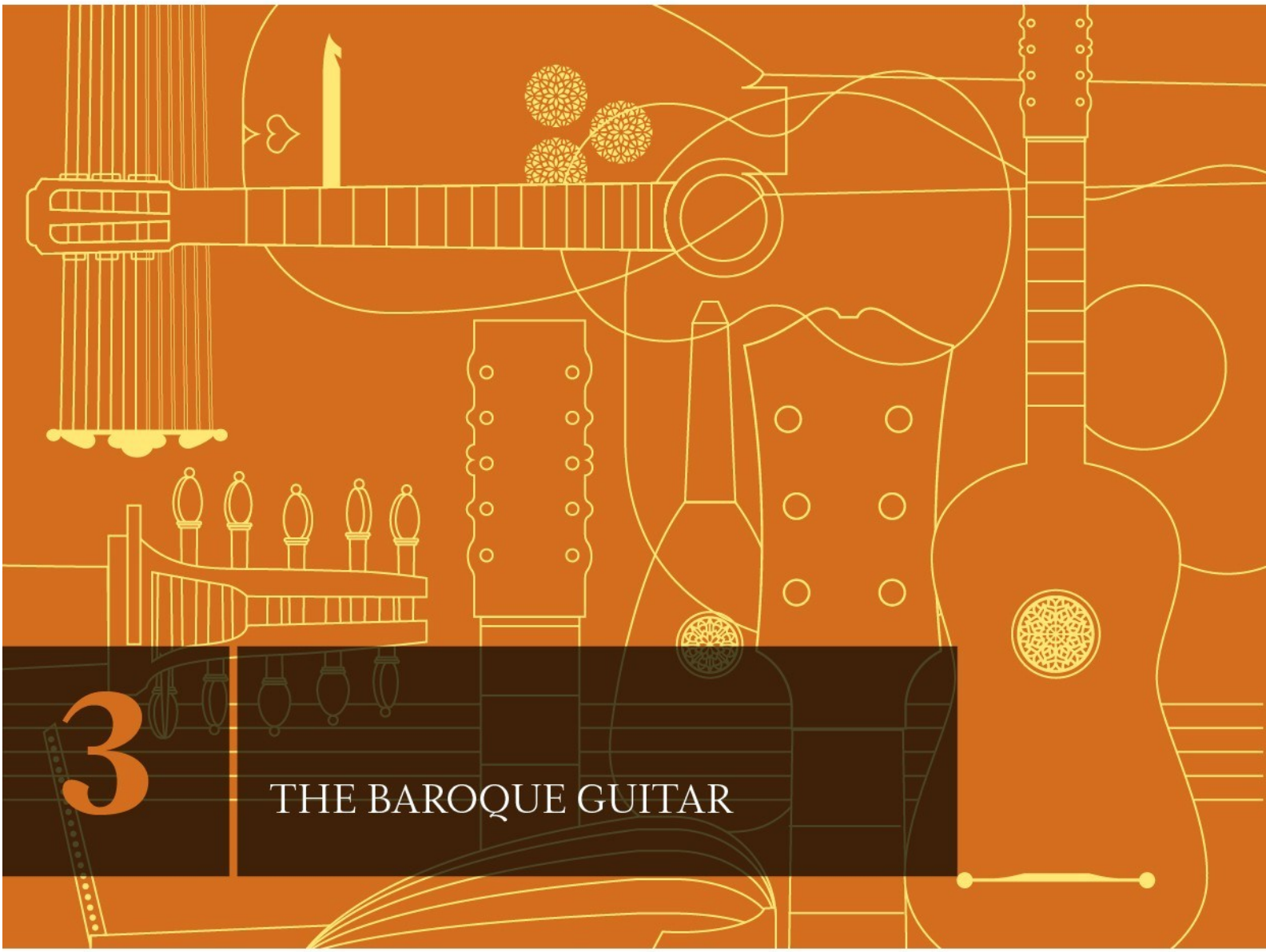
MUSIC FOR GUITAR, LUTE AND VIHUELA

THROUGH THE AGES

LANCE BOSMAN

CHAPTER PREVIEWS



MUSIC FOR GUITAR, LUTE AND VIHUELA

THROUGH THE AGES

VOL 3: THE BAROQUE GUITAR

Contents

La Guitariste. Engraving by F. Bolet after a painting by the French artist Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694–1752).

41. Introducing the Baroque Guitar

> *Moreover, the guitar is suitable and proper to accompany singing, to play alone, for court dancing, jumping and running, country dancing and tap dancing. Playing it one may sing and portray a thousand loving passions with its aid; and it is spice for the well-fed, banishment for troubles and cares, pastime for the sad, consolation for the lonely, joy for the melancholy, balm for the angry, sanity for the demented, madness for the sane.*
>
> A vignette by Luis de Briçeño extolling the virtues of the guitar.
> Addressed to his dedicatee, Lady de Chales.
>
> From author's preface *Metodo, la guitarra*, 1626.[1]

Introducing the Baroque guitar

By leaps and bounds the guitar swept into popularity during the 17th century with a surge of novel strumming styles. Brushing aside residues of its Renaissance linework, it came fully into its own with songs and dances whisked to routine chord sequences. Self-teaching books came within everyday reach drawing enthusiasts, dabblers and posers to this ready-at-hand instrument. From Spain to Italy, France and then England, the widespread affection for the guitar is evident from pictures showing its players active in all walks of life. At masquerades and carnivals they are seen strumming along. With guitars to hand, solitary street singers while away the time. At taverns and rustic domestic scenes the instrument is present, clasped or near to touch. Crossing social barriers it graduated into the palms of the gentry, aristocrats and monarchs. Within these circles guitars are portrayed, tinkered away in opulent drawing rooms and in courtly haunts. Fashionable French dames with splayed silken skirts display the instrument with a bowed ribbon adorning its pegbox. Be it cradled by the holder seated there or angled whilst standing, we notice it suspended without a shoulder strap. Such a support would surely detract from the composure of the image, like a length of string rigging (Pl. 41.1–2). Stepping outside these enclosures to the garden nooks of Watteau's alfresco paintings, guitars again appear, strummed by serenaders. Portable, pleasing to the ear and eye, this instrument was just the thing for rendering a song at wooing games. French guitarists fancied such *fêtes galantes*. In fancy dress they vocalized at picnics in glades and from verandas. From daily life to nightly hours, no scene more fulfils the romantic imagery of the guitar than the nocturnal vision of a serenading suitor. As he croons away to stroked strings from the terrace below, the moon casts an aura around him and a lady poised on the balcony. For theatrical entertainments as well, guitarists crossed the stage for entrées. Remembering costumed processions of chanting lutenists striding across, well, guitarists were not to be outdone. For that same ballet they paraded in frock and gown. What an impressive dash they cut, this colourful troupe striding to a unison strum (see Pl. 47.1).

[1] Transl. by Sprague Smith 1981, Part 1, 3.

