.* A *ballo* in theory and practice, as conveyed in the dance treatises of Domenico and his students, is found with contrasting sections of rhythms. The rhythms are chosen from a group of fours: *piva, saltarello, quadernaria,* and a. In the extant choreographic descriptions, never is a property required, such as sword, however dancers hold on to pieces of cloth in a *ballo* called *Tesara* ("Stretched Taut" or "Weaving"). Thematic floor patterns can be identified in some *balli,* but are not implied as existing in fifteenth-century accounts of *moresche.* It is probable that a moresca had a certain quality of movement and choreographic form associated with it in a manner similar to those dances referred to, for instance, as *balli a la franzosa.*[32] From the data, a *moresca* can be interpreted as a dance foreign to Italy and not identified with French, Germanic, or other Northern European countries. In one sense, it would be the appropriate form and style for dancers from a mountain said to be from the Indies.

After the *moresca,* the dancers approached Constanzo, Camilla, and the other guests of honor seated at the head of the great hall, and gave them the ten (or twelve?) boxes of candies. It is likely that the first two dancers returned with the ten, forming a total of twelve dancers. The number of people seated at the tribunal table the day before was twelve: Constanzo, Camilla, and ten guests.

The symbolism of the entry of the ten dancers onto the floor is also variegated. The two dancers in blue and green could be seen as scouts who previewed the dance space symbolizing the area of Pesaro. Seeing that the area appeared to be what they and the people in the mount were seeking, the two dancers fetched others.

Immigration of Jewish peoples to Italy was occurring in the fifteenth century partially as a result of the persecutions elsewhere, such as in Spain. Hence the mount, said to come from the Indies, could be an allegory

of new residents settling at the seacoast location of Pesaro. If twelve dancers were counted, the association to the twelve tribes of the Israelites may have been made. If only ten dancers, as stated, danced, and not twelve, as implied, their number may have been symbolic of the ten commandments given to Moses on the mountain, symbolizing law. In a following dance episode also with a mountain, Constanzo is likened to King Solomon. Solomon was associated with Moses in humanistic thinking during the same period at the closely neighboring hill town Urbino.[33] Moses was seen also as the leader of the Israelites when the Jews fled from Egypt in search of a new home.

That the dancers carried treasure and offered it to Constanzo, Camilla, and certain honored guests can easily be seen as symbolic -- the inhabitants of the mountain were rich in certain aspects, and those around them benefited as a result of those riches. It was also an act of obeisance. Donating gifts also prefigured the later events when wedding gifts would be offered to the newly married couple.

Since the Sun had predicted a stray mount (in the singular form *d'Indi ci e spinto uno aspero et richo monte ... pieno e di nova gente,* not plural) with new people from the Indies, it is likely that this episode of dance was an unstated contribution to the pageant by the Jewish community. In a later speech by the Jewish Queen Sabbia, translated from Hebrew into Italian for Constanzo, she stated that the dancing was to honor the newly weds (*yi piacia che danzando ve honora questa sua gente*), but unfortunately she did not precisely identify the dancing to which she refered.

If the dancing of the lion and wildman and the two "courtiers" in green and blue were a contribution by the Jewish community, then a specific symbolic message was probably expressed: that the Jews were cultured, not barbarians. Furthermore, the episode of the ten or twelve dancers with chests of jewels indicated contributions to Constanzo by skilled jewelers and other professionals, Jewish or othewise, who were established in Pesaro. Another basis for this attribution is that a Jewish University was established in the area of Pesaro, and certainly, educated individuals would have resulted who would have pursued activities other than farming. The later dancing symbolically depicted only the agricultural side of the economic contributions by the Jews. It is unlikely that farming was the only livelihood of the new people.

If dancing was a speciality of the Jewish community and there was another mountain with twelve dancers specifically identified as a contribution by the Jewish community, then it is probable that the first mountain with twelve dancers was also a Jewish contribution; in other words, there was one cast with different costumes and choreography.

