



Scholar Series

Dr. Jeffrey Noonan, early guitars

Sunday, January 31st, 2021

2:00 PM CST

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Program

I

Renaissance Guitar

Prelude (*Tiers livre de Tablature de Guiterre*, 1552)

Adrian le Roy
(c. 1520 – 1598)

Pavanne (*Le Premier Livre ... De Guiterre*, 1552)
Galliarde

Guillaume Morlaye
(fl. 1550)

Chanson: J'ay le rebours (by Pierre Certon, *Second livre de Guiterre* 1556) arr. **Adrian le Roy**

II

Vihuela

Fantasia del Quarto Tono (*Los seys libros del Delphin de musica...*, 1538)

Luis de Narváez
(fl.1526-1549)

Fantasia X que contrehaze la harpa en la manera de Ludovico
(*Tres libros de musica en cifras para vihuela*, 1546)

Alonso Mudarra
(c.1510-1580)

III

Baroque Guitar

Preludio (*Varii Scherzi di Sonata per la Chitaria Spagnola, Libro 4*,1648)
Ciaconna

Francesco Corbetta
(c. 1615 – 1681)

Suite in A minor (*Livre de Guitarre, Book 1*, 1682)
Prelude
Gigue

Robert de Viseé
(c. 1655 – 1732/3)

Canarios (*Libro segundo, de cifras sobre la guitarra española*, 1675)

Gaspar Sanz
(1640 – 1710)

IV *19th-Century/Romantic Guitar*

<i>Etude #3</i> (<i>25 Etudes Mélodiques Progressives</i> , op. 60, c. 1851)	Matteo Carcassi (1792/3 – 1853)
<i>Lied ohne Worte</i> (<i>Bardenklänge</i> , op. 13, 1851)	Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806 – 1856)
<i>Capricho árabe, Serenata para guitarra</i> (1892)	Francesco Tárrega (1852 – 1909)
<i>Prelude 2, Melodia capadocia</i> (<i>Cinq Préludes</i> , 1940)	Hietor Villa-Lobos (1887 – 1959)

Program Notes

In preparing this program, I had the opportunity to not only dig into the repertoire for each of the various instruments and the subtle technical and organological changes that took place over some 200 years, but to consider the cultural and musical roles each played as well. In the end, I realized that for players and listeners in the 21st century, “the guitar” is not just one instrument or one thing, but more of a process. Through historical research and the dedicated work of luthiers, we have the opportunity to experience the guitar across centuries and musical cultures.

Today’s program introduces a variety of instruments and illustrates some of the developments—physical and musical—that played out over several centuries in the world of guitarists. And while these days, musicologists tend to avoid using Darwinian themes about evolution and development, our presentation allows viewers and listeners to see and hear how these instruments, their playing techniques and repertoire pointed to our modern guitar world.

I. Renaissance Guitar

In the early 20th century, guitarists and guitar historians often identified instruments from ancient Hittite or Greek carvings as early examples of the guitar. This is a bit of a stretch, but there is no doubt that strung instruments with an elongated figure-eight or hourglass-shaped body have been part of many musical cultures. In any case, the tiny **Renaissance Guitar** is the first historical instrument to be identified as a guitar for which we have notated music.

This early guitar appears to have developed in Spain but achieved wide popularity in the 16th century in France and England. The earliest published music for the Renaissance Guitar appeared in Spain, but French player/composers created much of the surviving repertoire.

Like its cousin, the Renaissance Lute, the Renaissance Guitar had double-strings or courses and was plucked or strummed with the fingers. Its frets are strings tied around the neck, a characteristic of guitars and lutes until the very late 18th century that allows the player to fine tune both strings and frets.

Also like the lute, the Renaissance Guitar played the standard repertoire of the day—a variety of dances, arrangements of vocal music (sacred and secular) and complex contrapuntal fancies or fantasies. Both instruments were valued for their abilities to subtly accompany the voice as well as to imitate ensemble voices in song arrangements.



