

# Concealed within? Liturgical Organ Music in the Selosse Manuscript

Terence Charlston

Hidden within several seventeenth-century books of domestic keyboard music lie a number of pieces of a sacred nature that might well have had a liturgical function as organ music for the divine service.<sup>1</sup>

Sitting innocuously alongside secular dance suites for harpsichord or virginals it is easy to miss the larger importance of these items and assume that the performance of such religious music was limited to the home and private devotion. However, it is also possible that these pieces were deliberately concealed within such manuscripts for political and sectarian reasons. The recently discovered Selosse manuscript would appear to lend support to these views.

If the discovery of an important manuscript is the dream of every scholar, then few are granted the good fortune of Dr Peter Leech who discovered the Selosse manuscript quite by chance in 2004 in a second-hand book and print shop in Camden. Even more extraordinarily, he took his discovery to his PhD viva a few days later, the manuscript being directly related to his primary field of research, the music of the Stuart Catholic courts from 1660 to 1718. He was duly granted his doctorate and produced an edition published by HH Editions. Thanks to the generous support of Peter Leech, St Omers Press, St. Francis Xavier's Church in Liverpool, Cappella Fede and the Research Institute for the Arts and Humanities at Swansea University, it has been the author's privilege to make the world premiere



**Illustration 1:** Spine binding of Selosse Manuscript. Brown calf, finely-tooled and gilded. Typical of library bindings c.1680–1720, possibly French. The binding is very likely original.

recording on harpsichord, organ and clavichord.<sup>2</sup>

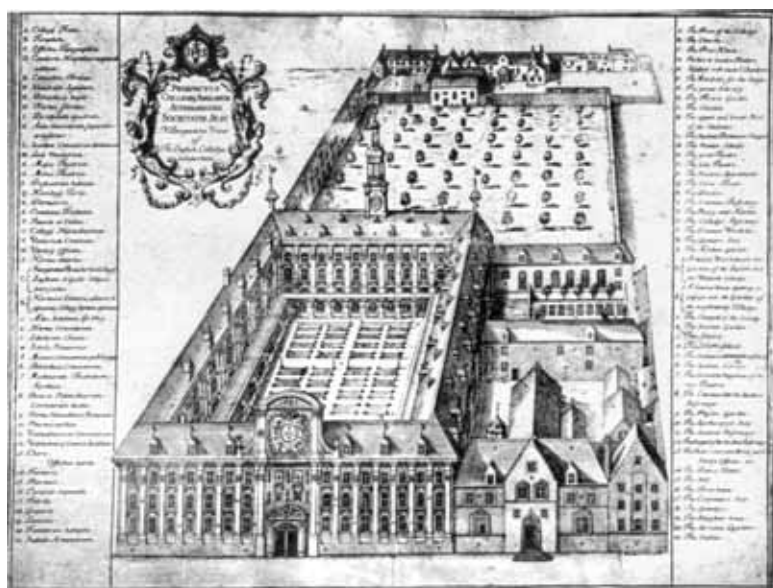
Without doubt, the Selosse manuscript is one of the most important late seventeenth-century keyboard sources to come to light in recent years. It contains an attractive and varied selection of 33 pieces designed for domestic and liturgical use, and significantly adds to our understanding of the interaction between English and continental musicians.

This small oblong book probably belonged to a Jesuit priest, who may have composed some of its largely un-ascribed contents. According to the inscription on the third front flyleaf recto, 'Cuiou Tocata per il Cembalo del

Padre Antonio Mason, alias Seloss', the keyboard pieces were compiled by one Fr Antonio Mason also known as 'Seloss'. A second inscription on the first front flyleaf recto: 'Mary Cicely Tichborne her book/given her by Mr. Toussaint la pouille' shows that the book subsequently found its way into the possession of an English woman, possibly a Catholic nun.

Dr Peter Leech, who has researched the history and context of the manuscript, considers that this 'Seloss' is probably the Jesuit musician Antoine Selosse (1621-87), who was active as the professor of music at the English Jesuit College at Saint-Omer in the Pas-de- ▶

**Illustration 2:** Engraving of the English Jesuit college at Saint-Omer (St Omers College), circa 1689, by Guillaume Lorrain-Montbard (before 1664-1731), of Paris, reproduced by courtesy of the Special Collections, Stonyhurst College, Lancashire. The church can be seen at the front and to the right of the main quadrangle.



