



LIVE
FROM
HOME
SERIES

**A note from La Grande Bande's
Music & Artistic Director and Board of Directors**

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, we had no idea exactly how, or how much, La Grande Bande would be affected. Obviously, we were profoundly disappointed that we were forced to postpone the two remaining performances of our 2019 – 2020 Concert Season. Thankfully, we were able to complete all of our educational programming before all large gatherings were not allowed.

Nothing can replace or make-up for not being able to perform for all of you in person. As musicians, we thrive on the direct connections we are able make with each of you before, during, and after each of our performances, masterclasses, outreach concerts, open rehearsals, and every single interaction in between. The new **Live From Home** series is designed to continue our programming, albeit in a radically different format: with videos recorded in our homes across the country made with the same passion and excitement we present in our concerts. We hope that the performances we'll be sharing over the next few months will provide you with joy in these historic times.

If you enjoy the program notes, the preview videos, or both, we encourage you to become a Sustaining Contributor. As a Sustainer, you will be able to access (1) all of the **Live From Home** series videos, (2) our Music & Artistic Director's Sustainer-level Director's Blog, and (3) other great perks like special invitations to private rehearsals. You can rest easy knowing that your monthly contribution will ensure La Grande Bande will be able to continue into the future. Want to find out more about becoming a Sustainer? We have the full list of benefits listed on our website at sustainers.lagrandebande.org.

Until we see each other in person again, we send each of you our best wishes.

Sincerely,

La Grande Bande

Live From Home Series

TJ Dalton
plucked strings

Friday 12 June 2020

Program

An informative talk about the Renaissance lute, Baroque guitar, and theorbo with musical selections by Gaspar Sanz (1640 – 1710), Robert de Visée (1655 – 1732/3), and Johannes Kapsberger (1580 – 1651).

Program Notes

We're so excited to have TJ Dalton performing for all of you for our third installment of our **Live From Home** series. You've seen and heard TJ in almost every one of La Grande Bande's 2019 – 2020 Season Concerts and our Sibley East Education Project in May 2019.

TJ has put together a wonderful lecture-performance for us about the three instruments that he plays the most often: the Renaissance lute, the Baroque guitar, and the theorbo. He's graciously agreed to provide us with some rock-solid program notes as well!

We hope you enjoy TJ's lecture-performance and we hope to see you all soon!

Renaissance Lute

The lute underwent many modifications throughout its long history. It has changed size, number of strings, number of necks, and even

inspired a number of different instruments that have become part of its extended family. The exact origin of the lute is not known, but the European lute—the instruments featured in today's **Live From Home** installment—is almost certainly a direct descendent from the Arabic *'Ud*.

The first instance of the European lute as it looks today though, traces back to the 13th Century. The lute began with four sets of strings (what we call “courses”) and was played with a plectrum during the Medieval Ages. By the end of the Baroque era, lutes had as many as 14-courses and were played with the fingers. These changes happened as a response to the ever-changing demands placed on musicians as the musical soundscape evolved. Often times, it was the musicians themselves who were responsible for the changes in instrument

design. Musicians were looking for specific sounds or functions that did not already exist, so they adapted their instruments to meet the needs of the music.

The rise of polyphonic music brought about the Renaissance lute. (This is the instrument that many people have come to mind when someone says, “lute.”) The Renaissance lute is quite small, with 6 to 10 courses, had was popular during the 15th and 16th centuries. They were used to accompany singers and to play complex and fast passages of polyphony. During the Renaissance era, lute songs became immensely popular and composers, such as John Dowland (1563–1626), wrote vast collections of works for the instrument.

Baroque Guitar

As music changed again, entering into the Baroque era, another instrument came to replace the Renaissance lute in the household: the Baroque guitar. Like the Renaissance lute, the Baroque guitar began as a smaller 4-course instrument created during the Renaissance era.

It was not until the very end of the 16th century that a 5th course was added, and the instrument gained popularity. With an additional course, the instrument increased in size to lower the instrument’s pitch and to increase its volume.

Like many instruments throughout the Baroque era, Baroque guitars widely varied in their size, shape, string scaling, and tuning. Some guitars by Italian makers possessed bowed backs like the Renaissance lute. Other guitars, like those made in France and by other Italian builders, have flat backs like our modern guitars. The guitar I’m playing in today’s video is a copy of an instrument by the famous Italian

luthier Antonio Stradavari (1644–1737).

Baroque guitars were played using two main techniques: the *punteado* (Sp, “plucking”) and the *rasqueado* (Sp, “strumming”). Combining of these two playing techniques allowed guitarists to produce a great variety of sounds depending on the settings where the instrument was used.

As a solo instrument, large collections of works were written by composers such as the Spaniards Gaspar Sanz (1640–1710) and Santiago de Murcia (1673–1739), by the Italian-born Francesco Corbetta (1615–1681), and by the French-born Robert de Visée (1655–1732/1733).

When used as an ensemble instrument, the Baroque guitar took on a harmonic role as a member of the basso continuo section. Using the *rasqueado* technique was a popular choice for playing basso continuo. The technique adds important rhythmic elements to the harmonic progressions. The guitar was also a popular choice for song forms, such as the chaconne and folia. But, generally, the Baroque guitar was used in all sorts of musical settings.

Theorbo

While the Baroque guitar may have replaced the Renaissance lute, the theorbo is a direct descendent of the Renaissance lute. At the end of the 16th century, the rise of opera in Italy brought about new challenges for the lute. The smaller Renaissance lute no longer possessed the necessary volume or range to play in such a setting, and the Italians were looking for an instrument to accompany the voice in recitative sections of operas.

