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**NEW CONTRIBUTION TO THE LIRA DA BRACCIO ICONOGRAPHY, 2022**

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<sup>1</sup> Only the items where the act of playing is shown are considered.

<sup>2</sup> Always separated for Type A – E (F)

## NEW CONTRIBUTION TO THE LIRA DA BRACCIO ICONOGRAPHY, 2022

### Dedicated to the memory of Sterling Scott Jones, 1929 - 2022

During working on this text, I heard the sad news that one of most important early musicians and scholar, Sterling Scott Jones,<sup>3</sup> passed away on 15th of August this year so I decided to dedicate this article to him, without whom any serious study of Lira da braccio in general and its Iconography wouldn't be possible.

#### Introduction:

In late spring this year, I remembered that on my "what to do list" for many years there is the project called "Lira (da braccio and da gamba) Method" waiting to be finished. I started to collect all my texts, drafts, lists and lot of already written things, like chord banks, exercises and reconstructions of the repertory I performed or recorded in last 40 years. This was for many years scattered on several old hard discs and elsewhere, so I decided finally to put some order in all this mess...

Twenty-seven years ago, Sterling Scott Jones wrote a marvellous and extremely important book on the lira da braccio, so I decided to revisit it - particularly his extensive and accurate iconographical analysis. And I was surprised another time how many important details it contains and how essential and important it is for anybody who wish to pursue Jones path analysing another hundred or more iconographical depictions of lira today. I went through his charts and commentaries and some completely new windows opened to me, some more ideas arrived. After all of that I believe that the clue of reconstructing the lira da braccio technique lies in the iconography and combining it with the written sources and one's own practical experience.

Sterling Jones, Joseph M. Skeaping and mine research stay in the long line of studies, so let's mention the most important among them.

#### Part I:

##### 1. Few Words about Musical Iconography in General

I shall start with the explanation American musicologist of Austrian origin, Emanuel Winternitz, gave in his article "The Iconology of Music: Potentials and Pitfalls"<sup>4</sup>

*Iconology*<sup>5</sup> of music deals with the lessons that pictures can teach the music historian. A more sophisticated definition would be the analysis and interpretation, by the historian of

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<sup>3</sup> Sterling was my first teacher on the viol and eternal model in the case of playing medieval fiddle and lyra (Dalmatian lijerica) and lira da braccio.

<sup>4</sup> See: Perspectives In Musicology, The Inaugural Lectures of the Ph. D. Program in Music at the City University of New York, Ed. Barry S. Brook, Norton, New York, 1972.

<sup>5</sup> Even if Winternitz calls it in the title Iconology, shortly afterwards in the text he used the term we are using today: iconography. The main difference between iconography and iconology is that iconography involves visual images and symbols used in a work of art, whereas iconology involves the study and interpretation of the meaning of these visual images and symbols. Both iconography and iconology have their origins in art. There are some art experts like Erwin Panofsky who maintained that there is a difference between iconography and iconology. However, most people, including some art historians, claim that there is no difference between iconography and iconology. In fact, most contexts use these two terms as synonyms. (pediaa.com)

music, of pictorial representations of musical instruments, their players, singers, groups of performing musicians, and all other kinds of musical scenes. ... As documents of the past, pictures have two enormous advantages over verbal descriptions or contemporary reports in treatises: first, pictorial representations often show a precision of detail that words cannot convey; second, pictures often reveal facts of detail that contemporary writers neglect to describe because they take them for granted. ... The same is true of the interesting things we expect to learn from *iconography*: the shape and stringing of instruments; playing technique; the grouping of instruments in church, court, and home; the proportions among strings, brass, woodwinds, etc.; and - a very large topic - the social status of instruments and their players as well as the environment of performances.

Another American musicologist, Howard Mayer Brown, in his book "Musical Iconography"<sup>6</sup>, wrote:

Was lehren uns die Bildwerke? What can work of art teach us about music, in particular about musical instruments and their place in the civilizations of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance? In the years that have passed since Hugo Leichtentritt asked that question, some progress has been made in answering it... If pictorial evidence is to be used in musical research, art works that include representations of musical instruments, performances, notation, and so on must be systematically collected and catalogued, since conclusions about the common practices of a time must be based on as large a sampling of the sources as possible.

Works of art can furnish scholars with three principal kinds of evidence. They can help to answer questions dealing with the history and construction of musical instruments, questions relating to the performance of earlier music, and questions about the relationship of music to the culture at large. Each of these areas - organological, practical, and cultural-historical - requires a slightly different approach to the individual work of art.

But Brown goes on warning that the scholar who uses pictures as organological evidence must keep in mind that the instruments haven't been correctly drawn and that even the most precise pictures cannot tell us about all details of construction - as for instance the material from which an instrument is made, the thickness of a soundboard and the tension of a string. Despite that author says that:

...works of art are still our best source of information on the history, construction, and playing techniques of early instruments.

Conclusions about instruments drawn from pictorial evidence can sometimes be corroborated by literary or archival sources, but written records alone often tell us little because we frequently do not know to which sort of instrument one of the many, varied literary terms applies. Only when we find a picture in which an instrument is *labelled*, or one which is accompanied by a text which includes the name of the instrument illustrated, can we be certain that we know what kind of instrument was meant by that name at that time. ...

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<sup>6</sup> Brown, Howard Mayer and Lascelle, Joan: *Musical Iconography, A Manual for Cataloguing Musical Subjects in Western Art before 1800*, Harvard University Press, 1972.

The importance of pictures is due not only to the ambiguity of the written sources, but to the lack of extant early instruments. Very few musical instruments survive from before 1500.

Brown continues with mentioning other factors which sometimes may prevent that we can fully believe that some examples of musical iconography are offering us reality in the artist's own time. An artist's lack of skill or his ignorance of instruments (and its playing technique) may have prevented him from depicting them accurately. Also, independently of artist skill and knowledge, he simply may not have had intention to depict an instrument of his own time. Artists sometimes have copied an earlier source, wished to include ancient instruments in an historical scene, even modified or invented instruments for some particular or symbolic reason.

Brown:

Even the most schematic representations can tell us some significant facts: the kinds of instruments in common use and some information about their construction and use, such as their approximate shapes and how they were held and played. Such conclusions must be based on as broad a sampling of the sources as possible, however, and even then, accepted with some caution. But there is at least some hope that the histories of most instruments can eventually be written with the help of iconographical evidence. Emanuel Winteritz's essays on the *lira da braccio* and on the survival of the *kithara* and the evolution of the English cittern can serve as models of what such research incorporating iconographical evidence can accomplish.<sup>7</sup>

In using pictorial sources, the musical scholar must take care to investigate the possibility that the artist has depicted an instrument copied from an earlier artistic source and not from real life. ... Also, painters sometimes depicted those imaginatively designed mock pseudo-ancient instruments that were carried by actors in theatrical productions of the Renaissance, which often concealed functioning contemporary instruments or were playable themselves. ... Occasionally an artist will modify the details of an instrument's construction for purely intellectual, artistic, or symbolic reasons. ...

If the student of organology needs to exercise caution in using pictorial evidence, anyone wishing to learn how music was performed during earlier times must be even more prudent in his use of works of art as evidence, for the questions they can answer depend entirely on the notion that artists depict contemporary reality. Thus, the extent to which an individual artwork reflects true and common practice must be assessed before its testimony can be accepted as fact. The principal check on a picture's realism must come about through an evaluation of its subject matter. The precept that only scenes depicting real life can be said to illustrate reality may seem tautological, but it is the basic assumption which underlies the work of the careful musical monographer. ...

Similarly, the traditional association of musical angels with the Virgin Mary very likely tells us little about musical practices in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, although

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<sup>7</sup> "Lira da Braccio," in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 8 (1960). An extract, in English, from this article can be found in his book "Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art", pp. 86-98.

some scholars have based conclusions about fifteenth-century instrumentation on such angel consorts.

On this place I want to stress the fact that certain number of examples with religious thematic probably shows lira da braccio (alone or with another instrument-s) in realistic act of performance. Sometimes we have lira or (frequently depicted) duo lira and lute on the bottom of the scene, scene like *Incoronazione della Vergine* in a center and above it the angel musicians playing shawms, trumpets and percussion instruments - in this case the first mentioned could represent a renaissance "snapshot" of a real performance.

Even if there are so many other important warnings, I shall close here with Brown own words:

Unfortunately, the intent of many art works is not clear; they may well reveal actual performance practice, or they may merely illustrate some unknown text. The musical scholar must often make difficult decisions about the reliability of a work of art as musicological evidence, knowing that further research might reverse his decision. But such difficulties are an inherent part of the problem of dealing with pictorial sources, and the musical scholar must simply accustom himself to dealing with working hypotheses as well as with established fact.

## 2. What was and is lira da braccio?<sup>8</sup>

This complicated question (on which there are as many answers or opinions as there are specialists who wrote about it) is not easy to answer. Was the lira da braccio just a further step in the development of the (late) medieval fiddle (*vielle*), an early experimental form of violin with more strings and primarily chordal way of playing - in this case a "missing link" between the fiddle and viola (*violin*) da braccio? Was it merely new way of playing of an old instrument but under the new name or was lira a completely new invention, something which happened often during this period? Like in many other cases concerning the early music, the written sources doesn't really help because the names *lyra* (mostly in Latin sources) or *lira* (Italian sources) could sometimes signify lira da braccio and sometimes lute or some other plucked instrument. On the other hand, many humanist sources report on the highly estimated activities of *improvisatori* or better *cantori ad lyram* and a huge number of iconographic evidences shows exactly lira da braccio - performing alone in the church or for the court or humanist public.

So, we shall here suppose that lira da braccio was a bowed instrument having 4 to 5 strings on the fingerboard and 1 or 2 bass strings<sup>9</sup> off the fingerboard and that its main role (at least at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and during the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries) was the (mostly improvised) self-accompaniment of singing or reciting with a certain chord progression. This, depending on the skill of the *cantor ad lyram*, could have been relatively simple and

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<sup>8</sup> See more on that in the Appendix of this article.

<sup>9</sup> Several times, in various articles and in various versions of my "Lira Project" (see in the Bibliography 1) I have stressed the fact that the off-fingerboard strings haven't been *drones* but simply bass strings, which the player could use in some chords and avoid them in another but not use them as a constant drones like on the hurdy-gurdy or on (one of the forms of) medieval *vielle*. Unfortunately, this mistake repeats even today in most serious articles on the subject.

repetitive<sup>10</sup> or more complicated and sophisticated with some virtuoso pre-, inter- or postludes.

What is really striking is the abundance of iconographic representation depicting lira da braccio (played or not) solo or playing together with one to ten other instruments. Even if many of those items have clear or hidden symbolic signification, in some cases it could be possible that they represent certain realistic act of performance.

### 3.Short History of the Lira Iconography:

The first book dealing with lira da braccio as a predecessor of violin was written by K.u.K (imperial and royal) officer Alexander Hajdecki and published in Mostar<sup>11</sup> (Capital of Herzegovina and part of a Austro-Hungarian Empire) but author didn't deal with iconography at all. The first who did it was Georg Kinsky in his catalogue of the Heyer collection from 1912.<sup>12</sup> The next important milestone for the lira iconography was the study made by Italian musicologist and engraver Benvenuto Disertori, who in 1941 (based on ten or dozen examples of iconography) tried to reconstruct the chords, playing technique and possible repertory for the lira.<sup>13</sup> After the Second World War similar studies (with less practical signification) have been pursued by already mentioned American musicologist Emanuel Winternitz.<sup>14</sup> As an addition to his article on Lira da braccio for German encyclopaedia MGG<sup>15</sup> and in two of his books<sup>16</sup> Winternitz found, examined and published many examples of lira da braccio and lirone iconography.<sup>17</sup> His research, several articles and books where lira da braccio got an important place have been an extremely important contribution to the studies of iconographic material in general and to the clearing up the "mystery" of the lira(s) in particular. All other research could rely on this to be able to go further and deeper.

Even if H. M. Brown was a very important specialist for musical iconography (and wrote many times on both liras) as far as I know he didn't write anything particular on lira iconography.

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<sup>10</sup> Like in today blues, pop or rock music and traditional folk music too.

<sup>11</sup> 1892; facsimile edition: Amsterdam, Municipal Museum of the Hague, 1965.

<sup>12</sup> Kinsky, Georg. Musikhistorisches Museum von W. Heyer in Cöln, Vol. II, Katalog. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Hartel, 1912.

<sup>13</sup> Disertori, Benvenuto. "Pratica e tecnica della lira da braccio." *Rivista Musicale Italiana (RMI)* 45 (1941): 150-75.

<sup>14</sup> Not at all important but just for curiosity: due to his notices which I could study in his former archive City University of New York in 2001, it seems he started his research on liras in 1946 - the year of my birth... And on this occasion I would like to thank my colleague dr Zdravko Blažeković (director of the Research Center for Music Iconography at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, since 1989, founder of the journal *Music in Art*) for all collegial and professional help, enabling me to work on Winternitz musicological inheritance.

<sup>15</sup> "Die Musik in der Geschichte und Gegenwart", 1960.

<sup>16</sup> "Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art" and "Leonardo as a Musician" - see in the Bibliography.

<sup>17</sup> For some reason he didn't publish some of them and in the case, I shall succeed to identify their provenance with other relevant information, I am planning to analyse and publish them with the next "contingent" of lira's Iconography.

#### 4. Sterling Scott Jones Iconographic Analysis, 1995/ 1997:

In the mid-nineties of the last century Sterling Scott Jones wrote and published an extraordinary important and still the only book devoted entirely to the *lira da braccio*<sup>18</sup>, its history, use, its comprehensive iconography, technique of playing, ample bank of chords and a representative repertoire reconstruction. Even if not primarily meant as a method or school, it could certainly be used also for this purpose. Shortly afterwards I wrote a review on this book for RIDIM/RCMI<sup>19</sup> Newsletter XIX/2, Fall 1994 but published later. Here are the most important and for our scope most relevant excerpts of it.

