

Pianelle, Zoccoli, Pantoble's and Chopine's Platform Shoes

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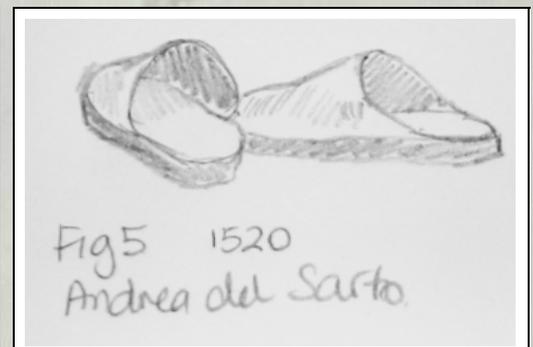
In the 15th and 16th centuries, slipper-like shoes without a heel (*pianelle*) were the fashion. They could be made from materials such as silk and could be elaborately embroidered. As these were most likely expensive and impracticable to wear when promenading through the streets, something was needed to protect them from being soiled. This was most likely the purpose of the platform shoe. This clog-like shoe was slipped over the finer shoe. (*Shoes and Pattens*, p 91)

Shoes and Pattens also states that platform shoes could be worn in the form of an open sandal directly over hose, similar to the English pattens. This is confirmed in 15th century Italian paintings such as: Siena foundling hospital (Siena) (Fig. 1), and a painting by Gentile da Gavriano (Florence, *Italian Renaissance Interior* p 177), 1435 (Fig. 2) which similar to those seen in Ghirlandaio's *An Angel appearing to Zacharias* (Florence), 1490's.



Florence- Zoccoli and Pianelle

In Florence, platform shoes (*zoccoli*) were made with a raised wooden sole. This was most commonly of white poplar wood. The *zoccolo* was worn over the slipper like shoe (*scarpette*), for protection. In the late 15th century, they are commonly seen, in paintings, worn (alone) over the hose (particularly by males) and can be seen worn this way in the 1493-5 miniature from Milan (Paolo and Daria Codex, p 31 *Italian Renaissance Interiors*). They could have an open toe, as seen in *Saint Benedict appearing to the Monks*, Siena (1505- 8) (Fig 3) or closed toes, as seen in the 1443 painting by Francesco Pessellino in a scene from *Life of St Nicholas* (p 151 *Italian Renaissance Interiors*), showing male shoes (Fig.4) and in Andrea del Sarto's *Birth of virgin*, 1520 showing women's shoes almost exactly the same (Fig.5, p 150 *Italian Renaissance Interiors* Italian *zoccoli* with closed toes can also be seen in the *Bayerisches*



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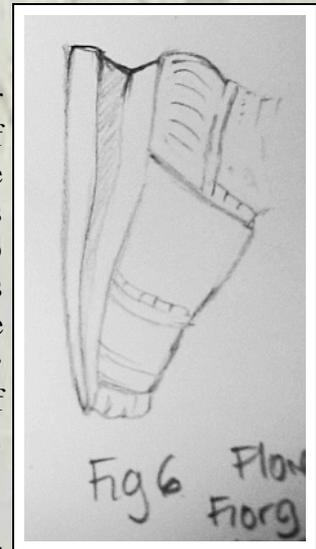
National Museum. The closed toe would most likely give better protection from the elements and weather.

The zoccoli was a popular shoe type in Florence. Eleanora d' Medici's favoured footwear was the *pianelle* (slipper without heel). Both the zoccoli and the *pianelle* appear to have a wooden sole. Zoccoli is usually used when describing 'clogs' or 'sandles' in *Dressing Renaissance Florence* (p 319) and usually described as having a raised sole. These are worn outside for protection. Pianelle had a closed toe and appear to be more slipperlike, being mainly for inside use. (*Dressing Renaissance Florence* p 315)



Right are my first pair of zoccoli, based on *Saint Benedict appearing to the Monks, Siena (1505- 8)* (Fig 3)

