INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this document, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark, it is an indication of either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, duplicate copy, or copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed. For blurred pages, a good image of the page can be found in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted, a target note will appear listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed, a definite method of “sectioning” the material has been followed. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For illustrations that cannot be satisfactorily reproduced by xerographic means, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and inserted into your xerographic copy. These prints are available upon request from the Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.
PLEASE NOTE:

In all cases this material has been filmed in the best possible way from the available copy. Problems encountered with this document have been identified here with a check mark √.

1. Glossy photographs or pages ______
2. Colored illustrations, paper or print ______
3. Photographs with dark background ______
4. Illustrations are poor copy ______
5. Pages with black marks, not original copy ______
6. Print shows through as there is text on both sides of page ______
7. Indistinct, broken or small print on several pages √
8. Print exceeds margin requirements ______
9. Tightly bound copy with print lost in spine ______
10. Computer printout pages with indistinct print ______
11. Page(s) ________ lacking when material received, and not available from school or author.
12. Page(s) ________ seem to be missing in numbering only as text follows.
13. Two pages numbered ________. Text follows.
14. Curling and wrinkled pages ______
15. Other__________________________________________________________________________
RICE UNIVERSITY

ENGLISH RENAISSANCE LUTE PRACTICE AS REFLECTED IN
ROBERT DOWLAND'S VARIETIE OF LUTE-LESSONS

by

RICHARD JAMES NOLDE

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF MUSIC

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:

Jeffrey Kurtzman, Prof. of Music
Chairman
Anne Schnoebelen, Prof. of Music
Paul Cooper, Prof. of Music

HOUSTON, TEXAS
MAY, 1984
Copyright
Richard James Nolde
1984
English Renaissance Lute Practice as Reflected in Robert Dowland's *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*

by

Richard James Nolde

ABSTRACT

The *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* is one of the most significant publications for the Renaissance lute to appear in England or Europe. This thesis documents early-seventeenth-century English lute practice through a detailed exposition of the two introductory treatises in the volume and an analysis of selected aspects of the forty-two musical selections that constitute the remainder of the work. The international style of lute playing that developed during the second half of the sixteenth century and the *style brisé*, which originated in France during the first years of the seventeenth century, are both reflected in the collection. On the basis of the materials in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* and extensive references to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources of music for the lute and related instruments, the following topics are discussed: Renaissance lute technique; the relationship between lute technique and compositional styles; procedures for fretting, stringing, and tuning the lute; pedagogical approaches to lute technique; and contemporary performance practices. Background information on the publication of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* and the roles of John and Robert Dowland in its production has also been included.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .............................................

LIST OF FIGURES ...........................................

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................... 1

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE VARIETIE OF LUTE-LESSONS ........................................... 9

An Overview of English Lute Music ..................... 11

The Publication of Lute Music in England ............. 15

References to a Publication Containing John Dowland's Lute Music and/or His Treatise on Lute-Playing ...................... 23

Robert Dowland's Role in the Production of the VARIETIE OF LUTE-LESSONS ...................... 31

III. SELECTED DIDACTIC WORKS FOR THE RENAISSANCE LUTE 55

Continental Lute Books ................................ 55

English Lute Books .................................. 59

IV. THE NOTATION OF RENAISSANCE LUTE MUSIC ...... 79

Pitch Representation ................................ 80

Rhythmic Elements ................................ 86

Other Symbols in Lute Tablature ...................... 96

V. "NECESSARIE OBSERVATIONS BELONGING TO THE LVTE, AND LVTE PLAYING," BY JOHN BAPTISTE BESARDO OF VISONTI ........................................... 98

Pedagogical Aspects of Besard's Treatise .......... 99

Individual Elements of Lute Technique ............. 116

Holding the Lute .................................... 116

Left-hand Position ................................ 118
Left-hand Fingerings ........................ 119
Single-stops .................................. 122
Shifts of Position ............................ 125
**Barre** Technique ............................ 129
Multiple Stops ................................ 131
Sustained Tones ............................... 144
Right-hand Position ........................... 145
Right-hand Fingering of Single Stops ..... 152
Right-hand Fingering of Multiple Stops .. 162
Right-hand Fingering of Passages in Triple
Meter ........................................... 170

Textual Variations in Different Editions of
Besard's Treatise .............................. 175

Selected Seventeenth-Century Descriptions of
Right-hand Usage .............................. 185

Selected Elements of Vihuela Technique .... 191

Reasons for the Development of the Thumb-over
Approach to Right-hand Technique ........... 194

Guidelines for Modern Players: Adopting an
Approach to Right-hand Technique ........... 200

VI. "OTHER NECESSARY OBSERVATIONS BELONGING TO THE
LVTE," BY Iohn DoVLAND, BACTCHELER OF MUSICKE . 205

"For Chusing of Lute-strings" ................ 205

Determining the Quality of Lute Strings .. 205

Sources of Lute Strings ........................ 217

"Of Setting the Right Sizes of Stringes upon
the Lute" ..................................... 221

Stringing the Lute ............................ 221

Octave versus Unison Stringing of the Bass
Courses of the Lute .......................... 226
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single versus Double Stringing of the Treble Course of the Lute</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Bass Courses on the Lute</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Of Fretting the Lute&quot;</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of the Fingerboard</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locating the Frets on the Fingerboard of the Lute</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Systems for Fretting the Lute</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Adjustments of the Fret Positions</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fastening the Frets to the Neck of the Lute</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Of Tuning the Lute&quot;</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lute Pitch</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures for Tuning the Lute</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. PERFORMANCE PRACTICES</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ornamentation</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graces of Play</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisions</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretative Performance Practices</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrasting Dynamics</td>
<td>422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrasting Timbres</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulations</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Printing History of Selected English Music Books, 1596-1612</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Musical Selections in the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Selected Sixteenth-Century Didactic Works for the Lute</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Contents of the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Common Configurations of Bass Courses on the Renaissance Lute</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Configurations of Bass Courses for Individual Compositions in the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em></td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Summary of Configurations of Bass Courses Utilized in the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em></td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fret Positions According to Dowland and Gerle</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Interval Ratios Produced by Selected Tuning Systems and Temperaments</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Usable Pitch Ranges of Modern Gut Strings</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Thomas Robinson's Falls and Relishes from <em>The Schoole of Musick</em></td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Rhythmic Complexity of Divisions in Compositions in the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em></td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Distribution of Divisions within Compositions in the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em></td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure                                                                 Page
1. Title-page of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* ... 21
2. Dedication of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* ... 32
3. Introductory address and poem of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* .... 34
4. Headnote to the treatise on fingering by Jean-Baptiste Besard .... 36
6. "Almande" by Ro. Dowlande from the Margaret Board Lute Book, fol. 12v ... 48
7. Title-page of *A New Booke of Tabliture* ... 64
8. First page of John Dowland's setting of "Fortune" as it appears in the British Library copy of *A New Booke of Tabliture*, shelfmark: K. 1, c. 18 ... 67
9. Title-page of *The Schoole of Musick* ... 70
10. Italian lute tablature. "Recercare" by Francesco Spinacino from *Intabolatura di Lauto. Libro Primo. (Venice, 1507)* ... 81
11. French lute tablature. "Parduana I" by Pierre Phales from *Liber IIII, Carminum pro Testudine... (Louvain, 1546)* ... 82
12. German lute tablature. "Der Ziegler in Berhecken" by Hans Newsidler from *Ein newes Lauttenbuchlein (Nuremberg, 1540)* ... 83
13. "The Earle of Darby's Galliard" by John Dowland, from the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, sig. M2v ... 94
14. Selected Fingering Diagrams for the Left Hand from Hans Judenkunig's *Ain Schone K rustliche Underweisung* ... 120
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15. A Galliard by Thomas Robinson from <em>The Schoole of Musicke</em>, sig. D2v</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Illustrations of Fingering Rules by Jean-Baptiste Besard, &quot;De Modo in Testvdine Stvdendi Libellvs,&quot; in the <em>Thesaurus Harmonicus</em> (Cologne, 1603), sigs. Xxr-Xx4r</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Knot used for Attaching Lute Strings to the Bridge, Above, Top View; Below, Side View</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. John Dowland's Table of Pitches of the Hexachord System and their Relation to Positions on the Fingerboard of the Lute, from the Margaret Board Lute Book, facing fol. 1r</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Intervals between the Open Courses of the Lute, from John Dowland's &quot;Other Necessary Observations Belonging to the Lyte,&quot; in <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em>, sig. E2r</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. &quot;Un doux Nennin,&quot; by Orlando de Lassus, embellished and intabulated for lute by Adrian Le Roy, in <em>A breui e and plaine Instruction to set all Musick of eitht divers tunes in Tableture for the Lute</em>, fols. 35v-37</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Coranto # 3, by an anonymous composer, from the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em>, sig. C2r</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Volt # 3, by an anonymous composer, from the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em>, sig. Sr</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Pavan # 1, by Maurice, Landgrave of Hesse, from the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em>, sigs. H2v-IR</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Pavan # 6, by Alfonso Ferrebosco of Bologna, from the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em>, sigs. KZv-IR</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Volt # 4, by [? Gaultier], from the <em>Varietie of Lute-Lessons</em>, sig. Sv</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. &quot;My Lady Hunsdons Allmande,&quot; by John Dowland, from the Dowland Lute Book, Folger Library: MS V.b. 280 (formerly MS 1610.1), fol. 22v</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Two tables by Andreas Ornithoparchus showing the relative values of each kind of note according to a variety of mensurations and proportions, from <em>Andreas Ornithoparchus His Micrologus, or Introduction: Containing the Art of Singing</em> by John Dowland, sigs. Gv and Pv</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. INTRODUCTION

Robert Dowland's *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* is the last and most important collection of music for the Renaissance lute to be published in England. The work, which is comparable to the finest European publications for the lute, appeared in 1610 when the classical period of English lute music was drawing to a close. The *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* contains two didactic, introductory treatises by Jean-Baptiste Besard and John Dowland respectively. Besard's treatise deals primarily with lute technique, while Dowland's concerns stringing, fretting, and tuning the lute. The treatises are followed by forty-two musical selections in lute tablature that are arranged by genre in the following six groups: Fantasies, Pauins, Galliards, Almaines, Corantoes, and Voltes. These selections demonstrate the international character of the lute repertoire at the end of the sixteenth century and the distinctive features of the Italian, French, and English styles of composition.

In spite of the significance of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, no critical edition or comprehensive study of the work as a whole exists. Besard's treatise has been examined in several related studies by Julia Sutton, Joseph Garton,
and Marc Southard,\(^1\) and it is available in a modern facsimile edition devoted to Besard's instructions for playing the lute.\(^2\) The only study specifically concerned with Dowland's treatise is a late-nineteenth-century commentary by Willibald Nagel that accompanies his German translation of Dowland's material.\(^3\) The first modern edition of the entire group of musical selections in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons is Edgar Hunt's set of keyboard transcriptions which appeared in 1957.\(^4\) Although the two introductory treatises are not included in his edition, Hunt has provided brief biographical notes on some of the composers and dedicatees represented in the work. Unfortunately, even though Hunt corrected many of the printing errors that appeared in the original edition, he introduced new errors. This edition contains no documentation of the original errata or of Hunt's editorial emendations. Several

\(^1\)Julia Sutton, "Jean-Baptiste Besard's Novus Partus of 1617" (Doctoral dissertation, Eastman School of Music, 1962), and other derivative works; Joseph Garton, "Jean-Baptiste Besard's Thesaurus Harmonicus" (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1952); and Marc Southard, "Sixteenth-Century Lute Technique" (Master's thesis, University of Iowa, 1976).

\(^2\)Jean-Baptiste Besard, Jean Baptiste Besardus: Instructionen für Laute 1610 und 1617, mit einem Nachwort Versen von Peter Paffgen (Neuss/Rhein: Institutio pro Arte Testudinis, 1974).


other faults make this edition difficult to use. Hunt does not indicate the relationship of the transcribed note values to the note values implied by the original tablature. This is problematic because Hunt is not consistent in his choice of note values. The physical layout of the music in this edition frequently requires page turns within a piece, and the spacing of the staves makes some pieces difficult to follow. Voice-leading, which is capricious at best in lute music, is often unclear and inconsistent in the transcriptions. For example, a given sequence of notes in the tablature may be transcribed as two contrapuntal lines in its first appearance, only to be recast as a single, wide-ranging line when the same material reappears later in the composition. Finally, the keyboard transcriptions do not accurately convey the sound of the music as it would be realized on the lute.

In 1958, Hunt published a facsimile edition of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*.\(^5\) This edition contains all of the

material of the original print, a brief note on the lute and lute tablature, and the biographical notes of Hunt's previous edition. The new information is incomplete and inaccurate at several points, and again there is no list of errata. Hunt's failure to indicate the tuning of the bass courses of the lute for each piece is particularly lamentable because his description of the applicable options is erroneous. There is no description of contemporary performance practices or list of concordances to assist the performer or scholar in dealing with passages of questionable accuracy.

Hunt's editions of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* remained the only ones available until John Duarte and Diana Poulton published a series of volumes devoted to guitar transcriptions of the musical selections during the 1970s. These transcriptions are not faithful realizations of the lute tablature for several reasons, the most important of which is that the range of the guitar corresponds to the range of the highest six courses of the lute. Any notes that lie on the lute's lowest bass courses must be omitted or transposed up an octave. Because the tuning of the lute's highest six courses differs slightly from the tuning of the guitar, certain chord-voicings cannot be transferred to the guitar without modifying them or omitting one or more tones. John Duarte describes the

---

editorial policy of this edition as follows:

Virtually nothing has been omitted from the original (save the errors) and where it has been necessary to change the octave in which a note or passage appears, it is without harm to the sense of the music. Since guitar music is already heavily burdened with caballistic symbols, I decided not to add to the task of the user by indications [sic] of editorial changes in text. 7

Because corrections and alterations are not documented in the text or in a Revisionsbericht, the scholarly value of this edition is limited. This is unfortunate since Diana Poulton is one of the world's leading authorities on John Dowland and English lute music. While she has contributed biographical notes and introductory comments to this edition, her scholarly acumen is lost in the lack of documentation that pervades this edition. Duarte's brief comments on performance practices and the editors' success in making the transcriptions actually suggest the sounds of a performance on the lute are the strong points of this edition. Guitarists will find that modern approaches to fingering the music for the left hand have been utilized in an effort to make the music accessible to more players. This edition must be considered a practical performing edition rather than a scholarly work intended for musicologists and lutenists.

A number of individual compositions from the Varietie of Lute-Lessons have appeared in modern anthologies, either in

7Ibid., Foreword to each of the six volumes, p. 5.
lute tablature or in transcriptions for guitar, but no other comprehensive edition of the musical selections exists. This is surprising since Hunt's facsimile edition has been widely available for over twenty-five years, and a great deal of research on English lute music has been done since its publication.

In light of the importance of the Varietie of Lute-Lessons and the shortcomings of the existing editions, yet another, critical edition of the volume is entirely justified. This thesis was originally conceived as a vehicle for the production of such a work, but, as work proceeded, it became clear that extensive research into a number of aspects of Renaissance lute practice was necessary to ensure the integrity and completeness of the final product. Investigation of the following topics was deemed necessary for a comprehensive evaluation and discussion of the materials in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons: the notation of lute music, Renaissance lute technique, pedagogical approaches to lute technique, didactic works for the lute, improvised ornamentation, division technique, contemporary performance practices, the roles of John Dowland and Robert Dowland in the production of the print, sources of English lute music, the development of systems for printing lute tablature, the development of the lute, the properties of gut strings, pitch in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century lute music, temperaments used on fretted Renaissance stringed instruments, Renaissance compositional techniques and
theoretical perspectives, idiomatic elements of lute music, the distribution of specific genres in the lute repertoire, early Baroque lute practice, and foreign influences on English lute practice. Information on these items is found in many diverse sources that vary considerably in reliability and accessibility. In many cases, recent research has proven early investigations in the field of lute music to be inaccurate or misleading. Thus, a secondary purpose of this thesis became the compilation, verification, and documentation of existing source materials in these areas to make the information more readily available to lutenists and musicologists. A single, well-organized presentation of this information provides a solid foundation for the study of Renaissance lute music in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* and in other collections as well. Once these topics had been researched and the information compiled, it was decided that the scope of the thesis should be redefined in light of the tremendous volume of material that had been assembled. As a result, the critical edition of the musical selections in the collection has been deferred until time and circumstances permit further study. Although the compositions are not discussed in great detail in this thesis, considerable study of the music was required to complete the thesis its present form and to prepare for the eventual realization of the critical edition. Similarly, while secondary sources provide a substantial part of the information in the thesis,
the author's original research and analytical comparisons of different sources provide new insights into many of the topics discussed. The author acknowledges a significant debt to earlier researchers in the field of English lute music, particularly David Lumsden, Diana Poulton, and John Ward. The writing of this thesis would have been impossible without the benefits of their study. The numerous citations to their works that appear in this thesis can only begin to indicate the scope of their knowledge of a variety of subjects that are examined in the thesis.
II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE VARIETIE OF LUTE-LESSONS

Changes that occurred in English social and cultural institutions during the sixteenth century created a growing demand for secular music. When King Henry VIII founded the Church of England in 1534, he confiscated the holdings of monasteries run by the Roman Catholic Church and distributed them among his favorite courtiers. One direct consequence of this act was the relocation of many musicians who had served in ecclesiastical positions. In some cases, these displaced musicians found employment in musical establishments created by the new owners or beneficiaries of the properties formerly held by the monasteries. In other cases, the musicians obtained positions in musical establishments created by merchants who made fortunes in the wool trade with Flanders.

While in the fifteenth century musical establishments were a feature of only the very largest country castles and mansions, by the end of Elizabeth's reign even the smaller houses have their music books, their instruments, their distinguished resident musicians and composers, and their visiting minstrels.1

As the demand for secular music grew, the study of music became a part of the education of young boys at better schools. At Dulwich, Westminster, Christ's Hospital, Merchant Taylor's and even at a few local grammar schools, music was part of the curriculum. The page, the apprentice, and the schoolboy were expected to be able to sing and play some instrument or other, not necessarily very well.\(^2\)

The universities at Cambridge and Oxford offered more advanced instruction in music for students who wished to pursue a career in music. Although the majority of young boys who received elementary training in music did not become professional musicians, their early acquaintance with music stimulated the growth of amateur music making and created a demand for didactic publications and collections of music for their instruments.

Some towns instituted the practice of maintaining special bands of musicians known as the town waits to provide music for official events and ceremonies. These groups enjoyed such high regard that their services were in great demand for private functions also. Playhouses frequently employed bands of musicians to accompany theatrical productions, and troupes of English actors and musicians toured Europe frequently during the second half of the sixteenth century. Clearly then, secular music held an important position in English social and cultural institutions by the end of the sixteenth century.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. xi.
An Overview of English Lute Music

Little is known about the history of the lute in England during the first half of the sixteenth century. While some references to lutenists at court and descriptions of lutes in inventories of musical instruments date from the early years of the century, the earliest extant sources of lute music appear to have been written during the middle years of the century. The sources of lute music that appeared after this time document the development of an important school of native lutenist composers during the second half of the sixteenth century and the first years of the seventeenth century. The classical period, or Golden Age, of English lute music extended from approximately 1590 to 1615, with its peak occurring at the turn of the century. Although it was still played as late as 1640, the Renaissance lute declined in popularity in England after 1615. The date of John Dowland's death, 1626, is often cited as the terminal date for the significant activities of the native school of lutenists in England.

In the early years of the Renaissance, England lagged behind the countries of Europe in producing major composers of music for the lute and performers of international renown. It was not until the reign of Queen Elizabeth that the English school of lutenists gained parity in this regard. John Dowland was probably the most famous lutenist of his day, and his works
were published, copied, imitated, and performed throughout England and Europe. His works are found in the sources of lute music more frequently than the works of any other composer. Although most English composers for the lute were not innovators, their ability to assimilate the compositional styles and techniques of their Continental counterparts and their native facility in creating tuneful melodies allowed them to compose works of outstanding expressivity and beauty. As a whole, English lute music is more notable for its melodic gracefulness than its technical sophistication.

The nearly three thousand pieces in the English repertoire for Renaissance lute are distributed among almost fifty manuscripts and printed books. This repertoire, which is nearly four times as large as the virginal repertoire of the same period in England, testifies to the prominent position of the lute in the musical world of its day. There is a small group of approximately one hundred to one hundred and thirty pieces that appear with much greater frequency than the rest of the other pieces in the repertoire, which suggests that these works were the most popular ones of the period.

Manuscript collections of lute music document the personal taste and/or professional development of the students,

teachers, performers, and professional scribes that compiled them. While some manuscripts were produced by a single copyist, many of them contain the contributions of several people during a long period of time. Thus, manuscripts demonstrate a variety of approaches to the literature.

On the other hand, printed lute books furnish some indication of the musical taste of the lute-playing public at the time of publication. For example, in his collection of lute music that was published by Petrucci in 1508, the Italian lutenist, Joanambrosio Dalza, apologizes for including so many easy pieces in the work. He states that the public demands them because novices and amateurs cannot play the more difficult pieces that he would like to publish. The commercial success of a printed lute book depended to some extent on the publisher's ability to sense contemporary musical fashions and to present works that would appeal to a wide following. Printed collections of lute music usually contain music of proven popularity that represents the culmination of musical trends rather than new developments.

Printed lute books frequently provide bibliographic information about compositions that is usually absent in

---


manuscripts. While individual works are rarely dated in manuscripts or printed books, the inclusion of a piece in a printed book established the latest date by which that piece must have been composed. Selections in printed books are generally titled, whereas pieces in manuscripts are frequently untitled. Surprisingly, the name of the composer or arranger of a piece is often omitted, abbreviated, or reduced to initials in manuscripts and in printed books. Many pieces in the lute repertoire remain unidentified even after extensive comparison of these pieces to contemporary works in the vocal and virginal repertoires.

Some scholars feel that a printed version of a composition should be looked upon as an authoritative text because the printing process requires great attention to the details of the tablature in preparing the printing plates. However, the standard of accuracy realized in the printed lute books is not significantly better than that of most manuscripts. Unauthorized and posthumous publication of works was common during this period in England. For example, in the preface to his First Booke of Songs or Ayres, John Dowland complained that there were errors in several of his pieces published by William Barley in A New Booke of Tabliture without Dowland’s permission. Yet, the Varistie of Lute-Lessons, published by Dowland and his son Robert, is not without its own errors, and some of the composers represented had been dead for several years when the print appeared in 1610.
The Publication of Lute Music in England

Less than ten per cent of the pieces in the English lute repertoire are found in printed books while nearly all of the vocal music of the period appeared in printed collections.\(^6\) It has been suggested that this discrepancy may indicate a distinction that publishers made between music that would have appealed to a large amateur following and music that would have been of interest to a more limited clientele. However, entries in the London Port Books for 1567/8 indicate that the lute had a substantial following in England well before the end of the century. During one ten-month period, eighty-six lutes and 13,848 lute strings were imported from various cities in Europe. Furthermore,

So important was the commerce in lutes that they are among the small number of musical instruments listed in The Rates of the Customes house, printed in London, 1582, for the use of those whose job it was to collect duty on imports.\(^7\)

It is clear that there were many lutenists in England at this time and that there was a demand for lute music. This demand appears to have been met through the copying of manuscripts and the publication of printed books in England, and the importation of works for the lute from the Continent.

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 16.

The French publisher, Adrian Le Roy, issued tutors for the lute, guitar, cittern, and mandore during the middle years of the sixteenth century, and several of these works subsequently appeared in England in translation. It is possible that English publishers had little desire to compete with established Continental publishers of music because of the large initial investment in special elements of printing type required. Alternately, they may have been unable to obtain an adequate stock of these elements before the final years of the century. In England, "It was not until the last decade of the sixteenth century that music printing appeared in similar quantity and quality to that of the Continent." This delay may have been due in part to a number of restrictions that governed the activities of publishers and printers in England.

An association of men known as the Stationer's Company of London controlled nearly every aspect of the printing business and bookselling trade in England. This organization

---


received a royal monopoly from Queen Elizabeth in 1586 that prevented anyone from entering the trade without its consent. However, the printing of music books and related items was exempt from the restrictions of this monopoly because music printing was regulated by private patents previously granted. These music patents included a patent that was granted to William Byrd and Thomas Tallis in 1575 for the printing of all music books except collections of metrical psalm tunes. This privilege was extended to them for a period of twenty-one years, i.e., until 1596, but neither Byrd nor Tallis had adequate time to devote to the printing business and few works were published under their patent. When Tallis died in 1585, Byrd designated Thomas East as his assignee to print music books for him. The industrious East seized the coveted opportunity and produced more new music books during the six-year period ending in 1593 than had been produced in the eighty years preceding his appointment as Byrd's assignee.¹⁰ After Byrd's patent expired in 1596, several London printers entered the market in a burst of unregulated music printing. These included Peter Short, who printed Dowland's First Booke of Songes or Ayres in 1597, and William Barley, who became Thomas Morley's assignee when Morley received the music patent in 1598. Barley published A New Booke of Tabliture and

---

¹⁰Dart, Foreword to A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Mysicke by Thomas Morley, p. xi.
The Pathway to Musicke independently in 1596, and Morley's The First Book of Consort Lessons as Morley's assignee in 1599. The expansion of music publishing that occurred at the end of the century coincided with the rise in popularity of the madrigal, the lute ayre, the consort lesson, and the lute lesson.

Morley's death in 1603 led to another period of unregulated music printing during which works were printed by Thomas East, Peter Short, and John Windet. East, who had printed Dowland's The Second Booke of Songes or Ayres in 1600, issued Thomas Robinson's The Schoole of Musicke in 1603. Short printed Dowland's The Third and Last Booke of Songes or Ayres in 1603 also. Windet printed Dowland's Lachrimae or Seaven Teares in 1604. Barley was granted the music patent and was admitted to the Stationer's Company in 1606. He was so successful as a publisher of music that he allowed his assignees to print for him from 1609 until his death in 1614.\footnote{Newcomb, Lute Music of Shakespeare's Time, p. xv.} During this period, several works by John and Robert Dowland were published by Thomas Adams and other assignees of Barley. John Dowland's translation of the Musice active Micrologus of Andreas Ornithoparchus appeared in 1609. Both the Varietie of Lute-Lessons and A Musicall Banquet appeared in 1610, and Dowland's final
collection of lute songs, *A Pilgrimes Solace*, was published in 1612 (See table 1).

The title-page border of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* is based on a design first used in Antwerp in 1566. This same design was used with minor modifications for the title-pages of Dowland's *The Second Booke of Songes or Ayres* and Thomas Robinson's *The Schoole of Mysicke*, both of which were printed by Thomas East. The border was also used for the title-page of *A Mysicall Banquet*, which appeared during the same year as the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*. Neither of the two last-named works contains any acknowledgement of the printer that produced the works for the publisher, Thomas Adams, but several pieces of evidence suggest that the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, and probably *A Mysicall Banquet*, were printed by Thomas Snodham. Snodham was East's apprentice and he took over his master's business when East died in 1609. While the border used in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* had been used by East as early as the 1570s, East generally left the oval at the top of the border blank or filled it with simple decorations, a verse, or a music stave. The oval in the title-page border of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* and *A Mysicall Banquet* contain a viol and its bow and a lute in

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer or Compiler</th>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Printer</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Dowland</td>
<td>The First Booke of Songs or Ayres</td>
<td>1597</td>
<td>[Peter] S[hort]</td>
<td>Thomas Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Morley</td>
<td>The First Booke of Consort Lessons</td>
<td>1599</td>
<td>William Barley</td>
<td>Thomas Morley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dowland</td>
<td>The Second Booke of Songs or Ayres</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Thomas East</td>
<td>George Eastland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dowland</td>
<td>The Third and Last Booke of Sorges or Ayres</td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>[Peter] S[hort]</td>
<td>Thomas Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Robinson</td>
<td>The Schoole of Musicke</td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>Thomas East</td>
<td>Simon Waterson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dowland</td>
<td>Lachrimae or Seaven Teares</td>
<td>1604</td>
<td>John Windet</td>
<td>Thomas Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dowland</td>
<td>Andreas Ornithoparcus His Micrologus</td>
<td>1609</td>
<td>[Thomas Snodham]</td>
<td>Thomas Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Dowland</td>
<td>A Pilgrimes Solace</td>
<td>1612</td>
<td>Matthew Lownes John Browne Thomas Snodham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Title-page of the Varietie of Lute-Lessons
front of a book of music. The oval is surrounded by the
inscription Laetificat cor musica. According to Margaret
Dean-Smith, this arrangement of the material in the oval is
almost a trademark of Thomas Snodham's prints. Furthermore,
the actual elements of printing type used in the Varietie of
Lute-Lessons for the text, including the initial letters of
several sections, the lute tablature, and several page borders
match the elements used by Thomas East for The Schoole of
Mysicke. Dowland's translation, Andreas Ornithoparvvs His
Micrologvs, appears to have been pressed from this same type
also. It is possible that Thomas Snodham printed the last-
named work and A Mysicall Banquet as well as the Varietie of
Lute-Lessons. This cannot be confirmed however, because the
page border that appears at the top of signatures A2r and
Er in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons also appears in Lachrimae
or Seaven Teares, which was printed for Dowland's publisher,
Thomas Adams, by John Windet.

---

13 Margaret Dean-Smith, Review of Robert Dowland, Varietie
of Lute-Lessons, facsimile edition by Edgar Hunt (London: Schott
The information concerning East's early activities derives from
this source also.

14 Thurston Dart states that East took over the music type
font of the French Huguenot imigrant, Vautrollier, that was
cast from punches cut by Petrelius of Nuremberg, and supplement-
ed it with new fonts of Dutch design. "In addition East pro-
vided himself with up-to-date founts of roman and italic
letters in various sizes, together with some fine initial
letters, borders, and blocks..." Foreword to A Plaine and
Easie Introduction to Practicall Mysicke by Thomas Worley,
p. x.
References to a Publication Containing John Dowland's Lute Music and/or His Treatise on Lute-Playing

On several occasions prior to the publication of the Varietie of Lute-Lessons in 1610, John Dowland indicated that he intended to publish a collection of his lute music and/or a treatise on fingerling lute music. In the address "To the courteous Reader" of The First Booke of Songes or Ayres, he expresses this intention.

There have been divers Lute-lessons of mine lately printed without my knowledge, false and vnperfect, but I propose shortly my selfe to set forth the choicest of all my Lessons in print, and also an introduction for fingerling, with other booke[s] of Songes, whereof this is the first... 15

This statement probably refers to several of Dowland's pieces printed by William Barley in A New Booke of Tablature. There is no evidence of Dowland's having made any definite plans for a collection of his lute music or of having begun work on the project at that time.

Dowland expressed a similar concern over unauthorized publication of his works in the address "To the Reader" of Lachrimae or Seaven Teares.

Having in forren parts met divers Lute-lessons of my composition, publish by strangers without my name or approbation; I thought it much more convenient, that my labours should passe forth vnder mine owne allowance, receiv[ing] from me their last foile and polish-

ment; for which consideration I have undergone this long and troublesome worke....

However, the selections in Lachrimae or Seaven Tears are arranged for a consort of five viols or violins and lute rather than for solo lute. Dowland seems to have made no other references to the publication of his lute works in a printed collection. The lute pieces by Dowland in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons and in the song books that he and his son, Robert, produced are the only pieces that John Dowland published.

Dowland did make another reference to a treatise about lute playing in the address "To the Reader" of Andreas Ornithoparcus His Micrologus.

My industry and on-set herein if you friendly accept (being now returned home to remains) shall encourage me shortly to divulge a more peculiar worke of mine owne: namely, My Observations and Directions concerning the Art of Lute-playing; which Instrument as of all that are portable, is, and ever hath been most in request, so is it the hardest to manmage with cunning and order, with the true nature of fingering; which skill hath as yet by no Writer been rightly expressed: what by my endeavours may therein be attained, I leave to your future Judgement, when time shall produce that which is already almost ready for the Harvest.


If, as this statement implies, Dowland had almost finished an extended treatise on the fingering of lute music in 1609, it would have made little sense to substitute the treatise on fingering by Jean-Baptiste Besard for Dowland's treatise in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* a year later. A statement by Robert Dowland in the address "To the Readers whosoever" of the latter volume confirms that John Dowland's treatise on lute playing was not complete when the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* was published.

But whosoever I haue here done (vntill my Father hath finished his greater Worke, touching the Art of Lute-playing,) I referre it to your judicious censures... 18

The "Other Necessary Observations belonging to the LVTE," which John Dowland contributed to the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, may have been extracted from a larger work in progress at the time, but the reference of 1609 states that Dowland's treatise concerned the fingering of lute music and this is precisely the subject covered in Besard's treatise. Dowland's contribution deals with peripheral subjects, such as stringing, fretting, and tuning a lute, that are not covered in Besard's treatise, and it gives the appearance of an addendum to Besard's contribution. The manner in which Dowland's treatise complements Besard's treatise suggests that Dowland added his treatise to the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*

to lend the weight of his reputation to a work that was ostensibly his son's product.

Several reasons may account for John Dowland's failure to publish the extended work on lute-playing to which he made reference. The first and least likely is that he may have been too old to complete such a work. In the address "To the Readers whosoever" of the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, Robert Dowland refers to his father as "... being now gray, and like the Swan, but singing towards his end..."19

Since John Dowland would have been only forty-eight years old in 1610, the reference may have been used figuratively to suggest a decline in the elder Dowland's creative powers. Yet two years later, John Dowland published A Pilgrims Solace, his final collection of lute songs, which contains some of his finest works. The statement may refer to John Dowland's abilities as a performer if it is to be accepted as anything more than a rhetorical device. However, two years later John Dowland received his long-sought-after appointment to the King's Musick and he held that post until his death in 1626.

A more plausible explanation of Dowland's failure to publish his extended treatise on lute-playing can be found in the changing public taste in musical fashions during the early years of the seventeenth century. John Dowland's

---

19 Ibid.
address "To the Reader" in *A Pilgrimes Solace* contains a lengthy diatribe in which Dowland complains about the poor reception given him by his countrymen when he returned from Denmark.

... So haue I againe found strange entertainement since my returne; especially by the opposition of two sorts of people that shroude theselues vnder the title of Musitians. The first are some simple Cantors, or vocall singers, who though they seeme excellent in their blinde Division-making, are meerely ignorant, euin in the first elements of Musicke,... yet doe these fellowes give their verdict of me behinde my backe, and say, what I doe is after the old manner; but I will speake openly to them, and would haue them know that the proudest Cantor of them, dares not oppose himselfe face to face against me. The second are young-men, professers of the Lute, who vaunt themselues, to the disparagement of such as haue beene before their time (wherein I my selfe am a party) that there never was the like of them... Moreover that here are and daily doth come into our most famous kingdome, divers strangers from beyond the seas, which auerre before our owne faces, that we haue no true methode of application or fingering of the Lute.20

Dowland's resentment of younger lutenists must have been acute for him to have included these comments in a publication devoted to his lute songs. While these lutenists created competition for Dowland, the foreigners to which he refers were popularizing a style of lute playing that posed a greater threat to Dowland's livelihood. The style *brisé*, which developed in France during the early years of the seventeenth century, departed radically from the style of

---

lute playing that had been in use since the beginning of the sixteenth century throughout Europe. Compositions in the new style utilized new tunings for the lute that took advantage of the ever-increasing number of bass courses on the instrument. Furthermore, in these works, ornamentation is an essential part of the melodic and textural design rather than a decorative option available to the performer. The growing popularity of the French style of playing the lute and composing for it could only hinder Dowland's career since he was an admitted champion of the old style of playing.

Competition from the French school of lutenists was only part of Dowland's problem. The viola da gamba and the broken consort were becoming increasingly popular during the first years of the seventeenth century and challenged the pre-eminent position of the lute in the musical world of Dowland's day. In 1605, Tobias Hume published a collection of music for the lyra viol called The First Part of Ayres, French, Polish and others that contained the following statement.

From henceforth, the statefull Instrument Gambo Violl, shall with ease yeeld full various, and deuicefull Musicke as the Lute; for here I protest the Trinitie of Musicke, Parts, Passion, and Deuision, to be gracefully united in the Gambo viol, as in the most received Instrument that is &c.21

---

Dowland responded to this statement, which he quoted in the address "To the Reader" in *A Pilgrimes Solace*, as follows, "Which Imputation, methinkes, the learned sort of Musitians ought not to let passe vnanswered." He then calls upon the younger lutenists of his day, who disdained Dowland's conservative outlook, to come to

... vndertake the defence of their Lute profession, seeing that some of them aboue other, haue most large meanes, conuenient time, and such encouragement as I never knew any haue.... Perhaps you will aske me, why I that haue travailed in many countries, and ought to haue some experience, doth not vnder goe this busines my selfe? I answere that I want abilitie, being I am now entered into the fiftieth yeare of mine age: secondly because I want both meanes, leasure, and encouragement.

These comments invite speculation that Dowland may have lacked the time to finish his treatise on lute-playing due to financial hardships, but this premise cannot be confirmed. Given the rhetorical tone of the address, these comments are probably just another expression of his discontent, due in part to his failure to obtain a post as a lutenist in the royal musical establishment. The Jacobean court favored elaborate, staged entertainments involving dancing and singing in a superficial dramatic context rather than the serious works that dominated Dowland's output during this period of his life. When Dowland did finally obtain a

---

23 Ibid.
post at Court later in the same year, his position was not that of Chief Luter, but rather one of lesser importance that entitled him to a smaller salary. Furthermore, the salaries of all the English lutenists in the King's Musick were substantially smaller than the salary paid John Maria Lugario, a foreigner who held the post of Queen's Musician at that time. 24

The competition of younger lutenists and composers, the rising popularity of the lyra viol and the broken consort, and the musical taste of the Jacobean Court may have convinced Dowland that there was no point in completing and/or attempting to publish his treatise on lute-playing after 1610. However, the popularity of Dowland's pieces in the manuscript collections compiled during the first quarter of the seventeenth century suggests that such a work would still have been well received. Although the reasons are not clear, the "Other Necessary Observations belonging to the LUTE" constitute Dowland's only published writings on the subject. While a few charts and musical examples in manuscript sources of lute music have been attributed to Dowland, no written discussion of lute-playing appears in any of these sources. Similarly, there are no references by contemporary writers to other work on lute-playing by John Dowland.

Robert Dowland's Role in the Production of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*

Very little is known about Robert Dowland's life that would establish his qualifications as a lutenist, composer, or editor of lute music. The *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* is dedicated to Sir Thomas Monson, in whose household Robert lived for several years (See Figure 2). Robert was probably indentured to Sir Thomas Monson during his youth while John Dowland served at the Court of Christian IV of Denmark. Robert may have received musical instruction from Simon Merson, a lutenist who served in Monson's musical establishment before becoming one of the King's Luters to James I.25 Diana Poulton refers to Sir Thomas Monson as "a prominent courtier and a great amateur of music [who] prided himself on his musical establishment, especially on the quality of his singers..."26 Robert's association with the Monson household is the only information that has come to light about his activities during his early years.

According to a statement on his marriage allegation, executed in 1626, Robert was then "about XXXV yeares" of age. This would mean that he was born around 1591 and would have been approximately nineteen years old when the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* was published. Robert must have achieved

26 Diana Poulton, *John Dowland*, p. 64.
TO THE RIGHT WORSHIP-FULL, WORTHY, AND VERTVOVS
Knight, Sir Thomas Monson.

Y R, the gratefull remembrance of your bountie
to me, in part of my Education, whilst my Father
was absent from England, hath embouclned me
to present thee my first Labours to your worthi-
ness, assuring my selfe that they being Musicall
will be acceptable to the Patron of Musicke,
and being onely out of duery Dedicated, you will daime to receive
them as a poore Testimonie of his gratitude, who acknowledgeth
himselfe for ever vnable by his vmermoft servuce to merit your
Fauours. All that I can is to pray to Almighty God for the health
and prosperitie of You and Yours, which I will neuer ceale to doe.

Your Worships in all duery,

Robert Dowland.

Figure 2. Dedication of the Varietie of Lute-Lessons
some proficiency as a performer on the lute during the latter part of his life because he visited the court of the Duke of Wolgast in Pomerania as lutenist for a troupe of English actors in 1623. When John Dowland died in 1626, Robert took over his post at the Court of Charles I. Robert held that position until his death in 1641.27

It is unclear to what extent John Dowland assisted his son in the production of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*. The title page of the print indicates that the lute pieces in the collection were selected by Robert Dowland, and that the "Other Necessary Observations belonging to the *LVTE*" were written by his father. Robert Dowland's address "To the Readers whoseoeuer" in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* contains additional information about Robert's role in the production of the print (See Figure 3).

Gentlemen: I am bold to present you with the first fruits of my Skill, which albeit it may seeme hereditarie vnto mee, my Father being a Lutenist, and well knowne amongst you here in England, as in most parts of Christendome beside. I am sure you are not ignorant of that old saying, *Labore Deum omnia vendere;* And how perfection in any skill cannot be attained vnto without the waste of many yeeres, much cost, and excessive labour and industrie, which though I cannot attribute to my selfe, being but young in usees, I haue adventured like a desperate Souldier to thrust my selfe into the Vant-gard, and to passe the Pikes of the sharpest Censures, but I trust without daunger, because we finde it true in Nature that those who haue loued the Father, will seldome hate the Sonne. And not unlike in reason that I should distast all, since my meanes and helpes of attaining what I haue,

27 Ibid., pp. 28, 86-92.
To the Readers whatsoever.

Endeavour: I am bold to profess you with the first fruits of my Skill, which when it may some beneficial use have, my Father being a Lutemaster, and well known amongst you here in England, as in most parts of Christendome beside. I am sure you are not ignorant of that old saying, Labor dura servat hominem. And how perfection in my skill cannot be attained without the waste of many yeares, much cost, and extreme labour and industry, which though I cannot attribute to my selfe, being but young in yeares, I have adventur'd like a desperate Soldier to thrust my selfe into the Vano-gard, and to pull the Poles of the sharpest Ciphers, but I trust without danger, because we find it true in Nature that those who have loued the Father, will find some here the Sonne. And not withal in reason that I should enflatt all, since my means and helps of attaining what I have, have been extraordinary. Touching this I have done, they are Collections gathered together with much labour out of the most excellent Authors, as well of those beyond the Seas, as out of the works of our owne Countrymen. The Treatyse of Fingering I thought no room to borrow of the Sacrae Officinae of Viboas, being a man generally knowne and honoured for his excellencie in this kinde. But whatsoever I have here done (well my Father hath finished his greater Workes, touching the Art of Lute-playing,) I referre it to your judicious censure, hoping that that love which you all generally have born me void him in time past, being now grey, and like the Swan, but singing towards his end, you would confesse the same to me his Sonne, who in the mean whilst will conferre my best indeavours at the thyme of your favour, and shall ever remaine obliged vnto you for your courtesies to the utmost of my power.

Robert Daisley.

Thomas Smith Gent

To Preface the Tryal.

Where merit the firmament the pinch of Praise,
The Good-worke there, transcendeth the reach of Words:
This Worke is such, then good-words cannot rate
Their weight so high as these Heart-dealing Ciphers.
Then let those versate their owne glory raise,
Let it be said, a Smith hath forg'd their praise.

Figure 3. Introductory address and poem of the Varietie of Lute-Lessons
haue beene extraordinary. Touching this I haue done, they are Collections gathered together with much labor out of the most excellent Authors, as well of those beyond the Seas, as out of the workes of our owne Countrimen.\textsuperscript{28}

The use of the pronoun they makes no sense in the phrase "... they are Collections gathered together with much labor ..." unless it refers to the pieces in the six genres represented in the collection, i.e., fantasies, pauins, galliards, almaines, corantoes, and volts. However, such a usage seems inappropriate even within the bounds of contemporary parlance. The pronoun may refer to the \textit{Varietie of Lute-Lessons} and a collection of lute songs, \textit{A Musicall Banquet}, both of which appeared under Robert's hand in 1610. Both volumes contain English and foreign selections and similar phrases are used on the title-pages of both prints to indicate this fact; compare "Fantasies, Pauins, Galliards, Almaines, Corantoes, and Volts: Selected out of the best approved AVTHORS, as well beyond the Seas as of our owne Country," in the \textit{Varietie of Lute-Lessons} with "Furnished with varietie of delicious Ayres, Collected out of the best Authors in English, French, Spanish and Italian," in \textit{A Musicall Banquet}. It is possible that Robert Dowland was referring to both of these works in this instance.

Robert Dowland implies that he produced the \textit{Varietie of Lute-Lessons} by himself in the address "To the Reader" in \textit{A

Musicall Banquet.

Gentlemen: Finding myselfe not deceived in the hope I had of your kinde entertayning my collected Lute-lessons which I lately set forth, I am further encouraged to publish vnto your censures these AYRES, being collected and gathered out of the labours of the rarest and most judicious Masters of Musick that either now are or have lately lived in Christendome... 29

However, the headnote that precedes the translation of Jean-Baptiste Besard's treatise on fingering implies that John Dowland assisted his son in collecting and editing the music in the volume (See Figure 4). It is possible that this page

NECESSARIE OBSERVATIONS BELONGING TO THE LUTE, AND LVTE playing, by John Baptiste Besardo of Vilonzi: with

Figure 4. Headnote to the treatise on fingering by Jean Baptiste Besard

may have originally been designed as the title-page of the print because the second part of it is redundant and inappropriate for a treatise that contains only brief examples.

If, as Poulton suggests, the headnote appeared on the copy of the manuscript that was delivered to the printer, the headnote may have been intended as a guide to the printer in composing and marking up a title page for the volume. This note may have then been overlooked once the preliminary pages had been set in type. Regardless of the reason for the inclusion of John Dowland's name, "There seems to have been a determined effort to make the volume appear as the sole work of Robert... ."30

John Dowland's wide-ranging travels and employment in Europe brought him into contact with numerous other musicians and provided him with exceptional opportunities to collect lute music. It is very likely that some or all of the foreign selections in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons were brought back to England by him. The headnote to the first pavan in the print suggests that some pieces may have been sent to John Dowland by lutenists he met in his travels.

Here beginneth the Pauins: of which the first was made by the most magnificent and famous Price Mauritius, Landgraue of Hessen, and from him sent to may Father, with this inscription following, and written with his GRACES owne hand: Mauritius Landgrauius Hesia fecit in honorem Ioanni Dowlandi Anglorum Orphei.31

The wording of the headnote implies once again that Robert Dowland was responsible for the entire editing process.

30Diana Poulton, John Dowland, p. 386.
31Robert Dowland, Varietie of Lute-Lessons, p. 32.
It is clear from the consistently high quality of the music and the level of performing expertise required by many of the selections in the volume that the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* was compiled by someone having a broad knowledge of the lute repertoire. Robert Dowland may have assisted his father in selecting the works to be included, but it would have been a remarkable achievement if he actually produced the collection by himself. In the address "To the Readers whosoever," he acknowledges that some people may be skeptical of his ability to produce the volume, and he insists that he has enjoyed special advantages as the son of England's most renowned lutenist that enabled him to accomplish the task (See Figure 3 on page 34). In light of John Dowland's frequent absence from England during his son's youth, a certain amount of skepticism seems entirely justified.

There is no explanation of the manner in which the pieces were "partly Collected out of the best AVTHORS." While there is no evidence to suggest that Robert Dowland solicited works from other composers for inclusion in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, this would not have been impossible. On the other hand, he may have expropriated from the sources at hand any pieces which he felt had sufficient marketability.

---

32 Ibid., p. 5.
to warrant inclusion in the volume. The various legal restrictions that applied to transactions between composers and publishers at this time in England are not entirely clear. Publishers of lute music sometime failed to identify the composers of selections in their prints, or used only the composer's initials for that purpose. Slightly over half of the pieces in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons are accompanied by an attribution to a composer. Most of the anonymous works in the print are almaines, volts, or corantoes that may in fact be arrangements of works for other instruments (See Table 2).

In the address "To the Readers whosoever" in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, Robert Dowland implies that he was responsible for the translation of Jean-Baptiste Besard's treatise on fingering lute music that appears in the print.

The Treatise of fingering I thought no scorne to borrow of John Baptisto Besardo of Visonti, being a man general-knowne and honoured for his excellence in this kinde. Robert does not specifically state that he made the translation himself, and it cannot be determined whether his knowledge of Latin at this point in his life was adequate for him

---

33 See Diana Poulton, John Dowland, p. 68 for a further discussion of this subject.

34 Robert Dowland, "To the Readers whosoever," in Varietie of Lute-Lessons, p. 4. Besard's treatise was originally published in Latin as an addendum to the Thesaurus Harmonicus divini Laurencini Romani... (Cologne, 1603), under the title "De Modo in testudine libellus." See page 58 of this thesis for a brief history of the treatise.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Dedicatee or Title</th>
<th>Composer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Fantasies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Diomedes</strong> of Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Knight of the Lute [Laurencini?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Iacobus Reis</strong> of Augusta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Laurencini</strong> of Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Alfonso Ferrabosco</strong> of Bologna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[6]</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Gregorio Huwet</strong> of Antwerpe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>John Douland</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Paeans</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ioanni Doulandi Anglorum Orpheii</td>
<td><strong>Mauritius, Landgraue of Hessen</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Anthonie Holborne</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Thomas Worley</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Daniell Batchelar</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sir John Langton</td>
<td><strong>John Douland</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Alfonso Ferrabosco</strong> of Bologna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sir Tho. Monson</td>
<td><strong>Robert Doulant</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Galliards</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Christianus the fourth King of Denmark</td>
<td>John Dovvland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Queene Elizabeth</td>
<td>John Dovvland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Robert Earle of Essex, high Marshall of England</td>
<td>John Dovvland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ferdinando Earle of Darby</td>
<td>John Dovvland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lady Rich</td>
<td>John Dovvland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lady Cliftons Spirit</td>
<td>Robert [John] Doulant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sir Thomas Monson</td>
<td>[Robert Dowland?]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Dedicatee or Title</th>
<th>Composer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Almaines</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mounsiers Almaine</td>
<td>Daniell Bacheler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sir Henry Guilforde</td>
<td>[John Dowland?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The first of the Queenes Maskes</td>
<td>[Robert Johnson?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The second of the Queenes Maskes</td>
<td>[Robert Johnson?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The last of the Queenes Maskes</td>
<td>[Robert Johnson?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Witches daunce in the Queenes Maske</td>
<td>[Robert Johnson?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sir John Smith</td>
<td>[John Dowland]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corantoes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mounsier Ballard</td>
<td>Mounsier Ballard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>John Perrichon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mounsier Saman</td>
<td>Mounsier Saman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mounsier Saman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Mathias Mason]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Saman]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voltes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Gaultier]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Perrichon]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to have made the translation without assistance. Robert may have made the translation in collaboration with his father, whose knowledge of Latin was demonstrated by the translation of the *Musice active micrologus* of Andreas Ornithoparchus that John Dowland published the previous year. It is also possible that John Dowland was solely responsible for the translation of Besard's treatise in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*.

Besard seems to have approved of the English translation of his treatise because he commented favorably about it in his *Novus Partus*, which he issued at Augsburg in 1617. When the *Novus Partus* was translated into German in the same year, the unidentified translator attributed Robert Dowland's remark, "The Treatise of fingering I thought no scorne to borrow of John Baptisto Besardo of Visonti...", to John Dowland, whom he subsequently complimented.\(^{35}\)

There are several omissions and mistakes in the version of Besard's examples in the treatise that appears in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* and in the accompanying text. While some of the errors may have been due to carelessness on the part of the printer, there is one group of errors that indicate that the responsible party did not understand Besard's discussion of the topics illustrated by the examples. These errors occur in the examples for the first through the fourth

rules of right-hand fingering for lute music. With one exception, someone has substituted left-hand fingerings for the right-hand fingerings in Besard's original version of these examples, with the result that they make little sense. This kind of error seems incomprehensible in the work of an accomplished lutenist such as John Dowland, and invites speculation that Robert may have been responsible for the preparation of the musical examples in the translation of Besard's treatise if nothing else.

Robert Dowland is also represented as a composer in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*. "Sir Tho. W'onson his Pauin" appears under the caption, "Composed by Robert Douland," and "The Right Honorable the Lady Cliftons Spirit" is followed by the notation, "Finis. Robert Douland." The latter work is also found in Cambridge University Library MS Dd. 2. 11. B, fol. 58 as [Kête] Darcies Spirite J:ohon] Dowl[and]. Internal evidence indicates that this manuscript was compiled by 1591, the approximate date of Robert Dowland's birth. "The identity of [strains] A B C of this piece [i.e., the one in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*] with 'K. Darcies Spirite'... and the characteristic style of the divisions, leave no doubt that the composer was John [Dowland]." 36 It is possible that the attribution which appears at the end of the version in the

---

Varietie of Lute-Lessons was misplaced by the printer, and that its correct position would be at the end of the following piece, "Sir Thomas Monson his Galliard," which appears anonymously. The complementary nature of the two pieces dedicated to Sir Thomas Monson, their similar positions in their respective sections of the collection, and many stylistic factors suggest that they are the work of the same composer.

The printed attributions of the two works in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons notwithstanding, the question of Robert's abilities as a composer remains to be considered. The two works dedicated to Sir Thomas Monson are by no means easy to play, nor are they amateurish in their musical construction. The elaborate divisions of the pavan in particular indicate a thorough knowledge of the lute idiom not frequently found in young composers (See Figure 5).

The only other work attributed to Robert Dowland that has not been proven to be by another composer is the "Almande Ro: Dowland" on fol. 12v of the Margaret Board lute manuscript.37 This piece was copied "in a hand which agrees in all details with that of John [Dowland]'s own tablature script,"38 and the adjoining pages of the manuscript contain


"Lachrymae made by Mr. Jo: Dowland: Bacheler of Musique," on fols. 11v-12, and "An Almand By mr Jo: Dowland Bacheler of Musique," on fol. 13r. John Dowland also appears to have written out several diagrams related to musical theory and several brief examples in the manuscript.

Although scholars accept this composition as a work by Robert Dowland, there are several reasons to question his authorship. First, it seems odd that John Dowland would copy a work by his son into a lute manuscript belonging to a student that John Dowland is presumed to have given lessons. If the student, Margaret Board, had requested a piece from her instructor, John Dowland, it seems unlikely that he could not have supplied something of his own invention. Since the handwriting is clearly John Dowland's and not Robert's, this circumstance is hard to explain, and it is not surprising that it has been largely ignored thus far.

Secondly, and perhaps more convincingly, there is a difference in the handwriting of the Ro: and the handwriting of the Almande and Dowlande (See Figure 6). The primary strokes of the letters Ro are darker and, for the most part, wider than the strokes of the other letters. The more forceful handwriting of the Ro matches the handwriting used in an alternate version of the final strain that appears immediately

---

Figure 6. "Almande" by Ro: Dowlande
from the Margaret Board Lute Book, fol. 12v.
after the attribution and title. The alternate version of the strain is preceded by the sign .S. , which also appears at the appropriate point in the piece, and it is followed by the inscription, "Or play the last devisor of the last strayne thus." In both cases, the handwriting matches the Ro that appears at the end of the piece. Robert Spencer identifies this handwriting as Margaret Board's based on numerous examples of her signature in the endpapers of the manuscript, and on numerous compositions in her hand in the volume. He does not comment on the difference between the two handwritings in the signature and title in question.  

Furthermore, the inscription Almande Ri Di that appears in the top of the left margin of the page also seems to be in Margaret Board's handwriting. The R in this inscription and the Ro of the lower inscription differ significantly from the initial letters of Robert Dowland's signature on his marriage allegation of 1626.  

The R of the Ro has a shorter stroke on the foot of the letter than the Rs in other titles and attributions copied by Margaret Board in positions where space was not a consideration. However,

---


this stroke is not markedly shorter than the strokes of Rs she used in positions where space was at a premium. Also, the long stroke on the foot of the R at the top of the page cuts through John Dowland's diagram that indicates the tuning of the eighth diapason for this piece. This suggests that the inscription at the top of the page was added after the completion of the piece because Dowland could easily have appended the diagram to the end of the selection, as he did in the lute parts in *Lachrimae or Seaven Teares*, if there was an inscription in the way when he entered the piece in the manuscript. The inscription at the head of the Almande is accompanied by the sign \(\text{\small\text{V}}\) over the title, which appears frequently in other works copied by Margaret Board. She seems to have consistently labeled the selections that she copied into her manuscript at the beginning and at the end of each piece, and she identified many of the composers represented in the volume.

This evidence suggests that when John Dowland copied the Almande into Margaret Board's lute manuscript, he concluded it with *Almande Dowlande*. Subsequently, Margaret Board added the Ro: to his signature and provided the inscription at the top of the page. Thus, the composer of the work is John Dowland rather than his son, Robert. This conclusion is supported by the presence of several other works by John Dowland in the volume that are unique to this source, including the only coranto and preludium in his
entire output and a piece called "Mr. Dowland's Midnight."  

The absence of other works by Robert Dowland makes it impossible to identify a personal stylistic idiom and leaves considerable room for speculation even as to his role in the composition of the works in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*. Stylistic evidence suggests that John Dowland may have composed the two works dedicated to Sir Thomas Monson, or at least given substantial assistance to his son if Robert composed them. This premise was proposed over forty years ago by the English scholar, Richard Newton. However, it has not yet gained universal acceptance. The *Collected Lute Music of John Dowland* does not contain either of these works but it does contain "Lady Cliftons Spirit." This author suggests that the two pieces dedicated to Sir Thomas Monson should have been included in the section of the volume that contains works of uncertain ascription.

Although it would seem that John and Robert Dowland would be the composers most likely to have contributed new works to the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, they seem to have composed very little new music for the print. There are only nine pieces in the volume that Diana Poulton attributes to John

---


Dowland. Furthermore, Poulton states that the

*Varietie of Lute-Lessons* has no pieces by [John] Dowland that are entirely new, although in some cases the divisions have been rewritten or added to some of the galliards that previously existed only in plain forms.\(^{45}\)

In addition to the pieces attributed to John Dowland in the print, Poulton considers "Lady Cliftons Spirit" and the almain dedicated to Sir John Smith to be his works. Anthony Rooley suggests that there is sufficient stylistic evidence to attribute the almain dedicated to Sir Henry Guilforde to John Dowland also,\(^{46}\) an opinion that is shared by other writers as well.

The two works dedicated to Sir Thomas Monson are the works most likely to have been composed specifically for inclusion in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, and they are unique to the print, which makes this supposition even more plausible. As noted above, there are some scholars who consider both pieces to be by John Dowland, while other scholars accept them as Robert Dowland's works.

Twenty-seven of the forty-two selections in the print were definitely not composed specifically for the publication of the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*. These works appear in other sources that date from prior to 1610, or their

\(^{45}\)Diana Poulton, *John Dowland*, p. 78. On page 111, Poulton contradicts herself by stating that John Dowland contributed ten pieces to the collection.

\(^{46}\)Anthony Rooley, "John Dowland and English Lute Music," p. 118.
composers were dead by 1610. The remaining fifteen pieces could have been "Inuented" for inclusion in the print, but there is no evidence to indicate that they were. Of these fifteen pieces, seven have concordances that date from after 1610, and eight are unique to the Varietie of Lute-Lessons.

It is impossible to determine exactly the roles played by John and Robert Dowland in the production of the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, but evidence suggests that John Dowland's contribution to the work was significant. The author agrees with the premise that "John Dowland was almost wholly responsible for the work." When one considers that, in spite of repeated attempts, John Dowland did not obtain a post at the English Court until 1612, it is understandable that he may have wished to further his son's career by publishing the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, and possibly A Musicall Banquet, under Robert's name. The extensive references to John Dowland in Robert Dowland's address "To the Readers whosoever" in the print may have been engineered by John Dowland to add the weight of his reputation to a work that is ostensibly by a much less seasoned musician. This seems particularly true of the closing portion of Robert's address.

But whatsoeuer I haue here done ... I referre it to your judicious censures, hoping that that loue which you all generally haue borne vnto him [John Dowland] in times past, being now gray, and like the Swan, but singing towards his end, you would continue the same

---

to me his Sonne, who in the meane time wil consecrate
my best indeuours at the shire of your fauours, and
shall ever remaine obliged vnto you for your curtesies
to the uttermost of my power.48

The brief poem by "Thomas Smith Gent: In Praise of the
Worke," which follows Robert's address is rather conservative
for a selection intended to promote the print, and it con-
tains no references to the parties responsible for the
production of the volume. It is possible that the poet
was aware of the shared responsibilities of father and son
and was unwilling to suggest that the Varietie of Lute-
Lessons was Robert's work. Not wishing to offend John
Dowland however, the poet opted to stress the quality of
the product rather than the abilities of Dowland or his
son. The wording of the poem is such that the final couplet
may be read as tongue-in-cheek disclaimer of association
with the work even though it is intended to suggest that
the high quality of the collection will be immediately
apparent.

Where Merit far surmounts the pitch of Praise,
The Good-worke there, transcends the reach of Words:
This Worke is such: then good-words cannot raise
Their weight so high as these Heau'n-scaling Cordes:
Then let their vertue their owne glory raise,
Least it be said a Smith hath forg'd their praise.49

Nothing is known about the poet's connection with the print.

48 Robert Dowland, "To the Readers whosoeuer," in Varietie
of Lute-Lessons, p. 4.

49 Thomas Smith, "In Praise of the Worke," in Varietie of
Lute-Lessons, p. 4. See Diana Poulton, John Dowland, pp. 427-
428, for the possible identity of the poet.
III. SELECTED DIDACTIC WORKS FOR THE RENAISSANCE LUTE

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century lute tutors contain a great deal of information about the development of the lute and the techniques used to play it. The following discussion of selected didactic works is not intended to provide a comprehensive history of the lute and its technique, but rather to establish the relationship of the Varietie of Lute-Lessons to contemporary works of similar design.