Sterling S. Jones divided his book into six chapters of different lengths: history, early citations, extant instruments, iconography, chords and fingering charts, and a selected repertoire. In an appendix, given are commentary on and transcription of the Pesaro Manuscript (which is our only extant contemporary source of information on tuning, chords with two-only one of them complete-pieces written for the *lira da braccio*), two other pieces which could be played on the instrument, and the fingering chart for alto tuning. The book ends with a list of instrument-makers and a bibliography.

The short history of the *lira da braccio* explains in very short but clear form the presumed development of the instrument and the rare sources of information about tuning and string setup. There, Jones already enters the domain of iconography and stresses the fact that sometimes-for instance, in the case of Raphael's representation of Apollo in Parnassus (Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican)-the number of strings has a purely symbolic, and not practical, value. He defined the shapes, characteristics, and most typical features of the instrument informing us about the extant instruments and the terminology (the latter being, in contemporary sources, rather confusing). ...

In the notes at the end of the first chapter, Jones gives much additional and very helpful information and comments. He mentions Benvenuto Disertori, who was the first to try, some fifty years ago, to reconstruct the playing technique of the *lira* using iconographical sources and to study the repertoire based on frottole. In such an excellent study, one would wish that more space had been given to this event, and more comments made particularly on Disertori's chord reconstructions. A second chapter "Some Early Citations" is followed by "Compendium of *Lira da Braccio* Shapes".<sup>20</sup>

The third chapter features a detailed organological study of all extant instruments: six unaltered (?) and four that have been later changed into violas. Jones provides excellent drawings and descriptions full of minute details, measurements, and a related bibliography.

The fourth chapter, "The *Lira da Braccio* in Works of Art", was given the central place in this book. After a detailed analysis of almost a hundred pieces of art clearly showing the existence of the five main body types of instruments (to be specific, four which could and one which could not be identified), Jones offers numerous charts summarizing the results of his marvellous iconographic study, giving the reader the opportunity to make his or her

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<sup>18</sup> Jones, Sterling Scott: *The Lira da Braccio*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis 1995.

<sup>19</sup> RIDIM: Répertoire International d'Iconographie Musicale (International Repertory of Musical Iconography); RCMI: Research Center for Musical Iconography The City University of New York 33 West 42 Street. New York. N Y. 10036

<sup>20</sup> See in the Appendix, p....

own conclusions. The charts show different types of instruments; the number of strings, their placement and combinations; the number of pegs, bridges, and sound holes; and the subject matter and player association in iconography. Jones further coordinated the subject and player association, dates of the iconographic sources with the extant instruments, the type of iconographic sources, bows related to the type of instrument, bow lengths, shapes and position on the string and in relation to the bridge, frog size and the placement of the hand on the bow. ...

Sterling Scott Jones wrote a marvellous and very welcome work which can be warmly recommended to all musicians, musicologists, and instrument makers interested in early music, its instruments, and performance practice. Anyone who will, in the future, do anything concerning the lira da braccio-its history, iconography, organology, playing technique and repertoire-will gratefully have to consider the information furnished by this excellent study. This work is of the highest scholarly and, at the same time, practical value (which is extremely rare!): it certainly opens a new era in the research and use of the lira da braccio.

Jones based his iconographic research on 97<sup>21</sup> (99, with two later additions) sources and divided them according to the shapes of instrument as follows:

“A. Lira with four corners, B. lira with two corners, C. lira with no corners, D. instruments that cannot be identified, and E. lira with oval body.”

In his 54 Charts under the title "Lira da Braccio Instruments in Iconography", Jones gives a lot of important information. For each of four types he gives the number and spacing of strings (on and off the fingerboard), shapes of sound holes, bridges and their placement, body indentation, subject matter of presentation and period when it was made and the medium to which it belongs. He did his best to deal even with smaller details like number of pegs and their relations to the number of strings, placement of bridges in relation to the sound holes, player association (male, female, angel, alone or with other instruments), type of iconography (intarsia, painting etc.) as well as several charts dedicated to lira bow as for instance its length, curvature, its position on the strings or in relation to the bridge, size of the frog and hand position on the bow.

To that, in 1997, Jones added an update<sup>22</sup> with another 13 charts and their commentaries. The charts are devoted to the positions of the left hand, finger and thumb positions (including its possible use in execution of some chords, see later), palm position, holding of the instrument at the neck, on the shoulder, on the chest with some other rare positions for each of four types.

The results of Jones analysis present the vast knowledge that readers (interested primarily for learning the chords and starting with the study of the repertory as soon as possible...) could easily overlook. Which would be a great pity because it could indeed be very useful if trying to reconstruct the technique of playing on the lira da braccio. The aim of my analysis of the Jones one is to prepare the basis for my own analysis of further two hundred or more items of

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<sup>21</sup> Jones compared them with ten extant (presumably) original lira da braccio, which I haven't took into consideration because some of them might be not original and the many "vital" details on them like the bridge, fingerboard, pegs, strings or bows are non-existent or simply not original.

<sup>22</sup> The Update Jones send to me by error had two pages, no.18 and 19, missing – see my review of his binder on lira da braccio in Appendix.

iconography. Confronting them will show are there any legitimacies concerning the results of both analyses, should we make some corrections, or it would even be possible to find completely new elements which could help us further in the reconstruction of the lira's playing technique. For that reason, I intend to take over i.e., slightly adapt Jones chart because so well-conceived and clear.

It is possible that Jones decided for his five main types of lire da braccio on the basis of some ideas given by Emanuel Winternitz and Laurence Witten II. Winternitz, based on his own extensive iconographic research, identified three basic body shapes by the lire da braccio:

1. Oval, narrow body with a slightly inwards turned sides, without the corners.

This would correspond to Jones types C-type Lira.

2. Because of the division of the body in two parts: the upper narrower and longer and lower wider and shorter part – which correspond to Jones B-type Lira.

3. The body is divided in three parts, as the immediate predecessor of the violin shape. - which would correspond to Jones type A-type Lira.

L. Witten made his classification omitting the fourth, oval type (Jones E-type Lira)

Class I: Guitar-Shaped Bodies or Jones E-type Lira

Class II: Two-Cornered Bodies or Jones B-type Lira and

Class III: Four-Cornered Bodies or Jones A-type Lira

Jones to those four types added a fifth one, the D-type, where the type of the lira couldn't be identified.<sup>23</sup>

Because of the importance of Jones iconographic study for the problematic of lira and for the reconstruction of its playing technique I shall bring here my summary (with quotations from his work) and comments of Jones results.<sup>24</sup>

**1. Type A (four corners, or violin form)<sup>25</sup>:** This shape shows the widest spread within the time span of the lira da braccio, extending from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Most examples are mythological and secular subjects found in woodcuts, engravings, and paintings.

Total of 37 instruments

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<sup>23</sup> I decided to add another type, the F- or fantastic shaped (probable) lira to which also some of Jones examples could be added.

<sup>24</sup> See bibliography, Jones, p. 16 – 54 and Supplement Folder C. Organology: S. Jones, Various shapes of the lira da braccio, p.9.

<sup>25</sup> The quotations from Jones book are always re-entrant in order that for reader is clear what is his original text and what are my commentaries or additions.

Important: Bottom Indentation are represented with ten, eight instruments have five strings on the fingerboard, nine having two off strings, four have same number of strings and pegs and three have frets. Eleven bridges are curved and two flat.

Male players are depicted on twenty-six and female on two pictures. In one case lira could be seen with another instrument.

One item is from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, fifteen from the 1st 3<sup>rd</sup>, three from the 2nd seven from the 3rd third of the 16th century and six from the beginning of the 17th c.

My Comments: Bottom Indentation could be useful if you sing to your own accompaniment on the lira. We could expect that A- type appeared later in the development of the body of the liras so the Jones finding is very interesting and surprising.

**2.Type B (instrument shapes with two corners):** This shape appears mostly within the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is seen most often in religious paintings.

Total of 34 instruments

Important: Bottom Indentation are represented with three, five strings on the fingerboard with eight, two off strings with twelve, eight with same number of strings and pegs and frets with two items. Fifteen bridges are curved and three flat.

Male players are depicted on seventeen and angels on twelve pictures.

In sixteen cases lira is depicted with other instrument(s).

Three items are from late 15<sup>th</sup> century, twenty-five from the 1st and two from the 2nd third of the 16th century.

Eighteen examples are paintings and eleven woodcuts.

My Comments: it would be nice if we could call this shape the "classical" but the period of its use (or at least appearance in the iconography) is a bit late compared with the written sources which put the peak or highlight of lira at the last third of the 15<sup>th</sup> and first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**3.Type C (no corners, medieval fiddle or guitar form):** Instruments of this shape appear in the iconography at the end of the 15th century and continue to appear through the first third of the 16th century.

Total of 21 instruments

Important: Bottom Indentation are represented with four, five strings on the fingerboard with one and two off strings with two examples. Only one example has same number of strings and pegs. Six bridges are curved and four flat.

Male players are depicted on seven, female on one and angels on ten pictures.

In twelve cases lira is depicted with other instrument(s).

Four items belong to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, fourteen are from the 1st and one from the 2nd third of the 16th century.

Nine examples are paintings, five woodcuts and four frescos.

My Comments: Here it is again surprising (if assumed that lira developed directly from late medieval fiddle) that this type coexists with type A and B during the 1st third of the 16th century... The bottom indentation (characteristic of all presumably original, extant, liras) appears on the relatively small number of iconographic examples - only 17 of them.

**4./5.Type D (total shapes not visible). Type E (oval shape).** Over half of the examples date within the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Type E. Lira with oval body, a shape sometimes found on medieval fiddles as well, has been documented with one example only and could therefore not be taken more as an isolated case.

D instruments: 4 totals, E instruments: 1

D.Important: there are no examples showing bottom indentation; one example has five strings on the fingerboard and two off strings could be seen on two items. Male players are depicted on three and angel on one picture. In one case lira is depicted with other instrument(s).

One example belongs to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and other three are probably from the 1st third of the 16th century. All four examples belong to the technique of painting.

E.Important: example is showing no bottom indentation, has four strings on the fingerboard and one off string. On the picture could be seen one male player, depicted with other instruments.

This example of engraving belongs to the 1st third of the 16th century.

#### **LIRA DA BRACCIO: NUMBER OF STRINGS. Total of 97 examples in iconography**

Of the 97 iconographical examples, 60 are clear enough to determine the number of strings. Sixteen show seven strings, thirteen of which are confirmed by the number of pegs shown. Twelve show six strings, with four confirmed by the number of pegs; eleven show five strings, with five confirmed by the pegs shown. These represent the most likely realistic possibilities, with seven strings being the most common on lira da braccio instruments. In all, twenty-six show the same number of strings and pegs (see appropriate charts).

I included my remarks starting on p.8 to 9.

#### **LIRA DA BRACCIO: STRING PLACEMENT Total of 97 examples in iconography**

Of the 97 iconographical examples, 57 are clear enough to determine string characteristics. 41 show equidistant strings, and 16 show some grouping.

A-Type Lira: nineteen examples show equidistant strings, seven some groupings of them and nineteen are unclear.

B-Type Lira: thirteen examples show equidistant strings, eight some groupings of them and thirteen are unclear.

C-Type Lira: nine examples show equidistant strings, two some groupings of them and ten are unclear.

D-Type Lira: one example shows equidistant strings and three are unclear.

E-Type Lira: example shows equidistant strings.

Forty-one example show equidistant strings, seventeen show some groupings and forty-seven are unclear.

### **LIRA DA BRACCIO: STRING COMBINATIONS Total of 97 examples in iconography**

Of the 60 iconographical examples where string combinations are clearly visible, 26 show all strings on the fingerboard, these being almost entirely within the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Of the remaining combinations the most frequent are 5 strings on the fingerboard with 2 off (13 examples) and 4 strings on the fingerboard with one off (9 examples). 26 examples agree with the number of pegs shown. One example (B-23) shows 3 strings off the fingerboard.

### **LIRA DA BRACCIO: NUMBER OF PEGS. Total of 97 examples in iconography**

Of the 53 examples in the iconography which clearly show the number of pegs, 25 show the usual 7, 13 show 5 pegs, and 7 show 6 pegs. About half of the examples (26) in the iconography agree with the number of strings shown (OK with pegs).

Seven pegs: nine of the A-type lire, four corresponding with the number of pegs. Twelve of the B-type lire, eight having same number of pegs. Three of C-type lire, one having the same number of pegs and one of the D-type lire.

Totals for all: 25x with 7 pegs.

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### **LIRA DA BRACCIO: BRIDGES (relation to sound holes). Total of 97 examples in iconography.**

Of the 67 examples where bridges are visible in the iconography, the placement is low between the sound holes in 28 examples, placement is below the sound holes in 24 examples, and placement is central in ten examples. Seven examples clearly show no bridges at all. Out of 40 examples where bridge shapes can be clearly observed, 32 show various degrees of curvature and nine appear to be flat.

Important: In the case of A-type lire eleven have curved and two flat bridges. By B-type lire, Fifteen have curved and three flat bridges. By C-type lire, six curved and four flat and by D and E type examples are unclear.

My Comments: This is another surprise which could confirm the Jones assumption about *arpeggiando* performance of chords. But this is one of elements that some artists could treat very superficially and without taking care of accuracy. Author didn't mention how these details developed chronologically but I shall try to take it into account and add to this study.

