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Abstract

This article explores the first decade of classical guitar-making in Britain (1948 – 1957) and discusses the efforts of amateurs and autodidacts in the recovery, codification and instruction of craft knowledge and skills. The research for this article draws on two sources of primary data: guitar magazines and the first three attempts in the English language to codify the practical knowledge of classical guitar-making into instructional texts. I begin by identifying the instrument in its historical context. Next, I present biographical summaries of key advocates and outline the work of the first luthiers. I then discuss the Do-It-Yourself texts and argue that classical guitar-making at that time gradually gained cultural legitimacy through the efforts of autodidacts who established the requisite knowledge and skills that were later adopted and validated by educational institutions.

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Amateurs, Autodidacts, and the First Decade of Classical Guitar-Making in Britain

“Owing to the dearth of information available to prospective guitar-makers I was forced to the examination of existing instruments, both good and bad, the perusal of short articles which appeared from time to time in “Guitar News” and other publications, the examination of the difficulties experienced in matters of intonation and tonal production by players...combined with my knowledge of woodworking, instrument making in particular, and a certain amount of commonsense.”¹

This article explores the first decade of classical guitar-making in Britain (1948 – 1957) and discusses the efforts of amateurs and autodidacts in the recovery, codification and instruction of traditional craft knowledge and skills.² Although the ‘heritage craft’ of stringed-instrument making (lutherie) in the UK is currently regarded as ‘viable’,³ during the first half of the 20th century the tradition of what we now call ‘classical’ guitar-making had all but disappeared from Britain. Eric V. Ridge’s statement above encapsulates several issues we will see again through the biographies of key individuals and their work: the lack of technical information; the limited access to instruments for study; feedback from frustrated players; the transfer of

¹ Eric V. Ridge, “The Birth of a Guitar,” *Guitar News*, Oct/Nov 1956, 17.

² I would like to acknowledge the encouragement and advice of my colleague, Dr Cassandre Balloso-Bardin, and thank James R. Westbrook for commenting on an earlier version of this article. Research towards this article was supported by a grant from the University of Lincoln, College of Social Science Research Fund.

³ Daniel Carpenter, *The Radcliffe Red List of Endangered Crafts*, The Heritage Crafts Association, 2019, <https://heritagecrafts.org.uk/redlist/>.

craft knowledge and skills from other domains, and the role of experimentation guided by an intuitive approach to problem solving.

There is literature on the history of composition, technique and performance of the classical guitar repertoire⁴ and several decades of scientific studies on the instrument's acoustic qualities,⁵ yet studies of the craft of guitar-making are rare and in the case of 20th century classical guitar-making in Britain, there is a notable absence of scholarly research.⁶ There is a body of technical literature on classical guitar making, such as that published by the Guild of American Luthiers, but much of it is written by and for practitioners. As Kevin and Moira

⁴ For example: Harvey Turnbull, *The Guitar from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1974); Tom Evans and Mary Anne Evans, *Guitars: Music, History, Construction and Players from the Renaissance to Rock* (London: Oxford University Press, 1984); Graham Wade, *Traditions of the Classical Guitar* (London: Almer Books, 2012); Maurice J. Summerfield, *The Classical Guitar: Its Evolution, Players and Personalities Since 1800* (Blaydon-on-Tyne: Ashley Mark Publishing Company, 2002).

⁵ For example: Erik Jansson, *Acoustics for Violin and Guitar Makers*, 2002, accessed October 10, 2019, <http://www.speech.kth.se/music/acvguit4/>; Thomas D. Rossing, *The Science of String Instruments* (New York: Springer Verlag, 2010).

⁶ A rough periodisation of the guitar is Baroque (1600 – 1750) Five double courses with moveable gut frets; Romantic (1790 – 1830) Six single courses with fixed solid frets, and the modern classical guitar (1850 –) as discussed in this article. For a study of early 19th century guitar making in Britain, see James Westbrook, *Guitar Making in Nineteenth-Century London: Louis Panormo and His Contemporaries* (West Midlands: ASG Music, 2020). For prior to the 19th century, see James Tyler and Paul Sparks, *The Guitar and Its Music: From the Renaissance to the Classical Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Dawe wrote in 2001, “we have yet to find substantial studies of the culture and sociology of the guitar let alone guitar making in Spain.”⁷

The research for this article draws on primary data in the form of magazines – a rich source of minutiae enlivened by the obsessive personalities of the writers – and the first three attempts in the English language to codify the practical knowledge of classical guitar-making into instructional texts. In doing so, I try to assemble a coherent narrative of the establishment of classical guitar-making in Britain. I conclude by suggesting that classical guitar-making at that time gradually gained cultural legitimacy through the efforts of autodidacts who established the requisite knowledge and skills that were later adopted and validated by educational institutions.

The classical guitar in Britain

The early development of guitar-making in Britain was short-lived as the instrument’s use began to decline by the mid-nineteenth century.⁸ The small-bodied 18th century instrument had been popular for private concerts in wealthy homes and salons, but was marginalized,

⁷ Kevin Dawe and Moira Dawe, “Handmade in Spain: The Culture of Guitar Making,” in *Guitar Cultures*, ed. Andy Bennett and Kevin Dawe (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 63 – 88. Since they wrote this, Kathryn Dudley has made a significant contribution, focusing on the culture of acoustic guitar makers in North America. See Kathryn M. Dudley, *Guitar Makers. The Endurance of Artisanal Values in North America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

⁸ For detailed accounts about the social status of the guitar in the 18th and 19th centuries, see Andrew Britton, “The Guitar in the Romantic Period.” PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2010, accessed February 6, 2020, <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.528890> and Stewart W. Button, “The Guitar in England 1800 – 1924.” PhD diss., University of Surrey, 1984, accessed October 10, 2019, <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?did=6&uin=uk.bl.ethos.350653>.

excluded from the concert setting and denigrated by the contemporary music press as an amateur, domestic and female instrument.⁹ Its amateur status led to a peak in popularity in the late 1820s and early 1830s but its lack of institutional recognition and therefore standardized pedagogy meant it was subject to the whim of fashion. With the closure of Louis Panormo's workshop in 1854, "London's period as a centre of guitarmaking was over... After the Panormos ceased making instruments, their guitars were still considered to be the finest available in Britain well into the 20th century."¹⁰ Louis Parnormo (1784-1862) emigrated to New Zealand in 1859, around the same time that Antonio de Torres (1817-1892) in Spain began to establish himself as "the father of the classical guitar as we know it."¹¹ From early in his career, Torres consolidated the design of the modern classical guitar.¹² While there is some continuity from the early 19th century 'romantic' or 'transitional' instrument, typified by Panormo's work, to the late 19th century instrument, Torres is credited with establishing what has been referred to as the 'classic', 'classical', 'concert', 'finger-style' or 'Spanish' guitar,¹³ characterized by a larger yet lightweight body, a slightly arched soundboard and

⁹ Andrew Britton, 2010, 75.

¹⁰ James Westbrook, "Louis Panormo: 'The Only Maker of Guitars in the Spanish Style'," *Early Music* 41, no. 4 (2013): 581.

¹¹ Graham Wade, *Traditions of the Classical Guitar* (London: Almer Books, 2012), 138.

¹² José L. Romanillos, *Antonio de Torres, Guitar Maker – His Life & Work* (Shaftesbury: Element Books Ltd., 1987).

¹³ *Spanish, Classical, Concert and Finger-style* are terms still in use today. When reading magazines of the period under discussion, *Spanish* guitar may refer to either the Panormo or Torres style of instrument. Reference to *Concert* guitars from the mid-1940s began to make a clear separation between the Panormo and Torres designs. For example, in 1947, Wilfrid Appleby wrote, "Those who are asking for a 'concert model' guitar are asking for something very difficult to find. There are few such guitars in this country and they are seldom 'for sale.'" *BMG*, May 1947, 143. *Classic* (a term used since the mid-1940s) was superseded by *Classical* in the

back, a recognizable fan strutting pattern, a scale length of around 650mm, and a bridge of standardized proportions. The combination of these features required a new methodology of construction which integrated the soundboard, struts, ribs, neck, end block and continuous lining.¹⁴ By the late nineteenth century, the Torres-style instrument served a Spanish market for flamenco music, with a minority of players adopting it for classical music.¹⁵

To be clear, in this article I use the term ‘classical guitar’ to refer to the design established by Antonio de Torres in Spain in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century. Although Louis Panormo claimed that his guitars made in London were in the ‘Spanish style’, classical guitar-making in Britain was *discontinuous* with Panormo’s instruments. As we shall see, the distinction between the earlier instrument and the ‘classical’ guitar was something both players and makers were conscious of and this is underlined by the fascination, frustration, and tension apparent in their writing. It may be useful then, rather than assume the continuity of a guitar-making ‘tradition’ in Britain, to think of an ‘epistemological break’ occurring between the

1950s and *Finger-style* is now used to refer to a style of steel-string guitar playing. This refinement in terminology occurred as part of a heated debate about what distinguished the Torres style instrument and its music from other types of guitar. That debate resulted in a schism between Appleby and Sharpe, which I refer to below.

