

‘Galant’ Continuo: Towards an Informed Approach to Accompaniment in the *Accord Nouveau*

By Benjamin Narvey

Today, however, it [the theorbo] is generally in the new lute tuning [d-minor], which our own lute has, since it would be too inconvenient for a lutenist to have to mentally switch to the old theorbo tuning every time he played that instrument.

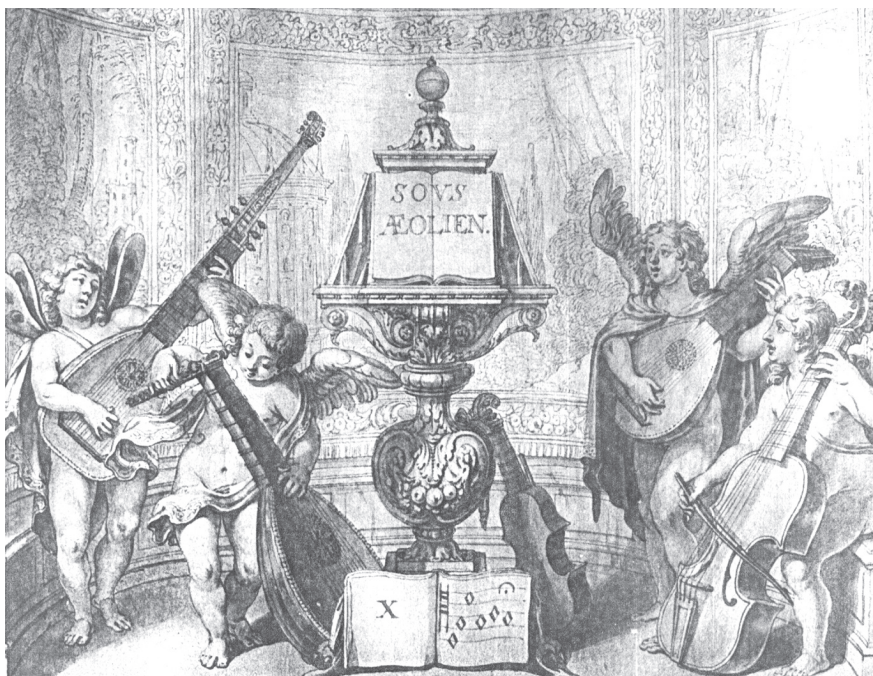
Ernst Gottlieb Baron (1727)

Thus spoke the famed lutenist Ernst Gottlieb Baron in his *Historisch-theoretisch und praktische Untersuchung des Instruments der Lauten*.¹ In our own age, when the modern lutenist must play a host of different tunings, “improvising” the basso continuo on what can easily be a different instrument every concert (or indeed the same

concert), it can seem almost surprising to remember that this multi-instrumental pressure is by and large a modern one. Although there were lutenists in earlier times who played several instruments – Robert de Visée chief among them² – the overwhelming majority of pluckers in the Renaissance and Baroque played but one instrument. Francesco da Milano played the renaissance lute. Charles Mouton played the baroque lute. That most famous guitarist, Francesco Corbetta, famously declared that he had never even touched a lute, saying “in truth, I do not know a single chord upon that instrument... since I have never had the desire [to play] anything other than the guitar alone”.³

Perhaps it is the same difficulty that players encounter today in trying to master several tunings that helped to draw the lines in the past between the different instrumental camps. “One cannot do everything, after all” seems to be the underlying point of Baron’s statement above.

While respecting that different repertoires do demand particular instrumentation, I decided that over the course of one year, I would try to think historically as Baron might have done (as far as professional circumstances would allow) and to play continuo in only one tuning: d-minor. This essay is the fruit of personal observations that I have gleaned over the course of this past year. It will also discuss the origins and characteristics of the d-minor tuning, the historical trajectory of its use in continuo, and finish with a discussion as to why further exploration of this tuning could be of use to modern lutenists. There will also be a brief explanation of the so-called “German Theorbo”, a powerful continuo instrument that is very little used and understood today.



The “French Revolution”: Origins of the d-minor *Accord nouveau*

The beginning of the seventeenth-century witnessed the emergence of two distinct traditions of lute tuning in Europe, one Italian, the other French. The French tradition would soon dominate the Continent, while the Italian tradition kept to its own course. Although there were Italians such as P.P. Melli and Bernardo Gianoncelli who experimented with new lute tunings, the Italian tradition is marked by its essential retention of the *vieil ton* (G-c-f-a-d'-g').⁴ This tuning would live itself out to the last days of the lute in Italy.⁵ The French tradition, however, was marked by such radical change and sustained experimentation that it can be appropriately considered a “French Revolution” for the lute.

