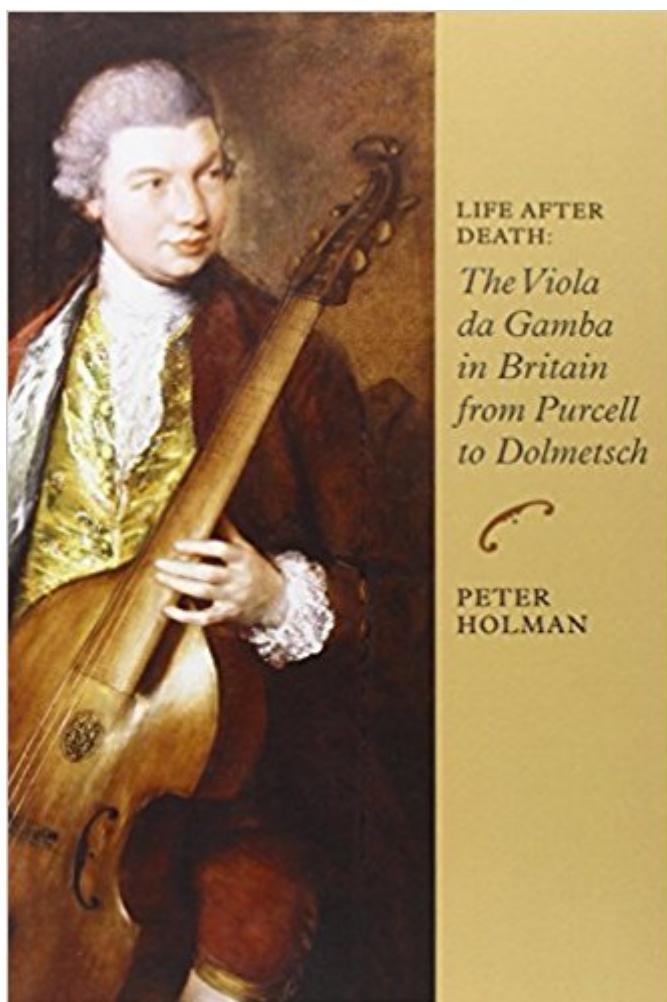


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# Life After Death: The Viola Da Gamba In Britain From Purcell To Dolmetsch (Music In Britain, 1600-1900)



## Synopsis

It is normally thought that the bass viol or viola da gamba dropped out of British musical life in the 1690s, and that Henry Purcell was the last composer to write for it. Peter Holman shows how the gamba changed its role and function in the Restoration period under the influence of foreign music and musicians; how it was played and composed for by the circle of immigrant musicians around Handel; how it was part of the fashion for exotic instruments in the middle of the century; and how the presence in London of its greatest eighteenth-century exponent, Charles Frederick Abel, sparked off a revival in the 1760s and 70s. Later chapters investigate the gamba's role as an emblem of sensibility among aristocrats, artists and intellectuals, including the Countess of Pembroke, Sir Edward Walpole, Ann Ford, Laurence Sterne, Thomas Gainsborough and Benjamin Franklin, and trace Abel's influence and legacy far into the nineteenth century. A concluding chapter is concerned with its role in the developing early music movement, culminating with Arnold Dolmetsch's first London concerts with old instruments in 1890.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

O]utstanding research [...] a valuable reference book that I will no doubt consult again and again. --Eighteenth Century Music[A] fascinating study that has significantly enlightened the dark ages of a much loved instrument. --Music and LettersB]eautifully presented and Holman's lucid and elegant prose is a joy to read. [...] This is a book suitable for players and scholars alike, which makes a

valuable contribution to our understanding of the viol; I recommend it wholeheartedly. --Early Music

PETER HOLMAN is Professor Emeritus of Historical Musicology at Leeds University, and director of The Parley of Instruments, the choir Psalmody, and the Suffolk Villages Festival.

Holman's careful research into Karl Friedrich Abel and his small London circle forms the core of this book. A thorough compilation of huge quantities of data about the period after the end of the French 17C kings until and including the rediscovery of the gamba by the Dolmetsches. Amazing the thin, but surviving trail throughout those centuries! Thank goodness the enlightenment gave rise to a sense of historic necessity which made it possible for so many threads of information to survive the two World Wars.

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