42. The Strumming Style

Alfabeto and cifras

Fashioning their music pretty much on the lines of those for the lute until nigh the close of the century, guitarists then struck out alone. From untried ground they forged novel popular song and dance accompaniments, and also set in place the footings for what were to become extensive Baroque variations. Solid chord progressions were wrought without concern for contrapuntal niceties. To denote these, tablature was cast aside for rows of mere symbols. Laid out in the pages of play-in-a-day self-instructors, beginner guitarists made rapid strides. Within these primers, an accompaniment for a topical tune would take shape and perhaps prompt the stirrings of a new melody. For sure these slapdash novices had their dissenters. Santiago de Murcia, an accomplished guitarist-composer of later years, was scathing about acorn pickers who tried to stimulate the ears by thumping the guitar. And high-minded onlookers frowned at the wanton dances and bursts of song to which guitarists lent a rhythmic edge – inflaming loose desire – but little they could do to stem such widespread enthusiasm for the instrument's new-found pursuits.

Pl. 42.1. *Récréation Flamande*. Engraving by William French (1815–98) after David Teniers (c.1616–90).

Those wishing to indulge would purchase a tutor for the *chitarra spagnola,* the 'Spanish guitar'. Though Italian printers produced them in numbers, the trail leads back to Catalonia and the last years of the 16th century. It was then that a medical doctor and amateur guitarist, Juan Carlos Amat (c.1572–1642) released his treatise, *Guitarra Española y vandola* possibly as early as 1596.[2] (Pl. 42.2). Also answering to his Catalan name, Joan Carles, this enterprising scholar implemented a system for learning chords by means of shorthand signs.[3] Like the symbols for chords in song sheets today, those charted and illustrated by Amat with numbers and letters were similarly intended to activate the fingers through instant identification of memorized chord shapes.

[2] A surviving edition of *Guitarra Española* from Lérida is dated 1626 but with a letter of dedication dated 1596 implying an earlier edition still. See Hall 1978, 1980. This book received wide circulation and there were at least ten editions of it published successively in Lérida, Girona and Barcelona, plus plagiarised impressions elsewhere.

[3] Though Amat's system of strummed chords is considered unique, there are however other Spanish and Italian primary sources in which chord symbols are entered. According to Corona-Alcalde the earliest reference to *rasgueado* appeared in Miguel Sánchez de Lima's *El Arte poética en romance castellano* (Alcalá de Henares 1580). Corona-Alcalde 1990, 11.

43. Early Songs and Dances

To the dance, then have ...
an ear to the guitars, and move your feet like quicksilver.

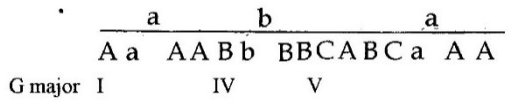
Cervantes: *Comedias y Entremeses* (1615). [4]

Oaks from acorns

Where there were carnivals, stage shows, village romps, guitarists would string along. However such cavortings were was considered by some Spanish authorities to be so lewd that participants stood the risk of imprisonment. Witness to raucous strumming, swaying hips and slapped haunches, self-righteous citizens were so incensed they felt morally bound to turn their faces away. Then are those disparaging remarks from Spanish observers and playwrights who likened guitarists to monkeys, as lowly onion eaters, drink-sodden yokels and more ominously as demonic apparitions. Indeed, without seeing these rumbustious displays, rasgueado alone drums up impressions of gyrating torsos, hops, clumps and swirling skirts. Outdoor activities, boisterous dances call for hard and fast chord strokes. Removed is this from the delicate plucking manner that Baroque guitarists were later to cultivate; for soon enough were these rough-hewn accompaniments fine-tuned, elaborated and melodically rimmed.

As rotary sequences initially they could be comped indefinitely for as long as a singer or dancer kept breath or pace. Once under way they would inevitably be varied with supplementary chords and ornaments. This practice is documented in Spanish-Italian dance and song solos published in the early 17th century. As shuffled major-minor key chords they spring from the moderno I-IV-V.[5] This sequence underlies the later-noted early Hispanic *chacona, villano* and *zarabanda,* originally sung and danced to guitar. In Italy these genres mingled with local idioms, the passacaglia and moderno-based arias *di Firenze* and *Ballo di Napoli*, Ex. 43.1:

Ex. 43.1. G. Montesardo: *Ballo di Napoli, sopra l'A* (1



Among other folk dances and instrumental grounds based on the moderno are those carried over from the Renaissance as the *Bergamasca,* Ex. 43.2, and *Calata*, a Spanish-Italian street song-dance, Pl. 43.1

[4] Transl. by Corona-Alcalde 1999, 'Performance Practice', 116.
[5] For the moderno bass lines and other sequences cited see Chapt. 12, 'Variation Settings for Lute.' See also Chapt. 53, 'The Guitar, Songs and Continuo', *per B molle, per B quadro*. For moderno sequences in I7th century guitar music and their sway on the formulation of major-minor tonality see Hudson 1970a.

44. Guitarists of the 17th and Early 18th Centuries

As the 17th century progressed, the guitar's standing was elevated on the international map; for this was the time of its travelling virtuosos. Acting as envoys for the instrument, accomplished performers crossed Europe. Introducing it to monarchs and upper echelons of society, 'you were as sure to see a guitar on a lady's toilet table as rouge or patches.'[6] While hobnobbing at court, guitarists penned volumes of compositions dedicated to incumbent kings. Flattering their royal patrons with prefatory verse and diplomatic panegyrics they ensured the preservation of their oeuvres.

Spanish and Portuguese maestros championed the guitar at the Palace of Madrid. One such, Nicolao Doizi de Velasco (1590–1659), was in the service of Philip IV, and another, Santiago de Murcia (1673–1739), became guitar tutor to Queen Maria Luisa Gabriella, wife of Philip V. In France Louis XIV's entourage included two eminent guitarists, Robert de Visée (c.1650–c.1725/32) and Francesco Corbetta (1615–81). De Visée was privileged to teach the king and entertain him with a courante or two in the privacy of his chambers. Across the Channel the guitar entered English musical life, where visiting players were again granted royal patronage. Among them was Corbetta again who dedicated to Charles II what is now regarded as one of the most significant collections of Baroque guitar music.

Italy and the 'mixed style'

In the service of princes, the Italian lutenist and guitarist Giovanni Paolo Foscarini (fl. 1629–49) was a member of the Academia dei Caliginosi. There he was known by his nickname 'Furious' *L'Academico Caliginoso detto il Furioso.*[7] His picture appears to bear this temperament out. Concentrating his volatile energies Foscarini left a compendium of dances and miscellaneous pieces for *Il primo, secondo, e terzo libro della chitarra spagnola* assumed to have been released around 1630. A fourth book was added to an edition printed about 1632, *I quatro libri della chitarra spagnola,* Pl. 44.2. Amounting to five books by 1640, this composite volume contains new and earlier music of his: *Li cinque libri della chitarra alla spagnola* (Rome, 1640). From this edition books I and II have variations in rasgueado, but subsequent volumes reveal developments. Book III for instance begins with a couple of pieces fully intabulated.

