



**the guitar in europe
—the modern age—**

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Persian tambura →



The guitar solidified its place in European culture as an instrument of high refinement during the aristocratic age. However, it too was greatly affected by the great social and cultural changes that erupted in Europe during the 19th and 20th centuries, and ultimately became the instrument of the people.

The French Revolution of 1789 and ensuing revolutions all over Europe marked the end of the old order (*ancien regime*), and effected a sea-change in the organization of European society, ushering in the "modern" era of western history: many of our own political, social and cultural functions resulted from the ferment of revolutionary ideas.

The revolution forced many nobles from their homes; therefore the guitar, which had been called the "instrument par excellence of the nobility," lost its favor at the royal courts. (In fact courts themselves disappeared, along with monarchies). Following on these profound social and political changes in the 18th century, the early 19th century was marked by an equally revolutionary change in industry and commerce.



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The Industrial Revolution marked a major change in economic and social organization. Hand tools were replaced by machines that could produce items much faster and in mass quantities. Large establishments with factories and assembly lines took the place of individual skilled tradesmen. Urban industry attracted emigrants from rural areas, and cities became major economic and cultural centers. ABOVE: Industrialized steel manufacturing enabled British engineers to construct the most monumental cantilever-truss structure ever built; a wonder of structural engineering. When completed in 1890, the Firth of Forth bridge in Scotland was the longest span in the world.

← Ukulele

instrument of the people



The Industrial Revolution re-shaped the fate of the guitar. Mechanization allowed for mass production of goods. The development of printing technologies, and ultimately sound recordings and broadcasts, resulted in the wide dissemination of music. Improved means of transportation, such as the railroad, allowed performers to travel more widely than before. The emergence of a powerful and wealthy business class created new audiences for public concerts and a market for musical instruments and music making in the home.

Italian guitarist **Mauro Guiliani** (1781–1829) had great influence as a performer. He embarked on extensive concert tours throughout Europe, legitimizing and popularizing the guitar as a serious classical instrument. Guiliani's good friend, the composer Anton Diabelli, was also a music publisher. Diabelli issued copies of guitar compositions by Guiliani and many others, and his efforts to promote guitar music had a profound effect on the increasing popularity of the instrument.



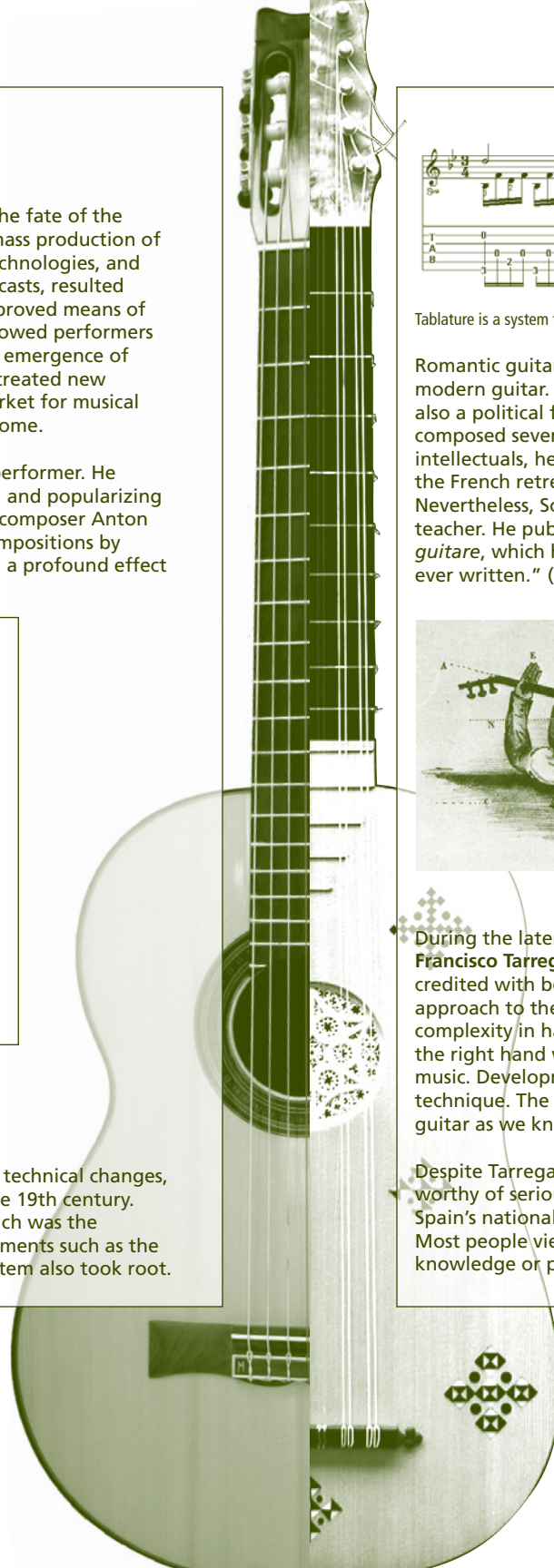
Many musicians and composers who are not usually associated with the instrument played and wrote music for the guitar. Franz Schubert (left), who for much of his life did not own a piano, composed on the guitar, and wrote guitar as well as piano accompaniments for voices and other instruments. Niccolò Paganini (right), who is known primarily as a violin virtuoso, was also an accomplished guitarist and wrote almost as much music for the guitar as for the violin.

