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Matthew Spring. *The Lute in Britain: A History of the Instrument and Its Music*.

(Oxford Early Music Series.) Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. xxxii + 536 pp. illus. bibl. index. \$150. ISBN: 0-19-816620-6.

As Matthew Spring writes in the preface of his book, the lute was one of the most important musical instruments in Europe from late medieval times up to the eighteenth century. The lute was used as a solo instrument, in combination with other instruments, or with voices. Since the revival of interest in the lute in the early twentieth century, numerous monographs, dissertations, and articles have been written on this once-popular instrument. There is, however, no comprehensive book on either the instrument or its music, perhaps because of the vastness of its literature and repertory. Scholars, therefore, limit themselves to focusing on a specific genre such as sources, performance practices, notation, playing techniques, tuning, lute construction, or iconography. Spring's book is the first attempt to trace a history of the lute in Britain (including Scotland) from the earliest known documents of about 1285 to its decline in the early eighteenth century.

The history of the lute in Europe may be divided into three phases. The "Medieval" phase starts with the invention of the lute (most likely based on the Arabic *ūd*) in Spain in the mid-thirteenth century and ends with the declining use of the medieval monophonic ensemble style in the late fifteenth century. The "Renaissance" phase, spanning from the late fifteenth century to the third decade of the seventeenth century, is marked by the development of the polyphonic solo style and the invention of lute tablature. The "Baroque" phase, characterized by the use of the *style brisé* for unmeasured preludes and dance movements, ends with the disappearance of the lute in the late eighteenth century. The cultivation of the lute in England coincides with this sequence, but with some minor and significant differences. Spring provides introductory chapters on topics that took place on the continent such as the invention of the lute, the development of the polyphonic manner of solo playing, and the transitional style of lute playing from the Renaissance style to the Baroque style.

That there is no surviving lute music before the mid-sixteenth century is perhaps the greatest mystery in the history of the lute in England. It is in contrast to the movements on the Continent where lute tablature was invented in the late fifteenth century and Ottaviano Petrucci published the first printed lute books in 1507. The cultivation of the lute in England in the first half of the sixteenth century can only be glimpsed from courtly documents on professional lutenists, literary references, and amateurs' commonplace books. The recruitment of continental virtuoso lutenists to the Royal Court points to the domination of foreign lute music, particularly that of Italy.

A major portion of Spring's book is devoted to the most significant period in the history of English lute music. The years between 1580 and 1625 are often regarded as the "Golden Age" of English lute music. According to Spring, there sur-

their own style of solo lute music, lute songs, and mixed consort music. Their innovations influenced the continental lutenists and keyboard players.

The period between 1625 and 1660 is marked as the age of imitation and influence by the French lutenists who developed a new lute style of *style brisé*. The sources from this period use the "new" d-minor tuning as well as the transitional tunings developed by the French lutenists, although the pieces in the "old" tuning were still in circulation. The social and political unrest and the rise of the viol, violin, and keyboard contributed to the decline of the lute and its eventual disappearance in the early eighteenth century.

Spring offers a comprehensive treatment of the history of the lute in Britain, a formidable task considering its long and complex history. His detailed descriptions and analysis of the primary sources are accurate and helpful. His handling of the secondary sources is commended, although he tends to rely heavily on British research. Spring's *The Lute in Britain* is recommended to scholars who are interested in the history of British instrumental and vocal music.

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