Continental Lute Books

The earliest printed source of lute music is Francesco Spinacino's Intabolatura de Lauto. Libro primo., published by Petrucci in Venice in 1507. Although this collection and a contemporary Italian manuscript copied by a student named Vitale for Vincenzo Capirola around 1517, contain some information on lute technique, Sebastian Virdung's Musica Getutscht... (Basel, 1511) is "the first known tutor that deals in detail with 'practical' information about musical instruments, their classification, construction, iconography and tablatures."¹ According to Marc Southard,

most of the surviving information on lute technique from the first half of the sixteenth century is found in the lute tutors of three German lutenists, Hans Judenkünig, Hans Gerle, and Hans Newsidler (See Table 3). The most important of these works are the 1532 edition of *Musica Teusch* by Hans Gerle and the 1536 edition of *Ein Newgeordent Kunstlich Lautenbuch* by Hans Newsidler.

France became an important center for the publication of lute music and lute tutors during the second quarter of the sixteenth century. The single-impression method of printing lute tablature developed by the Parisan printer Pierre Haultin in 1526, simplified the printing process and made it less time consuming. Pierre Attaignant's *Tres breve et familiere introduction* (Paris, 1529) was one of the first works for lute to come from his presses. Adrian Le Roy's *Breve et facile instruction pour apprendre la tablature, conduire et disposer la main sur le luth* (Paris, 1567) is one of a series of tutors for plucked stringed instruments.

---


Table 3
Selected Sixteenth-Century Didactic Works for the Lute

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer/Compiler</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Italian</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesco Spinacino</td>
<td>Intabolatura di Lauto. Libro primo.</td>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>1507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Attaignant</td>
<td>Tres breve et familere introduction ...</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>1529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian Le Roy</td>
<td>[Breve et facile instruction ...]</td>
<td>[Paris]</td>
<td>[1567]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>German</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian Virdung</td>
<td>Musica Getutscht ...</td>
<td>Basel</td>
<td>1511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Judenkünig</td>
<td>Utilis &amp; compendiania introductio ...</td>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>151?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ain schoné kunstliche underweisung ...</td>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>1523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Gerle</td>
<td>Musica Teusch</td>
<td>Nuremberg</td>
<td>1532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Musica und Tablatur ...</td>
<td>Nuremberg</td>
<td>1537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eyn Newes sehr Künstlich Lautenbuch ...</td>
<td>Nuremberg</td>
<td>1546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Newsidler</td>
<td>Ein Newgeordent Künstlich Lautenbuch ...</td>
<td>Nuremberg</td>
<td>1550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Das ander Buch. Ein new Künstliche Lauten Buch</td>
<td>Nuremberg</td>
<td>1552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthaeus Waissel</td>
<td>Lautenbuch ...</td>
<td>Frankfort</td>
<td>1592</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
instruments published by Le Roy at this time. While the original French edition of this work is no longer extant, two English translations that were published in 1568 and 1574 survive. No other instructions for the lute were published in France during the remaining years of the century. "For more than forty years, until the early part of the seventeenth century, Adrian Le Roy's instructions remained the basis of lute playing in both France and England." 5

Matthaeus Waissel's Lautenbuch, darin von der Tablatur und Applikation der Lauten . . . (Frankfort, 1592) was the last German method to be published for the Renaissance lute and the last edition of German lute tablature to be printed. The tutor gives a comprehensive, although conservative, description of lute practices in use at the end of the sixteenth century. 6

In 1603, Jean-Baptiste Besard, a Burgundian gentleman, lawyer, doctor, composer, and lutenist living in Germany, published a collection of lute music called the Thesaurus Harmonicus divini Laurencini Romani . . . . Although Besard published this work at Cologne, the text is in Latin and the music is in French lute tablature, rather than German.


The final section of the volume is a treatise on fingering and related aspects of lute technique entitled "De Modo in testudine libellus...", which appeared in revised form in Besard's Novus partus, sive concertationes musicae... (Augsburg, 1617). Besard also issued a German translation of the Novus Partus at Augsburg in the same year under the title Isagoge in artem testudinarium. The unidentified translator of the Isagoge added his own comments to Besard's which he revised slightly. The instructions in Besard's works were the most extensive instructions for lute to appear on the Continent during the first two decades of the seventeenth century.7

Although the works cited above represent the most important sources of information on lute practice to appear in Europe during this period, there are numerous other sources that contain limited amounts of information.

English Lute Books

In England, the earliest printed lute books appeared during the 1560s. Both the Seyence of Lutynge (London, 1566) and Robert Ballard's Exhortation to all Kunde of Men how they shoulde learn to play of the lute (London, 1567) were entered in the Stationer's Register, but no copy of either work has

survived. It is possible that these works were registrated to protect them from infringement but that they were never published due to circumstances not foreseen at the time they were registered.  

An English translation of the tutor issued by Le Roy in [1567] is the earliest surviving lute book to be printed in England. The title-page of the volume reads as follows:

A brief and easye instruction to learne the tableture to conducte and dispose thine hande unto the lute, englished by J. Alford Londenor. Imprinted at London by Iphon Kyngston for Iames Roubouthum and are to be solde at hys shop in paternoster rowe. Lycensed accordynge to the order apoynted in the queenes malestes iniuntions 1568.  

Although the author of the volume is not identified, the text can be definitely ascribed to Adrian Le Roy because it is credited to him in a subsequent reprint that appeared in 1574 (See below). The English edition of 1568 contains twenty-five rules for playing the lute, two fantasies, and twenty-one dances for solo lute. The title-page and plan of organization closely resemble those of Le Roy's cittern method of 1565.

---


The second extant English lute book is a reprint of the 1568 English edition of Le Roy's tutor to which two other sections have been added. The title-page of this print contains a description of the contents of the volume.

A briefe and plaine Instruction to set all Musicke of eight divers tunes in Tableture for the Lute. With a briefe Instruction how to play on the Lute by Tablature, to conduct and dispose thy hand vnto the Lute, with certaine easie lessons for that purpose. And also a third Booke containing divers new excellent tunes. ALL FIRST WRITTEN IN FRENCH BY ADRIAN LE ROY, AND NOW TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY F. Ke. GENTLEMAN. Imprinted at London by Iames Rowbothome, and are to be sold in Pater noster row at the signe of the Lute. ANNO. 1574 10

The first section concerns the entabulation of chansons for the lute and it appears to be a translation of a work published by Le Roy and Robert Ballarde in 1570 in Paris, the Instruction de partir toute musique des huit divers tons en tablature de luth. The second section is the reprint of the English translation of 1568, as noted above. The third section contains twenty examples taken from the lute accompaniments of Le Roy's Livre d'Airs de cour mix sur le luth (Paris, 1571) for voice and lute, plus eight new psalm settings in tablature and one new anonymous piece.11


11 Ibid., p. XIV.
The editors of the critical edition of Le Roy's works for lute suggest that the twenty-five rules for learning to play the lute, which appear in both the 1568 and 1574 translations, may have been first published before 1567, the presumed date of the lost French edition. They note that Le Roy was a lutenist himself and that he published tutors for the guitar in 1551 and for the cittern in 1565 that are very similar to the lute tutor. For these reasons, they suggest that the 1567 edition, now lost, may have been a reprint rather than a new work.\footnote{Ibid., p. XXXVII.} If this is in fact the case, it is possible that the two English lute books entered in the Stationer's Register but now lost, may have been derived from Le Roy's work also. It is not known whether Le Roy was connected in any way with the publication of the two English translations of his works.

In 1596, William Barley published the first printed collection of lute music by English composers. The title-page describes the contents of the volume.

\textit{A New Booke of Tabliture, Containing sundrie easie and familiar Instructions, shewing howe to attaine to the knowledge, to guide and dispose thy hand to play on sundry Instruments, as the Lute, Orpharion, and Bandora: Together with diuers new Lessons to each of these Instruments. Whereunto is added an introduction to Prickesong, and certaine familiar rules of Descant, with other necessarie Tables plainly shewing the true vse of the Scale or Gamut, and also how to set any Lesson higher or lower at your pleasure. Collected together out of the best Authors professing the practice of these Instruments.}
Printed at London for William Barley and are to be sold at his shop in Gratious street. 1596

The easy and familiar instructions that Barley describes are none other than Le Roy's twenty-five rules concerning tablature and lute technique. In many places, Barley's revised version of these rules is clearer than that of the earlier English translations. However, in the twenty-second rule Barley has substituted by as for bias in describing the diagonal lines that indicate sustained tones in lute tablature. He omits Le Roy's twenty-third rule except for a discussion of the repeat sign, which he incorporates into Le Roy's twenty-fourth rule. He also fails to mention that the semibreve was the longest note represented in lute tablature, a fact stated in Le Roy's twenty-fourth rule. Finally, Barley omits the two "accords to tune the lute" and the "fantasie for tunying the lute" by Le Roy. On the other hand, Barley updates the tutor by adopting the six-line tablature staff commonly used in England at this time in place of the five-line tablature staff used in the translations of Le Roy's works and in French lute music published before the last two decades of the sixteenth century.

---

13William Barley, A New Booke of Tabliture (London, 1596), British Library: Shelfmark, K. I. c. 18. (See Figure 7).

A nevy Booke of Tabliture, Containing

 sundrie easie and familiar Instructions, shewing howe to attaine to the knowledge, to guide and dispose thy hand to play on sundry Instruments, as the Lute, Orpharion, and Bandora: Together with divers nevy Lessons to each of these Instruments.

 Whereunto is added an introduction to pricksong, and certaine familiar rules of Descant, with other necessary Tables plainly shewing the true use of the Scale or Gamut, and also how to set any Lesson higher or lower at your pleasure.

 Collected together out of the best Authors professing the practive of these Instruments.

 Printed at London for William Barley and are to be sold at his shop in Gracious street, 1596

 Figure 7. Title-page of A New Booke of Tabliture
While Barley did not write the instructions for lute playing in *A New Booke of Tabliture*, he did apparently write the brief introductions to the portions of his book containing music for the orpharion and bandora. The "introduction to Prickesong, and certaine familliar rules of Descant, with other necessarie Tables plainlye shewing the true use of the Scale or Gamut, and also how to set any Lesson higher or lower at your pleasure" do not appear in the extant copies of *A New Booke of Tabliture*. Apparently, however, these are the same subjects discussed in *The pathway to Musicke*, the title-page of which reads as follows:

The pathway to Musicke, containinge sundrie familiar and easie Rules for the readie and true vnderstanding of the Scale, or Gamma vt: wherein is exactlie shewed by plaine definitions, the principles of this Arts, brieflie laide open by way of questions and answers, for the better instruction of the learner. Whereunto is annexed a treatise of Descant, & certaine Tables, which doth teach how to remove any song higher, or lower from one key to another, neuer heretofore published. Printed at London for William Barley, and are to be sold at his shop in Gratious streete neere Leaden-Hall. 1596.

John Ward states that the only extant copy of *The pathway to Musicke* was originally bound with the British Library copy of *A New Booke of Tabliture*. He speculates that the British library copies of the two works were actually proof copies.

---

not intended for sale because there are several pages in _A New Booke of Tabliture_ on which the tablature has been printed inverted on the page and there are several pages in _The pathway to Musicke_ that were inadequately inked. The inverted pages have been corrected in the other extant copies of _A New Booke of Tabliture_. Ward subsequently states that _The pathway to Musicke_ formed the fourth part of _A New Booke of Tabliture_ but that it is not present in the other extant copies of the print. It is possible that Barley originally intended to publish four separate volumes containing lute instructions and lessons, orpharion lessons, bandora lessons, and a treatise on music theory respectively, but later combined them into a single work. Each of the four above-mentioned items is foliated separately and each contains a separate title-page. Furthermore, the phrase "neuer before published" appears on the title-pages of all but the lute instructions and lessons. Also, the imprint of the lute instructions and lessons ends with "and are to be sold at his shop in Gratious street. 1596," whereas the imprints of the other three title-pages include the phrase "neere Leaden-Hall" after "Gratious street."

The head of each page in the first section bears the

---

16Ward, "A Dowland Miscellany," Appendix P. "Falce and vnperfect"?, p. 123. (See Figure 8).

17Ibid. p. 125.
inscription "An Instruvtion to the Lute," while the pages of the second and third sections are inscribed "An Instruc-
tion to the Orpharion," and "An Instruvction to the Bandore" respectively. This suggests that Barley may have combined the four volumes into a single work and amended the initial title-page accordingly. It is also possible that Barley planned to publish all four segments together but later withdrew The pathway to Musicke from the volume to create two separate publications.

A New Booke of Tablure contains thirty-one pieces of music in the three groups of lessons, seven for lute, fourteen for orphans, six for bandora solo, and four songs with bandora accompaniment. The composers represented include Francis Cutting (11 pieces), John Dowland (7 pieces), Phillip Rossetter (3 pieces), Anthony Holborne (2 pieces), and Edward Johnson (1 piece). In addition, the four songs and three other works for bandora are given without attribu-
tions. The genres represented include pavane, galliard, alman, prelude, character piece, settings of popular tunes, songs, and pieces based on ground bass patterns. None of Le Roy's musical selections are carried over into the print.

John Ward proposes that Francis Cutting may have com-
piled and edited the music in A New Booke of Tablure because Cutting contributed the largest number of pieces to the volume and his name is the only one that is spelled out in all three sections of the print. All the other
composers are identified by their initials only. Barley does not actually claim to have produced the work himself.

I haue here to my great cost and charges, caused sundrie lessons to be collected together for the Lute, Orpharion, Bandora, and out of the best Authors that hath professed the practice of those Istrumentes, only for the ease and furtherance of such as are desirous to have a taste of this sweet & commendable practise of musique... Ward also states that John Danter and his assistants did the actual printing of the work.

In 1603, Thomas Robinson published the only entirely original English lute tutor to appear during the first half of the seventeenth century. The contents of the work are described on the title-page.

In God rejoyce, With Instrument and voyce. THE SCHOOLE OF MYSICKE: WHEREIN IS TAUGHT, THE PERFECT METHOD, O£ TRVE FINGERing of the Lute, Pandora, Orpharion, and Viol de Gamba; with most infallible generall rules, both easie and delightfull. Also, a method, how you may be your owne instructor for Prick-song, by the help of your Lute, without any other teacher; with lessons of all sorts, for your further and better instruction. Newly composed by Thomas Robinson, Lutenist. London: Printed by Tho. Este, for Simon Waterson, dwelling at the signe of the Crowne in Paules Church-yard. 1603.

18 Ibid., p. 124.
In God rejoynce,  
With Instrument  
and voyce.

THE  
SCHOOLE OF  
MUSICKE:  
WHEREIN IS TAUGHT, THE PERFECT METHOD, OF TRUE FINGERING of the Lute, Pompon, Orpharion, and Viold de Gambay, with most infallible general rules, both easie and delightfull.

Also, a method, how you may be your own instructor for finger-song, by the help of your Lute, without any other teacher: with lessons of all sorts, for your further and better instruction.

Newly compos'd by Thomas Robinson,  
Lutemist.

LONDON:  
Printed by Tho. Ellis, for Simon Waterson, dwelling at the signe of the Crown in Paul's  
[printed mark]

Figure 9. Title-page of The Schoole of Musicke
Robinson's tutor is cast "Dialogue wise, betwixt a Knight, (who hath children to be taught) and Timotheus, that should teach them." Robinson discusses holding the instrument, hand position, recognition of the frets and courses, tuning, diapasons, note values, right hand and left hand fingerings, ornamentation, tempo, dynamics, sight-reading, and several items of a pedagogical nature.

The forty-five musical selections composed or arranged by Robinson include two fantasias, four galliards, one pavan, two almaines, five gigues, five toys, eleven settings of psalms, and fifteen settings of popular tunes or related pieces with individual titles. Six of these pieces are duets for two lutes, with one lute part printed inverted on the facing page to allow the second lutenist to read from the opposite side of the same book.

In contrast to A New Booke of Tabliture, none of the pieces is specifically designated for the orpharion or the bandora. In regard to the viola da gamba, Robinson states that

... by your skill in playing vpon the Lute, and the knowledge you haue in the pricksong, you may verie easilie attaine to play vpon the Viol de Gambo, either Tabliture or by pricksong notes. For the carriage of your left hand vpon the Lute, is likewise justly to be obserued vpon the base Viol, as shall bee more plainely declared in his due place after the Lute lessons.  

---

23 Ibid., sig. C2v.
The instruction for the viola da gamba consists of two sentences concerning the manner of holding the viol and the bow that are followed by several exercises and a number of psalm settings for voice and viol or voice and lute.

The instructions and compositions for the lute were apparently intended to serve for the orpharion and bandora as well. This interchangeability of instructions for various plucked stringed instruments is corroborated by Robinson's use of many of the same rules in his *New Citharen Lessons* of 1609.

"... Except for the tuning instructions, there is nothing in the cittern tutor that is specific to the technique of that instrument... Like Pierre Phalese and Adrian Le Roy on the Continent, Robinson transfers his rules bodily from one instrument to the other."

The *Varietie of Lute-Lesons* was the last collection of solo music for the Renaissance lute to be published in England, and the music in it is comparable to music found in the best Continental collections. In contrast to the works by Barley and Robinson, the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* does not contain any music for orpharion or bandora, although several of the selections may have been arranged for solo lute from pieces composed for other instruments. There are compositions by Italian, German, Belgian, French, and English

---


composers in a variety of compositional styles in the print. The forty-two musical selections vary in regard to the level of technical expertise required to perform them, but none is really appropriate for a beginner. Many of the pieces require the uncompromising technique of a professional performer. The selections are divided into six groups containing seven pieces each, and individual selections vary in length from approximately a half page for some of the corantoes and voltes to four pages for "Mounsier's Almaine" by Daniell Bacheler. Although pavans and galliards make up the largest part of the English repertorie, they are accompanied by equal numbers of fantasies, almaines, corantoes, and voltes in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons.

Thirteen pieces in the print are not found in any other English or foreign source, and an additional eight pieces have no concordances that date from 1610 or earlier. However, even though these are the earliest extant examples of these pieces, they may not have been composed specifically for publication in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons. For example, the pavan by Thomas Morley is unique to the print, but Morley had been dead seven years in 1610. Similarly, four of the almaines in the volume are thought to be arrangements of music composed for Ben Jonson's Masque of Queenes in 1609, but no score of the original setting has survived. The remaining twenty-one pieces in the print are also found in one or more sources that predate the Varietie of Lute-Lessons.
The musical selections in the Varistie of Lute-Lessons are introduced by two treatises on lute playing, the first of which, "Necessarie Observations Belonging to the Lute, and Lute playing, by John Baptisto Besardo of Visonti," is comparable in length to the treatises in Barley's and Robinson's prints. Besard's treatise opens with pedagogically oriented remarks on learning to play the lute. These are followed by a discussion of lute technique that centers around the fingerling of lute music. Robert Dowland has placed the following captions beside the appropriate parts of Besard's text: "To chuse a LVTE for a learner, What lessons to begin withall, For using both hands together, A Diminution is a Crotchett, Quaver, &c., Of laying the finger crosse fret, For Griping of stops in B., Of Holding, For the use of the right hand, To know how to strike single strings, being found amongst full stops, Wherefore the numbers before the letters seruth, Of playing with the two fingers," and "A good Note."

Besard's treatise is followed by "Other Necessary Observations belonging to the Lvte, by John Dowland, Batcheler of Musicke." Dowland's text is comparable in length to Besard's text, and it is divided into the following sections: "For

---

26Barley's introductory rules occupy seventeen quarto-sized pages, including two illustrations of a lute that occupy nearly a page each, and moderately sized spaces between rules. The treatises by Robinson and Besard occupy approximately seven and a half folio-sized pages for the corresponding items. Dowland's treatise occupies six and a half folio-sized pages, but it contains a single full-page illustration, whereas the other treatises contain a number of examples in tablature each.
chusing of Lute-strings, Of setting the right sizes of Strings
upon the Lute, Of fretting the Lute," and "Of tuning the Lute."
The treatise concludes with a diagram of the intervals between
the open courses of the lute, and it is followed directly by
the musical selections.

The introductory items by Robert Dowland and the two
treatises by Besard and John Dowland comprise approximately
one-quarter of the print. Among the musical selections, the
fantasies and pavans collectively make up one-third of the
print, the galliards and almaines make up one-quarter of the
print, and the corantoes and voltes make up slightly less than
one sixth of the print (See Table 4 on page 76).

The English gentleman, Robert Fludd, lived in London
from 1574 to 1637 and wrote a number of works on scientific
and philosophical subjects. His Utrisque Cosmi Maioris silici-
et et Minoris Metaphysica, Physica Atque Technica Historia,
an extensive multivolume work, was published at Oppenheim
between 1617 and 1621 even though it was written in England
during the 1590s. The volume of this work that appeared in
1618 contains descriptions of musical instruments in use dur-
ing the last years of the sixteenth century. Fludd seems to
have been an amateur lutenist, but his discussion of the lute
does not contain any information on playing technique. The
treatise is not the work "of a musical pedagogue but of a
universal scholar obliged as much by custom as by interest
to pay token respect to Musica Practica. [It] shows what an
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item or section</th>
<th>Incipit or title</th>
<th>Foliation</th>
<th>Page in facsimile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title-page</td>
<td>&quot;Varietie of Lvte-Lessons:&quot;</td>
<td>[sig. Ar]</td>
<td>[[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank page</td>
<td></td>
<td>[sig. Av]</td>
<td>[2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>&quot;To the Right Worshipfyll, Worthy, and Vertvovs Knight, Sir Thomas Mounson.&quot;</td>
<td>[sig. A2r]</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>&quot;To the Readers whosoeuer.&quot;</td>
<td>[sig. A2v]</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>&quot;Thomas Smith Gent: In Praise of the Worke.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatise</td>
<td>&quot;Necessarie Observations Belonging to the Lvte and Lvte playing&quot; by John Baptista Besardo of Visonti:</td>
<td>sig. Br</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatise</td>
<td>&quot;Other Necessary Observations belonging to the Lvte,&quot; by John Dovland, Batcheler of Musicke.</td>
<td>sig. Dr</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagram</td>
<td>[Intervals between the open courses of the lute]</td>
<td>sig. E2r</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablature</td>
<td>&quot;Fantasies for the Lute.&quot;</td>
<td>sig. E2v</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablature</td>
<td>&quot;Pauins for the Lute.&quot;</td>
<td>sig. H2v</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablature</td>
<td>&quot;Galliards for the Lute.&quot;</td>
<td>sig. L2v</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablature</td>
<td>&quot;Almaines for the Lute.&quot;</td>
<td>sig. Or</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablature</td>
<td>&quot;Corantoes for the Lute.&quot;</td>
<td>sig. Qv</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tablature</td>
<td>&quot;Voltes for the Lute.&quot;</td>
<td>sig. R2r</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final page</td>
<td>&quot;Finis.&quot;</td>
<td>sig. S2v</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
English gentleman, brought up in the Elizabethan era, knew about the lute.27

The Lute’s Apology for Her Excellency by Richard Matthew was published in London in 1652. As stated on its title-page, it was the first book to be published in England for the French lute, which had largely replaced the Renaissance lute of Dowland’s day in England at this time. The music in this volume requires a lute with eight courses of strings on the fingerboard and four diapasons running to a separate pegbox, tuned according to the French “flat tuning” for the lute, i.e., BB♭ C D Eb F G A d g bb d’ f’. The music is of rather amateurish quality and the volume contains no instructions concerning playing technique.28

The next treatise on lute playing to appear in England is found in a manuscript copied by Mary Burwell during the 1660s.29 For the most part, the discussion of playing technique in the volume concerns the French style of playing popularized in England by Jacques Gaultier during the first half of the seventeen century. This style was known as the style brisé, or broken style, because the music contains a

29 Thurston Dart states that Mary Burwell copied the treatise from a manuscript loaned to her by her lute-master. See “Miss Mary Burwell’s Instruction Book for the Lute,” Galpin Society Journal 11 (1958): 3-62, for a complete study of the treatise including much of the original work.
great many arpeggiated chords. However, the treatise contains a number of references to the Renaissance lute in a description of the history of the lute. The manuscript also provides a clear description of the style brisé that is useful in contrasting seventeenth-century lute practice with the Renaissance practice of Dowland's day.

By the time Thomas Mace published Musick's Monument in 1676, the style brisé had completely replaced the Renaissance practice in England. Mace's comments on the origins of the new style and its development in England include remarks about practices current during the first years of the seventeenth century, that are particularly helpful in reconstructing the performance practices of the earlier style. Musick's Monument contains the most extensive discussion of lute practice ever to be published in England and much of the information in it is not found in any other source. In particular, Maces's treatment of the care of the lute is unrivaled in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century didactic works for the lute.

---

IV. THE NOTATION OF RENAISSANCE LUTE MUSIC

The popularity of the lute during the renaissance was due in part to the simplicity of the system used to notate its music. Lute tablature is a graphic notation that indicates the position of notes on the fingerboard of the lute rather than their pitch. The only musical knowledge required to play from tablature is an understanding of rhythmic relationships and a familiarity with the procedures for tuning the instrument. Since tablature involves no pitch reference, Renaissance lutenists could also play other plucked stringed instruments that used the same kind of tablature without having to compensate for different tunings. Furthermore, since all but the lowest and highest pitches of the lute's range can be produced at more than one position on the fingerboard, tablature simplifies the performer's task by indicating which of the positions is to be used in a given passage. The choice of position, which is frequently determined by other notes that must be played simultaneously or in close temporal proximity to the note in question, becomes the responsibility of the composer or scribe. As a result, lute music can be played by an amateur musician even if he does not understand the implications of choosing one fingering over another.
Pitch Representation

The individual systems of lute tablature that developed in Italy, France, and Germany all share the same organizational principles, but each system represents the pitches of lute music as positions on the fingerboard in different ways. The Italian and French systems utilize a series of parallel lines to represent the courses of lute strings and a sequence of numbers (Italian) or letters (French) to indicate the frets along each course. German tablature utilizes a separate character (numbers and letters) to represent each position on the fingerboard, and consequently has no lines to represent the courses of strings. The three systems also orient the tablature image in different ways with respect to the physical position of the courses when the lute is being played. In the Italian system, the top line of the tablature represents the course of the lute that is most distant from the ground when the instrument is being played. This course is the lowest one in pitch. In the French system, the top line of the tablature represents the course which is closest to the ground and highest in pitch. The German system indicates simultaneously sounding notes in a vertical line, but the spacing of the characters does not correspond to their relative locations on the courses of the lute (See Figures 10 - 12 following).

The system of lute tablature employed in England resembles the French system very closely, but the five-line tablature staff used in France before 1584 was generally replaced by
Figure 10. Italian lute tablature. "Recercare" by Francesco Spinacino from *Intabolatura di Lauto. Libro primo*. (Venice, 1507).
Figure 11. French lute tablature. "Paduana I" by Pierre Phalese from Liber IIII, Carminum pro Testudine . . . (Louvain, 1546)
Figure 12. German lute tablature. "Der Ziegler in berhecken" by Hans Newsidler from Ein neues Lauttenbuchlein (Nuremberg, 1540)
a six-line staff in England.

The letters by which the frets are indicated in English lute-music derive from the English chancery hand: they are highly stylized and designed primarily to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation. A typical alphabet might be: $a\ b\ r\ d\ e\ f\ g\ h\ j\ k\ l\ m\ n\ o\ p$.¹

In most sources, the characters $i$ and $y$ were used interchangeably. There is no separate character for $j$ in the tablature alphabet. In the manuscript sources, the $r$ is frequently used for $c$ to distinguish it from $e$, although this is not always done in printed lute books.

The variation in appearance of individual characters within and between manuscripts is considerable, as are the degrees of legibility and accuracy of the scribes' work. Printed books of lute tablature furnish more uniform characters than manuscripts, but minor variations resulting from broken type faces and inconsistencies in the inking process are common. The printing of lute tablature in England at this time was usually done by the single-impression process developed in Paris at the end of the first quarter of the sixteenth century. This process uses a fixed grid of six raised flanges to print the string lines, between which the characters for the fret letters are assembled in their respective positions. A single line of rhythmic signs is set above the top line of the

tablature grid. While books printed by this process are not as visually appealing as books printed by the multiple-impression process developed by Petrucci in Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the single-impression process made music printing faster and more economical.\(^2\)

The grid used in single-impression printing of lute music prevents characters from extending across the string lines and requires the use of less elaborate letters than those found in most manuscripts. Similarly, characters cannot overlap as they frequently do in manuscripts. Both of these factors and the uniformity of the characters make printed lute music much easier to read than manuscripts of the period. The characters used for the lute tablature in *The Schoole of Musicke* and the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* are based on the following designs:

\[
adefgilmn
\]

As the range of the lute was extended downward through the addition of lower bass courses at the end of the sixteenth century, signs were added to the basic tablature grid to represent these courses. Notes on the seventh course were indicated by placing the tablature letter below the grid and courses below the seventh were notated with a series of diagonal lines below the staff that represented the courses

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 26.
between the sixth course and the course to be played. For example, the eighth course would be indicated by a character placed below a single diagonal line; e.g., /a , and the ninth course would be indicated by a character placed below two diagonal lines; e.g., //a . The use of arabic numerals below the tablature staff to indicate these low bass courses did not become common until the Baroque era, when the lute was strung with thirteen courses of strings.

Rhythmic Elements

The portion of lute tablature that conveys the rhythm of lute music simplifies the reading of complex patterns and cross-rhythms. The signs that indicate the rhythm are not attached to the characters that indicate the position of the notes on the fingerboard and do not relate to them individually. Instead, the rhythms of all the polyphonic voices are combined into a single line above the tablature grid that indicates only the interval between successive notes of all the voices collectively. This composite approach to rhythm does not indicate the duration of individual notes except in homophonic passages. Thus, voice-leading is not expressed directly in tablature and there is no means of indicating voice crossing or pitch doubling. However, the location of the characters on the lines of the tablature grid gives a rough idea of the voice-leading that is adequate in most cases.

The rhythmic signs that appear above the tablature grid
can be arranged in several different ways. In a system found chiefly in the early sources, a rhythmic sign is placed over every note, chord, or group of notes that are to be played simultaneously, so that each new attack is indicated by a rhythmic sign. These signs are often grouped together by horizontal bridging of the stems of signs having the same rhythmic value. These groupings do not necessarily indicate the subdivisions of the basic beat and signs of different values are never bridged in lute tablature.

In another system, which became popular in later sources of lute music, there is a kind of abbreviation of repeated rhythmic signs. The signs are only placed above the first note or chord in a series of notes with the same rhythmic value, and they remain in effect until cancelled by a new sign. Since successive characters of the same value have no signs at all, no beaming of signs is possible. When a given value remains in effect beyond the end of line of tablature, a redundant sign is supplied at the beginning of the new line.

The advantages of the abbreviated system of rhythmic signs are reduced copying time or typesetting time and a less cluttered appearance of the tablature. The disadvantage of the system is that the metrical subdivision of the measure is less readily apparent because of the absence of beamed signs. Syncopated rhythms can be particularly confusing with this system.
In a few manuscript sources, there are unique systems of rhythmic shorthand which represent the practice of individual scribes rather than a widespread custom. The two systems described above account for all but a small portion of the English lute repertoire.³

The following signs were used to indicate the rhythm of lute music: \( \hat{\cdot} \) or \( \hat{\cdot} \), \( \hat{\cdot} \), \( \hat{\cdot} \), \( \hat{\cdot} \). In some sources, the flags of the signs are looped back to the stem in the following manner: \( \hat{\cdot} \), \( \hat{\cdot} \), \( \hat{\cdot} \). While Marc Southard states that this arrangement indicates triple meter,⁴ this does not seem to have been a consistent practice. Numerous sources contain pieces in triple meter that are notated with the normal arrangement, and other sources use the looped style of flag for pieces in duple meter. In a few sources, the numeral 3 was inserted in the tablature to indicate a triplet rhythm in a passage otherwise in duple meter.⁵

Rests occurring in all voices simultaneously are most frequently indicated by the presence of a rhythmic sign over an empty space in the tablature grid. Less frequently, rests

---

³Ibid., pp. 76-9.


are indicated by underlining, overlining, or striking through the rhythm sign. Alternately, the rhythm sign may be placed within the tablature grid.\(^6\) In late sources, the symbols for rests from contemporary mensural notation are sometimes placed on a line of the tablature grid.

The relationship between tablature rhythmic signs and their mensural counterparts is frequently indicated in lute tutors by charts such as the following one from Thomas Robinson's *The Schoole of Musicke.*\(^7\)

```
\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{tablature_chart.png}
\caption{Semitrave, Minim, Crachet, Quaver, Semiquaver.}
\end{figure}
```

In his *Method for the Renaissance Lute*, Stanley Buetens states that "The two flag \(\text{flag} \) can be considered the unit of meter, having one beat in a \(\text{C} \) meter."\(^8\) While the semibreve actually corresponds to a whole-note in modern notation, most editors of lute music transcribe the original values with modern


notes that are one-half or one-quarter as long to reflect current usage, in which the units of the beat are indicated by smaller values than those in use during the Renaissance.

All of the tablature rhythmic signs may be extended by half of their values with a dot of augmentation except the semibreve. The semibreve was the longest value that the lute was considered capable of sustaining and it was rarely augmented in lute tablature. According to Adrian Le Roy,

... The Lute striken but once, could not hold the sound above the time of one Semibreve whiche must bee understooode for the perfection of the more greater harmonie; albeit that the sounde of the stryng, might partly endure the value of a pricke added, or the half more, but the sound towards the ende, is alwaies naturally of lesse force, as the seconde sounde of an Echo in his doublyng. So maie the pricke of the Semibreve (as it shall like hym that setteth[]), be left out from beyng marked with any letter in Tablature, or els be marked by the discretion, and judgement of the eare. For it is certain that the sound is more strong, and of Longer tariyng, accordyng to the goodness of the Lute.

Because the rhythmic signs of lute tablature do not indicate the duration of individual notes, the misalignment of tablature letters can be confusing and difficult to detect.

---

9 Adrian Le Roy, Les InstructionsPour le Luth (1574), vol. 1, p. 21. The maximum duration of a tone on the lute depends on the size of the instrument, the quality of the wood in it, and the construction of the soundboard. On any given lute, the maximum duration of a tone depends on the manner in which the strings are struck and the position of the note on the fingerboard, i.e., whether the note is on an open course or a fretted course, a lower fret or a higher fret, a bass course or a treble course. While the sound of a lute is percussive and dies away rapidly after the initial impulse sets the strings in motion, the overtones produced by the strings create a tone of surprising carrying power with a distinctive timbre that allows the lute to be heard in ensembles of louder instruments.
In some sources, short vertical marks connect characters that are to be played simultaneously. The guides are particularly helpful when single notes must be played against florid passages in another voice.

The duration of individual notes is sometimes indicated approximately by horizontal or diagonal lines that extend from a note to the point where that note is succeeded by a new note or an implied rest. These lines are not drawn precisely enough to indicate the exact duration of the note, but the use of the line alerts the performer to voice-leading patterns in which the indicated part is sustained while other parts move more rapidly. These lines are most commonly found in the bass voice, but they are occasionally used in upper parts as well.

Lute tablature contains a number of lines which extend vertically across all six lines of the tablature grid. In the earliest sources of lute music, these lines mark off the ends of sections or phrases. In later sources, they were also used to mark off regular groups of rhythmic units corresponding to a fraction or multiple of the basic beat. William Barley describes the function of these lines as follows,

... as for the other barres that come straight overthwart the sixe lines or stringes, serue for no other purposs, but to make a distinction, and inclose the measures, sometimes of a semibreve, and sometimes of two semibreve, according to the minde of him that bringeth musicke into the tabliture, for the Lute... 10

These lines facilitate the reading of rhythms by grouping the characters into units of equal length, but they do not necessarily imply metrical accent. The lines sometimes coincide with modern bar lines in transcriptions of lute music, but in many cases they occur with half, double, or triple the frequency.

There is no precise means of indicating when notes in all the voices of a composition simultaneously extend across these lines in tablature. Le Roy's instructions for intabulating chansons for the lute contain several examples in which the unbarred mensural notation of the vocal model cannot be rendered clearly in lute tablature because at some points all of the voices of the composition extend across the tablature bar line. Le Roy divides the problematic notes into two shorter values and places one rhythmic sign in each bar. The second sign has no tablature letters under it: The meaning of the tablature at these points is not clear without reference to the vocal models because Le Roy uses the same system to indicate rests in the tablature.\textsuperscript{11} In the \textit{Varietie of Lute-Lessons}, measures thirty-seven through forty-four of "The Earle of Darby's Galliard" contain three syncopations in which all the voices extend across the bar line simultaneously. Dowland notates the portion of the notes that fall in the succeeding

\textsuperscript{11}Adrian Le Roy, \textit{Les Instructions Pour le Luth} (1574), vol. 1, p. 31, "Un doux nennin," measure 4, and p. 44, "Ce faux amour," measure 31, contain notes carried across the previous bar line.
measure with a dot of augmentation after the bar line.
No rhythmic sign or tablature letter appears in the first
part of the succeeding measure (See Figure 13). This
arrangement is only usable when the next note in the succeed-
ing measure occurs after an interval of one-half the portion
of the tied note that occurs in the initial bar. A third
approach to the problem of tied notes is found occasionally
in manuscripts. This approach involves shifting the bar
lines to new positions that will accommodate the tied notes
within a single measure, but it produces irregular bars of
one-and-one-half or two times the normal length. The dis-
placement of the barline may or may not be corrected at a
later point in the composition. There are several instances
of irregular barring in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, but
these appear to be the result of printer's errors rather
than intentionally altered measures.

... In the classical period we find a strict enforce-
ment of regular barring undreamed-of in the vocal music
of the time... Regular barring, due mainly to the
influence of the dance, is perhaps the lute's greatest
contribution to instrumental style, just as regularity
of phrase and bar grouping was its greatest contribution
to musical form.12

The use of proportional mensuration signs, which were never
as common in English lute music as in Continental lute music,
deprecated as regular barring of measures became more common.

---

12Lumsden, "The Sources of English Lute Music (1540-
1620)," p. 84.
Figure 13. "The Earle of Darby's Galliard" by John Dowland, from the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, sig. k2v.
In a proportional sense, [bar lines] reinforce the signs, which began to fade from use and, as appears clearly in the compositions where the signs are lacking, they assumed sometimes, by themselves, the role of the signs. 13

In the last years of the sixteenth century, mensural rhythmic signs began to appear in lute tablature in place of the headless signs formerly used. By 1615, the new kind of signs had almost completely replaced the older signs. The introduction of mensural rhythmic signs in lute tablature was paralleled by and probably related to the use of a tablature notation for the music written for the lyra-viol. Music for that instrument was initially written in mensural notation because its early repertoire was essentially homophonic. As lyra-viol music became more and more polyphonic, a tablature similar to lute tablature was adopted for the instrument's music, but the mensural rhythmic signs were retained in the tablature. The use of mensural rhythmic signs in lute music first occurs in a manuscript that dates from approximately 1595. 14


14. Lumsden, "The Sources of English Lute Music (1540-1620)," pp. 81-2. Some sources contain tablatures for the lute and the lyra viol. When the appropriate instrument is not indicated, works for lyra viol can be identified from characteristic features of lyra-viol music deriving from the bowing action of the performer's right hand. Only chords whose tones lie exclusively on adjacent strings, i.e., chords having no 'skipped' strings, can be bowed by the player without a break in the sound. Therefore, tablature for the lyra-viol rarely contains chords of four or more voices. Lyra-viol music frequently progresses in consecutive thirds and chords are usually closely spaced.
Other Symbols in Lute Tablature

Lute tablature frequently contains symbols to indicate the appropriate right-hand fingerings for many of the notes. The system most commonly used for this purpose utilizes a series of one to three dots, corresponding to the index, middle, and ring fingers of the right hand, placed near the tablature letters to which they apply. As will be discussed in the following chapter of the thesis, it is not necessary to indicate the fingering of every note because certain conventions were consistently applied even when no fingering dots are given.

Left-hand fingerings were not usually indicated in lute tablature except in examples associated with didactic treatises about lute technique. The most commonly used system of marking left-hand fingering utilizes the arabic numerals 1, 2, 3, and 4 to denote the index, middle, ring, and little fingers of the left hand. In practice, the lutenist was ordinarily required to deduce the appropriate left-hand fingerings from the sequence of positions indicated in the tablature.

Symbols such as #, X, ♩, and ♩ were frequently used to designate specific embellishment figures to be applied to the notes which they accompany. The symbols vary in design and interpretation from source to source and are absent from some works entirely. The sources that include these symbols rarely provide descriptions of the embellishments that they represent and modern interpretation of them is problematic in many cases.
The following signs were generally used to mark the sections of a composition and/or a point of repetition, .\|./, |.|, and :|:|:; whereas || was used to indicate sectional divisions without repetitions exclusively. When used in conjunction with the first group of signs, the last sign may indicate first and second endings of repeated sections. These symbols were not used consistently in all sources and must be interpreted in the light of the musical design of the piece under study. The signs $\cap$ and $\text{𝔑}$ were known as orgaine points, and they indicated an unmeasured pause at the middle or end of a composition. Le Roy refers to the symbol, $\Upsilon$, as a rehearsal point, and uses it to mark the beginning of repetitions that do not coincide with the sectional divisions of a piece. In the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, there is a similar mark, $\chi$, in the second coranto, but there is no explanation of its meaning.

The errors most commonly found in lute tablature include letters placed on the wrong line of the staff, misaligned horizontally, or omitted entirely. Incorrect or redundant letters and rhythmic signs are also common. In some instances, passages of several measures are severely confused, omitted entirely, or transposed to another position in the composition.
V. "NECESSARIE OBSERVATIONS BELONGING TO THE LYTE, 
AND LYTE PLAYING," BY JOHN BAPTISTO BESARDO OF VISONTI

The following discussion of Jean-Baptiste Besard's "Necessarie Observations Belonging to the Lute, and Lute Playing" includes a detailed analysis of specific items in the treatise and an examination of the position of the treatise in relation to other didactic works for the lute. The discussion is organized as a series of comparisons of Besard's treatment of individual topics to the treatments accorded the same topics in other lute tutors and, when applicable, the didactic literature for related instruments. These comparisons bring out the strong and weak points of Besard's treatise and indicate the extent to which it reflects new developments in lute technique that arose from changes in the textural and harmonic design of lute music and the expansion of the lute's range during the last years of the sixteenth century and the first years of the seventeenth century. The discussion concludes with an examination of the relevance of the lute technique described by Besard to a historically accurate and stylistically correct approach to the performance of lute music from the same period.

The analyses of individual aspects of or topics within Besard's treatise are organized according to a chronological
presentation of sources cited to put Besard's remarks in historical perspective. Thus, the information from tutors that predate Besard's treatise is given before Besard's remarks on a given topic unless specific considerations require another approach. The majority of the comparative references in the analyses come from other lute tutors published in England, including the English editions of Le Roy's French tutor, but Continental publications are also cited when pertinent to the discussion. While the organization of this discussion follows the basic plan of Besard's treatise, some items have been relocated to make a more systematic presentation of the information possible. Topics of a general, pedagogical nature have been presented before specific aspects of lute technique, regardless of their original position in the treatise, and individual details of left-hand and right-hand technique have been rearranged to simplify the comparisons to other sources. Topics omitted by Besard but essential to an understanding of lute technique are inserted at the appropriate points in the discussion.

Pedagogical Aspects of Besard's Treatise

The topics most frequently discussed in lute tutors are fundamentals of rhythm, lute tablature, and fingering. Although introductory remarks by several authors stress the importance of a progressive plan of study, the examples used
to illustrate specific points in the tutors are rarely organized progressively, nor are they extensive enough to insure the development of sound technique without being supplemented with material from other sources.

Modern principles of presenting pedagogical material in the order of progressive difficulty, and of teaching instrumental technique through musical examples geared to the students level of competence generally were not features of the sixteenth-century didactic works for lute.¹ This statement appears to be an accurate assessment of early lute tutors in general, but it should not be taken to mean that there were no sections within individual tutors that were organized according to progressively increasing difficulty of execution or that none of the instructions was illustrated with appropriate examples. The didactic portions of these tutors are simply too brief to provide more than an initial acquaintance with the topics examined. These tutors cannot be considered complete courses of study for the development of full command of the instrument, the claims of their authors notwithstanding. This was due in part to the dual functions of most of these publications.

Essentially all of the didactic sources have the dual purpose of instructing non-players in the rudiments of the instrument's technique while at the same time presenting music geared to experienced performers, often resulting in a seemingly self-contradictory organization. It was not until Matthaus Waissel's Lautenbuch of 1592 and Jean Baptiste Besard's Thesaurus Harmonicus of 1603, that modern concepts of instrumental pedagogy

were systematically employed in tutors for the lute.  

As the pedagogical implications of the organization and selection of illustrative examples in discussions of lute technique received greater attention from authors writing at the end of the sixteenth century, the explanations of lute tablature and fingering were often supplemented with comments on how the student should approach the process of learning to play an instrument. These comments generally concern choosing a lute, practice techniques, sight reading, memorization, and the importance of a good teacher or instruction book. Not all of these topics appear in every book written since the last decade of the sixteenth century, however, and fingering still receives the most detailed exposition of any item.

The authors of early lute tutors frequently relied on examples to convey much of the information graphically without detailed explanations of the principles of fingering. In many cases, the examples were too brief to be clearly understood by a novice and the relationship between the examples and actual pieces of music was tenuous at best. The treatises by Besard and Thomas Robinson are notable for their clear explanation of the principles of fingering and the descriptions of their application to the examples in the treatises. In spite of these important improvements, there are still problems in some parts of these publications.

---

\(^{2}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp.} \ 7-8.\)
In many of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century lute tutors, there is a significant gap between the level of technical competency addressed in the didactic remarks at the beginning of the publication and the demands of the subsequent musical selections. This gap may represent the publisher's attempt to produce a product that would appeal to novices and accomplished amateurs alike. The compositions in Robinson's *The Schoole of Musicke* are more appropriate for beginners than those found in most lute tutors. In spite of the fact that Besard addresses his treatise to beginners, the compositions in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* represent advanced repertoire for the most part and none of them is really suited for the limited technique of the novice. A statement by John Dowland at the beginning of his "Other Necessary Observations Belonging to the Lvte" may partially account for this fact and the absence of an explanation of lute tablature in the volume.

When wee take in hand to instruct or teach a man on the LVTE, wee doe suppose that hee knoweth before (be hee never so rude) what a String, a Fret, a Stop, a Stroke, &c meaneth: therefore it were not convenient for a Teacher to stand vpon every small point and matter that may be thought appertayning to the Art of Lute-playing, but to leaue and let passe ouer some things, as apparrant of themselues, or easie to be discerned of every learner, by Nature, Sense, Reason, or common Experience, and therefore we will onely entreat and give resolution of those things which are most needfull... 3

---

Apparently, John Dowland intended his treatise to serve the experienced amateur who already knew the basics of lute playing rather than the novice. The following comment by Besard, concerning an omission in his own treatise, suggests that both authors may have omitted information that they felt was readily available from other sources.

I have set downe no rules for transposing out of Musicke to the Scale of the LVTE [i.e., entabulating], because you have that delivered in the most elegant field of Emanuel Adrianus, an excellent Musician, and in many other Bookes.\(^4\)

William Barley paraphrases Adrian Le Roy in his address "To the Reader" of A New Booke of Tabliture in suggesting that his tutor was intended for beginners who were unable to study with a teacher.

I would request those who hath beene long studious of this Arte and hath attained the perfection thereof, that they would not take my travaile and cost in ill part, seeing onlie I have done it for their sakes which be learners in this Art and cannot have such recourse to teachers as they would.\(^5\)

Unfortunately, Barley's instructions (taken from Le Roy's tutor) are among the least suited for independent study because of the ordering of some parts of the discussion of


fingering, and few of Barley's musical selections are really suited for the needs of a beginner.

Thomas Robinson states that he has designed his tutor for the aspiring student with no previous experience. The Schoole of Musicke is

... a method by generall rules, most perfect and easie, so that with my instructions, one (that cannot use the Lute, or other instrument) may verie readilie attaine to a good habit thereof.6

If we are to believe another statement by Robinson, the hap-hazard design of earlier lute tutors reflects the pedagogical practice of many lute masters of the period.

... It is verie true, that manie, both men and women, that in their youth could have played ... passing well, in their age, or when they once have beene married, have forgotten all, as if they had never known what a Lute had ment: and the reason I finde to proceed (in the beginning of their learning) from the ignorance of their teachers, for in older times they strove (only) to have a quick hand upon the Lute, to runne hurre hurre, keeping a Catt in the gutter vpon the ground, now true then false, now vp now downe, with such painfull play, mocking, mowing, gripeing, grinning, sighing, supping, heaving, shouldeering, labouring, and sweating, like cart lades, without any skill in the world, or rule or reason to play a lesson, or finger the Lute, or guide the bodie, or know anything, that belongeth, either to skill or reason.7

Robinson's tutor is clearly the best suited for use by a beginner, both in terms of the clarity of the explanations and the level of difficulty of the musical selections, a


7 Ibid.
number of which are arranged as duets for the student and
his teacher.

Besard suggests that his treatise may be used as a
supplement to the instruction of a private teacher or, in
the event that a teacher is unavailable, as a method of
study by itself, in spite of his omission of discussions
of lute tablature and the rhythmic organization of lute music.

Heare thou hast (gentle Reader) a fashion of prac-
tising on the LVTE, such as I could gather out of the
Observations of the famous and diuine Laurencinus, others,
and mine owne: comprehended in a few rules . . . by which
thou mayest more easily obtaine the right practice on the
LVTE. Take therefore this worke of mine in good part,
whosoeuer thou art that readest it, with a minde to
profit thyselfe: yet thinke not I set it forth to the end
to draw thee away from the liuely teaching of thy Maister,
(whose speach doth farre exceede all writing,) or presume
to teach those which are Maisters in the ART these triviall
ways, but I offer helpe to young beginners, and such as
oftentimes want of a Teacher, which it will not be vnpleas-
ing for them to vse, when they finde themselues weariest
with those difficulties which lightly befall young learners.
. . . I would with all my heart haue giuen thee the habit
and power to play well, rather then the meanes of learning
to play, if it were possible to be had without labour.

Whosoeuer therefore will vse these our rules, if hee
be wholli raw in the Art, aboue all other things let him
perswade himselfe, that the knowledge of this ART though
it be hard, yet it is easilie to be obtayne by him that
is in this sort conditioned. First if hee haue no great
defect, and haue that naturall desire towards MVSICKE,
which hath bee the founder of excellencie in every ART:
Secondly, if hee stint himselfe in his learning with such
labour and exercise that is moderate, and continuall, not
such vnreasonable paines as many doe weary themselues with:
Thirdly, if he be patient for a good long time, for common-
ly this brings vs whether wee will or no to the highest of
the SCIENCES. To these if he adioyne the industrious and
liuely instructions of a Teacher, that is a good Artist,
hee cannot but hope for a reasonable habit in a short time.

8 Besard, "Necessary Observations Belonging to the Lyte,
and Lyte Playing," pp. 5-6.
The order in which the instructions are presented in the treatises by Robinson and Besard reflect sound pedagogical practice and an awareness of the problems encountered by beginners. Robinson instructs the student in the proper method of holding the lute, striking the open strings with the fingers of the right hand, and stopping the strings behind the frets with the fingers of the left hand, before he explains the design of lute tablature. This sequence allows the student to concentrate on the physical actions involved in playing the lute without being distracted by the notation itself and the difficulties of following it.

... Now having the names & knowledge of the strings and stops perfectly by rote, you shall also learn to know them by booke (called Tablature.)⁹

Besard expresses his concern that the student should not be overwhelmed by difficult pieces that would cause him to become discouraged early in his study of the lute.

And although most men doe vsue themselves at the first to the hardest Lessons, that afterwards they may haue the easier passage, yet would I not perswade young beginners so, for feare least such difficulties should cause a loathing in them, and consequently a giving ouer of their practise: but I had rather an easier Lesson were set them at first, which is not intricate by reason of many Gripe or stops (as you call them) and in displaying whereof one shall not neede to lay his fingers crosse the necke of the LVTE. And this I would haue vsed vntill the hand be a little brought in vse. And in this Lesson I would not haue many or divers changes of the Time: for I haue knowne by experience that this hath been more hard to many than all the rest.¹⁰


The instructor represented in Mary Burwell's manuscript lute tutor takes a rather extreme and somewhat self-serving position on the need to supplement the instructions in the tutor with the supervision of a teacher and related studies.

I would not have a beginner play in the absence of his master; therefore the master must come to the scholar as often as he can, at least once a day, because of the tuning of the lute, and the keeping of it well strung.\(^{11}\)

He also suggests that the lute master sing the lessons to the student so that the student can hear the proper tempo and mood for each piece. This he considers preferable to playing duets (such as those found in Robinson's tutor) because the sound of two lutes may confuse a student. While the lute master is expected to play pieces occasionally to set an example of good playing for the student, it is the student's responsibility to study music theory so that he learns to detect errors in his own playing, to study dancing to learn the proper style and tempi of dances, and to study singing to learn the graces to be added to lute music. This view contrasts sharply with the those of Besard and Robinson who suggest that systematic self-instruction can easily compensate for the lack of a teacher.

Besard's attitude toward performers or teachers who advocate playing techniques or methods of study differing from his own is surprisingly liberal, perhaps because his

\(^{11}\)Quoted by Thurston Dart, in "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book for the Lute," Galpin Society Journal 11 (1958): 43.
treatise is based on his observations of other lutenists and his own experiences.

Neither would I haue thee thinke that in this I detract from the other differing wayes, which other men doe vse, not vnfitly, so that there be reason for them, and an easie gracefulnessse in them. For a man may come to the same place in divers wayes; and that sweet Harmony of the LVTE (the habit whereof wee doe daily affect with so great travaile) may strike our eares with an ellegant deelight, though the hand be diversly applyed.¹²

This flexibility of approach is particularly appropriate to the music in the repertoire of lutenists at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Changing compositional styles and the addition of bass courses to the lute were forcing lutenists to modify their playing technique at this time.

Those authors that discuss the selection of a lute for a student generally agree on the importance of a good instrument. Robinson's statement on this matter is particularly perceptive.

First it behoueth a scholer to haue a verie good instrument verie well strung, faire to the eie, and easie to reach any stop whatsoever, and verie well sounding... . . . I think it good to haue (if it were possible) even the verie best instrument for a learner at the first [because] a good instrument will please a learner every way, for it delighteth them to looke and behold it now % then, likewise they loue easie and smooth instruments, and although they can do but little, yet it will sound well, and so incourage them to learne with delight, where-as contrariwise, a bad or dull instrument will quell their spirits quite, so that in a long time, or neuer, will they profit in their forced labours.¹³


Besard's comments on the selection of an appropriate lute for the student are concerned with the size of the instrument.

First and foremost choose a lute neither great nor small, but a middling one, such as shall fit thine hand in thine owne judgement. Yet I had rather thou didst practise at first on a lute that were somewhat greater and harder, vnlesse thy hand be very short: because that is good to stretch the sinewes, which are in no sort to be slackned.14

The practice of using a slightly oversized lute or a lute with heavier than normal strings seems to have been common at the time. One of the few exceptions to this practice appears in Marin Mersenne's discussion of lutes and lute playing that appeared in his Harmonie Universelle in 1636. Mersenne suggests that children should have small lutes "so that the distances of the strings may conform to the size of their hands, and they play [them] at once like the larger ones."15 Unfortunately, this approach does not seem to have been widely followed.

Mary Burwell's lute teacher recommends that children begin to study the lute at the age of seven or eight.16 Although the instructions in The Schoole of Musicke were ostensibly intended for use by children, there is no mention of the proper age for a child to begin the study of the lute. Similarly, Besard addresses the needs of young beginners


16 Dart, "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 38.
several times in his treatise on fingering, but he does not suggest an appropriate age for a student to undertake the study of the lute. John Dowland says nothing at all about young students in his treatise.

None of the lute tutors published in England contains exercises specifically designed to develop digital independence or manual strength. Besard does not give exercises for stretching the hand, such as those used by modern classical guitarists, but he does report the practices of some lutenists who

... sometimes without a LVTE forcibly pull and lengthen their fingers. Others there are that laying their hand on a Table, or some like thing, doe spread their fingers as broad as they can possibly. Others there are that oftentimes annoint their fingers with oyle of Tartar. Though I know the vse thereof is good to make a nimble hand, rather by the often report of many others, then by any approved experience of mine owne. 17

The proper approach to practicing is discussed at length by Robinson, Besard, and Mary Burwell's lute master. Besard's remarks on this topic demonstrate his awareness of problems that the student is likely to have and bad habbits that he may be inclined to adopt. Besard stresses the need to master each lesson before proceeding to the next one.

Chuse one Lesson thy selfe according to thy capacitie, which giue not ouer by looking ouer others, or straggling from one to another, till thou haue got it reasonably perfect, and doe not onely beginne it by going through it to the end at first sight, but examine each part of it diligently, and stay vpon any one point so long (though thou

play it over a thousand times) till thou get it in some sort. The like you shall doe in all parts of the said Song, till you shall finde yourselfe prettily seene in it. 18

At another point, Besard counsels the student to avoid rushing the notes and to practice carefully, concentrating continually on the clear and accurate execution of the music.

... Especially if you be a beginner be not too hastie in handling the LVTE, for I dare promise you faithfully and without deceit, that nothing is more fit to second this businesse then patience in the beginning: for nothing can be gotten in an instant, and you must not thinke to play your lessons presently at first sight, for that is impossible. Wherefore take no other care but onely to strike all the Griffes and Notes that are in the middle betwixt them well and plainely, though slowly: for within a while, whether you will or no, you will get a habit of swiftnesse. Neither can you get the cleere expressing of Notes, vnless you doe vse your selfe to that in the beginning: which cleane deliuerie every man that fauours MUSICKE, doth farre preferre before all the swiftnesse and vnreason-able noyse that can be. 19

Besard's concern with accuracy in practice is evident in a brief comment that introduces his discussion of the particulars of lute technique. With reference to lessons for beginners, he states:

Wherefore in taking such Lessons be diligently carefull in marking both your hands, which being they are the chiefe and indeed the instrumental parts of this practise, therefore for the vse of them take these precepts here-after set downe: beginning first with the left hand, because that is as it were the mother of the Melodie, the other doth vnfold the Melodie conceiued, and so sounds it to our Eares. 20

In his closing comments, he seems to use the term mark to

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., p. 12.
20 Ibid., p. 6.
indicate the physical action of writing the correct fingerings in the tablature, though it is possible that he was referring to keeping time accurately as marking the measure.

I could wish you take as much paines in marking the Measures, as in the other former rules... 21

In any event, Besard is stressing the necessity of learning good practice habits at the start of the course of study.

Besard recognizes that the student may easily become confused by the lengthy and sometimes seemingly contradictory rules that govern fingering, and suggests that the student should memorize the lessons.

It will not little help you to get it without booke: for whilst the minde is busie searching here and there for that which is written, the hand is more vnapt to performe the Note, and all the difficultie the LVTE hath, which for the most part is imputed to the fingers, should rather be attributed to the varietie of the Rules, which are in this respect to be obsurbed, all which doe rather depend upon the minde, then on the hand. 22

Whereas Besard advocates memorization as a means of avoiding the difficulty of following the tablature while trying to direct the fingers of the left and right hands, Robinson states in several places that most lessons can be played at first sight after a brief examination of the music. This contrasts sharply with Besard's assertion that it is unrealistic for beginners to expect to be able to play their lessons at first sight (quoted on page 111 above). Robinson apparently recognizes the difficulties posed by reading the

21 Ibid., p. 12.
22 Ibid., p. 6.
tablature because, as noted above, he instructs the student on how to hold the instrument, strike the strings, and stop the notes before he explains the layout of lute tablature. Furthermore, he presents a simple example in tablature before he explains the notation of rhythm in lute music.

... for the time without stops or tune, is but an abstract, & my purpose is, first to teach the stops, & then the times with all afterwards: & therefore, I haue set it with all one time over head, as you see, vntill the lesson be perfectly had, & both the name & nature of that time well commited to memory, and this lesson had, than will I instruct them in all the varieties of tymes: as followeth.

A young beginner (although this were Semiquauer tyme) shall in the despight of his hart, make every stroke a Semibreve, & then as he multiplyeth in perfectnes, so he shal multiply in fastnesse of tyme... .

The difference between Besard's view that sight-reading is an unrealistic expectation for a beginner and Robinson's assertion that students can learn to play their lessons at first sight is more a matter of context than principle. Besard is referring to the first efforts of a novice in his comments, and he does not deny that more advanced students can learn to sight-read their lessons. In stressing the importance of working out problems with specific passages in a lesson, he downplays the role of sight-reading. Robinson, on the other hand, is referring to students who have mastered his general rules of lute playing, and he does qualify his assertion by acknowledging that some pieces are "too too trickified" to be played at first sight even then, in his address.

---

"To the Reader." Both authors advocate a careful examination of the lesson before attempting to play it. Although Robinson's discussion of this preview is presented in the context of a short exposition on sight-reading, it is equally appropriate for a work to be memorized after an extended period of study.

Therefore whensoeuer there is a lesson given you to play at the first sight[,] First looke it ouer before you offer to play it, for these reasons following. First see what manner of lesson it is, whether it bee a set Song, Innomine, Pauen, Galiard, Almaine, Ligue, Labolta, Coranta, Country dance, or Toy, whateuer, according to the nature of the lesson, to give it his grace with gra-uite or quicknes. Secondly by looking it ouer, you shall see the fastest time in all the lesson contained, that accordingly you may goe through without check. Thirdly by looking it ouer first, you shall see whether it be faire & true prickt [fingered], without blots. Lastly by hauing once seene it, you may the better remember it when you see it again.

