

Daily classes – Lute

Brandon Acker: “Demystifying Continuo on the Theorbo” (daily class)

Continuo doesn’t have to be overwhelming. This class shows you how to realize figured bass lines on the theorbo in an idiomatic, musical way. We’ll tackle the common challenges: counterpoint, multiple realization options, and the pressure to improvise brilliance in every measure. You’ll learn answers to questions such as: what is the theorbo’s primary role in an ensemble? How does that role change when you’re the sole accompaniment? How many voices should you use? Are there simple strategies for rolling chords?

We’ll focus on making the instrument feel natural so you can concentrate on supporting the music and the text. Participants will also have the opportunity to receive feedback on their own realizations.

Robert Barto: Master Class

Master Class with Baroque lute topics.

Robert Barto: “Easy Baroque Lute”

A hands-on class using easy chaconne patterns to practice chords and scale passages in various keys in a group setting. For 11- and 13-course players. Tuning will be at A=415.

David Brown: “From Melancholy to Paradise: The Consort Music of Anthony Holborne”

In this class, we’ll examine a variety of topics, including:

- Surviving instruments and their construction details in photos, drawings, and measurements. What stories do they have to tell?
- New lute construction and its relationship to surviving instruments. How much should we follow surviving instrument designs? How can we adapt them, and for what reasons?
- Material selection: woods and their properties
- String selection: options in tension, material, and type
- Basic lute maintenance: temperature and humidity, peg maintenance, and when to take your lute to a luthier
- When lutes go bad: repair, rebuilding, and reconfiguration of instruments.

With plenty of time for open discussion and your questions!

Eduardo Egüez: “Around the Vihuela”

This class investigates the distinctive features of 16th-century Spanish vihuelists (Milan, Mudarra, Narváez, Fuenllana, etc.), repertoire, tablature for vocal music, and other topics.

Lucas Harris: “The Elizabethan Broken Consort, From the Inside!”

This participatory class offers a rare opportunity to experience the distinctive sound world of the Elizabethan broken consort—also known as the “mixed consort,” “consort-of-six,” or “Morley consort” — from within!

This remarkable ensemble brings together an unlikely combination of six instruments: lute, cittern, bandora, treble viol (or violin), bass viol, and Renaissance transverse flute. The resulting blend of timbres is magical, yet many lutenists seldom have the chance to play in a broken consort. This is due both to the challenge of assembling the instruments and players, and to the technical demands of the lute parts.

This class is designed to overcome both barriers. First, the consort itself will be provided: the bowed string and flute parts will be played by Case Western graduate students, while LSA participants and faculty will take on the three plucked instrument parts (lute, cittern, and bandora). Second, I will provide accessible “ripieno” lute parts, allowing intermediate and advanced players to participate in the consort in a low-stress, high-fun environment. Beginning players are very welcome to attend as auditors.

It is expected that most playing participants will play the “ripieno” lute parts. For any who wish to try the cittern or bandora parts, at least one of each instrument will be on hand (participants are highly encouraged to bring others if they have them). I will be prepared to cover the demanding division lute parts, but advanced players may arrange with me to take on this role in selected pieces.

Repertoire will include selections from Morley’s *Consort Lessons* as well as modern broken consort reconstructions by Ray Nurse.
All parts will be distributed in advance via cloud access. The class will use a pitch standard of A=440, with frets set in 1/6-comma meantone (assistance will be provided with fret placement as needed).

Playing participants are asked to contact me in advance to confirm and coordinate their role in our consort: lucasharris@live.ca

Danur Kvilhaug: “From Melancholy to Paradise: The Consort Music of Anthony Holborne”

Anthony Holborne (1545–1602) was one of the most renowned composers in England at the turn of the 17th century. John Dowland specifically commended Holborne in his second publication of songs, dedicating the famous song “I saw my lady weepe” to the composer. In this ensemble-focused class, we will explore the consort and solo lute music of Holborne, both in full-ensemble and small-ensemble settings. Works covered in this class will include pieces from both solo and consort sources of Holborne’s repertoire. We will also delve into the exciting task of adding diminutions and graces to this repertoire, a tradition common to the works of not only Holborne, but also Dowland, Morley, and other English composers of this period.

