

Gaita



The Queen of Measures

1	Le hault et le bas	<i>Basse danse</i>	Brussels, arr. Chris Elmes
2	Ingrata	<i>Ballo</i>	Domenico, arr. Chris Elmes
3	La vita di Cholino (La vida de Culin)	<i>Ballo</i>	Guglielmo (NYp), music: Anon, Montecassino 871,
4	Bialte di Chastiglia (Beaulté de Castille)	<i>Ballo</i>	Guglielmo (NYp) music: Brussels, arr. Chris Elmes & Cait Webb
5	Principessa (Mit ganzem willen)	<i>Bassadanza</i>	Guglielmo (PnG) music: Conrad Paumann (Lochamer Liederbuch)
6	Prexonera	<i>Ballo</i>	Domenico, arr. Chris Elmes
7	Tesera	<i>Ballo</i>	Domenico, arr. Chris Elmes
8	Mignotta vechio (Cançon di pifari)	<i>Bassadanza</i>	Guglielmo (PnG) music: Cornazano tenor, arr Chris Elmes
9	Saltarello (Cançon di pifari)	<i>Saltarello</i>	music: Cornazano tenor, arr Chris Elmes
10	Soffrance (Trew on wam is al my tryst)		Gresley MS music: Anon English (Cambridge MS Add. 5943)
11	Roy de tribus		Gresley MS music: Chris Elmes, arr. Cait Webb
12	Verçepe	<i>Ballo</i>	Domenico, arr. Chris Elmes
13	Lionzello vechio	<i>Ballo</i>	Domenico, arr. Chris Elmes & Cait Webb
14	Temperans		Gresley ms
15	Mowbray (Me lyketh ever the lenger the bet)		Gresley MS, music: Anon English (Cambridge MS) arr. Chris Elmes & Cait Webb,
16	Mercantia	<i>Ballo</i>	Domenico, arr. Chris Elmes
17	New yer (Dou way, Robin)		Gresley ms music: Anon (BL, MS Cotton frag. XXIX)
18	La Franchoise nouvelle	<i>Basse danse</i>	Brussels, arr. Chris Elmes
19	Damsen (I ² senti matutino)		Gresley ms music: Andrea Stefani (Mancini Codex),

Io sono Bassadanza dele mesure regina (I am bassadanza, the Queen of Measures).

...So writes Domenico da Piacenza in his mid-15th C treatise on the art of dancing. He describes four *Misure* (measures) – bassadanza, quadernaria, saltarello and piva - each characterised by their own combination of tempo, rhythm and step. Of the four misure, Bassadanza was considered the most regal and the most difficult to master, for musicians or dancers: ‘few understand my performance’.

In modern notation bassadanza is given as 6/4 time. In the dance manuscripts it is described as ‘major imperfect’ and typically written in pairs of notes, often on the same pitch, each of three beats duration. This ‘tenor’ must be seen as a framework on which to improvise or arrange, adding rhythmic subdivisions, melody and/or counterpoint. An example of simply adding rhythm can be heard in the bassadanza section of *Temperans* (tr. 14) with the tabor accompanying the pipe. A basic melodic variation of the tenor can be heard in *Lionzello vecchio* (tr. 13). For the majority of bassadanza on this recording we have composed our own 2- or 3-part counterpoint on the tenor, with the exception of *Principessa* (tr.5) which arranges a 6/4 keyboard intabulation from a 15th C songbook.

Some 15th C Italian dances are in solely bassadanza measure (tr. 5 & 8), whereas most *balli* (tr. 2,3,4,6,7,12,13,16) incorporate bassadanza sections along with some or all the other measures. In the Burgundian tradition of the later 15th C, bassadanza becomes codified as the *Basse danse* (tr.1 & 18). We have included a short bassadanza section in our new composition for the dance *Roy de Tribus* (tr.11) from the 15th C English Gresley ms., and matched other Gresley dance descriptions to: two English songs from c. 1400 (tr. 10, 15); one Italian song also c. 1400 (tr. 19) ; and one English song from a much earlier period (13th C) but which fits the dance well (tr. 17). †

There is an accompanying booklet with choreographies for all the dances in this CD.

Thanks to the members of the Edinburgh Friday night dance group for their extensive testing and helpful suggestions regarding the choreographies, and to Helen Berrington for her organetto.

Recorded, mixed and mastered by Chris Elmes Jan 2019 & Jan 2020

Cover Artwork by Cait Webb

Layout by Chris Elmes

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The Queen of Measures

1	Le bault et le bas	1:49
2	Ingrata	3:26
3	La vita di Cholino	1:28
4	Bialte di Chastiglia	4:43
5	Principessa	1:57
6	Prexonera	3:57
7	Tesera	3:04
8	Mignotta vecchio	2:23
9	Saltarello	2:11
10	Soffrance	2:42
11	Roy de tribus	1:04
12	Vercepe	4:30
13	Lionzello vecchio	1:51
14	Temperans	1:09
15	Mowbray	2:06
16	Mercantia	5:14
17	New yer	1:53
18	La Franchoise nouvelle	1:31
19	Damsen	1:47

Total playing time 48:45

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Chris Elmes

medieval lute, gittern,
alto shawm, percussion

Cait Webb

harp, soprano shawm,
organetto, recorder

Theodora Hidalgo

medieval viol

Ruth Pollitt

alto shawm, recorder



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