Both Besard and Robinson stress the importance of establishing an efficient practice routine. According to Besard,

... It is most necessarie at least for the beginner to handle the LVTE often, yet never but when thy Genius favours thee, that is when thou feelest thy selfe inclyned to MYSICKE: For there is a certaine naturall disposition, for learning the Arts naturally infused into vs, and shewing it in vs rather at one time then another, which if one will provoke by immoderate labour, he shall fight against Nature. Therefore when thou shalt finde thy selfe aptlie disposed, and hast time and opportunitie, spare no paynes, yet keepe to this course.

Robinson is also concerned with the detrimental effects of

---

24 Ibid., sig. A2v.
tension and fatigue on the student’s practice.

Do these points perfectly, not striving at it, but with such ease, as if you did it carelessly, observing the carriage both of hand & body: & when you are weary, leave it, and to it again, but go to it with a willing minde. 27

There is little information about the care of a lute in any of the lute tutors published prior to the middle of the seventeenth century. Robinson’s remarks on the subject are very brief.

... Above all things, keepe [the lute] from wet, for wet will spoile the strings and make loose the ribs, and when you have done playing vpon it, put it vp into the case, putting the Trebles a little down... 28

With the exception of a brief comment by John Dowland on the adverse effect of moisture on lute strings, there are no instructions for the care of the lute in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons. The only substantial information on this topic to appear in an English publication for the lute occurs in Thomas Mace’s Musick’s Monument, published in London in 1676. 29

As is the case with many authors of lute tutors, Besard uses his treatise as a vehicle for the exposition of his philosophy of the lutenist’s art. The following comment by Besard is typical of many incorporated into explanations of


28 Ibid., sig. Bv.

individual aspects of lute technique.

Take this for a farewell: that this diuine Art, which at this time is by so great men followed, ought to be vsed by thee with that great gracefulnesse which is fit for learned men to vse, and with a kinde of maiestie: yea, so that [if] thou haue any skill in it be not ashamed at the request of honest friends to shew thy cunning; but if thou chancest to get an habit of perfection, prophane not the Goddesse, with making thy selfe cheape for a sleight gaine.30

Individual Elements of Lute Technique

Holding the Lute

Although it is one of the first things that a student should learn, lute tutors rarely contain detailed information about proper body posture or the correct manner of holding the lute. Besard acknowledges the importance of these topics, but does not describe them in detail.

... You must be carefull when you beginne to learne to carry your body comely, and the right hand stedely.31

Robinson includes a similar admonition in his tutor.

... Vse all instruments with a good grace, comelie play, without anticke faces, or shouderings, except such (which of necessitie) the nature of the instrument doth require; as, reaching stops vpon the Lute, where you lay your finger along & stretch out your little finger along at length, as from d to h... .32

However, he also includes one of the few detailed descriptions in the lute literature of the manner in which the lute is to

31 Ibid.
be held.

First sitting vpright with your bodie, leane the edge of the Lute against the table, and your bodie against the Lute, not too hard for hurtung your Lute, neither to sofftie for letting of it fall, for the table, your bodie, and your right arme, must so poyes the Lute, that you may have your left hand at libertie to carie to, and fro, at your pleasure... And although you ought to lean lightlie, yet carie your hand steddilie, not sliding out of his place, also remembringe, to leane lightlie vpon your arme vpon your Lute, for otherwise it will paine the sinewes and hinder your play. 33

Mary Burwell's instructor states that the student should sit upright and try to affect a pleasant, relaxed appearance to put the audience at ease. Furthermore, he suggests that the student memorize his lessons in order to avoid the discomfort of leaning forward to read the tablature. 34 Mersenne, who asserts that "one cannot play [the lute] without great stiffness and unsatisfactory demeanor if the hands are not well placed," describes two methods of holding the lute.

... the lute, leanded against a table or another body, must be supported by the weight of the right arm, although one can hold it without this prop by means of two small buttons of ebony or ivory... 35

The buttons to which Mersenne refers are attached to the neck block and end clasp of the lute to support a shoulder strap. Iconographical evidence indicates that the lute was sometimes played from a standing position with the aid of such a strap. In other cases, lutenists crossed their legs or raised their

33 Ibid., sigs. Bv-B2r.
34 Dart, "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," pp. 22-23.
35 Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, p. 105.
left foot with a stool to position the lute at the proper height and angle.\textsuperscript{36}

Left-hand Position

In referring to "the thombe [of the left hand as] beyng occupied to beare up the Lute, and to guide the hande . . . ,"\textsuperscript{37} Le Roy disagrees with Robinson, who states that the right arm and body of the performer must support the lute so that the left hand can move up and down the neck of the lute freely. Besard notes that the thumb of the left hand should fall in the center of the back of the neck of the lute and that it must shift with the rest of the hand.

\ldots Carrie your left hand so in holding the necke of the LVTE with a good grace, your thumbe must be set vp
on the middest on the backe of the necke, which must like-
wise with the other fingers as they goe vp and dowe
vp on the LVTE be gently moued and follow them the way
they goe.\textsuperscript{38}

Robinson describes the position and movement of the left hand even more precisely, and he explains the advantages of the arrangement to be used.

\ldots letting the middle part of the neck of the Lute, slide vp and downe the brawne of the thumb which is

\textsuperscript{36}Southard, "Sixteenth-Century Lute Technique," p. 28.


\textsuperscript{38}Besard, "Necessarie Observations Belonging to the Lute, and Lute Playing," p. 6.
against the nayle of the said thumb, houlding out the
wrest of the hand, and alwaies carrying your thumb
against your forefinger in any stop whatsoever, for
so shall your hand be the more comelie, the more readie,
and with the more ease, stop any stop the cleaner... 39

Although these authors describe the position of the thumb in
different terms, it is clear that the thumb was not extended
around either side of the fingerboard to stop strings on the
fingerboard. The position of the thumb behind the first fin-
ger orients the left hand so that the knuckles line up nearly
parallel to the edge of the fingerboard. This steadies the
hand and allows the fingers to obtain the maximum leverage in
stopping the strings. The fingers are arched over the strings
with their terminal segments as nearly perpendicular to the
fingerboard as possible, so that the inside portion of the
fingertips do not mute the adjacent strings by contacting them.

When individual fingers are not utilized to play a given chord,
they are kept as close to the strings as possible without
touching them, to minimize the time needed to position them
for ensuing chords. The left hand maintains a consistent
angle to the fingerboard at all times.

Left-hand Fingerings

The explanations of left-hand fingering practice found in
sixteenth-century lute tutors range from a series of diagrams
resembling a Guidonian hand, used by Hans Judenkünig to indicate
the fret positions to be stopped by each finger (See Figure 14),

Figure 14. Selected Fingering Diagrams for the Left Hand from Hans Judenkünig's *Ain Schone Kunstliche Underweisung*
to extended enumerations of the appropriate fingers for each note in whole series of chords given by Le Roy in his twentieth and twenty-first rules for playing the lute. Both Besard and Robinson use arabic numerals to denote the fingers of the left hand in lute tablature, but Besard places these numerals directly after the letters to which they apply, whereas Robinson places the numerals in vertical rows under the chords to which they apply. Robinson's method requires the student to match the numerals to the appropriate letters, usually a simple matter in spite of the extra step involved, but it allows him to use larger, more legible numerals than can be accomodated between the letters of the tablature.

The organization of instructions concerning left-hand fingering varies considerably from one lute tutor to another. Le Roy does not even discuss left-hand technique until after a lengthy exposition of right-hand technique involving several examples containing one to six voices in a variety of rhythms. As if to add insult to injury, Le Roy begins his treatment of

---

40 Judenkünig explains how his diagrams are to be used as follows: "As each letter appears in the song, finger it with the same finger in which that letter is written in this diagram." Martha Blackman, "A Translation of Hans Judenkünig's Ain Schone Kunstliche Underweisung ... (1532)," Lute Society Journal 14 (1972): 35. Le Roy introduces his list of chord fingerings with the following comment. "And for that in fewe woordes, thou maiest understonde, how thou shalte dispose the fingers of the saied letfe hande, I have chosen for thee certayne stoppes, or familiar accordes, common, and difficulte, the whiche I will teache thee, shewyng thee with what fingers thou must stoppe, and those well practised, will easely make thee understande all others that shall come to thy hande." Les Instructions Pour le Luth (1574), p. 56.
left-hand fingerling with chords of four, five, and six voices, and he does not discuss left-hand fingerling of passages in one to three parts at all.

Single Stops

Both Robinson and Besard explain the fingerling of passages in single stops, i.e., involving only a single voice, before dealing with passages in two or more voices. Besard introduces his discussion of left-hand fingerling by pointing out that specific rules apply to passages in single stops.

Now if you would know with which finger every letter is to be stopped, first enquire diligently whether the letter be it selfe alone, or ioyned with other letters: For if it be alone, then this order must absolutely be kept. The first Finger must serue to stoppe E, the second for C, the third and fourth for D, alwayes, so that the fourth finger serue the fift or fourth string, and the third finger the other strings, as for example: 41

\[\text{\includegraphics{image}}\]

The example and a subsequent discussion of fingerling passages in multiple stops make it clear that the fourth finger is to

\[\text{\footnote{Besard, "Necessarie Observations Belonging to the Lvte, and Lvte Playing," p. 6.}}\]
be used on the first and second strings (courses) and the third finger on the other strings rather than as given above. The English translation of this passage follows the original Latin construction found in the Thesaurus Harmonicus. If Besard, who published the print in Cologne, were following the local practice in referring to the courses of the lute, he would have described the two highest courses of the instrument as the fourth and fifth courses because in German lute tablature, the courses are notated 7, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 from the bass to the treble. This arrangement is due to the fact that German tablature was invented when the lute had only five courses of strings, the 7 being added at a later date when the sixth course was appended to the lute. Thus, the error in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons may be due to the translator's failure to take into account the context of Besard's description. It is surprising that the translator did not notice the problem since the contradictory example follows the passage in question immediately. However, there is evidence to suggest that Besard may have been partially responsible for the error himself. It is difficult to understand why Besard would have followed the German practice at this point in a collection of music presented entirely in French lute tablature accompanied by a Latin text. Furthermore, in another part of the treatise, Besard refers to the fourth, fifth, and sixth courses of the lute in a context that makes it clear these courses are on the bass side of
the instrument. Besard used the Latin words *quarta* and *quinta* in the first reference and the words *quarta*, *quinta*, and *sexta* in the latter reference even though his meanings were clearly different.\(^2\) Whoever made the English translation of Besard's treatise apparently failed to recognize the inconsistency in Besard's references.

Since the majority of lute music is not confined to the first three frets of the lute, some systematic approach to the remaining portion of the fingerboard is necessary. This approach is represented by the concept of positions on the fingerboard. A position corresponds to a sequence of four frets that can be stopped by the index, middle, ring, and little fingers without shifting the hand along the neck of the lute. In theory, each finger plays only the notes that fall on the frets directly below it. Robinson describes this aspect of the system as follows: "... Where you leave no stop, leave no finger; and where you leave a stop, leave a finger..."\(^3\) In actual practice, there are several exceptions to the basic pattern. As in the first position, i.e., with the index finger at the first fret, the fourth finger may be substituted for the third finger on the treble courses without effecting a shift of position. Also, the fourth finger may be extended an extra fret toward the bridge to reach an

\(^2\) The original versions of these passages are found in the *Thesaurus Harmonicus* on sigs. Xx *verso* and Xx3 *verso*.

occasional note beyond the normal limits of the position without requiring a shift of the hand. Similarly, the index finger may reach back toward the nut of the lute to play an occasional note behind its normal location. The choice of playing these notes as extended fingerings or as shifts of position depends upon the key of the selection, their frequency, and the sequence of notes that precede and follow them.

Shifts of Position

A large part of the lute repertoire requires the use of the upper positions on the fingerboard. However, there are only a limited number of exercises devoted to shifts of position in the lute tutors, and the use of the highest positions is beyond the scope of the basic instruction to which the tutors are geared. Most tutors contain only a brief description of the manner in which the left hand shifts up and down the neck of the lute, stressing the need to keep the thumb behind the index finger at all times. More sophisticated concepts of fingerings, such as minimizing the rotation of the wrist and arm, are also mentioned occasionally. Besard's analysis of the difficulties presented by shifts of the left hand is more detailed than most.

... Nothing is more vncomely, then to haue the left hand moued vp and downe often, and by that meanes to occasion too much motion of the arme, which is with all care to be avoided. Besides, by staying the fingers on a string you shall so easily run vp and downe vpon the necke of your LVTE at your pleasure, that the very handling of it, (after a little labour and time patiently
borne) will be no more troublesome to you then a pleasant walke.\footnote{44} Besard's comments on the use of the higher positions are brief, but they make it clear that shifts of the left hand should be thought of in terms of positions rather than the individual notes in a passage. The examples which he provides illustrate ascending and descending motion in the second and fourth positions.

But if the letters be set in Stoppes lower then \( D \), then keeping the same order with your fingers you must goe lower with your hand, and that letter which stands neareste the Bridge must be stopped with the little finger and the other letters which are above with the other fingers, as you may see in these examples:\footnote{45}

\begin{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
And in this other.
\end{verbatim}

Robinson expresses the concept of positions even more clearly

First, you shall understand, that we terme the fore-finger, and the little finger (of the stopping hand) two extremes: for that they be the outmost parts thereof:

\footnote{44} Besard, "Necessarie Observations Belonging to the Lvte, and Lvte Playing," p. 10.

\footnote{45} Ibid., p. 7.
& that in going downward with a point, (from the head of the Lute) the point is always begun with the forefinger, as thus:

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{diagram1.png}
\end{center}

But contrariwise, from the bodie of the Lute, to the head, the point must be begun, with the other extreme, as this example sheweth.\footnote{46}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{diagram2.png}
\end{center}

Mary Burwell's instructor notes that the positions utilized to play a particular passage should be chosen so as to minimize the number of shifts required.

And when you stop any letter you must consider what notes follow and [set] your hand in a frame or place fit to reach the next stops... .\footnote{47}

\footnote{46} Robinson, The Schoole of Musicke, sig. Cr. Robinson and his contemporaries refer to a shift of the hand toward the bridge of the lute as a move to a lower position on the fingerboard, and a shift toward the nut as a move to a higher position. This usage is the opposite of the modern, pitch-oriented system of reference commonly used for stringed instruments today.

\footnote{47} Dart, "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 30.
As Marc Southard notes, "... Fingering in higher positions does not lend itself well to systemization."

The following observations are based on practices observed in lute music rather than specific instructions in the lute tutors. No attempt is made by lutenists to maintain a uniform timbre throughout a passage by confining the melody to a single course or by avoiding the use of open courses in groups of notes otherwise played in higher positions. In fact, open courses are frequently, though not invariably, used in extended runs to facilitate the shift of the left hand from one position to another. Homogeneity of sound is apparently considered to be of secondary importance to ease of execution. Similarly, in cases where a given note can be played in more than one position on the fingerboard, little attempt is made to choose the option that will result in the smoothest connection of the notes or the fewest ringing dissonant tones.

The stopping of notes in the uppermost register of the lute's range requires special techniques. Although, according to Barley, the frets are "ordinarilie eight in number represented and marked with these letters, b.c.d.e.f.g.h.i.

...," in many cases the tablature contains letters for notes above these frets. Barley explains the manner in which notes can be played above the frets as follows:

And concerning the letters that come after the i,


which is the last stop of the eight, those letters have no frets at all, not withstanding those that are expert in this instrument, stop the stringes so certainelye as though they had freets assigned them, and the letters that sometime come after the i are these k. l. m. and n. but haue no freets allowed them. 50

In other words, the position of the stopping finger determines the pitch of the note as on a violin or any other unfretted stringed instrument.

**Barre** Technique

One of the most important elements of left-hand technique involves the extension of the index finger across the neck of the lute to stop a number of strings simultaneously. This practice is generally known as *barre* technique to modern players, but it did not have a specific name in the sixteenth century. Notes fingered in this manner were sometimes referred to as crossed stops and they were generally associated with the instruction "the finger must be laid crosse the Fret." The index finger may span two or three courses (a half- *barre* in modern parlance) or as many as six or seven courses (a full- *barre*), in melodic passages or in the fingerling of chords. Besard prescribes the use of the *barre* in passages of single stops in the higher positions because it has a stabilizing influence on the hand as a whole. The *barre* also makes it possible to play several notes on different courses at the same fret without having to shift the first finger laterally.

---

50 Ibid., sigs. E2v-Cr.
for each note on a different course. According to Besard,

Also if such letters singly placed beyond the fret D. shall happen to be in more strings then two (as for example in these Diminutions following) and no A put amongst them, they must be stopped with the fore-finger laid over halfe the fret of that letter which is nearest B, or with the fore-finger laid over the whole fret. The finger must be laid over halfe the fret if the Diminution goe no farther then three strings: over the whole if you strike more or all the strings. This Rule will seeme more plaine perhaps out of the examples which follow:

In these examples you see the finger is laid over the letter which is nearest B, the fourth finger stoppes that letter which is farthest from B, the other fingers stoppe the middle frets in their order.\footnote{Besard, "Necessarie Observations Belonging to the Lyte, and Lyte Playing," pp. 7-8.}

The use of the barre may be difficult for a beginner to master due to the extra pressure required to stop several strings.
with one finger, but it is an essential element of left-hand technique.

Multiple Stops

Passages in single stops are not difficult to finger.

But if the letter that we doubt of, be placed not alone but with one or more other letters, which conjunction we for this time will call a griffe, then the difficultie is greater, neither can any thing certainly be prescribed in this case, but that which vse and custome doth teach vs. . . . 52

The chief difficulties involved in fingering multiple stops arise when more than one course must be stopped at the same fret or when the individual voices of a polyphonic composition move independently in regard case, the fingering of a given chord must be determined in conjunction with the fingering requirements of the surrounding notes. In some cases, a particular fingering may be easier to execute quickly than another fingering that is equally correct from a musical standpoint. Thus, the same chord may be fingered a number of different ways in different contexts. As Besard notes, this fact makes it impossible to give every possible fingering of a chord in the limited space of a lute tutor, much less explain when to use each option.

Where marke that the finger must be laid crosse the Fret often; may, very oftentimes, (though you finde but one Letter of a kinde in that Fret,) that the other may be the swifftlier stopped, which cannot by any certaine Rule but onely by vse be learned. And know besides the same griffes the Letters differ not, yet are not stopt

52 Ibid., p. 8.
alwaies after the same sort, by reason of former or subsequent stops, which thing thou must diligently marke.53

William Barley's exposition of left-hand fingerings for multiple stops contains Le Roy's chord charts mentioned above, to which Barley has added a series of one to four dots to denote the fingers of the left hand to be used for each note. These dots replace Le Roy's extended written out, note-by-note enumeration of the proper fingering for each chord. However, since dots are commonly used in tablature to denote the fingers of the right hand, this practice is potentially confusing to students. Also, it cannot be used in any examples containing right-hand fingering dots. Barley introduces the charts with a brief explanation of the purpose of the dots.

In this example following are set downe the stops divers and common, which for they better helpe I have marked the letters with pricks or points, some letter having one pricke, some two, some three, according to the finger wherewith they must be stopped... .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a:</th>
<th>b:</th>
<th>c:</th>
<th>d:</th>
<th>e:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a:</td>
<td>a:</td>
<td>b:</td>
<td>c:</td>
<td>d:</td>
<td>e:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b:</td>
<td>b:</td>
<td>c:</td>
<td>d:</td>
<td>e:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c:</td>
<td>c:</td>
<td>d:</td>
<td>e:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d:</td>
<td>d:</td>
<td>e:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the abouesaid stoppes are to be stopped as I have shewed thee in this example, except thou be sometime forced to change them to doe some passage.54

This information is followed by a brief comment on the

53Ibid., p. 9.

54Barley, A New Booke of Tabliture, sigs. C2r-C2v.
use of \textit{barre} technique and the concept of the natural order of the fingers applied to the fingering of chords. Although Barley's explanation of this concept is not very helpful, the concept is not particularly difficult to understand. In multiple stops that contain a single stopped note at each of four frets, the natural order of the fingers is maintained if the index finger is used on the fret closest to the nut and each successive fret is occupied by the finger adjacent to its predecessor; e.g., frets two, three, four, and five stopped by the index, middle, ring, and little fingers respectively. In the event that an intermediate fret is not used, the corresponding finger would be omitted also. Hence, in its simplest applications, the natural order principle is the same as Robinson's concept of using a finger at every fret where there is a note to be stopped and skipping a finger at every fret where there is no note to be stopped. However, in many multiple stops, there are several stopped notes at the same fret. When these cannot be taken under a \textit{barre}, the fingers must be arranged so that each finger stops its note with the least awkward stretches and reaches over and around the other fingers. For example, the little finger is generally used on courses that lie on the treble side of the courses stopped by the third finger in any chord that requires both of them to be used at the same fret because the little finger is shorter than the third finger and cannot comfortably be extended beyond it. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to follow the natural order of the fingers in
playing multiple stops.

The chords in the second chart given by Barley are more difficult to play than those in the first set. Many of the chords utilize full or partial barres and higher positions on the fingerboard. 55

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>e</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robinson extends Barley’s principle of the natural order of the fingers (taken from Le Roy) with his own concept of the two extremes of the hand described in his discussion of single stops given above (See page 127).

... by this example of the two extremes, you see the first governeth the upper part or frets, and the other, the nether part, or next lowest: and thus the forefinger alwayes, in any stop wher (b) is, full, or single, [ ] except there bee in one stop, 2. (bees,) and an (a) beweene) 56 is to possesse the stop (b) as this example maketh plains:

---

55 Barley, A New Booke of Tabliture, sig. C2v.

56 Robinson, The Schoole of Musicke, sig. Cr.
The expositions of fingering in multiple stops given by Robinson and Besard are organized on the basis of the distribution of the stops on the fingerboard. Thus, all of the multiple stops that contain notes located at the \( \bar{B} \) fret are grouped together. Similarly, all the multiple stops that contain no stops located closer to the nut than the \( \bar{C} \) fret are grouped together, and so on. For example, Robinson's illustration of multiple stops at the first fret contains six chords in which there is a single \( \bar{B} \) stop on successively descending courses of the lute. Robinson mentions the use of multiple stops with two \( \bar{B} \) stops, but he does not provide any illustration of fingerings for them except a single chord in a subsequent illustration of the use of the barre.

Besard provides a much more extensive discussion of multiple stops at the first fret than Robinson does. His instructions "For Griping of stops in \( \bar{B} \)," as it is captioned in the margin, deals with fingering multiple stops containing one or more \( \bar{B} \) stops, some of which require the use of the barre.

First, keep this rule, that how oft soever two Bs happen to be on two strings which stand close together, let them be stopt together with the toppe of the finger. Yet understand this onely of the first, second or third stringe: for if two Bs stand together in the other stringes (name-lie the Base stringes) then they must be stopped not with the toppe of the first finger, but with the same finger laid over the whole fret.

The second Rule is, that whensoever two Bs are sounded on two Strings, that are not close together, but have the letter A, betwixt them or more Letters, then let such Bs be stopped with the fore-finger, and second finger.

The third Rule is, that whensoever the said Bs shal happen to be on two or more strings, betwixt which is no
A, but some other Letter, or a line or more vacant: wherein afterward some other Letter then A shall be set, then the fore-finger must be laid over the stop B. Let these examples serue for all the parts of this Rule.

And because it is impossible to set downe in writing particularly all these things, which we shall finde by daily use, necessarie to concerne this Chapter, I haue placed here certaine of the common griffes or stops, wherein are one B or many, which must be stopped eyther laying the finger flat over the Fret, or otherwise, which you may easily perceiue, if they be written together in more places then two, in such forme as you see them here marked.  

---

Robinson's treatment of multiple stops wherein C is the stop closest to the nut is also much briefer than Besard's treatment of comparable items, and it covers only two of the basic configurations that may be found at this fret. Robinson's comments and examples are divided into two parts: the first dealing with stops at the second fret in the bass accompanied by stops at the third fret in the treble, and the second dealing with stops at the second fret in the bass accompanied by stops at the fourth fret in the treble. Within each part of the illustration, the C stop appears on successively lower courses of the lute in each sequence of chords.

Note also, that C in any of the Bases in a full stop, wherein is an a (& in the more Treble strings d is the lowest of the stop) that that C is to be stopped with the second finger alwaies; but if there be (in sted of d with C in one of the Bases) an e than C must bee stopped with the fore-finger, as thus:58

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
5 & 5 & 5 & 5 \\
\underline{\text{a}} & \text{a} & \text{a} & \text{a} \\
\underline{\text{a}} & \text{a} & \text{a} & \text{a} \\
\underline{\text{f}} & \text{f} & \text{f} & \text{f} \\
\underline{4} & 4 & 4 & 4 \\
\underline{2} & 2 & 2 & 1 & 1 \\
\end{array}
\]

In his discussion of multiple stops at the second fret, Besard acknowledges that some lutenists may find one fingering or group of fingerings more to their liking than another even if there is no obvious advantage to either approach.

For the letter C I think there is no less controversy about it: for some men doe stop two Cs in the same Fret: when no Letter but A goes with them, with the second and third finger very elegantly: I always stop it with the first and second finger, vnlesse it happen that B be in the same griffe, for then of necessitie must the two Cs be stopped with the second and third fingers. But if the said two Cs, and with them other letters then A, you must lay your finger crosse the fret, though not always yet most an end, if those letters be vnnder C which otherwise should according to the Rule be stopped with the second finger, vnlesse it chance that after the griffe wherein it is played, another C follows immediately in some other string: Because to the end the first, namely, the Letter which is set in some Bass may the better be held, it must needs be stopped with the first finger. And this shall suffice for the Letter C: more and certaine Rules you shall gather by use and practise, yet have I set downe some examples, lest the obscurenesse of theses things I haue deliuered might hinder thee.

And many others besides which must be done in this manner. 59

Robinson does not specifically discuss the fingering of multiple stops at the third fret or above even though there

are numerous examples of multiple stops at these frets in *The Schoole of Musicke*. Besard’s discussion of multiple stops at the third fret is somewhat briefer than his previous segments on the fingering of multiple stops. It begins with a statement that clearly indicates that his initial reference to the use of the ring finger and little finger on the courses of the lute was in error. Once again, the English translation follows the Latin of the original text at this point.

For the Letter D, I said before it must be stopped with the third and fourth fingers; therefore the Rule will hold in my opinion, whether two Ds being in one stop have no other Letter betwixt them; or have one Letter or more betwixt them yet thus that the D on the lesse strings be stopped with the fourth finger, and the D on the great strings, with the third finger: and if happily three Ds come together, you may for the most part use the second, third and fourth fingers, or lay your finger crosse the Fret, as those stops which goe before or follow will beare it: of this Rule let this also be an example.60

![Image of musical notation]

There is only one other remark concerning the fingering of multiple stops in Besard’s treatise, and it is merely an

---

extension of the previously expressed concepts in general terms to cover all the remaining multiple stops at frets above the D fret.

The same order you may keepe in the lower Frets [i.e., closer to the bridge of the lute], onely in them for the most part (and very often) wee use to lay the finger crosse the Fret for more easinesse.61

Robinson's final comment on left hand fingering of multiple stops concerns the use of the barre, which he avoids in his earlier examples. The examples that he gives require the use of the barre at the first, second, third, and fifth frets, but no distinction is made between the chord that requires only a half-barre and the remaining chords which require a full-barre.

But in any full stop whatsoever, wherein ther is nouer an a there lay your fore-finger along in the highest of the stop, flat vpom the neck of the Lyte; as thus:62

```
   1 1 1 1
    b 5 3 i
   5 5 3 i
    3 i
   1 1 1 1

1 1 1 4

3 2 2 4

1 4 2
```

The absence of detailed information about fingering patterns for multiple stops in the upper positions is not

61Ibid., p. 10.

as serious a flaw in the design of the lute tutors as it may seem to the non-lutenist. Since the intervals between the courses of the lute remain constant at all points on the fingerboard, many of the chord voicings used in the lower positions can be utilized in the upper positions also. In general, a chord may be used at any fret on the fingerboard if it contains no open courses. Lower position chords that do contain open courses can be shifted to higher positions if the tones of the chord are arranged so that the stopped notes can be executed with the middle, ring, and little fingers while the index finger is used to barre all the courses that were originally played unstopped. The barre is acting as a substitute for the nut in these instances. Also, many chords in the higher positions can be played with open bass courses an octave or two below the next lowest voice, thus compensating for a higher bass note that may have to be sacrificed to use the chord in the upper position. This is one of the reasons that the bass line of much lute music is so erratic compared to the voice-leading of the upper parts. In any event, the modifications that must be introduced to use chords in the upper positions are demonstrated quite clearly in many of the chords in the examples for the rules concerned with multiple stops at the D fret. A number of these are barre chords that require no adjustments at all. Furthermore, at least until the left hand begins to hit the side of the lute body, many chords
become easier to play as the configuration is shifted toward the bridge because the frets become progressively closer together, thus reducing the stretches required to play them.

The most serious omission in the discussion of left-hand fingering is the absence of information on the precise way in which the fingers are to shift from one chord to the next. The instructions state that the fingers should be held on the stopped notes until they are needed at a new location in a subsequent chord, thus implying that common tones should not be refingered for successive chords unless it is necessitated by the arrangement of new tones in the subsequent chord. However, in many of Besard's examples, tones common to successive chords are refingered needlessly, thus implying that a specific fingering should be used for the refingered chord even though the connection of tones would clearly suggest otherwise. The chords in Besard's examples do not exhibit any logical pattern of organization that would justify these refingerings. Similarly, there are a number of instances in which one finger hops from one course to another to play successive chords, even though another finger is available which could be used to avoid the hopping motion and its inherent break in the continuity of sound. Finally, if two chords at different positions on the fingerboard use one or more fingers on the same courses in both configurations, those fingers may be held lightly against the strings as the hand shifts from one position to the next so that they will be
properly oriented as soon as the new position is reached. In this application, the fingers that slide along the strings are sometimes known as guide fingers by modern players. Although there is no direct evidence to indicate that Renaissance lutenists utilized this technique to facilitate the execution of shifts, it seems highly unlikely that an experienced player would not have discovered the technique and recognized its value. The pressure applied by the guide fingers during the shift must be very slight however, to avoid disturbing the gut frets that are tied around the neck of the lute.

Robinson indicates the left-hand fingerings to be used throughout several musical selections in The Schoole of musicke. These pieces provide the only examples of left-hand fingering practice found in the context of a musical composition, as opposed to an exercise or illustration of a technical point, that occur in any of the Renaissance lute tutors. As in the chord fingerings used in Besard's examples, Robinson's fingerings demonstrate little consideration of legato connection of successive chords. They also require unnecessary shifts of position and/or contractions of the left hand in passages on a single string. While Susan Sandman suggests that these fingerings are intended to produce staccato articulations of certain notes, it seems more likely that the interruptions in the flow of the line are the result of unavoidable shifts of position in some cases and a general lack of concern with
legato connection in other cases.  

Sustained Tones

Although lute tablature does not indicate the precise duration of individual tones, the authors of most lute tutors stress the importance of sustaining slower moving voices in polyphonic compositions. Barley's tutor is one of the few printed books containing lute music to use oblique lines to indicate specifically which notes should be sustained. Barley's description of the lines is taken from Le Roy's rules.

It is necessary to let you understand to what purpose the bars or lines serve that be drawn by as [bias, i.e., diagonally, in Le Roy's text] under the letters or passages... The knowledge of the said barre is so necessary, that having found out and exercised the same, thou shalt not neede but to remoue those fingers which thou shalt be forced, which manner of handling wee call closse or couert play... .

Thomas Robinson, who does not utilize these diagonal bars in his tutor, makes only the following brief comment about the importance of sustaining slower moving voices. "Alwaies noting this, that in any stop whatsoever, that you pluck away no finger, vntill you needes must." Besard comments at length on the importance of sustaining tones and suggests that the harmonic and contrapuntal implications of a given note must be considered to determine how long it should be held.

---


64 Barley, A New Booke of Tabliture, sig. C3r.

Therefore I will now speake of holding the fingers upon a string, which is in this part very necessary: because nothing is more sweete, then when these parts (the mothers of Harmonie) are rightly combined, which cannot be if the fingers be sodainely taken from the strings: for that voyce perisheth sodainely, when the stopping thereof is ended. . . . Therefore keepe your fingers in what strings soeuer you strike, (especially when you strike the Base) whilst the other fingers are stopping other stops, and remove them not till another Note come, which doth immediately fall vpon another Base, or some other part. And if you may, hold the Base and Treble together, if there be certaine middle Notes to be expressed: but if you may not for want of more fingers, take away the finger for the most part which stops the Treble: for it were better that Note perish then a Base. Generally take this for a Rule, the fingers must not be taken from the strings, without it be necessary: yet take heed whilst you play Diminutions, that one Note glue place to another, and be not held with the Note following.66

While the sustaining of tones receives considerable attention in Besard’s treatise, neither he nor any other author describes left-hand or right-hand techniques to deaden notes after their proper duration. Techniques used in playing other plucked stringed instruments indicate that it is feasible to dampen ringing notes on the lute. However, in light of the rapid decay of tones on the lute, it is probable that lutenists of Dowland’s day did not consider the ringing notes to require any special treatment.

Right-hand Position

The position of the lutenist’s right hand on the belly of the lute and the manner in which the strings of the instrument are set in motion have undergone a series of changes since the

lute was first introduced into Europe by the Arabs. In the Middle Ages, the lute was played with a plectrum that was held between the thumb and the index finger of the right hand. Plectrum technique requires that the forearm be extended across the belly of the lute over the bridge and parallel to the long axis of the strings. The wrist is extended along the same line. In time however, plectrum technique gave way to the use of the thumb and fingers to sound the strings.

When players started using the fingers instead of a plectrum, they adopted the same basic technique. The arm and hand remained straight with no bend at the wrist, parallel to the strings. The rotating movement of the arm was maintained, only now the thumb was used on the downward stroke and a finger, usually the index, was used on the upward stroke; with the added motion of the fingers, the rotation of the wrist became less pronounced.67

This hand position was maintained when lutenists began to play polyphonic music at the end of the fifteenth century.

In a number of early-sixteenth-century paintings, the little finger and the ring finger of the right hand are shown resting on the belly of the lute as a form of support for the hand. Hans Gerle describes this practice in Musica Teutsch, which he published in 1532. However, as the sixteenth century progressed, the ring finger began to be used in playing chords and was therefore no longer braced on the belly of the lute. The use of the little finger to support the hand is much more clearly documented than the exact position of the right hand over the strings. In paintings from later in the sixteenth century...

the little finger is usually shown positioned so that the thumb and other fingers contact the strings in the area of the rose. However, in many cases the plucking point ranges to quite near the bridge...

The fact that writers before Waissel rarely even make mention of the right hand's playing position is no doubt significant and leads to the conclusion that the actual relationship of the fingers to one another and to the strings was not a matter of great importance so long as the little finger was braced on the soundboard and the thumb and fingers did not interfere with one another during play.68

During the latter part of the sixteenth century, music for the lute began to exhibit increasingly thicker textures and a greater emphasis on the bass voice. These factors contributed to changes in the position of the right hand and the manner in which the fingers and thumb were used to pluck the strings. These changes are documented in the lute tutors published during the last years of the sixteenth century and the first years of the seventeenth century.

When the right hand is positioned over the strings of the lute, the thumb extends toward the bass side of the instrument and the fingers extend toward the treble side. As the thumb and fingers strike the strings, the fingers curl into the palm of the hand as though they were forming a fist and the thumb swings across toward the little finger. During the early part of the sixteenth century, the right hand was oriented so that the fingers were nearly parallel to the courses of the strings. With this hand position, the fingers extend beyond the thumb,

which permits the thumb to swing under them into the palm of the hand. This so-called thumb-under approach was the basis of right-hand technique for most of the sixteenth century. Toward the end of the century, lutenists began to change the orientation of the hand to the strings of the lute and the position of the hand in relation to the bridge of the lute. As the fingers of the right hand assumed a greater angle to the strings and the hand moved closer to the bridge, the interaction of the thumb and fingers was affected. The hand position that evolved during the final years of the century favors the extension of the thumb along the bass courses toward the head of the lute. However, this makes it more difficult for the thumb to clear the first two fingers when it strikes courses close to those played by the index and middle fingers. This problem was abated somewhat by modifying the course and manner of executing the thumb's stroke so that the thumb flexed more at the base joint next to the wrist and less at the terminal and middle joints. This modification causes the thumb to come to rest against the outside of the index finger or swing around it when the thumb and index finger are required to play notes on closely spaced courses. For this reason, this approach to right-hand technique is frequently referred to as thumb-over technique.

Although the thumb-over approach facilitated the playing of the thicker textures appearing in lute music at the end of the sixteenth century, some contemporary lutenists did not
endorse the new approach. In his \textit{Lautenbuch} of 1592, Matthaeus Waissel advises against the use of the new approach and states that the established thumb-under approach affords the player greater speed in the playing of diminutions than does the new approach.\textsuperscript{69} Thomas Robinson also prescribes the use of the thumb-under approach in his tutor in spite of the fact that many other aspects of his treatment of right-hand fingering are progressive by the standards of his day.

\ldots Then with the thumb of your right hand (houlding the rest of the fingers straight forth before your thumb \( \text{[']}, \) not ( as given) neither to neere the strings nor too farre off, begin to strike the first string downward with the thumb onelie, and also stricking with your thumb behind your fingers say: Base, Tenor, Contratenor, Great Meanes, Small meanes \( [',] \) Treble. This done: then begin at the Trebles and so goe vpward viz. backeard, stricking them string by string with your forefinger before your thumb, that is, houlding downe your thumb behind your fingers... \ldots\textsuperscript{70}

These instructions, which occur in the portion of Robinson's tutor devoted to familiarizing the student with the spacing of the courses of the lute, indicate that thumb under technique was still considered adequate for playing the lute music in the repertoire at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Besard was the first author to recommend specifically the adoption of the thumb-over approach to right-hand technique and the new hand position that it necessitates.


\textsuperscript{70} Robinson, \textit{The Schoole of Musicke}, sig. E2r.
First, set your little finger on the belly of the LVTE, not towards the Rose, but a little lower, stretch out your Thombe with all the force you can, especially if thy Thombe be short, so that the other fingers may be carryed in a manner of a fist, and let the Thombe be held higher then them, this in the beginning will be hard.71

The position described by Besard "is more properly associated with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than with the sixteenth, although paintings and woodcuts from well back into the sixteenth century show it occasionally."72 Although Besard does not indicate the precise angle that the fingers and thumb form in relation to the long axis of the strings, it seems to have varied from around forty-five degrees to almost ninety degrees for the fingers.73 The thumb approaches the strings from the opposite side of the soundboard at an angle that falls within a similar but slightly smaller range. This arrangement allows the thumb to clear the index finger more easily and facilitates the playing of the low bass courses being added to the lute at this time.

Besard, in his characteristically broadminded way, allows that some students may choose to adopt the thumb-under approach.

Yet they which haue a short Thombe may imitate those which strike the strings with the Thombe vnder the other fingers, which though it be nothing so elegant, yet to them it will be more easie.74

---

The German lute manuscript belonging to Johann Stobäus contains further evidence that the thumb-under approach and the thumb-over approach were used side by side at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In a passage that appears to have been written prior to 1619, Stobäus describes the advantages of the new approach. He also comments on the fact that some lutenists were still using the thumb-under approach and lists a number of important players who had adopted the new approach.

The thumb should strike outwards, not inwards as the older generation does, and commonly the Netherlanders and elder Germans... These famous lutenists play with the thumb out: In Germany, Gregory Huwet, the English Dowland, who nonetheless began playing with the thumb inwards. In Italy, Laurencini in Rome, Hortensius in Padua. In France, Bocquet, the Polish Mercure and others.75

In his Paradisus Musicus Testudinis of 1618, Nicolas Vallet calls for the adoption of the new approach in no uncertain terms.

You must avoid using the thumb all the time touching the courses, and especially bending it towards the inside of the hand, as many inept players are still doing today, which is a clumsy and ridiculous mistake. For the thumb must always bend outwards and not bend into the hand; here is what causes the motion of the entire body and many violent grimaces.76

Besard suggests, however, that even the thumb-over approach requires that care be taken to avoid unnecessary motion of the right hand that would impair the accuracy of the fingers and

---


thumb in striking the strings.

Some there be that bind their right hand with a napkin or girdle whilst they play upon the Lute, that they may seeme to move nothing but their fingers & ioynts, which you must use so that in running they may seeme scarcely to be moved: in like sort must you use the Thombe and the fore-finger. 77

Right-Hand Fingering of Single Stops

Renaissance lute tutors exhibit a variety of approaches to the explanation of right-hand fingering practice in lute music. In some tutors, such as those of Le Roy and Barley, the fingering of single stops is mentioned only briefly and it is interpolated into a discussion of multiple stops. In other tutors, such as Robinson's, single stops dominate the discussion of right-hand fingering and multiple stops are hardly mentioned at all. Besard's discussion of the rules for right-hand fingering is one of the most extensive and clearly organized to be found in any of the lute tutors. The bulk of his discussion deals with single stops, but surprisingly, he presents the rules for fingering multiple stops before the rules for single stops. This is apparently due to the fact that multiple stops, while requiring considerable coordination of the right hand fingers and thumb, admit of fewer options and are therefore less complicated to explain. This approach to right hand fingering reflects Besard's assertion that the most difficult part of learning to play the lute is

the confusing body of rules concerning fingering rather than the physical demands associated with the actions of the two hands. While the basic techniques involved in playing single stops are not overly difficult to learn, there are numerous rules to determine when each fingering option should be utilized. These rules are based primarily on rhythmic patterns formed by groups of notes and only secondarily on the distribution of the notes on the courses of the lute even though

   Sixteenth-century descriptions of right-hand fingering consistently omit explicit mention of the principle of metric organization. . . . However, the principle is implicit in the rules as they are set forth, and it is rigorously followed in virtually the entire sixteenth-century literature. 78

Early sources generally stipulate that the thumb and index finger of the right hand should play all of the notes in a sequence of single stops in alternation. However, there are a number of qualifications that restrict or modify the application of this basic principle. In fact, only passages in which the same rhythmic sign remains in force throughout are played with the thumb and index finger alternation. In all cases, the appropriate finger for a particular note is determined by the position of that note in the metrical framework of the measure. Although modern concepts of barring and regularly recurring accents were still developing during the sixteenth century, there is clearly a sense of strong and weak positions within the units marked off by the tactus. Notes which fall on the

strong subdivisions of the tactus are played with the thumb, and notes that fall on weak subdivisions of the tactus are played with the index finger, or in some cases, the middle finger. In the event that the rhythmic values of notes in a sequence of single stops involve a further subdivision of the tactus, a similar heirarchy of stressed and unstressed positions applies on each successive level of division. The heirarchy of strong and weak positions is reinforced by the uneven articulation that results from the use of the thumb and fingers. While the sources do not specifically state that there should be any difference in the intensity of the notes played by the thumb and the notes played by the fingers, the greater weight and surface area of the thumb contacting the strings produces a stronger, more rounded sound than the sound produced by the fingers. Nowhere do the authors of lute tutors acknowledge this uneven articulation or caution against it. In practice, the uneven articulation enhances the clarity of the metrical organization of the music. Strong/weak articulations of this sort are also found in Renaissance keyboard fingerings, wind instrument tonguings, and stringed instrument bowings.\textsuperscript{79} The modern concept of homogeneity of successive articulations had yet to evolve at this time.

Descriptions of the alternation of the thumb and index finger are found in sources dating from the beginning of the

\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., p. 57.
sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth century, including the first lute books published by Petrucci and the works of Capirola, Gerle, Judenkünig, Newsidler, Le Roy, Iselin, Jobin, Besard, Vallet, Piccinini, Wersenne, and Mary Burwell. In most of these sources, a dot or a cross identifies a note that should be played with the index finger, while the absence of the sign indicates that the thumb should be used instead. Le Roy describes this notation in a rather round-about manner.

Whereas thou doest finde but one letter to bee stop-
ped, thou shalte strike hym dounewarde with thy thombe,
bee it firste, second, or other, the stryng signified by the
line of the Tablatoire, upon the same line that the
letter standeth on, so that there bee under that letter
no poince or pricke. For if there bee one, it must bee
stricken upwardes with one of the fingers, as shall best
fit it.

In most sources, the middle finger and the ring finger
are indicated by two and three dots respectively. Le Roy
departs from the usual practice by letting the single dot
represent any finger of the right hand rather than only the
index finger. This adds an element of imprecision to the last

81 Le Roy, Les Instructions Pour le Luth (1574), p. 52.
part of his statement and suggests that he is sanctioning the use of the middle finger and the ring finger in passages of single stops. Unfortunately, Le Roy gives no further information that would clarify the matter.

The thumb and index finger alternation is fairly straightforward as long as no changes of rhythmic signs occur. Passages containing a variety of rhythmic signs are treated as a series of discrete segments each of which contains a rhythmic pattern described in a specific rule for right-hand fingering. In order to determine the appropriate fingering of a passage in mixed note values, the lutenist must first identify the rhythmic patterns involved and then apply the rules that govern them.

In contrast to Le Roy, who confines his discussion of right-hand fingering practices to an explanation of the signs that designate the fingerings in his examples, Robinson explains the theory behind the association of a given rhythmic pattern and its fingering.

For first, where you see a letter or stop without any prick vnder it, you shall for euer in the like stop, strike it downward, for two reasons, the first is, if it stand alone, that is, if it be a \( \text{\textasciitilde} \) and the next a \( \text{\textasciitilde} \) or the first a \( \text{\textasciitilde} \) and the second a \( \text{\textasciitilde} \) the first a \( \text{\textasciitilde} \) the next a \( \text{\textasciitilde} \) going so in seueral times, as thus.

\[
\text{\textasciitilde} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{\textasciitilde} \text{\textasciitilde} \]

These are said to stand alone, that is, not being accompanied with fellows, all of one time, wither Cratches, Quauers, or Semiquauers; as thus,
And also being of a long tyme, as Semibrefes and Minoms, for it is a generall rule, that every stroke, is more naturall to be striken downward, than upward; but the swiftnesse of tyme, is the cause of striking upward, and the farnessse off, of seconding a point, as thus:

for here a in the treble being the first of a point, is striken upward, which if the point were all of one string, or still the next vnto it, thus:

Going in 4. and 4. then for ever, the first is downe, the second is vp; so that if the pricks were away, this is a generall rule. Now by this rule, you may by occasion, strike twice down together; as if you have a point begin thus,
to be used without the index finger, i.e., for all the notes, in passages consisting entirely of semibreves and minims. In these cases, the long note values allow the thumb to be repositioned for each note and there are no intervening weak beats to be played with the fingers. The thumb also plays single notes that are preceded and followed by notes of different values. When a single note of a given value is followed by a series of notes of the next shorter value, the thumb plays the first note and the succeeding note if the number of shorter notes is an even number. This repetition of the thumb is necessary to maintain the proper pattern of strong and weak articulations. If the number of notes of the shorter value is an odd number, the thumb plays the initial note and the index finger plays the succeeding note, after which the regular pattern of alternation is continued.

Although single stops are by definition restricted to passages in which no more than one note is struck at a time, these passages may involve frequent skips from the bass courses of the lute to the treble courses or vice versa when two asynchronous voices are represented in the tablature. These skips are relatively easy to execute if the bass notes occur on a subdivision of the beat that is played by the thumb and the treble notes occur on subdivisions played by the fingers. However, if the thumb must play notes on the treble courses in close proximity to notes on the bass courses that are played by the fingers, the result is quite awkward and it may be
difficult to execute the passage rapidly without a great
deal of movement of the hand. While early-sixteenth-century
authors advocate the strict alternation of the thumb and index
finger in this kind of situation, by the second half of the
century lutenists began to take the distribution of the notes
on the courses of the lute into consideration in fingering
this kind of passage. As a result, lutenists began to utilize
the middle and ring fingers in passages of single stops that
contain large skips across the courses of the lute between
successive notes. Robinson's third example in the quotation
above illustrates this practice.

Besard’s rules for right-hand fingering produce essentially
the same results as do Robinson's rules even though individual
rhythmic patterns are described in slightly different terms.
For example, Besard gives rules for use with dotted notes
whereas Robinson, while not specifically referring to dotted
notes, covers them in the rule concerning odd or even numbers
of notes of the next smaller value. Besard begins his exposi-
tion of rules concerning right-hand fingerings for single
stops with a discussion of single stops that occur as short
sequences of notes between multiple stops.

Now that you may know with which finger you must
strike those notes which are found alone without the
Griffes, examine diligently the measure that each hath
to it allotted, and if a letter be set immediatlie after
any Griff, which letter is of the same measure with the
Griffe, then when you have played that Griff, you must
needs begin the Note following with your fore-finger at
all times, and afterwards vse the Thombe if you meet a
third note, and so goe forwards by degrees, keeping such
order with the Thombe and fore-finger, so that as long as you play in that measure you begin nothing with the thombe twice together, nor follow with the fore-finger twice together, till you come to a letter or Griffe where the measure changes; which letter (if it were alone) must needs be stroke with the Thombe at all times. But if after the griffe you finde a Note which hath over it any change of time, then having played that Griffe, begin the Note following with the Thombe, staying a while vpon the said Griffe or Note going before, as the nature of the time shall require. Yet failes that rule when the time going before hath a pricke put to it: for then it must be precisely observed, that after (which hath a pricke adjoyned) the Note following though it be measured with a new measure, must be strooke with the fore-finger, and the other notes with the thombe and fore-finger, one after another. Yet is ther an exception in this exception: for when you finde a Griffe measured with a pricke, as for example $\uparrow$, and there follow it many Notes, the first whereof is $\uparrow$, or if you meet with such a one $\uparrow$ and after it such a one $\uparrow$, although the measure with a pricke doe goe before, yet must that which followes, contrarie to this rule, begin with the Thombe. For example of this Rule and other things which I have formerly propounded, let this suffice: for the better understandeing whereof, note that the letters which you shall finde without a pricke added to them, must be stroke with the right hand Thombe: those which haue a pricke set by them or vnder them, with the fore-finger, the other numbers doe shew the application of other letters played together: the number of 2. signifieth the middle finger: the number of 3. the next finger.83

Besard's use of Arabic numerals to denote right-hand fingerings in these examples is at variance with the normal custom of using dots for the right hand and numerals for the left hand. Unfortunately, whoever translated Besard's treatise into English replaced the designations of right-hand fingerings given in the *Thesaurus Harmonicus* with designations of the left-hand fingerings that apply to the examples in all but the fourth example. This renders the other examples of the set nearly useless as illustrations of the rules for right-hand fingering.

Besard concludes his treatment of right-hand fingering with a discussion of extended passages of single stops, some of which contain notes on widely separated courses of the lute. Besard prescribes the use of the middle finger in certain situations, but he is not as free as Robinson in allowing it to replace the thumb in the thumb and index finger alternation. After the examples of right-hand fingering referred to above, Besard continues as follows:

These things being well observed, know that the two first fingers may be used in Diminutions very well instead of the Thombe and the fore-finger, if they be placed with some Bases, so that the middle finger be in place of the Thombe, which Thombe whilst it is occupied in striking at
least the Bases, both the hands will be graced, and that
unmanly motion of the Arme (which many cannot so well
avoice) shall be shunned. But if with the said Dimin-
tions there be not set Bases which are to be stopped, I
will not counsell you to vse the two first fingers, but
rather the Thombe and the fore-finger: neither will I
wish you to vse the two fore-fingers, if you be to pro-
ceede (that is to runne) into the fourth, fift, or sixt
string with Diminutions set also with some parts. Besides,
you shall know that low letters placed in the Bases, from
the fourth Chorus to the ninth, if they be noted with this
time ¶ may more fitly, nay must all be strooke with the
Thombe, and most commonly so they are stroken, although
this time ¶ be put to them, as you shall more easily see
in the example following: 84

\[ \text{Right-hand Fingering of Multiple Stops} \]

Right-hand fingerings for two or more simultaneous notes
generally, though not always, involve the use of the thumb on
the lowest note of the stop and one or more fingers on the
remaining notes. Some early sixteenth-century authors,
including Gerle and Judenkünig, stipulate that the thumb and
the index finger must play all two-part combinations regard-
less of the positions of the notes on the courses of the lute. 85
However, during the second half of the century, lutenists began
to advocate a more flexible approach to the fingering of mul-
tiple stops. For example, Le Roy's instructions for playing

84 Ibid., p. 11.
double stops indicate that the thumb may be paired with a finger other than the index finger, but they do not specify under what circumstances.

For to plaie two partes, the thombe, as of custome shall strike downwarde the Base stryng, and the first or other finger, the other stryng. 86

Besard suggests that the spacing of the courses on which the notes appear should determine when an alternate to the index finger should be employed.

... Let two stringes which stand close together be stroken with the Thombe and fore fingers: if two stringes be distant one from another so that there be one or two strings betwixt them, strike them with the Thombe and middle finger... 87

Robinson rather uncharacteristically fails to give a clear written-out description of the right-hand fingerings to be used with multiple stops. However, some of his illustrations of right-hand fingering contain multiple stops for which he has marked the appropriate fingerings with dots. Robinson's right-hand fingering practice contains a mixture of progressive and conservative elements. This is apparent in his discussion of passages containing both single stops and double stops.

Againe where you see three prickes under any letter as thus ą, you shall strike that letter upward with the third finger, and so when you see two prickes thus ą upward with the second, and one pricke with the fore finger as thus ą. It skills not what letter, or string it is.

but if a point begin with two letters together, although it follow the point either in the Trebles, Meanes, or Bases, yet shall the second of the point be striken upward as for example.

Here you see the forefinger possess his due place as is above mentioned, alwaies observing the distance of strings... 88

The fingerings in these examples combine the old thumb and index finger alternation with an increased use of the middle finger and the ring finger to facilitate the execution of widely spaced pairs of notes occurring as double stops or in succession. Robinson's retention of the thumb and index alternation in the bass of the fifth measure contrasts with Besard's practice of using the thumb for all the notes of a brief passage on the lower bass courses. On the other hand, Robinson's use of the ring finger is much more extensive than that of his contemporaries. He frequently pairs the ring finger with the thumb in double stops, particularly when the treble note is widely separated from the bass note. The ring finger is also used when there are one or more strings between the note it plays and a note to be played with the index finger.

88 Robinson, The Schoole of Musicke, sigs. Cv-C2r.
On the other hand, Besard does not prescribe the use of the ring finger except to play chords of four or more voices. Neither his rules for right-hand fingerig nor the examples that illustrate them contain any suggestion that Besard sanctioned the use of the ring finger as a substitute for the thumb or another finger in playing passages of single stops or double stops.

Another progressive aspect of Robinson's concept of right-hand fingerig is his awareness that it is often more convenient for the thumb to play single stops on weak beats when they are found on bass courses than it is for the index finger to reach over to play them. The economy of motion that this practice makes possible is further enhanced by the use of spatially oriented fingerings for the upper strings, i.e., fingerings coordinating the distance between the courses on which successive notes or simultaneous notes are located and the distance between the digits of the right hand. Robinson comments on both of these topics in his discussion of right-hand fingerig of single stops in combination with multiple stops.

You have heard, that every strok is more naturally to be striken downward then upward, which is very true, but above all, the Bases are to be striken downward, and for the same purpose, you see how aptly the thumb fitteth that office, and likewise the fingers remaine as ready to strike upward and meet the thumbe with their troupes of notes, as who should say the one were ready to aid the other; and so they bee, yet sometimes severall, one afore the other, as sometimes first the thumbe, and the fingers after, sometimes the fingers first, and the thumbe after, and sometimes both together, as heere vnderneath you see.
Heere, the Tenor beginneth the point with a open striken downward with the thumbe, and a in the Treble followes striken vpward with the third finger, next c in the Contratenor striken downward with the thumbe, & last of the 4 followes d in the small Meanes, striken vpward with the second finger. And now the reason why a in the Treble and d in the small Meanes, are striken vpward with the third and second fingers, is this, the more strings are betweene the Base and Trebles, the more fingers are left betweene the the [sic] thumb and little finger, and likewise the fewer strings the fewer fingers, as you see above mentioned.89

In most cases, three-part chords are played with the thumb, index finger, and middle finger. In some cases, however, all three notes of the chord are played with the first three fingers of the right hand without the thumb. Le Roy describes both of these approaches and his manner of indicating their use, but he does not explain when each should be used.

If you dooe finde one, twoo, or three letters, having one prickie or pointless underneath, you shall strike upwards as many stringes, as you shall finde letters upon the lines of the Tablature, signifying the said stringes, with as many fingers as there bee letters and

89 Ibid., sig. Cv.

90 The English editions of Le Roy's treatise erroneously contain the word no at this point instead of one. Barley perpetuates the error in A New Booke of Tabliture even though the example which follows this paragraph makes it clear that one is the correct reading.
strynges, and you muste also note, that although there bee but one pointe or pricke under one, two, or three letters, thei must bee all stricken with the fingers, without the thombe, as if every letter were marked severally with his pricke or pointe.

If under twoo, three or many letters comprised in one stoppe, bee founde no pricke or pointe, then you must gripe, or drawe as many strynges, as there bee founde letters: gripyng, or drawyng, is to bee understoode, when the thombe and the fingers of the right hande plaie together.91

Besard, who gives only a cursory treatment of fingering multiple stops for the right hand, states that the player must "... strike also three strings, with the Thombe, the fore-finger and middle finger..."92 Matthaues Waissel seems to be only contemporary author to describe the situations in which chords of three notes should be played without the thumb.

Sometimes two and sometimes also three strings must be plucked with two or three fingers without the thumb. This happens commonly where the formation has been completely fingered but the stroke is broken. The bass must be struck downwards with the thumb, the other voices upwards with two or three fingers. It also happens sometimes that the formation is first played completely, then afterwards is played with two or three fingers without the bass.93

---


Waissel's rather unclear statement indicates that the fingers were used to play two or three note chords without the thumb when these chords were actually part of a fuller chord that is played in two parts before or after it is played complete.

Robinson does not give specific fingerings for chords of two or more parts. However, all of the examples of three-part chords in his illustrations are fingered with the thumb on the lowest part.

Besard instructs the student to play "... four strings with all the other fingers (excepting the little finger,)...". This seems to represent a universal convention among lutenists of the sixteenth century. The little finger of the right hand, being occupied in supporting the hand on the belly of the lute, is never used to pluck the strings.

Since there are only four usable plucking fingers on the right hand, chords of five or six voices must be played with the thumb and/or a finger sounding two courses successively. The preceding remark by Besard is followed directly by the statement that

... If more [than four strings] be to be striken (as oft there be) keeping the same order with your fingers, let the Thombe and the fore-finger strike each of them two strings, if so many be to be stroken.95

Besard's meaning can be clarified somewhat by reference to

95 Ibid.
Le Roy's description of the techniques for playing chords of five or six voices, which is more detailed than Besard's.

When thou wylte plaie sixe partes upon the Lute, thou muste strike downwarde, the sixte and fifte stryng, with the thombe onely, trainying it upon the twoo strynges, or two partes, as if thou wouldest shutte thy hande, and strike upwarsdes the thirde and fowerth partes or strynges, with the first finger, as if thou wouldest joyne, or shutte it to thy thombe, whiche finger and thombe, after that sorte striketh fower partes, and to strike upwarsdes the seconde parte, with the seconde finger, and the firste, which is the Treble with the thirde finger, which maketh the full sixe partes. . . .

If it so happen, thou have but five partes to plaie, thou maist as in the foresaid Rule, strike downwarde with thy Thombe, the sixte and fifte stryng, or the fifte and fowerth, and to strike upwarsdes the three other strynges with the three 96 other fingers, so that the Counter Base, and the nexte parte bee nere one to another. Otherwise it were necessarie, that the firste finger should strike upwarsdes, the thirde and fowerth strynges or partes, to make the fowerth and fifte partes. 97

There is no indication as to whether the treble notes are to be sounded simultaneously with the first or second of the two notes played by the thumb in these chords. None of the sixteenth-century lute tutors contains a description of chord arpeggiation using the thumb and fingers. However, Judenkünig and Newsidler do mention a technique of strumming chords of

96 The English editions of Le Roy's treatise erroneously contain the word fower instead of three at this point. Barley corrects this error in A New Booke of Tabliture.

97 Le Roy, Les Instructions Pour le Luth (1574), p. 53. The two examples originally appeared at the end of their respective paragraphs rather than on a single line as here.
five and six voices (in which all the notes are located on adjacent courses) by brushing the thumb across all of the strings.\textsuperscript{98} No comparable technique is described in the English lute tutors published prior to the middle of the seventeenth century.

The majority of works in the repertoire for the lute contain a variety of textures, and must therefore be fingered according to various combinations of the rules given in the tutors (See Figure 15). Even with the added information provided by the illustrations, more than one interpretation of a passage is possible in many cases. Furthermore, the examples reveal that the authors were not entirely consistent in the application of their own rules. Finally, errors of varying seriousness in the wording of the written instructions or the marking of the fingering in the examples, mar the fingering instructions of Le Roy, Barley, Robinson, and Besard.

Right-hand Fingering of Passages in Triple Meter

None of the rules concerning right-hand fingering that appear in the English lute tutors is specifically concerned with triple subdivision of the beat. Likewise, none of the examples with marked fingerings is barred in triple time. However, the rules given in the tutors can be successfully applied to most passages in triple meter in spite of the

The Schoole of Musicke.

Figure 15. A Galliard by Thomas Robinson from The Schoole of Musicke, sig. D2v
duple grouping implied by the succession of strong and weak articulations produced by the thumb and the fingers.

