

Sprezzatura RPG

None

None

Copyright © 2025 Nicholas Cornia

Table of contents

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 1. Sprezzatura | 3 |
| 2. What is this game about? | 4 |
| 3. Game-mechanics | 5 |
| 3.1 The Four Tempraments | 5 |
| 3.2 The <i>Resonance</i> System | 6 |
| 3.3 Clocks | 8 |
| 3.4 Position and Effect | 8 |
| 3.5 Aspects & Minor Arcana | 8 |
| 3.6 Major Arcana | 9 |
| 3.7 The Royal Game of the Goose | 9 |
| 4. Playing the Game | 10 |
| 4.1 Character Sheet | 10 |
| 5. References & Inspirations | 11 |
| 5.1 Glossary | 11 |
| 6. Inspirations | 11 |
| 6.1 Books | 11 |
| 6.2 Games | 11 |
| 6.3 Music | 12 |
| 6.4 Academic Articles | 12 |

1. Sprezzatura

whirlpool

Sprezzatura is a role-playing game inspired by Renaissance culture and thought from Italian academies and courts. This project is still at its embrional state, so take this notes are purely speculative.

2. What is this game about?



Following Jared Sorensen's *Three Big Questions* I would like to introduce *Sprezzatura* as a game about **cooperative storytelling, unexpected narratives, character growth and wit**. The game is based on an esoteric game-engine of my invention called the *Resonance System*: a cooperative dice-poll system inspired by [Pythagorean intervals](#) and the [Harmony of the Spheres](#).

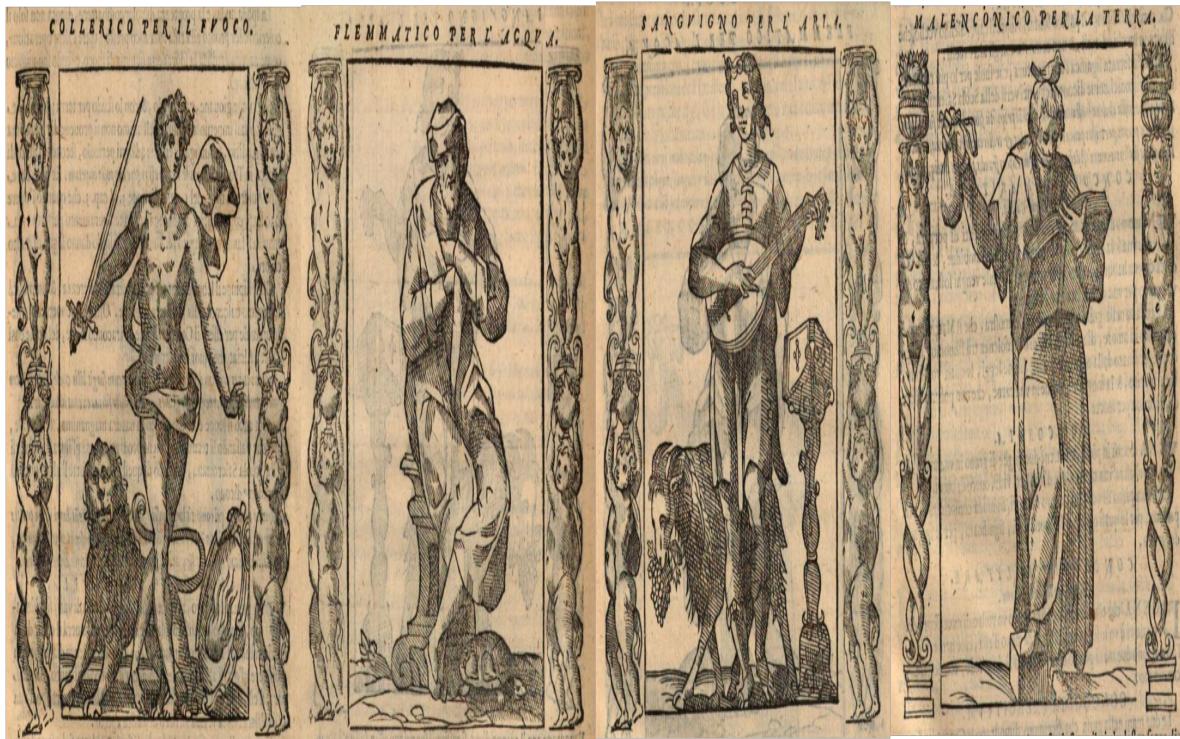
Furthermore, at the players' disposal comes a metacurrency system based on [Major Arcana](#) and [Minor Arcanas](#) tarot cards. Finally, the long-term growth of the story and characters is regulated by a parallel board-game similar to the [Royal Game of the Goose](#).

