

Early Guitar Anthology I

The Renaissance
c.1540-1580

by
Charles Wolzien

Music Edited by
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About the Author

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He joined the faculty of Colorado State University in 1974 as a part-time instructor of guitar, and from 1975 to 1979 served as an adjunct instructor at Metropolitan State College in Denver. In 1979 he moved to Boulder to design, teach, and direct new degree programs in guitar performance and education for the University of Colorado College of Music: he was later appointed to the full-time faculty and subsequently earned tenure. In 2006, at age 55, Wolzien stepped down as Associate Dean of the College and took early retirement from the CU-Boulder faculty after 27 years of service. He remained on staff for an additional year, being voted Professor Emeritus in 2007.

Dr. Wolzien served as a guest lecturer at Australia's Sydney Conservatorium of Music during April of 1995; has conducted master classes in the US, Canada, China, and Argentina; and is included in the 60th edition of Marquis's *Who's Who in American Education*. Wolzien has written articles on Renaissance guitar repertoire and proportional notation and is the author of a performance edition of Adrian Le Roy's 1555 *Voix de ville* (Doberman-YPPAN Press). For nineteen years he wrote about early guitar repertoire as a columnist for *Soundboard* magazine and critiqued the music of many contemporary composers as a reviewer for both *Soundboard* and *Guitar Review* magazines. His arrangements for flute and guitar are published by Shawnee Press and Southern Music Company.

From the mid 1970's through the decade of the 1980's, Wolzien appeared both as a soloist and ensemble performer, presenting hundreds of programs throughout the continental United States and Hawaii. He was a featured artist on a Royal Viking Lines trans-Panama canal cruise with stops in Mexico, South America, Central America and the Caribbean, and toured in the US and Canada for Columbia Artists Management. He presented debut concerts at Carnegie Recital Hall and the Los Angeles Bach Festival; performed on many major university and civic-center recital series; and was selected to perform at national meetings of the Sonneck Society (for American Music), the College Music Society, and the American String Teachers Association/Guitar Foundation. Beginning in the 1990's and continuing until his retirement from CU-Boulder, Wolzien performed extensively on replica guitars from the Renaissance and Baroque periods as well as on a small, French six-string guitar built in the early 1800's. His recitals spanned the globe, including appearances in the United States, South America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, North Africa and the Mediterranean, as well as performances at numerous European conservatories, including the American Academy in Rome. His CD album *Dances, Grounds and Songs* features repertoire played on these early instruments.

About the Editor

Frank Bliven, following graduation from The San Francisco Conservatory of Music in 1972, moved to Bellingham Washington where he was responsible for creating the first undergraduate Classical Guitar program at Western Washington University. Following completion of a Masters degree in classical guitar performance in 1976, he headed undergraduate and graduate guitar studies at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. He immigrated to Canada in 1990 and taught guitar at Trinity Western University: he now teaches privately in his studio in Kamloops, British Columbia.

Professor Bliven specializes in Renaissance guitar, Renaissance lute, Baroque guitar, Baroque lute and early 19th-century classical guitar performance. He has edited music for the London College of Music *Classical Guitar Series*; served as the first North American classical guitar examiner for music examinations in Canada; and is active as an adjudicator for music festivals in both the U.S. and Canada. He is currently developing a web based guitar examination program available at www.GuitarMusicianship.com.

As a soloist and early music specialist, Bliven has given numerous master classes, lectures and solo recitals for colleges and universities throughout the U.S. and Canada.

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Introduction

This anthology was compiled, revised and edited from materials I developed in over three decades of teaching guitar repertoire courses at the college level. Since the classes dealing with the earliest history of the instrument focused mainly on performance practices of the time, the Renaissance music in this volume is introduced by an outline text that delves into questions of musical expression (*i.e.* what was considered to be *expressive* playing); technique; instruments and tuning; and the notation that was used to convey musical ideas. Indeed, a consideration of what musical scores contain, and what they leave to the aesthetic discretion and imagination of the performer to add or omit, is at the center of a highly charged debate that will continue to be of critical importance to us as we craft our musical interpretations of early music.

The unique transcriptions of song repertoire in this book present the guitar arrangements underneath the vocal models that inspired them. This format not only facilitates a study of intabulation procedures, but results in transcriptions that can serve to enhance classes in music history and music appreciation as well. In addition, studio teachers will find many interesting pieces for their students since all the music has been transcribed to accommodate modern guitar tuning.