¹⁴ See Romanillos, *Antonio de Torres*, for a detailed discussion about Torres’ method of construction. Richard Bruné argues for the flamenco origins of the Torres guitar and provides three distinguishing characteristics: The body size is mathematically consistent within 5% among a range of makers from Torres onwards: 1858 (Torres) to 1956 (Fleta); Torres established consistent proportions for the bridge (length 1:7 and arms and tie block of 2:3:2), and a recognizable and widely imitated style of fan strutting. Richard Bruné, “Cultural Origins of the Modern Guitar,” *Soundboard*, Fall 1997, 9 – 20.

¹⁵ Julia Crowe, “Luthier Profile: Richard Bruné,” *Classical Guitar Magazine*, May 2007, 30 – 35.

mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries.¹⁶ As indicated above, there are reasons for this discontinuity, not least the rupture of two world wars, which redirected labour from workshops and put restrictions on the import and export of raw materials and finished products. The practices that constituted classical guitar-making knowledge in Britain did not begin to appear until the early 1930s and were not codified until the 1950s. It is from publications during that period that we can see how both explicit and tacit knowledge had to be applied through experimentation, learned by self-instruction and embodied through repeated practice of the craft.¹⁷

Significant interest in the classical guitar in Britain can be traced to Andre Segovia's first visits to the country in December 1926 and January 1927, when he played at the Aeolian Hall and the Wigmore Hall, London.¹⁸ A review of his 1926 performance in the London Evening News claimed that "Those who imagined the guitar to be of much the same nature as the vulgar banjo were astounded to hear Mr. Segovia play Bach on it with unsurpassable

¹⁶ The concept of an 'epistemological break' more often refers to ruptures in the history of science, denoting a radical shift in an approach or perspective. Here I use it more modestly to denote the rupture in craft knowledge that Torres initiated. Similarly, Greg Smallman's achievements in the 1980s could be seen as another epistemological break in terms of how the design and construction of the classical guitar is conceived and executed. It is my view, that Torres and Smallman are, in hindsight, more than just 'innovators' and their practices amount to turning points in the science (i.e. knowledge) of guitar-making.

¹⁷ Tacit knowledge refers to the "ineffable domain of skilful knowing"; it is knowledge that is demonstrable but inexplicable. See Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).

¹⁸ Graham Wade and Gerard Garno, *A New Look at Segovia – His Life, His Music Vol. 1: A Biography of the Years 1893 – 1957* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications Inc., 1997).

effect.”¹⁹ At this time, Segovia played an instrument made in 1912 by the workshop of Manuel Ramírez based on the Torres design and construction method which alerted British audiences to its potential for ‘serious’ concert music. Consequently, this guitar “may have been the most influential classic guitar of the 20th century.”²⁰

Classical guitar knowledge in Britain was, in its formative period, ‘migrant knowledge’, brought to the country by players and makers from Spain, Russia, Italy, Denmark and elsewhere. It is clearly evident from reading magazines like *BMG* and *Guitar News*, that the creation of a classical guitar culture in Britain required and was sustained by the international perspective of its enthusiasts. In 1929, Boris Perott, a Russian immigrant and doctor who arrived in Britain in 1920, led the formation of The Philharmonic Society of Guitarists (PSG),²¹ which had over 100 members by 1931. The aims and objectives of the PSG show how the five founders attempted to co-ordinate all aspects of the education and promotion of the guitar for classical music. They aimed to bring amateurs and professionals together “by means of organized lectures and concerts to win the interest of the general public, and thus place the guitar in its rightful place as one of the finest mediums for the expression of classical music.” Most of their objectives were educational: the teaching of “right methods,” to “establish courses,” “found a journal,” “start a library,” “organize lectures” and to bring together players and audiences. A further objective was “To organize a symphony orchestra composed of 60-80 guitarists, and to arrange for the manufacture of suitable guitars.” Button

¹⁹ *BMG*, January 1927, 50.

²⁰ R. E. Bruné, “Segovia’s 1912 Manuel Ramírez,” *American Lutherie*, 1994, 18. Ramírez’s head workman, Santos Hernández, was the actual maker of the guitar. The instrument was acquired in 1986 by the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art from Segovia’s wife, Emilita Segovia.

²¹ Jan de Kloe, *Boris Perott: A Life With the Guitar* (Heidelberg: Chanterelle Verlag, 2012).

argues that the low prestige of the instrument in Britain in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century was, in part, because “British luthiers were unable to keep abreast of modern constructional developments – thus there was a shortage of guitars.”²² Members of the PSG initially used the *Banjo Mandolin Guitar* (BMG) magazine to promote their activities and from 1945, published its own *Bulletin*. Between 1931 and 1939, Perott wrote a series of 64 articles for *BMG* on ‘The Famous Guitarists’ which, through short biographies of players, gave readers an impression of the instrument’s history and use across Europe and Russia. The PSG halted its activities at the beginning of WWII and reformed in early 1945.²³

The advocates

Perott’s series on Famous Guitarists finished a month before the outbreak of WWII. During the war years, and noticeable from 1942 onwards, the number of articles and letters in *BMG* on the classical guitar increased and serious interest and demand were established among its readers.²⁴ If before the war “the guitar construction business in England could not cope with

²² Stewart W. Button, “The Philharmonic Society of Guitarists,” *Classical Guitar Magazine*, December 1989, 14.

²³ ‘P.S.G Resumes Activities’, *BMG*, March 1945, 127. Julian Bream attended the first meeting after the war with his father on 21st April 1945 after reading about it in *BMG*. Henry Bream became the Librarian for the PSG, to the benefit of Julian who had easy access to musical scores. On hearing Julian play, Wilfrid Appleby claimed, “here is our brightest hope. A chance to revive the guitar.” Stewart W. Button, *Julian Bream: The Foundations of a Musical Career* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 24.

²⁴ A detailed discussion of the earliest articles, letters and debates concerning the classical guitar in *BMG* is not the focus of this article. However, see the following key items: “The Revival of the Classical Guitar” by Alexis Chess (Chesnakov), a founding member of the PSG (April 1931); “Introduction to the Spanish Guitar” by Cuerdas (April 1938); “The Spanish Guitar A Beautiful Effect” by A. de Vekey (February 1942); “An Open Letter to Spanish Guitarists” by R. Pullman (January 1943); A reply to Pullman by Morton Lawrence (April

the demand for good guitars,” the situation in 1945 was even worse.²⁵ For five years, the production of musical instruments in Britain had been disrupted due to conscription, restrictions on imports and exports, and the use of workshops for war production.²⁶ Yet, in this depleted post-war context, luthiers like Marco Roccia, Jack Abbott, and Harald Petersen would soon make some of the first ‘concert guitars’, while amateur players, like Wilfrid Appleby, Terry Usher and began to explore aspects of guitar construction in their writing. Many amateur players, like Hector Quine and J. K. Sutcliffe, attempted to make instruments. Some people with applicable knowledge and skills, were adopted into the guitar world, such as Clifford A. Hoing, who had an established reputation as a violin-maker, and Eric V. Ridge, an amateur maker whose interests had moved from the violin to the guitar. In the USA, the Architect, Theodorus M. Hofmeester’s contribution of the first scale drawing of a Torres guitar was an important contribution that influenced British makers. A catalyst for all the energy that went into making and writing about classical guitars was the Clifford Essex Company Ltd., run by A. P. Sharpe, who edited the company’s magazine, *Banjo Mandolin Guitar* (BMG) and also wrote the first two books in English on the history and construction of classical guitars. For researchers of twentieth century guitar culture in Britain up to the early 1970s, *BMG* is the most comprehensive record available.²⁷

1943); “The Spanish Guitar in England” by J. L. White (May 1943), and a letter by Perrott in August 1943, where he observes “there has been a certain revival of interest in the classical guitar.”

²⁵ Button, *Julian Bream*, 308.

²⁶ For example, during World War II, the Dolmetsch workshop in Haslemere was used for the manufacture of aircraft components.

²⁷ *BMG* was published between 1903 and 1976 and claimed to be ‘The Oldest Established and Most Widely-read Fretted Instrument Magazine in the World’. At the time of writing, 629 issues (over 70% of the total) are available online: <https://classic-banjo.ning.com/page/bmg-magazines>. Using Optical Character Recognition

A. P. Sharpe



Figure 1: Photo from BMG, February 1968, 149.

Albert Percy Sharpe (1906 – 1968) worked for the Clifford Essex company in London from the 1920s,²⁸ and was Editor of its magazine, *BMG*, from April 1937 until November 1967.²⁹ He took over as Director of Clifford Essex from 1942 after it went into liquidation, and became the owner of the company in 1957.³⁰ He was not an active musician,³¹ but acted as a catalyst for classical guitar-making in Britain in two important ways: He employed Clifford

(OCR), I have been able to systematically search for names, dates, themes and keywords across several decades of activity.

²⁸ It is not clear what year he started at Clifford Essex. The luthier, Marco Roccia, wrote that Sharpe greeted him for his interview in 1927.

²⁹ *BMG*, February 1968, 149 includes Sharpe's obituary. March 1968, 186-187 contains several letters in remembrance of Sharpe.

³⁰ Clifford Essex has experienced several changes in ownership since it was established in 1893. The history of Clifford Essex is detailed on its current website: <http://www.cliffordessex.net>

³¹ "A.P. was not a notable musician, nor was he an active player of an instrument." Jack Duarte, *BMG* March 1968, 186.

