

Bartolomeo de Selma e Salaverde
Canzoni, Fantasie et Correnti da suonar ad una, 2. 3. 4 con basso continuo,
Venice, 1638
by Joëlle Morton

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Little is known about Bartolomeo de Selma e Salaverde (this is the Italianate spelling of his name as printed in this publication, but I will hereafter refer to him as 'Selma') and the few details in current sources are riddled with inaccuracies or are almost impossible to verify with any degree of certainty. According to the title page of this 1638 publication, Selma was born and educated in Spain, and a friar of the Augustinian Order. Beyond that, specifics are murky. No records are known showing the names of his parents, or the date or location of his birth or baptism. Nowadays, it is widely cited that he was the son of the Spanish wind instrument maker by the similar name, Bartolomé de Selma. This older Spaniard was of Catalan origin, born c1560 (or earlier), married to Angela de Salaverde y Orella, of Barcelona and employed as a sackbut player at Cuenca Cathedral from 1593 to 1612 before a move to Madrid where he became instrument maker for the royal chapel until his death in 1616. But our Selma is almost certainly not this man's son; his name does not appear in Bartolomé's will, whereas another nine other children are mentioned. If connected to this family, it is more likely that he was actually a grandchild, perhaps born of the eldest son, Antonio, around the turn of the century. In Madrid, Antonio inherited the contents of his father's instrument making workshop, as well as his post as instrument maker at the royal chapel. Records document that Antonio had a son named Gabriel (who would likely have been older than Selma), who was a cornetto player at the Spanish royal court from 1626¹ but there is no mention of other progeny. And if Selma was indeed related, it would seem that he took his full double surname entirely from the paternal side of the family instead of the more common Spanish practice of taking one name from each of his father and mother.

It is not known where Selma received his musical training or the details of how he began his career, but a dedicatory sonnet by Claudio Panta at the front of this 1638 publication praises his virtuosity as a bassoonist, and in particular his "sweet melodies, breath control and excellent intonation." From 1628-30, Selma was employed by Archduke Leopold at Innsbruck and according to the title page of these Canzoni, he may still have been there in 1638, though the collection was dedicated to Karl Ferdinand (1613-55), son of King Sigismund III of Poland and Sweden. The

¹ B. Kenyon de Pascual: "The Wind-Instrument Maker, Bartolomé de Selma (†1616), his Family and Workshop." GSJ: XXIX, 1986.

preface mentions two other relatively important composers with whom he was presumably professionally acquainted: Giovanni Valentini (1582/3-1649, keyboardist and imperial Kapellmeister to Sigismund III in Vienna) and Giovanni Giacomo Porro (c1590-1656, organist and Kapellmeister to Elector Maximilian I of Bavaria in Munich). Aside from this 1638 collection, no other music by Selma is known, and few other references to him as an individual or performer have been brought to light. Today, his name is celebrated among historical bassoonists both for the reputation he appears to have had as a player, and because this collection contains the very first published work for solo bassoon (more on this subject, below).

“Canzoni, Fantasie et Correnti da suonar ad una, 2. 3. 4. con basso continuo” was published by Bartolomeo Magni in Venice, 1638.² It contains a total of 57 pieces in five part books, labeled *Primo Libro*, *Secondo Libro*, *Terzo Libro*, *Quarto Libro* and *Basso Continuo*. The works are almost entirely for unspecified instruments; the only three exceptions are a single solo *fantasia* for bassoon (with b.c.), and two duo *canzoni* for violin and unspecified bass instrument (with b.c.). This present edition contains all of the pieces for one and two instruments, plus b.c. The original parts for these pieces were printed in the first and second part books, with their accompaniments in the basso continuo part book. The *canzoni* and fantasias for *basso* are virtuosic diminutions on a simple bass line, and in this style they bear similarity to the writing found in other early 17th century Italian prints (think Frescobaldi, Castello, Marini, Fontana, Uccellini, for example). The writing for *soprano* instrument is in a similarly florid style, but obviously does not mirror the bass line in the same way.

Selma’s lack of precise instrumental assignment is not unusual for its time; one commonly finds the designation *“per ogni sorte d’istromenti”* on title pages of other contemporary publications, perhaps as a clever business marketing ploy, enabling the publisher to sell copies to musicians of all kinds. But there are other unusual features about the instrumentation in this collection, starting with the large number of pieces (6 solos and 18 duos) calling for a *“basso”* instrument. The bass parts exhibit an extensive range of two octaves plus a sixth, and descend very low, to BB flat. Since generally no instrument is prescribed or suggested, Selma must have intended the pieces to be utilized by a variety of wind and string players. To my mind, there would seem to only be four possible options of instruments capable of such a low compass. Fantasia #10 is specifically marked for bassoon, and of course the rest of the pieces are also possible for that instrument. #10 reflects a total range of two octaves plus a tone (from BB flat – c’), and most of the other basso pieces fall comfortably within that compass. What’s curious is that BB flat was not a note