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Calais, France from 1659 to 1687. Alongside his colleague Anthony Poole (1627- 92), the bass viol player and professor of instrumental music from 1659 to about 1678, 'Antonius Selossius' was responsible for the direction of the chapel choir and playing the organ. From its foundation in 1593, music played an important part in the college's life. A music library and collection of instruments was built up (both now lost due to the fires in 1684 and 1725) and the college quickly established a reputation for fine masques and other theatrical performances.<sup>3</sup> Selosse had a nephew, also Antoine, (b. 1653), who is not known to have been a musician but who came to England and who was chaplain to the Goring family and imprisoned after the reign of James II. A further Selosse, possibly the elder Antoine, is known to have worked at St Lambert's Cathedral, Liège, from about 1651 until 1657.

The manuscript probably dates from the 1680s. It contains 189 pages pre-ruled with four six-line staves, 145 with music written on them. Apart from the inscriptions at the front of the book, the contents are largely devoid of attributions or titles. Most curiously one of the pieces has had its title deliberately obscured, perhaps to conceal a reference to the Roman Catholic mass and thus hide the manuscript's religious origins or purpose from English protestant eyes.

The repertoire chosen for inclusion covers a broad spectrum of the genres popular in seventeenth-century Europe and reveals a wide range of national influences and styles. Although the volume consists of mainly dance pieces, it opens with three sets of variations and a fugal work and has another block of non-dance music about two thirds of the way through. The dances (often with a single variation or double) are grouped by key, and ten pieces (not counting their variations) are also present in a manuscript belonging to Christopher Hogwood (GB-CAMhogwood, M1471), an English source closely related to Selosse. Few pieces have a specific title and no composers are named. The authorship of only one piece, the third in the book, can be stated with confidence: John Bull's popular *The King's Hunt*. See table opposite.

While the entire contents of the Selosse manuscript may be considered generic 'keyboard' music, a number of significant clues guide the performer towards appropriate choices of instrumentation. One piece includes organ registration instructions clearly indicating that one or more sections of the manuscript may be a collection of organ music. The impression is re-enforced by the considerable number of concordances with the Hogwood manuscript which itself concludes with devotional music probably for the organ. The Hogwood manuscript describes two allemandes also copied into Selosse as 'fitt for the manicorde', suggesting a further important colour, the clavichord. The clavichord was undoubtedly in use in England and on the continent at the time

**Table 1 - List of contents of the Selosse Manuscript**

No.	Title / Key / Location (pp.)	Composer
1	[Variations on La Folia] [d] 1-24	
2	[Ciaccona] [C] 25-35	
3	[The King's Hunt] [G] 36-44	John Bull
4	[Toccatà] [g] 45-51	
	[Suite in C major]	
5a	'Courante' 52-53	
5b	'variation' [C] 54-55	
6a	'Sarabande' 56-57	
6b	'variation' [C] 58-61	
	[Suite in F major]	
7	[Allemande] [F] 62-63	
8	[Sarabande] [F] 64-65	
9	[Variation 1] [F] 66-67	
10	[Variation 2] [F] 68-69	
11	[Variation 3] [F] 70-73	
12	[Chaconne] [C] 74-79	
	[Suite in G major and minor]	
13	'allemande' [G] 80-81	John Roberts?
14a	[Courante] [G] 82-83	John Roberts?
14b	'variation' [G] 84-85	John Roberts?
15a	[Courante] [g] 86-87	John Roberts?
15b	[Variation] [g] 88-89	John Roberts?
	[Suite in D major]	
16	[Prelude] [D] 90	
17	[Allemande] / [D] 91-92	John Roberts?
18	[Hornpipe or Rant] [D] 93-94	
19	[Menuet] [D] 94-95	
20	[Toccatà] / [C] 96-97 'Vox Humana' (b.18)	
21	'The hunting Lesson' [G] 98-109	
22	'Fuga' [Ite missa est] [D] 110-115	
23	[Recit de Cornet] [C] 116-118	
24	[Bergamasca] [G] 118-120	
25	[Chaconne] [F] 121-123	
	[Suite in D major]	
26	[Allemande] [D] 124-125	
27	[Courante] [D] 126-130	
28	'Sarabande' [D] 130-132	
29	[Allemande] [F] 133-134	
30a	[Allemande] [g] 135	
30b	[Variation] [g] 136-137	
31	[Allemande] [c] 138-140	'fitt for the manicorde'
32	[Allemande] [c] 140-142	'fitt for the manicorde'
33a	[Allemande] [F] 143	
33b	[Variation] [F] 144-145	

