

*Journal of the
American Musical
Instrument Society*

VOLUME XXIX • 2003



Copyright by the [American Musical Instrument Society](#).
Content may be used in accordance with the principles of fair
use under [Section 107 of the United States Copyright Act](#).
Content may not be reproduced for commercial purposes.

provides on the physical nature of the instruments, which is meticulously documented by a combination of iconography, music sources, and contemporary writings. Undoubtedly, this book will become a standard reference work and should be found in every music library in the world.

James Tyler

Thornton School of Music
University of Southern California

Robert Lundberg. *Historical Lute Construction*. With photographs by Robert Lundberg and Jonathon Peterson. Tacoma, WA: Guild of American Luthiers, 2002. xiv, 280 pp.: 650 black-and-white photographs, 60 black-and-white figures. ISBN: 0-9626447-4-9. \$65.00 (hardcover).

Douglas Alton Smith. *A History of the Lute from Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Fort Worth, TX: Lute Society of America, 2002. xvii, 389 pp.: 4 color plates, 75 black-and-white illus., 56 musical exx. ISBN: 0-9714071-0-X. \$85.00 (hardcover).

These two thoroughly-researched books provide a comprehensive account of the lute's history and construction. Given the key role played by the lute in instrumental Western music from the Middle Ages to the Baroque, its revival over the past several decades, and the frequency of its use on recordings and in the concert hall today, the appearance of these long-anticipated books is especially welcome and timely.

Sadly, Robert Lundberg, the author of *Historical Lute Construction*, passed away at the age of fifty-two in 2001. His legacy is this book. The culmination of years of teaching and writing, it is based on past contributions of articles on the topic of lute construction to *American Lutherie*, the journal of the Guild of American Luthiers. While perhaps intended more for the specialist, the study offers a wealth of invaluable and relevant information for the general reader who is interested in the craft of instrument making from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. The bulk of the book is the second section, which is entitled "Practicum" and is organized into eighteen chapters that present Lundberg's step-by-step descriptions of his approach to each aspect of lute-making. The author's readable and engaging text is accompanied by hundreds of photos, diagrams, and informative captions; his direct, conversational writing style reflects his personality and his natural gifts as a

teacher. The first section of the book, consisting of five chapters, offers a more general introductory overview of the lute's development and the history of its construction from the pre-Renaissance to the Baroque, as well as discussions focused on its major components—bowl, belly, bridge, neck, and pegbox. These chapters are accompanied by numerous black-and-white photos of original period lutes, many of which are frequently-copied specimens from museum collections, thus making this a particularly valuable reference for lutenist and scholar. Several radiographs provide additional constructional clues to lute making. Even the reader with only a casual interest in mathematical design will marvel at Lundberg's lucid description of the geometry of barring arrangements, wood thickness graduations, and rose designs, all laid out with full-page diagrams and photographs.

At the end of the book are several useful appendices. Lundberg's drawing plans for seven lutes are intended primarily to accompany the Practicum chapters. His extensive experience in examining original instruments is revealed by an impressive catalog of lutes that he studied during his career. Also included are a glossary of lute-related terminology and a concise listing of information on lute makers.

Jonathon Peterson, who was responsible for many of the workshop photos, as well as the book's design, led the editing of the book. As he explains in the preface, an inevitable consequence of the book's posthumous production was that some editorial issues remained unresolved, for example, questions as to the author's intent on matters such as name designations for various pitch sizes of instruments in the lute consort. In this case, Lundberg's original nomenclature was left intact.

