



# Lute, Friend of Kings

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## ➔ A Lutenist's Life: from the Renaissance to Today

**Life during the Renaissance was quite different from modern life. People had different challenges than the ones we encounter today. The same thing goes for musicians...**

### A Renaissance Musician

It's May 15, 1536, and Francesco the lutenist is preparing to go perform for a great king. He is a little nervous, despite having practiced diligently over the last few weeks. Before leaving the house, he goes over everything: he has his lute, his sheet music... OH NO! Disaster! His wine<sup>1</sup> has spilled all over his sheet music.

The notes are impossible to read now! He doesn't have the time to transcribe them again by hand, or even to pass by Gutenberg's shop to have him produce several copies on his nifty new machine<sup>2</sup>.

He tries to sop the wine out from the page, but the tablatures remain illegible. Luckily, he knows the parts by heart. If all else fails, he can always improvise...

Francesco loads everything onto his cart and heads off.



The roads are in terrible shape and it takes him over an hour to get to the castle, even though it's only a few kilometers away from his house. He uses the extra time to hum through the melodies that he will be performing in order to have them fresh in his mind.

When he finally arrives, he sets up in front of the king and his guests of honor, most of them wealthy local merchants, and starts doing what he does best: he charms the audience with his music!

<sup>1</sup> Back then, people drank a lot of wine because water was not very clean and could pass along illnesses.

<sup>2</sup> Johann Genfleisch, also known as Gutenberg, invented a new printing press system around the year 1450.

### Today's Musician

It's present day, and Madeleine the lutenist is performing a concert in a big concert hall. She is a little nervous, despite having practiced diligently over the last few weeks. Before leaving the house, she goes over everything: she has her lute, her sheet music... OH NO! Disaster! Her coffee has spilled all over her sheet music. The notes are impossible to read now! Madeleine opens up her computer, goes into her email inbox, quickly retrieves the message from her lutenist friend who lives across the country and who had sent her the musical score. Rats! Her printer is out of ink! Not to worry – she slips her electronic tablet into



her bag, which she can use to easily read her score!

Madeleine loads up the back seat of her car and heads off. On her way, she listens to recordings of the melodies that she will be performing on her MP3 player in order to have them fresh in her mind.

A few hours later, Madeleine sets up on the stage. In front of her, she sees all sorts of people: young, old, wealthy and also less fortunate. She starts doing what she does best: she charms the audience with her music!



## → MONODY AND POLYPHONY

"Mono...what?" you might ask. "Polyphony! Why so serious?" you might think. It's actually a lot simpler than it may seem. Allow me to explain.

Imagine Remy, Solfa and I want to sing together. At first, we all agree to sing the same tune.

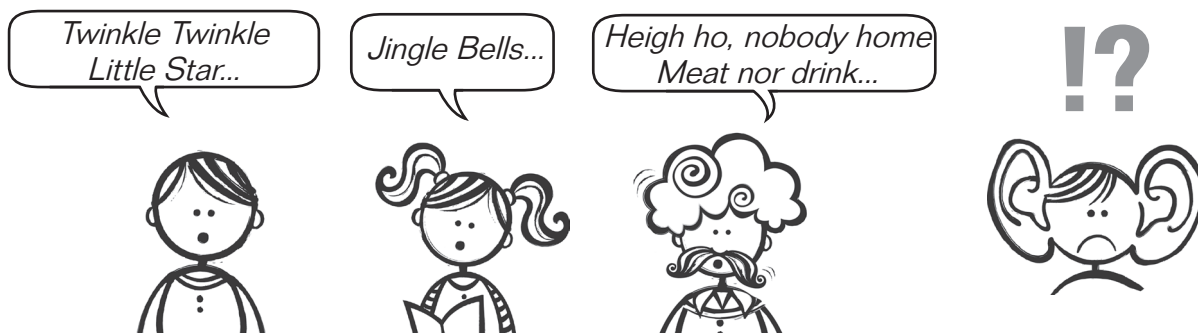
Twinkle Twinkle Little Star. It's very lovely! We call this monody.



