

# Sackville Festival of Early Music – Outreach 2021

(Prepared by Annika Williams and Dr. Linda Pearse)

**Introduction:** During the next few classes we will be listening to some early European art music from the Sackville Festival of Early Music. Early art music refers to music written before 1750, meaning that the newest early music was created over 270 years ago and the older early music is closer to 1400 years old! It can be confusing to listen to music that sounds so unfamiliar, so let's figure out some things to listen for.

## Part 1: Listening to Early Music

### Questions for Students

**Think about a song that you love. What elements of the music in that song stand out to you?** *The goal here is to get students thinking about the elements of music and to practice talking about them using music they are familiar with. If it is possible and effective for your class, you could ask students to take out their devices and listen to thirty seconds of a favourite song. Then ask them to share the elements that stood out to them with the class. Students might talk about rhythms, instruments, lyrics, emotional expression, and melody (tip: try to have them identify whether the melody has small or large distances between notes, and to have them talk about timbre, instruments, and beat).*

**Another important part of listening to new-to-you music is identifying any preconceived notions you have about that music. What do you expect early music to sound like?** *Any answers are fine! Be prepared to potentially shut down fatphobic jokes about opera singers or any comments that harm people, but disliking the music is totally fine!*

Now that you know what your brain is subconsciously expecting you are more prepared to listen. It is also helpful to learn a bit about the music before you listen.

**What technology and performance spaces were available when this music was being written?** *There was neither recording technology nor amplification, so all music was played acoustically. And because there was no internet or iTunes, music was listened to live: in the home, church, at court, in public concerts, or in the market place. The materials available to make instruments were different than those we use today, but instruments were designed to be perfectly suited for their specific performance venues and needs.*

**Activity:** Listen to Josquin des Prez's "De tous biens plaine a 3." <https://youtu.be/N4Bqvas8qcc>

**What did you notice about the music?** *Refer back to some of the words students used to describe music they are familiar with and see how those aspects are present in this music. For example: stepwise melody (notes close together), in duple time, string instruments (specifically lute and viola d'arco but these will be covered later in the outreach program), slow tempo, sounds very final and finished at the end.*

## Part 2: Instruments

**Activity.** Watch *Recercare* by Marco Dall'Aquila (1480-1544): <https://youtu.be/Kx08Aheyb64>

### Questions for students

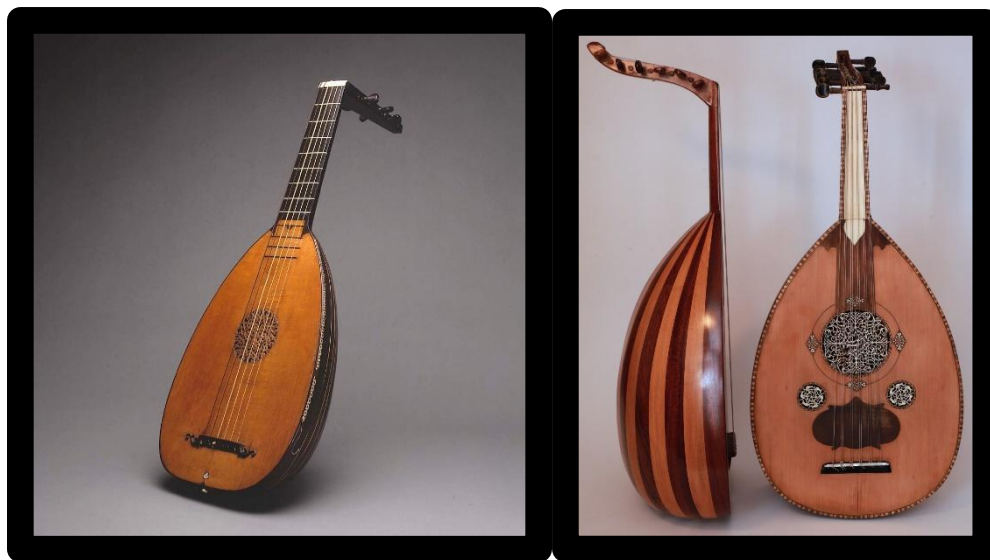
**Do you recognize any instruments being played?** *They likely will not, but some students may guess cello or guitar which can lead into the next question.*

**Do any of the instruments look or sound like instruments you are familiar with? If so, how?** *Cello, guitar, bass and violin will likely be common answers and students can point out that the viola d'arco is played with a bow, the lute has strings that are strummed, they both have tuning pegs at the top, and other observations. It may help to write down students' answers and then group their responses into a few main categories such as method of playing, materials the instrument is made from, instrument sound etc. before moving to the next question.*

**What do all these instruments have in common? What is this family of instruments called?** *This is the string family and all these instruments, like the (insert most common student instrument guesses here), are played by making the strings vibrate to produce sound.*

These specific instruments are called the lute and the *viola d'arco*.

**What is a lute?** *A lute is an instrument that is played by plucking the string. It has a hollow body, like a guitar, with a sound hole that allows the vibrations from the strings to resonate inside the instrument and produce sound. The top of the lute has tuning pegs to allow the player to tune the instrument by changing the tension of the strings and therefore the pitch.*



Lute

'Ud

*Lutes are similar to the Arab 'ud which can be traced back to the sixth century! The 'ud was played in Europe as early as the ninth century and the Western lute, like the one played in this concert, emerged around the thirteenth century.*

Depending on the history materials students have taken previously, a timeline might help visualize the development of these instruments. Here are some possible timeline events, but feel free to tailor it to suit your classes interests. There might be other events in history that you are studying in class that can be linked with these events.

