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The path to virtue

Dancing the education of Achilles and the Nereids

Kristine Kolrud

Abstract

This chapter explores the representation of male and female education in a ballet de cour (court ballet) performed in Turin in 1650. Princely education was the central theme of the ballet, L’Éducatione d’Achille e delle Nereidi sue sorelle nell’isola Doro (The education of Achilles and the Nereids, his sisters, on the island of Doro), and it celebrated a marriage alliance between the houses of Savoy and Bavaria. The performance was based on the ancient myth of Achilles’ education by the centaur Chiron, and also included the instruction of the hero’s sisters. Kolrud focuses on the written and visual documentation of the ballet in order to examine the presentation of educational ideals as well as the particular emphasis placed on the role of the mother.

Keywords: House of Savoy, ballet de cour, art history, court culture

The ballet L’Éducatione d’Achille e delle Nereidi sue sorelle nell’isola Doro (or: The education of Achilles and the Nereids, his sisters, on the island of Doro) was a Savoyard variant of the French ballet de cour (court ballet). It was performed in Turin, the capital of the duchy of Savoy, in 1650 on the occasion of the marriage of Princess Adelaide (1636-76) to the Electoral Prince Ferdinand Maria of Bavaria (b. 1636, r. 1651-79). The ballet was the work of the courtier count Filippo di San Martino d’Aglié, and it consisted of recitatives (or sung verses) performed by unnamed and professional singers as well as dance entries performed by the Duke, his sisters, and

1 The bride is also known as Henrietta Adelaide, Enrichetta Adelaide/Enrichetta Adelaida, or Adelaide Enrichetta.

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other members of the court. The subject of the ballet is the ideal education of the prince and to a lesser extent that of princesses, and the performance served to exalt the virtues of the members of the ducal House of Savoy. Order and harmony emerge as central concepts, as does the role of the mother.

Here, I will focus on how educational ideals are presented, and discuss the relationship between the performance and its documentation. While the musical score of L’Educatione d’Achille has not been preserved, written accounts of the performance have come down to us, and a manuscript that combines the decorated text of the libretto with images in watercolour and tempera exists. This manuscript provides valuable insight into the staging of the ballet, and it belongs to a series of fourteen codices made in connection with performances at the court of Savoy.

The manuscript is ascribed to Tommaso Borgonio (1628-91) and was presumably made after the performance. It is impossible to know how well the volume corresponds to the actual ballet, but such detailed visual documentation of court ballets from the period is rather unusual. The manuscript also clearly functioned as a work of art in its own right. It does not appear to have been intended as a gift, and it remained at the court of Savoy. In the manuscript the illustrations in colour correspond more closely to the text than the pen drawings on the text folios. Although the latter are by no means insignificant, I will concentrate mainly on the former in the following essay. These mostly alternate between overviews of the stage (Fig. 1) and close ups of the dancers and sometimes singers (Fig. 2). In the latter, the backgrounds are left blank and emphasis is placed on detailed

2 The architect Amedeo di Castellamonte was probably responsible for the execution of the scenery and the elaborate machines used. The ballet was performed in the San Giovanni palace. Castiglione, Himenei, p. 70.

3 It is clear from the libretto that greater emphasis was placed on music in this performance than in other Savoyard ballets. Maria Letitizia Sebastiani points out that it involved ten soloists as well as the choir. Entry on the ballet in Feste barocche, p. 103 (2.19). See also Bouquet-Boyer, ‘Musical Enigmas’, for the use of music in the Savoyard ballets.

4 [Tommaso Borgonio], L’Educatione d’Achille, BNT q.V 58. The mediums are watercolour, tempera, and pen and ink on paper, and the use of gold leaf is extensive.

5 They were performed between 1640 and 1681. The following are among the most important works on the manuscript: Viale Ferrero, Feste; McGowan, ‘Les fêtes’. Feste barocche, edited by Arnaldi di Balme and Varallo, contains an extensive bibliography.

6 Some of the albums clearly appear to be collaborative works. The nature of this collaboration nevertheless remains unclear. The names of Onoratio Tiranti and Carlo Conti are known but other artists may also have contributed. Arabella Cifani and Franco Moretti propose that Carlo Conti only participated on the later albums. In Feste barocche, p. 98 (2.15). See their discussion on pp. 98 and 100. See also Viale Ferrero, Feste, pp. 36-39, and the description of plate 31.

7 The albums were recorded there in an inventory of 1682. See Feste barocche, p. 84.
renderings of costumes, while one is also able to gather an impression of movements and gestures. As is common in this type of illustration, the performers are not individualized, but the dancers are named in the text, and the names of their characters appear beneath them in the illustrations, as seen in Figure 2. 8

The Duchess of Savoy, Marie Christine (1606-63) – who, although her son had come of age two years previously, in reality continued her regency – corresponds to the goddess Thetis in the performance (Fig. 3). 9 Marie Christine’s abilities as educator is a central message, clearly geared both to the court itself, the Bavarian delegation as well as Savoy’s important ally, 

8 The manuscript originally consisted of 119 folios, and a few of these are now lost.
9 BNT q.V 58, fol. 9. Thetis is the crowned figure in the foreground. The libretto incorporates a complex web of allusions and references to classical sources. It is beyond the scope of this essay to give a detailed account of the manuscript. Generally, names of gods follow the Roman convention. When citing Greek sources, I use the Greek names and add Roman equivalents (see Liddell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, repr., Perseus Digital Library, Tufts University, www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/abbrevhelp).
France, represented by the French ambassador, the Comte de Servient.10 The part of Thetis is not performed by the Duchess, and it is sung, not danced. Thetis is the mother not only of Achilles – danced by the Duchess’s son, Duke Carlo Emanuele II (b. 1634, r. 1638-75) – but also of the Nereids.11 The latter are performed by her daughters, including the bride Adelaide and other ladies of the court. In the ballet, Thetis sends Achilles to be educated by Chiron, and the young hero and his companions are trained in various disciplines. The Nereids are educated by the Muses, but the ballet focuses considerably less on them, and they only dance towards the end of the

10 If it made an impression on the French ambassador remains unclear. There is no direct reference to the performance in his correspondence but that can hardly be taken as proof that he was not intrigued by it. See ADC Sardaigne cote 114CP/44. Unsurprisingly, his interest in the marriage alliance as such is reflected in his correspondence. For the connection between the ballet and other works on the Duke’s education, see also Kolrud ‘Prolonged Minority’. The Duchess’s education of her son had been celebrated already in the allegorical dialogue Teti e Chirone (Thetis and Chiron) by Lorenzo Scoto, published in conjunction with her birthday in 1649. See Doglio, ‘Letteratura e retorica’, p. 592, n. 35; Bouquet, Il teatro di corte, p. 53.
11 The exception is fols. 69 and 70 with the lute-playing Fratelli la Volta, where one represents Achilles.
Figure 3  Prophecy of the Oracle of Apollo, Thetis to the right in the foreground

performance. However, the separation of male and female dancers, as well as greater focus on the performances by male courtiers, was common.\footnote{For instance in the ballet \textit{L’Unione per la peregrina Margherita Reale e celeste}, danced on the occasion of Margherita of Savoy’s marriage to Ranuccio Farnese, Duke of Parma, in 1660, the bride and other ladies of the court appear only at the end of the performance. See the entry on the ballet by Sebastiani in \textit{Feste barocche}, p. 107 (2.24).} Nevertheless, the emphasis on the education of princesses, who were not heiresses, is by no means inconsiderable in the ballet. As far as I know, this was innovative as a subject matter at the time.

The choice of the subject of Achilles’ education by Chiron is hardly surprising. It was frequently used and had been employed earlier at the court of Savoy. Chiron was also a clear reference to the young Duke’s grandfather and namesake, whose star sign was the Sagittarius.\footnote{See Castellani Torta for Carlo Emanuele I’s emblem, ‘\textit{Tra ludus e azione}’, p. 51. See also BRT, \textit{Storia Patria} 949, fols. 54, 63.} The employment of Chiron could therefore be a means of emphasizing how Carlo Emanuele’s education was sanctioned by his ancestor. Moreover, Carlo Emanuele II himself is often referred to as Achilles.\footnote{Castiglione, \textit{Himenei}, p. 68; Tesauro, ‘Il Diamante’, pp. 118-120.}
In the ballet, Thetis leaves Achilles with Chiron on the island of Doro. The Nereids, we learn, are already there with the Muses.\textsuperscript{15} In a series of entries, grouped together in a separate ballet within the ballet, we are then given an overview of the education of Achilles and his companions. The latter appear to be almost on an equal footing until the making of Achilles’ armour. The emphasis is above all on fighting techniques (Fig. 4), although it also includes other skills, such as music (Fig. 2) and painting. Some additional theoretical skills are mentioned in the text but they are not performed.\textsuperscript{16} Music may therefore have been a means of representing ‘Letters’, but the part called the Ballet of the Masters of the Arts, a series of interconnected entries within the performance, includes only two entries with musicians and nine that demonstrate physical skills, six of which focus on various forms of combat.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} BNT q.V 58, fols. 25, 26, 29, 31. It may also be worth noting that Chiron describes himself as more of a guide and follower than master, fol. 32.
\textsuperscript{16} See, for instance, BNT q.V 58, fol. 93.
\textsuperscript{17} Jeanice Brooks has suggested how, at the court of France in the sixteenth century, instruction in music could stand for letters in the context of the complete nature of Achilles’ education by Chiron. Brooks, \textit{Courtly Song}, p. 139. Castellani Torta refers to how this is based on the classical Greek concept of \textit{paideia} in that the ballet emphasizes the balance between the education of
It may have been easier to perform mock fighting on stage than the study of philosophy – and it may also have been a reflection of the exigencies of the time as well as the young Duke’s interests. Nonetheless, the sujet of the ballet is learned and complex, and could be characterized as a separate learning process. Also in the case of the Nereids, bookish learning is referred to in the text but not explicitly associated with their performance.

The fact that they are all to be educated on the same island appears significant. It may also be noted that the island of Doro and the character performed by the bride Doris (or Dori in Italian) share the same name, which, the text explains, means gift of the gods. One might add that the choice of name serves to further emphasize the greatness of the ducal house. Despite their shared geographical location, there is virtually no focus on the education of the Nereids. Needless to say, perhaps, they do not participate in Achilles’ programme. What they do have in common is the use of the palace where virtue resides – and the virtue of the Nereids is stressed.

