

Part I

HISTORY OF THE BAROQUE LUTE

The “French Lute”: the Golden Age of the Baroque Lute in the Grand Siècle

Although the lute enjoyed great favour throughout Europe during the Renaissance, the baroque lute may be regarded as a French phenomenon. Thomas Mace, one of the few authors who wrote extensively on the instrument, called it the “French lute”.¹ In a similar vein, the anonymous author of the *Burwell Lute Tutor* wrote that:

“the viol is the instrument of England, the guitar that of Spain, the theorbo that of Italy, the virginal or harpsichord [harpsicall] that of Germany, the harp that of Ireland, and so of others according to the genius of each nation [however] the French are in possession of the lute, that it is their instrument.”²

The *Burwell* author went so far as to seek the origins of French lute supremacy in classical antiquity, saying that the French genius for the lute was a form of revenge for the Roman conquest of Gaul. The “ingenious” French, “moved by a desire of revenge against the Senate of Rome” and seeking to “subdue those that had subdued them [...] cast their eyes upon the fine arts that flourished then at Rome – the mathematics, and the parts of it that best become a gentleman (as fortification, music, picture-drawing, sculpture, the arts of riding, fencing and dancing). The French then ravished from the Romans their liberty and those fine sciences, in which they have so much refined themselves since that they do excel in it at the présent above the Italians ...”³

Whatever the actual motivations of the French lutenists may have been, it is clear that this new lute that Mace refers to, this “French lute”, was

conceived and perfected in France. Aside from certain organological differences with the renaissance lute, such as the addition of several diapason strings in order to extend the bass range downwards, the main characteristic of the new instrument was its tuning – and not its shape, as the best French lutes were often old converted lutes from Bologna, such as those of Maler or Frei.

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'). This tuning would live itself out to the last days of the lute in Italy. 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 new tunings, which he called *cordes avallées*, in *Le Trésor d'Orphée*.⁴ This vogue for new tunings, also evident in Besard's *Thesaurus harmonicus* (1603),⁵ 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.

Part I

THE LUTE REPERTOIRE

Ornaments (*agréments*)

Ornaments, called *agréments* by the French lute masters, are notes of embellishment, appoggiaturas, trills, mordents, etc., which, when added to a composition, lent it greater variety, and enhanced its grace or even its vigor. One of the fundamental characteristics of music in the 17th and 18th centuries lay in the free choice of ornamentation and the faculty enjoyed by the musician to adapt it to his own expressive needs. Ornaments are not written out, but indicated, or merely suggested, by certain conventional signs.

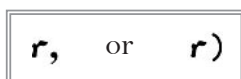
“I exhort people of talent and amateurs to remember that it is the character of passions, their degrees and nuances that determine the length, energy or gentleness, vivacity or slowness of the ornaments...”

Jean Blanchet, *L'Art ou les Principes philosophiques du chant*, 1756

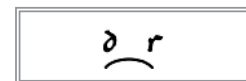
1) Upper Appoggiatura (*Coulé* or *Roulade*)

An upper appoggiatura is one that falls onto the main note. It may be placed a tone or a semitone above.

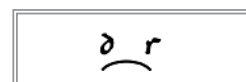
Notation



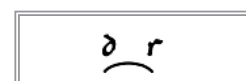
Realization



Realization



Realization



2) Lower Appoggiatura (*Port de voix* or *Chute*)

A lower appoggiatura is one that ascends to the main note. It may be placed a tone or a semitone below.

Part I

THE INSTRUMENT

Changing strings

At the bridge¹

- 1) Thread one end of the string through the bridge.



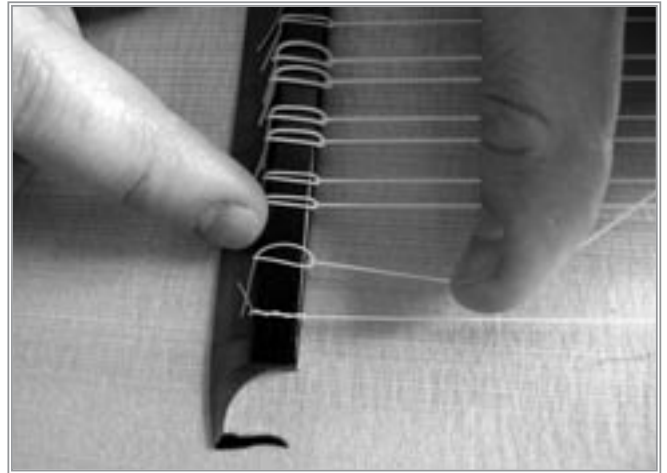
- 2) Make a loop ...



