

Study for 13-course Baroque Lute with Guidance Notes

by
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TREE EDITION

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Albert Reyerma

In Memoriam Ian Harwood MBE

Preface

Study for 13-Course Baroque Lute in D Minor

The primary purpose of this Study is to provide a work through which the player is expected to meet progressively more complex demands. Although these demands may be viewed as technical, they each have a purely musical goal.

During the lifetime of Sylvius Leopold Weiss, student lute players were privileged to hear examples of *how* music for the lute was played; in contrast, all that has come down to us is *what* was played.

No doubt exists that lute players of the Baroque Era played expressively, but how they did this remains largely a matter for conjecture. Within the Study are devices used by most other musicians of the time, and these are included in the tablature with the goal of providing examples of what might be added to the music to good effect. These techniques may added to other works in the repertory.

The following signs and abbreviations appear in the tablature, and their meaning is as follows.

Abbreviation	Full term	Meaning
<i>f</i>	forte	strong
<i>mf</i>	mezzo forte	moderately strong
<i>mp</i>	mezzo piano	moderately soft
<i>p</i>	piano	soft
<i>cresc.</i>	crescendo	getting stronger
<i>dim.</i>	diminuendo	getting weaker
<i>rit.</i>	ritenuto	holding back
<i>accel.</i>	accelerando	getting quicker

The sign // is used to indicate the end of a phrase, and corresponds to punctuation within text. Normally, in music, it requires that the note immediately preceding the sign, is shortened with a small period of silence which completes the time allocation of the original rhythm sign.

Occasionally, where there is overlap between parts, the final note may continue as the new phrase begins; both of these examples are found in the exercise.

Step 1: Familiarization with the music

The player should begin by studying the music, taking care to observe the changes in texture that occur in the tablature. For those who are good at sight-reading, this step will be a formality. However, given the nature of the succeeding steps, it is worthwhile committing the piece to memory or, at the very least, playing it sufficiently often to ensure that the score is little more than an aide-memoire to playing.

Given that the work contains mainly sequences and scale passages, those with a strong sense of key¹ should encounter little difficulty in memorizing it. Many of the textures encountered within the study will also be found in the music of Weiss and other composers of that period. The purpose of this first step is to learn the notes and, for the time being, all other indications on the tablature may be ignored.

Step 2: Controlling the bass notes

In Example 1 the first three bars comprise a linear descent from (8) to (13) and, given the action of the thumb coming to rest on the course below that of the note sounded, there is no need to take any special action to control the duration of the bass notes². At bar 4, however, the asterisk indicates that when the thumb has sounded (12), (13) will continue to vibrate if nothing is done to prevent it.

The effect is displeasing if unchecked and here is one of the key principles of playing the baroque lute: any ascending linear passage in the bass, using the open courses, will create a dissonant effect unless the player intervenes to prevent overlapping sounds. Hence, when a bass note is followed by an asterisk, after the marked note has been sounded, the thumb should come to rest on the course of the preceding note so as to stop the vibrations of this note.

There are occasions when the technical difficulty in stopping a bass is such that it is better either to leave it unchecked or to shorten the note in question. The last note of bar 8 presents such a dilemma: after it is sounded the thumb should then stop the previous note on (7).

However, given that the next note is on (12) at bar 8, considerable movement of the thumb is required to move back to (6) to stop (6) sounding after (12) has been struck. It is questionable whether this effort is justified and, unless the player wishes to be punctilious in the extreme, there is little to be gained in seeking to dampen (6).

