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From these and his previous statements, it is apparent that Mattheson's impatience was essentially twofold: The lute was not loud enough for use in large ensembles, which is the sort of music to which he was principally devoted; and its idiosyncrasies proved tiresome in the hands of the majority of lutenists.³⁷

With the *Lauten-Memorial* the lute controversy closes. We can today be grateful to Mattheson for expressing his biases; as a progressive musician his views on the lute are doubtless reflective of many of his *galant* contemporaries' opinions, though, of course, he often overstates for effect. We can even be grateful for the overstatements, since they occasioned the publication of the only major history of the lute prior to the twentieth century.

EPILOGUE

One of the most interesting aspects of the *Lauten-Memorial* is the inclusion of a letter by Sylvius Leopold Weiss. Mattheson thought very highly of Weiss, who, prior to this letter, was known to him only by reputation. The purpose of its inclusion was to demonstrate to Baron that it was possible to object to Mattheson's opinions in a dignified manner. The letter is here translated complete. Mattheson's footnotes are given at the bottom of Weiss' letter preceded by letters of the alphabet.

Here is the transcript of the letter which the greatest lutenist in the world did me the honor of writing to me four years ago, and which will here serve as a counterbalance to the undeserved calumnies of Herr Baron.

³⁷At this juncture it should be pointed out that Mattheson was hard of hearing. Even in 1705 the symptoms were noticeable; in 1728 he gave up his posts of cantor and canon at the cathedral in Hamburg (problems with the singers were also a consideration); and by about 1735 he was totally deaf (see Hans Turnow, col. 1799f.). We can only speculate to what extent this played a role in his rejection of the lute, but it may well have been a contributing factor.

A defense of the lute in addition to those of Mattheson's lutenist contemporaries is given by the outstanding German scholar Hans Neemann in "J. S. Bachs Lautenkompositionen," *Bach-Jahrbuch*, Vol. XXVIII (1931), p. 75. Neemann points out that in the eighteenth century lutenists were still popular in German courts and performed an important function as theorbists in thoroughbass ensembles. However, this position was undermined and finally made superfluous by the new musical style that did away with the basso continuo. Like Baron and Weiss before him, Neemann believes that Mattheson grossly exaggerated his case against the lute.

P[raemissis] P[raemittendis]

Not only your learned writings (which, as soon as they appear, I immediately acquire, read with edification, and have already derived much use from and hope to continue doing so), but also the undeserved praise which *mon cher maitre* most kindly extended to my unworthiness in his last musical journal on pages 287 and 288, pertaining to my trip to Munich,³⁸ encourage me to make with my pen your long-desired acquaintance. I have already planned several times with M. König to take a trip to Hamburg expressly for the honor of personally meeting *mon maitre*. To this point it has not been possible, but will unfailingly take place [in the future.] I especially admire your just and incomparable reasoning against Herr Cantor [Bokemeyer] concerning fugues and canons, in the fourth part of *Musica Critica*.

But then on page 280 I find again a passage to the disadvantage of the poor lute, which necessarily pains me somewhat, since this instrument was already twice sharply criticized in *Das Neu-Eröffnete Orchestre*.³⁹ Now I am protesting *solemnissime*, for my intention is not at all to start a musical controversy but only to inform you most obediently that no lutenist, especially I, would wish to assert that the lute can be compared to the keyboard instruments in perfection.^(a) Rather I am of the first opinion that after the keyboard there is no more perfect instrument than this one, especially for *Galanterie*.^(b) The theorbo and chitarrone, which are quite different even from each other, cannot be used at all in *Galanterie* pieces.^(c) I would like to show you this if I were sometime so fortunate as to be able to play for you the little that I have learned on this instrument.

Of course every instrument has its flaws, namely the thing itself, stringing, tuning, and so forth. However I have always endeavored to tune as little as possible, and almost never to put on new strings when I am playing publicly, unless perhaps the weather is very humid. Thus one cannot ascribe all imperfections primarily to the instrument, but rather to its players.^(d) Yet I do not wonder that the lute lacks your approbation, for those masters formerly active in Hamburg, Mr. T.—, who is now dead, and a certain M.—, played their pieces very well. However, without disparaging them I can testify that they had not achieved the full power and possibilities which have since been attained.

³⁸In *Critica Musica*, Vol. IV, p. 287f., Mattheson reported that Weiss had been rewarded for his performance at a nuptial festival in Munich with 100 ducats and a golden snuff-box.

³⁹In addition to the section translated here, there is another disparaging reference to lutenists in the preface of the *Orchestre*, p. 12. Baron does not refer to it.

(Here there followed a story like that of Marcolphus, which I omit for the sake of brevity.)⁴⁰

But to accompany with the lute in an orchestra would be too weak and inconspicuous,^(e) although at the nuptial celebration here I had an aria *con liuto solo* in the opera with the well-known Bercelli, and it is supposed to have had a good effect. First, I had a splendid lute. Second, the aria showed off the instrument brilliantly. Third, nothing else accompanied, except harpsichord and contrabass, and these played only the main notes in the bass.

Otherwise I have adapted [*accomodirt*] one of my instruments^(f) for accompaniment in the orchestra and in church. It has the size, length, power and resonance of the veritable theorbo, and has the same effect, only that the tuning is different.⁴¹ This instrument I use on these occasions. But in chamber music, I assure you that a *cantata à voce sola*, next to the harpsichord, accompanied by the lute has a much better effect than with the chitarrone or even the theorbo, since these two latter instruments are ordinarily played with the nails^(g) and produce in close proximity a coarse, harsh sound.^(h)

Now I am getting so involved in descriptions of all these details that you cannot but become bored. Thus I shall leave off here, again asking that you not believe I am a man who imagines he knows a lot or that he wished to contradict you—God forbid! My sole desire is merely to further promote my instrument and to profit from all expert people, to which the honor of your worthy acquaintance will

⁴⁰Mattheson's note. Marcolphus von Butterfass ("butter churn") is a fatuous, presumably fictional lutenist whom Baron derides in Part II, Chapter II of his *Untersuchung*.

⁴¹Until the late baroque period the theorbo retained the same tuning (in fourths with a major third in the middle, based upon G) as the renaissance lute, with of course more bass courses added. Baron reports (*Untersuchung*, p. 131) that in his time the theorbo was commonly tuned in D minor, like the baroque lute.

contribute considerably. Wherewith I commend myself to constant kind remembrance,

Your,

S. L. Weiss

à Monsieur,
Monsieur Mattheson, Maitre de Chapelle de S[on] A[ltesse]
R[oyale]
le Duc regnant de Schleswig-Holstein, etc.⁴²

- (a) I know various examples of those who rank the lute far ahead.
- (b) I am fully in accord with this.
- (c) Herr Baron should note this difference from the lute (p. 131) [of the *Untersuchung*].
- (d) A distinction should always be made between the faults of the instrument and those of the unskilled player.
- (e) This is exactly what I say: *aliis verbis*.
- (f) That is praiseworthy.
- (g) Note page 131 [of the *Untersuchung*].
- (h) True.

⁴²Mattheson, *Lauten-Memorial*, p. 117ff. This letter is excerpted (in German) with comments in Hans Neemann, "Die Lautenistenfamilie Weiss," *AfMf*, Vol. IV (1939), p. 163f.

