

**PART ONE**

**THE WANING AND WAXING OF THE VIOL:**

**A Historical Survey**

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New York City, June 1995.

## TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>EM</b>	<b>Early Music</b>
<b>HP</b>	<b>Historical Performance</b>
<b>IAM</b>	<b>International Arts Manager Magazine</b>
<b>JVdGSA</b>	<b>Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America</b>
<b>MQ</b>	<b>Musical Quarterly</b>
<b>MT</b>	<b>The Musical Times</b>
<b>VdGSGB</b>	<b>Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain</b>

The idea of a catalogue came first. As a professional cellist and later a gambist as well, I was always interested in new music. I have performed and recorded a fair amount of it. In the case of the viol I have taught classes and conducted workshops on twentieth-century consort music, and because of my identification with it, I have met several composers and collected some materials over the past twenty years. Since 1989 I have helped organize three competitions for new viol works. As the artistic director of the New York Consort of Viols since its formation in 1972, I have commissioned several compositions for viol consort.

To make this music accessible to other players, students and composers, I conceived the idea of a catalogue. Only two weeks ago I received an inquiry about just such a catalogue from a professional viol duo in Montreal, concrete evidence of the value of my project.

During the course of my doctoral studies I saw the importance of tracing the history of the viol from the performer's viewpoint, in order to provide a context for the catalogue. The course of the viol was not smooth, nor was it continuous or linear. The role of the viol changed, as did its construction and its playing technique, adapting to the demands being made by composers who represented the changing styles of successive periods.

The viol first appeared at the end of the fifteenth century in Spain and by mid-sixteenth century it had been accepted, along with the lute and other soft indoor instruments, for music-making in court circles. Like other Renaissance instruments, such as the

recorder, viols were built in various sizes, corresponding roughly to the ranges of the human voice.

The viol made its way northward through Europe and into England, where it became a favorite instrument for recreational chamber music in the seventeenth century. The finest composers in England's history wrote for consorts of viols. With the accession to the throne of Charles I, the viol and its fantasias began to lose favor, as the violin and French dance music were preferred by the king and his followers. Music was being written in which the top line was dominant. The equal-voiced music of Byrd and Gibbons was being replaced by French dance suites and Italian sonatas.

By the eighteenth century the cello had developed from an unwieldy bass instrument into one capable of playing a solo melodic line. One critical factor in this development was the invention of silver-wound strings. The viol had lost its competitive edge.

For a period of years at the beginning of the nineteenth century the viol seemed to disappear completely. When it resurfaced, the world had changed. Instrument builders and players had to cope with demands being made by public performing spaces and a new audience. As the viol was making a comeback, collectors were dusting off the old instruments and cellists were learning to play them. One of the pioneers in the movement to revive the viol along with the harpsichord, the recorder and the lute, was Arnold Dolmetsch, 1858-1940.

In the twentieth century this revival of instruments and of their repertoire reached a crescendo. Today there is an explosion of activity among instrument builders, would-be players and ensembles, both amateur and professional. Early music festivals have

become a familiar feature of concert life, workshops are proliferating and performers are focussing their programs more and more narrowly as they specialize and perfect their craft.

As we trace the fluctuating fortunes of the viol during its four-hundred-year history, we find recurring themes. One of the oldest is the relationship between the amateur and the professional. For the first part of its existence, during the Renaissance, the viol was primarily an instrument for the amateur. This amateur was a serious student of the instrument, who spent many hours perfecting his/her playing skills. Music-making was recreational or for specific occasions such as wedding celebrations or other social gatherings. It was not until the eighteenth century, with its growing middle class, that public performances were held solely to attract listeners. The professional performers were of a lower social class than the amateurs. Since the violin had become musically respectable after a period during which it was looked down upon as a dancing master's fiddle, it, along with the cello and the viola was associated with the professionals, while the viol tended to keep its identity as an instrument for the amateur. Of course there were exceptions, as in the case of gambist Carl Friedrich Abel (1723-1787), who had a devoted following among concert-goers, especially in London, where he practiced his career in his later years.

The line between professional and amateur was not always easy to draw. Arnold Dolmetsch, who paraded his family before the public in his self-produced concerts, was not infrequently accused of a less-than-professional level of performance. Today there is a large proportion of amateurs among viol players everywhere. Their level of playing varies widely from novice to highly skilled. The social class which they reflect tends to be middle to upper middle-class college-educated, a close match to their

professional mentors. Amateurs form the foundation of today's audience for viol performances.

The much-discussed and overworked issue of 'authenticity' is another recurrent topic in the story of the viol, especially from the early years of its revival. The concern of both luthiers and performers with historical correctness has manifested itself in different ways. Makers today are more respectful of earlier craftsmanship, preserving objects rather than reconstructing them. Viol players' pursuit of historically-informed performance becomes narrower. The nineteenth-century preoccupation with the use of frets gave way to the investigation of correct bowing and fingering techniques, to the search for the distinction between sixteenth- and seventeenth-century playing styles and instruments. Each phase of this endless hunt for the ultimate musical truth creates the impetus for the next. It is the preoccupation with 'authenticity' which fuels the early music movement and at the same time strengthens its detractors.

One of the most positive features of the viol revival is a renewed interest by many composers in writing for the viol. Many twentieth-century works already exist, and contests elicit more. The music varies in length, difficulty and style. Some pieces were written with the amateur in mind, while others find their way to the concert stage. Some are inspired by music of the past while others strike out in new directions. With at least four hundred years of viol music to draw on, composers today have a rich heritage. For those interested in forging new paths, the viol offers many possibilities.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE APPARENT DEATH OF THE VIOL

During the last forty or fifty years, there has been an extraordinary development in western instrumental music. Various referred to as the "early music" movement, the "original instruments" movement, the "period instrument" movement and the "historical performance" movement, it has significantly altered concert offerings both in the western world and outside, it has affected the playing of even the most rigid adherents of the mainstream approach to earlier repertoire, and it has supplied the growing number of amateurs in today's society with many hours of recreational playing. The viol became a part of this movement relatively late. After the reawakening of the harpsichord and other early keyboard instruments came the recorder, and later the viol family.

The viol is a fascinating case study. It first appeared on the musical scene in Spain at the end of the 15th century<sup>1</sup> and worked its way northward through Europe. By the early 16th century the English Tudors had made its acquaintance.<sup>2</sup> Over a period of three hundred years the viol gained favor as both a solo and ensemble instrument before its apparent demise at the end of the eighteenth century. The reasons for this demise are several, and will be the subject of this chapter.

The viol was one of the most important bowed strings in the world of the Renaissance court musician, along with its predecessor, the vielle. The viol family led a largely separate existence for about one hundred years until it began more and more

<sup>1</sup> Ian Woodfield, *The Early History of the Viol* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 61

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

frequently to share the company of the violin. The process was gradual and its intensity varied from country to country. When the cello first appeared on the scene as a solo instrument in the seventeenth century, it was not serious competition for the more sophisticated viol. By then it was the bass viol that had come to represent the viol family as soloist.

The viol began in Spain as an instrument of one size. Called *vihuela de arco*, it was the bowed version of the guitar-like *vihuela de mano* and, like the guitar, it had a flat bridge. The Borgia family of Valencia, Spain may have been responsible for the introduction of the Spanish viol to Italy, since two Borgias became popes (in 1455 and 1492.) Italy soon became an important part of the viol's itinerary through the continent. It was in Italy in 1495 that Isabella d'Este has been credited with creating more sizes of viol and adding curved bridges.<sup>3</sup> The instrument first appeared in just those areas of Italy where these Aragonese exerted the most influence.<sup>4</sup> Italian noble families embraced the viol. The *vihuela de arco* was named the *viola da gamba*, or "leg viol." It became an integral part of the Italian aristocratic life style. In Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (The Book of the Courtier, 1528) music for viols was described as "suave and exquisite." The d'Este family, as we have seen, showed more than a passing interest in the instrument. Isabella's brother Alfonso ordered three instruments in 1499 and three years later performed in public.<sup>5</sup> It was in Italy that the first treatises for viol were written, *Regola Rubertina* by Sylvestro Ganassi in Venice, 1542 and *Trattado de glosas* by Diego Ortiz in Rome, 1553.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Holman. *Four and Twenty Fiddlers*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 15.

<sup>4</sup> Woodfield. 81.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 87, 89.

In the early sixteenth century Italian luthiers experimented with various shapes and modes of construction. Some makers incorporated features of the violin into their viols, such as corners, arched backs or overlapping edges.<sup>6</sup> It would take another hundred years before the shape used widely today was adopted (see Figure One). Italian viol-building slackened in the later sixteenth century, although some outstanding instruments emerged later. The Brothers Amati (Antonio, born 1538 and Gerolamo, born 1561) produced a handsome bass viol in 1611, now in the Hill Collection at Oxford's Ashmolean Museum. A strikingly similar tenor viol, built in the same year, resides in Moscow in the State Collection, and a bass viol in the Smithsonian has enough features in common with these two to suggest that luthiers in seventeenth-century Italy had not abandoned the viol.<sup>7</sup> The pattern for a viol by Stradivari has survived, if the instrument has not. The instrument was made in 1684 for Cristina Visconti, a countess for whom Stradivari also built a cello in 1707.<sup>8</sup> It was the later German and English luthiers who became known for their viols. Two outstanding builders were Joachim Tielke, who worked in Hamburg from 1669 to 1718 and Barak Norman, who built both viols and cellos in England from 1690 to 1740. Tielke's viols were the first to have arched backs, which may have given them added resonance to compete with the violin family. One of the last to make viols in the eighteenth century was Frederic Hintz, a German luthier whose name was Anglicized to Hinds. He was active in London from 1740 to 1776. By then even the great French makers had built their last viols. It has been conjectured that a seven-string bass viol made by Hintz in 1760 may have been ordered by the gambist Karl Friedrich Abel, often referred to as the "last viol player."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Woodfield, 137.

<sup>7</sup> Burritt Miller. "The Making of an Amati Viol." 1994, unpublished, 2-5.

<sup>8</sup> W. Henry Hill. *Antonio Stradivari*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), 114, 208.

<sup>9</sup> G. Thibault, J. Jenkins, J. Bran-Ricci, eds., "18th-century Musical Instruments: France and Britain". (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1973), 38.

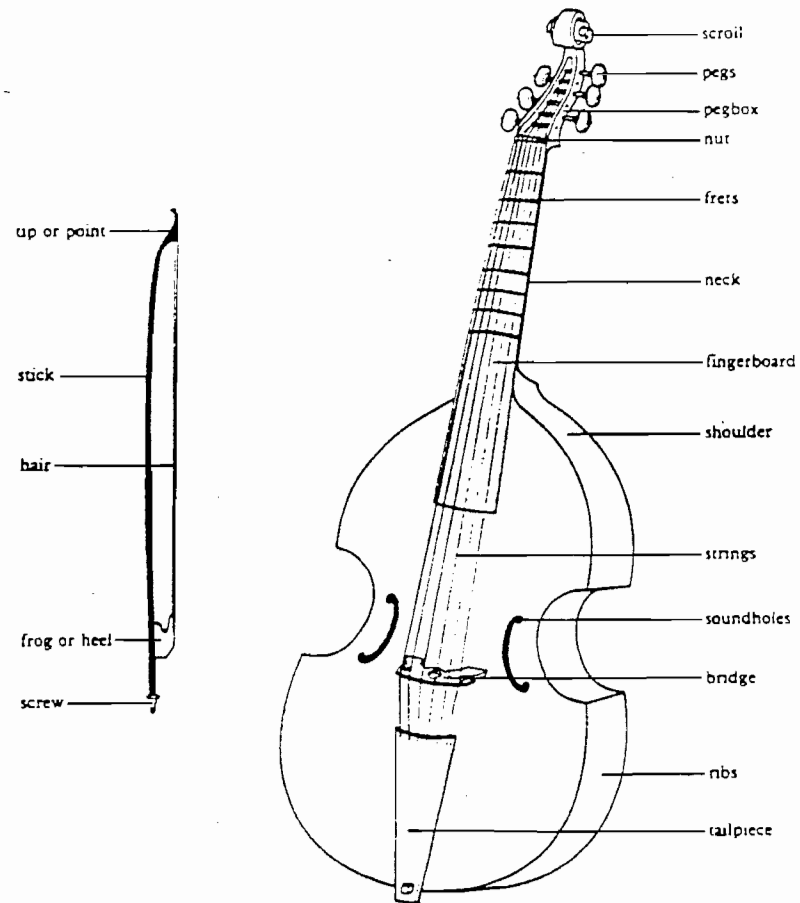
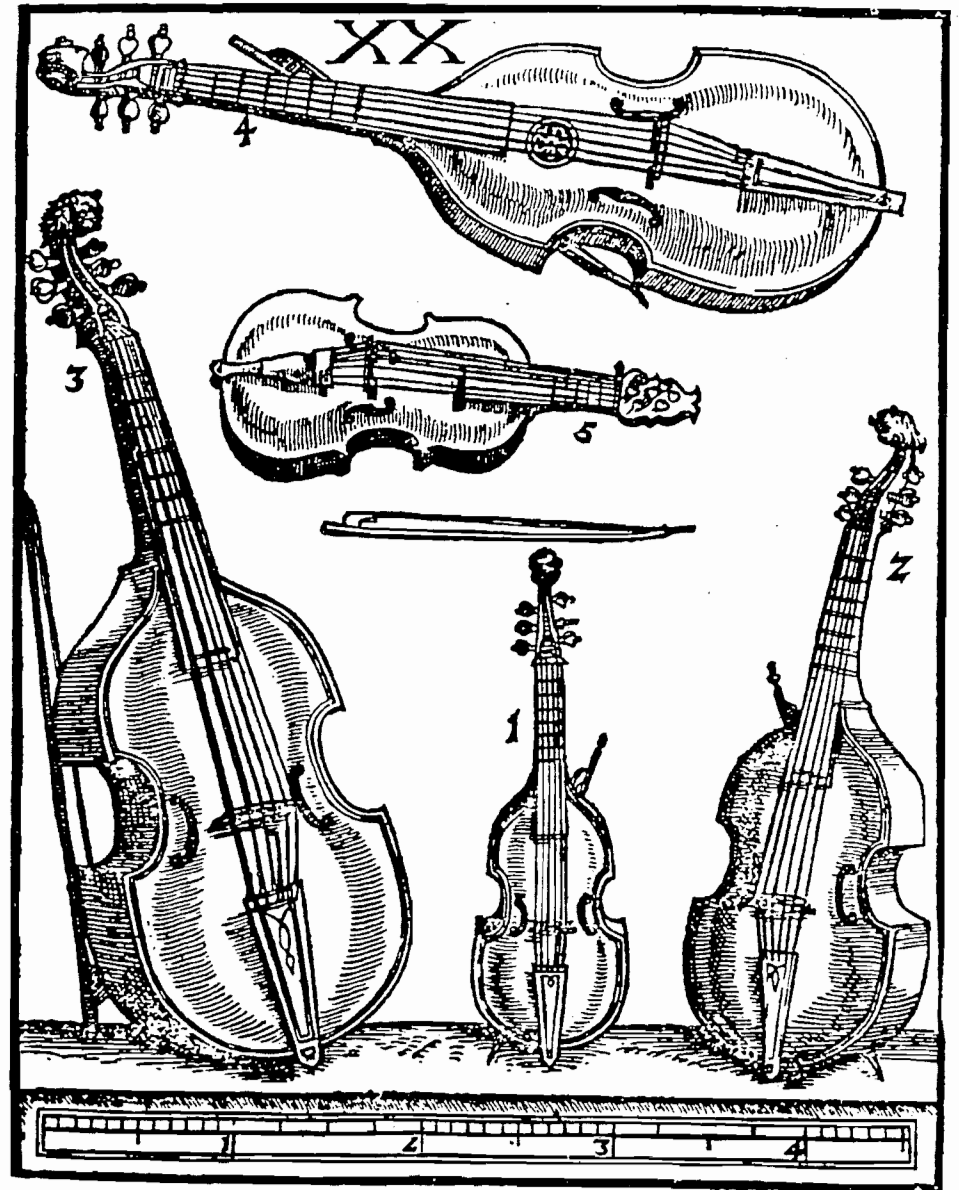


Fig. 1. The viol and bow

• viol: English  
 Viola da gamba : Italian  
 viole: French



- 1. treble viol
- 2. tenor viol
- 3. bass viol
- 4. bass viol ("viola bastarda")

5. Lyra de braccio

Fig. 2

People today often assume that the viol is the ancestor of the cello, that the latter took over where the former left off. In fact there was a period of about one hundred years when the two instruments coexisted. However, they were considered musical and social equals for only part of that time. The early cello was referred to as a bass violin and is believed to have been an ungainly instrument used only for playing bass lines. Roger North still used the term "bass violin" and as late as the 1720's called its sound "very hard and harsh"<sup>10</sup> The question of terminology, in relation to bass stringed instruments is confusing. The cello was variously referred to in Italy as basso da braccio (1607), violoncino (1641) and violone da braccio (Italy, 1666).<sup>11</sup> Still other designations were bassetto viola (Italy, 1674) and basse d'archet France, 1725).<sup>12</sup> Geographical location and period seem to have determined which name was used. To further confuse matters, the double bass shared some of the same labels as the cello. In the Rees encyclopedia, first published in 1738, the violoncello is described as "the diminutive of violone, contrabasso, or double-base. [sic]. The violoncello is the natural base [sic] to the violin and tenor, and has been very much cultivated throughout Europe..."<sup>13</sup> Hubert Le Blanc, in his 1740 booklet defending the viol

<sup>10</sup> John Wilson, ed. *Roger North on Music*. (London: Novello & Co. Ltd., 1959), 304, 352.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Cowling. *The Cello*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 56, 58

<sup>12</sup> Henry Burnett. "The Bowed String Instruments of the Baroque Basso Continuo (Ca. 1680-Ca. 1752) in Italy and France." *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America*, vol. VII, (1970): 70. vol. VIII, (1971): 55.

