

## Introduction

*"What avails it to know when the grandfather's uncle of a certain lutenist was baptized, or how many wives he had, if neither the lutenist's music nor a lute is procurable ?".* Thus wrote Arnold Dolmetsch in his book "The Interpretation of the Music of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries" in 1915.

How spoiled we are these days, we lovers of the lute. An ever increasing stream of CDs, websites, magazines; lute societies everywhere, and –builders, -virtuoso, -amateurs all around the world. Enough reason to show our respect and gratitude to the pioneers of this revival. But herein lies the problem: who of us remembers when, how and by whom our loved instrument was undusted and got its well-deserved place in the world of music ?

In the article below an attempt has been made to bring some of these pioneers back to our attention. These are not elaborate biographies, and completeness was not our purpose. The literature-list at the end will give more information.

## The very first pioneers – early music in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

There have always been individuals – even at the height of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic period – who were fond of early music. Composers like Pergolesi, Bach and Palestrina were never entirely absent in our collective musical memory.

For instance in Brussels early music could be heard, even in those days. Fétis and Mahillon had built an extensive collection of musical instruments, and obviously there was always the temptation not only to show those but also make them audible to an interested audience. Therefore young students of the conservatoire were encouraged to learn to play the fiddles, lutes and other archaic instruments that had been brought together there.

It is after attending such a "concert historique" in Brussels that a young Frenchman, who studied the violin with Vieuxtemps, got caught by the early music bug in such a way that he was to become the greatest pioneer of this revival. His name: Arnold Dolmetsch. Many books have been written about this eccentric character, and this is not the place to elaborate about his life. But one thing is certain : the oldest picture of a lute-player that you are likely to ever see, will undoubtedly show Dolmetsch, dressed in an Elisabethan costume and often surrounded by wife and children who play the viol or recorder. Dolmetsch favoured the so-called house music and strongly opposed virtuosity. He therefore played just about all instruments that he could lay his hands on. But most often he is portrayed with his lute, a 16<sup>th</sup> century instrument built by Michael Harton, presumably a pupil of Vendelio Venere (alias Wendelin Tieffenbrucker). Dolmetsch was the son of an organ builder and he was a very skilled instrument builder. During the course of his long life he built many lutes, selling them to pupils and other interested parties.

(picture 1 : Arnold Dolmetsch in his atelier).



During this period several attempts were made (in the absence of lutes) to build keyboard- or other instruments that would sound like a lute but were easier to play. The harp-builder Gustave Lyon amongst others invented a "harp-lute". In vain ! None of these hybrids could match the subtle sound and dynamic possibilities of authentic lutes (or even the copies built by Dolmetsch).

### **The lute during the first half of the 20th century**

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a movement was founded in Germany called "Wandervögel" (walking bird). During the next decennia similar organizations came to existence in large parts of Europe, using different names and banners. They were associated with love for nature and youth (and – sorry to say - by some with racial superiority). Within these groups the lute had a symbolic meaning, more than actually being played (unlike the recorder). In 1917 the magazine "Die Laute" was founded. It contained many folksongs arranged for voice and guitar or lute. The editor, Richard Möller, wrote many articles about early lute music and even a tutorial to read tablature. But all this remained in the amateur home-music atmosphere, and one could not expect much historically valuable research from this movement. One popular instrument in these circles was formed like a lute, but had the much heavier construction of a guitar. These "guitar-lutes" were almost solely built in Germany; every now and then you will find one in an antique-shop.

Meanwhile in Brussels (again !) an American citizen had arrived called Safford Cape, who would soon become one of the leading figures in the early music movement, as conductor of the group Pro Musica Antiqua. This ensemble was founded in 1933 and would bring us radio broadcasts, records and concerts during many years.

Musicologist Charles Van Den Borren was the father-in-law of Cape, and any performance under his supervision was guaranteed to have a scientific background and a high artistic level. Little is known about the lutenist(s) of Pro Musica Antiqua except that one was called Harrison, and that once a record entitled "Le Luth au 18ième siècle" (Musidisc "Richesse classique" 30RC790) was made by the "Trio au Luth de Bruxelles" which consisted of Safford Cape, M. Podolski en J. Tryssesoone.