By 1600 Antoine Francisque was experimenting with the *cordes avallées* in his *Le Trésor d'Orphée*.⁶ This vogue for *cordes avallées* tunings, also evident in Besard’s *Thesaurus harmonicus* (1603),⁷ involved lowering the fourth, fifth and sixth courses to give drone-like 4ths and 5ths; these tunings were used mainly for branles and other rustic dance pieces. This can be summed up as the first “moderate” phase of the lute-tuning revolution, one that lasted until about 1620.

The second phase of the revolution, lasting from roughly 1620-1650, is somewhat obscured due to a gap in

French lute sources from the 1640’s. Furthermore, the first print to use the new tunings, Pierre Ballard’s *Tablature de luth de différents auteurs sur l'accord ordinaire et extraordinaire* (Paris, 1623) is now lost,⁸ meaning that it is impossible to know more exactly when certain tunings, especially the d-minor tuning (A-d-f-a-d'-f'), first made its appearance. The earliest collection to use the d-minor tuning is the 1638 publication of Pierre Ballard and Pierre Gaultier, although the tuning may well have been in use considerably earlier.⁹ Nevertheless, other collections sporting various *accords nouveaux* survive, containing fine music by Mesangeau, Chancy, Belleville, Robert Ballard, Pierre Gautier and others.

The key development in this phase is that, unlike the earlier “moderate” phase of the revolution, where the *cordes avallées* were essentially a scordatura device, the *accords nouveaux* totally reconfigured the instrument. It is for this reason that the second period can be rightly considered to be the ‘radical’ phase of the revolution. Indeed, one can well imagine that for contemporary amateurs trying to keep their instruments appropriately strung (and in tune!), that this period of everchanging *accords* could easily have been dubbed “The Great Terror”. Although many different tunings existed

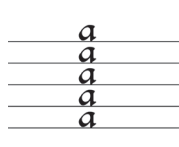
throughout this time - there were perhaps twenty in varying degrees of regular use - they mainly followed a new trend that favoured open thirds rather than fourths as the principal interval. This is a break from the renaissance lute in *vieil ton*, which was tuned like a viol in fourths. These new tunings naturally yielded harmonic triads when openly strummed, and this in turn greatly simplified chordal fingerings. This is a point we will come back to.

Excepting Italy, this “French Revolution” quickly swept all of Europe. The *accords nouveaux* were widely used in England from the 1630s onwards. They came to dominate north of the Rhine too, penetrating as far north as Sweden. The revolution completely overtook German-speaking territories, and then travelled eastward, notably conquering Bohemia, and then Silesia in present day Poland.

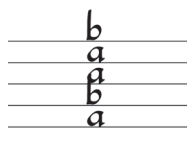
Although the last printed sources to make significant use of multiple *accords nouveaux* are those by Esaias Reusner (1676)¹⁰ and Jakob Kremberg (1689),¹¹ from 1650 onward until the end of the eighteenth century the d-minor tuning became the rule, the others the exception. The *vieil ton* was a thing of the past.¹² This marks the transition to the third and final phase of the lute’s “French Revolution”, one that ushered in a period of stability where the d-minor tuning reigned as *lingua franca*.

Characteristics of the d-minor Tuning

The fact that a lute tuned in d-minor naturally yields harmonies has deep implications for continuo. First of all, this means that chord shapes are radically simplified. Below are the tablature shapes for d minor and D major respectively:



Example 1 - d minor



Example 2 - D major

In this *accord*, the “open” minor chord is transposable in all keys by the employment of a simple barré with the index finger. A barré on the first fret yields Eb minor, the second fret E minor, etc. The major chord is equally transposable, with the addition to the barré of two fingers to hold down the major thirds.¹³ All keys “feel” the same. They all “look” the same. All the primary major and minor chord voicings in all keys are contained within the span of only two frets; this is unlike all other conventional continuo tunings (e.g. Italian theorbo, guitar, archlute), where all the standard transposable shapes demand a minimum of three frets, and often four. Not only does this much reduced stretch facilitate the playing of longer string lengths, but suspensions and ornaments that can be tricky in the *vieil ton*, such as the 9-8 suspension, are now entirely underhand. Even better, one has the free fingers to execute them. Furthermore, where instruments such as the Italian theorbo or archlute are better inclined to certain keys than they are to others (the theorbo prefers sharp keys where the archlute prefers flat keys), the simplified and universally transposable fingerings of the d-minor tuning makes the difficulty of key largely obsolete. It is not for nothing, after all, that there is so much fine baroque lute music in the *ton de la chèvre*, f-sharp minor.

But perhaps most importantly, the d-minor tuning allows the modern lutenist to see the musical battlefield, as it were, much like a keyboardist might. The notes contained within each fret demarcate a diatonically tonal zone, as we have seen, and these zones move chromatically by semitone up and down the entire length of the fingerboard. Thus, it is possible to intellectually inhabit the keys, to see musical movement as it is reflected by the fingers, and to understand the harmonies much more readily than on other continuo instruments.