Curved:

Late 15<sup>th</sup> century: A- and B- type lire are represented with one, C-type with two items  
1st third 16<sup>th</sup> c.: A-with two, B- with fifteen and C- with four examples.  
2nd third 16<sup>th</sup> c.: both A- and B-type with one example  
3rd third 16<sup>th</sup> c.: A-type with two  
Begin. 17<sup>th</sup> c.: A-type with four examples

Flat:

Late 15<sup>th</sup> century: B-type is represented with one and C-type with two items  
1st third 16<sup>th</sup> c.: B-type with eleven and C-type with one example.  
2nd third 16<sup>th</sup> c.: both B- and C-type with one item  
Begin. 17<sup>th</sup> c.: A-type is represented with two examples

**LIRA DA BRACCIO: SOUND HOLES. Total of 97 examples in iconography.**

Of the 86 clear examples in the iconography, 65 have C-shaped sound holes, of which 57 face inward and 8 face outward; thirteen have S-shaped and eight have F-shaped sound holes. Since most of these examples date from the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the early C-shaped sound hole is seen most frequently, the form most seen on medieval fiddles as well.

F-shaped sound hole are seen mostly on type A instruments (this type having the longest time span), but not before the last third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the S-shape form being most common earlier.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO: BODY SHAPES - end indentation**

Out of 78 examples in the iconography where body shapes can be seen, 53 show no end *indentation*, fourteen show indentation at the bottom end where the tailpiece is attached, eight show indentation at the top where the neck joins the body, and three show indentation at both ends. There is no correlation between body end indentation features and dates of the examples.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO: SUBJECT MATTER IN ICONOGRAPHY Total of 97 examples.**

Totals for all: Mythology 31x/ Religious 35x/ Secular 31x

It shows an almost equal division between mythological, religious, and secular subjects over the historical time span of the lira da braccio.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO: PLAYER ASSOCIATION IN ICONOGRAPHY Total of 97 examples.**

Totals for all:

Male 54x/ Female 3x/ Angel 26x/ None 13x

Alone 41x with other Instrument(s) 44x

Over half of the examples show a male player, the rest show female, angel, or no player. Although it is difficult to determine the gender of angels, most appear to be female. In 41 examples a single lira da braccio player is shown. In 44 examples other instruments are present, such as lute, harp, or wind instruments, but no more than one lira da braccio is ever present in a single example.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO INSTRUMENTS IN ICONOGRAPHY: COORDINATE OF SUBJECT AND PLAYER ASSOCIATION.**

Mythology: 31x Male (A x17, B x9, C x3, D x1).

Religious: 6x Male, 1x Female\* (A x2, B x4, C x1, D x1\*).

Secular: 14x Male, 2x Female\* (A\* x7, B x4, C x3, D x2).

Totals for all: 54x Male and 3x Female, 26x Angels and 13x None.

Mythological subject matter shows only male players. Religious subject matter shows predominantly angel players, who appear to be cherubs or females. Secular subject matter shows mainly male players or none.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO: DATES OF ICONOGRAPHY Total of 97 examples in iconography.**

Totals for all: end of 15<sup>th</sup> c: 9/

1st third of 16<sup>th</sup> c.: 57/

2nd third: 7/ 3rd third: 9/

Begin 17<sup>th</sup> c.: 6,

Unclear: 19.

Exact dates could not be determined for all iconographical examples, but death dates of the artists, when known, were used to place the examples into approximate thirds of a century.

Type A, or violin shapes, span the entire historical time range of the lira da braccio, from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> through the 16<sup>th</sup> into the 17<sup>th</sup> century. All the other types in the iconography are restricted almost entirely to the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, reflecting the period of highest popularity of the lira da braccio.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO: TYPE OF ICONOGRAPHY Total of 97 examples plus two double representations making 99<sup>26</sup>.**

Totals for all: Intarsia: 4x/ Woodcut: 26x/ Engraving: 12x/ Painting: 43x  
Drawing: 7x/ Watercolour: 1x/ Fresco: 5x/ Bronze: 3x

Most are in the form of paintings, woodcuts, and engravings from northern Italy. They date from the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, giving evidence that this area was the centre of lira da braccio popularity, particularly in the social environment of the courts of Verona, Padua, Mantua, and Venice. Some of the most detailed representations of liras da braccio are to be seen in paintings located in Venice (A-5, B-12), Parma (B-9, see Frontispiece), and Milan (B-5), all dating from about 1505-10.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO BOWS IN ICONOGRAPHY - 1<sup>27</sup>  
With instruments of type A. Total of 36 examples.**

About two-thirds of the examples show the bows held away from the strings.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO BOWS IN ICONOGRAPHY - 2  
With instruments of type B. Total of 30 examples.**

Even though long bows are observed as often as short ones, long bows appear more frequently in the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century than later. 7 of the 12 long bows are held away from the lower end, that is, with the hand placed higher on the stick, which aids in balancing long bows.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO BOWS IN ICONOGRAPHY - 3  
With instruments of type C. Total of 18 examples.**

Some correlation can be observed here between bow length and arch—less arch with a shorter bow—but this can hardly be considered a trend since some examples reveal the opposite. Hand positions are noticeably at or near the lower end of the bows, relating to the fact that fewer long bows are seen in these examples. Short bows would not require a higher hand position on the stick.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO BOWS IN ICONOGRAPHY - 4 Total of 87 examples.  
With instruments of type D x2 and E x1.**

Even though the use of long bows for lira da braccio instruments is mentioned in some sources (Ganassi, Rognoni) the predominance of such bows is not borne out by the examples. These show mainly medium to short bows. Hand positions on bows are equally divided between placements at or near the bow ends, and placements higher on the sticks whereby these are related to the length of bows in many examples (see type B and type C).

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<sup>26</sup> With another one item in Update: 100

<sup>27</sup> See my comments on the page 19.

## **LIRA DA BRACCIO BOWS IN ICONOGRAPHY: BOW LENGTHS**

**Total of 81 clear examples.**

Long: 20/ Medium: 26/ Short: 35 and Unclear: 6.

Examples show mainly medium to short bows. The examples showing long bows date almost entirely from the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the high point in lira da braccio history. They are to be seen mainly in type B instruments.

## **LIRA DA BRACCIO BOWS IN ICONOGRAPHY: BOW SHAPES**

**Total of 82 clear examples.**

High arch: 18x/ Medium: 42x/ Low: 16x/ Straight: 6x and Unclear: 3x.

Although it is often difficult to determine bow shapes because of variations in perspective, an attempt has been made at classification. Even though a great variety of shapes and lengths are seen in combination throughout the range of examples, most appear to have bows with medium-size arches often correlated to medium bow lengths. Some bows have straight sticks, and a few even show characteristics of a much later period (B-1, D-3).

## **LIRA DA BRACCIO BOWS IN ICONOGRAPHY: BOW POSITION ON STRINGS**

**Total of 50 examples.**

On strings, Lower 3rd: 5x/ Mid 3rd: 21x/ Upper 3rd: 24x and Off strings: 35x

Of the 50 examples which show bow placement on the strings, almost all are in the mid- to upper third of the bow. This, in combination with the fact that short bows are often shown on the strings far from the bridges, leads to the conclusion that chords were lightly stroked rather than sustained. The physics of such a relationship between bow and string hardly permits long, sustained chords. On the other hand, this situation may have led to the comments of Ganassi and Rognoni that long bows should be used with the lira.<sup>28</sup>

## **LIRA DA BRACCIO BOWS IN ICONOGRAPHY: BOW POSITION RELATIVE TO BRIDGE** Total of 37 clear examples.

From bridge, near: 4x/ Normal: 11x/ Far: 22x and No bridge: 7x.

Of the examples which show bows on the strings, 37 reveal their positions relative to bridges. These placements are not always easy to determine because of perspective angles. About two-thirds of the examples show bow positions far from bridges, and about one-third show what can be considered normal playing positions relative to string lengths. In 7 examples, no bridges are visible.

## **LIRA DA BRACCIO BOWS IN ICONOGRAPHY: FROG SIZE** Total of 46 clear examples.

Of the 46 examples, over half show a medium-size frog. Almost all examples showing very large frogs, or no frogs occur between the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup>. Some small frogs appear to be carved as part of the stick itself (B-27, C-7).

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<sup>28</sup> Underline is mine.

Size of the frog: Large: 11x/ Medium: 27x/ Small: 9x/ None: 10x and Unclear: 25x.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO BOWS IN ICONOGRAPHY: HAND POSITION**  
**Total of 65 clear examples.**

Hand position, Near or at end: 34x/ Away from end: 31x/ Fingers on hair: 7x and Unclear: 2x.

Of the 65 examples where hand positions on bows are clear, a fairly equal division can be observed between hand placements near or at the lower ends of bows and placements away from the ends, that is, higher on the sticks. In examples dating from the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century where most long bows are seen, there is a tendency toward hands positioned away from the ends of the bows, a balancing aid in holding long bows. It can be seen that some fingers touch the hair of the bow in seven examples.<sup>29</sup>

**JONES UPDATE, 1997<sup>30</sup>:**

**LIRA DA BRACCIO LEFT HAND POSITIONS IN ICONOGRAPHY**  
**Type A (four corners, or violin form)**

In as much as there would appear to be no correlation between these details and the type or shape of instrument, further detailed analysis is given for all types of instruments on page four and the pages following.

Important: 1st position: 20x/ 2nd or 3rd position: 3x. Thumb on or over fingerboard strings: 2x.

See the lower part of the Chart on this page for details on holding the liras.

On my remark about use of the 2nd and 3rd position for lira da braccio chords, Jones replied that this is more academic detail in today's reconstruction of the lira's playing technique. The small number of (anyway not very clear and credible) iconographic examples could indicate that this details if at all, was rather an exception.

**LIRA DA BRACCIO LEFT HAND POSITIONS IN ICONOGRAPHY**  
**Type B (2 corners)**

In as much as there would appear to be no correlation between these details and the type or shape of instrument, further detailed analysis is given for all types of instruments on page four and the pages following.

Important: 1st position: 18x/ 2nd or 3rd position: 5x. Thumb on or over fingerboard strings: 4x.

See the lower part of the Chart on this page for details on holding the liras.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> By mistake, in the letter Jones send to me in 1997, I didnt got the last two pages of this update; see in the Appendix my analysis of Jones binder.

## **LIRA DA BRACCIO LEFT HAND POSITIONS IN ICONOGRAPHY**

### **Type C (no corners, or guitar form)**

In as much as there would appear to be no correlation between these details and the type or shape of instrument, further detailed analysis is given for all types of instruments on page four and the pages following.

Important: 1st position: 12x/ 2nd or 3rd position: 1x. Thumb on or over fingerboard strings: 3x.

See the lower part of the Chart on this page for details on holding the liras.

## **LIRA DA BRACCIO LEFT HAND POSITIONS IN ICONOGRAPHY**

### **Type D (total shapes not visible).      Type E      (oval shape).**

This chart shows details for left hand positions and instrument held positions in the iconography of type D instruments (total shapes not visible), and totals for all iconography types combined.

Important: only D-Lira, 1st position: 1x/ 2nd or 3rd position: 0. Thumb on or over fingerboard strings: 1x.

See the lower part of the Chart on this page for details on holding all types of liras.

A total of 71 examples revealed some information about left hand and finger positions. Of these, 50 show the left hand in first position and 9 show a second or third position. Most fingers appear in a normal or contracted position with a normal thumb position, and 10 show the thumb on or over the fingerboard strings. One shows the use of a ring over the thumb for stopping off-the-fingerboard strings.

A total of 68 examples shows with some accuracy how the instruments are held. It is difficult to determine the positions in many examples due to the great variety of angles and perspectives. The majority show the instrument being held on the chest or on the shoulder with the instrument at a vertical slant with the end down. Some show the instrument placed at the neck in a more or less modern position. Several show it held across the chest or lap, and one shows a gamba-like position.

## **LIRA DA BRACCIO LEFT HAND POSITIONS IN ICONOGRAPHY**

### **With instruments of type A, B, C and D.**

Totals for 59 examples: 1st position 50x/ 2nd or 3rd 9x/ Not playing 14x and non-playing pos. 7x.

Of the 59 examples where the left hand can be observed all appear to be in first position with the exception of nine which indicate a higher position on the neck. All nine examples show the instrument being played, reinforcing the possibility of higher positions having been used on the lira da braccio. Of the examples showing first position twelve are not playing or the instrument is in a non-playing position.

### **LIRA DA BRACCIO LEFT HAND FINGER POSITIONS IN ICONOGRAPHY With instruments of type A, B, C and D.**

Of 51 iconographical examples, twelve are not playing or the instrument is in a non-playing position. Most of the examples show the fingers in a normal or contracted position, but some show all or some fingers expanded. A few examples show the first finger extended back.

### **LIRA DA BRACCIO LEFT HAND FINGER POSITIONS IN ICONOGRAPHY With instruments of type A, B, C and D.**

Of 52 iconographical examples where left-hand positions could be observed, 41 show the instrument being played, 27 show all fingers placed on the strings or fingerboard, 18 show three fingers placed, five show two, and one shows only one finger on the strings. In as much as only a few examples are clear enough to determine any possible chord combinations (see note 29 on page 6 of the published edition) no particular significance can necessarily be drawn from these observations.

### **LIRA DA BRACCIO LEFT HAND THUMB POSITIONS IN ICONOGRAPHY With instruments of type A, B, C and D.**

Of 54 iconographical examples where, left-hand positions could be observed, ten show the instrument not being played and four show the instrument in a non-playing position. Most examples show the thumb in a normal playing position, but many show the thumb pointing back along the side of the neck. Ten examples show the thumb over the fingerboard possibly stopping some of the lower strings. One example (C-18)<sup>31</sup> shows a type of ring on the thumb stopping an off-the-fingerboard string with the thumb stopping lower fingerboard strings as well.

Thumb on or over fingerboard strings: A: 2x/ B: 4x/ C: 3x/ D: 1x = total 10x

### **LIRA DA BRACCIO LEFT HAND PALM POSITIONS IN ICONOGRAPHY With instruments of type A, B, C and D.**

Of 38 iconographical examples, most of them show the palm flat against the neck. In eight of the examples the instrument is not being played and in two, the instrument is in a non-playing position. Ten examples show the palm away from the neck, all of these showing the instrument being played.