Example 1: Control of the bass notes (i)

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Staff 1: \bar{a} \bar{a}^* \bar{a} 4 5 6 5* 4 5 6 5* 4* \bar{a}^*

7

Staff 2: \bar{a}^* \bar{a}^* a^* a^* 5 [5] \bar{a} [\bar{a}] 6 [6] \bar{a} [\bar{a}] a [a] 4 [4] \bar{a} [\bar{a}] 5 [5]

13

Staff 3: \bar{a} [\bar{a}] 6 [6] a a b a 5 6 6 5* 4*

19

Staff 4: \bar{a}^* \bar{a}^* \bar{a}^* a^* a^* a \bar{a} \bar{a} \bar{a} 4

26

Staff 5: 5 6 5 6 \bar{a} 4 5 6 a \bar{a} \bar{a} 6

32

Staff 6: \bar{a} \bar{a}^* \bar{a}^* a^* 4 \bar{a}^* \bar{a}^* \bar{a}^* 5 4* \bar{a}^* \bar{a}^*

38

Staff 7: \bar{a}^* a^* 6 5* a a \bar{a} \bar{a} 4 5 4 \bar{a}

From bar 9 there is another effect: in the preliminary studies the rests are achieved by placing the thumb against the course which has just sounded. The time to do this is when a note appears within the square brackets. Within the full score, a slur ending with an asterisk indicates the duration of the bass note. The difference in notation is the consequence of tablature comprising a single set of rhythm flags to denote the rhythm of more than one part; Example 2 provides the music.

After sounding (12) the thumb comes to rest on (11) and when the dampening effect is required the thumb is lifted and brought to rest on (12).

The above is made yet more complex since a note is to be sounded with the index or middle finger at the same time as the bass note is dampened. Practise the passage very slowly and, if necessary, practise playing a note with the index finger whilst bringing the thumb to rest on a lower bass note. For example, rest the thumb on (11), then, whilst playing (2) with the index finger, rest the thumb on (12) without sounding the bass note. At first, this will feel unfamiliar but it is a very useful technique to acquire since it affords a level of control over the bass notes which is not otherwise available.

When the above techniques are mastered, incorporate them into the study and play it at the increased level of complexity.

Example 2: Control of the bass notes (ii)

The musical notation for Example 2 consists of two staves. The first staff contains four measures, each with a slur ending in an asterisk (*) below it. The second staff contains five measures, each with a slur ending in an asterisk (*) below it. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and slurs, indicating specific techniques for controlling bass notes.

Step 3: Dynamics

In Example 3 is the pattern of right hand fingerings which mirror those of the opening measures of the Study. The purpose of this is to provide opportunity to develop dynamic control. To begin with, the player should play the first two bars loudly, and the second two, quietly. This will create two levels of dynamic control. Although the lute has a narrow dynamic range, there are ways in which an illusion of a wider range may be created.

After playing the exercise as indicated above, move the right hand further away from the bridge and play in exactly the same way. The overall effect is softer than when first played and, by moving the right hand, the player may enhance the dynamic possibilities of the instrument.

Example 3: Dynamics



Play the exercise again with the goal of creating four distinct dynamic levels, one for each bar, moving the right hand away from the bridge for the pattern ***f mf mp p***, and, after beginning near the rose, back towards the bridge for the pattern ***p mp mf f***. Try to avoid extremes in the loudness of ***f***, and the change from ***f*** to ***mf***. It is easy to lose control by reducing volume by too great an amount so that the music is barely audible, and the reverse is also true. Owing to the fact that the sound is projected forwards from the lute, it is advisable to play this exercise to someone standing in front of the instrument and seek their feedback on the performance.

A yet greater level of control is required when changing the dynamic level by gradations. To assist in the development of this technique, start the exercise ***p*** and by the end of the second bar reach ***mf***, begin bar 3 ***mp*** and by the end of bar 4 be at ***f***. This is a more difficult level of control and, initially, it may be that both bars 1-2 and bars 3-4 sound the same. Rather than shifting the right hand in either direction in one movement, try moving gradually. Again, someone listening to give feedback on the results may prove helpful.

The dynamics should now be added to the performance of the study.

Step 4: Phrasing

Example 4 provides the opening bars of the study in two versions: first, as presented in the original and second, with a different pattern of phrasing. Where the sign // occurs, there should be a discernable break in the sound which mirrors the effect of a comma in speech.