Finally, it does not seem likely that a similar, if not the same, structure would have been used for two episodes if they were completely different and unrelated. The same mountain could have been turned ninety degrees to allow the exits, instead of being at the sides, required in the first episode for the dancers in green and blue, to be at the front and back, required for the second episode. Where it was possible in the terminology of the account to use the term "mountain" in the plural sense, the term is found in the singular case. Aside from the passage quoted earlier, it is also written *la feste de uno monte* (the festival of a mountain), and elsewhere, *vederite el monte* (you will see the mountain).

After the dancers had yielded their sweet treasures, each took a partner and danced.

Women often performed in formal theatrical dance situations in fifteenth-century Italy. Various pageants with female performers, for instance, at Rome in 1473, Urbino in 1474, and Naples in 1477, have been mentioned earlier in this study, but there are many other pageants that could be cited such as those at Venice in 1459 where Diana and nymph danced, Bologna in 1487 where Diana and nymphs danced, and Milan in 1490 where many couples performed. Female dancers were also shown earlier to have performed in each of the nine or ten loggia-like structures along the road to Pesaro. Here in the great hall, they performed with partners. The description of the pageant, however, does not include the location of the female dancers before they performed, their costuming, or the nature of the dancing by the couples. One hypothesis is that all of the dancers came forth from the mountain, including the women, and that the women's costumes were related to their male counterparts. A mountain as small as six feet by six feet could allow twenty cramped youths to be transported into the hall.

The male, and possibly female, dancers returned to the mountain, and the hollow structure exited the room as it came, without a visible display of wheels or of the arms and legs of those underneath or inside turning the wheels.

Next in the course of the pagenatry was the presentation of gifts. In the end, about thirty rugs and forty silver objects among other gifts, had been showered upon

Constanzo and Camilla.

This discussion up to now has been necessary to establish the context in which the formally acknowledged Jewish contribution was made.

THE FORMAL JEWISH ALLEGORICAL PRESENTATIONS

The Jewish University of Pesaro (*universita de li giudei di Pesaro*) was formally represented by a large cast at this key moment in the pageantry. The importance of this contribution can be seen in the position of the event, that of folowing the expensive and finely wrought silver cups, jewelry, and other gifts that probably awed all who were present. The first part of this presentation was based on the theme of Queen Sabbia when she visited Solomon, the wisest king who had ever lived according to popular thought.

The procession was led into the hall by many young children, two by two *(a doi a doi)*, wearing new robes and Arabic *(a la arabesca)* headpieces and holding real date palm leaves in their hands. The children were followed by a large artificial elephant that seemed to walk by itself. The men who were inside the hollow legs could not be seen by the spectators. On top of this elephant was a gilded chair, covered by a canopy of the same color. A Jewish woman bedecked as a queen, dressed in gold, sat in the chair, probably decorated as a throne.

Behind her were two other elephants on which there was a castle with towers and pennants. The castle was full of the ladies of that queen, holding lilies and pennants. As with the nymphs and Diana and the group of maidens holding lilies with Puditicia, here is another allusion to the ladies-in-waiting and Camilla. It is more than coincidence that major female figures accompanied by groups are found several times in the pageant.

Next in line was a great throng of Jew of all ages dressed in the Arabian style. The colorful costumes were trimmed with gold and silver, and many wore robes (*turche*). The queen stopped in the middle of the room so that everyone could see. She then paid reverence in an appropriate manner to Constanzo and the others seated at the head of the room, and spoke in Hebrew for a while.

Concluding her speech to Constanzo, she addressed one of her subjects. An old bearded man with a fine robe, mannered with much graciousness and reverence, recited an Italian translation of the Jewish queen's oration, translated into English prose as the following:

> Magnificent ruler, because you do not
> Understand the language of my queen
> I will translate it for you.
>
> But first I want to tell you in Latin language
> Her name, and country, and, then, her disposition
> And the reason that she bows to you.
>
> Sabba is her name, and she is from the East.
> From Arabia. Her great nation is
> Rich of plantlife, gems, gold, and people.
>
> In her speech, first she greeted you,
> Making great reverence to your highness.
> She prayed that your kingdom be blessed.
> She said that to visit your excellency
> Was her real intention,
> That the fame of your wisdom
> Made her want to ask you questions.
>
> But first, there are presents for you. You are very
> Similar to the great King Solomon.
> She prays with a good and cheerful heart
> That you will accept the small token and be pleased
> With the dancing of these peole here to honor you,
> Of whom God, who faces you from the sky above,
> has blessed.

