

## THE INSTRUMENTS

**Treble viol** by Lu Mi, China, 2008 after John Hoskins 1609

**Tenor viol** by Alan Clayton, Wellington, 2013 after Henry Jaye 1673

**Bass viol** by Peter Madill, Auckland, 1980 based on English models c. 1670

**Descant recorders** by Alec Loretto, Auckland 1976 based on Italian models c.1600

**Contra bass recorder** by Moeck, Celle, Germany, 1980 based on models c.1650

**Tenor flute** by Barbara Stanley, England, 1980 based on models c. 1550

**Violin** by Tobias Widemann, Christchurch, 2004

**Cittern** by Arthur Lewis, Wales, 1976 based on models c.1550

**Bandora** by Tom Coomber, Auckland, 1981 based on models c. 1580

**8 course lute** by David Van Edwards, Norwich, 2004, after Hieber 1580

**6 course lute** by Jason Petty, Wellington, 2013, after Magno Tieffenbrucker (Beare collection), c.1550

**Setar** by Mehdi Mafakheri, Tehran, 2010s, based on models c. 1700s, tracing back to 9th C. instruments



## RENAISSANCE: *an Elizabethan Consort*

**Background to the instruments of musicke**

**Roger Buckton**

### Plucked strings - Lute, Cittern and Bandora

There was a plethora of plucked string instrument types in the Renaissance, but it was the **lute** which dominated music making. The lute was introduced to Europe from the Arabic world during the Moorish occupation of Spain and during the Crusades. The word 'lute' derives from Arabic 'al oud', meaning 'the *oud*', which was the precursor instrument to the lute and is still commonly played in the Middle-East. The lute is a versatile instrument with a range of uses – accompanying songs, as a consort instrument and as a solo instrument playing anything from simple dances to finely-wrought polyphony. By the end of the 16th century, it had reached a peak of popularity and sophistication, epitomised in the music of John Dowland (1563-1620), but the instrument itself continued to evolve with larger instruments, more strings, and the extended necks of the archlute and theorbo becoming common till its decline around the middle towards the end of the 17th century.

Second in popularity was the **cittern**. Its wire strings (compared with the lute's gut) and sturdy body gave it a versatility for general usage even in the streets and barber shops. Ben Jonson (1572-1637) wrote: "That cursed barber...I have married his cittern that's common to all men." (from *Silent Woman*).



Another wire-strung instrument, the **bandora** (or bandore), plays the role of a bass cittern in the consort. It is thought to have been first built by John Rose about 1560 and retained its popularity for over a hundred years. Antony Holborn (1545-1620) composed many solieces for the instrument. The term 'bandora' derives from the ancient Greek 'pandura'.

Pairs of strings, called ‘courses’, tuned unison or to the octave, are common on these instruments. The music for them was published in tablature notation in which lines represent courses and numbers or letters on them, frets – the ancestor of modern guitar tablature.

### The Viol Family – Treble, Tenor and Bass

A first impression of the viol might be to compare it with the violin family. However, the history of the instrument shows it to have a different pedigree, one more in common with the plucked string family. Its six strings tuned in 4ths with a 3rd in the middle is similar to the lute (and close to the modern-day guitar). In the late 16th and 17th centuries, the instrument gained great popularity especially in the mansions of aristocratic and upper class England. Hence, there is a wealth of music repertoire available at a good amateur level, and from the Courts there was technically demanding music which would have been played by the excellent court musicians.



The standard combination of viols for 17th century England was set out by Thomas Mace in 1676: Your Best Provision (and most Compleat) will be, a Good Chest of Viols; Six in Number; viz. 2 Basses, 2 Tenors and 2 Trebles: All truly, and Proportionably Suited. Even Sir Frances Drake’s galleon, The Golden Hind, that circumnavigated the world from 1577 to 1580, found space for a music room for the officers to lay their chest of viols in the evenings.



### The Elizabethan Violin

Like the viol, the violin was of light construction and with gut strings compared with the metal high-tensioned stringed instrument of the 19th to 21st centuries. Its other name – “fiddle” gives a clue about its street and country social role as compared with the more respected viol family. But even in the Courts, its versatility was appreciated for dance music.