Essex luthier, Marco Roccia,³² who constructed one of the first commercially available British-made classical guitars, and he wrote the first English language books on the history of the Spanish guitar and classical guitar construction, drawing heavily on his work with Roccia.³³ Perhaps his greatest contribution was keeping *BMG* running continuously throughout his time as Editor, which provided an open forum for enthusiasts of fretted instruments to discuss, learn and argue about their chosen instruments.³⁴ Sharpe had a commercial interest in the success of fretted instruments, but this was undoubtedly sustained by a personal love of the music. He had a collection of over 4000 fretted instrument records and was an advisor to the BBC when it was developing its library.³⁵ He acted as a conduit between luthiers, players, the national broadcaster and the public in his roles as “journalist, fretted instrument historian, author, broadcaster and publisher”³⁶ and was at the forefront of the popular development of guitar culture, in contrast to a more conservative outlook held by Wilfrid Appleby.³⁷

³² In a letter published after Sharpe’s death, Roccia writes: “I never thought of him as an employer; only as a friend.” *BMG*, March 1968, 187.

³³ A. P. Sharpe, *The Story of the Spanish Guitar* (London: Clifford Essex Music Co., 1954); A. P. Sharpe, *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar* (London: Clifford Essex Music Co., 1957).

³⁴ In his appreciation of Sharpe, Jack Duarte emphasises the importance of *BMG* being “a platform upon which anyone was free to express an opinion, however much he [Sharpe] may have disagreed with it as a non-editorial person.” *BMG*, March 1968, 186.

³⁵ During a period of ill health, an appreciation of Sharpe was written by Jefferey Pocock in *BMG*, October 1964, 6 – 7, where he discusses Sharpe’s work with the BBC.

³⁶ Jefferey Pocock, *BMG*, October 1964, 6.

³⁷ “It is difficult to imagine the fretted instrument world without A. P. Sharpe... If you seek A.P.’s memorial, stand in the world of fretted instruments and look around you.” Jack Duarte, *BMG*, March 1968, 186.

Wilfrid M. Appleby

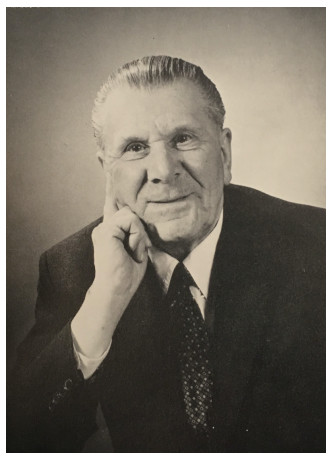


Figure 2: Photo from the cover of Guitar News, 100, Sept./Oct. 1968.

Wilfrid M. Appleby (1892 – 1987)³⁸ was a philatelist by profession, whose interest in the guitar began in 1938 when he heard a recital while on holiday in Belgium.³⁹ He began playing in 1940 when he and his wife decided they should start a new hobby and he became “obsessed with the guitar to the extent that I neglected my business.”⁴⁰ In July 1945, Appleby

³⁸ There are four useful sources of information by and about Appleby: His articles in *BMG* (1942 – 51); as Editor of *Guitar News* (1951 – 73); Button, *Julian Bream*, which contains letters from Appleby and is also based on interviews with him, and de Kloe, *Boris Perott*, who has researched the PSG and includes archival materials in the appendices of his book.

³⁹ Appleby writes a short autobiography that discusses his early relationship with the guitar in *Guitar News*, March/April 1962, 6 – 11. He says that he bought his first good guitar from Emile Grimshaw, who was a musician, luthier, and had been Editor of *BMG* between 1911 and 1933. The guitar was originally from the estate of Madame Pratten (1821 – 1895). At that time, in 1942, Appleby “had not seen or heard a modern guitar of the Torres type.” (9)

⁴⁰ Button, *Julian Bream*, 35.

became Editor of the re-formed PSG's new *Bulletin*⁴¹ and in January 1946, he started writing the 'Spanish Guitar' column for *BMG* shortly before he formed the Cheltenham Guitar Circle, a local branch of the PSG.⁴²

However, in 1951 Appleby fell out with Perott and Sharpe over what he referred to as "novelty variants" of the guitar. With missionary zeal,⁴³ Appleby campaigned for the "real guitar" and the "legitimate instrument," leading to a public dispute in the pages of *BMG*, where Sharpe refers to him as "unreasonable and bigoted"⁴⁴ while privately, Perot claimed he was "a fanatic."⁴⁵ Consequently, Appleby splintered off from both the PSG and *BMG* and formed, on March 17th 1951, the International Classic Guitar Association for (ICGA).⁴⁶ As a

⁴¹ *The Bulletin of the Philharmonic Society of Guitarists* was published between 1945 and 1951. At the time of writing 22 (out of a total of 33) issues are available to download and systematically search through:

<https://www.digitalguitararchive.com/2020/03/philharmonic-society-of-guitarists/>

⁴² The Cheltenham Guitar Circle was formed on February 2nd 1946, according to a notice in *BMG*, March 1946.

⁴³ Appleby's 'missionary' work for the classical guitar began in earnest following a holiday in Wales with Morton Lawrence in 1944 where they discussed "the revival of the Philharmonic Society of Guitarists and the future of the classical guitar in Britain." *BMG*, January 1945, 98. Morton Lawrence had written an article for *BMG* in June 1944 where he encouraged readers to "Be A Missionary" by introducing people to the instrument and teaching them how to play. He correctly reasoned that in doing so, the popularity of the guitar would increase and so would the demand for public performances, new compositions and better instruments.

⁴⁴ *BMG*, May 1951, 174.

⁴⁵ Jan de Kloe, *The Schism Between Perott and Appleby*. Paper presented at the International Guitar Research Centre Launch, 2015, 3, accessed August 19, 2019, https://www.academia.edu/14252727/The_schism_between_Perott_and_Appleby.

⁴⁶ Initially, it was simply the Classic Guitar Association. See the editorial of *Guitar News*, July/August 1961, which reflects on ten years of the ICGA and *Guitar News* and the developments of the classical guitar in Britain during that time.

founding member of the ICGA, Appleby took on the role of Organizer and Editor of its 'official organ', *Guitar News*, and published its first issue in June 1951.⁴⁷ His writing for both *BMG* and *Guitar News* amounts to a sustained and conscious effort to create a classical guitar tradition in Britain. For example, his 'The Spanish Guitar' column in *BMG* between 1946 and 1951 was used to write a history of the classical guitar up to the present and define its key vocabulary, to discuss finding and purchasing an instrument, and he encouraged readers to promote this relatively niche instrument. Taken as a whole, his writing documents the shared joy and excitement during this formative period as well as the frustration that classical guitar enthusiasts faced at that time.

Although he wrote little about guitar making, as Editor of *Guitar News*, Appleby encouraged and supported others to write on the topic and his writing sometimes indicates the progress being made to establish a tradition of making in Britain. In Oct./Nov. 1951 (issue 3), the front page carries an editorial by Appleby on 'British-Made Guitars', which begins by noting that,

⁴⁷ Appleby's wife, Kay, was Treasurer and Business Editor. In the 100th issue of *Guitar News*, Wilfrid Appleby acknowledges the important contribution of his wife, stating that "in all matters concerning the Association, in fact, they work as a team... It is, of course, a 'labour of love', and involves many hours of hard concentrated work, especially for the Business Editor, who deals with the accounts, card index and the very considerable correspondence." *Guitar News*, Sept./Oct. 1968, 6. They remained working as a team until it became too much for them and *Guitar News* ceased to publish in 1973. In 'An Obituary for *Guitar News*', Graham Wade writes: "Guitar News became a historic and vital record of the growth of the guitar's popularity throughout the world; the earliest editions are now of considerable value and a complete collection of the magazine's 119 editions would be worth its weight in gold for any researcher or aficionado of the "classic" guitar, as Wilfrid Appleby always loved to call the instrument." *BMG*, May 1973, 249. The complete series of *Guitar News* is available to download and systematically search through: <https://www.digitalguitararchive.com/2019/11/guitar-news/>

“It is strange that the art of guitar-making, which the Panormo family brought to such a high level in London during the nineteenth century, should have failed to progress during the past fifty years or so as it has done in Spain, Italy, Germany, etc. There have been several attempts in Britain to make larger guitars than the Panormo model, but in practically every case, they have been too heavy and unsuitable. Guitarists who experimented with some of these guitars found that they were improved to some extent by thinning away some of the wood. During the last decade, the growing popularity of the Classic guitar led some of the makers of jazz guitars to offer strange versions of the legitimate instrument.”

