



Reading 37

You are going to read an extract from a magazine article. Six paragraphs have been removed from the extract. Choose from the paragraphs A–G the one which fits each gap (1–6). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

The Magic Lute

Four hundred years ago, the royal courts of Europe resounded to strains of the lute. Then the instrument did a mysterious vanishing act. Arthur Robb is one of a small band of craftsmen bringing the instrument back from the past.

Arthur Robb has been marching to a different tune all his life. When the youth of Europe was listening to the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, he went to Paris and Amsterdam as part of a classical choir. And then in swinging London, he discovered even earlier music. It has all been good training, though. Now in his fifties, he is recognised as a leading expert in one of contemporary music's most fashionable offshoots - the revival of interest in the ancient string instrument, the lute.

GAP 1

Yet lutes were once produced in astonishing numbers. When the celebrated Italian lute maker Laux Mahler died in 1552, an inventory of his workshop revealed more than a thousand lutes in various stages of construction. The instrument's disappearance was so dramatic, however, that very few early examples survive.

GAP 2

What happened to all the others is a mystery. Robb's theory is that the lute was killed off by the development of keyboard instruments like the pianoforte. But the end must have come suddenly. Some of the last music for solo lute was written by J.S. Bach. Within years of his death in 1750, the instrument which had dominated Europe's musical repertoire for centuries had all but vanished.

GAP 3

Digging into literature and old manuscripts, such as early musical scores, has allowed him to discover how the music might have sounded,

whilst the examination of old paintings gives clues as to the details of the instrument's design. The lute has certainly altered over time, evolving from an elongated oval to a deep pear-shape. The stringing and the sound produced must also have changed as a result. 'The lute is like a time machine,' says Robb. 'Its history goes back into antiquity, possibly to ancient Egypt.'

GAP 4

Lute music is considered rather quiet compared with the volume of today's orchestration. But centuries ago, when music was being written for the instrument, people's ears were better attuned to quieter sounds.

GAP 5

Despite his enthusiasm, his initial efforts did not meet with immediate approval. A novice carpenter, he practised for a year, making wooden toys and household items to improve his basic skills, before joining an adult education class in musical instrument making. After months of meticulous work, he proudly offered a completed lute to a music shop in Bristol.

GAP 6

Far from being discouraged, Robb set about putting things to rights. Modern-day lute makers have problems their craftsmen forebears could never have imagined. Worldwide concern about the use of rare timber, for example, has meant that he has had to adapt his methods to the materials that are most readily available. He has, however, gone on to make dozens of lutes, each finer than the last, and repaired many more.

A

Those that do are now priceless museum pieces, and even these treasured relics have been damaged or altered so much during their life that copying them doesn't guarantee historical accuracy.

B

What's more, no authentic plan of a genuine fifteenth- or sixteenth-century lute has ever been found, and so no one knows what tools were used to make the instruments. Robb, alongside fellow enthusiasts in Britain and the USA, has been spearheading the lute's revival. This means unearthing fragments of information from surrounding strata like archaeologists hunting a fossil.

C

In turning it down, they left him in no doubt as to the shortcomings of his creation. It was the wrong shape, the wrong weight, the strings were too long to achieve the right pitch and the pegs which tightened the strings were too bulky for comfort.

D

But so little factual evidence remains, even from more recent times, that Robb has to think himself back in time in order to begin to see how they should be made. Only by appreciating the way people lived, how they behaved and the technology they used, can he begin to piece together the complete picture.

E

'Appreciating small nuances like that is vital to an appreciation of how the instrument might have been played,' Robb says. As one of a small band of professional lute makers who keep in touch via the internet, Robb can share these impressions, as well as swapping problems and possible solutions. No such forum existed when Robb began to construct his first lute 25 years ago, however. He had to work things out on his own.

F

Robb's enquiries have, however, punctured one other popular myth - that of the lute player as a wandering minstrel. Almost from its introduction into Europe, the lute was a wealthy person's instrument, the players attaining a status comparable to modern-day concert pianists.