<sup>13</sup> Abraham Rees. *The Cyclopaedia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature* ..(London: J & J. Knapton, 1738). XXXVIII 38.

against the violin family, refers to the cello as "la Basse de Crémone."<sup>14</sup> Even in our century Percy Grainger referred to the cello as a bass-fiddle, in his score to *Willow willow*.<sup>15</sup>

When the cello first appeared on the musical scene in Italy in the early seventeenth century the viol had a well-developed technique both as a solo and ensemble instrument. Instruction books for the viol had been around since the sixteenth century. Ganassi's two-volume *Regola rubertina* (1542) implied a level of sophistication (especially for the bass size of viol) which was not to have a parallel in cello technique until two centuries later. A chart of alternate fingerings in the viol treatise shows that gambists were acquainted with the higher reaches of the fingerboard not only on the top string but on lower strings as well. It was not unusual for the compass of the viol to extend to a ninth above the top open string. In seventeenth-century England Christopher Simpson and John Jenkins were composing very demanding solo and duo divisions using the higher reaches of the bass viol fingerboard. In 1725, eighteen years before the birth of Luigi Boccherini, who is generally agreed to be one of the first composers to require virtuosity in his writing for cello, Marin Marais called for a high *e* beyond the end of the bass viol fingerboard in his *Tableau de l'Operation de la Taille*.

<sup>14</sup> Hubert le Blanc. *Défense de la Basse de Viola Contre les Entréprnses du Violon et les Prétentions du Violoncel*. (Amsterdam, 1740.) 77.

<sup>15</sup> Cecil Forsyth. *Orchestration*. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1946), 480.



from *Pièces de Viole*, Book Five (1725).

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By contrast, the cello was confined to low bass parts for the early part of its existence. Even in the earliest examples of cello solos, 7 *ricercars* by Domenico Gabrielli (1689), the range rarely exceeds a sixth above the top string (a seventh if one tunes the top string to *g* instead of *a*, as the Schott editor (1975) suggests.<sup>16</sup> The string crossings involve skipping two strings at the most. The viol, because of its two additional strings, was often called upon to skip three or four. But it is not only in left- and right-hand facility that the instruments were at different stages in their development on their first encounter. The quality of sound was often commented upon, even more than the quantity of sound, which was not to be an issue until the period of coexistence was coming to a close. We have already referred to Castiglione's use of "suave" and "exquisite" to describe sixteenth-century viol music. Christopher Simpson, in his seventeenth-century book on the division viol (a small bass for playing divisions, or variations) instructs his readers to produce "a full and clear sound."<sup>17</sup> Jean Rousseau writes later in the century to his readers that playing a melody on the viol requires "beaucoup de délicatesse et de tendresse" and that one must imitate "tout ce que la Voix peut faire d'agréable et de charmant..."<sup>18</sup> As

<sup>16</sup> D. Gabrielli. *7 Ricercari for Violoncello*. CB 122. (Mainz: Schott, 1975), Foreward.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Simpson. *The Division Viol*. (London, 1659), Part I, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Rousseau. *Traité de la Viole*. (Paris, 1687), 56.

late as 1755 Leopold Mozart finds the tone of the viol "more pleasant" than that of the cello.<sup>19</sup>

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It is interesting to note that the Italians dispensed with the viol before the rest of Europe. A frequently-cited letter testifies to the paucity of viol players in Italy. The French gambist, André Maugars, who was sent to Italy for twelve years in 1636 for a political indiscretion, wrote from Rome in 1639.

"As to the viol, there is no one nowadays in Italy who excels on it, and indeed it is very little cultivated in Rome. I was particularly astonished by this, seeing that they had in former times a Horatio da Parma, who did wonders with it, and who left to posterity some very fine pieces -- which some Frenchmen have astutely adapted for other instruments, presenting them as their own-- and also in view of the fact that it was an Italian, the father of the great Ferrabosco, who first brought the use of the viol to the English, who since then have surpassed all other nations..."<sup>20</sup>

Maugars had already spent four years in England, around 1620, in the service of James I.<sup>21</sup> He saw first hand that the viol was still very much in use there. Leppert has an interesting reference to a later use of the viol in his chapter on 18th-century amateur musicians in England. One Marcellus Laroon (1679-1774) an artist and soldier, studied the violin while his brother received instruction on the viol.<sup>22</sup> Another

<sup>19</sup> Leopold Mozart, *A Treatise on the Fundamental Principles of Violin Playing*. trans. Editha Knocker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 12.

<sup>20</sup> Walter L. Bishop. "Translation of Maugar's *Response Faite A Un Curieux Sur Le Sentiment De La Musique D'Italie*." *JVdGSA* VIII (1971):11.

<sup>21</sup> Stanley Sadie, ed. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: MacMillan, 1980) vol. 11, 841.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Leppert. *Music and Image*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 108

more celebrated artist, Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), took up the viol with great enthusiasm even later and befriended the great gambist, Abel. His instrument collection included a violin and a cello as well as five viols.<sup>23</sup> Viols were not being discarded to make room for the cello or the violin, at least not in England at this juncture.

The period when the cello and the viol overlapped produced some repertoire where either instrument could be used, and some in which both were called for. Several composers wrote separately for each instrument, disproving the frequently-held notion that they turned away from the viol when they began to compose for the cello, or that they wrote for the cello in a later style. Bach's works, as we shall see, offer many examples.

Because of the confusion surrounding the terminology for the bass bowed instruments, we cannot be sure whether the viol was commonly used as a continuo instrument in Baroque chamber music. Henry Burnett, in his study of Baroque continuo instruments in Italy and France, states that the viol was not usually employed in a continuo role between 1700 and 1750, but that the cello was more likely to be used

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

"throughout Europe."<sup>24</sup> According to Julie Sadie, Charpentier (1636?-1704) often used the bass viol and the cello, separately and together, as continuo instruments.<sup>25</sup>

When it comes to more melodic playing, one can find examples of music where the viol and the cello were called upon to play similar roles. In some instances the instruments were interchangeable. Benedetto Marcello (1686-1739), in his *Sonate a Tre*, requires either two "violoncelli" or two "viole di gamba", though he specifies that a cello is to be used for the bass. There are several examples of compositions which include both the gamba and the cello. The most familiar is the sixth *Brandenburg Concerto* of J.S. Bach, where two gambas play inner parts while the cello reinforces the bass. Bach also wrote separately for the cello and the viol, distinguishing between them based on their tuning and tonal characteristics rather, it would seem, than on the basis of the level of technique their practitioners had achieved or on their ability to project the sound. The unaccompanied suites for cello lie awkwardly on the viol. To sound idiomatic the string crossings require an instrument tuned in fifths. Also, the sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord, though one often hears them played on the cello, enjoy a better tessitura on the gamba. It is interesting to compare Bach's use of the two instruments in obligatory roles. In the *St. John Passion* the alto aria, *Es ist*

<sup>24</sup> Burnett, 66, 72-73.

<sup>25</sup> Julie Anne Sadie, *The Bass Viol in French Baroque Chamber Music*. (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980.), 145.

*vollbracht*, one of the dramatic highpoints of this great work, is introduced by and sung with a bass viol. Written in b minor, the aria's resigned and somber mood is reflected in the timbres of the voice and the instrument. After a brief recitative, another aria follows, *Mein teurer Heiland*. This aria, for bass voice, is in the key of D major, and uses the cello as the obbligato instrument. Bach seems to be typecasting the two instruments. By juxtaposing these two arias, Bach points up the contrast between the instruments. Whatever characteristics Bach was attempting to bring out, one can say that these instruments in this place and time were treated as equals.

So far we have not identified any characteristic of the viol that should have caused its disappearance. The bass gamba survived the transition in compositional form from the equal-voiced fantasias of the Renaissance to the top-dominant trio sonatas of the Baroque, though the smaller members of the viol family fared less well. Telemann in Germany scored some trio sonatas for treble viol and recorder, and Marais and Heudelinne in France featured the treble viol in trios and solos. The pardessus de viole, smaller and higher than the treble, was popular with French women of the early eighteenth century who wanted to play the violin literature but found the playing position of the violin "not at all convenient." They also had access to a five-string pardessus, or quinton, its lower three strings tuned in fifths to make it more suitable for violin music.<sup>26</sup> But the role of these viols was being usurped by the violin. The bass viol, or viola da gamba continued the blood line, not primarily as a continuo instrument, as we have seen above, but as a melodic one.

<sup>26</sup> Michel Corrette. *Method for easily learning to play the Pardessus de Viole*. Paris, 1738. trans. Jane-Anne Koch. (Boston: New Boston Editions, 1990), 2.

Nor did the post-Baroque change in writing style necessarily exclude the viol. Haydn wrote 163 chamber works requiring the baryton, which was actually a bass gamba with added sympathetic strings, which were sometimes plucked. Many of these works do not even require the extra strings. Haydn combined the baryton with a viola and a cello in the trios, or divertimenti which make up most of this repertoire. The baryton plays the top part, which is the most active of the three, although the viola occasionally has the predominant voice, as for example in the trio section of a minuet. The cello parts are technically unchallenging. These baryton works were written in the decade roughly from 1762, a period when the C major cello concerto was written, a piece which only a very accomplished cellist could master. A colleague of Haydn's at Esterhazy from 1769 to 1774, Andreas Lidl, an Austrian viol and baryton player, wrote some sonatas for bass viol and cello with very demanding viol parts over a simple bass line. The style of the Haydn and the Lidl are similar. The technical demands of Haydn's baryton parts and Lidl's viol parts are also comparable, though the passage-work in the Lidl more closely approaches those of the cello concerti in difficulty. We cannot say, therefore, that the cello overtook the viol because it was better able to convey classical style or more equal to the technical demands of the music.

Not only did the cello and the viol exist side by side in the eighteenth century, but they were frequently played by the same persons. John Hebdon, in London, played the bassoon as well as the cello and gamba.<sup>27</sup> Dutch composer Johann Damen played both cello and viol and performed in his own trio for viol and two horns in London as late as 1799.<sup>28</sup> Cellists who were not gambists often used the underhand bow grip of the viol players, especially in the early half of the century. Three pages in van der

<sup>27</sup> van der Straeten, 310.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 94-95.

Straeten's *History of the Violoncello* are devoted to the German cellist, Christoph Schetky (1740-1824), whose claim to fame was sightreading the first violin part of a string quartet and playing both upbow and downbow staccato, all while using the viol underhand bow grip. He was probably one of the last to retain this bow hold, although an adaptation of it can sometimes be observed among orchestral or jazz double bassists.<sup>29</sup> The bow grip would have affected the sound, since the later overhand hold exerted direct pressure on the strings. However, Corrette observes in his instructions for holding the cello bow, "As in bowing the viola da gamba little of the weight of the player's arm is transferred to the bow."<sup>30</sup>

Van der Straeten observes that the technique of playing the cello was influenced at first by viol technique, as evidenced for example in the early cello solo repertoire<sup>31</sup>. It is instructive to look at the early methods for the cello, to learn what aspects of technique were stressed and how advanced it was. Caught as it was between the active period of viol-playing and the blossoming of the violin as a serious solo instrument, cello technique appears to owe much to the violin as well as the viol. According to Grove's dictionary, the name "violoncello" was not current until the middle of the seventeenth century. Earlier than that the instrument was still referred to as a bass violin. The early Italian builders, mentioned above, tended to make these instruments large.<sup>32</sup>

Because of the unwieldy nature of these early versions of the cello, the playing

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 191-192, 359.

<sup>30</sup> Michel Corrette. *Méthode théorique et pratique*. (Paris, 1741) 14

<sup>31</sup> van der Straeten, 369

<sup>32</sup> Grove's, III 805

technique was of necessity limited. The gut strings were long and thick and unresponsive. Later, when metal-wound strings were developed for the lower half of the instrument, a more compact body was possible, and the instrument's range and capabilities could be increased. The metal strings were tighter and could speak faster and louder than gut. It was easier to negotiate fast passages and string crossing. The technology of covering gut strings with metal (silver was the material of choice) developed in the 1680's. From then until the first quarter of the eighteenth century luthiers rethought and redefined the size and proportions of the cello (and other members of the violin family) in a search for clearer articulation and greater volume.<sup>33</sup> The smaller -sized cello no longer needed to rest on the floor, and was held with the legs, viol-style.

The first method for cello was printed in Paris in 1741. The author, Michel Corrette, wrote several methods, among them ones for harpsichord, harp, and voice. The title of his 1741 tutor was *Méthode, Théorique et Pratique pour Apprendre en peu de tems Le Violoncelle dans sa Perfection*. The forty-six page book also included a section for viol players who wanted to play the cello, promising that in three or four months one could "fait l'affaire." Corrette wrote a chapter for viol players because "la plus part des personnes qui jouent de la viole se mettent présentement dans le gout de jouer du violoncelle...." The method is in two parts, one devoted to music theory and the other specifically to playing the cello. The brief chapters on cello technique deal with basic matters such as playing position, bow grip, tuning, scales, a diagram of

<sup>33</sup> William Monical, consultation, 12/6/94

the fingerboard, shifting up and back down to the first position (one chapter each), ornaments, double stops, accompanying voices and other instruments, some pieces for two celli, and the chapter (XV) for viol players. It is in chapter XV that one finds a diagram comparing the viol and the cello fingerboards, first with a diatonic and then a chromatic scale.<sup>34</sup> (see Figure 3) The upper staff, for the viol player, indicates a seven-string bass viol and numbers the frets on each string which correspond to the notes. The highest note, a', is found at the top fret of the top string. The lower staff, for the cellist, gives the actual fingerings, and they are very strange indeed. In the diatonic scale the third finger is skipped on the two bottom strings, so that one is required to play a half step between the middle and little fingers, an awkward position even for a small hand. A curiosity of another kind can be found in the chromatic scale.

Enharmonic equivalents in the viol part are illustrated as belonging to the same fret. In the cello version a different fingering is indicated for D# and Eb, for E natural and Fb, etc. Van der Straeten cites a one-page English publication of 1745 or 1746, *The Gamut for the Violoncello, Printed by Henry Waylett at the Black Lyon in Exeter Change*, which also includes and fingers the enharmonic notes in the chromatic scale.<sup>35</sup> There were complaints during this period from champions of the cello that the frets made the viol's intonation less exact, although Quantz advises double-bass players in his 1752 flute method that "notes may be stopped more truly with them [frets] than without them."<sup>36</sup>

Around 1765 Robert Crome's cello tutor appeared in London. It contained "instructions for the violoncello or bass violin" and covered much of the same material as the

<sup>34</sup> Corrette, 45.

<sup>35</sup> van der Straeten, 364.

<sup>36</sup> Johann Joachim Quantz. *On Playing the Flute*. trans. Edward R. Reilly. (London: Faber & Faber), 1966. Ch. XVII, Sec. VI, No. 4.

*Application de l'étendue de la Violle au Violoncelle.* 45

*Démonstration du manche Diatonique et Chromatique de la Violle avec celui du Violoncelle.*

*Suite de la 3<sup>e</sup> Corde.*

*Suite de la 1<sup>re</sup> Corde.*

*Pour les Coups d'Archet Voyez Chap. II. pag. 8.*

34. Comparative fingerings for viol and cello from Michel Corrette's 'Méthode théorique et pratique' (1741; Chapter XV, p. 45)

Fig. 3

Corrette (including the avoidance of the third finger in the first position), but the musical examples rarely go above E. Like Corrette, Crome recommends that beginners use frets.<sup>37</sup> Seven years later a much more serious method book appeared in France, *Méthode Nouvelle et Raisonnée pour apprendre à jouer du Violoncelle*, by François Cupis. The fingerings he indicates for scales use the third finger where appropriate, his bowing exercises are many and varied, and the general level of the method is more demanding than those mentioned above. The first edition is dated 1772. In 1803 a second appeared, this time with music added. Unlike the Corrette and Waylett, Cupis favors tempered intonation and states, for example, that G# and Ab should be played at the same pitch. The compass of the cello is now up to D'.<sup>38</sup> Its range is still not comparable to the viol's, but it is approaching it.

