

THE WONDERFUL, BULBOUS BALZO

***Maestra Damiana Illaria d'Onde
Elizabeth Jones, 1997, 2002, 2020***

The *balzo* is a rotund feminine headpiece that originated in Italy during the early 1400's. It was worn during the first half of the century in conjunction with the *giornea* and *cioppa*: women's overdresses that resembled a houppelande at this time, usually pictured with dagged sleeves and a train. The forehead was plucked at the time (as was done France and northern Europe), and when worn with the *balzo* provided an elongated, but rounded profile of the head. This is comparable to the hennin effect that was to develop in gothic Europe, but was not as severe. Good examples of the original *balzo* can be seen in Pisanello's costume studies and in *Paradiso* by Giovanni di Paolo.¹

Later on in the century, the *balzo* seems to have fallen into disuse, and the favored method of headdress is the *reta* (hairnet) or *trinziale* (small cap), or dressing the hair via pearls and braiding. This coincides with the more streamlined, though ornate, garments that are worn by women at this time. The *gamurra*, *cioppa*, and *giornea* are less flowing, and lack the voluminous sleeves and train that mark the earlier dress style. The focus is on ornament, rather than oversize, and the detail of this period can be seen well in the paintings of Ghirlandaio, specifically the depiction of Giovanna Tornabouni.²

But after the turn of the sixteenth century (approximately 1510), styles change once again, and the body profile becomes much more dramatic. The ideal woman is rounder and larger, as is the dress itself. The dress becomes much more rounded and layers are not evident, although probably there. The bodice is higher, the neckline low, with the chemise filling in the gap. Sleeves are huge, and frequently puffy. To counterbalance all this mass, the *balzo* makes a fashionable comeback, but is rounder and worn more towards the front of the head.

It is interesting how one's first perception changes after research is done. My first encounter with the *balzo* in this period was the portrait of a woman by Parmigianino.³ Boucher attaches the description "Turkish Slave Girl", and it seemed to make sense at the time: after all, isn't that some sort of turban on her head? And she did have a striped partlet, which seems vaguely oriental.⁴ The next time I saw the *balzo* it was in Zeffirelli's *Taming of the Shrew*. Elizabeth Taylor wears a gold wire example very similar to Parmigianino's portrait. My costume companions and I scorned it at first, saying that most of the costumes in Zeffirelli's work were fairly good, but occasionally went off the deep end. After this research I offer an apology to that costume designer who was wrongly accused!

Although the shape is generally the same, there seem to have been two or three terms used in period, which depended on materials used for construction, or may have been simply regional language differences. Here are my definitions gleaned from the sources I found:

Balzo is a term found in both 15th and 16th century sources and can be applied somewhat generically to the shape current at the time. In its original 15th century form it is large and bulbous, not symmetrical, and back heavy. Height is an important feature as it competes in the fashion world with the hennin (or *sella* – "saddle" in contemporary Italy). In both centuries it is decorated extensively, ornamented with jewels or enameled pieces, and can also be made of wire (in the 16th century).

Ghirlanda (*garland*) takes its name in both periods (15 and 16th century) from its original nature – a garland of flower or natural material simply worn on the head. This type of headpiece seems to be typically gothic, and good early examples can be seen in the *Tres Riches Heures* of the Duke of Berry. A *ghirlanda* can be a simple lightweight ornament (as in Botticelli's *Primavera*), or enormous and elaborate offerings made of peacock feathers. The *ghirlanda* seems to mimic nature, and in the 1400s were also **flatter than the balzo**. Although the term *ghirlanda* can be found in both centuries, I am not aware of it being used in the 16th century to denote this type of structured headpiece. I assume the term reverted to its more natural and original form.

Capigliara is mentioned in 16th century texts and seems to be of the ruffled, lacy or fluffy type with an outer covering of silk, and the *balzo* is a more general term for a headpiece of this nature, or one which has a smooth, though ornamented, covering. Again, I have made this distinction for my own convenience, based upon my own research: others should not take it as fact. Therefore I deem the headpiece that I have created for this project to be a *capigliara*, modeled after Bernardo Luini's *Portrait of a Lady*.⁵ *Capigliare* also seem to have been made of false hair and perhaps curled floss or wool. They have certainly given their creators a vent for imaginative efforts, and the *balzi* can be quite modest in size or absolutely enormous.

For benefit of the researcher, I have collated some costume references regarding these headpieces.

