



Meeting of the Sociedad de Vihuela, Tiana, 27th–29th May, with photographs by the participants

At the weekend of Corpus Christi, giants walk the flower-carpeted streets of Catalonia, children take their first communion, and priests, shawm-bands and human pyramids escort the Host through the Spanish towns—and this year the Sociedad de Vihuela held a branch meeting in the attractive setting of the Casa Albéniz del Casal de Tiana. Tiana is a small town to the north of Barcelona, which like so much of the region is beautified by attractive art nouveau architecture, more or less wherever you look. The meeting took place under the aegis of the 17th annual Tiana early music festival.

The weekend got off to a flying start with what I can honestly say was one of the most entertaining early music concerts I have ever attended, entitled *Todos se burlan de mí*, given by the group La Sonorosa—photos below. We all know how in the 17th century the vihuela and the lute lost ground to the guitar, a fact lamented by lute players at the time. This history was beautifully brought to life in this show, which opens in the house of Frenchified Spanish lady in Paris, trying to learn a French air de cour—when in bursts a group of Spanish musicians, led by none other than Luis de Briçeno, author of a guitar method printed in Paris in 1626. What follows is an hour-long non-stop baroque-guitar-based music party, with all sorts of jokes and comic songs (advice to husbands; a woman confessing to a priests why she has had so many lovers and so on), and plenty of high kicks from the dancers. Why would anyone have wanted to go back to the studious, introspective world of the lute after such fun?

So often in early music concerts one encounters *either* painstaking scholarship, *or* a lively and unpedantic sense of fun—but this show really has both, to a degree I have rarely seen.





A paper delivered later in the weekend, by the group's main researcher Edwin Garcia Gonzalez, explained his painstaking attempts to reconstruct the songs from Briçeno's *Metodo*. He is in the process of turning his thesis into a paper for a Spanish musicology journal, after which we hope for an English version. The example below shows how problematic Briçeno's scores are: we have lyrics and *cifras* or chord notation, but the 'rhythmic' notation makes no sense and there is no melody. Edwin's interest was piqued at an early stage when he saw that a version of the song below actually survives as a children's song in Latin America.

OTRAS FOLIAS DIFERENTES Y BVENAS.

$\begin{array}{cccccccc} o & d & o & o & d & o & o & d & o & o & d \end{array}$
 $\begin{array}{cccccccc} B & O & - & l & a & u & a & l & a & p & a & l & o & - & m & i & t & a & . \end{array}$
 $\begin{array}{cccccccc} o & d & o & o & d & o & o & d & o & o & d \end{array}$
 $\begin{array}{cccccccc} P & o & r & e & n & c & i & m & a & d & e & l & v & e & r & d & e & l & i & m & o & n & . \end{array}$
 $\begin{array}{cccccccc} o & d & o & o & d & o & o & d & o & o & d \end{array}$
 $\begin{array}{cccccccc} C & o & n & l & a & s & a & l & a & s & a & p & a & r & t & a & l & a & s & r & a & m & a & s & . \end{array}$
 $\begin{array}{cccccccc} o & d & o & o & d & o & o & d & o & o & d \end{array}$
 $\begin{array}{cccccccc} C & o & n & e & l & p & i & c & o & l & l & e & n & a & l & a & f & l & o & r & . \end{array}$

*Arrojome las mançanitas
 Por encima del mançanar
 Arrojomelas y arrojelelas
 Y tornomelas arrojar.
 Si jamas duermen mis ojos
 Madre mia que haran
 Que como amor los defuela
 Pienso que se moriran.*

*Quien dixo muerte al amor
 Libre de pefares era
 Mejor dixera dolor
 Y mas natural le fuera
 Vna mora me enamora
 Por ser mora de naçion
 Mas no es mora pues que mora
 Dentro de mi coraçon.*





The *Metodo* was intended to provide easy access to a relatively easy and inexpensive instrument, so we may guess that the scores are intended to be close to one's intuition, to represent popular practice—notably singing to chaconnes and other repeating chord patterns. Comparison of other surviving settings of the follia ground for example, which in Italian *alfabeto* sources indicate which are downstrokes and which are upstrokes, suggest that Briçeno (unable to find a typesetter in Paris with all the type he would have liked) uses the semibreve for a downstroke and the minim for an upstroke. This conveys further rhythmic information, because in ternary rhythms the first two beats of a bar are often downstrokes on the guitar and the third an upstroke. Where a piece begins: semibreve, minim, that probably means that we start with an anacrusis and the semibreve sign is the second beat of the bar. Semibreve–minim–semibreve (down, up, down) may in triple time denote a dotted 'galliard' rhythm. The dot of augmentation (which in the contemporary Italian sources has the explanation that you should 'stop for the length of a sigh') would mean either a crotchet–minim rhythm in triple time, or a hemiola tied over a barline.

Edwin considered the types of evidence we can use in reconstructing lost melodies: individual experiment, 'collective' experiment, historical models, the source itself, and versions of some of the songs which have survived to the present. The fact that many of the pieces are based on chaconnes, follias, romanescas, the *dansa de la hacha* and so on is a tremendous help as we know the rhythmic structure already (and in some cases melodies from sources such as Santiago de Murcia), and indeed the basis of the songs in popular ground licenses us to vary the melody, as it probably would have varied even within a single performance. As far as 'collective experimentation' is concerned, he presented on a parallel stave, and with recordings, half a dozen modern reconstructions, many of which have come to the same conclusions on points of detail. As a final *jeu d'esprit*, Edwin showed how he had sneaked in a melody from the Walt Disney *Jungle Book* film—which is written over a harmonic sequence commonly used in 17th century Spain—in the guise of one of the lost Briçeno tunes, without his musicians initially realising!

On Saturday morning attendees made a visit to the Museo de la Música de Barcelona, led by luthiers Joan Pellisa and Jaume Bosser, both of whom have long relationship with the museum as consultants and restorers. If you want to read basic technical data about the lutes, there is a report 'The Lutes in the Museo Municipal de Musica in Barcelona' by John Griffiths in the *Journal of the Lute Society of America* xii (1979), but below are a few more observations and pictures. In fact the collection is added historical value because all the lutes all have an established provenance, and a Spanish one: they all came from a Valencian noble house, where they had been since their heyday, and were acquired by the Catalan collector and art historian Joaquim Folch i Torres (1886–1963), a great protector of Catalonia's cultural patrimony.