The fingering of double stops, triple stops, and chords of four or more voices is unaffected by triple division of the beat because the thumb plays the bass notes of all these configurations. Hence, in continuous passages of multiple stops, there are no strong/weak articulations in duple or triple meter. Similarly, passages of single stops consisting entirely of semibreves and minims are unaffected by the use of triple meter because the thumb plays all single-stops in these note values, thereby effectively disposing of accentual differences between successive notes in these values. Since the metrical principle of organization of fingering patterns is only concerned with notes shorter than a minim, the strong/weak articulations produced by these patterns have no significance on the level of the tablature measures and the bar lines in no way denote stressed initial beats that differ from the stressed beats of minim subdivisions of the measure.

In passages of single stops consisting of values shorter than a minim, the normal rules of fingering can be applied to any group of two or four notes within the framework of a piece in a triple meter. The only instances in which problems arise from the application of rules based implicitly on the alternation of strong and weak accents are as follows: (1) simple triple meter in values shorter than a minim, (2) compound triple meter, and (3) triplets. In effect, all three
of these cases are identical (for purposes of fingering) because they each contain three notes within the prevailing subdivision of the beat.

While there are many selections in triple meter in the lute tutors, very few of them contain fingering marks. The fingered selections consist of galliards having three minims to a bar and several individual selections with three crotchets to a bar. The fingerings in the galliards conform to the patterns established in the rules for duple meter. The only fingered examples of fast triple time with three crotchets to a measure are "Bockingtons Pound" and "Mistris Winters Jumpe," both of which appear in Barley's *A New Booke of Tabliture*. Barley utilizes the thumb on the first and third crotchets and the index finger on the middle note of one measure in the latter piece. However, at a similar point in the same piece, he indicates the use of the thumb on all three crotchets.

It is possible to play single stops involving triple subdivision of the rhythmic pulse using the thumb on the first subdivision and the index finger and middle finger on the successive subdivisions in either order. While there are no documented instances of this practice in the lute tutors, Robinson's use of the middle finger and the ring finger suggests that he may have sanctioned their use in this fashion, but this is only conjecture. On the other hand, Besard's

99 Barley, "An Instruction to the Orpharion," in *A New Booke of Tabliture*, sigs. Clv-Dr (See Figure 16).
Figure 16. Mistris Winters Jumpe by John Dowland, from "An Instruction to the Orphanion," in A New Booke of Tabliture, sig. Dr.
limited use of the middle finger and the ring finger make it doubtful that he would have utilized them in this fashion.

Textual Variations in Different Editions of Besard's Treatise

As noted previously, Besard's treatise on fingering appeared in four different publications, including two Latin versions by Besard, the English translation by Dowland, and a German translation of the second Latin version. It also appeared in a number of contemporary Continental manuscripts in one form or another.\textsuperscript{100} The original version of the treatise appeared in the \textit{Thesaurus Harmonicus}, published seven years before the \textit{Varietie of Lute-Lessons}, and the revised Latin version appeared in the \textit{Novus Partus}, published seven years after Dowland's print. The German translation appeared under the title \textit{Isagoge in Artem Testudinaria} in the same year and place as the \textit{Novus Partus}. While the revisions introduced by Besard into the second Latin version of the treatise were intended to update the work, the textual variants in the English and German editions may be errors or intentional modifications introduced by the translators without Besard's knowledge. In any event, the four versions of Besard's treatise document a number of developments in lute technique that occurred during the first part of the seventeenth century.

\textsuperscript{100}Julia Sutton, "The Lute Instructions of Jean-Baptiste," Musical Quarterly 51 (1965): 345. The bulk of the information concerning the editions of 1617 is from research by Sutton appearing in the works cited in this section of the thesis.
The discrepancies between the original version of the treatise and the English translation of it are minor. In the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, side-headings have been introduced throughout the text. In addition, bar lines have been added to the examples illustrating the rules for the finger- ing of single stops. In the first of these, the fourth stop of Besard’s version has been omitted. In the examples of fingering practice in multiple stops, seven chords have been omitted, four chords have been altered, and five chords have been refigered. Some of these fingering changes make the chords easier to execute whereas others have little effect. The examples of right-hand fingering practice contain a single altered chord, but as noted, the designations of right-hand fingerings that appear in Besard’s original version have been replaced by the appropriate left-hand fingerings in most of the multiple stops, with the exception of the example for the fourth rule (See Figure 17).

Besard’s own revisions in the second Latin version of the treatise are more significant than Dowland’s changes. In the Novus Partus, Besard added his own subheadings after the manner of those found in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons. In addition to extending the introductory and concluding remarks, he added a number of sentences to clarify or alter his earlier text. The section dealing with the choice of a lute for a beginner contains the following addition.

Take a lute with at least ten strings, or courses, unless you prefer a larger one (as is the practice in Italy and
Exemplum in quo feni ierendus est primus digitus ad scalam E in tribus alteris primis choris, dum nulium A occurrat.
Figure 17. Illustrations of Fingering Rules by Jean-Baptiste Besard, "De Modo in Testvdine Stvdendi Libellvs," in the Thesaurus Harmonicus (Cologne, 1603), sigs. Xxr-Xx4r. The following symbols refer to the English translation of Besard's treatise that appeared in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons: [ ] = omitted, O = added, X = altered, * refrigered.
elsewhere), for experience will teach us that the closer we come to the perfection of sweet harmony, the closer we will be to the perfection of music. 101

The earlier version of this passage does not specify the number of courses to be found on an appropriate lute, although the treatise does contain a reference to the ninth course of the lute in the discussion of right-hand fingerings.

Besard also added several recommendations to his discussion of practice techniques including an admonition to the student to practice before going to bed at night and again after getting up in the morning. The discussion of techniques for developing strength in the left hand is extended with the following material:

In Italy I saw many players wearing rather thick and heavy leaden rings while practicing the lute. And some apply gloves, even while playing. Though I do not disapprove of all this, I should rather urge you to wash your hands often and keep them as clean as possible; besides the good looks which please everybody, the repeated moistening is a great help to the strength of the muscles and, as a result, to the agility of the hand. Take care, however, never to become involved in violent exercises requiring the use of the hand. 102

Besard extends his comments on the choice of an appropriate lesson for a beginner with an explanation of why the first lessons should not contain complicated rhythms.

For if the rhythmic changes are not strictly adhered to, the learner cannot have a good understanding of the melody, and if he does not have this he cannot derive any

---


102 Ibid.
pleasure from the study — and it is pleasure which must first of all attract and arouse the beginner. 103

In discussing left-hand technique, Besard expands the treatment of multiple stops at the third fret considerably. He has added a paragraph dealing with chords that contain stops at first and third frets and extended the appropriate example to illustrate these chords. In several of the chords illustrating the rules of left-hand fingering, Besard has modified the voicing or fingering to correct an error or to reflect a new approach to the configuration. Occasionally, these modifications correspond to changes introduced by Dowland in the English translation of Besard's treatise. Besard also clarifies the instructions for releasing the fingers of the left hand from the stops when playing diminutions by stating that notes should not be sustained if they will form the interval of the second with subsequent notes, unless the notes are part of a cadence pattern. 104 He also instructs the student to avoid touching the frets since a muffled sound will result.

Besard's most important revisions concern right-hand fingering practice. In the Novus Partus, he designates the fingers of the right hand with the letters p, i, m, and a, which stand for the Latin pollex, index, medius, and annulus

103 Ibid., p. 350.

respectively. (The *barre* technique for the left hand is designated by an $\ddagger$ for *digitum sternum*.) Double stops are henceforth to be played by the thumb and the middle finger regardless of the distribution of the courses on which they are found so that the index finger will be free to play any subsequent single stops. (Although Besard does not say so, the use of the middle finger with the thumb instead of the index finger makes it easier to execute double stops on adjacent courses because there is less of a tendency for the middle finger to bump into the thumb as it executes its stroke.) However, Besard provides an exception to his new practice immediately. If a bass note is followed by two or three notes on the upper courses that continue in the rhythmic unit associated with the bass note, the multiple stop on the upper courses will be fingered with two or three fingers only. If the rhythmic values change for the succeeding notes, then the thumb must be used on the lowest note of the multiple stop instead.\(^{105}\) This practice is suggestive of the one used by Waissel to finger broken chords in which the bass note is sounded before the remaining voices.

Alternation of the forefinger and middle finger is no longer restricted to passages of diminutions. In particular, this alternation replaces the use of the thumb alone for playing rapid passages on the bass courses. Besard adds a new

\(^{105}\)Ibid., p. 106.
example illustrating the use of the index finger and middle finger in diminutions accompanied by slower moving bass notes. In the Thesaurus Harmonicus, his description of the procedures for playing diminutions does not make clear whether he was referring to bass notes that take the place of rhythmic units in the melody (i.e., polyphonic passages represented as single stops) or bass notes that are sounded at the same time as a melody note (i.e., double stops). The original wording, "... so that the middle finger be in place of the Thombe... (as translated in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons), implies a series of single stops, whereas the added example clearly shows double stops, thus clarifying Besard's meaning.

In reference to the execution of chords of four or more voices, Besard adds the comment that "... more advanced and practiced players in this art sometimes run through whole chords, even of six simultaneous voices, with the index finger."¹⁰⁶ This remark apparently refers to a practice introduced by French lutenists during the first quarter of the seventeenth century as one of the ornamental devices associated with the style brisé.

Finally, Besard expands his list of publications containing information on the entabulation of vocal music into French tablature from one book to ten books.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 126.
¹⁰⁷ See Sutton, "The Lute Instructions of Jean-Baptiste Besard," p. 359 for a list of the works to which he refers.
The German translation of Besard's treatise contains a great number of changes and several errors in the rendering of Besard's instructions from the Novus Partus. Julia Sutton suggests that Besard's translator acted as a self-appointed editor as well. "It seems quite clear then, that 'I. N.' was a lutenist himself and chose to improve on Besard where he felt it necessary."\(^{108}\) Among the differences to be noted between the two editions of 1617, is the instruction to place the little finger of the right hand ". . . as close as possible to the bridge . . .,"\(^{109}\) which appears only in the German edition. In addition, the greatly extended discussion of right-hand fingering practice contains comparisons of Besard's fingering instructions with those of Joachim van den Hove as presented in the latter's Florida musicae of 1601 and Deliciae musicae of 1612.\(^ {110}\) Finally, the recommendation that the thumb-under approach be considered as an alternative to the newer thumb-over approach for players with short thumbs is extended by a sentence with a rather condescending tone. "Though this is not becoming, it is nevertheless easy."\(^ {111}\)

The changes that appeared in the last two editions of Besard's treatise point to the growing influence of the French


\(^{109}\) Ibid., p. 136.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., p. 137.

style of lute playing throughout Europe and developments in the stringing of the lute itself. In general, these changes indicate that the thumb-over approach to right-hand technique was becoming firmly established with lutenists and the use of the middle finger of the right hand was becoming less restricted during the first part of the seventeenth century.

Selected Seventeenth-Century Descriptions of Right-hand Usage

Certain details of late sixteenth-century right-hand technique remain unclear even after extensive comparison of sixteenth-century sources. In some cases, these details can be illuminated by reference to seventeenth-century sources that describe individual aspects of lute technique in more precise language than the earlier sources. However, owing to changes in musical style and playing technique that developed during the seventeenth century, information from later sources must be carefully evaluated to insure that it is relevant to the earlier period. Obviously, the closer the date of a publication is to the beginning of the seventeenth century, the more likely it is to reflect practices appropriate to the music in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons. The discussion of these sources also amplifies the long-term implications of trends in progress during the early years of the seventeenth century. These trends would be less clearly demonstrated if the thesis were restricted to the earlier works.

Sixteenth-century sources do not contain detailed descriptions of the manner in which the fingers and thumb actually
make contact with and move across the strings of the lute.
The following statements by Le Roy and Robinson are typical
of statements found in most sixteenth-century tutors.
According to Le Roy, the fingers of the right hand "... serve onely to gripe, drawe or lifte up the strynges... "112
Robinson is no clearer in instructing the student to "Note
that you strike cleane, plump together in a full stroke of
many parts or strings... "113 On the other hand, the French-
man, Marin Mersenne, described right-hand technique in detail
in his Harmonie Universelle, which was published in 1636/7.
Mersenne gives this description of the use of the right-hand
fingers and

... thumb, the joint of which close to its extremity
must not be flexed, because it is necessary that it be
quite as extended as if it were without bending, since
one could not easily play the tenth string at the same
time one plays the fourth, because of the great distance
which would exist from the thumb to the tenth [string],
if one had it bent while touching the fourth string.
The first finger next to the thumb and which nevertheless
ought to be quite far when one uses it, ought to play
the strings by the corner of the tip nearest to the thumb
rather than the middle; this must be carefully observed
so that its action may be free to pluck or strike again
the strings. Now when one plays only a single string
with the first finger, it must be released from below
while holding the finger tip quite firm. But when three
or four are played [with the first finger], as occurs
often, the tip must be held more loosely so that the
finger be able to run more easily over the strings to be
released or beaten.

As to the second or third fingers, they must also
lift the strings from below; and when they are not used
they must be supported loosely next to the little finger.

The hand being held in this way, one must take care, while making the fingers operate, that the upper part of the hand is not thrown outwards, so that one can see that the hand is working only through the movement of the fingers.114

Mersenne's explanation of right-hand position, thumb-over technique, and the manner in which the fingers strike the strings reflects the increased demands made on the right hand by the larger lutes of ten or more courses then in use. Although none of the selections in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons requires more than nine courses as notated, almost half of the compositions require a lute of eight or nine courses. The voltes and corantoes, which are strongly marked by the French style of writing for the lute, account for all but one of the selections requiring a nine-course lute. It is conceivable that the use of the index finger to brush across a number of courses, a technique usually associated with the French style brisé, could be applied to certain chords in these pieces with good effect. Even though there are no specific references to this technique in the collection, Besard's comment on the practice in the Novus Partus indicates that it was in use by 1617.

The increasing number of strings on the lute caused the little finger of the right hand to be shifted away from the rosette and closer to the bridge as indicated by the translator of the Isagoge in Artem Testudinariam in 1617. During

114Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, p. 106.
the second half of the seventeenth century, it was rested on or behind the bridge. In his discussion of the lute dating from the third quarter of the seventeenth century, Thomas Mace states that the student should

... set your Little Finger down upon the Belly of the Lute, just under the Bridge, against the Treble or Second String...

A little later he adds that,

The 2d. thing to be gain'd is, setting down your Little Finger upon the Belly, as aforesaid, close under the Bridge, about the first, 2d, 3d, or 4th. Strings; for thereabout, is its constant Station.
It steadies the Hand, and gives a Certainty to the Grasp.

In a manuscript lute tutor dating from the middle years of the century, Mary Burwell's instructor even suggests that the little finger may be lifted from the belly of the lute to make it easier to reach the lowest bass courses and to play raking strokes with the thumb.

The manner of using the right-hand thumb was also modified in response to the additional bass courses on the lute. Mersenne states that the thumb may be leaned against one of the bass courses to steady the hand and make it easier to play certain chords. Similarly, Mary Burwell's teacher states that the thumb may be allowed to come to rest against the

---

115 Mace, Musick's Monument, p. 71.
116 Ibid., p. 72.
117 Dart, "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 29.
118 Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, p. 114.
next course when it has played a note on one of the bass courses. Despite the added stability this practice affords, there is no record of its use during the sixteenth century.

The role of fingernails on the right hand is another subject mentioned only in seventeenth century sources. As Marc Southard has noted, "There is no sixteenth-century evidence that player's fingernails ever came in contact with the strings."¹¹⁹ Robinson is the only English author to comment on their use before the middle of the seventeenth century. He instructs the student to "... remember alwaies to keep your hands clean and your nails short."¹²⁰ However, in 1623 the Italian lutenist, Alessandro Piccinini, described the use of fingernails in detail in his *Intavolatura di Liuto e di Chitaronne, Libro Primo*.

The thumb ... should not have a very long nail... The other three fingers, i.e., the index, middle, and ring, ought to have somewhat longer fingernails. The nails should just pass beyond the flesh and be oval-shaped; that is, longer in the middle than at the sides. When you play a chord or a single string, touch the string with the tip of the flesh and push it towards the belly, letting the nail glide over both strings.¹²¹

The use of the fingernails to pluck the strings did not become a widely accepted practice even during the latter years of the

---


seventeenth century. This may be due to the fact that fingernails tend to abrade the surface of gut strings, causing them to go false and break prematurely, although this is not stated in any lute tutor. Mace gives another reason for not using the fingernails to sound the strings.

... Take notice, that you strike not your Strings with your Nails, as some do, who maintain it the Best way of Play, but I do not; and for This Reason; because the Nail cannot draw so sweet a Sound from a Lute, as the nibble end of the Flesh can do.

I confess in a Consort, it might do well enough, where the Bellowness (which is the most Excellent satisfaction from a Lute) is lost in the Crowd; but Alone, I could never receive so good Content from the Nail, as from the Flesh: However (This being my Opinion) let Others do, as seems Best to Themselves.122.

The use of fingernails to pluck the strings affords the player greater precision of attack and produces a brighter, more focused tone.Apparently sixteenth- and seventeenth-century lutenists did not consider these qualities to be as desirable as did later generations of musicians.

One of the ways in which seventeenth-century right-hand technique differed from the practice of the preceding century is the manner in which the fingers sounded the strings. Mace refers to the older practice as Dividing Play and to the practice of his own day as Raking Play. He describes the execution of the extensive arpeggiation characteristic of Raking Play as follows:

Then, just as you hit the Bass with your Thumb, draw all

122Mace, Musick's Monument, p. 73.
over your **F ore-finger, very gently, till you have hit the Sixth String, and you will hear a very Full Consort, of 7 Parts . . . and thus must you do, by all the rest of the Full Stops . . . 123**

There are numerous seventeenth-century descriptions of this technique, from which it is clear that the arpeggiation of chords was the standard practice rather than the exception in that century.

**Selected Elements of Vihuela Technique**

Although the lute was not unknown in Spain during the sixteenth century, it was overshadowed there by the vihuela, an instrument similar to a guitar in shape. The vihuela is strung and tuned like a lute and its music is notated in tablature similar to lute tablature. Certain elements of vihuela technique bear a strong resemblance to lute technique, and it is possible that the development of lute technique may have been influenced by vihuela technique. One survey of the pedagogical literature for the vihuela states that

The vihuela seems to have been played in Spain with a greater variety of right-hand techniques than was the lute in the rest of Europe. These techniques were discussed by Milan (1536), Boudarra (1546), and Fuenllana (1554), and they were summarized by Henestrosa in a part of his treatise dealing with the various instrumental techniques of his time:

You should also know that there are four ways to make diminishions: one with the index finger of the right hand, which is called redoblar de dedillo [with the finger going back and forth across the string], the second is the Castilian style, in which the thumb crosses over the index finger; the third way is the foreign style [figueta estranjera],

123 Ibid., p. 102.
which is the opposite, bending the index finger over the thumb; the fourth is [to play] with the index and middle fingers. Henestrosa’s third manner of playing redobles (diminutions), is the thumb under technique . . .; it is significant that it is termed figueta estranjera, “foreign style,” referring to the manner of playing the lute outside of Spain.124

This passage indicates that the thumb-over approach to right-hand technique and the technique of alternating the index finger with the middle finger were practiced in Spain as early as the middle of the sixteenth century if not before because Henestrosa’s treatise dates from 1557. Furthermore, he describes practices already described by earlier writers rather than new developments in vihuela technique. The vihuelists, therefore knew and used these techniques well before they were discussed in lute tutors in other European countries.

Similarly, the redoblar de dedillo technique cited by Henestrosa was later described by Alessandro Piccinini in 1623 in his Intavolatura di Liuto e di Chitaronne, Libro Primo. Piccinini states that he adopted this technique as a result of hearing it used by mandora players in France,125 but it is not certain where they learned the technique. This technique never gained the wide-spread acceptance accorded


the other techniques mentioned by Henestrosa.

Among the other elements of vihuela technique to appear in isolated lute sources is a practice described by Bermudo and Fuenllana in which a finger of the left hand stops only one string of a course, while the remaining string is played unfretted. This produces two different pitches when the finger of the right hand strikes the course. This technique was described by the Italian lutenist Vincenzo Capirola at the beginning of the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{126} The same concept is involved in a practice described in Mary Burwell's lute tutor in which the right hand digits selectively strike only one of the two strings of a bass course (tuned in octaves) to sound only the fundamental tone or its octave.\textsuperscript{127}

Finally, the vihuelist, Fuenllana, suggests that the thumb should come to rest against the adjacent string after it has played a note to prevent the thumb from accidentally sounding any notes foreign to the harmony of the passage.\textsuperscript{128} A number of seventeenth-century lute tutors describe the practice of letting the thumb come to rest against the next string, but the justification is usually improved accuracy in finding subsequent notes with the thumb rather than the avoidance of false notes.


\textsuperscript{127}Dart, "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 33.

\textsuperscript{128}Myers, "Vihuela Technique," p. 17.
Although it has not been established that lutenists imitated the techniques of the vihuelists, there is a strong possibility that some lutenists came into contact with the vihuelists or their literature and were subsequently influenced as a result. The techniques described in the lute tutors should not necessarily be regarded as the only techniques employed by players of the instrument. Advanced lutenists may have borrowed vihuela techniques or developed their own ways of treating certain musical constructions to enhance the virtuosic element of their playing. The lute tutors, which are generally concerned with elementary elements of lute technique, would not necessarily reflect the practice of advanced players.

Reasons for the Development of the Thumb-over Approach to Right-hand Technique

The most important single reason for the development of the thumb-over approach to right-hand technique is the emergence of a new compositional style in the lute music of the second half of the sixteenth century. This style utilizes thicker textures than the previous style of lute music and it documents the gradual abandonment of the Renaissance ideal of equality of polyphonic parts. Whereas the lute music of the first half of the century rarely contains passages with more than two or three strictly maintained voices, the lute music of the last years of the century frequently exhibits four voices. During the first half of the century, both the
thumb and the fingers were used to play notes on all the courses of the lute. However, during the second half of the century, more complex counterpoint and faster harmonic rhythm, which were reflected in more active bass lines, led to greater specialization in the use of the digits. The thumb was increasingly restricted to the lower courses of the lute, leaving the fingers to play the middle strings and the treble strings. Because the thumb was needed to play bass notes, the middle finger, and later the ring finger, were called upon to play more active roles. Right-hand fingering practice came to be organized according to functional principles rather than according to principles based on the metrical organization of rhythmic groupings.\textsuperscript{129}

The changes in the compositional style of lute music were paralleled by changes in lute construction. The increasing importance of the bass line in the music of this period led luthiers to expand the compass of the lute by adding more fretted bass courses and diapasons. These extra courses in turn required larger fingerboards and bridges, and thus larger lute bodies to accommodate them. The larger lute bodies also increased the resonance of the notes on the lowest courses by extending the vibrating portion of the strings and increasing the volume of the lute's body cavity. However, the additional bass courses and the larger lute bodies made it more

\textsuperscript{129} Southard, "Sixteenth-Century Lute Technique," p. 5.
difficult for the fingers and thumb of the right hand to reach all of the strings. The hand position associated with the thumb-under approach to right-hand technique was no longer adequate for playing the larger lutes.

Throughout most of the sixteenth century, the most popular variety of lute seems to have been small, six-course instruments with the "pearl-mould" shape—for example, the lutes of Laux Maler and Hans Frei—the back being long and somewhat flat with narrow shoulders. Toward the beginning of the seventeenth century, larger and rounder bodied lutes became increasingly prevalent. Added to this was the fashion of added bass courses; eight and nine course lutes were in use by 1600, ten course instruments became popular shortly thereafter, and archlutes and chitarrones were being built with up to fourteen single and double courses. Again, the mere logistics of stretching the thumb far enough back to reach a ninth or tenth course forces the hand into a somewhat diagonal position.\(^{130}\)

The use of the thumb-over approach to right-hand technique effectively extends the reach of the hand so that the thumb can play the added bass courses.

The thumb-over approach and its hand position have a significant effect on the timbre of sounds produced when the strings are struck. To the extent that lutenists of the period considered the new tonal quality to be desirable, it may have contributed to the adoption of the new approach. The seventeenth-century German lutenist, Stobäus, declared his approval of the new sound quality in his description of right-hand technique.

The thumb should be stretched out sharply so that almost

\(^{130}\)Beier, "Right Hand Position," p. 16.
all of it is in front of the other fingers. The fingers should be pulled inwards under the thumb, so that the sound is strong and resonant. For it has been demonstrated to be much better to strike with the thumb outwards. This sounds clearer, crisper and brighter. The other [method] sounds very dull and muffled.\textsuperscript{131}

The crisper, brighter sound quality that Stobäus associates with the thumb-over approach results from shifting the right hand toward the bridge and the consequent change in the way that the fingers and thumb strike the strings. For a given note, if the point of contact between the digit and the string is near the bridge, the higher components of the harmonic series associated with that fundamental are enhanced and the timbre of the pitch is more brilliant than it would be if the string were struck closer to its midpoint. The angle of attack between the fingers and the strings affects the amount of surface area of the fingertip that actually plucks the string. With the thumb-under approach, the fingers strike the string with a relatively large area of flesh distributed across the end of the fingertip. This produces a warm, round tone. On the other hand, the thumb-over approach causes the fingers to contact the string at a greater angle. This angle reduces the area of contact between the fingers and the string and shifts the point of initial contact toward the side of the finger closest to the thumb.\textsuperscript{132} As a result, the fingertips and


\textsuperscript{132}Beier, "Right Hand Technique," p. 21.
the strings are in contact with each other for a shorter period during each stroke, and the strings are released more cleanly than is possible with the thumb-under approach. The limited contact area and the rapid release of the string also favor the production of higher overtones and thus contribute to the brightness of sound quality.

The brighter tone quality resulting from the adoption of the thumb-over approach was counteracted somewhat by the introduction of new structural materials and designs for the lute body during the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

It is characteristic that lute bodies of the first half of the 16th century were very often, if not primarily, made of very hard woods such as ash or maple, or even ebony or snakewood, and of ivory and whalebone. Hard woods and other hard substances respond very fast and favor high overtones, hence the bright sound, which is enhanced by the relatively narrow Maler-model belly... . Probably in the 1560's or 70's the Venetian and Paduan luthiers began to build lutes that were wider in the shoulders, making a considerably larger resonating surface on the soundboard, and often shallower in the body. Few wood, a coniferous wood that is much softer than maple or ivory, became the preferred lute-body material. The resulting tone is less bright... .\textsuperscript{133}

Paul Beier suggests that the adoption of the thumb-over approach was a means of compensating for the less brilliant sound of lutes made from softer woods.\textsuperscript{134} It seems more likely that the softer woods were the means of compensating for the timbral changes introduced by the adoption of the thumb-over approach,


\textsuperscript{134} Beier, "Right Hand Position," p. 22.
if indeed the two developments were related at all. There may be other reasons why the luthiers turned to softer woods that have nothing to do with tone quality.

According to Beier, the net effect of all these changes was that the lute assumed a greater dynamic range and a tone quality more like that of a harpsichord.

The evidence suggests that seventeenth century lutenists preferred as bright and loud a sound as possible... Certainly, playing near the bridge with the new thumb-over technique must have gone a long way toward helping lutenists achieve the ideal of a bright, loud tone.135 However, Ray Nurse states that the spacing of string holes in the bridges of lutes from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries indicates that a shift toward a less aggressive style of playing occurred at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

A chronological survey of surviving lutes reveals a gradual contraction of the string band [i.e., the width of the area occupied by the strings], especially once courses begin to be added in the bass... A wide string spacing with a lot of room between the two strings of each course is conducive to loud clean playing, and the preferred thumb-under technique of the Renaissance generally requires a fair amount of room. We would therefore expect that Renaissance lutes, with their relatively few courses would have a rather wide spacing, and this is indeed confirmed by surviving examples.

... Around 1600 a chicken-and-egg phenomenon becomes evident; more courses, closer spacing, change to thumb-out [over] technique and the introduction of a more delicate style of playing all occur simultaneously.136

Although we know that the adoption of the thumb-over approach

135 Ibid.

was the result of a number of complex developments, including changing compositional styles, new materials and techniques of lute construction, and changing aesthetic preferences, the conflicting opinions of these writers suggest that we cannot be sure about the interrelationships among these factors.

Guidelines for Modern Players:
Adopting an Approach to Right-hand Technique

As a number of writers have noted, the present-day lute student must choose between the thumb-under and thumb-over approaches to right-hand technique because it is very difficult, if not impossible, to alternate between the two. Even if it were possible to master both approaches, in many cases there is no way to determine which approach is appropriate for a given composition.

Because in nearly all cases, the wishes of the composers are unknown, and because it is impossible to precisely assign characteristic hand positions to temporal periods or geographical regions, modern players probably should feel free to choose the position . . . which they find most comfortable and allows them the greatest flexibility and control. Such an approach seems very much in the spirit of the sixteenth century.137

For the greater part of the lute repertoire, this suggestion is not in conflict with historical practice. Both approaches were utilized during the second half of the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth century. During the period represented by the music in the Varietie

of Lute-Lessons, the thumb-over approach became more and more common until it replaced the thumb-under approach entirely in succeeding years. Of the selections in the print, the corantoes and voltes are the only works for which internal evidence provides a strong case for the use of thumb-over technique. However, John Dowland is known to have switched from the thumb-under approach to the thumb-over approach at some point in his career, which is an endorsement of the latter technique not be be ignored in a collection containing at least nine of his works.

Whereas the middle portion of the repertoire for the Renaissance lute may be played with either approach, the earliest and latest portions of the repertoire clearly call for the use of the thumb-under approach and the thumb-over approach respectively.

A convenient general rule for the use of thumb-under [technique] is that it can be used for music composed for lutes with from six to ten courses in vieil ton (Renaissance tuning).

... Thumb-over [technique] probably became popular first with the late sixteenth-century Italian lutenists, although it may, in fact, have been pioneered by such mid-sixteenth century Central-European players as Bakfark and Ochsenkun. It became the favored technique throughout the baroque period. The general rule for thumb-over [technique] is that it can be used for music composed for lutes with from eight to fourteen courses in either vieil ton or accords nouveaux.138

Those lutenists who wish to play selections from the entire repertoire should choose the approach that accommodates the

---

majority of the pieces they will play, and accept the historical inaccuracy of using this approach for the rest of their repertoire. A compromise of this sort is not without precedent in the actual practice of Renaissance lutenists.

Particularly in the first half of the sixteenth century, differing national and regional styles are very apparent; yet there seems to have been a common European technique employed to play lute music regardless of style. The same is true among the various genres of Renaissance lute music. Dance music (to which the technique is in many ways best suited) was played employing the same techniques as used in playing chanson arrangements or learned, contrapuntal fantasias. It is only at the level of the individual player/composer that technical differences take on any real significance, and even then they are relatively minor. 139

The stylistic differences between the polyphonic vocal works transcribed for the lute during the first half of the sixteenth century and the genres derived from dances popular at the beginning of the seventeenth century is much more significant than the slight differences in sound introduced by the adoption of the thumb-under or thumb-over approach to right-hand technique. Similarly, the aural differences between a performance of Renaissance music for vocal or instrumental ensemble by the forces for which a particular work was written (i.e., individual parts) and a polyphonic realization of the same work performed on a lute are much more significant than the effects of using either approach

---

to right-hand technique on a given piece.

The popularity of the lute was due in part to the ease with which lutenists adapted works for the instrument from other mediums, including works for vocal and instrumental ensembles, popular tunes, dance music, and theatrical music. It is clear that the success of the derived works did not depend on the lutenists ability to reproduce every nuance of the original composition, but in his ability to go beyond the parameters of the original medium and create an arrangement that took into consideration the idiomatic elements of lute music and the limitations of the instrument's technique. These arrangements, which fostered the growth of an independent style of composition for the lute, demonstrate the essence of successful compromise; i.e., to make a perceived liability appear as an asset. In other words, today's student of the lute must adapt to the demands of a varied repertoire spanning over a century of stylistic developments (a requirement unknown to Renaissance lutenists) in compositional technique by adopting the approach to right-hand technique that appears to serve his needs best, and then concentrate on performing his chosen repertoire with the greatest possible understanding of the music itself — technique should never be considered an end in itself. Compromise has always been a part of the lutenist's art and it cannot be overlooked in the name of historical authenticity. The historical anachronism implicit in using thumb-over technique for mid-sixteenth-century compositions
or thumb-under technique for seventeenth-century works is therefore more a matter of degree than a flagrant violation of aesthetic principles that should be avoided by restricting one's personal repertoire to works that can be safely played with a given approach.

Obviously, modern musicological perspectives toward authenticity in performance did not concern Renaissance lutenists. From the few surviving discussions of the virtues of each approach and accounts of lutenists that described contemporary practice, it is clear that Renaissance lutenists made their choice on the basis of practical considerations. Perceived improvements in technical facility are cited in defense of the thumb-over technique in a number of cases, and nowhere do lutenists mention the change in accentual patterns that would have resulted from the adoption of the new technique. Few writers of the period even comment on past practices, and when they do it is usually only to say that a given technique is out of date and should no longer be used. Finally, as is clear from contemporary accounts, personal preferences, based on the physical characteristics of the lutenist's hand and the ease with which each approach can be realized, should not be ignored. For, as Besard notes,

Yet they which have a short Thombe may imitate those which strike the strings with the Thombe under the fingers, which though it be nothing so elegant, yet to them it will be more easie.140

VI. "OTHER NECESSARY OBSERVATIONS BELONGING TO THE LVTE"
   BY JOHN DOVLAND, BACHELER OF MUSICKE

John Dowland's "Other Necessary Observations Belonging to the Lvte" follows Besard's treatise on fingering and concludes the instructional portion of the Varietie of Lute-Lessons. Dowland's treatise concerns the selection of lute strings and the proper manner of stringing, fretting, and tuning a lute. His treatment of these topics is much more thorough than those of Le Roy, Barley, or Robinson, who do not discuss some of them at all. Musick's Monument by Thomas Mace is the only other English lute tutor to treat these topics in comparable detail.

"For Chusing of Lute-strings"

Determining the Quality of Lute Strings

After a brief opening statement, which indicates that Dowland is addressing students who are already familiar with basic concepts and terminology of lute playing, he turns his attention to the selection of lute strings and the criteria to be used in purchasing them.

Ordinarily therefore wee choose Lute-strings by the freshnessse, or new making: the which appeares vnto vs

1Quoted on page 102.
by their cleere and oylinessse, as they lye in the Boxe or bundle, yet herein we are often deceived, for Oyle at any time will make strings looke cleere, and therefore this tricke is too too commonly vusted to them when they are old.2

While some string dealers undoubtedly attempted to pass off old or poor quality strings as new ones by applying oil to them, dealers may also have applied the oil for legitimate reasons. Treating gut strings with olive oil, almond oil, or even varnish reduces the amount of moisture the strings absorb from the air,3 thereby stabilizing the string and extending its useful life. Mary Burwell's teacher suggests wrapping strings in oil-treated paper to protect them from moisture.

The strings are made of sheep's and cat's guts, and are twisted with a great deal of art. To be good they must be clear and transparent, smooth and well twisted, hard and strong; and new they are preserved in a white paper dipped in oil of almonds, or in a hog's bladder. They endure no moisture nor any excessive heat no more than the lute, but they will have a temperate air and place (but of the two the moisture is the worst).4

Thomas Mace gives similar advice concerning the care and storage of gut strings.

And concerning the keeping of your Strings, you must

---


know, there ought to be a Choice Care taken: for they may be very Good when you buy them, but spoile in a quarter of an hours time, if they take any wet, or moist Air. Therefore your best way is, to wrap them up close, either in an Oyl d Paper, a Bladder, or a piece of Sear-cloath, such as often comes over with them, which you may (haply) procure, of them who sell your Strings: Yet they are not very willing to part with it, except they sell a Good quantity of Strings together.

Which, when you have thus done, keep them in some close Box, or Cupboard; but not amongst Linen, (for that gives moisture;) and let them be in a Room where there is, or usest to be, a Fire often: And when at any time you open them for your Use, take heed, they lye not too long open, nor in a dark Window, or moist place: For moisture is the worst Enemy to your Strings.

Forget not, to Tie, or bind them close, or hard together.5

Dowland does not discuss the precautions to be taken to prevent lute strings from absorbing moisture, but he does give a series of criteria for determining if a string is false or otherwise unusable.

Now because Trebles are the principall strings wee neede to get, choose them of a faire and cleere whitish gray, or ash-colour, and take one of the knots in your hand, but let it [i.e., the string] not be too small, for those give no sound, besides they will be either rotten for lacke of substance, or extreme false. Also open the boutes[6] of one of the ends of the Knot,[7] and then hold it vp against the light, and looke that it be round and smooth: but if you discerne it to be curlie, as the thread of a curled Cypris, or horse hayre, (which you may

---


7 A quantity of measure of yarn, thread, etc. varying with the commodity and consisting of a definite number of coils; so called from the knot tied after reeling. Webster's International Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam, 1960).
as well feele as see) then refuse them, although they 
be both cleere and strong, because those strings were 
not well twisted, and therefore will never be true on 
the Instrument. For trying the strength of these strings, 
some doe set the top of their fore or middle finger on 
one of the ends of the Knot, which if they finde stiffe, 
they would hould them then as good; but if it bend as wee 
say, through a dankish weaknesse, then they are not strong. 
Some againe doe take the end of the string between their 
teeth, and then plucke it, and thereby if it breake faseld[5] 
at the end, then it is strong, but if it breake stubbed 
then it is weake. This Rule also is houlden for the break-
ing of a string betweene the hands. The best way, is to 
plucke out an end of the string (if the seller will suffer 
you, if hee will not assure your selfe that those strings 
which hee sheweth you are old or mingled,) and then looke 
for the cleernesse and faults before spoken, as also for 
faseling with little hayres.9

The high tension placed on the treble strings and the ex-
tra use of them that results from the playing of many melody 
notes on them contribute to the short useful life of the trebles, 
thus requiring a larger supply of these strings than of other 
sizes of strings. Similarly, "Gut strings are more susceptible 
[than nylon strings] to chemical attack from sweat, an effect 
that can decrease the life of strings, particularly treble 
one."10 Although Dowland specifically refers to treble strings 
at the beginning of this discussion, he subsequently indicates 
that these tests apply to the other strings as well.

The loose hairs that Dowland describes are tiny filaments 
of the gut that have broken and unravelled from the surface of 
the string. They interfere with the action of the fingers and

8Shredded or ravelled. Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: 


may produce buzzing sounds if not carefully trimmed. However, the loosening and subsequent removal of these filaments alter the distribution of the string's mass, which alters the timbre and pitch of the tones produced when the string vibrates.

"The harmonics of non-uniform strings are out of tune with one another and with the fundamental, which may produce a poor or weakened tone."\textsuperscript{11} As more and more filaments break loose from the surface of the string, the string becomes false and eventually breaks. Surface filaments, which may be broken by careless preparation or handling of the strings, come loose more frequently as the string ages. Furthermore, the actions of stopping and striking the strings abrade them to a certain extent regardless of the precautions taken to protect the strings from external damage.

Marin Mersenne describes a practice of polishing gut strings with dried grass to make their diameters more uniform throughout the useful length of the string.\textsuperscript{12} However, although polishing produces strings that are truer in pitch than unpolished strings, the process for polishing them breaks surface filaments and leads to the problems described above. For this reason,

Many modern manufacturers coat their strings with varnish (and even plastic) to resist moisture absorption and to hold the broken surface fibers caused by polishing [which is done by machine]. This is not desirable for it affects the pitch the string will break at, decreases the life of

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 431.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 433. No citation is given for the information concerning Mersenne's process for polishing gut strings.
trebles, and affects the tonal character, as well as increasing the cost.13

There are no known historical descriptions of the process of making gut strings that would indicate whether or not strings were polished before the seventeenth century.

Dowland continues his discussion as follows:

And againe looke amongst the boutes, at one end of the Knot, that the string be not parted, I meane one piece great and another small, then draw it hard betwene your hands, to try the strength, which done, hould it vp againe against the light between your hands, and marke whether it be cleere as before; if it be not but looke muddle, as a browne thread, such strings are old, and haue beeene rubbed over with oyle to make them cleere. This choosing of strings is not alone for Trebles, but also for small and great Meanes; greater strings though they be ould are better to be borne withall, so the color be good, but if they be fresh and new they will be cleere against the light, though their colour be blackish.14

The process of pulling the string through one's fingers is apparently intended to remove any oil that may have been applied to the surface of the string, thereby revealing its true color.

Although the significance of the string's color is rarely explained, color is mentioned as an indicator of the quality of a string in several sources. According to Dowland,

Some strings there are which are coloured, out of which choose the lightest colours, viz. among Greene choose the Sea-water, of Red the Carnation, and of Blew the Watchet.15

Mace, whose preferences in colored strings were similar to

Dowland's, suggests that strings of certain colors were more likely to be rotten than strings of other colors.

I have sometimes seen Strings of a Yellowish Colour, very Good; yet, but seldom; for that Colour is a general sign of Rottenness, or of the decay of the String.

There are several Sorts of Coloured Strings, very Good; But the Best (to my observation) was always the clear Blue; the Red, commonly Rotten; sometimes Green, very Good.16

Many lute tutors contain descriptions of a procedure for evaluating lute strings by observing the pattern of vibration produced by a plucked string held between the hands. Dowland states that this procedure is so well known that there is no point in describing it.

If you desire to choose strings that are not false, that the maker cannot promise you, but there is a rule for the knowledge thereof by sight after the string is drawn out, which being it is so ordinarie and so well knowne, I sould it not fit to trouble you with the relation [of it].17

Le Roy's tutor contains an explanation of the procedure to which Dowland is referring and the proper manner of executing it.

To put the parte hande to this worke, I will not omitte to give you to understande, how to knowe stringes. . . . Before ye putte them on the Lute, it is nedefull to prove them betwene the handes, in maner as is sette forth in figures hereafter pictured, which shewe manifestly on the finger, and to the eye, the difference from the true with the false: that is to wete, the true is knowne by this, that in strickynyng hym between the fingers, hee muste shewe to divide hymself juste in twoo, and that for so muche as shall recehe from the bridge belowe, to the top of the necke; because it maketh no matter for the reste of the strynges, that goes among the pinnes [i.e., tuning pegs], notwithstanding ye male not bee satisfied in as-saiyng the strynges, holden oneley at that length, but that

---

16 Mace, Musick's Monument, p. 66.
you must also prove hym in strikyng hym, beyng holden at shorter lengths, to bee well assured of his certain goodness and perfection. Also, the false stryng is known by the shewe of many strynges, whiche it representeth, when it is striken between the fingers: so muste you continewe the same triall in strikyng the stryng, till you perceive the token of the good, to separate hym from the badde, accordyng to the figures followyng.18

![Good String](image)

![False String](image)

The test given by Le Roy to determine the trueness of the string is based on the assumption that a string will vibrate

---

according to the patterns of simple harmonic motion if the mass of the string is evenly distributed with respect to the length of the vibrating portion of the string length. In other words, if equal units of the strings length contain equal portions of the total mass of the vibrating segment, and the string is set in motion at a single point, the oscillations corresponding to the fundamental pitch and its overtones will be synchronized, giving the impression of a simple vibrational pattern with the appearance of two conterminous convex curves defined by the endpoints of the vibrating segment, seen in the upper drawing in the illustration. Although the string is simultaneously vibrating as a single segment (determined by the fundamental pitch) and as many shorter segments whose lengths are simple fractions of the vibrating string length (determined by the overtones of the fundamental pitch), the prominence of the pattern produced by the fundamental tone and its reinforcement by the synchronized overtone patterns contribute to the impression that no subsidiary patterns of vibration are present.

If the mass of the string is not distributed evenly with regard to length, the normal patterns of harmonic motion are weakened or altered significantly by extraneous patterns of vibration created by the asymmetrical division of the string into units having equal mass but not equal length. In a false string, the overtones do not reinforce the fundamental tone (or its pattern of vibration) because the overtones are no
longer precise multiples of the frequency of the fundamental tone. This disruption of the simple integer relationship between the fundamental and its overtones accounts for the weakened tone of false strings and the visual impression of chaotic interference within the bounds outlined by the maximum excursions of the string, seen in the lower drawing in the illustration. The vibrating subdivisions of the string cannot be synchronized, causing their patterns of vibration to conflict with each other rather than to reinforce each other. Le Roy is accurate in describing the image of a false string as a representation of many strings, because each subdivision acts as an independent string in regard to pitch and motion.

Mace describes the same procedure for testing the string as the one given by Le Roy, but he is more specific in regard to the portion of the string that must prove true.

For you must know, that most Strings that are True Open, (that is, the whole length unstopt) when you come to make use of Them amongst the Frets (stopt,) they will be False; . . . when you have found a String True the whole Length, hold it still as you did; but with that hand which holds the End you intend for the Frets, (or uppermost) take up about an Inch shorter, and then strike it, and see how you like it, according to your former Directions; Then again another Inch, and so try it again, and in conclusion again and again, so far as you have use of that String amongst your Frets.19

The string is tested at shorter lengths corresponding to the portions that vibrate when it is fretted in order to insure

19Mace, Musick's Monument, pp. 67-8.
that no chance cancellation of equal, but opposite, defects 
has given an incorrect indication that the string is true 
throughout its length when in fact some portion of it is 
false.

Although this test seems to have been accepted without 
reservations by a number of Renaissance lutenists, it will 
not always detect a false string. Whereas the impression 
of many different strings is an accurate indicator of falsity, 
the impression of only two strings is not a guarantee of true-
ness.\textsuperscript{20} The inaccuracy of the test may be explained by re-
ference to another example of harmonic motion that is not 
related to a musical context; i.e., an unbalanced auto tire 
that makes no perceptible thump at most speeds, yet causes a 
significant shake in the wheel at a specific speed. The mass 
of the spinning tire is unevenly distributed around the center 
of the wheel, but the weight of the car and the elastic nature 
of the tire material prevent the tire from deforming abnor-
mal-
ly until the driver reaches a speed corresponding to a harmonic 
frequency of the rotational velocity (thereby causing the thump 
and the shaking sensation in the wheel as a temporarily egg-
shaped tire bounces along the road surface. At this speed, 
the forces holding the tire together are overcome by the centrif-
gal forces concentrated at the point of excess mass, and the 
tire is deformed into an egg-shaped design. In terms of the 
harmonic motion involved in the quality test for lute strings,

\textsuperscript{20}Abbot and Segerman, "Gut Strings," p. 437, note 15.
the tension on the string corresponds to the speed of the car. Unless the test is extended to cover the entire range of tensions that occur in the string as it is played at each fret, the test is not entirely reliable. Furthermore, the manner in which the string is held between the two hands contributes a dampening action to the motion of the string that is not present when the string is extended from the bridge to the nut of the lute. In other words, the test fails occasionally because it does not simulate the full range of conditions applicable to the behavior of the string on the lute.

The Frenchman, Marin Mersenne, was apparently aware of the principles of harmonic motion and the inadequacies of the test given by Le Roy even though he uses the same diagram to illustrate the procedure.

I now come to the choice of the strings, which depends on the eye, the hand, and the ear, since one can know whether the strings are good or bad, depending on whether they rend the air equally, after they are drawn with one of the fingers, while two hands hold them stretched out; and when they vibrate unevenly, and interfere with their vibrations, with this unevenness and some irregular movements, they are called false... .

There are those who have no use at all for looking at them, and are content with touching and handling them with the fingers, which they run and pass along the length of the string, and claim the string good and even when it has no unevenness at all and is like a cylinder. But if it occurs that these two senses are mistaken, the ear judges the goodness or the falseness of each string as the last resort. 21

---

If the diameter of the string is constant and there are no flat spots on it (in Mersenne's words, if it is like a cylinder), it is very likely that the mass of the string is evenly distributed throughout its length and the string will be true. However, it would be difficult to determine if the diameter of the string is uniform by pulling it through one's hands.

Sources of Lute Strings

Contemporary accounts indicate that there was a substantial trade in lutes and lute strings between English lutenists and suppliers in Europe. The authors of lute tutors cite a number of Continental sources of strings, but they do not mention any English suppliers.

Le Roy offers only a brief comment concerning the sources of lute strings.

... The best come to us of Almaigne, on this side of the town of Munic, and from Aquila in Italie... 22

Dowland also recommends strings from Germany and Italy, and he indicates which strings are best suited for the various courses of the lute.

Now these strings as they are of two sorts, viz. Great and Small: so either sort is pact vp in sundry kindes, to wit, the one sort of the smaller strings (which come from Rome and other parts of Italy) are bound vp by certaine Dozens in bundels; these are very good if they be new, if not, their strength doth soone decay: the other sort are pact vp in Boxes, and come out of Germany: of these, those strings which come from Wonnekin and Mildorp, are and continue the best. Likewise

22 Le Roy, Les Instructions Pour le Luth (1574), p. 47.
there is a kinde of strings of a more fuller and larger sort then ordinary (which we call Gansars.) These strings for the sizes of the great and small Meanes, are very good, but the Trebles are not strong. Yet also there is another sort of the smaller strings which are made in Liuornia in Tuscanie: these strings are rolled up round together, as if they were a companie of horse hayres. These are good if they be new, but they are but half Knots. Note there is some store of these come hither lately, and are here made vp, and passe for whole Knots. For the greater sorts or Base strings, some are made at Nurumburze, and also at Strassburge, and bound vp onely in knots like other strings. These strings are excellent, if they be new, if not, they fall out starke false. The best strings of this kinde are double knots ioyned together, and are made at Bologna in Lumbardie, and from thence are sent to Venice: from which place they are transported to the Martes, and therefore commonly called Venice Catlines.23

By the middle of the seventeenth century, French string makers gained recognition in England. According to Mary Burwell's teacher,

The good strings are made at Rome or about Rome and none that are good are made in any other place, except the great strings and octaves that are made at Lyons in France and nowhere else. They attribute that to the climate and to the waters.24

Thomas Mace, writing a decade or so later, is more critical of the French strings and restricts the use of them to

23 Dowland, "Other Necessary Observations," p. 14. In reference to the term catline: "On a ship the catline is the rope used to 'cat the anchor' (i.e., to lash the anchor to the 'cathead,' a beam fixed to the side of the ship for that purpose). The job needs to be done quickly and so the catline is an especially flexible rope. This flexibility comes from the way the rope is made. Any rope is made from a number of small ropes twisted together, but when the twisting together of the small ropes is in the opposite direction to the twisting of the strands that make up each small rope, the result is a highly flexible and somewhat stretchy rope, of which the catline is an example." Abbot and Segerman, "Gut Strings," p. 431.

24 Quoted by Dart, in "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 15.
certain courses of the lute.

The first and Chief Thing is, to be carefull to get Good Strings, which would be of three sorts, viz. Minikins, Venice-Catlins, and Lyons, (for Basses:)
There is another sort of Strings, which they call Pistoy Basses, which I conceive are none other than Thick Venice-Catlins, which are commonly Dyed, with a deep dark red colour.
They are indeed the very Best, for the Basses, being smooth and well-twisted Strings, but are hard to come by; However out of a Good parcel of Lyon Strings, you may (with care) pick those which will serve very well.
And out of these three sorts, First, chuse for your Trebles, 2ds, 3ds, and some of your small Octaves, (espe-
cially the sixth) out of your Minikins.
Then out of your Venice-Catlins, for your 4ths, 5ths, and most of your other Octaves.
Your Pistays, or Lyons, only for the Great Basses.
There is a small sort of Lyons, which many use, for the Octaves; But I care not for Them, they being constant-
ly Rotten, and good for little, but to make Frets of.

Dowland notes that the quality of gut strings varies according to the time of the year when they are made.

The best time for the Marchant is to provide [i.e., pur-
chase] his strings at Michaelmas, for then the string-
makers bring their best strings which were made in the Summer to Franckford, and Lypzig Martes. Contrarily at Easter they bring their Winter strings, which are not so good.

This variation in string quality may be due to changes in the animals' diet, activity, and general health during the year as the animals were moved from summer to winter pastures.

These conflicting endorsements of various kinds of strings probably reflect the personal tastes of their authors. They may also reflect new developments in string-making technology

---

25 Mace, Musick's Monument, pp. 65-6.
in various locales during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For example, overspun bass strings, which first became available in the 1660s, have a greater mass than the simple gut strings available in Dowland's day. The greater mass makes it possible to put a higher tension on the core filaments of the string, which in turn reduces the extent of the string's lateral excursions. These factors allow the string to be located closer to the fingerboard (i.e., the action of the lute can be lowered by reducing the height of the head nut and the bridge), which reduces the pitch distortion resulting from the stretching of the string during the stopping process.

Before the introduction of overspun strings, instruments usually used plain gut for every string. The lower strings were thick and suffered from pitch distortion. The lowest note an instrument could play was determined by (i) the amount of distortion that was tolerated, and (ii) how forcefully the strings were played... The maximum range increased in steps in the course of time, and may be associated with advances in the technology of string twisting. The more twist there is in a gut string, the more elastic it is, and the less pitch distortion it offers.

... From the late 15th to late 16th centuries, high-twist bass strings... offered a range up to two octaves and a tone. From the late 16th century until overspun strings replaced them, maximum-twist bass strings (using special rope technology) offered an open-string range of two octaves and a fifth. They were known in England as Venice Catlines. At each advance of string technology the new, more elastic strings were used to improve the quality of courses within the old range. There was no significant change in tone quality or cost in these changes... 27

From the last quarter of the sixteenth century to the last

quarter of the seventeenth century, low or moderate-twist
gut strings were used on the treble courses of the lute,
moderate or high-twist gut strings (including Venice-Catlines)
were used on the middle courses, and Venice Catlines were
used exclusively on the bass courses and diapasons. The
angle between the twisted fibres and the long axis of the
string varied from $30^\circ$ for low-twist strings to $55^\circ$ for
Venice Catlines. By comparison, modern, mass produced gut
strings are generally available with a moderate-twist ($40^\circ$)
construction only, which is often unsatisfactory for the
lower courses of the lute.\textsuperscript{28}

"Of Setting the Right Sizes of Stringes vpnon the Lute"

Stringing the Lute

Dowland's treatise contains advice concerning the theoret-
ical and practical aspects of stringing a lute. One important
item, which actually appears in the section on choosing lute
strings, deals with the problem of strings that break when
they are being installed on the lute.

Now againe some old strings will hould well the
stretching betweene your hands, yet when you set them
on the Instrument they will sticke, (and rise by starts)
in the Nut, and there breake, euen in the tuning: the
best remedy when the strings sticke so, is to rub the
little nickts of the Nut, (in which the string slides)
with a little Oyle, Waxe, or black lead.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid., pp. 435-37.

\textsuperscript{29}Dowland, "Other Necessary Observations," pp. 13-14.
Thomas Mace describes a similar procedure for smoothing the grooves of the nut to prevent strings from breaking.

... Take a piece of New Neats-Leather, and a little scrap'd Chalk wet in Spittle, which with good Pains must be Rubb'd so long, till you be assur'd that the Notches at the Bottom be very Smooth and Glib, so that the String in the winding up may have no Impediment either in Gauling, or in Sticking fast in the Nutt, which are very Common Inconveniences, to the Loss of many a Good String.

Clear it with a Dry Linen Cloath.30

Mace's discussion of lute maintenance is by far the most extensive in sixteenth and seventeenth-century sources. He discusses many topics that might properly be considered the province of the lute maker rather than the student or performer. One of these topics is the procedure for locating and filing the grooves in the nut. The description is too lengthy to quote in its entirety, but a short excerpt is pertinent for lutenists who wish to convert modern instruments to accept gut strings. All-gut strings require more room between the two strings of a course and more clearance above the fingerboard than do nylon strings. Mace suggests an additional factor to be considered in locating the grooves in the nut.

Yet observing, that the Pairs of the 2ds, 3ds, 4ths, and 5ths, would be a very little closer together, than those of the 6ths, 7ths, and 8ths. The reason I give is, because they are always in the use of stopping, and so may the more easily be stopp'd close, clean, and sure, than if they lay wider.31

30 Mace, Musick's Monument, p. 54.
31 Ibid., p. 53.
None of the English lute tutors describes the proper knots for holding the gut strings on the bridge and tuning pegs of the lute. This omission is significant, because the manner in which the knots are tied affects the stability and useful life of the strings. Thomas Mace notes that careless winding of the string on its tuning peg can cause the peg to slip and even lead to string breakage, but he does not describe the manner of fastening the string to the peg.

And take This Rule along with you, never to twist too much String upon the Peg. This fault of the Putter on is very often the Destruction of a Good String... For the Trebles, and Seconds, (which are the most Chargeable and Breaking Strings) come where you will, you shall find Them most commonly close and hard wound up to the Cheek of the Peg-holes, by which means the String is so pinch'd and squeez'd, that it is not Long-liv'd after... 32

Lute strings do not pass over a saddle or any other kind of narrow bridge bar before passing through the bridge. Instead, according to the practice generally in use today, a loop in the end of the string returns across the top of the bridge and passes under the freely vibrating portion of the string before being secured under itself on the face of the bridge farthest from the head of the lute. The point at which this loop passes under the vibrating string becomes the effective endpoint of the string segment that is used to determine the position of frets on the fingerboard. No mention of this fact is found in sixteenth-century lute tutors.

32 Ibid., p. 52.
The tension necessary to produce a given pitch on a vibrating string of fixed length is directly proportional to the mass of the string. Therefore, for a given pitch, a thin string requires less tension than a thick string (if both strings are made of the same material). By correlating the size of each string with the pitch to which it is tuned on the lute, it is possible to obtain a relatively uniform tension on all of the courses. The lutenist's control and accuracy are enhanced when the fingers and thumb meet a predictable, balanced resistance to their strokes on all strings. Mary Burwell's teacher summarizes this concept of stringing as follows:

... For when you strike all the strings with your thumb you must feel an even stiffness which proceeds from the size of the strings. 33

Dowland describes the principles of lute stringing in somewhat broader terms.

For the well ordering and setting on the right sizes of strings upon the Lute, the senses of Seeing and feeling is [sic] required. Wherefore first have consideration to the greatness or smallness of the Instrument, and thereby proportionably size your strings, appointing for the bigger Lute the greater strings, and for the lesser Lute the smaller strings... 34

He indicates that the strings of each lute must be graduated in size to achieve the desired balance of tension and to match the relative strengths of the high and low registers.

33 Quoted by Dart, in "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 16.
These double Bases likewise must neither be stretched too hard, nor too weak, but that they may according to your feeling in striking with your Thombe and finger equally counterpoys ye Trebles.

Thus as the sounds increase in height, so the strings must decrease in greatness: Likewise by the contrary, for those Accessories, which are the seuenth, eight and ninth string, &c. keeping the former counter-pelise, as if they were equall things weighed in an euene Ballance. 35

The two strings of a single course must be matched also to insure that both strings will sound with equal loudness when struck by the fingers or by the thumb.

Mersenne relates the size of each string to the size of the lute and to the pitch to which it will be tuned according to a precise system of proportions.

As to the strings with which the lute is mounted, they ought to be proportionate to its size: that is to say that they ought to be as much thicker or thinner as the lute is longer or shorter... The strings will be perfectly proportioned among themselves when they follow the ratios of the said notes [on the open courses]. It is easy to conclude from this that if the largest, or the eleventh string on the theorbo or on the lute is one line in diameter, then the seventh, which stands at the fifth, need be only 2/3 of a line in its diameter; and because the fourth string is placed at the twelfth, its diameter need only be one-third of a line; and finally, the second string which follows the treble line, and which is tuned at the seventeenth to the greatest string ought to have its diameter as one fifth of a line, since the ratio of the seventeenth is 5 : 1... 36

Mace indicates that the choice of a set of strings for a lute depends not only on the the size of the lute, but also on the materials of which it is constructed and the intended use for that lute, i.e., whether it will be used for solo or

35 Ibid.
36 Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, pp. 79-80.
consort playing.

But if you be to use your Lute in Consort, then you must String it, with such siz'd Strings, so as it may be Flump, and Full Sounded, that it may bear up, and be heard, equal with the other Instruments, or else you do Little to the purpose. 37

Mary Burwell's teacher describes a consideration that would have just begun to require attention in Dowland's day, i.e., the stringing requirements imposed by the variety of tunings for the main courses of the lute that were being introduced by French lutenists during the early years of the seventeenth century.

According to the several tunings they must be put smaller or bigger; upon the sharp tuning or upon the trumpet tuning, the strings that rise of a note or two must be smaller. And also of other tunings.... 38

No mention is made as to whether restringing was required to accomodate the variation in pitches of individual diapasons required to play music in a variety of keys.

Octave versus Unison Stringing of the Bass Courses of the Lute

During the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century, the fourth, fifth, and sixth courses of the lute were each strung with two strings tuned an octave apart. The upper octave added brilliance, clarity, and sustaining power to the rather dull and weak sound of the lower string on each course. As string-making technology improved,

37Mace, Musick's Monument, p. 65.
38Quoted by Dart, in "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 16.
the quality of sound obtainable from the lower-pitched
bass courses improved and the range of acceptable notes
increased until it was no longer essential to use octave
stringing for the bass courses of the lute.

Le Roy indicates that the two strings of the bass
courses are tuned in octaves.

To tune your Lute well, ... thy beginnyng shal-
bee at the great Base, whiche shalbee unto thee a very
good guide, to conducte thee to his companion the nexte
strynge, the whiche must be higher eight notes.39

In a similar manner, he states that the fifth and fourth
courses are tuned in octaves also, but the third and second
courses are tuned in unisons (the first course is a single
string). However, in the instructions for entabulating
chansons that appear in the previous section of the 1574
English edition, he describes the practice of the Italian
lutenist, Fabrice Dentice, and his followers, which differs
from his own practice described above.