Renaissance Guitar
based on 16th-century models
(Washington State, 1980s)

The pieces on today's program include samples of the early guitar's core repertoire—a little suite of dances by Adrian Le Roy and Guillaume Morlaye (both French), a song by Pierre Certon arranged for guitar and a sophisticated contrapuntal fantasia. All of these pieces appeared in print in France around 1550.

The instrument played for this performance is a reproduction built in the late 1990s or early 2000s. Its design is based on illustrations from French guitar books. The instrument has no signature or label but may well be the work of the American luthier Lawrence Brown. It features a lovely spruce top and quilted maple back and sides. I have strung the instrument in a combination of gut and New Nylgut, a synthetic string material that closely mimics the sound and feel of organic gut. Its four courses sound a 4th higher than the modern guitar at *g'g-c'c'-e'e'-a'* (from bass to treble.) The guitar is pitched at A=415 and in a quarter comma temperament.

II. Vihuela

The second set on today's program focuses on another Spanish instrument, the **Vihuela**. This instrument flourished in Spain in the mid-16th century and a version of it was in use in Italy at the same time.

The Vihuela shares many of the principle physical characteristics of the guitar—a somewhat figure-eight shape, a flat back, a fretted finger board and a peghead extending straight out of the neck—but in its time players considered it a similar but independent instrument. Perhaps the most important marker of the Vihuela from the guitar is tuning. Strung like a lute with six or seven courses, it followed the lute's tuning pattern. And while lutes were known and played in Spain in the 16th century, the Vihuela proved far more popular and served the same purpose as

the Renaissance lute at Spanish courts. Some modern historians, in fact, describe the Vihuela as the “Spanish lute.”

Like repertoire for Renaissance Guitar and lute, music for Vihuela appeared in tablature notation. Tablature represents the neck of an instrument on a four- or six-line staff and indicates left-hand finger positions. Examples of various forms of tablature appear over the course of today’s performance. Composers for the Vihuela appear on the cutting edge of 16th-century notation when several of them included tempo indications for some of their pieces. These tempo markings include symbols as well as texted instructions.

The first book of tablature for Vihuela appeared in 1526 and over the course of the century, another ten or more collections followed. Many of the player/composers of this repertoire had strong associations with the royal court, including Luys Milán, Luys de Narváez and Alonso Mudarra, all of whom were likely singers and clerics as well as vihuelists.

The pieces played on today’s program reflect the typical repertoire of lutenists and vihuelists of the mid-16th century. The *fantasia*, often improvised in the moment, held place of honor as a demonstration of musical and technical sophistication. Mudarra’s tenth fantasie mimics the playing of the royal harpist, Ludovico, with its cross-string voicings and tricky syncopations.

The Vihuela played on today’s program was built by Alan Suits in Santa Fe NM in 2019. It features a wonderful spruce top, an inset rosette and decorative inlays with back and sides of padouk and bubinga. Alan bases his instrument design on 16th-century images as well as measurements from the few surviving vihuelas held in museums. Like the Renaissance Guitar, it is strung in gut and New Nylgut, pitched at A=415 and tempered in quarter-comma. While vihuelas appeared in a variety of sizes, this instrument is tuned like the Renaissance Lute: *G-c-f-a-d'-g'* in unison courses.



Baroque Guitar

The five-course guitar probably developed in the last quarter of the 16th century and was undoubtedly played alongside the smaller Renaissance guitar. Like its smaller forerunner, this larger instrument may well have developed in Spain and been introduced to Italy through Naples.



In fact, in the 17th century, the small four-course guitar became known as the “Neopolitan guitar” while the larger 5-course instrument was identified as the “Spanish guitar.”

Early in the 17th century, the five-course guitar became an important accompanying instrument for the new solo singing style, monody. Professional singers used the instrument on stage in theatrical presentations beginning the late 16th century and by the early years of the new century songbooks appeared with vocal melodies and chord symbols for guitar accompaniment.

This early repertory featured a notation called *alfabeto*. The name refers to the use of letters to represent the various left-hand chord shapes, many of which would be quite familiar to modern guitarists. A repertory of *alfabeto* guitar solos quickly developed which featured intricate right-hand strumming patterns.