While instrumental tutors proliferated during this period, many were probably written in haste to take advantage of the growing market of amateur musicians. Some are worthy of more serious attention, as is the aforementioned book on the cello by John Gunn, in London. He takes a more historical approach than the earlier writers, and begins with a discussion of music "of remote ages" - music of the Egyptians, Jews and Greeks.<sup>39</sup> Fifteen pages later there is a section on the viol, along with the rebec and the bow. Gunn writes that after 1620 the "powers" of the violin were "known and acknowledged to be superior to those of the viol." He blames the frets on the viol for inferior intonation, declaring that they are in tune in only one key, while the violinist's fingers produce more accuracy.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Robert Crome. *The Compleat Tutor for the Violoncello*. (London, ca. 1765).

<sup>38</sup> van der Straeten, 266, 367.

<sup>39</sup> John Gunn. *The Theory and Practice of fingering the Violoncello*. (London, 1793), 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

The cello seems to be an afterthought in a 1731 violin book, part of a larger work by Peter Prellieur, a keyboard-player. Other methods included are for flute, recorder, oboe and harpsichord. A fold-out sheet in the back of the book shows the open strings and diatonic and chromatic scales on one side, and two "lessons" on the reverse. Fingerings are consecutive, as on the violin. There is an unexplained advance in technique between lesson one and lesson two, with the second notated in tenor clef and reaching an octave above the open top string. There is no indication on the title page or in the nine opening pages that this appendix exists.<sup>41</sup>

None of these early instruction books indicate that the playing of the cello required much skill, nor that its repertoire was very demanding. In England, especially, the bass viol was used even after the violin and viola (or "treble violin" and "tenor violin") replaced the smaller members of the viol family. There was no real need for another bass instrument while Roger North's "noble bass viol" was on the scene. The situation may have been different in Germany, where Quantz wrote, in 1752, "solo playing on this instrument [the violoncello] is not such an easy matter."<sup>42</sup> He recommends cellos of two different sizes, a smaller one with thin strings for solos, and a larger one with thicker strings for accompaniment.<sup>43</sup> Leopold Mozart wrote similarly four years later of an instrument "called the Bass-Viol, or as Italians call it, the Violoncello." He refers to the differences in size, but finds that "they differ but little from each other excepting in the strength of their tone, according to the fashion of their stringing."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Hyatt King, ed. *The Art of Playing on the Violin*. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1965), from "Peter Prellieur, *The Modern Musick-Master or The Universal Musician*." (London, 1731), 49-50.

<sup>42</sup> Quantz, XVII/IV/12.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII/IV/1.

<sup>44</sup> L. Mozart, Introduction, 11.

Perhaps it was in the sound itself that these instruments, the cello and the viol, found their champions and their detractors. We have already sampled some of the adjectives used to describe the viol tone. Roger North, writing around 1700, was more interested in "elegance" of sound than "loudness", ... "of which the former is most to be sought after, for loudness as such is no recommendation at all."<sup>45</sup> In his research on the subject of viol tone-quality John Rutledge found that English viols in the 18th century were valued for the "refinement" of their sound, that Praetorius (1640) found the viol's tone "lieblich", that Mersenne (1636) considered it capable of imitating the human voice, as did De Machy, and that Christopher Simpson (1659) found it "sweet" and "lusty".<sup>46</sup> Olga Racster described the 1612 viol belonging to Ann Ford Thicknesse as having a "mellifluous tone".<sup>47</sup> In his description of a "good stroke", Thomas Mace instructs the viol student to prepare for a stroke that is "handsome, smooth, sweet, smart and clear."<sup>48</sup> Many of these adjectives are used today to describe the sound of the cello, especially its ability to imitate the human voice. Quantz's choice of adjectives when writing of the violoncello is in interesting contrast to those applied to the viol. "In general the violoncellist must strive to draw a full, round, and virile tone from his instrument."<sup>49</sup> In a later section Quantz observes that "the violoncello has the sharpest tone of all the basses and can give vigour to the whole piece."<sup>50</sup> These adjectives sound like a subtle form of gender-labelling, certainly not unknown in many cultures, where certain instruments are played exclusively by men or by women. Curiously enough, the "base violin" is listed in a conduct book by John Essex (1722) as one of the instruments "most agreeable to the

<sup>45</sup> North, 228.

<sup>46</sup> John Rutledge. "How did the Viola da Gamba sound?" *Early Music*. 7/1 (January 1979) 59-69.

<sup>47</sup> Olga Racster. *Chats on big and little fiddles*. (New York: F.A. Stokes, 1924) 247.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Mace. *Musick's Monument*. (London, 1676) 248.

<sup>49</sup> Quantz. XVII/1/2

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII/1/6

Ladies", along with the harpsichord, spinet and lute.<sup>51</sup>

Of course there are structural reasons why the timbres of the viol and violin family should differ. The curved back on the cello focuses and projects the sound, while the flat back of the viol, like that of its guitar-like ancestor, plays no acoustical role. The strings and bow affect the sound as well. Quantz refers to the "long and thick strings" of the cello.<sup>52</sup> But the material of the string is as crucial as the gauge in determining quality and quantity of sound.

Pitch for the viol (alone or with other viols) was relative. Players were advised to begin tuning with the top string, raising it "as high as conveniently it will bear without breaking."<sup>53</sup> Gut is a flexible material and it is possible to stretch it considerably while turning the tuning peg. The higher the pitch of the top string, the less slack the bottom strings would have been. Especially in lyra viol music (music for bass viols notated in tablature), certain scordatura tunings separated the outside strings by as much as two octaves and a fourth, the interval between the outside strings of the seven-string bass viol. Metal-wound strings held their pitch better and could be shorter than their gut counterparts. Shorter strings meant smaller, less unwieldy instruments, offering the possibility of more technically-challenging music. As we have mentioned, this was particularly critical in the case of the cello, still confined, in the late seventeenth century, to the role of holding or reinforcing the bass line. With shorter,

<sup>51</sup> Leppert, 122.

<sup>52</sup> Quantz. XVII/1/5

<sup>53</sup> John Playford. *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick*. (London, 1674) 93.



thinner, more responsive bass the cello could begin to be considered a solo instrument. As Josef Marx observed, the cello was no longer "chained to the continuo."<sup>54</sup>

In his 1687 viol treatise published in Paris, Danoville recommends thin strings for bringing out the sweetness of the viols; he finds a bass viol strung with thick strings more appropriate for "Serenades & au Bal, que dans des Concerts de ruelle."<sup>55</sup> In the same year Jean Rousseau's *Traité de la Violle* appeared in Paris. Rousseau takes issue with "un petit Livret [by Danoville?], qui .....dit qu'il faut que les Violes soient montées de chordes menués." He compares viols to horses, the more responsive requiring thin strings, while the resistant ones require ones "un peu plus grosses."<sup>56</sup> Portraits of both Marin Marais and Carl Friedrich Abel suggest that these gambists played bass viols of two sizes, possibly for the same reason that Quantz suggested that cellists use two sizes of instruments. In a letter from the son of the famous French gambist, Antoine Forqueray, to the Prince of Prussia we learn that Forqueray père played one viol "for solo work" and the other "for accompaniment."<sup>57</sup>

The transition from plain gut to metal strings began in the early eighteenth century and continued throughout Europe well into the nineteenth century. Many luthiers had equipment for making metal-wound strings. The Bach cello suites, dating from approximately 1720, made technical demands on the cello, which only an instrument equipped with these new strings could have met.<sup>58</sup> At the same time bows became

<sup>54</sup> Josef Marx. Introduction to *Sonata op. 2 no. II* by Anton Kraft. (New York: Maginnis & Marx, 1948), 13.  
<sup>55</sup> le Sieur Danoville. *L' Art de Toucher le Dessus et Basse de Violle*. (Paris, 1687), 14.

<sup>56</sup> Jean Rousseau, 38-39.

<sup>57</sup> John Rutledge. "A Letter of J.-B.-A. Forqueray, translated and with commentary." *JVdGSA*, XXX, (1993), 14.

<sup>58</sup> William Monical

lighter, thinner and more supple. Makers of bows became respected craftsmen, their work more sophisticated. Bridges, too, adjusted to the changes in the instruments and their stringing, and toward the end of the 18th century they became thinner in order to brighten the sound.

The use of the cello endpin is another factor in the difference in sound between the cello and the viola da gamba. Until recently it was assumed that the endpin was a nineteenth-century phenomenon, but recent research indicates that it was used in the eighteenth century to some extent, primarily when the cellist was standing. A standing playing position implied that the cellist was a member of an orchestra. The cello parts would therefore lie in the lower hand positions where shifting was rarely necessary. Once the cello repertoire demanded more of the player, he was seated and no longer needed an endpin to stabilize the position of the instrument.<sup>59</sup> Another reference to the endpin can be found in Crome's cello tutor. He recommends resting the lower part of the cello "on the calves of the legs" but advises that a beginner use an endpin, "which may be taken out when he pleases."<sup>60</sup> Since the endpin connects the instrument to the floor, it is responsible for added resonance. In a period when the bass line served an important musical function, this added tone enhanced the role of the cello as continuo instrument. Once the cellist sat down and was sans endpin, the cello and the bass viol were again on a more level playing field.

The period during which the viol and the cello coexisted seems to have been fairly peaceful. Each instrument had its own repertoire and musical role. The blame for the decline of the viol cannot be pinned on the cello. Instead the suspect is the violin.

<sup>59</sup> Tilden A. Russell. "New Light on the Historical Manner of Holding the Cello." *Historical Performance*, 6/2 (Fall 1993), 73.

<sup>60</sup> Crome.



A serious rivalry developed between the violin and the viol, and the polarization was felt throughout Europe. Like the violin, the viol was essentially a melody instrument, although its wide range allowed it to function as a bass as well. There are several instances of the viol functioning as an equal or as a substitute for the violin - the Buxtehude trio sonatas (D.D.T. volume XI) and the Rameau *Pièces de clavecin en concerts*, for example. Rameau specifies on the title page that the pieces be played "avec un violon ou une flute, et une viole ou un deuxième violon."

The most dramatic manifestation of the intense competition between the viol and the violin was a small volume entitled *Défense de la Basse de Viole contre les Entrées du Violon et les Prétentions du Violoncel*. Written by Hubert LeBlanc, an abbé who was a Doctor of Law, it was published in Amsterdam in 1740. Other instruments are mentioned - the harpsichord and flute - but the main actors are the violin and the viol, with some appearances from the cello. In fact these instruments are personified and Le Blanc imagines conversations among them.<sup>61</sup> Since la viole is a feminine noun and le violon is masculine, it seems logical that these instruments should be addressed accordingly. "Dame Basse de Viole", "Sultan Violon", and his "acolytes", "Messire Clavecin & Sire Violoncel", are the subjects of ornate and often heated prose. The 148-page book is divided into three sections - 1. *Dissertation sur les Pièces & les Sonates*, 2. *A qui de la Basse de Viole ou du Violon doit-on la préférence. Manège de ce dernier pour l'emporter.*, 3. *Pratique pour rendre tout jouable sur la Viole, et le dessus. Précautions à prendre pour la monture, et méthode d'accorder.*

<sup>61</sup> Le Blanc.30 ff.

Beyond the purposes outlined in the title and the section headings, the book gives us a fascinating and valuable view of music-making and social customs in this period. Le Blanc was concerned that his beloved "viole" had passed its peak, and he offers some possible explanations. He faults the viol masters, who, with their circles of students, try to keep their world exclusive while that of the violins is "*comme un vaste Océan, où il a toujours été libre à tout le monde de pêcher.*"<sup>62</sup> He worried that fewer people were taking up the viol because of this attitude and more music was being written for the violin than the viol.<sup>63</sup> He felt that instead of confining themselves to the same old pieces, viol players should expand their repertoire and play the violin sonatas of Leclair.<sup>64</sup> LeBlanc also blamed the then-current left-hand technique of the viol for its failure to keep up. According to him, too much emphasis was put on remaining on the same string, evidence of "*une ignorance du Manche.*"<sup>65</sup> Barbara Garvey Jackson, in her exhaustive study of this work, believes that it was this last concern of LeBlanc's which prompted him to write the book.<sup>66</sup> That his concern was baseless was irrelevant.

Though it is clear from the title what Le Blanc's instrumental preference is, he acknowledges that the violin in certain hands is capable of great beauty.<sup>67</sup> He spends from page three to page twenty-four pointing out the different characteristics of French and Italian music - as personified by Lully and Corelli. In the French column he equates melody with poetry, and the *pièces* of Marin Marais, one of his heroes, with

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 121, 117.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 121, 122.

<sup>66</sup> Barbara Garvey Jackson. "Commentary on Le Blanc's *Défense de la Viole*" *JVdGSA*, XII (1975), 21, 22.

<sup>67</sup> Le Blanc, 103.

wit and intellect. On the Italian side we find harmony equated with prose, and the sonata with empathy and feeling.

The viol and the violin are given similar treatment in these pages and in the following, second section. The viol's private nature is contrasted with the violin's public stance. The violin sounds better from afar than up close, while the viol's pure sound can stand the scrutiny of an intimate audience. The viol's "tender" nature is compared with the overbearing stance of the violin, which "steals" approval while the viol "attracts" it. The viol's flexible strings of gut differ from the violin's metal ones, "*courtes et grosses, extrêmement tendues.*"<sup>68</sup> The short "tick toc", bell-like bow-stroke of the gamba differs markedly from the continuous legato of the violin. The cello comes in for some snide observations. It "flatters itself" that it will replace the viol, and that it will "receive caresses" formerly given to her.<sup>69</sup>

Despite Le Blanc's obvious resentment of the foreigner violin, it is clear that he accepts it as an inevitable part of French music. He praises Forqueray (senior) for "conquering" the Italian sonata, thereby making accessible to gambists a whole new repertoire.<sup>70</sup> At the same time he cannot resist pointing out that Forqueray's students had no equal among the violin students of the time.<sup>71</sup> Like Quantz, LeBlanc attributes masculine characteristics to the cello, reserving for the viol a kinder, gentler nature. Of the cello, Dame Basse de Viole observes, "*chez les Hommes, il n'est que trop besoin de l'air determinatif.....Vous avez telle envie de dominer, .....votre grand appétit feroit comprendre la Basse et le dessus de Viole dans l'arrêt de suppression.....vous ne*

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 103.

*dévez néanmoins point effacer les charmes de l'Harmonie féminelle qu'à la Basse de Viole.*"<sup>72</sup>,

Le Blanc's index is an interesting clue to his priorities. Not surprisingly, the entries under violin and bass viol are the most numerous. A mere three lines are devoted to the cello. Index topics are wide-ranging, covering royalty and mythology as well as the expected ones on musicians, instruments and composers. Corelli and Geminiani are greatly admired, as are Marais and Forqueray, senior (Forcroi). Lully is counted among the four people Le Blanc credits as having "discovered the most melodious harmony."

We have examined the musical background and roles of the viol in our search for clues to its disappearance. Another important area is the social setting of the instrument. As Castiglione had pointed out in 1528, the playing of the viol was part of a noble education. The viol had always been the province of the well-bred amateur. The violin, and by implication, its relatives, was associated with beggars, or at best, dancing masters. Woodfield points out a reference in *Jambe de Fer's Épitomé Musical* (1547), in which viols are defined as "*celles des quelles les gentilhommes marchands et autre gens de vertu passent leur temps.*"<sup>73</sup> Violinists, or fiddlers, played for money and were therefore on a lower social rung. Le Blanc's resentment of the violin can be attributed in great part to the intrusion of the instrument into a privileged and private domain. He observes that "*la Musique, comme on ne verroit que trop, passeroit du Cabinet Royal au Vestibule.*"<sup>74</sup> It is interesting to note that Castiglione's book was

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 69, 70.

<sup>73</sup> Woodfield, 200.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 45.

reprinted in 1724 in London.<sup>75</sup> In his oft-quoted letter (published in 1747) to his son, traveling in Italy, Lord Chesterfield advises, "If you love music, hear it; go to operas, concerts, and pay fiddlers to play for you; but I insist upon your neither piping nor fiddling yourself....Few things would mortify me more, than to see you bearing a part in a concert, with a fiddle under your chin, or a pipe in your mouth."<sup>76</sup> It was considered unseemly to perform in public. Richard Leppert, quoting Percy Scholes, reports that "the Earl of Mornington (d. 1781), father of the Duke of Wellington, gained distinction 'as the first member of the British aristocracy who dared to walk through the London streets openly and unashamedly carrying a violin case.'"<sup>77</sup> Here the objection might have been to bearing a burden more suitable for a servant to carry.

Not only was the violin frowned upon as an instrument worthy of a cultured person's attention, but performing in public on any instrument was considered suitable only to members of the working classes. When Ann Ford, later Lady Thicknesse, arranged to sing and play her viol and her English guitar in public in 1760, her outraged father had her arrested.<sup>78</sup> As a woman, she bore an extra burden of respectability. Her music-making was to take place in the home.