... Those strynges that stande twoo and twoo together,
be settte in one Tune and not by eightes, whiche thei
doe for a perfection of harmonie, in avoydyng many uni-
ssons, which those eight would cause.40

This passage demonstrates that unison stringing of the bass
courses was practiced as early as 1570 in some locales, since
this portion of Le Roy's treatise was first published in that
year. According to Daniel Heartz, Michele Carrara describes

39 Le Roy, Les Instructions Pour le Luth (1574), p. 60.
40 Ibid., p. 36.
unison stringing of the bass courses as the accepted practice in Italy when he published his *Regola Ferma e Vera di Nuove Corretta per l'Intavolatura di Liuto* at Rome in 1555.\(^ {41}\) Apparently, unison stringing of the bass courses was popular and possibly even predominant in Italy by the last decade of the sixteenth century.

Le Roy's description of octave stringing of the bass courses was reprinted without modification or comment in William Barley's *A New Booke of Tabliture*. This fact has frequently been cited as evidence that octave stringing was still practiced in England at the end of the sixteenth century. John Ward proposes, however, that Barley's unaltered duplication of Le Roy's description was the result of editorial oversight and therefore does not reflect the English practice at that time. He cites three instructions for tuning the lute that date from before 1600, none of which mentions tuning the two strings of a course in octaves.\(^ {42}\) Ward also states that Barley's line drawing of the lute depicts strings of equal size on the bass courses, whereas earlier editions of Le Roy's rules depict strings of unequal size.

---


\(^ {42}\) John Ward, "A Dowland Miscellany," Appendix P. "Falce and vnperfect"?, *Journal of the Lute Society of America* 10 (1977): 125-26, note 239. The sources are: (1) Cambridge, Trinity College MS 0.2.13, fol. 97v, dating from the late fifteenth century, (2) the Osborn Lutebook, fol. 32v, dating from ca. 1570, and (3) Trinity College Dublin MS D.3.30/I, p. 14.
Thomas Robinson states that "You shall understand, that two strings are in one tune, & also beare the name but of one string: as Base, not Bases, Tenor, not Tenors." However, his instructions for tuning the lute make no specific reference to unison or octave stringing of the bass courses.

Dowland clearly calls for unison stringing of the bass courses and notes that this is a departure from the practice of earlier lutenists.

Secondly, set on your Bases, in that place which you call the sixth string, or r [gamma] ut. these Bases must be both of one bigness, yet it hath beene a generall custome (although not so much vsed any where as here in England) to set a small and a great string together, but amongst learned Musitions that custome is left, as irregular to the rules of Musicke.

These statements suggest that unison stringing of the bass courses was common in England at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

It is not clear to what extent unison stringing of the bass courses was adopted by advocates of the French style of lute playing. Mersenne, Mace, and Mary Burwell's instructor all call for octave stringing without suggesting unison stringing as an alternative.

---

43 Robinson, The Schoole of Musicke, sig. E2r.


45 See Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, p. 114, Mace, Music's Monument, p. 83, and Dart, Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book, p. 15.
Single versus Double Stringing of the Treble Course of the Lute

The manner of stringing the treble course of the lute was also affected by improvements in string-making technology during the sixteenth century. Prior to the last quarter of the century, it was customary to use a single string for the highest course of the instrument. Le Roy explains the stringing of the lute as follows:

First you must understand, that the Lute is commonly strung with six strings, I sale six strings, although there be eleven, because the five first, accompanying from the base, be doubled, which make ten, and the Treble is only single and alone, which maketh the eleventh, as thou maiest perceive by the figure of the Lute, which I have here represented unto thee.46

Barley's tutor contains a paraphrase of the same rule and a drawing that is very similar to Le Roy's. However, the title-pages of the instructions for the orpharion and bandora contain

46Le Roy, Les Instructions Pour le Luth (1574), p. 50.
drawings of these instruments depicting a pair of strings for the treble course in each case. These two instruments were strung with wire strings, which could be made more uniform in diameter than gut strings at this time. It is very likely that Lutes before about 1580 had single first courses because of the difficulty of getting two [gut] treble strings to sound in tune together on all the frets. More uniform treble strings were available from Munich from Capirola's time (1517), but they seem to have been in general use only by vihuelistas until double first courses became standard (in Italy and England, at least). They were called 'minikins' in England and were very expensive.47

Robinson is apparently the first English writer to describe the use of double stringing on the treble course. His explanation of lute tablature is very similar to Le Roy's.

... Although you, heere see but six single lines, and vpon the Lute euerie string [is] double, you shall understand, that two strings are in one tune... .48

He is even more specific about the stringing of the treble course in his instructions for tuning the lute.

Now you shall learne to tune your Lute, and for a generall rule, first set vp the Treble, ... setting them both in one tune or sound called an vnison... .49

Dowland also requires two strings for the treble course.

... First set on your Trebles, which must be strayned neither too stiffe nor too slacke, but of such a reasonable height that they may deliver a pleasant sound... .50

Apparently, double stringing of the treble course became popular

49 Ibid., sig. C2r.
in England at about the same time as unison stringing of the bass courses.

The lutenists of the French school used several different stringing arrangements for the treble course. Kersenne presents a drawing of a ten-course lute depicting a single string on the course that runs along the bass side of the fingerboard (See Figure 18). This string runs over the nut to a raised peg which is held by a special bracket atop the normal pegbox. Following the diagram, Kersenne states that it must still be observed that a small pulley is used on the peg of the highest string, so that it does not break so often; this is done because one is forced to draw it very much tighter than the others in proportion to its thickness...51

This suggests that the drawing has been reversed in printing and that the single string represents the treble course of the lute. Surprisingly however, the adjoining drawing of a theorbo is oriented correctly.

Mace does not comment specifically on the stringing of the treble course, but he does state that a twelve-course lute has twenty-four strings, which indicates that the treble course must be double.52

Mary Burwell's instructor recommends the use of a single string for the two highest courses of the lute.

51 Kersenne, Harmonie Universelle, p. 75. According to Anthony Baines, the raised treble peg described by Kersenne came into use around 1600, European and American Musical Instruments (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), p. 31.
52 Mace, Musick's Monument, p. 41.
Figure 18. Illustration of a 10-course Lute and an 11-course Theorbo by Marin Mersenne, from his Harmonie Universelle: The Books on Instruments, translated by Roger E. Chapman, 1957, p. 74.
For the placing [of] the second string (or the small mean, as we call it) I would have but one cut in the nut and one hole in the bridge at an even distance between the treble and the third. For since we put but one second, we must fit it with as good symmetry and comeliness as we can. The reason why we use but one second is that two seconds will seldom agree, that the sound of the two squeaking [doth] smother the other strings. Besides, the cadence that is made upon the treble and the second is not so clear if there be two seconds.53

It is unclear whether this practice was widely used during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, it has occasionally been utilized by modern concert artists who perform on both the lute and the guitar, to facilitate the execution of rapid divisions in which many notes are concentrated on the highest two courses of the instrument. It should be noted that the lutes used by these artists are not built according to historical principles of construction in regard to the bracing of the soundboard, these artists use nylon strings rather than gut strings, and these artists employ certain aspects of guitar technique that are anachronistic to historical lute technique in order to emphasize these melody notes.

Additional Bass Courses on the Lute

As string-making technology improved during the sixteenth century, it became feasible to extend the lower limit of the lute's range. In a few cases, the sixth course was retuned a whole tone below its normal pitch. Generally, however,

53 Quoted by Dart, in "Miss Mary Burwell’s Instruction Book," p. 17.
lower pitches were obtained by adding one or more courses of strings to the lute. In some cases, the fingerboard was widened to allow one to three additional courses to pass over it and be stopped, thus providing the normal chromatic sequence of pitches on each new course. In other cases, two or three courses of strings were added alongside of the existing fingerboard without any surface for fretting them, thus adding only the notes of the open courses to the lute's range. The term *diapason* is generally used to refer to the free running courses below the sixth, and "as their name suggests, the primary function of the diapasons was to reinforce the bass line with resonant, octave-sounding strings, particularly (at least at first) at cadences."54

Printed collections of lute music and lute tutors provide the most accurate references for dating the use of added bass courses, but these sources give little information on the changes that these courses effected in lute design. Sebastian Virdung describes lutes with seven courses in his *Musica Getutscht* (Basel, 1511), and Hans Gerle's *Musica Teusch* (Nuremberg, 1532) contains the earliest surviving music for a seven-course lute.55 In spite of these early examples, the six-course instrument remained the standard lute until the


third quarter of the sixteenth century. In his instructions for entabulating vocal music for the lute, Le Roy writes that the bass line of a composition may descend below the lower limit of the lute's range,

whicher happeneth often in our plaine ordinarie Lutes, whiche be but of eleven strynges [i.e., six courses]. . . . Truthe it is, that it were possible to supplie that lacke uppon our plaine Lutes, by setting the base a note lower, but that would make the plaie a greate deale harder, because it would cause a chaunge of all the letters of the greate Base. The Lutes of the newe invention with thirtene strynges, bee not subjecte to this inconvenience, whereof the laste is put belowe; whicher according to the maner now adaies, is thereby augmented a whole fowerth: where here before it was used onely to supplie the lacke of this one note, whereof we speake now [i.e., the pitch F, one tone below the sixth course, in the selection to which he is referring].

Le Roy's statement suggests that additional bass courses were first added beside the fingerboard to provide pitches that lie below the normal compass of the six-course lute. Some time after the middle of the sixteenth century, luthiers widened the fingerboard to make it possible to stop the new course chromatically.Apparently, this practice led to the introduction of more bass courses in a number of different arrangements. Michele Carrara's Regola Ferma e Vera di Nuove Corretta per l'Intavolatura di Liuto (Rome, 1585) contains selections that require an eight-course lute, and Antoine Francisque's Le Trésor d'Orphée: Livre de Tablature de Luth (Paris, 1600) contains selections that require a lute with

---

56 Le Roy, Les Instructions Pour le Luth (1574), p. 31.
ten courses.\textsuperscript{57}

In England, the use of lutes with more than six courses did not become common before the last decade of the sixteenth century. Donald Gill suggests that seven-course lutes appeared in England around 1595, and additional basses began to appear around 1600.\textsuperscript{58} David Lumsden states that these changes occurred during the 1590s.\textsuperscript{59} Owing to the late appearance of lutes with extra bass courses in England, a great deal of the English repertoire requires a lute with only six courses.

Since MS or printed lute music was so late in making its appearance in England there are, comparatively, fewer sources devoted exclusively to the six-course lute, although music for such an instrument forms the solid core of the majority of source books until well into the second decade of the 17th century.\textsuperscript{60}

The first English publications to require a lute with more than six courses appeared during the final decades of the sixteenth century. Barley's \textit{A New Booke of Tabliture} does not contain a discussion of added courses and they are not required by the compositions for the lute in the volume. Furthermore, in the introduction to the selections for the orphaion, Barley notes that the pieces for lute may be played on the orphaion, . . . and likewise the lessons which are played upon the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57}Heartz, "Les Premieres Instructions," p. 89.
\item \textsuperscript{58}Donald Gill, "The Elizabethan Lute," \textit{Galpin Society Journal} 12 (1959): 60.
\item \textsuperscript{59}Lumsden, "The Sources of English Lute Music," p. 62.
\item \textsuperscript{60}Diana Poulton, "Lute Stringing in the Light of Surviving Tablatures," \textit{Lute Society Journal} 6 (1964): 16.
\end{itemize}
Orpharion may bee played vpon the Lute: but this difference is to be considered betweene them. First for that the Orpharion is strong with more stringes than the Lute, and also hath more frets or stops... 61

The title-page of the lessons for the orpharion depicts an instrument with seven courses of two strings each, which indicates that Barley was referring to a six-course lute (See Figure 19).

The first English publications containing lute music that requires a lute with more than six courses were collections of lute songs rather than works for solo lute. John Dowland's *The First Booke of Songes or Ayres* (1597) contains a number of pieces that require a seventh fretted course tuned a fourth below the sixth course. This arrangement is also utilized in *The Second Booke of Songes or Ayres* (1600) and *The Third and Last Booke of Songes or Ayres* (1603) by Dowland, and other collections of lute songs by his contemporaries including *The First Booke of Ayres* (1600) by Thomas Morley and *Musicke of Sundrie Kindes* (1607) by Thomas Ford.

Thomas Robinson was the first English author to describe added bass courses in a lute tutor. Although his musical selections require no more than seven courses, he refers to lutes having seven, eight, and nine courses: "Againe if you haue 14. 16. or 18. strings, those bases are called Diapasones... 62

---


A nevv Booke of Tabliture for the Orpharion: Contayning sundrie sorts of lesions, collected together out of divers good Authors, for the furtherance and delight of such as are desirous to praeitice on this Instrument.
Never before Published.

Imprinted at London for William Barley, and are to be sold at his shop in Gracious street neere Leaden-Hall.

Figure 19. Title-page of William Barley's "An Instruction to the Orpharion," in A New Booke of Tabliture, [sig. A3r]
The lute parts in Dowland’s collection of pieces for consort of viols and lute, Lachrimae or Seaven Teares (1604), require a nine-course lute as do the accompaniments to his three songs in A Musicall Banquet (1610). Dowland’s final collection of lute songs, A Pilgrimes Solace (1612), contains pieces requiring lutes with six, seven, and eight courses.

The only mention of additional bass courses in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons occurs in Dowland’s instructions for choosing lute strings of the proper size for each course.

Thus as the sounds increase in height, so the strings must decrease in greatness: Likewise by the contrary, for those Accessories, which are the seauenth, eight and ninth... 63 Dowland does not describe the variety of tunings that can be utilized on these courses, nor does he indicate the tuning required by each selection in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons. 64 The tunings of these courses must be deduced from the harmonic and contrapuntal elements of the individual selections. The print contains a number of selections that appear to depart from the standard configurations of the bass courses used in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as described by Diana Poulton (See Table 5). 65 However, the discrepancies may


64 In Lachrimae or Seaven Teares, Dowland indicates the tunings of the added bass courses at the end of the lute part of each selection with a brief diagram entitled "To tune the Lute." In this diagram, each open bass course is matched with the fret position on one of the upper courses that produces the pitch an octave above the open bass course.

Table 5
Common Configurations of Bass Courses on the Renaissance Lute

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total courses</th>
<th>7th</th>
<th>8th</th>
<th>9th</th>
<th>10th</th>
<th>11th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F or D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(octave stringing of the 4th - 6th courses, and later unison stringing, particularly in England)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Eb, D, or C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E or Eb</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E or Eb</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C or B♭</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E or Eb</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>B♭ or A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

represent instances in which music originally composed for a larger lute (or another instrumental medium) has been set for a nine-course lute. For example, several of the corantoes and voltes utilize the tuning F, E or Eb, C for the seventh through ninth courses, which may be an adaptation of the common ten-course configuration F, E or Eb, D, C.

There are five pieces in the print that require only six courses in standard tuning, seventeen more that require seven courses, eleven that require eight courses, and nine that
require nine courses. There are no selections that require ten or more courses as notated in the print.\textsuperscript{66} In several pieces, there are errors in the notation of the bass courses that suggest more courses are needed than are actually required by the music (See Tables 6 and 7).

In a number of selections, renotation of the notes on the bass courses would make it possible to play a given selection on a lute with fewer courses than are indicated in the tablature; e.g., a selection utilizing the eighth and ninth courses but not the seventh course, could be played on an appropriately tuned eight-course lute if the tablature were modified accordingly. Over half the selections in the \textit{Varietie of Lute-Lessons} can be played on a seven-course lute with the seventh course tuned to F or D as needed. While many of the selections could be played on a ten-course lute with the lower bass courses tuned F, E/\textit{Eb}, D, C, thereby avoiding the necessity of retuning bass courses for each composition, Diana Poulton cautions against the use of this practice because the ten-course instrument has a thicker, less clear sound than instruments with fewer courses, due in part to the fact that the lower bass courses continue to ring beyond their indicated durations.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{66}John Ward states that the selections in the \textit{Varietie of Lute-Lessons} require from one to four extra bass courses, but he does not specify which selections require the tenth course. See "A Dowland Miscellany," Appendix P. "Falce and vnperfect"? \textit{Journal of the Lute Society of America} 10 (1977): 124.

Table 6

Configurations of Bass Courses for Individual Compositions in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection</th>
<th>7th</th>
<th>8th</th>
<th>9th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fantasia 1</td>
<td>D: fretted</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>D: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F: fretted</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>D: fretted</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavan 1</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>D: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F: fretted*</td>
<td>D: fretted</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>D: fretted</td>
<td>C: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F: fretted</td>
<td>D: fretted</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>D: fretted</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galliard 1</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>D: diapason</td>
<td>[error]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>D: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>D: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>[F: diapason]**</td>
<td>D: diapason</td>
<td>[error]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>D: fretted</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>Eb: diapason</td>
<td>D: diapason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almaine 1</td>
<td>D: fretted</td>
<td>[error]</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>D: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>D: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

continued
Table 6, continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selection</th>
<th>7th</th>
<th>8th</th>
<th>9th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coranto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F: fretted*</td>
<td>D: fretted</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>E: diapason</td>
<td>C: diapason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>Eb: diapason</td>
<td>D: diapason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F: fretted</td>
<td>[D: fretted?]</td>
<td>C: diapason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>E: diapason</td>
<td>C: diapason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>Eb: diapason</td>
<td>C: diapason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>Eb: diapason</td>
<td>C: diapason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F: fretted*</td>
<td>Eb: fretted*</td>
<td>C: fretted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>[F: diapason]**</td>
<td>Eb: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>Eb: diapason</td>
<td>C: diapason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>E: diapason</td>
<td>[error]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The identification of a given course as a diapason in this table does not rule out the possibility of it being a fretted course that is played open in the selection in question. The seventh, eighth, and ninth courses of the lute can be configured as free diapasons or fretted courses and it is impossible to distinguish one arrangement from the other on the basis of the tablature alone unless the specific course is stopped at some point in the piece. The designation of a course as a diapason in this table should be understood as an indication that all the notes that occur on that course are unfretted. As such, these pieces could be played on any lute with a sufficient number of diapasons or fretted courses. The selections requiring fretted courses cannot be played on a lute with a comparable number of diapasons, however.

*This course is played open, but it would have to run over the fingerboard because the next lower course is fretted.

**This course is not used in the selection. Bracketed information suggests the most likely pitch to which the course would be tuned in accordance with the most common configurations of these courses. Other pitches are possible.
Table 7

Summary of Configurations of Bass Courses Utilized in the Varieties of Lute-Lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Courses</th>
<th>Pitches of Bass Courses</th>
<th>Number of Selections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Fretted Courses over the Fingerboard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Unfretted Diapasons beside the Fingerboard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Fretted Courses Combined with Unfretted Diapasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>7th</th>
<th>8th</th>
<th>9th</th>
<th>Number of Selections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C: diapason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>C: diapason</td>
<td>1***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
*These arrangements may represent the upper courses of a nine-course configuration with diapasons at F, E/Eb, and D.

**This arrangement may represent the lower course of an eight-course configuration with diapasons at F and D.

***This arrangement may represent the outer courses of a nine-course configuration with the seventh course fretted at F, the eighth fretted or unfretted at D, and the ninth unfretted at C.
The process of adding bass courses to the lute continued throughout the seventeenth century. As early as 1636/7, Mersenne noted that

Some have wished to place fifteen or twenty courses of strings upon the lute, but the sounding board is so burdened that it is often forced to split and burst, so it is not proper to use more than ten, eleven or twelve courses.68

Although Mace states that the lute of his day had twelve double courses as noted above, it is apparent that some lutenists still preferred smaller lutes even during the second half of the century. Mary Burwell's instructor describes the addition of the seventh through the tenth courses.

The lute hath had a long time but thirteen strings, then fifteen, then seventeen, then nineteen, where it hath remained a long time—that is, nine double strings and the treble (for 'tis but of late that we use but one second).69

The difficulty of tuning and playing such a large lute contributed substantially to the decline in popularity of the instrument during the Baroque era. This factor became increasingly significant as the guitar and the harpsichord, both of which were easier to play than the lute, became more popular.

"Of Fretting the Lute"

Dowland follows his discussion of lute strings with an extended exposition of the procedure for locating the frets on the neck of the lute. He introduces this section of his

68 Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, p. 73.

69 Quoted by Dart, in "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 13.
treatise with an explanation of the organization of his discussion of tuning and fretting the lute.

Although it may be thought we doe not herein keepe a good Decorum, because our discourse is first of fretting the Lute, rather then of Tuning, which is most commonly vsed: yet for that we meane this to Schollers, and not Maisters (seeing both these things are so needful) I haue rather chosen this subject first, hoping hereby to make the easier induction to Tuning: which part is not the least, and of most desired, because between Fretting and Tuning there is Symphonie by Antiphonie, that is to say, through the winding vp and letting downe of the strings, an Accord riseth from Discord, so as of contrary Notes is composed a sweet Tune, which doth concurre and after a sort of meeting together, bring forth by their agreement that sound which pleaseth the Ear.70

Dowland recognizes that a beginning student may not have an adequately refined sense of pitch to tune the lute or position the frets by ear, even though a number of lute tutors recommend this practice. For this reason, he prescribes a mechanical system of fret placement based on mathematical ratios applied to the fingerboard of the lute. This system does not relieve on the aural recognition of musical intervals, thereby allowing a student to place the frets accurately before developing the ability to recognize the intervals between the open courses of the lute.

Once the frets are positioned accurately, they can be used to simplify the tuning procedure by matching open strings to fretted positions on the lower courses that produce pitches at the unison or octave with the desired pitch of the open string. Although other authors use the same tuning procedure

as Dowland, the absence of instructions for fretting the lute renders the instructions for tuning the instrument all but useless for a beginner.

Development of the Fingerboard

In discussing the procedures for fretting and tuning the lute, Dowland refers to a number of classical, medieval, and Renaissance treatises. The style of his citations and many of the individual remarks can be traced to the translation of Ornithoparchus’ *Musicae activae micrologus* that Dowland published in 1609. Dowland cites Ornithoparchus a number of times when explaining the theoretical basis and historical background of subjects related to fretting the lute. He also refers the student to the earlier work for a more extensive exposition of music theory.

*Wherefore as that famous Maister in Musicke Andreas Ornithoparcus, saith in lib. 1. cap. 3. of his Micrologus: a voyce is compact of a Key and a Sillable: even so here the sounds on the Lute, [(] by which a Tenor of Notes may be expressed) are compact of a stoppe and a stroke; whose distinction is shewed by Strings called of the ancient Musitions Phthonsos, and also by Frets called Negui, Glarianus lib. I. Dedocha. [i.e., Dodecachordon]. . . 71*

Dowland continues with a quasi-historical account of the addition of frets to the fingerboard of the lute.

Now these frets of late yeeres were but seauen in number, as witnesseth Hans Gerle Lutenist, Citizen and Lute-maker of Nurenburge, (for so he stileth himselfe in his booke of Tableture, printed 1533.) and so the seaventh fret (according to the Monochord in the Diatonike order) rested upon the Diapente. Yet presently after there was added an

---

71 Dowland, "Other Necessary Observations," p. 15.
eight fret: for my selfe was borne but thirty years after
Hans Gerles booke was printed, and all the Lutes which I
can remember vse eight frets, and so ended at the Semi-
tonium cum Diapente.

But yet as Plautus saith, Nature thirsting after
knowledge, is always desirous to inuent and seeke more,
by the wittie conceit (which I haue seene, and not alto-
gether to be disallowed) of our most famous countriman M.
Mathias Mason Lutenist, and one of the Gromes of his
Maisties most honourable Priue Chamber,[72] (as it hath
told me,) inuented three frets more, the which were
made of wood, and glued vpon the belly,[73] and from thence
about some few yeeres after, by the French Nation, the
neckes of the Lutes were lengthened, and thereby increased
two frets more, so as all those Lutes which are most re-
cieued and desired, are of tenne frets.[74]

There are two lute books by Hans Gerle to which Dowland may
have been referring in the opening paragraph of this quotation.
John Ward states that Dowland is referring to Gerle's Tabulatur
auff die Lautten, which was published in 1533. [75] This possibil-
ity is corroborated by the fact that Dowland's date of birth,
1563, is indeed thirty years after the year in which that vol-
ume appeared. However, it is possible that Dowland was referr-
ing to Gerle's Musica Teusch, published the preceding year,
even though this would require Dowland to have made an error

[72] Mathias Mason was appointed one of the lutenists in the
King's Musick in 1579, was promoted to Chief Luter in 1589, and
died in 1610. Ward, "A Dowland Miscellany," Appendix K. The
King’s Luters, 1593-1612, p. 110.

[73] In this arrangement, frets nine through eleven, design-
ated by the letters k, l, and m, were therefore non-adjustable.

[74] Dowland, "Other Necessary Observations," p. 15. In this
arrangement, frets one to ten would be adjustable gut frets
tied around the neck of the lute. Dowland does not indicate
whether or not there were three wooden frets glued to the belly
of lutes of this kind.

in citing the date of Gerle's publication. The appellation, Citizen of Nuremberg, appears in *Musica Teusch* and other lute publications by Gerle as well as in the *Tabulatur auff die Lautten*. More importantly, the earlier work contains an extended discussion of fret placement that appears to be the source of, or at least very influential in regard to, the system of fretting the lute given by Dowland at the end of his treatise. In light of the significance of the discussion of fret placement in Gerle's *Musica Teusch* to the passage in which Dowland cites Gerle's publication, it is very possible that Dowland had the earlier work in mind at this point.

Dowland's account of the addition of frets to the fingerboard of the lute cannot be accepted at face value. The number of frets on the fingerboard seems to have varied in different locales during different periods. In his instructions for entabulating vocal music for the lute, Le Roy gives a diagram of "a generall collection of all the unisson, which maie be founde on the necke or beallie of the Lute." 

This table enables the student to find positions on the fingerboard that substitute for the normal position of the note when the course on which the pitch is usually played is already occupied by a note in another voice. In this situation, the substitute position occurs on a lower course at a higher fret. This illustration depicts frets up to \( j \) on the first course, \( k \) on the fourth and fifth courses, \( l \) on the third and sixth courses, and \( o \) on the second course. In the same publication, Le Roy gives a diagram of "the compasse of the lower partes of the song following, ["Trop endurer" by Lassus] of the fifte Tune,"\(^{79}\) which depicts the fret \( p \) on the second course.

![Musical Diagram]

However, in instructions for playing the lute, Le Roy states that there are ordinarily eight frets tied around the neck of the lute, designated by the letters \( h \) through \( p \), above which notes can be played without the use of frets.

---

\(^{79}\)Ibid., p. 36.
As for the letters that come after the \( .l \), (which we have set last), thei have no frettis, not withstand-\( yng \) those that be exercised in the same arte, stoppe the strynges justly, where thei should bee stopped, that is to saie; where the letters be marked, which bee ever above the number of eight, as cunninggly as if thei had frettis.80

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\cdot & m & k & m \\
\cdot & k & k & k \\
\cdot & m & k & m \\
\cdot & m & m & m \\
\end{array}
\]

This diagram indicates that chords as well as single stops were played up to the \( n \) fret position (an octave above the open course) on the first course. The lower courses, which are harder to reach in the higher positions, were played at least as high as the \( k, l, \) and \( m \) positions. Apparently, while only eight frets were tied around the neck of the lute at this time, skilled performers stopped the courses at fret positions above the eighth with only their fingertips and thereby gained as many as six additional half-steps (up to the fret \( p \)) on some courses. There is no mention of the use of fixed wooden frets on the belly of the lute in Le Roy's treatise.

Barley's discussion of frets on the fingerboard consists of a duplication of Le Roy's remarks and an additional comment concerning the upper positions.

\[
\ldots \text{ and the letters that sometime come after the } i. \text{ are these } k, l, m \text{ and } n \text{ but haue no frettis allowed them.}81
\]

---

80 Ibid., p. 51.

81 Barley, A New Booke of Tabliture, sig. 53r.
This remark replaces Le Roy's diagram. Barley presents two illustrations of a lute with eight frets in connection with the rules concerning the arrangement of the courses and frets on the fingerboard. These diagrams are very similar to Le Roy's diagram on which they are based (See page 230 above). However, the illustration that appears on the title-page of A New Booke of Tabliture depicts a lute with nine frets tied around the neck of the instrument (See page 64 above). There are no fixed frets on the belly of the lute in any of Barley's illustrations. It is possible that the title-page illustration, presumably made for the publication of the print, represents the kind of lute in use at the end of the sixteenth century, and that Le Roy's outdated illustration was retained due to oversight on Barley's part. However, the title-page illustration is not entirely accurate in representing the courses of the lute: there are six lines at the nut and seven at the bridge, thus casting the reliability of the illustration in doubt.

The only other information in Barley's print that concerns the number of frets on the lute is his statement that the lute has fewer frets than the orpharion.

And concerning the frets or stoppes, the difference doth consist in the different number that is betwenee them, for the Lute hath no farther than i. and the Orpharion hath to q. . . . 82

82 Ibid., "An Instruction to the Orpharion," sig. A4r. See the illustration from the title-page of this section on page 239 above.
Robinson's *The Schoole of Musicke* contains the first English description of fixed frets on the belly of the lute. He states that the normal frets extend from \textit{b} to \textit{i} which is the last fret about the neck of the Lute, but you may glue on more fretts in fit place and space (untill you come to \textit{m} [\textit{l}]).

This description agrees with Dowland's description of older lutes, but Robinson does not mention lutes with ten frets on the fingerboard below the belly nor does he say when or by whom fixed frets were first glued on the belly. The combined gut and wooden frets described by Robinson total eleven in number, whereas Dowland states that the most popular lutes have ten frets. Dowland's description suggests that all ten of these frets are made of gut tied around the neck of the lute.

Because one of the selections in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* requires an eleventh fret, it is possible that Dowland's lute had ten gut frets and several wooden frets on the belly. While his instructions for placing the frets in position on the fingerboard conclude with the remark, "Thus haue you the perfect placing of your ten frets...", Dowland does indicate the position of the twelfth fret, \textit{m}, which produces the octave above the open course. Since he does not locate the fret \textit{m}, it can be argued that the position of fret \textit{n} is given only for use in subsequent calculations. On the other hand, it can be argued

\footnote{Robinson, *The Schoole of Musicke*, sig. E2r.}
\footnote{Dowland, "Other Necessary Observations," p. 17.}
that Dowland failed to provide the locations for the frets on the belly of the lute because he assumed that a student would have no need of them or that he felt an experienced player or luthier should be entrusted with the task of gluing them in place. Dowland does not explain the omission of the positions for the eleventh or thirteenth fret.

In any event, if all three of the wooden frets were glued to the belly above the ten tied gut frets, a lute thus appointed will accommodate all of the pieces in the Varieties of Lute-Lessons and all of the frets in Le Roy's table of unisons. Only position $p$ would need to be stopped without a fret. Although works with ten or fewer frets make up the majority of the repertoire, the higher frets are frequently required in some manuscripts dating from the turn of the century. For example, Cambridge University Library: MS Dd. 9. 33., dated 1600, contains a number of pieces requiring position $p$, and the fret $n$ is not uncommon in other manuscripts.\textsuperscript{85}

The practice of extending the upper limit of the lute's range by adding more frets to the fingerboard seems to have reached its zenith in Dowland's day. French lutenists of the seventeenth century appear to have favored lutes with nine tied gut frets, with or without three wooden frets glued on the belly of the lute. \textsuperscript{85}Mersenne indicates that notes requiring the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth fret positions were played

\textsuperscript{85}Lumsden, "The Sources of English Lute Music," pp. 55-6.
with both arrangements during the second quarter of the seventeenth century. At one point in his treatise, he states that

... although there are only nine frets on the neck of the lute, which cause each string to rise from the pitch that it makes unstopped, up to the major sixth, and each is divided into nine semitones; nevertheless I shall show in the proposition which follows the method of further adding three frets so as to make the said strings rise up to the octave.86

Subsequently, Mersenne states that the highest fret is

the ninth fret marked with the letter k, beyond which one can still place the fingers, which occurs only rarely inasmuch as the strings do not speak so clearly there.87

While Thomas Mace and Mary Burwell's instructor also call for lutes with nine frets, neither of them refers to the practice of gluing wooden frets on the belly. If as Dowland claims, the French lutenists were responsible for extending the neck of the lute to accommodate ten frets, they seem to have had second thoughts about the practice later in the seventeenth century. In recommending a lute with nine frets, Mace makes it clear that lutes with fewer or more than nine were also in use during the third quarter of the seventeenth century.

And here Note, That the Number of 9 Fretts, is the Best Number for a Lute-Neck to carry; for if it bear few-er, it will be too short, both as to the Proportion, and Comeliness of the Instrument, and Deficient as to the proper good use required in a Lute; and if it bear more than 9, it will be Inconvenient, both as to the Proportion

86 Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, p. 80.
87 Ibid., p. 111.
of the Lute, and also, as to the Breaking of Strings. In his discussion of testing lute strings, Mace implies that nine frets were adequate for the majority of the pieces in the repertoire of his day.

But your Treble String, would always be examin'd and found True, to h, y, or k, because there is no other String, to take it off. Your 2d. String likewise to h, or y, because it is often us'd so far. Surprisingly, Mace only requires the lower courses to be true as far as the fret at which each course corresponds to the pitch of the next higher course, i.e., the third or fifth fret depending upon the tuning involved. Complicated chord-fingerings in higher positions were much less frequently employed in the lute compositions of the style brisé than in the lute music of the English Golden Age. As a result, the design of the lute was modified accordingly and lutes with shorter necks became popular once again.

Locating the Frets on the Fingerboard of the Lute

The Varietie of Lute-Lessons is the only English tutor for the lute that contains instructions for positioning the frets on the fingerboard of the instrument. Le Roy's third rule concerns the propuse of frets, but gives no directions for placing them.

And because these sise cordes bee not sufficient of

---

88 Mace, Musick's Monument, p. 75.
89 Ibid., p. 68.
them selves, to expresse many and diverse soundes, it
it necessarie to finde meanes, whereby every stryng maie
give many and diverse soundes, and the meanes and waie
thereof, is the invention of fretties... . .
For to speake of the fretties, I will not here de-
clare the proportions, that ought to bee observed, to
saie, the space or disstance betwixte frette and frette,
whiche wee do call stoppes, for to compass them justly,
nor the greatnessse of the frette strynges, which must
bee also observed, these thyngs shalbe declared an othere
tyme... . .90

Unfortunately, no discussion of these matters appears in the
tutor. Barley paraphrases Le Roy's rule, but he modifies the
final clause to omit the reference to a subsequent explanation
of the procedure for sizing and placing frets, substituting
instead the phrase, "which time will better acquaint you with."91
Thomas Robinson does not discuss fret placement at all in The
Schoole of Musicke.

Dowland acknowledges that frets may be positioned by ear
and that many accomplished players use this method, but he re-
jects it as unsatisfactory for beginners.

Now to place these frets aright, whereby wee may make vse
of these various sounds by them caused, there is two wayes:
the one is the deuine sence of Hearing, which those that be
skilful doe most vse, and according to the opinion of the
Stoiks, is a Spirit reaching from the Vnderstanding to the
Eares, and thereby (after the Instrument is tuned open) doe
set them in their order; yet as Caluisus [92] in de initio &

90Le Roy, Les Instructions Pour le Luth (1574), p. 50.
91Barley, A New Booke of Tabliture, sig. E2r.
92Sethus Calvisius (1556-1615), author of Melopeiam... (1592) and Compendium Musicae practicae... (1594) according
to R. Alec Harman, in A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practi-
call Muskicke by Thomas Morley (London, 1597), modern reprint
p. 285, note 3. Morley also cites this work.
progre∫ Musicis saith, the sence of Hearing of all others deceiueth most, and cannot discourse and judge of the smaller Intervals. To this agreeth Valla Placentinus [93] in lib. 2. cap. 3. of his Musicke, wherein he writeth that those sounds must be censured and pondered with naturall Instruments, and not by the Eares, whose judgement is dull, but by wit and reason.94.

Whereas Dowland considers the practice of tuning the lute by ear to be unsatisfactory for beginners, Mary Burwell's teacher favors it over the practice of using a compass to mark the positions of the frets on the fingerboard according to mathematical ratios.

For the frets, they must be nine in number and so make the Gamut, every fret making a half a tone. For example, strike a string open and sing 'Ut'; then skipping one fret and laying the finger upon e of any string you shall sing 'Re'; Then skip a fret again and stop on e; it will sing 'Mi'. The next fret where you shall stop on [f] will make 'Fa'; then skip two frets and stop upon the h, it will make 'Sol'; and two frets more, stopping upon the k will make 'La'. Some make use of a compass made for the nonce that one may have from the lute-makers to place the frets at the right distance; but the best way is to place them by ear, singing the Gamut as was said even now, for you must sometimes remove a fret if a string sing too high or too low.95

93 Giorgio Valla of Piacenza (1447-1500); referred to as Placentinus by Ornithoparchus. "He was the first Italian scholar to study Greek music theory extensively. His writings on the subject, compiled as De Harmonica, chapters 5-9 of his posthumously published work, De expetendis et fugiendis rebus opus (Venice, 1501), is based on a thorough acquaintance with Aristoxenus, Cleonides, Aristides Quintilianus, and others." Gustave Reese and Steven Ledbetter, editors, A Compendium of Musical Practice: Musice active micrologus by Andreas Ornithoparchus, and Andreas Ornithoparcus His Micrologus, or Introduction, Containing the Art of Singing by John Dowland (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), p. xii.

94 Dowland, "Other Necessary Observations," p. 15.

95 Quoted by Dart, in "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 16.
This procedure is incomplete as it stands since several frets are not even mentioned in it. The missing frets would probably have been tuned by octaves and unisons from notes on the frets described above.

Dowland continues his discussion of fret placement with further assertions that the sense of hearing cannot be trusted to give accurate results. He also gives a lengthy account of Pythagoras' discovery of acoustical ratios that is intended to justify his use of a system of fret placement based on mathematical calculations.

Now the certaintie thereof was first found out (as Petrus Cornerster in Historia Scholastica saith) by Tubals waighing of his brother Tubals Hammers: but most Authors attribute this vnto Pithagoras, (the sonne of Mresarchus a Samian borne) the first author of the name of Philosophie, who flourished in the time of Cambices king of Persia, seauenty yeeres after the captituite of Babilon ended: when Tarquinius Superbus the last King of the Romaines raigned: more then sixe hundred yeeres after the destruction of Troy; and fiue hundred yeeres before the birth of Christ, and the manner of it was thus. Pithagoras searching after a certaine distance of Intervals, left the judgement of the Eares, and went to the rules of Reason: for hee would not gliee credit to mans Eares, which are chaunged partly by Nature, partly by outward accidents: as for example, let a companie of Lutenists, Violists, &c. which be skilfull, play each after other, and you see every one as the Instrument commeth to him, Tune according to the judgement of his owne Eare. Besides, Pithagoras was giuen to no Instruments, amongst which commonly there growth much varietie and vncertainty being that euen now if you will regard the strings, the Ayre being most dulles their sound, or dry, makes them dry, or by some other accident doth chaunge the state of their former constancie. Now being all other Instruments were subject to the same, hee accounting all these things to be of no waight nor truth, did with great toyle studie a long time how hee might learne the firme and constant course of Concors. And while (as God would haue it) passing by the Smith shops, hee heard the beating of their Hammers, and that of diuers sounds there was as it were one consent. Wherefore amazed at this, hee set to that worke which he had long intented,
and pondering long thought that the strength of the strikers did make the diuersitie of the sounds: which that it might be more evident vnto him, hee bad them change hammers, but the propertie of the sounds was not in the Armes of the strikers, but in the hammers which were chaunged: wherefore marking that, hee takes the weight of the hammers, and being by chance there five hammers, they were found to be duple in weight, which answered themselues, according to the concord of a Diapason, and that which was duple to the least, hee found to be a Sesquiquipmenta to another, to whom it sounded a Diatessaron. And againe hee found that the same duple was a Sesquialter to that, with which it was ioyned in a Diapente concord. Now those two to whom the former duple was proved to be a Sesquiquipmentus and Sesqui-
alter, were found to keepe a Sesquioctaue proportion one with another betwixt themselfes: and the fift hammer which was a discord to all of them was rejected. Whereas therefore before Pithagoras his time, the musieall concords were called partly Diapason, partly Diapente, and partly Diatessaron, which was thought the least of all Conords. Wherefore Pithagoras was the first that by this meanes found out by what proportion this diuersite of sounds was ioyned together.

And to make that which is spoken more plaine, let there be for examples sake of hammers foure waights, which let be comprehended in the numbers vnder-written, 12. 9. 8. and 6. Those hammers which waigh 12. and 6. pounds, did strike a Diapason, or eight Concord in the duple: the hammer that waighed 12. to the hammer of 9. pound waigh, and farther the hammer of 8. pound, to the hammer of 6. pound, according to the Sesquiquipmenta proportion, were ioyned in a concord of a fourth, or in a Diatessaron: then the 9. pound hammer to that of 6. and of 12. to 8. did mingle a fift or Diapente, in the Sesqui-
altera proportion. Againe the hammer of 9. to that of 8. did sound in a Sesquioctaue proportion. Wherefore returning backe againe from hence, and searching by mani-
fold trys, whether the whole nature of Conords did consist in these proportions, and so fitting the waights (which answered the late found proportions) to strings, hee judged of their Conords by his Eare. Then overseeing the doulenesse and halfe of the strings length, and fitting the other proportions, he gat a most true rule out of his manifold experience, and was exceedingly loyed that hee had found that which in all things answered with the truth: hitherto are Boethius his words.96

This account of Pythagoras’ discoveries establishes the ratios that Dowland uses to calculate the positions of the frets required to produce the intervals of a whole tone, a fourth, a fifth, and an octave above the open courses. His system, which utilizes pure fourths and pure fifths, is essentially Pythagorean in design with a few modifications for certain fret positions.

After giving the theoretical basis of the system, Dowland describes the procedure for applying it to the fingerboard of the lute.

Thus the Intervals being found out by weight and number, wee will endeaouer to set them downe by measure: whereby the ignorant may perceiue by this vnliued Trinitie, that the finger of God framed Musicke, when his Word made the World. Wherefore take a thinne flat ruler of whitish woode, and make it iust as long and straight as from the inward side of the Nut to the inward side of the Bridge, then note that end which you meane to [rest at] the Bridge with some samll marke, and the other end with the letter A, because you may know which belongeth to the one and to the other: then lay the ruler vpon a Table, and take a payre of compasses and seeke out the iust middle of the Ruler: that note with a pricke, and set the letter N. vpon it, which is a Diapason from the A. as appeareth by the striking of the string open. Secondly, part the distances from N. to D. [sic; A is correct] in three parts, then the first part [from N to A] gives you the seauenth fret from the Nut, making a Diapente; in that place also set a pricke, and vpon it the letter H. Thirdly, deuide the distance from the letter H. to the letter A. in eleaumen parts: two of which parts from A. gives the first fret, note that with a pricke, and set the letter E. thereon, which maketh a Semitone. Fourthly, diuide the distance from H. to the letter A. in three parts, one of which parts from A. vpward sheweth the second fret, note that with a pricke, and set the letter C. vpon it, which maketh a whole Tone from A. Fiftly, diuide the distance from N. to A. into two parts, there the first part sheweth you the first [sic; fifth is correct] fret, sounding a Diatessaron: in that place also set a pricke, and vpon it the letter F. The sixt fret which is a G. must be placed iust in the midstest
betwixt F. and H. which maketh a Semiditone. Sequently, divide the distance from the letter B. to A. in three parts, which being done, measure from the D. apace four times and a halve, and that will glue you the third fret, sounding a Semiditone; mark that also with a prick, & set thereon the letter D. then set the fourth fret just in the middle [between D. and E.], the which will be a perfect ditone; then take one third part from A. to the bridge, and that third part from B. maketh I. which soundeth Semitonus cum Diapente, then take a third part from the bridge to C. [sic; C to the bridge is correct] and that third part maketh E. [sic; K is correct] which soundeth Tonus cum Diapente, or an Hexachordos maior. Then take one third part from D. to the Bridge, and that third part from D. maketh L. which soundeth Ditonus cum Diapente. Now take your LVTr, and lay it upon a Table upright, and set the Ruler edgewise, between the nut and the bridge, and thereby set little marks upon the neck of the Instrument even with those on the ruler, because those are the places on which your frets must stand.

Dowland's procedure for locating the frets follows the same sequence as the system of fret placement put forth by Hans Gerle in Musica Teusch in 1532. Except for the frets above h, which Gerle does not mention, most of Dowland's instructions for the placement of individual frets are the same as Gerle's, and it is very likely that Dowland derived his system in part from Gerle's publication. Dowland does depart from Gerle's instructions in his directions for calculating the position of the third fret. Both authors state that the segment from A to D is to be divided into three parts and the result multiplied by a certain factor to give the distance beyond D for the fret D. In Gerle's instructions, the factor is five, whereas Dowland

---

97 Ibid., pp. 16-17.

98 Mitchell, "Fretting and Tuning the Lute," pp. 450-59, is the source of most of the information about Gerle's system of fret placement.
stipulates a factor of four-and-a-half (See Table 8). The fret position that results from the use of Dowland's factor is too close to the bridge to be used in some keys. There is no indication why Dowland modified Gerle's system, if indeed he based his system on Gerle's, but he may have considered the change an improvement.99

The computation as given by Dowland requires that the segment A to B be divided by three and then multiplied by four-and-a-half. The segment produced by this calculation can be described much more clearly as the result of multiplying A to B by one-and-a-half. This version of the calculation is also much easier to realize with compass dividers than the indirect one given by Dowland. It does not make sense for Dowland to have used this wording unless he were following an earlier source, because the addition of the extra step invites errors in the calculation. This fact supports the premise that the factor of four-and-a-half is an error introduced by Dowland or some unknown conveyer of Gerle's system.

J. Murray Barbour notes that Dowland's system of fret placement resembles the one given by Ornithoparchus in his Musice active micrologus.100 Whereas Ornithoparchus' system is strictly Pythagorean, Dowland's system is best described

99 Ibid., p. 455.

100 See "Of the Dimension of the Monochord," in A Compendium of Musical Practice, Reese and Ledbetter, editors, pp. 142-43, for Dowland's translation of Ornithoparchus' procedure for locating the notes on a two-octave monochord.
Table 8

Fret Positions According to Dowland and Gerle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fret</th>
<th>Fret Position*</th>
<th>Portion of Open String**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: B</td>
<td>2/11 A to H</td>
<td>2/33 (.0606)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: C</td>
<td>1/3 A to H</td>
<td>1/9 (.1111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: D</td>
<td>3/2 A to B beyond B</td>
<td>5/33 (.1515)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5/3 A to B beyond B***</td>
<td>16/99 (.1616)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: E</td>
<td>1/2 D to F</td>
<td>53/264 (.2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/2 D to F***</td>
<td>163/792 (.2058)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: F</td>
<td>1/2 A to N</td>
<td>1/4 (.2500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: G</td>
<td>1/2 F to H</td>
<td>7/24 (.2917)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: H</td>
<td>2/3 A to N</td>
<td>1/3 (.3333)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: I</td>
<td>1/3 B to the bridge</td>
<td>37/99 (.3737)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: K</td>
<td>1/3 C to the bridge</td>
<td>11/27 (.4074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: L</td>
<td>1/3 D to the bridge</td>
<td>43/99 (.4343)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/3 D to the bridge***</td>
<td>131/297 (.4411)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11: N</td>
<td>not given</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12: N</td>
<td>1/2 A to the bridge</td>
<td>1/2 (.5000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *This column indicates the position of the fret as a point on a segment beginning at the first letter (unless specified otherwise) and ending at the second letter or the bridge. Dowland's descriptions have been simplified in some cases.

**These factors may be multiplied by the string length of the lute to obtain the distance of each fret from the nut. The common fractions are followed by their decimal equivalents to facilitate comparison of the positions.

***The alternate calculations are based on Gerle's calculation of the position of the third fret. Although Gerle did not provide for the tenth fret, the value given above indicates its position according to the location of the third fret, on which it is dependent in Dowland's system.
as an irregular one that is essentially Pythagorean in design. The intervals produced by the open courses and the second, fifth, seventh, ninth, and twelfth frets are those of the Pythagorean system (See Table 9). The position of the first fret produces a chromatic semitone of 108.2 cents that is slightly smaller than its Pythagorean counterpart of 113.7 cents. The diatonic semitone, located between the second and third frets, is 80.5 cents, which is considerably smaller than the 90.2 cents of its Pythagorean counterpart. Dowland's system utilizes the following pure fifths between frets on the same course: open course to seventh fret, first fret to eighth fret, second fret to ninth fret, third fret to tenth fret, and fifth fret to twelfth. The positions of the fourth and sixth frets are given as the midpoints of the segments between the frets adjacent to them (i.e., the arithmetic means between the two points) rather than the mean proportionals of the segments (i.e., the harmonic means between the two points). This produces intervals of 387.8 cents and 597.1 cents at the fourth and sixth frets respectively instead of intervals of 362.0 cents and 582.5 cents at the same frets.  

---


102 The arithmetic mean of two numbers, \(x\) and \(y\), is found by the following formula: 
\[ A = \frac{1}{2} (x + y). \]

The harmonic mean of two numbers is found by the following formula: 
\[ H = \frac{2xy}{x + y}. \]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interval</th>
<th>Fret</th>
<th>Dowland/Gerle</th>
<th>Pythagorean</th>
<th>Pure Partials</th>
<th>Just</th>
<th>Meantone</th>
<th>Rule of Eighteen</th>
<th>Equal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minor 2nd</td>
<td>1: B</td>
<td>[80.5]</td>
<td>90.2</td>
<td>111.7</td>
<td>111.7</td>
<td>117.1</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>108.2*</td>
<td>113.7*</td>
<td></td>
<td>92.2*</td>
<td>76.0*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major 2nd</td>
<td>2: C</td>
<td>203.9</td>
<td>203.9</td>
<td>203.9</td>
<td>203.9</td>
<td>193.2</td>
<td>197.9</td>
<td>200.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor 3rd</td>
<td>3: D</td>
<td>284.4</td>
<td>294.1</td>
<td>315.6</td>
<td>315.6</td>
<td>310.3</td>
<td>296.9</td>
<td>300.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>305.2***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major 3rd</td>
<td>4: E</td>
<td>387.8</td>
<td>407.8</td>
<td>386.3</td>
<td>386.3</td>
<td>386.3</td>
<td>395.8</td>
<td>400.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>398.9***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect 4th</td>
<td>5: F</td>
<td>498.0</td>
<td>498.0</td>
<td>498.0</td>
<td>498.0</td>
<td>503.4</td>
<td>494.8</td>
<td>500.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimin. 5th</td>
<td>6: G</td>
<td>597.1</td>
<td>588.3</td>
<td>609.8</td>
<td>609.8</td>
<td>620.5</td>
<td>593.7</td>
<td>600.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augmen. 4th</td>
<td></td>
<td>611.7</td>
<td>590.2</td>
<td>590.2</td>
<td>590.2</td>
<td>579.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect 5th</td>
<td>7: H</td>
<td>702.0</td>
<td>702.0</td>
<td>702.0</td>
<td>702.0</td>
<td>696.6</td>
<td>692.7</td>
<td>700.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor 6th</td>
<td>8: I</td>
<td>810.1</td>
<td>792.2</td>
<td>813.7</td>
<td>813.7</td>
<td>813.7</td>
<td>791.6</td>
<td>800.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor 7th</td>
<td>9: K</td>
<td>905.8</td>
<td>905.8</td>
<td>884.4</td>
<td>884.4</td>
<td>889.7</td>
<td>890.6</td>
<td>900.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major 7th</td>
<td>10: L</td>
<td>986.3</td>
<td>996.1</td>
<td>996.1</td>
<td>996.1</td>
<td>1006.8</td>
<td>989.5</td>
<td>1000.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1007.2***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major 7th</td>
<td>11: M</td>
<td>[1089.8]###</td>
<td>1109.8</td>
<td>1088.3</td>
<td>1088.3</td>
<td>1124.0</td>
<td>1088.5</td>
<td>1100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[1100.9]###</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect 8va</td>
<td>12: N</td>
<td>1200.0</td>
<td>1200.0</td>
<td>1200.0</td>
<td>1200.0</td>
<td>1200.0</td>
<td>1187.5</td>
<td>1200.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes: *Chromatic position of the fret for this interval.

**Diatonic intervals (major second and minor seventh) as found between the second and third degrees of the major scale.

***Intervals according to Gerle's calculation of the position of the third fret.

##Proposed intervals a perfect fifth above the pitch of the fourth fret as located by Dowland and Gerle. Neither author gives the position of this fret.

Interval ratios in the table have been expressed in cents to facilitate comparison of the different system. Cents are logarithmic units of measurement that may be calculated from the ratio of two frequencies or their corresponding string segments according to the following formulas:

\[ Cents = \frac{1200}{\log \frac{b}{a}} \times \log \frac{b}{a} \], where \( \frac{b}{a} \) is the ratio of two frequencies expressed as a fraction greater than 1. Since frequency is inversely proportional to the length of the vibrating portion of a string, the formula for cents can also be expressed in terms of the ratio of the vibrating segments. Thus,

\[ Cents = \frac{1200}{\log \frac{b}{a}} \times \log \frac{b}{a} \], where \( \frac{b}{a} \) is the ratio of the vibrating segments expressed as a fraction less than 1.

In order to obtain a uniform degree of accuracy in the data from different sources, the simple fractional values given in these sources have been used to calculate the interval ratios in cents. These calculations were carried to four decimal places and then rounded off to one decimal place.

In several cases, there are alternate positions for certain frets. In these cases, when there is a diatonic and a chromatic option for a fret, the diatonic interval is given before the chromatic interval regardless of the relative size of the two intervals; e.g., at the first fret, G to Ab is given before G to G#. Since each fret crosses six or more courses on the lute, both alternatives may be implied at a single fret simultaneously. The means by which this problem was addressed by lutenists will be discussed below. In some cases, the alternate intervals are diatonic intervals as well. For example, in the just system there are two different diatonic major seconds and minor sevenths. The double asterisks indicate these options.

The data in Table 9 are derived from ratios given in the following works: Dowland, "Other Necessary Observations Belonging to the Lute," in Varietie of Lute-Lessons.

268
The position of the fourth fret produces a major third of 387.8 cents above the open course, which is very close to a pure third (386.3 cents), instead of the Pythagorean major third of 407.8 cents. The position of the sixth fret produces a major third of 393.2 cents above the second fret. Barbour considers these changes to be improvements on the basic Pythagorean system.\textsuperscript{103} He suggests that the eleventh fret, omitted by Dowland and Gerle, be positioned a pure fifth above the fourth fret, which would make it 1089.8 cents according to Dowland's calculation for the fourth fret and 1100.9 cents according to Gerle's.

Although Barbour accepts Dowland's system without qualification, David Mitchell states that it is not workable in the form given in the "Other Necessary Observations Belonging to the Lute." He blames the failure of the system on Dowland's calculation for the position of the third fret.\textsuperscript{104} The minor third of Dowland's system is 284.4 cents above the open course, and the major third, which is derived from the position of the minor third, is 387.8 cents above the open course. The sum of this major third and the four perfect fourths found between the highest six courses of the lute equals 2379.8 cents. This is 20.2 cents short of the 2400 cents in the two pure octaves between the first and sixth courses. This deficit, or comma, is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{103} Barbour, Tuning and Temperament, p. 153.
\item \textsuperscript{104} Mitchell, "Fretting and Tuning the Lute," p. 455.
\end{itemize}
due to the position of the fourth fret, which determines the value of the major third. Mitchell suggests that Dowland's system can be used if several adjustments are made, including the substitution of Gerle's positions for the third and fourth frets, and by extension, the tenth fret. The major third given by Gerle (398.9 cents) is closer to the true Pythagorean major third (407.8 cents) needed to fill the gap. Mitchell proposes that the remaining 9.1 cents be distributed across the intervals between the remaining courses according to the following system. 105

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frets</th>
<th>Distances from bridge (inches)</th>
<th>Ratios</th>
<th>6th</th>
<th>5th</th>
<th>4th</th>
<th>3rd</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>1st</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>24:00</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>21:33</td>
<td>8:9</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>20:12</td>
<td>8:9:99</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>1003</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>19:06</td>
<td>6:9:792</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>1097</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>3:4</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>1196</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>17:00</td>
<td>17:24</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>1096</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>2:13</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>15:03</td>
<td>6:2:99</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>1009</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>14:22</td>
<td>10:27</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>1105</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>13:41</td>
<td>16:297</td>
<td>1007</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>806</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>1007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>1:2</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Mitchell version of the Dowland/Gerle system, fifths vary from 687 to 715 cents, fourths vary from 489 to 509 cents, and major thirds vary from 390 to 411 cents at different positions on the fingerboard. Mitchell's modifications are very similar to the adjustments a player makes by ear to distribute the

dissonances over as many chords as possible so that no one chord is extremely false. However, they appear to contradict his assertion that "... the amount of latitude available varies from interval to interval—with octaves and fifths there is very little, but with thirds considerably more."\(^{106}\)

Other Systems for Fretting the Lute

Many other variations on the Pythagorean system of tuning were advocated by theorists during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Among them, three systems given by the Spaniard, Juan Bermudo, were specifically intended for use on fretted instruments such as the lute and vihuela. He describes the systems in his *Comienca el libro llamado declaracion de Instrumentos Musicales* (Ossuna, 1555) and he notes that players must adjust the frets of their instruments to provide the arrangement of diatonic and chromatic semitones best suited to the mode of each piece. This adjustment is necessary because the sequence of diatonic and chromatic semitones elected will be the same on all courses, regardless of the pitches required on any specific course, unless the frets are positioned at an angle other than 90° to the strings. Bermudo's comment indicates that the fret positions given in his systems are not absolute values to be adopted in all cases, but rather guidelines establishing reference points from which the actual positions can be derived. Bermudo also indicates that false notes can be corrected to

\(^{106}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 454.}\)
some extent by varying the position and pressure of the stop-
ning finger behind the fret.107

Although modified Pythagorean systems are more commonly
advocated for fretted instruments than unmodified ones, a
strictly Pythagorean system of fret placement appears in a
mid-sixteenth-century publication of uncertain authorship,
the Discours non plus mélancoliques que divers, de choses même-
ment qui appartiennent à notre France (Poitiers, 1556) under
the title "La manièrê de bien et iustement entoucher les lucs
et guiternes."108

While fretting systems based on the Pythagorean model lend
themselves to the tuning of the lute more easily than other
kinds of systems, other arrangements have been proposed from
time to time. Mitchell states that, "A few attempts were made
to use a system based on just intervals, but, with possibly one
exception, none of them is suitable for the lute."109 Although
meantone temperament was not advocated by sixteenth- and seven-
teenth-century lutenists, Eugen Dombois suggests that it can be
employed for ensemble works in which the lute accompanies wind
or keyboard instruments. The fifth of meantone temperament is
696.6 cents above the open course. Any system of fretting based

107 Joan Myers, "Vihuela Technique," Journal of the Lute

108 Harvey Turnbull, The Guitar from the Renaissance to the

on this fifth has a very limited range of transposition. Dombois suggests modifying the meantone system by using a fifth of 698 or 699 cents, which brings it closer to the fifth of equal temperament (700 cents). The major thirds corresponding to the modified fifths are 392/416 cents and 396/408 cents respectively. Dombois notes that adjustments of individual frets may be necessary to accommodate music with different modal and tonal centers. Even if the modified fifth is used, the discrepancy between the fret positions required by the diatonic and chromatic interpretations of a number of intervals limits the application of the system to compositions in which only one of these options is required for any given fret. 110

Mark Lindley suggests that Luis Milan used meantone temperament on the vihuela because Milan systematically avoided certain chord voicings that would have been out of tune in meantone temperament. These voicings are much easier to execute than the ones that Milan substitutes for them. Milan also utilizes different fret positions for identical pitches occurring in compositions in different modes. Furthermore, the instructions that he gives for adjusting the frets are consistent with the principles of meantone temperament. Lindley suggests Milan may have pulled the strings sideways to stretch them and

110 Eugen Dombois, "Varieties of Meantone Temperament Realized on the Lute," Journal of the Lute Society of America 7 (1974): 88-89. Dombois provides complete data for fretting a lute according to these two modified meantone systems, including the intervals in cents and the factors for calculating their positions on the fingerboard.
thereby raise the pitch in order to adjust the intonation of certain chords. 111

Fretted instruments appear to have led the way in the development of tuning systems based on equal divisions of the diatonic whole tone. Just after the middle of the sixteenth century, Nicola Vicentino published what is frequently cited as the first description of an equal-tempered system.

The viol and the lute have been played [tuned] with equal semitones ever since their invention. Today one can play any mode on any fret, which gives rise to two errors: The first is that the interval of a third and, on certain frets, the interval of a fifth are not exact. The second error is that when these instruments play with other instruments that have the whole tone divided by one large and one small semitone they cannot agree on a tuning. 112

The equal semitones described by Vicentino do not necessarily imply equal temperament in the modern sense of the term, i.e., twelve equal semitones to the octave. A number of systems were proposed that divided each diatonic whole tone into two equal semitones, but the semitones thus produced were not all equal to each other. According to Barbour,

\[ ... \] In the golden age of lute music the composers were indifferent to disords that would have arisen if an unequal temperament had been used... It seems very probable that lutes and viols did employ equal temperament from an early time, perhaps from the beginning of the sixteenth century.


We need not be too much concerned with what the equal temperament for the fretted instruments was really like. It might have been the Grammateus-Sermudo tuning—Pythagorean with mean semitones for the chromatic notes. It might have been the Ganassi-Rheinhard mean semitones applied to just intonation, or Artusi's more subtle system of mean semitones in meantone temperament. Or the frets might have been placed according to Galilei's 18:17 ratio, or (correctly) according to Salinas' ratio of the 12th root of 2. In any case, it would have been a good, workable temperament. 113

Detailed descriptions and analyses of these systems and their application to the process of fretting and tuning the lute are beyond the scope of this thesis. It should be noted, however, that Francisco Salinas gave the first precise mathematical definition of modern equal temperament.