By mid-century, a new technique mixed the strumming of *alfabeto* with the right-hand plucking of the lute and resulted in a sophisticated technique and expanding repertoire of solo music and vocal accompaniments. In their study, James Tyler and Paul Sparks note that nearly 200 collections of solo guitar music and some 250 song collections with guitar accompaniment survive from 17th-century Italy alone. There are, of course, numerous French, English and Spanish sources as well. The individual pieces for the Baroque Guitar number in the thousands.

In addition to an added bass-side course, the **Baroque Guitar** has a longer body and fingerboard than the Renaissance guitar. In fact, the string length of most surviving Baroque Guitars exceeds that of the modern classical guitar. While some luthiers built relatively plain instruments (see the surviving Stradivarius guitars, for example), a good number produced guitars featuring intricate inlay, exotic materials and flamboyant decoration. A special feature of many instruments is the rosette, the delicate sculpture decorating the sound hole. Many rosettes, architectural in design and execution, were often carved from exotic materials or built up with handmade paper.

While the Baroque Guitar's initial popularity began in Italian courts and theatres, it has strong cultural and musical associations with the French court of Louis XIV. Besides his affinity for dance, Louis XIV studied and played the guitar and employed a number of the continent's finest guitarists. These include the Italian Francesco Corbetta and his French student Robert de Visée.

Guitarists across the continent employed a variety of tuning systems for the Baroque Guitar, the differences typically based on the stringing of the lower courses. But even with actual low bass strings on the Baroque Guitar, its timbre and texture is light and almost transparent. Composer/players utilized this sound to create shimmering cross-string scale runs called *campanella*, named for their bell-like quality. In addition, they utilized a sophisticated strummed *rasgueado* technique to add a variety of textures and colors to their pieces.

The first set of pieces for Baroque Guitar comes from one of Francesco Corbetta's published collections. The opening *Prelude* includes moments of *campanella* and the following *Ciaconna* mixes *punteado* (plucked) passages interspersed with strummed *rasgueado*. Corbetta's student, Robert de Visée played lute, theorbo and guitar at the courts of Louis XIV and Louis XV. His *Suite in A Minor* reflects the importance of dance music as the French court. Like his teacher, Visée blends intricate passage work with accents of strummed chords. Modern guitarists might be interested to learn that the mixed notation allowed composers to indicate not only the direction of the various strums but also whether to use fingers or thumb to sound the strings.



The final set of pieces for Baroque Guitar comes from the Spaniard Gaspar Sanz. Sanz employed a slightly different stringing for his guitar, with no actual bass pitches. Listeners might notice a slightly more shimmery quality to Sanz's music. And while Corbetta and Visée offered works that reflected musical tastes across the continent, Sanz frequently produced music that might be heard as character pieces. This music often conveys the rhythms and harmonic patterns of Iberian music, including works that purport to reflect the music of Spain's New World natives.

The Baroque Guitar played today was built in 2015 by Stephen Barber and Sandi Harris in London. The spruce soundboard, decorated with bone and ebony, also features an incredible parchment rosette. The back and sides of the instrument are of alternating persimmon ebony and rosewood with

white holly spacing strips. Barber & Harris modeled this instrument on a surviving instrument built by Jacopo Checchucci in Livorno in 1623. The guitar is strung in gut, tuned to A=415 with a 1/6 comma temperament. The tuning is *aa-d'd-gg-bb-e'* (Corbetta and Visée) or *aa-d'd'-gg-bb-e'* (Sanz.)

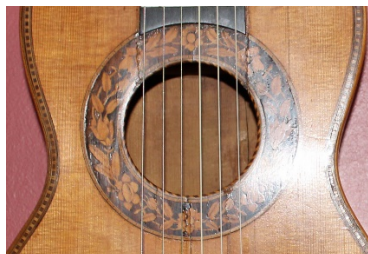
The Classical and Romantic Guitar

The guitar fell out of favor in royal and noble circles in the period between 1750 and 1800, but remained popular across the continent. It had numerous adherents in Spain and Portugal outside of the upper crust and began its long association with “the folk” in these years. It likely acquired another course of strings on the bass side in these years, making it a six-course instrument with eleven or twelve strings. The popular strumming style of Spanish players favored a strong bass and the lower courses eventually included at least one if not two bass strings.