### **LIRA DA BRACCIO INSTRUMENT POSITIONS AT NECK IN ICONOGRAPHY With instruments of type A, B, C**

This chart shows lira da braccio instruments held at the neck in 16 of the total 68 iconographical example where playing positions of the instruments can more or less be determined. Ten examples show the instrument being held at a vertical slant with the end down, whereby two of these are not playing. Of these ten, four would appear to show the player's head against the instrument. Three examples show the instrument held straight out while playing, holding the lira da braccio at a vertical slant. Three other examples just

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<sup>31</sup> First discovered and published by Disertori in 1941.

show the instrument held at the neck with the end down, one of which shows the player's head against the instrument.

A-Lira: End straight out: 1x/ End down: 4x/ Vertical slant pos. of instr.: 5x.

B-Lira: End straight out: 1x/ End down: 3x/ Vertical slant pos. of instr.: 2x. Head against inst.: 2x.

C-Lira: End straight out: 1x/ End down: 6x/ Vertical slant pos. of instr.: 6x. Head against: 3x.

Total, out of 16: End str.: 3x/ Down: 13x/ Vertical slant: 13x and Head against: 5x.

### **LIRA DA BRACCIO INSTRUMENT POSITIONS ON SHOULDER IN ICONOGRAPHY, With instruments of type A, B, C**

Twelve examples show the instrument held flat on the shoulder with the end down, whereby two of these are not playing. Of these twelve, two would appear to show the player's head against the instrument. Three examples show the instrument held straight out, holding the lira da braccio at a vertical slant. Of these three, two show the head against the instrument while playing, with one not playing. Five other examples just show the instrument held on the shoulder with the end down, two of which show the player's head against the instrument, with one of these not playing. One other just shows the instrument being played at a shoulder position with the end down.

A-Lira: Flat on: 5x/ End str.out: 1x/End down: 7x/ Vertical slant pos. of instr.: 2x/ Head 1x.

B-Lira: Flat on: 5x/ End str.out: 2x/ End down: 9x/ Vertical slant pos. of instr.: 6x/ Head 5x.

C-Lira: Flat on: 2x/ End str.out: 0/ End down: 2x/ Vertical slant pos. of instr.: 0. Head: 0.

Total for 21 in.: Flat on: 12x/ End str.out: 3x/ End down: 18x/ Vertical slant 8x/ Head 6x.

### **LIRA DA BRACCIO INSTRUMENT POSITIONS ON CHEST IN ICONOGRAPHY, With instruments of type A, B, C and D.**

This chart shows lira da braccio instruments held on the chest in 28 of the total 68 iconographical example where playing positions of the instruments can more or less be determined. 20 examples show the instrument held at chest level with the end down, 17 of these showing the instrument held at a vertical slant. Of the 20, eight are not actually playing the instrument. Five examples show the instrument being played holding it flat against the chest with the end down. Two show instruments being played held straight out with a vertical slant. One example shows the instrument with the end held up with a vertical slant, but the instrument does not appear to be in a playing position.

A-Lira: Flat against 0/ End str. out: 1x/End down: 10x/ End up: 1x/ Vertical slant: 9x.

B-Lira: Flat against: 1x/ End str. out: 0/End down: 10x/ End up: 0/ Vertical slant: 9x.

C-Lira: Flat against: 3x/ End str. out: 1x/End down: 4x/ End up: 0/ Vertical slant: 2x.

D-Lira: Flat against: 1x/ End str. out: 0/End down: 1x/ End up: 1x/ Vertical slant: 0.

Totals for 26: Flat against: 5x/ End str. out: 2x/End down: 25x/ End up: 1x/  
Vertical slant: 20x.

## **OTHER LIRA DA BRACCIO INSTRUMENT POSITIONS IN ICONOGRAPHY With instruments of type A and C**

This chart shows three less usual positions out of the 68 iconographical examples where playing positions of liras da braccio can be identified. Two show the instrument being played holding it across the lower chest or on the lap and one shows a lira da braccio being played down in a gamba-like position.

A: Across the chest or lap 2x/ Gamba position 0

C: Across the chest or lap 0/ Gamba position 1x

### **Additional Iconographical Examples**

Both of the following are of type B (instrument shapes with two corners).

1. Painting: *Enthroned Madonna with Angels and Saints*. A detail shows a cherub playing a lira da braccio. Giulio Licinio, ca. 1550-55, Chiesa di S. Pietro, Murano, Italy.

Five strings on the fingerboard, two off. Total of seven equidistant strings on a flat bridge which curves down on the off-the-fingerboard side. The bridge is set low between S-shaped sound holes. Seven pegs. Ends of body not indented. A slightly arched, medium-length bow is held near the end with the first two fingers around the stick, the third and fourth fingers behind the stick. Small frog. The bow is placed on the strings in the upper half at a normal distance from the bridge. The left-hand position has the first three fingers on the strings in what appears to be second position. The palm seems to be flat against the neck where it joins the instrument with the thumb pointing back. The lira da braccio is placed at the neck, slanted vertically with the end slightly down.

2. Painting: Cola dell 'Amatrice, *The Saviour, Four Prophets and Angels*. Formerly Rome, sold "Antonina." A detail shows King David playing a lira da braccio.

Seven strings on the fingerboard, one off. Seven pegs with a possible tuning peg on the side of the leaf-shaped peg box. A unique type of bridge appears to have four different flat levels, the lowest for the top string, the next slightly raised for the next two strings, another for the next two, and the highest level for the last two fingerboard strings. The off-the-fingerboard string is then at a somewhat lower level on the far side. The system may indicate a tuning of courses in octaves or unisons. The bridge is set low between ornate C-shaped holes. The bottom end is unclear, covered by the player's ear, but may be indented. A low-arched, medium length bow is held at the end with three fingers over the stick. Medium sized frog. The bow is placed on the strings in the upper half at a normal distance from the bridge. The left hand has all fingers on the strings, the fourth finger appearing to pull the fourth from string over slightly. The hand seems to be placed at about second

position with the palm probably not against the neck. The instrument is held at the neck, slanted vertically with the end slightly down.

The two pages which have been missing in my copy of the Update contains following examples and information:

First, represents the painting by famous painter Jacopo da Empoli (Jacopo Chimenti), Orpheus and Pan or the Judgment of Midas. The second one depicts a real medieval fiddle (from 1362-1422) and author gives his doubts if those instruments (in this case of type E, oval body shape) may or may not be identified as lira da braccio. Anyway, from this time (i.e., beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, we have more written sources in Latin referring about the humanist playing the instrument *lyra* and using it in the pedagogy.

The third instrument is an intarsia showing an oval fiddle or the earlier form of the lira da braccio with four strings on and one offboard string; author explains that he cautiously originally didn't include this item because the pegbox couldn't be seen.

### **5.My Summary of Sterling Scott Jones Lira Iconography:**

Generally, it should be stressed another time that any result and conclusion we could get through the analysis of iconography depends of various factors like the accuracy of representation of particularly sensitive details whose have been important or not, known or not to the artist, the technique applied and in some cases even the restauration of the work(s) one or more centuries after its creation when the knowledge of an earlier instrument and its role, musical taste etc. changed completely. But as already said, the iconography is in many cases our unique source of information and we must use it taking a risk that our conclusions could be "possible" but rarely "sure" and never absolutely "credible".

But it is like that with so many other elements on which our entire "reconstruction"<sup>32</sup> of the early (medieval, renaissance and at least early baroque) music, its performance practice, technique of playing, combinations of instruments etc. relays - not to mention ornamentation and "real" improvisation which was the essence (not only) of the lira da braccio role and use in the zenith of its "life".

When we compare Jones four (five) types of instruments with the (presumed) extant originals, it is possible to conclude as follows: all preserved (and those later changed in violas) instruments have characteristic *indentation* at the lower end of the instrument, as well as five strings on the fingerboard and two outside of it.<sup>33</sup>

In the contrary, only 17 of the 99 analysed instruments displays the mentioned *indentation*. In most cases lira da braccio has been played by male players - only exceptionally female,

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<sup>32</sup> Today mostly known under the name of historically informed performance - much more suitable and credible than the so called "authentic" performance on "original" instruments etc., used in the time of the boom of early music in late fifties, through sixties and seventies of the last century.

<sup>33</sup> When we speak about the presumably preserved, extant, instruments, we should be aware of the fact that by no one of them we could be sure they are genuine.

although even in those few cases, it is not sure whether they were probable angels. More than a half of the analysed sources of art comes from the first third of the 16th c.

### **Iconographic representations only:**

Number of strings: from 99 pictorial evidences, on 60 of them one can determine with certainty the number of strings but only sixteen shows seven string (by thirteen of them number of strings match the number of pegs) and 26 show identical number of strings and pegs.

Bridge: from 40 iconographic representations where the bridge could clearly be seen, only nine are almost flat and the others shows various degrees of curvature. This fact could speak in favor of Jones' supposition on *arpeggio* style of executing chords.

Frets on the lira da braccio: there is a small number (Jones found them on five and I on additional seven) of representations on which the *lira* (with a singer - musician or alone) is shown with frets. Contrary to this is Lanfranco's explicit statement that the frets on the lira da braccio, unlike the viol or lute, haven't been used. Once, I tried it on my lira and can say that this practice is not to exclude - it even allows the player better intonation when playing more complicated chords.

Length and curvature of the bow: Jones analysis showed that iconography in no way confirms the information given by two of the contemporaries (Ganassi and Rognoni) that a longer bow should be used on the lira: from all (99) pictorial sources only 20 shows long bow, 26 one of medium length, and 35, even a short bow.

This is also confirmed by my 40 years of practical experiments and experience. It is not the length of the bow that helps the performance of the chords, especially in the case of *arpeggio* theory, but it is not necessary either for the sustained way of performance, where the notes of one triple or quadruple chord sound almost simultaneously.

Holding the bow/ position of the fingers on it: I think this is a particularly sensitive detail that has been treated very superficially or even incorrectly even by those artists whose display of the instrument and its holding seems very realistic as of somebody who knew well the instrument itself perhaps even the practice of playing technique on the lira.

It seems that this part of the lira's playing technique was treated very freely and differently in the iconography.

Singing to the lira: Jones doesn't take this element into account. The reason could be because it is quite difficult to be convinced that artist is showing exactly something like that. There are several cases where the player keeps his mouth slightly open; whether he (or she) sings or recites with his or her own accompaniment to the lira or just breathes, it is hard to say. On a small number of representations, it looks like they show the realistic act of singing. This is rather surprising in that there are a larger number of written sources that unequivocally speak of improvised singing or reciting accompanied by lira da braccio or (latter) with the lute.

One or more players (ensemble): in 45 cases only one player is displayed and in 44 other instruments are present. In neither case could be seen that two or more liras (violas) da braccio play together. It should be said that some of the early sources about humanist *cantori ad lyram* (late 15<sup>th</sup> and the early 16<sup>th</sup> c.) give a hint that sometimes probably two lira da

braccio players have been playing and singing alternatively or together. Also, it should be remembered that the sources, describing the performance of the *intermedii* for "La Pellegrina" (1589), mention almost invariably simultaneous use of two liras da braccio and (in two cases) two liras da braccio together with lira da gamba.<sup>34</sup> For a comparison, I shall quote A. Baldassare who mentions the iconographic analysis of another Swiss musicologist Victor Ravizza: "... of 536 analysed iconographic evidences, a total of 37 shows lira da braccio, where it is displayed as a solo instrument or in duet with a lute<sup>35</sup> but rarely in a three- or four-part ensemble."

As I already said and wrote many times the work and conclusions Sterling S. Jones took out of his research are of an enormous importance for the study of the lira da braccio in general and the reconstruction of its playing technique in particular. Here are also some reflections of mine, meant by no means as any critic, because Jones profound research of great number of smallest details will always remain exemplary.

How important is for us today to know about string spacing, use of higher positions, bridge curvature, holding the instrument, holding the bow and its length and curvature?

1.String spacing could be important in the case you want (as Jones allows and Skeaping recommends) to treat the two bass offboard strings and two lowest strings on the fingerboard as "courses" tuned in octaves. Again, I suppose that this element has changed during the hundred or more years lira has been in use. As it developed (presumably) directly from the late medieval fiddle, during last decades of the 15th and first third of the 16th centuries, those pairs of strings have been understood and used as courses like on the lute - also because of the (poor) quality of deeper strings. Later, maybe, they started to play more "active" role in the shaping of chords.

2.Bridge curvature: Jones analysis of 100 instruments showed that flat bridges weren't a typical but rather exceptional feature on liras da braccio. Still, my additional analysis of his examples showed that there are another 15 representations showing almost flat bridge and I believe that this would ask from player almost same sustain technique of playing as the completely flat bridge. It is also interesting that two of them (one of B- and one of C-type liras) are from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> c., one or maybe two from ca.1500 and the other twelve from the first third (1500-1535) of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

3.Bows depicted, their length, curvature, position relative to the bridge, frog size, hand (finger) position on it:

As we have seen, Jones found out that (out of 81 clear examples) most bows are short (36), followed by medium (26) and the long ones come as the last one: only 20. Their shapes (from 81 clear depictions) show in most cases the medium (42), followed by high (18) and low (16) arch - six of them are even straight...

The position of the bow on the strings could be very important factor in reconstructing the lira's technique of playing: Jones find out that most bows (out of 50 clear examples) are touching the string(s) on the upper third (24), followed by mid (21) and lower third (five). Of 37 clear examples, most bows are far from the bridge (22), followed by normal position (eleven) and those near (four) to the bridge.

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<sup>34</sup> It is truth that this represents relatively late evidence of lira da braccio use.

<sup>35</sup> Their use in music was very similar especially in the case of singing accompaniment.

Most frogs (from 46 clear examples) are of medium (27), followed by large (eleven) and small (nine) size.

Hand (finger) position on the bow: out of 65 clear examples most show the hand near to the end, followed by those away (31) to it and seven shows the fingers on the hair.

