



Luteshop Catalogue

2016

Introduction

I always use the best available materials as the main cost of a lute is labour – it seems pointless to expend that amount of labour on indifferent materials. Prices listed are for the instrument only. I use made-to-measure cases from Kingham - see below for prices.

Use the prices quoted below as a guide only - the cost of an instrument can vary quite a lot depending on materials and decorative aspects - obviously extra decoration in the form of neck stripes, etc. adds considerably to the production costs. Any extra costs of this kind are subject to negotiation when the order is placed and the price agreed.



For more information on deposits, payment and delivery methods, cost of cases etc. please see my full terms of business at www.luteshop.co.uk/catalogue

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6-course lutes

For most of the 15th century lutes commonly had five courses, but six courses are often shown in paintings from the second half of the century, and the first published music (Spinacino, 1507) is for six courses. There are very few surviving six-course lutes, none in original condition, and none from before about 1550, therefore modern reconstructions involve a degree of guesswork, especially in the thickening and barring of the soundboard. In surviving lutes, often all that is left of the original lute is the back. The soundboard, if it is original, has been rebarred several times and probably thinned as well. Paintings provide some useful information about the external appearance of these lutes.



Marziale: *Virgin and Child with Saints* (detail),
Cremona 1507

They usually have 11 or 9 ribs, and there are usually 8 tied frets. Pegs are almost always heart-shaped, pegboxes have a shallow taper and are more or less at right angles to the neck. Many of the instruments shown in paintings are very blond in appearance, made of light coloured woods (e.g., sycamore) with a pale golden varnish, with fingerboards (if separate from the neck, which may not have been usual) much the same colour as the soundboard (boxwood or sycamore?). The earliest surviving bodies (e.g., Maler, Frei) are usually made of rippled sycamore or ash, or a kind of maple which looks like “birdseye” maple but must be a European timber.

Some paintings show darker woods which look like fruitwoods (plum?), or even alternate dark/light ribs (walnut and sycamore?). As with lutes of later periods, there are surviving instruments with ivory backs, but one suspects that this was more for ostentation than for acoustical reasons (Thomas Mace was of this opinion in 1676) and in any case elephant ivory is unavailable to the modern maker.

In many examples the fingerboard seems to overlap the neck joint (see the Carpaccio painting, left), but I now think it most probable that the colour is actually a protective varnish which covers the fingerboard and extends onto the soundboard for a short distance where the left hand fingers might cause wear (see the Marziale and van Scorel paintings above and below).



Carpaccio: *Presentation at the temple* (detail), Venice 1510

Wooden body frets seem not to have been used, notes above the tied frets being played directly with the fingers. John Dowland credits Mathias Mason with inventing three wooden body frets, which in England would coincide with the first evidence of their use in the Marsh lute book (c.1595), where “m” is used for the twelfth fret rather than the eleventh – the implication being that the three wooden frets were on the 9th, 10th and 12th fret positions (“diatonic” fretting).

Another interesting feature of six-course lutes is that the bridge is sometimes very low on the instrument (see the Marziale painting, right), perhaps about 1/8 of the body length from the bottom (rather than the more usual 1/6 recommended in the Henri Arnault of Zwolle treatise of c.1450 and widely found on surviving lutes). This feature is also attested by marks of earlier bridges on some surviving lutes, the obvious example being the Maler lute in Nuremberg. I have not yet tried this bridge position but I imagine it would involve not using any bars below the bridge – and I then wonder whether the lutes with the higher bridge position had a J-bar like later lutes, or perhaps even a straight bar going all the way across the soundboard, of which the Hans Frei lute in Warwick provides an example (as does the modern Arabic lute). The acoustic implications of this observation remain to be tested.

Another feature is that roses sometimes appear dark in colour (as in the three paintings below), possibly painted or gilded. The implications here are purely cosmetic.



Master of the half-lengths,
Flemish c.1530



Jan van Scorel (1495-1562),
Utrecht

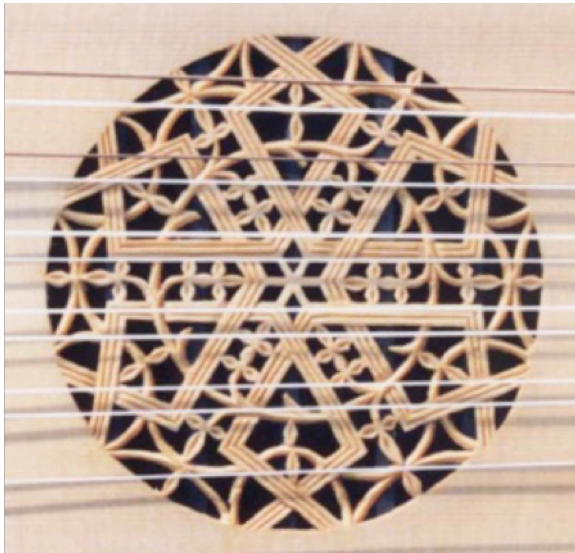


Master of the half-lengths,
Flemish c.1530

My instruments

1. My own design (1983),
incorporating some features from
surviving lutes and iconography.
String length 53.5 cm.

Hear this lute in a short piece by Francesco
da Milano on my catalogue webpage.



