



Beyond the Basics

The Art and Science of Playing the Lute

Quiet Practice

Practice very quietly to master a difficult passage.

It is well known that one should practice slowly when working out a difficult passage. But quiet practice is extremely helpful as well. A feather-light touch relaxes the hands (both hands) and gives them more agility and sensitivity.

Many technical problems are caused by the physical tension we hold in our hands and arms when playing. And it is not uncommon to increase that tension when approaching a difficult spot in the music. Since much of that tension is automatically dropped when we play very quietly, it allows the lutenist to get out of his/her own way.

So, practice those tricky passages slowly and quietly. Then gradually build up your speed at a very quiet dynamic. When the passage is mastered up to tempo at the quiet dynamic, you can gradually add more volume until the desired volume is reached. Be sure to remain as relaxed as possible when increasing the volume.

Be sure that your energy and intensity remain high when practicing quietly. It is a natural tendency to play with less energy or mental focus when playing quietly. Please guard against this.

Finally, don't practice mistakes! Find a tempo and volume which are slow enough and quiet enough to play the passage correctly every time.