

## The five-course guitar

(It. chitarra spagnuola; Sp. guitarra). Iconographic sources confirm that five-course guitar-like instruments were in use from at least the end of the 15th century, especially in Italy. The Italian term ‘viola’ was applied to these as well as to instruments with six and seven courses. The terms ‘viola’ and ‘viola da mano’ (and their Spanish equivalent ‘vihuela’) were often used generally to mean instruments of this general type and shape; sometimes the small four-course instrument was also included. Fuenllana (f.IV), for example, wrote about the ‘vihuela de Quatro Ordenes, Que Dizen Guitarra’. He also printed the earliest known music for a five-course instrument (‘vihuela de cinco ordenes’), fantasies and vocal intabulations that require an instrument tuned to guitar intervals (starting from the fifth course; 4th–4th–major 3rd–4th), though he made no mention of specific pitches or stringing. Bermudo referred to a ‘guitarra de cinco ordenes’, saying that one could be made by adding to the four-course guitar a string a 4th above the existing first course (f.xxviiiiv). He also described new and unusual tunings for it as well as for a ‘guitarra grande’ of six courses and for the four-course instrument. No music survives for any of these tunings. The previously described Dias guitar could be an example of Bermudo’s ‘guitarra de cinco ordenes’ (later Italian sources call this type of small instrument a ‘chitarriglia’).

A French source, the drawings of Jacques Cellier (*Recherches de plusieurs singularités*, c1583–7; F-Pn fonds fr.9152), shows a four-course instrument (seven strings) with a tuning chart for a five-course instrument: g–c/c’–e–a–d’ (octave stringing is shown only for the fourth course). This re-entrant tuning would be, if the third course were raised a semitone, a typical stringing arrangement (with its bourdon on the fourth course) for the playing of much of the later Italian and French ‘art’ music written for the guitar. A first course at d’ was fairly common (see, for example, Benedetto Sanseverino, *Intavolatura facile* (Milan, 1620)), though a first course at e’ was to become the standard. Spanish sources often recommended bordones on both the fourth and fifth courses, especially if the guitar was to be used only for strumming. The earliest known edition of Amat’s booklet on the guitar (1626) gives the following tuning: A/a–d/d’–g/g’–b/b’–e’; one assumes that the lost first edition (?1596) gave the same information.

From the 17th century, tuning information frequently indicated no bourdons at all. This produced a totally re-entrant tuning: a/a–d’/d’–g/g’–b/b’–e’ with the lowest pitch that of the third course (see, for example, Luis de Briçeno: *Método ... para aprender a tañer la guitarra a lo español* (Paris, 1626/R); Marin Mersenne: *Harmonie universelle*, ii (Paris, 1636–7/R); Francesco Valdambrini: *Libro primo d’intavolatura di chitarra* (Rome, 1646), *Libro secondo* (Rome, 1647); Antoine Carré: *Livre de guitarrre* (Paris, 1671/R); Gaspar Sanz: *Instrucción de música sobre la guitarra española* (Zaragoza, 3/1674)). Two Italian sources for this re-entrant tuning offer another variant: a/a–d’/d’–g/g’–b/b’–e’ with an upper octave on the third course (I-MOe Campori 612.X.L.10.21 and I-Bc AA360). The most common modification to the re-entrant type tuning was a/a–d’/d’–g/g’–b/b’–e’ which, judging by the musical requirements of their tablatures, was used by the leading composers of guitar solos of the time: Francesco Corbetta, Angelo Michele Bartolotti, Giovanni Battista Granata, Robert de Visée (ex. 1), Ludovico Roncalli, and others.

The reason for these re-entrant tunings becomes clear from the original tablatures: in much of the 'art' music for guitar (as opposed to exclusively strummed music), the high, re-entrant fifth course was used melodically in scale passage-work in conjunction with the other treble courses; rarely was the fifth course used as a bass. The fourth course too was used most often in the same fashion as the fifth. A typical idiom was that which Sanz called 'campanelas' (little bells): as many open strings as possible were employed in the notes of scale passages, so that the notes rang on, one melting into the next in the manner of a harp or bells (see ex.2). Even when a bourdon was used on the fourth course the stringing arrangement was technically important, with the upper octave string placed nearest the fifth course and the bourdon nearest the third course; this allowed the player the choice of striking the upper of the pair alone (needed most frequently), or including the bourdon when the music required the lower octave. This stringing was mentioned by Lucas Ruiz de Ribayaz, Antonio Stradivari and Denis Diderot among others and is shown in a number of iconographical sources.

