

# Introduction

Tone production is that particular moment when sound is initiated and set free, developing the sounds necessary to present an audible experience. It is a topic that is highly subjective, debated and discussed, which can only exist in relation to the socio-cultural context in which it is being produced. With such a central phenomenon at hand, I ask in this book: ‘how can we understand tone production on Early Modern lute instruments before the 1700s?’

Although there are numerous words used to speak about sound (including terminologies such as ‘tone production,’ ‘timbre,’ ‘tone colour’ and ‘frequency construct’), I find that tone production is the most apt for the argument I wish to present. This is because ‘tone’ (n.) has an inherent sense of a physically-produced sound that mediates something; consider its relations to Old French *ton* (musical sound, speech, words) and to Latin *tonus* (a sound, tone, accent), which again stems from Greek *tonos* (vocal pitch, raising of voice, accent, key in music), originally ‘a stretching, tightening, taut string’. Hence, ‘tone production’ can be said to be the production of a sound that is produced physically (cf. stretching, tightening, taut string), having a sense of something to be mediated (cf. speech and words, especially considering the sense of ‘manner of speaking’ present around the seventeenth century).<sup>1</sup> As a result, tone production has a discursive function that easily opens up for a different socio-cultural debate than similar terms such as ‘tone colour’ and ‘timbre,’ where ‘colour’ is more perceptually and emotionally charged (from Old French *color*; ‘colour, complexion, appearance’), while ‘timbre’ is more scientifically charged

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1 Online Etymology Dictionary. ‘Tone,’ *etymonline.com*. Retrieved 18 September 2017, URL: [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=tone&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=tone&allowed_in_frame=0).

(from French *timbre* ‘quality of a sound’). This book presents perspectives, theories and reflections on the subject by placing tone production on lute instruments in relation to historical and present approaches and perspectives.

Although the lute is perhaps not the first thing that comes to mind when thinking of the music market today, it is nonetheless present in the social and musical community. The instrument enjoyed a revival with the awakening of interest in historical music around 1900 and throughout the twentieth-century. That revival was further boosted by the Early Music Movement in the same century. There are many professional lutenists, especially in Europe, where most of the employment is found and lute performance practise has reached considerable heights in recent years, thanks to a growing number of world-class lutenists, such as Rolf Lislevand, Hopkinson Smith, Paul O’Dette, Miguel Yisrael, Xavier Diaz Latorre, Robert Barto, Nigel North and Anthony Bailes. We can also take note of many guitarists switching over to the lute, and many of them continue practising guitar techniques on the new instrument, thus perhaps not fully exploring the sonic and expressive capacities inherent in the instrument. Many guitarists prefer to play the theorbo as it, most often, is single-strung and therefore suits the modern guitarist’s nail-based technique better than the double-strung instruments.<sup>2</sup> There is, however, an increasing number of musicians who fully convert to becoming lutenists and there seems to be an expanding global market for lute performance. This statement is supported by the proliferation of teaching institutions offering lute performance studies,<sup>3</sup> the number of lute societies,<sup>4</sup> as well as the increasing amount of publications treating lute-relevant subjects. Lute instruments have, in recent years, started to become an expected part of the continuo ensemble in accordance with historical sources, and

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2 *Liuto forte* is an example of this - it is a type of adapted lute to suit guitarists using guitar-technique.

3 For instance: University of Agder, Norway; Royal College of Music, Stockholm, Sweden; Conservatoire National de Toulouse, France; Staatliche Hochschule für Musik in Trossingen, Germany.

4 The Lute Society of America, The Argentine Society for Lutes and Early Guitars, The Austrian Lute Society, The Belgian Lute Society, Czech Viola da Gamba and Lute Society, The Dutch Lute Society, The French Lute Society, The German Lute Society, The Italian Lute Society, to name only a few. For further details; see: The Lute Society of America. ‘Links,’ [lutesocietyofamerica.org](http://lutesocietyofamerica.org). Retrieved 20 May 2015, URL: <http://www.cs.dartmouth.edu/~lsa/links/index.html>.

we can see an increasing number of productions of Early Modern operas, staging of music theatre and ballets, all incorporating and relying on the continuo group. So, there is indeed a need to address tone production, the very foundation of a lute performance's *ethos*, *pathos* and *kairos*, in full.