Interaction and sharing agency on the story with other players is encouraged by the *Resonance System*, decentralizing the usual role of the Game Master between all participant at the table.

3. Game-mechanics

3.1 The Four Tempraments

The main attributes of each playing character in *Sprezzatura* represents four approaches called **Temperaments**, inspired by Renaissance and Medieval theories categorizing people's **personality and physiological traits**. For each **Challenge(Check)**, the player will describe their PC's action that will lead the **Gathering(Table)** to an agreement: the chosen character's approach.¹



- **Choleric** (Fire): associated with creativity and passion.
- **Phlegmatic** (Water): associated with empathy and adaptivity.
- **Sanguine** (Air): associated with reason and wit.
- **Melancholic** (Earth): associated with tradition and care.

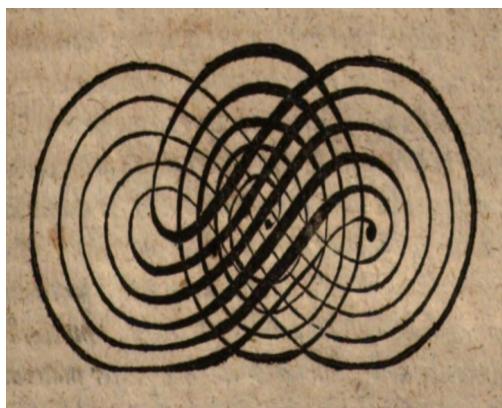
A playing character in *Sprezzatura* will have an amount of 6-sided dices (d6s) associated to each Temperament, reflecting their predisposition to the given approach. Each Temperament's value ranges from 2 (weak) to 5 (legendary) d6s.

3.1.1 Example

Nicholas' playing character *Guidobaldo Strozzi* is an Italian merchant from Venice, who climbed the social ladder with his wealth and lack of empathy. He has a silver tongue, a passionate soul and no respect for tradition and etiquette. His Temperaments values are:

| Temperament | Value |
|-------------|-------|
| Choleric | 3 |
| Phlegmatic | 3 |
| Sanguine | 4 |
| Melancholic | 2 |

3.2 The Resonance System



The search for sympathetic resonances, unity of opposites and the universal language was an obsession shared by many thinkers and occultists of the Renaissance. Inspired by the principal Pythagorean musical proportions of the - **unison** (1:1) - **octave** (2:1) - **fifth** and its complementary **fourth** (3:2 and 4:3) - **major intervals** of the **third**, **sixth** and **tenth** (respectively 5:4, 5:3 and 5:2)

I have designed a dice-poll system where successes are collected by **pairing dice to achieve consonant proportions**.

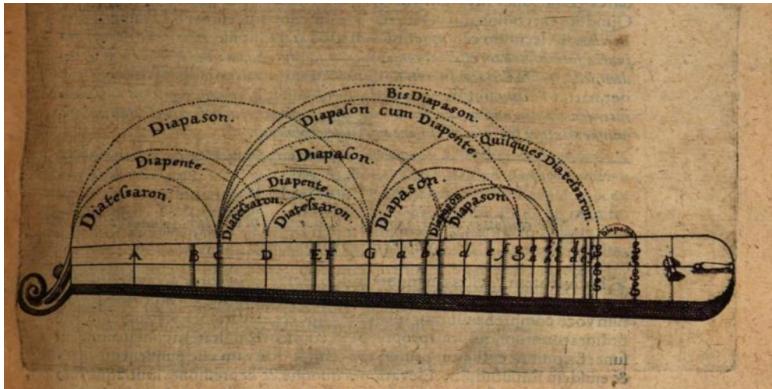
Here a table describing all possible pairings given two d6s:

| d6 x d6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1 | unison | octave | | | | |
| 2 | octave | unison | fifth | octave | maj. tenth | |
| 3 | | fifth | unison | fourth | maj. sixth | octave |
| 4 | | octave | fourth | unison | maj. third | fifth |
| 5 | | maj. tenth | maj. sixth | maj. third | unison | |
| 6 | | | octave | fifth | | unison |

As you would notice, there are 6 possibilities for **unison** (corresponding to the diagonal of the matrix), 6 for octaves (when the ratio between two values gives 2), 6 for **fifth** and **fourth** and 6 for **major third and sixth**. Each of the four categories is equiprobable, and counted together gives a total probability of success of 24/36 = 66 %.

