

rose early to prominence and spent his youthful maturity in Italy, where he was an influential early madrigalist. Later in life he returned north and settled in Paris, where he made his mark on the *chanson*. *Si ce n'est amour qu'est-ce* is a light-hearted love song with a clever lyric full of verbal paradoxes. Arcadelt's setting is tuneful in a flowing 9/8 meter, and Nelson carefully crafts the accompaniment to support the arc of the song. *Que te sert amy d'estre ainsi* shows another, more refined side of Renaissance composition. This song is a setting of a text by the aristocratic poet Mellin de Saint-Gellais, as is the next piece by Arcadelt, *Dieu inconstant*. All the works by Arcadelt presented here are arrangements for guitar and voice by Le Roy of polyphonic vocal originals. *Dieu inconstant*, a mournful song of disappointed love, especially shows Le Roy's skill as an arranger. The guitar accompaniment is completely original and not just an intabulation of the lower parts of the *chanson* (although it does exploit the more active voice-leading of the last line). To my ear, it approaches the contrapuntal richness of John Dowland's lute song accompaniments. The duo might have felt the same way, because they chose to separate the first and second strophes of the song with a purely instrumental statement of the accompaniment. The last song by Arcadelt on this recording is *Margot labourez les vignes*. Howard Goodall believes the lyric of this piece tells a humorous story whose meaning is lost in time; others have said it challenges the idea that love and marriage are limited by social class. The polyphonic original is often performed at a quick tempo, lending it the character of a "patter song" and accentuating the humorous character. The performance here is gentler, with an air of innocence and sincerity.

Although Le Roy shines as an arranger, he is represented as a composer by two songs: *Une m'avoit promis* and *Mes pas semez*. The first is a rather long, strophic *pavane*. The performers introduce more or less instrumental and vocal ornamentation in different verses, and also vary a distinctive metric elision at the end of each verse. The second is a mournful *chanson* based on the *folias* ground bass pattern in a slow triple meter with a prominent hemiola in the third couplet of each verse. Here Bartram performs the first verse *a cappella*, after which Nelson enters with block chords for the second verse, then performs the published contrapuntal accompaniment for the third verse, and accompanies the last verse with a *rasgueado* texture, building to a dramatic finish. Another song on the CD, *J'ay le rebours*, is credited to Le Roy but is almost certainly his arrangement of a polyphonic work originally by Pierre Certon.

A brief song by Laurent Bonard, *Au jour au jour au jour*, shows a large-scale metric alternation between duple and triple organization of the kind that is seldom credited to 16th-century music. The text tells a humorous tale of a wife's dalliance in the face of her husband's shortcomings.

The jewel of the recording is the last track, Claudin de Sermisy's *Tant que vivray*, transcribed by both Attaingnant and Bianchini for lute and by Fuenllana for solo vihuela. Jocelyn Nelson has created her own convincing version for four-course guitar and solo voice. As a noble and soaring anthem of fidelity to romantic love, it is a fitting and inspiring close to this recording, reaching out across the centuries to touch our hearts and fire them anew. With this setting, Nelson may fairly claim her place alongside Le Roy, Attaingnant, and other notable guitarist exponents of the *chanson*.

—ELLWOOD COLAHAN

## AV Review:

*Men, Women and Guitars in Romantic England.*

Six-lecture video series (2014-2015) hosted at the Gresham College website,

<<https://www.gresham.ac.uk/series/men-women-and-guitars-in-romantic-england/>>.

### *The Eyre Guitar*

At first glance, a detailed examination into the conditions of the governess class in early 19th-century England might seem like it has little to do with understanding the guitar. Yet medievalist and scholar of the guitar Christopher Page patiently lays out an array of evidence to show that it is, in fact, central to a number of themes connected to the guitar in this period: its intimate performance context, its role as a tool of striving, its overwhelming identification with women. This is just one of a number of vivid socio-historical perceptions he offers in the course of his six-part lecture series, *Men, Women and Guitars in Romantic England*.