2. My own design (1993), an attempt to
reproduce the shape of the lute in
Holbein's famous painting, *The
Ambassadors*, which dates to about 1533.
The unusual shape of the ends of the
bridge seems to be what is shown in the
painting – but it is very hard to tell. Some
other paintings also show very wide
bodies (e.g. Costa below). String length
56cm.

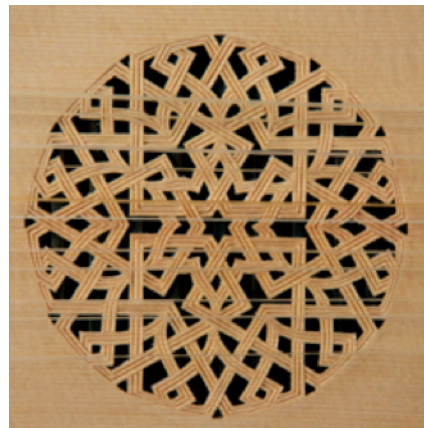
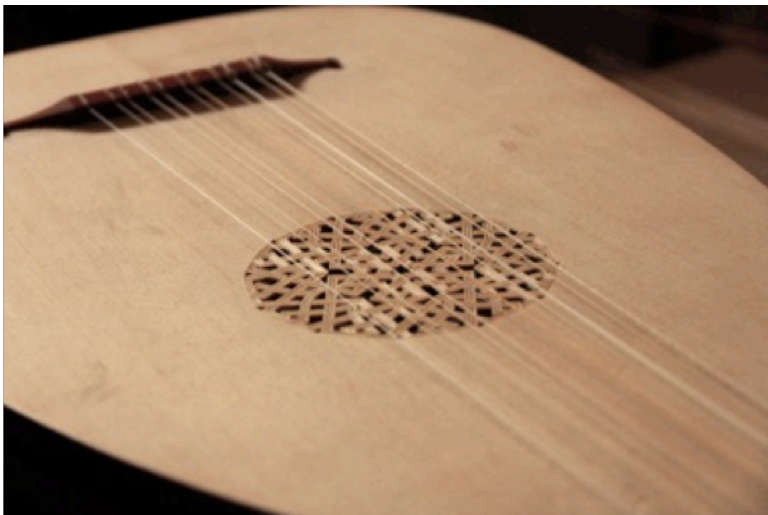


3. After Georg Gerle (Vienna, A35)

The original lute was built in Innsbruck in about 1580, perhaps in imitation of an earlier style of lute. It has an ivory back and a neck decorated with ivory, ebony and a greenish coloured bone.

It has become a commonly-chosen model by modern makers, partly because it is one of the few surviving six-course lutes in original or near-original condition. String length 59.7cm.

This example is in plum with pear neck and pegbox.



Here is another example in European walnut with holly spacers, the neck and pegbox veneered in holly and ebony. Rose after Laux Maler. Thanks to Francesco Tribioli for the photos, taken when the lute was two years old.

In September 2011 he also sent me a sound file of his playing of a Recercar by Francesco da Milano – see my catalogue page for the link.



4. After Magno Dieffopruchar (Beare collection)

Another ivory-backed lute which survives in six-course form. This lute was described by Stephen Barber in *The Lute* 22/2 (1982), 47-53. Nine ribs, 64cm string length.

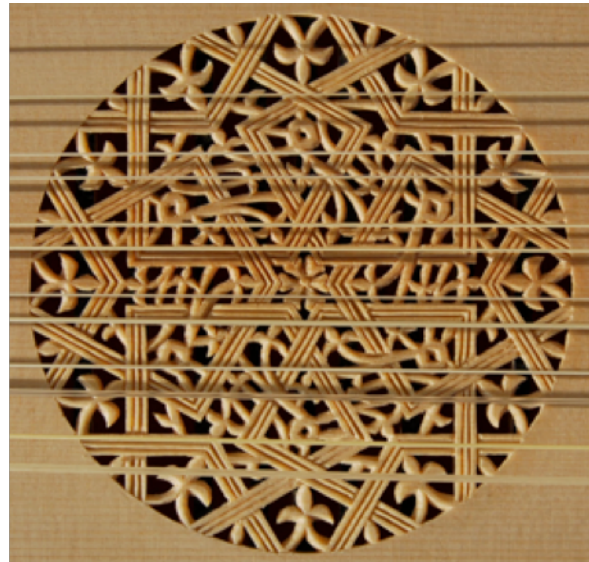
5. After Hans Frei (Warwick County Museum)

Hans Frei was a famous maker of Bologna who flourished in the early sixteenth century. Only four of his lutes appear to have survived, and even some of these may be fakes, the famous master's label having been applied to another instrument to increase its value.

The Warwick Frei, in its present state, is an 11c lute with an elaborate neck veneer which seems to be of Italian origin, suggesting that the conversion to an 11c lute was done in Italy. It has, as mentioned above, traces of a straight bar having been glued right across the soundboard below the bridge, in the same place as the J-bar of later lutes (which only projects a little more than halfway across the soundboard, starting from the bass side).

The soundboard is also quite thick, up to 2.8mm near the endclasp – suggesting that early soundboards were commonly rather thick, and have been thinned by later makers when converting them into later styles of lute. String length 69cm.

Hear this lute in a Preambel (prelude) by Hans Judenkönig (1523) on my catalogue webpage.



