

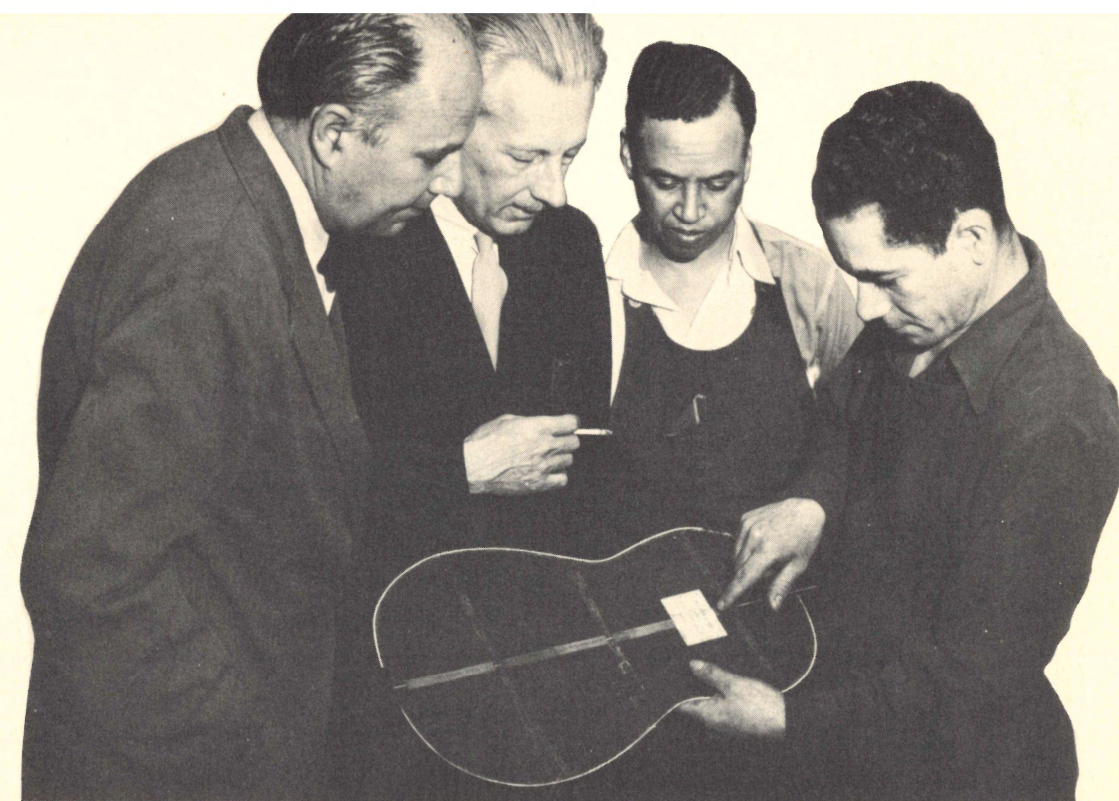
# El Vito Canto popular Andaluz

Matilde Cuevas



□ Tap on bridge - with middle or ring finger - simultaneously striking bass.

Examining the back of the Hofmeister Torres (from right to left): Manuel Velasquez, his assistant, Felix Garay, Theodoros Hofmeister, Jr., and Vladimir Bobri.



## TORRES

THE CREATOR OF THE MODERN GUITAR  
BY THEODORUS M. HOFMEISTER, JR.

ANTONIO TORRES JURADO, more commonly known to the guitar world as Torres, whose instruments have become the prototype of subsequent luthiers worthy of the name, was born in San Sebastián de Almería on June 13, 1817 and died there on November 19, 1892.

Why the guitar whose ancestry certainly antedates that of the violin should have to wait until the middle of the 19th century to find its final form at the hands of an obscure carpenter with no hereditary background in instrument making is one of those mysteries that probably will never be solved.

At an undisclosed age he was apprenticed to a carpenter in the town of Vera, then moved to Granada and eventually landed in the workshop of the famous luthier José Pernas who established himself in this town about 1850. Since he was born in 1817, it is obvious that Torres started his career as a guitar maker rather late in life; this together with his lack of background make his innovations and their impact on the history of the guitar even more incredible. The earliest Torres the writer has seen reference to is dated 1854 when he was nearing the age of forty.

How long he stayed with Pernas is uncertain but he again pulled up stakes and this time moved to Sevilla where he was fortunate to meet the famous guitarist Julián Arcas, and encouraged by his enthusiasm, Torres decided to devote his life to guitar making. Evidently he eventually came to the conclusion that enthusiasm alone could not support a wife and four children, because he returned to the town of his birth in 1870 and established himself there as a merchant of china and glassware.

Whether or not he carried on his profession of luthier simultaneously is unclear, however we do know that he again started to make guitars around 1880, although towards the end of his life he made them only for some of his friends and intimates.

Torres constructed his guitars in two distinct epochs, the first from about 1850 to 1869 and the second from approximately 1880 to 1892. One label of his first epoch reads: *Por D. ANTONIO DE TORRES / Sevilla / Calle de la Cerrajería numero 32 / Año de 186...* (see illustration). The third line it will be noted is printed in what is now known as mediaeval text or blackletter. We know of another label of this period reading the same except that the preposition "de" is omitted, the third line is printed in Roman and the street name is spelled Cerrajería, that is, with a "j" instead of a "g." Since "186..." is printed and only the last number is filled in by hand, the question arises if there exists another label antedating 1860.