## THE MUSICIANS

**Roger Buckton**, an Adjunct Associate-Professor at the University of Canterbury, formed “Renaissance” in 2020. His background in the ‘broken consort’ repertoire was based on playing at the Early Music Centre, London and in Auckland with “The Kynges Companye” for which he was director. From these beginnings, he had in his possession two crucial instruments – the cittern and the bandora.

These instruments were not in good condition and it was **Tessa White**, instrument maker and repairer who painstakingly brought them back into good working order. Tess is also a violinist and plucked string player and took over the role of playing cittern in the group. Tess also plays a mean Irish fiddle and together with Jonathan Le Cocq on guitar, they perform throughout New Zealand as duo “Entrada”.

For some years, Professor **Jonathan Le Cocq** was Pro-Vice Chancellor of the College of Arts at the University of Canterbury but is now based at the School of Music lecturing in music literature courses. His services as a lute and theorbo player are keenly sought by groups throughout New Zealand and recently, he toured with the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra.

**Dr. Nicolette Paul** plays tenor viol, having discovered a lively local group of Early Music enthusiasts during her postgraduate studies in Music Education, as well as all the members of the recorder family, flute and piano. Nicolette is an active church musician and teaches Music and Mathematics at Christchurch Adventist School, where she has enjoyed introducing students to the early repertoire through recorder consort playing and choral work.

**Jane Brown** who previously played in Wellington with Robert Oliver, is a Banks Peninsula resident living in Duvauchelle. Apart from playing bass viol (also known as viola da gamba), she is a professional cellist playing with the Christchurch Symphony. Jane previously played in the early music consort, Palliser viols, that has performed extensively in Wellington and amongst other things produced a recording of a concert performance called ‘Sonnets and Sweet Ayres’.

**Liam Oliver** specializes in plucked stringed instruments from around the world, particularly those from the Middle-East, India, and surrounding regions. Some instruments in his repertoire include the Persian setar, Indian sitar, Afghan rabab, Arabic/Turkish oud, and Greek bouzouki. In 2021 Liam co-founded Simurgh Music School alongside members of the Iranian community in order to share and teach some of these instruments in Christchurch. When Renaissance needed someone to pick up the bandora, Liam was eager to give it a go.



family of bowed and plucked strings to be 'broken' by the sound of a wind instrument either a flute or a recorder.

It is also interesting that this wind sound is not generally the top treble part but lies below the treble and above the bass. There is, however, another possible meaning for 'broken' in this context. Some scholars have argued that it could refer to the breaking up of the melodic line into divisions (or fast variations) as can most easily be heard on the lute.

### The Consort and Shakespeare

Music was very much part of Elizabethan life and Shakespeare's plays echo this. The amount of music in a play varied. In *Twelfth Night*, from which our quote "If music be the food of love..." is taken, offers many opportunities for music, song and dance. The instruments of "Renaissance", being amongst the most popular in Elizabethan England, would have featured strongly in the musicians' line up.



In England, all this was to change after the Civil War when Charles II returned from France with his band of 24 violins, modelled on the celebrated French originals. From the beginning of the 17th century, the musicians from Northern Italy had been setting the new styles of music, now known as the baroque. The bass viol (viola da gamba) continued to be played – especially in France – through the 18th century, but the gentle viol family per se with its repertoire of skillfully crafted polyphonic music was set aside for the brilliance of the violin-family string orchestra.

### The Flutes and Recorders

Sixteenth century Europe saw a blossoming of many types of wind instruments of all sizes from bass to treble: for example, the predecessor of the oboe – the shawm family, and the predecessor of the bassoon – the dulcian or curtal. Then there were other instruments such as the crumhorn, rauscheiffe and rackett for which there is no modern equivalent. But the written records and locations of surviving instruments show that these instruments were most popular on continental Europe. In England, it was the gentler flute and recorder families that were in demand.



### Consort Playing

'Closed' consort playing, that is, using members of the same family of instruments, was popular across string and wind repertoires. A viol consort is perhaps the most common example of the 'closed' consort, but there could be a consort of flutes of different sizes or any other of the instruments mentioned above. The notion of closed consort playing must have been popular enough for the German writer and composer, Praetorius, to note that the English had developed a 'broken consort'. (1619) That is, a