² The sole surviving copy of this printed edition is located at Wroclaw University in Poland. The facsimile is widely available (online at http://www.bibliotekacyfrowa.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=114&from=&dirids=1&ver_id=581789&lp=1&Ql=!6FD7E7A205B3694A5638538B9829CECC-137, and also available in a SPES edition) and its contents are public domain.

generally attainable on bassoons of this period (most surviving instruments only go as low as C), so in order to obtain low BB flats, Selma would have to have been playing on an unusual model for the time, as will players today if they are using copies of original instruments.³ So this may prove a deterrent! A second option would be to employ the bass trombone, with its range down to low AA; but many trombonists will find the low and fast writing with scant opportunities for breathing to be awkward, not to mention challenging, for such a large slide instrument.⁴ The low compass of these works rules out a standard bass viol (the introduction of a 7th string was still quite a few decades away, and in a different country), but they do fit very well on the larger member of the gamba family, nowadays called the G (or A) violone, that was in common use as both a solo and chamber instrument at this time. They also fit nicely on a bass violin, using its early Italianate tuning a full step lower than the modern cello (BB flat, F c g). At the time of this publication, the bass violin was probably not (yet) an especially common solo instrument, but it was certainly moving in that direction, and in my opinion, this seems a genuinely viable option. Both the G violone and the bass violin have the same top string (g), so the high passagework would lie in exactly the same place on either one. Both would also have the agility required to play the fast moving passagework in the lowest register. It's these two string instruments that strike me as the most logical choices for Selma's basso parts. It is sometimes posited that these pieces might have been intended to be transposed, but I find this suggestion unlikely especially in light of the already high treble parts in the duo pieces; a transposition would push those lines unrealistically high. And the lower compass of the bass parts precludes their being transposed in the other direction. Looking at the collection overall, Selma's basso instrument range is very consistent, and I feel certain he intended the pieces to be played in the actual range that was printed, using one of the four instruments discussed above.

23 pieces call for "soprano" instruments; here there are more varied string and wind options. Selma prescribes the violin in two of his duo *canzoni* (#12 and #16), and the writing in these pieces exhibits a range of just less than two octaves (c' to b''). The other pieces for unspecified treble instrument reflect a similar range, with just one note extra on either side (b flat - c'''), for a total range of two octaves plus a tone. However, none of the pieces requires quite that entire compass; the largest span Selma asks of his soprano instrument is two octaves (in the solo *Fantasia* #2, from b - b''), and most pieces use less than that, averaging one octave plus a sixth or seventh. Depending on the specific key of the piece and its total range, sometimes recorders, cornetti, flutes and treble trombones will be possible. String instruments will be more useful across the board; violin is a logical option, but a treble viol, and even sometimes a tenor viol, will also work nicely.

³ See William Waterhouse: "Bassoon." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press.

⁴ I am grateful to Mack Ramsey, for discussing these pieces in conjunction with the trombone with me.

A final observation about instrumentation comes from looking at the *canzon* for two “*tenori*” (#22). In marked contrast to the other *canzoni* for like instruments (#20 and #21 for two *soprani* and #23 for two *bassi*) where Selma assigns identical ranges to the paired instruments, his two tenor lines reflect different compasses. The first tenor part remains quite high, (c# - a’), while the second tenor goes much lower (G - g’). It is interesting to note that in both cases, the upper extent of Selma’s tenor writing is almost identical to that of his *basso* parts. There are many wind and string instruments on which these pieces will fit comfortably, including the bass instruments mentioned above. One could additionally consider exploring the use of dissimilar instruments for each of the tenor parts to call attention to the difference in ranges and writing for each.

Last but not least, some commentary should be offered about the pieces that are instrumental *passaggi* on well-known Renaissance vocal models: Selma offers a “*basso solo*” setting (#6) and a “*basso e soprano*” duo setting (#15) based on Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina’s madrigal *Vestiva i colli* (1566) and a “*basso solo*” setting (#7) of Orlando Lasso’s chanson *Susanne un jour* (1567). In each case, the solo lines embellish a single part from the original polyphonic model. This makes them nice, albeit somewhat unusual, additions to the division repertoire. A fourth work (#9) is not identified by name, but his third *Fantasia a basso solo* is variations on a Spanish *cancioń*, the *Canto del Caballero*.