<sup>75</sup> Leppert, 17.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 21-22.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>78</sup> Judith Davidoff "Ann Ford: An Eighteenth-Century Portrait." *JVdGSA* XXX (1993), 61.

One cannot, of course, generalize about the violin's social role. The country in which it was played is an important factor. The Italians switched allegiance from the viols to the violin family first. By the beginning of the seventeenth century only the bass member of the viol family was in use in Italy, and by 1640 the cello had replaced it.<sup>79</sup> In France, as we have seen, the bass viol had its adherents well into the eighteenth century, and the English resisted the advances of the violin even longer than the French. In fact, even during the reign of James I, English viol players, as a result of the renewal of interest in consort playing, travelled to Europe, where they "revitalised the traditions of viol playing."<sup>80</sup> But the violin had reached British shores long before. Like the early cello, the violin presented problems in terminology. Was a rebec a type of violin? If so, it could trace its presence in Britain to the court of Henry VIII in 1540. Its role was primarily to play dance music, while the viols played counterpoint or accompanied singers.<sup>81</sup> By the seventeenth century the violin joined the viols in chamber music by Coprario, Lawes, Jenkins and Locke. The violins gained more respectability when Charles II, impressed by the violin ensemble at the court of Louis XIV, established his own at home. It performed at his coronation in April, 1661.<sup>82</sup> Thomas Mace, in his advice on assembling a viol consort, recommends adding "a Pair of Violins, to be in Readiness for any Extraordinary Jolly, or Jocund Consort-Occasion" but warns that

<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Cowling. *The Cello*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975) 56.

<sup>80</sup> Woodfield, 228.

<sup>81</sup> Holman, ix, xii.

<sup>82</sup> J.A. Westrup. *Purcell*. (New York: Collier Books, 1947) 42.

they will "Out-cry" the basses unless the latter are reinforced.<sup>83</sup> John Playford, like Mace two years later, characterizes the "treble violin" as "a cheerful, spritely Instrument, and much practiced of late."<sup>84</sup> In 1710 Roger North wrote his well-known and eloquent tribute to "the noble base viol," in which he expressed his opinion of the violin and the cello:

There is an instrument which, tho' very excellent in its kind, yet hath engross't all people's fancy to learne, and very few will touch upon any other, and that is the violin. That this is a prime part in a consort, true; but without its attendant harmony it is a bauble. And the ill effect is that all affecting the upper part, none apply to the base, and so no consort can be had, but by means of some hireling drudge, on the harsh violon, to serve as a tambour to [stamp?] out the the noise. And the noble Base Viol is not thought an instrument for a christiall to handle, and indeed it lyes under this disadvantage, that so few understand the bow, and regular fingering, with the proper graceing of the notes upon it, as one seldome hears it well used or rather not abused. Whereas in truth all the sublimitys of the violin - the swelling, *tremolo*, tempering, and whatever else can be thought admirable - have place in the use of the Base Viol, as well as drawing a noble sound; and all with such a vast compass, as expresseth upper, mean and lower parts, and in a lute way toucheth the accords, and is no less swift than the violin itself, but wonderfully more copious. This I must say in vindication of the base Viol, and for the encouragement to use it; and lett those that know it less, despise it as they please. It is from this chance, art hath an enemy called Ignorance.<sup>85</sup>

North is as passionate as Le Blanc in his championing of the bass viol, but eventually their cause was lost.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Mace. *Musick's Monument*. London, 1676. 246

<sup>84</sup> Playford. 109

<sup>85</sup> North. 227-228.

The accidents of history seem to have been responsible for many of the twists and turns of the path followed by the viol through Europe. The Spanish popes of the Renaissance introduced the viol to the Italians. Italian viol players, possibly Jewish refugees from the Spanish Inquisition, were employed by Henry VIII.<sup>86</sup> Charles II, having spent time in France because of political upheavals in England, became acquainted with Louis XIV's court music. Louis XIII had established the "Vingt-quatre Violons du Roy", actually an ensemble made up of the members of the violin family. Lully took over the ensemble under Louis XIV. The repertoire of these "violin bands" was French dance music and entrées.<sup>87</sup> It was not difficult to play,<sup>88</sup> nor was it difficult to listen to. North considered it "unexceptionable"<sup>89</sup> Charles II vastly preferred it to viol fantasies, and just as "first lady" Jacqueline Kennedy's preference for serious music over country western influenced the listening habits of the Camelot generation, the tastes of Charles affected his followers. This new enthusiasm for music you could tap your foot to, (the king "could not bear any musick to which he could not keep the time",<sup>90</sup>) diminished the opportunities for viol consort playing. But even after the new fiddle band was in place, the older ensembles continued to play, and the viols were phased

<sup>86</sup> Woodfield, 155.

<sup>87</sup> Westrup, 115.

<sup>88</sup> David Boyden. *The History of Violin Playing from its Origins to 1761* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965) 228

<sup>89</sup> North, 185

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 350, 221

out very gradually.<sup>91</sup> They continued to be played in private, but public concerts, not connected to the court, featured violins more and more. North makes a point of the fact that the audiences for these concerts included "numbers of people of good fashion and quality."<sup>92</sup> The concerts often took place in taverns, which were frequented by audiences Ruth Rowen refers to as the "citizen-class". Because of the small scale of the concerts the expense was also modest, and a new layer of society could be reached.<sup>93</sup>

We have explored the possible reasons for the viol's decline throughout Europe. The timing varies in different countries, and the reasons are numerous, some having more weight than others. The oft-stated explanation that the cello was louder than the viol and could better fill the increasingly vast performing spaces with its sound is an oversimplification, implying a progression of events in which superior instruments succeeded inferior ones, and louder was better. There is another important area which we have touched on only peripherally, and that is the area of fashion. Today we hear about taste-makers. The ever-powerful media mold our tastes. The fickle public is always ready to embrace anything new, especially if pushed persuasively by powerful spokespersons. Slavery to fashion is nothing new, and I believe that it is this

<sup>91</sup> Westrup, 42.

<sup>92</sup> North, 352.

<sup>93</sup> Ruth Halle Rowen. *Early Chamber Music*. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 7.

at least as much as any of the other factors which we have explored, which drove the events described above. Today we are just beginning to recover from the dominance of opera by Italy, but still the emergence of a new Italian opera star acts like a magnet to audiences. In the Renaissance the Italian noble families embraced and improved the viol, and sent viol players northward to teach and to entertain. The Elizabethans were enamored of Italian music. Even the later preference for French music can be traced to an Italian, Lully (born Lulli in Florence), and to the violin, his instrument. The Germans adopted the Italian style of playing, sometimes combined with the French. And as we have seen, the French were obsessed by it. Fashion is a powerful force and the literature abounds with references to that fact.

Thomas Morley, who was himself an admirer of Italian madrigals and canzonets, made the following observation in 1597: "such be the new-fangled opinions of our countrymen who will highly esteem whatsoever cometh from beyond the seas (and specially from Italy) be it never so simple, condemning that which is done at home though it be never so excellent."<sup>94</sup> Morley was writing at a time when feelings were running against Italy. There were plots against the Queen by Italians and she had been excommunicated by the pope. But still the Italians were looked up to for their arts,

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Morley. *A Plain & Easy Introduction to Practical Music*. London, 1597. New York: Norton, 1963. 293

learning, and deportment. Coprario (born Cooper) based many of his instrumental compositions on Italian madrigals, as did Mico and Lupo; Philip Sidney's poems were set to Italian music.<sup>95</sup>

A generation later Thomas Mace wrote, "concerning modes and fashions," that he could not understand "how Arts and Sciences should be subject to any such Phantastical, Giddy, or Inconsiderate Toyish Conceits, as ever to be said to be *in fashion or out of fashion*.....nor will I Stop my Pen, but let It *Run Freely*, and *Publish Boldly*, That It can be no Good Fashion in Musick, to bring up any Way, Thing, or Instrument, and Cry It up for the Mode, and leave a Better, and Cry it down."...<sup>96</sup> The "better" was obviously the viol. And under the heading, "The Great Idol in Musick, of late Years, set up." : They now run over their *Brave New Ayres*; and with what *High-Priz'd Noise*, viz. 10, or 20 *Violins*, ... or some *Coranto*, *Serabrand*, or *Brawle*, (as the *New-Fashion'd -Word* is).....which is rather fit to make a Mans *Ears Glow*, and fill his *Brains full of Frisks*..."<sup>97</sup>

Sixty-four years later Le Blanc played a variation on this same theme when he wrote, "Mais qui est-ce qui poussera la conséquence à ce qu'il faille abroger la Viole à cause que ce n'est pas un Instrument de la grande bande, sinon des Provinciaux Animaux

<sup>95</sup> Joseph Kerman. *Write All These Down*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 140.

<sup>96</sup> Mace. 232-233.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

moutonniers, qui s'empresent de faire chez eux ce qu'ils auront ouï dire quelque part à Paris, laissant la mode décider sur la façon des habits."<sup>98</sup>

Gerald Hayes observed that the viol "did not pass out of use because of any progress into a more perfect form; it was simply put aside."<sup>99</sup> Ernst Ludwig Gerber, author of a "Musicians' Lexikon" (1812 and 1814), is credited with commenting on "Another sad proof how greatly Apollo is overruled by the goddess Fashion. The taste of our forefathers for these soft, modest, humming viola [viol] tones is also remarkable; they were a quiet, contented, peace-loving people! In the present time the instruments for our musicians cannot be chosen sufficiently high and shrill."<sup>100</sup> Richard Leppert, in his chapter, "Music, Socio-Politics, Ideologies of Male Sexuality", presents another viewpoint. He reports that an Aaron Humpkin, in a letter to the London weekly *The Connoisseur* of July 8, 1756 "rail[ing] at length about his wife's passion for music", was really attacking "both his wife and foreign, especially Italian, music and musicians - the woman making a fool of herself over the trappings of a foreign culture and, worse, foreigners."<sup>101</sup> Class differences seemed to figure as well. Leppert refers to Humpkin as "the basic John Bull Englishman." He can be found in audiences

<sup>98</sup> Le Blanc, 88.

<sup>99</sup> Gerald Hayes. *Musical Instruments and their Music 1500-1750*, vol. I. (London: Humphrey Milford, 1928), 17.

<sup>100</sup> Wilhelm Joseph von Wasielewski. *The Violoncello and its history*. (London & New York: Novello, Ewer & Co., 1894), 37.

<sup>101</sup> Leppert, 13.

throughout the world today, the reluctant escort to the concert hall or opera house.

Another of today's observers of the musical scene recognizes the social forces at work in the development of taste for ever new sounds and musical experiences. Sylvette Milliot does not believe this phenomenon can be explained by organology alone, but for reasons which are subtle and esthetic. "[Le violoncelle] appartient donc résolument au monde de l'Italie, c'est-à-dire au monde de la nouveauté. Inséré au coeur de la grande rivalité qui oppose ce pays au nôtre, il suscite les mêmes hostilités que son partenaire; celle des chères habitudes contre le changement, du chauvinisme contre un enthousiasme parfois excessif pour l'étranger."<sup>102</sup>

England and Germany are considered the last strongholds of the bass viol. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the two gambists identified as the last in the eighteenth century were English and German. Ann Ford, born in London in 1737, lived to the age of 87, though her activity as a viol player was shortlived, due to forces beyond her control. She has been mentioned as "a rival of the famous C.F. Abel."<sup>103</sup> Carl Friedrich Abel was born in Coethen in 1725 and spent the first thirty-four years of his life in Germany, where he received his musical education and at the age of twenty-three became a

<sup>102</sup> Sylvette Milliot. *Le Violoncelle en France au XVIIIème Siècle*. (Paris: Champion-Slatkine, 1985), 16  
<sup>103</sup> van der Straeten, 53.

member of the Polish Court Chapel. In 1759 he arrived in London, where he was to spend the rest of his life. He was obviously well connected, since he was soon teaching teaching members of the nobility.<sup>104</sup> He and Ann, however, seemed to travel in different circles. Daughter of a Clerk of the Arraigns and niece of a royal physician, Ann Ford was an upper class lady, but not quite of top rank. There was one friend she and Abel had in common, the artist Thomas Gainsborough, who was himself an avid amateur violist. The portraits he painted of each of them are among his finest. But there is no evidence that the two gambists ever met, or even that Ann's repertoire included Abel's music.<sup>105</sup>

Abel's output included symphonies, chamber music, and of course, solos for bass viol. Abel's biographer, Walter Knape, remarks in his notes to the Alamire facsimile edition of *27 Pieces for the Viola da Gamba* (1993)<sup>106</sup> that most of Abel's works were published, a fact which, he believes, proves the quality of the music. Though this is not necessarily true, the gamba pieces are attractive, if not always memorable. The technical level varies, some pieces having been intended for not very advanced students. A title page from Abel's London period reads, "Six Easy Sonattas for the Harpsichord or for a Viola Da Gamba, Violin or German Flute with a Thorough-Bass

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>105</sup> Davidoff, 59, 65.

<sup>106</sup> Walter Knape, ed. *27 Pieces for the Viola da Gamba*. Karl Friedrich Abel. New York Public Library, MS Drexel 5871

Accompaniment." One of the twenty-seven pieces, from the New York Public Library's *Drexel manuscript 5871*, can also be found in a British Library manuscript. It is a minuet, appearing in G major in the separate manuscript and in D in the Drexel collection. The latter version, the third piece in the collection, is considerably more difficult than the former, which is believed to have been written for the Countess of Pembroke. Lady Pembroke's husband, an example of the "more progressive nobility", studied the cello.<sup>107</sup> A survey of *The Times* of London between the years 1785 and 1787, the year of Abel's death, reveals that his music was performed twenty-four times in that period alone.<sup>108</sup>

It was not only as a composer, but as performer, teacher and impresario that Abel was known in London. His famous partnership with J.C. Bach in their long-running London concert series was an artistic if not ultimately a financial success. Bach arrived in London three years after Abel, and two years later they began their series, which was to last almost twenty years. Abel functioned as a composer and a gambist as well as a presenter in this enterprise.<sup>109</sup>

Abel's viol playing is mentioned in more than one source, especially his adagio

<sup>107</sup> Murray Charters. "Abel in London," *The Musical Times*. CXIV (1973), 1225.

<sup>108</sup> Sarah Joiner Wynn. "Karl Friedrich Abel - Some Contemporary Impressions." *JVdGSA. X* (1973), 8.

<sup>109</sup> Charles Sanford Terry. *J.C. Bach*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 62, 93, 151, 165.

playing. Burney writes in 1779, "Yet in nothing was he so superior to himself, and to other musicians, as in writing and playing an adagio; in which the most pleasing, yet learned modulation; the richest harmony; and the most elegant and polished melody were all expressed with such feeling, taste, and science, that no musical production or performance with which I was then acquainted seemed to approach nearer perfection."<sup>110</sup> Some scholars believe that at least some of Abel's viol solos were composed for Gainsborough. Among these Murray Charters mentions a fugue.<sup>111</sup> One wonders whether the painter was able to get around on the fingerboard nimbly enough to master this demanding work.

Abel's students included harpsichordists and singers. Van der Straeten also lists the well-known London cellists James Cervetto and John Crosdil.<sup>112</sup> They were the second-generation players; their teachers came from Italy, as did indeed most visiting string players. Cervetto the Elder (Jacopo Bassevi) arrived in London in 1728 as a dealer in instruments, eventually joining the Drury Lane Theatre. His son James was evidently a better cellist than he, noted for his mastery of double stops, an advanced technique at this time.<sup>113</sup> A countryman, Luigi Boccherini, was to advance the cello to

<sup>110</sup> Charles Burney. *A General History of Music*. Vol.1, 1776, 1019.

<sup>111</sup> Murray Charters. Introduction to C.F. Abel: *Six Sonatas for Unaccompanied Viola da Gamba*. Dovehouse Editions, Canada, 1982.

<sup>112</sup> van der Straeten, 88.

<sup>113</sup> Wasielewski, 51.



the position of a virtuoso instrument and then the mantle would pass to the French Duports, father and son. The day was long past when "survivors of the old school like Simpson and Mace sighed in vain for the glories of other days. But the mischief was done, and the music of 'the generous viol' with all that it implied had been put aside with other noble things of the past."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Hayes, 48

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE GAP : DEMISE OR DORMANCY?

We have discovered several possible reasons for the viol's having been "put aside" at the close of the eighteenth century. We are still attempting to discover how long the viol was absent from the musical scene before its reappearance. Until recently it was assumed that there was a roughly hundred-year gap, measured from 1787, the year of Abel's death, to the beginning of Arnold Dolmetsch's involvement in the restoration of the viol and other early instruments. As the result of recent research, the gap has been significantly reduced, and Dolmetsch's role in the revival must be reassessed. The interval between the fading and the rebirth of the viol has been reduced to about fifty years. It is conceivable that the gap may shrink further as investigations into the viol's checkered past continue. The first stirrings of the viol revival do not fit neatly into one time period. Activities have been recorded, sporadically to be sure, beginning in 1832. Every generation seemed to have prominent figures who played an important role in bringing the viol back into use, until the middle of our own century, which witnessed a more continuous and dramatic early music movement, fueled today by continent-spanning concert tours and world-wide distribution of CD's.