Nigel North: “Twenty Original Sources for Lute Instruction, 1500-1750”

We will take a detailed look at all major instructional sources for the lute, including Capirola, Newsidler, Galilei, Waissel, Besard, Robinson, Vallet, Piccinini, Mersenne, Gaultier, Gallot, Mouton, Le Sage de Richée, Reusner, Radolt, and Baron. In this survey, we will explore what these original instructions say about technical and musical subjects, such as tuning/temperament, hand positions and fingering, ornamentation, dynamics, arpeggiation, and more.

Nigel North: Master Class

Paul O’Dette: Master Class

Bring whatever you want!

Paul O’Dette: “Discovering Dowland”

Everyone loves Dowland, but what makes his music so special, and how can we bring out that specialness in our playing? We will explore all the genres Dowland used and will discuss how to determine the most appropriate phrasing, articulation, fingering, ornamentation, sources, etc. for each piece. This class is a deep dive into the genius of the greatest lute composer.

Laudon Schuett: “Improving Your Sight-Reading”

While sight-reading on the lute is generally easier than on other instruments due to the use of tablature, it can still be an underdeveloped skill for many students. This course will aim to help students improve their sight-reading in a fun and friendly environment. We’ll cover a number of techniques and “games” that can quickly improve your reading over the course of the week. All levels are welcome.

Laudon Schuett: “Composing Your First Lute Piece (Renaissance Style)”

This class will be a user-friendly introduction to composing pieces in a Renaissance style. While composition can often be an intimidating subject for students, we’ll work on practical steps to build your confidence and assignments will be tailored to each student’s level. At the end of the week, we’ll play through each other’s pieces and enjoy hearing what everyone came up with! All levels are welcome.

Hopkinson Smith: “Technique and Interpretation”

Open to all levels and all plucked instruments.

Class Recordings

This icon 📽️ indicates that a recording of this class will be available through the Lute Fest Lite program as well as for students attending the event in person.

Pat O’Brien Lecture

Lucas Harris: “The Collaborating Lutenist” 📹

No lutenist would deny that studying the lute’s rich solo repertoire brings immense satisfaction. Yet we should remember that the lute was (and is) an essential contributor in a wide range of ensemble settings, from intimate genres (solo songs, sonatas for solo viol or violin, etc.) to larger ones (orchestral suites & concertos, operas & oratorios, and even choral-orchestral works). Performing with others not only brings our instrument into dialogue with the broader musical world, it also gives us the chance to engage with brilliant music that lies outside our solo tradition.

This series of lectures will empower you to “up your game” as a collaborative lutenist. Drawing from historical sources, insights from modern lutenists, and my own experience of nearly three decades as a full-time lutenist, we’ll discuss both the practical and artistic dimensions of ensemble playing, whether we’re working from tablature, basso continuo, or other types of notation. Although the bulk of the discussion will focus on working with other historically-informed musicians, we may also take time to explore collaborations with other artists, such as dancers, actors, non-classical musicians, and non-Western musicians.

Topics will include setting yourself up for success with well-chosen repertoire and collaborators, optimizing your instrument’s setup for ensemble contexts, effective rehearsal communication, and the ever-present question of audibility. We’ll also welcome guest vocalists and instrumentalists to enliven the discussion through live collaboration.

Single 90-minute classes – Lute

Eduardo Egüez: “Intabulating a 16th-Century Polyphonic Vocal Work for Vihuela or Renaissance Lute” 📹

During the sixteenth century, a countless number of vocal works, both sacred and secular, were intabulated, following precise techniques to adapt the original polyphony to these instruments according to the number of voices involved.

First, we will set a transcription that remains as close as possible to the original. Second, we will apply diminution models to each voice. Finally, we will write a bastarda-style diminution.

Eduardo Egüez: Master Classes (2)

Nigel North: “In Search of Dowland” 📽️

Following five years of preparation of a new edition of Dowland’s Lute Music (Le Luth Doré, Paris, 2026) Nigel North will consider the sources of Dowland’s music, how to interpret and edit them, and will ask the question of “what is really Dowland?”

Nigel North: “A Guide to Playing 16th-Century Polyphony on the Lute”

Most of our 16th century repertoire is written polyphonically: several individual voices, played together on one lute. In this lecture, we will consider how to interpret tablature so as to make the most sense of this multi-voiced music. Technical and musical subjects abound.