Pl. 44.1. A somewhat fearsome portrayal of Giovanni Paolo Foscarini. *I quatro libri* (Rome c.1630).

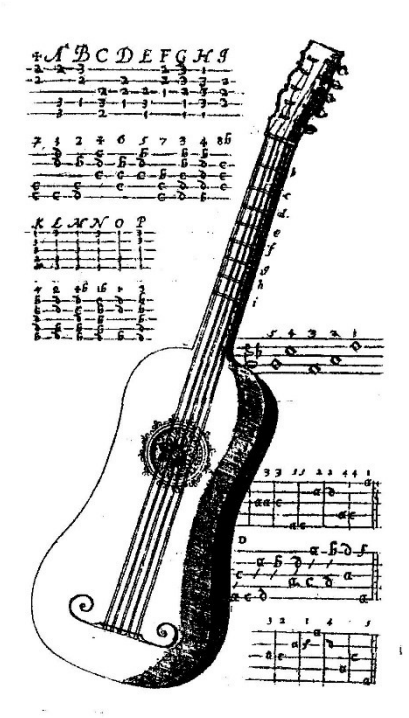
[6] From Sprague-Smith 1982 who cites Anthony Hamilton's *Mémoires du Chevalier de Grammont* (1713).
[7] Gammie 1985, 24.

45. Baroque Guitar Tunings

Send for a guitar, and if possible, henceforth
let it be better furnished with frets and strings,
for there is no worse torment for the one who sings
than to be subjected to the treachery of an
out-of-tune instrument ...

Alonso Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo,
El cortesano descortés. Madrid, 1621.

While the lute was progressively widening its pitch range with ever-deeper diapasons, guitar music preserved a certain levity, given its relatively narrow tonal compass. Even so, from tunings in circulation, players could opt for one with a bass presence. More often than not, though, they preferred to cast their solo music in a treble-toned light. Such sonorities are intrinsic to the instrument and imbue its music with a distinctive timbre. What would otherwise be the instrument's lowest or two lowest courses were in this case upwardly pitched. And guitarists certainly knew how to maximize on what might seem topsy-turvy ways of tuning. On the other hand, should at least the semblance of a bass line be desired the 4th course is left unchanged. Striking a happy medium, the resultant music still retains a lightness of tone but now with a slender bass underlay. This tuning is sufficient to add weight to cadences and provides scope for upper and lower interplays of linework. Though for accompanying singers or ensembles, these tunings might prove a little too rarefied for brushed chordwork. Extending the five-course guitar's pitch compass to its utmost, the 4th and 5th bass strings come into play, hence with scope now for wholesome chords as those in alfabeto charts.



Pl. 45.1. Five-course guitar depicted in Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle* (Paris 1636). Upper left are chords with alfabeto and Castilian ciphers. The notated tuning upper right with a B-flat signature has the first course pitched d^1 and tuned to (C). See Ex. 45.1.

There are three principal tunings for the five-course guitar. Within the prologues of some collections the authors specify the tuning for that edition. Short of that the player is left to choose one; but which of the three would best suit the music in view? The issue is both confounded and paradoxically resolved by the fact that in many cases more than one tuning lends itself to a composition in hand. These factors aside, there are other considerations which inform on a decision: that the one chosen accommodates the cut and weave of the music;

46. Passacaglias

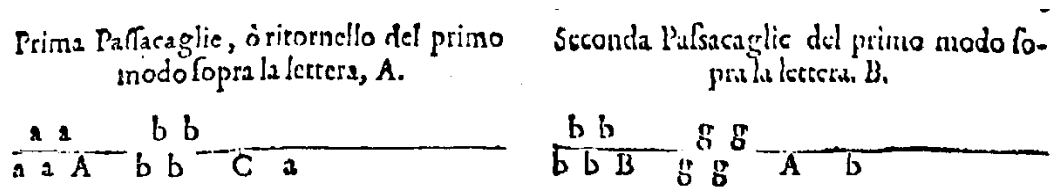
... I saw (what an admirable thing and what a just punishment!) the barbers who were tied up, with their hands free. Above each of their heads was a guitar ... Whenever one of them went to play, with that natural yearning for pasacalles, the guitar would fly away from him.

A narrator describing the torment of barbers from Quevedo's satire on Hell.

In the light of those billowing passacaglias of the late Baroque, it seems improbable that their kernels were mere basic chord sequences. As rasgueado rounds initially for songs and dances in Italian books they come under the name of a *passacaglia*, in French ones *passacaille* and in Spanish, *passacalle.* Beforehand they were given in Amat's treatise as *paseo.* The term alludes to 'street walks' of processions of singers sauntering and gallivanting. From outdoors to within walls passacaglias were strummed in theatres to herald the entrances of actors. Vamped as well between dance rounds and acts, they granted time for participants to snatch breath and regroup.[8]

Singers of passacaglias, though, weren't held by all in highest regard. Not quite note-perfect apparently, they became rather unfairly the butts of ridicule. A literary reference from 1614 cites Sancho Panza lamenting the loss of his ass, exclaiming that his donkey made finer music by wheezing and flatulence than a barber with a guitar drawling a *passacalle*.[9] It seems that barbers, poor souls, and passacaglias were inseparable, to be beaten by the same censorious stick.

Early Italian guitar passacaglias are in many cases presented as simple arrays of primary chords I-IV-V in major keys and from the minor, Im-IVm-V. Usually the writers of guitar tutors provide a variety of these sequences enabling a performer to select one in a key which corresponds to that of a dance or song in mind. For a passacaglia in G major, *primo modo sopra la lettera, A*, Montesardo links the three primary chords of this key: G, C and D major. Alongside is the sequence for C major (*la lettera B*), C, F, G major. Pl. 46.1.



Pl. 46.1. *Prima Passacaglie, ò ritornello del primo modo sopra la lettera, A. Seconda Passacaglie del primo modo sopra la lettera, B* by Girolamo Montesardo (Florence 1606).

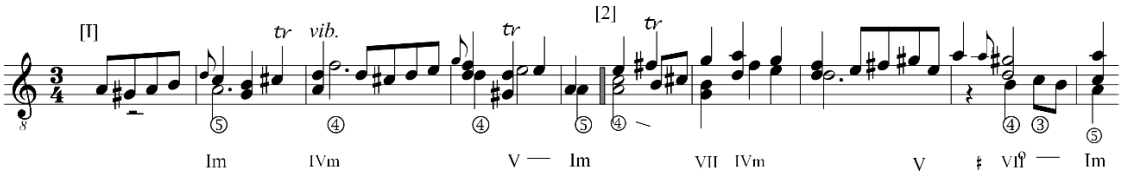
[8] For passacaglias in various instrumental mediums see Hudson 1982, Vol. 3 and Walker 1968. Apart from specific references to Spanish and French pieces, the generic term 'passacaglia' is adopted above.