Davenport does give the *balzo* brief mention:

The turbans which the Italians always loved, but had abandoned during the transition period for tiny caps covering only the back of the head, return in the 16th century, in higher round forms, ruffled, netted and knotted.⁶

Herald examines the 15th century version and says:

On her head, and Italian woman might wear a *ghirlanda* (*grillanda*) or a *balzo*, both of which appear early in the century... A *balzo* is a bulbous headdress, consisting of a wire or possibly willow understructure, which was then covered by textile. Both *ghirlanda* and *balzo* were often covered with gems, usually pearls, and with velvet or often some more lavishly figured textile. ⁷ ... Amadeo of Savoy also forbade women to wear tall hairstyles in horns, or rounded into some deformative shape.⁸ ... As the whole shape of the both male and female costume added more width to its height, so the padded roll of the *ghirlanda* grew into the bulbous *balzo*. One of crimson, covered in pearls, was given by Francesco de' Medici in 1432 to his betrothed, Costanza, and is probably one of the earliest references to this fashion. However, there are more documentary references to *ghirlande* than to *balzi*: although an earlier form of headdress, the garland did not go out of fashion.⁹

In the Herald volume is also a very valuable picture not found in other sources (that I recall) of the understructure of the *balzo*: she says that it is “*probably made from steamed and bent willow*” (and I agree from reconstruction exercises – see attached instructions).¹⁰

Herald provides a definition in her excellent glossary of Italian Renaissance costuming terms, in which she provides information on false hair simulation:

A large headdress, rising up in a rounded form from the forehead, completely hiding the female wearer's hair (the hairline having been plucked back to create an

artificially high forehead). The shape of the headdress is founded on an understructure, probably of willow, which is covered by a rich textile and alternatively by false hair of white or yellow silk, or by real hair (*capelli morti*) ("dead" hair). The balzo then may be decorated further with ribbon or braid. The fashion for *balzi* is peculiar to Italy, and to the first half of the Quattrocento.¹¹

One source that has proved invaluable is *Storia del Costume in Italia* by Rosita Levi-Pisetsky.¹² I have translated the following extracts somewhat awkwardly, but I wanted to avoid mistranslation of words that are no longer in use in the Italian language.

15th Century (Volume 2):

From Description of Masolino da Panicale's *Herodiade – detail of a fresco "Salome before Herod" 1435* Battistero, Castle Olono, we have a description of how the balzo balanced the exposed forehead and neckline:

The delicate stance of the figure of Herodiade, almost completely in profile, dressed according to the purest style (taste) of the first half of the 1400s, permits one to better observe the balzo form that, being rounded, enlarges almost to the point of a reversed cone. The manner of wearing it to the back, leaving completely uncovered the artificially higher and plucked forehead, corresponds to the neckline that sinks below the nape.¹³

From the description of fresco detail "April", circa 1430, attributed to Niccolo Miretto, Palazzo della Ragione, Padova, we get a sense of decoration and use of the balzo as a matching accessory to the garment:

The balzo, the typically Italian hairstyle, with its round mass often adorned, like in this example, by jeweled stripes, underlines the bizarre and fantastic character of the gothic style of dress. The beautiful ling trained *cotta*, with sleeves of the same color as the balzo, harmonizes with the headdress.¹⁴

The description of Gentile da Fabbriano's detail of the *Presentation at the Temple*, circa 1423, Louvre Paris provides commentary on materials and the features of the balzo versus the *ghirlanda*:

The *ghirlanda* in the 1400s have assumed a rotund shape that approaches the *balzo*, although they distinguish themselves because they are flatter. Under this name come, in fact, massive headdresses decorated with flowers and leaves of enameled gold, or also of peacock feathers, interspersed with precious ornaments. The elegant headdress harmonizes with the sumptuousness of the velvet *giornea*, *pavonazzo* (*peacock style – dagged?*), elegantly slit and trimmed with ermine. The other older woman figure has her face framed with a simple veil turned into the style of a hood and tones down the sumptuousness of the blue silk *cioppa* with pink roses and black mantel.¹⁵

Levi-Pisetzky covers the general topic thus:

