

Courante

duBut le Pere

arr. Tim Brace

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Guitar

The sheet music is written for guitar in treble clef, key of D major (one sharp), and 3/4 time. It consists of seven staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 1. The second staff starts at measure 4. The third staff starts at measure 8. The fourth staff starts at measure 13. The fifth staff starts at measure 18. The sixth staff starts at measure 23. The seventh staff starts at measure 27. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and includes various chordal textures and melodic lines. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the seventh staff.

NOTES for Courante by duBut le Pere

This elegant courante from 17th century France presents many challenges to transcription. The music of this period is very graceful, but somewhat sparse by modern day guitar standards. I have resisted the transcriber's temptation to "fill in" the chords. The transcription is literal from the lute manuscript. What I HAVE tried to do is to give a notion of style brise and how it sounds. The lute tablature does not give pitch durations. The "broken style" of this type of piece (much imitated by keyboardists of the period) helps give the piece its forward momentum. The player should hold notes as long as is reasonable. Don't break any fingers, though. Also, allow bass notes to sound as long as is reasonable within the harmonic flow. Transcribing this piece in one "voice" would make it look more like the original tablature, but wouldn't give the modern guitarist the connected melody the lutenist would have assumed and understood. Transcribing the "correct" voicings would be cumbersome. I tried to find a happy medium.

In this type of piece, the eighth notes should be "swung" as in jazz. The degree of inequality of duration between each pair of notes is up to you. Personally, I like to vary it a bit within the piece, playing some even and others uneven.

The places where a "(" is indicated means an ornament was indicated in the tablature. ")" means ornament from above. The type of ornament (pull, trill, etc.) is up to you. It is appropriate to put in longer ornaments (trills) at cadences. Experiment a bit. Insert more ornaments if you like; the 17th century lutenist was well trained in improvisation (that's where Preludes came from), and there was significant variance from one player to another regarding the frequency of ornaments.

And finally, it was common in this type of piece to repeat the last phrase one more time at the end. The tablature of this piece did not show that, but I have seen it often enough to consider it optional on any piece of this period. To try this out, play each half twice, then play the final line (with the upbeat) one more time.

Have fun! I hope you'll find this music as charming as I do.

Tim Brace 4/30/2001