6. After Hans Frei (Vienna, C34)

In its present state this is an 11-course lute, though originally it would have had only six courses. The body is smaller than the Warwick Frei – shorter, shallower, and more or less semicircular in section.

String length 67cm.

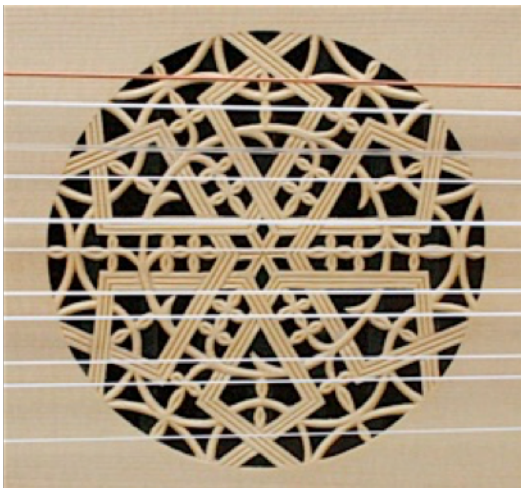
7. After Laux Maler (Prague, No.654)

Laux Maler was the most famous and sought-after of the 16th century Italian lutemakers, whose instruments commanded huge prices more than a century after they were built (by which time they were being converted into 11c lutes). Some 17th-century writers attributed the fame of these instruments to the varnish, some to the age of the wood.

Of the thousand lutes and parts of lutes present in the Maler workshop in Bologna when the master died in 1552, only four appear to have survived. One of them (in the V&A) is only a back, the others are only backs and soundboards, and a recent discovery (now in Paris) appears to have its original soundboard, albeit with more recent barring.

All of the surviving Maler lutes have the long thin body shape (like a pear, as the author of the Burwell lute tutor says, or the "pearl mould" as Thomas Mace has it) which is a great contrast to the more rounded shape of the Venetian and Paduan lutes of the late 16th century. In modern times this shape has been associated with Bolognese lutes, but in fact this shape was used by many early-mid 16th-century makers elsewhere (Laux Bosch in Schongau, for example).

Hear a lute of this model in an anonymous English Dump on my catalogue webpage.



8. After Laux Maler (Nuremberg, MI 54)

This is a slightly larger lute than no.7 above but with a similar body shape and nine ribs of Hungarian Ash. Currently this instrument is in pieces and the upper third of the soundboard is missing. The current bridge relates to a conversion to a 13-course instrument but there are clear marks of an earlier bridge lower down on the soundboard which could well show the original bridge position.

With this bridge position the string length would be about 74cm, with a higher bridge position (approx 1/6 of the body length) the string length would be about 70cm. The recently discovered Maler lute in Paris is reportedly practically identical in size and shape to the Nuremberg Maler.

9. Own design based on Maler.

This lute was designed for someone who wanted a bass lute in D but with a smaller body than the Paduan lutes such as those by Harton. It was built in a seven-course version, so the pictures are in the 7-9 course section of the catalogue, but the design is ideal for a six-course bass lute.

7-9 course lutes

There are many surviving Italian lutes from c.1580-1610, mostly from Venice and Padua. Few are in original condition, but quite a lot of information can be gleaned from these instruments, and they exhibit a high degree of standardization, so we can be a little more confident about our reconstructions. The first course was usually double, though most players nowadays prefer a single top string: I usually build this type of lute so that it is easy to change from single to double first course. There were usually eight tied frets.

The backs were made up of 13 to 39 or more ribs, and were often made of yew, cut so that each rib contains some of the cream-coloured sapwood, giving a striped appearance. Unfortunately, yew of this quality is now almost unobtainable, but there are several alternatives which were also used by the old makers and seem to work very well today (cypress, sycamore, rosewood, plum).



Seven-course lutes are occasionally to be seen in paintings from the first decade of the 16th century. They are mentioned by Viridung (1511) and some of the music in the Thibault manuscript (c.1495) is written for seven courses. However, the most usual procedure for obtaining lower notes was to tune the sixth course down a tone, a practice which is evident in the earliest tablatures (Dalza, 1508 used a tuning in which the fifth course is lowered a tone as well) and continues right through the 16th century.

The earliest use of seven courses in printed books is in Gerle (1532), but clearly they were not in common use until later. Vincenzo Galilei (1584) mentions seven-course lutes with disapproval – he regards six courses as adequate, and the sound of a seventh course too weak to be useful. Terzi's first book (1593) is for a seven-course lute (with the seventh usually tuned a fourth below the sixth) and his second book (1599) is for an eight-course lute.

The only two large collections specifically for eight-course lute are those of Reymann (1598) and Molinaro (1599). Some music for eight courses also appeared in various manuscripts and in later printed collections.

The first printed book for nine courses is Francisque's *Le Tresor d'Orphee*, published in Paris in 1600. With Besard's *Thesaurus Harmonicus* (Cologne, 1603) and Dowland's *Lachrimae*

(five viols and lute, London, 1604) we are led to conclude that the nine-course lute was quite widespread in Northern Europe by the early years of the 17th century. The rapid expansion in the number of courses (from six to nine) in the last thirty years of the 16th century has often been attributed to changes in string technology and it may reflect the development of techniques for increasing the density of bass strings.