The *balzo* is another gorgeous headdress, but typically Italian, elevated, of a rounded form, and made of precious fabrics wrapped in the style of a turban. In the 1500s Veccelio speaks of it like an ancient (old) fashion: in Italy the women "*wear on their heads balzos of varied colors, and worked of cloth of gold and of silk with rose petals and other works.*"¹⁶ In (his) engravings we often see clearly drawn this headdress, but the fantastic majesty of the balzo, that by contrast gives a

wondrous grace to the face, resulting particularly in the frescoes of the Palazzo Borromeo and of the Casino di Caccia (Hunting Lodge?) of Oreno, as in the vivid painting of the wedding chests (*cassoni*). The *ghirlanda* of peacock feathers assume the same rounded and massive form, Matteo Parentis, as we know from the scrupulous notes of his housebook, bought "500 choice peacock feathers, 300 assorted peacock feathers", besides eleven roses of peacock feathers and enameled flower, golden leaves and pearls for his wife's (wedding gift), Caterina, daughter of Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi.¹⁷ One clearly imagines this headdress that appears in the note picture (tr.??) of the Adimari wedding: the beauty of the *ghirlanda* comes out more than of the line (?), although heavy for our taste, from the lustrous green and blue of the feathers, "all eyes and gems", as says a Latin poet, in contrast to the delicate feminine complexion. Also common are the *ghirlanda* or crowns of natural flower. The Botticelli figures are often crowned with light garlands, their foreheads characterized by a soft melancholy (!).¹⁸

16th Century (Volume 3):

Of a totally different nature, heavy and pompous, is the *capigliara* that appears in the portrait by Tiziano in Vienna. Rotund, enormous, this headpiece stands between the wig and the hairdo. Eleanora Rusca, Countess of Coreggio, having seen it "worn by gentlewomen" defines it as "a new longhaired fashion of silk that comes as a notable invention" by the Marquessa (Isabella d'Este), and asks her for one as a gift "that may not be in use...in order to measure/trace it accurately". Evidently Isabella conceded the privilege of wearing the *capigliara* only to certain preferred ladies.

To our eyes this headdress seems a simple refacing of the 15th century *balzo*, with which in fact the Molmenti (?) confused it. But in comparison to the *balzo* it is most exaggerated, bundled with ornaments, more crushed and worn further back; in a manner in which the bands of hair in the front remain uncovered; and came quickly into fashion. Of the rest even the *balzo*, that Vecellio recorded as a fashion totally of the 1300-1400's, had not gone completely into disuse by the beginning of the century. In fact, in 1530 Battista Stabellino, one of the informants of Isabella, giving her the news of a ball held at the court of Ferrara, describes the Queen of Naples daughters "dressed in our fashion with *balzo* and *scoffiato* (?). The singular headdress, was therefore of properly Italian character.

In a return to the past another headdress also appears, vaguely resembling the hennin for its height, which according to Vecellio was in vogue around 1530: "about 60 years ago the Venetians began to reuse cages of branches, covered with caps made of gold nets, decorated with *varij* (jewels?), and rich ornaments", and a "lovely black veil/cloth, of transparent silk, that covers them in front".

Vecellio also provides two examples of the *balzo* of this time period, in plates 39 and 71.¹⁹

COOKING UP A BALZO

Maestra Damiana Illaria d'Onde

This project began with me trying wall wreaths on my head in the craft shop. It must have looked pretty strange to other customers, but it paid off in the end. This was the first piece of garb or accessory that I had to *cook* in the creation process, but I believe the method, structure and appearance to be period. Having now made several balzi and taught a few classes in it, this is an updated set of instructions. Do not be deterred by the amount of instructions here – the process is very easy but I wanted to be as explicit as possible. Making the frame can be done in an hour or less.

Considerations:

First, decide on the century and shape of the balzo to be created. You will need to gauge the overall size of the piece you want to create in relation to your own head. Balance and proportion are important, as I found from creating a too-large version (see Balzos Undone, below). If you are imitating a picture, then measure the face in the picture and measure your own (forehead to chin). Remember that 15th century foreheads were plucked and therefore higher. Create a scale to use to estimate the size of the balzo: for example: the face in my Pisanello picture was 2 cm tall. My face is approximately 10” tall. Therefore, the scale I used to measure the pictured balzo was 1 cm = 2 inches.

The 15th century balzo measured approximately the same as the exposed face, so my frame was about 10 ½ ” tall, or 23” inches over the top. (See diagram in Construction below). The height and shape of the 15th century balzo are the most important issues. Width seems to fall into place naturally. Likewise, in the 16th century flatter version, the width is the most important, as the height seems to follow naturally. My 16th century frame measured 20” over the top – I would not go much larger than that, if at all.

