



Project
MUSE[®]

Today's Research. Tomorrow's Inspiration.

Die Laute in Europa: Geschichte und Geschichten zum Geniessen [The Lute in Europe: A History to Delight]. By Andreas Schlegel. Menziken: The Lute Corner, 2006. [120 p. ISBN-13: 9783952323205. \$23.] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography.

Lutenists. We're an odd bunch. Were one to ask my wife how many lutes I need, she'd respond with a sigh, "just one more." Yet it is our lot for a very practical reason: during the Renaissance and baroque eras, lute design, stringing configuration, tuning, and technique quickly accommodated the rapidly changing musical tastes that make this repertoire so diversified, exciting, and challenging. For instance, the 7- or 8-course (a course is a single string or pair of strings tuned in unison or octaves) Renaissance lute necessary to perform the music of John Dowland (1563–1626) cannot be used to play that of J. S. Bach's contemporary Sylvius Leopold Weiss (1687–1750), which calls for a larger lute sporting more strings arranged and tuned differently. One lute cannot serve all. Even lute music composed at exactly the same time in different nations sounds noticeably better on an instrument designed to take into account that area's musical tastes. While French 11-course and German 13-course baroque lutes are tuned similarly, they carry structural modifications that best serve their own national styles, the 11-course exploiting the French interest in texture and timbre while the 13-course favors the German preference for clear counterpoint. This record of extraordinarily rapid and innovative response is further evidence that back in the day they were every bit as interested in being *au courant* as we are today.

Enter Andreas Schlegel's *Die Laute in Europa: Geschichte und Geschichten zum Geniessen*, which thankfully bears a parallel English title and side-by-side translation as *The Lute in Europe: A History to Delight*. For anyone interested in learning basic information about the lute in a tidy attractive package jam-packed with information and full-page color photographs, this lovely publication is just the ticket. For lutenists, this book should fit quite nicely on the bookshelf between Douglas Alton Smith (*A*

History of the Lute from Antiquity to the Renaissance [Lexington, VA: The Lute Society of America, 2002]) and Ernst Pohlmann (*Laute, Theorbe, Chitarrone: Die Lauten-Instrumente, ihre Musik und Literatur von 1500 bis zur Gegenwart*, 5th ed. [Lilienthal: Edition Eres, 1982]). Better yet, it merits a place of honor on the coffee table because readers—and visitors—will want to refer to it again and again. Printed on very thick high quality paper, it is quite heavy (17 oz.) for a 120-page paperback measuring 16.5 x 24 centimeters.

Despite Schlegel's occasional excursions into the arcane, this fully footnoted compendium focuses largely on the instrument itself and other practical matters, as befits a primer or introduction, in contrast to Smith's broader treatment. Schlegel includes a fully illustrated "gallery of lute types" with photographs of each lute type's front and back, tunings, and short and long neck measurements in centimeters, a very thoughtful feature. Almost every page opening displays a spectacular color photograph. It's one of the finest collections of high-resolution lute photographs I've ever seen. As Smith explains in his book and Schlegel reinforces here, the instrument's visual beauty and related powerful mythological associations attract many to its world—they come for its good looks, but stay for its sweet sound. Many of the photographs are sumptuously detailed close-ups, providing a voyeuristic insider's view into the lute's interior and such elements as the intricate tracery of lute and baroque guitar roses, the finely cut designs that cover the opening on the belly through which the sound emits. Most of the illustrations, however, are photographs of the original lutes upon which modern reproductions are based; I am sure that lutenists will appreciate noting how precisely our contemporary versions resemble their exemplars. As if these were not enough, bonus features include a brief and partially illustrated glossary of relevant lute construction terms and a lexicon of the eternally vexing nomenclature of lute types. And there's more: an international list of "Recommended Literature," an illustrated timetable of lutes and composers, and photo credits with museum locations for most of the instruments pictured. All of this is presented with a guileless enthusiasm

that exalts the lutenist's art, summed up in the book's final two sentences: "If we accept nothing at face value, but scrutinize everything thoroughly, we are able to find exciting stories that are just waiting to be discovered, relived, and retold. A much wider vision of art and history emerges—which I hope gives it an infectious charm to reach out to others" (p. 98). That it does.

Following a brief and well-titled introduction ("Which Lute Are You Talking about?"), Schlegel covers various dimensions of the following broad topics: organology; the history of the lute's development, notation, and repertoire; and advocacy for contextual understanding. One could not ask for a better explanation of how the lute is constructed and how it works than is found here. On pp. 32–36 Schlegel discusses in some detail the significant role proportions play in the lute's design. For greater depth on organological issues beyond the scope of this book, I refer readers to the articles by Ray Nurse, Joël Dugot, and Michael Lowe in the *Proceedings of the International Lute Symposium Utrecht 1986* (ed. Louis Peter Grijp and Willem Mook [Utrecht: STIMU Foundation for Historical Performance Practice, 1988]). Earlier, on p. 18, Schlegel provides possible explanations for the sharp angle of the Renaissance lute's pegbox in relation to its neck. In reality, though, the angled pegbox is a manifestation of a brilliant engineering concept. According to one of my luthiers, the angle reduces the tension the strings put on the extremely thin tops found on Renaissance lutes. Otherwise, the pull of the strings on the bridge would rip the belly right off the bowl. Because of their thicker tops and sturdier bracing, theorbos and archlutes do not require such accommodation. Schlegel surmises that we know very little about historical string production technology (p. 38), but then launches into a fascinating discussion regarding almost every aspect of lute stringing. Although on pp. 40–41 Schlegel correctly explains that pitch standards in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries varied from location to location, he perhaps inadvertently gives the impression that nowadays we have settled upon $a^1 = 415$ for modern performances of early music, when in fact the two burning questions that must always be settled before a concert run is what pitch (415, 440, or

something else), and what temperament, i.e., usually some version of meantone or its variants or, when necessary, equal temperament. For my taste, however, Schlegel delves too much into rather obscure lute-like instruments and such oddities as the "liuto forte," an oxymoron if ever there was one. After piquing my interest about such a "curiosity," he should have offered a description, an illustration, or something.