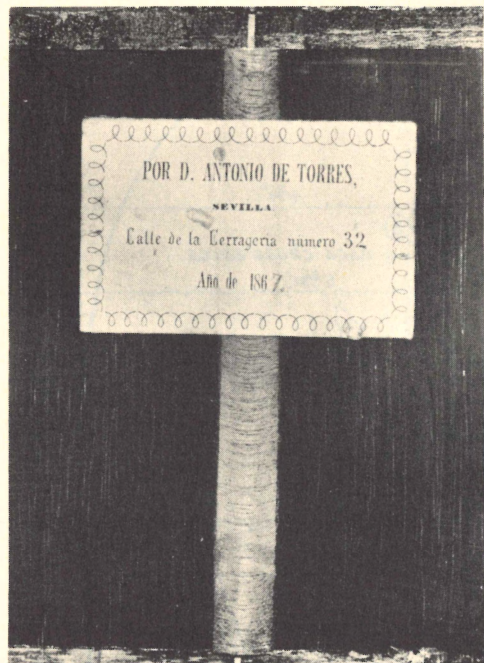
We know of two labels of the second epoch. One reads: *D. ANTONIO DE TORRES / constructor / de guitarras en Sevilla / vive hoy / en Almería calle Real No. 20 Cañada / Año de 18... / Guitarra num...2ª Epoca.* The other reads: *Por D. ANTONIO TORRES / Almería / Calle Real No. 20. Cañada / Año de 18... / Segunda Epoca / No....* It will be noted from the above that Torres numbered the guitars of his second epoch only. He never signed his labels. Why he sometimes used the preposition "de" before Torres and at other times not the writer has been unable to determine.

Among the innovations ascribed to Torres are the machine head and tornavoz. Since they are found on gui-









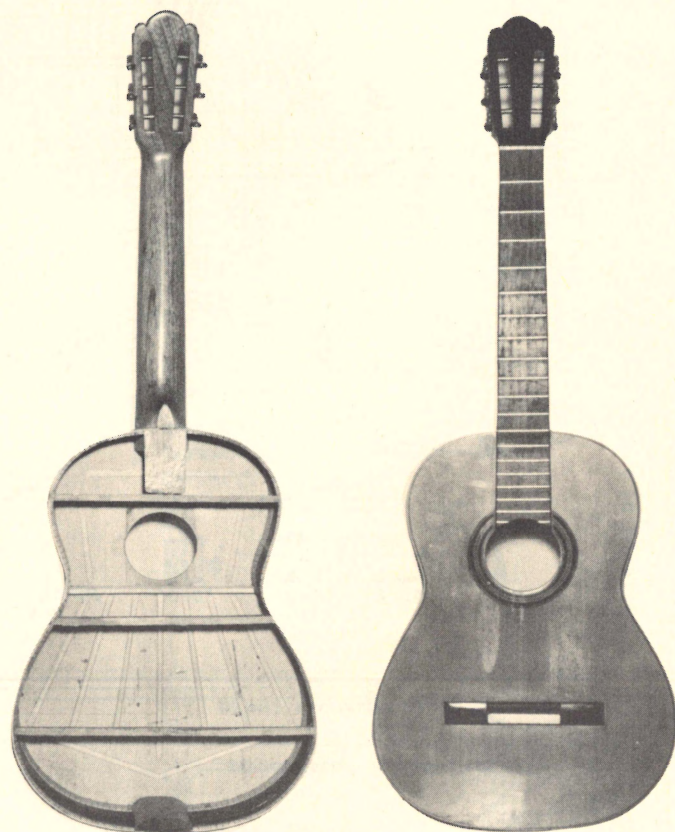
Details of the HOFMEESTER TORRES:  
Above: The label, dated 1867. Above, right: Side view. Right, between text: Back view of top, showing fan bracing and front view of top.



know of tops he made that have unmatched halves—that is, the fibers do not match as is usual.

The guitars of Torres have an elegance of outline never approached even by his closest emulators. His inlays are comparatively simple. A characteristic feature is the use of yellow spikes (*espigas*) on a green background in the center of the inlay around the rosette. Nobody seems to have copied this design to this day, hence it may almost be used as an identification of a genuine Torres.

How many guitars Torres made during his lifetime is uncertain. There is however a great difference in quality among them. Perhaps during periods of stress he had to make instruments to fit the pocketbooks of a clientele whose demands was not of the highest in order to support



himself and his family. Unquestionably many of his instruments have suffered the ravages of time, misuse and bad restoration.

There is a fantastic tale about a Torres referred to as "la leona," which a number of people at various times have claimed to possess. A tale, too long to relate here, those interested in the details of this story are referred to *Der Gitarrefreund* of 1922.

The writer has seen and played only five Torres guitars, and although this is perhaps a greater number than most people interested in the guitar are privileged to examine, it is not sufficient to draw any unqualified conclusions. These instruments all have one trait in common, that is the extreme softness of touch and easiness of action. More important, there is a definite tone quality common to all—mellow, yet robust, which once heard is never forgotten.



Two Torres Guitars from the collection of Albert Augustine:  
Left: Dated 1866. Back and sides of rosewood, simply decorated. One of the finest Torres guitars in existence.  
Right: Dated 1863. Back and sides of rosewood, elaborate mosaic ornamentation. Back made in three sections.

# Expectatio Iustorum

(from *Cantiones Duarum Vocum*)

Orlando Di Lasso

arr. for Recorder & Guitar  
by La Voûte-Davenport

\* Sop. or Alto Recorder

Guitar

Sop.

Alto

\* If played on Alto, read B $\flat$  higher