

A 2016 Berkeley Festival Fringe event sponsored by Trinity Chamber Concerts

An Obscure History of the Guitar or, A History of Obscure Guitars

Trinity Chapel, 2320 Dana Street

Saturday June 11th, 2016, 10:30 a.m.

Franklin Lei, vihuela, early Viennese guitar, archtop guitar

I.

Ricercar 84 – Fantasia 40 – Fantasia 30 – Ricercar 16 - *Francesco Canova da Milano (1497-1543)*
Tochata – Ricercar 34, ‘*La compagna*’

II.

Diferencias sobre ‘*Guárdame las vcas*’ (both sets) *Luys de Narváez (c.1505-1549)*
Fantasia V *Luis Milán (c.1500-1561)*
Fantasia que contrahaze la harpa en la manera de Luduvico *Alonso Mudarra (c.1510-1580)*

III.

Grande Ouverture, Opus 61 : *Mauro Giuliani, 1781-1829*
Andante Sostenuto – Allegro Maestoso

Source: Facsimile of the First Edition by Giovanni Ricordi, Milan, late 1814

IV.

Blues in the Night *Harold Arlen (1905-1986)*
Autumn in New York *Vernon Duke (1903-1969)*
Night and Day *Cole Porter (1891-1964)*
Here’s That Rainy Day *Jimmy Van Heusen (1913-1990)*
*Letter to Evan** - *Laurie** *Bill Evans (1929-1980)*

Arrangements by Franklin Lei (except * by Sid Jacobs)

6-course Vihuela: Daniel Larson, Duluth MN, 1997 (after iconographic sources especially Juan Bermudo’s woodcut)

Viennese guitar: Johann Michael Rudert, Vienna, dated 1811

Acoustic archtop: Tom Bills, St. Louis, 2013

An obscure history of the guitar or, A history of obscure guitars

I am playing three guitars from very different periods in the instrument's history:

The *vihuela de mano* dates from most of the 16th century. Strung in courses (pairs of strings) and tuned as the Renaissance lute, the vihuela is the true ancestor of the modern guitar. Both the blind vihuelist Miguel de Fuenllana, and Juan Bermudo the leading vihuela theorist, told us that *guitarra* or the Renaissance guitar was nothing other than the vihuela minus its outer (first and sixth) courses. However, the vihuela was the esteemed lute of Spain, Portugal and the Kingdom of Naples, while the guitarra was associated with strumming in taverns. The vihuela was taken by missionaries in particular the Jesuits to India, Japan, China, the Malay Peninsula, and Central and South America. In that way it was the most popular instrument in the world of the 16th century, just as the guitar in its various forms is the most played instrument in our world today.

16th century *guitarra* evolved first into the 5-course *guitarra barocca* of the 17th century and later into the 6-course guitar of the late 18th century. During the 1790s, a guitar of 6 single strings was developed in Naples, the same place that gave birth to the vihuela 300 years earlier. This instrument was brought to international prominence by Mauro Giuliani, who left wife and young child in his native Italy to seek fame in the then musical capitol of the world, Vienna. Giuliani became the rage of Vienna. Subscribers to his recital series at the Kleine Redoutensaal included no less than Beethoven, who was the first in history to compare the guitar to a miniature orchestra, a century before Andrés Segovia. I am most fortunate in acquiring in 1989 the instrument I will play on this program, when the then head of musical instruments at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna steered me towards this guitar.

The guitar entered the 20th century as both a classical and a folk instrument, the latter using metal strings. In the 1920s Lloyd Loar of the Gibson guitar factory developed his famous *archtop* instruments – the L5 guitar and the F5 mandolin. But few people know that in Vienna in the 1820s, a luthier from Budapest named Peter Teufelsdorfer applied for a patent on the *arpeggione*, a fretted 6-string cello with its single immortal sonata from Franz Schubert. Teufelsdorfer's application was rejected in favor of Georg Staufer, Vienna's most famous guitar maker and the alleged mentor to C.F. Martin (whose guitars remain world famous to this day.) But Teufelsdorfer did succeed in obtaining patent on a guitar "in the form of a viola d'amore," which of course was a prototype (and history's first) archtop. Archtops with their powerful metal strings could cut through the brass section in a Jazz band. When electrical amplification was developed in the 1930s, Charlie Christian of the Benny Goodman Orchestra became the first Jazz guitar soloist. As a solo Jazz voice, the archtop guitar is still evolving both in playing technique and in its construction. Current trend is away from its chordal role of the Big Band era, single-line solos of the BeBop and West Coast Jazz, even from the Jazz Fusion of the 1980s and 90s. Today's archtop is a vehicle for unaccompanied playing – what Jazz guitarists call "chord-melody" – a genre which encompasses music arranging, harmonic substitutions, and improvisation.

About the music...

The beginning of the 16th century was of course the first classic period of the lute. Gutenberg's movable type was quickly adapted for printing music, with lute tablature in fact among the first printed musical notations. In Naples and throughout the Iberian Peninsula, music for its Iberian equivalent – the vihuela – was printed from 1536 on. 1536 also marked the first year that Francesco da Milano's music was set to print, and several of his editions from Naples bear the instruction *per viola overo lauto* (for vihuela or lute.) It is assumed that Francesco performed on both instruments himself. The music of Francesco, nicknamed *Il Divino* just as his Milanese compatriot Michelangelo, consists mainly of improvised pieces known as *fantasias* or *ricercars*. In Spain, the first printed vihuela music came from Milán, Narváez, and Mudarra. The latter's fantasy "in imitation of the harp in the manner of Ludovico" is still one of the best known pieces for solo guitar, with its ingenious use of *redobles y consonancias*, or scales and (arpeggiated) chords, to generate not only counterpoints but polyrhythm that predated 20th century music.

Published in late 1814, Giuliani's *Grande Ouverture* Opus 61 was so perfectly timed with the Congress of Vienna that the composer likely wrote it for this event. If that were the case, then it might have been a musical symbol for peace, just as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was for the 1989 German *Einheit* and the subsequent formation of the European Union. It is a masterpiece combining the two most prevalent musical styles of the early 19th century – grand opera and Viennese classicism. It obviously pays tribute to Gioachino Rossini's opera overtures. One of the longest works for guitar or lute, it is written in classic sonata-allegro form, with its second theme promptly recalling Beethoven's piano sonatas, such as the *Quasi una fantasia*. What is equally interesting is the meticulously notated dynamic markings, which shows how Giuliani "recalled the good old days of true lute playing" to quote J.F. Reichart from 1808, with sharply contrasting forte and piano, and long rising-falling phrases using the Rossini crescendo.

Going into our time, the first half of the 20th century saw radical musical changes, with unavoidable reaction in the form of highly melodic "romantic" music, which accounted for most songs written for Broadway and for films. It coincided with the rise of the guitar as a solo instrument. Joe Pass was perhaps the first guitarist to perform alone an entire program drawn from the *American Songbook* repertory. This is a still evolving art, since many Jazz guitarists played only with a plectrum, and had to learn anew playing with individual right hand fingers. That is slowly changing, as "fingerstyle" technique is not only powerful but has a track record all the way back to Francesco da Milano. I am not a Jazz guitarist, but for a long time have wanted to be able to improvise on a good tune. I find solo or "chord-melody" Jazz playing to be an artform easily as challenging as the lute or classical guitar repertory.

~ Franklin Lei