(According to Jewish tradition, the queen asked King Solomon three riddles. Editor's note.)

After these words, representatives of the Jewish group presented their gifts, a bowl and a silver object; and, after circling about the room, the procession departed.

Then some representatives of the villages in the neighboring districts introduced themselves, one at a time on bended knee, and presented their gifts. Interspersed between one donation of a wedding present and the next was dancing by costumed youths (*gioveni*) and, probably, by professional dancers (*ballarini*). It is likely that this is some of the dancing the Queen Sabbia referred to as partly being the Jewish gift.

At times, the twenty-eight year-old Constanzo danced with his young wife Camilla. Since the eyes of everyone present were on the heads of state when they danced, and to dance well was a form of showing competence, it is all the more likely that dance masters such as Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro flourished at each of the major courts,

including the Sforza court at Pesaro.

Another episode featuring a mountain occurred. Either the same mountain as before, but modified, or a different mountain altogether was carried or rolled to the center of the performing space. Like the first, it was covered with plants, bushes and flowerbeds, but had a golden drawbridge from which dancers or actors could exit and enter at the front. Apparently there was another opening in the rear, because the dancers later went to the rear of the mountain to bring forth new properties needed for their dances. It is possible that this structure was the same as the first, but instead of two grottos on the sides, the mountain was rotated ninety degrees, one opening given a drawbridge, and on the peak, or on one of them if there were several, a high tower was placed. From this tower, a cherub, portrayed by a child dressed appropriately, who probably crawled up a ladder through a small opening, appeared and recited a poem that can be translated into English prose as follows:

> God protect this fine gathering,
> First, the married couple to which we pay honor
> And, second, the mountains and the stones here that envy them.
>
> Inside this mountain is an ancient man, very worthy,
> Who travelled by a long and difficult road
> To visit the illustrious ruler here
> He would like to ask for land near
> This place (Pesaro), and wants to farm it.
> Watch, therefore, and with you be the divine,
> Always overseeing all of your activities.

At this point, the drawbridge was lowered, and out came an old man with great dignity that was admirable. He made his way to Constanzo who was designated King Solomon, in order to ask the question that Queen Sabbia had intimated would be asked, the same mentioned by the cherub -- a request for land to farm. This can be translated into English prose as the following:

> From Bethlehem in the land of Judea,
> Moved by your great fame I come to
> You as predicted by the Hebrew Laws.
>
> My name is Roboam[34] and all of my property --
> Material things, wife, servants -- is in this mountain
> That, against its nature, moved to pay honor to you.
> Because you spring forth from a glorious and virtuous fount,
>
> Under your shadow I am considering to live.
>
> All of your wishes will be well attended,
> But, please give me this field to farm.

Saying this last sentence, he gestured to the performing surface in the great hall. Constanzo replied that he was content to give away the "field". The elderly Jew then went cheerfully to the opening of the mountain and called forth his people, reciting poetry translated into English prose as the following:

> Come forth my dear caretakers.
> Brig your tools in your hands.
> God has had pity on his subjects.
> This kind ruler (Constanzo) that you see before you
> Gave us this "field" in order to gather fruit
> And to cultivate well. Now, attend to it.
> Everyone has my blessing.

After those words, twelve dancers, possibly the same twelve who had performed earlier in association with the mount, dressed in short white costumes with hand-sewn gold flowers and trim, sprang forth from the mountain. Their tresses and hairdos were well ornamentd, and they projected exuberance at being there in the hall, symbolic of the domain of Constanzo, that of Pesaro.

They performed a lively dance, *uno ballo in forma di moresca* (a lively *ballo* in the form of a *moresca*). Here, the *moresca* was undoubtedly performed by the Jewish dancers.

The dancers then returned to the mountain, using a door different from the one used at first. They came forth with silver and golden hoes, performing representational actions such as cultivating, weeding or loosening the earth. Their dancing was well choreographed and rhythmically executed. At the end of the first musical section that probably featured only one rhythm (*misura*), they returned to the mountain.