“The repertoire chosen for inclusion covers a broad spectrum of the genres popular in seventeenth-century Europe and reveals a wide range of national influences and styles.

the book was being compiled, and its place in the performance traditions of the time may be much more significant than the paucity of surviving instruments suggests.<sup>4</sup>

If the majority of the pieces were probably intended for performance on a plucked keyboard instrument, be it harpsichord or virginals, the central portion of the *Selosse* manuscript seems to differ from the suites and variation sets, at least musically, and may have been intended for the organ. This is supported not only by the single registration instruction but also internal musical evidence.

The first piece in this central section of the book (no. 20) calls for the *vox humana* registration. This might be a reed stop or an undulating effect produced by two unison stops being drawn together, one of which is slightly detuned to the other. The solo reed stop seems to



Illustration 3 (above)

- a) Page 96 of *Selosse Manuscript* showing bars 9-17 of piece no. 20 with 'vox humana' instruction. Reproduced by kind permission of Dr Peter Leech.
- b) Chaumont, *Voix humaine*, bars 10-16, *Troisième Ton, Pièces d'orgue*, 1695.

Illustration 4 (above)

- a) *The Hunting Lesson*, bars 21-24, *Selosse manuscript*, p.100.
- b) Buxtehude, *Toccata in F major*, BuxWV 157, bar 12.
- c) Stradella, *Toccata in A minor*, bars 1-3.

be required here as it is not called for at the beginning of the piece, which is presumably played on an accompanying *petit jeu* texture. When the solo part begins at bar 14 the accompaniment continues from this point only in the left hand and it may well have been the intention to end with all four voices on the solo manual (see Illustration 3). Models are numerous in the classical French organ repertoire, for example the *Pièces d'orgue* by Lebègue or Chaumont and François Couperin's *Messe pour les Convents*.

The next piece in this group 'The Hunting Lesson' (no. 21) is a *fête champêtre* probably inspired by Bull's *Kings Hunt* and the larger scale harpsichord music of John Blow. Its downward arpeggios and semi-quaver figures are common to Italian toccatas from Stradella and A. Scarlatti onwards and also occur in German organ music (see Illustration 4).



Illustration 5

- a) *Ite missa est*, Mass II, *Liber Usualis*, Tournai, 1934, p. 22
- b) *Fuga [Ite missa est]*, *Selosse manuscript no. 22*.
- c) Anon., *Praise ye our Lord God on strings and Organs. Psalme 150, v.4. Hogwood manuscript, no 57*.

The third piece (no. 22), entitled *Fuga* is an extended, multi-sectional work. All but the first word of the title have been blocked out with ink (see Illustration 6). Since the work appears to be based on the Gregorian chant *Ite Missa est*; Peter Leech has postulated that the original title was *Fuga Ite Missa est*. The similarities between the main melodies and the chant are demonstrated in Illustration 5. Related tetrachord patterns are also present in an anonymous psalm setting in the Hogwood manuscript.

In French organ masses of the period the brief, last movement was often titled, *Deo gratias*, to indicate it should be performed as a response to the celebrant's invitation, 'Ite missa est'. The Selosse piece is a more extended setting and closer in scope and impact to an *Offertoire* or *Dialogue*. Another contemporary source with English Catholic credentials, Elizabeth Roper's 1691 virginal book (US-Cn Case MS VM 2.3 E 58r) contains just such an *Offertoire* with manual changes marked for a *dialogue pour les grands jeux*. Such an antiphonal scheme works well with the Selosse *Fuga*.

The musician named 'Selosse' who worked at Liège cathedral, could be an important link to explain some of the stylistic anomalies in the Selosse manuscript. St Lambert's Cathedral, Liège was famous for its sacred music in the seven-

teenth century and its choir school was an important training ground for musicians and composers. The celebrated Liègeoise, Henri Du Mont, for example, went on to pursue a distinguished career as composer to Louis XIV in Paris. Apart from Gérard Scronx at the beginning of

the century, and Thomas Babou (1656-c1740) at the end, the leading light of organ music in Liège at this time was Lambert Chaumont (c1630-1712). Chaumont's *Pièces d'orgue sur les huit tons*, published in 1695 is typical of many French organ books of the later seventeenth century, but is most unusual in that it also contains dance music: a juxtaposition of liturgical and domestic is no indication to suggest that Chaumont's allemandes, giges and chaconnes should not be performed on the organ although their compositional style is clearly different to the rest of the book. Alongside two short essays on accompaniment and plainchant at the back of his organ book, Chaumont included instructions for tuning a harpsichord and the dances may share a similar didactic purpose.

