

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> An instance is the celebrated and very interesting collection made by Archduke Ferdinand of Tyrol at the end of the sixteenth century in his castle at Ambras; even at such an early date it comprised a remarkable series of instruments.

<sup>2</sup> T. Gérold, *Les Pères de l'Eglise et la musique* (Strasbourg, 1931), part three, chapter III: 'Real and imaginary instruments.'

<sup>3</sup> As will be seen later, the date 1500 has when necessary been exceeded so as to trace the final transformation of an instrument or its disappearance.

<sup>4</sup> Here, too, I have gone back further when necessary in order to trace the origin of an instrument or of a new outline.

<sup>5</sup> Among these general works in which assertions concerning each country or each century are based on too few plastic representations, even the best must be included, like those by Kinsky, Sachs and others.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, R. Buhle, *Die musikalischen Instrumente in den Miniaturen des frühen Mittelalters* (Leipzig, 1903). Compared with this some studies are wholly inadequate, among others: E. Reuter, *Les représentations de la musique dans la sculpture Romane en France* (see my review in *La revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* (1939), XXV, pp. 821-22).

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THE DEVICE used on the front cover of the JOURNAL is taken from Sylvestro Ganassi's treatise on the viol and viol-playing, *Regola Rubertina*, published in Venice in 1542-3—seven years after his book on the recorder, *La Fontegara*. The *Regola Rubertina* is one of the three or four earliest Italian books on instruments, and although Ganassi's prose occasionally writhes so elaborately and continuously that the reader becomes quite lost, his work well deserves Gerald Hayes' encomium of 'complete and masterly'.

The single string on the viol enables the fretting to be checked accurately and quickly; the lute has always been regarded as the height of a craftsman's achievement. Together they form a rather apt illustration of the interests of The Galpin Society.

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The photographs reproduced in plates II, III, V and VI are by Edward Byers; plate IV is by Maurice Vincent, plate I by Layton's and plate VII by Paul Timings.

MICHAEL PRYNNE

## An Unrecorded Lute by Hans Frei

AN old lute of exceptional interest has recently been acquired by Mr Eric Halfpenny of this Society. There are good reasons for believing it to be an authentic specimen of the work of the celebrated master, Hans Frei.

### DIMENSIONS

Overall length	78 cm	(30 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
Body length	49·8 "	(19 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
Body width	30·7 "	(12 $\frac{1}{8}$ "
Body depth	15·7 "	(6 $\frac{3}{16}$ "
Neck length	29·7 "	(11 $\frac{11}{16}$ "
Open string length	69·5 "	(27 $\frac{3}{8}$ "
Length of the turned-back head (19 pegs)	25·4 "	(10"
Width of the nut	7·65 "	(3 $\frac{1}{8}$ "

Strings: Nine paired courses and a single treble.

### DESCRIPTION

The body of this well-preserved instrument is built of eleven slightly concave ribs of finely figured sycamore, now covered with pale golden varnish but still showing a few traces of a thicker, darker varnish which has been removed. The rose is delicately carved in the wood of the belly; below it, inside the body, is a manuscript label, inscribed in Gothic characters:



Hans Frei

The neck is of tough but light wood, probably sycamore, stained black, made up of three longitudinal sections, each secured to the neck-block with a large iron nail. The fingerboard is of walnut, and is inlaid

with ivory strips enclosing an ebony panel, which is in turn inlaid with a Renaissance-style design in ivory, of foliage surrounding a grotesque mask. The same design is repeated on the back of the neck, but the materials are reversed. The turned-back peg-box is faced on its top and under surfaces with ebony, and carries nineteen pegs. The stringing is ten-course, including a single treble. The bridge is modern.

#### COMMENT

When Julius von Schlosser compiled his fine catalogue<sup>1</sup> of the old musical instruments in the Vienna Kunsthistorische Museum, he believed that the two lutes there which bear Frei's label were the only existing specimens by that master. Lütgendorff, in his dictionary,<sup>2</sup> quotes only these two lutes. There is a reputed Frei lute in the Museo Civico, Bologna, now arranged as a theorbo, but its authenticity is less certain.

The possibility of there being another, and unrecorded, Frei lute in existence, and that one in England, is therefore of unusual interest.