technical developments

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the guitar went through major technical changes, leading to a universal standardization of the six-string guitar in the 19th century. The guitar's elegant sound underwent several innovations, one of which was the introduction of the plucked style of playing, derived from court instruments such as the Spanish *vihuela*. Innovations in musical notation and the tablature system also took root.

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classical guitar →

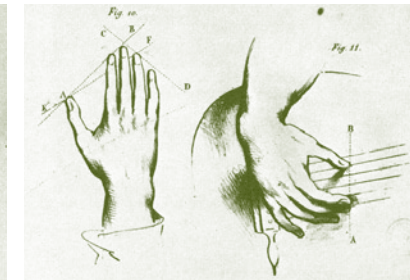
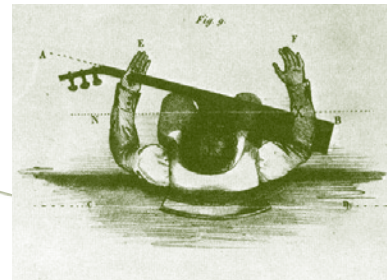


← vihuela



Tablature is a system for notating music that uses letters, numbers and other symbols instead of musical notes.

Romantic guitarist **Fernando Sor** (1778–1839) was critical to the development of the modern guitar. He was one of the most famous Spanish composers and guitarists, and also a political figure. Sor fought against the French during the invasion of 1808 and composed several patriotic songs, which became famous. However, like many Spanish intellectuals, he eventually accepted an administrative post under the French; when the French retreated in 1813, he was then obliged to leave Spain and move to Paris. Nevertheless, Sor achieved fame as a concert guitarist, a composer, and as a guitar teacher. He published a definitive book on guitar technique called *Methode pour la guitare*, which has been called "easily the most remarkable book on guitar technique ever written." (Grunfeld: *The Art and Times of the Guitar*)



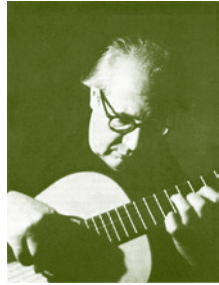
From Sor's *Methode pour la guitare*

During the later part of the 19th century, the popularity of the guitar began to fade. **Francisco Tarrega** (1852–1909), one of the greatest concert guitarists of all time, is credited with beginning its revitalization through his modern techniques and new approach to the guitar. Tarrega also wrote many compositions that exhibit an increased complexity in harmony and technique. His technique changed the way guitarists held the right hand while playing the instrument, allowing them to play more complex music. Developments in the construction of the guitar paralleled Tarrega's innovations in technique. The guitar maker **Antonio Torres** (1817–1892) created the basic form of the guitar as we know it today.