Selma’s duo setting of *Vestiva* (#15) is perhaps the most straightforward of the three pieces based on vocal models. Its two solo lines are treble and bass divisions embellishing the original top and bottom lines of Palestrina’s 5-voice madrigal and the piece is presented in its original tonality/modality. The *soprano* part has a range of one octave plus a sixth (d - b flat’’) and the *basso* part goes to its highest tessitura in the collection, with a range of two octaves plus a tone (F - g’). That Selma was loyal to Palestrina’s original is immediately clear from the basso continuo part book; this is the only work in Selma’s collection where both a treble and a bass line are provided in the accompaniment and they are *basso seguente* and *canto seguente* parts that are true to Palestrina’s polyphonic original. Though Selma includes simple figures for the bass line, the inclusion of Palestrina’s treble could perhaps be argued to reflect a preference for what was common *Diminutionspraxis* several decades earlier, having the solo line accompanied by the entire original vocal work around which it was based. In this modern edition, both Selma’s abbreviated treble/bass accompaniment, and also the entire original madrigal, are provided, so that modern performers may make their own choice about which version to use in performance. Editorial accidentals have been included so that the solo line fits against the original madrigal.

The *basso solo* setting of *Vestiva* (#6) has some interesting features. To begin, the entire piece has been transposed down a perfect fifth from Palestrina’s original, and this puts the *basso* instrument in a lower tessitura than in the duo setting, but still with a range of two octaves plus a tone (C - d’). I personally find it a little puzzling why the madrigal was transcribed; if the original key had been retained, the range

would have been only one step higher (G – a') than Selma's writing in the duo setting! I believe Selma must have liked the low pitches where they are written, and this strengthens my argument about why performers should not transpose these works in order to fit them on different instruments. The solo writing in this piece is *passaggi* on Palestrina's original bass line and the accompaniment he provides is a *basso seguente* of the original madrigal. As above, the work can be performed either with a harmonic bass, or with the entire madrigal as accompaniment (in its transposed form, as supplied). Selma concludes the piece by tagging on a simple harmonic coda, marked "*acadenza*" in the basso continuo part book.

Selma's writing on Lasso's 5-part chanson, *Susanne un jour* (#7) is yet again quite different from the other vocal model divisions. Here, the piece appears a perfect fourth lower than the original chanson, with the solo bass line again calling for a range of two octaves plus a tone (BB flat – c'). Again Selma's choice of transposition is a little puzzling, since the solo line in its original modality (F – g') would have been identical to the one he called for in the duo setting of *Vestiva*. His accompaniment is loyal to Lasso's original bass line, but with the unique modification that every time the original chanson bass line had rests, Selma left them out, running directly into whatever came next! As a result, the opening four measures of Lasso's chanson were excluded, and there are similar gaps scattered throughout the piece. Somewhat miraculously, the piece still works without those passages, and I doubt a listener would notice these changes unless holding a score, or intimately familiar with Lasso's version. This is also the only one of Selma's works where there is a solo in the basso continuo line in the middle of the piece (M47-50). But perhaps the most unusual feature of the piece is the fact that Selma took the final nine bars of Lasso's chanson, writing eleven variations on them before concluding the work (again using the same cadential coda as in #6). A note at the top of the solo part instructs that liberty may be taken by the performer; it's not necessary to play all eleven variations, 'so long as the continuo player is advised in advance where to end.' (*Et quando sara troppo longa lasciatete alcune repliche avisando al organista le quale repliche sono al ultimo del madrigal.*) From the choice of wording in this instruction, we may additionally infer that Selma was thinking of organ as his preferred continuo instrument, something that would certainly enable the possibility of using the entire original polyphonic model as accompaniment in these division style pieces.

The solo bass Fantasia (#9) is based on the *Canto del Caballero*, a popular sixteenth century dance-song. The melody to this *cancion* seems to have been widely known, sung with the *villancico* text:

Dezilde al cavallero
que non se quexe,
que yo le doy mi fe,
que non la dexe.

Dezilde al cavallero,

cuerpo garrido,
que non se quexe,
en ascondido,
que yo le doy mi fe,
que non la dexe.

(Tell the gentleman not to complain, for I give him my promise I will not leave him.
Tell the gentleman of handsome body not to complain in secrecy, for I give him my
promise I will not leave him.)

The *Caballero* tune was utilized by a number of different composers. A simple,
untexed harmonization of one statement of the melody and *buelta* by

Pisador (1552) exists for solo vihuela and a set of five *diferencias* (with the tune
appearing in three out of four part) exist for organ by Antonio de Cabezón (1578).
The only fully texted setting is by Nicolas Gombert (1556), but the tune was also
utilized by Cristóbal Morales as a *cantus firmus* in the tenor voice throughout his 4-
part *Missa Desilde al Cavallero* (date unknown, but prior the composer's death in
1553).⁵ Selma's setting is only loosely based on the original melody, but
immediately identifiable aurally by the minor sixth that outlines the beginning of
each new statement, and because the solo part observes two bars rest each time the
melody repeats. Not all melodic statements are the same length, or in the same
tonality as the initial appearance of the tune. This piece merits more study and
analysis to determine Selma's precise structure, but it is the only currently known
setting of this tune from the seventeenth century, and the fact that it is modeled on a
Spanish tune further reinforces the composer's connections to that part of the
world.