We judge this one thing must be observed by makers of viols, so that the placing of the frets may be made regular, namely that the octave must be divided into twelve parts equally proportional, which twelve will be the equal semitones. 114

Although Salinas recognized the nature of equal temperament in the modern sense, he did not develop a system of locating these twelve semitones on the fingerboards of fretted instruments. Instead, he restated a number of Zarlino's theories in Latin and developed several modified meantone systems of his own. 115

Vincenzo Galilei described the first practical system of fret placement utilizing uniform semitones throughout the

113 Barbour, Tuning and Temperament, pp. 187-88.


octave. However, his system produces semitones slightly smaller than the semitones of the modern equal-tempered scale, i.e., 99 cents each instead of 100 cents. According to the 'Rule of Eighteen' on which his system is based, the first fret is located 1/18th of the distance from the nut to the bridge, and each successive fret is located 1/18th of the distance from the previous fret to the bridge. The simplicity of this system and its application to the fingerboard led to its widespread adoption even though the octave resulting from the extension of the procedure through twelve frets is only 1187.5 cents above the open course.

Mersenne recognized the discrepancy between true equal temperament and Galilei's approximation of it. However, since the interval ratio of a true equal-tempered semitone (the 12th root of 2) is an irrational number, i.e., one that cannot be expressed exactly as the ratio of two integers, it is much easier to translate the ratio into the physical positions of the frets by using the geometrical construction of mean proportionals than by extended calculations of very large fractions that can only be approximated in measurements. Mersenne acknowledged this and provided an accurate means of locating twelve frets at positions that produce equal semitones adding up to a true octave. 117


117 Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, pp. 90-93 and 285-86.
The adoption of equal temperament for fretted instruments was largely a matter of personal preference when no other instruments were involved. "No one universal system of tuning existed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; each player could, within limits, choose his own."\(^{118}\) It is very likely that many more variations on the basic systems of tuning and temperaments were in use than are actually documented in the didactic literature of the period. Some performers, altering the systems to suit their own tastes or to accommodate compositions in remote keys, perhaps created new systems in the process.

The freedom to experiment with new systems or to modify existing ones depended on the use of movable gut frets tied around the neck of the instrument. Fixed frets, although most commonly used on wire strung instruments, were occasionally used on the lute, in which case no adjustments were possible. According to Mersenne,

As for the frets, they can be made fixed or movable; the first [kind] can be of wood, of ivory, or of copper, as they are on the cittern... . It is much better that they be movable so as to be able to raise or lower them now on one side and now on the other to make up for the falsity and other defects that occur perpetually in the strings, in which the part below is often different from that above, and in which one of the frets can be exact and the other unequal and bad; so that the placement of the frets depends upon the goodness, the judgement, and the delicacy of the ear.\(^{119}\)

---


Contemporary wire-strung instruments, such as the orpharion, bandora, and cittern, required wooden, ivory, or metal frets to resist the abrasive action of the wire strings. These frets were glued in place or inserted in slots in the fingerboard, thus eliminating the possibility of adjusting them to accommodate the intervallic requirements of compositions in different modes. Equal temperament may well have been more readily accepted by players of these instruments than by lutenists and vihuelists because it provided the best available compromise for diatonic and chromatic interpretations of the same fret position. If the wire-strung instruments were in fact fretted according to equal temperament, the use of these instruments with the lute in broken consorts in England may have provided an additional impetus for the adoption of equal temperament by lutenists.

Further Adjustments of the Fret Positions

The mathematically correct fret positions for any temperament utilized on the lute must be shifted toward the nut a minute amount in actual practice due to a number of practical considerations. The manner in which lute strings are secured to the bridge creates an effective vibrating string length (which determines the pitch of the open course) that is slightly shorter than the distance from the inside of the nut to the inside of the bridge (on which Dowland erroneously bases his calculations). Whereas the end of the string at the head of the lute runs over a rigid barrier (the nut) that determines
the lower vibrational node of the open course, the other end of the string passes over an auxiliary loop of string (derived from the portion of the string that extends beyond the bridge) before passing through the bridge. Since there is no rigid barrier in front of the loop, the point of contact between the loop and the main portion of the string determines the upper vibrational node of the open string. The loop begins where the string leaves the rear of the bridge, crosses under the main portion of the string, and terminates on the rear of the bridge, where the end of the string is held in place under the first strand of the loop by the tension on the string, thus avoiding the necessity of tying a knot in the end of the string (See Figure 20). The distance from the nut to the upper node, which is two or three millimeters in front of the bridge, should be used in calculations for the positions of frets, rather than the nut-to-bridge distance that Dowland uses.

The fret positions must be shifted even farther toward the nut to compensate for the rise in pitch that occurs when the string is pushed against the fingerboard to play a stopped note. Since the path from the nut to the fingerboard to the bridge is slightly longer than the direct path from the nut to the bridge, the string is stretched slightly as it is fretted. This stretching increases the tension on the string and raises the pitch by an amount depending on the height of the string above the fingerboard, the tension on the string before it is stopped, and the elasticity of the string material. The
Figure 20. Knot used for Attaching Lute Strings to the Bridge, Above, Top View; Below, Side View
less the tension on the string, the greater the rise in pitch will be when the string is stopped. While the tension will be uniform throughout the string, the height of the string above the fingerboard increases progressively as one moves from the nut to the bridge. The rate of increase is determined by the angle that the neck forms with the belly of the lute and by the heights of the nut and bridge. Also, bass strings require more clearance above the fingerboard than treble strings to prevent them from buzzing against the fingerboard since the greater mass of the bass strings results in more extended excursions of the string when it is played.

Thus, the amount of compensation required at each fret depends on a number of interacting factors related to the design of the lute and the adjustment of the string supports. Eugen Dombois suggests that the calculations for fret positions should be based on a hypothetical string length that is slightly shorter than the distance from the nut to loop in front of the bridge in order to compensate for the rise in pitch that occurs when the string is stopped. Furthermore, since the bass courses are higher than the treble courses, Dombois suggests using two different hypothetical string lengths for the fret positions on the highest and lowest fretted courses of the lute. The frets are then set at the angle dictated by the positions established at the outside extremes of the fingerboard.¹²⁰

The fret positions produced by the application of Dombois' procedure bear a striking resemblance to those produced by Galilei's system based on the "Rule of Eighteen." However, since Dombois states that the correct hypothetical string length must be determined empirically for each lute, precise mathematical comparison of the two systems is beyond the scope of this study. It should be noted, however, that Galilei's system works much better in practice than is apparent from the mathematical representation of it that appears in Table 9. Galilei's semitones of 99.0 cents each appear to provide approximately the right amount of compensation required by the factors discussed above for lutes with relatively low strings.

The playing action of the lute can be adjusted to minimize the amount of compensation required.

The obvious and logical way to minimize pitch distortion on fingering [i.e., the rise in pitch that occurs when the string is stopped] is to have the lowest possible action and the lowest possible frets. Making a low action was certainly an authentic practice, but the grading of frets for fine adjustments of the action made them remarkably thick at low positions (near the nut).121 Dowland describes this grading of fret sizes following his instructions for locating the frets on the fingerboard.

Thus have you the perfect placing of your ten frets, which taketh away that scruple by which many are deceived, when they say the frets are false. Note here also, wee doe not try the frets, as wee trie the strings; but (now knowing their places) size them rightly, for which any kinde of string will serue, I meane whether they be true or false, new or old, onely take heed that you set not a great fret where a small one should be, & so by contrary:

for every fret doth serve as a Magadis;122 therefore doe this: let the two first frets nearest the head of the Instrument (being the greatest) be of the size of your Countertenor, then the third and fourth frets must be of the size of your great meanes: the fift and sixt frets of the size of your small meanes: and all the rest sized with Trebles. These rules serve also for Viols, or any other kinde of Instrument where- on frets are tyed.123

Thomas Mace gives similar instructions for sizing frets.

... Chuse your B Fret, so Thick as well you may, (according to the Lying of your Nutt, and Strings;) For the Thicker That Fret is, the more easily may you fit all the Rest: because that in Fretting, every next Lower Fret, would be some small matter Smaller, than the next above, (quite through:)... .124

The use of frets of different diameters affects the clearance between the underside of a stopped string and the top of the frets between the stopped note and the bridge. Since the string will make a buzzing sound if it contacts any of these intervening frets during its excursions, Dowland and Mace specify frets that decrease in size as one approaches the bridge, to maximize the clearance available. However, the diameter of the fret affects the amount of rise in pitch that occurs when the string is stopped. If frets vary in size, the relationship between the rise in pitch and the distance from the nut ceases to be a regular, predictable one, unless the

122 "Magidis. An ancient Greek harp, which seems to have had ten pairs of strings, each pair consisting of the fundamental and its octave." Willi Apel, ed. Harvard Dictionary of Music, s.v. "Magidis."

123 Dowland, "Other Necessary Observations," p. 17.

124 Mace, Musick’s Monument, p. 68.
diameters of the frets differ by a consistent amount. Since
the larger frets near the nut produce a greater rise in pitch
than the small frets closer to the bridge, no single hypothet-
ical string length can be used to provide the precise amount
of compensation needed at each fret. Although it may be pos-
sible to determine a hypothetical string length that is based
on a compromise between the requirements of the large frets
and those of the small frets, it is very likely that fret-by-
fret adjustments will be necessary to insure the feasibility
of the resulting fret positions.

Gut from which frets and strings are made is affected by
changes in its environment. Because it is hygroscopic, i.e.,
it absorbs moisture from the surrounding air, the length, dia-
meter, mass, and texture of a fret or string will vary slightly
in response to changes in atmospheric conditions. An increase
in the moisture content of the gut will cause the frets to
loosen, swell, and soften, whereas desiccation will cause them
to shrink, tighten, become brittle, and even break. As early
as 1555, Juan Bermudo noted that the unstable nature of gut
affects the intonation of an instrument.

I am persuaded that if the frets were of metal or ivory,
they would cause better music. The dampness of the fret,
especially in humid weather, causes great imperfection in
music... .125

125Juan Bermudo, Comienca el libro llamado declaracion de
Instrumentos Musicales (Ossuna: Juan de Leon, 1555), facsimile
edition, (Kassel: Barenreiter, 1957), fol. 109v, translated by
Buetsens, in "On Fretting a Lute," p. 54.
In addition to intonation problems, gut frets of different sizes produce a variety of tonal qualities. Small frets yield a cleaner, more well-defined sound than large frets (for a given position on the fingerboard) because there is less cushioning effect with the small fret, since the thinner fret has less mass to absorb the vibrational energy of the string. The use of wooden, ivory, or metal frets on the belly of the lute produces an even more noticeable change in tone quality between the last gut fret tied around the neck and the first fixed fret on the belly.

Fastening the Frets to the Neck of the Lute

None of the sources that appeared in England during the last half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century contains a description of the procedure for tying frets around the neck of the lute. The Frenchman, Mersenne, comments on the importance of learning the proper kinds of knots, but he does not provide detailed instructions for executing them.

It must be remarked that the makers and those who play the lute ought to learn to make the knots which are necessary for attaching the frets on to the neck, and the strings to bridge, so that they hold tight without pulling off. And consequently it is necessary to learn to make the straight knot, both simple and double, which is often joined with a single or double running knot, both horizontally or vertically. There are many other knots which can be of use on different occasions.126

Although Mersenne refers the reader to his illustration of the

126 Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, p. 81.
lute (See Figure 18), the illustration is not sufficiently
detailed to make clear how the knots are tied.

Thomas Mace's *Musick's Monument* contains the only usable
description of the procedure for tying fret knots.

The way to Tye on a Fret the best way, is Thus; viz.
Your Lute standing (as it were) before you upon a Table,
upon its Back, take your Fret, and put it double, under
all the Strings, beginning from the Basses, towards the
Trebles; then (putting your Left Hand under the Neck)
take That Middle Double, and draw it under the Neck to-
wards the Basses, (holding fast the two ends in your Right
Hand) till you have brought them together, (viz. the
Middle Nooze, and the Two Ends.)
Then take the End next you, which you held in your
Right Hand, and put it through That Nooze, so that you
make another Nooze of That End, and then let the first
Nooze go.
Then again, take but the other End, which still re-
mains in your Right Hand, unused, and put it through your
last Nooze, taking the Ends, (in each hand one) and let
All else go, and (only drawing them straight) your business
of Tying is over.
This being done, (now comes the Curiosity, to Stif-
fen, Fasten, and Fix This Fret) I say, take the Fret
(thus far fastned) and draw it so close (by both ends)
as you can well, to stiffen it to the Neck; then, (hold-
ing both Ends fast, in your Left Hand) with your Right
Hand and Left, force It down so low (towards E. D. &c.)
as you can; then put it up again to the Nutt, where
you'll find it much too wide or slack; therefore take the
Ends, (in each hand One) and draw it stiff, and close
again; the (as before) down with it, so low as you can,
and up again; Thus do it three or four times, till at
last you find it stiff, and so fast, that it will scarce
be stirr'd, to Its place of B. (which is but a very little
space.)
But here Note, that at last, before you force it down,
to Its place at B. you are (after stretching) to Tye it, of
another hard Knot, and then it is firmly fast. 127

The following drawing by Ken La Barre illustrates Mace's
procedure for tying the fret knot in five steps, depicted on
successive frets. The stretching of the fret and the final

knot to secure it are not illustrated in the drawing.\textsuperscript{128}

The use of double-stranded frets such as those described by Mace frequently results in a poor tone or a buzzing sound when the fret is new. For this reason, Mace subsequently advocates the use of single-stranded frets instead of the traditional double ones.

There is a way which I have lately try'd, and I find it much better, which is, to Fret a Lute with single Strings. My Reason is, because it is not only sooner done, and with a shorter string; but chiefly, it does (assuredly) cause a Clearer Sound from the String stopt; which must needs be granted, if it be considered, that the String lying upon This only Round single Fret, cannot but speak Clear, when as (on the contrary) it lying upon Two, (as in the Double Fret it does) it cannot be thought to speak so Clear, because, that although it Lye hard and close, upon the uppermost of the Two, next the Finger, yet it cannot lye so very close and hard, upon the undermost; so that it must needs Fuzz a little, though not easily discern'd, and thereby, takes off something of Its Clearness, especially if the Fret be a Thick-broad-Double-Fret.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{128} Beutens, "On Fretting a Lute," p. 58.

\textsuperscript{129} Mace, \textit{Musick's Monument}, p. 70.
Although Mace is apparently the first author to call for single-stranded frets,\textsuperscript{130} he does not describe the procedure for tying them around the neck of the lute. Since no sixteenth or seventeenth-century description of the procedure has survived, modern lutenists who wish to use single-stranded frets will have to devise their own means of securing the fret. The knot illustrated below is one possible solution to the problem. As in the previous illustration, a second knot is needed to secure the fret once it has been stretched and positioned.\textsuperscript{131}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{lute_fret.png}
\caption{"Of Tuning the Lute"}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Lute Pitch}

Sixteenth and seventeenth-century descriptions of lute pitch frequently contain references to tones of the Hexachord

\textsuperscript{130}Abbot and Segerman, "On Lute Bridges and Frets," \textit{Early Music} 3, no. 3 (July, 1975): 295.

\textsuperscript{131}Illustration by [Ken La Barre], in Buetens, "On Fretting a Lute," p. 60.
system, such as Gamma ut, A re, F fa ut, C sol fa ut, etc. Although the notes cited have frequently been used as the basis of modern transcriptions of lute music, they do not indicate the absolute pitches to which lutes were tuned. Instead they provide a means of establishing the intervals between various points on the fingerboard, thereby facilitating the tuning of the instrument.

Instructions for the intabulation of vocal music support the premise that, in the contexts in which they are cited in the lute tutors, the notes of the Hexachord refer to relative pitches rather than absolute pitches. Le Roy clearly indicates that a given tone of the Hexachord may be assumed to be located on different courses of the instrument even though no actual retuning occurs. This mental transposition is designed to accommodate compositions in a variety of keys that would otherwise present notes that exceed the compass of the instrument.

For the first Tune we will take for example the song of Orland de Lassus beginning Quand mon mari vient de dehors in which we must firstly set the treble: the first note whereof being in Gsoreut must be set on the second string of the Lute open... although we see in other tunes that the treble open serveth for Gsoreut, and sometimes for Ffaut, as in the sixth tune. True it is that such as be cunning in this Art, do dispose of them diversly at their pleasure... We have to give a reason wherefore we have before ordered, that the second string of the Lute open / shal serve for Gsoreut, which is because this first tune hath his retche or compasse a fourth or foure notes higher then the second... .132

Le Roy uses the term tune to mean mode in this excerpt, but

subsequent examples make it clear that the range of the vocal work determines which pitch reference must be assumed by the intabulator.

Le Roy's practice agrees with the instructions given by Juan Bermudo in his *Declaracion de Instrumentos Musicales* in which he directs the performer to assume (imaginari, in the original Spanish text) that his vihuela is tuned to a note of the hexachord that will allow the vocal work being intabulated to fit within the compass of his instrument. Although Bermudo refers to this practice as "changing the instrument for the music," no change of tuning or substitution of another vihuela actually occurs. 133

Some scholars have assumed that the actual pitches represented in the tablature could be determined from the accompaniments of lute songs in which the singer's part is given in mensural notation above the tablature. However, this assumption is not valid because the singer is frequently instructed to take his opening pitch from the lute at a specific position on the fingerboard. John Ward cites the instructions of Franciscus Bossinensis as an example of this practice.

"La voce del sopran al quinto tasto del Canto," which can be translated; the pitch of the first note of the voice part is that produced by the lutenist on the fifth fret of the highest course; in other words, an "X" pitch. 134


134 Ibid., p. 28. No citation is given for the quotation.
The three songs by John Dowland that were published in *A Musicall Banquet* demonstrate a similar system for indicating the pitch of the singer's first note. At the beginning of each lute part, before the accompaniment actually begins, a single tablature letter appears. This letter does not represent an upbeat to the first measure, as has sometimes been assumed, but rather the pitch of the singer's first note. Several other English and Continental sources utilize this same system of indicating the singer's pitch, thereby confirming that the mensural notation does not require the use of an instrument tuned to a specific absolute pitch.\(^{135}\) It is the vocal line that requires transposition to accommodate the pitch of the lute, and not vice versa. Apparently, the vocal line was notated in any convenient key that could be easily read at sight by the singer once the lutenist supplied the initial pitch. This is confirmed by a passage from Morley's *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Mysicke* in which the teacher criticizes his student's setting of a composition in a key requiring two flats.

The music is indeed true, but you have set it in such a key as no man would have done, except it had been to have played it on the organs with a choir of singing men, for indeed such shifts the organists are many times compelled to make for the ease of the singers. But some have brought it from the organ and have gone about to bring it in common use of singing, with bad success if they respect their credit; for take me any of their songs so set down and you shall not find a musician (how perfect

---

soever he be) able to sol fa it right, because he shall either sing a note in such a key as it is not naturally, as la in C sol fa ut, sol in B fa b mi, and fa in A la mi re, or then he shall be compelled to sing one note in two several keys in continual deduction, as fa in B fa b mi and fa in A la mi re immediately one after another, which is against our very first rule of the singing our six notes or tunings. And as for them who have not practised that kind of songs, the very sight of those flat clefs (which stand at the beginning of the stave or line like a pair of stairs, with great offence to the eye but more to the amazing of the young singer) make them misterm their notes and so go out of tune, whereas by the contrary if your song were pricked in another key any young scholar might easily and perfectly sing it; and what can they possibly do with such a number of flat ♭♭ which I could not as well bring to pass by pricking the song a note higher.136

Thomas Robinson's "Rules to instruct you to Sing" in The Schoole of Musicke provide even more conclusive evidence that the vocal notation does not indicate absolute pitches. The first part of these rules consists of an illustration of a three octave scale in mensural notation utilizing the bass, alto, and treble clefs on three different staves, one clef serving for each octave. This is followed by a brief explanation of the letters of the musical alphabet and the syllables of the hexachord system, and an illustration of a two-octave scale in lute tablature.

Heere you see, that from Gam-vt to G-sol-re-vt in space, to G-sol-re-vt in rule above, are the same in number, quantitie and qualitie: which according to the Alphabet, from G.a.b.c.d.e.f. and then G. againe by rule and space, are expressed in the Diapason, by five termes, words, or notes, as thus. Vth for vt, re, mi, fa,

sol, la, and so still higher you goe, fa, sol, la, mi, fa, sol, la, &c. which is thus expressed in tablature.137

Since the Gam vt is written on the fifth course of the tablature, Robinson's lute must be tuned to the D a fourth lower, with the added bass courses descending from there. If the pitch references written on the fifth, third, and first courses are assumed to be an octave too low, the upper notes of the lute's range (not depicted in the illustration) will lie above the third octave of Robinson's mensural scale and the limits of the hexachord system. If Robinson's illustration is not enigmatic enough in regard to the question of absolute pitch, there is a conflicting illustration in the Margaret Board lute manuscript, presumed to have been drawn by John Dowland during a lesson given to Margaret Board138 (See Figure 21). Dowland's diagram depicts the pitches of the hexachord system and the fret positions required to produce them on a lute tuned from Gamma ut on the sixth course rather than the fifth.

---

137 Robinson, The Schoole of Musicke, sig. Nr.

Figure 21. John Dowland’s Table of Pitches of the Hexachord System and their Relation to Positions on the Fingerboard of the Lute, from the Margaret Board Lute Book, facing fol. 1r.
Although the discrepancy between Robinson's diagram and
the one in the Margaret Board lute book can be explained as
indicating lutes of different sizes that are in fact tuned
to different pitches, Robinson's instructions contain further
evidence that the mensural notation does not indicate the
absolute pitch of the lute part. Following the two-octave
tablature scale, Robinson states that the exercises and psalms
on the succeeding pages are to be sung at the unison with the
pitches indicated in the tablature for lute or viol appearing
below the mensurally notated vocal line.

Now you have gotten the way to tune your voice, (note
for note) with the Lute in the vnison, (that is: all in
one tune or sound, or eight vnder) then you may rule your
voice to the Viol also... for which purpose I have set
out some Psalms, both to the voice, and Lute, and voice
& Viol, in the Vnison, for your sure guide. Also, I have
set them full to the Lute, so that you may vse which you
please at your pleasure.139

This passage is followed by a diagram of rhythmic values in
mensural notation and tablature, and a series of exercises
illustrating conjunct motion, sequences of thirds, fourths,
fifths, and octaves. In each exercise, the vocal line in
mensural notation is paralleled by a line of solmization
symbols and the lute tablature. Once again, the relationship
between the pitches of the vocal line and the positions on
the fingerboard that correspond to them implies a lute tuned
to D. However, in the psalms, the relationship of the two
lines implies a lute tuned to G in several cases. Furthermore,

139 Robinson, The Schoole of Musicke, sig. Nr.
the vocal lines of the psalms given as single-line singing exercises are actually extracted from the four-part harmonizations that appear at the end of the section on singing; two parts being extracted from each harmonization. Robinson does not state which of the single-line psalm parts belongs to each of the four-part harmonizations (which appear in tablature only), preferring instead to identify them only as "A Psalm," but it is clear that the student is expected to learn the vocal line so that he can sing it with the complete harmonization. In three of the four psalms, the individual parts presented initially imply conflicting tunings of the lute if the mensural notation is assumed to indicate the actual pitch of the lute. For example, the soprano part of "O Lord that art my Righteousness," found at the bottom of sig. N2r, implies a lute tuned to G while the bass part, found at the bottom of sig. Ov, implies a lute tuned to D (See Figure 22). The same discrepancy is found in the soprano and bass parts of "O Lord of whom I doe Depend" and the unidentified psalm preceding it. The alto and bass parts of "Sweet IESV who shall lend me wings" both imply a lute tuned to D, but there is no indication in the tablature that different lutes or viols are required for the psalms in G tuning and this psalm in D tuning. Given Robinson's comment that the single-line versions of the psalms are to be sung in unison with the lute or viol, it is clear that the mensural notation cannot represent the absolute pitch of the vocal line or the lute part. The instrumental support merely assists the
Figure 22. Thomas Robinson’s settings of “O Lord that art my Righteousnesse,” from The Schoole of Musicke, soprano part, sig. N\textsuperscript{2}r; bass part, sig. O\textsuperscript{v}; complete setting, sig. O\textsuperscript{2}v
student in learning the intervallic pattern of the pitches in mensural notation at any given absolute pitch to which the lute may be tuned. The use of solmization syllables under most of the vocal lines supports this premise.

Sixteenth century publications for the lute suggest a variety of hypothetical pitches to which the lute should be tuned. The publications of Martin Agricola, Pierre Phalèse, Melchoir de Barberis, and many other lutenists including John Dowland, suggest that the sixth course was tuned to Gamma ut. Dowland instructs the student to "... set on your Bases, in that place which you call the sest string, or R ut..." However, the publications of Giovanni Maria Lanfranco, Sebastian Virdung, Hans Judenkünig, Hans Gerle, Hans Newsidler, and Oronce Fine suggest that the sixth course was tuned to A re. Finally, a few sources suggest that the lute could be tuned to F fa ut in some cases.

The practical instructions for tuning the lute that are found in a number of lute publications also indicate that the references to the tones of the hexachord system do not designate absolute pitches to which the lute should be tuned. These instructions also acknowledge, directly or indirectly, the basic relationships between pitch and the length, size, and tension of a string. For example, Le Roy notes that the

---

141 Heartz, "Les Premiers Instructions Pour le Luth," p. 79.
size of the lute and the thickness of the string determine
the appropriate pitch for a given instrument.

To tune your Lute well, although it is hardly to
bee shewed, beyng subjecte to the delicatnesse of a
stryng, either to the greatnesse, or to the smallnesse
of the instrumente, thou must therein followe nature,
who will bee by no meanes bee forced, a good care is
thereunto also a good helpe, to have consideration to
the extreme highnesse, and the extreme lownesse... 142

Barley adds nothing to Le Roy’s comments on pitch and
Robinson’s instructions are even less specific than Le Roy’s.

Now you shall learne to tune your Lute, and for a
generall rule, first set vp the Treble, so high as you
dare venter for breaking... 143

Dowland’s comments about lute pitch are found in his
instructions for sizing lute strings. He states that the size
of the string must be proportional to the size of the lute,
and he notes that the tension on the string affects the tone
of the lute and its sustaining power. Prior to his comment
indicating that the sixth course was tuned to Gamma ut (quoted
above), Dowland notes that the tension on the string affects
the tone and sustaining power of the instrument.

... First set on your Trebles, which must be strayned
neither too stiffe nor too slacke, but of such a reason-
able height that they may deliver a pleasant sound, and
also (as husitions call it) play too and fro after the
strokes thereon.144

This statement echoes an observation by Thomas Morley about

---

142 Le Roy, Les Instructions Pour le Luth (1574), p. 60.
143 Robinson, The Schoole of Musicke, sig. C2r.
the proper pitch of stringed instruments.

... for take an instrument as a lute, orpharion, pandora, or such like being in the natural pitch, and set it a note or two lower, it will go much heavier and duller and far from that spirit which it had before.145

In his instructions for tuning the lute, Mersenne clearly states that the performer may tune his lute to any reasonable pitch that the strings will sustain.

... We must begin with the small sixth string by tuning it at whatever pitch one wishes, although it ought to be neither too high nor too low... .146

This comment is particularly significant because Mersenne provides detailed descriptions of the tunings for the lute that were in use during the second quarter of the seventeenth century and several temperaments that could be applied to them. In describing the standard Renaissance tuning for the lute, which he calls the old pitch, he suggests that the implied pitch of the lute is merely a matter of convenience in regard to the solmization syllables that must be used to designate the courses of the instrument.

It must be noted here that I have not given the G re sol upon the sixth string, as many do, inasmuch as I had less to indicate the tone made from the seventh to the eighth string, by the letters of the Harmonic Hand, for if one take the G re sol, on the sixth, the F ut fa is found on the seventh and consequently the E mi la on the eighth, which makes only a major semitone with the said F ut fa, so that it would be necessary to place a new letter which should mark the sharp, a semitone lower than the said E mi la is, to make a tone from the seventh to the eighth

146Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, p. 114.
string, but this difficulty does not arise in the numbers and is of no importance.147

The numbers to which Mersenne refers are his so-called harmonic numbers indicate the ratio of two vibrating string lengths or the ratio of two pitches, but never the frequencies of absolute pitches. These numbers appear in a parallel column to the pitch designations according to hexachord terminology in a number of Mersenne's tuning diagrams.

Mary Burwell's instructor, who suggests that some lutenists use a pitch pipe to tune their lutes, comments further on the problems that arise from improper tension on the strings.

Some make use of a pipe to fit a lute in his right pitch; . . . When a lute is not in its pitch (that is, when it is set too low or too high) it seems to be naught, [even] when it is an excellent lute so that it were in his pitch. The little lutes must be set high and the great lutes not so high, for it is impossible to play well— I mean to, to use all the graces — if the strings be too stiff. The hand is soon weary and the playing cannot be, as we term it, full of pearls... .148

The useful life of a string is also a factor in determining the pitch to which it can be tuned. All other factors remaining constant, if the tensile strength of a string is approached too closely, the string will become false and break prematurely.149 Gut has a lower tensile strength than

147 Ibid., p. 74.

148 Quoted by Dart, in "Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," pp. 16-17.

149 Tensile strength is a measure of the maximum tension a string or wire will withstand before breaking.
nylon or steel, and cannot withstand the tension required by the pitches to which modern performers have become accustomed. Modern lutenists who wish to use gut instead of nylon on their instruments will find it necessary to tune their instruments below modern concert pitch in order to realize a reasonable string life. A modern gut string for a lute with a working string length (the nut to bridge distance) of sixty centimeters will only last approximately one week if tuned to the $g'$ now in use for the treble course. It will last considerably longer if tuned a tone or more lower.\textsuperscript{150} In light of the high cost of treble minikins in Dowland's day, it is unlikely that a lutenist would have tuned his instrument to a pitch that required him to replace his treble strings often.

Due to the absence of standardized pitches for lutes in Dowland's day, the general rise in pitch over the last 375 years, and changes in string-making technology, it is impossible to make quantitative judgements about the absolute pitches used on Renaissance lutes. The following table of the highest and lowest pitches currently obtainable with modern gut-twisting technology cannot, therefore, be considered an infallible representation of Renaissance practice. Needless to say, the pitch names in the hexachord system do not imply the same absolute pitch as those currently in use.\textsuperscript{151}

\textsuperscript{150} Abbot and Segerman, "Gut Strings," p. 430.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., p. 437.
Table 10

Usable Pitch Ranges of Modern Gut Strings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String Length in Centimeters</th>
<th>43</th>
<th>45</th>
<th>48</th>
<th>51</th>
<th>54</th>
<th>57</th>
<th>61</th>
<th>64</th>
<th>68</th>
<th>72</th>
<th>76</th>
<th>81</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest Pitch</td>
<td>b'</td>
<td>bb'</td>
<td>a'</td>
<td>g#'</td>
<td>g'</td>
<td>f#'</td>
<td>f'</td>
<td>e'</td>
<td>eb'</td>
<td>d'</td>
<td>c#'</td>
<td>c'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest Pitch: Moderate Twist</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>eb</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>c#</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>G#</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest Pitch: High Twist</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>G#</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>F#</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C#</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest Pitch: Venice Catlines</td>
<td>F#</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Eb</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>C#</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>Bb</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>GG#</td>
<td>GG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: "These are the usual ranges. One semitone or more higher is possible with particularly high quality gut but was not the usual practice because of the short life of the string. Plucked instruments often go one tone lower, bowed instrument rarely do since bowing thick gut near the bridge is quite difficult. Instruments played forcefully rarely had strings tuned so low." Abbott and Segerman, "Gut Strings," p. 437.
Although many sources indicate that lutes were available in a variety of sizes during the Renaissance, few publications contain specific information about the relative pitches of the lutes or the range of sizes in use. Michael Praetorius lists the following sizes of lutes in his *Syntagma Musicum II*: small octave lute tuned to d" or c", small descant lute tuned to b', descant lute tuned to a', usual choir or alto lute tuned to g', tenor lute tuned to e', bass lute tuned to d', and large octave bass lute tuned to g.\(^{152}\) Publications for the lute rarely indicate that the music is intended for a specific size of lute. However, in lute duets and ensembles the intervallic relationship between the lute parts can be used to determine the most probable sizes intended for a specific composition.

### Procedures for Tuning the Lute

Many Renaissance lute tutors state that the best method of tuning the lute consists of adjusting the open courses by ear until the proper intervals have been established. This procedure does not require that the frets be accurately positioned before tuning, but the pitches of the open courses must be reconciled with the pitches produced at the frets after the lute has been tuned. Furthermore, the four perfect fourths and a major third that occur between the highest six courses

---

(P4, F4, M3, P4, P4, from highest to lowest or vice versa) must be tempered slightly to match the double octave between the first and sixth courses unless the pure third of just intonation is used. This system is not practicable unless the lutenist has a refined sense of relative pitch.

Most students, being unable to distinguish the proper intervals between the courses accurately, relied upon an alternate system of tuning based on unisons and octaves. This system requires that the frets be positioned accurately before the open courses are tuned since the pitches of the open courses are matched to fretted positions that produce the same note or an octave above or below it. The positions of the appropriate unisons and octaves are often indicated diagramatically in lute tutors, with little or no explanatory commentary. Furthermore, the order in which the courses are to be tuned varies from source to source, although this has no effect on the final result.

The procedures for tuning the lute given in Renaissance lute tutors are concerned with the highest six courses of the instrument only. No mention is made of the procedure for tuning courses below the sixth even in sources that acknowledge the existence of instruments with up to ten courses until the French school of lutenists introduced a variety of new tunings at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Le Roy and Barley state that in tuning the lute,

...thy beginnyng shalbee at the great Base, whiche shalbee unto thee a very good guide, to conducte thee
to his companion the nexte stryng, the which must be
higher eight notes. Then the fifte beyng the second
Base, to sette higher by fower notes then the greate
Base, and the second Bases companion, to bee higher by
eight notes: the next unto that, beyng the fourthe partes,
called the Countertenour, shal sette higher fower notes
above the fifte partes or second Base, and his companion
to bee sette higher by eight notes. The third parte called
the great meanes, shelbe higher by three notes then the
Countertenour, in unitie. The small meanes, fower notes
higher then the great meanes. The Treble or laste parte,
fower notes higher then the small meanes, whiche thou
shalte truely doe, havyng a good eare withall, notwith-
standyng, a thyng not easie to all menne, but to them
only that have beene doers in this arte, and that long
tyme have as it were, maried their eares to the swetenesse
of the stryng, notwithstanding, suche as have a good will,
and are desirous to learme, maie have recourse unto the
examples and rules, which I have here under written.153

The tune of the Lute

Although Barley concludes his instructions for the lute
with the diagram given above, Le Roy's tutor contains three
additional illustrations and "A little fantesie, for the tunyng
of the Lute." The illustrations depict the fret positions be-
tween the intervals of the open courses and ascending and de-
scending scales in the keys of 3 (Accord par B. carre) and 4
(Accord par B. moll).

Robinson directs the student to begin tuning the courses
from the highest in pitch downward because the breaking point

of the strings on the treble course determines the highest pitch to which the lute can be tuned.

. . . First set vp the Treble, so high as you dare venter for breaking, setting them both in one tune or sound called an vnison; then in the like sort set vp the small Meanes, stopping them in f, and making them in f agree with the Trebles in a, which is likewise an vnison. Likewise make the great Meanes in f an vnison with the small Meanes in a, the Contratenor in e an vnison with the great Meanes in a, the Tenor in f with the Contratenor in a, and likewise the Base being stopped in f to agree with the Tenor in a in the vnison... 154

Robinson's procedure is illustrated by a diagram that corresponds to the first half of Le Roy's "The tune of the Lute" in reverse order.

Dowland's instructions for tuning the lute are introduced by a series of philosophical and pedagogical comments about the nature of tuning and the best means of explaining the procedures involved to the student.

Being there is such Symphonie by Antiphonie, which proceedeth through the winding vp and letting down of the strings, as is aboue said, and therein affirmed by Plutarch, to be one kinde of wisedome, which (saith he) is called MVSICKE. I wish those who assume vnto themselves the name of Maister, (by instricting of others) to prouide and finde out some good and necessary rules for the tuning of the LVTE, not onely for their owne ease, but also for the Scholers present good, because it is most needfull. Againe, though the Maister be never so diligent, painfull, and industrious, yet three things are required in the Scholer, necessary for the obtaining thereof, viz. Nature, Reason, and Vse: because this Harmony dependeth of Science and humane Art, which the understanding retaineth by Musicall habit. And from hence it is, that in MVSICKE not onely the sense, but also the vnderstanding is weakened. 155

155 Dowland, "Other Necessary Observations," p. 17.
Dowland stresses the importance of music theory as an essential element of the student's training. Although he includes a lengthy discussion of the nature of musical intervals according to Pythagoras, he does not even discuss the basics of rhythm or mensural notation. This omission may be explained by Dowland's statement that his comments were intended for students having a basic knowledge of the lute and tablature. Dowland does not discuss more advanced theoretical topics in his treatise either, preferring instead to refer the student to his recently published translation of Ornithoparcho's extensive treatise on the subject for further study.

Wherefore I exhort all Practitioners on this Instrument to the learning of their Pricke-song, also to understand the Elements and Principles of that knowledge, as a especial great helpe, and excellent worker in this Science, and soone attained, if the Teacher be skilfull to instruct aright; for which purpose I did lately set forth the Worke of that most learned Andreas Ornithoparco his Micrologus, in the English tongue. Also the duty of the Lutemaster is to teach them the yt vpon the Instrument, that thereby they may both discerne those degrees which are continuall, and also discreet Intervals, which belong to the tuning of an Instrument. Now this intellect appeareth vnto us commonly by the subtile sense of Hearing (which is of so great price, that Plotinus, the chiefe of the Platon-ical familie, maketh it like the beautie of the Soule.156

This passage clearly indicates that the hexachord system was used to teach the intevallic patterns required to tune the lute.

Following this passage, Dowland criticizes the manner in which some authors present their information concerning tuning. He notes that diagrams such as those given by Le Roy and Robinson are appropriate for refining the tuning of the instrument,
but offer little help in bringing the strings close to their appropriate pitches. He insists that the student's needs would be better served by a procedure for rough tuning the strings when they are first set on the lute. Dowland provides just such a system in the form of a simple pitch-matching procedure that allows the student to determine whether the string he is tuning is above or below the desired pitch. He even anticipates errors that the student is likely to make when first learning to tune the lute.

... Some haue set forth Rules to approve the agreement of Concors by Vnisons and Octaues, which indeede is true, when the Instrument is tuned, but by what order those strings must be let vp or downe, to shew the finding out thereof, I haue not seene declared by any. Therefore according to mine owne experience: first, let the Scholer practise to set euery one of the paires in an vnison, which being well vnderstood: Secondly, let him tune his Bases and one of his Tenors in the Vnison: Thirdly, let him raise the sounds of the Base, by stopping thereon, and then make the Tenor sound open, to [match] that sound which was stopt in the Base: this rule must be followed between the Base and the Tenor vntill the Tenor be in the Vnison with the Base in the letter F: and then tune both the Tenors together, but, suppose you haue tuned your Tenor too high, then you shall finde it in some of those places above the F, as in G, H, &c. Wherefore let it downe againe to F. This same course must be kept through out, onely excepting between the Contratenor and the great Neane, in which the same course aboue said must be vsed, that the great Neane may be in the Vnison with E in the Contratenor, and so by this vse the LVTE being tuned, you shall heare these Intervals or spaces in the table vnderneath, and very quickly learne to tune the LVTE by your eare, without stopping, and also place the frets according to the generall custome.157

The illustration that follows this passage concludes Dowland's instructions for tuning the lute and his treatise (See Figure 23).

157 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
Figure 23. Intervals between the Open Courses of the Lute, from John Dowland's "Other Necessary Observations Belonging to the Lute," in Varietie of Lute-Lessons, sig. E2r
Dowland does not indicate the appropriate pitch for the sixth course in his instructions for tuning the lute even though the other courses are tuned from it. However, in his discussion of sizing lute strings, he implies that the Trebles, which are the first strings to be installed, are the limiting factors in determining the pitch of the instrument. The two strings of the sixth course, which are the next to be set in place after the Trebles, must be chosen of a size

... yeelding from them a low or deepe sound, distant from the Trebles an Intervall called Disdiapason. Now the Base being ordered, proceede to the Tenor, which strings must be so much smaller then the Base, that they may reach a Diatessaron higher, that is, a fourth, or to say better, foure Notes higher: that being done, strike the Tenor with your Thombe, and the Treble with your fore-finger both together, and you shall heare them sound the Intervall Diapason cum Diapente.158

In other words, each course is to be compared to the treble course when the lute is first strung, thereby achieving a semblance of rough tuning before the actual tuning procedure is undertaken. As Dowland notes at the conclusion of his tuning instructions, once the student has learned to recognize the intervals between the courses, he will be able to tune the lute without using the stopped notes to produce unisons between adjacent strings, thereby making it possible to tune all of the courses to the treble course directly.

Several other lute tutors describe tuning procedures

that begin on one of the lower courses of the instrument. Mersenne directs the student to begin with the higher octave course of the sixth course, "For it is necessary always to commence tuning with the thinnest string of each course, although one could begin with the thickest." Mersenne was one of the first authors to indicate the tuning of the bass courses below the sixth, although, as he notes, several options are possible. He also describes the new French tuning for the lute known as the "accord nouveau" or "extraordinaire" (A d f a d' f' for the highest six courses, basses below the sixth being tuned diatonically according to the key of the composition) that became popular in France during the early years of the seventeenth century. Numerous other tunings for the highest six courses of the lute were developed by the lutenists of the French school during the seventeenth century including the "flat tune" (G c f ab c' eb), described by Nace, and the "sharp tune" (G c f a c' e'), the "trumpet tune" (B♭ d f b♭ d' f'), and the "goat tune" (A d f a d' f'), both cited by Mary Burwell's instructor, and several others, inconsiderable tunings invented by inconsiderable

159 Mersenne, Harmonie Universelle, p. 114.
160 Ibid., p. 115.
161 Nace, Musick's Monument, p. 83.
masters, some altering only one string, some two, some three, some more, some less."\textsuperscript{164} However, during the sixteenth century, the only variant of the standard Renaissance tuning (G c f a d' g') commonly employed was the use of a lowered sixth course (F c f a d' g'), noted by Le Roy.\textsuperscript{165} Although a number of other tunings were occasionally utilized in individual sources, these tunings are not discussed in contemporary lute tutors.

Not until about 1615 do we find many variants from the stringing and tuning described so far [i.e., the standard Renaissance configuration for the highest six courses]. At about this date various experiments in tuning reflect similar experiments in form and style in the music itself, and they are symptomatic of the general unrest in English music caused by increasing pressure from new Italian ideas and from a rising school of lutenists in Paris.\textsuperscript{166}

Mary Burwell's instructor notes that the use of more than one tuning for successive compositions has a destabilizing effect on the strings that must be retuned according to the interval pattern of each tuning.

\ldots To play upon several tunings you must have more than one lute, for two reasons chiefly; the first reason is that the lute must be strung according to the tuning (as, in the trumpet tuning, the thirds, the sixths [and] the sevenths must be smaller than in other tunings because they are set higher). The other reason is that if you change the lute from one tuning to another it will never stay in tune, the strings returning always to the pitch they were before.\textsuperscript{167}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p. 22.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{165} Le Roy, \textit{Les Instructions Pour le Luth} (1574), p. 31.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{166} Lumsden, "The Sources of English Lute Music," p. 65.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{167} Quoted by Dart, in "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 22.}
The use of added bass courses below the sixth frequently requires the lutenist to retune one or more of these courses to accommodate the bass lines of compositions in different keys. The considerations stated by Mary Burwell's instructor (quoted above) would also apply to these bass courses, but none of the lute tutors suggests using different lutes for each configuration of the basses. Renaissance lutenists would probably have resorted to a combination of retuning, restringing, and renotating the music on different courses, the choice in any particular instance being determined by the magnitude of the pitch change required, the availability of alternate courses, and the requirements of other compositions to be played at that time.

In a similar vein, Mary Burwell's instructor notes that new strings must be allowed to stretch after they have been strung on the lute, or they will not hold their pitch.

If your strings be all new set on, or the most part of them, you must not expect to play upon your lute so soon; but you must tune your lute now and then and let the strings stretch at leisure.168

Even when the initial stretching of the strings has stabilized, a lute is easily thrown out of tune by changes in the temperature and humidity of the surrounding air. Gut strings expand longitudinally as the temperature rises, thus lowering their pitch slightly. Furthermore, as noted above, gut is a hygroscopic material and therefore readily absorbs moisture.

168 Ibid., p. 17.
from the air. Added moisture causes the individual twisted fibers of the strings to swell, which in turn causes the fibers to assume a greater angle to the central axis of the string in order to accomodate the extra bulk produced by the swelling: \[\text{becomes}\] . As the angle of twist increases, the tension increases, causing the pitch of the string to rise until the moisture content of the string becomes so great that the effect of the added mass overrides the effect of the increasing tension. At this point, the pitch of the string begins to fall as more moisture is taken up by the gut. The amount of change in pitch of a string relative to a given change in humidity depends on the string's capacity to absorb moisture, the angle of twist of the component fibers, and the tension on the string initially. Since these factors differ from string to string, a given change in humidity will produce a different pitch change on each string.

Sixteenth and seventeenth-century lutenists were clearly aware of the adverse effects of moisture on gut strings and the glue that holds the lute together. Robinson admonishes the student to

\[\ldots\] Marke how you ought to use your Lute, above all things, keepe it from wet, for wet will spoile the strings and make loose the ribs, and when you have done playing upon it, put it vp into the case, putting the Trebles a little down\ldots .\]

The last-mentioned practice was apparently intended to

reduce the strain on the treble strings in order to make them last longer.

Dowland has nothing to say on these matters, but Mace comments on them at length.

And that you may know how to shelter your Lute, in the worst of ill weathers, (which is moist) you shall do well, even when you lay it by in the daytime, to put it into a Bed, that is constantly used, between the Rug and Blanket; but never between the Sheets, because they may be moist with Sweat, &c.

... A string exposed to the Air, (especially if it be moist Air) will not last Long: For the moisture causeth it to Swell; Therefore it cannot hold stretching like That String which is kept Dry, and in a Good Temper.

... For That String which suffers the Inconvenience of the moist Air, as it will certainly Swell, so as certainly it will go out of Tune.

Therefore it must necessarily follow, that That String which is constantly kept in a Dry Temper, (as in a Bed it will be) must needs stand more constantly at, or near the Pitch it was set at, than the other, expos'd to moisture. Therefore your Trouble will be less in the Tuning; This is plain. Yet know, that the Bed doth alter it a little; but still for the Best.

And always observe, when a Lute is taken out of a Bed, the Strings are more Lank than they were before; which may more easily be perceived by the bigger Strings of the Basses; for They will ever (at the coming out of the Bed) be Flatter than any of the smaller Octaves, which Pairs with Them; The Thicker therefore a String is, the more doth it partake of the moistness of the Air, and so must needs Swell proportionably, and be the more sharp.170

Abbot and Segerman summarize the characteristics of gut strings that relate to tuning the lute as follows:

... Gut strings do not last as long, are more trouble to keep in tune, are inherently more out of tune, and allow much less latitude in pitch than usual modern alternatives.171

---

170Mace, Musick’s Monument, pp. 62-63.

VII. PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

English sources of lute music contain a limited amount of information about the performance practices applicable to the music in them. The information they do contain is often found in discussions of related topics such as lute technique and in the instructions for stringing and tuning the lute. For example, in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, the introductory treatises by Besard and Dowland contain information about the use of added bass courses, unison stringing of the upper bass courses, and double stringing of the treble course. In other sources, performance practices may be indicated by symbols in the lute tablature that may or may not be explained in the text of that source. A variety of symbols used to indicate the points at which improvised ornaments should be added fall into this category of performance practice indications. Finally, some performance practices are not described at all in the lute books, but their usage may be deduced from an examination of the music itself in conjunction with a study of contemporary performance practices appropriate to the music for other instruments. For example, embellished repetitions of the main sections of compositions based on dance rhythms and steps are found in nearly all the English lute books of the period, but the manner of composing them is not
discussed in any of the lute sources.

The limited information on performance practices found in English sources for the lute can be clarified and expanded somewhat through references to Renaissance treatises that deal with the viol, voice, vihuela, and keyboard instruments. A number of theoretical treatises and musical publications of a general nature also provide additional insights into the performance practices applicable to Renaissance lute music. These non-lute sources provide background information, clarify points of lute practice, and suggest possible options when there is a gap in the information in the lute sources. No attempt has been made, however, to provide comprehensive coverage of all Renaissance instrumental and theoretical treatises.

In order to appreciate the difficulty involved in reconstructing the performance practices applicable to English Renaissance lute music it is important to recognize the degree to which the roles of the composer and arranger or editor were frequently assumed by the performers themselves.

Dowland lived at a time when the activities of composer, performer, arranger, editor, and teacher were closely allied and little or no attempt was made to identify the contributions of different musicians to a musical source; at a time when the techniques of variation permeated both composition and performance, and the altering of a composer's music was common practice; and at a time when the ad hoc nature of the occasions on which music was performed required accommodating the notes to the number and ability of the players available.1

It is clear that the performance practices of Dowland's day were quite flexible and that they left considerable interpretive leeway to the performer, whose role extended far beyond the mere reproduction of the notes represented by the tablature.

Ornamentation

It has been asserted frequently that Renaissance composers did not construct their music in a way that allowed them to take advantage of the idiomatic characteristics of specific kinds of instruments. Proponents of this point of view note that many sixteenth-century ornamentation manuals prescribe the same kinds of figures for vocalists and instrumentalists, soloists and ensemble performers alike.\(^2\) However, some authors of these manuals do acknowledge that a particular figure may be awkward to finger on a certain instrument or difficult for a vocalist to sing due to the intervals in that figure.

In short, sixteenth-century discussions of ornamentation do recognize the nature and limitations of various instruments, especially those cultivated by amateurs for chamber music—the recorder, the viol, the lute, and keyboards—even though idiomatic styles of embellishment were not developed for any one of them.\(^3\)

Howard Mayer Brown asserts that the adaptation of ornamentation techniques to the idiomatic characteristics of each


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 62.
kind of instrument had only begun at the end of the sixteenth century. This lack of specialization, however, should by no means be interpreted as evidence that ornamentation played only a minor role in the performance of Renaissance music. Whereas a thorough grounding in the techniques of improvisation was considered a desirable but inessential part of the training of vocalists, it was considered to be an obligatory part of the instruction of instrumentalists.⁴

Although the term ornament usually connotes an inessential, decorative element that is added to a completed musical work, ornamentation frequently assumed a significant structural role in compositions for the lute. Composers and performers often used elaborate improvised or written out ornamentation to extend multisectional works by repeating parts of the work in embellished form. Furthermore, during the seventeenth century, improvised embellishments became an essential element of the initial statements of melodic material in compositions for the lute by French composers and their followers.

In describing Renaissance ornamentation practices, it is helpful to follow the convention of many sixteenth-century writers who made a distinction between stylized figures of limited scope that were added to individual notes and more extended figures that were used to embellish the interval

⁴Ibid., p. 64. See page x of Brown's introduction for a list of ten instruction books written in Italy between 1535 and 1600 that contain information on Renaissance performance practices for instruments other than the lute.
between pairs of notes (the two notes of the pair not being restricted to successive notes in the same voice part). In lute music, this distinction coincides with two different methods of executing ornaments.

During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the ornaments in the first group were referred to as graces in England, mordanten in Germany, quiebros in Spain, les ornaments in France, and tremoli in Italy. Lutenists execute the various figures in this group by forcing the fingers of the left hand down onto the fingerboard rapidly in a hammering motion or by pulling the string sideways with a finger of the left hand until it releases the string and sounds the desired note. In both cases, the right hand finger sounds only the initial note of the figure. These figures, which are not written out in the normal tablature characters, are designated by symbolds that are neither alphabetic nor numeric. The symbols resemble modern punctuation marks or proofreaders’ marks in some cases, but their shapes give no clue to their interpretations. It is surprising, therefore, that few sources contain instructions for the execution of the ornaments they designate. Furthermore, even the symbols may be omitted in some sources containing textual references that clearly indicate ornaments are to be added at the performer’s discretion.

Sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century authors referred

---

to the ornaments in the second group as divisions or diminutions in England, passaggi in Italy, coloraturen in Germany, glosas in Spain, and diminutions in France. The ornaments in this group are performed without the hammering or pulling actions of the left hand alone that are integral to the execution of the figures in the first group. Whether improvised or written out, these ornaments are played with the normal interaction of the left and right-hand fingers.

Graces of Play

The earliest printed lute books, which appeared in Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century, do not contain any symbols in the music itself that would suggest the use of graces. Diana Poulton suggests that this is due to the fact that printers may not have had the necessary elements of type for the symbols, or that perhaps they could not utilize them with the grid system of printing then in use. In any case, "When this method of printing was abandoned in favour of engraving it is noticable that the resulting freedom allowed the signs to be added."\(^6\)

In lute manuscripts, the use of ornament signs did not present any additional difficulties for the scribe, and, as we might expect, a number of early manuscript lute books do contain the signs. The Capirola lute manuscript (copied ca. 1517) is the earliest source containing descriptions of the

---

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 108.
execution of the ornaments indicated directly in the tablature. The two ornaments used in this collection involve the upper and lower auxiliary tones of the note being embellished.

The first is apparently a trill with the upper neighbor beginning on the main note and involving an unspecified number of repercussions. . . .

Capirola's second ornament is apparently also a trill; this time involving the lower neighbor. Again, the ornament seems to begin on the main note, and the number of repercussions is unspecified.7

Howard Mayer Brown considers Capirola's ornaments to be examples of a common sixteenth-century embellishment known as the **tremolo**, which he defines as

. . . a rapid alternation between a main note and its upper or lower auxiliary. The interval between the two notes can be a half step, a whole step, or a third, and it can be repeated once, twice, or many times, either in measured or, perhaps more normally, in unmeasured units of time, but apparently a tremolo seldom took up more than half of the time value of the main note. Thus it combines the two graces that we more usually call the trill and the mordent. . . . If tremoli are the easiest ornaments to play, perhaps, then, they were the graces most often added to sixteenth-century music.8

Capirola's scribe (identified only as "Vitale")notated the first ornament by altering the appearance of the tablature character that was to be embellished rather than by adding a special symbol to the tablature. Instead of using the normal form of the tablature number (numbers were used in place of letters in Italian lute tablature), Vitale arranged a series of dots to form the outline of the number in the same way that

---


modern dot-matrix computer printers form characters. The second ornament was notated by adding one dot on each side of the tablature number in the space just above it.

Neither the symbols used to designate specific embellishing figures nor the terminology used to describe them were employed with any consistency in different lute sources. Among the early printed sources, the second edition of the Intavolatura di Lauto dell Divino Francesco da Milano et dell' eccelente Pietro Paolo Borrono (Milan, 1548) is one of the few lute books to notate the positions of ornaments and to give instructions for their execution. According to Borrono,

... Where a circle is found ( ), two fingers must be placed on the string and the finger on the lesser number must be held firm. Pull down the string with the finger which is on the higher number as if the voice were notated on the lesser of the two frets. This is done because the lute will sound sweeter. But the said circle is one stroke only.9

From this description and the examples in the tablature, it is clear that the figure is a kind of appoggiatura from the note above the main note that takes a portion of the time value of the main note. The sweeter sound to which Borrono refers results from the execution of the figure with the fingers of the left hand, and it is common to all graces.

9 Pietro Paolo Borrono, Intavolatura di Lauto . . . (Venice, 1548; second edition, Milan, 1548), translated by Foulton, in "Graces of Play," pp. 108-109. The symbols and their explanations, which do not appear in the original edition, were incorporated into Rudolph Wyssenbach's transcription of the contents of the volume into German lute tablature, which he published as Tabulatura uff die Lutten at Zurich in 1550.
Martin Agricola's references to mordanten in his \textit{Musica Instrumentalis Deutsch} (1528) suggest that ornaments were used in German lute music during the second quarter of the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, Agricola does not describe specific ornaments or their execution in his book.\footnote{Poulton, "Graces of Play," p. 108.} However, during the final years of the sixteenth century, Matthaeus Waissel described the distribution and execution of these embellishments in detail in his \textit{Lautenbuch}.

Mordents, also called \textit{Moderanten}, are played with the fingers of the left hand. However, they are only used in formations of whole and half beats and in runs where four notes appear in one beat (as semiminims). In coloraturas, where eight or sixteen notes occur in one beat (as with fusas and semifusas), they are not used at all because of the speed. And it is well to note that no mordents are used in coloraturas, except at the end of the penultimate letter. Otherwise they should not be done in coloraturas at all. For the coloraturas must be sharp and clean, without any mordents, otherwise they would have no appeal.

However, mordents serve to make lute playing lovely. They are done sometimes with the index finger, sometimes with the middle finger, sometimes with the ring finger, and sometimes with the little finger. The fingers with which the mordents are done are placed on the letters in formations somewhat slower than the others and are moved up and down two or three times, just like trembling. In some formations the mordents are done with the little finger above the finger that has stopped the letter. One cannot give rules for these things, but this will all come with time and practice. I have merely wished to mention this as information.\footnote{Matthaeus Waissel, \textit{Lautenbuch} . . . (Frankfort, 1592), translated by Douglas Alton Smith, in \textit{The Instructions in Matthaeus Waissel's Lautenbuch}, \textit{Journal of the Lute Society of America} 8 (1975): 69.}

Waissel's closing statement is echoed by a number of Renaissance lutenists from Wyssenbach to Besard. It indicates
the strength of the performing tradition through which the
techniques of improvised ornamentation were transmitted from
player to player without written documentation. This senti-
ment may also partially account for the scarcity of written
instructions concerning ornamentation in the lute tutors of
the period.

Sixteenth-century Spanish sources of music for the vi-
huela and other instruments contain descriptions of a number
of ornaments and their usage. Luis Venegas de Henestrosa
uses the term quiebro to refer to two ornaments in his Libro
de Cifra Nueva . . ., which contains a variety of pieces for
the organ, lute, and vihuela by mid-sixteenth-century Italian
and Spanish composers. 12 According to Henestrosa,

The 'quiebro' is to shake the finger on the string and
fret that you wish to play, or to keep it in place and
shake with the second or third finger one or two frets
higher. 13

The two ornaments that he describes are apparently a kind of
vibrato and a form of tremolo respectively.

Tomás de Sancta Maria describes a number of ornaments
in detail in his Libro llamado Arte de tñer fantasia
asi para tecla como para viñuela . . ., which deals with
instrumental technique, interpretation, and improvisation
among other things.

12 Gustave Reese, Music in the Renaissance, revised edition

13 Luis Venegas de Henestrosa, Libro de Cifra Nueva para
tecla, harpa y vihuela (Alicatá de Henares, 1557), translated
With regard to the redobles and trills, which constitute the eighth condition of good play, it must be noted that the word redoble means to double or repeat a note, and that notes can only be doubled or repeated when they lie immediately next to each other; thus: mi, re, mi, fa, mi, fa, mi, fa, mi. . .

It is the same way with the word trill. This means notes that are doubled or repeated; thus: mi, fa, mi, fa, mi, fa, mi. Nevertheless, there are many trills that are not repeated, but are simple, thus: mi, fa, mi, or fa, mi, fa. In this way trills are divided into two classes. . .

The repeated trill differs from the redoble in that the redoble has one note more, which descends below.14

Sancta Maria indicates that the length of the ornament determines the note values to which it may be applied.

The redobles are done only in whole bars, that is, on Semibreves; trills are done on minims and on crotchets, and, by a miracle, on quavers. And take notice that the redobles must not be very long, or the music is made ugly.

The repeated trills are made on minims, and the simple ones on crotchets, except one, which, though not 'repeated,' is used only on minims. The solmization is: so, fa, mi, fa. . .

The repeated trills are done on all the minims where it is possible for the fingers to do them. Simple trills, however, are not done on all the crotchets, but on the one yes, and on the other no, and in this manner all. [i.e. on alternate notes.]

The reason why the trills made on crotchets are simple and not repeated, is because of the short space of time that there is in a crotchet. For the same reason trills are not made on quavers or semiquavers.15

This last remark contradicts the statement made at the beginning of this passage in which he indicates that trills may be added to quavers in some cases. Nevertheless, it is clear that longer ornaments must be reserved for longer note values.


15Ibid., pp. 26-27.
There is no suggestion that the ornaments may displace or substitute for other notes in the melody being embellished.

Sancta Maria describes the arrangements of whole steps and half steps that can be used in each ornament and the degrees of the scale on which they may be employed with the proper intervallic relationships between successive tones. The simple trills are further classified according to their use in ascending, descending, and returning passages. Commonly, the first interval of these figures leads in the direction opposite that of the melodic line as a whole in the immediate vicinity of the ornament.

Sancta Maria's examples suggest that the short trills are used liberally throughout the composition. The redobles and repeated trills, being reserved for longer notes, appear to occur most often at cadences. However, the examples are too brief to provide conclusive evidence in either case, and they consist of only a single melodic line.

Although the basic techniques of ornamentation seem to have changed very slowly during the sixteenth century, the popularity and manner of execution of individual figures were apparently much less static. The existence of passing local fashions in ornamentation is indicated in another passage by Sancta Maria.