This is illustrated even in the way that players speak. For instance, on the re-entrant Italian theorbo it is often said that one “finds” or

“discovers” interesting chord voicings - for the excellent reason that they are not visually obvious.¹⁴ This is opposed to the d-minor tuning where all is laid out for the eye to see. An instrument such as the Italian theorbo, whose highest sounding string is placed roughly in the middle of the fingerboard, does not easily lend itself to intellectual clarity. As a result of the re-entrant tuning, simple scale passages must be plucked campanella style on alternate strings (“which way is up?!”), and the voice leading is hampered by the extremely compressed tessitura. This is not to denigrate the Italian theorbo, a wonderful instrument whose worth is attested by the generations of players across Europe who played it. The point is rather that with such an instrument, one must think in a *tactile* way, in finger shapes and patterns, and less immediately in notes, harmonies, and formal design. I know of several professional theorbo players who regularly must mentally conjure a keyboard – an instrument they often do not even play - in order to figure or analyze complex harmonies or passages.

The fact is that nobody wishing to design a logical musical instrument, one whose clarity of invention could foster a comprehension of musical form, would ever sit down at his desk and come up with a theorbo. The theorbo evolved from the renaissance bass lute whose string length became so great that it could no longer support the old tuning in the correct octaves. The re-entrant result - and its resplendent effect - is the child of this quintessentially empirical process. This stands in stark contrast to the d-minor tuning, which is above all rational, ordered, efficient. In short, it is the product of the French Enlightenment, and a veritable manifestation of Cartesian zeitgeist. It is also the closest a plucked string instrument has ever come to the supreme musical immediacy of the keyboard.

The Historical Trajectory of d-minor Continuo

I. France

Presumably lutenists were playing d-minor continuo from the moment of the *accord nouveau*’s inception before 1636. It is interesting to note that Ballard published the very last edition of *airs de cour* for the *vieil ton* only a few years later in 1643, citing that they were no longer profitable;¹⁵ this seems to indicate that by this time the *accords nouveaux* – and perhaps the d-minor tuning in particular – were already firmly holding sway over the more conventional *vieil ton*. This date also coincides with the death of Louis XIII, who had delighted in the *airs de cour* repertory, and who was also a very capable lutenist much marked by the conservative lute style. As so commonly happens throughout the history of the arts, with the change of rule came a change of school. All future song collections published by Ballard after Louis XIII’s death would be for continuo only; by 1647 the nine-year-old Louis XIV, the Sun King, was being initiated to the d-minor lute by Germain Pinel. The *vieil ton* was out.

The only French sources to deal exclusively with continuo in d-minor are those by Perrine. His *Livre de musique pour le lut* (1680) explains the cursory rules of continuo, as well as explaining in both tablature and staff notation the intervals and chords necessary to realize a figured bass.¹⁶ He explains the system of figures, and even common signs, scribal conventions, and basic remarks on metre. His 1698 *Table pour apprendre à toucher le Luth sur les Notes Chiffrées de Basses continües* is a kind of “cheat sheet” for d-minor continuo, one that succinctly expresses much of the material in the 1680 publication in a visually compact, one-page format.¹⁷ Perrine also includes idiomatic realizations of perfect cadences in all the common keys, written out in both tablature and staff notation.

Although Perrine was the only French author to write in depth about continuo in the new tuning,¹⁸ we have to place this scarcity in context of two tempering factors. The first was the new, full, and powerful orchestral style of Lully, for which the inward and *précieux* nature of the lute was not suitable. Second, is the scarcity of instructive French lute sources in general. Despite the lute’s renown in France throughout

the *Grand Siècle*, there are only two tutors written for the French lute, and both of these are English: the so-called *Burwell Lute Tutor*¹⁹ and Thomas Mace's *Musick's Monument*. Mace effectively explains this scarcity of sources by saying:

The French (who were generally accounted Great Masters) seldom or never would prick their lessons as they play'd them, much less reveal anything (further than of necessity they must)

to the thorough understanding of the art, or instrument....²⁰

Indeed, knowledge about the lute has been hampered From the closeness of masters in the art, who (all along) have been extremely shie in revealing the occult and hidden secrets of the lute....which when they have done, and with long pains, and much labour obtained, THEY DYE, AND ALL THEIR SKILL AND EXPERIENCE DYES WITH THEM.²¹

Indeed, the very purpose of his publication is to counteract this scarcity of knowledge concerning the lute, and to make such knowledge "manifest and very plain".²² So, in the case of the French lute, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Undoubtedly lutes were commonly used as continuo instruments despite the relative scarcity of sources to document it. This practice would have been largely abetted by the new continuo-based song style whose proponents, such as Michel Lambert, self-accompanied themselves on the instrument.²³ Furthermore, lutes were much more readily available than theorboes, the latter being predominantly an instrument of a small circle of professionals (and their students) in and around Paris.²⁴

II. Germany & the "German Theorbo"

The widespread role of the d-minor tuning for continuo becomes more clear in later sources from Germany. Although documentation is still scarce and frustratingly incomplete, the advantage here is that we have correspondence regarding the issue from two of the most important lutenists of the age, the first being Ernst Gottlieb Baron, the second Silvius Leopold Weiss. Furthermore, much of the correspondence is taken from communications with Johann Mattheson, perhaps the most important musical writer and theorist of the day.