The article goes on to state that the Dolmetsch workshop in Surrey “are now making modern concert guitars. Their first guitar was described by an expert as ‘an admirable effort – beautifully made, with a good tone and a fine response.’” The timing of Appleby’s article is a few months after Terry Usher had announced in *BMG*, August 1951, a new classical guitar of “revolutionary design” by Marco Roccia, luthier for Clifford Essex Music Co. Ltd. Perhaps Appleby was unaware of the Clifford Essex instrument, or perhaps he considered the instrument produced by the Dolmetsch workshop, with its links to the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Early Music revival’s focus on authenticity, to be of more ‘legitimate’ design.⁴⁸ Despite the positive reviews of Appleby and Usher, neither the Dolmetsch nor

⁴⁸ Arnold Dolmetsch (1858 – 1940) was a key figure in the Early Music Movement and younger friend of William Morris, founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Morris and Dolmetsch both had a desire to restore earlier art forms and, according to Dolmetsch’s biographer, Morris was “determined to help Dolmetsch to realise his ambitions.” Margaret Campbell, *Dolmetsch: The Man and His Work* (London: Hamilton, 1975), 67. I contacted Dr Brian Blood at the Dolmetsch Foundation and was told on June 26, 2019, that “records pertaining to Arnold Dolmetsch Limited are sparse because most of the firm's records were lost around the time the

Clifford Essex instruments appear to have been sold widely and it was only through Sharpe's writing about Marco Roccia's instrument that the Clifford Essex instrument had any lasting influence on subsequent makers.

J. K. Sutcliffe



Figure 3: Photo from Guitar News, Aug./Sept. 1956.

The main writer on “technical and scientific matters” for *Guitar News* was J. K. Sutcliffe, who by 1954, had made three guitars.⁴⁹ In his first article in Aug./Sept. 1952, titled ‘Buying

company went into liquidation in about 1980/81... I have checked what little we have here and find nothing about classical guitars... I have found one interesting photograph which shows a Dolmetsch classical guitar but I think this picture dates from the 1960s or 70s, and so I assume does the instrument.” The photograph supplied was published in a 1961 catalogue, available at the British Library: Charles Leslie Clifford Ward, *The Dolmetsch Workshops* (Haslemere: Arnold Dolmetsch, 1961), 22.

⁴⁹ Regrettably, I have been unable to find much information about J. K. Sutcliffe. A search through genealogical records suggest he may be John Kelvin Sutcliffe (1908-1973) but I have been unable to verify this. In *Guitar News*, Feb./March 1955, the Editors “gratefully acknowledge the valuable help always willingly given by Mr. J. K. Sutcliffe, a Foundation Member of I.C.G.A., especially on technical and scientific matters.” In *Guitar News*, Feb./March 1954, there is an advertisement for two guitars he has made and a note to say that a third instrument would be available in July. At that time, he lived in Bromley, Kent.

one is easier!’, he makes a familiar complaint about the difficulty in obtaining suitable tonewoods, suggesting that the amateur maker might consider re-appropriating old furniture or other instruments for their wood. He goes on to discuss the challenges of correctly bracing the soundboard, the need to construct the right jigs, and how it is better if the maker is also a player so that they understand the instrument from both perspectives.

In June/July 1953, Sutcliffe reviews *Technologia de la Guitarra Argentina* (1952) by Ricardo Munoz, “a book of undoubted value to luthiers and much interest to musicians.” The book, written in Spanish, “appends ideas, general considerations and plans of study concerning the creation of a school for luthiers, with projects set out and submitted to the Comision Nacional de Cultura, Buenos Aires.” However, Munoz’s book was not the DIY manual that eager makers were looking for. In his 1967 review of Irving Sloan’s book, *Classic Guitar Construction*, Appleby writes that “Before 1952 we could find nothing printed on the subject except a rather incomplete treatise in Spanish by Ricardo Munoz of Argentina. In that year, J. K. Sutcliffe commenced to write a number of articles on various aspects of guitar making for *Guitar News* but this was by no means a complete outline of instruction from start to finish.”

Indeed, between Feb./March 1956 and April/May 1957, Sutcliffe wrote a series of three technical articles about ‘Body, voice-box or resonance-cavity’, published in parallel to Eric Ridge’s series of instructions on making a Torres-style guitar. He reminds the reader that “Any competent cabinet maker would find the construction of a guitar well within his capabilities. But the odds that he will produce a successful *musical instrument* are not so much in his favour as one would imagine.”⁵⁰ Before the end of the decade, he would write

⁵⁰ *Guitar News*, Aug./Sept. 1956, 2.

about ‘Origin and choice of wood’,⁵¹ the ‘Variety and Choice of Materials’,⁵² and ‘Sticking the pieces together’ (covering choices of glue available, the amount of pressure required and the correct temperature to work at).⁵³ In Jan./Feb. 1960 he wrote about ‘Guitar Repairing’ referring to how “today’s well-advertised Do-It-Yourself cult” might be enthusing people to take up repair work when they are not qualified to do so. There is with Sutcliffe, always a warning about the challenge of the skills involved and the knowledge that is required, yet careful encouragement that it is within the reach of “the very patient and careful amateur.”⁵⁴ Sutcliffe’s articles in *Guitar News* amount to a body of useful technical information that supplemented, in a more discursive way, the step-by-step instructions that were being written at that time by Hoing, Ridge and Sharpe.

Terry Usher



Figure 4: Photo from the cover of BMG, October 1948.

⁵¹ *Guitar News*, Nov./Dec. 1957, 14 – 16.

⁵² *Guitar News*, May/June 1959, 18 – 19.

⁵³ *Guitar News*, July/August 1959, 12 – 13.

⁵⁴ *Guitar News*, Jan./Feb. 1960, 25.

Alongside Sharpe and Appleby, Terence (Terry) Usher (1909 – 1969) was a key figure in the introduction of the modern classical guitar in Britain. He first came to people's attention in the mid-1930s, writing about 'plectrum guitar' for *BMG*. By the early 1940s, we can see a transition to the classical guitar that he and other players were making at the time. Usher became an advisor for *BMG* on the Spanish guitar in June 1945, when its regular column, Plectrum Guitar Forum was renamed Guitar Forum, indicating a broadening of the types of guitar that people were playing. In 1943, Usher started to produce classical transcriptions and readers wrote to thank him for providing them with "serious" music for the guitar.⁵⁵ From 1945, he composed original pieces such as 'Suite for Spanish Guitar' and 'Sonata in A' that were enthusiastically received. Such was his reputation that he was featured on the front cover of the January 1947 issue of *BMG* posing with a 19th century instrument.⁵⁶ Inside, is a profile of him written by his friend and former student, Jack (John) Duarte who would also write an appreciation of Usher for *BMG*, following his death in April 1969.⁵⁷ Readers could be forgiven for thinking that Usher was a full-time musician, but, after six months of absence from *BMG* in 1954, he explained that he worked as a public relations officer for Manchester City Council, snatching moments for his guitar-related work.⁵⁸

From articles and letters over a thirty-year period we learn that as well as a writer, composer and broadcaster, Usher was a prolific teacher of the guitar and in 1949, he received a grant

⁵⁵ For example, see *BMG*, January 1942 and July 1943, where Usher writes a long letter about transcribing Bach for plectrum and fingerstyle guitar.

⁵⁶ He is on the cover again in October 1948 with a modern instrument and there is a short profile of him inside outlining his career as a guitar player, composer and advocate.

⁵⁷ *BMG*, June 1969, 289.

⁵⁸ *BMG*, July 1954, 253.

from the Arts Council to promote the instrument through a series of lectures and recitals. In March 1954, he became ‘Tutor for the Guitar’ at the Royal Manchester College of Music and in 1956, Usher wrote the first English-language, organological article on the classical guitar.⁵⁹ In that article for *The Galpin Society Journal*, Usher writes about several specific instruments dating from the late 18th century, including a Clifford Essex (Marco Roccia) guitar from 1953 and a Harald Petersen guitar from 1955. He provides the body dimensions and a brief note on the strutting system for each instrument, referring to the “gradual evolution” of the modern concert guitar. Sections then follow that discuss different parts of the instrument: for example, the woods used; the variation in scale length and neck shape; fretting, and the attachment of the neck to the body. In *BMG*, Usher later referred to his article as a “a treatise on the development of guitar design, 1800-1950”⁶⁰ and the systematic, pedagogic purpose of the article is evident to the reader. Presumably, versions of the article were rehearsed in the public lectures he gave and its length of 11,800 words allowed him to produce a sustained argument that was not possible to achieve in the pages of *BMG*. It is an argument that synthesises continuity, variation and innovation, culminating with Torres’ design and method of construction. The article concludes with a section on the ‘Future of Spanish Guitar Design’, referring to the experiments of Marco Roccia, involving different strutting patterns, hollow necks, and variations in wood thickness, “producing guitars which were particularly suitable for particular purposes” but not necessarily superior “in tone or volume to the orthodox instruments.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Terence Usher, “The Spanish Guitar in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.” *The Galpin Society Journal* 9, (June 1956): 5 – 36, accessed October 10, 2019 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/841787>.

⁶⁰ *BMG*, October 1957, 22.

⁶¹ Terence Usher, 1956, 33.