... Now it is the normal usage to begin the redoble and the repeated minim trill from one note higher than where it finishes, and in addition, the first note of the said redoble and trill must be struck alone, and the second struck together with the chord that then follows... . . .

These ways of playing redobles and trills, and the
other way with the minim trill of the tone and the semi-
tone, are very new and very gallant and add grace and
melody to the music. They give so much pleasure and
contentment to the ears that music played without them
sounds something quite different. For this reason they
should always be used, and not the others, since they are
old and without grace.16

As widespread as the practice of improvised ornamentation
appears to have been on the Continent during the sixteenth
century, there is only limited documentation of the practice
in England during the same period. No extended manuals on
ornamentation by native authors appeared in England before the
seventeenth century. However, the use of long melismatic ca-
dences in early sixteenth-century partsongs and the occurrence
of typical diminution patterns in Tudor church music imply that
English musicians knew and practiced improvised embellishment
well before the end of the century. The Cambridge consort
books (four manuscripts now in the Cambridge University Library)
contain numerous signs indicating the use of graces, and the
florid part-writing in many of the selections represented in
them attests to a well-developed tradition of division writing.17

In the dedication of the first edition of The First Book of Con-
sort Lessons, Thomas Morley acknowledges that some of the in-
strumental parts do require additional filling out of the basic
lines given in the collection. He commends the music to the

16 Ibid., p. 29.

17 Sydney Beck, Introduction to The First Book of Consort
Lessons; Collected by Thomas Morley (London, 1599 and 1611),
reconstructed and edited by Sydney Beck (New York: C. F. Peters,
... carefull and skilfull handling [of the London Waits, i.e. municipal musicians]: that the wants of exquisite harmony apparent[ly] being left unsupplied, for breuitie of Proportions, may be excused by their melodious additions...18

Undoubtedly, the material that Morley expected the performers to add would not have been confined to graces alone, but it does seem likely that graces would have been utilized frequently in music of this kind.

Diana Poulton summarizes the current state of knowledge about ornamentation in English lute music as follows:

Evidence suggests that ornamentation reached a higher degree of complexity at the end of the 16th and the first two decades of the 17th century than in any other country in the pre-baroque era. Nevertheless, in spite of the very large quantity of ornamented source material that has come down to us, interpretation is difficult since there was no standardization of the signs used either by scribes or printers, and we have exceptionally little information on the subject.19

According to Poulton, at least twenty-one lute manuscripts, including the four major books copied by Matthew Holmes,20 contain symbols that indicate points where graces should be improvised. The following sources contain the greatest concentrations of symbols and the most sophisticated systems for differentiating between the specific ornaments intended:21

18 Thomas Morley, Dedication to The First Booke of Consort Lessons (London, 1599), sig. Ar.
19 Poulton, "Graces of Play," p. 112.
20 The four lute books copied by Holmes are now in the Cambridge University Library and bear these shelfmarks: Dd. 2. 11., Dd. 5. 78. 3., Dd. 9. 33., and Nn. 6. 36.
21 Poulton, "Graces of Play," p. 112.
The following additional sources contain numerous ornament symbols, but it is unclear to what extent individual types of ornaments are differentiated by separate signs within each source: 22

Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales: Brogynton MS 27
Edinburgh, University Library: MS 5c. 125
Cambridge, University Library: MS Dd. 4.22
Cambridge, Trinity College: MS 0. 16. 2
London, British Library: Add. MS 6402

Any analysis of the symbols found in these sources is complicated by the fact that the only clues to the interpretation of the symbols are the musical context of the notes to which they are appended and the limited number of options that can be executed given the disposition of the surrounding notes on the fingerboard. Modern scholars, therefore, frequently disagree on the interpretation of these symbols and the terms used to refer to ornaments in contemporary lute tutors and manuscripts.

Modern scholars frequently use anachronistic terms to describe specific embellishing figures implied by symbols in Renaissance lute music. Although this practice is more

convenient than describing the individual figures at length every time it is necessary to refer to them, it is both confusing and misleading, since these terms (generally taken from later seventeenth-century lute publications) were not necessarily applied to the same ornaments in different periods. For this reason, the interpretations suggested by modern scholars are given as they appear in the sources cited, but when possible the derivation of the terminology and an explanation of the execution of the ornament have been added. Neither the interpretations of the ornaments nor the additional comments can be considered irrefutable since the information on which they are based is frequently imprecise.

The following table of symbols appears on folio 32v of the Margaret Board Lute Book, presumed to date from the 1620s.

Robert Spencer offers these interpretations of the symbols:

in Mace's *Musick's Monument* and refers to an ornament executed by sounding the upper auxiliary note and then pulling the appropriate finger of the left hand sideways until it releases the string and sounds the main note. It can be considered a form of appoggiatura from the note above the main note.]  

( a fall forward (i.e. a half-fall, used on tablature b, c, d, e and f). [The term half-fall appears in Mace's *Musick's Monument* also, and refers to an ornament executed by playing a note below the main note in the normal manner and then hammering down a finger of the left hand to sound the main note. It can be considered a form of appoggiatura from a note below the main note.]  

χ to beat down the finger with a shake (although it is ambiguous, I think this means a half-fall repeated, used on tablature b, c, d, e, f and g. It appears on tablature a twice, but in each case I think the grace belongs to the neighbouring note). [See the previous entry for an explanation of the half-fall. The shake is described by Mace as an ornament that involves an unspecified number of alternations between the main note and its upper auxiliary, hence, a form of tremolo.]  

.: 3 prickes to be struck upward with one finger (one right-hand finger playing a chord from higher to lower sounding strings). [Apparently this ornament is the same as the practice referred to by Besard in the *Novus Partus* as follows: "more advanced and practiced players in this art sometimes run through whole chords, even of six simultaneous voices, with the index finger."

#: for a long shake (used on tablature a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h and i, presumably beginning and ending on the same note, rather than beginning on a note lower or higher than the ending note). [See the entry before the previous one.]  

< for a slide (i.e. slurring or hammering two or three notes with the left hand fingers having plucked only the first with a right hand finger: a c d on f, 34r, e c a on f, 35r). [The slide is described by Mace as a manner of articulating the written notes with the pulling-off action of the left hand. No new notes are introduced in the process. The slur, also

---

described by Nace, is a manner of articulating the written notes with the hammering action of fingers of the left hand. These two articulations differ from the pull back and the fall forward only in adding no new notes to the music. The slide and the slur are generally associated with French lute music in the style brisé (which is represented in this portion of the Board Lute Book) rather than English Renaissance lute music. The sign for the slide, as identified by this particular scribe, often appears in conjunction with the sign for the pull back in the manuscript, possibly indicating a series of pulls executed entirely with the left hand fingers (which may provide a clue to the origin of the practice of slurring). On fol. 35r, the two signs appear together with the word slide under the sequence of notes, thus: \( \text{\textit{slide}} \) \( f \) \( d \) \( r \) \( a \).

As brief as this table is, it is the only table of its kind in an English lute manuscript. Three English lyra-viol manuscripts contain the only other comparable tables, two of which date from the middle years of the seventeenth century.\(^{25}\) Furthermore, the signs in the table discussed above do not necessarily apply to any of the works copied by the other four scribes represented in the manuscript or to works in other sources. The works in the portion of the manuscript that accompany this table appear to date from approximately 1630, by which date the French style of playing had gained a following among lutenists in England.\(^{26}\)

Therefore, the ornaments in this table may not all be equally

\(^{25}\) The lyra-viol manuscripts are British Library: MS Egerton 2971 (also known as the Downes lyra-viol MS), ca. 1615; the Mansell lyra-viol MS, ca. 1640; and the Manchester lyra-viol MS, ca. 1660. Robert Spencer, "Three English Lute Manuscripts," \textit{Early Music} 3, no. 2 (April, 1975): 124.

\(^{26}\) Spencer, "The Book and its Date," in \textit{The Board Lute Book}, commentary unpaginated.
applicable to English lute music of the last years of the sixteenth century.

Several symbols appear in these same selections that are not included in the table given above. 27

\[ \therefore \quad \therefore \quad \therefore \] occur in the tablature on ff. 33v and 38v, . . . Perhaps a beat. [Mace describes the beat as an ornament involving the repeated alternation between the main note and its lower auxiliary. Hence, it is a kind of tremolo.]

\[ \| \] occurs on f. 45 r on tablature a and c . . . perhaps this means \#. [i.e., an abbreviated notation for a long shake.]

\[ \times \hspace{1em} \text{(shake)} \] used in vieil ton pieces. . . . [i.e., pieces in the standard Renaissance tuning.]

Each of the four other scribes represented in the Margaret Board Lute Book used a different set of symbols to designate graces. Unfortunately, there are no further explanations of the interpretations of the symbols. Robert Spencer offers the following interpretations of the symbols used by Margaret Board, who copied a large number of the selections in standard Renaissance tuning. 28

. . . All the graces she used should be played on the beat, not before. She used \[ \times \] before tablature letters a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h and i. I think this should be interpreted as a relish . . . or shake . . . . [Both of these ornaments appear to involve the alternation between the main note and its upper auxiliary. Hence, they are forms of tremoli.]

She used \[ \times \] before letters b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i and l. I think it very likely that though she would have called this grace a "fall," she would have interpreted it as a half-fall of a semitone or tone . . . . [During the seventeenth century, the term half-fall


28 Ibid.
came to be applied to the ornament previously known as
the fall, in order to distinguish it from other similar
graces that came into use at that time.]

She occasionally combined the fall and shake on one
note... From f. 10v onwards she introduces further graces:
.. on tablature h, ff. 10v and 22v, perhaps indicating a
single relish... [The single relish, as described
by Nace, is an ornament involving the main note and
its lower auxiliary in the manner of a mordent.]
•: on tablature f, g and h, ff. 11v and 15r, perhaps indi-
cating a whip... [The whip is described by Nace
as a turn-like ornament involving the upper and
lower neighbor tones that starts and ends on the
main note.]
+ on tablature d, f. 20v, perhaps indicating a whole-
fall... [The whole-fall is described by Nace
as an ornament involving the third below the main
note and the lower auxiliary, both of which are
sounded by hammering down two fingers of the left
hand in succession. It differs from the slur in
that new notes are introduced.]
, on tablature c, f. 29r, indicating a backfall. [i.e.,
a pull back as described above.]

John Dowland, who is presumed to have written out two of
the selections in the manuscript and the introductory theory
lessons concerning the pitches of the hexachord system cited
above, used the following symbols to notate graces.29

. (shake) on tablature a, b, c, d, e, f and h.
+ (fall) on tablature a, b, c, d and g. Since he uses
the fall sign on an open string, perhaps he intended
it to mean either a fall or a backfall, depending on
whether the previous note was below or above the
graced one. He once combined a (back-)fall with a
shake on tablature f.
‡ possibly this means whole-fall (on tablature d) as
distinguished from a half-fall, or a half-fall re-
peated a second time.
+++ on tablature g, perhaps a double back-fall. [The do-
uble backfall is the upper counterpart of the whole-
fall, i.e., it involves the third above the main note
and the upper auxiliary, both of which are sounded by
the pulling-off action of two fingers of the left hand

29Ibid. Refer to previous entries for graces not described
in detail in this and succeeding sections.
in succession.]
.: on tablature i, perhaps a whip.
: on tablature c and d, perhaps a beat...

The following symbols were used by the third and fourth scribes, who contributed a total of six pieces to the manuscript.\textsuperscript{30} The identities of the scribes are unknown.

Scribe # 3:

\# (shake) on tablature a, b, c, d, e, f and h.
+ (fall, i.e. half-fall) on tablature c, d, e and h.

Scribe # 4:

uses both \# and \# in the same piece. If, as I think both mean a shake, perhaps they indicate soft and hard shake [sic]. ... [According to Wace, the difference between the two kinds of shake involves the intensity with which the main tone is sounded after the initial note is played with the right-hand finger. To execute the hard shake, the appropriate finger of the left hand pulls the string sideways rather vigorously after hammering down on it to sound the upper auxiliary tone. To execute the soft shake, the finger is retracted vertically without pulling the string sideways, thereby producing a much weaker tone for the main note.]

+ (fall, i.e. half-fall) on tablature c and d.
\| (possibly a lazy way of writing \#) on tablature a and c.

Robert Spencer has also analyzed the use of ornament signs in the Sampson Lute Book, which dates from approximately 1609. He offers the following interpretations of the symbols found in the twelve compositions copied by Henry Sampson.\textsuperscript{31}

\# (relish = upper mordent?) on tablature letters a, b, c, d, e, f and g.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.

† or x (fall = appoggiatura from below?) on letters a
(possibly a mistake), b, c, d and f.

The following symbols were used by the second scribe, who
copied the remaining fourteen pieces into the manuscript32
(See Figure 24).

# on tablature letters a, b, c, e, f, g and h. [Inter-
pretation same as above.]
+ or x on letters b, c, d, e, f and h. [Interpretation same
as above.]
| (back-fall ≠ appoggiatura from above) from k to h, h
to f, and f to d.

Diana Poulton proposes the following interpretations of
the symbols appearing in the Sampson Lute Book.33

† possibly a slide from a major third below. [Poulton
uses this term for the figure Mace designates as a
whole-fall.
| a fall.

Poulton proposes the following summarization of Dowland’s
use of ornament signs in various compositions that he is pre-
sumed to have copied or to have authenticated with his signa-
ture.34

† Since this sign occurs on both open and stopped notes
it presumably indicates a relish.
| Occurs on stopped notes only. The context suggests a
fall.
. On open notes only. Possibly a short trill.

These interpretations do not coincide exactly with those
given by Robert Spencer in his commentary in The Board Lute
Book. The two interpretations of the dot, †, as a shake and

32 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
Figure 24. "The Earl of Derby's Galliard," by John Dowland, from the Sampson Lute Book, fol. 13v
a short trill are not really in conflict because they are forms of the tremolo. However, in light of the fact that both writers state that the cross, †, appears on tablature a, it is more logical to interpret this grace as a relish rather than a fall because there can be no lower auxiliary to a note on an open course, individual graces being confined to a single course. Dowland's printed works offer little insight into his use of ornaments because, with the exception of the twentieth selection in The Second Booke of Songes or Ayres, "no pointings, barres, or ornamentation signs occur in any of the tablatures published by Dowland or his son..."  

Diana Poulton offers the following interpretations of the ornament signs found in the Dowland lute book, Folger Library: MS V.b. 280 (commonly known by the original shelfmark, MS 1610.1) to which Dowland is thought to have contributed several pieces and a few brief instructional examples.  

- Possibly a fall, slide, or mordent. [Poulton uses the term slide to designate the grace Wace refers to as a whole-fall, which involves two successive tones from below the main note.]  
- Possibly a fall.  
- Possibly a fall, slide, or mordent. [Poulton does not make clear which manuscript contains this sign, but it follows directly after the preceding grace.]  

The John Sturt lute book, British Library: Add. MS 38,539, contains a symbol that is apparently unique to that source.  

---

The ▲ occurs only on notes that are immediately preceded by
the upper auxiliary note, including notes in fairly rapid
runs. According to Stanley Buetens, "It indicates a repeat
of the previous note in stepwise passages on the same string
and takes half the value of the note on which it is found." 37
If his analysis is correct, the grace may be described as a
pull back or, in Mace's terminology, a back-fall. The Sturt
lute book also contains the X sign, which Poulton interprets
as a fall, slide, or mordent again. Buetens notes that this
sign is never found on an open course, again suggesting that
the specific figure represented by the sign contains a lower
auxiliary tone. He states that the ornament, which he calls
a fall or a slide, "can fill in any interval from a minor
second to a major third... ." 38

All of the symbols discussed above are found in sources
in which the scribe has utilized two or more symbols to dis-
tinguish between the different kinds of graces intended. In
many sources, however, the # symbol is used to indicate all
the graces indiscriminately, and interpretation becomes even
more problematic. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for a copy-
ist to omit the ornamentation signs completely, thus leaving
the choice and location of the graces to the performer.

37 Stanley Buetens, Method for the Renaissance Lute (Man-
hattan Beach, California: Instrumenta Antiqua Publications,
38 Ibid.
The printed lute books published in England during the second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century provide little specific information about the use of graces. Neither Le Roy nor Barley discusses graces at all in their tutors. However, the double cross, †, appears frequently in A New Booke of Tabliture. This sign, which does not designate a specific ornament, frequently appears below the note to be embellished rather than in the normal position ahead of the note. Although Poulton states that Barley uses both the single cross and the double cross, the British Library copy of the print (shelfmark K. 1. c. 18) contains no single crosses at all.39 The crosses do vary considerably in appearance as in manuscript sources, e.g. \( \times, \times, \#, \#, \#, \# \), etc., but in each case, the double cross is indicated.

Thomas Robinson was the first author of an English lute tutor to discuss the use of graces. His comments indicate that graces served the practical purpose of sustaining the sound of the note as well as decorating it. Robinson also notes that the execution of any grace involves special consideration of left-hand fingering requirements.

Now you shall haue a genrall rule to grace it [i.e., a passage in single stops], as with passionate play, and relishing it: and note that the longer the time is of a single stroke, that the more neede it hath of a relish, for a relish will help, both to grace it, and also it helps to continue the sound of the note his full time:

but in a quicke time a little touch or jerke will serue, and that onely with the most strongest finger... . . .

... And as before I haue taught you how to relysh in a single stop, with that finger which is the strongest, so take this for a generall rule, that you relysh in a full stop, with that finger which is most idelest, in any string whatsoeuer: either a strong relysh for loudnesse, or a mild relysh for passionate attenticion.40

Robinson describes the graces known as the fall and the relish and illustrates their use in a series of chords. However, instead of marking the graces with the customary symbols, he describes the execution of the embellishments in the text below his examples. The last four examples of the fall with a relish combination are not even discussed in the text, thereby requiring the student to deduce which notes are to be graced by analyzing the fingering requirements of each option to see if the required additional note or notes can be executed with the available fingers.

Now to your fall with a relish, or a fall without a relish: take this for a generall rule, that all falls in what stop soeuer, in a flat note, must bee performed with the nearest finger to the halfe notes, and in a sharp note or stop, with the nearest and strongest finger to a full note. As heere you see vnderneath for example.

\[\begin{array}{cccccccc}
1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\
\hline
\text{f} & \text{b} & \text{e} & \text{d} & \text{c} & \text{b} & \text{d} & \text{f} \\
\text{B} & \text{G} & \text{E} & \text{D} & \text{C} & \text{B} & \text{D} & \text{G} \\
\text{A} & \text{G} & \text{E} & \text{D} & \text{C} & \text{B} & \text{D} & \text{A} \\
1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\
\end{array}\]

Heere the stops where b is placed, must haue his fall from a in the same string [,] where d is placed, (the finger laid along in c) must haue his fall from c in the same strings, in the next where c is in the Treble, because c is sharp, must haue his fall from the full note a, and c having had his fall, may so bee held still without moving the forefinfer, and the relish continued (with the little finger) in d which is vnder halfe note, and so of all the rest.41

The first two chords illustrate falls that embellish notes at the first fret on the second and third courses respectively. Since the lower auxiliary tone is a half step below the note that is embellished, these chords represent the falls in a "flat or halfe note" referred to above. Similarly, the third and fourth chords illustrate falls that embellish notes at the third fret on the second and third courses respectively. These chords represent the falls in a sharp or whole note because the lower auxiliary tone is a whole step below the note that is to be embellished. The fifth chord illustrates a fall at the second fret on the first course that is followed immediately by a relish at the third fret (the "under halfe note").

Falls can be executed on more than one chord tone in three of the last four examples. However, in the preceding chords, Robinson always graces the third of the chord rather than the root, fifth, or octave. If this pattern is extended to the last four chords, the sixth and seventh chords illustrate falls at the second fret on the second and third courses

41 Ibid., sig. C2r.
respectively. Both of these falls can be followed immediately by relishes at the third fret according to the pattern prescribed by Robinson for the fifth chord. Similarly, the eighth and ninth chords illustrate falls at the fourth fret on the first and second courses respectively, but these falls cannot be extended with relishes unless the chord is refingered.

Robinson’s examples and their descriptions make it clear that the fall is a form of appoggiatura involving the diatonic tone or semitone below the main note. However there is no information that would indicate whether the lower auxiliary is played prior to the rest of the chord or with it. Neither is there any information concerning the duration of the two notes that make up the fall. As noted above, the fall is executed by hammering a finger of the left hand against the fingerboard strongly enough to sound the main note after the lower auxiliary has been played in the normal manner.

Robinson’s brief references to the relish suggest that it involves the upper auxiliary to the main note. Poulton concludes that it is an appoggiatura from the upper auxiliary, but other interpretations are also possible. A relish may be a form of tremolo involving the main note and its upper auxiliary such as an inverted mordent or a short trill that begins and ends on the main note. These interpretations would agree with Robinson’s assertion that the relish helps to sustain the sound of longer notes (See Table 11).

The touches and jerkes mentioned by Robinson are probably short graces since he states that they are appropriate for passages in faster tempi. Accordingly, a touch may have been a grace executed by briefly hammering a finger of the left hand against the fingerboard in the manner of a fall. Marc Southard suggests that the touch was equivalent to an appoggiatura from below the main note, but it could also have been a grace involving the main note and the tone above it in the manner of an inverted mordent. The jerke may have been played in the manner of a pull back, which would make it an appoggiatura from the note above the main note according to Southard.

---

44 Ibid., p. 81.
However, the jerke could also have been a grace involving the main note and the tone below it, played like a mordent, if the finger that plays the main note is returned to the string with a hammering action after the pull off that sounds the lower note. Poulton does not comment on the execution of either figure, but she suggests that the touch and the jerke may correspond to the grace indicated by the 7 symbol in the John Sturt lute book. Robinson does not provide any further information on graces in The Schoole of Musick.

The Varietie of Lute-Lessons contains even less information about graces than Robinson's tutor. John Dowland does not mention the subject at all in his treatise and Besard gives only the following general advice.

You should have some rules for the sweet relishes and shakes if they could be expressed here, as they are on the LYTE; but seeing they cannot by speech or writing be expressed, thou wert best to imitate some cunning player, or get them by thine owme practice, onely take heed, least in making too many shakes thou hinder the perfection of the Notes. In somme, if you affect biting sounds, as some men call them, which may very well be used, yet use them not in your running, and use them not at all but when you judge them decent.

Judging by the scarcity of information about graces in contemporary sources, Besard's belief that graces could not be adequately described in writing must have been widely held.


However, the individual figures are not as difficult to describe as the way in which they are added to a composition. The physical restrictions imposed by specific fingering patterns and the position of the note to be embellished on the fingerboard of the lute undoubtedly determined whether a grace could be added to a particular note. Ornaments were confined to the notes available on a single course within the reach of one position on the fingerboard due to the nature of the hammering and pulling actions of the left hand fingers that executed them. This makes it impossible to use a figure that extends below the main note when the main note occurs on an open course or at a fret stopped by the index finger. Similarly, it is impossible to use a figure that extends above the main note when the main note is stopped by the fourth finger. Yet, it is clear that graces were not added to every chord or passage of single stops in which the fingering patterns would accommodate them. The few guidelines for the use of graces that appear in the lute tutors indicate that rapid passages should be embellished sparingly if at all, and longer graces should be reserved for longer notes. There are no guidelines concerning the extent to which the execution of a grace may interfere with the sustaining of the unembellished parts, nor are there any guidelines concerning the use of graces in sequential patterns or imitative passages. Essentially, the Renaissance lutenist was guided by the limitations of his own technique, the compositional style of the selection being played,
and his own taste.

None of the illustrative examples found in Besard's treatise contains symbols to indicate the use of graces, nor do any of the musical selections in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*. The absence of a thorough documentation of contemporary ornamentation practices in the print is particularly regrettable in light of Dowland's extensive opportunities to observe the playing of foreign musicians in general and lutenists in particular.

From his years in France, travels in Italy and Germany, and six years' service at the Danish court, where his colleagues included Germans and Netherlands as well as Danes, Dowland must have been more widely acquainted with the musicians of his time than most of his contemporaries. 47

As the seventeenth century progressed and the use of improvised ornaments in lute music became increasingly common, more detailed information on ornamentation appeared in printed lute books. However, the compositions in these works display a growing number of stylistic elements that are foreign to the Renaissance lute idiom. The changes that can be observed in lute compositions dating from the first quarter of the seventeenth century culminated in the establishment of the Baroque style of lute playing known as the *style brisé*, or broken style, in France, where it developed. One of the most important aspects of the new compositional style is its elevation of the role of improvised ornamentation from decorative enhancement to that of an essential component of the melodic design. Without ornaments,

the lute music of the style brisé often sounds melodically impoverished and uninteresting. The increased complexity and variety of ornaments in Baroque lute music probably reflect composers' and performers' attempts to avoid monotony in their use of ornaments, on which the success of compositions in that style depend so heavily. In light of the contrasting roles of ornamentation in Renaissance and Baroque lute music, it is clear that not all of the ornaments described in Baroque lute books are appropriate for use in Renaissance works. It is difficult, however, to determine which of the ornaments in Baroque treatises and books were already in use during the Renaissance and which of them were invented specifically to meet the requirements of the new style of composition. Furthermore, lute books that appeared during the transitional years at the beginning of the seventeenth century often contain music that demonstrates a mixture of old and new stylistic elements. These works are particularly problematic in matters of ornamentation. In a few of these publications, the author makes editorial comments about current or former preferences for individual graces that clarify the limited information on Renaissance practices found in earlier sources.

The Frenchman, Nicolas Vallet, published a collection of lute music in Amsterdam in 1615 under the title Secretum Musarum. He added an introduction to the collection and republished it under the title Le secret des Muses: Paradisus Musicus Testudinis . . . in 1618. This edition contains
descriptions of the execution of two graces indicated by
symbols in this volume and in other works by Vallet. The
first grace, which is indicated by a short comma-like sign,
is clearly an appoggiatura from the diatonic note above the
main note. In his illustrations of this grace, the second
half of each measure indicates the execution of the ornament
notated in the first half of the measure.  

\textit{Exemple}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{example1.png}
\caption{Example of appoggiatura.
\end{figure}

The second grace, which is indicated by a single cross, $x$, is
a short trill that begins on the upper note and ends on the
main note. Vallet states that it is similar to the first
note except that it must be repeated two or three times,
particularly when it occurs on a dotted crotchet followed by
a quaver or a minim. He gives several examples of the second
grace in a cadential context in his illustration, but the
actual execution of the grace is not represented in tablature
letters as in the examples of the first grace.  

\textit{Exemple}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{example2.png}
\caption{Example of trill.
\end{figure}


\footnote{Ibid.}
In the illustrations of both graces, the note that is embellished is a third or a fifth above the bass note in every case.

In 1620, Vallet published a collection of one hundred and fifty psalms arranged for lute under the title Piètè Royale, c'est a dire: Les 150 Pseaumes de David, accomod. pour jouer sur le luth. This work contains a description of the use of vibrato, which is indicated by the double cross, ♯, in the collection.\(^{50}\) Poulton notes that the symbol appears most frequently on the highest note of a phrase, and that it appears in inner voices as well as the melody.\(^{51}\) As with the other two graces cited by Vallet, there are no instructions for using the vibrato in compositions that do not already contain the symbols.

Although no symbol is given to represent it in the lute tablature, Alessandro Piccinini's Intavolatura di Liuto e di Chitaronne, Libro Primo contains a description of the technique for executing the vibrato. Piccinini considers the vibrato to be a form of tremolo.

\(^{50}\) Stanley Buetens, "Nicolas Vallet's Lute Quartets," Journal of the Lute Society of America 2 (1969): 30. Beutens gives the following excerpt from the introduction to the work: "...seulement vous serez advertis que là out vous rencontrerez des doubles croix en cette forme ♯ il faut mignarder la corde d'un doigt seul, savoir est tenir le doight ferme sure la lettre qui preseced ladite croix et branler toute la main si vittement que faire ce pourra." "Advertissement aux amateurs," in Piètè Royale (Amsterdam, 1620).

\(^{51}\) Poulton, "Craces of Play," p. 110.
The third trill is seldom used because it tends to free the hand [i.e., take the hand out of its normal position on the neck of the lute]. For example: Place the little finger on the fifth fret of the third string and pluck the string at the same time, pressing hard and shaking the whole hand strongly. You will quickly hear that the string wavers a little, and so it is done.\footnote{Alessandro Piccinini, \textit{Intavolatura di Liuto e di Chitaronne, Libro Primo} (Bologna, 1623), translated by Buetens, in \textit{The Instructions of Alessandro Piccinini}, \textit{Journal of the Lute Society of America} 2 (1969): 13.}

He also describes two other kinds of \textit{tremoli}.

The first is the long trill, and it is used where there is a long note value. To do it, pluck delicately and quickly many times with the tip of whichever finger is most convenient. If you trill a zero [open course], trill on the first fret; if you ornament the first fret, trill on the second; the second on the third; and so on successively. The trill should last as long as the note value.

The second trill is fast and can be done in an infinite number of places. It gives great pleasure. Here is an example of how to do it: Place the little finger on the third fret of the first string and at the same time put the middle finger on the second fret. Quickly pluck the string, lift the little finger slightly off the string, and with force return it to the same place. To do it on the first fret, only one finger is necessary, lifting and returning as has been discussed.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 12-13.}

Piccinini describes an unusual way of playing cadential trills by striking repeatedly with a single finger of the right hand instead of hammering every other note against the fingerboard with a finger of the left hand.

The cadential \textit{groppo} is very difficult, and in order to play it equally and fast... I have found that using the index finger alone, striking the string up and down with the end of the nail, succeeds wonderfully well, because of the speed and clarity [thus achieved]. This method was so easy for me that together with the \textit{groppo} I could [play] another moving part with the thumb.\footnote{Ibid., p. 10.}
This technique is very similar to the dedillo stroke used for rapid passages by the Spanish vihuelists during the middle of the sixteenth century.

Piccinini provides one of the few descriptions of the procedure for adding embellishments to a piece of music.

In all places where there are pauses, long or short, you should put an ornament. Here you should do one kind of ornament, and there another, on every string and fret, depending on what convenience dictates. As long as the note values are at least quavers, and you have time, ornamentation will always have good effect. Because there are an infinite number of places where you can ornament, and not wishing to clutter the tablature with ornament signs, let this advice suffice: Do not become fatiguing and wearisome by putting in too many ornaments. Play gracefully and make sure not to tire the listener.55

In spite of the short span of time between the publication of Vallet’s and Piccinini’s volumes, there are significant differences between the two prints. While the music of both composers exhibits a mixture of Renaissance and early Baroque traits, Piccinini’s instructions include descriptions of some techniques that are clearly out of place in Renaissance lute music. For example, although the techniques used to slur successive notes written out in the tablature are the same as the techniques utilized in the fall and the pull back, slurs are not considered appropriate for music in the Renaissance style. However, Piccinini advocates slurring entire passages of notes, ascending or descending. He also advocates the use of the apoyando stroke for the thumb, which causes the thumb

55Ibid., p. 13.
of the right hand to come to rest against the adjacent course when making a stroke; the use of fingernails on the right hand fingers to facilitate faster playing and to produce a brighter sound; the shifting of the right hand to different positions along the string to vary the timbre of the sounds produced; and the breaking of block chords with special arpeggiation patterns. The techniques are much more appropriate for Baroque lute music than for Renaissance lute music.

Although the techniques of the style brisé had largely replaced the Renaissance practice in France by the time that Mersenne's Harmonie Universelle was published in 1636, there are a number of comments in the volume that bear on the earlier practice. According to Mersenne, the excellence of the new style of lute playing is evident from

... the use of ornamentations, which have never been so frequent as they are at the present. Thus the playing of our predecessors had none of the delicacies or the gracefulness which embellish ours, nor the diversity. But since the ornamentations are different in their effect as well as in their names, I shall attempt to make them understood, and to distinguish them through the characters which I have expressly invented for this subject, for each names them and figures them as he pleases.  

Mersenne's discussion of ornaments is very lengthy and detailed, in part because he classifies each ornament according to whether

---

56 Ibid., pp. 10-16.

it is used on an open course or a fretted stop, and whether it involves a half-step or a whole-step between the grace note and the main note.

The first kind of ornament that Mersenne describes is a shake, which he indicates with the comma, '. Although the word trill appears in the description of the figure, and it is clear that a shake involves the upper auxiliary tone, Mersenne does not indicate whether the grace begins on the main note or the note above, nor does he specify the number of repercussions involved. Therefore, his shake could be an appoggiatura from above or a short trill.

Mersenne's second grace, the accent plantif, is indicated by a dot with the comma, thus: ··. This grace is clearly an appoggiatura from the note below that corresponds to the fall.

The martelment is indicated by a small cross or a caret, thus: * or ^. This grace is clearly a form of trenolo that utilizes the lower auxiliary tone, either a mordent or a short trill.

Mersenne marks the notes to which vibrato is to be applied with a comma followed by a dot, thus: ··, but he notes that the vibrato "is not used so much now as it was in the past. . . And one of the reasons that the moderns have rejected it is because the older ones used it all the time." \(^{58}\)

The fifth ornament is considered more appropriate for the violin than for the lute, apparently because it is difficult to

\(^{58}\)Ibid., p. 109.
sustain the sound of the note for its full value on the lute. This ornament, the *battement*, is indicated by the sign \( \ddagger \), and its execution is described as follows:

... The finger of the left hand ought to pull on the string only once, after it has been played by the right hand, for the remainder of the ornamentation ought to be made by the single trill of the finger, as many times as the length of the measure will allow it... And although one plays the string with the right hand, the string must be pulled just one time with the little finger, and the remainder of the ornamentation must be ended in beating the string.\(^59\)

It is this beating action, without pulling the string to the side, that would produce a rather weak sound on the lute.

Mersenne describes two unnamed compound ornaments, the first of which consists of the *accent plainité* followed by the *battement*, indicated by the sign \( \ddagger \). The second compound ornament consists of the *accent plainité* followed by the *verre cassè*. The description of this grace is not very clear, and several interpretations are possible. Poulton suggests that the first part of the grace consists of a mordent,\(^60\) but it could also be a compound appoggiatura from the third below the main note, Mersenne's terminology notwithstanding. The second part of the ornament, the *verre cassè*, is Mersenne's term for the vibrato. Mersenne describes the practice of slurring groups of written notes in the manner advocated by Piccinini, but he does not consider these notes ornaments.

\(^{59}\)Ibid.

\(^{60}\)Poulton, "Graces of Play," p. 111.
Wersenne's discussion of lute technique and ornamentation is actually taken from a treatise on lute playing, L'Art de toucher le Luth, by Jehan Basset, who was a lutenist and teacher in Paris during the early years of the seventeenth century. The style of playing that it describes clearly belongs to the music of the Parisian school of lutenists responsible for the development of the style brisé, but it is more conservative than the style of playing described by Mace forty years later. On the other hand, some of Mace's ornaments are identical to graces described in Renaissance sources under different names.

Mace's discussion of ornamentation in Musick's Monument is the most extensive treatment of the subject found in any of the English manuscript and printed sources. According to Mace, the most commonly used ornament is the shake, indicated with a dot in front of the tablature letter, which is a kind of trill between the main note and the upper auxiliary tone, beginning and ending on the main note.

The Shake is 2 ways to be performed, either Hard, or Soft, the Hard, (or Tearing-Shake) is thus done, Viz. If you Shake any String Open, you must first strike it with some Right Hand Finger, and then be ready with the Fore-finger, of the Left Hand to pick it up, with the very Tip (near the Nail) of your Finger; and so, by often, and quick picking it up in that manner, or (more plainly) Scratching It, in a Smooth, Nimble, and Strong Agitation, you will have performed it.

The Soft-Shake, is done, in all respects, like the former, except the Tearing, and Scratching; and only by

---

61 Lionel de la Laurencie, "Un Maître de luth au XVIIe siècle; Jehan Basset," La Revue Musicale 4, no. 7 (1923): 228.
Beating the String Strongly, and with a Quick Motion, in the same place, as you did the other, which must always be either in b, or c Fret; and if it be done Evenly, and Strongly, it gives a very Pleasant Grace unto your Play.62

The two different ways of executing the shake affect only the intensity of the notes that follow the initial attack. Pulling the string to the side and releasing it will produce a stronger sound than simply hammering on the string and retracting the finger vertically. Mace's description of the soft shake is very similar to Mersenne's description of the battement and it is very likely that the same ornament is represented in both cases. It is also very possible that these two ways of executing the repeated notes are the basis of Thomas Robinson's distinction between "a strong relish for loudnesse or a milde relish for passionate attenuon,"63 whether or not the relish and the shake are the same grace.

The second grace in Mace's list is the beat, which is indicated by a short vertical mark, '. The beat seems to be the descending counterpart of the shake in that it is a trill between the main note and the lower auxiliary, beginning and ending on the main note. The repeated notes are apparently sounded only by hammering the appropriate finger of the left hand against the fingerboard at the fret for the main note


and then picking it up again to allow the lower note to sound. Mace's description does not indicate whether the finger pulls the string sideways or not.

The back-fall is indicated by a comma, ', and corresponds to an appoggiatura from the note above the main note. It is executed by pulling the string to the side with the finger of the left hand until the string is released as occurs with the pull back.

The half-fall, indicated by a diagonal line, /, corresponds to an appoggiatura from a half-step below the main note. The main note is sounded through the hammering action of the left-hand finger that is characteristic of the falls described in Renaissance sources.

The whole-fall is indicated by a single cross, +. It consists of two successive appoggiaturas, from the third below the main note to the lower auxiliary and another from the lower auxiliary to the main note, both of which are executed through the hammering action of the left-hand fingers. Mace notes that "The Whole-fall, is a Grace, much out of use, in These our Days ..." 64

The elevation, which is indicated by the sign, #, also involves two auxiliary tones. However, in the elevation, both of the notes are above the main note and the figure involves ascending and descending motion. The elevation is executed by

---

64 Mace, Musick's Monument, p. 105. (See Figure 25 for illustrations of Mace's ornaments.)
TABLEAU DES ORNEMENTS


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOTATION</th>
<th>EFFET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 25. Graces of Play from Thomas Nace's *Musick's Monument* (London, 1676), pp. 102-110 with transcriptions.
hammering two fingers of the left hand against the fingerboard successively to sound the notes a second and a third above the main note, and then immediately pulling these two fingers away to sound the upper auxiliary tone and the main note respectively. Mace notes that the elevation is usually played in passages of an ascending or descending third. His illustration indicates that the second and third notes of the figure are played twice as fast as the other notes.

The single relish of Mace's day, indicated by the sign, \( \dddot{\cdot} \), corresponds to a mordent rather than a form of tremolo involving the upper auxiliary as was the case in Robinson's day.

The double relish is indicated by the sign, \( \dddot{\cdot}\dddot{\cdot} \), and it is a complex figure involving two quasi-trills with terminations in succession used with a three note cadence pattern. The first half of the figure begins on the upper auxiliary tone. Three alternations between the upper auxiliary and the main note are followed by a descent to the second and third degree below the main note to conclude the first half of the figure. The second half of the figure begins with a leap to the main note followed by three more alternations between the main note and its lower auxiliary, a descent to the third below the main note, and a concluding rise to the main note via its lower auxiliary tone. Mace illustrates the double relish with an example and comments that

The Double Relish, is a Grace, very profitable to practice, for the making the Hand Nimble, Quick, and
Even; But upon the Lute is not us'd to be performed, by any Sliding, or Falling of Notes, as Others are; because it consists of too many Notes, to be performed, without some other Help, than by the Left Hand... .

In Ancient Times, the Well, and True Performance of It, upon the several Keys, throughout the Instrument, (either Lute, or Viol) was accounted an Eminent piece of Excellency, though now, we use it not at all in our Compositions upon the Lute. 65

Nace includes ascending and descending groups of written out notes sounded entirely with the left hand in his list of graces for the lute, even though no new notes are added to the music. Ascending sequences, executed by hammering the appropriate fingers of the left hand against the fingerboard in the manner of a fall, are marked with a curved line under the appropriate letters in the tablature, thus: b d. Descending figures, executed by pulling the appropriate fingers of the left hand off of the strings in the manner of a pull back, are referred to as a slide, and are also indicated by a curved line under the appropriate letters in the tablature, thus: d b. It is possible to slur or slide up to four notes at one time if the one of the notes in the figure is found on an open course, but groups of two or three notes are much more common.

The spinger, which Nace indicates with a slash like the sign used for the half-fall, is a grace that introduces a very weakly articulated note between two notes in a voice. Nace describes the manner in which it is executed as follows:

After you have Hit your Note, which you intend to

65 Ibid., pp. 107-108.
make the Grace upon, you must (just as you intend to part with your Note) Dab one of your next Fingers lightly upon the same String, a Fret, or 2 Fretts below, (according to the Ayre) as if you did intend to stop the String, in that Place; yet so Gently, that you do not cause the String to Sound, in That spot, (so dab'd;) but only so, that it may suddenly take away That sound, which you last struck; yet give some small Tincture of a New Note; but not Distinctly to be heard, as a Note... .66

In his commentary to the facsimile edition of Musick's Monument, Jean Jacquot transcribes the spinger as an échappée from the lower auxiliary tone. 67 However, Mace's instruction to dab a finger on the note one or two frets below the main note refers to a note that is closer to the bridge than the main note, hence higher in pitch rather than lower. Although the lower auxiliary may have been utilized when playing this grace on bowed stringed instruments, its use on the lute would have to be effected by releasing the finger of the left hand that produces the main note. This does not agree at all with Mace's instruction to dab the string lightly.

The sting is another of Mace's ornaments that does not introduce additional notes into the music. It is indicated by a wavy line in front of the note to be graced, \[\text{\textasciitilde}\] , and it is clearly the vibrato. Mace states that it is appropriate for long notes, but it is "not Modish in These Days... ." 68

---

66 Ibid., p. 109.


68 Ibid., p. 109.
Similarly, the tut alters the articulation of the given notes rather than introducing new notes. It is the only ornament (other than dynamic contrasts which Mace considers to be ornaments) that is executed with the right hand. The tut is indicated by two dots in front of the note to be graced, thus: :, and it appears to be a means of producing a staccato articulation. The tut is executed by sounding the note in the normal manner and then immediately placing another finger of the right hand on the string to muffle the sound. According to Mace, "If you do it clearly, it will seem to speak the word Tut, so plainly, as if it were a Living Creature, Speakable."69

Although he does not include it in his list of graces, Mace describes a similar ornament at a later point in his book. The crackle, for which he gives no sign, is executed by partially releasing the fingers of the left hand as soon as a chord has been played with the fingers of the right hand, "yet not to unstop Them, but only so much as may Dead the Sound on a sudden."70 The sound produced is said to resemble a sob.

Finally, Mace concludes his discussion of ornaments by stating that dynamic contrasts and brief pauses greatly enhance a performance. He acknowledges that these effects are not considered graces by other writers. Mace does not discuss the

---

69 Ibid., p. 109.
70 Ibid., p. 170 [sic, p. 175].
process of adding graces to music that has not already been marked with the signs for specific graces.

On the basis of the preceding survey of Continental and English sources of information on Renaissance ornamentation practices, the following graces are suggested for use in Renaissance lute music from the last quarter of the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth century:

**tremoli** consisting of the upper or lower auxiliary note in alternation with the note to be graced. This type of grace includes figures involving a single alternation of the two pitches, i.e., mordents and inverted mordents; figures involving several alternations of the two pitches, i.e., short trills; and figures involving numerous alternations of the two pitches, i.e., extended trills. Tremoli begin and end on the main note in most cases, though several sources suggest the possibility of their beginning on the upper auxiliary tone. The long tremoli may often have been replaced by similar figures known as **groppi** at cadences. These graces involve the alternation of the tonic and its lower auxiliary primarily, but they may include additional tones in introductory or concluding formulas. In addition, they may begin on the tonic rather than the lower auxiliary, which would be considered the note that they embellish.71

**falls** consisting of one or more notes below the note to be graced. This type of grace includes figures suggesting single and compound appoggiaturas from below the main note. The compound fall, i.e., whole-fall, seems to have been introduced at the end of the sixteenth century, and should be reserved for works composed after 1590.72

---

71 Brown states that "we may add tremoli and groppi and no other kinds of ornaments to virtually any composition written during the sixteenth century with some confidence that we are not violating any but the most flamboyant and the most conservative of Renaissance tastes." *Embellishing Sixteenth-Century Music*, p. 11.

pulls consisting of one or more notes above the note to be graced. This type of grace includes figures suggesting single and compound appoggiaturas from above the main note. The compound pull, i.e., double-backfall, would appear to be a later addition to the vocabulary of Renaissance graces than the single pull. It probably came into use at approximately the same time as the French practice of slurring descending sequences of written-out notes and should therefore be reserved for late Renaissance works for the lute.

compound ornaments consisting of two of the figures above applied to a single note successively. The joining of two graces is apparently restricted to formulas that do not require a skip at the connecting point, and thus produce the impression of a single, longer ornament.

All of the ornaments given above are played on the beat instead of before it, and they are executed in part with hammering or plucking motions of the fingers of the left hand. Stanley Buetens notes that

Ornaments should follow the melodic contours of a phrase, employing stepwise motion whenever possible. They should not introduce new notes which are out of the range of the immediate musical compass. 73

Although graces are occasionally introduced by skips, for the most part graces are used to fill in skips or to create a returning figure within a conjunct ascending or descending line.

The graces described above are primarily those that can be executed most easily on the lute, which may account for their appearance in contemporary lute tutors. It is very likely, however, that other, more complex graces would have been improvised by virtuoso performers to supplement them. 74

73Buetens, Method for the Renaissance Lute, p. 46.
Variations on popular ballad tunes and elaborate divisions in the dance music of the period testify to the English lutenists' mastery of a style of figural writing that goes far beyond the limits of the simple graces cited above. It seems probable that skilled players bridged the gap between simple graces and elaborate divisions with graces of intermediate complexity that utilize more than the one or two notes adjacent to the note being ornamented. Turn-like graces such as the whip are not far removed from Robinson's fall with a relish or Sancta Maria's redoble, and similar figures are common in sixteenth-century Italian works for other instruments.\textsuperscript{75} The elaborate graces of the style brisé described by Mersenne and Bace must certainly have had predecessors of intermediate complexity in the lute music of the opening years of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that a grace as simple to execute and yet as effective as the vibrato would not have been discovered and adopted by lutenists before Vallet described it in 1615. Henestrosa's description of it indicates that the vihuelists utilized the vibrato as early as 1557. Poulton suggests that the widely used double cross, \#, may have indicated vibrato and or the arpeggiation of chords in some cases.\textsuperscript{76}

In light of the new styles of ornamentation that developed in Italy and France during the early seventeenth century, it

\textsuperscript{75}Dolmetsch, \textit{The Interpretation of Music}, p. 225.

\textsuperscript{76}Poulton, "Graces of Play," p. 114.
would seem appropriate to adopt a less restrictive approach to ornamentation in Renaissance lute music composed during this period. Composers and performers in other countries of Europe and in England are bound to have been affected by the importation of foreign music and musicians that became so commonplace during the latter part of the sixteenth century. A progressive approach to ornamentation is even more important for the performance of early seventeenth-century works by French composers and their contemporaries writing in styles that reveal the influence of the French school of lutenists. The corantoes and voltes in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* fall into this category. Similarly, to a somewhat lesser extent, the four selections arranged for lute from Ben Jonson’s *Masque of Queens* (1609), which appear among the almaines in the print, also deserve a more liberal approach to the use of graces as an acknowledgement of the flamboyant theatrical style and French origin of the masque as a musical entertainment.

Divisions

In contrast to graces, which function to a certain extent as isolated, independent embellishing figures whose effect is restricted to their immediate musical context in a single voice of a composition, the embellishing figures that make up divisions depend upon each other for their effectiveness. Furthermore, division figures frequently alter the texture and balance of voices in whole sections of a composition by setting one voice off from the remaining parts. Unlike graces, which
only supplement the written notes, division figures may actually be used to replace notes or whole groups of notes, thereby creating passages that bear little resemblance to the original melodic material. However, the new notes are often integrated into the original material so skilfully that they cannot be detected except by comparison of the embellished and original versions of the same passage. This is due in part to the fact that all the notes of the division figures are executed in the normal manner of playing, which eliminates the variation in timbre associated with using the fingers of the left hand to play graces.

In the literature for the Renaissance lute, divisions are most commonly found in elaborately embellished intabulations of vocal works or in compositions based on dance rhythms and patterns. In the intabulations, the divisions not only embellish the vocal model, they also provide a means of adapting it to the idiomatic requirements of the lute and lute-playing technique. For example, notes in long rhythmic values that cannot be sustained on the lute are divided into runs and other patterns of shorter notes. These intabulations may or may not contain unembellished statements of the vocal model on which the divisions are based.

In compositions based on dance rhythms and patterns, on the other hand, the divisions take the form of varied reprises of the primary strains of the pieces. Each section of these compositions is usually varied only once, immediately after
its initial statement, but in some pieces there are several divisions on each strain, or the divisions are placed after all of the initial strains. The process of making divisions on a strain is similar to the variation technique used in Renaissance settings of popular melodies, except that division technique employs specific figures less systematically than variation technique. For example, whereas settings on popular melodies frequently employ a single rhythmic motive or melodic figure throughout an entire variation, divisions rarely contain more than three or four successive statements of the same figure. Furthermore, divisions are intended to contrast with the initial strains on which they are based rather than with each other, and therefore do not change character dramatically from one division to the next in the same piece. Finally, divisions generally involve fewer different ways of reshaping the original material within a single work than do variations, since one approach to the model usually dominates an entire set of divisions.

The authors of many European ornamentation manuals from the latter half of the sixteenth century discuss the techniques of composing divisions at length. These manuals often contain a series of tables of melodic formulas to be applied to sustained tones, repeated tones, ascending and descending intervals, and standard melodic figures such as scale fragments. Students were expected to practice these formulas until they could execute them fluently from memory, at which point the formulas were to be applied to any interval in a composition
that matched the interval encompassed by the ornament in the table, providing the fingering of the passage could be adjusted to accommodate the notes of the embellishment.

Some writers of ornamentation manuals stress the importance of considering the intervalllic relationships between the bass line and the notes of the division figure when choosing an ornament for a given passage, but in most cases a very liberal attitude toward dissonances and infringements of contrapuntal rules seems to have prevailed. Most writers suggest that "an occasional untoward dissonance or parallel fifth or octave was a price worth paying for a particularly brilliant effect."77

The simplest method of adding divisions to a composition involves breaking up the original note values into groups of shorter ones by introducing one or more notes between successive pitches of the original line. This approach preserves the pitch and metrical position of each original note, and relies primarily on rhythmic contrast for its effectiveness. More sophisticated approaches to division technique involve the metrical displacement or even omission of some of the notes of the original composition in order to accommodate longer and more complicated division figures. In the most sophisticated divisions, only the essential pitches of the original line are retained, and extended departures from the melodic contours of

77 Brown, Embellishing Sixteenth-Century Music, p. 23.
the model are common.

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to give a comprehensive history of the development of division technique, several general observations about trends in sixteenth-century practices will establish a point of reference for the subsequent discussion of divisions in lute music. The construction of division figures reflects the stylistic characteristics of the compositions to which they are added. Not surprisingly, most divisions in early and mid-sixteenth-century sources utilize melodic figures in which the rhythmic values do not change abruptly from long notes to very short notes. The flowing, even character of these figures allows them to blend into the contrapuntal fabric of the compositions they embellish with a minimum of disruption. On the other hand, most divisions in sources from the last quarter of the sixteenth century demonstrate an increased emphasis on speed and virtuosic display of manual dexterity that set off the division figures from the material they embellish.

The practitioners of the new style of the 1580s and 1590s... pile onto comparatively simple melodic lines excessively florid ornaments of awesome speed, while at the same time leaving more of the original notes unadorned than the earlier musicians did, so that the newer music is characterized by rapid changes of pace from slow to very fast indeed.78

In spite of the obvious complexity of many of these figures, there is evidence that the rhythms of the added notes were

78Ibid., p. 35.
treated rather freely. In his *Prattica di musica* (Venice, 1592), Lodovico Zacconi "concludes that it is better to learn diminutions by ear rather than by written example, since the correct rhythms ('misura et tempo') are impossible to transcribe correctly."\(^7^9\)

One aspect of division making that seems to have remained fairly consistent throughout the sixteenth century is the way in which repetition of melodic material in a composition is treated. Generally, new division figures are utilized whenever melodic material is reused in a piece, thereby disguising the repetition rather than calling attention to it through the use of the same embellishments for subsequent statements. According to Howard Mayer Brown,

\[\ldots\] This process of constant renewal of the decorations [was] the standard practice of the century. Apparently musicians took pleasure in obscuring the structural elements of a composition, rather than in making them as plain as possible.\(^8^0\)

This statement would seem to require some qualification in light of Zacconi's directions for applying divisions to the opening of imitative compositions. He states that the embellishing figures should not be introduced until after the second voice has entered because divisions are not as effective in accompanied lines as they are against a background of slower notes. Regardless of their merits in single-line passages,

---

\(^7^9\) Ibid., p. 25.

\(^8^0\) Ibid., p. 34.
division figures obscure the essential outline of the imitative subject, and make it more difficult to recognize in subsequent entrances. Prohibiting division figures from the initial statement of a subject insures that its identity is established as rapidly as possible, which in turn makes it easier to recognize and to appreciate the division figures that are added to subsequent statements. Thus, it appears that sixteenth-century musicians did not necessarily intend to disguise the structure of the compositions that they embellished with divisions, but rather that this masking occurred as a result of their desire to incorporate as many different division figures as possible within a single work. This evaluation of sixteenth-century practice is in line with Zacconi's instructions to use simple figures at the beginning of a composition and then to increase the complexity and frequency of the figures as the composition unfolds. The divisions in many sixteenth-century works do appear to be based on Zacconi's guidelines, but there are certainly exceptions in the literature.

Divisions can be found in lute music dating back to the first years of the sixteenth century, but there is very little information about division technique in lute tutors or published collections of lute music. Fortunately, in many cases, a great deal of information about division technique can be determined empirically by comparing divisions in lute music to an unembellished version of the same piece in another source or to a corresponding unembellished portion of the version for lute.
John Robison's recent study of the ornamentation in Sebastian Ochsenkun's *Tabulaturbuch auff die Lauten* (Heidelberg, 1558), which contains numerous lute arrangements of vocal works, provides a good analysis of mid sixteenth-century German division technique. According to Robison, Ochsenkun utilizes "a somewhat fragmented style of ornamentation, with each line being ornamented for only a short period, a characteristic that is commonly found in German Renaissance ornamentation." As would be expected, stepwise motion predominates, although there are occasional leaps of a third or a fifth. Significantly, many of Ochsenkun's figures demonstrate a progression from slower to faster rhythmic values, e.g.:

\[ \text{\ldots} - - - - - - - - - - - \]

This acceleration lends an agogic accent to the initial note of the figure and directs attention to the note following the figure. For this reason, ornaments are frequently located just in front of the most important high note in a phrase, while they are less common in static portions of melodic lines.

Ochsenkun frequently uses division figures to connect two notes that occupy strong metrical positions in the original composition, i.e., at the beginning or the middle of a measure. This approach coincides with the approach described by Silvestro di Ganassi in his *Opera intitula Fontegara* (Venice, 1535) even

---

81 John Robison, "Ornamentation in Sebastian Ochsenkun's *Tabulaturbuch auff die Lauten*," *Journal of the Lute Society of America* 15 (1982): 9. This article is the basis of all statements related to Ochsenkun's practice unless otherwise noted.
though neither author explicitly states that division figures should connect stressed notes. Similarly, approximately forty percent of the figures used by Ochsenkun appear in the *Tratado de glosas sobre clausulas* . . . (Rome, 1553) by Diego Ortiz. According to Robison,

This suggests either that Ochsenkun was familiar with Italian ornamentation practices or that those ornaments were commonly used by mid-sixteenth-century musicians regardless of nationality. 82

Ochsenkun's manner of distributing the individual figures differs from the Italian practice described by Zacconi at the end of the century in that the complexity of the figures does not increase as the composition unfolds and the subjects of imitative compositions are often decorated with figures that begin immediately after the initial note. Furthermore, in contrast to the fragmented approach to the distribution of division figures that Ochsenkun utilized, Italian musicians of the sixteenth century generally preferred to use more extended figures in a single voice at a time, thereby minimizing the number of shifts between voices.

The manner in which division figures are distributed among the different voices of compositions for the lute appears to be related to idiomatic aspects of lute technique as well. Because the lutenist's left hand approaches the fingerboard from the treble side, it is easier for him to execute divisions or other rapid passagework on the higher-pitched courses than on the

---

82 Ibid., p. 10.
bass courses. It is not surprising, therefore, that the highest voice of the compositions in Ochsenkun's collection contain approximately twice as many division figures as the inner voices. The bass voice, which is the most difficult to reach, contains the fewest ornaments. Similarly,

The amount of ornamentation used for . . . cadences seems to depend not on the strength or weakness of the cadence, but on how easily the ornament can be executed in relation to the other parts. 83

Ochsenkun uses cadential ornaments on the ascending voice of a cadential pattern much more frequently than on the descending voice.

Robison directs special attention to a group of division figures that begin in one voice and conclude in another voice. Although division figures of this kind are not as common as those that occur within a single voice, Ochsenkun uses them more frequently than the previous generation of German composers for the lute. 84 These figures demonstrate another idiomatic characteristic of lute divisions; namely, the compass of individual figures is not restricted to the range of a single voice of the composition.

Adrian Le Roy's instructions for the intabulation of vocal works provide further indirect information about mid-sixteenth-century division practice. In his A briefe and plaine Instruc-

---

83 Ibid., p. 13.

84 Ibid., p. 10.
the Lute, originally published by Le Roy and Ballard in Paris in 1570, he describes the procedure for transferring the voice parts of chansons to the lute, one part at a time. In this way, he builds up a four-part intabulation that follows the vocal model exactly except when fingering problems or the lower limit of the lute's range necessitate modifications. However, each completed intabulation is followed by an alternate version of the same piece that is profusely embellished with division figures. Le Roy's setting of the first chanson "more finely handled," as he refers to it, is introduced with the following passage:

To make this woorke in all poinctes parfite, and to shew you (as a man might saie) not onely the plaine and rude Grammer, but also further somewhat like the eloquence of Rhetorike, I have thought good in this place of the first Tune (to crowne as it were the worke withall) to add an example of the same song, adorned with running poinctes and passages, as wee will likewise doe in the example of every song, given for example: to the intente the scholer maie learme to decke other songes or daunces, with like flowers and ornameites: in whiche he shall be forced sometyme, for the better grace and pleasyng of the eare, to leave out some note of the accordre, of some one of the partes: not so much for all that for necessitie, as for the pleasautnesse of the sounde: yea and that with full recompence of the lacke of the note, which shalbee omitted, by the puttyng to of runnyng poinct or passage, wherein lieth all the cunnyng.85

Unfortunately, Le Roy does not discuss the kinds of division figures that should be added to a literal intabulation or give

any guidelines for their application. The following summary of Le Roy's approach to division technique is therefore based entirely on empirical evidence gathered by comparing the embellished versions of the chanson intabulations to the vocal models on which they are based. (See Figure 26).

In general, Le Roy seems to follow Ochsenkun's practice in regard to the distribution of division figures among the different voices of the composition, i.e., figures are not linked together in long chains in a single voice. Instead, figures of short or moderate length appear in different voices successively. In the twelve chansons presented in Le Roy's text, the maximum length of continuous embellishment in a single voice varies from two to eight tablature bars consisting of two minims each. However, the vast majority of embellishments within a single voice are less than two bars in length. On the other hand, if division figures in all the voice parts are considered aggregately, it is common for whole phrases of eight tablature bars to be embellished with only an occasional interruption.

Individual division figures vary considerably in complexity. The simplest figures introduce one to three new notes in patterns described in modern terms as auxiliary tones, passing tones, anticipations, escape tones, turns, and appoggiaturas. More complex connecting and cadential figures introduce five to twelve new notes (and in one exceptional case, fourteen new notes) between successive notes of the vocal model. The interval that is embellished may begin or end at strong metrical
Un doux nennin
Figure 26. "Un doux Nennin," by Orlando de Lassus, embellished and intabulated for lute by Adrian Le Roy, in A briefe and plaine Instruction to set all Musicke of eight diuers tunes in Tableture for the Lute, fols. 35v-37
positions within the bar or any intermediate position. In a number of cases, the divisions are integrated into a melodic line in such a way as to produce uniform rhythmic activity from one strong beat to the next, even though the division figure itself fills only part of the metrical unit; in other words, the division figure extends or anticipates the existing rhythmic pulse in order to complete a stressed-note-to-stressed-note unit.

Many of the simpler figures resemble portions of florid passages in the unembellished vocal models, but the more complex division figures depart notably from the stylistic parameters of the chansons, particularly in terms of increased rhythmic activity. For the most part, Le Roy's figures are characterized by stepwise motion with occasional leaps of a third or fourth. Rhythmic values generally change by only one level of division at a time. Exceptions to this rule include dotted notes followed by two notes of the second faster value and passages in which the embellishment shifts from one voice to another. In the latter case, the accelerated rhythmic activity is maintained even though individual voices contain interludes of longer note values that may be introduced by abrupt shifts from one value of note to another. In approximately forty-five per cent of the division figures, a rhythmic acceleration occurs, most often in the form of a long initial note followed by a series of notes in the next smaller value. Occasionally, a second reduction in note values occurs at the
end of the figure. Division figures with uniform rhythmic activity make up another forty-five per cent of the total, and figures with decelerating or mixed rhythmic values constitute the final ten per cent of Le Roy's embellishments.