3.2.1 Consonances

Each of the aforementioned pairs of dice generates a Consonance that can be exchanged by a player for a success. Later on, we will see how it is possible to increase the number of consonances by borrowing dice from the Resonance Poll or by playing a Minor or Major Arcana.



Each Temperament has a favorite type of Consonance associated with it.

- **Choleric** resonates the most with passions, reflected by the colorful consonances of major third, sixth and tenth.
- **Phlegmatic** resonates the most with the purity of the unison consonance.
- **Sanguine** resonates with the creative impulse of the fifth and fourth consonances.
- **Melancholic** resonates with the stability and depth of the octave consonance.

Players are encouraged to seek consonance pairs in their dice poll that resonate with the chosen Temperament for the roll. If the majority of consonances aligns with the Temperament resonance, than the player grants a bonus.²

3.2.2 Resonance Poll

Many tabletop role-playing games are turn-based, providing few mechanics for other players to interact with the active player taking actions. In *Sprezzatura* I have introduced an interesting help mechanics called the Resonance Poll.

Each time a player rolls for a challenge, they can "keep" up to one unused die from the poll and save it. During the same scene, other players can require extra dice from the Resonance Poll involving their owners in the current challenge. In this way, the owners can actively contribute to the active player's action, keeping the out-of-turn attention of players high.

Example

Nicholas' character *Guidobaldo* is involved in a challenge, trying to impress some local nobles at a party. He is rolling with his Sanguine Temperament of 3 and he rolls a 1,2,5. He can combine (5,2) to generate a major tenth Consonance, but he needs two successes to achieve his character's goal. Lidwien has a 2 on her Resonance Poll and suggests to include her character *Moderata* in the challenge in exchange for the die.

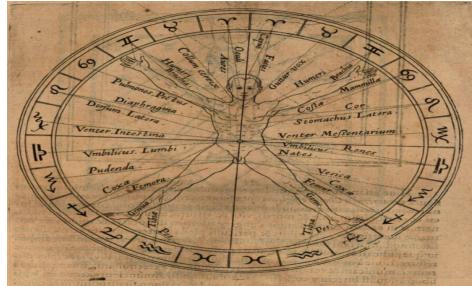
3.2.3 Dissonances

Special combinations of dice generates Dissonances. Those unpleasant sounds are represented in *Sprezzatura* by values of 7,11 and 13. As long as the player rolls only dice from a character's Temperament, Dissonances can not be generated. The only way to create Dissonance is by playing Minor Arcanas or Major Arcana (see next section).

A Dissonance always cleans every player's Resonance Poll and generates a negative twist into the character's life. It can be a short or a long-term consequence, the player who played the Dissonance might choose.

In exceptional cases, a player may play a Dissonance card on their character. Their challenge has failed narratively, but instead of rolling Failure dice on the Goose Game they might choose to reposition their pawn up to twice the number of successes of their current roll. More information about the Goose Game in its [dedicated section](#).

3.3 Clocks



Inspired by *Forged in the Dark* games and *Dungeon World* Fronts I have decided to represent every kind of Opposition facing the players, either abstract or concrete, into Clocks. The magnitude of each Opposition is proportional to the number of ticks of their associated clock. The more ticks, the harder will be for the players to face the challenge.

| Magnitude | Number of Ticks |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Trivial | 2 |
| Simple | 4 |
| Complex | 6 |
| Challenging | 8 |
| Legendary | 10 |

3.4 Position and Effect

Every challenge arises when the story encounters a moment of uncertainty, and the players leave the final decision to dice. I am considering the Position and Effect matrix from *Forged in the Dark* games to organise degrees of success according to the shared fictional state.

A character's Position indicates their advantage with respect of the situation. It can be Desperate, Standard or Controlled.

| Position | Desperate | Standard | Controlled |
|------------------|-----------|----------|------------|
| Successes needed | 3+ | 2+ | 1+ |

On a similar fashion, a character's Effect measures the impact of their action. It can be Limited, Standard or Great.

| Effect | Limited | Standard | Great |
|---------------|---------|----------|-------|
| Clock's ticks | 1 | 2 | 4 |

Here comes a 3x3 matrix describing Position and Effect combinations

3.5 &

Each character starts the game with three Aspects representing their Past (Background), Present (Bonds) and Future (Drives). These Aspects should be assigned collaboratively during Session 0 and can reflect any kind of emotion and relationship, either positive or negative. During Scenes, characters can invoke one of their Aspects during a challenge to spend one of their Minor Arcana cards in their hand. The numerical value of the card will be added to the player's poll and can be combined with any die to generate a Consonance, increasing the amount of successes, or even a Dissonance.