Paul O’Dette: “The Antwerp School of Lutenists, circa 1600: An Unexplored Treasure”

Antwerp was one of the most important centers of lute playing in the late 16th century, focused around the teaching of Emanuel Adriaenssen. Adriaenssen’s students Gregorius Huwet, Adrian Denss and Joachim van den Hove all moved on to important posts in Germany and Holland, but the essential characteristics Adriaenssen taught them remained: beautifully crafted counterpoint, soaring melodies, jazzy rhythms and wacky figuration that strongly influenced English and German composers around 1600. We will survey the repertoire to find out what makes it tick.

Paul O’Dette: “English Lute Music in Germany and the Low Countries”

English music was extremely popular in Germany and Holland in the late 16th/early 17th centuries. The lute music of Dowland, Holborne, Cutting, Bachelar and others were copied into numerous manuscripts and published in printed books between 1600-1630, and these sometimes provide the best, or only sources for these works. We will survey these German sources and look at what they can tell us about the music that the English sources cannot!

Mark Rimple: “Contemporary Analysis for Better Musicianship: Parameters and Implications for Interpreting Solo Lute Music”

Lutenists come to the instrument from varied personal experiences. Players who learned the lute as adults might have little background in music theory, while conservatory-trained players might have a repertoire of analysis skills that was created out of Romantic or contemporary music, with little meaningful relationship to the music they are playing on the lute. Knowing that particular events happen in a musical discourse is quite helpful, but labeling cadences and contrapuntal entries alone isn't the same as getting “under the hood” to discover exactly what to do with these events. The worst kind of teaching and learning relies on the authority alone, and while much of the world learns music as “the master played it”, the Western, humanistic frame of a free society of individual minds rubs up against simply copying the guru. And yet, many theoretical systems can be led by their own: Heinrich Schenker believed the only musicians were the people he trained in his special system over many years, and he had quite a Romantic axe to grind. Different systematic approaches have held sway in American and continental discourse lately including Neo-Riemannian theory, the application of classical Rhetoric, and most recently, Schematic analysis and Partimento training. Each of these approaches has its own learning curve and, ultimately, its utility (if any) and historical relevance for each lutenist is based on their musical pursuits. The problem seems insoluble. But must everyone be reliant on a master to understand music beyond the communication from the composer in tablature?

Led by Leonard Meyer, Eugene Narmour, and their students, in this short lecture, we will explore a few simple but powerful analytical tools that can help any player, from the beginner to the virtuoso, make better informed and more creative decisions about the music they play (and hear), based on the ways the human mind and body react to musical parameters and the grouping of patterns and musical structure. Acquiring these tools does not require intensive conservatory training to get started; such concepts are based in the perception and cognition of music, and can be applied to every musical style from chant to contemporary music. We will look at several excerpts from representative lute works by Francesco da Milano and John Dowland and apply several of these concepts. Hopefully, lutenists will leave the lecture with more interest in analytical thinking and more of a sense of how their minds perceive the music they hear.

Mark Rimple: “Rhythm Changes”

The seemingly bland note values or rhythmic patterns running along the top of our lute tablatures do not always result in a predictable meter. Note groupings often break the bonds of the meter that strives to contain them in neat, ordered rows. In this lecture, we

will examine passages from lute works written between ca. 1450 and 1700 in order to discover their subtleties, which often lay hidden in plain sight.

Laudon Schuett: “Dowland’s Right Hand” 🎥

It is unfortunate that John Dowland never completed his *Art of Lute Playing*. His son, Robert, promised that it would make clear all of his father’s technical preferences and likely would have been one of the most important resources for modern lutenists. Despite this, we still have a lot of information and clues related to John Dowland’s right hand preferences. This goes well beyond the fact that he played thumb-out, and this course will dive into the “nitty gritty” details of his right hand playing technique. While we may never be certain about a number of things, we can use the available evidence to make very informed assumptions about his approach. We will examine sources like the *Varietie of Lute Lessons*, the Margaret Board Lute Book, and the Folger Lute Book to elucidate as much as we can and we’ll experiment with using the techniques we find. Intermediate and advanced students.

Laudon Schuett: “Nuts and Bolts of Rhetoric”

While the topic of rhetoric is often discussed in early music, it is usually employed in a vague sense. This class will dive into the “nuts and bolts” of rhetoric, its figures, performance practices, and modes. We’ll develop a new vocabulary for discussing music and explore primary sources like Peacham’s *The Garden of Eloquence* and Wilson’s *The Arte of Rhetorique*. This class will empower students to make musical decisions based upon a tradition of practices that were embedded in all the arts of the Renaissance. This class is generally geared toward intermediate and advanced students.