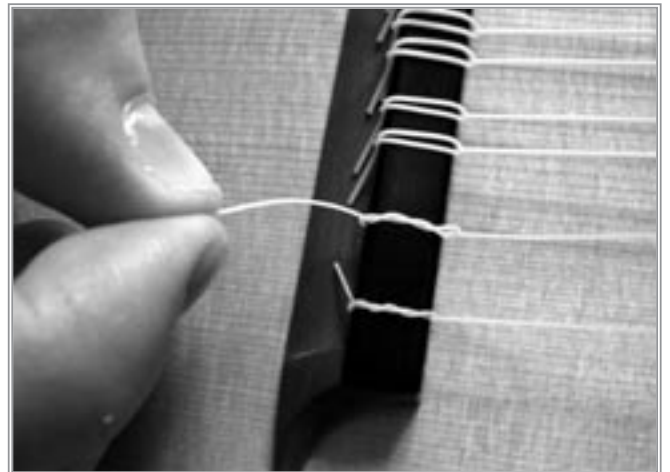
- 3) ... then two more loops.



N.B. From the third course up, one loop is enough.



- 4) Pull the string, not too hard, with both hands.



At the tuning peg²

- 5) Thread the other end through the hole in the tuning peg until the string is almost taut.



Part II

TECHNIQUE

The mechanics of finger movement

The articulation of the index, middle and ring fingers in contact with the strings.

We will use the index finger as an example.

11) When the finger touches the course, as described above...



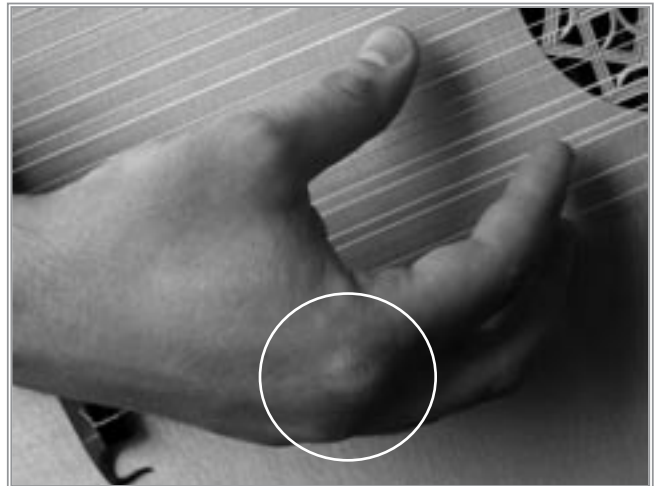
11.1) ... you will bend the first joint very slightly toward the soundboard.



12) You will then press the course down toward the soundboard, bending the strings somewhat. Careful: in the photo below, the strings have been pressed a little too much so that you may see the curve and better understand the required movement. In actual fact, the mere pressure caused by the right hand's weight is sufficient.



13) You should sense that the (very moderate) strength exerted on the course comes, not from the finger's joints, but rather from the third (metacarpophalangeal) joint toward the top of your hand.



Pieces Group 1

To illustrate the importance of the previous exercises, we have chosen a series of pieces by different composers. Only the melody line has been transcribed, with no ornaments, so that you may focus on the alternate use of the right-hand middle and index fingers alone.

- 1) Play these pieces very slowly.
- 2) First of all, before playing, study the rhythm and the left-hand fingerings. The term “Fingering” in music is used to mean the finger(s) used to play a note or notes. The figures refer to the fingers you should use to stop the strings. These indications are very important and deserve your full attention.
- 3) For each piece, play the first measures, up to the repeat sign (See “Musical Notation” above) three or four times only. Then read the second part of the piece three or four times.
- 4) Next, study each piece in two-measure segments. Repeat each segment several times in turn.
- 5) Make sure you raise your fingers from the strings as soon as the note has ended.
- 6) Always hold the strings down with sufficient pressure from the left hand.
- 7) Listen carefully to the sound you produce, and try to make it round, clear and precise.

NOTE: Pay attention to the rhythm and the left- and right-hand fingerings of each piece!

Sarabande (Tuning - F M)

D-Hs Ms. 17.706 / Anonymous

♩
|
| . ♩
|
♩
|
♩
|
♩
|
♩
|

7

Part III

PIECES FOR THE BAROQUE LUTE

Level 1 - Beginner

Gavotte, La belle Angloise (Tuning - C M) US-R Ms. Vault M 2.1 D 172 / Anonymous

♯

♯

5

a

8

a

12

a

16

4 da Capo

Part III

PIECES FOR THE BAROQUE LUTE

Level 2 - Intermediate

Allemande (Tuning - C M)

B-Br Ms. II 4087-10 / E.G. Baron

4 a a a a a a 4 a a a

5

a a a a 4 4 4

9

a a a 4 a a 4 a

13

a a a 4 a a a

17

a b a a a r 4

21

a a a a a a 4 a a 4 a a

25

4

Part III

PIECES FOR THE BAROQUE LUTE

Level 3 - Advanced

Allemande (Tuning - A m)

Neue Lauten Früchte, 1676 / E. Reusner

1

5

8

10

13

16

19