Usher's writing in *BMG* was influenced by his growing understanding of classical guitar construction, presumably from his interaction with A. P. Sharpe and Clifford Essex luthier, Marco Roccia, as well as collecting and studying guitars he owned and modifying them.⁶² In 1948, Usher began a series of articles on 'Spanish Guitar Technique' by writing about the difficult conditions in England for players of the classical guitar: The tutor books are "of dubious quality," there are not enough good teachers, and the instrument is difficult to play, hence "the comparatively small number of Spanish guitarist in Britain." He relates his efforts to learn classical guitar, first by finding a suitable instrument:

I commenced to study the Spanish guitar seriously during the war years, when the import of instruments had already ceased and when production of English models had also ceased. These conditions still persist and I see no likelihood of any immediate easing of the situation. I have searched for the ideal guitar for nearly four years; trying and buying literally dozens of instruments in the process. Although my own view is that the average player of the Spanish guitar is an idealist – and will never be wholly satisfied with any instrument – I have at last found a very satisfactory guitar. It is British made but, for reasons of policy, I cannot mention the make here. So my first advice is: do not let prejudice interfere with your choice of a guitar. It is not only in Spain that good guitars are made; in fact, few good instruments are made there nowadays!⁶³

⁶² Usher briefly discusses these experiments in *BMG*, February 1953, 121. His guitar collection (19th century instruments only) and 'scrapbook' are held by the Horniman Museum, London.

⁶³ *BMG*, July 1948, 190.

In subsequent articles, he discusses each component of the classical guitar: the fingerboard (September 1948), fretwire (December 1948), the neck and machine heads (February 1949), adjusting the string height (April 1949), (news from Manchester Guitar Circle in April 1949 states that he has offered to give lectures on guitar construction), the bridge (July 1949), the ‘belly’ or soundboard (August 1949), strutting or bracing of the soundboard (September 1949), the back, sides and strings (November 1949) and finally, a long letter in December 1949 in response to a reader about how timber is cut i.e. ‘quarter sawn’. Usher’s articles on ‘Spanish Guitar Technique’ for *BMG* are, for the first 18 months, actually about guitar technology, making them the first English-language articles about classical guitar design and construction.

Much more could be said about Terry Usher and his role in the development of the classical guitar in Britain. He took over from Appleby in 1951 as the main writer on classical guitar for *BMG* and continued into the early 1960s when he suffered from ill health and took early retirement from Manchester City Council.

The luthiers

It is well documented that the celebrated guitarist Julian Bream housed the workshops of luthiers, David Rubio and José Romanillos on his estate in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁶⁴ In addition to “the revitalisation of village life” through craft, Bream was interested in

⁶⁴ Julian Bream’s significant contribution to the popularity of the classical guitar is widely acknowledged and well documented. For biographical detail of this post-war period, see Button, *Julian Bream* and Tony Palmer, *Julian Bream: A Life on the Road*. London: Macdonald & Co., 1982. Button’s book is very useful for understanding this pivotal post-war period because it republishes many letters between Appleby, Usher and Henry Bream.

instrument design and making and by having “an instrument workshop on my doorstep” he would benefit from the pick of instruments and the luthier would have a world-famous player offering feedback on and endorsement of their work.⁶⁵ Bream’s influence on the classical guitar in Britain and his close relationship with luthiers began very soon after he started playing the instrument and the efforts he and his father made to get him a ‘concert guitar’ reveal how rare such instruments were in Britain at that time.

Aged 14, Bream’s first concert guitar was a Clifford Essex ‘Hauser’ model loaned to him in July 1947 by Terry Usher.⁶⁶ Bream travelled with his father, Henry, from London to Manchester to view the instrument, which, Henry writes, Usher “considered ... to be the finest he had ever heard or owned... [Julian] played the Clifford Essex which was certainly a very nice guitar, particularly sustaining and very sweet tone. Better than anything else Terry had there and in perfect condition.” Bream was now in possession of a Hauser guitar, but two weeks later Henry came across a “dilapidated” instrument by the highly regarded Spanish luthier, Jose Ramirez (1858 – 1923), in a shop in London. Bream and his father compared it to the Clifford Essex/Hauser and found the Ramirez to be a better instrument. Once restored by Henry, Julian Bream used the Spanish-made instrument to play four pieces of Spanish

⁶⁵ Palmer, *Julian Bream*, 56.

⁶⁶ In a footnote, Button says that “Clifford Essex was a London music proprietor and owner of BMG. Essex began to import guitars by celebrated luthiers, and frequently placed his labels over the original. Usher’s guitar was actually constructed by the influential German luthier Hermann Hauser (1882 – 1952). After Torres, Hauser was considered the most notable European maker. Usher bequeathed his instrument collection to the Horniman Museum, London.” Button, *Julian Bream*, 75) In a letter to Appleby dated 15 July 1947, Usher refers to the guitar as “my new concert Hauser model.” Allan Brace has written about Clifford Essex’s importing of guitars from Germany during the inter-war period. Allan Brace, “Clifford Essex – maker and importer of guitars,” *BMG Newsletter*, Spring 2020, 22-23.

music by Sor, Tarrega and Albeniz, for the Spanish section of the BBC's Overseas Service, broadcast to the Spanish public on 30th August 1947.⁶⁷

Jack Abbott Jnr.

The fate of the Ramirez instrument is not clear, but it doesn't seem to have been used for more than six months because a further attempt was made to provide the teenage Julian Bream with a satisfactory instrument the following year. In early 1948, Henry Bream approached the luthier Jack Abbott Jr. of Abbott-Victor Music Company to make a guitar. Jack Abbott Jnr. (1905 – 1994) was the son of the luthier, John George Abbott (1877-1938) and both men worked together in London in the late 1920s and early 30s.⁶⁸ As an independent luthier from 1936, Jack was known for his banjos and plectrum guitars but was willing to build an instrument to Henry Bream's design:

“The soundboard was built of spruce, with mahogany back, sides and neck. Henry scraped down the table and announced, ‘the best instrument we have ever had for classical type music, good sustaining power, a celestial pure tone, and plays like silk.’”⁶⁹

Julian Bream received the instrument and played Shand's *Premier Concerto Guitare, op.48* at the Social and Athletic Club of Gays (Hampton) Ltd. in March 1948. He used it again in

⁶⁷ Button, *Julian Bream*, 68 – 70.

⁶⁸ Jack's real name was also John George Abbott but he used 'Jack' to distinguish himself from his father. Abbott-Victor instruments can be found in classified advertisements in *BMG* from 1943 onwards.

⁶⁹ Button, *Julian Bream*, 98 – 9. See also Button, *Julian Bream*, photograph 13, which shows Julian Bream posing with the Abbott-Victor guitar.

April at Peckham Film Studios. However, by June 1948, the instrument “began to lose its vibrancy, and the fingerboard warped so badly, the strings fouled the frets. It became impossible to play and Julian had to revert to the Panormo...”⁷⁰ Despite its short life, this instrument may well be the first ‘concert’ guitar made in Britain used in a public performance.⁷¹ Of course, it is difficult to determine who produced the first ‘concert’ classical guitar in Britain but it is very likely to have been an established luthier like Abbott Jnr. or Roccia, who applied their existing lutherie skills and experience of repairing Spanish guitars to meet a growing demand. Also, after the war, musical instrument retailers were in short supply of stock and looking to British luthiers to supply them.

Jack Abbott’s father, John, produced instruments under the ‘Aristone’ brand, which, from 1932, received investment from the French musical instrument company, Bessons. After John Abbott’s death in 1938, Jack continued to share the Aristone name with Bessons. This is noteworthy because the March/April 1949 issue of the *Bulletin of Philharmonic Guitarists*, reports that Bessons was selling an “Aristone Model 4 for finger-style playing described as ‘of recognised Spanish design’”. A corresponding advertisement appears in *BMG*, April 1949, listing the Model 4 of ‘Spanish design’ and ‘handmade throughout’ and it is advertised even earlier in the *Musical Express*, October 22nd 1948. We might wonder whether following

⁷⁰ Button, *Julian Bream*, 103. Henry Bream also purchased a c.1880 C. F. Martin 0-28 guitar, which Julian played between 1948-52. This was replaced by an instrument made by Hector Quine, as I discuss later in this article.

⁷¹ Information about Jack Abbott is scarce, but these web pages are useful, accessed April 24, 2020:

<http://banjolin.co.uk/banjo/abbotthistory.htm> and <https://gypsyjazzuk.wordpress.com/gypsy-jazz-uk-home/uk-luthiers/aristoneguitars/> and <https://gypsyjazzuk.wordpress.com/gypsy-jazz-uk-home/uk-luthiers/abbott-victor/>

A short obituary of John Abbott appears in *BMG*, March 1938, 142.

the experiment with Henry Bream's guitar, Jack continued to produce a 'Spanish' design, which became the 'Aristone Model 4' sold through Bessons.

Furthermore, the March/April 1949 *Bulletin* of the PSG, also reports the availability of "The John Alvey Turner" concert guitar described as being 'especially designed for modern exponents of the classical style'." John Alvey Turner was a well-known instrument retailer and after the war, the luthier, Sydney Young (1880-1864) re-opened his workshop adjoining John Alvey Turner's premises on New Oxford Street. Although best known for his banjos, a John Alvey Turner advertisement in *BMG*, November 1946, states that Sydney Young is the maker of mandolins and guitars, too. An experienced luthier like Young would have been keen to meet any demand for British-made classical guitars after the war, especially given the decline of the banjo's popularity. It's also possible that Jack Abbott produced guitars for John Alvey Turner which they sold under their own brand, as happened with his father before the war.