These lectures, each about 45 minutes long, are engagingly delivered and sprinkled with musical performances on period instruments and voice by accomplished artists. Although there is more lecture than recital (the music makes up something less than one-third of each video), the musical interludes both illustrate the speaker's points and return us at regular intervals to the sounds inspiring Dr. Page's scholarship in the first place.

The first lecture, *The "Romantic" Guitar*, introduces the general topic and raises the themes that will be examined in the other five. Here Page outlines what he portrays as the early 19th-century English craze for the guitar. He notes, for instance, that twice as many self-teaching methods were published in London during the period than in supposedly more musical Vienna. He proposes that, while "symptoms of musical Romanticism" came late to the instrument's repertoire, its culture was Romantic on a much deeper and more symbolic level.

Lecture 2, *Being a Guitarist in the Time of Byron and Shelley*, begins with an imagined re-creation of Fernando Sor's first concert before British royalty in 1815, and goes on to analyze the social and technical adversity faced by professional and amateur guitarists alike, from the constant breaking of strings to the expectation that every instrument should stay in tune like a piano. He discusses the "immigrant" character of the guitar in England, which made it the object of both suspicion and fascination, and examines how its soft, intimate voice stood in opposition to the canonization of large, emphatic orchestral and operatic works that were then becoming fashionable.

Lecture 3, *The Guitar, the Steamship and the Picnic*, places the guitar in the context of the contemporary enthusiasm among the leisure class for out-of-doors excursions. Picnicking was essentially a Romantic invention, and the suitability of the guitar as an accessory burnished its Romantic credentials. The same activity was also, often as not, called a "Gypsy party," and the presence of a guitar was a standard exoticizing ingredient in the recipe. We are also introduced to the modern, yet medieval-tinged, "harp-lutes" that competed with the guitar for the attention of picnickers, highlighting the association between the culture of picnicking and the Romantic worship of nature and fascination with olden times.

Lecture 4, *The Guitar and the Romantic Vision of the Medieval World*, is particularly full of evocative images. Dr. Page discusses at length the constructed idea of the Middle Ages and how it evolved as a Jungian shadow of enlightenment rationality, becoming a vessel into which the Romantics could pour their longing for a life elevating feeling over knowing and doing. He shows us the idea of accompanied song portrayed in terms of Medieval minstrelsy, along with an array of bewilderingly anachronistic portrayals of the guitar as a medieval instrument, especially in Spanish hands: a "transhistorical property of an eternal Spain."

In Lecture 5, *Harmony in the Lowest Home: The Guitar and the Laboring Poor*, Page develops the theme of the guitar as the embodiment of an entirely different construct: the "March of Intellect," or the idea of teleologically certain social progress. We see the inexpensive, beginner-friendly guitar in the hands of the English industrial working class as a way of striving after self-improvement. We also see the same image cruelly caricatured in publications aimed at wealthier parts of society. Page painstakingly traces evidence regarding the price of guitars and sketches the landscape of music publishing for amateurs of limited income. While the guitar allowed the leisure class to play at minstrelsy and Gypsy wandering, to the working class it was affordable yet had associations of gentility. As the same author writes

elsewhere, in his respected monograph *The Guitar in Tudor England: A Social and Musical History*, "Unlike the lute, the guitar has never been dependably gentle in the Elizabethan sense of possessing an assured lineage or a right to respect. Its allure arose from the competing attractions of the decent and the disreputable, the simple and the sophisticated."

Finally, in Lecture 6, *The Guitar and the Fair Sex*, Page pays homage to that other, most oppressed group in early industrial England, women of all classes. He uses pictorial evidence, newspaper advertisements, and essays on feminine comportment to show how young women were encouraged to take up the guitar as a tool of seduction, and after marriage as a means of whiling away the empty hours at home when their husbands were absent, fulfilling their destiny in the world of deeds. He shows the recurrence of the guitar in association with the Romantic literary theme of the abandoned woman. He also delves deeply in this lecture into the situation of young women advertising their services as governesses, striving to succeed in a competitive employment market by offering ability with the guitar among the accomplishments they were prepared to teach. His painstaking approach to research shines brightly here, as he quantifies the evidence of advertisements in a way that allows us to trace the popularity of the guitar in measurable terms. At the same time, his focus on the human aspect of the story takes him into the "lived experience" of these "sisters of Jane Eyre," to the extent that the evidence allows us to discover it behind the ideal they were pressured to conform to.