String technology played a significant role in the development of the guitar in the 18th century. While “overspun” strings (a gut or silk core wrapped in a fine metal thread) first appeared in the late 17th century, guitarists did not really employ them for nearly 100 years. The greater power and clarity of these “wound” strings allowed the guitarist to tackle the new *gallant* musical style and to be heard more clearly. And while this change in string technology did not immediately lead to fewer strings, at some point in the last quarter of the 18th century, the guitar lost its courses and became a six-string instrument. This may well have occurred first in Italy, eventually spreading to France, Spain, Germany and England. In any case, by the first decade of the 19th century, luthiers from Spain to Germany were building instruments carrying six single strings.

As significantly, guitar composers and players abandoned tablature for standard musical notation. This change reflected an attempt by player/composers to return the guitar to the mainstream musical culture of the era. Compositions and pedagogy for the guitar through the 19th century reflected the values of the Classical and Romantic eras with etudes, sonatas and chamber music aimed at a broad middle- and upper-class cosmopolitan public.

While we don't have a late 18th-century transitional guitar for today's program, we do have two instruments built in the 19th century. The first is a small anonymous American instrument and it reflects many of the era's physical changes to the guitar. It retains a rather narrow body, reinforcing its relation to the earlier Baroque Guitar. But this instrument has lost all ostentation. It has a simple bridge, no fanciful architectural rosette but a restrained pattern inlaid around the open sound hole. More significantly, this instrument also has a raised fingerboard that extends onto the guitar's body and a saddle on the bridge that elevates the strings. Both of these changes enhance the power of the instrument and the saddle adds to the clarity of the individual strings. The top of the neck is no longer a “peghead” but now a headstock with mechanical tuners.



This instrument has no label or signature, but its simple design and construction suggest an American builder. Its size and construction suggest mid-century construction. The St. Louis luthier Rich Worthington restored the instrument around 1996. It is strung with Aquila's Ambra 800 strings, a formula derived from 19th-century string design, and tuned to A=430.



The second 19th-century instrument played on today's program dates to 1899 and came from the Madrid workshop of José Ramírez, founder of the famed line of luthiers and guitars. Ramírez guitars became famous in the hands of Andres Segovia, whose first Ramírez dates from about 1914. This 1899 instrument was likely sold in Paris; its original case had a shipping label from Madrid to Paris and a small French label is next to the builder's label inside the body.



The instrument has rosewood back and sides and a spruce soundboard. The decorative rosette is eye-catching but not ornate and features small abalone insets set among contrasting concentric circles. Curiously, the instrument has tuning pegs rather than mechanical tuners, a bit of a throwback to the earlier century. Or perhaps it was intended as a flamenco guitar which traditionally carries pegs rather than gears. In any case, the

instrument sounds and plays wonderfully, offering listeners a chance to hear the sounds of guitar that might have been familiar to Tárrega, Segovia, Pujol, or Villa-Lobos.

The musical selections featuring these 19th-century instruments span over a century. The first set, from Matteo Carcassi's well-known set of studies, were selected to illustrate the clarity of the instrument as well as some aspects of 19th-century technique. Attentive listeners will see in the video that I am playing these pieces with the little finger of my right hand braced on the soundboard. Carcassi and a number of his contemporaries espoused this technique, based in early lute and guitar playing. While later guitarists including Giuliani, Legnani, Mertz, Regondi, Tárrega and others eventually abandoned this braced right-hand position, well into the 20th century it remained the standard position for many classical guitar players. In the late 1920s, a number of prominent American guitarists downplayed Andres Segovia's accomplishments principally because he embraced such "new-fangled" innovations like a footstool, an elevated right-hand position and the *apoyando* rest stroke.