At the same time, the Clifford Essex company was working on its first concert guitar which Usher began to disclose in his writing from July 1948. Those articles are especially helpful in dating some of the earliest efforts to make a classical guitar in Britain.

Marco Roccia

The "very satisfactory guitar" that Usher had alluded to in July 1948 was the work of Marco Roccia (1902 – 1987) who was employed as a luthier for Clifford Essex Co. Ltd from 1927 until 1977, except for service during World War II.⁷² Prior to joining Clifford Essex, Roccia

⁷² In a letter of tribute to A. P. Sharpe (*BMG*, March 1968, 187), Roccia states that he and his brother were interviewed and employed at the same time by Mr Clifford Essex.

had apprenticed at Henri Selmer in Paris under the technical director, Mario Maccaferri and came from a family of cabinet-makers.⁷³ Throughout his career, Roccia became experienced in repairing and making a variety of fretted instruments and his output of finished instruments was modest. For example, between 1954 and 1967, he made 24 instruments of different models.⁷⁴ An obituary in *Guitar International* lists several famous makers' instruments he had inspected and repaired, including "a few Torres."⁷⁵ A couple of years after his return to work for Clifford Essex in 1946, Roccia began to experiment with making a Clifford Essex concert guitar to meet the growing demand for the instrument.⁷⁶ The guitar was announced to *BMG* readers by a review Usher wrote in August 1951 of a guitar he had purchased from Clifford Essex in November 1950. The review begins with Usher relating how he had previously been held back from informing his readers about the guitar by Sharpe, who would not "permit mention of Clifford Essex products in articles." Usher goes on to say:

⁷³ Allan Brace, *BMG Newsletter*, Spring 2019, 22-24.

⁷⁴ Allan Brace, *BMG Newsletter*, Spring 2019, *Ibid*, 23. Brace states that Clifford Essex "pre-war guitars numbers run to about 1100, achieved over about 15 years, indicating an average annual volume of 70/75 guitars. Contemplating Marco's preference to produce quality instruments (guitars plus banjos etc.) rather than high volume, the employment of other lesser and apprentice luthiers at CE is probable, but given the volume of repair work in the limited CE workshop, it's a fair assumption a significant volume was by import, either in completed or part assembled forms. After the war CE guitars are consecutively numbered to about 55/60 – definitely to no. 52 (1970), with very limited output in the remaining years to 1977 due to managerial problems leading to CE's final demise. This is an annual production of about 2, probably almost all made by Marco, with possibly some production from apprentices at the time, including Marco's arch irritant, James Burton." *BMG Newsletter*, Spring 2020, 23.

⁷⁵ George Clinton, "Obituary Marco Roccia 1902 – 1987," *Guitar International*, September 1987, 48.

⁷⁶ Usher writes about Roccia's experiments in his article for *The Galpin Society Journal* in 1956 and this was quoted by Sharpe in the Foreword to his book, *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar*, published in 1957.

However, I have practically browbeaten him to relax this rule just for once because it is almost impossible to import good finger-style guitars and because the new Essex guitar is, in my view, the first true concert guitar to be produced in this country.

Usher then discusses the attributes of “really fine” guitars, naming highly regarded European makers such as Santos Hernández, Hermann Hauser and Robert Bouchet, thus putting Roccia’s work in good company, referring to him as a “master craftsman.” Usher refers to himself as

“a most fastidious player and, in my search for “the perfect guitar” I have owned or handled well over a hundred instruments. In addition, I have played the instruments of many of the leading professional artists. My opinion of the perfected Essex instrument will be evident when I tell you that I have disposed of all the guitars I had and that I now use only one of the new Essex instruments which I bought in November last.”

Usher goes on to describe the instrument: A laminated neck; ebony fingerboard; rosewood bridge; back and sides of African walnut “crossed with a species of mahogany,” and a spruce soundboard. The top and back are both “slightly arched.”

The strutting below the belly is of revolutionary design, being neither fan nor cross type. I shall not disclose the exact form (it was evolved by Marco as a result of studying hundreds of classical guitars to discover why, after years of playing, they sunk or split because of age). I can say that the result of this new strutting is a tone of exceptional purity, depth and carrying power which has astonished those who have heard these instruments. The most satisfying feature of these guitars is their

consummate craftsmanship. Of all guitars I have ever seen, there is none with the interior and exterior finish of the Essex guitar.

It is a gushing, uncritical review yet of unique significance due to its detail and because Usher, one of the leading writers on classical guitar in Britain at that time, claims the historical importance of the instrument:

British guitarists are completely unused to judging new guitars since none of any note have previously been built in this country... Like the Lacote and Panormo guitars, the Essex instruments built today will be in use and giving satisfaction a hundred years from now. The emergence, after long research, of this Essex concert guitar is certainly a landmark in the history of the guitar in Britain.⁷⁷

A more recent appraisal of Roccia's classical guitars describes them as "quite exceptional – beautifully made, without fussy detail or over-indulgence, but possessing nice touches".⁷⁸ If we compare Usher's review of the Roccia guitar with Appleby's review of the Dolmetsch in the same year, we can see that both writers were keen to relate the instruments of 1951 to the earlier instruments of Panormo and Lacote, thus restoring a tradition of lutherie in Britain that had been lost.

⁷⁷ Despite the hyperbole, the claims in the review were not contested by *BMG* readers who would regularly write to the magazine to criticise or compliment Usher and other authors. Yes, Clifford Essex Director, A. P. Sharpe maintained editorial control over readers' letters in the 'Correspondence' section of *BMG* but seemed happy to publish critical remarks and corrections at all times. The lack of correspondence about the new guitar could also be due to the low numbers of them produced.

⁷⁸ Allan Brace, *Ibid.*

Marco Roccia continued to work for Clifford Essex Music Co. Ltd until it closed in 1977, following several years of commercial decline after the death of A. P. Sharpe in 1968.⁷⁹ Roccia's classical guitar was featured in Usher's article for *The Galpin Society Journal* in 1956 and in Sharpe's books on the history and construction of the classical guitar. However, it was never advertised for sale in *BMG* and Roccia is remembered as a luthier of fretted instruments rather than a maker of classical guitars, of which he said he had just "made a few."⁸⁰

Harald Petersen

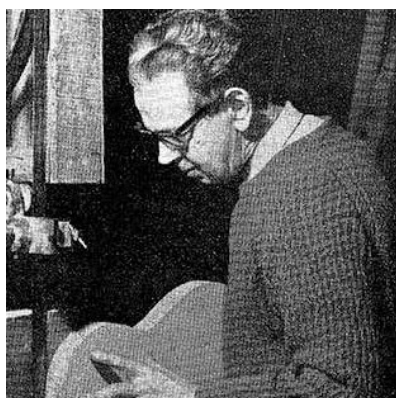


Figure 5: Photo of Harald Petersen from BMG, December 1969.

The first luthier from this period who subsequently made a reputable career out of classical guitar making in Britain was Harald Petersen (1910 – 1969).⁸¹ Born in Skjern, Denmark, he

⁷⁹ Janet Ambrose, *BMG Newsletter*, Spring 2012, 9 and Summer 2012.

⁸⁰ George Clinton, "Obituary Marco Roccia 1902 – 1987," *Guitar International*, September 1987, 48.

⁸¹ On Petersen, see Kenneth Brögger, *Danish Guitars – and Their Makers* (Roset, 2001); John C. Braithwaite, *Guitar News*, June-July 1954, 10-11; Malcolm Weller, *BMG*, June 1969, 295; Malcolm Weller, *BMG*, December 1969, 77, and William Starling, *Strings Attached: The Life and Music of John Williams*, (London: Biteback Publishing, 2012).

began repairing musical instruments at the age of 20 and after five years working for established luthiers, established his workshop in Aarhus making and repairing a range of stringed instruments. From the early 1940s, he concentrated on making jazz guitars though wanted to make classical guitars, but there was no market for them in Denmark at that time. Hoping to reach a greater number of customers, he moved his English wife and four children to Askam and Ireleth-in-Furness in Lancashire in 1949 and he followed in 1950.⁸² After a slow start in England, Petersen began making guitars for Len Williams' Spanish Guitar Centre in London, which had opened in 1952. At first, Len Williams sold cheap Italian made guitars for beginner students, but as his students improved they sought higher quality instruments, which Petersen provided after the shop moved to its Cranbourn Street premises in 1955. For a year or so, his son, John Williams, played a Petersen guitar until he switched to a Fleta in 1956.⁸³

Over time, Petersen and his sons, Tom and Peter, made three models of classical guitar: A, B and the finest C model. After his death in 1969, his sons continued the business until 1983. What is significant about Petersen is that he was focused on making a living from classical guitar making in Britain even before Clifford Essex produced their concert model in 1951. It

⁸² This is according to Kenneth to Brögger, who received correspondence from Petersen's widow, Mary Winifred Petersen. An alternative account of how Petersen became a classical guitar-maker is given by John Duarte, who states that Petersen came to England as a violin-maker and was coached by Len Williams to make guitars: "It was thus through Len Williams that Harald Petersen *became* a luthier, and it was from him that Harald Petersen received his grounding. This collaboration was the foundation on which Harald's whole activity was built-and it is nice -to give credit where it is due." John Duarte, *BMG* July 1969, 339.

