

Chapter I - Introduction

With the growth and popularization of lute continuo over the past two decades, it seems appropriate to devote some research to the details of stylistic continuo interpretation of various genres. The cavalier songs of 1630-1670 are worthy of this attention as a relatively rarely performed and sometimes misunderstood repertory. The term “cavalier” is a reference to the cavalier poets John Donne, Ben Johnson, Thomas Carew, and their contemporaries, whose works inspired the composers of their age. They were men of the court and royalists, and their generally light and forthright verses were a last flowering of aristocratic self-confidence before the dark days of the Civil War.

It should be mentioned at the outset that this study is meant to be of use primarily to lute players. While keyboardists may find much of it useful, they may want to be wary of imitating the lute idiom, since many rules of voice leading that would apply to the keyboard are set aside. Many decisions in lute accompaniment are based on the very specific requirements of the instrument and its playing technique, and it would be wrong to imitate them verbatim on keyboard. Keyboardists who borrow this repertory may want to use the stylistic elements suggested in this work but create their own realizations that follow the rules of counterpoint laid out in the period treatises intended for keyboard.

The dates picked for the study are somewhat arbitrary; they are meant to encapsulate the English solo song repertory between the end of the Golden Age lute song for which lute accompaniments were generally intabulated and the second wave of French and Italian influenced song that arrived at the English court with Charles II’s restoration to the throne in 1660. The literary significance of the cavalier song poetry, as well as the

historical and biographical details of the poets, composers, and singers, will be left to other writers; this work will concentrate on the challenges and questions that the cavalier songs present to lute accompanists.¹ After a brief explanation in this first chapter of the instruments, sources, and history leading up to the period of basso continuo practice in England, Chapter II will analyze eight manuscripts with intabulated song accompaniments to identify elements of performance style and, to a lesser extent, harmonic language, and provide some ground rules that can be applied loosely for creating lute accompaniments. Chapter III will examine two writings on continuo practice from the period that address primarily the issue of harmony, with supplementary information on performance style. Chapter IV will present several fully realized accompaniments that apply the concepts gleaned in Chapters II and III.

The choice of the type of continuo lute – its size, range, and tuning – has a dramatic effect on the sound of the accompaniment and the stylistic vocabulary available to the player. However, modern lutenists have, for the most part, made somewhat limited choices regarding the instruments used in continuo playing and have applied these choices more or less universally to every genre that they play. The reasons for this are understandable. Professional performers in our time are expected to play music from many different periods over the course of a season, and it would be difficult and expensive to own, maintain, and practice the large number of instruments that would be appropriate for each nationality, epoch, and genre. Modern continuo players tend to concentrate on two instruments: the mid- to large-size Italian theorbo with the first and second courses in re-entrant tuning (down an octave from the usual Renaissance lute pattern), and the archlute. This combination is fairly flexible, as the instruments are

¹ For brief biographies and sources on the cavalier poets see Anniina Jokinen, “English Literature: Early Seventeenth Century,” *Luminarium*, <http://www.luminarium.org/lumina.htm>, 2000-2004.

tuned a tone apart, in A and G respectively, and thus easily cover a wide range of keys. Due to their long bass extensions, they are also the loudest of the known continuo lutes, allowing players to be heard in an orchestra, the bread and butter of modern continuo work. They are a logical choice for a lutenist seeking the widest range of musical possibilities for the job at hand, but by themselves they cannot address every musical situation. In the case of the cavalier songs, recent research has revealed that these two instruments were little known in England during the early and middle seventeenth century, and that other instruments were used in their place.

Separate from the choice of instrument is the issue of harmony, which is often ambiguous in the unfigured or partially figured basses of the cavalier song repertory. Continuo accompaniments by definition are not realized; the premise was that a competent and stylistically informed player would supply a realization from a simple bass line. In seventeenth-century song, the bass lines of the French *air de cour*, Italian monody, and English cavalier song all share some characteristics and developed at approximately the same time. It would be expedient and in some ways logical for a player to use the same approach to harmony in all three styles. There are, however, primary sources on continuo playing specific to the cavalier songs that can be used to establish boundaries for the harmonic language of the realization – the most notable and pertinent to this study being Matthew Locke’s *Melothesia* and Thomas Mace’s *Musick’s Monument*, both of which will be examined in chapter III.