Unfortunately we have no definite historical information on this point (see my Strings webpage). A seventh course tuned a fourth below the sixth expands the open string range to two octaves and a fourth, while a ninth course only expands it one tone further because the eighth course is tuned to one of the intermediate notes. Even the ten-course lute does not represent an expansion of the open string range beyond that of a nine-course lute. Once string technology allowed an open string range of two octaves and a fourth it was inevitable that the expansion in the number of courses was rapid, due to the convenience of having more notes available as open strings.

The Lute Consort

Lutes had always been made in a variety of sizes: Laux Maler (d.1552) seems to have made at least three sizes, and seven are distinguishable from the Fugger inventory of 1566. Praetorius (1618) lists seven sizes, giving the pitch of the top string as follows:

1. Small octave lute in c" or d" (*presumably "octave" because it is an octave above the "bass"*)
2. Small descant lute in b'
3. Descant lute in a'
4. Ordinary chorist or alto lute in g' (*shown in his scaled drawings as having a string length of about 60.6 to 62.4cm, with nine courses*)
5. Tenor lute in e'
6. Bass lute in d'
7. Octave bass lute in g (*i.e., an octave below the Chorlaute*)

The surviving lutes made in Northern Italy towards the end of the 16th century group very impressively into proportionate sizes, where string length is directly related to the intended pitch. Using Praetorius' terminology, they give us a 44cm "small octave" lute in d", a 59cm "descant" in a', 67cm "alto" in g' and 78cm "tenor" in e' (Praetorius' pitch was probably different from that of the earlier Italians, but if we imagine a pitch about a tone below modern, these sizes seem to fit well – but see my website article on Historical Pitch and the Lute). The fit to a strict proportional scheme is almost perfect, except that an 88cm "bass" seems to be missing. Robert Lundberg suggests that the surviving Harton lute of 93.7cm might be a "bass" (in C rather than D) instead of an "octave bass" as has usually been supposed.

The fossil record contains very large numbers of lutes around 67cm, which may suggest that this was the size most commonly used. Sixteenth century lute duets for lutes at different pitches most commonly involve lutes a fourth apart, also a tone apart, and a few a fifth apart. The lute trios of Giovanni Pacoloni (1564) require a Superius a fifth above, and a Tenor a tone

above, the Bassus. The trios of Emanuel Adriaensen (1584) require lutes a tone, a fourth, and a fifth above the bass. The lute quartets of Nicolaes Vallet (1620) require lutes a fourth, a fifth and an octave above the bass. The splendid trio by Alessandro Piccinini (published 1623, but probably written much earlier) requires lutes a tone and a fifth above the bass (it's a pity he didn't publish other pieces for lute trio – he performed with his two brothers during the 1580s and 90s and must have had plenty of pieces for this combination of lutes). We can accommodate all of this music with five of the sizes given by Praetorius: small octave, descant, alto, tenor and bass.

My instruments

1. 44cm, after Venere (Vienna, C39)

This is one of two almost identical lutes now in Vienna, made in the Venere workshop in Padua around 1600, with the landmark "WE". It has a 19-rib back in striped yew, a plain beech neck and pegbox and seven double courses.

The string spacing at the bridge is very narrow for modern hands, and most people would prefer a slightly wider spacing.

You can see photographs of the original lute on the front cover of Robert Lundberg's book, *Historical Lute Construction* (Washington: GAL, 2007).



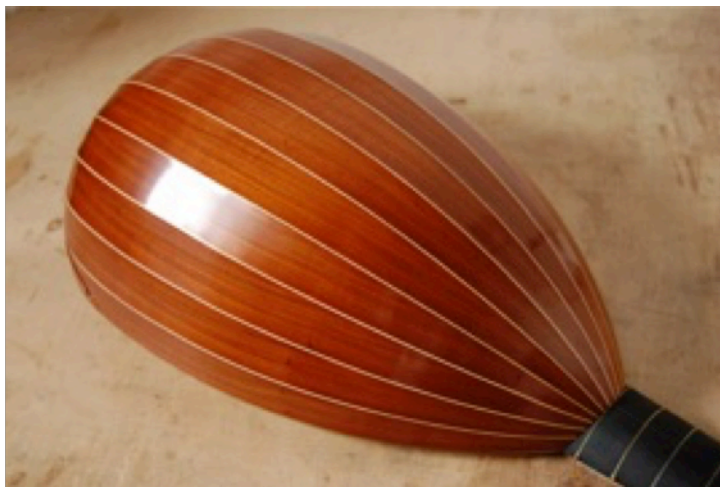
2. 58.5 cm, 25 ribs, after Venere, 1592 (Florence)

This is one of the very few seven-course lutes to have survived in near original condition, and has therefore attracted much attention from modern makers. It has a back of 25 ribs in yew heartwood, with pale-coloured (sycamore?) spacers. The neck and pegbox are veneered with stripes in ebony, ivory, and a brownish mahogany-type hardwood. It has been superbly documented by Grant Tomlinson.

3. 60cm, 13 ribs, my own design based on Venere

This is my own design, combining characteristics of the Venere lutes of 1582 and 1592, in order to obtain a slightly wider body than a simply scaled down version of the 1582 lute.

