

## THE CONCISE HISTORY OF THE CLASSICAL GUITAR

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The classical guitar is categorized under necked box lutes of composite chordophones according to Hornbostel and Sachs (1914). In its standard form, it has six strings and it has a box-shaped resonator with incurved sides and a flat back (Figure 1.1). The guitar’s tuning is accepted worldwide as E A D G B E from 6<sup>th</sup> string to the 1<sup>st</sup>, perfect fourth intervals except the major third between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> strings.



**Figure 1.1:** Classical guitar.

There are different views about the derivation of the term guitar. Some scholars claimed that it is derived from the Ancient Greek instrument *kithara*. Summerfield (2002, 11) and Kasha (1968, 4) claimed that the old Spanish term *quitarra* was derived from the term *chartar* which means four (*char*) strings (*tar*) in Persian<sup>1</sup>. In the 16th century, the guitar was called *guitarra* in Spain, *chitarra* in Italy, *guitarre* in France and *gittern* in England (Tyler and Sparks, 2002: 3).

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<sup>1</sup> Kasha (1968: 4) also claimed that the earliest Greek *kithara* had four strings and the term *kithara* also derived from the Persian term *chartar*.

The classical guitar is a member of the vast necked lute family that originated in Asia, Europe and Africa continents. The classical guitar evolved in the Western boundary of this region, the Iberian Peninsula. Some of the early antecedents of the guitar are listed by Graham Wade as follows (2001: 13):

"Thus the history of lute/guitar type plucked chordophones goes back hundreds of years. Among ancestors of the established instrument forms known today can be included lyres and harps (mentioned in the old Testament), the long-necked lutes of Mesopotamia, various kinds of stringed instruments depicted in both ancient Babylonian and Egyptian art, and the Hittite stone carvings of three thousand years ago found at Alaca Höyük, in Turkey."

There are two sources that brought some types of necked lutes to the Iberian Peninsula: The Roman Empire from the North and the Moors from the South. According to Kasha (1968, 9) and Summerfield (2002, 12), Romans brought necked lutes to the Iberian Peninsula during their colonization era. The Moorish presence in the Iberian Peninsula between 711-1492 had a strong cultural influence in Spain. Jahnel (2000: 22) listed the necked lutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century Spain as follows:

"In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries in Spain the existence of different lute types can be accepted with certainty. Not only the various Sassanian short-necked lutes and the Arabic *al' ud*, but also the narrow *rebab* and the long-necked *tanbur* types entered Spain and Southern Italy and spread rapidly."

These instruments have influenced the evolution of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century necked-lute instruments in the Iberian Peninsula such as the lute, the vihuela and the guitar.

In the Middle Ages one piece of significant evidence about the ancestors of the guitar was found in the miniatures of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* manuscript in 13<sup>th</sup> century. In these miniatures, there were two kinds of guitars: *la guitarra morisca* (the Moorish guitar) and *la guitarra Latina* (Latin guitar). Summerfield (2002, 12) described *la guitarra Latina* as follows: "The *guitarra Latina* had a flat back as has the modern guitar, and the soundboard had one hole over which the strings passed. It was used for playing chords and was a forerunner of the vihuela."

In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the lute and vihuela were very influential in the construction and the repertoire of the guitar. The lute is a necked lute with a pear-shaped resonator and with six strings (one single and five courses), generally tuned in G C F A D G from 6<sup>th</sup> string to the 1<sup>st</sup> (Grout and Palisca, 1996: 221; Serrano and Whitehead, 2008: 9), which is very close to the modern guitar's tuning except for the major third interval between the fourth and third string. Additional strings or courses were inserted in time and different kinds of lutes such as the *theorbo* and archlute have emerged. In the Renaissance era (ca. 1450-1600), the lute had its

golden age. Some of the famous lutenists of the era were John Dowland, Francis Cutting, John Johnson, Thomas Robinson, Robert Dowland, Melchior de Barberis, Antonio Rotta, and Francesco da Milano.

The first collection of pieces for the lute is Francesco Spinacino's *In Tabulatura de Lauto* published in 1507. Until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the lute and guitar were notated in tablature systems (Wade, 2001: 18). In the various tablature systems, the notes are indicated by the numbers or letters which show the fret number that the note will be played. These numbers or letters are placed on four to six-lined staves, each line indicating a string. The rhythms are shown above the staff by note values. The lute's popularity declined in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. One of the important reasons was the invention and popularity of the pianoforte.