While many harmonic choices are clear, there is little implied by the cavalier song bass lines that can help the player choose from among the many stylistic possibilities for accompaniment of which the lute instruments are capable. In the case of the cavalier song there is a large body of intabulated accompaniments that show a highly developed, and in

many cases consistent, style that often runs counter to the instincts many of us have developed by accompanying Italian music on the theorbo or archlute. These intabulated accompaniments run the gamut from amateur and technically limited attempts by students to masterful realizations by self-accompanied song composers like John Wilson and Charles Coleman. In addition, Mace's *Musick's Monument* demonstrates an elaborate, virtuosic approach to the theorbo that may apply to song accompaniment style. These sources offer a wealth of possibilities for the development of a historically stylistic approach to accompanying the cavalier songs.

The continuo lutes for the cavalier songs

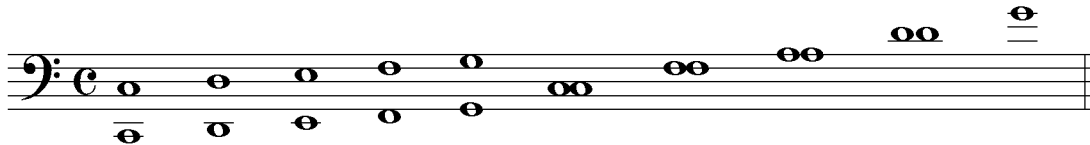
Several writers have addressed the confusion of nomenclature for continuo lutes with multiple pegboxes, most notably Robert Spenser, whose *Chitarrone, Theorbo, and Archlute* was the first and most complete attempt.² More recently, Lynda Sayce and Matthew Spring reexamined the subject of the continuo lutes that were used in England throughout the period covered in this study, and their findings will be the basis for what is summarized below. Sayce listed the manuscripts of the cavalier songs with intabulated lute parts, along with examples showing the ranges and tunings of the lutes that would most likely have been used to realize the tablature. She identified the three basic types of lutes: the 10-course Renaissance lute, the 12-course double-headed French lute, and the English theorbo with twelve or more courses. She then associated each instrument with the intabulated song manuscripts that seemed to fit their range and stringing, observing that in general the 10-course lute was employed at the beginning of the period as a hold-over from the Golden Age lute song tradition, that the 12-course lute became popular

² Robert Spenser, "Chitarrone, Theorbo, and Archlute" *Early Music*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Oct. 1976), pp. 407-423.

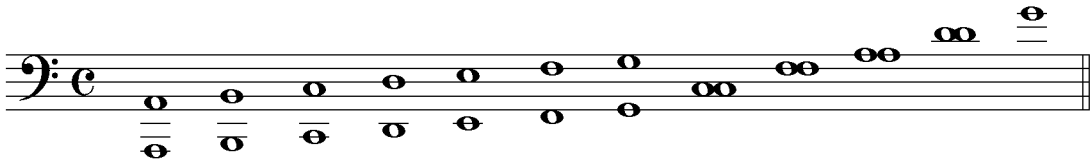
between 1620 and 1630 after being introduced from France, and that the English theorbo came into use around mid-century. The instruments are tuned in the following manner:

Example 1.1, lute tuning

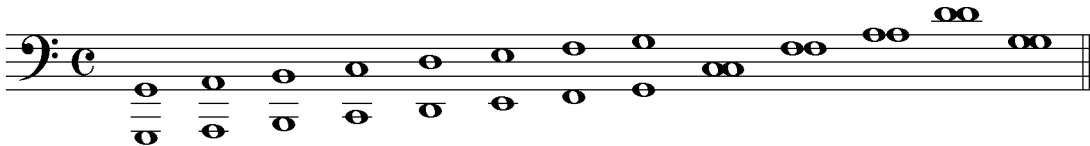
10-course lute:



12-course lute:



English theorbo:



The manuscripts are assigned by her to the various instruments as follows:³

A. 10-course lute

1. New York Public Library Drexel MS 4175 (*Ann Twice, Her Book*)
2. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Mus. Sch. f.575

³ Lynda Sayce, "Continuo Lutes in 17th- and 18th-century England," *Early Music*, Vol. 23, No. 4, (Nov. 1995), pp. 667-84.

3. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Don. c.57
4. Yale University Filmer MS A.14

B. 12-course lute

1. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Mus. b.1 (John Wilson MS)
2. London, British Library MS Egerton 2013

C. English theorbo with first course down an octave

1. Lambeth Palace Library MS 1041 (*Lady Ann Blount Song Book*)
2. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Broxbourne 84.9

Sayce made her assessments concerning appropriate lutes for each manuscript based on two criteria: 1) the range (in number of courses) used in the intabulations, and 2) whether the top string of the instrument was tuned in the normal fashion of Renaissance lute tuning or was tuned down an octave, the so-called re-entrant tuning. Other pieces of evidence that both she and Matthew Spring bring into the discussion are the many English paintings of lutenists with their instruments and written descriptions of lutes from a number of period sources. They reach several important conclusions, the most significant of which is that the words “theorbo” or “theorbo-lute” are used indiscriminately and could have referred to any member of the lute family in Renaissance tuning with any arrangement of courses, re-entrant or not. In England, “theorbo” seems to have been a general term used to refer to a lute in some form of Renaissance tuning used for accompaniment, rather than a lute for solo pieces that was possibly tuned to one of the new interval patterns made popular in France near the beginning of the seventeenth century. They further confirm that the 12-course double-headed lute in Renaissance tuning without a re-entrant top string was extremely popular throughout the cavalier song

period and was perhaps the continuo instrument of choice for much of the century. The number of intabulated songs that imply the use of the English theorbo with a single re-entrant course is not extensive, and they seem to appear later in the century, indicating that this instrument may not have been as ubiquitous as was thought until recently.

None of these conclusions can be proven to the point of being able to say that certain composers' works should only be played on a particular instrument. Manuscripts may not always employ all of the courses contained on an instrument that could have been used, and they are sometimes ambiguous about the tuning of the top string; some passages implying Renaissance tuning and others re-entrant. However, the significance of their conclusions is that they point to a variety of available instruments and imply that the non-re-entrant, smaller lutes probably had a larger function in continuo playing than previously supposed. The implication for modern players is that they need to explore all three instruments. Of the suggested instruments, only the 10-course Renaissance lute is commonly used by present day continuo players. Neither of the two instruments commonly used today – the 14-course Italian theorbo with two re-entrant courses or the 14-course archlute – found much favor in England during the period under discussion. The Italian theorbo made an early appearance there, but it did not seem to achieve much popularity, and the archlute was not used in England until the end of the century.

The size of the cavalier song repertory, sources used and omitted

The cavalier song repertory is large, with over fifteen hundred songs in almost forty manuscripts and at least sixteen prints containing several hundred more.⁴ While many of the manuscripts present the songs anonymously, the prints attribute the songs to a long list of composers who are little known as of this writing, together with the most famous and in some cases the most prolific, such as Robert Johnson, Nicholas Lanier, John Wilson, Charles Coleman, and William and Henry Lawes. The lesser composers include names like Walter Porter, William Child, John Gamble, William King, Robert King, and many more. These men worked and composed for the stage, court, and private houses; they ranged in the social strata from courtiers and diplomats to wealthy amateurs, churchmen, and singing actors. Court pay records indicate that many of them both played the lute and sang, so it can be assumed that they performed their own songs to their own accompaniment.⁵

Of the primary sources available, several were deemed to be outside the topic area and were omitted from the study. In Chapter II, the comparative analysis of the manuscripts of songs with intabulated accompaniments, two manuscripts were omitted: London, British Library Additional Ms. 15117 and Tokyo, Nanki Music Library Nanki n-4/42 (c.1690-1720). The former has been dated between 1614 and 1616 and is too early for this study, containing mostly Elizabethan lute solos and lute songs by Diomedes Cato, Dowland, Morley, and Jones, along with a song to the viol by Hume.⁶ The Nanki

⁴ Matthew Spring, *The Lute in Britain: A History of the Instrument and its Music*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Tables on pp. 379, 380, 388-89.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 325

⁶ *English Song, 1600-1675, Part I*, ed. Elise Bickford Jorgens, (London: Garland Publishers Inc., 1986), see introductory notes.

manuscript refers to music from a much later period. Detailed descriptions of all the intabulated song manuscripts will follow later, and they have been studied in depth by Lynda Sayce and Matthew Spring.