You should definitely consider how you will wear your hair underneath the balzo. In the 15th century, foreheads were artificially high and plucked, but all hair is smoothed back and not visible under the balzo. In the 16th century the hair was parted in the middle, and slicked down, frequently covering the ears. There might be a couple of curls plastered to each side of the forehead. For the 15th century, I would recommend hairtaping²⁰ a braid around your head with a ribbon, as this provides an ideal base for a balzo, particularly one that is a bit large. I have also worn my hair this way with the 16th century model, but also in a high bun at the back. Either way, it is important to do your hair in a period fashion, at least the hair that shows, so your finished look is not odd! No curls or long hair dangling down, please!

Facilities:

Just to mention that you will need a kitchen or area where you can boil water in a big pot. This is to keep the reed steamed and flexible while constructing the balzo.

Materials needed:

Framework:

Flat basket weaving reed is the best choice – ½” for base around head, about 2 yards, and thinner reed (1/4” or 3/8”) for the rest of the frame - about 6-8 yards If you can only find one thickness, that is fine as you can easily split it or double up for stability.

OR a few branch/grapevine wreaths ½ - 1 cm in diameter. The wreaths can easily be found in craft

shops, but the flat basket weave takes a little more searching.

Note: Reed requires less work and less steaming than the branches, as well as being able to be folded around the frame without breaking. Hence it is the preferred material. The branches create a bumpier frame requiring more work to smooth out with coverings.

Thin White florist wire (22 gauge, 18” length covered with white thread) available in craft shops is preferred as it twists easily and cuts with normal scissors OR Thin beading wire OR Twisty ties (wire variety)

Linings and Coverings:

Cotton batting) or *Fiberfill batting* if you are doing a smooth covered balzo, or a silk cocoon

Padding: for the frame around your face. This is only a narrow piece of springy wool or cotton batting, about two inches wide and as long as needed to make your frame fit snug but comfortably – one length around or two.

Overlining: Natural fabric – approx 24 – 28” circle (depending on frame size) or $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 yd. Can be open weave wool, cotton or linen. Remember this goes on your head and should be able to breathe! I used an open weave wool.

Lining next to your head: Natural fabric approx 18-20” diameter circle. Do not choose a “slidy” fabric for this, as you want it to grip your hair and not slide off. I used black cotton for one balzo, for the other a dupioni silk that matched my dress.

Covering materials – fabric, false hair, feathers, fabricated or natural garland, etc. For the ruffled 16th century *capigliara* covering, use a 45” circle of plain smooth silk, not slubbed, rough, raw or dupioni.

Construction:

Uncoil the flat reed or wreaths, and place them on a vegetable steamer in a very large pot with a couple of inches of water in it. The vegetable steamer helps keep the reed from getting very hot in the water, but is not essential. The pot needs to be very large, as the whole balzo will need to be placed in it repeatedly. If you don’t have an oversized pot you can still do this but will not be able to steam the whole balzo but could soak it in a sink. Steam the reed until soft, about 15 minutes to 1/2 hour.

Step One – Making the Base:

Make the base out of the wider reed (if you have it) or thicker branches using about three coils around the head, with enough room for your hand to slide through flat. My head measures 22 ½” and my frame measured about 24”. Secure the base with wire in the front and mark the front with a magic marker!!

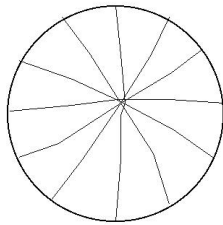
Step Two – Making the Vertical Framework

Leaving the thinner reed in the pot to steam, take out a length at a time, and start bending it over the frame back and forth. Originally I cut the reed to be flush with the base, and although this is a little neater, it is not actually correct. The sketch of the 15th century balzo frame shows the material being weaved into a cross hatch pattern, and this requires folding under the frame and coming back up.

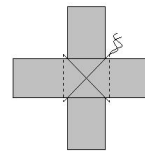
However, either method will work, so you can cut it if you wish, but be sure that your ties are tightly secured or the upper frame can separate from the base. I recommend cutting the first two pieces so you can get a more exact height or width, and then wrapping the rest for security. Once you wrap the reed it breaks down the fibers and weakens it, so you do not want to keep redoing it.

Secure each cut cross-section to the base with some wire, crossing **over** the reed on top, and behind/under the reed on the bottom to be secured, then twist together. This should form an “X” pattern that holds it in place .