## Previous work

I wish to present arguments that are directly usable for the performer as well as the scholar. Much published information can be found, but it is scattered (throughout articles, magazines, etc.) and often distinguishes between historical and practical approaches. Furthermore, the literature is often very traditional in its approach, focusing mainly on fingering and experience-based perspectives on performance practices; there is often more emphasis on how something should be played than how it sounds (as will be discussed in full in later chapters). Some scholars are, for instance, not performers and sometimes miss out on important perspectives closely connected to the highest, international-level performances in their research on music performance. Additionally, many prominent performing lutenists do not publish their experience in writing, meaning that their knowledge is only accessible through personal tuition. A few attempts have been made in recent times to present effective methodologies for learning lute practices but they are, more or less, solely designed to provide 'do it like this' solutions and do not include more complex perspectives, such as physics and psychology; neither do they present their work in a format that supports and develops academic theoretical perspectives.<sup>5</sup> Books treating the Renaissance lute are in a clear majority. Online resources include, for instance, Stefan Lundgren's online tutor,<sup>6</sup>

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5 See for instance North, N., *Continuo Playing on the Lute, Archlute and Theorbo* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987); Weigand, G., *Lute Improvisation* (Shattinger International Corp, 1977); Poulton, D., *A Tutor for the Renaissance Lute* (England: Schott & Co. Ltd., 1991); Lundgren, S., *The Baroque Lute Companion oder 'Galanthe Methode, die Laute zu tractieren'* (München: Lundgren Editions, 1993); and Damiani, A., *Method for Renaissance Lute*. Eng. trans. Doc Rossi (Italy: Ut Orpheus edizioni, 1999).

6 Lundgren, S.O., 'Lesson Two', *Lute Online*. Retrieved 31 July 2017, URL: [http://www.luteonline.se/lesson\\_two\\_1.htm](http://www.luteonline.se/lesson_two_1.htm).

David van Ooijen's YouTube channel<sup>7</sup> and Simone Colavecchi's YouTube channel.<sup>8</sup>

Taylor (1978)<sup>9</sup> addresses tone production on the Classical guitar, but only limited amounts of its contents can be transferred to the lute. Indeed, the lute offers certain complexities that are not of interest to the modern Classical guitar. For instance, it makes a difference on the Baroque guitar where you place the finger between two frets — the sustain of the tone can indeed be reduced by up to a fourth of its potential duration — while on the modern Classical guitar, the tone remains the same independently of the finger's position (see Chapter 4).

On other occasions, it may be equally easy and effective to turn to historical works, but, with some exceptions, they almost never talk clearly about tone production. Only a few approach the subject, but not to an extent that sheds much light on the performer.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, there is a great amount of experience and knowledge preserved in audio and film recordings by high-level international performers of Early Music, but these recordings can often prove difficult to turn into practical knowledge to implement in one's own playing, mainly because of poor recording quality and a certain distance to the performer, making it difficult to perceive what they are actually doing without much prior knowledge of that particular artist's practice.

Additionally, some areas within Early Music performance are scarcely treated at all. For example, the *chitarra battente* has only recently been treated in a practical, although quite limited, method;<sup>11</sup> and the *colascione* is only treated fully in one large scale work.<sup>12</sup> In the case of the latter, there are some minor articles, theses and dissertations that mention the

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7 *Lute Lessons* [YouTube channel]. Retrieved 6 September 2017, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/user/LuteLessons>.

8 *luteplayer80* [YouTube channel]. Retrieved 6 September 2017, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/user/luteplayer80>.

9 Taylor, J., *Tone Production on the Classical Guitar* (London: Musical News Services Ltd, 1978).

10 See for instance Mace, T., *Musick's Monument ...* Early English Books Online Editions, ProQuest (London: T. Ratcliffe and N. Thompson, 1676).

11 Loccisano, F., *La chitarra battente*. Con DVD (Granarolo dell'Emilia: Fingerpicking.net, 2015).

12 Depalma, F., *O re di li stromiente: Il colascione nelle fonti musicali, letterarie e iconografiche* (Lecce: Edizioni Grifo, 2010).

*colascione*, but few of them present much directly-incorporable data for the practicing performer. The need for presenting a work that brings together various relevant disciplines through reflection and practical advice across the entire lute instrument family is evident.