Hopkinson Smith: Master Classes (2)

These classes will focus on delving into your musical spirit and looking for the best way to bring your ideas to life on the instrument. Unencumbered freedom of expression is our goal. Wide open discussions.

Hopkinson Smith: “Seven Passionate Pavans and Six New Solo Works” 🎥

Dowland wrote his Lacrimae Cycle for five viols or violins, and playing them on a lute alone opens up a new world. The Last Frontier! This class will focus on arrangements of Dowland's *“Seaven Passionate Pavans*” for solo lute.

Daily classes – Voice

Estelí Gomez: Master Class

Estelí Gomez: How to Practice: Interdisciplinary Guidance for Singers and Instrumentalists

This class is designed to support and enhance both concrete and abstract aspects of musical practice, no matter the instrument or skill level. Topics covered throughout the week will include but not be limited to interleaving, use of recording in practice, silent practice, unhelpful binaries in the practice room, and an introduction to mindfulness techniques.

Drew Minter: Master Class

You may bring repertoire including English lute songs (Dowland, Campion, Danyel, and the like) and 17th-century English continuo and theatre songs (Nicholas Lanier, John Wilson, Henry Purcell, and the like) of your own choosing, or ask to be assigned specific repertoire.

Drew Minter: John Dowland’s First Book of Ayres

In 1597 Dowland published the first book of English lute songs by a single composer. Containing 21 songs, Dowland laid out his book to be read by four singers and a lute player. Its popularity led to three reprintings /revisions during his lifetime and, over the next nearly three decades, a whole series of lute song books by a variety of composers (Thomas Campion, John Danyel, and others). We will examine Dowland’s groundbreaking book, observing Dowland’s own invitation to be performed “all the partes together, or either of them severally,” and therefore singing them in a variety of combinations of voices and lutes.

Nell Snaidas: Master Class

Nell Snaidas: Songs in Shakespeare

Music plays a vital role in the works of William Shakespeare. In a theatrical tradition that utilized very little in the way of painted scenery and props, the power of music to amplify the setting and emotional tone of a scene was fully exploited by Shakespeare and his colleagues. Songs illuminate character, deepen atmosphere, and often reveal what spoken text cannot. From the haunting lyricism of Ophelia's songs in Hamlet to the rustic charm of tunes in As You Like It and Twelfth Night, these pieces offer a rich intersection of poetry and musical expression. We will explore settings by composers such as Thomas Morley and Robert Johnson, focusing on text delivery, style, and historical context. Meeting daily, this class will provide participants with the opportunity to develop and refine repertoire over the course of the festival; songs will be assigned in advance in consultation with each student.

Single 90-minute classes – Voice

Estelí Gomez: Songs of Henry Purcell

Perhaps best known for his tragic chamber opera Dido and Aeneas, Henry Purcell was a prolific composer of both sacred and secular music in late 17th-century England. In this lecture-presentation we will explore examples of a variety of his works for solo voice, from sacred songs with non-biblical texts such as "Evening Hymn" to solo secular songs and operatic excerpts performed with projected scores and further interpretive and stylistic analysis.

Drew Minter: The Feldenkrais Method Applied to Singing and Playing

Considered a genius in the development of somatic awareness, Moshe Feldenkrais, a nuclear physicist and world-renowned judo expert, created "Awareness Through Movement" after receiving an unsatisfactory prognosis for the knee surgeries he would have required while working on submarines in World War II. He turned his knowledge of movement dynamics to the body, developing a movement vocabulary of over 1500 lessons. Feldenkrais specialized in improving and enabling students with multiple sclerosis and other diseases of the nervous system to lead healthy lives. His method is widely used now by actors, musicians, and those recovering from physical injuries and

disabling conditions. Drew Minter will lead a group lesson followed by specific work with lute and voice students.

Nell Snaidas: The Art of Gesture

Gesture was an essential component of musical performance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, closely linked to the rhetorical and expressive aims of early opera and song. Drawing on primary sources such as Bonifaccio's L'Arte dei Cenni (The Art of Gesture, 1616) and John Bulwer's Chironomia (1644) we will explore how physical gesture, including codified hand positions, posture, and stance, can illuminate text, clarify affect, and enhance communication with an audience. Through guided exercises and practical application to repertoire, participants will develop a vocabulary of historically informed movement, discovering how gesture can deepen interpretation and bring immediacy to performance. The class will include group work as well as opportunities for individual exploration.