G

From a tiny attic workshop in the English countryside, Robb makes exquisite examples of this forgotten instrument. Piecing together the few remaining clues to the instrument's construction and musical characteristics has demanded all his single-minded concentration.

Reading 37 — Keys

1. G
2. A
3. B
4. D
5. E
6. C

EXPLANATION

Arthur Robb has been marching to a different tune all his life. When the youth of Europe was listening to the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, he went to Paris and Amsterdam as part of a classical choir. And then in swinging London, he discovered even earlier music. It has all been good training, though. Now in his fifties, he is recognised as a leading expert in one of contemporary music's most fashionable offshoots - the revival of interest in the ancient string instrument, the lute.

From a tiny attic workshop in the English countryside, Robb makes exquisite examples of this forgotten instrument. Piecing together the few remaining clues to the instrument's construction and musical characteristics has demanded all his single-minded concentration.

Yet lutes were once produced in astonishing numbers. When the celebrated Italian lute maker Laux Mahler died in 1552, an inventory of his workshop revealed more than a thousand lutes in various stages of construction. The instrument's disappearance was so dramatic, however, that very few early examples survive.

Those that do are now priceless museum pieces, and even these treasured relics have been damaged or altered so much during their life that copying them doesn't guarantee historical accuracy.

What happened to all the others is a mystery. Robb's theory is that the lute was killed off by the development of keyboard instruments like the pianoforte. But the end must have come suddenly. Some of the last music for solo lute was written by J.S. Bach. Within years of his death in 1750, the instrument which had dominated Europe's musical repertoire for centuries had all but vanished.

What's more, no authentic plan of a genuine fifteenth- or sixteenth-century lute has ever been found, and so no one knows what tools were used to make the instruments. Robb, alongside fellow enthusiasts in Britain and the USA, has been spearheading the lute's revival. This means unearthing fragments of information from surrounding strata like archaeologists hunting a fossil.

Digging into literature and old manuscripts, such as early musical scores, has allowed him to discover how the music might have sounded, whilst the examination of old paintings gives clues as to the details of the instrument's design. The lute has certainly altered over time, evolving from an elongated oval to a deep pear-shape. The stringing and the sound produced must also have changed as a result. 'The lute is like a time machine,' says Robb. 'Its history goes back into antiquity, possibly to ancient Egypt.'

The ideas are united by comparison to archaeology

'Possible' in the previous paragraph is opposed to 'factual'

But so little factual evidence remains, even from more recent times, that Robb has to think himself back in time in order to begin to see how they should be made. Only by appreciating the way people lived, how they behaved and the technology they used, can he begin to piece together the complete picture.

Lute music is considered rather quiet compared with the volume of today's orchestration. But centuries ago, when music was being written for the instrument, people's ears were better attuned to quieter sounds.

These are the nuances the next paragraph refers to.

'Appreciating small nuances like that is vital to an appreciation of how the instrument might have been played,' Robb says. As one of a small band of professional lute makers who keep in touch via the internet, Robb can share these impressions, as well as swapping problems and possible solutions. No such forum existed when Robb began to construct his first lute 25 years ago, however. He had to work things out on his own.

initial = when he began

Despite his enthusiasm, his initial efforts did not meet with immediate approval. A novice carpenter, he practised for a year, making wooden toys and household items to improve his basic skills, before joining an adult education class in musical instrument making. After months of meticulous work, he proudly offered a completed lute to a music shop in Bristol.

In turning it down, they left him in no doubt as to the shortcomings of his creation. It was the wrong shape, the wrong weight, the strings were too long to achieve the right pitch and the pegs which tightened the strings were too bulky for comfort.

Shows the reaction to the mentioned shortcomings

Far from being discouraged, Robb set about putting things to rights. Modern-day lute makers have problems their craftsmen forebears could never have imagined. Worldwide concern about the use of rare timber, for example, has meant that he has had to adapt his methods to the materials that are most readily available. He has, however, gone on to make dozens of lutes, each finer than the last, and repaired many more.