After the entries that focus on Achilles’ education, it is Juno, not Thetis (as is the case in the Iliad) (Fig. 5), who asks Vulcan for armour for Achilles. At the same time the goddess requests colours from her messenger Iris to adorn sceptres, mantles, and crowns for the Nereids – they are in other words to be given regalia, a clear sign of their status. Juno ends her song by stating that arms and love will shine equally. The making of armour is directly connected to virtue, whereas the simultaneous request on behalf of the Nereids could be related to the equally virtuous task of the restoration and consolidation of peace through marriage.

body and soul. ‘Tra ludus e azione’, p. 53, esp. n. 51. For the tradition of pyrrhic dance at the court of Savoy, see Samard, ‘Les danses guerrières’. In fact, even the Corybante and Curete of the first entry of musicians are associated with armed dancers. See Robertson, ‘Ancient Mother’ pp. 292–94. For the tradition of pyrrhic dance at the court of Savoy, see Samard, ‘Les danses guerrières’. In fact, even the Corybante and Curete of the first entry of musicians are associated with armed dancers. See Robertson, ‘Ancient Mother’ pp. 292–94.

See Viale Ferrero, Feste, p. 49. See also the discussion in Kolrud, ‘Prolonged Minority’, pp. 201–2.

See BNT q.V 58, fol. 25, 111, 117.

See BNT q.V 58, fols. 23 and 111.

See BNT q.V 58, fol. 23 and for instance, fol. 32.

BNT q.V 58, fol. 76; Hom. Il. 18.427.

Iris is the goddess of the rainbow, and in Italian her name Iride is also the common word for rainbow. Tesauro likens the radiance of the diamond, Marie Christine’s device, to the rainbow and, citing Pliny the Elder, establishes a connection between the lily of the Duchess and the iris flower; ‘Il Diamante’, pp. 29–30. The fleur-de-lis of the French monarchy (or indeed the fleur-de-lis as such) may well have derived from the iris.

BNT q.V 58, fol. 76.

The goddess Iris was considered a restorer of peace, and Tesauro praises the Duchess as a peace-bringing Iris. ‘Il Diamante’, p. 30.
Iris is not described as appearing on stage in the text, nor is she represented in the illustrations. The exchange of Thetis for Juno in the ballet could have been a means of accentuating the importance of marriage – and therefore of one of the daughters in particular – and Juno’s role as goddess of marriage. Juno’s proximity to Thetis, attested to by classical sources, including the *Iliad*, possibly also influenced this choice. Emphasis is placed on the fact that Vulcan provides Juno’s husband with lightning; yet, Jupiter’s name is not mentioned. The text does not allude to blood ties between Juno and Vulcan, but it cannot be ruled out that it was considered to be of some importance – and although the Duchess is primarily associated with Thetis, Margaret McGowan has suggested that both Juno and the personification of Virtue are references to her. Other goddesses in the performance must have served a similar function, but the choice of one heroic female character over another can hardly be considered a mere variation on the theme.

26 BNT q.V 58, fol. 78.
27 ‘Les fêtes,’ 201.
It is also worth mentioning that while Achilles dances with his companions, little distinction is made between the actual daughters of the Duchess and other ladies at court. They all perform as Nereids and sisters of Achilles but, as pointed out by Valeriano Castiglione in his official account of the marriage celebration, the princesses lead the dances in the ballet of these sea goddesses (Fig. 6). Nevertheless, despite the fact that Doris is singled out as the bride of Ajax (who represents the groom, Ferdinand Maria), sceptres, mantles, and crowns are made for all of the Nereids – while Achilles is selected as the only receiver of impenetrable armour.

The connection between virtue and the soldier or various parts of armour and weapons was a commonplace at this point in time. It was mentioned by ancient sources and used throughout the Middle Ages. In the text, the qualities associated with Achilles’ arms and armour are spelled out as the

28 Castiglione, Himenei, p. 75.
29 See Seneca, De beata vita 15.5; St. Paul’s passage on the armour of God, Ephesians 6:10-17. The need for armament is also mentioned by Ripa, in the first edition of his highly influential Iconologia (1593), p. 290, as well as subsequent editions. The 1645 edition, closest in time to the performance, is cited here (unless otherwise indicated). Iconologia (1645), p. 672. See also Braunfels-Esche, Sankt Georg.
Figure 7  Virtue


Figure 8  Ballet of Achilles and his Companions: Odysseus, Menelaus, Agamemnon, and Polydamas

virtues of a great hero. It reads like a list of virtues and their subcategories, or variations in which virtues needed in battle are emphasized, but it also includes other typically princely virtues.\textsuperscript{30}

In the performance, this catalogue of virtues is soon followed by the appearance of Virtue (Fig. 7), who, the text makes clear, had been the inseparable companion of young Achilles all along and inspired him.\textsuperscript{31} Virtue is equipped with a spear, in conformity with the military tradition. She in fact combines attributes found in different descriptions of Virtue in Cesare Ripa’s \textit{Iconologia}.\textsuperscript{32} Virtue wants Achilles to triumph at Troy, and after her song Achilles and fifteen of his most valorous companions take part in the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions (Fig. 8).\textsuperscript{33} The education of Achilles has now come to an end, and the dancers perform as armed heroes.\textsuperscript{34}

After the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions, Ajax – who, as already mentioned, represents the young groom – is hurt by Amor’s arrow, and the gods rejoice at Achilles’ victory in battle and the happy union of Ajax and Doris, the bride.\textsuperscript{35} The Nereids then perform their ballet (Fig. 6), which they have learnt in the Temple of Neptune. The Nereids are presented and described, and emphasis is placed on their beauty but also on particular capacities. For instance, Eurynome (who is actually an Oceanid, rather than a Nereid) is singled out for her vast knowledge.\textsuperscript{36}

In mythology Doris is in fact the grandmother of Achilles and mother of Thetis, whereas the latter is the leader of the Nereids. The mother of the Oceanids was Tethys, the daughter of Uranus and Gaia, and both goddesses could be referred to as \textit{Teti} in Italian.\textsuperscript{37} In the ballet the two goddesses appear

\textsuperscript{30} BNT q.V 58, fol. 86. See also Kolrud, ‘Gem and the Mirror’, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{31} BNT q.V 58, fol. 90.
\textsuperscript{32} Ripa, \textit{Iconologia} (1645), pp. 671-72. These first appear in \textit{Iconologia} (1603), pp. 510-12, though most of the characteristics of the Virtue of the ballet are found in variants of the first edition, \textit{Iconologia} (1593), pp. 290-91.
\textsuperscript{33} BNT q.V 58, fols. 92-99.
\textsuperscript{34} The ballet celebrates their triumph, but the libretto also incorporates comments on the fictional character of the dance (in the description of the first entry), by emphasizing the importance of training during peacetime and by noting how the performance prepares them for real triumphs, as well as in the presentation of Virtue (where the dance is said to consist of mock battles and simulated assaults), BNT q.V 58, fols. 90 and 93.
\textsuperscript{35} BNT q.V 58, fol. 107. Unlike Adelaide, Ferdinand Maria was not present and Ajax was danced by the marchese of S. Damiano. BNT q.V 58, fol. 93.
\textsuperscript{36} BNT q.V 58, fols. 109, 111-18.
\textsuperscript{37} Generally, the Nereid is referred to as \textit{Teti} and the Titan goddess as both \textit{Teti} and \textit{Thetide}. This distinction appears to have been less clear in the seventeenth century, and both \textit{Teti} and \textit{Thetide} are used in the libretto, with reference to the mother of Achilles. Vincenzo Cartari does not distinguish between \textit{Teti} and \textit{Thetide} (\textit{Le Imagini de gli Dei}, pp. 68, 188, 190, 294,
to merge; this may explain why quite a few of the Nereids who appear are Oceanids. Doris is the name both of a Nereid and the Oceanid who was the mother of the 50 Nereids. This is no doubt intentional and a reference to fertility and her wifely duties. It is also a means of singling out both the Duchess and the young bride.

The dance entries are arranged into six separate ballets in *L’Éducatione d’Achille*, and the fact that they are characterized as ballets in the libretto may cause some confusion. The first of these is the Ballet of the Zephyrs (Fig. 9), which precedes the already mentioned Ballet of the Masters of the Arts (Fig. 4). The next set of dance entries are presented as the Ballet of Children’s Games (Fig. 10). Subsequently, the Ballet of the Smiths of Vulcan (Fig. 11) is danced, followed by the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions (Fig. 8), and finally, the Ballet of the Nereids (Fig. 6). These ballets were interspersed with sung verses, and the centrality of the figure of the mother may have been stressed throughout the performance through an inscription on the proscenium arch.

and the unpaginated index. The first version of Cartari’s work was published in 1556 but it went through numerous editions and remained popular in the seventeenth century, although the learned are unlikely to have relied on him.
Figure 10  Ballet of Children’s Games: Achilles and Patroclus


Figure 11  Ballet of the Smiths of Vulcan

The mother as ideal educator

In the manuscript, this inscription (Fig. 12), NATORUM VIRT(U)S MATRIS GLORIA, Children’s Virtue – Mother’s Glory, is found on the proscenium arch in all of the overviews of the stage. In order to achieve glory one must choose the path of virtue, as is even explicitly stated in the argomento (or explanation of the subject) of the ballet; it therefore also says something about the virtue of the mother. It appears to be both a description of the Duchess and a message to the young bride. Nevertheless, it is not mentioned in any account of the performance, but whether or not it was added to the manuscript as something of an afterthought it stresses the significance of both the mother and virtue. If the whole performance was framed by these words on virtue, it would also have reinforced the message of the mother’s importance. The inscription would have emphasized the Duchess’s abilities and those of her children; it would moreover have been a means of reassuring the Bavarian delegation about the bride’s potential.

The inscription may allude to the exemplary figure of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. In his Facta et dicta memorabilia, Valerius Maximus contrasts Cornelia with her ostentatious female guest and describes how, instead of displaying her jewellery, the Roman matron said of her children, ‘these are my jewels’. The inscription above the proscenium arch is not lifted directly from Valerius Maximus, and it may have been invented for the

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38 The word virtus is always truncated.
39 BNT q.V.58, fol. 2.
40 It could even refer to the second performance, given to celebrate Marie Christine’s birthday in February 1651, but the manuscript is explicitly linked to the first staging of the ballet. BNT q.V.58, fol. 1 (frontispiece).
41 I am grateful to Professor Emerita Siri Sande who suggested to me that the inscription could be related to Cornelia.
42 ‘haec [...] ornamenta sunt mea’, V. Max. 4.4.
occasion. Yet, Emanuele Tesauro, who is likely to have contributed to the performance, compares Marie Christine and Cornelia in ‘Il Diamante’, a panegyric dedicated to the Duchess and published in 1659. Unsurprisingly, Tesauro makes it clear that Marie Christine’s virtues surpass even those of this Roman prototype, but his work may in fact shed some light on the performance and Marie Christine as a modern Cornelia. Tesauro recounts Valerius Maximus’s anecdote but claims that Cornelia presented four children to the other woman. The number is not specified in Valerius Maximus, but it is often interpreted as a reference to the two sons who survived into adulthood. Suzanne Dixon points out that Cornelia’s children are presented as small at the time. If the event took place, her husband may therefore have been alive, and Cornelia could in fact have paraded four of her twelve children in front of the Campanian woman.