One development that the Germans made is that after circa 1720, d-minor continuo was played on both the baroque lute as well as on a new kind of theorbo, what has been termed for modern convenience the "German Theorbo", in order to distinguish it from its Italian counterpart.²⁵ This is this theorbo that Baron refers to in the quote at the beginning of this article. Weiss appears to have been the first player to mention the existence of this theorbo. In a letter to Johann Matheson dated 21 March 1723 he writes:

I have adapted one of my instruments for accompanying in the orchestra and in church; it has the size, length, power and resonance of the 'true' theorbo, and has the same effect, just that the tuning is different.²⁶

It is interesting to read Weiss's letter in light of Baron's 1727 statement that says "Today....it [the theorbo] is generally in the new lute tuning".²⁷ These sources imply that during the 1720's players in huge numbers began switching their theorboes over to d-minor, since the difference between Weiss's letter (the first source documenting the change), to the change being reported as something standard by Baron is only about four years.²⁸

It would seem that many German players simply re-strung their existing Italian theorboes for use in d minor.²⁹ Perhaps the most prominent case of this kind to concern a surviving instrument has been made by André Burguette, who has suggested that the Italian theorbo by Venere

in the Musikinstrumenten-Museum (Leipzig, No. 3357) was adapted for use as a German theorbo by no less a player than Weiss himself.³⁰ New instruments were also being made in Germany, many of which had shorter diapason lengths; this, however, likely reflects contemporary use of newly developed overwound metal strings, which did not need the excessive lengths of the traditional gut diapason.³¹ Yet whether the instrument in question was of Italian or local providence, the seminal point is that theorboes were now generally being tuned in the *accord nouveau* - albeit with one difference.

The long string lengths of accompaniment instruments would have precluded the standard lute tuning. As Lynda Sayce has shown, theorboes of all countries throughout the baroque period were rarely beneath a stopped string length of 85cm.³² It would have been impossible to stretch gut on such a length at any contemporary pitch standard and have the high f chanterelle. In his *Essay on the Notational System of the Lute and the Theorbo* Baron explains:

So one can see that the lute and the theorbo differ considerably from one another. For the lute requires a chanterelle; but on the theorbo, which begins a third lower (calculated from the first string) and has one or even two more bass strings, the chanterelle is omitted because it would break due to the long mesure.³³

To summarise, it would appear that the German theorbo was, organologically speaking, simply a normal Italian theorbo, or perhaps one of local manufacture (not to be confused with the swan-neck baroque lutes, which were much smaller), tuned in d-minor with the top f taken off and all the other strings moved up, so that the first course would be the d string. They were generally big instruments, with stopped string lengths of 85cm or more.³⁴ The wonderful German theorbo by Schelle in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (Nürnberg, No. M1574), which is perhaps the best surviving example of such an instrument, is a veritable behemoth whose body dimensions weigh in at a very prominent 652mm x 410mm.³⁵ To put this in perspective, the Schelle is larger than all surviving "monster" theorboes by Buechenberg, save the one in the Musée Instrumental in Brussels (No. 1570).³⁶

Concerning musical matters, Weiss mentions in a letter to Mattheson that the German theorbo is "not at all suitable for use in the gallant style";³⁷ by this Weiss means that the theorbo is not suitable for *galanterie*, meaning solo repertoire - understandable if one considers that the top string is missing.³⁸ Baron goes on to say that "melodies are played on the lute; the theorbo, on the other hand, was developed exclusively for accompanying."³⁹ That said, the texture and technique of the lute would have been directly transposable to the German theorbo - indeed, this was the very reason for its creation in the first place - and this would obviously have been a factor in continuo realisations on the instrument.

In this regard it is interesting to revisit Weiss's comment quoted above, in which he states that the German theorbo "has the same effect" as the Italian theorbo. This statement by Weiss may indicate that when German lutenists used Italian theorboes, they plucked in such a way as to avoid the breaking of parts (which is the natural effect of the re-entrant tuning), thereby achieving a more lute-like, *cantabile* texture. It would be difficult to see how otherwise one could recreate "the same effect" of an Italian theorbo on a German theorbo; i.e., whereas it would be difficult to reproduce a broken texture on a *cantabile* instrument (which has no re-entrant tuning), one could, in a majority of instances, realise a *cantabile* texture on an Italian theorbo (where deliberate plucking can overcome the re-entrant effect).