[9] This was *Segundo tomo del Ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (Tarragona 1614), a falsified second volume of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* written by Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda. Quotation by Esses 1992, 687.

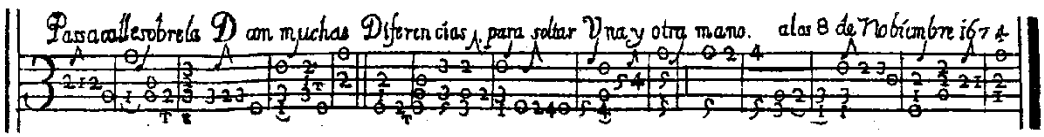
Later passacaglias

As the century rolled on passacaglias transformed from rasgueado progressions into extensive and fully intabulated workings. From one variation to the next their weaves change – strummed here, arpeggiated there, contrapuntal elsewhere. Sanz leaves us with cross-samplings of both early and later versions. His 'demonstration' passacaglias (Pl. 42.13) are mere foundation harmonies intended to limber the fingers. However, those from the third book and Ex. 46.3 following are of another calibre. Though most begin with the passacaglia's routine sequences they then spiral. Within their sweep now are patterned sequences, runs in counterpoint and chordal stretches Their keys are specified in titles with a letter symbol. That shown in Pl. 46.4, *sobre la D*, is the alfabetto for A, the key of A minor. A quite lengthy number, Ex. 46.3 covers thirteen variations of four-bar spans.

Ex. 46.3. G. Sanz: *Passacalle sobre la D con muchas Diferencias* (1674)



Play



Pl. 46.4. 1st to 3rd variations from *Passacalle sobre la D con muchas Diferencias* by Gaspar Sanz (Zaragoza 1674).

Not all passacaglias begin with an upbeat or pickup run; but if they do, these tend to spur successive rotations. Consequently on-running cycles begin not on a downbeat but within the bar. At such times the close of a foregoing variation is inclined to merge with the opening of the next. More so are they rendered seamless should the conclusion of one cycle and the departure of the following both hinge on the tonic chord.

47. Chaconnes

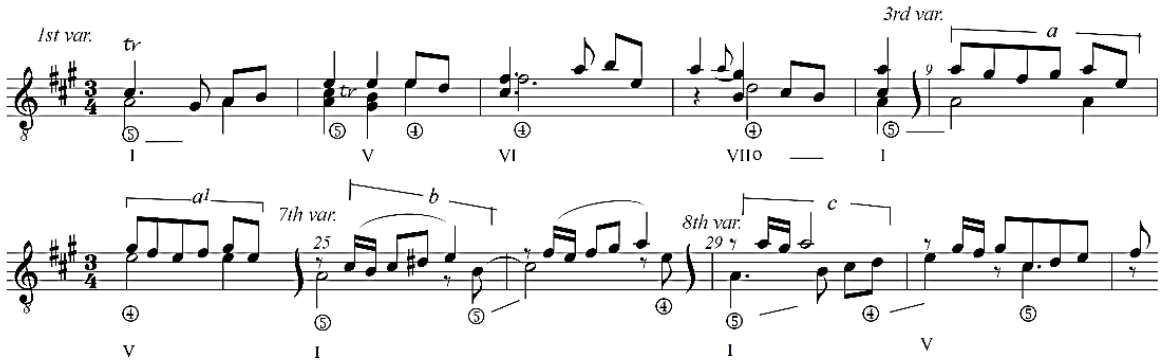
To enter through the cracks and clefts
into the convent of the nuns,
their virtue to disturb,
which in those cells doth always reign.
In the dance of the chaconne
Lies the secret of vie bonne.
Cervantes: *La ilustre fregona*.[10]

A Spanish and New World dance of the late 16th and 17th century, the chaconne, *chacona*, *ciaccona* gained notoriety for its sensual, wild and humorous movements. Sung and danced to tambourines, guitars and castanets, it was branded as outrageous by guardians of decency. Like other early songs and dances it was banned in public places by official edict. One observer, Juan Ferrer, recounting a song from a comedy, the 'Chacona', described it as so dissolute as to cause a serious scandal in Zaragoza. From the same city another blatant exposure was so shocking that people were leaving the theatre to avoid hearing it. For those flaunting senoritas not giving a fig for decorum the chaconne was 'beyond the bounds of the modesty and moderation which she owes to her virtue, by revealing with these leaps her breasts, her feet, and those things which nature or art has decreed should be covered up as occurs in the *zarabande*, *chacona*.'[11] In the text quoted by the observer, however, there is no mention that so disapproving was this affronted citizen of this indelicate display that he shot up and stormed off.

Playwrights seized on the chaconne's licentiousness and its associations with peasantry and cited it, if somewhat tongue-in-cheek. Cervantes mentions it in the lines above and elsewhere in his *Novelas ejemplares*. Twelve mule drivers and kitchen maids dance to its pulse while another character sings and accompanies on the guitar.[12] Lope de Vega as well staged them in comedies. With a rather righteous tone, or at least outwardly, he describes them as 'gesticulations and lascivious movements offensive to the virtue, chastity and decorous silence of the ladies'.[13] Then from a sonnet by the Italian Zan Muzzina cutely entitled 'His mistress, to pick his pocket does all the dances in Bologna.' She with a seductive ploy distracts his attention by 'wriggling her waist an excellent chaconne does perform.'[14] But that's enough of that.

[10] From Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares* (1613), quoted by Bianconi 1987, 101–02.
[11] From Juan de la Cerda's *Libro intitulado, vida política de todos los estados de mugeres* (1599), quoted by Esses 1992, 618.
[12] Esses 1992, 615.
[13] Lope de Vega, *Dorotea* (1632), quoted by Hamilton 1971, 149.
[14] From Zan Muzzina's burlesque sonnet *La sua donna per cavargli denari, fa tutti i balli usati in Bologna*, quoted by Bianconi 1987, 100.

Ex. 47.5. G. Sanz: *Chacona* (1675)

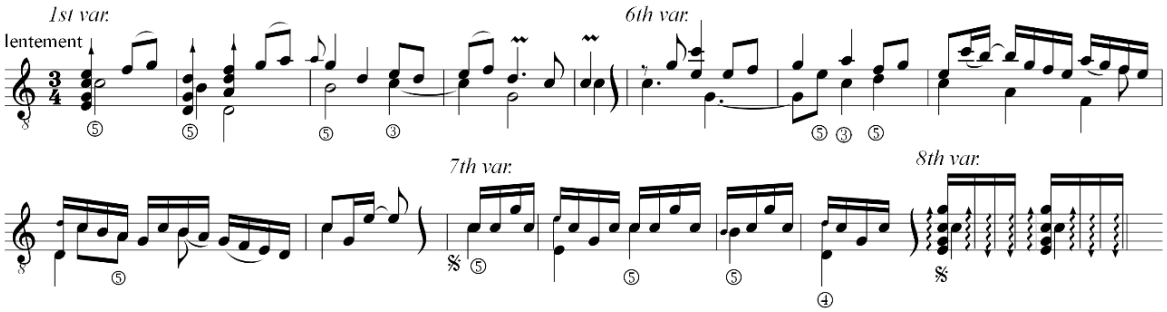


Play

After a few turns of regulated chord changes, Sanz then discards these for melodic patterning. Indeed, sequences, variants and fragmentations animate more than half this chaconne, from its fifth variation to ninth concluding one. In the process divisional cadences are overridden by the unremitting impetus of these figures.