I found that at least twelve vertical strands are necessary for stability. This equates to six pieces going over each side. At this point (or whenever the structure starts to feel brittle), throw the whole thing back in the pot to soften it up. Start your shaping by bending the base into an oval, and start pushing on the back or front to get it molded into the right shape. This will get better as more cross pieces are added and the gaps become smaller, but **shaping is necessary**. For the 15th century version, push the front backwards and the back of the frame in to create a slight bulge. For the 16th century version, push the crown down with some force, as this should not be totally round, but somewhat flattened.



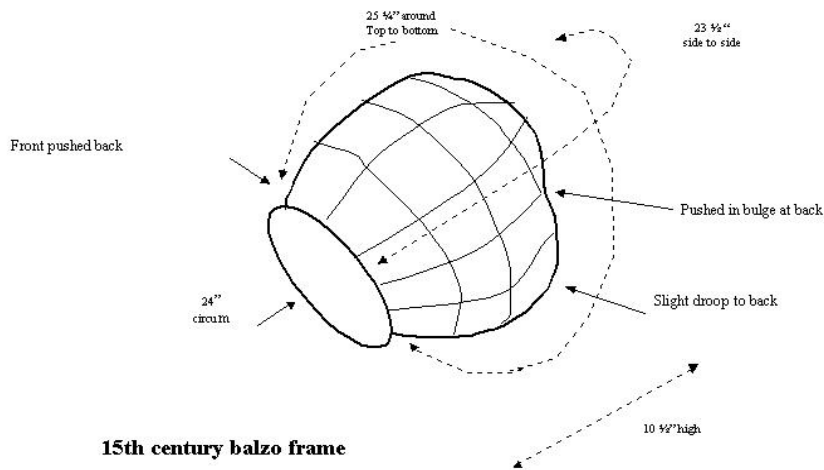
Preliminary balzo frame
4 - 6 cross pieces



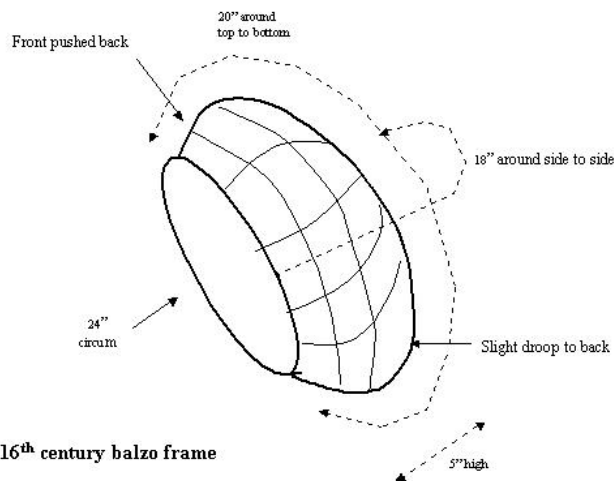
Wire wraps behind reed to be secured

Step Three – Adding the Horizontal and Bands

Taking a long piece of willow, weave it around the outside of the "cage", filling in the gaps somewhat. Make at least two of these horizontal rows, each about a third from crown and base, with no more than about 2” between each area. Secure all joins with an “X” of wire so that the structure is sound. Throw the whole thing in the pot to soften up and mold it by pressing and tightening joins to get your shape right. Let it sit in the air to dry, but check on it from time to time to keep the shape intact. Your finished frame should retain its desired shape.



**15th century balzo frame
with dimensions**

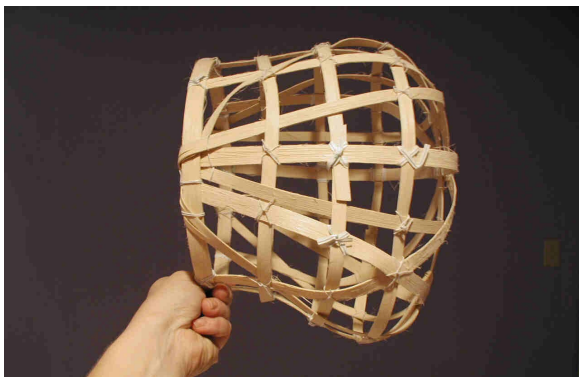


**16th century balzo frame
with dimensions**

Step Four –

Covering the Frame

Note: Do NOT add padding or any additional weight unless you really need it. These things can get heavy depending what you cover them with!