The vihuela was also named *vihuela de mano* which means that it is played with the fingers. Other types of vihuelas were *vihuela de penola* (played with a plectrum) and *vihuela de arco* (played with a bow). The *vihuela de mano* has six courses of strings. Its tuning was same as the lute, G C F A D G<sup>2</sup> from 6<sup>th</sup> string to the 1<sup>st</sup>. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the vihuela was considered a separate instrument from the guitar (Tyler and Sparks, 2002: 3):

“The still larger, six-course, lower-range, figure-8-shaped Spanish *vihuela de mano*, and its Italian counterpart, the *viola da mano*, were not considered guitars. Indeed, as will be seen, all available evidence from the sixteenth century indicates that the guitar had its own separate and distinct character, function, tunings, and repertory, and that sixteenth-century players, theorists, and composers regarded the vihuela not as a guitar but as a figure-8-shaped Spanish equivalent of the lute.”

According to Summerfield (2002, 12), the vihuela and lute had ten or eleven frets. Some of the famous vihuelists of the era were Luis Milán, Alonso Mudarra, Luis de Narváez, Enriquez de Valderrabano, Diego Pisador, Miguel de Fuenllana, Francesco de Milano, Scipione Cerreto and Esteban Daza. Some of these vihuelists' pieces were also published. Luis Milán wrote a vihuela method called "*Libro de música de vihuela de mano intitulado El maestro*" in 1536.

The four-course guitar was a small (about one-third the size of a modern Classical guitar), figure-8-shaped, treble-range instrument (Tyler and Sparks, 2002: 3). It was tuned as G C E A or F C E A from 4<sup>th</sup> course to the 1<sup>st</sup> course according to Juan Bermudo (1555). In the books of Alonso Mudarra, Miguel de Fuenllana and Melchior de Barberis, the four-course guitar scores were available. Noad (2002, 4) argued that the four-course guitar was less sophisticated than the vihuela and used as an accompaniment to dances with strumming techniques

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<sup>2</sup> These pitches were not standard in those times. For example, vihuelist Luis Milan claimed that the top string should be tuned “as high as it will go” (Noad, 1974: 12).

(*rasgueado*). But Tyler and Sparks (2002: 12) mentioned that in France, the four-course guitar flourished more than other countries:

“And not only was there far more of it, but the French repertory was considerably more varied, comprising fantasias, intabulations of vocal music, songs to the guitar, and dance music, all composed in a style that involved a much greater degree of ornamental passagework than is found in the Spanish sources.”

The four-course guitar was played by the guitarists such as Simon Gorlier, Guillaume Morlaye, Gregor Brayssing, and Adrien le Roy. According to Tyler (URL-2), the four-course guitar continued to be used for playing popular music throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the Baroque era (ca. 1600-1750), the five-course guitar, which is also called ‘Baroque guitar’ or ‘Spanish guitar,’ was widely played and the vihuela’s popularity has declined. According to Tyler (URL-3), despite the five-course guitar-like instruments were being played from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, they become popular in the Baroque era. In Juan Carlos Amat’s *Guitarra Espanola de cinco ordenes* in 1596, the five-course guitar was tuned as A D G B E, the tuning of the modern guitar from 5<sup>th</sup> string to the 1<sup>st</sup> (Turnbull, 1974: 13). Some of the famous Baroque guitarists were Joan Carles Amat, Luis de Briceno, Giovanni Paolo Foscari, Francesco Corbetta, Giovanni Battista Granata, Robert de Visee, Gaspar Sanz, Francisco Guerau, François Campion, François le Cocq, Remy Médard, Angelo Michele Bartolotti, and Santiago de Murcia.

Wade (2001: 35) described two different styles for the Baroque guitar as follows:

"As always the guitar was torn between two aspects of its technique, the *rasgueado* strumming style, suitable for song accompaniment and relatively easy to learn and the playing of interweaving lines (known as *pizzicate* or *punteado*), which demanded more sophisticated musical skills."