Significantly, Weiss's denial that the new theorbo caused musical change complements Baron's remark that the instrument was created only to avoid "mentally switching" tunings. Indeed, when both sources are taken together, they clearly agree that 1) the German theorbo was above all a development of practical convenience for the player, and that

2) it was not designed to alter the nature of continuo realisations, or to effect stylistic change in composition more generally. Neither source discusses the musical advantages of the German theorbo over the Italian theorbo, but rather only how the musical effect is the same but at much more convenience to the player.

This inkling could potentially alter the way we approach accompaniment from this period, since the *cantabile* element lends a more lyrical conception to continuo, one that is primarily composed horizontally in binary counterpoint. This is in opposition to the vertical, texture-rich, and chord-based continuo that is usually encountered on the Italian theorbo, then and now. Although such details about historical realisations are largely a subject of speculation today, these sources make plausible the case that lutenists would have (naturally) realised continuo on the Italian theorbo with lute textures in mind, and then continued to do so more easily after the development of the German theorbo. What Baron and Weiss make clear is that the German theorbo was invented precisely in order for lutenists to fulfil these textures more efficiently.

Although the lute itself was clearly a solo instrument *par excellence*, it too was often used for continuo. Weiss says:

A lute accompanying in an orchestra would certainly be too weak and inconsequential, although I did have an aria con liuto solo at the nuptial celebrations here, with the famous Bercelli, which is said to have been quite effective. Firstly, I had an excellent lute; secondly, the aria was brilliantly written for the instrument; thirdly, nothing else accompanied but the harpsichord and contrabass, and they played only the main notes in the bass.....let me assure you that in a chamber cantata for solo voice, the lute, together with the harpsichord, is more effective than the archlute or even the theorbo.....⁴⁰

The success of d-minor continuo in Germany can in part be seen by the modest – but telling – number of solo lute and German theorbo arias written by composers such as Lotti, Heinichen, Ristori, and Hasse.⁴¹ The links between Weiss and J.S. Bach are well known, and it is perhaps significant that the “Liuto” obbligato arioso from the St John Passion, “Betrachte meine seel”, works so well in this tuning. As a general guideline modern lutenists can follow Weiss, and use the German theorbo “for accompanying in the orchestra and in church”, and the baroque lute for “chamber cantata[s]”, lute-scored obbligato parts, and diverse *kammermusik*.

Finally, the above line of enquiry is not meant to say that the Italian tuning was no longer in use in Germany, or that all players switched over to the *accord nouveau*. Both the German and Italian theorbo, amongst other instruments such as the arciliuto, colascione, and mandolino, were all used for continuo in Germany at this time.⁴² It would seem, though, that the majority of lutenists who also played theorbo switched their theorboes over to the *accord nouveau* – and this may have applied to the majority of German players. On the other hand, foreign musicians, such as the famous Italian theorbist Francesco Conti in Vienna, continued to use the “old” Italian theorbo tuning.

Conclusion: The “Galant” Solution of the *Accord nouveau*

What is so striking about the opening statement by Baron is how what he says resonates with the conditions of modern lute play. Just as lutenists in eighteenth-century Germany were playing lutes of 11 or 13 courses in d minor, and then had to “mentally switch” everything over to accompany in large groups on the theorbo, modern lutenists might well do the same. Indeed, our combinations can be even more psychologically bizarre when one considers that many lutenists today play both renaissance and baroque lutes, theorbo, archlute, baroque guitar, and often other instruments such as the renaissance guitar, vihuela, medieval lute, and mandora – cellists play the cello, and violinists the violin after all. Often, several of these instruments can be used even in the same concert; how

often does one hear from a director that he wants such and such an instrument for this piece, and such and such for that. Far from simply being difficult (especially if one must carry all these instruments around with a suitcase on tour!), when one plays for continuo an instrument who’s tuning is different from one’s principal “home” instrument, this means that all the knowledge one gleans from solo repertoire and improvisation is rendered useless in accompaniment.

This concern is at the heart of Baron’s statement, and it is this that must give modern lutenists pause for thought. The most common continuo instrument for lutenists today is not the lute at all but rather the Italian theorbo, an instrument that was never even designed for solo music (even if a small solo repertoire does exist); the common result of this arrangement is the preclusion of soloist knowledge in continuo. This of course has a great effect both on players themselves as well as on the quality of accompaniment generally.