Though routine chord sequences continued to steer some guitar chaconnes from later years, there are other instances at this time where these progressions don't figure at all. Evidently they far from Corbetta's mind when in 1671 he released his extraordinary *Caprice de chaconne*, Ex. 47.6:

Ex. 47.6. F. Corbetta: *Caprice de chacone* (1671)



Play

48. The Folia and Españoleta

Believed to have hailed from Portugal, the folia, *folias*, became popular in Spain during the 17th century as a dance, song, a genre of poetry and as a ground for instrumental variations. Like other Iberian dances, the folia had a checkered history. Delighting some for its courtly train, others observed it as a madcap street display. Performed with castanets and strummed guitars, its frenzied movements may account for its name, suggesting folly, foolishness, crazy antics. Folias were also performed as spectacles. One description recounts it as altogether noisy, with boys dressed as maidens and suspended on the shoulders of porters who 'spin around and sometimes dance and also play tambourines. The noise is so great and the music so fast, that it seems that both the men and the boys are out of their minds.'[15] For an image of the folia's elevation into regal circles we turn the clock back to 1564 when a tableau of eight Portuguese men were pictured 'very finely attired in cloaks, helmets and points of gold. There were also four ladies-in-waiting and four chambermaids dressed in Portuguese style with jugs filled with flowers on their heads. When the queen and her ladies-in waiting entered, the characters began to play and sing Portuguese *folías*.'[16] In France spectators were treated to the folia as an exotic stage act. Redolent of things Spanish, colourfully attired dancers accordingly accompanied themselves with castanets.

There are two kinds of instrumental folias. One circulated during the early Baroque, the other emerged later. Even so, early versions enduring from the late Renaissance persisted through much of the 17th century. On the guitar they began as lively triple-time brushed accompaniments and solos around a flexible chord sequence. In the years following the mid-17th century these were joined by a slower and graceful theme with a distinctive tune and harmony.

Early folias

Soon into the 17th century instrumental folias took root in rasgueado collections. Rudimentary versions generally comprise two phrases. Variations run without breaks. Keys are major or minor, though frequently cast in G minor. The fundamental chord progression for major keys is I, V, I, flat-VII, flat-III, flat-VII. In G major: G, D, G, F, B-flat, F. In minor keys triads III and VII are integral major chords, hence: Im, V, Im, VII, III, VII.[17] On occasions the fifth bar of the sequence, usually occupied by III, might instead be taken by a continuation of VII or supplemented with IV. If both phrases of the folia each encompass the above chord sequence, the first follows it through to the dominant, the second retraces the progression to end on the tonic.

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[15] From Sebastián de Covarrubias y Orozco's dictionary *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o Española* (1611), quoted by Esses 1992, 638.

[16] From Cristóbal Pérez Pastor's *Noticias y documentos relativos a la historia y literatura españolas*, Vol. 1, 415 (1910). Translated by Esses 1992, 646.

[17] See Hudson 1982, Vol. 1, 'The Folia', xv–xxx for chord schemes.

49. Spanish and Latin Dances of the Baroque

By the sound alone of popular Spanish dance music, visions spring to mind of fiestas, cafe get-togethers and town square capers. Add to these images the clicks of castanets and rattling tambourines. Then the brittle strum of a guitar breaks through. A haze clings, raising the temperature of these scenes of merriment. From such exposures of tempestuous Spanish life this fanciful travelogue passes on. The sounds and sights of outdoor festivities fade. A shift of scene is in the offing suggested by a blank stillness. A serenade then drifts across, and from its gentle sway our imagery is transported onto another plane. And it is one issuing from an elevation distanced from the populace. For we now enter courtly haunts where finesse and decorum is all. Polite society is pictured, swanning a ballroom with calculated motions and measured gaits.

So at the lower end of the social scale are the earthy exuberance of rustic dances known as *bailes* or *bayles.*[18] in upper circles poised choreography called in Spanish simply '*danzas'*. Yet it was hardly a case that never the twain should meet. Though a cultural divide was theoretically drawn, there was inevitable toing and froing of steps between them. Despite the condemnatory mutterings of righteous citizens, courtiers nonetheless warmed to those dances branded as wanton. With gentrified leanings are the españoleta, pavan and galliard. Bizarre and grotesque displays ~~were~~ downgraded as *bailes* are the villano and others following with a foot in both arenas. This term, story has it strangely, alludes to a thief, and possibly the image of one gyrating in his death throes at the gibbet.

Bailes – and their mixed receptions

Casting a gimlet eye on the guitar within the steamy activities of peasant life.

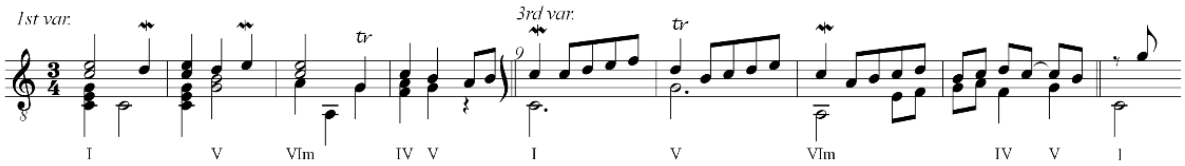
> 'I think there cannot be a better Representation of Hell than these sort of Kitchins and the Persons in them; for not to speak of this horrible Smoak, which blinds and choaks one, they are a Dozen of Men, and as many Women, blacker than Devils, nasty and stinking like Swine, and clad like Beggars. There are always some of 'em impudently grating on a sorry Guitar, singing and hopping like a Cat a roasting.'
>
> *The Ingenious and Diverting Letters of a Lady – Travels into Spain*. London, 1692. An observation by Marie Catherine d'Auley from her colourful account.

[18] See also references to bailes in Chapt. 24, 'A Vista of the Musical Baroque / Spain.'