I thank my dear friend and University of Colorado colleague Professor Ester Zago for providing the translations that appear in this anthology, and for sharing with me her insights and ideas regarding these texts. I am especially indebted to guitarist and lutenist Frank Bliven, a former Professor at Southern Illinois University and close friend since our days as undergraduate students at the San Francisco Conservatory, for his meticulous editing of the musical transcriptions. Needless to say, any remaining errors in either the text or musical transcriptions in this book are the result of my own oversights.

Charles Wolzien
August 2010

Renaissance Guitar History

General Background

Instrument and Tuning

The Renaissance guitar was a small and delicate instrument that was strung with four courses: the three lowest sounding courses contained two strings each while the highest was strung with one. Constructed of extremely thin pieces of wood, guitars of this period had a limited dynamic range that become softer in the higher reaches of the neck, and the use of multiple strings per course gave it a much more diffuse sound than that of the modern instrument.

Period sources by Pierre Phalèse (*Selectissima...in Guiterna Ludenda Carmina...* 1570: translations by Daniel Hertz) and Juan Bermudo (*Declaracion e instrumentos musicales*, 1555) give the normal intervalic tuning between courses as 4th, 3rd, 4th (from lowest to highest). A variant of this tuning was referred to as either *avalée* or *viejo* (in France and Spain respectively), which called for lowering the bottom, or fourth string, by one step (rendering the intervals of 5th, 3rd, 4th). While the pitch of the highest course was often cited as being an a' or g', in reality it was variable. Admonitions like that of Phalèse to “stretch the strings as high as possible and comfortable without breaking” demonstrates that the tensile strength of gut strings, as well as the size and construction of the instrument dictated tuning: it was not pitch, but intervals that were the determining factor. Bermudo said that the fourth course was strung with a high octave string while Phalèse documented the use of high octave strings on both the fourth and third courses. While no specific mention was made as to the position of these strings within the course, their order can alter the timbre produced by emphasizing either the low or high octave.

In addition to this standard four course guitar, there was also a five course instrument which, according to Miguel de Fuenllana, could have been tuned in a variety of ways. He included a limited number of pieces for this unusual guitar in his *Libro de musica para Vihuela, intitulado Orphenica lyra* of 1554 (translations by John Griffiths). The musical examples in this anthology are transcribed for guitars with a first string tuned to e' in order to accommodate performance on the modern instrument.

Finding gut strings that were true, and in tune, was always a problem. Players apparently tested the strings by stretching them between their thumbs and forefingers and then plucking them to see whether the vibration would appear as ‘one,’ or as ‘multiple’ images. In his *Les instructions pour le Luth* of 1574 Adrian Le Roy warned that “a false string is known by the show of many strings...when it is stricken between the fingers.” However,

even strings that tested true, and were of the same diameter, sometimes produced slightly different pitches, again resulting in faulty tuning.

Tuning problems also resulted from the improper positioning of the gut frets that were tied onto the neck of the instrument (unlike those on the modern instrument that are metal and inlaid in the fingerboard). While there is evidence that many Renaissance players fretted their necks in equal semitones that approximated modern guitars tuned in equal temperament, others used the ratios of Pythagorean intonation to position all, or some of the frets.

The anonymous French author of the 1556 *La manière d'entouher les lucs et guiternes* said that errors in fretting could be witnessed in “the most accomplished lute and guitar players as well as from little advanced apprentices.” To help remedy the situation, he offered guidance in setting frets through the use of Pythagorean ratios that were measured onto the neck with the use of a large compass. He paid special attention to the first seven frets, giving directions for locating the higher frets almost as an afterthought. In his *Selectissima* of 1570, Phalèse said that eight frets were normally placed on the guitar with the letter *i* designating the eighth fret; and any notes sounding above these were to be played on the neck “according to their order, just as if they had frets.” These higher ‘frets,’ the 9th through the 12th, he represented by the letters *klmn* (the letter *j* was not used). Phalèse went on to say that these notes were in the realm of the virtuoso players and “those who have long practice in the art.” He noted that these performers could play them perfectly, “as if they corresponded to frets on the fingerboard.”

The drawing of a guitar that appears in his *Selectissima* confirms the fact that the instrument’s dimensions will not accommodate the higher frets of *klmn*. However, some of the guitars that were used in France had longer necks which would have provided space to tie ten frets to the fingerboard: this is substantiated by the famous rendering of a guitar which appears on the covers of Guillaume Morlaye’s publications.