The reader is also treated to a history of the lute's development from its well-documented Arab origins to the extinction of the baroque lute when it became so difficult to master that it complicated itself completely out of the late eighteenth-century amateur market, giving way to the keyboard, an easier instrument to play, at least in the initial stages. Schlegel's assertion on page 76 that for at least 150 years "the lute had the same significance as the piano in the 19th century" is no understatement if the number of extant lute prints and manuscripts as well as the vast number of lutes in various stages of construction listed in luthiers' estate inventories are any indication.

If I might be given leave to nitpick, in his discussion of tablature, Schlegel makes no mention of Spanish tablature, yet there is a photograph of the very same on p. 79. The photo captions abruptly cease on p. 89 although the photos continue to be referred to in the text. On the other hand, Schlegel's Sherlock Holmesian enthusiasm for his own research on *La rhétorique des dieux* reveals a thrilling adventure story for anyone who has hunted for treasure in European research libraries.

Sprinkled throughout the book is a plea to accept the lute on its own terms. This reminds me of an episode some twenty or so years ago in a conservatory master class when one of my colleagues used his baroque bow to perform a Bach violin sonata for a famous visiting violinist who afterward asked him why he would use such an outdated bow when the modern bow had overcome all the older version's deficiencies. Nice! Never mind that using modern reproductions of our ancestors' instruments can provide invaluable performance insights. I'm certainly not advocating such historicism that for many reasons may now be impractical; but exposure to historically aware instrument reproductions and techniques

can certainly inform the way we perform the music, even on modern instruments. For instance, experiencing the surprisingly treble-dominated sound of a lute strung entirely in gut can dramatically alter the way a classical guitarist approaches the sixteenth-century polyphonic lute music of Francesco da Milano (1497–1543).

I think, however, that Schlegel goes a tad over the edge when he criticizes the use of the much more resonant overspun strings (invented in the mid-seventeenth century) rather than gut on theorbos' diapasons. While he correctly argues that their use flies in the face of the extended neck's *raison d'être*, namely to render low-pitched gut strings with enough length to give timbral clarity, at the same time he overlooks modern circumstances that sometimes demand compromise. Gut diapasons work well for solo and chamber music, but in baroque operas the poor lone theorbo player must compete against the harpsichord and louder modern instruments, when originally there were probably so many theorbos and arclutes that, as one colorful historical

account described, the collection of long necks poking out from the pit gave the appearance of the masts of ships in port. If overspun basses help mimic the presence of several long-necked lutes, it would be foolish to forsake such technology just to worship at the altar of authenticity.

As a final comment, this book would have benefited from a clear idiomatic English translation. All translations are certainly prone to misspellings, typos, and homonym errors, and many permeate this fine book, more so in the footnotes than in the main text. Clunky translations beg for the reader's indulgence, but in this case, I am more than pleased to grant it. Such blemishes pale in comparison to the superb service Andreas Schlegel has offered the lute world with this delightful volume. Well worth the \$23 cover price, every music library should have this book on its shelves. Did I mention the photos?

DAVID DOLATA

Florida International University

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A Cellist's Companion: A Comprehensive Catalogue of Cello Literature. By Henk Lambooij and Michael Feves. Netherlands: Stichting The Cellist's Companion, 2007. [697 p. ISBN-13: 9789090223711 (hardcover), €149; ISBN-13: 9781847990051 (paperback), €95.] Bibliography, index.

In *A Cellist's Companion* we have a reminder that the concept of data mining is not new, only the techniques have changed. For more than thirty-five years, the authors searched "every possible source" in an effort to find every composition ever written for violoncello. Published editions are their core resource, but Lambooij and Feves have also consulted many kinds of secondary resources, both scholarly and ephemeral: reference works, biographies, reviews, catalogs, Web sites, concert programs, announcements, auction notices, correspondence, record and compact disc covers, and many more. The result is a bibliography of over 44,500 titles by some 15,000 composers and arrangers. It is a remarkable survey, a true celebration of violoncello literature by two accomplished cellists.

The reference book includes arrangements and original compositions, published works in print and out of print, works that are lost, and manuscripts. It is arranged alphabetically by the last name of the composer or arranger, augmented by a classified index at the back of the book that provides access by medium of performance: cello solo, cello with electronics, two or more cellos, cello and violin, cello and other instruments, two or more soloists, cello and voice, and methods and studies. Not included in the index are works for cello and piano and for cello and orchestra, "because practically every composer wrote for these combinations" (p. 657). This seems to be a concession to saving space. Excluded from the work altogether are chamber works (except those where the cello part is "soloistic") and those works