Chaumont was a member of the Carmelite Monastery in Liège from 1649 and also trained later in Reims where he may have learned the French organ style with its distinctive registration practices and introduced these to Flanders on his



Illustration 6

Opening of the *Fuga Ite missa est* from the Selosse manuscript, p. 110. Reproduced by kind permission of Dr Peter Leech.

return. Curiously, such French elements, so distinctive to Chaumont's style, run counter to the prevalent fashion for Italian music amongst other Liège based musicians.<sup>5</sup> The most talented musicians of St Lambert's Cathedral in Liège were sent to study in Italy during the seventeenth century and Seloisse may well have done the same, although there is no evidence for this. Amongst the important guests who attended musical events at St Omer's college were the patrons of Frescobaldi and Peter Philips, and college members sent to Rome must surely have heard the musicians of the German Jesuit College at S Apollinare directed by the eminent composer Giacomo Carissimi.<sup>6</sup> Carissimi attracted some distinguished pupils, including Johann Caspar Kerll, Christoph Bernhard, and possibly Agostino Steffani. It

This practice is certainly older than Chaumont and can be traced back to at least the time of Sweelinck's echo fantasias. Nos. 24 and 25 are Italian inspired and based on ground-bass dances, the *bergamasca* and the *chaconne*.

Strong Italian influences can be found at the beginning of Seloisse's book. The monumental set of 24 variations on the *La Folia* ground which open the collection deploys a rich panoply of textures and technical devices. The second piece is also an extended variation set, this time on the *ciaccona* bass. The similarity with Bernardo Storace's much longer set (*Selva di varie compositioni d'intavolatura per cimballo ed organo*, Venice, 1664) is startling. Such variations were popular not only for keyboard instruments, especially for the organ (e.g. Buxtehude and Pachelbel) but also for lutes and

iation groups each with largely new material, interspersed by 'refrains' in which previously heard material returns (see Table 2.)

Although the frequent broken chord patterns (bars 69 onwards and 101), off-beat right hand quavers (bars 55-68) and notated over-holding (bars 49-50) have been traditionally thought of as indicators of performance on a plucked keyboard, they can work well on the organ too.

The fourth piece at the start of the manuscript is a multi-sectional 'toccata' that opens in fugal style with typical canzona theme followed by a *tripla* section (from bar 42) with three mensuration changes (see Illustration 8).

The work ends with a final slow duplet-time passage based on the rising tetra-chord. Similar passages can be found in the organ music of the English Restoration, notably Purcell's D minor Voluntary for the Double Organ and are also present in Christopher Gibbons, Draghi and Blow (see Illustration 9). Purcell acknowledged his debt to the 'fam'd Italian masters' although his contrapuntal skills far exceed those of his models.

As can be seen from even this brief tour of the manuscript, the Seloisse collection displays its rich mixture of diverse musical styles with great subtlety. The paucity of ascriptions and titles is, of course, a serious impediment to a fuller understanding of its contents, and to be regretted. On the other hand, the fact that contemporary political shifts meant that the full religious significance of certain pieces had to be concealed, and one title obliterated, can only tantalise and increase our curiosity to find out more about this remarkable and newly available repertoire. ■



Illustration 7  
Chaumont, *Allemande en mi*, bars 1-4, *Premier Ton, Pièces d'orgue*, 1695.

is not surprising then to find a 'common currency' of motives derived from Italian practice permeating Europe through pupils and publications, some of which can be discerned in the Seloisse pieces.

The three pieces that follow the *Fuga* [*Ite Missa est*] are typical of the stylistic *mélange* found throughout the Seloisse manuscript. No. 23 has similarities to an English Cornet voluntary with sprightly melody for the right hand. Like the many *récit de cornet* in Chaumont's *Pièces d'orgue sur les huit tons* the melody can be divided in the manner of an echo.

guitars (e.g. Francesco Corbetta). Unlike Storace, the Seloisse set remains in one key throughout. The continuous repetition of two-bar phrases is carefully planned to give a basic structure of five var-

Table 2.  
Basic structure of the *Ciaccona* (Seloisse manuscript, no. 2).