Not many sixteenth-century lutes now remain, in spite of the very large number which then existed, and their wide distribution. At that time the most notable centre of lute-making was Bologna, where Luca (Laux) Maler, his son Sigismond, Hans Frei, and Nikolaus Schonfeld were the most esteemed masters. Their lutes continued to be valued above all others for over two hundred years—as long in fact as the lute itself occupied a position of importance in musical life.<sup>3</sup> Maler is known to have practised his art from 1518 until his death in 1552; Hans Frei was either contemporary or a little later, and if his work is put at 1550–1570 it is probably not far out. Baron is certainly wrong in saying that Maler and Frei lived together at Bologna about 1415. Nor does there seem to be any sound basis for the identification of Hans Frei with Albrecht Dürer's musically inclined father-in-law, who died in 1523. (Lütgendorff follows this erroneous tradition.) Lutes by Frei and Maler continued to command extremely high prices at a time when fine instruments were still being made in large numbers.<sup>4</sup> The reasons for their superiority were essentially musical, due to the combination of excellent form and superlative workmanship and material, as the few specimens still in existence are not as richly finished as many later instruments. Mace and Baron confirm this.

It is reasonable to assume that the two Vienna lutes are genuine, from their provenance—the Catajo Collection—and because they have passed expert examination. The first point of importance is that the label of the lute under review is practically identical with the facsimile reproduced by Schlosser.<sup>5</sup>

A difficulty to be disposed of is the present arrangement of the strings, neck and head. A Frei lute in its original state would have six or possibly seven courses, including a single treble string. The ten-course arrangement and tuning (the minimum with nineteen pegs) points to a substantially later date. There are, however, some indications that the present neck and head are not original. The two pointed extensions of the fingerboard into the belly—one of the most persistent features of the lute—are not parts of the present fingerboard at all, though the inlaid decoration has been carried down into them. Exactly why they are separate is difficult to conjecture, but if the fingerboard were original one would expect to find them an integral part of it. A second point is that the open string length of 69.5 cm is rather long; this, of course, improves the lower notes though at the expense of being unable to tune the treble string much above *e'* in modern pitch. (The *g'* tuning of the treble string, *c.* 1600, was probably somewhere between *f'* and *f'♯* in modern pitch.<sup>6</sup>) This compromise solution to the problem of obtaining satisfactory compass for the instrument would seem less likely to be adopted in one built for ten-course tuning than in an old lute converted. It is interesting to note in this connection that both the Vienna Frei lutes are reported as having had new necks and peg-boxes fitted to convert them to eleven-course tuning.

One might hope for some help in identification from comparison of the rose patterns; they have, however, nothing in common. Moreover, one cannot be entirely sure that a new belly has not been fitted at some time. Evidence exists, however, which points to the belly in the present lute being original, and earlier than the neck. The rose pattern is more or less Gothic in character, while the decoration of the fingerboard and neck is essentially Renaissance. The barring as now fitted is quite elaborate; there are six transverse bars more or less evenly spaced between the neck-block and the bridge, and, in addition, below the bridge, a curving bar extending rather more than half way across the belly from the bass side, and two small radial bars extending from near the treble end of the bridge to the edge of the belly. There are, however, traces of other bar positions (I have only examined these in a photograph, not on the belly itself), which point to five fairly evenly spaced bars between neck and bridge, of which now only the one nearest the bridge and the one through the rose centre are in their original positions. The marks of the original top bar are very close to the neck-block and provide additional evidence of re-necking with a substantially wider neck, involving the fitting of a larger neck-block. The need for extra barring probably arose as a result of the increased strain of the added strings.