More than a hundred Italian, French and Spanish volumes were published in the three playing styles of the Baroque period between 1600-1750: plucked style, strummed style and the mixed style (Bordas and Arriaga, 1991-1992: 83). According to Andia (URL-4), the need for the fifth string is due to the prevalence of the *rasgueado* technique: “Because one needed well a new instrument better adapted to the new writing in chords which was essential gradually in Baroque esthetics under the influence of musicians like Caccini or Peri.” The mixed style was developed especially by composers such as Giovanni Paolo Foscari, Francesco Corbetta, Gaspar Sanz and Robert de Visee and many genres of Baroque music such as suites, various dance forms, *toccatas*, *passacaglias* were composed for the Baroque guitar.

A notation system called *alfabeto* was used for guitar in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In this system the chords were shown by the letters or symbols and they were placed above the

melody notes. This system was the predecessor of the chord symbols of the 20<sup>th</sup> century popular music notation system. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there were over 250 Italian sources of vocal music with guitar *alfabeto* accompaniment (Tyler and Sparks, 2007: 49). The frets of the lutes, vihuelas and four-course and five-course guitars were made of gut and tied around the fretboard. There are different views about the numbers of the frets<sup>3</sup>.

The second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century can be seen as a transition period to the six-string modern guitar. Wade's research (2001: 63-64) on the different guitar types between 1750-1815 shows that there were five-course, six-course, seven-course and six string guitars. According to Turnbull and Sparks (URL-5), the earliest known six-course guitar is Francisco Sanguino's, which was made in 1759, and the luthiers in Marseilles and Naples were making six single string guitars by 1785. Some of the well-known guitarists of the era were Padre Basilio and Federico Moretti. The teacher of Dionisio Aguado, Pedro Basilio was one of the first to play the classical guitar with finger nails (Tyler and Sparks, 2002: 231). Dionisio Aguado praised Moretti's skill as follows (Wade, 2001: 71): "Don Federico Moretti was the first to begin to write guitar music in a manner in which two parts were separated, one part for the melodic line, the other for the accompaniment."

In this period Italian composer and cellist Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) is important for his compositions for the guitar. He adapted several of his quintets by including the guitar. It was in this period that the tablature system was slowly abandoned from guitar scores and staff notation became widespread (Sparks, 2002: 14).

According to Summerfield (2002: 14), "The years 1800 to 1980 were to see a gradual development of the instrument in three main areas. These were the guitarist's technique, the guitar's repertory and the construction of the instrument."

The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be analyzed as the guitar's golden age with a generation of composer guitarists including Fernando Sor (1778-1839), Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829), Ferdinando Carulli (1770-1841), Dionisio Aguado (1784-1849), and Matteo Carcassi (1792-1853). Although this period can be regarded as the romantic era, the style of these composer

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<sup>3</sup> According to Turnbull (1991: 15), "the guitar had about eight for plucked music and as few as four if it was simply a case of strumming chords." The four-course guitar has eight to ten gut frets according to Tyler (URL-2), and four to eight frets according to Summerfield (2002, 12).

guitarists was mostly classical (Noad, 1976: 6). These guitarists have influenced the history of classical guitar with their compositions, performances and guitar methods.

Giuliani for example, composed many concertos, etudes, sonatas, variations and dances for the guitar and most of them are still in the repertory of many guitarists in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Sor, not only composed many important pieces for classical guitar, but also composed symphonies, ballets and operas. Aguado's *Escuela de Guitarra* published in 1825 was a significant guitar method which included instructions about playing with the fingernails in contrast to Sor's playing style without nails. Carulli composed more than 400 pieces for guitar and his guitar method op. 27 is still used in modern conservatories. Carcassi's 25 melodic and progressive etudes op. 60 are significant pedagogic pieces. Some other guitarists from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were Francesco Molino (1775-1847), Anton Diabelli (1781-1858), Nicolo Paganini (1782-1840), Luigi Legnani (1790-1877), Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806-1856), Simon Molitor (1766-1848), and Giulio Regondi (1822-1872).