For example, consider the effect of placing a comma in different places in the following: ‘to be or not to be’; ‘to be, or not to be’; ‘to be, or not, to be’. All of these are plausible interpretations of the opening of the soliloquy in Hamlet; the following are not: ‘to, be or not, to be’; ‘to be or not to, be’. Equally, some phrasing patterns in music are effective whereas others are not. Distinguishing between the two is a key characteristic of a good musician.

There is, however, no imperative to be original and, in the *Varietie of Lute Lessons* (London, 1610)³, the following advice is provided to those who do not have the power to devise their own interpretations: ‘imitate some cunning player’. This advice holds true for phrasing in lute music where it is a rare occurrence for there to be phrase marks on a tablature staff. There are, however, many good recordings available of the music of S. L. Weiss and these will all contain phrasing, dynamics etc.

Example 4: Phrasing (i)

The mechanics of shaping phrases on the lute can be very simple. In the first three measures of Example 4, each // is followed by a number of vertical crosses which indicates which courses are sounding at that point in the music. As the first of these courses (3), (2), and (1) are sounding, it is necessary to dampen these by some means.

One way is to release the left hand pressure either shortly before or at the point when the asterisk is reached. Another method is to place on the respective courses those right hand fingers which had previously plucked them. A third option is to dampen the strings by placing against them the fingers which will sound the subsequent notes. In this case (3) will remain sounding but, by the time of the dampening, it will be barely audible and so the shaping of the phrase will be effective. A fourth alternative is to dampen only (1) using any right hand finger. It goes without saying that an open course is normally dampened by bringing a right hand finger against it to stop the vibrations.

When the first three bars have been mastered the player should play the remaining bars and observe the contrast in sound. Neither is better than the other, but the former has more finesse.

Example 5 presents another aspect of phrasing since here the phrases are conceived instrumentally and do not have an obvious corollary in text.

In essence, although the music is in two parts, by ensuring that the final note of the phrase continues, a three-part texture is created and this is based on the progression outlined in Example 6.

Example 5: Phrasing (ii)

Example 5: Phrasing (ii) musical notation showing two staves. The top staff contains notes: a, b, a, c, a, c, a, b, c, a, b, c, e. The bottom staff contains notes: a, h, f, a, h, f, a, h, f, a, h, k, a, h. There are double bar lines with repeat signs after the first, second, and third measures. Below the staves are labels: 5*, 4*, a*, a*, a*, a*.

Example 6: Three-part sequence

Example 6: Three-part sequence musical notation showing two staves. The top staff contains notes: a, c, a, b, b, d, e, f, f, h, h, i, i. The bottom staff contains notes: a, c, a, b, b, d, e, f, f, h, h, i, i. There are double bar lines after the first and second measures. Below the staves are labels: 5, 4, a, a, a, a.

In Example 7 are two versions of the passage which begins at bar 5 of the study. In the first version, the notes of events 6 and 7 in each bar of the tablature produce an idiomatic phrasing pattern, which is a consequence of the creation of a dissonance by holding the note of event 6 whilst that of event 7 is sounded.

Essentially, the music appears to be a two-part texture but, by using the suggested fingerings, a three-part texture is created. In the second version of the passage, this effect is removed. The player should play both versions of the passage noting the contrast in the phrasing. The same device is used in the Study.

Example 7: Idiomatic phrasing

Example 7: Idiomatic phrasing

The notation shows three systems of tablature. The first system, labeled 'a)', shows a sequence of notes with fingerings 6, 5, 4, and a double bar line. The second system, labeled 'b)', shows a sequence of notes with fingerings 6, 5, 4, and a double bar line. The third system shows a sequence of notes with fingerings 6, 5, 4, and a double bar line. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and accidentals.

The player should now incorporate the phrasing into the piece.