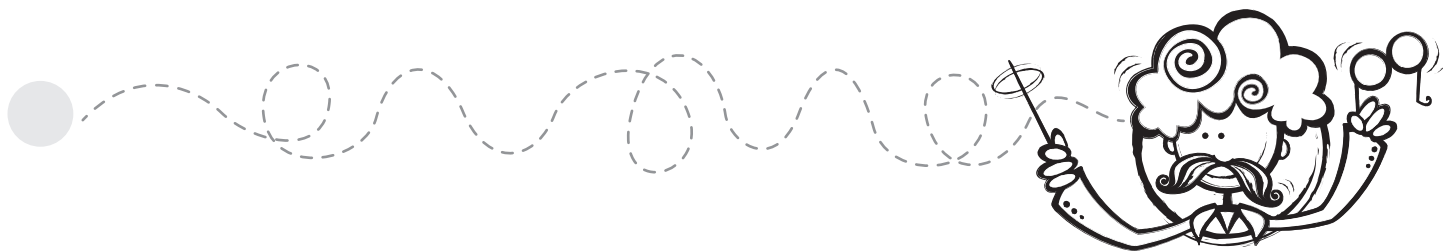
At one point, Remy starts singing a series of notes that, on their own, wouldn't be very interesting, but that serve as a wonderful accompaniment to the tune that Solfa and I are still singing. When you have a melody (the tune that Solfa and I are singing) with accompaniment (what Remy is now singing), it is still called monody.



Then, there is an argument. We don't want to sing *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* anymore! Solfa starts singing *Jingle Bells*, Remy starts singing *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, and I hum *Heigh ho, nobody home*. This is a far cry from monody – it's more like cacophony!







We now need a composer to instill some order into this hurricane of notes! The composer invents a different tune for each singer, while taking into account the harmony between the three voices. Solfa sings her part on its own: it's wonderful! Remy sings his part on its own: it's fabulous! I sing my part on its own: obviously it's sublime!



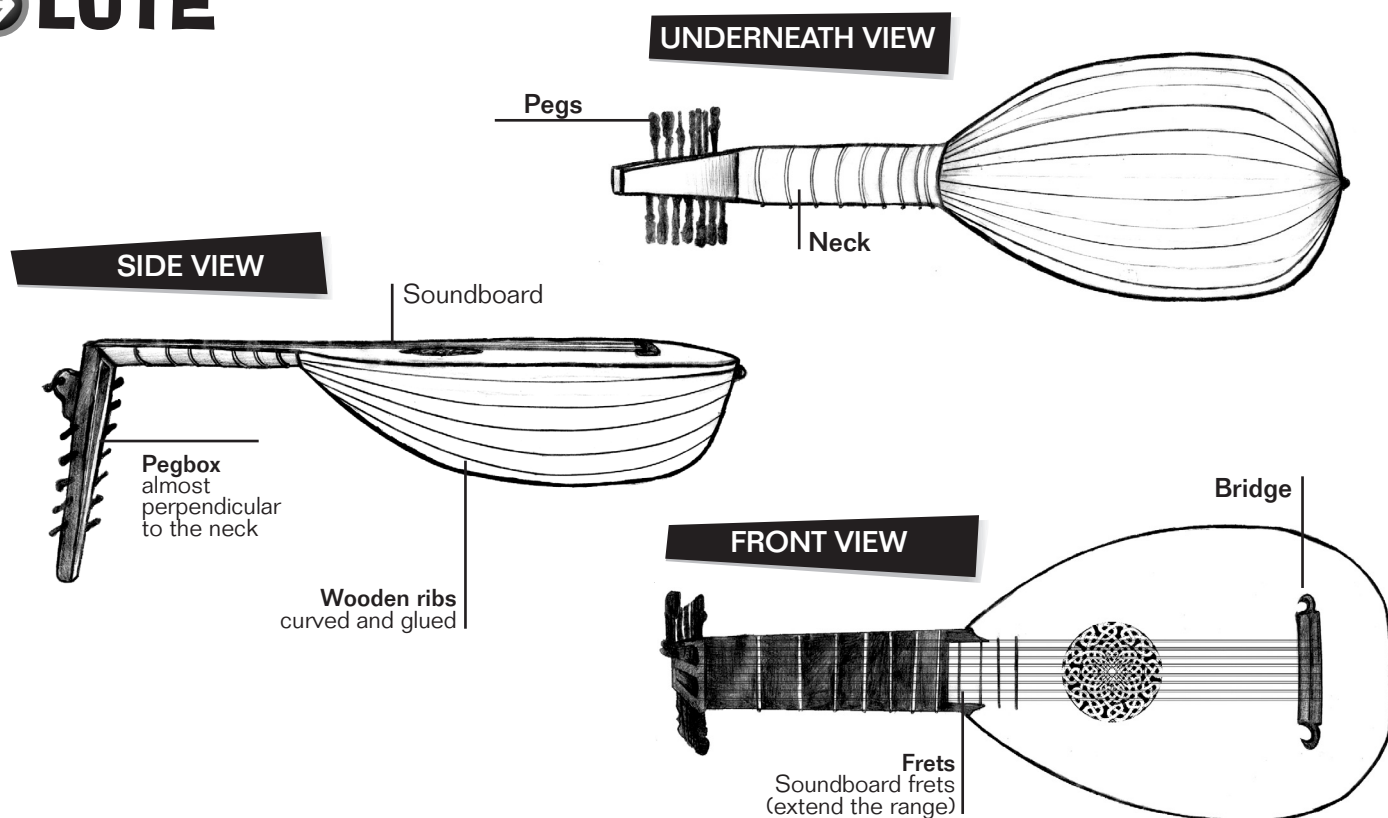
And then, when we sing these three tunes simultaneously, it's quite simply magical! It actually is magic... the magic of polyphony!