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Spanish luthier Antonio de Torres (1817-1892) gave the guitar its modern shape with its "specific structure, string length, fan-strutting beneath the front of the instrument, overall proportions, types of wood used, quality of tone etc." (Wade, 2001: 94). There were also different kinds of less popular guitars such as lyre guitar, *doppelgitarre* (double-necked), guitar with seven or eight strings and *decacorde* (10-string guitar) in this period (Randel, 2003: 371; URL-6). The guitar's golden age couldn't last in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the main reasons was the popularity of pianoforte with its higher volume and larger octave range. According to Summerfield (2002: 11), other reasons were the lack of compositions written for the guitar by the great composers of the period, the lack of volume of the 19<sup>th</sup> century small-bodied guitars and the prejudices against guitar due to its use in folk music.

The important guitarists of the era were Napoleon Coste (1806-1883), Julian Arcas (1832-1882), José Ferrer (1835-1916), and Francesco Tarrega (1852-1909). Tarrega is an important figure for classical guitar history because of his compositions, transcriptions, and methods. According to Noad (2002: 4), "It was really thanks to Francisco Tarrega that public interest was again awakened." He expanded the classical guitar repertoire with many transcriptions from Chopin, Beethoven, Mendelssohn etc. His technical instructions about the left-hand and right-hand techniques, his development of the rest stroke technique, his use of foot stool and decision to rest the guitar on the left thigh strongly influenced the next generations. He advocated playing without finger nails like Fernando Sor. He was also a very important

teacher. Some of his students were Emilio Pujol, Miguel Llobet, Maria Rita Brondi, and Daniel Fortea (Noad, 1986: 12).

In the 20th century, the most influential figure of the classical guitar history was Andres Segovia (1893-1987). As Tarrega had done previously, Segovia expanded the repertoire with his transcriptions of several composers' pieces. Unlike Tarrega, Segovia asked important composers such as Federico Moreno Torroba, Manuel Ponce, Heitor Villa Lobos, Joaquin Turina, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Joaquin Rodrigo to compose for the classical guitar and many pieces entered the repertoire. Segovia played his recitals worldwide and made the classical guitar popular all around the world. Segovia was also an important teacher. Segovia's pupils such as Karl Scheit, Abel Carlevaro, Ida Presti, Alexandre Lagoya, Narciso Yepes, John Williams, and Alirio Diaz formed a significant guitarist generation. Segovia made several recordings starting from 1927. Segovia also criticized Tarrega's perspective of not using finger nails and he advocated the combination of nail and flesh to play the guitar. Segovia had also an impact on the strings of the classical guitar. In 1947, Danish luthier Albert Augustine copyrighted the use of nylon strings with the support of Andres Segovia instead of gut treble strings (Wade, 2001: 132).

Tarraga's pupil Emilio Pujol (1886-1980) was also an important guitarist in expanding the repertoire. He has researched many 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century vihuela and lute pieces and arranged, performed and published pieces by Milan, Narvaez, Mudarra, Pisador, Fuenllana, Valderrabano, Besard, Sanz, de Visee, Corbetta, Roncalli, Santiago de Murcia, J. S. Bach etc (Wade, 2001: 114). Some of the other important guitarists and composers of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were Miguel Llobet (1878-1938), Agustin Barrios Mangoré (1885-1944), Regino Sainz de la Maza (1896-1981), and Joaquin Rodrigo (1901-1999). Barrios was one of the first classical guitarist that make commercial recordings starting from 1913 (Wade, 2001: 111).

John Williams (b.1941), Manuel Barrueco (b.1952), Pepe Romero (b.1944), and Julian Bream (b.1933) were some of the eminent performers of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Julian Bream's performance of Benjamin Britten's "Nocturnal After John Dowland" in 1964 and his album '20<sup>th</sup> Century Guitar Music' by contemporary composers in 1966 were examples of the significant turning points for the contemporary classical guitar repertoire which make use of various timbres, effects, colors, complicated rhythms, a vast array of dynamic markings, extended techniques, new notation system, various *scordatura*'s etc. Many contemporary pieces were written for Bream.