Indeed, these longer necked guitars may have been patterned after Spanish guitars of the period, because in Spain, guitarists routinely placed ten frets on the necks of their instruments, although Bermudo said that playing simple music required the use of only five or six frets. Bermudo’s instructions for finding the finding the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 7th, 9th and 10th frets with Pythagorean ratios are like those encountered in *La manière*, except that he recommended setting the remaining semitone frets by ear (see Endnote 1).

Sources and Notation

The following printed sources were used in making the transcriptions in this anthology (see Endnote 2):

- Alonso Mudarra *Tres libros de Musica...* 1546
- Melchior de Barberis *Opera Intitolata Contina...* 1549
- Simon Gorlier *Le Troysieme Livre...De Guiterne...* 1551
- Guillaume Morlaye
Le Premier livre...de Guiterne... 1552
Le Second livre...de Guiterne... 1553
Quatresme livre...de Guiterne... 1552
- Adrian Le Roy
Premier Livre de Tablature de Guiterre... 1551
Second livre de guiterre... 1555
Tiers livre de tablature de guiterre... 1552
Cinqiesme livre de guiterre... 1554
- Gregoire Brayssing *Quart livre de tablature de guiterre...* 1553
- Miguel de Fuenllana *Libro de musica para Vihuela, intitulado Orphenica lyra...* 1554
- Pierre Phalèse *Selectissima...in Guiterna Ludenda Carmina...* 1570.

Renaissance guitar tablature varied in format from country to country, but all of the different systems graphically showed players where to place their hands in order to pluck the correct pitches, and provided note values and bar lines as well. These bar lines usually correspond to the semibreve in sixteenth-century mensural notation (our whole note), the value normally used for beating time with the *tactus*. The *tactus* simply consisted of a raising and lowering of the hand (or the foot). In duple meter each hand motion coincided with a minim (our half note): in triple time, a *tactus inaequalis* was used in which the raising of the hand took twice the time of lowering it. Thus, in most cases, tablature made the undifferentiated pulse of the *tactus* ‘visible’ through the use of bar lines (mensural notation had no bar lines).

Transferring tablature into modern notation is best done by equating the semibreve with the half note (a 2:1 reduction of value) and combining two tablature bars into one modern measure. In the examples of duple meter (marked in tablature with the *a la breve* sign) and triple meter (often denoted by the **3** sign) below, the first line contains the mensural note values--semibreves and minims--with arrows representing the *tactus*; the second line contains the equivalent values in guitar tablature; and the third line gives the modern

FANTASIES *et al.*

Overview of Genre and Composers

Fantasies feature linear, contrapuntal writing and were admired due to the skill and sophistication they demanded of the composer. Witness the Englishman Thomas Morley's thoughts on the genre: "The most principal and chiefest kind of music which is made without a ditty is the fantasy, that is, when a musician taketh a point at this pleasure and wresteth and turneth it as he [will], making either much or little of it as shall seem best to his own conceit. In this may be more art be shown than in any other music because the composer is tied to nothing" (translation by Oliver Strunk).

It is significant that the published repertoire for the instrument was created by well educated priests, courtiers, and members of the rising bourgeois class, all of whom included the 'learned' fantasie in their publications. Both Alonso de Mudarra (a church canon in Sevilla) and Miguel Fuenllana (who served the Spanish court of Philip II) devoted half their guitar output to the genre, the latter contributing six fantasias for the five course guitar (the first extant pieces written for this instrument) and another six for the four course instrument. France far surpassed Spain in the amount of guitar music published, but fantasias make up a much smaller percentage of their repertoire. Competing Parisian publishers Adrian Le Roy and Guillaume Morlaye wrote six fantasias between them, the latter publishing an additional two fantasias written by his teacher Albert de Rippe, the preeminent Italian lutenist who served at the court of François I. Le Roy included two preludes in his *Tiers livre...* while Simon Gorlier composed three contrapuntal pieces--two loosely constructed canons and a *Duo*. The German expatriate Gregoire Brayssing wrote six fantasias and the Italian priest Melchoir Barberiis appended four short guitar fantasias to his publication for lute, but they are all dance-like in character and devoid of contrapuntal interchange.

Characteristics

Contrapuntal Texture

Like its relative the *ricercar*, the fantasie was inspired by the vocal motet, a form built of independent melodic lines that wind around each other as prescribed by the strict rules of counterpoint. Chords exist as by-products of the interwoven melodies, not as pillars supporting a single tune, which often give them a 'wandering' quality in comparison to dance music and grounds of the time. Fantasies are characterized by uneven phrase lengths and a continuous motion that is created in part from the elided and deceptive cadences that help to obliterate clear resting points.

