

Playing for Bassadanza

MMitD 2021 with Chris Elmes

The purpose of this workshop is to introduce the elements that make up an arrangement/improvisation on a bassadanza tenor.

These are:

- Adding rhythm to the misura
- Adding melody to the tenor
- Adding counterpoint to the tenor

The handouts include:

- A brief outline of 15th C counterpoint, with some example cadences ornaments, and some rhythmic variations.
- Sheet music for an example of a simple arrangement for a basse danse, *Le hault et le bas*
- Sheet music for an elaborate period arrangement of La Spagna, *Falla con misuras*

Students will be encouraged to try some very simple improvising, or if preferred, very quick composition on paper.

Students are not expected to be able to play *Falla con misuras* (or *Le hault et le bas*), it is only provided as a good example of 2-part counterpoint for later study.

Falla con misuras

Gulielmus (1470?)

8

7

12

18

24

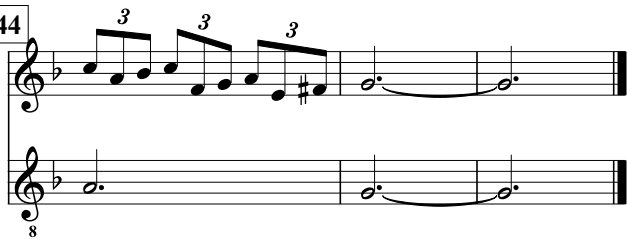
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35

40

8

44



Le hault et bas

Arr. Chris Elmes (tenor middle line)

Brussels ms

The musical score is written for three staves: Treble, Alto, and Bass. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into five systems, each starting with a measure number (1, 5, 9, 13, 16). The first system (measures 1-4) features a treble staff with a melodic line, an alto staff with whole notes, and a bass staff with a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the melodic and harmonic development. The third system (measures 9-12) shows a more active treble staff. The fourth system (measures 13-15) includes a first ending bracket over measures 14 and 15. The fifth system (measures 16-18) includes a second ending bracket over measures 17 and 18, which concludes with a double bar line. The alto and bass staves provide a steady harmonic and rhythmic foundation throughout the piece.

The Rules of Counterpoint

The following rules are for note against note harmonies. They apply for slow moving tenors or the structural notes (on strong beats, notes of longer duration) of faster moving passages.

2-Part Counterpoint in the 15th Century

1. Intervals on the first, final notes and cadences should be perfect (unison, fifth, octave).
2. Internal consonances – unison, third, fifths, sixths
3. Parallel fifths and octaves should not be used.
4. Consecutive perfects of different size are allowable, e.g. octave followed by fifth.
5. Parallel thirds are allowable. Parallel sixths allowable leading to a cadence.
6. Contrary motion (moving in the opposite direction – up or down – to the tenor) to the following interval is preferred.
7. Intervals greater than the octave count the same as an octave lower , e.g. tenth counts as a third (but a fourth below is not the same as a fifth above).
8. Around 1450 fifths and thirds are most common. From 1500 thirds and sixths are most common.
9. Seconds, fourths and sevenths count as dissonances.

Cadence Ornaments for Superius



Simple Rhythmic Divisions