As the guitar became more popular during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were those brave enough to combine guitar and lute. Serious constraints were the lack of luthiers, skills to read tablature and specific lute techniques. Among the happy few who mastered both instruments were the Swiss Herman Leeb, the Spanish master Emilio Pujol and Antwerpian Frans De Groodt. Regrettable enough Andres Segovia is not on of those, for – as George Bernard Shaw once wrote to Dolmetsch : "If Segovia could be convinced to play the lute, then the world would finally accept this as a serious instrument".



(picture 2 : Frans De Groodt)

## **The era of the first professional Early Music groups: 1950-1970.**

During this period Early Music really flourished in the whole western world. Numerous ensembles were founded some of which, e.g. the Boston Camerata, are still active. Basel, London, Vienna and Boston were centers of musical and musicological activity. An overview of the most important ensembles and their lutenists is in appendix 1.

This generation of musicians obviously did not just evolve from nothing. It was a clear symptom of the growing interest towards pre-baroque music with musicologists and in the world of music amateurs. Also during this period, good and affordable copies of recorders, lutes, viols and harpsichords became readily available.

A striking detail when looking at record sleeves of this period is, that so many groups consisted of multi-instrumentalists. Most of them played at least two completely different instruments, often more. In amateur circles this is still the case and you will for example find people who play the trombone, lute, recorder and viol in a most skilful way. But at a professional level this is of course not realistic. The era approached of the true specialists. People like Bruce Dickey (cornetto), Charles Toet (trombone) or Andrew Lawrence-King (harp) became such masters of one instrument that the most complex and difficult repertoire became playable once more.

By and by the lute, theorbo and chitarone also gained popularity. Here follows an overview of some pioneers of this era:

### *Joseph Iadone*

Iadone played the lute (and double bass) in the Yale University Collegium Musicum, lead by Paul Hindemith from 1940 to 1953 (although the instrument he plays on a photograph of that period, reminds us more of a large mandolin). Iadone was one of the first who made lute-playing his profession. He was part of the famous New York Pro Musica ensemble, and accompanied countertenor Russell Oberlin on two LPs from 1958, one with songs by Dowland and the other containing the Cantigas de Santa Maria. A lot of his solo-work has been republished on a CD entitled "The Art of the Lute" (Lyricord LEMS 8020).

Iadone described renaissance music as "... team music, not ego-music. It is all about listening and fitting in"

### *Diana Poulton (1903 – 1995)*

English lutenist, but more famous as musicologist, teacher and author. She studied three years with Arnold Dolmetsch, and then researched ancient tablature scores in London. Around 1935 she had become a friend of Suzanne Bloch with whom she formed a lute duo. Poulton published "John Dowland – his life and works" (1972), "The collected works of John Dowland" (1974), "Lute playing technique" (1981) and "A tutor for the renaissance lute" (1991). Until 1979 she was a lute teacher at the Royal College of Music, where she was succeeded by Jacob Lindberg. Amongst her many pupils were Christopher Wilson and Stephen Stubbs.

### *Suzanne Bloch*

Pupil of Arnold Dolmetsch, and daughter of the composer Ernest Bloch. In 1936 she played lute quartets with (amongst others) Arnold Dolmetsch, then eighty two years old (Dolmetsch having great difficulty mastering the rapid ornamentations in Vallet's music, on his tiny self-built soprano lute).

In the best Dolmetsch-tradition, Suzanne Bloch was a multi-instrumentalist who also played the recorder and virginals. When in 1939 the American Recorder Society was founded, she became the first president.

Allow me to quote an extract from Suzanne Blochs article "Saga of a twentieth century lute-pioneer", published in The Journal of the Lute Society of America in 1969:

*Around that time (1934) my saviour came in the person of Diana Poulton. I already had heard of "this other female lutenist" who also had studied with Dolmetsch. I was curious and also a bit envious, for during that time both of us felt we were the only one bringing the lute back to life. But when we then finally met, we became friends instantly. She told me about the three years studying the lute with the eccentric and tyrannical Dolmetsch, who made her play "All of Green Willow" over and over again until she ended in tears ! Diana and her husband Tom had inherited a folder with lute-tablatures from Peter Warlock. She fluently played all sorts of tablature, accompanying her husband who had a marvellous voice. Finally I heard a lute being played the way it should !*