Page is at his best in the last three lectures, dealing first with the intense Romantic imaginary of the Middle Ages, and then with the role of the guitar in mitigating the Dickensian misery of the urban poor and the social isolation of women. The themes in these lectures spill over into the others, with the welcome effect of weaving them together into a unified whole.

Prof. Page's musicological *tour de force* is all the more impressive for being delivered hard on the heels of his publication of *The Guitar in Tudor England*. It shares with that monograph a careful analytical approach in the service of an intensely human and imaginative rendering of its subject. His procedure is generally to offer an unexpected text, whether a fashion print, a passage from a novel, a newspaper advertisement, or even an actual instrument, and methodically unpack a surprising array of explicit and implicit messages that broaden and deepen our understanding of the guitar and what it meant to the England of the Romantic poets.

This England was also the England of the industrial revolution, and Page places the two in stark and illuminating contrast. He argues eloquently that the

guitar stood for an exoticised “other”: archaic, generally Mediterranean, and more specifically Spanish. This other was preindustrial, languid, warm, and suitable for midnight serenading; or at least it seemed so to the half-frozen, rain-soaked English warming themselves by sooty coal fires to the background clamor of factories and railroads. It is hardly surprising that the quiet little instrument came to embody so many different longings.

Over and over, Page supports his arguments with evidence in the form of engravings, quotes from essays and stories, prefaces to editions of music, contemporary concert reviews, and newspaper advertisements. It might seem that such a rigorous adherence to evidence would lead to a pedantic presentation, but Page’s lectures are anything but boring. His delivery is engaging and dramatic, and he vividly communicates his love of his subject both verbally and nonverbally. Examination of the downloadable transcripts shows that in places he has embellished his published text with extensive interpolations; in others he skips over parts of it entirely, or rearranges parts to suit an apparently revised plan of progression. Yet his delivery of the prepared remarks is so engaging, that a listener is at a loss to distinguish the moments when he departs from them to speak extemporaneously.

Dr. Page is especially entertaining when quoting from a period text, which gives him an opportunity to portray the voices of different players in the social conversation. In one example from Lecture 5, he quotes testimony from an official report on law and order, alternating between the condescending tone of an examining official and the blunt, direct speech of a working-class coffee shop proprietor. In another from Lecture 6, he quotes a published review of an 1827 guitar method, slipping smoothly from his own voice into the pompous voice of the reviewer, then into the earnest voice of the author as quoted by the reviewer,

then back again. This kind of performance, applied to Page’s already fascinating material, makes for a compelling experience.

The videography of these lectures is professional but unobtrusive, the principal variety being furnished by cutting to images from handouts supplied to the audience. The audio quality is good; we can occasionally detect the sound engineer adjusting settings as Dr. Page introduces the next musical interlude, showing attention to optimally recording both the musical and the spoken content.

Dr. Page and Gresham College deserve our gratitude for making this valuable material available in the form it is, a freely accessible multimedia package. At another time, or under a different publisher, this content might have been packaged as a costly DVD set.

For those concerned about the ephemeral nature of Web content, the videos are downloadable, making it easy to add them to one’s personal collection. We hope, however, that they will be available long into the future on Gresham’s website, with the transcripts, handouts, and artist biographies that accompany them.

One reviewer of *The Guitar in Tudor England* allowed himself to hope that Dr. Page would soon take up where he left off and write *The Guitar in Stuart England*. Dr. Page decided instead to skip a couple of centuries, and gave us *Men, Women and Guitars in Romantic England*. Whether he next turns his attention forward to the Victorian period, or back to the time of the Stuarts, the world of the guitar will be the richer for it.

—ELLWOOD COLAHAN

