

The thesis is focused on courtly dancing in Italy in the early modern period. The work endeavours to survey its role in the fifteenth-century society, where it occurred for the first time at the noble courts. The general layout of the thesis is based on the assumption that dancing was one of the essential attributes of the nascent courtly society of the Renaissance. The work consists of two parts: the first part examines the roots that were the foundation of the progression of the fifteenth-century society towards full-blown Renaissance culture. There were two basic kinds of influence: one was the ancient Greek and Roman cultures, where dance was seen as a common part of life. The other was the Bible and its medieval Christian interpretations, which in its extreme aspects considered dancing to be one of the capital sins. Before integrating these antitheses, there was an acute conflict in society, which is clearly demonstrated by the attitude towards dancing in the period in question. The second part of the thesis addresses different roles of dancing in the fifteenth-century society and its ambition as an instrument of official demonstration of political power, noble entertainment and theatre-like spectacle. The reconstruction of life, works and dance theories of the first dancing masters show which functions it served in communication between people: it was a way of personal representation, it also was a part of the adventure of intersexual relationships (where women were the protagonists). Dancing further played the role of an acceptable public display of erotic themes and, at the same time, it was a means of experiencing one's own cultural identity.