Cover the outside with a natural material as suggested above. The easiest shape is a rough circle wrapped round the underside of the base and sewn to itself on the inside. Else a rectangular piece can be gathered along one side for a more elongated balzo. Either way you will have to take a few tucks or gathers around the base. The easiest way to do this is with a rather large sewing

needle and going in and out of the balzo frame. Note: If you want a smooth balzo with only this as a final covering, put on the base padding and inside lining **first** (*see following steps*).

Cut a piece of springy fabric for padding the base to fit around your head, pin and whip stitch it to either side of the base, attaching to the outside covering. This can also be done first, I just find it easier to sew it to the outside covering.

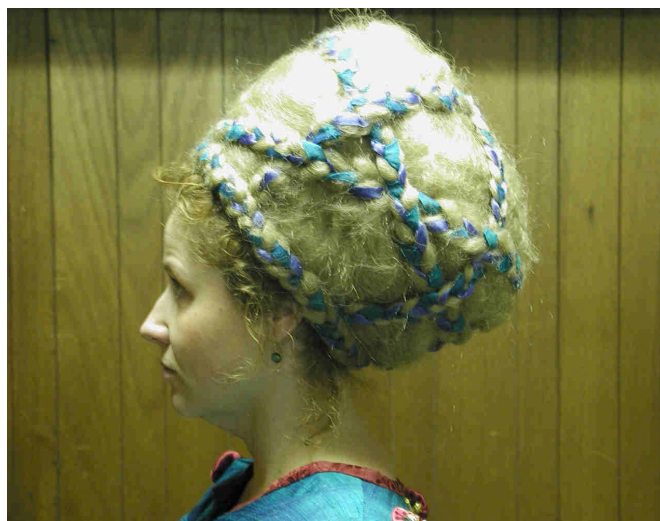
Cut a smaller (16-18" diameter) circle of cloth for the inside lining. Wrap the edges of the circle around the outside of the frame (over the padding), and pin on, adjusting to fit your hairstyle. This lining will not go all the way into the frame, as you do not want your head floating around in the balzo, but rather supported by the inner lining. You may wish to gather it more at the back than the front, in order to accommodate your hairstyle if a bun. Secure the lining by stitching above the inside band, going in and out of the balzo frame. Also, take a few tacks through the upper part of the balzo so the lining does not sag down on itself when off your head.

Step Five – Decorating: The final covering

You can really use some imagination here, but there are many examples in period of garland, feathers, false hair, gems, wire, etc. I recommend finding an example to follow, but have provided two methods here. In either method, make sure your front is marked, as it does tend to get lost.

To cover the 15th century balzo with false hair and braid with ribbons: Obtain false hair from a beauty supply store. You may wish to get a couple of hairnets too, in order to control flyaway hair. Note that blonde hair was preferred in Italy during this period. I got a “deluxe braid” of “Kanekalon” synthetic hair and found that it weighs quite a bit (3 oz), so use one package for the covering and one (or less) for making the braids. Starting at the back, spread the hair over the balzo and pin strategically to cover the lining. Don’t lose your pins in the hair! Use transparent nylon thread to baste it on around the base (but slightly above the edge) and at necessary junctures. Stay away from pin cushions and plants! They will get tangled in the hair! You can cover the false hair with a couple of hairnets to control the frizzing.

Make a few long braids with the other skein of hair, interweaving ribbon into the braids (I used two colors that matched my dress). See the diagram or Pisanello’s costume sketches for placement of the braids. Secure with transparent nylon thread. You can put an ornament at the front if you wish. Be prepared for many Marge Simpson and Bride of Frankenstein comments!



For the 16th century ruffled *capigliara*: Cut a circle of silk 45" in diameter. Sew twelve machine basting lines in concentric circles, about two inches apart. This does not have to be extremely precise, but I marked mine in chalk first. Start gathering the circles from the center working out, using the balzo frame as a reference for size of each circle. When it is looking very strange (tee-pee in shape), and all the circles have been gathered roughly, pin the silk to the balzo starting at the outer edge. (Leave the gather threads loose for now). Remember that the first four or five rows are most visible, and adjust the ruffles as best you can. Each two inch circle should be spaced roughly one inch apart, creating the ruffle.