Informative studies of the viol in the nineteenth century have been undertaken by John Rutledge, a bibliographer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for his articles in *Early Music* and the *Journal of the Viola da Gamba Society of America*. But though he has found convincing evidence that the viol's period of dormancy may be shorter than we had believed, we cannot overlook the fact that the viol suffered a fate not unlike Rip van Winkle's, a fate from which it still has not recovered.

The viol awoke to a changed world, a world which had never heard its sound. No one can ever know what the viol sounded like before it faded away, although efforts are made to come ever closer. Unlike the recorder, for example, no viols have survived intact. Strings are a critical part of the instrument, but the most perishable. When the viol succumbed in the late eighteenth century the cello was coming into its own as a solo instrument and the violin was established as the premier bowed string. Public concerts, performed by professional musicians, were more numerous when the viol awoke. Concert fare was changing. Symphonies and Italian opera were attracting new audiences, drawn from the middle class instead of the social élite. Virtuoso soloists on the keyboard, the violin and even the cello were becoming known. The viol did not fit into this picture. Large performing spaces were inappropriate for its intimate sound, symphonic scores did not include the viol (although van der Straeten in his 1914

*History of the Violoncello* imagines the "ravishing effects" that a section of bass viols would have on the sound of an orchestra).

Despite this alienation of the viol from the mainstream, or perhaps because of it, certain individuals became curious about the instrument and devoted themselves to it in various ways - as collectors, restorers, builders, scholars, and performers. Their interest and involvement led them to make lasting contributions to the future of the viol in early music and in some cases to influence its direction.

François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871) had a decisive influence on early music in the nineteenth century in several roles. His instrument collection was to be the nucleus of the museum in the Brussels Conservatory, his library is part of the Bibliothèque Royale Albert Premier in Brussels, and he organized the *Concerts Historiques* in Paris in 1832 and in Brussels in 1839.<sup>115</sup> It was at one of these concerts, in 1879, that a twenty-one year old Arnold Dolmetsch probably heard his first early music concert. The gambist was cellist August Tolbecque, another influential figure in the revival of early strings.<sup>116</sup> The *Concerts Historiques* built their programs on special themes, and were consistent in their emphasis on both music and instruments of the past.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Robert Wangermée. "François-Joseph Fétis." *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 6:512.

<sup>116</sup> Margaret Campbell. *Dolmetsch: the man and his work*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975). 9, 10.

<sup>117</sup> Wangermée. 511-512.

Rutledge reports that the music critics complained that the early strings were treated as modern ones: the gamba was played as a cello, the pardessus like a violin.<sup>118</sup> It is surprising that the critics were so knowledgeable about the playing styles of instruments which were probably unfamiliar. In any case, the same criticism could be levelled for many years thereafter.

In 1845 a viol belonging to Fétis was sent to London to be played at an "Ancient Concert" of sixteenth-century music. The viol seems to have attracted a great deal of attention, because during the evening the player was sent for, to show it to Queen Victoria.<sup>119</sup> The viol had become a curiosity; it would take a long time to recover. England's "Academy of Antient [sic] Music" sponsored the "ancient concert" mentioned above. The earliest such organization, it began in 1776 and continued presenting regular concerts until 1848, when it was felt that players and audiences had finally accepted earlier music.<sup>120</sup>

In the last decades of the nineteenth century more collectors became known, performing societies continued, and new performers joined them. A nineteenth-century auction catalogue affords us a good idea of what the private collector valued.

<sup>118</sup> John Rutledge. "Towards a history of the viol in the 19th century," *Early Music*, 12 (Aug. 1984):334.

<sup>119</sup> William Sandys & Simon Forster. *The History of the Violin*. (London: John Russell Smith, 1864), 105

<sup>120</sup> Harold Rosenthal. "London, §6: Concert Life," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 11:194.

Charles Edmond Henri de Coussemaker, a prominent French musicologist and lawyer died in 1876. The following year a three-day auction of his music library and instruments was held in Brussels. Though he played the violin and the cello, Coussemaker owned a bass viol, two pardessus, and two viol bows. The listings of his books and music reveal what may have been more than a passing interest in the viol: Rousseau's *Traité de la Viole*, an 1865 biography of André Maugars, Mace's *Musick's Monument*, Simpson's *The Division Violist*, Corrette's cello method and volume three of Marais' *Pièces de Violes*. Most of the important items were purchased by the Bibliothèque Royale of Brussels.<sup>121</sup>

Another collector was Paul de Wit (1852-1925) of the Netherlands. His holdings became so numerous and valuable that they were made part of larger collections in Leipzig and Berlin.<sup>122</sup> De Wit was more than a collector - he performed on the viols he had gathered. He too participated in the "concert historiques" at the Brussels Conservatory, from 1881 to 1884. He also gave performances on the viol in Paris, Leipzig and Dresden, playing on a diamond-studded Ruggieri instrument famous for its tone. The choice of repertoire was limited mainly to Bach (J.S. and C.P.E.) and Marais, but deWit added some Tartini and Boccherini, and even an arrangement of a

<sup>121</sup> Facsimile of auction *Catalogue des Livres, Manuscrits et instruments de musique de feu M. Ch. Edm. de Coussemaker*. Uitgeverij Frits Knuf BV/Buren (old), 1977, 202-3.

<sup>122</sup> John Rutledge. "Paul de Wit: Reviver of the Viols", *JVdGSA*, XXIII (1986), 19-21.

piece of Liszt's.<sup>123</sup> He seemed intent on proving that whatever the cello could do, the gamba could do better.

Just as the earliest cellists were often gambists, it was the cellists who spearheaded the renewed interest in viol playing in the second half of the nineteenth century. One hundred years later this was still true, as it is in large part today. Though he is best known for his viol playing, Jordi Savall began as a cellist, as did August Wenzinger and Wieland Kuijken. Gambists whose first instrument is the viol are less rare than they used to be, but the majority of viol players are still cellists.

In May, 1895 another performance society, the "Société des Instruments anciens" made its debut at the Salle Pleyel in Paris, and soon afterwards at London's Salle Erard. The four members of the ensemble were considered virtuosi. They were the Belgian violinist and violist Louis van Walfelghem (1840-1908), French violinist Laurent Grillet (1851-1901), French cellist Jules Delsaert (1844-1900), and Parisian pianist and composer Louis Diémer (1843-1919). The instrumentation of the Société seems rather bizarre today, but the musicians evidently had access to a set of instruments to which they could apply their modern instrumental technique.

Walfelghem played viola d'amore, and Grillet, the vielle, or hurdy-gurdy. Delsaert had

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-23

taken up the viol in the late 1880's and in 1889 teamed up with Diémer, who applied his impressive keyboard technique to the harpsichord. The other two members joined them later.<sup>124</sup> Writing about the successors to these four members in a 1909 article in *The Strad*, [they appeared in London in 1908] van Der Straeten enumerates the problems such a group faced: locating playable instruments, finding out and getting used to the tuning of the instruments, and locating music. He observes that "during a period of over two centuries, not more than about twelve pieces have been republished."<sup>125</sup> Delsaert's viol solos, rewarded with "rapturous applause" in the Salle Erard concert, were a Handel sonata and "Le Papillon" by De Caix d'Hervelois.<sup>126</sup>

The "new" ancient instrument society, established in 1901, expanded to five players: Marcel Casadesus played gamba; his brother Henri, viola d'amore; M. Malkin (and later Edward Celli), the quinton [a hybrid of the viol and the violin, with frets, and five strings]; Maurice Devilliers, violone; and the Italian composer Alfredo Casella, harpsichord. Saint-Saens was the president.<sup>127</sup> Their instruments were historic and fine specimens, and their music was borrowed from Versailles and from private

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 535

<sup>125</sup> Edmund van der Straeten, "La Société de Concerts des Instruments Anciens", *The Strad*, XIX (Aug 1908), 359.

<sup>126</sup> van der Straeten, *History of the Violoncello*, 119.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

collections. They played to capacity audiences all through Europe, and if van der Straeten's reaction to their performances was typical, everyone was enchanted by the "quaint atmosphere created by the old world instruments, and the dainty music [which] falls refreshingly on the ear."<sup>128</sup> The exotic nature of this kind of music-making was its main attraction. In some circles it still is today.

Though we have encountered collectors and restorers among the prominent figures in the late nineteenth century, it is striking that no one seemed to be interested in the viol as a consort instrument. The viol-playing cellists in the late nineteenth century naturally chose the bass and its solo repertoire. One of Arnold Dolmetsch's most important contributions to the viol revival was his resurrection of the viol consort. He assembled a chest of six viols and had his family learn to play them. Some of the instruments had been converted to violins or violas, but he restored them.<sup>129</sup> And it was Dolmetsch who stumbled on some viol consort music in 1889 during one of his increasingly frequent visits to the British Museum and RCM libraries. His accidental discovery of viol fantasias while looking for music for the viola d'amore was believed to be a turning point in his career. His daughter Nathalie wrote later that that discovery "inspired Arnold Dolmetsch to devote his life to the restoration of ancient music and

<sup>128</sup> van der Straeten, "La Société de Concerts des Instruments Anciens", *The Strad*, XIX (Aug 1908), 134.

<sup>129</sup> Campbell, 22.

instruments."<sup>130</sup>

The first decade of the twentieth century was distinguished by yet another group of restorers and performers. Auguste Tolbecque, who was identified as the gambist in the *Concert Historique* attended by Dolmetsch in 1879, was not only a fine player (if "unhistorical") but a distinguished luthier and restorer. In his book *L'Art du Luthier* Tolbecque not only treats matters of instrument-making (including reflections on the bottom string of a seven-string bass and its challenges to the player and the builder), but he advises viol players on repertoire, both ensemble and solo, which not surprisingly is mainly French (Marais, Rameau, Dollé, Couperin, Boismortier, De Caix D'Hervelois, Forqueray (père et fils), but also includes a Haydn serenade, Handel, Graun, Telemann and Bach. He expresses the hope that he will discover more.<sup>131</sup>

George Saint-George (1841-1924) was the best known viol maker of the nineteenth century, but he made few viols (four around 1896.)<sup>132</sup> Yet an article in *The Strad* exults, "After a two-century hiatus, England has a fine viol maker: George Saint-George, composer of the Suite 'L'ancien Régime' for orchestra, player of viola d'amore and viola da gamba (as well as violin and viola)."<sup>133</sup> As we have seen, the

<sup>130</sup> Nathalie Dolmetsch, "The Consort of Viols", *The Strad*, LXIX (Jan 1959), 312 ff.

<sup>131</sup> Auguste Tolbecque, *L'Art du Luthier* (Niort: Th. Mercier, 1903), 21.

<sup>132</sup> John B. Rutledge, "Late 19th-century viol revivals," *Early Music*, XIX (Aug 1991), 412.

<sup>133</sup> van der Straeten, "The Revival of the Viols", *The Strad*, XX (Mar. 1910), 399.

performing groups, including Dolmetsch's family consort had the use of "original" instruments. The time had not yet arrived when there were more viol players than viols or when the viol-playing ranks included amateurs with leisure time but limited means for any but student instruments. In an article written eleven years after Arnold Dolmetsch's death we learn that about ten viols were sold by his workshop annually, although twice that number of old viols were brought in for repairs. Meanwhile sales of recorders climbed to the five hundred mark, an almost twenty-fold increase since the 1920's.<sup>134</sup>

In the introduction to her article about the instrument collection at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the curator characterizes the "scholar-collector", who "will be seen to put in a appearance just when he would be expected to, in the late 19th century, when musicology was shouldering the task of making intelligible a great quantity of music that had lain unused for centuries, and when Arnold Dolmetsch was proposing to clothe this music in its proper sound."<sup>135</sup> Ms. Williamson was describing Francis Galpin (1858-1945), another leader in this first wave of the early music revival. His book, *Old English Instruments of Music* was first published in 1910 in London, and a year later in Chicago. It was considered a model of its kind. Galpin's personal

<sup>134</sup> Charles Stuart, "Dolmetschere Today". *The Musical Times*. (July 1951) 299.

<sup>135</sup> Narcissa Williamson, "The Musical Instrument Collection at Boston", *JVdGSA*, III (1966): 26.

instrument collection may have been started in 1877 during his student days at Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1901 he was invited to the Metropolitan Museum to arrange the Crosby Brown Collection, and two years later he was invited to Stockholm for a similar purpose. His own instrument collection was sent to Boston in 1917, having been purchased by Bostonian William Lindsey and presented to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in memory of his daughter, who lost her life on the *Lusitania*. Six of the instruments were viols, some in playing condition at the time of their presentation, but some have since succumbed to the ravages of time and woodworm.<sup>136</sup> The catalogue, written by Bessaraboff, will be discussed in chapter 3.

The second decade of the twentieth century marked the appearance in 1914 of Edmund Van der Straeten's information-crammed history of the cello and its predecessors ("the result of thirty years' research"). He includes his own biography. From it we learn that he began his instrumental studies in 1867, when he was twelve, and took up the viola da gamba in 1891, collecting music for it and presenting lecture-concerts in London and environs. With the assistance of two other gambists, a harpsichordist and a violist d'amore, he began an early music group in 1909. They played Marais suites for three bass viols, and works by Christopher Simpson and John

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

Jenkins. A prolific writer about music, van der Straeten was also a composer, creating many works for the viol. It is impossible to assess the character or the quality of these pieces from their titles ("Romance in F", "Chant du Troubadour"),<sup>137</sup> but it is possible that van der Straeten was the first to compose music for the viol in the twentieth century.

The performing groups we have described were all mixed ensembles performing Baroque music. It seems to have been left to the Dolmetsch family to acquaint audiences with the earlier repertoire for viol consort. Most of the performances were sponsored by the family and audience reactions were mixed. Some listeners were put off by the costumes and by the participation of Dolmetsch's children<sup>138</sup> but George Bernard Shaw enjoyed the "viol concerts" and praised both Arnold's and his daughter Hélène's playing.<sup>139</sup> Quite another reaction was registered by the critic of the *Boston Transcript*, November 23, 1904 during a tour by Dolmetsch, his wife Mabel, and harpsichordist Kathleen Salmon:

While Mr. Dolmetsch talks in praise of bygone days, the ladies, in their flowing robes, with faces as impassive as those of the Aeginetan marbles, tread stealthily about the stage, as though fearful of making a sound, taking Botticellian looking instruments from queer boxes, and putting them in place. One wonders who and what these people may be? Where do they come from, and where are they going? How came those mysterious boxes in Steinert Hall? Surely no common expressman brought them? Are

<sup>137</sup> van der Straeten, *The History of the Violoncello*, 463-4.

<sup>138</sup> John Runciman, *The Saturday Review* (13 Dec 1913) cited in Campbell, 192.

<sup>139</sup> Bernard Shaw, *Music in London 1890-94*, Vol. II (London: Constable & Co., 1932), 225.

these strange people actually alive? To keep alive, must they eat? If so, what is their diet? One cannot picture them sitting down to a beefsteak.<sup>140</sup>

The other-worldly quality of these performances may have been exaggerated by the Boston writer, but it is clear that the novelty of the instruments themselves attracted people to concerts, exhibits and auctions. A series of transitional instruments succeeded the viol, some quite briefly. The baryton, as described in chapter one, is a form of bass gamba. With its many strings, both bowed and sympathetic, it is eye-catching, and was featured in exhibits in London in 1849 and again in 1862.<sup>141</sup> Its nineteenth-century practitioners may not have reached the heights of virtuosity of Anton Lidl in the eighteenth century or August Kühnel in the seventeenth, but they kept the instrument alive. Vincenz Hauschka (1766-1840) had entrée to Austrian court circles, where the baryton had played a significant role. He took up the baryton in 1805 and composed five duos for baryton and cello.<sup>142</sup> In 1846 the Parisian Félix Battanchon made a less successful attempt to revive the baryton, attracting little interest.<sup>143</sup> Since both Hauschka and Battanchon were cellists, it seems unlikely that they would have applied viol technique to playing the baryton. (There is now an active and rapidly growing international baryton society, with its headquarters in England.

<sup>140</sup> Cited in Campbell 161.

<sup>141</sup> Sandys & Forster, 161.

<sup>142</sup> van der Straeten, *History of the Violoncello*, 344-5.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, 529.

Among its members are both viol players and cellists. )

Another relative of the viol's was the arpeggione, also called the guitar-cello, invented by J.G. Stauer in Vienna in 1824, the year in which Schubert composed his famous sonata for arpeggione and piano. The instrument has six strings tuned like the guitar. Heinrich Birnbach, (b. 1782) solo cellist in the Budapest opera, both played and composed for it. An arpeggione method was written by Vincenz Schuster of Vienna, who also played the premiere of Schubert's sonata. The instrument has all but disappeared except for some museum pieces. There is an 1824 arpeggione at Cologne's Heyer Museum,<sup>144</sup> and the Metropolitan Museum in New York owns one built by Johann Georg Stauer in 1831. According to Lawrence Libin, curator of instruments at the Metropolitan, this arpeggione is "almost unused". It has a modern endpin, and the frets may have been changed.