Despite Tarrega's development of the guitar, it was still not perceived as an instrument worthy of serious classical music attention until some time into the 20th century. As Spain's national instrument, the guitar was popular as a simple accompaniment to song. Most people viewed it as an instrument anyone could pick up and strum without much knowledge or practice.

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the guitar gains respect



Spanish guitarist **Andrés Segovia** (1893–1987) changed the way the world viewed the guitar. When he was five years old, Segovia was sent to live with his uncle in Granada. His uncle wanted desperately for him to play the violin, but Segovia wasn't interested—he was instead entranced by the sounds of a flamenco guitarist who lived in his uncle's house. At ten years old, Segovia was given a guitar and from then on, his life was defined by the instrument. His family did not want him to become a guitarist and refused to pay for his tuition to study the guitar. Instead, Segovia quit school when he was 16 so he could concentrate on the guitar and began giving public concerts.

Self-taught, Segovia developed his own technique, perfecting the precision of the right hand; this produced enormous volume and a wide range of tone colors from the instrument with great economy of movement. Without sacrificing the warmth and intimacy that distinguishes the instrument, Segovia's technical innovations allowed the guitar to produce the powerful sound required for unamplified classical concert setting. He was dismayed that the guitar did not have a reputation as a serious classical instrument and devoted his life to changing this image. Segovia transcribed, arranged, and performed on the guitar the early works for lute and vihuela by great composers, such as J.S. Bach. In addition, his great artistry inspired many living composers to write new pieces for him, thereby increasing the repertoire; the rich legacy of 20th century guitar music is largely due to Segovia's immense influence.

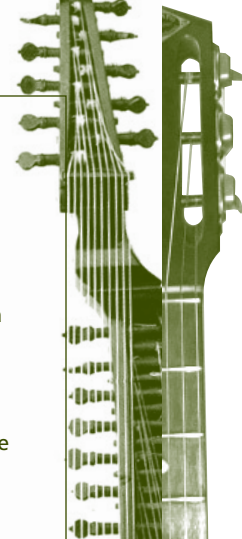


Virtuoso of the jazz guitar, **Django Reinhardt** (1910–1953) led the "Quintette du Hot Club de France" and influenced swing and bebop styles from Paris. Many American jazz musicians traveled to France to play with him during the heyday of the 30s, and he became widely known in America as a result of a joint tour in 1944 with Duke Ellington and his Orchestra.

Born to a nomadic gypsy tribe in Belgium, Reinhardt arrived in Paris at the age of 8 when his mother's tribe settled outside one of the old city gates. He was given a banjo by a neighbor at the age of 12, and he learned to play the instrument by mimicking the fingering of musicians he saw. In 1928 a fire in his caravan permanently disfigured his hands, but with the two unbent, fully mobile fingers of his left hand Reinhardt built a new fingering system and became renowned for the precision of sound and absolute perfection of control. Incomparable improviser and composer, Reinhardt could not read or write musical notation: a famous encounter with Andres Segovia has Reinhardt playing his own composition for the classical guitarist, who admired the piece greatly and asked for a transcription in vain. Others however have subsequently put his compositions to paper, and many of his melodies are part of the jazz guitar repertoire.

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oud →



Reinhardt told his biographer that jazz attracted him because in it he "found a formal perfection and instrumental precision that I admire in classical music, but which popular music doesn't have." Classical music remained a heavy influence on him throughout his compositional career, with subtle references to works by Debussy and a version of Bach's "Concerto in D Minor" surfacing in his arsenal of melodies. However, jazz allowed Reinhardt the freedom to improvise - he is said to never have played the same phrase twice—and his influence is acknowledged by guitarists as diverse as Jeff Beck and Jerry Garcia.