Although Tesauro explicitly emphasizes this famous story, he conflates it with Plutarch’s account of an unknown Spartan matron. The latter showed her four sons to a woman from Ionia who was immensely proud of her weaving. The Spartan woman admonishes the other that she should focus on the upbringing of her children and that they should be the source of her pride. There is no mention of personal ornament in this story. It is hardly by chance that Tesauro combines the two accounts; after all, the subject of the panegyric is Marie Christine’s personal device, the diamond. The comparison with this so-called ordinary Spartan woman may, however, have appeared particularly appropriate.

43 I have been unable to find an exact classical precedent for the inscription.
44 Tesauro, ‘Il Diamante’. For Tesauro’s contribution to ballets at the court of Savoy, which has not been sufficiently studied, see Viale Ferrero, *Feste*, pp. 32-33, the text to plate 11 (which deals specifically with *L’Educatione d’Achille* where she also mentions Tesauro’s ‘Il Diamante’), and her ‘Le feste e il teatro’, p. 75, and Doglio, ‘Letteratura e retorica’, p. 573, n. 8.
46 See, for instance, Hallett, ‘Women Writing’, p. 15.
47 Dixon, *Cornelia*, p. 44.
48 Tesauro, ‘Il Diamante’, p. 122; *Plut. Lacaec. 6.9*. Tesauro refers to ‘Plut. in Apopht. Lacacn’, ‘Il Diamante’, p. 122. This could be interpreted as a reference to Plutarch’s *Apophthegmata Laconica*, rather than the *Lacaenarum Apophthegmata*, but, undoubtedly, the reference is to the latter. Tesauro also mentions the Ionian woman’s pride in her lavori (works), a term that could refer to her production of beautiful woven textiles.
49 The fact that the Spartan woman was associated with someone who could dedicate herself to fine weaving, suggests that she did not come from a humble background. Tesauro’s description of her as ordinary appears to imply that her situation was not comparable to that of the Duchess. Tesauro also refers to Cornelia elsewhere in the context of the joys of motherhood, ‘Il Diamante’, p. 59. She was seen as a prototype widow and good educator of children and generally used as an example. Much less was known about the anonymous Spartan woman.
Tesauro elaborates on the joy these children afforded the anonymous woman. They seemed to her the four corners of the world, the four elements, and the four cardinal points. It is worth noting that Tesauro emphasizes how the four corners of the world comprise its empires.  

He then juxtaposes these ordinary figures with ‘a heroic princess’ and her education of ‘four heroes’, noting the superiority of the Duchess’s achievements. The fact that the story actually includes four sons suited Tesauro’s purpose. Marie Christine had four surviving children and Figliuoli could also be understood as a reference to the Duchess’s offspring; undoubtedly, this was the intention.

This idea of the mother’s virtual world dominion through her children is also reflected in the ballet. The number four and its multiplications was not an uncommon structural element in court performances, but considering Tesauro’s insistence on the blessings to be had from four children, it is reasonable to assume that it was of particular importance in this case. Achilles dances with fifteen of his companions, and they are divided into four squadrons (as explained in the libretto); there are sixteen Nereids who first appear in entries of four, then in one of eight, and finally all sixteen are joined on stage. The Ballet of the Masters of the Arts is divided into twelve entries; in turn, these are performed in groups of four entries. The Ballet of the Smiths of Vulcan consists of three entries only, but the first two of these are danced by two performers and the last by four. Thus, eight dancers appear together in the final grand ballet. The eight zephyrs appear in four entries.

The four elements

It is worth taking a closer look at the Ballet of the Zephyrs, the first of the series of ballets. At first glance it may appear to be no more than a separate performance or, possibly, an ill-fitted introduction, unrelated to the theme

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50 ‘Il Diamante’, p. 123. He speaks of the four corners of the world, but relates the elements and cardinal points more directly to the immediate surroundings of the matron.
52 The masculine plural figliuoli (sons) also covers a combination of several daughters and only one son.
53 See BNT q.V.58, fols. 13-22, 35-64, 80-87, 93-102, and 111-18. For the explanation of the squadrons, see fol. 92. The pattern is not entirely consistent. The Ballet of the Nereids only consists of three entries (but four performances if their grand ballet is included). The Ballet of Children’s Games, however, consists of three entries and nine dancers in all. BNT q.V.58, fols. 68-75.
of princely education. It should be noted, however, that a fresco by Isidoro Bianchi, titled *The Birth of Flowers*, shows Flora, a young Zephyr, Apollo hovering in the sky, Chiron (who had himself been instructed by the god and Diana), and presumably the nine Muses, as well as other female figures. It is part of the decoration of the Valentino room in the Valentino palace, and a representation of the palace is included in the background. Decoration of the room started after the birth of an heir, that is Francesco Giacinto, Carlo Emanuele's elder brother in 1632. A connection between the zephyr and education was therefore already established in Savoyard iconography and associated with Marie Christine's son.

Before Achilles is sent to the island for his education, the libretto describes how Thetis calls forth the zephyrs to perform a ballet (Fig. 9). The background for her action is her joy at hearing the prophecies of a great future for her offspring from the oracle of Apollo (Fig. 3). The inclusion of the west wind is hardly unusual and Zephyr (or even zephyrs in the plural) was popular in various art forms. What is particularly interesting here is that, although they are clearly presented as zephyrs and thus westerlies, their names suggest that they cover the whole spectrum. For instance, one of the zephyrs is called Leuconotus, a southerly to south-westerly wind; two of Aeolus's sons, Iokastos and Pheraimon, are also among the dancers. Moreover, the winds represent the four elements and by implication, other quadruplets, such as the four cardinal virtues.

Clearly, the zephyrs suggested hope and prosperity, but one may wonder why it is not ostensibly turned into a ballet of the four winds, not least considering the straightforward representation of the seasons and the four elements. Flora as Marie Christine appears to be the answer. Zephyr was easily associated with her son and the continuity of the dynasty. Here the westerlies probably represent all of her children, and the ballet demonstrates their ubiquity, a clear reference to their conquests of new empires through war and marriage. The Duke dances the role of Zephyr and is paired with his

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54 The decoration is dated 1633-37. For the decoration, see Griseri, *Il Diamante*, pp. 121-29, who refers to the nine Muses (p. 121). More than nine figures are included; a greater number of Muses may have been represented or, possibly, these are attendants. Griseri also notes that Apollo, Flora, and Chiron appear in other contexts at the court of Savoy (p. 126). It is worth bearing in mind that Favonius, the Roman equivalent of Zephyr (or Zephyrus), was said to be Flora's husband, mirroring Zephyr's union with Chloris. The zephyrs are specifically referred to as the children of Flora in the libretto, however (BNT q.V.58, fol. 12), and the zephyr in the fresco is also shown as Flora's son, not her husband.

55 BNT q.V.58, fol. 12.

56 See BNT q.V.58, fols. 12-22. Leuconotus is also known as Libonotus.
Roman counterpart Favonius, thus suggesting dominion of both the Greek and Roman worlds and, hence, omnipresence. Iokastos was the legendary founder of Reggio Calabria; the theme of both procreation and the foundation of new settlements is therefore integrated into the ballet. Wind is a potent symbol for the spread of ideas or, as in this case, the growth and multiplication of a dynasty. The ballet might be classified as educative in itself. It incorporates the four elements, the constituents of all matter, and wind as such could represent the element of air. The zephyrs appear as air, water, earth, and fire, and their final, joint appearance seems to insist on the perfect harmony of the elements. Although the notion of the four elements was not unchallenged, it remained important, and certainly functioned as a symbolic representation of, among other things, natural philosophy.57

The perfect balance of the elements could even allude to the importance of a harmonious education. Winds are associated with travel and are suitably placed at the beginning of Achilles’ educational voyage; the winds of spring are also often associated with facilitation of navigation.58 Moreover, Homer claims that Zephyr fathered Achilles’ horses, which were swift as the wind, like the hero himself.59 The wind is therefore connected both to the speed with which the hero moved and his means of travel. In fact, when Achilles is received by Chiron, the centaur refers to the ocean, the waves, and the shore, and then continues to describe his sisters as bright stars who eagerly await the sun, that is, Achilles.60 Again, the elements, or at least what could be understood as symbols of them, are included, and the force of the wind is implicit in the association between the young hero’s passage and waves. Explicit reference to favourable wind is also made during Achilles’ voyage.61

Even the elements of fire and water have their own ballets, since Vulcan is associated with the element of fire and the Nereids with that of water. Only the element of earth is not thematized in a separate ballet. However, the text insists on the fertility of the various areas to which we are introduced in the performance.62 In as much as they cross the sea, with the help of the wind, in order to travel between various parts of the classical world, the role

57 Alternative views are discussed in Garber and Ayers (eds.), Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy, esp. I, ch. 18, Garber et al., ‘New Doctrines of Body’.
58 See, for instance, Stat. Silv. 3.2.46–49.
59 Hom. Il. 16.150. Philostratus the Lemnian mentions Zephyr in the context of the education of Achilles, but the wind’s ability to (becomingly) ruffle the young boy’s hair does not appear particularly relevant here. See Philostr. Maj. Im. 2.2.
60 BNT q.V.58, fol. 32.
61 BNT q.V.58, fols. 31–32.
62 BNT q.V.58, fols. 3, 23, 88.
played by the element of earth (in the form of an island as well as mainland Europe and Asia) is central, but it is not pointed out in a comparatively explicit manner. Nonetheless, as will be seen below, it is emphasized in the libretto.

Harmony between heaven and earth

Indeed, the ubiquity of the sea is emphasized, and the point of the transformative capacities of sea deities is also stressed in the descriptions of the Nereids. In some respects, their ballet therefore parallels that of the zephyrs, and it seems reasonable to understand this as an emphasis on the complete nature of their education (and their excellence per se). It therefore also establishes a connection between the first and the last ballets of the performance. The relationship between heaven and sea is particularly important in the Ballet of the Nereids, as is how the sea reflects the light. Doris is described, not only as a heavenly gift, but also as princess of both the earth and the sea. This theme of harmony between heaven and earth is emphasized in particular in the Ballet of the Nereids; it seems suitable in the context of the happy union of Doris and Ajax, as well as the celebration of Achilles’ victory. As soon as Amor is introduced, the joy of the earth is paired with the glory of the heavens and the choir of the gods. In the final entry of the Ballet of the Nereids, the libretto incorporates references to all of the elements, as well as the celestial sphere. In addition to water in various forms, river banks, adorned with the flowers of Liriope’s son Narcissus, are included. Ephyra’s name is linked to the element of fire, and she is said to have the capacity to ignite the fires of love in the middle of the ocean. Also included among the dancers in this entry is Ocyrrhoe, whose speed is immense and who therefore married the north wind, Boreas. Wind, the main theme of the first ballet, is consequently related to the concluding entry of the performance of the Nereids. In fact, it is associated with the

63 BNT q.V.58, fol. 108.
64 BNT q.V.58, fol. 111. In this she parallels Thetis, whose dominion (as queen, not princess) is equally extensive, see fol. 5.
65 BNT q.V.58, fol. 105.
66 BNT q.V.58, fol. 115. Osir(o) in the libretto (the name is spelt as either Ocyrrhoe or Ocir(r)oe in present-day Italian) could refer to several different mythological characters. It seems most likely that the nymph also known as Melanippe or Euipe is intended here. She was the daughter of Chiron and conceived with Aeolus. However, Orithyia, daughter of King Erechtheus, was raped by Boreas. A conflation of the two characters may have been intended.
very last dancer mentioned in the libretto. The last entry also picks up the theme of the four elements, although, as with the description of Ocyrrhoe, this emphasis may not have been as evident in the actual dance.