Next, the dancers came forth with golden chests filled with flowers. They mimed actions of planting seeds in the imaginary tilled soil that had just been hoed. Their dance required a suspension of reality by the audience, as has been demonstrated many times earlier, since the dancers actually scattered flowers instead of seeds. Of curse, in May, real flowers would have been available to use in the pageant. When the *misura* ended for this episode of planting, the dancers returned to the mountain.

With silver sythes the dancers returned. In unison ,they represented the cutting of the stalks of grain.

They left and returned into the performing area many times, performing each episode with a different gilded or silver garden tool. In the course of this dance, the dancers represented all of the phases of work related to farming the land. For instance, they mimed actions of drying and collecting the imaginary grain they had grown by putting the flowers, which earlier had been spread on the floor as "seeds", into sacks and carrying them home. This was done rhythmically and in unison, and probably in choreographic and symmetrical arrangements.

The aged man who had asked permission to work the land on behalf of the inhabitants of the mountain was always present during the performance. Another character in the performance was a woman who was also dressed in the style conceived as "antique" at that time. She gestured appropriately, for instance, when collecting part of the harvest from the various workers.

At the conclusion of the dance, some of the flowers were probably given to Constanzo and Camilla as a symbolic token of the benefits to be derived from having these new inhabitants work the land.

Participation and theatrical activity of the Jewish community in later pageantry of fifteenth-century Pesaro is described elsewhere. In two letters dated 29 and 30 October 1489, Giovanni Sforza and his new wife Maddalena Gonzaga described the pageantry of their wedding. One of the episodes was a theatrical presentation of Judith and Holofernes, made *cum spese et operatione deli Hebrei de questa terra* (paid for and produced by the Jews of this area).[35] This story depicts the courage and sacrifice made by a young Jewish woman to overcome the enemy of her people.

EVENTS FOLLOWING THE JEWISH PRESENTATION

Next, a costumed group, representing seven planets, came "dancing" *(danzandosi)* into the room. Each of the seven seated figures, representing a planet, on the seven painted box-shaped pageant wagons then prepared to recite his or her lines. But before this a small child recited a short poem.

The next episode of the pageant was a presentation of candies to Constanzo, Camilla, and their important guests. The musicians of wind instruments played a *piva,* which was described as being very pleasant (*suave*) and slow (*larga*), requested beforehand by Constanzo to accompany the distribution of the edible treats. The dance rhythm *piva* was one of the four rhythms in dance theory allowed by Domenico and his student Cornazano.

In Cornazano's value system at the time of writing one version of his treatise (the extant manuscript is thought to date from c. 1465), the *piva* was not used much by good dancers. Also, according to Domenico and Cornazano, the *piva* required the quickest movements.

Unfortunately, the dance master Guglielmo da Pesaro did not indicate the nature of the *piva* in any copy of his treatise, although he used the term sixteen times in his treatise dated 1463, in the choreographic descriptions of dances. But since Cornazano stated that two *piva* units were equivalent in duration to one unit of *bassadanza,* a slower rhythm, it is possible that the chronicler meant the latter. A year earlier in 1474 at Urbino, the dance that was performed was a *bassadanza,* not a *piva.*[36] The dance type *bassadanza* was performed in later pageantry, for instance, at Bologna in 1487, whereas the *piva* was not mentioned.[37]

In a column formation, one hundred and twenty youths danced to the *piva* music. They were arranged according to the objects that they carried. The first in line supported a large and magnificent castle of sugar on his head and was followed by two other dancers, each carrying, on one shoulder, a chest about two feet long containing candies. This same arrangement was repeated for all of the dancers composing the column.

Because there was not enough space in the great hall to see the dancers as a column stretched out as a straight line, by request of Constanzo they danced in the middle of the performing space, weaving like a snake or forming the letter "s". They danced to the rhythm, and, at certain moments in the dance, kneeled in unison.

It was the most splendid and magnificent sight that was ever seen, according to the account, when the many banners, castles, feathers, and chests of gold were raised with digity high into the air all at once.