Step 5: Cadenza

Example 8 gives the music of the final part of the study. In essence it comprises a descending sequence of very quick notes and each appearance of the pattern has similar phrase marks. To play this passage in strict time is to waste an opportunity both for expressive musicianship and virtuosic display. The use of the left hand slurs helps simplify the right hand fingering and Example 7 includes suggestions for the right hand fingering. There is no need to dampen any of the notes since the speed dictates that there is insufficient time to accomplish this, and the repetition of the pattern gives shape to the phrase.

Start the passage slowly and gather speed as it progresses. At the final bar the trill on (5) may be executed as follows: begin quite slowly with the appoggiatura from above and gradually increase speed, ending on the principal note, c on (5), which may be held for a short time before the anticipatory note, d on (5), ushers in the final harmony, itself having an ornament on (5). The latter ornament involves the lower auxiliary note, e on (5), which is sounded at the same time as the a on (4) and a on (8). The d on (5) is sounded by the left hand alone after the auxiliary has lasted for the value of a crotchet.

Players may wish to vary the length of the auxiliary note. This section will probably require more practise than the others but it is well worth the effort.

Play the entire piece incorporating all the above instructions. When you can do this reliably, consider adopting different patterns of phrasing and dynamics of your own invention.

Example 8: Cadenza



Conclusions

Every piece in the repertory can be made more interesting by the addition of dynamics, phrasing, and attention to the duration of notes. Preludes, in particular, offer opportunity to vary tempo and many players take the view that, where a passage is slowed down, the music benefits from a corresponding increase in tempo elsewhere.

With dance forms dominating much of the Baroque repertory this should be done with caution but it may be effective. The Allemande from Sonata No 42 by S L Weiss is included as an appendix and this has been edited using the same signs as the Study.

¹ The tonality of the piece is F major, and the lute is tuned as follows: f', d', a, f, d, A, G, F, E, D, C, Bb', A'.

² There is historic evidence that lute players dampened strings and this is found in Jacques de Gallot 'Méthode qu'il faut observer pour jouer du luth' in *Pièces de luth composées sur differens modes* (Paris c. 1684), facsimile edition, ed. F. Lesure, Minkoff Reprint, Geneva 1978, 8: Prendre garde de n'assommer pas les basses et les autres corde du pouce, et s'empechêr de brouïlle. [Take care not to overplay basses and other notes played by the thumb, and avoid muddled sounds]. Although Gallot does not advise how to avoid the muddled sounds, given the preceding statement, it is clear that he refers to the actions of the right thumb.

³ The quotation appears in Robert Dowland, 'Necessarie Observations', *Varietie of Lute-Lessons ...* (London, Thomas Adams, London 1610), f.C2v. The cover page of the publication attributes the remarks to John Baptisto Besardo and the same appeared in *Thesaurus harmonicus ...* (Cologne, 1603), f.Xx4. The point that notation cannot convey all attributes of a musical performance is of importance to all music students, and listening to the work of talented performers is a key lesson for all aspiring musicians irrespective of their instrument, or the times in which they live.

The musical score is written for a 13-course Baroque Lute. It consists of six systems of music, each with a single melodic line on a six-line staff. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4, and breath marks (//) are used throughout. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.

System 1 (Measures 1-6): Starts with a common time signature 'C'. Measures 1-2 contain a half note 'h' and a half note 'h' with a double bar line. Measure 3 contains a half note 'f' and a half note 'f' with a double bar line. Measure 4 contains a half note '2e' and a half note '2e' with a double bar line. Measure 5 contains a half note '3e' and a half note '3e' with a double bar line. Measure 6 contains a half note 'a' and a half note 'a' with a double bar line. Dynamics: *f* (measure 1), *mf* (measure 3), *mp* (measure 5). Fingering: 2 (measure 1), 3 (measure 3), 3 (measure 5).