The most important question about a supposedly original instrument, "Is it genuine?" is the most difficult to answer. This brings us to the thorniest problem in the revival of early music and its attendant instruments. Much has been written about performance practice, and lively debates continue over the desirability, practicality, or possibility of authentic performances on "period" instruments. The viol, aside from its style of performance, is only truly authentic if not only its body, but its strings, bridge and inner

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 26, 239, 648.

fittings are as the original builder made them. Restorers, who flourished in the nineteenth century, took great liberties. They were often superb craftsmen and could reconstruct a viol from the sketchiest remains of a worm-eaten instrument. But is the result "authentic"? Luthiers and organologists are reserving judgement on this question as more sophisticated methods of dating instruments are being put into practice. The aesthetics have changed too. In an era when the interest in acquiring a playable old viol was high and the supply thin, well-meaning restorers destroyed valuable evidence of building traditions, replacing the original but worn parts of the instrument with sound new ones. Arnold Dolmetsch, in a never-published introduction to a private instrument collection, writes of a historic Ruckers harpsichord<sup>145</sup>: "With care and love, I brought it back to its pristine condition and it proved to be an exquisite instrument... It should be noted here that when the famous Blanchet of Paris took it in hand in 1750, he did not merely *repair* it, but he *remade* it... he turned it into an instrument capable of rendering the masterpieces of Couperin, Scarlatti and J. S. Bach, which made demands upon the harpsichord undreamed of in the previous century."<sup>146</sup> Dolmetsch seems to be criticizing Blanchet for doing violence to an earlier type of harpsichord. It is not clear whether such concerns guided him in his own restoration or reproduction of historic viols, or whether he cared more about the more

<sup>145</sup> The Ruckers family built instruments in the 16th and 17th centuries.

<sup>146</sup> Campbell, 238.



practical ones of commercial value and saleability. In the period of the earlier viol restorers, students of viol-building and restoration techniques were being deprived of valuable first-hand evidence. Today, now that many fine modern replicas are being produced, we have the luxury of preserving fragments of old instruments without trying to reassemble them.

The viol community has become aware lately of the investigations of Karel Möens of the museum at the Brussels conservatory. He has developed a method of dating viols by the use of ultra-violet light and high-powered magnification. This technology, along with his basic knowledge of the building techniques of the various schools of instrument-making, has allowed him to reassess the authenticity of instruments in visits to many famous instrument collections in this country and abroad. He has upset many curators and researchers by declaring most of their purported original viols to be nothing of the sort. A British viol-maker, interested in studying a renaissance viol before building a modern reproduction, was told by M. Möens that "most, if not all, existing 16th - century viols were actually constructed in the 19th century."<sup>147</sup> But his is not necessarily the last word. There are other methods in use in dating instruments. Peter Klein of Hamburg is a dendrochronologist. By measuring the spacing between

<sup>147</sup> Jane Julier "A Renaissance Viol Statement", *Newsletter, Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain*, (Jan 1995), 14.

the annual rings in the wood of the tables of instruments (normally pine or spruce) and comparing them with other examples, he is able to date at least that part of the instrument. This technology is not yet applicable to other woods, used for the backs and sides of viols and other strings, and many instruments are composites of more than one original instrument.<sup>148</sup> We are still a long way from being able to declare an instrument to be "genuine". For those who care deeply about such matters, the dating of viols is a veritable minefield. Sleeping viols were not let lie. Many were cut down or otherwise altered and converted to cellos. Their carved heads were removed and mounted on other instruments. Today these conversions are still being discovered.

We have seen several kinds of activities in the latter years of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Collectors had rescued some of the fine viols of the past, scholars had studied and catalogued them, they had been put into playing condition and used in the performance societies. The viols were usually played by cellists, but it would be for later generations to recapture the historical playing techniques. This would be just one of the many challenges facing the early music movement of future generations. More kinds of music had been composed, new kinds

<sup>148</sup> Conversation with Joseph Peknik, Musical Instrument Collection, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 14 April, 1995.

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of performing groups were emerging and many new concert spaces had been created.

Would these developments cause more problems or offer new opportunities? The experiences of the next eighty years would offer some answers.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY REVIVAL

Just as the first cellists in the eighteenth-century tended to be gambists, so did the first gambists in the twentieth-century revival tend to be cellists. We have already seen cellists in the forefront of the nineteenth-century mini-revivals: Paul de Wit, August Tolbecque, Edmund van der Straeten, and Hélène Dolmetsch, to name a few. The transition is certainly logical, as is that from the guitar to the lute. The tendency, however, was for the cellists to carry over stylistically inappropriate features from one instrument to the other, such as continuous vibrato and heavy bow pressure. The first half of the twentieth-century witnessed much cellistic gamba playing. A word for the resulting hybrid, *cellamba*, was coined by "a waggish musical friend" of Nicholas Bessaraboff after the two had attended a concert in which a cellist performed on a fretless viol.<sup>149</sup> Robert Donington and gambist Desmond Dupré define the term as "a gamba strung up tightly, bowed like a cello..."<sup>150</sup> Thurston Dart refers approvingly to the label and adds, "To fob [these instruments] off on the listener as though they were authentic is to debauch his ear and to insult his intelligence."<sup>151</sup>

Much has been written about frets and their effect on the sound of the viol. Saint-George advocated omitting frets so as to avoid the extra resonance they gave to each bow stroke, a resonance he believed interfered with expressive subtlety. He also

<sup>149</sup> Nicholas Bessaraboff, *Ancient European Musical Instruments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), 266.

<sup>150</sup> Robert Donington, "Why early music?", *Early Music*, 11 (Jan 1983), 43.

<sup>151</sup> Thurston Dart, *The Interpretation of Music* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1954), 32-33.

complained that the frets inhibited glissando, which was part of the string-playing style of his day.<sup>152</sup> Paul Grümmer and his contemporary, Christian Döbereiner, influential figures in the viol revival of the 1930's, continued the avoidance of frets. They regarded frets as "crutches", though Döbereiner admitted that they made chords easier to play.<sup>153</sup> Since frets are associated with aids for beginning string players (the Susuki method for string playing uses frets in the beginning stages), it was probably a point of pride among these professionals to eschew their use. Other arguments against frets were that they compromised the intonation, and that they hindered vibrato.<sup>154</sup> Though the fretless practitioners were highly visible performers, who felt themselves above the fray, they were attacked in print by Josef Bacher in his 1932 treatise on the viol. In his introduction, after stating that the gamba was not the ancestor of the cello, Bacher stresses the importance of frets, and later takes several pages to discuss their tying and placement.<sup>155</sup> The pro-fret viewpoint was later reinforced by Nicholas Bessaraboff in his catalogue for the instrument collection at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Like Bacher, Bessaraboff first addresses the subject in his introduction. He expresses regret that it is the violinists and cellists who are spearheading the revival of the viol, observing that guitarists, used to frets, would be more "logical." Since Abel used frets, so should we today. He credits Arnold Dolmetsch with fretting his viols and believes that frets would make the viol more accessible to amateurs and to children learning to play. Finally, he feels that "if the old music written for viols is to be revived and performed correctly with scrupulous regards for tonal qualities, then viols must be played fretted."<sup>156</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Rutledge, "Late 19th-c viol revivals", 413.

<sup>153</sup> Rutledge, "The Fretless Approach to Gamba Playing", *JVdGSA*, (1991), 24-26.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 28, 34.

<sup>155</sup> Joseph Bacher, *Die Viola da Gamba* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1932), introduction, 24-28.

<sup>156</sup> Nicholas Bessaraboff, xxxi, xxxii, 266.

Gerald Hayes had already warned his readers in 1924 about the loss of the traditional gamba technique and recommended that they make a "careful study of contemporary sources." He stressed the importance of frets, an underhand bow grip, and a vertical position for the viol, even for the smaller sizes.<sup>157</sup> (Some players modified treble viols so that they could be held on the shoulder.<sup>158</sup>) The more historical approach won out eventually, with the amateurs taking the lead, while the more established soloists were reluctant to change their approach. According to gamba scuttlebutt, Eva Heinitz, a cellist/gambist active from the thirties, played without frets until August Wenzinger convinced her to put some on. (He reportedly also persuaded her to stop using an end-pin, but a near-accident while wearing a slippery satin gown made her change her mind.)

Since Paul Grümmer was such an important figure in the twentieth-century viol revival, a closer examination of his career would be in order. He was the teacher of both August Wenzinger and Nikolaus Harnoncourt. Well-known as a cellist, Grümmer became known as a player of the viola da gamba and the baryton and was the first viol teacher at the Cologne Hochschule für Musik.<sup>159</sup> His seventy-five page viola da gamba method, published in 1928, was used by generations of viol students. In the preface, he writes "Any cellist may easily acquire sufficient dexterity on the viola-da-gamba, an instrument so closely related to his own, to be able to play those parts, in the 'Passion' music, which Johann Sebastian Bach wrote expressly for the viola-da-gamba, instead of having to transpose them for the 'cello, a very poor substitute for the other instrument."<sup>160</sup> He points out that there is a large solo and ensemble repertoire,

<sup>157</sup> Gerald Hayes, "The Technique of Gamba Bowing", *The Strad*, xxxv (July 1924), 136-137.

<sup>158</sup> Rutledge, "The Fretless Approach", 21.

<sup>159</sup> Christian Fuchs, "Vienna", *The Consort*, 50, (Spring 1994), 40.

<sup>160</sup> Paul Grümmer, *Viola da Gamba Schule für Violoncellisten und Freunde der Viola da Gamba* (London: Anton J. Benjamin, 1928), 3.

which "should stimulate the artist to take up this noble instrument and revive the love for it which it once enjoyed." There follows a brief history of the viol, in three languages, and a list of published music, most of it Baroque, but Ganassi and Ortiz are included.<sup>161</sup> The second part of the method consists of tuning instructions, bowing and finger exercises, scales, chords, and exercises for changing left hand position. In the section on tuning, Grümmer recommends cello, violin or guitar strings, all tuned below their usual pitch, "in order to obtain the proper tension of the strings, and with it, the natural viola-da gamba tone... preference must be given to gut-strings by virtue of their tonal character."<sup>162</sup> It is curious that after referring to Christopher Simpson in his paragraphs on tuning, he ignores him when discussing bowing and holding the instrument: "The instrument is held similarly to the manner of holding the violoncello, and the bowing is the same also." (This statement is reminiscent of Van der Straeten's in a 1910 installment of his *Strad* magazine series, "The Revival of the Viols": "We do not intend to weary our readers with [Christopher Simpson's] detailed instructions on fingering, as they are practically the same that apply to the violoncello, and it is only to violoncello players intending to take up the bass viol that this part would appeal.")<sup>163</sup> Grümmer's final piece of advice is "The viola-da-gamba player should choose a light violoncello bow."<sup>164</sup>

The third and fourth parts of Grümmer's gamba method contain reprints, highly edited, of music which the gamba student of the day would doubtless have had great difficulty finding: preludes and sets of divisions from Simpson's *The Division Viol*, sonatas by Abel and Telemann, and solo pieces by Caix d'Hervelois and Schenk. Fingerings,

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-16.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>163</sup> Van der Straeten, "Revival of the Viols", *The Strad* XXI (June 1910), 54.

<sup>164</sup> Grümmer, 19-20.

bowings, dynamic markings and "interpretation signs" are liberally added, and clefs changed to more familiar ones, but a "supplement" at the end of the book invites interested students to look up the original clefs.

One such interested student was August Wenzinger. He began studying with Grümmer in 1927, after pursuing a degree in cello at Basel University. He was concerned about the use by contemporary gambists of cello bows, endpins and altered fingerboards and necks and set out to revive the historic playing technique of the viol. But despite his search for the "authentic" way, he employs a steady vibrato in his playing, as do many of his numerous students, defending its use as indispensable for conveying the "expressive character" of Baroque music.<sup>165</sup> Just as there were the frets/no-frets schools of playing, there were now the vibrato/no-vibrato schools. Despite stylistic differences, today Wenzinger is probably regarded as the best authority on the gamba revival in our times.

During the first half of the twentieth century and lasting in some instances to the last decade, the viol participated in a kind of tokenism. As the establishment has become aware of the availability again of viols and viol players, performances of Baroque works have been staged with modern and "period" instruments sharing the platform. The most frequently-performed of these compositions are by Bach: the *St. John Passion*, the *St. Matthew Passion* and the *Brandenburg Concerto no.6*. Typically, a full symphony orchestra is used in the Passions and vocal soloists are engaged who

<sup>165</sup> Marjorie Bram, "An Interview with August Wenzinger", *JVdGSA* XII (1975), 79-80.

have the strength of voice to fill a large concert hall. When the gamba obbligato is introduced, the volume level drops abruptly. The resulting effect is often dramatic if not the one Bach might have sought. Meanwhile the conductor believes that he/she is using "original" instrumentation. In the case of the *St. John Passion*, the use of the lute and the viola d'amore would fall into the same category of tokenism when combined with modern symphonic instruments. In the *Brandenburg* sixth concerto one typically hears the viola soloists play the solo lines with great intensity, balanced below by the cello and the double bass, while the harpsichord and two viols seem to be miming their parts. I have participated in some of these performances under the baton of a conductor. Such examples of tokenism are increasingly rare, but even today, with the existence of whole Baroque orchestras, they are far from unknown.

The advent of World War II resulted in the interruption of many early music activities on the Continent and in Great Britain, but in the late forties and the fifties the early music revival was refreshed. Universities in the United States welcomed a group of distinguished German musicologists, who were resuming their careers in a more friendly environment. Visiting performers from Europe were presented in American concert halls. Would-be viol players were among those who benefited from this development. Wenzinger was invited to Harvard in 1953 to lecture and to teach the

viol.<sup>166</sup> Many of today's professional viol players were his students during that period. Paul Hindemith was at Yale from 1940 to 1953 and introduced a generation of music students to early music through informal playing sessions and concerts. Soon after he became a member of the Yale faculty, Hindemith organized a student collegium. He managed to assemble enough instruments by borrowing from the Yale collection and others, and soon the annual collegium performances began to attract outside audiences and even the press.<sup>167</sup> In 1949 Hindemith himself participated in a student concert at Harvard's Sanders Theater as tenor viol player. The ten-member Brussels Pro Musica Antiqua, which included three bowed-string players in its ranks, played on the American college circuit in the forties, introducing hundreds of students to enchantingly unfamiliar Renaissance sounds and repertoire. Another European, arriving in the fifties, was Ann Gombosi, a gambist and viola d'amore player trained at Basel's *Schola Cantorum*. She was an early director of the Boston Camerata, sponsored at that time by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Members were allowed to use the instruments in the museum's collection. The viol players in the ensemble had access to bass viols by Barak Norman, Meares, and Pierray.

The second half of the twentieth century saw the acceleration of activity in every aspect

<sup>166</sup> Bram, 81.

<sup>167</sup> Harry Haskell. *The Early Music Revival*. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988), 108.

of what came to be called historical performance. Luthiers, organologists and collectors abounded. Teachers, workshops, collegia, graduate and undergraduate curricula offered more opportunities for learning the instruments and music of the past. Professional and amateur societies were formed, the better to disseminate information about consort viols, recorders, harpsichords, serpents, barytons, vielles, and the pardessus. Early music festivals were established, early music concert series were begun, and early music publications multiplied. Recordings of early music were released with increasing frequency, some reaching the top of the charts. One early music CD catalogue contains more than two hundred pages of listings, three columns to a page.<sup>168</sup> A twenty-two page closely-spaced bibliography for the viola da gamba, prepared in connection with the 1991 viol symposium in Utrecht, bears testimony to the dramatic increase in information available to the many constituents of the viol community today.<sup>169</sup> But in the seventies there were still serious gaps in our knowledge.

In 1971 the Juilliard School of Music hosted an international Josquin conference.<sup>170</sup> Scholars and performing groups from both sides of the Atlantic gathered, creating an

<sup>168</sup> *Vollständiger CD Katalog Alte Musik 91/92*, Regensburg, 1991.

<sup>169</sup> Taco Stronks, "A Viola da Gamba Bibliography," *Proceedings of the International Viola da Gamba Symposium*, Utrecht, 1991. (Utrecht: STIMU, 1994): 141-162.