It was up to the player to decide which of the variety of possible tunings and stringings was suitable for each source of music; this was not always easy. In general, the sources for exclusively strummed music could be used with any tuning because questions of proper chord inversions and harmonic niceties were rarely touched upon in this repertory. For much of the mixed style of guitar music, which used Punteado (It. pizzicato) technique, some strummed chords (Sp. Rasgueado; It. Battuto, battente), and frequent campanela passages (found in the most important Italian and French sources), a re-entrant tuning, usually with a bourdon on the fourth course, was suitable. Occasional sources such as Francisco Guerau's Poema harmónico (Madrid, 1694/R) seem to require bourdons on the fourth and the fifth courses.

With its unique tunings and its emphasis on brighter, higher-ranged music, in an idiom generally quite unlike that of the lute or any other plucked instrument of the time, the five-course guitar was very different from the modern guitar. Only from the middle of the 18th century did the character of the guitar begin to approach that of the instrument we know today in its development of a bass range and its playing technique. Average measurements of the five-course Baroque guitar were: overall length 92 cm; string length 63–70 cm; widths 20 cm–17 cm–24 cm; depth varied according to whether the back was flat or rounded (vaulted). The five-course guitar retained features of the smaller, four-course instrument, but curved pegboxes with laterally inserted pegs no longer appeared.

Although many guitars had rounded backs, this feature alone does not identify the later, special type of guitar known today by its 19th-century name, the chitarra battente. Developed in the mid-18th century along the lines of the newly perfected Neapolitan mandolin, the instrument usually had a deeply vaulted back, but metal rather than gut strings and frets. The strings passed over a movable bridge and were fixed at the bottom of the body (fig.7). Like the Neapolitan mandolin, the table of the chitarra battente was canted downwards from the bridge instead of being completely flat as on the gut-strung guitar. Although it generally had paired strings, the chitarra battente could also have three strings to a course. It seems to have been used primarily for popular music

accompaniments, and was probably played with a plectrum. There is no known repertory for it, although the parts in alfabeto notation for the 'chitarr' a battendo' that accompanies the 'chitarr' a penna' (an eight-course instrument most likely to have been a Neapolitan mandolone) in a mid-18th century, possibly Neapolitan manuscript may be for the chitarra battente (I-Mc Nosedà 48A).

Many Baroque guitars have survived, particularly the highly decorated ones, which were more likely to be preserved by collectors than the plainer models. A survey of contemporary pictures reveals that instruments made of plain woods and with relatively little decoration were more common. In museum collections there are many instruments by makers such as Matteo and Giorgio Sellas, Giovanni Tessler, René and Alexander Voboam, Joachim Tielke (fig.8) and Antonio Stradivari (fig.9). The two surviving instruments by Stradivari are beautifully proportioned with little decoration, though their plainness has been heightened over the years by the removal of decorative details such as the traditional 'moustaches' on either side of the bridge.

The earliest notation specifically for the five-course guitar dates from the latter part of the 16th century, when a new symbol system developed to represent complete, five-note chords. It seems to have first appeared in an Italian manuscript (I-Bu 177 iv), which contains the top parts of madrigals and canzonettas from the 1580s by such composers as Marenzio and Vecchi. There, lower case letters of the alphabet representing specific chords are found about the words and at places where there are changes in the harmony. Other early Italian sources (all song manuscripts) include one supposedly copied c1595 by Francesco Palumbi (F-Pn Español 390), and one dated 1599 (I-RvatChigiani L.VI.200). These contain mostly Spanish texts, but use the Italian letter (alfabeto) notation. There are some Spanish sources for the chord system, e.g. Amat's (lost) booklet of 1596 (and its 17th-century reprints) and Briçeno (1626), in which the chords are symbolized by numbers instead of letters. The number notation is rarely encountered, while Italianalfabeto became the standard chord notation. Radically different from any previous type of notation, this system, which implied that the performer was to think only in terms of vertical block harmonies (as modern rhythm guitarists do), developed in conjunction with the rise of Italian monody. Indeed, some of the earliest manuscript sources of monody by such composers as Peri and Caccini (for example, I-Fc Codex Barbera G.F.83) contain alfabeto. It is, perhaps, significant also that in the 1589 Florentine intermedii, a major landmark in the development of the new monodic style, two guitars were used in Cavalieri's famous Ballo del Gran Duca, a piece which remained popular for at least another century.