Some of examined and notated details (the length and arching of the bow, the size of frog) could give valuable information to makers of early instruments, other to the reconstruction of the bowing technique but the problem remains the same; how much could we believe and relay on the iconography in this very respect?

In his Update from 1997, Jones gave some very important additional results of his research concerning the left-hand positions, finger positions etc.

4.Higher positions: personally, I don't believe that somebody used the 2nd or even 3rd position on the lira. The majority of instruments depicted are relatively large and held in a way which would make the use of positions almost impossible. But later, as lira started to be made in smaller, more violin-like body shapes and its main role was not anymore the accompaniment of player's own singing but performing in an ensemble together with other instruments (as in *intermedii* etc.) it is possible that some players come on this idea.<sup>36</sup> In this case, not only liras use of chords on a bowed instrument but also use of higher positions were the elements which later have been taken over and further developed by violinists. We should have on mind that the use of higher positions has been rare even on the early violins.

5.Left hand finger position: Jones made detailed analysis if the fingers are in a normal or contracted position or even expanded, with some examples showing the first finger extended back. In some cases, all fingers (or only some of them) are placed on the strings or on the fingerboard - all very interesting details for the reconstruction of the playing technique. The technique of using the thumb on both (or one?) of the lowest fingerboard strings for performance of certain chords (which both Jones and Skeaping are supposing, and I agree with them) are documented with only ten out of 54 iconographical examples.

6.Left hand palm position: this is another interesting detail of the playing technique. Of 38 iconographical examples, most of them show the palm flat against the neck and ten examples show the palm away from the neck.

7.Holding the instrument: there were (and today are) several possibilities how to hold the lira. In some cases of (sometimes more or less "realistic" or credible representations) this has been determined with the relatively large body of (many) depicted liras. Also, the fact that those large liras have been used for the accompaniment of one's own singing and playing the chords certainly asked for as stable and as firm position or control of the instrument as possible.

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<sup>36</sup> My Viennese colleague, medieval vielle, early violin player, scholar and maker of bowed instruments, Rainer Ullreich gave me recently the following answer to this topic: "Regarding position playing on early string instruments: I'm very positive that good players always felt the need to exploit the "other level". I'm thinking of the outstanding folk musicians in Central Asia or the Far East. For good instrumentalists then as now there were certainly no restrictions! Very old bowed instruments often have signs of use in places that can actually come only from playing in the position..."

Jones has considered several ways of holding the instrument: a) at neck, b) on the shoulder and c) on the chest - with end straight out, end down, vertical slant position of the instrument and head against it in the case of a) and adding the "flat on" position in the case of b) or "flat against" for c). To that author added also some of the rare art of holding, "in the lap" or "gamba (viol)" position. Again, all these details are very important for the reconstruction of the lira's technique of playing i.e., holding but they depend on the capacity of single artist to make as realistic and credible representation as possible. See my remarks about various ways of holding the liras later.

At the end of this summary with commentaries of the Sterling Scott Jones work it must be said again that he made a great, very detailed, research and with this a very solid foundation for any further serious lira da braccio iconography after him. His achievements and incredible quantity of information have been and still could be of enormous help for musicologists interested in musical iconography or in organology, for instrument makers and - last but certainly not the least - the main group of users, us who for longer or shorter time (or as a newcomer) play or want learn to play this amazing instrument lira da braccio for sure was in its "heydays" and is again today, within the so called "Historically informed performance" of the early music. Because of that, we owe Sterling a lot, thank you!

## **Part II:**

### **6.I. POMYKALO, LIRA ICONOGRAPHY ANALYSIS, 2022**

In the summer of 2022, I decided to make my own Lira iconography collection and at the beginning used the already existing items collected by Giordano Ceccotti (Italian musician and instrument maker, the co-founder of our IPs LIRAforum FB Group, founded in 2011), Barry Pierce and several other members of the group. As already mentioned, my great inspiration was the Lira Iconography Analysis made by colleague Sterling Scott Jones and published as a book in 1995. Valuable help in the preparative work was again Barry whose extraordinary Bowed Instrument Iconography Project is the most important, informative and rich source of this type up to now and Esha Neogy, founder and administrator of the similar and related FB group, LIRONE/ LIRA DA GAMBA/ARCIVIOLATA AND LIRA DA BRACCIO. Recently I got valuable help and several new items thanks to Annalisa Pappano and Simon Steinkühler.

At the beginning, my (our) goal in the above-mentioned IPs LIRAforum was to collect the examples of iconography which Jones analysed and published in form of charts, list with detailed explanations but without examples.<sup>37</sup> Again, Barry was of big help procuring many valuable reproductions.

Started with some 80 or so items after completing the Jones' iconographic collection (database) in last years (and especially in last months...) my own collection mounted to more than 200 examples! As it seems that there could be ("hidden" somewhere in the "meanders" of world wide web and for sure in various archives, museums and galleries) still (many?) more representations of lira (alone or not) I decided to stop with my "investigative" work and tried

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<sup>37</sup> In my both reviews (in English and Croatian) I did a slight remark to this but now, after exhaustive work on my own collection, I can understand the reasons Jones make it this way - particularly having on mind that quarter of a century ago the state of internet and the probability to find any and especially good copies of musical iconography have been much less than today. See later about that under 8.2. Some peculiarities and problems of Lira Iconography", on p.46.

to make the first summary and comparison with the Jones analysis, using his classification of five types of liras and (basically) his chart - system adding some of my own additions. But I decided to rearrange and divide Jones topics (excluding some and adding the new ones) on "my way". Chart no.1 deals with Construction Elements of the Lira da Braccio, Chart no.2 is devoted to the details of Playing technique and player association, and Chart no.3 to the relation of Subjects, Player Gender, Period and Medium.

Here are the first results:

### **6.1.Type A (four corners, or violin form), Summary for 104 totals<sup>38</sup>:**

Here I am mentioning only the most important trends - all details found during my own lira da braccio iconography analysis could be checked under the chapter 7.Comparison of Jones and my Analysis (p.29 and further) and in the charts themselves, separated or combined (summaries) as well as in the charts where Jones' and my results are compared, all of them in the Appendix.

Chart no.1, DETAILS ABOUT THE LIRA CONSTRUCTION:

In three cases there have been five strings on the fingerboard, in another three cases four and in two cases six of them.

In most cases there have been two strings off the fingerboard and in one case one of them.

Frets could be seen on four examples. In seven cases seven pegs could be seen but only in one (unclear) case there have been the same number of strings and pegs. This is one of the more examples where otherwise realistic depiction (from point of hands position and holding of the lira) show similar imprecision.

In the most cases sound holes have the C-shape; mostly faced inward and in less cases faced outward. The *f* and *S* sound holes are not so often represented. In addition, I found one of { } shape and several with one, double or even triple rosette.

More bridges have been flat than curved and most bows have been of medium size, followed by short and long ones.

Chart no.2, INTERESTING FOR THE PLAYING TECHNIQUE:

In only two examples second or third position of the left hand could be supposed and in several cases thumb seems to be on two lower fingerboard strings.

Most instruments have been held on the chest (with various vertical slant positions, with or without head leaning on the instrument, followed by those held on the shoulder and across the chest. In few cases under the chin (almost a modern) holding could be seen and in one case lira is held in the lap or in the air (like the Creta traditional lira players do nowadays during walking in the streets).

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<sup>38</sup> For all details and totals see the Chart no.... In Appendix.

The act of playing could be seen on most items against those of non-playing and in few cases singing could be supposed.

In only one example bow is held "in the air", which could but must not represent what Disertori characterised as special, "dramatic", effect, very impressive on particularly important places in the text or between the stanzas.

In one case lira (or vielle?) was played without bow - *pizzicato*. Majority examples are credible and only few of them seem not playable. Lira is playing mostly alone, sometimes as a duo, trio or in an ensemble.<sup>39</sup>

Chart no 3, SUBJECT, GENDER, PERIOD and TECHNIQUE<sup>40</sup>:

Most items represent the mythologic, followed by religious and secular thematic. Concerning the player association, majority pictures shows the males, followed by females and angels.

Most numerous are depictions from the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, followed by 3rd third, begin of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and 2nd third of 16<sup>th</sup> century.

And at the end the medium i.e., the painting technique. Most of them belong to paintings, followed by frescos, bronze, engraving, woodcut, drawings, ceramics, illuminations and intarsias with one example each.

## **6.2.Type B (instrument shapes with two corners), Summary for 33 totals:**

Chart no.1, DETAILS ABOUT THE LIRA CONSTRUCTION:

Number of strings on the fingerboard: five strings could be seen in five, four in two cases.

One string off the fingerboard could be seen in three and two in five cases.

In several cases there are seven pegs but in only one of them number of strings and pegs are the same.

Most sound holes have the C-shape facing inward, few have *f* and *S* shape sound hole. In addition, two items have { } shape sound hole.

As an exception eleven bridges are flat and only one is curved...

The majority of bows belong to medium, followed by long and short ones.

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<sup>39</sup> See the separate article on Lira with more Instruments.

<sup>40</sup> Details about the Subject, players gender, period and medium (technique) in which individual examples have been executed you shall find under heading 7.3. SUBJECT, GENDER, PERIOD and TECHNIQUE, on the page 36, as well as in form of Charts nos and in the Appendix. Even if this is not my domain I would like to mention that some pictures with mythological, religious or even secular thematic could have also double symbolic; the officially "allowed" and other which could understand only those (among humanists, for instance) informed or initiated.

## Chart no.2, INTERESTING FOR THE PLAYING TECHNIQUE:

In only one example second or third position of the left hand could be supposed and in several cases thumb seems to be above or on (one or both?) of lower fingerboard strings. Most instruments have been held on the shoulder and only few ones in other holding – including the vertical slant positions and head leaning on the instrument. Only one lira has been held viol-like, between the knees.

The act of playing could be seen on most items against few of non-playing and in several cases, singing could be supposed.

Majority of examples are credible and only two of them seem to be not playable. Lira is playing mostly alone, in several cases as a duo, trio or in an ensemble.<sup>41</sup>

## Chart no 3, SUBJECT, GENDER, PERIOD and TECHNIQUE<sup>42</sup>:

Most representations belong to the subjects of mythology, followed by religious and some secular or other subjects.

Male players could be seen on majority of items, followed by angels and females.

Lira is playing mostly alone but relatively numerous are also depictions where it is performing in a duo, trio or in an ensemble.

Concerning the (presupposed) period, most numerous are examples from the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> c., followed by those from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> c., 2nd and 3rd third of 16<sup>th</sup> c. represented by one each.

Most numerous are also for this type of the lira the paintings, followed by intarsia, woodcut and drawing and engraving with only one example.

### **6.3.Type C (no corners, medieval fiddle or guitar form), Summary for 37 totals:**

#### Chart no.1, DETAILS ABOUT THE LIRA CONSTRUCTION:

Two examples show five strings on the fingerboard, one has one and two two offboard strings

Three items show one and one (maybe two?) two offboard strings. Two examples have seven pegs but no one same number of those and strings. Frets could be seen on three items.

Majority of instruments have C-shaped sound holes faced inward and few faced outward; Both, the { } shaped sound holes and rosette, are represented with one example.

The number of flat and curved bridges are almost identical, the majority of bows are of medium, followed by short length and only three of them are long.

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<sup>41</sup> See the separate article on Lira with more Instruments.

<sup>42</sup> Details about the Subject, players gender, period and medium (technique) in which individual examples have been executed you shall find under heading 7.3. SUBJECT, GENDER, PERIOD and TECHNIQUE, on the page 36, as well as in form of Charts nos. and .. in the Appendix.

Chart no. 2, INTERESTING FOR THE PLAYING TECHNIQUE:

Two items show the left hand in higher position and several the thumb on or over the lower fingerboard strings. Most liras are held on the shoulder, followed by on the chest and at the neck; several are held in some kind of vertical slant position or with head leaning on the instrument.

In most cases the act of playing and in few cases of not playing is represented. Singing could be supposed on several examples and in one case the technique of *pizzicato* is shown.

Most cases are credible and only few not playable. Lira performs alone in most cases, followed by ensemble and duo.

Chart no.3, SUBJECT, GENDER, PERIOD and TECHNIQUE:

Most depictions of C-type lira have religious thematic, followed by mythologic and secular or other one.

Majority of analysed items shows the males, followed by angels and only in one case female player.

Most numerous are examples from the 1st third of 16<sup>th</sup> c., followed by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup>, and begin of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; 2nd and 3rd third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century are represented with one item each.

Again, most representations belong to the paintings, followed by engraving and bronze, drawing, watercolour and frescos.

#### **6.4.Type D (total shapes not visible), Summary for 18 totals:**

Chart no.1, LIRA CONSTRUCTION:

Due to the impossibility of making a detailed analysis in majority of cases, the number of on or off fingerboard strings could be seen only on few items; several show seven or six strings on the fingerboard and one example shows one offboard string.

Sound holes could be seen in one case each for the C-shape facing outward, *f* and the *S* shape.

Two bridges are curved, and one flat, medium and short bows could be seen in two cases.

Chart no. 2, INTERESTING FOR THE PLAYING TECHNIQUE:

In two cases holding on the shoulder and in three on the chest could be seen. More examples show act of not playing than playing and in one case the holding is not playable.

More examples represent lira alone, followed by duo, ensemble and trio.

Chart no.3, SUBJECT, GENDER, PERIOD and TECHNIQUE:

Mythological subjects are depicted on four, religious on two and secular or other on another two examples.

Most players are males and angels could be seen in one case.

Most representations are from the begin of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; end of 15<sup>th</sup> and the 1<sup>st</sup> third of 16<sup>th</sup> century are represented with one item.

Most depictions are paintings, followed by bronze with one example.

### **6.5.Type E (oval shape), Summary for 6 totals:**

Chart no.1, LIRA CONSTRUCTION:

All of them have five strings on the fingerboard, one offboard string, same number of strings and pegs; C-shape of sound holes facing inward are represented with one case.

Curved and flat bridges could be seen in one case for each.