<sup>170</sup> Edward Lowinsky, ed. *Josquin des Prez: Proceedings of the International Josquin Festival-Conference* held at The Juilliard School at Lincoln Center in New York City, 21-25 June 1971. (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).

atmosphere so rarified that a single bowed B flat or sung F sharp caused an audible ripple in the audience. The degree of 'authenticity' practiced by the performing groups varied widely. The treble viols in the Capella Antiqua München were held on the shoulder, violin style. The New York Pro Musica used Baroque viols for playing Renaissance music.<sup>171</sup> The initiated were shocked by both infringements, but to many of those viol players present the idea of earlier viols for earlier music was a new one. They had always believed that a viol was a viol was a viol. Thus began the search for the ideal Renaissance viol. Organologists were discovering recorders dating from pre-Baroque times, and were learning how different in appearance and sound they were from their later counterparts. The case for the Renaissance viol was a more difficult one to prove. First of all there was the matter of the sound-post. Was there or wasn't there a post in these early viols? How early? Had any survived? (We have already mentioned what may have been 19th-century fakes.) None of these questions had easy answers. Experiments were made, and in the process some interesting instruments were built, but were they Renaissance viols? Luthiers today are still attempting to reconstruct them, and some have produced convincing examples. Martin Edmonds of London has been doing important research on sixteenth-century Venetian viols and has identified fourteen surviving examples.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>171</sup> *Josquin Proceedings*, 691, 683.

<sup>172</sup> Martin Edmonds, "Venetian Viols of the Sixteenth Century Reconsidered," *Utrecht Proceedings* 15.25.

Meanwhile, copies of later viols abound, with some catalogues advertising the "Tielke model" or the "Bertrand model", while other builders make composite instruments, or supply features designed to withstand the stresses of central heating or travel in the baggage holds of jetliners. A lively trade in bows is conducted in large cities and remote villages. Gut strings are sometimes custom made - plain, thick rope, copper-wound, and, the latest, strings treated with metallic salts. Preferences in the color of bow hair and the tackiness of rosin are debated wherever viol players gather. Nylon fishing line made its debut several years ago as the preferred fretting material, but there are those who insist on gut.

Part of the consciousness-raising in historical performance circles was the development and expansion of the field of organology. The Galpin Society, named for Canon Francis Galpin, was founded in London in 1946. The society's journal brings members information about instruments, their history and construction. The first issue of the Journal was published in 1948.<sup>173</sup> A similar society but younger, in the United States, is the American Musical Instrument Society or AMIS. Founded in 1971, its headquarters is the Shrine to Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota, which houses a large instrument collection. The AMIS journal is published annually.

<sup>173</sup> Canon Francis W. Galpin, *Old English Instruments of Music* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1965; first edition, 1910)

With the supply of viols at its peak, and historic viols available for study by the luthiers who supply the instruments, record numbers of students are taking up the viol. The availability of teachers is increasing, and new methods are being written and published, some just for the bass viol, and others, like Alison Crum's, for the treble and tenor viols as well.<sup>174</sup> Today's viol methods have moved far away from the cello-oriented books of the past. Consort playing is acknowledged as an important aspect of today's gambist's musical activity and exercises are related to the various areas of literature which exist for the viol. Summer workshops are popular places for would-be viol players to study, for enthusiastic amateurs to be coached and for pre-professionals to get exposure. In North America alone these workshops, either devoted entirely to the viol or including viol instruction in the curriculum, begin in June and continue till Labor Day. All through the year week-end workshops take place from coast to coast. Topics become more and more focussed. Recent playing workshops have been organized around such specific topics as the six-part fantasias of John Ward, Gibbons' verse anthems, and Simpson's divisions. In Great Britain and on the Continent, both organized and casual consort playing proliferate. Workshops have been taking place in recent years in Brazil, Australia, Israel, Greece and Japan. Much of this activity is sponsored by viola da gamba societies or by professional performers.

<sup>174</sup> Alison Crum, *Play the Viol* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)



The collegium musicum has traditionally introduced university students to early music, and many colleges and universities house such student groups, though the ensembles vary widely in size and make-up. Many campuses own at least one viol; some own whole sets. Originally the collegium musicum was a German phenomenon, where in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries amateur instrumentalists and vocalists performed new works.<sup>175</sup> In 1908 Hugo Riemann, a well-known musicologist, led the collegium in a new direction by having his students in Leipzig study and perform Baroque instrumental music.<sup>176</sup> In subsequent years collegia, led by such well-known musicologists as Curt Sachs, were formed on other German campuses.<sup>177</sup>

For the seriously committed viol student there are schools where special early curricula have been developed. The oldest and one of the most celebrated is the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, founded in 1933 by Paul Sacher with August Wenzinger. Like similar programs (which it inspired), the Schola tries to find a balance between theory and practice. The founders, concentrating on Baroque music, tried to combine the best features of the conservatory and the university. In the viol

<sup>175</sup> Joel Cohen and Herb Snitzer. *Reprise: The Extraordinary Revival of Early Music*. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1985), 15.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>177</sup> Haskell, 56.

curriculum, Wenzinger included solo, consort and continuo playing.<sup>178</sup> Today the challenge to train performers in the music of many periods is overwhelming. In 1986 five other early-music institutes (those in Bremen, Geneva, London, The Hague and Toulouse) joined with the Schola to discuss cooperative ventures for the future, and invited Thomas Binkley, head of early music at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, to the next meeting.<sup>179</sup>

The big conservatories in this country have shown little or no commitment to early music performance practice. In 1970, Wenzinger was invited in to teach a master class at the Juilliard School<sup>180</sup>, but there seems to have been no lasting effect on the curriculum. The Curtis Institute of Music is equally unresponsive, and Eastman's program, though it has the lutenist Paul Odette as its star faculty, is marginal. The Eastman collegium depends on local enthusiasts outside the school to fill its ranks. Oberlin has an active early music program in the summer, but during the year the program shrinks. The Mannes College of Music in Manhattan has had a master's program in early music since the early eighties, but enrollment is miniscule. The Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts has been building its early music curriculum over the past few years and now boasts a small but growing faculty

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-64.

<sup>179</sup> Peter Reidemeister, "The Schola Cantorum of Basel", *Historical Performance*, 3 (1990), 37.

<sup>180</sup> Bram, 82.



specializing in instrumental and vocal music from the Middle Ages through the eighteenth centuries, including courses in various aspects of viol playing. Indiana University in Bloomington established an active early music program under the late Thomas Binkley's direction, but the viol program is small. Stanford University in California has discontinued its graduate performance program, as has Sarah Lawrence College and Washington University, St. Louis. The situation in European conservatories parallels that in most American ones. London has two early music programs, Italy and France have developed curricula, and it is now possible in some music schools in Holland and Germany to major in an early instrument, but the course work is not usually tailored to early music.<sup>181</sup> As we shall see, hard economic realities are reflected in these statistics. There are more opportunities for the serious study of early music, but the chances to perform are limited.

Many would-be gambists study privately with professionals, rather than enroll in degree programs. As we have observed, teaching materials are plentiful and increasing in number. Some books are geared for the consort player and some for the soloist. Though their authors often organize their scales and exercises as did their earlier counterparts, they no longer assume, like Grümmer and Döbereiner before them, that their readers were modern string players first. With the accessibility of

<sup>181</sup> Reidemeister, 37.

scholarly editions and facsimiles of solo and consort music, viol students today have a great advantage over those who began their viol studies in the sixties and seventies. The editions of the Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain and Gordon Dodd's thematic indices, have been joined by more recent editions of consort music, such as George Hunter's Northwood editions and the Golden Phoenix publications edited by Richard Charteris. They are a far cry from the overedited pages of music at the back of the Grümmer and Döbereiner books. Viol playing in the twentieth century is coming of age.

Who are the viol players today? The tradition of the amateur is a strong one, which we can trace back to Castiglione. The viol-playing noblemen and women of Renaissance Italy have their counterparts in today's leisure-time gambists. Rutledge suggests that Dolmetsch's great gift to the twentieth-century amateur viol player was to make the viol seem within the reach of "educated laymen", whereas de Wit put so much emphasis on virtuosity, that his own attempts to revive the viol failed.<sup>182</sup> It is important to add that the consort music which Dolmetsch performed sounded much more accessible than did de Wit's excursions into Boccherini and Liszt. As Haskell observes, "...without its army of amateur acolytes, early music would never have rid itself of the stigma of élitism so quickly." I am not at all convinced that we have

<sup>182</sup> John Rutledge, "Paul de Wit, a Reviver of the Viols", *JVdGSA* XXIII (1986), 26.

escaped from the "elitist" label, or that it is a stigma, but I agree that the cultivated amateur is still an indispensable factor in early music, nowhere more than in the viol world. Modern string players are known for their passionate devotion to the string quartet literature. All over the world amateur string quartets meet regularly and read their way through Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven into the wee hours, stopping only for sustenance to see them through the next few hours of music. Amateur viol consorts are equally dedicated and are known to burn the midnight oil at workshops after a full day of classes, as they go through the fantasias of Byrd, Gibbons and Jenkins. The viola da gamba societies are responsible in large part for the growth in the numbers of leisure-time gambists. The Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain was founded in 1948. Fifteen years later the Viola da Gamba Society of America was founded. Today there is a large gamba society in Japan, and smaller ones in the Czech Republic and Italy, as well as many active consort-playing centers around the globe.

The amateur viol player's relationship to the professional is an interesting one. One British viewpoint was eloquently presented in a 1963 newsletter:

"As a profoundly satisfying pursuit for musical amateurs the playing of viol consorts is unrivalled. For the amateur, that is to say, whose musico-intellectual capacity is a long way in advance of his technique...Amateurs... have no illusions about the gap between themselves and professionals, and a warm, though not indiscriminating enthusiasm for professional performance....

"But in the world of viol-playing, with the dividing line much less clearly marked,

there exists a certain coolness and wariness towards the whole idea of strictly professional consorts, and though not widespread it is significant enough to merit attention. Several factors contribute to it. There is firstly the historical aspect; was not this music created primarily for the private enjoyment of amateurs? There is the practical aspect; the unsuitability of large halls, the economic impossibility of small rooms. But, stronger than any argument, there is the cumulative effect of the attitude of the professional musical world towards early music and its authentic performance, from the pioneer days of the revival until quite recently;...This has tended to breed in certain intelligent and sensitive amateurs an actual mistrust of technical accomplishment itself, since it has so often been so distressingly misapplied....only the playing of first-class professional consorts can overcome this prejudice, counter these arguments...the highest degree of technical accomplishment can co-exist with a dedicated humility towards the music, ... virtuosity and scholarship are not incompatible."<sup>183</sup>

The current director of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Peter Reidemeister, counters this attitude with his opening statement in a 1990 article, "The early music revival, begun by amateurs, is now firmly in the hands of professionals."<sup>184</sup> Who are these professionals? Though there is considerable overlap, professional viol players fall roughly into two categories, soloists and ensemble players. Not many viol soloists become internationally known, though three or four outstanding viol players can be identified. At this writing, Jordi Savall is probably the most widely known, largely because of the French film *Tous les Matins du Monde*, starring Gerard Depardieu as Sainte-Colombe, teacher of Marin Marais. Savall provided the music for the soundtrack, most of which is bass viol solo, engineered to a gorgeous if somber

<sup>183</sup> Sheila Marshall, "For Love or Money". *Vd G S[GB] Bulletin*. (Dec 1963), 4-6.

<sup>184</sup> Reidemeister, 37.

sheen. (Marketed as a CD, the soundtrack was a best-seller.) As the director of *Hesperion XX*, a flexible ensemble of mixed instrumental and vocal forces, Savall is well-known in early music circles for his many recordings and increasingly frequent live concerts. The other high-profile viol soloist, Wieland Kuijken, has become partially eclipsed by Savall thanks to the recording and film industries' hard-sell techniques. Like Savall, Kuijken is known for his ensemble playing, and both are prestigious teachers. In the modern instrument world there seems to be limited room at the top, and there is a hierarchy of instruments, each being allotted its quota of stars; pianists are the most numerous, followed by the violin, the cello, the flute, with others shifting from year to year. In the "period instrument" world it seems that promoters are comfortable pushing only one or two viol players at a time, one or two recorder players, two or three fortepianists and harpsichordists, and three or four singers. Or to put it another way, the marketplace can only support a limited number of performers.

Professional viol consorts are even rarer than viol soloists on the concert scene, but there are more today than at any time in the past, though none are really full-time. We have read about Dolmetsch's family consort. Some of Dolmetsch's devoted students formed their own viol ensemble, the English Consort of Viols, founded by Marco Pallis. Its members toured the States in the fifties and played serious programs of the great

consort literature for three to six viols. Truth to tell, the audiences with whom this writer listened to some of these programs were not ready to hear these fantasias; most of them were not even familiar with the sound of a viol consort. August Wenzinger formed a viol consort in the forties, the *Viola da Gamba Quartett* of the *Schola Cantorum Basiliensis*. His colleagues were Hannelore Mueller, Marianne Majer, and Johannes Koch. Wenzinger also played in a trio with harpsichord and traverso/recorder. Both ensembles were enlisted in the Deutsche Grammophon's Archiv-series, which began in 1949.<sup>185</sup> England has produced a succession of professional viol consorts since the English Consort of Viols; among them are the *Jaye Consort*, the *Rose Consort*, and *Fretwork*, active today. Other mixed ensembles sometimes function as viol consorts or combine viols with violins. In Japan the *Yukimi Kambe Viol Consort* has been active since 1982, with sporadic appearances by the newly-formed *Chelys*. In the United States there have been viol consorts since the sixties. Some have succumbed to the caprices of the marketplace, and others have begun in the last few years. Shortly before his untimely death in 1966, Noah Greenberg added a viol consort to the *New York Pro Musica*. The consort's debut took place under Paul Maynard's directorship. The *New York Pro Musica Consort of Viols* occasionally shared programs with the concert ensemble and for one or two seasons toured alone with harpsichordist John Gibbons in a mixed program of fantasias and

<sup>185</sup> Wenzinger, "The Revival of the Viola da Gamba," *Utrecht Proceedings*, 138.

Baroque sonatas. In 1972 the consort became an independent ensemble under the direction of Judith Davidoff and became known as the New York Consort of Viols. It is now in its twenty-second season. The Oberlin Consort of Viols traces its beginnings to the winter of 1976. Les Filles de Sainte-Colombe began one year earlier. Numbers of performers in these ensembles vary according to the demands of the particular repertoire being addressed, but the core of the three ensembles are four, five and three respectively. These three consorts of viols were selected for the initial recording project of the Viola da Gamba Society of America, but there are others. The New England Consort of Viols and the Boston Viol Consort have been succeeded in Boston by Oriana (three viols and theorbo). Parthenia has recently joined the New York scene. It would be misleading to suggest that these professional viol consorts have full concert schedules, but their audiences, if not their budgets, are growing.

Most mixed early music ensembles have at least one viol player. Often other members of the ensemble, who double on viol, are pressed into service for one or two pieces. Such was the case with the New York Pro Musica and David Munrow's Early Music Consort of London, as it is with the Waverly Consort. Program directors are able to vary their concert fare by interspersing viol solos, without demanding too much of the audience. The audience can presumably cut its teeth on this brief appetizer and

perhaps try a full program of viol music later. But social and economic forces have an important role in this scenario. We will address these issues later in this chapter.

Much attention has been paid to audience development, especially by funding sources. Dolmetsch was concerned with building a following by educating his audiences. He customarily addressed his audiences, discussing the music and the instruments. Today's audiences still need background information before or during the program, and pre-concert lectures have become standard, especially in early music. In more formal settings program notes take the place of spoken remarks. The process of courting the audience is a tricky one. Listeners, except for the ardent early music groupies, often feel insecure about their lack of preparation and the right tone must be found - the mystery of the unknown must be broken without doing the music an injustice or patronizing the patron.

Recordings can go a long way toward preparing audiences, but they can backfire. People who collect CDs like to stay home and listen to them. More and more often I encounter people who love music but who have never heard a live concert. When they do attend, they expect to hear the same flawless performances that were engineered on their CDs. In the case of viol recordings, especially of consort music,

there is the added problem of fidelity. The quality of the viol sound is very difficult to capture. Only the most sensitive of microphones and the most careful microphone placement can do it justice. If the mike is moved away to avoid picking up the "chiff" of the bow strokes, the viol can sound like a saxophone or a synthesizer. If there is too much presence to the sound, it is unpleasantly edgy. Add to this the difficulty of finding a recording engineer who really understands the equal-voiced nature of the polyphony of the viol fantasia. There are few viol consort recordings in which the treble does not dominate the ensemble, thus reducing to a murmur the imitations in the lower voices. But the wisdom of the day is that without a CD a performer does not really exist.

The *cellamba* has been laid to rest, but still there are stylistic differences among viol players and viol consorts. Howard Brown describes three schools of viol playing: "English, Germanic and Netherlands." These categories were suggested as he listened to recordings by several consorts. In the first category he placed the Jaye Consort and The Consort of Musicke. Both of these groups, he found, produced a light, transparent sound and took a relaxed approach to impending cadences, rather than the "intense drive to cadences that mars some ensembles." He was disturbed by the audible and continuous vibrato, bow pressure and unrelieved legato used by the

viol consort of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, in a recording of Purcell fantasias, which exemplifies to him the "Germanic" school. He points out that the energy generated by the forward motion would be more appropriate in Baroque repertoire. The Netherlands style is attributed to Leonhardt in a recording of seventeenth-century English consort music, in which Sigiswald Kuijken is the sole viol player (along with instruments of the violin family). Brown is critical of the slight swell in the middle of each bow stroke, finding the resulting articulation robs the melodic line of direction. In a recording of François Couperin's *concerts royaux* by Sigiswald and Wieland Kuijken, with their flutist brother, Bart, he praises their grasp of the French style. What he found "mannered" in the English recording he now finds "refined" and "vital".

