

# Basic Detail Report

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## Salterio

### Date

1760

### Primary Maker

Salvator Bofill

## Description

Salvador Bofill was a notable luthier in Barcelona, where he was born in 1705 and died in 1771. He made various stringed instruments including violins and cellos, mandolins, salterios, and at least one harpsichord. Trapezoidal psaltery of the Italian/Spanish type, resembling the northern-European hammered dulcimer but intended to be played by plucking with the fingers (sometimes with plectra attached by rings to the fingers). Twenty-four quadruple courses, twelve crossing the left bridge, which divides each string into two sounding segments, and twelve crossing the right bridge. The right bridge is divided into two sections, one carrying the seven lowest courses, the other section carrying the five upper courses. The left bridge is divided into five sections, each carrying, from bass to treble, two, four, three, two, and one course(s). This order of the various sections, as found when the instrument arrived at the NMM, is probably original, since the divisions fall in the usual places with the exception of the three-course section of the left bridge, which is found in place of the usual further division into two and one courses. Because of this atypical feature, there seems to be no ideal solution for determining the tuning, but the lowest note would certainly have been the conventional g, and the highest note, conventionally three octaves higher or nearly so, might have been g<sub>3</sub>, as discussed below. The walls are of walnut, the front and back about 11 mm thick, the right and left much thicker to serve as the hitch-pin and wrest planks. The bottom edges of the walls are rebated to receive the bottom board, which is of spruce (*Picea*\*: wood identifications marked with an asterisk were done by microscopic examination) 5½ mm thick. As there are no liners, the walls are probably similarly rebated to receive the soundboard. The soundboard, of quarter-sawn fir (*Abies*\*), with two gilded geometric roses made of layers of parchment, is supported by two internal ribs approximately under the two rows of bridges, as indicated: The ends of the ribs, not tapered, are housed in the walls. The exterior walls and the upper surfaces of the hitch-pin and wrest planks are painted a light blue, which was applied over the hitch pins. At the edges of the blue surfaces there are gilt or gold-colored lines. That the blue paint and gold lines match those on the outer case, which was likely made in Cascante twelve years after the instrument, suggests that this decoration is not original. A lower layer of darker blue to be seen in several places where the light blue is damaged is perhaps original. The bridges and the moldings surrounding the soundboard are also gilded or gold-colored. The instrument rests on four small turned feet. Salterio in Castilian Spanish; saltiri in Catalan) in the Italian/Spanish form essentially identical to trapezoidal hammered dulcimers. Salvador Bofill was a notable luthier in Barcelona, where he was born in 1705 and died in 1771. He made various stringed instruments including violins and cellos, mandolins, salterios, and at least one harpsichord. Several surviving instruments are described in

the publications listed below. Diego Díaz y Valle is not listed in any of the standard art-historical references. According to a Cascante website (<http://www.cascante.com/arte/>, accessed 2 December 2009) Diego Díaz de[sic] Valle did decorative paintings in the dome of Capilla del Cristo some time after it was constructed in 1779 in the Iglesia de la Asunción. In 1794, according to another website (<http://www.unav.es/arte/cmn/tudela/lam3.html>, accessed 2 December 2009), Diego Díaz del[sic] Valle, “the painter from Cascante,” drew plans for the façade of the Capilla de Santa Catalina in the Parish Church of San Miguel in Corella. Typical tuning schemes for Spanish salterios, which require careful positioning of the several sections of the left bridge to obtain the proper intervals between the left and right string segments, are described in Beryl Kenyon de Pascual’s 1997 article. In many schemes, for example that described in Pablo Minguet’s “Reglas y advertencias generales que enseñan el modo de tañer todos los instrumentos mejores” (Madrid, 1754) the left bridge section for the lowest two courses is placed far to the left so that the strings, to be sounded only to the right of the bridge, are tuned to the two lowest bass accidentals. As Kenyon de Pascual suggests, this placement of the left bridge for two lowest courses might be typical of Catalan usage. Further evidence of this Catalan custom is provided by an organ with keys arranged like the strings of a salterio, made by Josep Pujol in Manresa (Catalonia) in the 1760s (in the Museu de la Música, Barcelona: see catalogue, listed below, pp. 410-411), arranged similarly to Diagram 2 (but with low g# and a# instead of g#1 and a#1 as the left-hand “string” sections). Also, there is no evidence that the lowest section of the left bridge of NMM 14421 was ever placed far to the left. The three-course section for courses 7 to 9 is more problematical. It seems to be most reasonable that course 9, which in the usual schemes has its own bridge section, should be tuned to the same interval as courses 7 and 8, rather than the reverse adjustment. Thus the left segment of course 9 becomes c#3 rather than c3, and it would then be logical to make the right segment of course 12 c3 rather than c#3. The paper label on the soundboard for the right segment of course 12, with the letter C (albeit damaged, with a missing piece that might conceivably have carried the #), is in such a position that the bridge cannot be placed any farther to the right for dividing this course into segments any smaller than a fifth. Thus, the left segment would probably have been g3. Curiously, a label in this vicinity but under course 12 of the open strings crossing the right bridge, apparently reads F#. Since this is entirely out of place, one might speculate that it became loose and was reattached incorrectly. The two sections of the right bridge have long been slightly askew (as already in 1950 in the photo in the Lachmann collection catalogue), with the line of the bass section somewhat to the left of the line of the treble section. This makes a certain amount of sense, in that f#1 is reasonably made a little shorter relative to c#1 and the bridge section for the bass strings is over a more active area of the soundboard.

### **Dimensions**

Length of front (bass) side: 709 mm Length of back (treble) side: 365 mm Width: 319 mm Height of walls, excluding the molding over the soundboard: 67 mm (front), 65½ mm (back)