This example is in plum with holly spacers, rose after Magno Dieffopruchar.



4. 60cm, 31 ribs, my own design based on Venere

This is the same as the previous lute, except for the number of ribs, and the body sections which are more typical of multirib lutes from the Venere workshop. The ribs are cypress with ebony spacers, the rose is after Venere (1592).



5. 60cm, 11 ribs, after Georg Gerle, c.1580

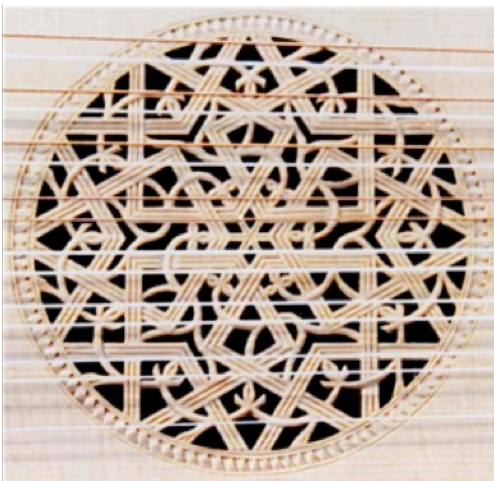
This model is usually used for a six-course lute, but seven-course lutes existed before the 16th century so this is a 7-course lute in an earlier style.

Striped back of ash and plum, pear neck and pegbox, lemonwood bridge.



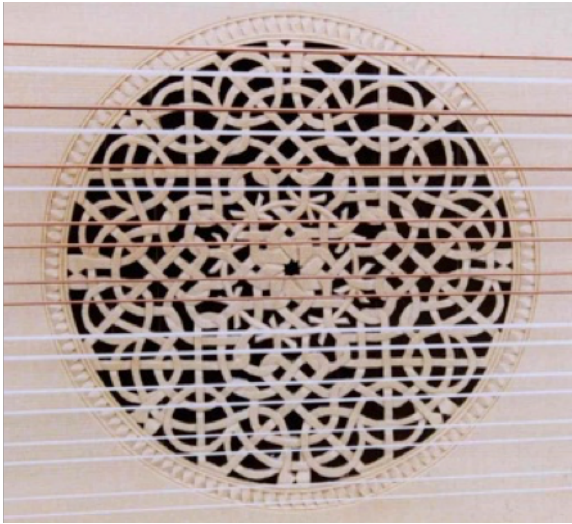
6. 64cm, 13 ribs, scaled from Venere, 1582 (Vienna, C36)

Figured maple back, ebony veneered neck and pegbox, rose after Sellas.



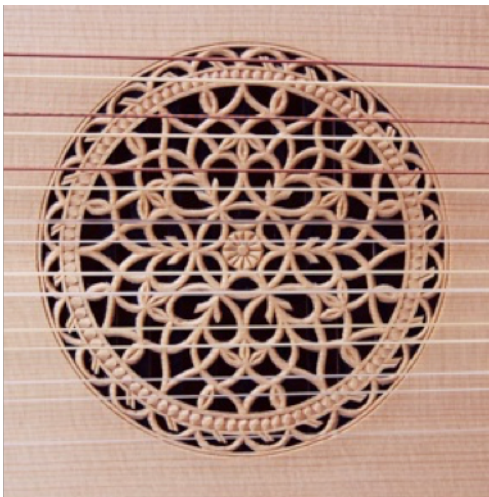
7. 67 cm, 13 ribs, after Venere, 1582 (Vienna, C36)

Striped back of yew, ebony veneered neck and pegbox, rose after Wendelin Tieffenbrucker.



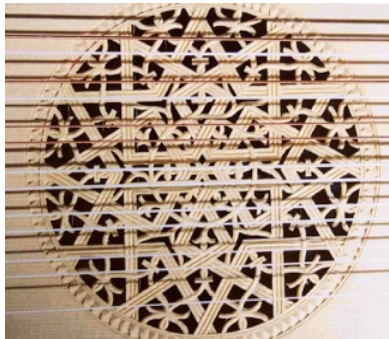
8. 67 cm, 35 ribs, own design, based on Venere, 1582 (Vienna, C36)

Multirib back of cypress, rose after Venere (1592).



9. 76 cm, 11 ribs, after Maler

Figured maple back, ebony veneered neck and pegbox.



10. 78 cm, 35 ribs, after Venere, 1582 (Vienna, C36)

Multirib back of American black walnut, ebony veneered neck and pegbox.



10-course lutes

There is a large and varied repertoire for ten courses, using both the old renaissance tuning and also a variety of new tunings which started to appear in the early 17th century. The earliest printed music for ten courses is Kapsberger's book of 1611 (actually one piece in the book requires eleven courses, suggesting perhaps an early liuto attiorbato).