Turning to American ensembles, Brown singles out the Oberlin Baroque Ensemble as developing its own profile, though its use of vibrato, instilled by teacher and mentor, August Wenzinger, is still obtrusive. An early recording of William Byrd by the New York Consort of Viols is labelled as "Swiss", in that most of its then members were directly or indirectly products of the Wenzinger school. Brown admits that his three-school descriptions are oversimplifications and confesses that some viol players do not fit neatly into any of these categories: John Hsu, Jordi Savall, the Concentus Musicus and the Gamben-Consort Johannes Koch.<sup>186</sup> All of these assessments are subjective and as time goes on consorts will develop more and more independently of

<sup>186</sup> Howard Mayer Brown, "Notes on the viol in the 20th century", *EM* 6 (Jan 1978), 47-53.

their roots. The important message is that whatever sameness may strike the casual listener, there are important distinctions to be made among styles of viol playing. As players specialize more and more in particular areas of the broad repertoire available to them, the styles should become more focussed. Some ensembles retain a continuo instrument so that they can perform Baroque works. Others are moving backward in time and are using vielles and other early fiddles to perform medieval and early Renaissance works. But here again the financial aspect must be considered. With a limited, if devoted public, how practical is it to specialize in a narrow repertoire? To attract a broader public, should the repertoire also broaden? Or is the answer to educate the public? Do we begin with the children? And what of multi-culturalism, the new concern of both funders and fund-seekers. Along with the rest of the early music constituency, viol players of the future will need to balance all these factors.

In reading Robert Donington's description of the Dolmetsch Foundation<sup>187</sup> I was struck by the similarities between its concerns and goals in its opening phase in 1928 and those of Early Music America (EMA) at its founding in 1986. Both are advocacy organizations, engaged in promoting and making available the music of the past. They are interested in attracting scholars, in supplying their constituencies with publications

<sup>187</sup> Robert Donington. *The work and ideas of Arnold Dolmetsch* (Haslemere: The Dolmetsch Foundation, 1932), microfilm.

about early music, and in enlisting the support of prominent people in the field. In 1928 it was Gerald Hayes who was being courted to lend his name to a worthy cause. For EMA it was Christopher Hogwood who was considered a desirable ally. But what is shared by both associations is their enthusiasm for the music and their desire to share it with others. Of course there are inevitable differences, due either to the passage of time or to English traditions not observed across the sea. In his description of the Dolmetsch family viol sextet Donington describes the viol and its music as suitable for people who "have not the time to acquire the extreme technique necessary for the satisfactory performance of later chamber music." The book's opening statement is more consonant with EMA's concerns: "The musical world at large has not yet acknowledged that there exist whole epochs of instrumental music written before Bach's time as fine, as mature and as important as the music of any later period; and that people who study and play early instruments may not be merely purists and connoisseurs of the quaint and old, but serious musicians rewarded by all that fine music can give."<sup>188</sup>

During the 1987-1988 academic year the Oberlin Conservatory of Music held a series of conferences on the early music revival. The main topic was "Musical Interpretation: The Influence of Historically Informed Performance." Five of the participants had

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, preface.

already been invited to contribute articles to a book on 'authenticity' to be edited by Nicholas Kenyon. They were the scholars Philip Brett, Howard Mayer Brown, Robert Morgan, Richard Taruskin and Gary Tomlinson. The critic Will Crutchfield, who introduced the conference, is represented in the volume along with the five aforementioned participants, all of whom were given the opportunity to revise their papers after the Oberlin event. The resulting book<sup>189</sup> provides a fascinating overview of thoughts about and reactions to developments in early music performance during the last several years. The writers represent different points of view, but they are in close agreement on some fundamental points: that a historically correct performance is impossible, that we cannot know the composer's intention, and that expressive playing and singing should be encouraged. Many, if not all of the views expressed in the book apply to the viol-playing and -building revival. It is interesting, if not necessarily significant, to note that the liveliest opinions are offered by viol-player (and musicologist) Richard Taruskin.

In his introduction to the book, critic Nicholas Kenyon sums up the main preoccupations of the historical performance movement: the revival of forgotten music, played on generally unknown instruments, and the performance of known music in a completely different way. The viols can still qualify as being unfamiliar even to

<sup>189</sup> Nicholas Kenyon, ed. *Authenticity and Early Music* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1988.)

experienced concert-goers, as can their repertoire. The Bach works mentioned in chapter one sound very different scored for viol instead of cello, as do the sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord. It is generally acknowledged that the difference is explained by the "authenticity" of the historic version.

In his chapter, "Pedantry or Liberation? A Sketch of the Historical Performance Movement", Howard Mayer Brown refers to "a near obsession with questions of authenticity."<sup>190</sup> It is true that every early musician has taken a position on these questions and that it is the rare rehearsal or performance where no reference to the historical context is made or considered. The word "authentic" has become a loaded one, which has been interpreted in a number of ways. William Christie, whose direction of *Les arts florissants* has been acclaimed on both sides of the Atlantic, has labelled 'authenticity' a "stupid, impossible goal."<sup>191</sup> The Oberlin symposium produced some extended variations on this rather bare statement. To Will Crutchfield "the authenticity of a performance is to be understood in terms of the sources of the performance [ , which ] lie within the person who is performing."<sup>192</sup> Richard Taruskin finds the word 'authenticity' "neither description nor critique, but commercial propaganda."<sup>193</sup> No doubt he refers to publicity blurbs for concerts where the words

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>191</sup> Leighton Kerner. "Les arts florissants" *The Village Voice*, 19 April 1995, p. 82.

<sup>192</sup> Kenyon, 24.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 137.



"on original instruments" are highlighted and punctuated with at least one explanation mark. Howard Brown's description of an authentic performance is one which is "expertly played and sung, genuinely committed, and artistically convincing." Beyond that, he finds matters of early instruments and playing techniques "a controversial area."<sup>194</sup>

We have already examined some of the controversy inherent in assessing the genuineness of so-called historic viols. There are also many obstacles in the path of the luthier who attempts to make an exact copy of an early viol. Brown believes that there are too many "variables" to make such a copy possible.<sup>195</sup> At a recent meeting of the Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain on the subject of viol-making, the point was made by Michael Fleming that unlike violin-making, which has enjoyed a continuous tradition, viol-making does not have an "unbroken handing-down of expertise." In fact Dietrich Kessler, who has built many fine viols in this century, was quoted as having stated that no-one really knows just how viols were built.<sup>196</sup> There is another form of copying practiced by some builders and restorers today. Richard Rephann, director of the Yale instrument collection, refers to this as "retrofitting" - replacing, on an old instrument, modern fittings such as the neck, fingerboard,

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>196</sup> Ruth Harris, "A Meeting of Makers," *Newsletter of the Viola da Gamba Society of Great Britain* 89 (April 1995), 9.

tailpiece, bridge with "authentic" ones. His complaint is that the resulting version of the instrument is then labelled "original". Like Taruskin, Rephann believes that it is the "Madison Avenue approach" which encourages the feverish quest for 'authenticity'.<sup>197</sup> Kenyon's book explores another aspect of 'authenticity', the composer's intent, which many of us profess to be attempting to carry out. Again, Kenyon's writers are in general agreement. Tomlinson finds "daunting obstacles" in the path of a historian or performer seeking the composer's intent, which he believes is "an inscrutable cipher closed away in a time that no longer exists, an unsolvable enigma standing between us and fruitful historical enquiry."<sup>198</sup> From the point of view of the music editor, Brett writes "Almost every work has implications beyond what its composer can consciously have intended; and often other people determine much of what we conceive of as a work."<sup>199</sup> Taruskin points out that not only can we not know the composer's intentions, but "we cannot know we know them."<sup>200</sup> This is a particularly sobering thought to viol players, who have received five volumes of works by Marin Marais, a composer who went to great pains to tell his contemporaries how to play his music, not only by supplying fingerings and bowings, but ornaments which included the use of vibrato. His markings are amplified by verbal instructions at the beginning of each volume. But

<sup>197</sup> Richard Rephann, 'Original Instruments and Authentic Performances: Fact, Fantasy, and Fraud' *Journal of the Violin Society of America*, VII 4 (1986), 71-72

<sup>198</sup> Kenyon, 115.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 145.



even here it is only an illusion that we know exactly how he wanted his music to sound. Leaving aside the question of what kind of viol was used, and how it was set up, Marais's language, at least to a twentieth-century reader, is vague in crucial respects. For example, in his introductory note to his third book, *Pièces de Violes* (1711), Marais introduces a new symbol, "e", for varying the bow pressure to give more "soul" (*âme*) to the music. He confesses that he cannot convey the correct style by using conventional notation. ("...ne pouvant donner une idée de ce goût en me servant des notes ordinaires j'ay été obligé de supléer de nouvelles marques ...")<sup>201</sup> Were he alive today, we would have M. Marais make a video for us to study. As it is we must make do with educated guesses, but what makes a guess "educated" is certainly open to question.

The 'authenticity' debate is not likely to end soon. Now that historical performances of more and more familiar repertoires are being heard live and on CD, even the casual concert-goer and recording buff is involved. Among viol players there is a great variety of opinion on just what constitutes 'authenticity'. Many concentrate on the instrument itself and on its accessories, continually experimenting as new facts are uncovered or new theories argued. The problem is that the organological approach is in constant flux and while fascinating, does not in my judgment reach the heart of the matter. My

<sup>201</sup> Marin Marais. *Pièces de Violes*. Book III (Paris, April 1711). *Avertissement*.

interest is in the performance itself. The instrumentalist's equipment is just that and nothing more; it is possible to give a completely unhistorical, stylistically misguided performance of Marais on an untouched, unaltered original viol, and an inciteful and stylistically sensitive one on a modern cello. One has only to listen to the old Boulanger recording of Monteverdi to realize that a convincing performance transcends the use of the "wrong" instrument. This is not to say that we should emulate Boulanger's use of the piano as a continuo instrument, but rather that the emphasis should be on the correctness of the *musical* approach. Substituting "correctness" for "authenticity" solves nothing, of course. Who is to be the judge? Our audiences? Our critics? Our modern-instrumentalist counterparts?

During the planning meetings of Early Music America, when we were drafting a mission statement, we argued for hours before we came up with the phrase "historically informed performance". I believe the key word is "informed". We need to find out as much as we can about past approaches to the music and then decide, through a combination of esthetics and practicality, how to translate this information into a live performance of our own. This is not a "stupid, impossible approach", as Christie believes. The pursuit of knowledge about earlier performances can be stimulating and revelatory. It is not free of pitfalls. We are dealing with subjective

matters of interpretation and even a Marais cannot lead us to the ultimate perfect performance. But by reading, listening and consulting the scholars we can learn about such matters as articulation, tempo and ornamentation. We should be able to put together persuasive performances in which the instrument sounds natural and unforced, the music has a strong profile, and the performer displays a personal involvement.

Now that the viol has acquired a growing twentieth-century repertoire we need to consider the matter of 'authenticity' in a new light. With the composer frequently available for advice, can we finally know his/her intentions? And if we are told what the intentions are, how much weight should we give them in performance?

Kenyon's writers would have us emphasize the expressiveness of the music. What constitutes "expressiveness"? Expression is conveyed by different means in each musical period. Every composer has a different definition, and words cannot convey it fully. Every performer has his/her own language of expression. Vibrato and glissando were the nineteenth-century string player's means of expression, but we cannot assume that they suffice or are even appropriate for music of other periods.

Techniques of expression which work for Mendelssohn cannot be assumed to be

applicable to Ortiz or Ferrabosco or David Loeb.

Joseph Kerman reminds us that "authenticity should not be valued in itself, only in the service of ever-better interpretation of music", which is not "readily articulated in words."<sup>202</sup> We still need to find out as much as we can about the historic *means* of expression and interpretation.

Many of the members of the historical performance "movement" have been declaring lately that early music is "entering the mainstream". Thomas Kelly, a past president of EMA, sounds a warning to those given to self-congratulation on achieving recognition for early music by "the musical world at large". The next step as he sees it is to stop setting ourselves apart, to stop being "preachy" and "self-exalted". "It is time, in fact, to think of retiring the early-music movement...Our goals are the same for all musicians."<sup>203</sup> Harry Haskell observes that we have stopped acting as a "counterculture" and have "rejoined the fold."<sup>204</sup> Joel Cohen believes that "all external signs point to [early music's] continued success and acceptance."<sup>205</sup>

But from the point of view of a professional performing viol player, entering the

<sup>202</sup> Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 193, 196.

<sup>203</sup> Thomas Forrest Kelly, "Down with the Barricades", *Historical Performance* 3 (Spring 1990), 23.

<sup>204</sup> Harry Haskell, "Fifty Years of Early (and not-so-Early) Music", *The Consort*, 50 (Spring 1994), 12.

<sup>205</sup> Cohen and Snitzer, 101.

mainstream implies becoming part of the economic profile of the mainstream musician. The prospects are not bright for anyone trying to live even modestly on the income of an "early musician". According to Wenzinger, Johannes Koch (1910-1973), was the first viol player to support himself entirely through his music.<sup>206</sup> Today it is still remarkable when self-employed musicians can make ends meet solely through their concertizing. The executive director of Early Music America has discovered that "early music specialists rarely are able to make their living from their craft."<sup>207</sup> Without the security of a full-time position, most early musicians in the States must supplement their irregular income from individual engagements by teaching, playing in a Broadway musical (on a modern instrument), or going outside the field of music. Two formerly active New York musicians have left early music to pursue careers in the computer industry. The economic picture is a little brighter in Europe, where there is more support both from concert-goers and from government funding. The Jaye Consort received a grant from the British Arts Council which made it possible for them to rehearse six days a week for five months.<sup>208</sup> What viol consort would not thrive under such support? But such stories are rare, and the struggle goes on. Yes, there are more activities than ever before, and the level of performance is higher than it has ever been, and CD sales are soaring and instrument builders and bow makers have

<sup>206</sup> August Wenzinger, "The Revival of the Viola da Gamba", 138

<sup>207</sup> Beverly Simmons, "In tune with the past", *IAM* Dec 1994/Jan 1995, 49

<sup>208</sup> Francis Baines, "Life with the viol", *EM* 6 (Jan 1978), 46

long waiting lists, but there are more people sharing in the pie, and the slices are just slivers. And for those early music consorts who present their own concerts, expenses are mounting. Only small spaces are appropriate for a concert by a consort of viols. There is a limit to what audiences will pay to attend. The result is that the consort loses money or is forced to compete for funding with other worthy ensembles. Amateur viol players are caught in the economic squeeze as well. As their playing improves they want better instruments, and the cost of viols, and accessories is mounting alarmingly. Music, too, is barely affordable, and they are tempted to resort to photocopying, a vice probably worse in this country than others. Some professional viol players have joined the Musicians' Union to insure that rehearsal and concert fees have some protection. A look at the last two years' listings in New York's local 802 (under "Ancient"! ) reveals twenty-two viol players in 1992-1993 and nineteen in 1994-1995. For one of the two largest union branches in the country that is not a very encouraging showing.

That is not to say that the "movement" has lost its vitality. On the contrary, enthusiasm for the music and the instruments is undimmed. With the improvement in playing levels of both professional and amateur viol players, a new level of confidence has been gained, a confidence that allows people to take musical risks. Kerman makes a plea for expression in early music performances. He deplores the once commonly-held

conviction among "historic" performers that to play with expression is to raise the spectre of nineteenth-century Romanticism. "One lesson taught by history is that all music is expressive but that music is not all expressive in the same way."<sup>209</sup>

Expressive playing was a main concern of Arnold Dolmetsch's. In his book it is the subject of the opening chapter. We seem to have come full circle.

There is an interesting backlash at the "authenticity" concerns of many members of the early music world. Eva Heinitz, now retired, has recently released a CD containing examples of her many performances of the past. Its title: *Authentic Baroque Music performed in a Non Authentic Manner*. Most of the viol music (the cello is also represented) on the CD is of a virtuosic nature, which is clearly well within Ms. Heinitz's impressive technique. The intensely legato articulation and heavy vibrato hark back to earlier times, but the vitality of the playing and of the interpretations are persuasive. This is an extreme example, but we seem to be moving away from the pallid, careful performances of the past, afraid to be accused of some infringement of what we perceived as the only correct way to approach a piece of music.

Where will the viol revival go from here? Viol solo and consort music is still being uncovered. Luthiers are working hard to recover old building techniques. Consorts

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<sup>209</sup> Kerman, 211.

are experimenting with different tuning temperaments. And composers once again are writing music for the viol. This will be the subject of Part Two.

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