The distribution and complexity of rhythmic figures in the twelve embellished versions of the chansons does not follow any consistent pattern. Cadences are frequently, but not invariably, ornamented and division figures usually occur in groups rather than as isolated additions to otherwise unembellished passages. On the other hand, groups of division figures are regularly interrupted by interludes of unembellished notes varying in length from one or two measures to several phrases. These unembellished passages occur in every chanson, but there is no consistent pattern to their distribution, nor is there a consistent pattern to the deployment of division figures within a section or within a phrase. In contrast to Ochsenkun's practice, Le Roy does not seem to make any attempt to emphasize the highest or lowest notes of a phrase. However, this may be due to the relatively static character and limited range of many of the vocal lines in the chansons.

Le Roy's treatment of imitative passages in the chansons differs from the practice recommended by Zaccooni. Division figures appear in the first statement of the subject and frequently embellish the initial interval of it. The figures in the subject are usually brief and rarely extend for its full length. The division figures do not always appear in every
entrance of the subject and they may be modified slightly to accommodate the entrance of successive voices. Within a given group of entrances, in nearly every case the same figure appears in all of the statements of the subject that are embellished. On the other hand, successive entrances of the same subject or a new subject at later points in the piece invariably receive new division figures.

Simple division figures are occasionally used sequentially within a single voice or imitatively in different voices when the construction of individual lines permits. More frequently, the rhythmic design of the division figure is retained but the pitch pattern is altered to fit the melodic contours of the sequence.

The distribution of the division figures in the voices of the chansons resembles the pattern seen in Ochsenkun's collection. Approximately fifty-one per cent of all the division figures occur in the soprano voice, thirteen per cent in the alto voice, and eleven per cent each in the tenor and bass voices. The remaining fourteen per cent of the figures begin in one voice and conclude in another. The figures that bridge two voices frequently embellish the intervals between a fourth and an octave inclusive, whereas most of the figures within a single voice embellish repeated notes or seconds and thirds. Ascending intervals are embellished approximately one and one-half times as frequently as descending intervals. Division figures occurring in cadential formulas account for slightly
more than a tenth of all figures, and they are frequently more complex than other figures in a given phrase. 86

The addition of division figures to the chanson model often results in the alteration of some of the unembellished notes that are carried over into the final product. Subdivisions of note values and the introduction of syncopations, rests, dotted rhythms, and suspensions are common. Selected tones in a chord or entire segments of a melodic line may be deleted to facilitate the playing of florid division figures. In a few instances, new pitches replace the original ones or additional pitches are inserted to clarify or change the harmonic progressions in cadences. Similarly, chords and short segments of counterpoint may be revoiced by shifting one or more notes up or down an octave to facilitate the execution of certain passages.

By the time Le Roy published his instructions for intabulating vocal works for the lute, intabulations were declining in popularity throughout Europe, in part due to the development of idiomatic instrumental styles of composition. There are very few intabulations of vocal works in English lute sources because the majority of the pieces in the repertoire date from

86 The distribution of division figures by intervals is as follows: repeated notes, 15%; ascending seconds, 30%; descending seconds, 21%; ascending thirds, 14%; descending thirds, 10%; ascending fourths, 2.5%; descending fourths, 1.5%; ascending fifths, 4%; descending fifths, 1%; all sixths and sevenths, .5%; and octaves, .5%. The distribution may be summarized according to the direction of the embellished interval as follows: ascending intervals, 51%; descending intervals, 34%; repeated notes, 15%.
the last quarter of the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth century. The divisions in the English sources reflect the influence of the emerging idiomatic lute style of composition rather than the polyphonic vocal style of the chansons that dominates Le Roy's divisions. The free treatment of voice leading, clear-cut phrasing, and sectional forms based on dance rhythms and patterns that characterize the English works for lute contrast sharply with the strict conduct of balanced lines, staggered phrasing marked by imitative entrances and overlapping cadences, and irregular or continuous forms characteristic of the chansons in Le Roy's collection. Le Roy's division figures are imposed on the homogeneous contrapuntal fabric of the chansons without any consistent pattern whereas English composers applied division figures to selections based on dance patterns in ways that amplify the inherent sectional structures of the dances. Typically, each strain of the dance is immediately followed by a set of divisions in the manner of a varied reprise or a variation. Even when the divisions do not immediately follow the strains on which they are based, the sectional divisions of the composition are clearly articulated.

The divisions found in English lute music also amplify the increasing vertical polarization occurring in instrumental part-writing at the end of the sixteenth century. Strict four-part writing frequently gives way to quasi-three-part writing in which the alto and tenor voices are combined to
provide a free accompaniment to the outer voices. This essentially three-part texture may be expanded to four or five parts at cadences to facilitate the voice leading when a specific arrangement of the final chord is needed. In addition, free tones and short melodic figures may be added to any part without an apparent contrapuntal purpose. Sydney Beck, who refers to the added notes as "notes of sonority" or "Notes of convenience," describes this practice as follows:

In the freer and more idiomatic 'broken' style of the lute, particularly in the varied repeats ... occasional bass notes or chords ... occur momentarily in the course of a running passage and ... like the isolated notes in the other parts, serve no other purpose than to add emphasis or increase the resonance. ... 87

In the more elaborate divisions, the voice leading is often treated so freely that it appears to disintegrate into a succession of chords and scale fragments that do not connect in any logical way.

Divisions may be grouped into three categories according to the relationship of the embellishing figuration to the original material. In some cases, division figures are added to the highest voice of the original passage and the lower voices are simplified considerably or remain unchanged. In other cases, the division figures are added to the lower voices and the upper voice is preserved intact. Finally, there are some divisions in which the embellishments appear in all of the voices, although

generally not simultaneously. This last pattern is more common than the other two in English lute music, but there are a significant number of examples of the first pattern. The second pattern occurs relatively infrequently.88

Due to the number of different composers represented and the assortment of different genres contained in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, it has not been feasible to make a statistical analysis of the construction and distribution of division figures in all of the pieces in the volume. However, a number of observations about English division practice can be made on the basis of a less formal study of selected pieces in the collection. These observations may be used as stylistic guidelines for modern performers who wish to add divisions to pieces lacking them or to supplement existing divisions with new ones.

The most complex and extensive division figures are found in the duple-meter pavans and almaines of the collection. Of the selections in triple meter, the galliards contain the most complex and extensive division figures, but these figures are less involved than those of the pavans because the faster tempo of the galliards makes it more difficult to execute the additional notes of the division figures. (See Table 12).

The corantoes and voltes contain noticeably simpler and less pervasive division figures than the other dance-derived

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Rhythmic units per measure</th>
<th>Rhythmic units utilized; Frequently</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Division of basic unit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fantasies*</td>
<td>4 minims ((\wedge))</td>
<td>quavers (16 (\text{(\frac{1}{16})}) / bar)</td>
<td>semiquavers** (32 (\text{(\frac{1}{32})}) / bar)</td>
<td>4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavins</td>
<td>4 minims*** ((\wedge))</td>
<td>semiquavers (32 (\text{(\frac{1}{32})}) / bar)</td>
<td>demisemiquavers (64 (\text{(\frac{1}{64})}) / bar)</td>
<td>8:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galliards</td>
<td>3 minims ((\wedge))</td>
<td>quavers (12 (\text{(\frac{1}{12})}) / bar)</td>
<td>semiquavers**** (24 (\text{(\frac{1}{24})}) / bar)</td>
<td>4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almaines</td>
<td>2 minims ((\wedge))</td>
<td>semiquavers (16 (\text{(\frac{1}{16})}) / bar)</td>
<td>demisemiquavers (32 (\text{(\frac{1}{32})}) / bar)</td>
<td>8:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corantoos</td>
<td>3 crotchets ((\wedge))</td>
<td>quavers (6 (\text{(\frac{1}{6})}) / bar)</td>
<td>semiquavers (12 (\text{(\frac{1}{12})}) / bar)</td>
<td>2:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voltes</td>
<td>3 crotchets ((\wedge))</td>
<td>quavers (6 (\text{(\frac{1}{6})}) / bar)</td>
<td>semiquavers (12 (\text{(\frac{1}{12})}) / bar)</td>
<td>2:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes: *As noted above, the embellishments in the fantasies are not divisions according to the strict definition of the term.

**There are a few demisemiquavers in the first and fifth fantasies.

***The third pavan contains two minims per tablature bar.

****The final cadence in the third galliard contains a few demisemiquavers.
genres in the collection. The fantasies, being derived from vocal models rather than dance patterns, do not contain any passages that would qualify as divisions according to a strict interpretation of the term, but they do contain some passages wherein florid counterpoint in one voice is accompanied by less active supporting voices. These passages, which suggest the style of writing characteristic of elaborate divisions, alternate with more homogeneous passages in much the same way that Le Roy incorporates division figures into his chanson intabulations.

In English lute music, division figures may be added to the unembellished strains in several ways. In many instances, short figures are inserted between two successive notes of one voice of the passage being embellished, as occurs most commonly in Le Roy's embellished chansons. These figures rarely contain more than three or four notes, and they do not alter the positions of the notes they embellish. Hence, they might well be described as connective figures. On a slightly broader scale, division figures of moderate length frequently connect two rhythmically stressed notes a semibreve or a minim apart. These embellishments, for which the term incremental figures seems appropriate, may incorporate some of the intermediate notes or replace them with entirely new sequences of notes. In some cases, the stressed notes may be shifted metrically to accommodate more extended division figures.

A third group of figures involves the combination of two
or more voices of the original composition into a single, wide-ranging, convoluted line that fills out the harmonic implications of the original passage at the expense of the original melodic contours. These pseudo-polyphonic figures utilize only those pitches of the original passage that can be conveniently linked together without regard for their durations. The polyphonic aspect of these figures is limited to brief arrivals on chord tones originally occurring in different voices, and little attempt is made to imply sustained part-writing. This kind of embellishment, for which the term structural figure seems appropriate, is common in the works by English lutenists, but it does not occur at all in Le Roy's chansons. Figures of this type begin in one voice and end in another fairly frequently.

Divisions are usually located immediately after the strain on which they are based in English lute music, but a number of other arrangements are also found in the literature. Twenty of the forty-two selections in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* contain a single division on each strain and in each case that division follows the original strain immediately, e.g., AA' BB' CC'. One selection contains a single division on each of its three strains, but the divisions occur consecutively after the third strain. Another piece contains multiple divisions on each strain with the divisions arranged in successive sets. This variation-like treatment is also used in two selections containing multiple divisions on each strain grouped in paired
sets. In two works, there are divisions on only one strain, the remaining strains being presented unembellished only. Sixteen of the selections in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* contain no divisions at all, the seven fantasies accounting for a significant portion of this group of pieces (See Table 13).

**Table 13**

Distribution of Divisions within Compositions in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Selections</th>
<th>Sectional Scheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Continuous*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A B**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A A' B B'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A A' B B' A^2 A^3 B^2 B^3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A A' B B' through A^8 A^9 B^8 B^9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A B C**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>A A' B B' C C'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A B C A' B' C'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A B C through A^3 B^3 C^3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A A' B C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A B B' C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** *The seven fantasies have no clear-cut formal designs marked by major caesuras and regular phrasing as do the majority of pieces based on dance forms.*

**These pieces have no divisions, but are divided into distinct sections by major cadences.*
In general, the distribution of strains and their divisions in these pieces reinforces the sectional designs derived from the dance forms on which they are based rather than disguising the structure of the compositions, as frequently occurs in imitative works. The complexity and pervasiveness of division figures is not significantly greater in any one strain of a given composition, although fingering requirements do sometimes limit the scope of the division figures that can be added to a particular passage.

Approximately one-third of the selections in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* consist of strains that contain equal numbers of measures. There is no apparent pattern to the irregularities found in the remaining selections. Although two strains of a selection usually differ in length by only a measure or two, in some cases the longer strain is fifty to one hundred per cent longer than the shorter strain. The strains of the pavans, galliards, and almaines are much more regular in length than those of the corantoes and voltes. Divisions, which are normally the same length as the strain on which they are based, may extend or, in one case, contract the original material by a measure or a fraction thereof.

---

89 See the fourth galliard and the third, fifth, and sixth corantoes for examples of extreme variations in the length of the strains within a single composition (See Figure 27).

90 See the sixth pavam, the second galliard, the third almaine, and the second, third, and seventh voltes for examples of extensions of the unembellished strain. See the fourth galliard for an example of a contraction of the original strain.
Figure 27. Coranto #3, by an anonymous composer, from the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, sig. C2r
The application of division figures generally begins on the first note of the original strain, but in some cases one or two unembellished notes precede their entry. This delay is often considerably greater in the corantoes and voltes. There are no pronounced concentrations of division figures or increases in their complexity in different portions of individual divisions. However, cadences are frequently emphasized with division figures that are particularly florid. In several works, the prolongation of the final chord of an unembellished strain consists of florid passagework that serves as a bridge between the unhurried material preceding it and the animated division that follows it.\footnote{See the first pavan, ms. 34; the fifth pavan, ms. 8 and 41; the seventh pavan, ms. 42; and the sixth galliard, ms. 8 for examples of this practice (See Figure 28).} Although embellishing figures are distributed nearly uniformly in the divisions, the accelerated rhythmic activity that characterizes them rarely extends for more than the duration of three semibreves before it is interrupted by notes in longer values.\footnote{According to Wayne Wentzel, a pavan by Daniel Bachelier contains seventy-eight consecutive thirty-second notes (i.e., semiquavers) which would nearly equal the duration of five semibreves. He also states that some pieces by Dowland have as many as sixty-four consecutive semiquavers which would equal four semibreves. Wentzel, "Lute Pavans and Galliards," p. 57.} These interrupting notes may be unembellished notes of the original strain or less animated division figures, and their durations are usually four times as long as the durations of the notes preceding them. In most cases, the longer notes occur in strong metrical
Figure 28. "Sir John Langton's Pavan," by John Dowland, from the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, sigs. Kv-K2v
positions and serve as goal notes for the preceding figures.

Individual division figures vary in length from the
duration of a crotchet to that of two semibreves. In the
voltes and corantoes, where division figures are less pervasive,
their durations are considerably shorter, and there are numerous
interludes of unembellished material. (See Figure 29).

Nearly three-fifths of the embellishing figures in those
works analyzed for this study occur in the soprano voice or in
a pseudo-polyphonic structural figure that acts as the soprano
voice. Slightly more than one-fifth of the division figures
begin in one voice and conclude in another. The also voice
contains approximately as many division figures as the tenor
and bass voices combined, i.e., one-tenth of the total number.\textsuperscript{93}

Compared to Le Roy's chanson intabulations, there is a slight
increase in the number of bridging figures (beginning in one
voice and ending in another) and figures in the soprano voice.
This may be due in part to the fact that the polyphonic fabric
of the composition is frequently reduced to three parts in the
divisions, and on some occasions elaborate figures are accompan-
ied by only a slow moving bass line. (See Figure 30).

An analysis of the intervals in the initial strains to

\textsuperscript{93}These statistics are based on an analysis of the first,
fourth, fifth, and sixth pavans in the \textit{Varietie of Lute-Lessons},
which were composed by the Landgrave of Hesse, Daniel Bachelier,
John Dowland, and Alfonso Ferrabosco respectively. The exact
proportions observed were: soprano, 57%; alto, 11%; tenor, 5.5%;
bass, 5%; bridging, 21.5%. Owing to the limited size of the
sample and the extremely flexible nature of the voice leading,
which admits of more than one interpretation of many figures, the
accuracy of the survey is less than ideal.
Here beginneth the Psalms: of which the first was made by the most magnificent and famous Prince Mauritius, Landgrave of Hessen, and from him sent to my Father, with this inscription following, and written with his GRACES own hand:

Mauritius Landgraveus Hessian usque in honorem Isaacus Deusland Anglorum Orphei.
Figure 30. Pavan # 1, by Maurice, Landgrave of Hesse, from the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, sigs. H2v-Ir
which the division figures are added reveals a number of differences between Le Roy's practice and the practices of the composers represented in the sample from the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*. While ascending intervals were embellished nearly one and one-half times as frequently as descending intervals in Le Roy's chansons, the selections from the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* contain nearly twice as many embellished descending intervals as ascending intervals. In addition, the percentage of embellished repeated notes in the English selections is less than half that found in the French works. The second remains the most frequently embellished interval, and it accounts for nearly sixty per cent of all the division figures. This may be due to the preponderance of stepwise motion in the works examined. However, in a study of many pavans and galliards by five English composers, Wentzel notes that

The most prevalent pavan motive is a four- or five-note ascending or descending scale passage...

The most common galliard motive is also a scalewise progression, but only four notes and always descending...

It is a particular favorite of Dowland, who uses it as often as the other four composers combined.\(^94\)

Embellished thirds constitute the second largest group of division figures. Intervals larger than a third are embellished slightly more frequently than in Le Roy's chanson intabulations, the most noticeable increases occurring in the number of sixths, sevenths, and octaves. However, there is a slight decrease in the number of ascending fifths that are embellished in the

---

Division figures rarely span intervals larger than a tenth with continuous ascending or descending stepwise motion. In most cases, long figures contain a mixture of conjunct motion and skips, and sequences of notes leading in one direction are balanced by returning sequences. skips of a third, fourth, fifth, or sixth are frequently incorporated into division figures in ways that clarify the harmonic implications of the passage in which they appear. These same skips are also found in arpeggiated chords that are included in divisions. Skips of a seventh, octave, or ninth are used to shift portions of extended figures from one octave to another in order to avoid limitations imposed by the range of the instrument or to facilitate the execution of a passage. Similarly, skips may be used to transfer the tone upon which a figure resolves to another voice to accommodate a specific voicing of the chord in which it occurs. Occasionally, a division figure introduces a new voice a third or sixth below the original line that is delayed one half the duration of the original note values. This staggered approach produces freely treated sequences of parallel thirds and sixths.

A number of brief patterns containing dissonant tones are

95The distribution of division figures by intervals is as follows: repeated notes, 6%; ascending seconds, 14%; descending seconds, 45.5%; ascending thirds, 7%; descending thirds, 9.5%; ascending fourths, 4%; descending fourths, 3%; ascending fifths, 2%; descending fifths, 1.5%; all sixths and sevenths, 5.5%; and octaves, 2%. 
used as simple embellishments or as constituent parts of more extended figures. Passing tones, which also occur frequently in the original strains, are the most common of these, but they are restricted almost entirely to weak metrical positions in the measure. The same limitation applies to auxiliary tones, which are also common. The descending passing tone and the lower auxiliary tone appear more frequently than their counterparts. Dissonant note may be approached by leap and resolved by step in the manner of an appoggiatura, or they may be approached by step and resolved by leap in the manner of an escape tone. The manner in which these two constructions are used differs from seventeenth-century practice in that the dissonant notes occur on weak metrical positions. Similarly, the use of successive upper and lower auxiliary tones between repeated notes resembles the pattern of changing tones except for the metrical position of the figure. The least commonly found constructions are the cambiata and the dissonant anticipation. Suspensions are frequently used in division figures that embellish cadences and in passages involving the alternation of division figures in two or more voices. The preparation and resolution of the dissonance are abbreviated or irregular in many cases. The suspended tone may be dissonant with some or all of the preceding tones, and delayed, indirect, and upward resolutions are not uncommon. Suspension-like figures occur on all the principal beats of the measure and occasionally on the stronger subdivisions of the beat in florid passages. The
traditional 4 - 3 and 7 - 6 suspensions occur in over half of the pieces in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* and the 2 - 3 suspension occurs in just under one-quarter of the selections. Less traditional suspensions such as the 9 - 8 and 7 - 8 suspensions are also found occasionally.

The complexity of cadential embellishments depends upon a number of factors including: the sequence of chords involved, the number and arrangement of voices in these chords, the position of the cadence in the selection, and the personal preferences of the composer.\textsuperscript{96} In the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, the simplest figures are generally found in the corantoes and voltes, in which two and three-part writing prevails. The selections in the other genres are more likely to utilize three and four-part writing with more elaborate cadential figures (See Figure 31). According to Howard Mayer Brown,

\begin{quote}
... *passaggi* [i.e., division figures] may be added to cadences, even when no other embellishment seems warranted, although no sixteenth-century evidence quite suggests that all cadences ought to be decorated as many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers say.\textsuperscript{97}
\end{quote}

The term *propo* refers to the cadential trill on the subsemitone that usually begins on the note of resolution, i.e., the upper auxiliary tone to the note being embellished. However, the lower tone can be held for a time before the trill actually

\textsuperscript{96}Wentzel states that certain cadential figures are used so consistently by individual composers that they can be considered stylistic trademarks of these composers. Wentzel, "Lute Pavans and Galliards," p. 72.

Pavan 4  Composed by the right perfet Musitian Daniell Bachelar: one of the Groomes of her Mosteties Prince Chamber.
Figure 31. Pavan # 4, by Daniel Bacherer, from the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, sigs. I2v-Kr
begins, thereby suggesting a tremolo instead, i.e., a trill beginning and ending on the main note. Many of the cadential trills in Renaissance lute music are introduced by or terminate in elaborate melodic formulas that get progressively faster as the final chord is approached. Brown states that, "even in the sixteenth-century, cadential trills may often have been genuinely unmeasured." The most complex cadential figures in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons progress from semiquavers to demisemiquavers, but the majority of figures contain only quavers, semiquavers, and longer values. In a few instances, the tablature indicates more notes in a cadential measure than that measure should contain. These measures appear to represent printing errors rather than unmeasured trills.

Trills account for only a portion of most cadential division figures and they may not be used in some figures at all. The penultimate chord and/or the final chord may be extensively embellished with scale fragments, skips, arpeggios, turns, changing tones, and innumerable other figures that prolong the appropriate harmonies. In many cases, the figuration for the initial chord may not be in the same voice as the figuration for the final chord. Although extensive embellishment appears in only one voice at a time, the other voices frequently

98 Ibid., p. 8.
99 Ibid.
100 See the fifth pavan, mss. 9, 13, and 47, and the sixth pavan, ms. 39 for examples of this practice (See Figure 32).
Pavin 6  Composed by the most Artificiall and famous Alfonso Ferrabosco of Bologna.
Figure 32. Pavan # 6, by Alfonso Ferrabosco of Bologna, from the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, sigs. K2v-Lr
contain suspensions and other contrapuntal figures in longer note values. The simultaneous use of more than one embellishing pattern on the penultimate chord, one or both of which involves the suspended tonic and the subsemitone (or any note of resolution and its lower auxiliary), can produce striking passing dissonances as a result of the voice-leading requirements of the individual parts. These dissonances are acceptable because of their brief durations and the percussive nature of the lute's sound which dies away rapidly after a note is struck. The prolongation of the final chord, which may last for the duration of two semibreves at major cadences, is usually constructed so as to avoid stressing tones that are dissonant with the prevailing harmony. This prolongation usually consists of arpeggios and scale fragments arranged with the tones of the final chord in strong metrical positions. If the final chord is arpeggiated from bass to treble, a suspension often occurs in an upper voice. On the other hand, if the chord is arpeggiated from treble to bass, which occurs most frequently in the corantoes and voltes, a suspension in the bass voice or a passing second inversion chord is likely to result (See Figure 33).

The seven compositions in each genre represented in the _Varietie of Lute-Lessons_ demonstrate a surprising consistency of approach to the construction and distribution of division figures. On the other hand, the selections in different genres reveal variations in approach that depend primarily on compositional factors such as sectional organization,
Figure 33. Volt # 4, by [? Gaultier],
from the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, sig. Sv
tempo, meter, texture, and voice leading. Generally, the more distinctly articulated the sections of a composition are, the more likely it is to contain substantial divisions. Furthermore, pieces exhibiting regular, balanced phrase construction almost always contain divisions, whereas irregularly constructed pieces are much less likely to contain them. Selections in quick tempi are much less extensively embellished than pieces in slow tempi due to the difficulty of executing the additional notes of the division figures. Similarly, pieces in duple or quadruple meter contain more complex division figures than pieces in triple meter. Surprisingly, pieces utilizing thicker textures generally contain more extensive division figures than pieces in thinner textures. However, the divisions within a given composition frequently involve thinner textures than the strains on which they are based since voices are often omitted or combined in the process of adding the division figures to the original material. Similarly, divisions are more common in pieces exhibiting regularly maintained voice-leading in the primary strains than in pieces exhibiting unpredictable and erratic voice-leading.

The distinctions are most clearly seen by comparing the use of divisions in the corantoes and voltes to their use in the pavans, galliards, and almaines. The corantoes and voltes differ substantially from the other genres in the treatment of sectional organization, textures, voice-leading, and harmonic rhythm. The irregular phrase groupings, disjointed
melodies, and literal repetition found in a number of these works contrast sharply with the regular, balanced phrasing, tuneful melodies, and wealth of new ideas found in many of the pavans, galliards, and almaines. The contrast between the two groups of selections outweighs all the personal idiosyncracies of different composers' styles, and all other nationalistic and regional preferences. For example, although the first, fifth, and sixth pavans were composed by a German, the Landgrave of Hesse; an Englishman, John Dowland; and an Italian, Alfonso Ferrabosco of Bologna; respectively, the differences among these three works are less pronounced than the differences between any one of the pavans and the French-inspired pieces. During the second half of the sixteenth century, the traditional Italian approach to embellishment, with its preference for extended division figures in a single line, and the traditional German approach, with its preference for shorter figures distributed among several lines, seem to have been largely replaced by a common approach that is represented by the pavans, galliards, and almaines in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons.

Interpretative Performance Practices

Contrasting Dynamics

Renaissance lute tutors contain very few references to performance practices that are not directly indicated in the tablature itself. For example, contrasting dynamics are only
mentioned in two Renaissance sources, the Capirola lute book, and Thomas Robinson’s *The Schoole of Musicke*. The brief instruction "toccia pian piano" (play very softly or gently) in the piece "Non ti spiaqua l’ascoltar" appears in the Capirola lute book,¹⁰¹ but there is no discussion of the role of dynamics in performance. Robinson considers dynamic contrasts to be a kind of grace, and he refers to their use as passionate play.

Passionate play is to runne some part of the squares [i.e., measures] in a *Treble* (that is foure and foure) first loud, then soft, and so in a decorum, now louder, now softer, (not in extremitie of either) but as companie of other instruments, or farnesse off giueth occasion.¹⁰²

Even though Robinson refers to single-line passages here, it is clear that dynamic contrasts may be utilized in playing chords also, because he later instructs the student to play full stops "sometimes loud, sometimes soft."¹⁰³ Robinson recognizes the need to consider the performing environment in determining the appropriate dynamic levels for a performance, but he does not specifically relate dynamic levels to the character, tempo or structure of a piece. Neither does he suggest any special right-hand techniques, such as the apoyando stroke used by vihuelists and guitarists, for emphasizing one or more voices of a passage.

Although none of the works by Le Roy, Waissel, Barley, Besard, or Dowland mentions dynamic levels at all, lute sources

---


¹⁰³ Ibid.
from the seventeenth century often contain extended discussions of them. Alessandro Piccinini comments extensively on the use of dynamic contrasts in his *Intavolatura di Liuto*.

Of the many attributes distinctive to the lute, the possibility of playing soft and loud is the best, and has a very beautiful effect (*cosa molto affettuosa*). The use of it depends on the effect desired: When a composition is happy, you must play loudly but not cruelly or harshly; you must play loudly, especially in fantasies and canzonas, the string that has the subject or imitation, but keep the accompaniment soft so as not to smother the subject; you must play softly when there is chromaticism, melancholy, slow meter, or dissonance (durezze), but always in such a way that the tone is sweet and not dampened or muted... Where the music is dissonant, you can play as they do in Naples: When thy play a dissonance, they repeat it now soft, now loud; and the more dissonant it is, the more often they repeat it.104

Piccinini's lute technique owes more to the early Baroque style of playing than it does to the Renaissance idiom, particularly with regard to the use of apoyando stroke to emphasize the subject of imitative compositions.

Seventeenth-century French lutenists also considered dynamic contrasts to be an essential element of expressive performing. Mary Burwell's teacher compares them to rhetorical devices used by orators to hold their listeners' attention.

For as the lute is a kind of language you must imitate the orators, who now raise their voice and then abate it; now they get asleep the hearer, and now they awaken him; now they charm him and now they amaze him, and with the same organ do express two sorts of sounds. Likewise, in playing of the lute, in some places you must strike hard and in others so gently that one may hardly hear you. That variety is pleasing and produces attention of the

---

hearer. It belongs only to the lute to touch so the same instrument, that, if one did not see you, he would think that you played upon two several lutes.105

Among the graces that Thomas Mace describes in Musick's Monument

... is to Play some part of the Lesson Loud, and some part Soft; which gives much more Grace, and Lustre to Play, than any other Grace, whatsoever: Therefore I commend It, as a Principal, and Chief-Ornamental-Grace (in its Proper Place).]106

Contrasting Timbres

When playing a stringed instrument, the timbre of the sound produced varies according to the position of the bow or finger that strikes the strings. The contact between the striking medium and the strings sets up vibrational nodes in the strings that determine the relative amplitudes of the individual harmonics that are generated along with the fundamental tone, thereby influencing the timbre of the tone. If the string is struck near its centerpoint, the lower members of the harmonic series are enhanced, and a full, mellow tone results. On the other hand, if the string is struck near one end, e.g., close to the bridge, the higher overtones are enhanced and a brighter timbre results.

Although it is clear that Baroque lutenists shifted the right hand to different positions between the rosette and the

---


106Mace, Musick's Monument, p. 109.
bridge to obtain different timbres, Renaissance lutenists apparently did not do so, preferring instead to keep the little finger of the right hand anchored on the belly of the lute to steady the hand. It is unlikely that the hand could have been shifted significantly without moving the little finger. It was not until the number of bass courses on the lute increased to the point that the thumb could no longer reach the lower courses unless the little finger came away from the belly of the instrument that there was sufficient freedom of movement in the use of the right hand to permit the use of contrasting timbres in close juxtaposition. This fact does not rule out the possibility of contrasting timbres being utilized for different sections of a work or for different works, but there is no evidence that this practice was employed during the sixteenth century.

Piccinini's book contains the earliest known description of the use of different timbres in lute music.

The lute and also the chitarrone sound sweeter when played halfway between rose and bridge, and the right hand should be held there... .

... Sometimes I do the arpeggio near the bridge with the tip of the nail, while the thumb plays the cantus firmus, thereby achieving a silvery [metallic] tone... .107

The use of fingernails to sound the strings, another Baroque practice, would also increase the brightness of the tone.

Marin Mersenne recognized the way in which overtones determine the timbre of a sound and the role played by the striking fingers in determining the overtone series of a given note. He states that strings

... make other sounds than those which are heard ordinarily, and which are called natural, since the finger that touches them fills the function of a bridge, so that there is heard a false sound which follows the length of the string taken from the bridge or nut to the finger that touches it. For example, if the string is touched at one foot from the bridge, and the string is four feet long, the part which lies between the bridge and the finger will make the fifteenth, and the part which lies between the finger and the nut will make the fourth against the whole string...

There can still be considered the difference of the tones of each string, according to the different places where they are touched, for aside from the fact that they make a softer sound when they are struck at a distance from the bridge and a harder tone as they are struck closer to it, it seems that they have a little sharper sound when they are played vigorously, although it is almost impossible to tell the difference. 108

Thomas Mace does not mention contrasting timbres in Musick's Monument, but this may be because he advocates a fixed position for the little finger, on or behind the bridge. 109

Articulations

Contrasting articulations may be introduced in lute music with specific left- and right-hand techniques. The manner in which notes are fingered for the left hand significantly affects the degree to which they can be connected. If a finger must be removed from a sounding note in order to shift the finger to a

109 Mace, Musick's Monument, p. 72.
new position for the next note, there will be a temporary
break in the sound between the two notes. Hence, if a legato
connection is desired, successive notes should be played with
different fingers of the left hand, a barred chord, a shift
along the same string with the same finger, or any fingering
sequence that avoids the necessity of hopping from one string
to another with the same finger.

Renaissance lutenists appear to have been inconsistent in
their approaches to the connection of successive tones. In
some sources, oblique lines are used to indicate sustained
bass or treble notes in the tablature. However, the emphasis
placed on the importance of sustaining the tones thus marked
contrasts with the apparent disregard for the interruptions
introduced by unnecessary shifts of left hand fingers in the
same passages. In the few sources that contain fingerings
for the left hand,

Melodies are freely divided among strings in an effort
to confine them to one position rather than one string.
The voice leading of chords frequently shows a disregard
for smooth transitions [@and] often a break in the sound
is unavoidable when the harmony changes. Such cases are
a clear indication that the modern ideal of legato play-
ing was absent from (or at least not always essential to)
the Renaissance lute style.110

Thomas Robinson provides left-hand fingerings for several
selections in The Schoole of Musicke and for several examples
in the instructional material. According to Susan Sandman,
Robinson’s fingerings carry this implied disregard for legato

---

connection of successive tones one step further.

[They] show a deliberate use of detached articulations—particularly at cadences and to highlight melodic figures—and, also, the use of small breaks between some notes of the phrase to articulate the line into time or rhythm groups...

Although Sandman states that "Robinson seems to have gone to considerable trouble in fingerings [sic] passages to allow for consistent articulation patterns for the component figures in a melodic sequence," this does not always seem to have been the case. For example, in Robinson's "A Plaine Song for two Lutes," the same melodic material appears in both lute parts with different left-hand fingering patterns. Like most lutenists, Robinson does not take advantage of potential left-hand fingerings that would minimize the number and distance of shifts required to execute a passage, nor does he attempt to avoid the minor changes in timbre that result when an open string occurs in the middle of a passage of stopped notes.

Although it is possible that left-hand fingerings were sometimes designed to articulate note groupings as Sandman claims, the limited evidence available suggests that Renaissance lutenists were not concerned with short breaks in the sound caused by shifting fingers for successive notes. The convenience of standardized fingering patterns to be used with specific chords


112 Ibid., p. 31.
and contrapuntal sequences seems to have outweighed lutenists' concern for the connection or grouping of successive notes.

Contemporary evidence in treatises on other instruments indicates that

Apparently, then, sixteenth-century instrumental music was usually performed entirely in a detached manner, with one bow- or tongue-stroke per note. The speed of improvised ornamentation, though, prompted players to enlarge their technique to include slurred groupings, a device, we may imagine, that was soon adopted for reasons of musical variety as well as physical necessity.\(^{113}\)

Thus the hammering and pulling actions utilized to play graces on the lute were eventually incorporated into the playing of rapid passages that were written out in full in the tablature. The use of slurred note groups is generally associated with the style of writing for the lute that developed in France during the early years of the seventeenth century. This practice was probably introduced in England around 1617 by French lutenists, such as Jacques Gaultier, who came to England at that time.

There is no evidence to suggest that this 'grace' was known or liked in England before that date, or indeed that it was ever associated with music in the classical tradition and tuning.\(^{114}\)

The left-hand technique required to execute the grace that Mace calls a crackle, in which the stopping fingers are relaxed after the notes are struck (thus deadening the sound), has no

\(^{113}\text{Brown, Embellishing Sixteenth-Century Music, p. 70.}\)

counterpart in Renaissance lute technique.

Thomas Robinson stresses the importance of coordinating the actions of the fingers of the left and right hands to produce a clean attack.

... For what auaileth it to stop neuer so neate, fine and cleane, and if it be flubberd with a bad touch, or stroke... Note, that you strike cleane, plump together in a full stroke of many parts or strings, sometimes loude, sometimes soft, letting your right hand, answere the left hand at the instant, striuing with no stroke: and to conclude, the touch of the one hand, to answere the stop of the other hand, in the full harmony of consent... 115

This passage, and the absence of statements to the contrary, suggest that chords were not arpeggiated at this time. In the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, Besard states that the right hand must be held steadily so that only the fingers and thumb appear to move, but he does not mention arpeggiation at all. Significantly, the revised version of Besard's treatise that appeared in his *Novus Partus* in 1617 does mention the practice of arpeggiating chords by dragging the first finger across the appropriate strings. Arpeggiation became such an essential element of the seventeenth-century French style of lute playing that the term *style brisé* was applied to it. In many cases, chords were arpeggiated or the bass note note sounded before the upper voices even when written as block chords in the tablature. Mary Burwell's instructor states that the bass note is played by the thumb first, and then the remaining voices are arpeggiated by sliding the first finger across the strings

from the treble courses toward the bass courses. The treble note is then repeated with the middle finger.\textsuperscript{116}

None of the Renaissance lute sources mentions the use of the right hand to produce non-legato articulations. The staccato or \textit{étouffé} articulations that are implied by the grace that Mace calls a tut, have no counterparts in the graces mentioned in Renaissance sources. However, John Ward suggests that certain patterns of rhythmic signs in the version of \textit{My Lady Hunsdons Allmande} by John Dowland that appears in the Dowland lute book indicate a non-legato articulation of three successive chords. (See Figure 34).

A comparison of bar 12 . . . with its varied reprise in bar 14 . . . makes it immediately apparent that the intabulator was indicating, first detached play, then "close or covert play," a variation in execution to accompany the variation in the notes.\textsuperscript{117}

Furthermore, many sources contain versions of works in which dotted rhythmic patterns replace equal divisions of the beat found in other sources of the same composition. Ward suggests that, "Perhaps it was common practice to play certain notes dotted (= \textit{notes inégales}) whether the dotting was notated . . . or not . . ."\textsuperscript{118} Although this practice is generally associated with French Baroque music, there is clear evidence that it was utilized during the sixteenth century as well. Tomás de Sancta Maria describes three different ways of altering the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{116} Dart, "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 29.
\textsuperscript{117} Ward, "A Dowland Miscellany," p. 45.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., pp. 41-42.
\end{flushleft}
Figure 34. "My Lady Hunsdons Allmande," by John Dowland, from the Dowland Lute Book, Folger Library: MS V.b. 280 (formerly MS 1610.1), fol. 22v
written rhythms.

Note that it is required that crotchetts be played in one manner, but that quavers may be played in three different manners. In playing crotchetts you must pause a little on the first, and hurry on the second, and in the same way pause on the third and hurry on the fourth. All the crotchetts are treated in this way, as if the first were dotted and the second were a quaver, and similarly, as if the third were dotted and the fourth were a quaver. And in this manner all the crotchetts are to be played. And take notice that the crotchet that is hurried is not run too fast, but with moderation... .

Of the three ways in which quavers are to be played, the first two are somewhat similar in that they consist of a quaver that is paused on and one that is hurried.119 The first manner of playing quavers corresponds to the manner of playing crotchetts just described.

This manner serves for those works which are all counterpoints and for passages of long or short glozas. The second manner is to hurry the first quaver and to pause on the second, and in the same way to hurry the third and pause on the fourth, all being treated as if the first quaver were a semiquaver and the second one were dotted, and the third were a [semi]quaver and the fourth dotted... . In this manner the quavers that have the dot are not played with a blow, but are struck gently.

This manner serves for short glozas which occur in works such as fantasias. Note, too, that it is much more gallant than the manner described above.

The third manner consists in hurrying three quavers and pausing on the fourth, and then hurrying another three and again pausing on the fourth, but you must take note that the pause must take up the necessary time so that the fifth quaver will be struck on the exact beat in the middle of the bar, in this way all must be played. These, then, that go in four and four, are played as if the first three quavers were semiquavers and the fourth were dotted. The third manner is the most gallant of all, and serves for long and short glozas.120

119 Tomás de Sancta María, Libro llamado Arte de tener Fantasia así para Tecla como para Vihuela, y Todo Instrumento (Valladolid, 1565), translated by Poulton, in "How to Play with Good Style," p. 24.

120 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
Almost one hundred years later, Mary Burwell's instructor described a method of altering the written rhythms by

... breaking the strokes; that is, dividing of them by stealing half a note from one note and bestowing of it upon the next note. That will make the playing of the lute more airy and skipping. 121

Unfortunately, there is no direct mention of the use of notes inégales in the English lute tutors of the intervening period.

Tempo

Renaissance lute tutors provide little written information about the tempi appropriate for individual selections or kinds of selections. The available evidence does suggest that a consistent tempo was maintained throughout a piece. Robinson advises students to

First see what manner of lesson it is, whether it bee a set Song, Innomine, Pauen, Galliard, Almaine, Gigue, La-volta, Coranta, Country dance, or Toy, whatsoever, according to the nature of the lesson, to give it his grace with grauitie or quicknes. Secondly by looking it ouer, you shall see the fastest time in all the lesson contained, that accordingly you may so begin as you may goe through without check. 122

Besard indicates that the proper tempo for a piece must allow for the clear and accurate execution of the notes.

Wherfore take no other care but onely to strike all the Griffes and Notes that are in the middle betwixt them well and plainely, though slowly: for within a while, whether you will or no, you will get a habit of swiftnesse. Neither can you get that cleere expressing of Notes, vnlesse you do vse your selve to that in the

121 Quote by Dart, in "Miss Mary Burwell's Instruction Book," p. 46.

beginning: which cleane delivery every man that favours Musicke, doth farre preferre before all the swiftnesse and unreasonable noyse that can be.123

This emphasis on clarity at the expense of speed is particularly important in light of the technical demands imposed by graces and extended divisions. Non-lutenist authors of ornamentation manuals state clearly that the tempo should be strictly maintained even when elaborate embellishments are added to the music.124

The concept of measuring time according to the tactus is essential to an understanding of tempo in Renaissance music since lute tablature contains no descriptive words or phrases to denote the tempo of each composition. The tactus corresponds to a basic pulse "directing the equalitie of the measure: Or it is a certaine motion, made by the hand of the chiefe singer, according to the nature of the marks, which directs a Song according to Measure."125 Unlike the beat in modern music, the tactus was considered to be invariable, as can be seen from Hans Newsidler's description of the duration of note values in terms of commonly known extra-musical phenomena.


124 Brown, Embellishing Sixteenth-Century Music, pp. 67-68.

... Mensuration is the highest and greatest art in the playing of the lute and of all instruments. Where it is not kept exactly, all learning is for naught. Simply stated, mensuration signifies that everything gets its proper measure, neither too much nor too little, neither too long nor too short. That is the meaning of the hooks and lines [i.e., rhythm signs].

You will have to submit to learning and to maintaining the mensuration. A long line like this | means that you must stop [the note(s)] for the same length of time as the clock or bell strikes in the church steeple, or for as long as one counts money leisurely, saying 1 - 2 - 3 - 4. This long line is called a beat [schlag].

One hundred years later, Mersenne defined the duration of the beat with even greater precision.

... The white notes with tail show that it is necessary to make the sound of the letter last the time of half a measure, which ordinarily lasts a 7200th part of an hour, or a 120th part of a minute, that is to say, during the diastole of the heart.

Although the duration of the tactus was invariable, the tempo of individual compositions varied according to the number of notes of a given value that were executed during each unit of the tactus marked off by the hand motions. The duration of the semibreve was normally equal to one tactus, but the semibreve could be related to the next larger value, the breve, and the next smaller value, the minim, by factors of two or three, thereby providing a number of combinations affecting the grouping and speed of notes within the unit of


time marked off by the tactus. The relationships between the breve and the semibreve (tempus), and the semibreve and the minim (prolation) were notated by a series of mensuration signs that indicated the metrical configuration of the notes within the tactus. The most common patterns were indicated by the following signs:

- Tempus perfectum, Prolatio major - 9/8 meter
  breve = three semibreves
  semibreve = three minims

- Tempus perfectum, Prolatio minor - 3/4 meter
  breve = three semibreves
  semibreve = two minims

- Tempus imperfectum, Prolatio major - 6/8 meter
  breve = two semibreves
  semibreve = three minims

- Tempus imperfectum, Prolatio minor - 2/4 meter
  breve = two semibreves
  semibreve = two minims

Notes shorter than a minim were always related to each other by a factor of two, i.e., being in imperfect relation to each other.

These four mensurations provide for only two tempi in their basic forms, i.e., either two or three minims per tactus when the semibreve is equal to the tactus. However, a number of other combinations can be created by augmenting or diminishing the basic note values. Augmentation is accomplished by shifting the reference for the tactus from the semibreve to the minim, and is known as tactus alla minima. This results in a tempo that is one-third or one-half as fast as the original tempo depending upon the prolation.
On the other hand, diminution involves shifting the reference for the tactus to the breve, i.e., *tactus alla breve*. This produces tempi that are faster than the original tempi of the normal mensurations by a factor of two or three depending on the tempus.

Diminution is often indicated in the score by a vertical slash through the mensuration sign. Augmentation and diminution may also be indicated by the addition of proportional numbers to the mensuration signs. These are commonly given as fractions unless the denominator is one, in which case an integer is frequently used instead. According to Thomas Morley,

\[ \ldots \text{in all [the signs of the]} \text{ Proportions, the upper number signifieth the semibreve and the lower number the stroke [i.e., the tactus], so that as the upper number is to the lower so is the semibreve to the stroke.} \]

Augmentation was indicated by fractions whose values were less than one whereas diminution was indicated by fractions whose values were greater than one. These proportional numbers were often supplemented by other notational devices. As noted above, the vertical slash through a sign indicated diminution by a factor of two. If two slashes were applied to a sign in the form of a cross, e.g., \( \times \), the notes are diminished to one-quarter of their normal value. Alternately, the image of

---

the sign may be reversed to indicate diminution by a factor of two, e.g., δ. Morley uses the term *retorted* to refer to signs that have been set backwards on the page. He notes that only signs indicating imperfect tempus can be set in this manner because the complete circle, indicating perfect tempus, cannot be reversed.\(^{129}\) When proportional numbers are used in combination with these devices, an extensive range of metrical configurations and tempi can be created. Contemporary theorists often summarized the most common options in tables such as the one by Morley given below.\(^{130}\) (See also Figure 35).

![Table showing the value of notes according to the value of the mood or sign.]

The term *Mood*, which appears in Morley's caption, denotes the relationship between the breve and the long, and is of greater significance as a theoretical concept than as a practical device in that the extended values of the long could only be

---


**A Rule for Tatā.**

A *semibreve* in all signs (excepting the Signes of Diminution, augmentation, and proportions) is measured by a whole Tatā, as in the example following appeareth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table of Tatā rejoined.

For in this Signe $\Phi$, the Notes keepeth the same value, which they have in this O, but the measure only, is to be measured by the Binarie number, thus:

**A Table for the Tatā of Diminution.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For in $\Phi$, to one stroke.

---

Figure 35. Two tables by Andreas Ornithoparchus showing the relative values of each kind of note according to a variety of mensurations and proportions, from *Andreas Ornithoparcus His Micrologus, or Introduction: Containing the Art of Singing* by John Dowland, sigs. Cv and Pv.
realized in music for the organ or other instruments not limited by the restrictions imposed by bowing and breathing requirements.

The use of mensuration signs and proportional numbers in lute music differs from their application in music for other instruments or vocal music in that

... Each note (or rest) is equal to two, and only two, notes (or rests) of the next smaller value. This is another progressive feature of keyboard and lute notation in contrast to contemporary mensural notation, in which a note was equal to two or three notes of the lower grade, according to the mensuration... .131

Since note values are always related by a factor of two in lute music, the proportional mensuration signs serve only to indicate the tempo of the music and the metrical grouping of the notes in relation to the tactus.

During the sixteenth century, the relationship of each note type to the tactus underwent an inflationary shift. Whereas the tactus alla semibreve originally indicated a range of moderate tempi and the tactus alla breve served for rapid tempi, gradually, the tactus alla breve came to denote moderate tempi. The mensuration signs C and Æ became interchangeable in many cases and were omitted altogether in some compositions for the lute since the note values in these pieces were always related by a factor of two. In triple meters, the number 3 could indicate either simple proportio

tripla or compound proportio sesquialtera, which would formerly have been indicated by the fraction $3/2$.\textsuperscript{132} This revaluation of the mensuration signs is indicative of the evolution of the modern concept of relative note values that do not require a fixed reference such as the tactus.

Le Roy's instructions for the intabulation of vocal works provide evidence of the freedom with which mensuration signs were treated during the last half of the sixteenth century. In his setting of one chanson, Le Roy replaces the note values used in the mensural notation for the vocal model with proportionally reduced values in the lute tablature to avoid the necessity of dividing notes longer than a semibreve (which the lute cannot sustain) into shorter values. In spite of this modification, the tempo of the piece remains unchanged.

... I have marked the Semibreves into Minims, which for all that, shall goe no faster nor slower, then if thei were Semibreves, beyng no difference nor perfection, more in the one, then in the other.\textsuperscript{133}

Similarly, in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, the sign $\Phi$ is used in all of the pieces with two or four minims per tablature bar. The proportional sign $3$ predominates in pieces with three minims or crotchets per tablature bar, but several other signs also occur. The galliards, with three minims per bar, use the signs $3$, $3/2$, $\zeta$, $\Theta$, and $\Phi$. The corantoes


\textsuperscript{133}Le Roy, Les Instructions Pour le Luth (1574), p. 39.
and voltes, which have three crotchets per measure, use the signs $\phi$ and $\gamma$ in addition to the $\frac{3}{2}$. "The Witches Dance" contains numerous shifts among the proportions indicated by the signs $\frac{3}{2}$, $\gamma$, and $\frac{3}{4}$ (See Figure 36).

The inclusion of proportional mensuration signs in every selection in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* is by no means typical of the practice of most late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century lutenists. However, John Dowland appears to have included them in nearly all of the tablatures for which he directed the copying or printing.\(^{134}\)

These mathematical approaches to the duration of note values would seem to limit the usable range of tempi to those tempi that could be expressed by proportional mensuration signs in each piece and to imply that few artistic liberties in regard to subtle changes of tempo were permitted. However, the repertoire and writings of the mid-sixteenth-century Spanish vihuelists frequently contain written descriptions of the tempi to be used for individual pieces that suggest a somewhat more flexible approach to tempo. Milán, Narváez, Mudarra, and Valderrábano often indicate the tempi of their works with signs and/or written comments. For example, Mudarra describes the three basic tempi used in performing his works as follows: $\phi = \textit{despacio} (\text{adagio})$, $\gamma = \textit{ni muy apriessa ni muy a espacio} (\text{moderato})$, and $\gamma$ apriessa (allegro). Although the specific signs and written descriptions vary from writer to writer,

\(^{134}\) Ward, "The So-Called 'Dowland Lute Book,'" pp. 12 and 16.
Figure 36. "The Witches daunce in the Queenes Maske," by [Robert Johnson], from the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, sig. F2v
these three variations in tempo are found throughout the literature for the vihuela. The vihuelist, Fuenllana, does not give tempo indications in his works, but he does state that pieces should be played neither too slowly nor too quickly, and he notes that the tempo of a piece depends on the difficulties involved in performing it.\textsuperscript{135} Milan introduces the fantasias in the fourth and fifth chapter of his \textit{El Maestro} with instructions for their performance that include the following comments on tempi.

\ldots Play all the chords with a slow tactus and all the diminutions with a fast tactus, and stop for a moment at each hold sign. \ldots \textsuperscript{136}

These comments and the qualifying adjectives that are used in conjunction with the terms for the three basic tempi indicate that "Quite evidently tempo was fairly flexible according to the text of the piece and the ability and feelings of the performer."\textsuperscript{137}

The flexibility of tempo described by the vihuelists would appear to contradict the strict observance of the tactus described by contemporary lutenists. This discrepancy cannot be explained as the result of an assumed isolation of Spanish

\textsuperscript{135}\textit{Joan Myers, "Vihuela Technique,"} \textit{Journal of the Lute Society of America} \textit{1} (1968): 16.


\textsuperscript{137}\textit{Myers, "Vihuela Technique,"} p. 16.
musicians from the musical world of their European contempo-
raries because statements by Milán indicate that he was
aware of current musical fashions in Italy and numerous
foreign compositions appear in the intabulations and varia-
tions of the vihuelists. Upon careful examination, the two
approaches are seen to present fewer contradictions than
are suggested initially. Lutenists, such as Newsidler and
Mersenne, are attempting to provide a basic point of reference
for the proper execution of the rhythms in the music and their
emphasis on observing the mensuration marked in the tabla-
ture, i.e., the relationships between the note values. The
proper observation of these relationships is essential whether
or not a tempo is strictly maintained. The vihuelists, on the
other hand, seem to take for granted that the proper relation-
ships will be observed, go a step further in discussing the
expressive variations in tempo that a performer introduces as
a part of his interpretation of the music.

Numerous remarks by Robinson, Besard, and other lutenists
indicate that it was not uncommon for performers to engage in
virtuosic displays of their technical prowess by adopting in-
ordinately fast tempi for works with elaborate divisions. The
fact that these writers advocate the use of slower tempi to
ensure the clear and accurate rendition of the notes suggests
again that a certain latitude in respect to tempo existed in
the sixteenth century even though it is not described in the
majority of lute tutors from the period. When writers of
ornamentation manuals stipulate that the tempo should be maintained even in passages of complex division figures, their intent is not so much to prevent the subtle, expressive deviations from the basic tempo of a piece, as it is to encourage the student to master the technical demands of those passages so that he will not be forced to slow down drastically to execute them, thereby destroying the continuity of the work. In other words, musical rather than technical parameters should determine the tempo of the work. Playing all or part of a composition too fast or too slow is unacceptable. Undoubtedly, the permissible variations in tempo were less pronounced during the sixteenth century than in modern times, but it seems highly improbable that metronomic consistency was considered a desirable end in itself even then. Owing to the absence of detailed information in the lute sources, it is impossible to assert categorically to what extent sixteenth-century lutenists varied the tempo within or between performances of a given work or what range of tempi was considered acceptable for each kind of composition.
VIII. CONCLUSIONS

By the end of the sixteenth century, individual national styles of composing and performing lute music that had been prominent during the early years of the century had largely given way to three main schools of lutenists: the Italian, French, and English.¹ In spite of the continued importance of these schools, the lute repertoire also became more international in character as improved dissemination of music made the works of major lutenists available throughout Europe and England. For example, works by the Hungarian/Polish lutenist, Valentin Greff-Bakfark, were published in Lyons (1553), Paris (1564), Cracow (1565), and Antwerp (1569).² Although England lagged behind other countries in developing its own music printing industry, Dowland's works appeared in innumerable manuscripts and printed collections in England and Europe. "The Earle of Essex's Galliard," or pieces derived from it, appear in no less than thirty-five sources found in England and Europe, and the famous "Lachrimae Pavan" occurs in even more sources. In the address "To the Reader" of A Pilgrimes

¹David Munrow, Instruments of the Middle Ages and Renaissance (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 76.
²Ibid.
Solace, Dowland states that

... some part of my poore labours haue found favour in the greatest part of Europes, and beene printed in eight most famous Cities beyond the seas, viz.: Paris, Antwerpe, Collein, Nurenburge, Franckfort, Leipsig, Amsterdam, and Hamburge: (yea and some of them also authorized vnnder the Emperours royall priuilege). . . .

The contents of published collections of lute music, such as Besard's *Thesaurus Harmonicus* and the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons*, which include pieces in many different forms and styles by a number of composers from different countries, provide ample evidence of the dissemination of national styles in the lute repertoire at the end of the sixteenth century. The *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* alone contains compositions by Italian, German, French, Belgian, Polish, and English composers in most of the major compositional genres then in use. Furthermore, the opening statement of Besard's "Necessarie Observations Belonging to the Lvte, and Lvte Playing," indicates that the technique he describes is based on his observations of the practices of a number of players, including the Italian lutenists, Laurencini, and his own experiences as a lutenist. In the same treatise, Besard comments that he has not felt it necessary to include instructions for intabulating vocal music because the subject had been adequately treated in the works

---

of Emanuel Adrianson and numerous other publications that were widely available.

The dissemination of lute music in a variety of national styles probably had a broadening effect on the musical tastes of the public as a whole, but composers did not always react positively to the competition from foreigners. Thomas Morley complained that his countrymen failed to pay adequate attention to the technical aspects of their craft in their haste to...

... put on another humour and follow that kind [of music] whereunto they have neither been brought up nor yet (except so much as they can learn by seeing other men's works in an unknown tongue) do perfectly understand the nature of it; such be the new-fangled opinions of our countrymen who will highly esteem whatsoever cometh from beyond the seas (and specially from Italy) be it never so simple, condemning that which is done at home though it be never so excellent. 4

Had Morley lived twenty years longer, he might well have directed similar remarks to the English lutenists of the 1620s who aped the style of playing popularized by the Parisian lutenists of the early years of the seventeenth century. Indeed, in the address "To the Reader" of A Pilgrimes Solace cited above, Dowland complained about the influx of foreign lutenists who advocated the use of new styles and techniques of lute playing. 5

In addition to documenting the international character of the lute repertoire at the beginning of the seventeenth

---


5 See page 27 of this thesis for Dowland's comments.
century, the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* contains a great deal of information about contemporary lute technique. Besard's "Necessarie Observations" are applicable to the manner in which the lute was played from at least the middle of the 1590s to the end of the first decade of the following century.6 It is clear, however, that lute technique and performance practices continued to evolve during that period. The shift from the thumb-under approach to right-hand technique to the thumb-over approach and its new hand position was made by many lutenists, including John Dowland, during this period or shortly thereafter. Composers' use of thicker textures, decreased emphasis on contrapuntal writing, and the continually increasing number of bass courses on the lute were significant factors in the development and adoption of the new approach to right-hand technique. The relationship between compositional styles and lute technique is also apparent in the works inspired by the new school of French lutenists, who developed new tunings for the lute to simplify the fingering of pieces in the *style brisé* and to accommodate the technical demands of playing the increasing number of bass courses. Furthermore, the extensive use of ornaments in lute music led to the adoption of graces and kinds of articulations not found in Renaissance lute music.

The elaborate divisions found in many of the pieces in the *Varietie of Lute-Lessons* testify to the English lutenists’

---

mastery of this form of embellishment. However, as a result of the growing influence of the Parisian lutenists, improvised ornamentation took on an increasingly important role in the construction of the melodic material until it became an essential element of the compositional process rather than a decorative accessory to the completed work. These graces became increasingly complex and pervasive in lute music during the first quarter of the seventeenth century as the French style of playing became known outside of Paris. Although no ornament signs are found in the pieces in the Varietie of Lute-Lessons, the new compositional style, with its harmonically conceived counterpoint, is evident in the corantoes and voltes of the collection. These pieces frequently contain arpeggiated chords and extended passages in two- or three-part textures, and their sectional construction is often irregular and poorly defined.

The combination of Besard's treatise on fingering and lute technique; Dowland's treatise on stringing, fretting, and tuning the lute; and the collection of forty-two musical selections establishes the Varietie of Lute-Lessons as one of the most significant publications for the Renaissance lute to appear in England or Europe. Besard's treatise provides additional documentation of the history of the thumb-over approach to right-hand technique. Dowland's treatise, which represents his only published discourse on topics related to lute playing, contains information rarely found in other lute
sources of the period. It is particularly useful in the construction of historically accurate copies of lutes on which to play Renaissance lute music. In addition, the versions of the musical selections that Dowland contributed to the print can be considered as authorized texts of these pieces since they were prepared under his supervision. These selections are particularly significant since Dowland never realized his stated intention to publish a collection of his works for solo lute, and he expressed his dissatisfaction with the published versions of his works issued by his contemporaries without his consent.

Finally, the Varietie of Lute-Lessons contains a great deal of information about secondary topics, including: changes in the construction of the lute that extended its range, such as the addition of frets to the fingerboard; sources of gut strings for the lute and methods of evaluating their quality; procedures for sizing strings and frets and installing them on the lute; the temperament used by Dowland to tune his lute; and the musical tastes of the lute-playing public in Jacobean England.

The changes in compositional styles introduced by the French school of lutenists, the development of new musical mediums such as the court masque and the viol consort, the introduction of the lyra-viol to English musical circles, and the death of some of the most important of the English lutenist composers led to the decline and eventual eclipse of the native
school of lutenists during the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The Varietie of Lute-Lessons holds a special place in the history of English lute music in that it testifies to the brilliance of its Golden Age while foreshadowing its passing.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Barley, William. *A new Booke of Tabliture*, Containing sundrie easie and familiar Instructions, shewing how to attaine to the knowledge, to guide and dispose thy hand to play on sundry Instruments, as the Lute, Orpharion, and Bandora: Together with divers new Lessons to each of these Instruments. Whereunto is added an introduction to Frickesong, and certaine familiar rules of Descant, with other necessarie Tables plainly shewing the true vse of the Scale or Gamut, and also how to set any Lesson higher or lower at your pleasure. Collected together out of the best Authors professing the practice of these Instruments. Printed at London for William Barley and are to be sold at his shop in Gratious street, 1596. [British Library: shelfmark, K. 1. c. 18].


Le Roy, Adrian. *A briefe and easie Instruc[tion] to learne the tablature to conducte and dispose thy hande unto the lute*. Englished by J. Alford Londenor. Imprinted at London by Ihon Kyngston for James Roubouthum and are to be solde at hys shop in paternoster rowe. Lycessed accordyng to the order apoynted in the queenes maiestes iniuitions 1568.

456
A Briefe and plaine Instruction to set all Musicke of eight divers tunes in Tablature for the Lute. With a briefe Instruction how to play on the Lute by Tablature, to conduct and dispose thy hand vnto the Lute, certaine easie lessons for that purpose. And also a third Booke containing divers new excellent tunes. All first written in French by Adrian Le Roy, and now translated into English by F. Ke gentelman. Imprinted at London by James Rowbothome, and are to be sold in Pater noster row at the signe of the Lute. Anno. 1574.

Robinson, Thomas. The Schoole of Musicke: Wherein is taught, the perfect method, of true fingering of the Lute, Pan-dora, Orpharion, and Viol de Gamba; with most infallible generall rules, both easie and delightfull. Also, a method, how you may be your owne instractor for Frick-song, by the help of your Lute, without any other teacher: with lessons of all sorts, for your further and better instruction. Newly composed by Thomas Robinson, Lutenist. London: Printed by Tho. Este, for Simon Water-sun, dwelling at the signe of the Crowne in Paules Church-yard. 1603.

Secondary Sources

Modern and Facsimile Editions


Books, Theses, and Dissertations


Articles