To sum up, polyphony is the combination of several melodies that can stand alone, but that can also form part of a whole. Singing with a group can produce polyphony, but it can also be achieved with a solo instrument. The lute is one of these instruments. Indeed, a lutenist can press the left hand fingers down on several strings at once, and pluck several strings with the right hand in order to play several voices all at once!

## INSTRUMENTS YOU WILL HEAR



## → LUTE



The lute's ancestor, the oud (which translates to "wood") is an ancient plucked string instrument from the Arab world. It's pear-shaped just like the lute, but its neck is somewhat shorter. The oud travelled Asia where it transformed into the pipa (in China) and the biwa (in Japan). It also made its way to Europe (specifically, Spain), where it became the lute!

When it got to Spain, the lute underwent some transformation. Little pieces of gut called frets were tied around the neck. At the beginning, like the oud, the lute generally had six groups of strings, for a total of thirteen strings. These string groupings are called courses. Later, lower-pitched courses were added. Renaissance lutes can have six courses or eight courses, pre-baroque lutes can have ten courses, and there are even baroque lutes with thirteen courses (so twenty-four strings!).

By the Renaissance, the lute had become the star of all the instruments! Its delicate sound was considered very pleasant and was especially loved by kings and queens. Monarchs hired lutenists as their own personal musicians. Eventually, the lute's popularity waned. People started to prefer the harpsichord which was also a great instrument both for accompaniment and solo performances, but could play more loudly, filling the newly invented concert halls and accompany larger groups of instruments and singers. For about 200 years, the lute had all but disappeared. For about 60 years now, interest in ancient instruments has revived. Luthiers began again to build lutes and composers to compose music for the instrument. Musicians found a renewed pleasure in playing them!

**The Renaissance  
was followed by  
the Baroque era.**



## THEORBO

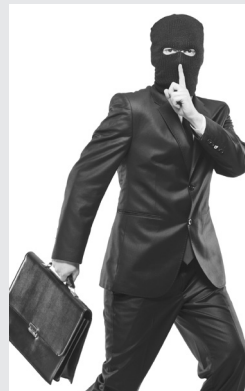
The theorbo is also a plucked string instrument. It was created in Italy, long after the lute. It bears many similarities to the lute, since it belongs to the same family, but its neck is a little different: it is longer and has not one but two pegboxes (where the pegs, which connect to one end of the strings, are located). The strings that go all the way to the end of the fingerboard are far lower in pitch and the theorbist cannot change their pitch by putting fingers down while he or she is playing. The theorbist has to tune them in advance and uses them to accompany the melody. For a long time, the theorbo was preferred over the lute for vocal accompaniment, because its low register was more readily distinguishable from the human voice.