Marionas

A sprightly baile with snappy syncopations, the *marionas* in triple time has a melody of alternating held notes and short spurts. Accompanied by mainstay chords it falls into I-V-VIm-IV-V in the preferred key of C major. With a comic side to this dance, gentry took to it as a slapstick. Into its swing the eighteen variations from Guerau would for sure grant scope for dancers to let loose all manner of body twists, Ex. 49.4:

Ex. 49.4. F. Guerau: *Marionas* (1694)

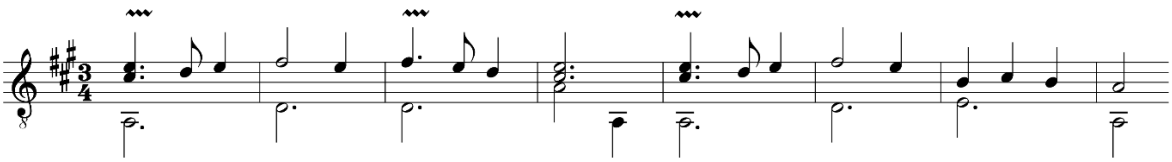


Play

Matachín

Known in Spain as the *matachín* or *matachines*, the matachin also took on an Italian identity as a *mattacinno* and in France as *mattassins.* To triple time I-V-VIm-IV-V and its variants often accompany the dance. In the 16th century it could be a grotesque display of fools which Arbeau likens to jesters, 'bouffons'. It is also choreographed as a sword dance performed by young noblemen. Otherwise, rather ominously it serves as a ritual death enactment. Putting a picture to this, Negri in 1602 described a *mattaccinata* as a dance of dwarves with cudgels.[19] Seventeenth century *matachines* were performed by masked figures to a triple or six-eight metre. Parodying sword fencers, duelists or troupes of combatants performed matachins in pantomimes. In patchwork costumes 'to the sound of a joyful instrumental piece they make wry faces and strike blows with wooden swords and inflated cow bladders.'[20] But for the following number, paradoxically, they would have to contain their antics to take an elegant waltz-like stance.

Ex. 49.5. L. R. de Ribayaz: *Matachín* (1677)



Play

[19] Cohen 2004, 326–27.
[20] From *Diccionario ... por la Real Academia Española*, quoted by Esses 1992, 677.

50. Suites for Guitar

Dances as ever have proved an enduring source of inspiration, prompting a turn of melody to a fitting pace and rhythm. And with a variety of chord sequences up their sleeves, guitarists of the day could as readily turn their hands to accompanying foot steppers on the floor. At theatricals they would be too, reeling off a few rounds at scenic encounters. To a sarabande sequence, forest folk, sylvans, and harlequins pirouette. Against strumming guitars milkmaids prance at village wedding settings and bumpkins cavort in make-believe rural depictions.

As the years rolled on Baroque guitarists refined and extended their dance settings. Yet for all their elaboration they were still invigorated with rasgueado. As lutenists had done, dances from this quarter were presented as pick and mix assortments or batched as suites. Core movements are accordingly an allemande, courante, sarabande and gigue. Preludes in some cases lead the way. In their stead if not between are optional varieties, minuets, gavottes, bourées. Variations also spring up as chaconnes, passacaglias, folias. Taken in turn, the principal dances of these suites are considered first, and then incidental varieties.

Preludes

Like preludes for lute, those at the guitar are contrived to nimble the fingers and root out a tonality for an ensuing suite. Some begin leisurely, pausing here and there before latching onto and pursuing a purposeful idea. Such is Ex. 50.1 which from its opening sweep then slips into patterned counterpoints. Other preludes though are impelled from the start as Ex. 50.2 now with bugle-like flourishes.

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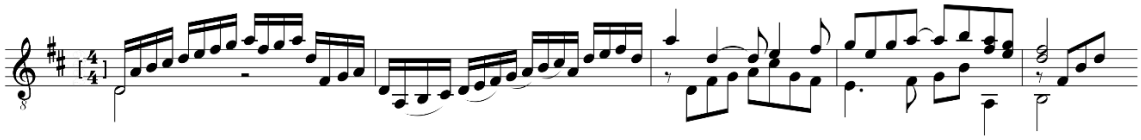
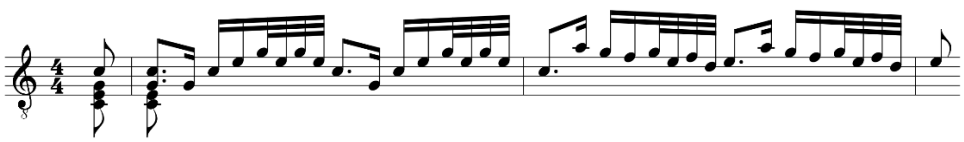
Ex. 50.1. A. M. Bartolotti: *Prelude* (c.1655)



Play

Ex. 50.2. A.M. Bartolotti *Prelude* (c.1655)



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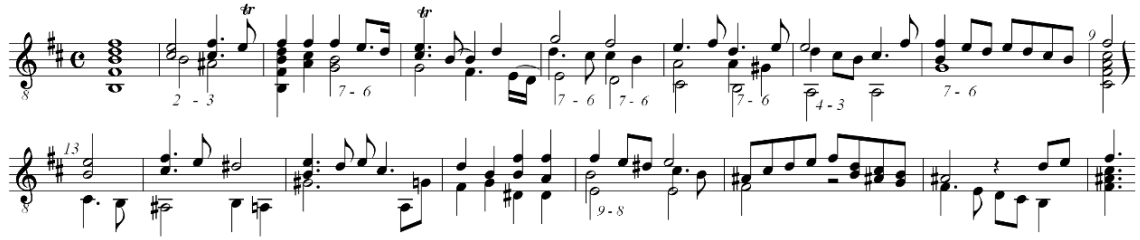
51. Blank Canvasses

Chance encounters

Tinkering at the fingerboard a turn of phrase happens to arise. From out of the blue but somehow engaging, it merits investigation. Having worked it over, a responding gesture then takes shape. More through application now than happenstance, a further twist to the line is teased out. Up and running by this time and perhaps pinned down in notation, a title would be in order. But for a composition open ranging as this turns out, it bears no evident associations with a familiar dance or prospective song setting. Hence brand names are discounted for a heading free of preconceptions. Suitably ambiguous, a Toccata, an improvisatory 'touch piece' would fit the bill. Another possibility given the music's whimsical nature, would be a Caprice. Vague terms, they do at least imply that the music is borne by a free spirit, of an impromptu kind.

Remembering how unpredictable toccatas can be from those in the lute repertoire, equally are so are they on the guitar. Melodic runs at one moment are apt to halt at the next for a stretch of ponderous chords. Along the way the lines engage in contrapuntal banters, erupt with rasgueado, and even dissipate in a flurry of arpeggiations. If not broaching these extremes, free-ranging toccatas feature in Foscarini's books from the 1630s. As a lutenist besides, and acquainted with that instrument's abstract genres, it would be second nature for him to set toccatas at the guitar in ways similar to those he composed for the lute.

Ex. 51.1. G. P. Foscarini: *Toccatta* (1640)



Play

Should the introductory chord of Ex. 51.1 be dispatched with a suspenseful roll it would be evident to the listener that from this dramatic opening gesture no dance arrangement or song setting will follow. Granted an unconstrained hand, ideas unfold at will. Just so is that above, with unexpected turns and holds. Suspensions prepared and resolved render uplifts to the counterpoints. Through-running without regard for phrase symmetries, timely cadences seal one line of activity and beckon the next.