Furthermore, this modern dichotomy between solo and accompaniment roles has also led to an unfortunate organological development – perhaps ironically, one motivated by the same forces that informed Baron himself. Just as Baron makes clear that the majority of players adapted their theorboes for use in the “home tuning”, modern players often make similar adjustments. Unfortunately for us, however, we cannot simply find a practical solution to a practical problem as our instrumental predecessors did, since “historical performance” is at the very centre of our enterprise. It is this that is the other side of our musical coin; it is this together with practical musicianship that constitutes our musical currency. It follows that just making up new instruments that use the same tuning as our principal instruments cannot really be an alternative, since doing so simply begs the question as to why we play early music on lute instruments in the first place. Regrettably, one result of this “solo-continuo dichotomy” is that some modern players have begun to do just this. Modern concoctions such as the “single-strung archlute”, or the “modern-guitar-tuned baroque lute” – instruments that have absolutely no basis in historical fact – are of course wholly inappropriate to informed performance practice. And yet the reason why some players today do such things, in lieu of using historically appropriate instruments, is that they can transfer knowledge already gleaned from previously known tunings, just as the German lutenists did.⁴³ Although I disagree with the results, I can certainly sympathise with the motivation of the players. Personally, I have tried to respond to the “solo-continuo dichotomy” by choosing a historically sanctioned instrument that was created specifically to counter this very problem. Furthermore, any modern lute player who is familiar with the baroque repertoire can do the same.

Finally, while it is true that there is no single tuning that can properly be used for continuo in all repertoires, due to the *accord nouveau*’s status as lingua franca, one can make a powerful argument for its use in much music composed north of the Alps dating from about 1630 onwards. One could also make a credible argument for its use in contemporary Italian music itself, based on the presence of d-minor players, such as Weiss, whom we know travelled, lived, and worked in Italy using this tuning. This is not to say that the choice of d-minor continuo is always the “best” from an historical perspective (although it often may be); but such instrumentation would certainly have been recognised by any knowledgeable composer or musician at the time – and this is the crucial criterion. The advantage of this to us is that by being able to play continuo in the *accord nouveau*, we can transfer to our accompaniment the knowledge we obtain as soloists while upholding the principle of historically informed performance.



Footnotes

¹ See Ernst Gottlieb Baron, *Historisch-theoretisch und praktische Untersuchung des Instruments der Lauten*. Nürnberg: Rüdiger, 1727). Translation mine. See also Ernst Gottlieb Baron, *Study of the Lute*, trans. Douglas Alton Smith (Redondo Beach: Instrumenta Antiqua Publications, 1976). All quotations of Baron's *Untersuchung* in this article are taken from Smith's translation unless otherwise stated.

² De Visée played the lute, guitar, theorbo, viola da gamba and was perhaps even a singer. See Alexander Dunn, *Style and Development in the Theorbo Works of Robert de Visée: An Introductory Study*, unpublished Ph.D. diss., University of California at San Diego, 1989.

³ Francesco Corbetta, *La Guitarre Royale....* (Paris: Bonneüil, 1670), p. 8. Translation mine.

⁴ See Victor Anand Coelho, "Authority, autonomy, and interpretation in seventeenth-century Italian lute music", *Performance on Lute, Guitar, and Vihuela: Historical Practice and Modern Interpretation*, ed. Victor Anand Coelho (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 108-141.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Antoine Francisque, *Le Trésor d'Orphée* (Paris: Ballard, 1600).

⁷ Jean-Baptiste Besard, *Thesaurus harmonicus* (Cologne: 1603).

⁸ The only part of this collection to survive is the title page.

⁹ Thomas Mace writes in 1676 that the d-minor tuning, "which although it be (to my knowledge) at least 40 years old [emphasis mine]; yet it goes under the name of the new tuning [accord nouveau] still." Thomas Mace, *Musick's Monument* (London: T. Ratcliffe & N. Thompson, 1676) p. 191. This would place the development of the d-minor tuning at a date no later than 1636.

¹⁰ Esaias Reusner, *Neue Lauten-Früchte* (Berlin: 1676).

¹¹ Jakob Kremberg, *Musicalische Gemüths-Ergötzung oder Arien*, (Dresden: 1689).

¹² There is an historical anecdote that illustrates how far the *vieil ton* had fallen from popularity by the eighteenth century. In his *Study of the Lute*, Baron tells how one day, out of curiosity, he had retuned his lute to the *vieil ton* and was supremely non-plussed with the result. He writes, "I was curious and tuned the lute in the old manner of that [Besard's] time, and I cannot sufficiently describe the remarkable effect his compositions had. For I heard tones that blended together well but, to tell the truth, there was little or no melody. Be that as it may, they nevertheless wrote concerti with three or four lutes in this manner and marvelled at the wonders they possessed." See Baron, *Study of the Lute*, p. 64. Elsewhere he writes, rather diplomatically, that "we must not scorn these pieces [in the *vieil ton*], because simplicity must always precede perfection [i.e., pieces in the *accord nouveau* of d-minor]." Ibid., p. 59.

¹³ With the d-minor German theorbo, as we shall see, the fingering is even more simple. Since its fingerboard tuning is the same as a baroque lute, but without the chanterelle, all major chord shapes require only one finger in addition to the barré. A secondary result of not having a chanterelle is that there is even less lateral stretch across the instrument, since there are only five, and not six, stopped strings to reach across.