In addition to manuscripts with intabulated accompaniments, there is elaborate figuration in mensural notation added in a period hand to five songs in five consecutive volumes of Henry Playford's *Banquet of Music* (1688-91) but, again, these contain later composers such as Robert King, Henry Purcell, and John Blow. They are interesting for their sheer virtuosity, and their range indicates they may have been intended for a lute, but they lie well outside this study, belonging to the post-restoration period.⁷

Of the seventeenth-century English writings on continuo practice, only Matthew Locke's *Melothesia* and Thomas Mace's *Musick's Monument* fall squarely within the tradition of the cavalier song composers and are included in chapter III, the study of continuo writings. Although both works were probably written in the 1670s, they look back to the era of the cavalier song, as that chapter's introduction will explain. Other very important works fall just outside this topic and were excluded. John Blow's small treatise in British Museum Add. 34072, ff.1-5 was probably written around the time of *Melothesia*. While it contains all of Locke's harmonic language as a subset, it also looks forward to the new French and Italian styles that arrived with the return of the monarchy of Charles II, detailing chord progressions that for the most part do not apply to the cavalier songs. *The False Consonances of Musick* (1682) by Nicola Matteis is a continuo method for the guitar, and like Blow's treatise, it deals with a harmonic language that postdates the cavalier songs. It resides completely in the idiom of the guitar with little application to lute style. Also omitted was Glasgow University Library (Euing Ms. R.D.

⁷ Peter Holman, "Continuo Realizations in a Playford Songbook," *Early Music*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (Apr. 1978), pp. 268-269

43), a period lutenist's transcription of parts of Matteis' guitar treatise. Finally, one should be aware of John Playford's *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick*, which was printed in fourteen editions from 1653 to 1730. While the earlier editions have some relevance to the world of the cavalier song, they provide little specific insight into lute accompaniment practice.

Background to English song accompaniment

By the early 1600s, the practice of basso continuo on lute, theorbo, and other instruments was already firmly established in Italy. Writings on continuo practice by Viadana, Agazzari, Banchieri, and Bianciardi, as well as compositions using figured and unfigured bass notation by Peri, Caccini, Cavalieri, and many others indicate the existence of a tradition that had its beginnings in the previous century. The treatises show musicians' desire to learn and perfect continuo playing, while the many published compositions using basso continuo notation reflect the fluency that performers had achieved. Between 1600 and 1630, over 130 collections of secular vocal music were published in Italy with continuo intended for chitarrone.⁸

Despite the fact that some English musicians such as Martin Peerson and Richard Deering traveled to Italy in the first decade of the seventeenth century, acceptance of the basso continuo and the new vocal style that it was designed to enhance came much later to England. The school of English lute song was still flourishing at the beginning of the seventeenth century, preserving a compositional practice drawn from the Italian madrigal style of the mid-sixteenth century that had been transplanted to England by way of publications such as *Musica Transalpina* and by musicians who traveled to Italy, John

⁸⁸ Kevin Mason, *The Chitarrone and its Repertoire in Early Seventeenth-Century Italy*, (Aberystwth, Wales: Boethius Press, 1989), pp. 118-136.

Dowland being a prominent example.⁹ Evidence of the popularity of this older style can easily be seen in John Dowland's *First Book of Songs*, which was printed first in 1597 and then reprinted in 1600, 1603, 1606, and 1613. This book was laid out in table format so the songs could be performed either by solo singer and lute or by up to four singers or instrumentalists. The intabulated lute part was a short score of the three lower vocal parts, preserving the counterpoint of the four-part vocal original whenever possible. Although John Dowland's son Robert decided to dispense with the three lower vocal parts in his song collection *A Musical Banquet* (1610), and although Golden Age lute composers including John Dowland eventually experimented with a more declamatory vocal style, lute accompaniments up through the 1620s were generally intabulated and had a contrapuntal texture to varying degrees.