52. Harmony, Ornaments and Peculiarities

Taken together, the Baroque guitar's unique sonorities, its rasgueado and the piquant dissonances it gives rise to, may strike an uninitiated ear as decidedly eccentric. Well, all is grist to the mill of its music. From the start of the 17th century guitarists staked their own preserves. When alfabeto took hold it marked a turning point from line setting to chord brushing. The pioneers of alfabeto dealt with solid harmonies for instant playing – and never mind the blemishes. The object was to get novices immediately up and running. If that meant flouting the norms of part-writing, then so be it. These forerunners were indifferent to the niceties of counterpoint, about which note led to where within a progression. Besides which, the sheer propulsion of rasgueado precluded such considerations. Blatant octaves, parallel 5ths spring up in defiance of textbook rules; but most cavalier were these proponents with their use of inverted chords. Where in other circumstances none other than root-position formations would do, requisite for harmonic stability, the chord stacks in alfabeto charts frequently appear with their root notes upended. Consequently 1st and 2nd inversions abound. 1st inversions, with their roots dislodged, leaving the middle note of the triad lowermost, are innocuous enough; as alternative underpins to the roots of chords they serve to elasticize bass lines, and have done so for centuries. But 2nd inversions conventionally receive cautious treatment. Unstable in effect, aurally insipid, they are customarily reserved for particular occasions; but not so by these guitarists who dispensed them with abandon. As for discords, a cultivated ear might also well wince at those abject offenders that the present guitar is prone to unleash. If accordingly prepared and cushioned as convention has it, they are not unknown either to jut out brazenly.

But this is nit-picking. The Baroque guitar takes these 'liberties' in its stride, and to its credit. Given a certain tonal levity by virtue of its treble pitch compass, the instrument readily accommodates otherwise theoretical prohibitions; they just don't sound misplaced. We aurally perceive 2nd inversion chords on this instrument as if they were more or less in root position. However cautiously handled elsewhere, guitarist-composers regarded these idiosyncrasies as intrinsic to their music. While keeping abreast of received musical practices in the main, they had no compunction in waiving them as they saw fit.

Alfabeto dissonante – falso

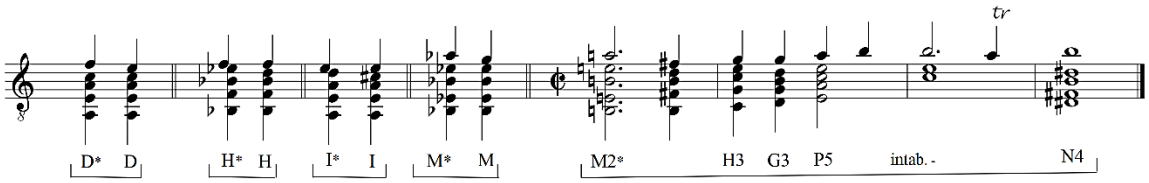
Adding a bite to rasgueado progressions, guitarists of the 17th century widened their harmonic palettes with defined discords. These appeared in the chord charts of Foscarini's *Li cinque libri* of 1640 as *alfabeto dissonante.* They also figured in Corbetta's first volume of 1639, *De gli scherzi armonici* as *alfabeto falso*. By no means errant harmonies, Foscarini and Corbetta aligned them by letter names to concords, and distinguished the discords with asterisks, D*, H*, etc., Ex. 52.1a. However, asterisks also accompany concords in the case of Ex. 52.1e where Corbetta applies them to taper the harmony to A minor.[21]

[21] For more information on *alfabeto falso* see Hall 2009, 49–69.

Ex. 52.1a–e. *Alfabeto dissonante, alfabeto falso*

Ex. 52.1a
G.P. Foscarini: *Alfabeto dissonante** (*with* resolutions)

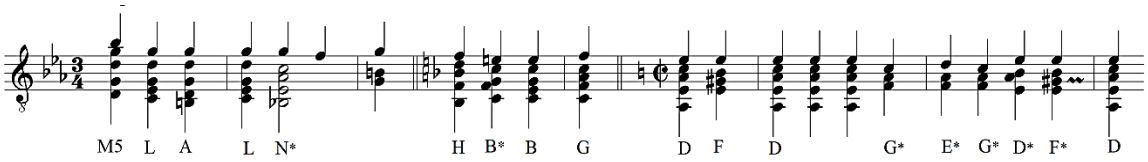
Ex. 52. 1b
Toccata



Ex. 52. 1c.
F. Corbetta: *Passacalli*

Ex.52. 1d
Chiaccona

Ex. 52. 1e
Pass'e mezzo



Play

As chordal embellishments their inset suspensions could have been indicated by means of mixed tablature; but as strummed entities they preserve the spirit of rasgueado. Though Foscarini seldom resorts to them, when he does as in Ex. 52.1b the impact of M2* as an opening chord would make a sensitive soul wince. Had he been attending a music theory class and came up with this as a starter he would have been sent out of the room. Corbetta for his part frequently deploys them, particularly to enliven cadences, Ex. 52.1c–e. If not jolting they certainly relish the harmony with further strokes of individuality (see also Ex. 53.11).

53. The Guitar, Singers and Ensembles

How agreeable a part it bears in a consort.

Nicola Matteis eulogising on the guitar in his
The False Consonances of Musick. London, 1682.

With ample reserves of rasgueado sequences at their fingertips, guitarists readily turned their hand from solo to collective music making. At impromptu instrumental gatherings are snapshots of them pitching in alongside pipers and fiddlers. Accompanying dancers, they were just as soon on call for singers. Theatre audiences witnessed them in these roles and spectators observed them vamping among the populace. At secluded spots, in Watteau's leafy glades they loll, rendering a serenade. Habitués of taverns and open-air cafés they are seen crooning and playing along in company. To complete the picture, a beaker of wine on a nearby table, and to one side animals sit, dogs, monkeys, cats, observing the surrounding activity with looks of impassive tolerance.

From outdoor venues to more exclusive haunts, guitarists are pictured in chamber ensembles. Within these gatherings they joined ranks with vocalists, strings and continuo instruments. There for more than just the ride, their brittle chordwork and rhythmic syncopations injected a certain edge to the proceedings; for the Baroque guitar's pitch compass was just so, bridging the gap between flights of melody and a drawling bass.