*When I made some progress playing myself, Diana told me about the beautiful duets in "Jane Pickering's Lute Book". And shortly after that, those pieces came to life again for the first time in three centuries. Rudolph Dolmetsch – by far the most musical member of the clan – heard us play and was very enthusiastic. He asked us to play during the next early music festival at Haslemere in 1935, but not to tell "papa Dolmetsch" for he would certainly disapprove ...*

*... Playing the lute brings me an unsurpassed satisfaction. First I did not realize it but now I understand what many people of the young generation are looking for: the same longing for subtlety, purity, simplicity and an enormous rhythmic vitality. I felt so happy having played a simple piece error-free. It is a sheer joy making lute music sound the way it should.*

*Much later, when I toured the United States with Carl Dolmetsch, I also played recorder and virginal, but the difference with the lute was immense. As a lute soloist I discovered the magic that is created when a piece – however simple – is performed well. The audience was enchanted ! It was as if all the stress and noise of our present time were swiped away ...*

*Frans De Groodt (1892 – 1990)*

Guitar- lute- and mandolin player from Antwerp. He studied with Emilio Pujol and during the twenties of the previous century became a great promoter of the guitar in Flanders. His best known pupils are Victor Van Puijbroeck (who would later play the lute with the Consortium Antiquum lead by Jean-Pierre Biesemans), Godelieve Monden and his son David De Groodt.

*Desmond Dupré (1916 – 1974)*

Lutenist and viola-player. He was the regular accompanist of Alfred Deller starting 1948. Dupré also played in "early Early Music groups" as Musica Reservata, the Philomusica of London and the Saltire Singers. In 1959 he was one of the viola players on the very first recording on authentic instruments of the Brandenburg Concertos.

*Robert Spencer (1932 – 1997)*

English lutenist, who until his death was president of the Lute Society which he had co-founded in 1956. Spencer was with Dupré the regular accompanist of Alfred Deller. His collection of tablatures was legendary, and Spencer was always ready to lend these valuable manuscripts or prints to colleagues, or to have them published in facsimile. He also published lots of articles and studies.

*Julian Bream* was born in London in 1933. He studied the piano and composition on the Royal College of Music because at that time guitar studies were not yet available. Therefore he learned this instrument as autodidact, while playing the steel guitar to earn a living. Then the early music bug got to him as well. Bream taught himself the lute, becoming one of the few who combined both instruments successfully (although the instrument he played now is totally out of date; since Gerwig and Dombois made recordings using much lighter instruments, we are used to a much more subtle sound of the lute). Julian Bream once said: playing guitar is my job, playing the lute my hobby.

*Walter Gerwig* was the teacher of Michael Schäffer and Eugen Dombois. He was part of the Ulsamer-Collegium and the Camerata Academia of the Salzburger Mozarteum, and he accompanied amongst others Elly Ameling. But above all he was a very influential teacher who – although autodidact – made a huge impression on his students. Gerwig did not ask

for virtuosity but for temperament and musicality, and he asked them for instance "Tonleitern musikalisch zu spielen" (to play scales in a musical way), something very difficult to achieve.

#### *Michael Schäffer*

Schäffer was one of the first who abandoned guitar technique resolutely, and certainly did not want to be considered a guitarist. Playing without long fingernails was for him very important, as was the position of the right hand, thumb-index alternation, etc. Everything had to be done as described in the old tutorials or visible on paintings and drawings. Schäffer, Dombois and their pupils at the Musichochschule in Koln experimented until they mastered these techniques. Michael Schäffer died in 1978.

*Eugen Dombois (of Müller-Dombois)* is known primarily as teacher at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, where he taught a whole generation of marvellous lutenists: Hopkinson Smith, Paul O'Dette, Anthony Bailes, Toyohiko Sato, Rolf Lislevand and many others. Dombois also lead courses at the Eduard van Beinum Stichting in the Netherlands. He recorded with Concentus Musicus Wien, Concerto Amsterdam and Collegium Aureum. In 1988 a CD was published entitled "Baroque Lute" (Sony SBK60372).

#### *Joël Cohen*

American lutenist, composer, author, radio commentator and director. He studied for two years with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. As a director he worked two years at the national opera (la Monnaie) in Brussels. But Cohen is best known as the leader and inspirer of the Boston Camerata, an ensemble that made numerous recordings since 1968. On many of those he can be heard as lutenist. Early during his career Joël Cohen accompanied the Swiss countertenor Hugues Cuénod who already took part in the Monteverdi recordings directed by Boulanger during the thirties.