## The ambition

It is my strong opinion that interdisciplinarity is the way to go for Early Modern music performance studies. The problem we meet is how to ensure that the study is indeed interdisciplinary and not only parallel-disciplinary; i.e. how to join the knowledge of several fields together without losing the precision of the argument and without presenting two or more separate, parallel discourses. Furthermore, I am very interested in how artistic practice and traditional academic research can work together to produce knowledge. To me, this is crucial for developing arguments, theories and practices that are interesting and directly useable for musicians, while preserving the academic dimensions and giving the research the proper scientific attention. The present book functions as a sort of meta-argument, from which we can better understand lute tone production from a biological point of view and its morphological aspects. The ‘biology of lute sound’ is a perspective I developed in my earlier study, *Dissecting Transformations: Towards a Biology of Recorded Lute Sound*,<sup>13</sup> and it suggests that recorded lute sound (or simply ‘lute sound’ in this present context) is something that evolves over time and is not necessarily a fixed description of the present state. By learning more of this interdisciplinary process, we can better understand what a concept of tone production on Early Modern lute instruments may be and how it might develop. By learning more of this interdisciplinary process, we can achieve a state of informed play, where our tone production is not only something we have learned from others but something we have developed ourselves. Informed play can enable us to contribute to new perspectives on lute performance and place ourselves within the very process of artis-

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13 Rolfhamre, R., ‘Dissecting Transformation: Towards a Biology of Recorded Lute Sound.’ *Studia Musicologica Norvegica* 40 (2014): 43–62.

tic development. The book will not be a traditional ‘how to’ manual or DIY service, but rather a source of reflection, enabling the reader to form their own opinion and implement their own approach to performance. By writing this book, I wish to contribute to setting a new standard for what can be expected from a lute performer’s development of their own tone production, and I wish to provide a new perspective on what can be taught at lute courses worldwide.

## How to use this book

The formulations ‘informed play’ and ‘artistic approach to research’ are important keys to understanding and using this book. There will be no definitive answers on how to do things properly; there will be no definitive methodology teaching the right and only way to play. What will be offered, however, is a pool of perspectives, facts and sources from which the reader can make up their own mind about what constitutes a good lute sound; hence, ‘informed play.’ Furthermore, a practice will be presented in which traditional, academic scholarship works hand in hand with musical performance to unveil perspectives that may be lost when only considering the written word. When practical considerations are addressed, I will present arguments based on my own approach to lute playing through case studies of my own instruments. This will be done based on a certain line of thought and foundation of source materials which will give the reader an opportunity to judge for themselves, instead of directly offering a ‘Rolfhamre school of playing.’ This is further grounded in the book’s focus on *tone production*, rather than *playing technique*. Fingerings, i.e. which finger to use and when, are approached when necessary to the argument, by focusing on the sound they produce rather than the efficiency and ergonomics of their execution.

The main value of this project lies in the combination of an experience-based discipline with an academic one. Following such an approach, other values are gained: 1) the introduction of a more systematic, reflective approach towards tone production; 2) highlighting of perspectives relating in particular to playing the lute at a professional level; and 3)

a contribution to increased competence among lutenists and scholars researching lute instruments, both concerning what is entailed in the different perspectives and what each perspective can contribute to the others.

It is then possible for various types of readers to utilise this book in several ways. Firstly, scholars may be interested in the scientific approach of the book, exploring artistic research as a scholarly practice; obtaining new perspectives on historical music practices; and using it as a handbook to better understand the practical side of lute playing. Secondly, educators and students at institutions around the world may incorporate this book into their tuition, both as support for the course content and as course curriculum. Thirdly, professional lutenists globally may gain new perspectives and inspiration for their own practice, contributing to their artistic development. Finally, amateur lutenists across the globe who are not following any formal course may utilise this book to guide their work. The book naturally follows an argument from beginning to end, but each chapter can be used separately in a course of study, making the book flexible. A sound-recording course curriculum may, for instance, be more interested in Chapter 6, while a beginning lutenist may be more interested in starting with Chapters 2 and 3. The more advanced, intermediate or professional lutenist may find new perspectives in Chapter 4 and 5. These are just a few of the possible approaches to the book.

## Foundation

A study related to historical practice and how that can be realised today depends completely on the foundation from which it emerges, i.e. the common ground on which various discourses, aesthetics and ideologies can start to form. Naturally, in order to justify the arguments that I am presenting here, I find it necessary to present the research foundation which underlies those arguments, in order to clarify the framework in which the argument will unfold. In this section, I will give a brief presentation of how sources and literature, instruments, my own musicianship, and some of my earlier publications have contributed to this book.