Some 1,500 years ago, the gypsy tribe known as the Sinti are believed to have migrated and/or been forcibly moved from the banks of the Sindh River in India (from which they derived their name) to the Persian court, where they worked as musicians. From Persia, the gypsy groups called the Roma and the Sinti, among others, traveled what is known as the Romany trail leading through the Middle East, into North Africa and Europe. Europeans, believing these wandering people to come from Egypt, corrupted their name into "gypsy." Often chased away from "civilization," the gypsies have become nomadic of necessity more than desire. Forced to live a transitory life, they managed to survive on their skills as musicians, entertainers, metal-smiths, and traders. Gypsies were targets of persecution during World War II as part of the Nazi plan of ethnic cleansing in Europe. Many were interned and killed in Nazi concentration camps.

Among modern classical guitarists, Segovia's lineage is still distinctly felt, since he helped ensure a place for the guitar in the classical music world by passing on to his students the love of the instrument and the music. One of his most famous students is **John Williams** (b.1941). Born in Australia, Williams learned how to play guitar at the age of seven from his father. When he was 11 years old his family moved to London where he played for Segovia, who was so impressed by his talent that he accepted Williams as one of his students and enrolled him in a summer music academy in Siena, Italy. Williams then attended the Royal College of Music in England, but was not able to study guitar because there was no guitar curriculum. Shortly after his graduation, he was invited to run the newly created guitar department.

Williams performs classical guitar music all over the world, but has always had an interest in other types of music, most recently music of Africa. Williams brings the technical virtuosity he acquired from playing classical music to jazz, pop, and music from cultures around the world.

If Williams and his students trace a direct lineage from Segovia, Williams' great colleague and friend **Julian Bream** (b.1933) presents a contrast in virtuosic style. A child prodigy who gave his official debut at the age of thirteen, Bream was recognized early (and celebrated) as one of the most remarkable artists of post-war Britain. After studies at the Royal College of Music—and completing National Service with the Army—Bream

← Selmer-style Busato

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continued his meteoric rise in the world of classical music, performing around the world with a truly exceptional solo guitar repertoire that ranged from transcriptions from the 17th century to compositions written for him by his contemporaries.

Bream is noted for his unique sound: the fullness and variety of the “Bream sound” were credited with raising the guitar’s profile as a true string instrument, and illustrating Beethoven’s contention that the guitar is the instrument most like a full orchestra. Bream propelled significant development of the guitar repertoire by inspiring numerous original works by eminent 20th century composers, and himself contributed by transcribing many Baroque works for the guitar.



Bream is also considered possibly the greatest lutenist of the 20th century. In 1960 he founded the Julian Bream Consort (an ensemble of early music virtuosos), greatly revitalizing interest in the music of the Elizabethan era. Bream created a vast body of recorded work, and perhaps more than any other figure in the latter half of the 20th century, has inspired generations of classical guitarists.

women and guitar in the 20th century



So far we have only talked about male guitarists. While women played the guitar throughout its history, few had the opportunity to perform or compose professionally. Music was traditionally part of a privileged young woman’s education. However, she was expected to display her musical talents only in the home. The movement of women’s participation in public life and society paralleled the rise of the classical guitar in the 20th century, and today the role of celebrated, professional musician is no longer limited to men. Segovia’s musical descendants include two female guitarists of particular note, **Maria Luisa Anido** (1907–1996) and **Ida Presti** (1924–1967).



Anido, who studied with Tarrega’s most famous student Miguel Llobet, enjoyed a long career and taught for five decades at the National Conservatory of Music in her native Argentina. French-born Presti, called “Ida Prestissimo” by Segovia, was a child prodigy who made her first recording at 10. Segovia said of her at age 13, “I have nothing to teach her... She should not accept the advice of any other guitarist”—and indeed Presti is considered one of the great female musicians of the 20th century. After her marriage to fellow guitarist Alexandre Lagoya, Presti performed exclusively in duo guitar concerts with her husband until her sudden death during an American tour.