Turning to the form of the bodies, which should provide a firmer basis for comparison, the main dimensions compare as follows:

Instrument	Length of body	Width of body
Mr Halfpenny's lute	49·8 cm	30·7 cm
Vienna lute No. C33	48 „	30 „
Vienna lute No. C34	49 „	30 „

Allowing for the fact that all three instruments have been re-necked (though with necks of comparable width), the dimensions agree very closely. Unfortunately, the measurement of the depth of body of the Vienna lutes is not at present available. From comparison of excellent photographs, the form of the outline of the belly is similar in all three instruments to an encouraging degree. All the lutes show a long 'pearl-mould' form, with sloping shoulders and rounded bottom, which is consistent with a sixteenth-century origin. The number of ribs, nine in the case of Vienna lute No. C33 and eleven in the other two, agrees with such information as we have about Frei's lutes. De la Barre, in a letter (dated 1648) to Constantin Huygens, mentions one with nine ribs, and Jacques Gaultier in a letter of (probably) 1647, says that eleven is the usual number.<sup>7</sup> It looks quite possible that Vienna lute No. C34 (eleven ribs) and the lute here examined may have been built on the same mould.

The neck and head, even though not original, deserve special notice for their fine workmanship, with inlaid work that is masterly both in design and execution. But the charming decoration has in no way been allowed to interfere with the efficiency of the instrument. The peg-box is light and well-balanced, and the neck of admirable proportions, with the fingerboard slightly cambered, particularly near the nut, under the upper strings. All this is indirect evidence that the instrument was a much valued one.

Two small points are worth mention, though it is difficult to draw any useful deductions from them. The ivory nut, which was fitted to the lute when Mr Halfpenny acquired it, is old but was only grooved for nine paired courses. Secondly, there are a group of six little metal pins mounted vertically above the treble end of the nut. This unusual expedient is evidently intended to keep the strings from being pulled out of their grooves in the nut by the oblique strain of the pegs, but the close spacing of these pins above the treble and small mean grooves seems to imply yet another arrangement of the strings. Probably several systems have been used or tried since the nineteen-peg head was fitted.

Of the musical quality of this lute it is difficult to write, as one has no

standard now by which to judge the really old instruments, nor is the present writer qualified to do so. The tone is very sweet, though quite small, with a rather reedy quality in the lower register. The notes hold out for a long time, and the richness in overtones and comparative weakness of the fundamental note produce to a marked degree the very intimate and sympathetic tone which is the lute's essential character. It is not difficult to persuade oneself that this soft and very mellow lower register is what appealed particularly to Tudor musicians, and changed in character as the demand for a stronger bass came in with the progress of the seventeenth century.

What is not open to argument is that Mr Halfpenny owns a very fine old lute in remarkably good condition, which can be said with a fair degree of certainty to be one of the most important instruments of its type, not only in the United Kingdom but in existence. Further, it should be recorded that this lute is handled and played, and has not been condemned to languish behind glass. That it can be played is due to the skilful restoration carried out by Mr Alec Hodsdon.

In conclusion, I should like to thank Mr Halfpenny for allowing me to examine his beautiful instrument, and for his valuable assistance and many helpful suggestions, most of which have been incorporated in this notice.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> J. von Schlosser, *Die Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente* (1920), pp. 53, 54.

<sup>2</sup> Baron W. L. von Lütgendorff-Leinberg, *Die Geigen und Lautenmacher vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* (5th and 6th revised edition, 1922), II, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> A. Piccinini, *Intavolatura di liuto* (1623), p. 5: 'Già molti anni sono che in Bologna si facevano liuti di bontà molto eccellenti, o fosse l'esser fatti di forma lunga, a similitudine di pera, o fosse l'aver le coste larghe; chè l'uno fa dolce, e l'altro armonioso . . .' He says also that these lutes became highly sought after and that few remained in Bologna (in 1623). T. Mace, *Musick's Monument* (1676), p. 48. E. G. Baron, *Historisch-theoretisch und practische Untersuchung des Instruments der Lauten* (1727), p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> J. Evelyn, *Diary*; (Visit to Bologna, 1645), 'This place has also been celebrated for lutes made by the old masters, Mollen, Hans Frei, and Nicholas Sconvelt, which were of extraordinary price; the workmen were chiefly Germans.' W. J. A. Jonckbloet and J. P. N. Land, *Musique et Musiciens au xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (1882) (Constantin Huygens' correspondence). T. Mace, *loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Schlosser, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup> O. Körte, *Laute und Lautenmusik bis zur Mitte des 16 Jahrhunderts*, (1901), p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> Jonckbloet and Land, *op. cit.*, pp. cxlix and ccviii.