Many 17th-century English manuscripts contain some ten-course music in a variety of tunings – see Spring for a list of the tunings (p.xxv) and guide to repertoire. Some ten-course lutes were converted from earlier lutes with six or more courses, so a variety of styles is evident. The title page of Fuhrmann's *Testudo Gallo-Germanica* (1615) shows a multirib lute typical of late 16th century Venetian or Paduan origin:



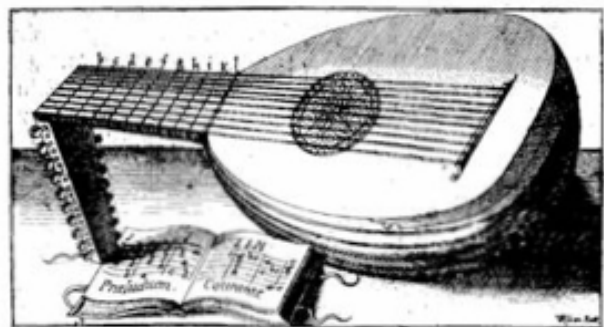
Number of frets



John Dowland (1610) says that the French lengthened the necks of the lutes so that they could have ten (tied) frets. The conversion of an old lute with fewer courses involves cutting back the body to accommodate a wider neck, so inevitably the neck would be a little longer if the string length was maintained.

However this relatively small increase does not really account for an extra two frets and I think string lengths were probably increased as well.

In the illustrations (above and right) we can perhaps see a transitional stage. In Fuhrmann's lute we see eight tied frets but labels which go up to fret "k", the ninth fret, suggesting that perhaps the lute really had nine frets but the engraver only showed eight. In Besard's lute we have ten frets, correctly labelled up to "l", but the tenth fret comes right on the body join, perhaps indicating that this was not the original disposition of the lute (it is very hard to tie a fret in this position because of the angle of the neck/body joint, and it will not stay in place unless small notches are cut into the edge of the fingerboard).



Treble rider

Instead of going into the pegbox, the treble string may go to a “treble rider” attached to the front of the pegbox (see the painting by Terbruggen above). This probably started as a conversion feature, making it possible to add another string without having to make a new pegbox, but it also has the advantage that the treble string is not forced to travel through such a sharp angle to reach the peg and may make tuning easier and probably also increase the life of the string. With Fuhrmann’s and Besard’s lutes (above) we cannot see a treble rider and they both have 19 pegs but we cannot assume that one has not been added – several paintings (including the ter Brugghen above) show a treble rider despite the fact that they have enough pegs without one (though it is not clear whether this is a 10- or 11-course lute!). The rider and its peg are often a different style and colour from the other pegs which suggests that it was an added feature.

My Instruments

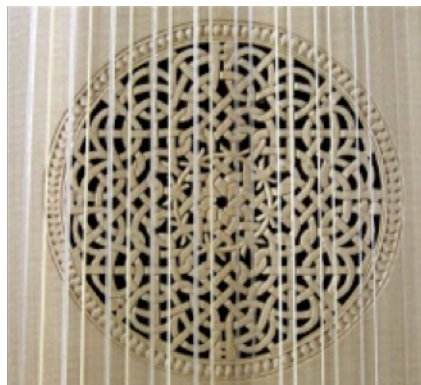
1. 66.5cm, 13 ribs, after Venere (Vienna C36, scaled down)

The body of this lute is a 4% reduction of the Venere C36 lute, which allows nine frets with ten courses.



2. 67cm, 35 ribs, after Paduan models

This is the same body as described in the 7-9 course section (no.7). The pictured example below has a multi-rib back of yew with holly spacers, The bridge and pegs are plum.



4. 67.5cm, 11 ribs, after Frei (Vienna, C34 & Warwick)

The design, by Philip MacLeod-Coupe, uses the outline of the C34 lute with the sections of the Warwick Frei (also shown in the 11-course section, no. 1). It works very well, but I now feel the rather unusual sections of the Warwick Frei are not so suited to a shorter body and I plan to offer a version of the C34 instead. One advantage of this model is that the body is short enough to allow ten tied frets, as recommended by Dowland.



5. 69 cm, 9 ribs, after Maler (Prague No. 654)

This is the same body as described in the 6-course section (no.7). You can also find photos of the 11-course version in the 11-course section (no.2).

6. 69.5 cm, 11 ribs, after Frei (Warwick)

The original lute is discussed in the 6-course section (no.5). The original (11-course) string length of 69.5cm makes the ninth fret quite close to the body join, so it is also possible to make it slightly longer. Ten frets would of course require a still longer string length.

11-course lutes

A large and very attractive repertory of 17th-century music survives for the French 11-course lute. Unfortunately hardly any French instruments survive. The most prized instruments were those of Laux Maler, made in Bologna in the second quarter of the 16th century – Piccinini (1623) tells us that in his time the French were buying up all the old Bologna lutes, paying any price which was asked.

These lutes would originally have been 6-course lutes, so they would have been fitted with new necks, pegboxes and bridges to accommodate the extra strings, and usually rebarred as well. This is one reason why we have hardly any intact 6-course lutes, even though many surviving lute bodies would have had six courses in their original state.



Some 11-course lutes were converted from 10 courses by adding an extra peg on a treble rider (and having a single 2nd or 11th course) and extending the bridge and the nut to accommodate an extra course, so that the 11th course ran off the fingerboard to an overhanging nut. This allowed one extra string to be added with the minimum of rebuilding.

The consequence of this for the modern player is that one can have a single lute which can serve either as a 10 course lute (with a double second course and all courses on the fingerboard) or an 11 course lute (with a single 2nd course and 11th course off the fingerboard). It was usual for these lutes to have a "ten-fret neck", i.e. the tenth fret position coincides

with the neck/body join, so that it is easy to tie on the ninth fret. The French music only uses nine frets.