To meet this need, the theorbo (It, “chitarrone”), was created. Likely developed by lutenists Alessandro Piccinini (1566–1638)

and Johannes Hieronymus Kapsberger (1580–1651), the instrument was an evolution of a bass lute with a modified tuning, a greatly increased size, and an additional, longer second neck.

The theorbo's second neck greatly increased the bass range of the instrument and expanded the instrument's voicing options. Furthermore, the theorbo's larger size allowed it to project in larger ensembles and to blend with the opera's professional singers.

Composers like Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) greatly favored the theorbo. Monteverdi is famous for utilizing multiple theorboes in combination with the organ to beef up the continuo section for many of his operas.

While the theorbo was often used as a continuo instrument, composers such as Johannes Hieronymus Kapsberger, Alessandro Piccinini, Robert de Visée, and Charles Hurel (fl. 1665–1692) wrote many solo works for the instrument. Each of these composers were also players, teachers, and innovators on the instrument. Through their works, modern lutenists gain a glimpse into the progression of the instrument as it moved through time and traversed Europe.

The theorbo was a popular choice as a continuo instrument until the mid-18th century. The increasing complexity of figured bass, the prevalence of melodic bass lines from composers like Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) and François Couperin (1668–1733), and changing musical tastes caused the theorbo to fall out of fashion. From that point on, the harpsichord became the most common plucked continuo instrument used for Baroque music.

Gaspar Sanz

Francisco Bartolome Sanz, later known as Gaspar Sanz, was born in 1640 into a wealthy family in Spain. Studying music lead him to become a Professor of Music at the University of Salamanca. To further his musical training, Sanz traveled to Italy where he was introduced to the Italian style of guitar playing. Upon his return to Spain, Sanz wrote his guitar method.

Sanz's three-volume set comprehensively covers the techniques and methods used in guitar playing while also providing a large set of solo literature for the instrument. This achievement made him the leading guitar theorist and lead him to teach royalty, including the child of King Phillip IV and Maria Calderon. Sanz's collection of works was published as a set in 1697 and contained 90 works for the Baroque guitar.

Robert de Visée

Born in France in 1655, Robert de Visée accepted a position as a court musician for Louis XIV sometime around 1680. De Visée's proficiency and popularity within the court later secured him the position of Royal Chamber Singer in 1710. During his time as court musician, de Visée composed his collection of works for baroque guitar, theorbo, and lute.

His music took on the style of the dance suite, which was immensely popular at the French court. Each of de Visée's suites consists of multiple movements inspired by dances like the minuet, bourée, and gavotte. His works for the theorbo and Baroque guitar are exemplary of the French style of playing.

The French style emphasizes the melody and uses numerous forms of ornamentation to

embellish it. Full utilization of the lute's range, and the strategic use of harmonic dissonances, helped to define the French style of lute and guitar playing. De Visée became one of the most important and popular French composers for the lute.

His works are still widely studied today, and they offer modern players a clear insight into how the lute would have been played in France during his time. De Visée died in France sometime in 1732/1733.

Johannes Kapsberger

Little information is known about the location of Johannes Kapsberger's birth, but some speculate that he was born in Venice in 1580. He was born into a military family and quickly gain notoriety as a musical virtuoso. Kapsberger's first major lute work, *Libro I d'intavolatura di lauto*, was published in Rome in 1611. Kapsberger was one of the composers responsible for advancing the use plucked

instruments.

His music is characterized by sharp contrasts in harmony, strange rhythmic groupings, and a disregard for standard counterpoint rules. A popular style utilized by Kapsberger was the toccata. A toccata is a virtuosic piece of music that is meant to exhibit a performers proficiency on a given instrument.

An extremely excellent player, Kapsberger utilized this form to show off his skills and to highlight what the lute could do. Even in the prelude played in today's installment, you can see hints of the toccata style throughout.

In addition to writing solo works for the instrument, he also wrote smaller pieces, including a collection of songs for theorbo and voice. A prolific composer, Kapsberger died in Rome in 1651.

Program notes by TJD.

About La Grande Bande

With performances called “warm and sensitive” by the Minneapolis Star Tribune, La Grande Bande strives to present innovative, unique, and inspiring musical programs played on the instruments that premiere audiences might have heard. LGB is composed of musicians from across the United States and from around the world who are specialists in the field of Early Music—music written between c. 1600–1800—and who play on historical instruments and sing in an historical manner.

We aim to present “masterworks” alongside lesser-known compositions, illustrating the extensive musical production during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Education is crucial to our mission, be it through program notes, through directed-educational events, open rehearsal sessions, or another method. We see incredible value in resurrecting the music written by the great masters of our past; it’s a historical, cultural, and musical lesson rolled into one.

To learn more about our musicians, or about our programming, visit www.lagrandebande.org/about.

About the Musicians

Timothy (TJ) Dalton is a native of Long Island, who began his musical career on guitar. He completed his Undergraduate and Masters of Music degrees at Stony Brook University in classical guitar performance under the study of Jerry Willard.

He began playing early music during his time at Stony Brook University. Starting with baroque guitar, he soon progressed to theorbo, archlute, and other historical plucked instruments. He has played with the Stony Brook Baroque Players, Three Village Chamber Players (3VCP), as well as other small ensembles, baroque orchestras, and baroque opera productions.

He has performed across New York, Boston, and Toronto. TJ continues to perform on historical plucked instruments as well as classical guitar in solo and ensemble settings.