The first appearance in print of the alfabeto system was Girolamo Montesardo's *Nuova inventione d'intavolatura per sonare li balletti sopra la chitarra spagnuola, senza numeri e note* (Florence, 1606). During the early 17th century an abundance of guitar books appeared in print using only this system for strummed chord solos (many of the pieces could also be considered accompaniment parts for use in ensembles). The important writers of alfabeto books were: Foriano Pico (1608), G.A. Colonna (1620, 1623, 1637), Sanseverino (1620), Carlo Milanuzzi (1622, 1623, 1625), Millionini (1624, 1627), Millionini and Lodovico Monte (c1627, 1637, 1644, etc.), G.B. Abatessa (1627, 1635, c1650,

1652), G.P. Foscarini (1629), Tomaso Marchetti (1635), Corbetta (1639), Agostino Trombetti (1639), Antonio Carbonchi (1643), Carlo Calvi (1646), Giovanni Bottazzari (1663), Giovanni Pietro Ricci (1677) and Antonio di Michele (1680); for full details of second and subsequent editions of many of these collections see Tyler, A1980, pp.123–58. The last known alfabeto book was an edition of Millioni and Monte's 1637 book in 1737.

In addition to the alfabeto sources of guitar solos, there is an enormous body of publications of Italian arias employing the guitar as the instrument to accompany the voice. In this repertory are found publications by many of the major vocal composers of the time, such as Stefano Landi (1620, 1627) and Sigismondo d'India (1621, 1623), and several books by Andrea Falconieri, G.G. Kapsperger, Milanuzzi, G.B. Vitali, Biagio Marini, Guglielmo Miniscalchi, Alessandro Grandi (i), and others. In the collections with contributions by various composers are found five arias by Monteverdi (Milanuzzi, 1624, RISM 16347) all unique to these prints, as well as arias by Frescobaldi (VogelB 16212), Domenico Mazzochi (RISM 162116) and Cavalli (RISM 16347). The subject of guitar accompaniment in this important 17th-century aria repertory has yet to be studied thoroughly, and the role of the guitar as a widely used continuo instrument has not been sufficiently stressed.

In addition to devising accompaniments from the harmonic indications of the alfabeto, 17th-century guitarists also learnt to read and improvise a Continuo accompaniment from the bass line (both with and without figures). Although the Baroque guitar was often unable to sound the true bass note because of its tunings, an idiomatic continuo accompaniment could be realized for the proper harmonies. The true bass line was played by an appropriate instrument such as a theorbo or cello. The preface of most of the aria books gives a chart instructing the guitarist on how to read from the bass, but many of the books of solos give far more detailed instructions. Corbetta's books of 1643 and 1648 give continuo-playing information, as do Foscarini's of 1640. Sanz devoted an entire section of his book to guitar continuo playing and Santiago de Murcia's *Resumen de acompañar la parte con la guitarra* (Madrid, 1717/R) was, as its title suggests, in large part devoted to instruction in guitar continuo playing. But the most thorough and extensive instructions of all appeared in Nicola Matteis's *Le false consonanze della musica* (London, c1680) and the later English edition *The False Consonances of Musick* (1682/R). This tutor for guitar continuo playing is one of the most useful and detailed of any 17th century continuo treatise for any instrument (including keyboard).