Having finished dispensing the sweet treats, all of the squires *(scuderi)* began to dance among themselves, jumping, hopping, or leaping *(saltando)* with great agility and pleasure *(grandissima gratia et piacere)*. Whereas the dancing of the labors could be seen as representational, this act seems expressionistic.

When the sweet snack had been consumed, the lord Constanzo took his lady Camilla to the floor to dance.

Likewise, other rulers, gentlemen, scholars, and knights danced with their partners in a wedding ball *(uno lungo et gran ballo).*

Later, when everyone had returned to his or her seat, a youth recited a long verse in Latin. Following this speech, the youths who had served the candies before the ball returned with more sweets. A rich private citizen, a spice merchant, had servants bring into the hall a sculpture made of sugar and other sweet things.

Next, a figure representing Poetry entered with many poets. She held an apple with the word TRUTH written on it and with transparent fabric covering it. This was a representation to express the idea that truth -- the underlying realities -- could be perceived through poetic allusion.

Next, came three maidens, representing Grammar, Rhetoric, and Astrology, carrying a representation of the mountain of Parnassus. Nine muses were represented dancing to the sound of Apollo's lyre, near the fountain of Helicon.

Behind this mountain came twenty poets, ten Greek and ten Latin, each carrying a large book made from sugar. The figure of Poetry gave a speech, followed by a series of alternating presentations of the Greek and Latin books.

At this point the pageant in the hall was concluded; and, since it was dusk, all went to their places of lodging for supper.

At night, a construction made of rotating wheels, with fireworks placed everywhere on it, was lit to give a spectacular display.

A pageant wagon with a figure of Cupid, elevated on a podium and surrounded by fire, was rolled into the town square. About twelve sculpted mobile figurines of children (*spiritelli*) holding torches were fixed so that they would dance (*ballando*) around the pedestal. Fireworks were placed in positions on the wagon in order to ignite continuously. With much fanfare, the day's festivities formally ended.

TUESDAY, 30 MAY 1475

In the courtyard of the palace, a platform was ereted for the comic performance of *Cavalero de la Gata.*

Another pageant wagon was seen; this time of Fame. Finally, there was the joust. In the end, four prizes were given, two of rich fabrics and two pouches or purses. With this episode, the theatrical aspect of the pageant formally ended.

The pagenatry at 1475 Pesaro was rich in its variety. It was multi-faceted, multi-colored, and multi-disciplined, that is, crossing boundaries of the artforms traditionally studied by modern scholars. The pageantry conveyed splendor. Each episode had its place like a jewel in a crown. Each episode had a function to fulfill within the values of the period: moral, social, political, or other.

The dancing of the Jewish community, representing the labors, is one of the unique episodes of fifteenth-century dance whose importance has been overlooked by historians. Although the theme of the labors of the months is found in other disciplines such as painting, the Jewish dances in the Pesaro pageant in 1475 form the only known "ballet" from the period with a similar theme. Behind the pretext of representing the labors was a social and political statement. The Jewish people were seeking recognition of their economic contribution to a community. They wanted "land" to cultivate and, most likely, a refuge from persecutions.

Although historians specializing in art, music, ideas, or other fields have been able to appreciate in greater or lesser degrees the contributions to our present civilization derived from the late fifteenth-century Italian courts, only the initial stages of identifying the dance activity has occurred. Recovery of the jewel-like dances remains to be effectively accomplished.

Typically, the dance was a veil that could be seen through in order to perceive the "underlying" realities or truth as conceived in those times. The number of dancers, type of costumes, set pieces, style of moving, dance vocabulary, and, likely, the floor patterns alluded to other things. ■