After 1549, most records in Eleanora's Gardaroba (wardrobe) are for *pianelle*, rather than shoes with full uppers (*scarpini/ scarpe*). Most of these were made in velvet with one pair recorded to have been made in satin and another in silver leather (1542). The preferred colour was red, violet and green. Records showed that they could be ordered to match an outfit. Green was Eleanora's preferred colour after 1550. As green was not a common colour for clothing, in Eleanora's time, the shoes are most likely to contrast with clothing at this time. (*La Mode a Firenze* p 144) In 1544, Eleanora's Gardaroba records one pair of footwear as having 'a whole upper', possibly with complete with heel. (*La Mode a Firenze* p144)



Pianelle or zoccoli could be made with matching flat leather shoes (*scarpini*). This can be seen in Fig 6. *The Arrival of Leo X in Florence*, by Fiorgio Vasari and Giovanni Stradano, 1559-60, found in the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

The *scarpini* were often decorated with simple slashes. This combination could be made attached together. This made is easier to walk, especially for children. The Gardaroba recorded such a combination made for Eleanora's son. (*La Mode a Firenze* p144)

Pianelle and zoccoli could be fabric covered and embroidered for festive occasions. (*Dressing Renaissance Florence*, p 157). Velvet coverings were commonly mentioned in Eleanora's Guardaroba. They could be decorated with fine braids made of silk or gold possibly covering stitching. One example is a pair of Eleanora's *pianelle* decorated with a gold cross (*La Mode a Firenze* p145)

Florentine upper class women also wore zoccoli or the more fashionable *chopines*. Height was associated with higher ranks from the 14th century (*La Mode a Firenze* p 145). It appears the 'fashionable' height in the 16thC was 19cm (1/3 braccio) (*La Mode a Firenze*, p 143) Florentine zoccoli tended to be of a more respectable height than the Venetian *chopine*. However, in traditional Italian fashion, it was typically taller than the English *pantoble*.

In the 15th century, Florence shoe and slipper makers were restricted by local sumptuary laws to keep the height of the zoccoli or chopine to less than 1/6 of a braccio (approximately 15 cm at the time) Even in the 14th century, there were laws to restrict the height of zoccoli to 8cm

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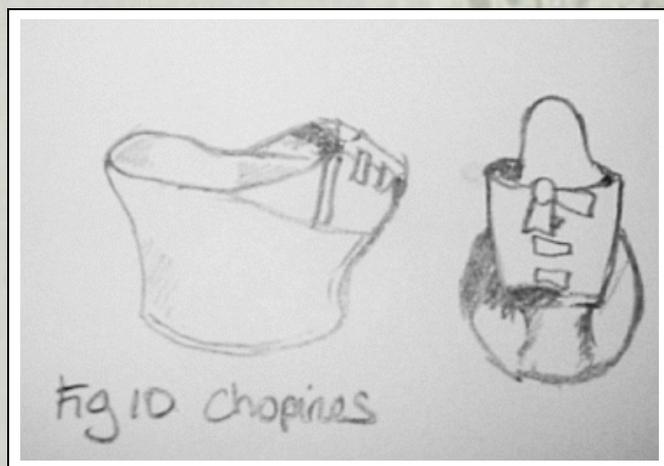
(*La Mode a Firenze*, p 145). The fine for finding an illegal item in a shoemakers shop was 25 lire. (*Dressing Renaissance Florence* p 291)

Measurements quoted in braccia can be confusing, it was a unit of measurement that varied, not only in different regions, but in different centuries. In the mid 15th century, one (Florentine) braccio was defined as an 'arms length' or approx. one yard (91.4cm) (*Dressing Renaissance Florence*, p226). By the 16th century, one (Florentine) braccio was 58.8cm (*La Mode a Firenze*).

Figure 7 shows Red (?), lower pianelle in Jacopo Zucchi's *Bathsheba Bathing*, 1573-74. These are very similar to pictures found in the Palazzo Vecchio's *Wedding of Marseilles*, 1557. (both from *La Mode a Firenze*). Figure 8 Shoes green pianelle from Lorenzo Lotto's *Susanna and the Elders*, 1517.



Fig. 9, from the third quarter of the 16thC, Florence. These were originally of white leather covering a wooden sole/wedge. (*La Mode a Firenze* p144) Fig. 10 (last quarter of the 16thC, Florence) shows what looks more like the more familiar chopines found in Venice.