### Lingo lesson...

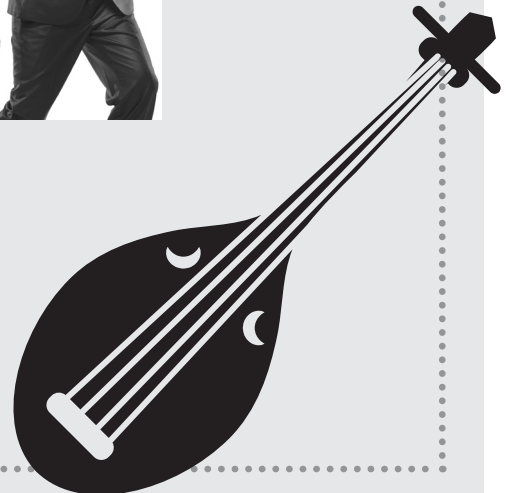
A **lutenist** is a musician who plays the lute.



A **luthier** is someone who makes, repairs, or sells plucked or bowed string instruments like the violin, the guitar, and of course the lute!



A **looter** is someone who steals things. Hopefully no looters get their hands on a lute!



## ➔ For students in grades 1 and 2

After hearing Francesco the Renaissance lutenist's story and Madeleine the modern lutenist's story, can you connect the following objects with the corresponding era?

**Renaissance**

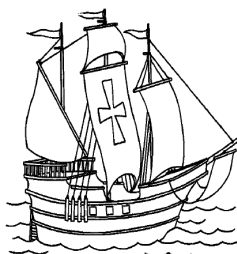
**Today**



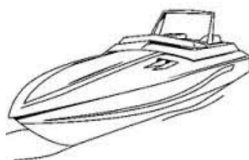
**Car**



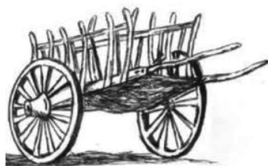
**Printing press**



**Caravel**



**Motorboat**



**Cart**



**Computer**

**Example**



## ➔ For students in grades 3 to 6

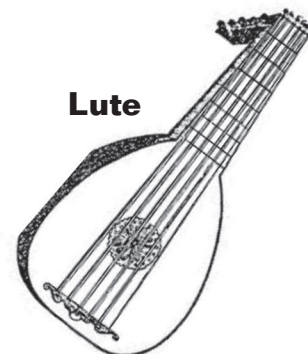
Link the historical events to their corresponding dates on the timeline.

Gutenberg invents the modern printing press	<b>1492</b>
The computer is invented	<b>1453</b>
The automobile is invented	<b>1715</b>
Christopher Columbus discovers America	<b>1804</b>
End of Louis XIV's reign	<b>1877</b>
The Renaissance begins	<b>1883</b>
The electronic tablet is invented	<b>1936</b>
The phonograph is invented	<b>1978</b>
The compact disc (CD) is invented	<b>1989</b>
The steam-powered train is invented	
Your school is built	

## LET'S HAVE SOME FUN

- 1** The lute is a string instrument. Draw a blue circle around all the string instruments you see on this page.
- 2** Lutenists pluck the strings on the lute. In red, colour in all the plucked string instruments you see on this page.
- 3** The lute is positioned on the lutenist's lap when played. Draw a yellow rectangle around all the instruments on this page that are played in the lap.

Now that you've circled, coloured in, and drawn squares, which of the following instruments do you think most closely resemble the lute?