Medium and short bow sizes are represented in two cases each.

Chart no. 2, INTERESTING FOR THE PLAYING TECHNIQUE:

Position of the left-hand fingers in other than 1<sup>st</sup> is documented with one and thumb on the lower fingerboard strings with two examples.

Several items depict holding on the shoulder and both vertical slant position and head as a support of holding could be seen in one case.

All examples show the action of playing, singing could be seen in one case only.

More cases showing the credible and only one not playable holding.

In two cases lira plays in a duo and in several in an ensemble.

Chart no.3, SUBJECT, GENDER, PERIOD and TECHNIQUE:

Religious subject could be seen on five examples and secular or other on one depiction.

Several cases show angels and in one case a male player.

Most examples belong to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, one to the 1<sup>st</sup> and another one to the 2<sup>nd</sup> third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Five representations are paintings and one marble intarsia on the floor.

## 6.6.Type F Lira?

To Jones' five types I would probably add the sixth one: F - for fantastic, fancy shapes which could sometimes be liras or kind of mythological, pseudo antique or simply theatre instruments. As for instance, here are six of them (four already mentioned under A: -44, 74, 75 and 85)

A-44 IP Cima da Conegliano, The judgement of Midas, contest between Apollo and Marsyas/

A-74 IP Giorgione (attributed to), The Hourglass/ A-75a/b Giorgione Haus, Castelfranco Veneto. /

A-85 IP bsip256.1 c.1500-illumination.

F-1 IP Ferrari, Gaudenzio-Virgin with St. Anne, Pinacoteca Turin and

F-2 IP Cima da Conegliano, King Mida.

One of Jones examples, A-2 JS Master of the Sforza Book of Hours, ca1500, could be added to this “category”.<sup>43</sup>

During my analysis and after the last checking I decided to discard some 24 iconographic representations being probably early violins or viola (da braccio), on the other hand some of them could be very schematic presentation of a lira da braccio.

The striking fact is that lira da braccio (usually thought as a solo instrument for voice accompaniment) appears so often with other instruments. Mostly in duo with lute and less often with harp - which could be explained with the so called *tenoristi*, usually coadjutors playing the lute or another bowed instrument. But trios or bigger ensembles could only indicate that (apart the symbolic or similar reason) lira began to perform together with other instruments relatively early.

It is good to remember that Jones' Iconography out of 100 totals showed 44 examples where lira is depicted (but not necessarily plays) with other instrument(s).<sup>44</sup>

## 6.7.LIRA WITH MORE INSTRUMENTS, after COMBINATIONS

**From Totals of 200 new representations, lira could be seen with other instruments on 63 pictures - 57 of them playing. Duos are represented with 22 and Trios or more with 35 examples.**

### 1.Duos:

Duos with lute are represented with thirteen (see above), those with wind instrument with four, with harp three and with another bowed instrument in one example.

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<sup>43</sup> See also my article about bowed instruments (liras?) represented by Italian master Marco Palmezzano.

<sup>44</sup> In how many cases the image shows the real or presumed act of playing, see later.

## 2. Trios (six):

In some cases, only one person (Apollo) is playing, and others are listening (?). Lira with lute and recorder plays in two, with other instruments (for instance with lute and psaltery, second fiddle (maybe lira?) and harpsichord (and singers?), in trio but not playing with another lira /with frets/ and cornetto - on the floor are recorder and cymbals, with lute and singer?) in four cases.

## 3. Lira with more than three Instruments (30):

Quartets could be seen in seven cases, showing combinations like lira with lute, harp and tambourine, with lute, psalterium and two trumpets (?), with fiddle, lute and shawm(?) and lute, organetto and recorder.

Quintets (total of eight) are showing various combinations of lira with second fiddle (or lira?), lute and two recorders, lira with harp, lute, second fiddle (or lira?) and shawm(?), lira with lute, viol and two wind instruments (recorders?) and lira with psalterium, mandorra, organetto and tambourine.

Sextets (total of six) depicts lira in combination with harp, lute, crumhorn, pipe and tabor, triangle and singers(?) and with second fiddle (or lira?), two lutes, recorder and tambourine.

Septet (only two examples) are showing combination where some players are playing and other not and lira with a fiddle (or 2nd lira?), harp, lute, recorder, shawm(?) and 2 percussion instruments.

Ensemble of eight or more instruments (total of seven)<sup>45</sup> depicts lira in various combinations with other instruments (playing or not) as for instance with antique lira, another lira (both with frets) and lira da gamba(?), with five recorders, second lira da braccio and lute, with fiddle (or 2<sup>nd</sup> lira?), two lutes, two shawms (recorders?), four trumpets and percussion, ensemble with 2<sup>nd</sup> fiddle, lute, harp, hand clapping(?), psaltery, 2<sup>nd</sup> plucked instr.(?) and double pipe or recorder.

There are also two plates first one by Reymond Martial (fl.1599) representing Apollo and the muses, where lira da braccio (playing or not) could be seen with two *lironi* (one of them plucked) lute, positive organ, trumpet(?), cymbals and tambourine. The second one work by Jean de Court, II (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> c.) with the same subject is depicting the similar combination of lira (playing or not) with two *lironi*, lute, smaller positive organ, trumpet, cymbals and tambourine - it seems as the second work could be the copy of the first one.

## 7. Comparison of Jones and my Analysis:

Comparison between Jones Lira da braccio in the Iconography (100; 97 analysed examples in 1995 and three in 1997) with mine (200 analysed examples in 2022 but some items dated ten or more years back) showed some similarities, some divergences and made some surprises.

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<sup>45</sup> On the famous fresco by Gaudenzio Ferrari in Cathedral of Saronno (1535) lira da braccio (played like a viol!) could be seen together with multitude of various bowed and plucked (all without strings), wind and percussion instruments but hardly representing the real renaissance "orchestra". Several of bowed instruments have the body or peg box like lira but are presumably early violins.

## 7.1. DETAILS ABOUT THE LIRA CONSTRUCTION:

As already said, I have restricted some of the constructive elements Jones analysed, as for instance the equidistant or any groupings of strings, position of sound holes and bridges in relationship to the former, which could certainly be of greater interest for musicologists or instrument makers as for us, practitioners.

Another (always the same) reason was that I am afraid we could only in minor number of depictions rely on artist capability or not in painting above mentioned details faithfully.

I restricted myself on "standard" combination of 5 strings on the fingerboard and one to two offboard strings and seven pegs, frets, sound holes (adding several which Jones hasn't found like { } and rosette), bridges and bows.

All details you shall find in the Chart no.1, Comparison of the Details about lira construction but here is a summary of most important i.e., indicative results.

### **Type A, four Corners:**

From the total of thirty-seven (plus one in the Update, 1997) images for the Type A-Lira Jones found only eight items with five strings on the fingerboard, three having one and nine two offboard strings. Nine liras have seven pegs and four of them same number of them and strings; three items have frets.

From the total of hundred-four examples for this type of lira I have found only three having five strings on the fingerboard, one having one and three two offboard strings. Eight have seven pegs but only one same of those and strings. Two as it seems have frets.

Most sound holes by Jones (thirteen) and me (twenty-eight) belong to the C- shape faced inward and I found six examples with rosette and two even with two of them.

Most of bridges by Jones as already noted are curved (eleven) and only two flat. In my case, fifteen are flat and fourteen curved.

Long bows are rather exception: by Jones only four, by me six, by Jones majority are the short ones (seventeen) followed by medium (thirteen) – in my case is opposite; the majority are of medium (twenty-two) and twelve of short length.

Taking our two iconographies together we got following results:

Of the total of 142 examples for A-type only eleven have five strings on the fingerboard, four having one and twelve or more?) two offboard strings. Seventeen have seven pegs but only five same of those and strings. Five (or more?) have frets.

Most of sound holes are C-shaped faced inwards, followed by *f* and *S* shape and some with rosette. Most bridges are curved but, in my iconography, appeared more flat ones than by

Jones. The medium bows are “leading”, followed by short ones and the long ones are in minority.<sup>46</sup>

### **Type B, two Corners:**

From total of thirty-four (and two in Update, 1997) by Jones and thirty-three in my case here are the most important results.

Jones has found eight and me five items having five strings on the fingerboard, five versus one with one and twelve versus three, with two offboard strings. Twelve by Jones and nine in my case have seven pegs but only eight of them, by Jones, having the same number of pegs and strings. Only two liras (Jones) have frets.

Again, the C-shaped sound holes faced inward are the most numerous (twenty-eight by Jones and nineteen by me) and I have found one instrument having three rosette. Curved bridges are more numerous (fifteen by Jones and three by me) than the flat ones, three by Jones and fourteen by me. Surprisingly enough, the long bows are slightly more numerous (Jones found twelve and me eight) versus the medium ones (Jones five and me fourteen or more?), followed by short ones, by Jones eleven and in my cases three.

Looking in total: from the sixty-nine examples of the type B, thirteen (or more?) have the five strings on the fingerboard, six have one and fifteen two offboard strings. Twenty-one (or more?) have seven pegs but only eight of them have the same number of pegs and strings.

The majority of sound holes are C-shaped faced inwards, followed by S-shaped and only some rare examples of other shapes.

Most of bridges (eighteen or more) are curved followed by flat ones, fourteen or more.

Long bows are more numerous, followed by medium and short ones.

### **Type C, no corners:**

From the totals of twenty-one items (by Jones) and thirty-seven in my case, only one of Jones and two by me have five strings on the fingerboard, five by Jones have one and two in both cases have two offboard strings. Three of Jones (versus two by me) have seven pegs but only four of them by Jones have the same number of pegs and strings.

Frets have only three (or maybe some more?) of my examples.

Most often are again the sound holes of C-shape faced inwards and only one of my items seems to have double rosette.

Curved bridges (six in both cases) are more numerous followed by flat ones, four by Jones and five in my cases; medium bows are leading (eight by Jones and fifteen or more by me), followed by medium ones (eight by Jones and fifteen or more by me) and three in both cases of long ones.

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<sup>46</sup> See also the total comparison at the end considering those elements comparing all types of lira found in both iconographies.

From the total of fifty-eight examples of this type only three have five strings on the fingerboard, five by Jones have one and four have two offboard strings. Five (or more?) have seven pegs but only four of them have the same number of pegs and strings.

Frets have only three (or maybe some more?) examples.

In forty of cases sound holes have C-shape faced inwards, followed by some of the S-shape and few of other shapes. See above for bridges and bows.

### **Type D, Form Not visible:**

From the totals of four (by Jones) and eighteen in my case, only one of Jones has five strings on the fingerboard, one in both cases have one and two of Jones and one in my case have two offboard strings. One of Jones (versus three by me) have seven pegs but none of them has the same number of pegs and strings.

Frets have only three of Jones examples.

Most sound holes are of *f*-shape (three in both cases) followed by *S* one (four by Jones and probably two in my case?).

Curved bridges (four by Jones and three by me) are more numerous followed by only two flat ones in my cases. Medium bows are more numerous (eight by Jones and three or more by me), followed by short ones (seven by Jones and one or more by me) and only three long ones by Jones.

From the total of twenty-two examples of this type only one (or two?) has five strings on the fingerboard, one in both cases has one and three have two offboard strings. Four (or more?) have seven pegs but no one has the same number of pegs and strings. For other details see above or in the Chart no...

### **Type E, Oval Shape:**

From the one example by Jones and six by me only one item has five strings on the fingerboard, one in both cases has one and no example two offboard strings. No item shows either seven pegs nor same number of pegs and strings and one of my examples (but not played) has frets???

Two of my items have C-shaped faced inwards sound holes and in two cases it could be that instruments have *S*-shaped sound holes or rosette. One example in my case has curved bridge and another probably the flat one. Jones has found one long bow and me two (or more?) of medium and maybe two of short type.

### 7.2.1.INTERESTING FOR THE PLAYING TECHNIQUE AND PLAYER ASSOCIATION<sup>47</sup>:

As already said, I decided not to analyse some of the elements Jones did in very detail, but I added some which, in my opinion, could be interesting. It is not that I wanted to ignore Jones' opinion or system of analysing the lira iconography but every person, scholar or practical musician like me could have some priorities and mine were and remained how to apply in the practice the theoretical knowledge to help the other musician who want to learn the *arte della lira*. Certainly, this was Jones' concern too – look his extraordinary collection of chords, the reconstruction of the repertory and all those very detailed analyses of various elements important for the playing technique on this instrument. I haven't considered Jones' detailed analysis of left-hand fingers (expanded or contracted, number of fingers on the fingerboard, palm flat or away from the neck) or concerning the bow and the right hand (position of the bow on the string, relative to the bridge, hand i.e., fingers on the bow). On the other hand I decided for another approach to the same problematic and here are my ideas.

Concerning the holding of the lira, sometimes players hold the lira somewhere "between" shoulder, neck and chest, mostly in vertical slant position.

I shall risk being criticised for not going in such precise details as Jones did, like:

-Holding on the shoulder: flat on, end straight out or down.

-Holding on the neck: end straight out or down and

-Holding on the Chest: flat against, end up or down

Judging from my own practical experience I think that changing of those positions could happen even unconsciously during playing. So, I decided to consider only the three basic positions: on the shoulder, on the neck (under the chin?) and on the chest - separating from each of them and putting together the vertical slant position of the instrument. To that, I took over from Jones the positions across the chest (isolating the holding like the guitar, "on" and "in the" elbow) and in the lap or viol-like. I added the category of Credible and Not realistic representations (as individual this judgment could be...) where I think it would be extremely difficult or impossible to play lira.

In my Charts (inspired and made based on Jones' ones) I considered playing in position other than the first one, using the thumb to press (shorten?) the lower strings on the fingerboard, various ways instrument could be held judging from the examples in the iconography adding relevant elements of my own like playing, not playing, probable singing, bow in the air, use of the *pizzicato* technique, credible or not playable situation or holding and the section lira solo versus lira in a duo, trio up to an ensemble, performing with other instruments. This last section will be omitted here because there is a whole article about this topic in the Appendix.