It appears that that platform shoes were popular in other Italian states also. The Florentine Giovanni Ridolfi, travelling in 1480, was surprised to find that the Geonese women wore very low or no pianelle. (*Glossary of Terms in Italian Clothing* quoting Levi Pisetzky).

Pianelle, Zoccoli, Pantoble's and Chopine's: Platform Shoes

Chopines

Possibly the best known of the platform shoe was the *chopine*. Chopine was the 'foreign name' for the high (usually) cork platform shoes made fashionable in Venice where they attained the most exaggerated heights found in Italy. Chopines are often associated with the 15th and 16th century Venetian courtesan. They were known as *shopini*, by the English. This higher style was worn by Florentine women as early as the 14th century (*Dressing Renaissance Florence*, p305) Though they appear to be more popular from the 15th century. (*Dressing Renaissance Florence*, p320).



Right: Chopines belonging to Vicountessa Lucrezia Lorenz, of a very modest height! These are covered in black velvet.

Sumptuary laws from 1430 Venice, forbade the Venetian shoemaker from making platform shoes of more than 1/2 of *a quarta*. The fine for doing so was 25 lire and three months imprisonment. (*Sumptuary Laws of Italy. 1200-1500* p 140). One proposed reason for this was that the establishment was concerned with pregnant women falling and causing miscarriage (*Sumptuary Laws of Italy, 1200-1500*, p 51).

Extant examples of 16th century venetian chopines are found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. With recorded heights of 30 cm, in 15th century Venice, it is not surprising that Venetian women required a servant at each elbow when promenading the street. This heights also lend support to the concern of miscarriage.



Left: is our attempt at promenading at the Collegium. Proof that you do actually need help to walk safely! (thanks to Lady Agnita).

Above Right: A close up of the chopine in action. This dress was not made for these shoes or the hem would have been dropped at least 25 cm.

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This led to another reason, quite consistent with many other sumptuary laws, to restrict the heights of the chopine - the higher the platform, the longer the garment must be made. This meant using an increased amount of material. Other sumptuary laws restricted the length of the dress train. Chopines were possibly yet another way for the Italian (both Venetian and Florentine) woman to try to outwit the letter of the law. The same logic can be used in the case of the Florentine woman, as there were similar laws in place there and records of individuals trying to circumvent the local sumptuary laws.

England's Pantoble

England also succumbed to the fashion, though they were much more restrained in the heights used. They named their platform shoe the *pantoble*. In 1572, Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe lists eight pair of velvet pantobles. Examples of arched 'wedges' were found on the Mary Rose, dating around 1545. In 1549, Elizabeth the wife of the 2nd Earl of Worcester was recorded to have low wedged shoes. (*Queen Elizabeths Wardrobe Unlock'd*, pp 214- 215). So already the concept of height had begun.

Pantobles were made with deep cork sole which were thicker at the heel. The vamp (front) reached to the instep and could be of velvet, leather or satin. Other recorded materials used were cloth of silver lined with satin (*Queen Elizabeths Wardrobe Unlock'd* p215). Decorations listed, in 1591, included embroidery, pearls, 'spots of gold', silver or gold lace. Some pantobles were made to match particular outfits. *Queen Elizabeths Wardrobe Unlock'd* also states, on page 215, that Queen Elizabeth were pantobles instead of slippers.



In early 15th century English platform clogs (*pattens*), varied in design. They were generally flat and could be hinged with leather. Many were elaborately decorated. Pattens were made to be worn over shoes, for protection, or over the hose like a sandal. (*Shoes and Pattens*, p91). This is very similar to the early zoccoli of Florence (left are a pair of my pattens).

The Makers in Florence

In 1415 Florence, wooden zoccoli were sold in a drapers shop and came under the auspices of the Arte dei Medici speziali e merciai. Originally they were one of the 12 major guilds of Florence. Later, when the number of major guilds were reduced to 7, they were relegated to the position of a minor guild - the Arte dei Calzolai. In the mid 1400's this comprised the Calzolai (shoe makers), Pianellai (slipper makers) and Zoccolai (clog makers).. (*Dressing Renaissance Florence*, p55)

Though a minor guild, it had more members than any other guild. Interestingly 7% of shoe-makers and 40% of slippermakers were women. (*Dressing Renaissance Florence*, p55).

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