The guitar was still in transition to becoming a “serious” instrument in classical music during their active performing career, and the couple helped establish the instrument’s credibility by transcribing keyboard works by Bach, Debussy, Granados and Haydn, as well as commissioning new works from contemporary composers. Considered the finest guitar duet ever, Presti and Lagoya brought great emotional subtlety and intimacy to their playing, and performed over two thousand concerts internationally between 1950 and 1967.



Celebrated American guitarist **Sharon Isbin** (b.1957) has modeled herself after Presti’s example and is building an influential tradition of her own at the Juilliard School, where she established a guitar department in 1989. As a virtuosic player of the instrument Isbin claims a place among the guitar masters, but she has also made several technical contributions that have furthered the field of classical guitar. She has authored the “Classical Guitar Answer Book” and published the first performance editions for guitar of Bach’s lute suites in collaboration with pianist Rosalyn Tureck. Isbin has helped create a unique amplification system for the guitar, for use in large performance halls. In addition, Isbin has regularly commissioned new works for the guitar from major composers, and thereby expanded the guitar repertoire. She is credited with making the classical guitar a regular feature of the concert stage, and her two Grammy awards attest to both her artistry and her wide appeal.

antigoni goni



One of the leading guitarists of her generation—and a student of Sharon Isbin—Greek-born guitarist **Antigoni Goni** (b. 1970) has been praised for her “beautiful tone, rich palette of color, enormous dynamic range, excellent technique and stylistic accuracy” (*Daily Classical Music Critique*, Tokyo). In 1995, she was awarded First Prize at the Guitar Foundation of America’s International Competition, which resulted in a 65-concert tour of North America and a contract with Naxos records. She was also a prizewinner at the 1991 Julian Bream Competition and the 1988 International Guitar Competition in Havana, Cuba, where she won the prize for Best Interpretation of Latin American Music.

Goni has performed as soloist with orchestras throughout the world, and she has also appeared as a featured artist at international festivals. Since her New York debut at Carnegie’s Weill Recital Hall in 1994, Goni has toured extensively in Europe, Russia, Canada, the United States and Asia.

She has also been Director of the Guitar Department of the Juilliard School pre-college division since 1995. In 1997, she was appointed Associate of the Royal Academy of Music in London, and she recently joined the faculty of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels.

summary

The last two hundred years have brought the guitar from the courts of the nobility to the homes of ordinary people, and from there to the concert stage and recording studio. The guitar has become an international instrument, taught throughout the world. Magazines about the guitar abound, along with societies, associations and organizations devoted to some facet or other of guitar music.

As the guitar gained respect as an instrument of virtuosity as well as versatility, however, it did not lose its local and popular ties. The technological innovations of the guitar in the area of popular music has produced the electric guitar, which has an amazing lineage of musicians who were able to push the capacity of the instrument in different ways: the Jimmy Hendrix performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" demonstrates what electric virtuosity sounds like.

This adaptability of the guitar is perhaps the most important reason for its survival, and what guaranteed its place in the cultural life of many different peoples across the globe. The guitar is arguably the most popular instrument available today for the very fact of its ability to yield to new sounds and uses. What is in store for future innovations in the development of the instrument is limited only to the imagination.

questions for discussion

Is there a particular role for the musician (or the artist) in society? Do you believe that there is a place or need for artistic expression in society? If so, how do you think musicians and artists shape and/or reflect their culture/society/age?

The electric guitar, the type of guitar many people now know best, is a very recent innovation linked specifically to the evolution of American popular music in the 20th century. At the same time, the guitar has become accepted in the "high culture" arena of the concert hall. Do you think the changes in the guitar's physical structure is related to the guitar's continued popularity?