¹⁴ Indeed, one of the primary reasons why theorbists are so drawn to the music of Kapsberger is that he employs so many novel and clever voicings, which one can then adopt for use in improvisation and continuo. Solo music by Pinel or Weiss is much less useful in this regard, since the majority of voicings in d-minor are already evident.

¹⁵ See Samuel F. Pogue, Jonathan Le Cocq: 'Robert Ballard (iii)', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (Accessed 21 May 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com>.

¹⁶ See Perrine, *Livre de musique pour le lut* (Paris: Perrine, 1680).

¹⁷ See Perrine, *Table pour apprendre à toucher le Luth sur les Notes Chiffrees de Basses continues* (Paris: Perrine, 1698).

¹⁸ There were, nonetheless, several other French writers who mention the lute in its continuo role. These include Delair, Derosier, Campion, Brossard, and Le Cerf.

¹⁹ See Anonymous (poss. John Rogers?), *The Burwell Lute Tutor*, ms. Private collection.

²⁰ Mace, *Musick's Monument*, p. 40.

²¹ Ibid. Capitals original.

²² Ibid.

²³ Perrin's laudatory sonnet to Lambert declares that "Beautiful ladies lend their hearts and ears to your songs/and let themselves be ravished by the charm of your fingers". Perrin later compares such women to a group of bees who would "follow the accents of a lute or voice" of Lambert's. See Michel Lambert, *Les Airs de Monsieur Lambert.....* (Paris: 1666), p. 3. Translation mine.

²⁴ Personal communications with Lynda Sayce. See also Lynda Sayce, *The Development of Italianate Continuo Lutes*, unpublished Ph.D. diss., The Open University, August 2001.

²⁵ This distinction, and indeed the best modern discussion of the German theorbo and d-minor continuo in Germany generally, is made by Timothy Burris. See Timothy Burris, *Lute and Theorbo in Vocal Music in 18th-Century Dresden: A Performance Practice Study*, unpublished Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1997. I have adapted his *Instrumentarium* chapter for the purpose of the current article.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

²⁷ Italics mine.

²⁸ Unfortunately, Weiss does not say in his letter to Mattheson when it was that he first adapted his theorbo to d-minor. However, the fact that he is mentioning it as being something of a novelty that Mattheson did not know about (it should be noted that Mattheson was himself an amateur lute player) would suggest that this was a recent development.

²⁹ See Burris, *Lute and Theorbo*, pp. 40-72.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

³¹ Ibid. Indeed, the Venere theorbo mentioned above was reworked in the 1720's by Schelle, who shortened the long neck extension presumably to facilitate the use of wound strings; these would have sounded for far too long on a traditional diapason string length. Apart from this alteration to accommodate emergent string technology, the theorbo was otherwise left in its original "Italian" condition.

³² The only notable exception to this is the French *théorbe de pieces*, which as is evident from the name was exclusively a solo instrument. Regarding string lengths, see the following excellent online article: Lynda Sayce, "Theorbo sizes: the uncomfortable truth" (Accessed 20 May 2006), <http://www.theorbo.com>.

³³ Ernst Gottlieb Baron, 'Herr Barons Abhandlung von dem Notensystem der Lautee und der Theorbe', publ. In F.W. Marburg's *Historisch-kritische Beyträge zur Aufnahme der Musik* 2 (1756): 119-23. Quoted from Burris, *Lute and Theorbo*, p. 55.

³⁴ Lutemaker Klaus Jacobsen has suggested that German theorboes with particularly long mensural measures may have been tuned with a high a string (i.e., without the top two strings of the d-minor tuning), since string lengths above approximately 90cm would certainly preclude having even a high d.

³⁵ I would like to thank Klaus Jacobsen for having built me a superb reproduction of the Nürnberg Schelle, which has been of great inspiration to me in my investigations of d-minor continuo over the course of this past year. I am happy to report that this model works wonderfully in terms of tone, power and sheer projection. It is easily the most penetrating continuo lute I have yet encountered.

³⁶ The "Brussels" Buechenberg is probably the largest theorbo in existence, with body dimensions of 712mm x 446mm. I am indebted to lutemakers Klaus Jacobsen, Martin Haycock, Stephen Barber, and Sandi Harris who have, in personal communications, shared and discussed with me the above information regarding the comparative sizes of extant theorboes.

³⁷ Letter from Weiss to Johann Mattheson dated 21 March 1723, quoted in *ibid*, p. 59.

³⁸ That said, there is an extensive repertoire of *sans chanterelle* solo repertoire that could in theory be explored with such an instrument.

³⁹ Baron, *Abhandlung*, p.123. Quoted from Burris, *Lute and Theorbo*, p. 59.

⁴⁰ Weiss, Letter. Quoted from Burris, *Lute and Theorbo*, p. 73.

⁴¹ See Burris, *Lute and Theorbo*, p. 72-112.