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ENDNOTES

1. The author used two main sources for the pageant: Firenze, Bibiloteca Nazionale Centrale, Banco Raro 157, which is an incunabulum dated 9, November 1475; and Cittá del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Codice Urb. Lat. 899, which is

a hand-written manuscript, essentially a copy of the incunabulum, with thirty-two added miniatures, dated 1480. In 1985, the manuscript was on display at the Vatican, exemplifying miniature painting by the young Raphael. Tammaro de Marinis published the text of the former and the miniatures of the latter in his *Le Nozze di Costanzo Sforza e Camilla d'Aragona Celebrate a Pesaro nel Maggio 1475* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1946) of which two hundred copies were printed for the wedding of Ricasoli-Firidolfi and Ruffo di Guardialombarda.
Camilla is called Covella in a contemporary chronicle by the notary Giacomo, edited by Paolo Garzilli *Cronica di Napoli di Notar Giacomo* (Napoli: Stamperia Reale, 1845), reprinted in 1980 by Forni, p.129; here is that entry, "*A di 5 de magio dicti anni se parti da napoli la illustre Madamma Covella Marzana figliola del Signore Princepe de Rossano et ando ad marito allo Signore Constanzo Sforzia, Signore de Pesaro ...*" The spelling of the name for the young Sforza is either Costanzo or Constanzo in contemporary accounts.

2. Alessandra Macinghi negli Strozzi, *Lettere di una gentildonna fiorentina del secolo XV ai figlioli esuli,* ed. C. Guasti (Firenze: Sansoni, 1877), 431.

3. Patrizia Castelli, "La kermesse degli Sforza pesaresi" in *Mesura et Arte del Danzare* ed. Castelli, Mingardi, and Padovan (Modena: Coptip, 1987), 24-25.

4. Alessandra Veronese, "Una 'Societas' Ebraico-Cristiana nella Firenze del Quattrocento", a paper to be included in the *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro* held at Pesaro, Villa Miralfiore, July 16-18, 1987.

5. Giacomo, *op.cit.,* 136, *lo legato andavano sotto lo palio per li segi dela Cita in li quali erano gentile done che in quilli a ballavano.*

6. Giovanni Zannoni, "Una Rappresentazione allegorica a Bologna nel 1487" in *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Classe di Scienze, Fisiche, Matematiche, e Naturali; Atti, Rendiconti,* Ser. IV (1891), 419.

7. Alfredo Saviotti, "Una Rappresentazione Allegorica in Urbino nel 1474" in *Atti e memorie della R. Accademia Petrarca di Scienze, di Lettere e Arti* (Arezzo), I, (1920), 232.

8. The account reads "*un gran diamante col fio d'intro ala divisa Sforcesca*". The miniatures accompanying the handwritten text in the Vatican often have a ring with a rose shaped bracket that holds a cone-shaped diamond. A structure shaped like this is not congruent with the description that suggests an object -- a diamond, not a ring -- with a rose inside it. This entire episode is badly interpreted by Giulio Perticari "Delle nozze di Costanzo Sforza con Camilla d'Aragona celebrate in Pesaro l'anno 1475" in *Rivista Bolognese,* I (1868), 179. He interprets the original *uno arboro de nave* (ship's mast) as a *piramide,* and states that the iron sculpture *sostenevano de' garzonetti in sembiante di Geni, i quali si udian cantare, e vedeansi bellamente danzare* (supported boys dressed like genies, who sang and danced). In the original, it is written *doi ordini di balli l'uno contrario al'altro dove balavano spiritelli ornatissimi de oro et argento.* The term *spiritello* is used for a small, often naked, child that is either real, or is painted or sculpted. In the latter sense, original sources describe *balli di spiritelli picoli* (dances of little children) on the fountain found in the center of town.

9. Because there was bleacher seating for less honored guests, the seating closest to the action was probably not of individual chairs, nor of a bench with a high back. This is established on the basis of the text, found in Marinis, *op. cit.,* 10, *banchi da sedere, et drieto gradi cinque de ligname in forma de theatro.* However, at a pageant in 1459, the seats are said to have had high backs. See Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Magliabecchiana VII, 1121, 64 (63), *tutti i seggi altissimi e reali.* Although a musicians balcony and a platform for women were placed on one long side, suggesting that the bleacher seating occupied the other, such is not the case according to the description *el piano de la sala era dal tribunal in fino ala credenza occupato d'intorno di banchi da sedere.*

10. Giacomo Vanzolini, "Musica e Danza alla Corte di Urbino nel Rinasciamento" in *Le Marche; Illustrate nella Storia, nelle Lettere, nelle Arti,* Anno IV, Fasc. vi, (1904), 334.

