PREFACE

This anthology includes 3 Fantasies (originally for vihuela) from the Spanish Siglo de Oro and 3 lute Fantasies by two of the greatest masters of the lute, Francesco da Milano (aptly dubbed "il divino" by his contemporaries) and John Dowland, in whose work several centuries of lute playing found their culmination. Any modern edition of 16th century music for plucked strings must address the problem of translating the tablature into modern notation. It's not just that the modern editor has to reconstruct the voice leading; he also needs to be sensitive to the actual sound of the old instruments. For example, in Luis Milan's Fantasia XXII from El Maestro, m. 98, it is impossible to physically sustain the low G. Still, the vihuela with its double strings seems to sustain this note "sympathetically". For this reason and because it makes more sense musically I have notated the passage like this:

![Musical notation image]

In such cases my notation tends to be idealistic.

One confronts a related problem when transcribing the lute music of the last decades of the 16th century. We know that the extra courses or diapasons that were added as renaissance style gave way to early baroque were generally tuned in octaves. However, in some places the other bass courses were tuned in octaves as well. As John Dowland says in his forward to The Varietie of Lute Lessons: "It hath become a generall custome (although not so much used any where as here in England) to set a small and a great string together..." Nevertheless, Dowland himself is clearly opposed to this: "Amongst learned musicians that custome is left, as irregular to the rules of Musick..." or as he puts it earlier "The Bases must be both of one bignes..."

Despite Dowland’s preference, some people were clearly using octaves, and in one place (m. 3 of the Fancy transcribed here) I couldn’t resist simulating this effect:

![Musical notation image]

Sixteenth century lute books often contained compositions by a variety of composers – Robert Dowland’s Varietie of Lute Lessons, which begins with seven Fantasies by seven different composers is a case in point. Although the present collection is historically a bit improbable, I’ve found it to work well in performance. Finally, the use of a capo at the second or third fret seems to transform the sonority of the modern guitar into something resembling the ethereal sound of the old instruments: thus the paradox that by slightly altering the "original" one comes closer to the composer’s intentions.

Eliot Fisk
Luis Milan
FANTASIA XXII (1535)

Ni muy a espacio ny muy espriesa*
Alonso Mudarra
FANTASIA (1546)
Desde aquí hasta cerca del final ay Algunas falsas tañiendo se bien no parecen mal.*

Da questo punto fino alla fine circa, si incontrano alcune false relazioni: se ben suonate, non risultano male.

From here until near to the end there are a few cross relations. Played well, they don't seem bad.

Von hier an bis zum Ende stößt man auf einige falsche Verbindungen: wenn sie gut gespielt werden, klingen sie nicht schlecht.
Luys de Narbæz
FANTASIA DEL PRIMER TONO (1538)
Francesco da Milano

FANTASIA
John Dowland
FANCY