Castiglione also insists on the celestial connection in his description, in which he claims that the princesses appeared in the guise of parhelia (or sun dogs) and he, moreover, compares them to the aurora.67 The libretto says of the dancers of the first entry, which included Doris, that they appeared as auroras and suns.68 Parhelia had been observed in Rome in 1629 and 1630 and Castiglione's version therefore, together with the references to meteors in the libretti, appears to testify to the interest in astronomy at the court of Savoy.69

The appearance of the Nereids is introduced by a description of the sea as a pervasive element that not only constitutes oceans and rivers but also reaches springs on the highest mountains through subterranean routes. Moreover, as present in meteors it enters the air and even reaches the stars.70 This is why, so the text maintains, Homer calls them 'heavenly Pleiades and Hyades and souls of the spheres'. An etymological explanation is thus offered and these mountain and rain nymphs are associated with the sea and the Nereids.71 By associating the two constellations (or groups of nymphs) with the souls of the spheres, the libretto appears to equate them with the Muses who rule the celestial spheres and, when they take hold of the souls of poets, cause poetic fury.72 Already upon Achilles’ landing on the island of Doro his sisters are ‘almost rotating among spheres of virtue’, clearly the result of their education by the Muses.73

After the completion of his training by the masters of the arts, the parallel between Achilles’ lute playing and Apollo’s handling of his lyre is evident in the first entry of the Ballet of Children’s Games, and the text explicitly refers to the harmony of the spheres.74 Apollo is Achilles’ antagonist; like the god

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67 Castiglione, Himenei, p. 75.
68 BNT q.V.58, fol. 109.
69 Meteors are mentioned in the same context on BNT q.V.58, fols. 108 and 115. It was believed that meteors were atmospheric phenomena at the time.
70 BNT q.V.58, fol. 108.
71 Only the word Hyades or Huades means the rainy, but the Pleiades were also associated with rainy weather.
72 Marsilio Ficino’s elaboration on Plato’s Phaedrus and Ion were essential for the Renaissance revival of the concept of furor poeticus. ‘Jupiter [...] is the understanding of God [...], on whom depends Apollo as the understanding of the world-soul. The nine Muses consist of the world-soul and the souls of the eight celestial spheres.‘ This is linked to the concept of the harmony of the spheres and poetic inspiration. Allen, ‘Soul as Rhapsode’, pp. 144-147 (p. 144, quote).
73 BNT q.V.58, fol. 32: ‘Quasi trà sfere di virtù volgendo’.
74 BNT q.V.58, fol. 68.
of poetry himself, the hero is specifically associated with the art form. In the ballet, the music played by Achilles (and Patroclus) (Fig. 10) appears to result in the unity of heaven and earth.\textsuperscript{75} Thus, universal harmony is evoked, and this theme is emphasized in the Ballet of the Nereids (Fig. 6), which, unlike the Ballet of Children’s Games, is performed after Achilles’ victory at Troy. The making of Achilles’ armour (Fig. 11), however, follows the Ballet of Children’s Games. Homer mentions the Pleiades and the Hyades in his ekphrasis of the shield that Hephaestus (Vulcan) makes for Achilles; they are therefore part of a famous passage in the \textit{Iliad}, linked to the poet’s own inspiration, which is undoubtedly what the libretto alludes to. However, they are not described as souls of the spheres. Along with other constellations they are described as part of an all-encompassing totality: ‘Therein he wrought the earth, therein the heavens, therein the sea, and the unwearied sun, and the moon in the full, and therein all the constellations wherewith heaven is crowned – the Pleiades, and the Hyades and the mighty Orion, and the Bear […]’.\textsuperscript{76} The decoration of the shield of Achilles is extremely multifaceted and described at great length in the \textit{Iliad}.\textsuperscript{77} It seems to offer a microcosm of society as a whole, including the celestial spheres. In the ballet, the star clusters function as a connection between heaven and ocean, and, implicitly, also between Achilles and the Nereids. The opening lines of Homer’s description emphasize the completeness of the shield’s decoration, and the libretto’s much briefer depiction of the ubiquity of the sea has a similar function.

Although Achilles’ arms and armour are not portrayed in a comparable manner in the libretto, they represent a comprehensive list of virtues and are linked to his great conquests.\textsuperscript{78} The traditional connection between the Nereids and Achilles’ armour is not only established through their leader, Thetis. For instance, in Quintus Smyrnaeus’s description of the shield of Achilles, Thetis is shown, led by the other Nereids to her wedding with Peleus.\textsuperscript{79} In one account, the \textit{Fabulae} previously attributed to C. Julius Hyginus, Thetis first requests the armour from Hephaestus (Vulcan); subsequently, it is transported to Achilles by the Nereids.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{75} ‘scese à festeggiar con le loro armonie cortessissime le sfere’, BNT q.V.58, fol. 68.
\textsuperscript{76} Hom. \textit{Il.} 18.483-86.
\textsuperscript{77} Hom. \textit{Il.} 18.478-608.
\textsuperscript{78} BNT q.V.58, fols. 86, 88, 90-92.
\textsuperscript{79} Q.S. 5.73-75. In the first \textit{stasimon of Electra}, Achilles receives the weapons made by Hephaestus from the Nereids before he departs for Troy. Torrance, \textit{Metapoetry}, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{80} Hygini, \textit{Augusti Liberti}, p. 25 (CVI).
Fire and earth

Attention is drawn to the relevant element also in connection with Vulcan and the Ballet of the Smiths of Vulcan. 81 The tradition of Cyclopes as helpers of Vulcan is post-Homeric. In the ballet, the Giant Cyclopes Steropes (lightning bolt) and Brontes (thunder) dance the first entry, and Achilles' armour appears to be made by the god's assistants only (Fig. 11), whereas no mention is made of helpers in the *Iliad*. 82

The Vulcan of the ballet, however, turns Ionia into the Troad, including the capital of Troy. 83 By doing so, he copies Thetis's previous transformation of Thessaly into Ionia, and a parallel is also found in the metamorphosis of Mount Pierus into Doro. 84 Subsequently, Asia is praised for her riches, 'metals, gems, and minerals' as well as 'herds of animals, plants, birds, and colours'. The Troad and Troy are then singled out. 85 By praising the territories where the ballet is set, the theme of the earth's abundance is evoked. 86 In conjunction with the transformation of Ionia into the Troad, a list of Achilles' past conquests is included. They are compared to Vesta's crown of turrets. 87 Vesta could stand for the earth herself, and the crown of turrets is generally associated with Rhea or Cybele (the former is equivalent to Ops in the Roman pantheon). Vesta, goddess of the hearth, is connected both with Vulcan's element of fire and the earth. 88 By associating Vesta with the imminent destruction by fire of Troy as well as the earth and Achilles' future world dominion, a play on her two functions is clearly intended. 89 Vincenzo Cartari explains the symbol of the crown by referring to the many 'cities, castles, villages, and other buildings' of the earth's circumference. 90 The crowning element of Achilles' career is the victory at Troy, and the crown of

81 BNT q.V.58, fol. 78
82 BNT q.V.58, fols. 78-88; Hom. Il. 18.468-613.
83 BNT q.V.58, fol. 88. Folio 89 is missing and would perhaps have shown the Troad and Troy.
84 See BNT q.V.58, fol. 23 and the discussion below.
85 BNT q.V.58, fol. 88.
86 For Thessaly and Doro, see BNT q.V.58, fols. 3 and 23.
87 BNT q.V.58 fol. 88.
89 A burning city with a Trojan horse is illustrated on BNT q.V.58, fol. 86, in other words the calligraphic plate placed before the folio showing the final ballet of the smiths of Vulcan.
90 Cartari, *Le Imagini de gli Dei*, p. 149 (in his description of Ops). He claims that the Great Mother is the same as Ops, Cybele, Rhea, Vesta, and Ceres, as well as others, p. 148. Several goddesses could be identified with the Great Mother. Hestia (Vesta) was the daughter of Rhea and (although this does not occur in the earliest sources) could be confounded with, for instance, Cybele and Demeter. However, Cartari also maintains that there were two separate goddesses by the name of Vesta and that they were often confused, p. 160.
turrets here clearly alludes to the *corona muralis*, given to the soldier who, in the words of Aulus Gellius, ‘is first to mount the wall and enter by force into the enemy town’.91 Clearly, honours from the much later Roman army could not be bestowed upon the Greek hero Achilles, but the ballet is rife with carefully chosen incongruities that add to its complexity. In addition to Vesta, the two goddesses Flora and Pomona are associated with Thessaly and ‘eternal autumns’ as well as ‘immortal springs’.92 As seen above, Flora subsequently appears as the mother of the zephyrs, and the fertility of the earth is relevant to the west wind.93 Moreover, life on Earth is connected to the passage of the seasons.94 The association of Vesta with earth and fire may also be seen as a reminder of the wider context, how the earth consists of fire, water, and soil, as well as the necessity of the air surrounding it. It is hardly irrelevant that Vesta is introduced as soon as Achilles’ armour is finished, bearing in mind that the hero’s shield (as it is described in the *Iliad*) appears to comprise a miniature version of the world. Directly preceding the association of Achilles with Vesta, the Troad with Troy is in fact described as a compendium of the wonders of the world.95

The earth’s significance is also emphasized in the opening entry of the Ballet of the Masters of the Arts, which is performed by one of the Corybantes and one of the Curetes (Fig. 2).96 These are followers of Rhea/Cybele. In the ballet they play tympana, a type of hand drum, and (as indeed they could be) they are credited with being the inventors of this instrument as well as *krotala*, which were similar to castanets.97 The instruments illustrated

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91 Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 5.6.16. Quoted in Maxfield, *Military Decorations*, p. 76. Maxfield drily notes that ‘[i]t is unlikely that the crown was awarded very frequently, for few can have been the first to scale an enemy wall and have lived to enjoy the distinction which their courage had earned’, ibid. Unsurprisingly, the ballet makes no mention of Achilles’ tragic fate at Troy. This would hardly be suitable in the context of princely celebration.