Douglas Alton Smith, a longtime scholar in the field, was also pivotal in bringing Lundberg's book to fruition. Known especially for his research on the composer Sylvius Leopold Weiss, Smith has drawn together years of his research into a volume entitled *A History of the Lute from Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Although it covers the lute's history only up to the end of the Renaissance period, the book's scope is vast. Ample discussion of the lute's repertoire and its cultural and societal context, biographies of important composers, and tablature notations are all included in chapters organized by geographical location throughout Europe. A separate chapter covers the vihuela in Spain, where during the Renaissance it played a role comparable to that of the lute. The first four chapters are devoted to the organological history of the lute itself—its origins, evolution, and development—focusing particularly on the

extraordinary period of lute making during the sixteenth century in Northern Italy. Smith is able to offer an especially detailed and informative account of this period because there is far more material—both surviving instruments and documentary sources—from after the beginning of the sixteenth century than from earlier times. He provides fascinating descriptions of multi-generational family lute firms in Bologna, Venice, and Padua from the early- to mid-sixteenth century until well into the seventeenth century. Recent archival work has begun to untangle the identities of key members of these families, such as the Malers and Tieffenbruckers, whose roots were invariably in the upper Bavarian region of Germany. The staggering output of their workshops is vividly shown in one of the book's appendices, consisting of two extraordinary room-by-room inventories made in 1581 of the Tieffenbrucker workshop in Venice, describing the astonishing quantity of lutes that filled the building to nearly overflow capacity. Other appendices include an inventory of lutes in the collection of sixteenth-century Augsburg banker Raymund Fugger, and a translation of the regulations of the lute-makers' guild in Füssen from 1562.

The earlier chapters of the book deal with the far more shadowy period of the lute's origins. Starting with Greek and Roman times and continuing through its use in Arabic culture during the eighth and ninth centuries, Smith outlines the lute's presence in early medieval Spain and its subsequent transmission to the rest of Europe through the Italian peninsula, via the influential and culturally fertile court in Sicily. Ties with the ancient roots of the lute were never quite broken; its association with Orpheus and Greek mythology maintained the instrument's high stature during the Renaissance. Smith aptly returns several times to the theme of humanism and the lute, and to the role of the lute's symbolism in Renaissance culture, as he deals with such topics as geometry and cosmology and the lute.

The book is profusely illustrated with excellent reproductions of lute iconography, photographs of original instruments, diagrams, and musical examples in modern staff notation (instead of tablature). In its richness and diversity of pictorial material, Smith's study serves to augment Lundberg's book, whose illustrations are almost exclusively photos of instruments and the workshop. Lundberg, in turn, covers the principles of lute making and construction in much greater depth, which is a perfect complement to Smith's overall survey approach. Taken together, both books—with their differing viewpoints yet closely related subject

matter, focused principally on the Renaissance lute—are rewarding to be read simultaneously and deserve adjacent places on the reference shelf.

Kenneth Bé

The Cleveland Museum of Art

Ardal Powell. *The Flute*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. xi, 347 pp.: 18 color illus., 41 black-and-white illus. ISBN: 0-300-09341-1. \$35.00 (hardcover). Companion compact disc *The Flute on Record, 1902–1940*. Hudson, NY: Folkers & Powell, 2002. FP001. \$18.95. Combined price at www.flutehistory.com, \$43.25 plus S & H.

Ardal Powell's book, simply entitled *The Flute*, is a tremendous achievement. Its account of the transverse flute in the West from the late Middle Ages through the present focuses not only on the nature of the instrument itself and the changes it underwent over its long history, but also on the individuals and firms that made the flute, the people who played and listened to it, the music they played and heard, and the varying manners in which they played and understood the instrument. While it also touches on the transverse flute's earlier presence in other parts of the world and, occasionally, its use in folk traditions, these are not part of the main story. One of the book's greatest strengths is that it shows the interrelationship of the instrument, its repertoire, and its players and their performing styles.

Another strength is the engaging way in which Powell presents the story of the transverse flute. Included among those who make up the intended audience for the book are not only flutists, flute teachers, musicians in general, and academic readers, but also "attentive and curious" flute students. Thus, Powell writes in such a way that a specialized knowledge of music history is not required on the part of the reader, although a number of side-bars provide information about technical topics. He brings his narrative to life by including vivid biographical (or autobiographical) stories about the life experiences of flutists and flute makers of the past, as well as striking quotations from a wide variety of historical sources. Powell enhances his narrative further by including many black-and-white and color plates illustrating music-making scenes, instruments, and players, along with examples of concert programs, musical scores, fingering charts, and more. Finally, he places the whole in a grand narrative, enlivened by his own point of view and interests, that keeps the reader eagerly turning pages.