Two English writings on music from this period discuss composed song accompaniment but do not mention continuo practice. Thomas Morley's *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music* (1597 and 1608) is written to teach the late-Renaissance compositional style of the book's dedicatee, William Byrd. Morley's discussion of descant tells us a great deal about his viewpoint as a theorist:

The name of descant is usurped of the musicians in divers significations; sometime they take it for the whole harmony of many voices, others sometime for one of the voices or parts: last of all they take it for singing a part extempore upon a plainsong, in which sense we commonly use it...¹⁰

⁹ Nicholas Yonge, *Musica Transalpina*, London 1588, (Facimile ed. Farnborough, England: Gregg International Publishers, 1972)

¹⁰ Thomas Morley, *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music*, Edited by R. Alec Harman, forward by Thurston Dart, (London: Dent Publishers, 1952), p. 140.

Morley continues to explain improvisation over plainsong, a skill that had been treated by theorists since the Middle Ages. Morley, like many music theorists through the ages, tended to look to the past. His purpose was to present an English equivalent of the great theoretical works of Heinrich Glarean and Gioseffo Zarlino, who themselves were conservatives more concerned with describing established traditions than the practices of their immediate contemporaries.

Charles Butler's *The Principles of Music in Singing and Setting* (1636) is equally out of step with the seventeenth-century Italian practice. Butler treats the hexachord system, the Greek note names, and the Guidonian scale in the ancient tradition of music theory treatises. He concentrates on the fundamentals of note against note composition, uses the study of canon as a teaching aid, and stresses the careful control of dissonance. He instructs his readers to study the works of Clemens, Vecchi, Alfonso Ferrabosco II, Marenzio, Taverner, Parsons, Bull, Dowland, Tallis, Byrd, Morley, and others, and also mentions the contemporary composers, Thomas and John Tomkins as excellent models. He mentions no Italians of the *seconda prattica*, nor any song writers of his own times, such as Nicholas Lanier and John Wilson.¹¹

In spite of this slow beginning, declamatory song with lute continuo accompaniment found its way to England through several avenues near the beginning of the seventeenth century, and by 1620 it was supplanting the Golden Age lute song tradition. The introduction to Gulio Caccini's *Le Nuove Musiche*, essentially an instruction manual for singing in the new declamatory style, was

¹¹ Charles Butler, *The Principles of Musik in Singing and Setting*, Introduction by Gilbert Reaney, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), p. 92.

translated into English and published by John Playford in nine consecutive editions of his *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick* and must have received wide distribution.^{12 13} Robert Dowland's *A Musical Banquet* mentioned above presented English lute song, French *airs de cour*, and Spanish airs, along with Italian monody by Caccini, Domenico Maria Megli, and another unidentified Italian. Although the lute parts were presented in tablature rather than with a figured bass, there must have been significant interest in this new foreign music to warrant its inclusion. The Italian singer/lutenist Angelo Notari arrived in England around 1610 and served at court from 1625 until his death in 1663. He published *Prime Musiche Nuove* in 1613, songs for various groupings of voices with only a bass line accompaniment, suitable to theorbo continuo.¹⁴ While the song texts were in Italian, the introduction in English was certainly intended to win over an English audience. Nicholas Lanier, who would emerge as a defining force in the cavalier song, traveled to Venice in 1610 and made numerous trips to Italy during his long service at court. He participated with others in translating the idiom of declamatory song into an English format. He was then able to popularize this new style through his vast influence as Master of Musick to Charles I. Many lutenist composers participated in this new art form, including William and Henry Lawes, Charles and Edward Coleman, John Wilson, William Webb, and many anonymous non-professional musicians.

¹² Gulio Caccini, *Le Nuove Musiche*, (Florence, 1601).

¹³ Ian Spink, "Playford's 'Directions for Singing After the Italian Manner,'" *The Monthly Musical Record*, (July-Aug. 1959), pp. 130-135.

¹⁴ Angelo Notari, *Prime Musiche Nuove di Angelo Notari a una, due, et tre voci, per Cantare con la Tiorba et altri stromenti*, (London, 1613).