**Lute**



**Violin**



**French Horn**



**Guitar**



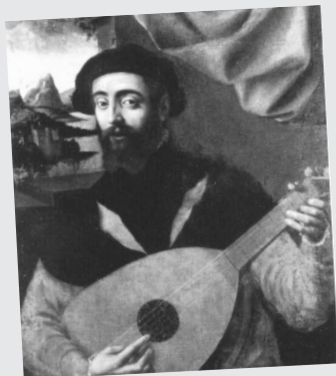
**Drum**



**Harpsichord**



## → THE LEGENDS: IT'S ALL IN THE CARDS



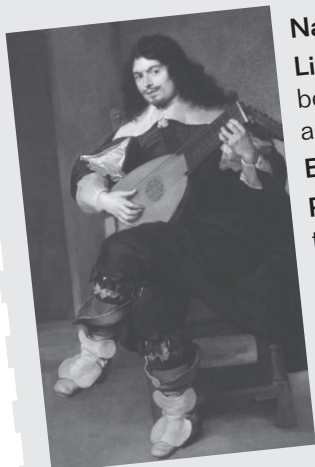
**Name:** Francesco Da Milano  
**Life:** Born in 1497 and died in 1543  
**Nickname:** Il divino (the divine one)  
**Background:** Italian  
**Profession:** Lutenist and composer  
**Other facts:** He is known as the greatest Italian composer and lutenist of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.



**Name:** Claudin de Sermisy  
**Life:** Born in 1495 and died in 1562  
**Background:** French  
**Profession:** Composer  
**Patrons:** Kings Louis XII, François I, Henry II and François II  
**Other facts:** He is known mostly for his polyphonic works



**Name:** John Dowland  
**Life:** Born in 1563 and died in 1626  
**Background:** British  
**Profession:** Lutenist and composer  
**Patron:** He was a long-time servant of Christian IV of Denmark, but he longed to play for the Royal Court of England under Queen Elizabeth I.  
**Most famous work:** Lachrimae or Seven Teares



**Name:** Robert de Visée

**Life:** Probably born between 1650 and 1665 and died after 1732

**Background:** French

**Profession:** Lutenist, theorbist, guitarist and composer

**Patron:** King Louis XIV, to whom he even taught guitar

*No portraits exist of Robert de Visée.  
This image is of a French lutenist  
of the same era.*



**Name:** Konstantin Bozhinov

**Life:** Today

**Background:** Bulgarian, but has lived in Vancouver, Canada for many years

**Profession:** Lutenist, guitarist, accordion player, improviser, composer, arranger, teacher

**Patron:** He plays for anyone, whether or not they are kings!

**Motto:** "Don't seek the footsteps of ancient masters. Instead, seek what the masters were seeking."



**Name:** Madeleine Owen

**Life:** Today

**Background:** From Montreal, Canada, but now lives in Vaudreuil-Dorion

**Profession:** Lutenist, theorbist, teacher and Artistic Director of Ensemble La Cigale, an early music group

**Other facts:** She is the creator and star of the show you will be seeing. She originally created it for her daughters, Joséphine and Sacha.

Her passion for lute came early in her childhood from lute recordings by Julian Beam. She fell in love with the theorbo the first time she saw one.



**TO YOUR INSTRUMENTS! READY? SET... PLAY!**



Here are three pieces from the concert. Now, it's your turn to sing them or play them on the recorder!



## Le levraut et la tortue

*Hâtez-vous lentement*

Mélodie populaire du 17<sup>e</sup> siècle  
Harmonisée par Louis-Nicolas Clérambault

1. 2.

Qui ne part au point cer-tain, Court et ga-lope en vain. La la Que l'on s'a  
la la la la la la la la la la la.

6

nime et s'é-ver-tu-e, Rien ne cor-ri-ge ce dé-faut: La tor-

10

1. 2.

tu-e se rend plu-tôt Au but que le le-vraut. La la la.  
la la la la la la la la la la.

1. 2.

II. Ils avaient gagé tous deux  
Et mis de bons enjeux.  
Allez toujours, dit le compère,  
Il ne me faut que deux instants :  
La commère prend les devants  
Et ne perd pas de temps.

III. Le coureur la voit enfin  
Presqu'au bout du chemin :  
Comme un trait part de l'arbalète,  
Il part, il vole, mais sans fruit ;  
Et la bête, dit-on, perdit  
L'honneur et le profit.