Intro	R	V	R	V	R	V	R	V	R	V	R
1-8		13- 21		25- 34		39-79 with R (between 42-44)		85- 94		101- 129	
R = refrain, V = variations, 1-8 = bar numbers											



Illustration 8  
[Toccata], bars 1-2 and 42-45, Sellose manuscript, pp. 45 and 48.

Illustration 9  
a) [Toccata], bars 86-90, Sellose manuscript, p. 50.  
b) Purcell, Voluntary for the Double Organ in D minor, bars 21-23.



Terence Charlston will be playing a selection of pieces from

the Sellose manuscript on Saturday 9 October in St Saviour's Church, St Albans at 5.30pm as part of the Saturday Organ Concert Series of the International Organ Festival Society of St Albans.

Details from <http://www.organfestival.com/recitals/index.shtml>.

He will also be performing and speaking about the manuscript at the RCO London Organ Forum in Oxford study day on Saturday 27th November in the Chapel of St John's College, Oxford. Details from <http://www.rco.org.uk/events.php?eventid=193>.

## Footnotes

1. Apart from the Sellose manuscript further instances can be found in a manuscript in the possession of Christopher Hogwood (GB-CAMhogwood, M1471) and Elizabeth Roper's 1691 virginal book (US-Cn Case MS VM 2.3 E 58r).
2. This double CD has been issued by Deux-Elles Classical Recordings Ltd. under the title 'La Chasse Royale' (DXL 1143). Further details from, <http://www.deux-elles.co.uk>.
3. See P. Leech, 'Seventeenth-century music at St. Omers.' *Stonyhurst Magazine*, Vol. 56 No. 505 (2009), pp.56-64 and William H. McCabe, An Introduction to The Jesuit Theatre, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, St.Louis, 1983, pp. 114-115, 128-129.
4. See preface to Albertus Bryne: *Keyboard Works for Harpsichord and Organ*, ed. Terence Charlston and Heather Windram, (Oslo: Norsk Musikforlag, 2008).
5. Chaumont may also have been exploiting national sensitivities against the military campaigns of Louis XIV by offering useful liturgical music to his fellow Flemish organists who were presumably ill disposed towards French music itself. See P. F. W., Review: [untitled]. *Music & Letters*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Jul., 1971), pp. 334-335.
6. See P. Leech, op. cit.

## Sources:

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- José Quitin. 'Babou, Thomas' and 'Chaumont, Lambert', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 20 June 2010) [www.grovemusic.com](http://www.grovemusic.com)
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## Music Editions

- Albertus Bryne: *Keyboard Works for Harpsichord and Organ*, ed. Terence Charlston and Heather Windram, (Oslo: Norsk Musikforlag, 2008)
- Babou: *Treize Pièces (1709-1710)*, ed. P. Froidebise, *Orgue et liturgie*, Vol. 43. ed. N. Dufourcq and others (Paris: Schola Cantorum, 1950-)
- Dietrich Buxtehude: *Complete Free Organ Works*, Vol. 2, ed. Christoph Albrecht, (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1994)
- Chaumont : *Pièces d'orgue sur les huit tons*, ed. J. Ferrard (Paris: Le Pupitre 25, 1990)
- Faber Early Organ Series, Vol. 3, *England, c.1660-1710*, ed. Geoffrey Cox (London: Faber, 1986)
- Liber usualis missae et officii pro dominicis et festis duplicibus cum cantu gregoriano*, (Tourmai, 1934)
- The Sellose Manuscript. Seventeenth-Century Jesuit Keyboard Music*, ed. P. Leech (Bicester: HH Editions, 2008)
- Alessandro Stradella: *Instrumental Music*, ed. by Eleanor F. McCrickard, *Concentus Musicus, Band V* (Köln: Volk 1980)

## Recording

'Antoine Sellose: La Chasse Royale', Terence Charlston, Harpsichord, Organ and Clavichord. Deux-Elles Classical Recordings Ltd. 2009, 2CD DXL 1143. Further details from, <http://www.deux-elles.co.uk>