By the end of the 17th century, the French love affair with the 11-course lute seems to have come to an end, and the focus of activity shifted to Germany and Austria. By this time, there were very few old instruments, so new lutes were made. The luthiers involved were not part of an unbroken tradition of lutemaking – usually their main work was making violins – so we see some differences of approach.

We have excellent surviving instruments from this period of German lutemaking: lutes by Sebastian Schelle in Nuremberg and J.C. and Martin Hoffmann in Hamburg survive in some numbers, and mostly in near original condition.

However, it must be said that these instruments seem less suitable for the 17th century French music and more suited to the galant style music of the early 18th century. Several of the composers of this period used only 11-course lutes, and even Sylvius Leopold Weiss only used a 13-course lute from about 1720, so there is a large repertory of music for the “German” 11-course lute.

My instruments

1. 69 cm, 9 ribs, after Maler (Prague No. 654)

This lute also features in the 6-course section (no.7) of this catalogue. In view of the high reputation of his lutes in the 17th century it seems the obvious model to choose for a French 11-course lute - and it works very well indeed. This instrument has a figured ash back, pear neck and pegbox, all gut strings.



Here is another example in sycamore...



2. 67.5 cm, 11 ribs, after Frei (Vienna, C34 & Warwick)

This is the same lute described in the 10-course section which I have sometimes built as a dual-purpose 10/11 course lute.



3. 69.5 cm, 11 ribs, after Frei (Warwick)

This lute was described in the 6-course section (no.5). The original (11-course) string length of 69.5cm places the ninth fret rather close to the neck/body join, so for an 11-course lute I might prefer to use a slightly longer string length.

12-course lutes

Unfortunately paintings, and Mace's book, are our principal sources of information about this type of lute. Only two historical instruments survive: a small multirib lute made by Raphael Mest in 1633 (now in Linköping) with string lengths of 50 - 70cm, and a conversion of a lute made originally by Wendelio Venere in 1603 (now in Darmstadt) with string lengths of 67 - 89cm. The Talbot MS gives measurements for a lute with string lengths from 60 - 81cm. It is clear from the paintings as well that these lutes were made in different sizes.



According to the author of the Burwell lute tutor (c.1660-72), the twelve-course lute was invented by Jacques Gaultier (d. before 1660) who came to England in 1617 (f.68; spelling original, punctuation editorial):

...it now remaines then to speake of the head and of the neck of the lute; the neck ought to be as broad as the stringes and the neck as long and not longer than the stringes. English Gaultier hath beene of another opinion and hath caused twoe heads to be made to the lute. All England hath accepted that augmentation and France at first but soone after that alteration hath beene condemned by all the french Masters who are returned to their old fashion, keepinge only the small eleaventhe. The reasons of English Gaultier are soe feeble that they destroy themselves. First he saith that the lengthe of the strings produce a longer and bigger sound, but all the stringes ought to have the same length of sound and the sound of a string must make roome to the other, for besides the confusion that the lengthe of sounds produce it alsoe causeth a discord

since every base cannot make a concord with every small string and this is the first reason. The second evil effect that condemneeth this alteration is that the sound of these long stringes is not good and that sound is like that of one that singes in the nose. The third inconvenience is that one cannot stopp upon them long bases. The fourth reason that there is noe symmetry in proportion in the twoe heads and a lute so framed is not a lute but a bastard instrument between a lute and a theorbo. The fifth reason is that so many stringes doe exceed the breadth of the neck of the lute and the reach of the right hand: the lute is an instrument hard enough and needs not new difficulties. In conclusion if a man hath not a light hand as English Gaultier had one maketh an ugly and confused noise upon them long bases. For a more ample satisfaction you may read the Chapter concerning the fert shape and frameing of the lute in the beginning of this worke.

The reference to the "small eleaventhe" is explained earlier in the book [f.8]:

Concerneing the eleaventh string which is the last base the good masters of the lute doe use onely the octave that is the little one because the eleaventh base is a superfluous string that has beene added to the lute of late to give ease to the hand, for the D [tablature letter d] of the sixth is the same thing with the eleaventh [the same note as the open 11th] and if we must stoppe a string belowe the neck with the D of the sixth tis hard and sometimes impossible to doe it, then we use the eleaventh instead of the D of the sixth therefore it were necessary to discharge the lute of that burthen.

Makeing the bridge and the nutt smaller and takeing from the head the superfluous pegges the lute would sound the better and the hands would find more ease. The eleaventh string being alone ought to be something bigger then if it were an octave his bignes must be betweene the size of the fifth and the great of the sixth. The lutemasters have taken away that great string because the sound of it is too bigg and smothers the sound of the others.

So the classic French lute went back to eleven courses (and, apparently, a single string at the upper octave on the 11th), but the twelve-course lute remained popular in the low countries and England, where Thomas Mace celebrated its qualities in his *Musick's Monument* (1676).

