

The Cambridge Companion to the Guitar

From its origins in the culture of late medieval Europe to enormous global popularity in the twentieth, the guitar and its development comprise multiple histories, each characterized by distinct styles, playing techniques, repertoires, and socio-cultural roles. These histories simultaneously span popular and classical styles, contemporary and historical practices, written and unwritten traditions, and Western and non-Western cultures. This is the first book to encompass the breadth and depth of guitar performance, featuring twelve essays covering different traditions, styles, and instruments, written by some of the most influential players, teachers, and guitar historians in the world. The coverage of the book allows the player to understand both the analogies and the differences between guitar traditions; all styles – from baroque, classical, country, blues, and rock to flamenco, African, and Celtic – will share the same platform, along with instrument making. As musical training is increasingly broadened this comprehensive book will become an indispensable resource.

VICTOR ANAND COELHO is Professor of Music at the University of Calgary. His publications include *Performance on Lute, Guitar, and Vihuela* (Cambridge, 1997), *The Manuscript Sources of 17th-Century Italian Lute Music*, and *Music and Science in the Age of Galileo*. As a lutenist he has performed throughout North America and Europe and as a guitarist has just released a CD, *Come on in my Kitchen*, with his blues band.

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The Cambridge Companion to the
GUITAR

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Victor Anand Coelho
University of Calgary



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For Carina

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Steve Waksman is Assistant Professor of Music and American Studies at Smith College. In 1998, his dissertation, "Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience," won the Ralph Henry Gabriel Prize awarded by the American Studies Association, and was later published by Harvard University Press in 1999. Currently, he is writing an interpretive history of heavy metal and punk rock.

Preface and acknowledgments

The history of the guitar is not only about the past, but is about how its modern traditions, covering many styles and types of instruments, cut across the lives of professional players and amateurs, and across classical and popular repertoires, thus creating the need for a book about the guitar that validates not one, but many approaches. The Cambridge Companion Series offers an ideal format for such wide-angled perspectives, in which these areas can be explored on an equal basis. Surprisingly few books have attempted this kind of inclusive approach, which promotes the idea that the history of the guitar is not simply about music, but about the interactions of players and (sub)cultures of all types. Currently, information about guitar styles and players is contained in niche magazines and journals, few of which circulate outside their specific markets. This insularity has reinforced unfortunate institutional barriers between styles and approaches (between rock and classical, for example) that do not exist in the “real world” of musicians. Guitarists such as Bill Frisell, John McLaughlin, Pat Metheny, Mike Stern, John Williams, Carlos Santana, and Jeff Beck (to name just a few) have explored many aspects of guitar playing through a process of assimilating and transforming diverse styles. The influence these and other guitarists have had on thousands of musicians is incalculable, and it underscores the basic fact that guitarists find ways around the stylistic roadblocks that have been artificially demarcated by the discipline of music history.

Indeed, one of the main purposes of this book is to extend to the reader the musical collegiality that has long existed among players of the instrument. Almost every guitar style – even classical – contains some element of fusion, and this is why the instrument is a nexus for so many different approaches. Guitarists are generally respectful toward one another regardless of their own stylistic orientation or training, and guitar technique in the professional world is usually a combination of self-study, apprenticeship, and reconciliation. Much of this mutual respect is the result of the hybrid training that has come to be expected of players. The stylistic base of guitarists becomes wider by the day: rock guitar is now a bona-fide “tradition” with its own pedagogy, transcriptions, and academic curricula; contemporary classical guitar repertoire calls for techniques that go far beyond the Segovia method, incorporating popular styles; and we are experiencing at present an enormous revival of interest in flamenco, Celtic, rural American, and world music styles. For many players, all of these traditions are valuable and enriching, and they form the basis for the eclecticism that is accepted as

the stylistic template among guitar players today. In short, by its inclusion of guitar styles and study of players in the rock, country, world music, jazz, classical, and blues genres, this book promotes the idea that history is also created by players and builders, not just by composers.

Naturally, it is impossible to cover all guitar styles in a single book, and even more difficult to suggest that they would *all* share some common ground. Readers may not find mention (or if mention, maybe not extensive discussion) of their favorite guitar-gods or styles. Nevertheless, with the emphasis on styles that have clear crossover patterns of influence and a focus on traditions in which the guitar is the *central* instrument (with the possible exception of jazz), the selection of topics does not, I think, require more justification.

As musical training is increasingly broadened at the college and university level to include popular styles, rock, jazz, and world music, the proposed book will be a central source. The history of blues, flamenco, country, rock, and in some respects jazz can be examined through the prism of guitar technique, influences, and innovations. Moreover, an inclusive study of guitar styles and players proposes an attractive model for a modern history of music through the way the instrument can inform about issues of transmission, adaptation, revival, roots, interpretation, oral/written traditions, and the value of studying recordings.

The compiling of a book as diverse as this one is complicated but rewarding, and my first words of thanks must naturally be extended to the contributors themselves. This is a book not just about guitar styles, but about how guitarists relate to one another, toward a community of shared interests and beliefs, regardless of background or area. This book would never be mine to edit if I were not also a guitarist, and this would have been impossible were it not for my mother Rani. She was a good classical guitar player who taught me my first chords, and even encouraged my excursions beyond classical. My brother Arjun and childhood friends Chet and Poe were all influential by introducing the world of English pop to me. When my brother returned home one night in 1969 with a shard of a Gibson SG Special that he managed to catch after Pete Townshend smashed his instrument during a concert at Fillmore East, it was mounted with solemnity in a glass case and assumed the importance of a sacred relic for many years before it sadly disappeared at a yard sale. To Brita I owe the joy of having a lifelong companion who truly believes, I think, that her lutenist/guitarist husband is not just another dumb plucker; and to our daughter Carina, whose play area is constantly being intruded upon by instrument cases of many shapes and sizes, this book is lovingly dedicated.

Note on pitch

All musical examples using staff notation (with the exception of Example 2.2, which is at pitch) follow the convention of notating guitar music an octave higher than it sounds.