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<sup>47</sup> For very detailed comparison of Jones and my iconographies concerning the lira with other instruments see a separate article in Appendix.

### **Type A:**

From total of thirty-eight Jones found three items (me from hundred-four, two) where player uses higher position of the left hand. He found two and me five items where thumb is on the lower fingerboard strings.

Jones found thirteen items where lira is held on the shoulder, five at the neck and twelve on the chest. Sixteen of these items have vertical slant position and head is held against the instrument in one case. Across the chest are held two items.

Ten of my examples are held on the shoulder, fourteen at the neck and twenty-five on the chest. Twenty-one of those items have vertical slant position and in fourteen cases head is held against the instrument. Across the chest are held nine and under the chin three instruments. First of two ways of holding the lira differs sometimes in sense that some depictions show it held like the guitar but missing the belt. This means that the position without the belt would be not realistic i.e., playable. In other cases, lira relies on the elbow or in it which (according to my practical experiments) would significantly shorten the movements of the bow. This, of course, is valid for all body shapes of the lira da braccio.

One lira is held like the viol.

Jones has found fifteen examples for playing versus twenty-two for not playing and in four cases act of singing could be supposed.

I have found sixty examples for playing versus thirty-six for not playing and in four cases singing could be supposed.

Bow in the air? Sterling noted this under the aspect of “Off strings” but he didn’t consider the possibility Disertori mentioned and called the “dramatic caesura” effect. Anyway, I think that in four of Jones examples one could suppose this posture and in one by me. In one example I found *pizzicato* technique of playing.

Fourteen of Jones and forty-eight of mine examples could be credible, five in both cases are not playable.

Twenty-two of Jones players (versus thirty-seven of mine) are playing alone, one in duo (seven by me) and in both cases two in trio. In my iconography ten are performing in an ensemble.

**Type B:** Jones found five examples where player uses higher position of the left hand and four with thumb over or on the lower fingerboard strings.

In my case, one player probably uses higher position of the left hand and four of them held the thumb over or on the lower fingerboard strings.

Holding: Jones found sixteen examples where lira is held on the shoulder, four at the neck and eleven on the chest. Twenty have the vertical slant position and seven head leaning against the instrument.

I found eighteen items held on the shoulder, two at the neck and two on the chest. Twenty items have the vertical slant position of the instrument and seven head leaning against it. One instrument is held across the chest, one under the chin and another viol-like.

Jones found twenty-one examples for playing versus thirteen for not playing; in five cases singing could be supposed. On three of his examples, I could suppose the “bow in the air” effect and in one case maybe the pizzicato technique has been depicted.

Nineteen of his examples show a credible and one not playable way of holding the instrument.

Eleven players are playing solo, five in a duo and a trio and one in an ensemble.

I found twenty-three items for playing versus eight for not playing and in four cases singing could be supposed. Two pictures show supposedly dramatic effect, twenty examples depict a credible holding of lira and two are not playable.

Ten lira players are performing alone, seven in a duo, three in a trio and five in an ensemble.

**Type C:** Jones found one examples where player uses higher position of the left hand and three where thumb could be seen on the lower fingerboard strings.

Holding: four of his liras are held on the shoulder, seven at the neck and eight on the chest. Vertical slant position of the instrument could be seen in eight cases and head against the instrument in three examples. In one example lira is held like a viol.

Jones has found fifteen examples for playing versus six for not playing and one where singing could be supposed. Twelve cases show a credible way of holding and performance situation and three are not playable.

Five players are soloists, two performing in a duo, four trio and two in an ensemble.

In my iconography, there are two examples where players use higher position of the left hand and five where thumb could be seen on the lower fingerboard strings.

Holding: thirteen of my liras are held on the on the shoulder, four at the neck and nine on the chest. In seven cases could be seen vertical slant position and head against the instrument.

Twenty-four examples show playing versus nine for not playing and six where singing could be supposed. The dramatic effect of “bow in the air” could be seen in one case.

Both credible and not playable way of holding and performance situation are represented by seventeen cases.

Nine players are playing alone, four performing in a duo and eight in an ensemble.

**Type D:** Jones found one examples where player uses higher position of the left hand and one where thumb could be seen on the lower fingerboard strings.

Holding: two of his liras are held on the chest, vertical slant position of the instrument could be seen in one case and head against the instrument in three examples.

Jones has found one example for playing versus three for not playing. One of examples could show a credible way of holding and performance situation and one is not playable.

Three of his players are soloists and one is performing in a duo.

In my case, there is one example where player uses higher position of the left hand and two where thumb could be seen on the lower fingerboard strings.

Holding: two liras are held on the shoulder, three on the chest. Vertical slant position could be seen in one case..

Four examples show playing versus ten for not playing.

Both the credible and not playable way of holding the instrument are represented by one item.

Three players are playing alone, two in a duo one in a trio and two in an ensemble.

**Type E:** Jones has found only one example for not playing as well as one of lira playing in a duo.

I have found one example where player uses higher position of the left hand and two where thumb could be seen on the lower fingerboard strings.

Holding: three liras are held on the shoulder and one at the neck. Both vertical slant position and head against the instrument could be seen in one case.

Five examples show playing versus one for not playing. Four items are credible and one not playable.

Two players are performing in a duo and three in an ensemble.

### 7.3.SUBJECT, PLAYER GENDER PERIOD AND TECHNIQUE:

**Type A:** Jones found that seventeen examples belong to the mythology, five have religious and fifteen secular or other thematic. Male players have been documented in twenty-six, female in two and angels in three cases.

In my iconography sixty-six are belonging to the mythology, fourteen have religious and four secular or other thematic. Seventy-two players are males, two females and nine angels.

**Type B:** Jones found that nine examples belonging to the mythology, seventeen have religious and eight secular or other thematic. Male players have been documented in seventeen, female in any and angels in twelve cases.

My iconography: eleven examples have mythological character, eleven religious and seven secular or other character. Thirteen players are males, five females and nine angels.

**Type C:** Jones found that three examples belong to the mythology, twelve have religious and six secular or other thematic. Male players have been documented in seven, female in one and angels in ten cases.

In my iconography twelve examples belong to the mythology, eighteen have religious and five secular or other character. Sixteen are males, one female and seventeen angels.

**Type D:** Jones found out that one example belongs to the mythology, another one has religious and two secular or other thematic. Male players are represented by three and angels with one example.

I found out that nine items have mythological, two religious and three secular or other character. Fifteen of performers are males, one is female, and one is angel.

**Type E:** Jones found one items belonging to the mythology and one player is a male.

I found five examples which have religious and one (?) with secular or other thematic. Male players have been documented in my analysis with one and angels with four examples.

PERIOD: As expected the most numerous remained the Jones' A-type Lira, followed by his B and C-types but the number of representations coming from certain period changed - sometimes drastically. Jones didn't find any example prior the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, in the case of some types of lira I have found several items.

**Type A, Jones totals of 37<sup>48</sup> and IP totals od 104 items (together 141)<sup>49</sup>:**

From the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century Jones found one and me no example, from the 1st third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century he found fifteen and me even thirty-two items. From the 2<sup>nd</sup> third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Jones has found three, and me seventeen items, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> third of the same century Jones has seven and me twenty-three items. For the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Jones has six and me nineteen examples. For the later period I found eleven items.

**Type B, Jones totals of 34<sup>50</sup> and IP totals od 33 items (67):**

From the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Jones found three and me two examples, from 1st third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century he has twenty-five and me eighteen items, for the 2<sup>nd</sup> third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Jones has two me seven examples and for the 3<sup>rd</sup> third of the same century he has no and me three items. For the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century or later: in both cases there have been no examples.

**Type C, Jones totals of 21 and IP totals od 38 items (59):**

From the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century Jones has found four and me twelve examples. For the 16<sup>th</sup> century; from the 1<sup>st</sup> third Jones has fourteen and me nineteen items, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> third Jones has one and me one example, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> third Jones has no and me one item. Beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Jones has no examples and I have three of them.

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<sup>48</sup> With another item in the Update from 1997, 38.

<sup>49</sup> All those information are to be found in the Appendix, Charts, Comparison of Jones – Pomykalo Analysis no.

<sup>50</sup> With 2 items from Update 1997, 36.

### **Type D, Jones totals of 4 and IP totals of 17 items (21)<sup>51</sup>:**

For the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century both of us have found only one example. From the 1<sup>st</sup> third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Jones has found one and me three items, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> third of the century he has no and me four examples, for the 3<sup>rd</sup> third of the same century Jones has no items and me two of them. From the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Jones has no and I have six examples and for the later period, one example

### **Type E, Jones has one and me six items (7):**

From the period of earlier or mid 15<sup>th</sup> century I have found one example, for the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century both Jones and I have found no examples. 16<sup>th</sup> century: in the 1<sup>st</sup> third Jones has found one and me two examples, for 2<sup>nd</sup> third both Jones and I have found no items.

For last third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and begin of the 17<sup>th</sup> century we haven't found any examples which is understandable because E-Type liras have a body of one of the rare forms of medieval *vielle*.

It was to expect that most representations of A, B and C-types of liras da braccio came from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries - this was the peak of the popularity of its use by *canterini*, *improvvisatori* or humanist *cantori ad lyram*, more artists, poets and musicians. What surprises is the fact that the number of presentations diminishes in the second third or mid of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and then again augments in the last third of the same century and "explodes" at the begin of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when (as believed) lira da braccio already went out of the normal use and its practice but remained linked with lower class of itinerant musicians and mimes. One can notice that same artists whose painted the figures of Apollo, Homer etc. with lira gradually put the violin in their hands. On the other hand, the depictions of the same characters playing or holding lira da braccio continues until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century...

### MEDIUM:

#### **Type A:**

In both cases we found one example for intarsia, Jones found five for woodcut, nine for engraving, twelve for painting, five for drawing, one for watercolour and two for sculpture or relief.

I have found five examples for woodcut, nine for engraving, forty-seven for painting, three for drawing, eighteen for fresco, nine for sculpture or relief, four for ceramics and one for both, illumination and decoration of manuscripts.

#### **Type B:**

Jones found two items for intarsia, eleven for woodcut, one engraving, eighteen for painting, two drawing, and one for fresco.

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<sup>51</sup> This difference happened due to my very rigorous (probably exaggerated?) system to decide what belongs to types A, B, C, and E and what should go directly to D-type.

I have found three intarsias, two woodcuts, three engravings, nineteen paintings, two drawings, and one fresco representing liras.

### **Type C:**

Jones found liras of this type on one intarsia, five woodcuts, one engraving, nine paintings, four frescos and one sculpture or relief.

I have found them on three woodcuts, five engravings, twenty-one paintings, three drawings, two sculptures and one illumination.

### **Type D:**

Jones found these partial representations of lire on four paintings.

I have found it on one engraving, thirteen paintings, one drawing and two sculptures or reliefs.

### **Type E:**

Jones found his example on one engraving. I found mine on four paintings and one marble floor in Siena.

## 7.4.TOTAL SUMMARY for 300 EXAMPLES:

Two Lira iconographies, by S. Jones and me, taken together all types of liras, result in 300 examples, 131 of which are unclear or at least not enough clear for serious analysis.

Left-hand in other than 1st position could be seen in fourteen cases, the thumb on or over the fingerboard strings in twenty-three cases. This means that both should be considered as a realistic part of lira da braccio playing technique.

Holding: most numerous is the holding on the shoulder with eighty-one items, followed by holding on the chest with seventy-two cases and at the neck with thirty-six cases. It should be stressed that the second of them appears in various variants.

Vertical slant position by above mentioned holdings appears in seventy-six cases and head is leaning on or against the instrument (as an additional support by playing?) in thirty-seven cases.

The holding, "at the chest" with its variants could be seen in twelve cases and seemingly "under the chin" one in only four cases, same as the viol-like, in the lap or "in the air", like the Greek lira players on the island of Creta today.

Act of playing is represented in hundred-seventy cases versus the not playing in 109 cases. Act of singing could be supposed in sixteen cases, "bow in the air" because of desired dramatic effect in only one (but supposed in eight cases) and use of a *pizzicato* technique in two cases.

Credible are hundred-thirty-five items and not playable twenty-three items.

Lira solo is performing in ninety-eight cases, in a duo with another instrument in thirty-one cases, in a trio in seventeen and in an ensemble of more than three instruments again in thirty-one cases. This, once again, witness the solistic role of a lira da braccio.

## 8. Conclusion:

What could be said after Jones analysis of 100 and mine of 200 examples? First and most superficial clue would be that number of over 300 depictions of liras (mostly da braccio) support the opinion that lira da braccio was one of the most important and in various works and techniques of art most often represented musical instrument in general and bowed instrument in particular. Due to its double (or more?) signification as symbol of mythological person of Apollo, Arion, Orpheus, Phoebus, Homer, king David etc. on one and as the real instrument played by *canterini*, *improvvisatori*, humanists *cantori ad lyram*, many artists and musicians on other hand, it would be exaggerated to draw a conclusion out of that about how often it was used in the real performance practice of its time.

Anyway, at least we could suppose it was relatively often and on various levels of social life: on the piazzas like San Martino in Florence, in the court like Ferrara, Mantua, Napoli etc. and on numerous humanistic (secular or ecclesiastical) gatherings in all more important cultural centres of late *quattrocento*, whole *cinquecento* and probably even beginning of *seicento* Italy.<sup>52</sup>

As we could see, due to the extremely important and ground-breaking iconographic analysis Sterling Scott Jones made in 1995 (and 1997), there is a lot of information about lira da braccio construction, playing technique, symbolic and significance in its "best days" we could learn due to his and similar studies. Such work could be useful to various interested specialists as for instance the historian of art, musicologist, maker of instruments and of course for ever growing (once extremely small) lira "community" - people who (as "professionals" or amateurs) already play or want to learn how to play this instrument.