## Sources and literature

An obvious start for any historical inquiry is, of course, literature and sources, which we can divide into original primary sources, secondary sources, literature and practical instructions. Primary sources can be thought of in different terms. Writing about music, for instance, the musical score can be considered a primary source, while literature describing the music can be termed secondary sources. According to Yale's *Primary Sources at Yale* website:<sup>14</sup>

Primary sources provide first-hand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic under investigation. They are created by witnesses or recorders who experienced the events or conditions being documented. Often these sources are created at the time when the events or conditions are occurring, but primary sources can also include autobiographies, memoirs, and oral histories recorded later.

The functional definition of primary sources in this book will be based on Yale's definition, i.e. that primary sources provide first-hand testimony or direct evidence concerning the topic under investigation. This would, in the present context, include sources such as musical notation (handwritten manuscripts, engravings and prints) and pedagogical material (historical documents describing how to play an instrument). Due to matters concerning copyright laws, I have chosen to write the examples of music in my own hand. Given that it is the content of the music — not the actual handwriting, print or engraving — that is being considered in this book, it should not present any problems to the interpretation nor the understanding of the given examples.

Secondary sources include documents or recordings that relate to or discuss information originally presented elsewhere. These would then include publications such as letters, poems and encyclopedias.

Literature includes modern scholarly publications treating Early Modern practice. I have focused my corpora of literature mostly on English-language publications, but I have also studied and reviewed

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<sup>14</sup> Yale University, 'Primary Sources,' *www.yale.edu*. Retrieved 29 February 2016, URL: [http://www.yale.edu/collections\\_collaborative/primarysources/primarysources.html](http://www.yale.edu/collections_collaborative/primarysources/primarysources.html).

relevant publications in French, Italian, German and Spanish. In all instances where I have referred to non-English texts, the translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated. I do not claim to present translations that do justice to the tone and original syntax of the literature from a linguistic perspective, but merely to present functional translations that mediate the intention behind the written words. To give the reader the benefit of judging the translation themselves, I will present both the original text and its translation throughout the book. I have tried to keep the transcription of the original texts as accurate as possible, but I have taken the liberty to alter certain typographical letters, such as ‘v’ to ‘u’ and ‘vv’ to ‘w’, where appropriate, for the sake of clarity. Where *The Burwell Lute Tutor* is concerned, the original is very hard to read. I have therefore made the decision to refer readers to Thurston Dart’s translation of it into modern English<sup>15</sup> to make it easier for the reader to comprehend. I have compared his translation to the original and, where nothing else is stated, I agree with his solutions. The same applies to other instances where the translations of others have been included.

Practical instructions include modern publications directly treating a handicraft, such as how to play lute instruments and how to perform music. Common for practical instructions is that they are often based on the author’s own experience and personal idiolect, rather than on fully-presented academic arguments.

The hierarchy of these sources throughout the book, for the sake of the argument I wish to present, will be:

1. Primary sources
2. Secondary sources
3. Literature
4. Practical instructions

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15 Dart, T., ‘Miss Mary Burwell’s Instruction Book for the Lute.’ *The Galpin Society Journal*, 11 (May, 1958): 3-62.

## Instruments

The book also has an artistic-performance aspect to its research foundation. The instruments used for the practical studies are from my own collection. There are several reasons for this: 1) my approach is founded on a principle that we do not necessarily buy good sound (of course, there are quality differences between instruments and makers), but that it is rather a matter of how we use the instruments; 2) instruments can be expensive and a successful approach to tone production should be grounded in the performer rather than the object; a lutenist playing at a concert is judged on their performance ‘here and now,’ not based on what instrument they may acquire in the future; 3) by using the instruments I have at my disposal at home, I simulate the situation of most readers and therefore the argument of informed play and an artistic approach to research becomes more valid and useful in practise; and finally, 4) I do not find it necessary for the academic argument of the book to use original instruments found in museums. This is because many of them are not playable and their present state corresponds to their lifespan. Some instruments are restored by modern luthiers, but then again, we cannot speak of the ‘original sound’ for the reasons already stated. Modern instruments are in themselves interpretations made from historical evidence, based on the luthier’s understanding, knowledge and artistic agenda; they do not necessarily correspond to what was actually used in the Early Modern era. Modern instruments are also based on a modern perception of what sounds good and what feels good when playing.

## My own musicianship

Always when dealing with the performance of musical traditions long gone, there are inevitable subjective and intuitive aspects to how a musical performance presents itself. This is not always easy to put on paper, and the ‘ear’ of the beholder plays a crucial role in this process. I will, therefore, present relevant aspects of my own musical background to clarify the perspective which forms the foundation of my readings, interpretations, expectations and understanding.