92 The two goddesses are mentioned in the presentation (*Ordine della festa*), BNT q.V.58, fol.3.

93 BNT q.V.58, fol. 12.

94 Cartari explains that although Ops is immobile, she has a carriage (carro) because that which takes place on Earth is related to the rhythm of the seasons (‘sono con certo ordine variate per le quattro stagioni dell’anno’), p. 151.

95 The word used is *ristretto*. BNT q.V.58, fol. 88.

96 BNT q.V.58, fols. 35-36.

97 BNT q.V.58, fol.35. In the *Bacchae*, Euripides mentions their association with Rhea and refers to the Curetes as parents of Zeus, whereas he credits the Corybantes with the invention of tympana, Eur. *Ba.* 120-26. The Curetes used music to drown the crying of little Zeus when Rhea had left him with the nymphs, in order to save him from being eaten by his father, Cronus. This story is mentioned by numerous sources. A comparison with Marie Christine who protected her young son during the civil war of 1639-42 is possible. However, this could be risky, considering the potential for misreading the myth as implicit criticism of the late Duke, Vittorio Amedeo I.
have little in common with tympana shown in classical works of art, but
the inclusion of satyrs suggests awareness of the association of both Curetes
and Corybantes with fertility rituals. Nonetheless, the text relates how
they imitate the sound of antique triumphs. The hemispherical shape of
the instruments in Figure 2 may well correspond to contemporary views
on the shape of the instrument. In his entry on Ops, Cartari explains the
tympana as symbols of the earth’s roundness, claiming that one of them
is the upper hemisphere ‘where we live’, while the other is home to the
antipodes. In other words, the instruments represent the shape of the
earth itself. Placed at the beginning of Achilles’ education by the masters,
the entry also addresses the question of mythic origin and reflects the theme
of the Great Mother. The combination of the opening ballet of the fertile
winds of spring and the repeated references to the abundance of the earth
appear to serve both as a celebration of the Duchess as Mother Earth and
an affirmation of the great future of her offspring.

The labours of Hercules

Harmony could be considered the organizing principle of the ballet. In fact,
the Ballet of the Masters of the Arts not only consists of groups of four entries,
which all terminate in a final joint ballet, it also includes a sense of balance
within these internal divisions. Each of the first four entries is performed
by two dancers, and they combine music with fighting techniques. Subsequently, in the next group of entries, the martial aspects of princely
education are balanced by painters and leapers; the latter appear to represent
theatre and dance. The last four entries are similar; here, fighting is
combined with horse dressage. However, the very last entry is different,
and the text stresses the importance of surprise and variation. Only three

98 BNT q.V.58, fols. 35 and 36. Satyrs are illustrated on the calligraphic plate, fol. 35. Compare for instance with the krater, showing a maenad playing a tympanym with a handle, c.440-430 BC. Harvard University Art Museum, inv. no. 1960.343. The dancers also carry wind instruments described as tuba ritorta, as if they were quivers (BNT q.V.58, fol. 35). In the illustration on fol. 36 these look rather fanciful and there is a certain resemblance with the buccine ritorte blown by the tritons, fols. 29-30. As a noisy instrument, it may serve the purposes of the Curetes.

99 However, they are also accompanied by violones. BNT q.V.58, fol.35.

100 Cartari, Le Imagini de gli Dei, pp. 149-51.

101 BNT q.V.58, fols. 35-44.

102 BNT q.V.58, fols. 45-54.

103 The horses are danced by two garzoni (servants), according to the text (BNT q.V.58, fol.58), but from the illustration on fol. 59 one might be led to believe that there were four dancers.
of the vaulcers of the final entry are named, but they are apparently also joined by two more dancers and a winged *pegasus*.\(^{104}\) Pegasus as a symbol of wisdom and poetic inspiration may appear appropriate at the end of this series of educative dances.\(^{105}\) The Muses also implicitly refer to Pegasus in the final chorus of the performance; they mention the tribute paid to the Nereids by their sacred spring of Hippocrene, which was said to have been created by a blow of Pegasus’s hoof.\(^{106}\) However, the sudden appearance of the winged horse was clearly also meant to entertain and delight, and probably create a link with the following Ballet of Children’s Games.\(^{107}\)

The Duke’s position in the Ballet of the Masters of the Arts is central; he appears in the sixth entry and performs the noble art of fencing (Fig. 4).\(^{108}\) Bearing in mind that there are twelve entries, an allusion to the labours of Hercules may also have been intended. Although this may seem far-fetched, considering the inclusion of, for instance, painting, the masters are training heroes, and Chiron makes it clear that virtue is acquired through exertion.\(^{109}\) The connection between excellent masters, heroes, and virtue is also spelled out in the libretto.\(^{110}\) Thetis asserts that Chiron will turn the young hero...
into a Jupiter where Justice is concerned and a Mars in matters of war, and the Apollonian oracle prophesies that he will have the ‘face of Amor and the heart of Hercules’ (Fig. 3). This is directly connected to his (good) fortune and valour, as well as the Pillars of Hercules.\textsuperscript{111} In other words, the hero’s tenth labour, which made him undertake his longest journey to the end of the known world, is implied. The oracle declares that the Pillars of Hercules will shield Achilles, and he will be guided by his great ancestors.\textsuperscript{112} The pillars also specifically alluded to the Duke’s Habsburg forebears.\textsuperscript{113}

Although the circumstances were radically different, Hercules had asked Apollo for guidance, and subsequently embarked upon the twelve labours. The education performed by the dancers is hardly suggestive of Hercules’ torturous labours, but he is the perfect example of the idea that only a strenuous journey can lead to virtue. Even intellectual endeavours, and indeed the acquirement of most skills, require hard work and resilience. Moreover, as soon as these exercises are completed, Nestor appears to suggest that they included wrestling with lions, dragons, and leopards, thus alluding to their Herculean nature.\textsuperscript{114}

It is only after the favourable prophecy that Thetis invites the zephyrs to dance; and it also seems to function as a prologue to the educative journey. Winds are associated with travel, and the journey is a well-known trope for the rite of passage. In the performance, the training of the young heroes accumulates with the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions (Fig. 13), and their attainment of heroic virtue attests to their ability to follow the example of Hercules.\textsuperscript{115} Nonetheless, Chiron also stresses the importance of diversion and leaves the young heroes in the care of Nestor, who often functioned as

\textsuperscript{111} BNT q.V.58, fol. 29 (Thetis); fol. 8 (Apollo). The text refers to the rocks of Calpe (Gibraltar) and Abila, also known as Abyla or Abyllica (Ceuta).

\textsuperscript{112} BNT q.V.58, fol. 8.

\textsuperscript{113} The pillars with the motto \textit{Plus Ultra} (or \textit{Plus Outre}) was the device of Emperor Charles V, conceived when he was still Duke of Burgundy (and the king designate of Spain) in 1516. According to most historians and emblematisists of the mid-sixteenth century, Charles’s device was invented – some thought divinely inspired – to foretell the extension of his rule “beyond the Columns of Hercules” into the New World’, Rosenthal, ‘\textit{Plus Ultra}’, p. 204. Whether or not the device was associated with imperial expansion from its inception, this is the most likely association at the court of Savoy in the mid-seventeenth century. At the time, the motto appears to have been understood as an inversion of \textit{Non} (or \textit{Nec}) \textit{Plus Ultra}, the warning against travelling beyond the strait, said to have been inscribed on the pillars in antiquity. If the pillars were to shield the Achilles of the performance, adventurous exploration (and expansion of his realm) is emphatically condoned.

\textsuperscript{114} He actually contrasts the games ahead of them with their previous exertion, saying: ‘Non piú si trattin spade, o archi, o dardi / Non s’atterin Leoni, ò Draghi, o Pardi’, BNT q.V.58, fol. 66.

\textsuperscript{115} See BNT q.V.58, fol. 100.
their adviser in the *Iliad*.\textsuperscript{116} Chiron's education of Achilles is the exemplary model, in which music was incorporated, and the wise centaur was well aware of the necessity of comprehensive instruction. Achilles' education in the company of other heroes is in fact in line with ancient tradition, although, as is also the case elsewhere, liberties are taken in the performance.

**Play and battle**

Playfulness and games, in the form of the Ballet of Children's Games (Fig. 10), function to some extent as a break for the audience. The theme of variation is introduced in the last entry of the Ballet of the Masters of the Arts. According to the text, the grand ballet where the participants of the four preceding entries dance together functions as an *intermedio*, performed as dialogues of pantomime; it marks the completion of training in the arts and physical exercises.\textsuperscript{117} The significance of diversion is further stressed in an

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} BNT q.V.58, fol. 65. See, for instance, the introduction of Nestor, Hom. *Il.* 1.247-53.
\item \textsuperscript{117} BNT q.V.58, fol. 63.
\end{itemize}
edifying manner by a reference to Alexander the Great and Alcibiades.\textsuperscript{118} Consequently, it is hardly surprising to find that Achilles' lute playing, in the first entry, is described as a highly virtuous exercise.\textsuperscript{119} It also fits well with the reference to the Greek lyrical poet Anacreon and the ancient tradition of accompanying lyric poetry with music, most often the lyre, with which the lute was associated in the early modern period.\textsuperscript{120} The reference to Homer's description of Achilles' playing is explicit, and in addition to Achilles, the entry is performed by Patroclus. The latter does not play the lyre in the \textit{Iliad}, but he fulfils the function of ritual substitution for the greater hero and dies wearing the armour of Achilles.\textsuperscript{121} By letting him appear as a musician alongside Achilles, the performance incorporates an inventive reminder of Patroclus's function.