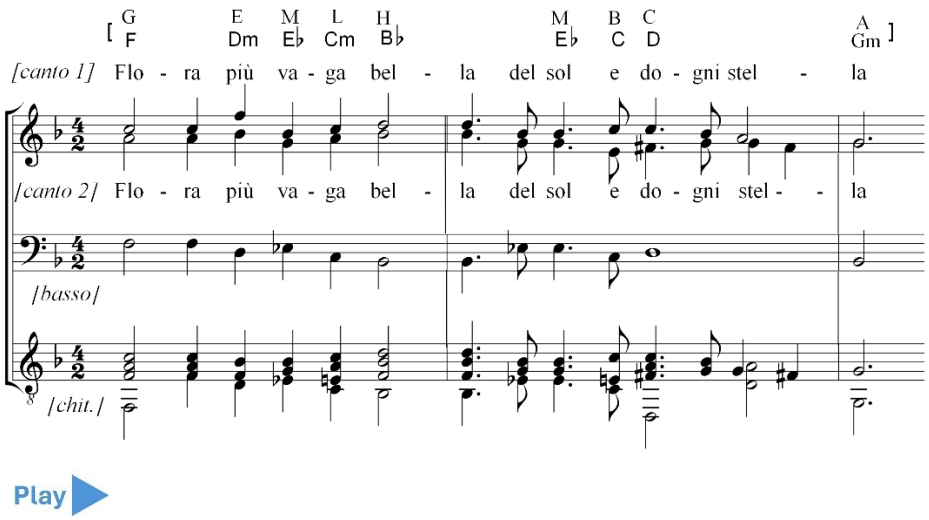
Pl. 53.1. Francesco Corbetta and a band of cherubs at play. They all look very wise.

Roman publishers and those in Naples led the way in the production of alfabeto songsbooks released in the second decade of the 17th century. Venetian printing shops then came to the forefront, issuing numerous collections through the 1620s and beyond. Their contents ranged from arias – popular songs – that rolled off the tongue to quite sophisticated deliveries. Suiting the tastes and abilities of society at large, they also chimed with connoisseurs who wished to participate in singing rather than just witness it. Moreover, the widespread enthusiasm for these song collections testified to the popularity of the guitar in 17th century Italy.

Italian songs – villanellas, arias

Light popular songs, villanellas, otherwise called canzonettas with rasgueado accompaniments were initially published in Kapsberger's *Libro primo di villanelle… chitarrone et alfabeto per la chitarra* (Rome, 1610). For one to three voices they are presented with alfabeto symbols and chitarrone intabulations.

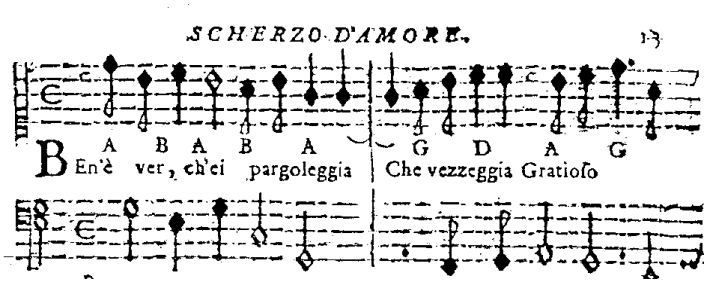
Ex. 53.1. G.G. Kapsberger: *Flora più vaga* (1610)



Play

Typical of Kapsberger's choral villanellas, Ex. 53.1 has two voices blending at intervals of thirds and occasional sixths. Though the chitarrone accompaniment more or less encapsulates the linework, there is however a certain hit and miss to the guitarist's contribution.[22] Needless to say that chord brushing allows little room to engage finer points of voice-leading. Nearing the end of bar 2 the part movements and lute tablature align horizontally for a cadence with a suspension to G major. A guitarist, though, preoccupied with alfabeto, hence oblivious to this cadential ornament, sustains the chord of D major. Returning to the first bar there is also a disparity between the two accompaniments (assuming no misprint). As the chitarrone strikes C major with an added 6th, A, the guitarist is directed to 'L' for C minor, with its resultant semitonal differential, E, E-flat. Be there just one instrumentalist present, either harmonization would gel. Should both instruments be enlisted, such mismatches would even so hardly mar the song's presentation, for these moments are over in a flash.

Not resting on his laurels with the ground-breaking formulation of song and dances sequences in 1606, Montesardo then compiled a progressive anthology of vocal settings, *I lieti giorni di Napoli ... aria spagnuola a due, e tre voci con la lettere dell'alfabeto per la chitarra*, (Naples, 1612) Within this collection are villanelles for three voices, duets and solo songs with continuo bass lines and alfabeto.



Pl. 53.2. *Scherzo d'amore. Ben è ver, ch'ei pargoleggia* by Girolamo Montesardo (Naples 1612). Since the chord symbols underlie the vocal line, a guitarist would focus on these rather than the bass.

[22] Alfabeto symbols in Kapsberger's prints might have been added by someone other than him to widen the commercial appeal of his books. On the other hand, given the prevalence of alfabeto, it's just as likely that Kapsberger knew it and applied it himself.

54. Adieu the Baroque Guitar

'*The Fine easie Ghittar whose Performance is soon gained, at least after the brushing way, hath at this present overtopt the nobler Lute.Nor is it to be denied but that after the pinching way, the Ghittar makes some good work.'*
An observation on the improvements of musick. 1697.[23]

In a nutshell

With a farewell glimpse across the guitar 's repertoire to date, the 17th century proved to be a thriving age of its players and music – after whisked and plucking ways. As earlier retrospectives on the Renaissance and Baroque lutes, the present roundup is one of fleeting reminders of the Baroque guitar's acquisitions. Among these are what can be regarded as emblems. They encapsulate the instrument's peculiarities with poise, dynamism and flair. There are those too, if not outstanding, nevertheless merit recall as models exemplifying traits their genre. Others still elude categorization, as eccentricities, out on a limb

Turning back the pages to the turn of the17th century, guitarists broke ranks with the musical mainstream. While composers elsewhere dwelt on the refinements of line weaving and suchlike, guitarists struck out with blatant rasgueado. Through the simple expedient of Catalan cyphers and alfabeto Amat, Montesardo and successive pace-setters presented chordal tasters grounded in major-minor tonalities. From embryonic chord sequences, elaborated dance settings and variations were propagated within the guitar's repertoire and thereon across the musical fronts of the 17th century. In Italy, the spawning ground, Montesardo codified them in 1606, Pls. 42.6-7. Onward to 1620, Sanseverino entered time signatures and introduced pitch notation, Pl. 42.10. In turn explorations of the fingerboard widened the range of keys by means of moveable shapes, Ex. 42.6. Further headway of Baroque guitar music was marked by Foscarini in the 1630s with the mixed style, Ex. 44.1. Intabulations then took hold with numbered symbols care of Bartolotti, Pl. 44.6. By means of full-scale tablatures guitarists etched finer points to their lineworks along with specified chord formations and ornamentation. Even so, rasgueado strokes prevailed adding slapdash syncopations to an otherwise detailed scoring.

The repertoire was then to spread-eagle internationally with French, Italian and Spanish trends and their cross-fusions. Leafing back to Chapter 44, Granata's oeuvre of seven volumes embraced these. Meanwhile Corbetta produced his landmark 'Royalle' collection in 1671 notable for its elaborate settings and stylistic blendings. Roncalli for his part then advanced the repertoire in 1692. Spanish dances and local idioms sprung from the engravings of Sanz in1674, to which are those of Guerau. Into the 18th century the tomes of Murcia saw light of day in 1714 and his passacaglias, 1732.

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1 'A compleat history of the most remarkable Providences.' William Turner. London, 1697. Part III. Quoted by Carlton Sprague-Smith 1982, 16.