As well as the strummed style of guitar music found in the alfabeto sources of the early 17th century, a new style of guitar music began to appear in print from about 1630 with Foscarini's second and third books (published together, n.d.). Although one of the chief assets of the guitar was its ability to play block chords in a rhythmic strumming style (this was considered to be the true idiom of the guitar), Foscarini adapted lute tablature and technique in combination with the strummed chords to arrive at a mixed style of solo guitar writing. In his preface he was apologetic about the lute-like elements. It was this new mixed style that was used by the finest guitar composers of the 17th century and the early 18th. Although Corbetta included some very fine solos in his 1639 book, it was

A.M. Bartolotti who, in 1640, produced the first fully developed, masterful examples of the new idiom, and his second book (c1655) contained some of the finest Baroque guitar music of the 17th century. It was Corbetta, however, who became the best-known Italian guitar composer, with his publications of 1643 and 1648, which contained music of the highest order. Other major Italian writers for the guitar were Granata (1646, c1650, 1651, 1659, 1674, 1680, 1684), Valdambrini (1646, 1647), Domenico Pellegrini (1650), Francesco Asioli (1674, 1676), Matteis (c1680, 1682) and Roncalli (1692). It is ironic that, although the guitar was known as a Spanish instrument, it was in Italy that its repertory was first developed.

In France the five-course guitar was not held in high esteem initially. Both Mersenne and Pierre Trichet referred to it in disparaging terms, and the general opposition is mentioned in Briçeyño's *Método... para aprender a tañer la guitarra* (1626), a work advocating the chordal style of performance. Briçeyño's book did not succeed in popularizing the instrument, and only later in the century did further publications appear. These reflect an interest in the guitar in court circles engendered by Corbetta, whose *La guitarre royalle* of 1674 was dedicated to Louis XIV. Although the *rasgueado* style is a strong feature of the pieces in the book, the alphabet has been abandoned and greater freedom achieved by indicating the notes of the chords individually. Corbetta was succeeded by Robert de Visée (?c1655–1732/3), who was formally appointed guitar tutor to the king in 1719. His *Livre de guittarre dédié au roy* was published in 1682, and a second work, *Livres de pièces pour la guittarre*, appeared in 1686; both contain suites of various length, made up of an introductory prelude followed by dances – *allemande*, *courante*, *sarabande*, *gigue*, *passacaille* and others. Visée also produced a collection of pieces for theorbo and lute, and left a number of works in manuscript. Rémy Médard, in his *Pièces de guitarre* (1676), acknowledged his debt to Corbetta, who taught him, but like Visée he cultivated a more delicate style. A concern with melodic and contrapuntal movement is also evident in *Nouvelles découvertes sur la guitare* (op.1, 1705) by François Campion (c1685–1747).

Corbetta's first *La guitarre royalle* (1671; fig.11) was dedicated to Charles II of England, who was an enthusiastic performer. The guitar was extremely fashionable in England; Corbetta, who went to England in the early 1660s and counted many of the nobility among his pupils. However, some distaste for the instrument was expressed, and Pepys, for one, held the guitar in low esteem. (The inclusion in Pepys's library, which survives intact in Cambridge (GB-Cmc), of a manuscript by guitar tutor Cesare Morelli, and the evidence of his own compositions for guitar and voice (written out for him by Morelli), suggests, however, that he was eventually won over by the instrument.) The distinction drawn by William Turner (i) in 1697 between the 'brushing way' and the 'pinching way' indicates that, as well as Corbetta's more complex music, there was no lack of strumming in England. Indeed it is likely that a lost work, *Easie Lessons on the Guitar for Young Practitioners*, recorded in 1677 as by Seignior Francisco, was by Corbetta himself. In 18th-century England the guitar went out of fashion. It was replaced by the English guitar, which had little in common with the guitar proper, being similar in shape to the cittern and having metal strings tuned c–e–g–c'–e'–g'.

The five-course guitar was first known in Germany as an instrument for strumming. Praetorius so described it, but he also related that 'it can be used to good effect in other graceful cantiunculæ and delightful songs by a good singer'. Later in the century the guitar appeared in consort with the lute, angélique and viol, accompanying a collection of songs by Jakob Kremberg, *Musicalische Gemüths-Ergötzung* (Dresden, 1689).