Starting at the (raw) outer edge, fold it under at the outside of the headband, and start tacking it to the band. Work entirely around the row, adjusting ruffles as you go. I used a backstitch for security. For each successive row: tie off the gather threads, matching the balzo edge as closely as possible. Tack over the gather stitching, adjusting the ruffles and pins where needed. Fluff the ruffles when complete, and add some sort of ornament to the center front, as this was the focal point of the head piece.



END NOTES

¹ Chantilly, dating to 1440, and the Metropolitan Museum, New York, dating to 1445: respectively. See attached copies. Signora Capulet also wears a *balzo* of this type in Zeffirelli's production of *Romeo and Juliet* during the ball scene.

² Stories of the Baptist, Santa Maria Novella, Firenze, circa 1480.

³ Pinacoteca, Parma, circa 1525. See attachment.

⁴ Francois Boucher, *20,000 Years of Fashion*, (New York, 1987) This description seems to have been Boucher's alone, as I have not seen it repeated anywhere else. However, it does remind me that the phrases that are attached to portraits usually are **not** assigned by the painter, but rather by his audience, with their own prejudice.

⁵ National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Circa 1517. Her *capigliara* appears to be of light colored silk, ruffled (shirred) in the same method as sleeves in period (Lucrezia Panciatichi and other Bronzino portraits in the Uffizi Galleries, Firenze). See attached.

⁶ Milia Davenport, *Book of Costume*, (New York, 1945), pp. 496

⁷ Jacqueline Herald, *History of Dress in Renaissance Italy 1400-1500* (Atlantic Highlands, 1980), p. 50. There is also pictured a fresco(?) from the Tuscan school, circa 1430, which shows the understructure of the *balzo*, "probably of steamed and bent willow". See attached.

⁸ Herald references Levi-Pizetsky for this part, but I have not yet found it in the LP text.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 105

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 50, figure 21. Only referred to as "Tuscan School", circa 1430. Would like to know where this is!

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.210

¹² Milan, 1968, pp. 90-91. Unfortunately, this five volume set (!) on Italian Costuming is extremely hard to find: Volumes II and III (1300-1700) are in Italian, but loaded with color portraits.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 280c (according to my numbering) figure 127

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 280b (my numbering), figure 128

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 280a (my numbering), figure 129

¹⁶ Get Footnote 189 from LP

¹⁷ Get Footnote 190 from LP . This inventory is further listed in Herald, page 244, and includes materials needed for a *cotta* and *giornea*, in addition to prices paid.

¹⁸ Levi-Pizestky, *op. cit.*, pp. 292. Note that I am not clear on the text regarding the Adimari wedding chest – I cannot tell, whether this is cited somewhere, and thus imagined, or is an actual chest that still exists. If so, I would like to find out where it is!

¹⁹ Dover Press, *Vecellio's Renaissance Costume Book* (New York, 1977). The accompanying descriptions are written as "Dogalina for noblewoman's streetwear" (#39), and "Old costume worn in Venice and other parts of Italy" (#71). Unfortunately, all the text that is quoted by Levi-Pisetzky is not included in the Dover edition. Although Vecellio's woodcuts are very suspect for periods outside of his own lifetime, and foreign lands (especially America!), he is fairly reliable for Italy in his own lifetime, and neighboring countries.

²⁰ Hair taping was done with *bende*, thin ribbons of linen or silk, that secured the braid or styled hair to the head. The style is evident throughout the Middle Ages and renaissance and can be elaborate or simply practical. It is exceptionally secure and requires about a yard of ribbon for the average head of hair. I have also done it with hair cut above the shoulder. This provides a better, more even base for wearing most headgear of the period. See <http://www.mfgraffix.com/hird/faolt/hairtape.html>, the website of my good friend and SCA colleague, Lady Faoltighearna MacQuarrie (mka Margo Farnsworth).

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BIOGRAPHY

Maestra Baronessa Damiana Illaria d'Onde, OL, etc., is a 15th-16th century northern Italian of good lineage, with finances wavering between wealthy and middle class (depending on her mood and clothing involved). She has roots in Pitigliano, Toscana, but wanders up to Venezia occasionally in the later years. She teaches of costuming, and enjoys camping in a period manner, hearth cooking, and making shoes. Elizabeth Jones is a wife and mother of two, who funds her many interests through project management. Recent adventures have brought her more to Ireland than Italy as 30 years in the SCA has culminated in the purchase and renovation of [Sigginstown Castle](#) in Wexford. Contact me at lizjones429@earthlink.net - happy to hear feedback or questions regarding this article.