*Thomas Binkley* is best known as founder and leader of the influential Studio der Frühen Musik with whom he did a lot of important pioneering work. He also played in the Leonhardt-consort and the Early Music Consort. He taught during a long time at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. Among his many pupils are James Tyler en Paul O'Dette. In memory of Binkley, the "Early Music America" association honors a yearly "Binkley Award" since 1988.

*Konrad Ragossnig* was born in Klagenfurt. He studied guitar in Vienna and in 1961 won first prize in a concours in Paris. As lutenist he is autodidact, but declares to be influenced by Schäffer and Dombois. Yet he continued to combine guitar and lute, often during the same concert (although he admits this causes many problems and demands a lot of concentration). He accompanied Peter Schreier, Ian Partridge and Nigel Rogers, and taught at Basel, Vienna and Zürich. Scott in Mainz published his "Handbuch der Gitarre und Laute" in 1978.

#### *James Tyler*

Tyler studied with Joseph Iadone and Thomas Binkley and then joined New York Pro Musica, Musica Reservata, and the Early Music Consort of London. After the untimely death of David Munrow he tried to continue the Consort, renaming it London Early Music Group. Tyler recorded about 60 albums and at the moment teaches music history at the Thornton School of Music (California).

#### *Anthony Bailes*

This British lutenist studied at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis with Eugen Dombois. Afterwards he taught many courses and worked for a long time at the Sweelinck Conservatorium in Amsterdam. He was a member of the Ricercare-ensemble from Zürich, the Consort of Musicke and the Taverner Players. One of the lutes that Bailes uses during recitals was built by Matheus Pocht in 1519.

#### *Guy Robert*

French lutenist who studied with Madame de Chambure, Antoine Geoffrey Dechaume and Solange Corbin. He is co-founder of Ars Antiqua de Paris (1965) and the Ensemble Guillaume de Machaut (1974). With Eric Rohmer he collaborated on the film "Perceval le Gallois" for which Robert wrote the music. This was performed by the actors, and this led to the foundation in 1979 of the "Ensemble Perceval". Guy Robert contributed to over 30 recordings.

### **The "explosion" of the early music rage: 1970 to today**

As this article is dedicated to the pioneers and not their successors, I will limit myself to list those we encounter most frequently on record sleeves, concert notes and now and then on the radio :

First of all *Konrad Junghänel*, born in Cologne but equally at home in the Low Countries. He taught at the Conservatorium in Antwerp and contributed to productions of Concerto Vocale, la Petite Bande, and others.

The Flemish lutenist *Philippe Malfeyt* may be ranked amongst the great lutenists of our time. He studied guitar at the Conservatorium in Antwerp, but as lutenist he was self-taught until he started taking lessons from Anthony Bailes, Hopkinson Smith and Konrad Junghänel. In 1983 he got qualified as lutenist at the Royal College of Music in London. His career as lutenist started in the seventies with the ensemble Pandora, and afterwards one could hear him with Currende, Musica Polyphonica, les Enemis Confus, the Paul Rans ensemble and the Huelgas Ensemble. Philippe Malfeyt founded the group Romanesque who made some fantastic recordings.

*Hopkinson Smith* is known from numerous solo-recitals on renaissance- and baroque lute, vihuela, theorbo and baroque-guitar. He recorded over twenty solo CD's but also participated in ensembles as Hesperion XX and the Taverner Consort. Hopkinson Smith teaches at the prestigious Schola Cantorum Basiliensis.

*Anthony Rooley* founded The Consort of Music together with James Tyler, which he has led for many years. He also made several recordings with soprano Emma Kirkby.

*Toyohiko Satoh* studied guitar, cello and composition in his home country Japan. In 1968 he travelled to Basel to study with Eugen Dombois. Two years later Satoh recorded his first solo LP. He joined Syntagma Musicum, The Little Consort Amsterdam and the Baroque ensemble Ton Koopman. Satoh's own group is called Alba Musica Kyo and they perform music from the thirteenth to seventeenth century, as well as contemporary pieces. He is an accomplished composer, and he helped towards to the organization of a Library of contemporary Lute music in The Hague.

