



## Quiet Practice

By Ronn McFarlane

Practice very quietly to master a difficult passage.

It is well known that one should practice slowly when working out a difficult passage. But quiet practice is extremely helpful as well. A feather-light touch relaxes the hands (both hands) and gives them more agility and sensitivity.

Many technical problems are caused by the physical tension we hold in our hands and arms when playing. And it is not uncommon to increase that tension when approaching a difficult spot in the music. Since much of that tension is automatically dropped when we play very quietly, it allows the lutenist to get out of his/her own way.

So, practice those tricky passages slowly and quietly. Then gradually build up your speed at a very quiet dynamic. When the passage is mastered up to tempo at the quiet dynamic, you can gradually add more volume until the desired volume is reached. Be sure to remain as relaxed as possible when increasing the volume.

Be sure that your energy and intensity remain high when practicing quietly. It is a natural tendency to play with less energy or mental focus when playing quietly. Please guard against this.

Finally, don't practice mistakes! Find a tempo and volume which are slow enough and quiet enough to play the passage correctly every time.

*Readers of this magazine familiar with Ronn McFarlane's work will know that in addition to being a master of the historical*

*lute repertoire, he has written some rather fine lute music of his own. I once heard him play "Cathedral Cave" during a Lute Society concert in London, and was very moved by its haunting beauty. At last we are about to have the chance to both hear and play some of Ronn's original music with the combined release of the CD and book Indigo Road.*

*Both contain the same pieces of music - originally written for 10 course solo lute in renaissance tuning, although many can be played on an 8 course instrument. On the CD some pieces are enriched by added instruments - bass, flute, harp, percussion, cittern, harmonium and even string quartet, but the original lute solos lie at their heart. They cover the full spectrum of Ronn's compositional style, ranging from those influenced by the renaissance and baroque to the completely modern. Indigo Road will surely be a very welcome addition to the modern lute repertoire.*

*I am particularly grateful to Ronn for allowing a sample piece from the book to be included in this edition of the Quarterly. He describes his composition "Gigue" as a baroque-style dance, in his own words: "written somewhat in the style of Silvius Leopold Weiss. However, a certain Scottish flavor crept in to the piece. So, if Weiss had lived in Scotland instead of Germany, it might have sounded a bit like this!"*

*The book containing the music of 'Indigo Road' is due to be published by Mignarda Editions and the CD will be released by Dorian Recordings in November.*

*Denys Stephens*