Corbetta's presence in the Netherlands is attested by his *Varii scherzi di sonate per la chitarra spagnola*, published in Brussels in 1648. The interest engendered by Corbetta was maintained through the 17th century, although native sources are lacking until the following century, when François le Cocq's *Recueil des pièces de guitarre* appeared (c1729). As well as Le Cocq's compositions, the collection contains works by Corbetta, Sanz, Visée, Granata and other 17th-century guitarists (added by Jean-Baptiste Castillon, to whom Le Cocq had dedicated the book). A mid-18th-century manuscript collection from the Netherlands is the so-called Princes An's Lute Book, for five-course guitar (NL-DHgm4.E.73).

Despite its title, a late 17th-century Spanish source by Antonio de Santa Cruz, *Música de vihuela* (E-Mn M.2209), is not to be compared with the 16th-century vihuela books, as its contents consist of 17th-century Spanish dances notated in five-line tablature. It includes the chord alphabet and was obviously intended for the five-course guitar. The most important source of guitar music in 17th-century Spain is the *Instrucción* by Gaspar Sanz, eight editions of which appeared between 1674 and 1697. Sanz, in his preface, states that he went to Italy to study music and became an organist in Naples. He later went to Rome where he studied the guitar with an important composer of the time, Lelio Colista (some of whose guitar music survives in B-Bc, littera S no.5615). He also states that he studied the works of Foscarini, Granata and Corbetta. There are many Italian as well as Spanish dance pieces in his publications and he employs a mature and fully integrated style of mixed writing with an equal balance of strummed chords and punteado style, especially in his later passacalles of 1697.

The *Luz y norte musical* (Madrid, 1677) by Lucas Ruiz de Ribayaz is a work devoted to the guitar and the harp; most of the guitar music was plagiarized from Sanz. Guerau's book of 1694 is notable for containing music in an almost totally punteado style, quite different from Sanz and the majority of other guitar composers. Other Spanish sources are Santiago de Murcia's *Resumen* (1714), his manuscript *Passacalles y obras* (1732, GB-Lbl Add.31640) and his manuscript collection of dance variations (Archive of Elisa Osorio Bolio de Saldívar, Mexico City, *Codice Saldívar*, 4), which contains music of a very high standard; Murcia's own prelidios tend to be both original and masterful, though a study of concordances reveals that the majority of pieces in these two works are actually arrangements of French court music, many of pieces by Lully as well as Le Cocq and Corbetta.

The music for the five-course guitar discussed so far can be regarded as the 'classical' repertory for the late Renaissance and Baroque instrument. On the whole, this music calls for the characteristic re-entrant tunings that were so important to the playing style and idioms employed during these periods and which made the guitar unique. But the nature

of the guitar changed noticeably in the middle of the 18th century, along with musical styles in general. The change seems to have occurred first in France, where the guitar began to be used primarily to accompany the voice, using an arpeggiated style similar to that of keyboard instruments. The new style required true bass notes and as early as 1764 (*Journal de musique*, April) instructions for proper accompaniments stressed the use of a bourdon on the fifth course. The appearance of many guitar tutors in France between 1763 and c1800, all for a five-course guitar tuned A/a–d/d'–g/g–b/b–e', as well as the gradual abandonment of tablature in favour of staff notation, leaves little doubt that the guitar was becoming an instrument much closer in character and playing styles to the modern guitar than to the Baroque instrument. Soon, even the double courses in octaves were abandoned in favour of single strings and, as early as 1785, a sixth string was indicated (*Etrennes de Polymnie*, Paris, 1785, p.148).

Historical statements referring to the guitar as an easy instrument should be treated with caution. Such a dismissive attitude is valid only when it is directed towards the guitar at its simplest level. The judgment is certainly not true in the context of art music, where textures more complex than a series of chord patterns demand accuracy of fingering and a high degree of coordination. These are of particular importance for the Baroque five-course guitar, which, though first used as a popular instrument, later gave rise to a literature that presents textures similar to those of the lute. Five-course guitar music has yet to be heard widely on the instrument for which it was written. Performance on the modern guitar is only an approximation of the original sound, as modern stringing and tuning does not allow the music to be realized faithfully.