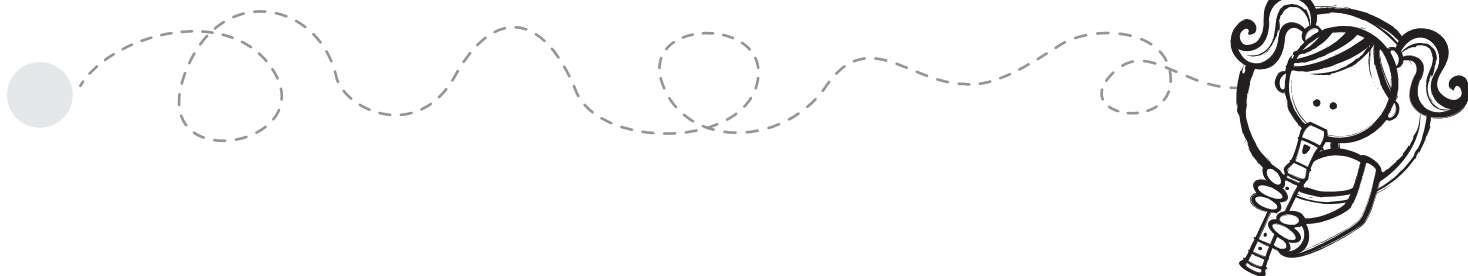
## THE HARE AND THE TORTOISE

*Run slowly*

[1] If you don't start in time, you'll hurry in vain. You may strive and strain, but nothing can alter that fact. The tortoise, remember, reached the goal sooner than the hare.

[2] The two of them made a bet and laid their money down for a race. "Go on ahead," said the hare, "it will only take me two seconds." So the tortoise lost no time in getting on her way.

[3] At last the racer noticed that the tortoise had almost reached the finish line. Swift as arrow shot from a bow he flew, but to no avail. And so the animal lost both his honor and his bet.



## Frère Jacques

singing-bell.com

Frè - re Jac - ques, frè - re Jac - ques dor - mez - vous? Dor - mez - vous?  
 Are - you sleep - ing, Are - you sleep - ing Bro - ther - John? Bro - ther - John?

5

Son - nez les ma - ti - nes, son - nez les ma - ti - nes, Ding dang dong. ding dang dong.  
 Mor - ning bells are ring - ing, Mor - ning bells are - ring - ing, Ding dang dong! ding dang dong!

## Three blind Mice

Three blind mice. Three blind mice. See how they run. See how they

run. They all ran af - ter the far - mer's wife, who cut off their tails with a

car - ving knife, Did you e - ver see such a sight in your life, as three blind mice?

## → THE PROJECT: Make up your own secret musical code

When you play a musical instrument, you read sheet music that looks like this:



During the Renaissance, lutenists used different tablatures that looked like this:



Looks too complicated? That's because you don't know the secret code! Each line represents one of the lute's strings, and the letter represents the spot where the musician presses down with his or her finger. See? When you know a piece's code, you too can play it!

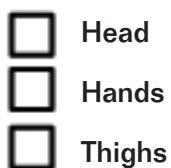
**Now, it's your turn to create your very own secret musical code! Here are the steps:**

- 1) Choose an instrument: a recorder, a xylophone, the voice, feet, hands, etc.
- 2) Think of the different sounds and notes that can be produced with the instrument.
- 3) Think of the best way to represent each of the sounds. For example, with the recorder, you could draw the holes on the flute. Or you could give each note a geometrical shape.
- 4) Compose a piece and write it down using your secret code.
- 5) Give your piece a title.
- 6) Share your code with your friends, so you can all play together!



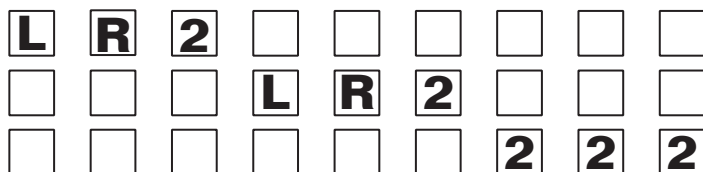
### EXAMPLE:

- 1) My instrument is my hands.
- 2) I can clap my hands together, slap my thighs or tap my head.
- 3) To represent the head, the hands, and the thighs, I will arrange three squares like so:

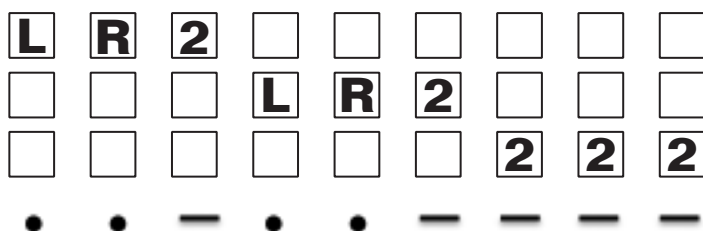


To indicate the RIGHT hand, I will write an R in the square. To indicate the LEFT hand, I will write an L in the square. And when both hands are to be used, the square will indicate the number 2.