The contents of Selma's 1638 collection are summarized below. For those who wish
to compare ranges and tessituras of the various parts, I have additionally provided
that information here.

Ad una:

1.	Canzon [1]	soprano solo	c' – a''
2.	Canzon [2]	soprano solo	b – b''
3.	Canzon [3] s	soprano solo	e' – b''
4.	Canzon [4]	soprano solo	d' – b flat''
5.	Fantasia [1]	basso solo	C – c'
6.	Vestiva i colli	basso solo	C – d'
7.	Susanna	basso solo	BB flat – c'
8.	Fantasia [2]	basso solo	BB flat – d'

⁵ Esses, Maurice, *Dance and instrumental diferencias in Spain during the 17th and early 18th centuries*. Pendragon Press, 1992, p.147-48.

9.	Fantasia [3]	basso solo	BB flat – d'
10.	Fantasia	fagotto solo	BB flat – c'

A doi:

11.	Canzon [1]	basso e soprano	C – d'	d' – b flat''
12.	Canzon [1]	basso e violino	D – d'	d' – a''
13.	Canzon [2]	basso e soprano	D – c'	f' – c'''
14.	Canzon [3]	basso e soprano	D – c'	b – a''
15.	Vestiva i colli	basso e soprano	F – g'	d – b flat''
16.	Canzon [2]	basso e violino	D – c'	c' – b''
17.	Canzon [4]	basso e soprano	E – b flat	b flat – g''
18.	Canzon [5]	basso e soprano	B – c'	f' – b''
19.	Canzon [6]	basso e soprano	D – d'	g' – a''
20.	Canzon [1]	2 soprani	d' – a''	d' – a''
21.	Canzon [2]	2 soprani	d' – a''	d' – a''
22.	Canzon	2 tenori	c# – a'	G – g'
23.	Canzon	2 bassi	C – c'	C – c'
24.	Corrente [1]	basso e soprano	G – c'	g' – a''
25.	Corrente [2]	basso e soprano	D – c'	f' – a''
26.	Corrente [3]	basso e soprano	D – b flat	g' – a''
27.	Corrente [4]	basso e soprano	F – g	g' – b flat''
28.	Corrente [5]	basso e soprano	C – a	e' – g''
29.	Balletto [1]	basso e soprano	D – a	g' – b flat''
30.	Balletto [2]	basso e soprano	D – a	d' – g''
31.	Gagliarda	asso e soprano	D – b flat	g' – a''

Violino range: c' – b'' (d' – a'' and c' – b'')
Fagotto range: BB flat – c'
 Overall *soprano* range: b flat – c'''
 Overall *tenore* range: G – a' (c# – a' and G – g')
 Overall *basso* range: BB flat – g'

Clefs used in original publication:

#1	C1	F4	*soprano clef for solo part
#2	G2	F3	*baritone clef for b.c.
#3	G2	F4	
#4	G2	F4	
#5	F4	F4	
#6	F4	F4	
#7	F4	F4	
#8	F4	F4	
#9	F4	F4	
#10	F4	F4	
#11	F4	G2	F4

#12	F4	G2	F4	
#13	F4	G2	F4	
#14	F4	C1	F4	*soprano clef for treble part
#15	F3	G2	G2 + F3	*baritone clef for solo bass part and bass of b.c.
#16	F4	G2	F4	
#17	F4	C1	F4	*soprano clef for treble part
#18	F4	G2	F4	
#19	F4	G2	F4	
#20	G2	G2	F4	
#21	G2	G2	F4	
#22	C4	C4	F4	*tenor clef for both tenor parts
#23	F4	F4	F4	
#24	F4	G2	F4	
#25	F4	G2	F4	
#26	F4	G2	F4	
#27	F4	G2	F4	
#28	F4	G2	F4	
#29	F4	G2	F4	
#30	F4	G2	F4	
#31	F4	G2	F4	

The remaining contents of Selma's 1638 collection (not provided in this edition):

A 3:

- 5 Canzonas for 'doi soprani e basso' (#32-36)
- 1 Canzona for 'doi soprani e tenore' (#37)
- 1 Canzona for 'soprano, tenore e basso' (#38)
- 6 Correnti for 'doi soprani e basso' (#39-41, 43-45)
- 1 Balletto for 'doi soprani e basso' (#42)

A 4:

- 3 Canzonas for "doi soprani, alto e basso" (#46-48)
- 1 Canzona "battuta allegra sempre" in 2 parts for "doi soprani, alto e basso" (#49-50)
- 2 Canzonas 'a chori doi' for "doi soprani e doi bassi" (#51-52)
- 5 Correnti for 'doi soprani, alto e basso' (#53-57)