

*Blame not my lute*, Jacob Heringman, lute, Magnatune.com / The Lute Society

'Fifty-eight instrumental tracks are exceptionally soothing and are perfect for any time you'd like to bring a little peace into your

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day'. Nice try, Magnatune, but the real point of this CD is as a companion piece to the Lute Society's publication *58 Very Easy Pieces for Renaissance Lute*. It's available from the Lute Society or as a download from magnatune.com, who originally released the recording in 2006. You can also stream it online for free from Magnatune, but the commercials after each of the 58 tracks become wearing after a while (these disappear if you subscribe).

The slide up to the bass note in bar three of the first track is the first indication that all will not be exactly as written. Jacob Heringman follows the advice in the introduction to the book that 'more advanced players might care to practise their hand at ornamentation and division-making on some of the materials here'. So while the primary purpose of the CD may be to illustrate to students how the pieces should sound, and to help choose which pieces to learn, it's also a valuable master class in how to 'deck other songs and dances with like flowers and ornaments' (as Adrian Le Roy expressed it in 1574). Jacob Heringman typically plays each piece straight the first time, then repeats with divisions, bringing a basic text to life. This brings the total playing time of the album up to 47 minutes: these pieces are very much miniatures.

Jacob Heringman's playing is always a pleasure to hear, with distinctive and attractive gut stringing on all of the six courses of the instrument, complemented by a warm recorded sound quality. He approaches even the smallest piece with respect and conviction, turning it into a miniature performance piece and thereby encouraging students to do the same. I'm not sure that any lute music is actually 'very easy', but the book and CD do a good job of grading the music in order of difficulty, encouraging the student with a sense of progression and continuing achievement.

*Peter Martin*