The limited range of the guitar made it necessary to overlap and fuse melodic lines together, or to constantly drop and add them as space permitted, thereby creating an ever

1. Fantasia del primer tono

Alonso Mudarra

Moderato

5

9

13

17

21

25

C3

②

① ②

④

③ ④

④

GROUND BASS PATTERNS

Overview of Genre and Composers

Built of repeated chord progressions, ground compositions are vertical rather than horizontal in conception. Their characteristic harmonic progressions are found intertwined with dance forms and underpinning popular songs. Only a handful of solo grounds exist, most of which are included in the musical examples below by Mudarra, Phalèse, and Morlaye.

Characteristics

Bass Progressions

The chord progression of the romaneca is III-VII-i-V--III-VII-i-V-i: the conte clare is built on the reiteration of I-IV-V: the passamezzo antico was a dance associated with a i-VII-i-V--i-VII-i-V-i chord row while the passamezzo moderno exhibits a I-IV-I-V--I-IV-I-V-I sequence of chords. The i-V-i-VII-III-VII-i-V chord row associated with the later Folia can be found as an underlying structure in numerous Renaissance guitar songs and also appears in a variant form of V-i-VII-III-VII-i-V. Sometimes, rather than full rows, partial rows, or even short characteristic chordal relationships (like the VII-III-VII progression of the folia or the similarly diagnostic III-VII-i of the romaneca) were used in writing songs and dances.

The beginning of Brayssing's *La guerre faite a plaisir* (ex. 5) is constructed over a unique harmonic progression that incorporates the chromatically descending line of D-natural, C-sharp, C-natural, B-natural, A-natural and G-natural. Subsequent sections of this canzona-like composition are organized by variation writing, sequential figuration, changes in proportions, typical battle/fanfare motives, and dance rhythms. Part of a genre known as battle music, this *La guerre* commemorates the battle of Mühlberg in 1547 where John Frederick the Magnanimous and the armies of the Smalcaldic League were defeated by the Catholic forces of Charles V (Brayssing left Germany soon after the Reformation troops of the League were crushed).

Variation Writing

Some grounds were simple and unadorned, like the *Passemeze* (ex. 2--the passamezzo was also a dance, similar to the pavan, but faster in tempo). At the other end of the scale were grounds like Morlaye's *Conte clare* (ex. 4) which showcases the elaborate art of diminution writing (hemiola at the level of the half note pervades this ground, and occurs at the level of the quarter note as well, e.g. in measure five). In between these extremes are grounds like Mudarra's *Romanesca* (ex. 1) with variations that explore the higher

4. Conte Clare

Guillaume Morlaye

4

7

10

13

16

18

21

23

DANCES

Overview of Genre and Composers

Dance music pervaded Renaissance society. It played an important role in state functions and court ceremonies; it was eagerly embraced by the rising bourgeois class who, along with the aristocracy, were the targeted consumers of guitar publications of the period; and it provided entertainment for the lower classes, who enjoyed a more robust and rustic style of dancing than would have been encountered in refined court settings.

Like grounds, dances are the product of vertical thinking, and are mostly sectional in construction. Many of the popular dance tunes that were used in creating the French guitar repertoire appeared in earlier consort settings published by Pierre Attaingnant. While the easiest dances were clearly meant for beginners to study without needing to hire a personal tutor, the difficult and highly ornamented dances are more enigmatic, perhaps examples of how professionals might have improvised and ornamented a dance tune. The florid variations found in these pieces can well serve modern guitarists as templates for improvising their own ornaments, or for writing new diminution variations in order to create even longer and more intricate dances.

Given the popularity and importance of dance music, it is noteworthy that some composers avoided the genre altogether. Neither Gorlier nor Brayssing included any dances in their books, and there is only one dance in the entire Spanish guitar repertory--a pavan by Mudarra. The publications by Le Roy and Morlaye, on the other hand, are full of them: Le Roy published twenty seven branles, fourteen galliards, four pavan-galliard pairs, three allemandes, and a single example of the older basse danse-tourdion pair; Morlaye's books contain a total of thirty galliards, four pavan-galliard pairs, a buffons, a hornpipe, two almandes and eleven branles.