System 2 (Measures 7-10): Measure 7 contains a half note 'a' and a half note '1c' with a double bar line. Measure 8 contains a half note '3b' and a half note 'a' with a double bar line. Measure 9 contains a half note '2c' and a half note '3a' with a double bar line. Measure 10 contains a half note 'c' and a half note 'a' with a double bar line. Dynamics: *p* (measure 7), *cresc.* (measure 8), *f* (measure 9), *mf* (measure 10). Fingering: 2 (measure 7), 3 (measure 8), 2 (measure 9), 3 (measure 10).

System 3 (Measures 11-14): Measure 11 contains a half note '3h' and a half note 'f' with a double bar line. Measure 12 contains a half note '2h' and a half note 'h' with a double bar line. Measure 13 contains a half note '3h' and a half note 'f' with a double bar line. Measure 14 contains a half note '3h' and a half note 'f' with a double bar line. Dynamics: *f* (measure 11), *mf* (measure 13). Fingering: 3 (measure 11), 2 (measure 12), 3 (measure 13), 3 (measure 14).

System 4 (Measures 15-18): Measure 15 contains a half note '4e' and a half note 'a' with a double bar line. Measure 16 contains a half note '3e' and a half note '3c' with a double bar line. Measure 17 contains a half note '3e' and a half note '3c' with a double bar line. Measure 18 contains a half note '3e' and a half note '3c' with a double bar line. Dynamics: *mp* (measure 15), *p* (measure 16), *cresc.* (measure 17), *mp* (measure 18). Fingering: 4 (measure 15), 3 (measure 16), 3 (measure 17), 3 (measure 18).

System 5 (Measures 19-22): Measure 19 contains a half note '2d' and a half note 'a' with a double bar line. Measure 20 contains a half note '1d' and a half note '2e' with a double bar line. Measure 21 contains a half note '1f' and a half note 'a' with a double bar line. Measure 22 contains a half note '3h' and a half note 'f' with a double bar line. Dynamics: *mf* (measure 19), *mf* (measure 21). Fingering: 2 (measure 19), 1 (measure 20), 3 (measure 21), 3 (measure 22).

System 6 (Measures 23-26): Measure 23 contains a half note '3h' and a half note 'f' with a double bar line. Measure 24 contains a half note '2h' and a half note 'f' with a double bar line. Measure 25 contains a half note '2i' and a half note '3h' with a double bar line. Measure 26 contains a half note '3h' and a half note 'f' with a double bar line. Dynamics: *f* (measure 23), *dim.* (measure 24), *f* (measure 25), *dim.* (measure 26). Fingering: 3 (measure 23), 2 (measure 24), 2 (measure 25), 3 (measure 26).

[illegible]

Accordes

The exercise 'Accordes' is written on a five-line musical staff. It consists of two rows of notes. The first row contains the notes: a (first line), a (second line), e (third line), f (third space), a (third space), a (third space), c (third space), a (third space). The second row contains the notes: a (first line), a (second line), c (third line), c (third space), a (third space), a (third space), d (third space), c (third space), a (third space). Below the staff, the fingerings for the second row are indicated: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 4, 5, 6.

Appendix

Allemande from Sonata No 42 by Sylvius Leopold Weiss

Source: D-D1, Ms. Mus. 2841-V-1, vol. 2, p.51

$\text{♩} = 80$

mp *cresc.*

5

mf *mp* *cresc.* *f* *dim.*

8

mf *mp* *mf*

11

mp *p* *mp* *mf*

14

p *cresc.*

17

mf *f* *mf*

20

||

c a c

c a c

a c

4 \bar{a}^* \bar{a}^* *mp*

||

c a c

a c a

a* a*


5 4* \bar{a}^* *p*

||

a e c a c e

c a

\bar{a}^* b^* b *cresc.*

23 

[illegible][illegible]

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is written in the treble staff, and the bass staff provides a simple accompaniment. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system (measures 9-12) concludes the piece with a final cadence. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines, as well as dynamic markings like 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte).

Accordes

a a e f a a c a c a b c a

a a e f a a c a c a b c a

a a e f a a c a c a b c a

4 5 6



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