As if to insist that the warrior really must engage in recreational activities (and also argue that games prepare the young for great tasks), the text stresses the link between play and battle. In the second entry, the dancers play pall-mall and run like Atalanta and Hippomenes. The balls are likened to the golden apples of their race, and the game is connected to the valour of the Greek and the flight of the Trojans.\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Jeu de volant} or battledore is played next. In the libretto, the parallel with the destruction of Troy is emphasized, but two of the dancers, Castor and Pollux, did not take part in the war.\textsuperscript{123} The entries may function as something of a break, but they

\textsuperscript{118} BNT q.V.58, fol. 66.
\textsuperscript{119} BNT q.V.58, fol. 68.
\textsuperscript{120} BNT q.V.58, fols. 66, 68.
\textsuperscript{121} They are also accompanied by some theorbo in the ballet, BNT q.V.58, fol. 68. According to the \textit{Iliad}, Patroclus listens to Achilles who 'sang of the glorious deeds of warriors'; Hom. \textit{Il.} 9.185-90 (9.189, quote). Achilles' refusal to fight, and subsequent rage, is never mentioned in the libretto. A reference to the elimination of the 'anger of war' is included (BNT q.V.58, fol.105), but this is not associated with Achilles' madness. Patroclus is Achilles' \textit{therapōn}. Leonard Muellner explains how 'Patroklos's death in Achilles' stead on behalf of the host of fighting men is an enactment of Aristotle's definition of friendship: he is a "he" who has become "another I."
\textit{Anger of Achilles}, p. 160. Patroclus is unlikely to have functioned as a reference to the Duke's late brother, Francesco Giacinto, in the ballet. The latter, who had succeeded their father prior to Carlo Emanuele II, would then have come across as subordinate to his brother.
\textsuperscript{122} BNT q.V.58, fol. 70. If an allusion to Ovid's version of the story is intended, the golden apples would be those of the apple tree of Tamassus or Tamassos in Cyprus. Venus describes the tree and how she picked three of its golden apples to help Hippomenes, Ov. \textit{Met.} 10. 638-51. The connection of victory in battle to Cyprus would appear particularly suitable at the court of Savoy. Although it was not recognized, the title of 'King of Cyprus' had been in use since 1632 by the House of Savoy. See Oresko, 'House of Savoy'.
\textsuperscript{123} BNT q.V.58, fol. 72. The two twin brothers are also included in the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions. One may therefore get the impression that they really did participate in the war. BNT q.V.58, fols. 97-98. However, they are presented as Argonauts in the libretto, fol. 97.
also prepare the spectators for Achilles’ victory.\textsuperscript{124} This demonstration of how play and great deeds on the battlefield are, as it were, two sides of the same coin is also reflected in their costumes with their double message of youthfulness and Greek gravity.\textsuperscript{125} The Ballet of Children’s Games is danced by the youngest performers, and variation is shown even in the number of dancers. The first entry is performed by two dancers, the second by three, and the third by four; finally, all nine perform a playful grand ballet, and it is probably not coincidental that their number corresponds that of the Muses.\textsuperscript{126}

Reconciliation

\textit{L’Educatione d’Achille} incorporates an impressive range of characters, and many of these are presented in a concise and didactic manner, in almost encyclopedic fashion.\textsuperscript{127} For instance, the masters in the Ballet of the Masters of the Arts are drawn both from history and mythology and are all great characters from antiquity. They represent excellence in a wide range of skills, mostly in fighting techniques, and among them we find Olympic victors such as Milo of Croton and Agesidamus of Epizephyrian Locris, the latter danced by the Duke himself (Fig. 4). They also include the two innovative painters Cleophantes of Corinth and Apollodorus Skiagraphos.\textsuperscript{128} Yet, as seen above, the series of entries actually starts off with two rustic \textit{daimones}, a Corybante and a Curete (Fig. 2), and, in the role of Agesidamus, the Duke

\textsuperscript{124} One may also ask if it was meant to silence those who thought the Duchess spent too lavishly on entertainments and counter any criticism of her educational standards. Concerns about the cost of the marriage celebrations were voiced in France. See the letter from the agent Giovan Battista Amoretti to the principal Secretary of State, the Marquis of San Tommaso, dated 6 January 1651. AStT Lettere ministri Francia, m. 56, n. 4, 123/1. For the idea that the education of the Duke was insufficient, see Kolrud, ‘Prolonged Minority’, pp. 200 and 207.

\textsuperscript{125} BNT q.V.58, fols. 68-75. The text comments on their young age twice, fols. 68 and 74.

\textsuperscript{126} Nonetheless, these introductions are not necessarily coupled with the character’s first appearance. This even applies to Achilles whose presentation coincides with his performance in the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions, when the Duke appears in the role. He is presented as the ‘son of Thetis and Peleus, king of Thessaly, who was immersed in the Styx in order to become invulnerable. From Chiron he learnt the art of war, astrology, and music. With the enchanted spear, made by Vulcan, he could wound and heal in an instant, and killed the Trojan Hector.’ BNT q.V.58, fol. 93.

\textsuperscript{127} BNT q.V.58, fols. 47-50 and 57-58. The latter is described as ‘Apollodoro Ateniense’ (fol. 49). This would normally refer to the scholar but the painter must be intended here.
appears alongside the snake god Glycon (Fig. 4). The two leapers appear to be the playwright Aeschylus and Telestes, a dancer used in the former’s tragedies. The text describes them as Theban; this could be an allusion to Aeschylus’s famous *Seven against Thebes*, and thus possibly also to the recent civil war between the Duchess and her two brothers-in-law, Prince Tommaso and Prince Maurizio.

In this context, it is worth taking a closer look at the roles danced by Prince Emanuele, the son of Prince Tommaso, whose relationship with the Duchess remained problematic. In the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions, Prince Emanuele dances the part of Phoenix, son of Amyntor. According to Apollodorus, Phoenix was blinded by his father and fled to Peleus. The latter took him to Chiron who restored his eyesight; Phoenix also helped raise the young Achilles. The libretto makes no reference to his passing blindness. Prince Emanuele was too young to participate in the war himself, but an underlying theme of temporary loss of sight on the part of the Duchess’s adversaries cannot be ruled out. However, in the *Iliad*, where the story of Phoenix’s blindness is not included, he, along with Ajax and Odysseus (Ulysses), tries to convince Achilles to return to the battlefield. The libretto makes no mention of this and simply states that he is a ‘most valorous follower of Achilles’; the meaning of the hero’s name, however, and the phoenix’s ability to rejuvenate ‘in the midst of the flames of war’ is emphasized. The phoenix may symbolize reconciliation and new hope, and it was often used as a symbol of regeneration, including in the Savoyard context, where it was associated with Marie Christine herself. The end of the civil war had been celebrated in the ballet *La Fenice rinovata* (The renewed phoenix), performed

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129 BNT q.V.58, fols. 35-36 and 47-48. The performer who appears with the Duke is described as *Glicone* in the text and this could refer to three other characters, a Greek poet, a sculptor, or a Roman doctor, but none of them were known to be valiant fencers. The text also refers to Horace’s description of the god as an invincible fighter, BNT q.V.58, fol. 47.

130 BNT q.V.58, fols.51-52. For the 1639-42 war, see Ricotti, *Storia della monarchia*, V, pp. 206-361; Claretta, *Storia della reggenza*, I, pp. 342-887. The peace settlement of the 1639-42 civil war also included a marriage alliance that was meant to ensure the consolidation of the ducal house. In 1642 the Duchess’s eldest daughter, Ludovica, was married to her uncle, Maurizio.

131 BNT q.V.58, fols. 95-96. The role must have been danced by Prince Tommaso’s third-born son, Giuseppe Emanuele (1631-56). The Prince is consistently referred to as Emanuele by Castiglione, who uses Filiberto whenever his elder brother, Emanuele Filiberto (1628-1709), is intended. *Himenei, passim*. Prince Emanuele di Savoia is used in the manuscript, BNT q.V.58, fols. 59 and 95.

132 Apollod. 3.13. The story is also mentioned by other sources, but the blinding of Phoenix is not always included.

133 For Phoenix’s passionate speech, see Hom. *Il*. 9.435-619.

134 BNT q.V.58, fol. 95.
on the Duchess’s birthday in 1644. The character of Phoenix, danced by
Prince Emanuele, therefore appears related to the theme of reconciliation
and new hope, indeed to the restoration of order and harmony.

The inclusion of Hector’s friend Polydamas among the companions of Achilles
comes across as more surprising (Fig. 8). He is the only character in the ballet
who undoubtedly fought on the Trojan side, and he is the last of the heroes
mentioned in the last entry of the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions.
Polydamas is positively described in the text as the one who opened the passage
to the Greeks. Perhaps the point here is to end on a reconciliatory note. The
dancers wear the colours of the Imperial House, and the marriage celebrated is
the direct result of the Peace of Westphalia. The alliance signals a new course;
the entry perhaps obliquely suggests that the imperial crown itself could be
within reach. In Quintus Smyrnaeus’s *Fall of Troy* Polydamas suggests handing
Helena back to the Achaeans, with the result that Paris calls him a deserter.
In other words, Polydamas represents a negotiator in the Trojan camp and is
portrayed as someone who is willing to go to great lengths to put an end to the
war in order to preserve Troy. This may be read as acknowledgement that the
Greek cause is just, and that the Trojans must surrender. In Savoy the description
of Polydamas could also be understood in light of the recent civil war.

135 Viale Ferrero, *Feste*, p. 40. See also Emanuele Tesuaro’s earlier panegyric, ‘La Fenice’. In ‘Il Diamante’ he describes her as ‘the phoenix of queens’ (*Fenice delle Reine*), p. 118.

136 In the Ballet of the Masters of the Arts, Prince Emanuele presumably performs the part of the Spartan king and reformer Cleomenes III. He is referred to as *Cleocene* and dances alongside Durso; BNT q.V.58, fols. 59-60. Cleomenes III, who may have played a role in the assassination by poison of his uncle, appointed his brother, Eucleidas, co-ruler. Although he was eventually defeated by Doson, Cleomenes was a highly successful military strategist who conquered almost the entire Peloponnesian. A comparison with Prince Tommaso may therefore be intended.

137 BNT q.V.58, fols. 99-100.

138 The legendary archer Acestes, king of Sicily, is included among the masters of the arts, BNT q.V.58, fols. 39-40. The character appears in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, especially in Book 5. He is the child of a Trojan woman and a Sicilian river. When his arrow catches fire, Aeneas understands it as the will of Jupiter, and a link between Troy and Rome; Ross, *Virgil’s Aeneid*, pp. 100-1 (commentary on 5.485-544). In his *Antiquitates romanae*, however, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who claims that both his parents were Trojan, describes how Acestes (or Augestas as he calls him) returned to fight on the Trojan side during the war. D.H. 1.52-3. In the ballet, it seems most likely that he symbolizes supreme archery but a certain ambivalence cannot be ruled out. The great Trojan warrior Euphorbus is also mentioned, BNT q.V.58, fol. 33. He is clearly cited as an example of a valiant fighter, but it is worth noting that heroes on the Trojan side are in fact included. Euphorbus does not dance in the ballet, however – he is merely listed – yet the context appears puzzling. Polydamas is also mentioned here.