Sample Timeline:

- *6th century – 'Ud is born*
- *9th century – 'Ud moves into Europe*
- *11th century – first crusade; Catholic Church attempts to standardize mass and chants*
- *12th century – University of Oxford founded; Hildegard von Bingen, founds her own Abbey and composes music.*
- *13th century – Western Lutes emerge; the Ottoman Empire is founded*
- *14th century – Black Plague; Ars Nova period begins; Katherine of Sutton writes first recorded play by a woman*
- *15th century – printing press invented; Renaissance Era begins in music; polyphony (many voiced music) becomes standard*
- *16th century – Josquin des Prez and Palestrina compose beautiful sacred music; Shakespeare writes plays in Elizabethan England; Maddalena Casulana in Venice becomes the first woman to publish her own music;*
- *17th century – opera emerges combining sung music, drama, costumes and sets; women increasingly gain access to public performance; Francesca Caccini and Barbara Strozzi are important women composers; Galileo argues that the planets rotates around the sun*
- *18th century – Bach dies in 1750; Louis XIV's reign in France ends; American Revolution; expulsion of the Acadians; Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges is composing in France*

*Lutes were especially important in Renaissance and Baroque music because they were versatile ensemble and accompaniment instruments. Lutes played basso continuo – the part of the music that provides other players with the bass line and chord progression that the whole piece is based on. In this way the Lute functioned similarly to a rhythm guitar or bass in a jazz or rock band: it supported other musicians with harmony and rhythm. Lutenists read symbols called figured bass but also had their own notation known as Lute Tablature. Figured bass is comparable to chord charts we use today. Lute tablature looks a lot different.*



Lute players can also look at figured bass and do the same thing. The numbers in this case, tell the lutenist which intervals should sound above the bass note. See this figured Bass exercise from <https://www.mymusictheory.com/>



*The lute was popular through most of Europe but in Spain it was overtaken by its cousin the vihuela. The vihuela was similar to the lute: it is a stringed instrument with a hollow wooden body. In Spain many people played the guitar while the aristocracy played the vihuela. You'll hear the vihuela in later Sackville Early Music Festival videos!*

**Activity:** Listen again to the *Recercare* (<https://youtu.be/Kx08Aheyb64>) and pay attention to the lute heard at 0:05–0:30.

*The final instrument you will hear in this concert is the viola d'arco. The viola d'arco is a bowed instrument, meaning it is played by moving a horsehair bow across the instrument's strings, making the strings vibrate and create sound. The viola d'arco is held between the player's legs, like a cello. The viola d'arco dates back to the Medieval era and is an ancestor of another popular early music instrument the viola da gamba.*

**Activity:** Listen one more time to the same track but this time, listen to the *viola d'arco* and start the video at 1:45–2:00.

### Part 3: Music and Dance

In this concert music and dance are working together to communicate with the audience, watch clip of *Al Alba venir* and *De mon triste displasir* here: <https://youtu.be/2ds9QT4lu90>

#### Questions for Students

**Did you like the fusion of dance and music? Why or why not?** *There are no wrong answers!*

**Where else do you see music and dance together?** *Ballet, musicals, music videos, Tiktok, etc.*

**How did the music and dance reflect each other?** Some possible answers: *She moved fast when the music was faster, slower when the music was slower; she looked like she was listening to the musicians; the musicians are paying attention to her; she slows and holds her motion when there are small pauses at the ends of phrases; her movement emphasizes the downbeats.*

**Notice the movements the musicians make:** do you think this is dance? Can we consider the dance solo at the end of this video clip to be music? Why or why not? *Feel free to spend time on this. One of the goals of the performers is to question the boundaries between dance and music.*

**Why are dance and music combined in this performance?** *This programme emerged from the collaboration of Montreal based dancer and choreographer Stéphanie Brochard and lutenist Esteban La Rotta. They decided to work together to create art that centres on music and dance as two art forms of equal importance. Stéphanie combines modern dance with the early European dance that would typically suit the music Esteban plays.*

**What is early European dance?** *Early dance refers to dance that was popular during the Renaissance and Baroque periods (approximately the 15th through mid 18th centuries). Early European dance is based on stylized or dramatized versions of everyday movements such as walking, running, jumping, sliding, turning, or falling. Early dance is like early music in that it emphasizes tension and release.*

*When you listen to music you might tap your toe to the beat and on the strong beat your foot goes down. In Baroque dance, the dancers emphasize strong beats by rising up on their toes. Before the strong beat the dancer often bends to further emphasize the rise on the strong beat.*

**Dance and music appear to have been part of human culture from the earliest of times – how were they viewed together when this music was written?** *In the 14th century artists, poets, and philosophers developed an interest in Ancient Greece and Rome that would continue well into the 17th century. They drew inspiration from these ancient societies and attempted to emulate their art. This included dance, which became a huge part of daily life. Much of the earliest European dance music was either vocal music rearranged for a group of instruments or an improvisation. Dance was so popular that composers began writing purely instrumental dance music. When composing dance music, the goal was to musically reflect the dancers' movements which led to the development of many new musical forms, such as the pavane.*

**Activity.** Watch the pavane: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVBIFUb0g60&t=4s>

If space and covid regulations permit, lead the students in dancing a pavane (see below)! *A pavane is a stately dance in 2/2 or 4/4 done in pairs. The movements are simple and consist of a pattern of forward and backward steps. Give it a try!*

Watch to see a simple pavane: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B10z9b\\_PRXw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B10z9b_PRXw)

1. Line up in pairs (*only if distancing allows; a single line works as well!*)
2. Take one step forward with your left foot then bring your right foot to touch the ground beside the left foot.
3. Take another step forward this time with your right foot and bring the left foot to rest beside the right.
4. Take three steps forward starting on your left foot.
5. Repeat steps 2–4.
6. Repeat in reverse! One step back with your left foot, one step back with your right foot, and then three steps back: left, right, left.