- 4) I write my piece.



Something is missing... I need a way to indicate the length of each "note". A dot will mean a short note, and a line will mean a long note.



- 5) My piece is called "The Stubborn Martian".
- 6) Now that you know my secret musical code, you too can play "The Stubborn Martian"!





## ➔ LET'S TALK ABOUT THE CONCERT

Here are a few discussion points that will help you to review your concert experience.

As you surely noticed during the concert, life during the Renaissance was very different from today. Would you have liked to live in that era? Why or why not?

If you were living in that era, what role do you think you would have had in society? Would you have been a king? A musician? A great explorer?

In the concert, you learned a bit about the lute and the theorbo. Before the concert, did you know anything about these two instruments? Which of the two did you prefer? Why?

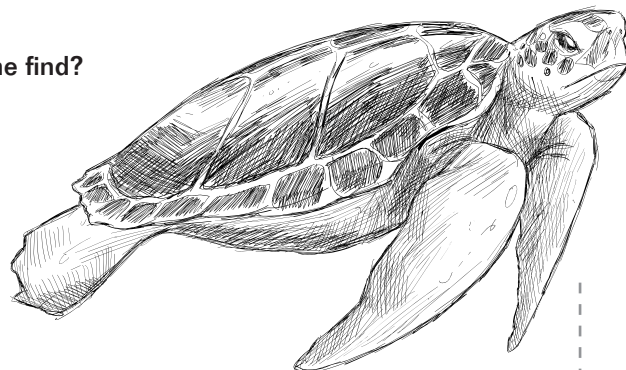
You heard several pieces played by Madeleine Owen. Do you remember which was the fastest? The softest? Which piece did you sing along to? Which was the polyphonic piece? Do you remember the fable? What was it about?

Would you like it if a composer wrote a piece for you? What would it be like? Happy? Sad? Fast? Slow? Why?

### APOLLO'S QUIZ

During the show, you heard the mythical story of how the lute came to be created. Test your memory with this little quiz game!

- 1) **According to Greek mythology, Apollo was the god of...**
  - a. Love and beauty
  - b. Music and art
  - c. Travel and writing
- 2) **In the story, Apollo comes across a turtle. What state was the turtle in?**
  - a. Sick
  - b. Asleep
  - c. Dead
- 3) **When Apollo picked up the turtle, what did he find?**
  - a. Dried up innards
  - b. Stalks and vines
  - c. A hunter's trap
- 4) **What did Apollo do next?**
  - a. He threw the turtle into the sea
  - b. He adopted the turtle as his friend
  - c. He transformed the turtle into a musical instrument.



## GET READY FOR THE CONCERT



**YOU CAN KEEP THIS GUIDE AND REFER TO IT EVERY TIME  
YOU GO TO AN OPERA OR CONCERT.**

It sets out various rules that you must follow before, during and after the concert, and information about applause, an ancient custom that has continued to this day.

**Read the guide carefully to become an experienced concertgoer!**

### CLAP YOUR HANDS

To show your appreciation during a concert, you can clap your hands.

In a concert, it is customary to applaud the performers at the end of each piece. If the piece is in several movements, you should wait for the end of the last movement and leave a moment of silence, just as the musicians leave a moment of silence between movements.

At the opera, a different system applies. The audience often applauds the singers at the end of a well-known or difficult aria, as well as applauding at the end of each Act. At jazz concerts, the audience often applauds the players after each solo improvisation.



**1**

#### BEFORE THE CONCERT

To make sure you don't distract the artists and audience, turn off any electronic device (watch, cell phone, etc.)

Make sure you don't arrive late for the concert. It is preferable to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the concert is scheduled to begin. This will give you time to read the program!