J.K. Mertz held an esteemed position in this country through the 19th century and his *Bardenklänge*, was published about the same time this little guitar was built. Perhaps some talented American player performed this very piece on this instrument. Mertz embraced the Romantic ethos with his *Bardenklänge*, an anthology of character pieces. Mertz, clearly evoking Mendelssohn's *Lieder ohne Worte* (first published in 1829), utilizes the Romantic guitar's wide range of dynamics and lyricism to create a miniature of aching intimacy and longing.

The final piece on today's program brings us into the 20th century with a standard work of the classical guitar repertoire. While the guitar was an essential part of Brazil's musical culture, Villa-Lobos drew on the inspiration and encouragement of the Spaniard Andres Segovia for his guitar compositions. Following the success of his *Etudes* of the 1920s, Villa-Lobos produced his *Five Preludes* some fifteen years later. Like the Legnani, each of the pieces in this collection draws on the technical and tonal character of the guitar, but each offers an idiosyncratic approach to the instrument. As a result, these pieces from the first half of the 20th century remain fresh for players and listeners still.

If this little essay has not offered all the details and background you might want, I encourage you to check out the following books, excellent resources on the early, pre-electric guitar—

The Guitar and Its Music by James Tyler and Paul Sparks

C.F. Martin and His Guitars by Philip Gura

The Guitar in America: Victorian Era to Jazz Age by Jeffrey Noonan

-- Program Notes by Dr. Jeffrey Noonan

BIOGRAPHY



Trained as a classical guitarist, **Jeffrey Noonan** has played lute, theorbo and early guitars for some forty years across the Midwest. Based in St. Louis, he has performed throughout the region with various ensembles including Shakespear's Bande, Early Music St. Louis, Armonia e Passione, Kansas City Baroque Consortium, Bourbon Baroque (Louisville, KY), the Madison Early Music Festival (Madison, WI), Ars Antigua (Chicago), and Musik Ekklesia (Indianapolis, IN.) In addition, Jeff has created and directed a number of Early Music

ensembles including The Ellenwood Consort, Such Sweete Melodie, Musicke's Cordes and La Petite Brise.

A recognized expert on the early guitar, Jeff has produced two books and several articles for The Grove Dictionary of American Music/Oxford Music Online on the subject. His edition of violin trio sonatas by the 18th-century Italian composer Giovanni Bononcini was published in 2012 by A-R Editions. Jeff's most recent research project is an edition of an Italian song manuscript he uncovered in Chicago's Newberry Library. The manuscript holds over thirty arias by the Italian composer Bernardo Pasquini, including several pieces thought lost. He has received funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and in 2015 the Newberry Library awarded Jeff its Cullen Fellowship to research and edit music manuscripts in its collection. In 2016, the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission presented Jeff with a RAC Artist Fellowship in recognition of his accomplishments in musical scholarship, pedagogy and performance. In early 2021, the Missouri Arts Council selected Jeff for its new "Featured Artists Program." (<https://www.missouriartscouncil.org/featured-artists>)

Jeff appears on *Musik Ekklesia's* Grammy-nominated CD on the Sono Luminus label and can be heard on-line as a soloist and in a variety of ensembles with Chicago's Ars Antingua and his ensembles Such Sweete Melodie, Musickes Cordes and La Petite Brise. Links to some of these performances are listed on this webpage under the Audio & Video Links heading.

Jeff holds degrees from the University of Notre Dame (A.B.), the Hartt School of Music (B.Mus.) and Washington University in St. Louis (M.Mus., Ph.D.) Over the years, he served as adjunct faculty at St. Mary's College, Indiana/Purdue Universities in Fort Wayne, Andrews University and Washington University in St. Louis. Jeff served as the only musicologist on the full-time faculty of Southeast Missouri State University from 1999 to 2015, where he taught upper-level music literature and history courses and directed the classical guitar program. He retired from Southeast as a Professor of Music in 2015. In addition to his Early Music performance activities, Jeff maintains a small private studio for lute and classical guitar students, teaches occasional music classes and presents lectures on a wide variety of musical topics.

Learn more at www.jjnoonan.net...