Characteristics

Dance Types

Basic step patterns were used to build a variety of different dances and adapted to serve in either duple or triple time. The combination of specific steps, quality of motion (leaps, landings, or changing weight from foot to foot), and tempo gave each dance its own distinctive character. [Since this volume deals mainly with French dances, the choreography in Thionot Arbeau's *Orchesography* (translated by Mary Evans) is cited below.]

The pavan and galliard were popular dances in the latter sixteenth century that were often paired together, linked by a similar tune and/or harmonic pattern. The pavan was a slow and stately processional dance consisting of *simples* and *doubles* that involved no-

2b. Gaillarde de la Gambe

Adrian Le Roy

1

3

6

9

12

15

17

Plus diminuée

SONG INTABULATIONS

Overview of Genre and Composers

Intabulations of vocal scores include renditions for solo guitar as well as voice with guitar accompaniment. The arrangements for solo guitar include some of the most challenging works in the repertoire. They were especially popular in France, appearing in every publication of the period: Le Roy arranged a handful of chansons, including a setting of the Italian tune *Chi dira mai* (ex. 5); Morlaye arranged 20 chansons and 3 villanesche; Brayssing 5 chansons and 5 psalms; and Gorlier's *Tiers livre...*, save for two canons and a duo, consists entirely of chanson intabulations (see Endnote 5).

Bermudo said that singing songs to the strummed accompaniment of the guitar was a popular pastime in Spain during the early decades of the sixteenth century (and a tradition that re-surfaced in the waning years of the century). While the practice may well have continued through the middle of the century, the only extant songs we have of this time are those in the publications by Le Roy and Fuenllana which were written in the *punteado* style. Like solo intabulations, the more literal guitar song accompaniments contain as many lines of the model chansons as would fit on the instrument, including the vocal part.

While only a handful of guitar songs were printed in Spain (one romance, one villancico, and two intabulations made from the masses of Juan Morales that are contained in Fuenllana's *Orphenica lyra*), Le Roy published two entire books of them in Paris. One of these volumes, the *Second livre...*, consists of voix de ville tunes arranged for guitar and the other, the *Cinq livre...*, contains many intabulations of chansons *a3* by Jacques Arcadelt. When Phalèse reprinted many of these Le Roy songs he presented them as solos, stripped of their mensural notation and texts. As a result, some scholars have concluded that the voice parts were simply included as references or *subjectum*, while others view them as bona fide songs: they are presented as true guitar songs in the transcriptions below.

The revival and study of ancient classical sources that so shaped and energized Renaissance thinking became manifest in music by the middle of the sixteenth century and led to a debate that focused on the relationship of text and music. Songs became a testing ground for balancing words and music in order to best express the meaning of the texts. Musical form could be used to reflect the subject matter of the text, or to amplify the mood of the poetry, as could the use of harmonic emphases (from subtle to blatant). Textual meaning could also be conveyed by strategically placed ground and/or dance underpin-

3. Helas mon Dieu

Jean Maillard

[See pages 26 and 27 regarding
blank measures and omitted beats]

S
A
T
B

Gregoire Brayssing Guitar Version 3a

Adrian Le Roy Guitar: Version 3b

4

4

C3 a m a m i

9. Que te sert

Trio

Jacques Arcadelt/Adrian Le Roy

The musical score is arranged for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), Voice, and Guitar. It is in the key of B major (three sharps) and 6/4 time. The score is divided into two systems, each containing three staves. The first system includes vocal parts and guitar accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal parts and guitar accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Que te sert a - mi d'etre ain - si, Pen - sif, so - li - taire et tran - si, Veu que tu as l'heur et l'ad -".

System 1:

- Soprano (S):** Treble clef, 6/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4.
- Alto (A):** Treble clef, 6/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4.
- Tenor (T):** Treble clef, 6/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4.
- Voice:** Treble clef, 6/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Lyrics: "Que te sert a - mi d'etre ain - si, Pen - sif, so -".
- Guitar:** Treble clef, 6/4 time. Chords: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4.

System 2:

- Soprano (S):** Treble clef, 6/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4.
- Alto (A):** Treble clef, 6/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4.
- Tenor (T):** Treble clef, 6/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4.
- Voice:** Treble clef, 6/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4. Lyrics: "li - taire et tran - si, Veu que tu as l'heur et l'ad -".
- Guitar:** Treble clef, 6/4 time. Chords: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4.

6

6

dres-se, De ser - vir si bell - le mai - tres - se, Et de qui

6

9

9

tu te peux van - ter D'a - voir la veue et le han -

9