139 BNT q.V.58, fol. 99.


141 Q.S. 2.54 and 2.68.
Just war

Even the theme of the wind could be related to war. In the 1613 and subsequent editions of Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia*, an entry on the cleanliness or purity of air is included. Ripa refers to Isidore of Seville’s ninth-century *De natura rerum*, explaining that according to some authors, the winds are generated by the air, which they can both purify and infect. The zephyr, Ripa continues, is the most benevolent wind. The very name signifies life-giver, and it blows away pestilence and clears the sky. According to Ripa, it is particularly favoured by the poets, and he quotes the fourth book of Homer’s *Odyssey* to prove his point. He moreover refers to Plutarch’s comment on Homer, where the former discusses the cleansing properties of the west wind. Purity of air is pictured by Ripa as a female character who holds a zephyr, among other attributes. The west wind is placed in an elevated position and, Ripa explains, the air is at its purest when it is furthest away from the earth, where it is in fact ‘similar to celestial purity’. The idea of both renewal and purification is associated with marriage and fecundity, and Thetis sings of ‘happy times and eternal springs’ in her realm. The Ballet of the Zephyrs (Fig. 9) therefore celebrates this promise of a great future; and, bearing in mind that the winds could cleanse as well as pollute, one may wonder if there was also a need for decontamination. When Juno appears in order to request arms for Achilles (Fig. 5), the text refers to how she had previously demanded a storm from Aeolus to ensure the destruction of the Trojan fleet. This is a reference to Book 1 of Virgil’s *Aeneid* and not entirely logical in the context of the ballet; it is, after all, related to Aeneas’s voyage to Italy and takes place after the fall of Troy. In the *Aeneid*, Neptune quells the storm requested by Juno; this famous first simile is generally understood as the great statesman’s calming of the mob. In other words, violence is vanquished by words, rather than force. It was also much used

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142 In fact, Prince Tommaso celebrated the Duchess’s birthday in 1640 (when they were at war) with a performance titled *La Battaglia de’ Venti* (The battle of the winds). Viale Ferrero, *Feste*, p. 35.
144 *Iconologia* (1645), p. 541. In Homer, however, the west wind is generally viewed as tempestuous.
147 ‘Tempi felici, e Primauere etere’, BNT q.V.58, fol. 12. In his account of the ballet, Castiglione also emphasizes how the Duke’s performance in the Ballet of the Zephyrs is linked to hope for the house and his own great future; *Himenei*, p. 69.
148 BNT q.V.58, fol. 76.
149 Verg. *A.* 1.65-70.
as a metaphor for the putting down of civil strife.\textsuperscript{150} Interestingly, here it appears to be viewed positively, and it is therefore more adapted to Juno's role as supporter of the Greek cause in the \textit{Iliad}.

The storm provoked by Juno is only referred to in the libretto; it is not performed. Nonetheless, the ballet does in fact open with something of a tempest, but it is the turbulent weather associated with the prophecy of the oracle of Apollo (Fig. 3). His prediction of the great future of Thetis's children is preceded by thunder and lightning as well as the appearance of a great number of birds. Priests interpret both the weather and the flight of the birds.\textsuperscript{151} Apollo was the sun god, and lightning was normally the attribute of Jupiter, who, the text proclaims, was Thetis's father (although she is normally considered to be the daughter of Nereus).\textsuperscript{152} The oracle in fact addresses her as the invincible daughter of Jupiter.\textsuperscript{153}

As seen above, when Thetis asks Neptune to take her son to Chiron, she sings that the centaur will help him emulate both Jupiter and Mars.\textsuperscript{154} This combination of justice and war could be interpreted as an allusion to the idea of just war and how it may bring or restore peace. Thus, Marie Christine the peace-bringer and life-giver may also go to war if necessary.\textsuperscript{155} Her son will be both a great warrior and a just ruler. The west wind at the beginning of the performance could also suggest the clearing of the sky and return to peace. Civil strife had been blown away with the marriage of Marie Christine's eldest daughter to Prince Maurizio; now her youngest daughter's marriage was also related to the end of war and the Peace of Westphalia. The reference to the storm initiated by Juno emphasizes her unswerving support for the Greek side and ability to fight the enemy.\textsuperscript{156} By analogy, the Duchess's loyalty to and defence of the true Savoyard cause is

\textsuperscript{150} See Christine Perkell's comments on Verg. \textit{A}. 1.148-56, Perkell, \textit{Aeneid i}, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{151} BNT q.V.58, fols. 3, 8-11. Augury, divination through the study of the flight patterns and voice of birds, was practised in antiquity. Birds are also associated with the element of air, and immediately after the prophecy the zephyrs are invited to dance, fol. 12.
\textsuperscript{152} This could be inspired by the \textit{Achillauid} where Poseidon (Neptune) comments on Achilles' future greatness and reassures Thetis that he will be considered begotten of Zeus. Stat. \textit{Ach.} 1.91.
\textsuperscript{153} BNT q.V.58, fol. 8, see also the description on fol. 7. This would entail that she was Apollo's sister, considering that he is the son of Zeus.
\textsuperscript{154} 'Nel giusto un Gioue, e nella Guerra un Marte', BNT q.V.58, fol. 29. Neptune's helpfulness in the ballet could perhaps be seen as an inversion of his behaviour in the \textit{Achilleid}, where he tells the goddess to accept fate. Stat. \textit{Ach.} 1.86-94.
\textsuperscript{155} See also BNT q.V.58, fol. 76, where, as seen above, Juno asks Vulcan for armour and simultaneously calls on Iris, the restorer of peace. This appears to emphasize the idea of necessary war in order to restore peace.
\textsuperscript{156} The text emphasizes her constant animosity towards the Trojans and support of the Greeks; BNT q.V.58, fol. 76. Neptune's intervention is not mentioned in the libretto.
emphasized.\textsuperscript{157} The combination of the Ballet of the Zephyrs and allusion to Juno’s hatred of the Trojans appears to imply that Marie Christine could both call the storm and calm it.\textsuperscript{158}

Spears and Dorians

In the performance, Achilles’ victory at Troy is associated with virtue by the personification of Virtue herself (Fig. 7).\textsuperscript{159} The Ballet of Achilles and his Companions celebrates their triumph, but it is also – as a whole – a ballet performed in honour of the bride and the alliance. Achilles and his companions are divided into four squadrons who sport the colours of the houses of the bride’s father and mother as well as those of the groom’s parents (Fig. 13). Reference to this is made in the presentation of the first entry, where the dancers are said to appear in the colours of Doris, that is, those of the House of Bavaria.\textsuperscript{160} The audience would have been familiar with this use of heraldic colours, and the same device of four squadrons in the colours of the four houses had been used in the horse ballet performed a week earlier. In the earlier spectacle, the House of Savoy was introduced first, followed by that of Bavaria, then France and Austria.\textsuperscript{161} The houses of France and Austria appeared in the same order also in \textit{L’Educatione d’Achille}, but here the House of Savoy was placed second.\textsuperscript{162}

In the final entry, where the dancers sport the colours of Austria, their breastplates display mirrors of heroic virtue (Fig. 8).\textsuperscript{163} Moreover, they are

\textsuperscript{157} Critical voices saw her as a supporter of France.  
\textsuperscript{158} In the \textit{Iliad}, Apollo did in fact support the Trojans. His appearance in the ballet, as a god who is only related to Achilles’ (and his sisters’) good fortune differs radically from the role played by the god in the epic. Apollo, who was instrumental in Paris’ killing of Achilles, apparently foretold the great future of Thetis’s children, but Thetis was upset with him for lying, complaining that he in turn took her son’s life. Aesch. \textit{Frag.} 350 from Plat. \textit{Rep.} 2.389b. Hera (Juno) also chides Apollo for being untrustworthy, reminding him that he attended the wedding of Thetis and Peleus, and that Hector (whom Achilles had slain) could not be compared to Achilles, the child of a goddess, who had been raised by Hera herself. Hom. \textit{Il.} 24.55-63.  
\textsuperscript{159} BNT q.V.58, fols. 90 and 92, see also fol. 86 for the virtues of Achilles.  
\textsuperscript{160} BNT q.V.58, fol. 93. Folio 94 illustrating their costumes in colour is missing but they are included in the illustration of the grand ballet (the group of dancers to the left, fol.102).  
\textsuperscript{161} BRT, Storia Patria 949. The horse ballet was performed on 15 December and the court ballet on 22 December.  
\textsuperscript{162} BNT q.V.58, fols. 93-100.  
\textsuperscript{163} BNT q.V 58, fol. 99. See also Kolrud ‘Gem and the Mirror’, pp. 82-84.
equipped with light javelins (dardi).164 Achilles and three of his companions were also armed with spears in the first of these entries (for which the illustration is missing) and, as seen above, Virtue herself held a spear.165 Finally, it is the last weapon mentioned in the description of Achilles’ equipment; it is reasonable to interpret it as a reference to the famous ash spear that only Achilles could carry and that had been given to his father, Peleus, by Chiron and later to Achilles himself.166 It is particularly well suited to the Savoyard context and the young Duke’s grandfather, Carlo Emanuele I, who identified with Chiron. In the text, the spear is specifically associated with greatness of soul, magnanimity, and clemency.167 In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle suggests that magnanimity enhances other virtues.168 The characteristic is doubly emphasized in the spear described here, given that the virtue is referred to as greatness of soul and magnanimity. Moreover, both magnanimity and clemency are qualities associated with rulers.

In the last entry of the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions, the light javelins are described as apt at striking not only the Trojans but even the most beautiful nymphs, both of the earth and the sea.169 The specific connection between this ranged weapon, which has much in common with an arrow, and love is thus emphasized. Possibly, it even alludes to the double nature of Achilles’ spear, in the sense that a marriage alliance can heal the wounds of war.170 This concluding entry is directly linked to the appearance of Amor, which takes place after the grand ballet danced by Achilles and his companions.171 Amor emerges from the clouds and strikes Ajax; Doris has already been subjected to the same treatment on the island of Doro.172 That the weapons of love are more potent than those of war is spelled out in

164 According to the 1623 edition of the *Vocabolario della Crusca*, the length of the dardo was around two braccia, p. 245. The exact length of the braccio varied but the Florentine Accademia della Crusca probably used the braccio fiorentino or braccio a panno of 0.5836 metres. Normal javelins would be considerably longer. Although the word dart could also be used to describe certain ranged weapons in English, these had feathers on the tail. The dardi shown in the illustration are not equipped with feathers. BNT q.V.58, fol. 100.
165 The first entry of the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions is described on BNT q.V58, fol. 93.
166 BNT q.V.58, fol. 86; Hom. *Il.* 16.140-44.
167 Greatness of soul and magnanimity can both be considered translations of the Greek term megalopsuchia.
168 *NE* 4.3.1124a1-2.
169 BNT q.V.58, fol. 99.
170 The fact that Achilles could both wound and heal with the same spear is mentioned twice in the libretto, BNT q.V.58, fols. 86 and 93.
171 The grand ballet is described and shown on BNT q.V.58, fols. 101-2.
172 BNT q.V.58, fols. 2, 103 and 105.
the text. Amor outshines Jupiter, Mars, and Hercules.\footnote{173} As is well known, only Venus could conquer Mars, and the small spears in the last entry of the Ballet of Achilles and his Companions clearly provide a link between the two. Not only Amor’s arrows but even spears and lances (as well as other weapons) could serve similar purposes.\footnote{174} Arrows and various forms of spears are all ranged weapons and therefore share some characteristics. Prior to the Ballet of the Nereids, the chorus of the gods proclaims the victory of both Amor and Mars; Jupiter declares that Achilles will possess his newly conquered realm in eternity, and he marries Doris and Ajax with the approbation of the other deities.\footnote{175} Amor’s arrows are also associated with Apollo; the simulacrum of the god at his oracle is equipped with a lyre and arrows, so that he may wound both ‘eye, ear, and heart’.\footnote{176} In other words, his prophecies, music, and arrows may affect his surroundings.\footnote{177}

The name Doris (Dori in Italian) may also have been chosen to emphasize the connection between the Nereids and armour. Dory or doru (δόρυ), in the meaning of spear, is mentioned on numerous occasions throughout the Iliad. The choice of the name Doro could therefore also function as a means of establishing a connection between Achilles’ ash spear and the island where he was trained, and hence further stress the bond between him and his sister. The audience may not have been familiar with the many repetitions in the Greek text, but they would have been acquainted with the term doriforo and its connection to the Greek word for spear (or lance). Although no copies of Polykleitos’s Doryphoros had been identified in the seventeenth century, the statue was mentioned by Pliny and was well known at the time of the performance of the ballet.\footnote{178} In his never-completed mid-fifteenth century Commentari, the famous Florentine sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti possibly made use of ‘a flawed copy of Pliny which led him to cite Polykleitos as the bronze-caster who produced a youth bearing gifts rather than a spear (δῶρα for δόρυ [\ldots])’.\footnote{179} The ancient Greek word for gift (δῶρον) is transliterated as
doron, which is similar to Doro. The transliteration of δόρυ, however, is dory, akin to Dori, the Italian variant of Doris, used in the libretto.