**2**

#### DURING THE CONCERT

To show your respect for the musicians and the audience, don't talk to the people next to you. Silence is essential to allow the musicians and everybody at the concert to concentrate.

Candies and sweets should only be eaten outside the concert hall. They can make a lot of noise and disturb your neighbours if you unwrap them during the concert.

Unless there's an emergency, never leave the concert hall during the performance. If possible, wait for the intermission.

The musicians on the stage are aware of everything going on in the hall and hear all the sounds made by the members of the audience. By keeping a respectful silence, you will allow the performers to give the best concert possible.

**3**

#### AFTER THE CONCERT

Make sure you haven't forgotten anything on or under your seat. Leave the concert hall calmly, without pushing or shoving. Take the time to discuss the concert with your friends.

It is often possible to meet the performers after a concert to congratulate them or ask them questions. Sometimes, the musicians come back on stage to meet the audience members. If this is the case, you just have to go up to them and speak to them. If the musicians do not come back on stage, ask one of the ushers where to go to meet them backstage or in their dressing room.

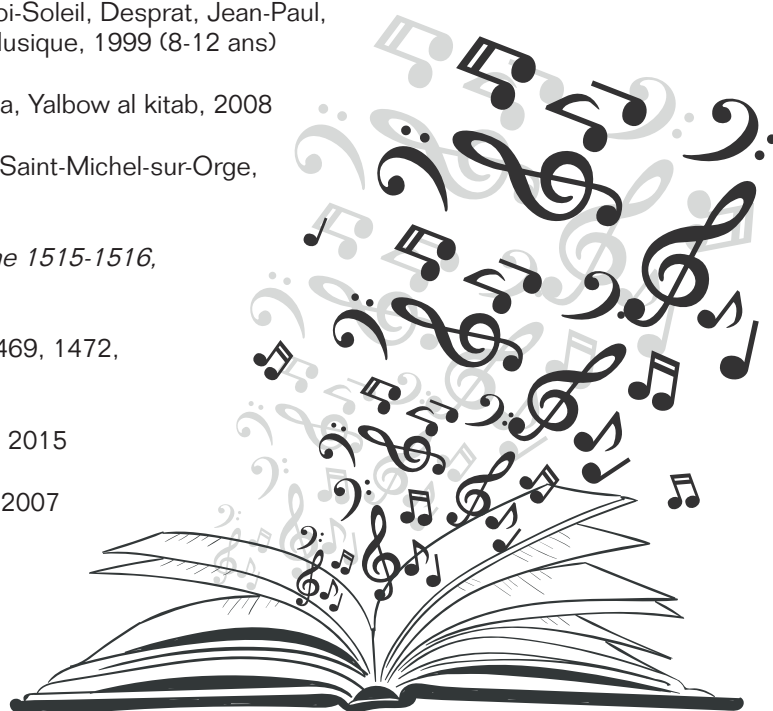
## EXPAND YOUR MUSICAL KNOWLEDGE



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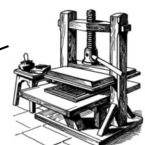
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- *Au temps de François 1<sup>er</sup>, Journal d'Anne de Corme 1515-1516*, Coppin, Brigitte, Paris, Gallimard jeunesse, 2008
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\*with DVD
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# SOLUTIONS

**Renaissance**

**Today**



- Gutenberg invents the modern printing press ..... 1453
- The computer is invented ..... 1936
- The automobile is invented ..... 1883
- Christopher Columbus discovers America ..... 1492
- End of Louis XIV's reign ..... 1715
- The Renaissance begins ..... 1453 or 1492
- The electronic tablet is invented ..... 1989
- The phonograph is invented ..... 1877
- The compact disc (CD) is invented ..... 1978
- The steam-powered train is invented ..... 1804
- Your school is built ..... ?

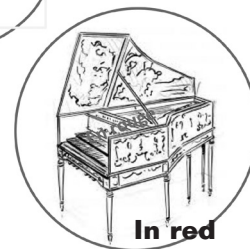
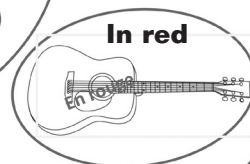
**In blue**



**In yellow**



**In red**



**In red**

**Apollo's Quiz**

b. c. a. c.