⁸³ See James R. Westbrook, "Classic Classics. Ignacio Fleta," *Classical Guitar*, July 2004, 52-54. Also, *BMG*, August 1958, 262, in which Ivor Mairants writes about his visit to Ignacio Fleta's workshop and mentions that Fleta had "recently made a guitar for Segovia and another for John Williams."

took him a few years to become established but he became a prolific luthier due to his association with the Spanish Guitar Centre and his instruments remain well-regarded today. Over a decade before more celebrated luthiers such as David Rubio and José Romanillos, Petersen was the first successful self-employed maker of handmade classical guitars in Britain.

Len Williams' role in establishing the classical guitar in Britain is widely acknowledged, mainly in his role as a teacher and father to John Williams. O'Toole asserts that the Spanish Guitar Centre "arguably became the catalyst for an entire cultural movement around the classical guitar in England"⁸⁴ but this overlooks the significant groundwork that people like Perott, Appleby and Usher had been doing for several years. It was William's innovative teaching method of small group tuition and therefore his ability to accommodate larger numbers of students than individual tuition would allow, that stimulated and concentrated the demand for good quality instruments, which he sourced for the retail side of his growing business. The Spanish Guitar Centre became a key outlet for independent luthiers like Petersen to sell their instruments through and led to other Spanish Guitar Centres being established around the country.

⁸⁴ Michael O'Toole, "John Williams: An Evaluation of his Impact Upon the Culture of the Classical Guitar," PhD diss., Dublin Institute of Technology, 2018, 40.

Hector Quine



Figure 6: Photo of Hector Quine. Source unknown.

Not all serious guitar-makers aspire to become professional luthiers like Petersen. Hector Quine (1926 – 2015) began playing classical guitar after he returned from the War in 1948. He was initially taught by Alexis Chesnakov, a founding member of the PSG where, around 1950, he met and received lessons from Julian Bream. Quine is best known for his teaching career, having taught classical guitar at Trinity College of Music in 1958 and the following year became the first professor of guitar at the Royal Academy of Music. Like many players then and now, Quine wanted a satisfactory instrument to play and so decided to make one for himself. In an article published in *Guitar News* (Jan./Feb. 1955), he describes the experience of making his first three guitars, drawing attention to the importance of understanding tone-production. The first “obstacle” for Quine and other early guitar-makers was finding quality tonewood, which was just “as scarce as good quality instruments.” It took him several months to find the right materials and once he began, Julian Bream’s “advice and guidance proved invaluable.” The first instrument “was put together mostly by unorthodox methods and devices” but was “surprisingly good from the tonal point of view.” He goes on to say that “after completing this ‘trial’ instrument, I studied a book on violin-making, and applying the

basic principles of construction to the guitar, I was able to proceed with the building of No. 2 on more conventional lines, while still incorporating several ideas of my own, and of the player for whom it was made.” Over twenty years, Quine made 18 instruments, eventually stopping because of other responsibilities.⁸⁵

Quine’s obituaries⁸⁶ refer to how Julian Bream played Quine’s second instrument at his Wigmore Hall debut in 1951, but this is not correct.⁸⁷ In the *Guitar News* article, Quine writes about how Bream played the second instrument at a later Wigmore Hall recital in September 1954. He also states that his first guitar took him 14 months to build and the second took ten months to complete. His third instrument, which he was completing at the time of writing the article in late 1954, would take him six months, because “I work only in my spare time, of course, and even that has to be divided between making and playing.”

⁸⁵ “Bill was compelled to stop making guitars around 1970 because of the pressure of other work; eighteen guitars were completed and the nineteenth was only three-quarters finished until some years later when José Romanillos kindly completed it for him.” Roland Gallery, “Professor Hector William Quine, Hon RAM (30 December 1926 – 1 January 2015,” accessed 12 March 2018, https://www.ram.ac.uk/public/uploads/documents/2b153f_professor-hector-william-quine.pdf.

⁸⁶ Roland Gallery, *Ibid.*; Michael Lewin, “Hector Quine, 1926 – 2015,” accessed 12 March 2018, <https://www.ram.ac.uk/about-us/news/hector-quine-19262015>; “Hector Quine, Classical Guitarist – Obituary,” *The Telegraph*, accessed 12 March 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/11353591/Hector-Quine-classical-guitarist-obituary.html>; “CG World Mourns Passing of Hector Quine,” *Classical Guitar*, accessed 12 March 2018, <http://classicalguitarmagazine.com/cg-world-mourns-passing-of-hector-quine/>

⁸⁷ In fact, Bream played a c.1880 C. F. Martin 0-28 at his Wigmore Hall debut in 1951. See James R. Westbrook, “Classic Classics. C. F. Martin 0-28 c.1880,” *Classical Guitar*, June 2004, 57-58.

Bream would use guitar No. 3 to record for Westminster in 1955.⁸⁸ In doing so, Quine's instrument appears to be the earliest recording of a classical guitar by a British maker.

The texts

Hofmeester: Torres: The Creator of the Modern Guitar⁸⁹

As we have seen from the efforts of Jack Abbott, Marco Roccia and Hector Quine, some of the first classical guitars made after the war were experiments. The publication of a technical drawing of a Torres guitar by Theodorus M. Hofmeester Jnr. (1897 – 1955)⁹⁰ has been recognised as “a landmark in guitar construction of the Torres school because, for the first time, guitar makers, professional and amateur alike, were provided an insight into the work of Torres and more importantly, into the dimensions to draw upon for making a guitar.”⁹¹ The guitar, since catalogued as FE26, was drawn in 1953 and published in the 1954 issue of *Guitar Review* magazine. In the catalogue section of his book, Romanillos cautions the reader that there are doubts about the accuracy of the drawing and the authenticity of the

⁸⁸ Palmer, *Julian Bream*, lists Quine's 1954 guitar as the instrument used on Bream's 1956 albums, *Spanish Guitar Music*, Westminster XWN18135 and *Guitar Music of Villa-Lobos and Tárroba*, Westminster XWN18137, both recorded in September 1955.

⁸⁹ *Guitar Review*, 16 (1954): 15–18.

⁹⁰ Note that ‘Hofmeester’ is also spelled ‘Hofmeister’ in the same *Guitar Review* article and both spellings are used elsewhere, too. Genealogical records show that Hofmeester Jnr. travelled with his mother and siblings from Holland to the USA in 1910. His father, Theodorus Marinus Hofmeester (1865 – 1955), was a violinist and clarinettist, who played in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1909 – 1911). Hofmeester Jnr. worked as an Architect and was President of the Classical Guitar Society in Chicago.

⁹¹ Romanillos, *Antonio de Torres*, 58; 125 – 6; 187. For further discussion about the authenticity of the Hofmeester instrument, see James R. Westbrook, “*Investigative Methods for the Study of Historical Guitars: A Case Study of the Work of Antonio de Torres*,” MA diss., London Metropolitan University, 2009.

guitar itself, but it offered aspiring guitar makers the first opportunity to accurately construct a classical guitar in the style of a Torres instrument. Although published in the USA, *Guitar Review* was international in its outlook and had subscribers in Britain. It also included Terry Usher, Jack Duarte and Wilfrid Appleby among its editors and authors.⁹²

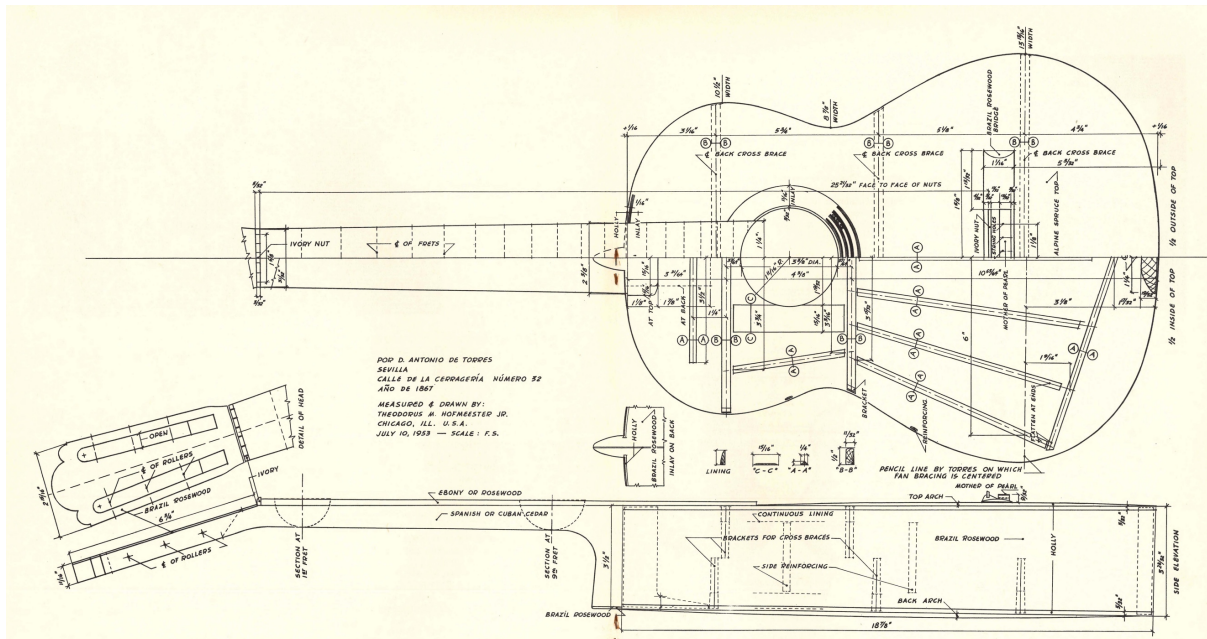


Figure 7: Torres FE26 plan by Hofmeester, *Guitar Review*, 16 (1954)

Hofmeester's plan offered a level of detail about the design of a Torres instrument that had not previously been widely available. We have seen how six years earlier, Henry Bream approached Jack Abbott Jnr. with an ultimately flawed design based on his observations of available instruments and that Quine's first effort was "unorthodox," so Hofmeester's drawing finally provided the amateur maker with a reliable plan to use in the absence of good instruments to study and accumulated experiential knowledge.⁹³

⁹² A decade later, an entire issue of *Guitar Review* is devoted to 'Guitar Construction from A to Z' (No. 28, 1965).