*George Weigand* was already a professional lutenist when he travelled from the USA to England. There he researched sixteenth century playing- and improvisation-techniques on stringed instruments. With his wife Rosemary Thorndycraft he formed the ensemble Extempore, emphasizing on improvised ornamentation. He also was a member of the Broadside Band with whom he recorded lots of beautiful music, until his death in 1999.

*Paul O'Dette* is an American born in Pittsburgh in 1954. As so many, he studied guitar first before dedicating himself fully to the lute. He was a member of the Studio der Frühen Musik, Concentus Musicus Wien and the Musicians of Swanee Alley. O'Dette recorded over a hundred CD's, five of which contain the complete solo works of John Dowland.

Hungarian born *Dániel Benkő* is best known as defender of the ingenious lute music of his compatriot Bálint (or Valentin) Bakfark, whose complete solo work he recorded on six LP's. Benkő also founded the Benkő consort and the Bakfark consort.

*Stephen Stubbs* studied lute, harpsichord and composition. Since 1980 this American lives in Germany where he joined the Musicalische Compagny and founded (together with Andrew Lawrence-King) the ensemble Tragicomedia. With Concerto Palatino Stubbs made some outstanding recordings.

*Jakob Lindberg* was born in Sweden in 1952. He studied the lute in London at the Royal College of Music. He joined the Taverner Players as continuo player, as well as the Academy of Ancient Music and the Consort of Musicke. In 1979 he succeeded Diana Poulton as teacher at the Royal College of Music.

*Nigel North* first studied violin and guitar, but since 1976 he has concentrated on playing continuo on lute and theorbo. He often played with London Baroque, the Taverner Players and the Academy of Ancient Music. But also as a soloist he made many recordings. North published a continuo method on lute and theorbo, as well as a tutorial for lutenists.

Some lutenist who recently were successful include *José Miguel Moreno*, *Rolf Lislevand*, *Paolo Cherici*, and *Ronn McFarlane*, while the course by *Andrea Damiani* ("Method for Renaissance Lute", Ut Orpheus edizioni 1999) is of great value to todays lute students.

## Suffix

As mentioned in the introduction, this article is meant to be accurate but not complete. Nothing was said about tutorials and manuals written by Stanley Buetens (1969), George Weigand (1977) and Pascale Boquet (1984). Nothing about the (re-) use of theorbo and chitarrone as continuo instrument, not only in baroque operas and concertos but also in smaller ensembles (e.g. The Palladian Ensemble). Yet this evolution also contributed to a remarkable new sound.

And the first important luthiers of the twentieth century were not part of this article : Michael Lowe, Stephen Gottlieb of Friedman Hellwig who measured and documented old instruments and published building plans. Later builders as David van Edwards, Joel van Lennep en Jacob van de Geest have not been mentioned. Perhaps a motivated and well-documented luthier can fill this gap ?

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### Appendix 1 : Overview of Early Music groups 1950 – 1970 and their lutenists

<b>ensemble</b>	<b>country</b>	<b>year</b>	<b>leader</b>	<b>lutenist(s)</b>
Pro Musica Antiqua	Belgium	1933	Safford Cape	M. Harrison
Deller Consort	UK	1948	Alfred Deller	Desmond Dupre / R. Spencer
New York Pro Musica	USA	1952	Noah Greenberg	Joseph Iadone
Boston Camerata	USA	1954	Narcissa Williamson (since 1968 : Joël Cohen)	Joël Cohen
Julian Bream Consort	UK	1960	Julian Bream	Julian Bream
Musica Reservata	UK	1960	Michael Morrow / John Beckett	Michael Morrow
Studio der Frühen Musik	Germany	196?	Thomas Binkley	Thomas Binkley
Musica Antiqua	UK	1962	Michael Uridge	Kevin Coates
Ars Antiqua de Paris	France	1965	Michel Sanvoisin / Joseph Sage / Guy Robert	Guy Robert
Early Music Consort of London	UK	1967	David Munrow	James Tyler
The Consort of Musick	UK	1969	Anthony Rooley / James Tyler	Anthony Rooley / James Tyler
Musica Aurea	Belgium	1970	Jérôme Lejeune	Philippe Lemaigre