As a guitarist and lutenist, I was primarily formed by my teachers and mentors, ranging from the beginning of my studies with Theodor Holmer at the Public Music School in Haninge, Sweden, to high school studies at Södra Latin in Stockholm, Sweden, with Bo Hansson and Jan Risberg, to my University-level degrees at the University of Agder, Norway, where I studied with Per Kjetil Farstad and Jan Erik Pettersen. In recent years, Rolf Lislevand has also functioned as an important source of input in my development as a lutenist, which of course has had implications for my approach towards perspectives related to Early Music aesthetics, playing technique and performance.

Additionally, my understanding of Early Modern music (and music in general) stems from my interest in the breaking point between ‘Early Modern art-music’ (for want of a better term) and what we today label as ‘folk music’. This is an approach based on a pragmatic ideology that I have developed throughout my artistic career based in Scandinavia, and through my studies in music performance (Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees) and research (PhD) — where sound and emotion are favoured before traditional schools and the nearly impossible: complete accuracy.

What’s more, being an Associate Professor at the University of Agder and teaching lute instruments, among other things, has put me in the position of constantly needing to analyse my own approach towards lute playing and tone production, to be able to direct my students properly.

## My earlier publications

Part of this book has been presented beforehand in earlier versions. Chapter 6 is a combination and reworking of two previously-published papers, ‘Dissecting Transformation: Towards a Biology of Recorded Lute Sound’<sup>16</sup> and ‘Compact Disc(losure): Some Thoughts on the Synthesis of Recording Technology and Baroque Lute Music Research.’ Both are used with permission from the journals in which they were published.

Some selected, short passages retrieved from my doctoral dissertation, *The Popular Lute: An Investigation of the Function and Performance of*

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16 Rolfhamre, *Dissecting*.

*Music in France Between 1650 and 1700* (2014), have been utilised here and there in highly-revised, reworked and recontextualised versions.

## Structure

Chapter 2 addresses the historical perspective, introducing English, Italian, French, German and Spanish sources. The purpose of this chapter is to map out what contemporary materials have been published and what they do, or do not, unveil.

Chapter 3 turns to modern literature and handbooks to address the status of modern lute technique, what is being said about tone production in modern handbooks and instructions on lute play, what literature there is and what can be found online.

It is also important to understand how sound is created on lute instruments and how we can relate to that phenomenon. In Chapter 4, I will address matters relating to the physics of sound, including lute construction and function, string properties, how string materials influence tone production, and how their properties change over time.

Chapter 5 will raise some psychological perspectives, through which I wish to address relevant matters relating to perspectives such as social influence and learning, perception, attitudes, values and inter-group relations. This is to put tone production into a human perspective, focusing on how our perception of good tone production is formed, not only from knowledge but also from inter-human relations, to become self-expressive acts.

Another important aspect for many performing lutenists is how they maintain and nurture their tone production through the recording medium. In Chapter 6, I will address the relationship between the lute and recording technology, and discuss the recording as a mediator of scholarly work. This will be followed by discussions on both technological and performance-practical considerations.

In the final conclusion, I draw everything to a close, focusing on the conceptual and biological perspectives of tone production, and I attempt to conclude the process itself and propose a context in which my argument can be further utilised by colleagues.

## Acknowledgements

Before the book fully unveils, there are some people I wish to thank for their support, input and guidance. First of all, I would like to extend my gratitude to Rolf Lislevand, for his support and feedback. Several of the important perspectives presented in this book were born during our conversations, and it has been valuable indeed to gain access to his far-reaching experience and knowledge. I am also grateful for being able to test my theories and ideas in practice with my current lute and guitar students at the University of Agder. Furthermore, Anne Haugland Balsnes deserves a great thank you for reading the manuscript and providing her comments prior to submission to the editor. Support has also been given by one of my current PhD students, Inga Marie Nesmann, who has provided support and feedback. My dear friend and colleague, Per Kjetil Farstad, has been there and supported me all the way from my Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree, throughout my PhD and now finally as my colleague at the University of Agder, Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Classical Music and Music Education; thank you! Additionally, Are Skisland at the University of Agder Library has been a great help in getting the necessary material and literature for the book. My gratitude extends to Lars Aase at Portal Forlag for believing in this project and providing support in the early stages, before they became part of Cappelen Damm Akademisk, where my current editors, Simon Aase and Katia Stieglitz, took over responsibility for the book; thank you, all three of you. Finally, I wish to say thank you to the University of Agder, Faculty of Fine Arts and the University of Agder Open Access Publication Fund for funding production of the book and granting me the time to write it.