11. The term in the account of 1475 is *aspero.* Variants in spelling during the period occurred frequently. The modern Italian term *sperso* means "stray" and *aspro* means "sour, rough, harsh".

12. Zannoni *op. cit.,* 423.

13. See Edmondo Solmi "Relazione della Festa del Paradiso" in *Archivio Storico Lombardo* (1904), 86.

14. The passage "*...che saltava sopra ogni gran tavola altramente* ..." leads one to think that the tables were still in the room.

15. Zannoni *op. cit.,* 423.

16. Saviotti, *op. cit.,* 193.

17. Alessandro d'Ancona, *Origini del Teatro Italiano,* 2nd ed. (Torino: Ermanno Loescher, 1891), I, 239.

18. Saviotti, *op. cit.,* 193.

19. See *Early Music* I (1973), 38, regarding King Charles VI at the Hotel de St. Pol, Paris.

20. There are several modern hypotheses regarding this color *alessandrino.* Alessandro Luzio and Rodolfo Renier, *Mantova e Urbino* (Torino, Roma: L. Roux, 1893), 296, state that Gay (no citation) was incorrect in stating that the color *alessandrino* was

rouge (fr., red). Rather it was metallic blue or violet-blue. According to Polidori Calamandrei, *Vesti delle Donne Fiorentine nel Quattrocento* (Firenze: La Voce, 1924), 125, the color *alessandrino* is *azzurro* (blue) with *riflessi metallici*(metalic reflections). According to Rosita Levi Pisetzky, *Il Costume e la Moda nella Società Italiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), 76, the color *alessandrino* is *sorta di turchino cupo* (a hue of dark blue).

21. The key passage is *cum bona maniera quasi stupefacti como deli loro paesi si ritrovaseno li cum quel monte.*

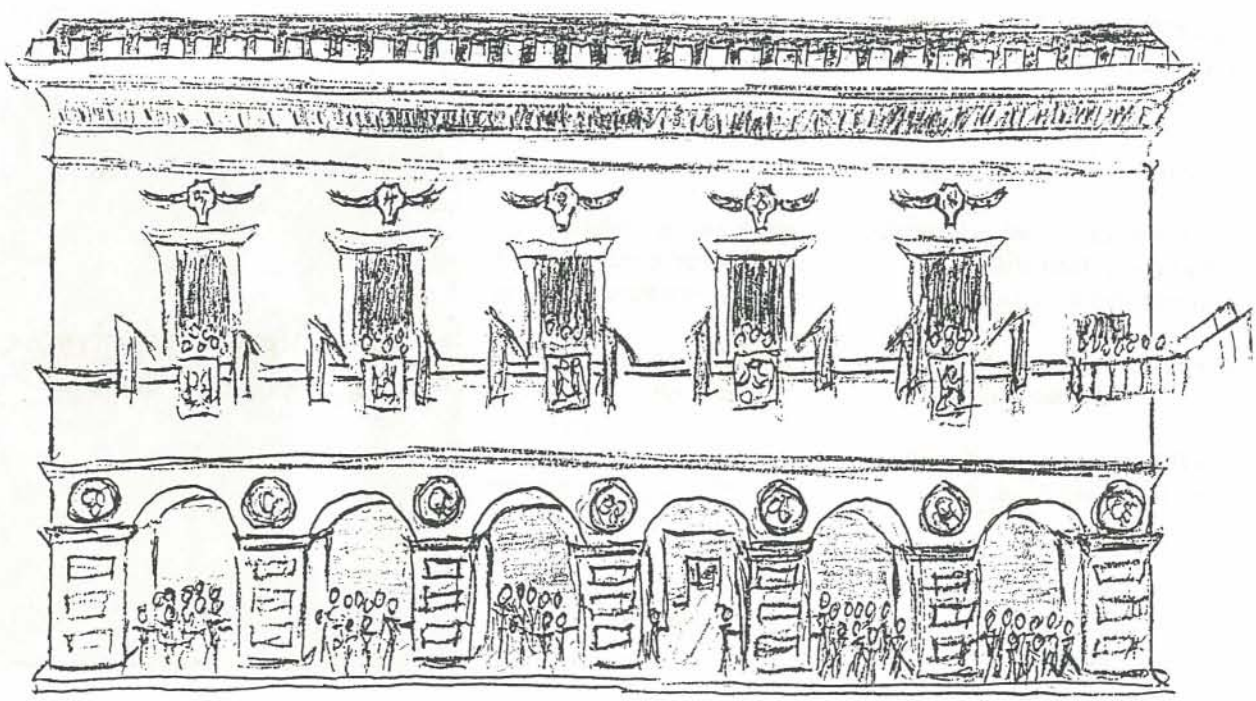
22. See Antonio Cornazano, *Libro dell'Arte del Danzare* (Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Codice Capponiano 203), lines 141, 183, and 191. Curzio Mazzio provides an Italian transcription in his "Il "libro della'arte del danzare" di Antonio Cornazano" in *La Bibliofilia* XVII/1 (1915—16), 1-30. An English translation is provided by Madeleine Inglehearn and Peggy Forsyth, *The Book on the Art of Dancing by Antonio Cornazano* (London: Dance Books Ltd., 1981).