At the beginning of the performance, Thessaly turns into Ionia and Mount Pierus becomes the island of Doro. This in part reflects the eastward movement of the Thessalian Achilles and, in the text, Thessaly is presented as bellicose. Doris is described as born in Thessaly and raised in Doro, which appears to be placed in the Aegean Sea, close to the Ionian city of Smyrna. The island of Doro could therefore be located in Ionia and represent the merging or integration of opposites. It is even a fitting image of reconciliation. In Virtue’s song Dori is associated with Ionia and opposed to the Greek March. Indeed, this seems to fit with the traditional view of the Ionians as artistic, interested in intellectual endeavours rather than warfare, and appreciative of luxury and elaborate garments. Doris represents beauty and grace, and is the gift of the gods. This actually reflects the myth of how Sparta came to be associated with the Dorians. In his discussion of a fragment by the mid-seventh-century poet Tyrtaios, Jonathan M. Hall comments that ‘for Tyrtaios, Sparta is a divine gift granted by Zeus and Hera’. He also suggests the possibility that it may be ‘connected with doron – the Greek word for “gift”’. The idea of a chosen people is well-suited to the Savoyard self-image as rightful rulers of Cyprus. The connection with the river Dora, in close proximity to where the ballet was performed, as well as the association with the Italian word for golden, d’oro, serves to emphasize this point. Admiration for so-called Spartan values probably played a part, but the island in the ballet appears to unite feminine and masculine

180 BNT q.V 58, fol. 23.
181 BNT q.V 58, fol. 107.
182 See BNT q.V 58, fols. 25 and 29. The link between Doro and Ionia is less clear on fol. 23, whereas the Argomento explains that the Ionian Sea is crossed in order to reach Doro, fol. 2.
184 It is given to the Herakleidai. Hall, Hellenicity, p. 87. Hall continues, ‘In a variant tradition, Sparta is a gift to Herakles that is entrusted to his descendants.’
185 Hall, Hellenicity, p. 88. Yet, it is more commonly believed that their name was associated with their region of origin. ‘The standard assumption that the name of the Dorians is derived from the region of Doris presumes the authenticity of the tradition on the invasion.’ Ibid., p. 87.
186 Oro means gold but d’oro should normally be translated with golden, as in l’isola d’oro (golden island), which the name of the island clearly plays on, see also fols. 31 and 32. Amor in fact claims that Doris is named after the river, BNT q.V 58, fol. 105. Moreover, the performance concludes with the choir of the Muses who explicitly connect her with the river Dora, fol. 119. It may even refer to the island of Polidora, part of the park created by Carlo Emanuele II’s great-grandfather, Emanuele Filiberto. For the park see Scotti, ‘Il Parco Ducale’, p. 258. A wedding had been celebrated with a tournament at the Polidora in 1602. Franca Varallo mentions the
virtues.\textsuperscript{187} Indeed, Ionian and Dorian appear reconciled; the name Doris may allude to this (if both gift and spear are suggested), whereas even the activities of Achilles and his companions draw on both Ionian and Dorian values. It may also be viewed in the context of the more traditional and expected alliance of Venus and Mars.

When the Nereids appear it is within a triumphal arch (Fig. 1), and the sea goddesses are invited to celebrate the wedding of their sister, Doris, and Ajax.\textsuperscript{188} According to the libretto, the arch is in the Corinthian order.\textsuperscript{189} Thus, the ballet combines the Dorian (linked to the Doric Order) and the Ionian (connected with the Ionic Order) and then precedes with young (nubile) girls, who were often associated with the tenderness of Corinthian columns.\textsuperscript{190} That this gracious order comes last and implicitly may be understood as placed on top of the Doric and Ionic, in turn appears to emphasize balance and harmony. Venus and nymphs are connected with the Corinthian order by Vitruvius, whereas Mars and Minerva are associated with the Doric and Diana and Juno with the Ionic, etc. The standard is clearly gendered but not necessarily along biologically gendered lines.\textsuperscript{191} Renaissance theorists were inspired by Vitruvius, and the general idea was that the most significant buildings should be constructed in the Doric order. However, as Dörte Kuhlmann rightly points out,

In general, the most important public buildings and temples were built according to the Corinthian order or a composite order because from an economic perspective the most decorative order is the most expensive and therefore the most valuable. Those two opinions were always in opposition to each other over the centuries, but it seems that the most expensive order was usually regarded as the highest order, and the sexual evaluation that it is ‘female’ and not ‘masculine’ was not taken into account.\textsuperscript{192}

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item 187 It was probably not intended as an allusion to Achilles’ sojourn on the island of Skyros. Tesauro’s passionate depiction of how much more manly the Duke would have acted under similar circumstances seems unrelated to the ballet. ‘Il Diamante’, p. 120.
\item 188 BNT q.V 58, fols. 2 and 108. The arch that gradually rose from behind the stage must have been an impressive sight, see also Castiglione’s description, \textit{Himenei}, p. 75.
\item 189 BNT q.V 58, fol. 109, see also the illustrations on fols. 110 and 113.
\item 190 A reference to the Peloponnesian War between Sparta (Dorians) and Athens (Ionians), which ended with the surrender of the latter, could also be intended. However, the role of Corinth in the conflict does not fit well with the theme of the ballet, and Athens did not remain under Spartan rule for long.
\item 191 Vitr. 1.2.5
\item 192 Kuhlmann, \textit{Gender Studies in Architecture}, pp. 98-99.}

Here, the Corinthian order really does appear to symbolize feminine values, and indeed young girls; it is also clearly associated with love and Venus, as recommended by Vitruvius. The arch is described (and shown) as elaborate and the use of gold and bronze is emphasized.193 As goddesses the Nereids are indeed important, and they are celebrated as empresses by the Muses, who crown them at the very end of the performance.194

Presumably, their training is as complete as that of the young heroes, although with a different emphasis; fighting techniques have no part in their curriculum.195 Tesauro likens them to the three Graces, an allusion that is also made in the libretto, and the Graces sometimes appeared in company with Apollo and the Muses.196 Tesauro speaks of the significance of the Graces, noting that ‘there is no virtue without beauty and no beauty without virtue’.197 It is equally emphasized by Castiglione who describes the three princesses as ‘emulators of the three Graces’.198 Nevertheless, these epitomes of grace and beauty are also grouped together with Carlo Emanuele as heroes, and their qualities appear more complex.199 The young bride may be associated with the Corinthian order but her name alludes to the graver Doric order. In his comparison of the Duke to Achilles and the princesses to the three Graces, Tesauro also emphasizes Marie Christine’s superiority as educator; she, much more than Chiron, deserves heavenly glory.200

194 BNT q.V 58, fol. 119.
195 After the Ballet of the Nereids, the libretto describes the Muses as daughters of Apollo, ‘father of the sciences, master of all the arts’, and adds that they taught the sciences to the heroines, the daughters of Nicomedes and those of Ulysses and also the Nereids, BNT q.V 58, fol. 117. They are, in other words, described as educators of women, but their educational standards appear to have been high, as attested to also on fol. 25, where their description as most wise is reassuringly related to the virtue of the Nereids.
196 They are not only educated by the Muses but even nourished among the Graces, ‘Trà le gratie nodrite’, BNT q.V 58, fol. 25. For the association of the Graces with Apollo and the Muses, see for instance Homeric Hymn 3, to Pythian Apollo. HH 3.192-196. They are more generally associated with Aphrodite (Venus); here they dance with her (and others) while Apollo plays the lyre and the Muses sing.
197 ‘ne Virtù senza Beltà, ne Beltà senza Virtù’, ‘Il Diamante’, p. 121. This combination of Graces and education was also found in Rubens’s representation of The Education of the Princess (from the Maria de’ Medici cycle, now in the Louvre, 1622-25). Thus it was present in a work of art showing the education of the Duchess’s mother.
198 Castiglione, Himenei, p. 75.
200 Tesauro, ‘Il Diamante’, p. 120. Chiron had been elevated to the stars as the constellation of Sagittarius or Centaurus.
By focusing on the Duchess’s abilities as educator of her son and daughters, the ballet emphasizes her competence both as mother and regent and shows how the House of Savoy will continue to prosper in the future. The performance addressed several different audiences, but one of its functions must have been to serve as a guide for the young bride.

The manuscript itself may also have had a particular educational value and functioned as an aide-memoire for members of the court. Through it they would be reminded not only of the performance as such and the excellence of the ducal house but, in the case of this particular ballet, also of educational ideals. Greater emphasis may have been placed on practical skills in the actual performance, but the manuscript itself accentuates learning. The history and philosophy that were not danced could be gathered from the narrative and descriptions of characters. The libretto as well as other accounts were also available elsewhere, but the numerous images in addition to the text must have facilitated the act of remembering and guided the reader. One might argue that the dancing of the ballet and the studying of the manuscript functioned as different ways of acquiring knowledge.

It should be added that the libretto was printed after the first performance, so that the performance itself may have appeared less complex to some members of the audience. Reading about it would have provided them with new layers of meaning. The juxtaposition of text and images, found in the manuscript, would not only serve to refresh the memory of those who were present at the performance, but even give them a means of experiencing the event differently – and thus reinterpreting it.

It was also an example of living mythology. The text is dense with information; yet, as was common in this type of early modern performance, the ballet was not based on a rigid retelling of ancient sources. The mythological characters were moulded to suit the court’s purposes. In a sense, it therefore provides a lesson in a combination of ancient history, literature, and mythology as well as current affairs at the court of Savoy. In his account of the ballet, Castiglione also emphasizes that, although the performance was invented, it was performed in a room which was appropriately decorated with equestrian portraits of all the princes of Savoy as well as the triumph of the house.

201 A brief description was published before the event in the anonymous Socini, Relatione delle solennita.
202 Castiglione, Himenei, p. 73.
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