3.6

Major Arcana cards are powerful emblematic symbols that will dictate the mood of each Scene, or *Canto*. The player placing the last Major Arcana on the table is designed as temporary Game Master and they are responsible to describe the content of the Scene to the fellow player, in a short and concise Description, or *Argomento*. Furthermore, each Major Arcana card temporarily influence the game-mechanics with some alternative rules. More information about in the [dedicated section](#).

At the beginning of a Session, usually is the player with the highest Station value on the Goose Game may place a Major Arcana for the first Scene. If they have no Major Arcana on their hand, the next player on their left may play a card and be designated ad Game Master. The subsequent Scenes are played similarly, but now just following clockwise order.

3.7 The

- 1. Mechanics where attributes are based on approaches, rather than descriptive physical or mental talents are inspired by [Legend of the Five Rings 5th Edition](#) and [Fate Accelerated](#). ↪
- 2. TO-DO: Bonus for Temperament resonance to be defined. ↪

4. Playing the Game

Here come some example of play, setting a campaing and other useful tips.

4.1 Character Sheet

Template [Character sheet](#)

Example [Character sheet](#)

5. References & Inspirations

5.1 Glossary

5.1.1 Aspect

A short sentence defining a PC's Backgrounds (Past), Bonds (Present) and Drives (Future). If a certain Aspect applies on the given Challenge, the active player can invoke it to add a Minor Arcana card in their dice poll, increasing their chances of success.

Challenge When the narrative poses uncertainty of outcome, the active player is asked to describe their action and the Gathering will agree on a suitable Temperament. After that the player will roll their dice poll and assemble Consonances to gather Triumphs.

Consonance A unique way to generate Triumphs (Successes) in the *Resonance System*. During a Challenge, players are encouraged to assemble pairs of dice in order to generate so-called Consonances. Based on the circumstances, Consonances can be transformed into Triumphs to exhaust Wheels.

Gathering Terms indicating the whole playing table, including players and Host.

Host Name given for the temporary Game Master, moderating the session during a **Scene**.

Scene Portion of an **Act** (Gaming Session) ruled by a Major Arcana card and moderated by a Host.

Segment A constitutive part of a Wheel, equivalent to Tick of a Forged in the Dark Clock.

Temperament One of the four main attributes of a player character, representing a PC's disposition on a certain approach rather than modelling a specific physical or mental talent.

Triumph Equivalent of Success in a Challenge. The more Triumphs, the more Ticks of the Wheel can be exhausted with the PC's action.

Wheel Equivalent to Forge in the Dark's Clock representation. Every opposition to the players in the world is mapped into a Wheel, abstracting its inherent degree of difficulty according to its number of Segments.

6. Inspirations

6.1 Books

Ariosto, Ludovico. *Orlando Furioso* (2nd ed.). 1532.

Bargagli, Girolamo. *Dialogo de' Giuochi nelle vegghe senesi si usono di fare*. 1572

Bargagli, Scipione. *I Trattenimenti*. 1587.

Fludd, Robert. *De Natura Simia Seu Technica macrocosmi historia*

Fonte, Moderata. *Tredici canti del Floridoro*. 1581

Kircher, Athanasius. *Musurgia Universalis*

6.2 Games

Evil Hat Productions. *Fate Accelerated*. 2013.

Fantasy Flight Games. *Legend of the Five Rings* (5th ed.). 2018.

Harper, John. *Blades in the Dark*. Evil Hat Productions, 2017.

6.3 Music

6.4 Academic Articles

Lantz, Frank. *The Beauty of Games*. MIT Press, 2023.

Seville, Adrian. *The Cultural Legacy of the Royal Game of the Goose: 400 Years of Printed Board Games*. Edited by John Spear. Amsterdam University Press, 2019.

Suits, Bernard. *The Grasshopper. Games, Life and Utopia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.

Tekinbas, Katie Salen, and Eric Zimmerman. *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals*. MIT press, 2003.