23. Solmi, *op. cit.,* 83-86.

24. The passage in question is *pur danzando alquanto se reduseno quasi fugendo et impauriti nel monte col lione et col homo salvatico.*

25. Several writers have discussed the atrocities supposedly committed by the Jewish community in Italy around 1475, but

Map of Northern and Central Italy identifying locations cited in article
מפת צפון איטליה ומרכזה, בה מצוחים האתרים המוזכרים במאמר



Reconstruction of the front of the palace as seen from the fountain.

that were untrue fabrications. See Pietro Ghinzoni, "San Simone di Trento; Nuovi Documenti, 1475" in *Archivio Storico Lombardo* (1889), 133-44; and Guidetti Corrado *Pro Judaeis. Riflessioni e documenti* (Torino: Roux e Favale, 1884), for an episode in 1479. That a Jewish community existed in the Pesaro region is attested to by the following documents found in Antonio Gianandrea's "Della Signoria di Francesco Sforza nella Marca" in *Archivio Storico Lombardo* (1885), 476: 1440, 24 giugno Cons. general.

26. Biblioteca Universita via di Bologna, 2441, page 11, back side.

27. (n. a.) "Cena e Rappresentazione data dal Cardinal Gonzaga" in *Archivio Storico Lombardo* (1888), 195.

28. Pietro Ghinzoni, "Alcune Rappresentazioni in Italia nel Secolo XV" in *Archivio Storico Lombardo* (1893), 960-61.

29. *Ibid.*, 963.

30. Zannoni, *op. cit.*, 426.

31. Guglielmo's treatise, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds It 973, lines 1049-1053: *Et piu che habiando in voi tal pruova et experienza potreti perfettamente danzare Todescho grecho schiavo et morescho e di qual si vuole altra natione e comporre anche balli.* Of the several versions of Guglielmo Ebreo da Pesaro's treatise his *De practica seu arte tripudi vulgare opusculum* dated 1463 is found in Francesco Zambrini, "Trattato dell'arte del ballo di Guglielmo Ebreo pesarese" in *Scelta di curiosità letterarie inedite o rare del secolo XII al XVIII* (Bologna: Forni, 1873), CXXI. It is reprinted as *Trattato dell'Arte del Ballo di Guglielmo Ebreo pesarese* (Bologna: Commissione per i testi de lingua, 1968).

32. Solmi, *op. cit.*, 86.

33. Luciano Cheles, " "Topoi" e "Serio Ludere" nello Studiolo di Urbino" in *Federico di Montefeltro; Le Arti,* ed. Giorgio Baiardi and others, (Roma: Bulzoni, 1986), vol. 30 of *Europa delle Corti,* 270.

34. Roboam (Rehoboam), King of Juda was the son of Solomon c. 930 B.C., and was unable to prevent the destruction of Juda by Sesac of Egypt.

35. Luzio and Renier, *op. cit.*, 49.

36. Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Palatino 286, 7v.; or Saviotti, *op. cit.*, 232, but the reader is to be cautioned that his wording is not true to the original.

37. Zannoni, *op. cit.*, 424.