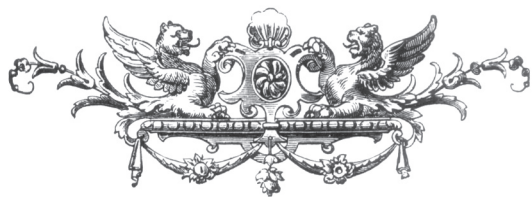
⁴² See Burris, *Lute and Theorbo*, pp.40-72.

⁴³ Indeed, even the reason why the "correct" archlute enjoys such widespread popularity today has less to do with its historical usage, and more because the vast majority of modern lute players begin by playing the renaissance lute and thus do not need to totally rethink the fingerboard in order to play continuo on this instrument. The problem here is that the archlute was, historically, only a rather specific niche instrument, one whose true repertoire consisted of music from the southern half of the Italian peninsula between roughly 1650 and 1710. And yet, it is used today in everything from Caccini to Dowland to Rameau.

Bibliography:

Anonymous. *The Burwell Lute Tutor*. Ms. Private collection.
 Baron, Ernst Gottlieb. *Historisch-theoretisch und praktische Untersuchung des Instruments der Lauten*. Nürnberg: Rüdiger, 1727. *Study of the Lute*. Trans. Douglas Alton Smith. Redondo Beach: Instrumenta Antiqua Publications, 1976.
 Besard, Jean-Baptiste. *Thesaurus harmonicus*. Cologne: 1603.
 Burris, Timothy. *Lute and Theorbo in Vocal Music in 18th-Century Dresden: A Performance Practice Study*. Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1997.
 Coelho, Victor Anand. 'Authority, autonomy, and interpretation in seventeenth-century Italian lute music', *Performance on Lute, Guitar, and Vihuela: Historical Practice and Modern Interpretation*, ed. Victor Anand Coelho, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Corbetta, Francesco. *La Guitarre Royale*. Paris: Bonnetüil, 1670.
 Dunn, Alexander. *Style and Development in the Theorbo Works of Robert de Visée: An Introductory Study*. Ph.D. diss., University of California at San Diego, 1989.
 Francisque, Antoine. *Le Trésor d'Orphée*. Paris: Ballard, 1600.
 Kremberg, Jakob. *Musicalische Gemüths-Ergötzung oder Arien*. Dresden: 1689.
 Lambert, Michel. *Les Airs de Monsieur Lambert*. Paris: 1666.
 Mace, Thomas. *Musick's Monument*. London: T. Ratcliffe & N. Thompson, 1676.
 Perrine. *Livre de musique pour le lut*. Paris: Perrine, 1680. *Table pour apprendre à toucher le Luth sur les Notes Chiffrées de Basses continues*. Paris: Perrine, 1698.
 Reusner, Esaias. *Neue Lauten-Früchte*. Berlin: 1676.
 Sayce, Lynda. *The Development of Italianate Continuo Lutes*. Ph.D. diss., The Open University, August 2001.



SEICENTO

Distribution & Edition of Lute Music

NEW

Francesco da Milano:

Collected Lute Works (6 volumes in French tab)

Music for:
 Renaissance Lute
 Baroque Lute
 Theorbo
 Archlute
 Mandora
 Baroque Guitar
 etc.



from:
 Seicento
 Minkoff
 Forni
 Tree
 SPES
 etc.

Have a look on my website...

SEICENTO - NOTENVERSAND

Rainer Luckhardt, Holbeinstrasse 12, D-79312 Emmendingen

Tel. ++49-7641-932803 * Fax. ++49-7641-932804
 mail: tiorba@web.de * internet: www.seicentomusic.de

Historical Lute Construction

by Robert Lundberg

By far the most comprehensive and authoritative work on understanding and constructing authentic lutes. Historical section covers the development of the lute from the 15th through the 18th centuries with over 100 photographs of ancient lutes by Robert Lundberg and 50 diagrams. Practicum section covers the construction of the lute in minute detail with over 600 step-by-step photographs by Jonathon Peterson and a dozen diagrams. Also includes a list of historic makers, catalog of extant historic lutes, bibliography, and index, plus complete reduced images of seven GAL lute plans. Robert Lundberg's encyclopedic knowledge, insightful analysis, and mastery of woodworking techniques grew out of a distinguished 30-year career in which he examined and measured over 250 ancient lutes and built hundreds of fine instruments. A quality hardback book of 296 pages.

\$65

+ \$7 S&H in USA

We also publish *American Lutherie*, the foremost magazine of string instrument making and repair

See our web page for searchable abstracts of our books and back issues, images of our full-scale instrument plans, and on-line or mailable order forms.

www.luth.org

Guild of American Luthiers 8222 South Park Avenue Tacoma, WA 98408 (253) 472-7853

Historical Lute Construction

* Robert Lundberg *



with photographs by Robert Lundberg and Jonathon Peterson