Actually it seems far from clear whether Mace's lute is the same as Gaultier's prototype, though he calls it the "French lute". The lute he describes does correspond to the surviving paintings, mostly Dutch, of this type of lute:



My instruments

1. 70 cm, 9 ribs, after Maler (Prague No. 654)

This lute also features in the 6-course section (no.7) of this catalogue. Mace said that Maler lutes were the best, even though there were few of them left:

There are diversities of mens names in lutes; but the chief name we most esteem, is Laux Maller, ever written with text letters: two of which lutes I have seen (pittiful old, batter'd, crack'd things) valued at 100l. a piece. Mr. Gootiere, the famous lutenist in his time, shew'd me one of them, which the King paid 100l. for. And Mr. Edw. Jones (one of Mr. Gootiere's scholars) had the other, which he so valued; and made a bargain with a merchant, who desired to have it with him in his travels, (for his experience;) and if he lik'd it when he returned, was to give Mr. Jones 100l. for it; but if he refus'd it at the price set, he was to return the lute safe, and to pay 20l. for his experience and use of it, for that journey. I have often seen lutes of three or four pounds price, far more illustrious and taking, to the common eye.

13-course lutes

There are two main types of 13-course lute. The "bass rider" type is where an 11-course lute has been converted by adding the two extra courses on a bass extension to the pegbox. The "swan-neck" type uses an extended pegbox to house the bottom five courses, which are therefore only used as open strings.

This second design is clearly intended to use all-gut bass strings (rather than metal-wound strings), even though the latest examples date from the middle of the 18th century when some metal-wound strings would have been available. In the 20th century lute revival, these instruments have usually been strung with overspun nylon strings, with disastrous consequences for the sound - bass strings sounding very rich in upper harmonics and ringing on far too long.

Thankfully, with recent developments in gut strings, and (I hope) an increasing understanding that these lutes were probably strung at a rather low tension, we are beginning to realize the possibilities of this design.

My Instruments

1. Bass rider type, body after Hans Frei (Warwick), 72/78cm

The Warwick Frei makes an excellent body for a bass-rider lute, being somewhat larger than some of the 18th century conversions but still an elegant shape and manageable string length.



2. Swan neck type, after Sebastian Schelle (Nuremberg, 1744, MI64), 73/99cm

The original lute has a rosewood back, as shown here, and is a very elegant shape.



Theorbo (14 courses)

The origins of the theorbo, and even the word itself, are something of a mystery. The distinguishing feature seems to be the reentrant tuning, where the first (or first and second) courses are tuned an octave lower than normal.

Piccinini (1623) tells us that this came about when large bass lutes were tuned higher than normal to increase their brilliance, but because of their long string lengths it was impossible to tune the highest strings to the normal octave.

He also claimed to have invented the idea of having the bass strings longer than the others, commissioning (in 1594) a long-bodied lute with two bridges (this instrument, by Christoph Heberle of the Venere workshop, dated 1595, survives in Vienna) and then deciding that it was better to have all the strings tied to one bridge and make the basses longer by having them run to a second nut on an extended neck.

But the extended neck principle seems to go back further - the Fugger inventory of 1566 mentions a lute "mit zwei Kragen" - with two necks - and some paintings show extended bass strings on instruments which might otherwise be described as bass lutes:



St Cecilia and the Angel - Carlo Saraceni (1579-1620)



The Duet - Jan Miense Molenaer (c.1610-1668)

In the Saraceni painting (above left), St. Cecilia's lute is an eight-course lute with the bottom two courses, about 10% longer than the other strings, going to a separate pegbox. In the much later Molenaer painting (above right), a somewhat larger neck extension accommodates the bottom 4? courses of a 9? course lute, allowing them to be about 25% longer. One wonders whether it is this type of instrument which was originally called "chitarrone", as used in the Florentine Intermedii of 1589 and played by the virtuoso Giulio Caccini to accompany his own singing?

The much longer extension of the tiorba is actually an extension of the lower pegbox, which is no longer bent back as in the paintings discussed above. This type of lute is well represented in museum collections, with superb examples by Matteo Buechenberg of Rome featuring prominently in modern reproductions.

Further reading can be found in: Mason, Kevin, *The Chitarrone And Its Repertoire in Early Seventeenth-Century Italy* (Aberystwyth: Boethius Press, 1989), and [Lynda Sayce's website](#).

My instruments

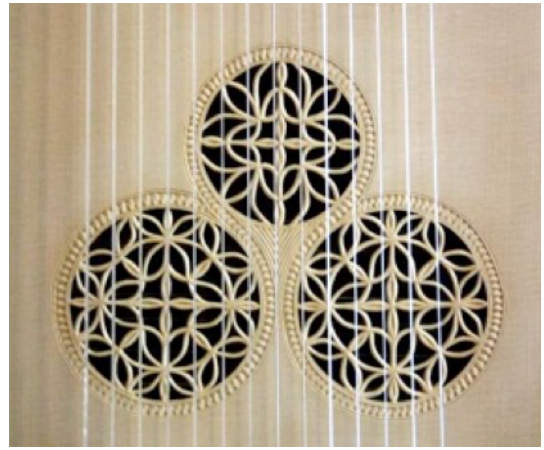
1. 78/155cm, 35 ribs, ten-fret neck

Back of heartwood yew, ebony veneer and spacers.



2. 82/160cm, 35 ribs, nine-fret neck

Back of heartwood yew, ebony veneer and spacers, rose after Sellas.



3. 86/164cm, 35 ribs, ten-fret neck

Back of cypress, ebony veneer and spacers.

