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Margaret Anne Downie. *The Rebec: An Orthographic and Iconographic Study.* 2 vols. Ph.D. dissertation, West Virginia University, 1981. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, order no. PSE82-07522. 651 pp.; 64 black-and-white plates. Paperbound, \$35.

"A Rhybybe is a Rabel is a Rubible is a Rebec" read the title of a paper presented by Margaret Downie to the AMIS several years ago. Little then did anyone realize that she was merely scratching the strings of Pandora's rebec. In her impressive study of this instrument Downie has traced the orthography of 218 variants of the word *rebec*, offering at times as many as fifty-six historical citations of a single variant. Also, she has found iconographical evidence of the instrument in over three hundred paintings, sculptures, and engravings.

As a result of her studies, the use of the rebec in Western Europe can now be documented from the late thirteenth to the mid-eighteenth century, with its earliest appearances in Spain and its latest in Italy and North Central Europe. Within these areas its myriad names are sprinkled through the literature, showing that the instrument was in common use for much of this time. Its influence was so pervasive that the name even turns up in figurative expressions, such as "Il est bon joueur de rebec," meaning "He is a clever person," or "Et jouent volontiers du rebec," that is, "They willingly resist"—the latter found in an anonymous *Sermon joyeux de la patience des femmes obstinees contre leur maris* of the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The demise of the rebec, brought about by the popularization of the violin, was hastened by edicts like that of Guignon in 1741, which forbade the use of the rebec by all but the lowest classes.

The reader may wonder at the outset why such emphasis has been placed on the orthographical and iconographical aspects of the study. In due course it becomes clear that there is almost no music specifically designated for the rebec, only four short arrangements for four rebecs in Hans Gerle's publications of 1532 (*Musica Teusch*) and 1545 (*Musica und Tabulatur*). Moreover, there are no certifiably old rebecs, only one pre-seventeenth-century instrument called a violeta, and a couple of mislabeled early mandoras. Twenty-six rebecs from public and private collections are described, but all are late eighteenth- or nineteenth-century reproductions, of which more than half, Downie suggests, are products of the unscrupulous Florentine dealer Leopoldo Franciolini. As a result the author is forced to rely on secondary evidence for many of her conclusions. Even the basic description of the rebec—that it was most often a bowed instrument with three high-pitched strings and an unwaisted pyriform body with

a rounded back—comes principally from the iconographical section. Hence specifics about the rebec's size, weight, materials, interior structure, and so on, are lacking. Symptomatic of this treatment is the extended discussion of the morphology of the early rebec and lyra, whose differences, the author maintains, depend more on the employment of a pegdisc or a pegbox than on how they are played, how they sound, or their musical uses. In actuality, such essentially decorative features as string fastenings are of more value in determining genealogy and cultural influence than in defining the nature of a musical instrument. No one, for example, would think of describing a guitar with sagittal pegs as a different instrument from one equipped with machine heads.

The first twenty-four pages are devoted to an introduction and a section entitled "Avenues for Research," the latter constituting a primer for instrument-related research that commends itself to anyone embarking on such a project, though it is not specifically related to the study that follows and slows the reader's progress into it. In the iconographical section—and indeed throughout the dissertation—the author is often similarly impeded by her methodology: for example, if one picture takes fourteen steps to describe, then all do, even though for many of the points there is only the statement "No information available." Although this leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader regarding these points, it also tends to obfuscate the significant observations the author does make about the representations. Aspects like these impart to the work a quality of overcareful earnestness—often encountered in dissertations but not contributing to their enjoyable use.

On the whole, however, the author's impeccable work yields considerable insight into a ubiquitous but little-known early instrument. Such detailed research contributes much to the continued development of our understanding of early music and its performance. This dissertation is an important organological contribution; pruned of its methodological excesses, it would make a highly publishable work.

CECIL D. ADKINS

Tom Wheeler. *American Guitars: An Illustrated History*. New York: Harper and Row, 1982. 370 pp.; 136 color, 830 black-and-white photographs; many drawings. \$30.95.

In his latest book, *American Guitars: An Illustrated History*, Tom Wheeler claims to provide us with "the first comprehensive volume devoted to the guitar's post-Civil War history." While this claim might be somewhat over-