Do you think technological innovations change the essential characteristics of any invention? In the case of the guitar, do you think that electric guitars are to be considered guitars, or do you think the amplified guitar is an entirely new instrument to be distinguished from the acoustic guitar?

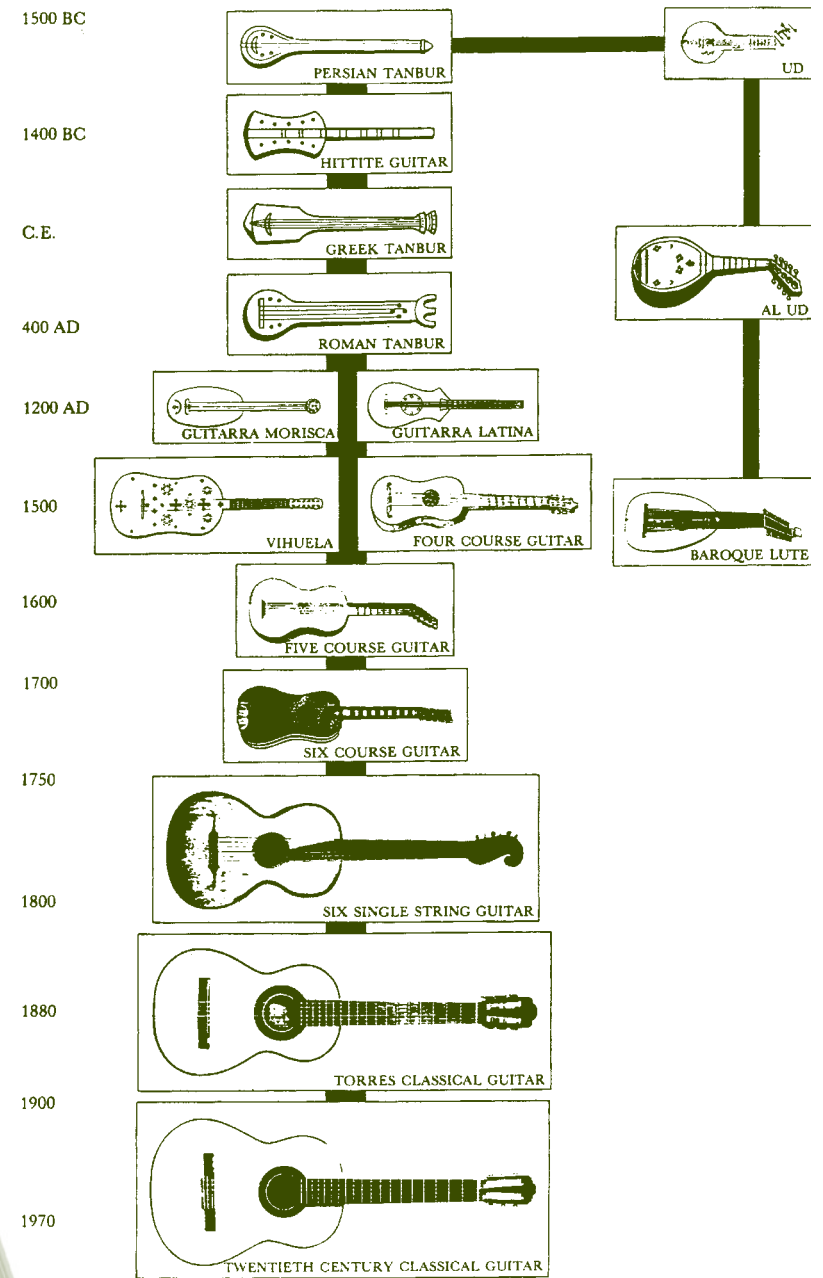


Chart showing the evolution of the classical guitar as an instrument from 1500 BC to the present day.



Pablo Picasso
The Old Guitarist
1903/04



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