The importance of composer guitarists continued in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries with important figures such as Leo Brouwer (b.1939), Dusan Bogdanovic (b.1955), Nikita Koshkin (b.1956), Sergio Assad (b.1952), Paulo Bellinati (b.1950), Carlo Domeniconi (b.1947), Roland Dyens (b.1955) and Andrew York (b.1958). Some of the famous non-guitarist composers of the classical Western music that composed pieces for the classical guitar in the 20<sup>th</sup> century are Elliott Carter, Michael Tippett, Darius Milhaud, Benjamin Britten, Luciano Berio, Ernst Krenek, Maurice Ohana, Goffredo Petrassi, Alberto Ginastera, Peter Maxwell Davies, Toru Takemitsu, Brian Ferneyhough, Giacinto Scelsi and William Walton.

By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the classical guitar became very popular throughout the world. There are many festivals, competitions, recitals, masterclasses, methods, scores, guitar duos, trios, quartets, orchestras etc. The number of compositions for the classical guitar by non-guitarist or guitarist composers has increased drastically. The teaching has become systematic and many good performers have been educated through this system. Developments in classical guitar making have resulted in guitars with more volume and better sound.

### **A Concise History of the Classical Guitar in Turkey**

Until the end of the 1970s, there existed no academic institutions in Turkey with a classical guitar department. Therefore, the historical approach can be divided into two periods: a pre-conservatory period before 1977 and the academic period after 1977. In the pre-conservatory period, some teachers were giving classical guitar lessons privately. One of these teachers was Andrea Paleologos (1911-1997), who was active in classical guitar education in Turkey until 1964. He was also one of the few performers to give classical guitar recitals in Turkey between 1931 and 1942. Some of his students were Can Aybars, Mario Parodi, Ziya Aydıntan, Sava Palasis, Savaş Çekirge, Misak Torosyan, Mutlu Torun, Raffi Arslanyan, Harun Batırbaygil (Kanneci, 2001: 18). These players started to give recitals and teach and the classical guitar became more known in Turkey.

Ziya Aydıntan was the first to form a guitar orchestra and write a classical guitar method in Turkey. Other guitarists of the pre-conservatory period were İrkin Aktüze, Yüksel Koptagel, İhsan Turnagöl. Yüksel Koptagel published his compositions in 1958 in Germany and those pieces were one of the first compositions for classical guitar in Turkey (Kanneci, 2001: 19).

The academic period started with the opening of a classical guitar department at Mimar Sinan University State Conservatory in 1977. Well-known Italian guitarist Carlo Domeniconi was



the teacher in this department for two years. After Domeniconi, Ertan Birol became the teacher. The first student who graduated from this department was Erdem Sökmen who founded the classical guitar department at the Istanbul University State Conservatory in 1985.

Ahmet Kanneçi founded the classical guitar department at Hacettepe University in 1985, Bilkent University in 1986, Anadolu University in 1990. Bekir Küçükay in 1985, Yıldız Elmas in 1983 founded the departments at Gazi University and Marmara University respectively. During the 1980s, the few recitals were played mostly by Ahmet Kanneçi and Bekir Küçükay.

After the 1980s classical guitar competitions in Turkey motivated many guitarists to compose their own compositions. The first one was organized in 1983, called ‘National Guitar Music Composition Contest.’

Since the 1980s, classical guitarists have launched performance careers on standard repertoire as well as creating their own music by incorporating influences from Anatolian folk music and Ottoman/Turkish art music. These pieces fall into two categories: harmonization of folk melodies and compositions with East-West characteristics. Some of the guitarist composers and non-guitarist composers that created pieces in these categories are Bekir Küçükay, Hasan Cihat Örtter, Doğan Canku, Ahmet Kanneçi, Melih Güzel, Kağan Korad, Kürşad Terci, Erkan Oğur, Ricardo Moyano, Carlo Domeniconi, Cem Duruöz, Mesut Özgen, Ceyhun Şaklar, Safa Yeprem, Gilbert Biberian, Kemal Belevi, Cem Küçümen, Nejat Başegmezler, Ertuğrul Bayraktar, Ertuğ Korkmaz, Turgay Erdener, İstemihan Taviloğlu and Onur Türkmen.

By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, many festivals, competitions, recitals, masterclasses, have been organized in Turkey. In Bilkent University’s “2. Turkey Guitar Meeting” in 2007, 11 universities were represented by their teachers and students. The levels of classical guitar education and performance have reached international standards and the number of compositions and arrangements made for classical guitar is increasing year after year.

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