There are number of interesting and important details about the construction of liras we could find in iconography. Even if the artists are not always best informed or careful enough in presenting all details, we still can study the multitude of body shapes, neck and fingerboard details, string number and spacing, bridge and bow shapes, sound holes forms and placement etc. Those details could be of great importance for organologists and, as already said, makers of early bowed instruments in general but particularly for those who are engaged with late medieval fiddle and early violin.

Making the lira da braccio in our own time has the small tradition of its own. At the beginning, this was done by several pioneers like some unknown makers who made crude copies of liras today kept in the Copenhagen collection of historical and "historical" instruments, also unknown but much better (reduced) copy of D'Andrea instrument (kept in the Viennese collection of early instruments), continuing with Fabrizio Reginato, Robert Hadaway (who made the liras for British ensemble "Musica Reservata" and for me - both after Viennese originals), John Pringle and some others – who made their instruments almost exclusively on the basis of extant and presumably original liras.

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<sup>52</sup> As we could see, there are also examples of Austrian, Croatian, Dutch, French and German provenience and couple of written sources documenting the use of the instrument in those countries.

Then, a younger generation of makers as Giordano Ceccotti for instance started to make the instruments based on iconographic sources and this trend is going on, giving an important contribution to combined practical study of joint forces of musicologists, musicians-practicians and specialized instrument and string makers like Mimmo Peruffo.

Sterling Scott Jones gave us the models, directions and method how to treat the Lira Iconography, even the genius charts which could be used as a standard for further research. I am convinced that this could and should go on because already those first two analyses, Jones and mine, of 300 items showed how useful this work could be and as already said the collection could be (much?) bigger. Underneath I shall give some of my thoughts on certain problems and peculiarities of Lira Iconography as well as some ideas, advices, how to proceed and where to search.

### **8.1.How to continue?**

What would be the “right” approach to the lira technique of playing today? Mostly, we are coming from usual academic studies indoctrinated with modern violin or viola technique, some from the baroque violin and some from the medieval fiddle. According to that, it is obvious that our approaches will be different as well as the practical results they will achieve. As in the EM in general it is almost impossible to tell what is right and what is wrong; we can only presume that some details could be closer and other more distant from that what we know or better, suppose, about the role, use and performance practice of the lira da braccio.

Also, as already said, since lira da braccio has been an improvising instrument there are consequently almost no notated piece of music left. The only exception is the Ms Pesaro, where one of the owners decided to write down a small chord "bank" for lira in comparison with the lute chords, adding two fragments for lira. And that's all what we got, beside a number of sometimes not very clear written sources and luckily enough, an abundant iconography.

Apart already mentioned dangers when taking iconography for granted there is also possibility that we, based on about 300 representations (up to now) where lira appears alone or with other instruments, examine its role, signification and use and forget other important reasons like lira's symbolic role etc.

Anyway, even if the possible reason why lira appeared on some or many pictures is a symbolic one, those representations could teach us a lot about the positions of both hands - if not looking through the eyes of (modern) violinist. I think it would be better to consider the less "academic" technique used nowadays by blues, Roma or Sinti, Indian and other traditional folk fiddlers i.e., violin players - techniques which are also chronologically closer to the baroque on one and medieval technique on the other side.

When I say "technique" I mean all those details of holding the liras as Sterling Scott Jones put together as a part of his throughout iconographical analysis. Of course, the images don't give a clue of a sound, how the chords have been performed and how the whole thing have been improvised.

But still we got many details which could serve to us as a starting point, the foundation, on which we could build our individual reconstructed technique of playing and the “repertory”.

Which, I think, is conform with the supposed practice at the end of 15th and during the 16th centuries; various types and sizes of liras demanded slightly different approach, various roles which lira played too. As with the blues, rock or traditional folk music players, among *vielle* and *lira da braccio* players must have always been several levels of skill or capabilities. Some of them were primarily poets who accompanied their (learned by heart or ad hoc improvised) songs with couple of simple chords, others singing their own or songs by other poets with more ambitious and varied chordal accompaniment. As today, the real *virtuosi* have been rare and it seems that they have been capable to improvise "everything" simultaneously and without any preparation: words, melody, accompaniment and certainly virtuoso pre-, inter- and postludes - on any given theme.<sup>53</sup>

Later, during the 16th century *lira* continued to play chords but probably started to use the ornamentation, diminution rules as any other soloistic or ensemble instrument.

## 8.2. Some particularities and problems of Lira Iconography

Here, due to my own experience, I wanted to mention some problems and peculiarities of Lira Iconography and give some ideas how to search for it.

So, what are we looking for in the case we want to find or to manage Lira Iconography? Due to the various forms under whose *lira* appears I decided to follow the Jones categorisation (A to E-types of instruments) but maybe it is easier to decide which factors are not necessarily determining what *lira* was than those which would be "obligatory"...

-body shape: besides those defined by Jones A, B, C, D and E, there are also some other types like those having fantastic, pseudo antique shapes and those which are not *vielle* or *viols* nor early violins but could probably represent some kind of *liras* or at least the elements of its playing technique.

-the shape of the peg box: as already said, the leaf shaped, "typical" for *viella* and *lira* is also found in early violins (see G. Ferrari).

-number of strings: a total number of five strings should be the absolute minimum, because it also exists with the *vielle*, just like one string "off". Accordingly, two "off" should be the best criteria.

-the shape of sound holes: although the C-shape sound holes (facing inwards) predominates, and F and S are rare, there are even the { } shaped and rosette - both present on the late *vielles* and the early violins too which means that even this detail is not relevant either.

-so called "indentation" on the bottom (at the tailpiece) present on all (presumably) original *liras*. Although I found some more of them, they also appear on early violins (see Ferrari etc.) and therefore cannot be relevant.

Well, what should then be the minimum requirements that we could suppose one instrument with less than 7 strings in general (i.e., five on and 2 off the fingerboard) could be called "*lira*" *da braccio*?

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<sup>53</sup> Which, as we know due to many testimonials, is not completely true; already *canterini* and especially *cantori ad lyram* prepared their skills of improvisation learning the rhetorical art of memory and the formulaic elements.

I think that late examples of *vielle* (mostly with four strings on and one off the fingerboard; Jones C-Type of *lira*) at least sometime could have been used as a proto *lira* and could therefore be called as such. Many years ago (in the mid-nineties) my already mentioned Viennese colleague Rainer Ullreich donated to me an instrument of this type (made after an intarsia in Studiolo di Federico di Montefeltro in Urbino). This enabled me to make various experiments then, in the meantime and recently showing in the practice that on the similar instrument would be possible to perform a whole series of *lira* chords without any problem.

This has been done based on:

a) Four strings on the fingerboard and one off it, using Moravia tuning II, equidistant placement of (fingerboard) strings, respectively with two lowest strings G-g (nos. 2 and 3 counted from the lowest D) moved a bit closer. This experiment shows that the number of 5 strings (4 + 1) regardless of the shape of the body was sufficient that the former *vielle* could function as a "normal" (except for the number of strings and shape...) *lira da braccio*.

We must ask ourselves, what was the function of that Moravia's octave just like the other octave (outside the fingerboard) on the *lira da braccio* with seven strings? Most likely to amplify the bass in the chord, due to the problematic tone quality of the low gut strings of the time.

First problem is already mentioned fact how good the artist knew the instrument and its playing technique, was his goal to make as accurate and detailed representation of this or his intentions have been primarily of symbolic nature? Interesting enough, sometimes we have examples where all details are perfectly visible and correct, even the position of one hand (for instance the left one) is credible but the holding of the bow not realistic or wrong. Of course, the cases when the artist didn't know enough (or at all) about the *lira* are mostly clear.

Then, on one hand examples of (late medieval or early renaissance?) *vielle* continue to appear in the earlier 16th century, and on the other hand, early violins use "characteristic" body shapes (type B) and leaf peg boxes of the *lira da braccio* (again see by G. Ferrari). Even if in the later 16th century and beginning of the 17th centuries, from a certain point, typical *lira da braccio* players such as Apollo, Arion, king David, Homer and Orpheus appear more often playing the violin we still have the paradox, that at the same time depictions of the real and already obsolete *lira da braccio* (in the hands of the same people; mostly on the title pages of printed editions of Ovid etc. or of the contemporary poets from the Netherlands and Germany) appear until the end of the 17th century. The good question is, why?

There are also cases where we could suppose that an artist intended to depict the scene of an actual, real, performance even to combine it with a symbolic one. For instance, there are several examples of pictures (frescos or paintings) of clearly religious nature where in the centre the main actors (Virgin with Child, with or without Saints) are represented, above them there are many angels playing various soft and loud instruments but underneath the main actors there is a bigger and more important "angel" playing the *lira* – alone or in duo with lute.

This association is particularly interesting because of similar role of both instruments by *improvvisatori* i.e., *cantori ad lyram* and known and well documented practice of the so called *tenorista* - who played mostly bowed or plucked instrument as a helper of the singer/*lira* or lute player.

Also, in images with religious thematic we see lira player in the middle of angel concert calmly tuning his (or her?) instrument and again we must ask ourselves why or what was the symbolic in that?

Another (and very numerous indeed) peculiarity of Lira Iconography are examples where lira is playing with several instruments, from trio to the small "orchestra". This could sometimes have clear symbolic reason but at least in some cases could show the real act of playing and that after its days of glory lira became a "normal" instrument who has been often asked for in various spectacles like *intermedi*, theatre presentations, important weddings etc.

And there is the last special category of pictures: portraits. Beside already mentioned Apollos, Homers and Orfeos (whose too could represent some living models, maybe some known singers/players), there are several depictions which are showing portraits of lira da braccio players, probably some renown *canterini* or *cantori ad lyram*; three of them are holding the A-type instrument, two the B-type, one with C-type lira probably representing Leonardo, two of the D-type published by Jones (in both cases the musicians are tuning their liras...) and one probably showing composer Luca Marenzio - altogether nine of them. In three cases they are tuning the instrument and in one case holding a lira where (apart from two offboard and one fingerboard strings) most strings are broken. Certainly, symbolic but which?

Back to the problems (having nothing to do with artist's good or bad knowledge of liras...). Even if average picture you can found in web will allow you to study many important details of its construction and playing technique there are some (exact number of strings, sometimes the curvature of bridge and similar) which could be seen only on the photos of the best quality (higher number of pixels) and those are rare or available only for sale through various art market websites, stock photography agencies or companies selling the pictures with high resolutions for (mostly) big money, as for instance Art net, Getty, Alamy, Flickr (partially free) and others. If you are not member of any faculty etc. but are working as an "independent researcher" investing (apart of huge amount of your free time) your own money, this could be a big problem.

### **8.3. How to search and to find more examples of Lira Iconography?**

But how and where one could search for liras anyway? Due to my own experience the first place would be the great database of my colleague Barry Pearce, the "Bowed Strings Iconography Project"<sup>54</sup>, Iconography Database-Early Music Sources.com, home pages of organizations like RIdIM (Repertoire Internationale d'Iconographie Musicale), well-known and larger collections such as Albertina and KHM in Vienna and other art collections or museum websites, Ministero della cultura (Beni culturali.it) of Italy etc.

Then, as it seems some artists have had particular predilection for liras and left several of works depicting them like Fra Bartolomeo, Giovanni Bellini, Agnolo Bronzino, Giovanni Cariani, Vittore Carpaccio, Cima da Conegliano, Lorenzo Costa, Lorenzo de Credi, Guercino, Lorenzo Leonbrunno, Pier Francesco Mola, Bartolomeo Montagna, Marcantonio Raimondi, Raphael, several artist of the family Santacroce, Andrea Schiavone, Luca Signorelli, Giovanni di Pietro "Spagna", Tiziano, Jacopo Tintoretto, Pietro Vanucci il

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<sup>54</sup> Don't search under "lira da braccio" because you shall not find it even in the advanced search.

Perugino, even such late artist as Jan Brueghel II and Hendrik van Balen. For some of them we even know that they have been singing to their own accompaniment on the lira; Leonardo, Bramante, Gaudenzio Ferrari, Timoteo Viti and maybe Rafael, etc. So, I tried and found some more items of Lira Iconography searching the web under above mentioned names. There are too numerous plaques in bronze depicting (mostly) Apollo and Arion playing or posing with liras.

It could be useful and successful to search the works of art under the names of persons depicted, for instance under Apollo, Arion, Homer, Orpheus, sometimes Phoebus, king David etc. Or search the title pages of printed works by some ancient (like Ovid) or renaissance humanists or poets like Lorenzo il Magnifico, Poliziano, Ficino, Sannazzaro etc.

One is for sure: the world wide web is full of liras and searching the Wikimedia Commons, Instagram, Pinterest, Face Book etc. will always give some results - BUT rarely of good quality (resolution) and in most cases with insufficient or wrong information on author's name, date, title and place the work of art is kept today.

Because of that I shall end this study with the appeal:

If you are lucky and found some (presumably new) examples of Lira Iconography and decided to publish it somewhere in the web, on Instagram, Pinterest or in some specialized FB groups, it means that you have already certain or bigger interest in this subject. So, PLEASE, be so kind and publish at least the name of the artist and title of the work. If you even add the place where this work is to be found, is kept today this will be of greatest help not only to you but also for any other person, colleague, fellow musician, musicologist or simply an *aficionado* of art in general or musical iconography in particular - with special interest for lira da braccio and lira da gamba i.e., *lirone*.

As the best example how this should be done I shall name two persons; for instance, each and every publication (of individual work/s or in her articles or books) of prof. Bettina Hoffmann and the great work done by already mentioned colleague Barry Pierce and his "Bowed Strings Iconography Project".

I hope this article will be of some help to other colleagues, especially those of younger generations of Lira *aficionados* - as Jones research and his book has been for me and musicians of my generation. Although I invested a lot of time in this study (and made numerous controls) *errare humanum est* and it is possible that some errors (especially in numbers) remained. So, be so kind and let me know in the case you find some. Also, I am always very interested to hear your reactions and other people's opinion.

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