⁹³ Although no longer in circulation, I have been shown an enlarged and modified version of the Hofmeester plan sold by luthier supplier, Sydney Evans Ltd. (UK), probably dating from the 1960s.

Subsequent Do-It-Yourself instructions each draw from three different sources of knowledge about classical guitar construction: Clifford A. Hoing was an experienced violin maker and understood first-hand the principles of stringed instrument making so that he was able to write matter-of-fact instructions for amateur woodworkers; Eric V. Ridge was an amateur maker who used the Hofmeester plan to take fellow guitar enthusiasts on a shared journey of discovery, and A. P. Sharpe documented and systematised the instrument-making of his friend and employee, Marco Roccia. These four texts by Hofmeester, Hoing, Ridge and Sharpe, constitute the foundational instruction on classical guitar-making in the English language. As we have seen, prior to and parallel with these DIY instructions was the more discursive writing of people like Sutcliffe and Usher who took an interest in the material culture of classical guitars.⁹⁴

One aspect of the material cultural context in which all of this activity was taking place is the growing popularity of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) in post-war Britain. The destruction of WWII led to a shortage of housing and labour in Britain and until 1951, the only furniture available was through the government's Utility Scheme. Consequently, the war had resulted in "an unprecedented level of self-help and resourcefulness."⁹⁵ Home ownership was being

⁹⁴ For a relevant discussion concerning the material culture of musical instrument making, see Kevin Dawe, "People, Objects, Meaning: Recent Work on the Study and Collection of Musical Instruments," *The Galpin Society Journal* 54, (2001): 219 – 232.

⁹⁵ Andrew Jackson, "*Understanding the Experience of the Amateur Maker*." PhD diss., University of Brighton, 2011, 23, accessed 15 August 2019 <https://research.brighton.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/understanding-the-experience-of-the-amateur-maker>. Jackson observes that research into amateur making is notable by its scarcity and that (as is the case here) the bulk of primary material consists of magazines and self-help DIY textbooks from the period.

encouraged by banks and building societies and so new owners were faced with having to furnish and manage repairs on their homes rather than ask their landlord. A labour shortage made it difficult to find a tradesman to carry out repairs and people were encouraged by magazines and television to take up DIY. It is no coincidence that at the same time that Hoing, Ridge and Sharpe were writing instructions for classical guitar making, *Practical Householder* magazine was launched with the editor claiming that a DIY movement “has reached such proportions today that it can only be dealt with satisfactorily by a journal entirely devoted to it.”⁹⁶ Jackson argues that these sources reveal how the media “planted do-it-yourself and home crafts as part of the popular consciousness” and that DIY had become a voluntary activity “not necessarily disseminated by formal training or employment.”⁹⁷

Woodworker magazine, established in 1896, spanned a period when amateur pursuits had shifted from the leisure activities of the middle classes to meeting a post-war utilitarian need. By the time of its publication of Hoing’s series of articles on ‘Making a Guitar’ in 1955, the massification of DIY was underway which promoted craftwork as both a useful and intrinsically rewarding form of leisure.

⁹⁶ Andrew Jackson, “Labour as Leisure – The Mirror Dinghy and DIY Sailors,” *Journal of Design History* 19, no. 1 (2006): 57 – 67.

⁹⁷ Jackson, *Understanding the Experience of the Amateur Maker*, 21.

Hoing: Making A Guitar



Figure 8: *Woodworker*, January 1955.

Clifford A. Hoing (1903 – 1989), was “one of the most respected”⁹⁸ British makers of violins and violas and wrote the first step-by-step instructions in the English language for making a classical guitar.⁹⁹ In his review of Irving Sloan’s *Classic Guitar Construction* in Jan./Feb. 1967, Appleby recounts how it was *Guitar News* (presumably Appleby), who contacted Hoing in 1954 and “gave him what information we could find on the subject. This resulted in a series of detailed, illustrated articles in a British magazine, *The Woodworker* which aroused much interest.” Looking through the issues of *Woodworker* from 1955, the widening social uptake of DIY is made very clear: Alongside Hoing’s first article on making a guitar, readers

⁹⁸ Brian W. Harvey, *The Violin Family and Its Makers in the British Isles: An Illustrated History and Directory*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 354. For further biographical detail and photographs of Hoing, see Michael Dewey, “Clifford Hoing: English Violin Maker and Viola Maker,” *Journal of the British Viola Society*, October 2014, 19-25.

⁹⁹ First published in *Woodworker* January, February, March, May, and June 1955, the articles were also collected and republished in the 1955 *Woodworker* annual and republished again as a series in 1965.

were shown how to make a window seat, bookcases, cupboards, a 'ladies' mobile workbox (to hold sewing materials), and sharing the same page as Hoing's article were instructions on making a fishing float. The drawings of the instrument his instructions refer to are of a now familiar seven strut fan-braced guitar with a dovetail joint used to join the neck to the body. The back is also conventionally braced with three bars.

Hoing (and all subsequent DIY texts on making a guitar) treats the construction of a guitar as a series of small projects, from fashioning the components from raw materials, to a process of assembly, finishing and set up of the instrument. The first article focuses on the back and ribs with Hoing stating that "full instructions will be given which will enable anyone with a fair knowledge of woodwork to make a good example of the classic guitar." Although instructions are very brief by comparison to more recent books, Hoing offers a range of advice including measurements, making of jigs, choice of wood, how to plane thin pieces of wood, and how to make and work with a bending iron. Illustrations are provided for the rib mould and bending iron.

The second article covers assembly of the back and ribs, jointing of the soundboard and installation of the rosette. The brevity is remarkable and assumes a significant amount of resourcefulness and confidence of the maker. Perhaps this is not surprising, given the context of a general woodworking magazine where the techniques of tool and jig making, inlaying, design and measurement are written about regularly. As such, the article can be seen as a complement to the variety of instruction and learning that the reader is assumed to gain with each magazine issue.

The rest of the series proceeds along similar lines: Hoing's instruction, though brief, is direct and methodical, occasionally referring to his personal preference for doing a particular task

while acknowledging other methods. Such anecdotes can be understood as recognition by Hoing that the reader is able to make up their mind and use their judgement and he cautions us that whatever decisions we make, “it must be remembered that work on a musical instrument must be more carefully done than if it were merely a piece of cabinet work, otherwise the tone will be far from musical. There can be no faking of joints in this kind of work.”¹⁰⁰ As such, Hoing establishes lutherie in a hierarchy of practical skills that stands above more domestic DIY projects in *Woodworker*.

The characteristic brevity of Hoing’s instructions follows the overall style of *Woodworker* magazine. Presumably given a limited amount of space in a popular, monthly magazine, he contributed what he felt necessary – he was after all, first and foremost a luthier not an author. He did for the classical guitar what no-one else in Britain had done by codifying the first set of instructions.

Ridge: The Birth of the Guitar

Eric V. Ridge was a Committee member of the International Classic Guitar Association (ICGA) and an amateur instrument maker, having already made a few violins. He was encouraged by Appleby to make use of the Hofmeister plan to construct a guitar and write about his experience.¹⁰¹ In *The Birth of a Guitar*, Ridge writes:

¹⁰⁰ *Woodworker*, March 1955, 59.

¹⁰¹ Ridge writes: “The best modern concert guitars are all based more or less on the model designed by the great Spanish guitar-maker, Torres, who has been called ‘the Stradivarius of the guitar’. I was fortunate to have the detailed plan and measurements of one of his finest instruments so I used these in planning my guitar.” (6) Appleby’s review of Irving Sloan’s *Classic Guitar Construction* offers further detail: “In 1956, we were

“I commenced therefore, after months of contemplation and experimenting, with a firm idea in my mind as to how I intended to proceed with my first instrument, free and untrammelled by the experiences and writings of past guitar makers, and if some of my ideas seem revolutionary, let me say here and now that at no time during the making of the instrument was anything done without due consideration and forethought.”¹⁰²

The original series of articles ran over six issues of *Guitar News*, from Oct./Nov. 1956 to Sept./Oct. 1957, coinciding with A.P. Sharpe’s book, *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar*, which was published in early 1957. *Guitar News* from that time contains no mention of Sharpe’s book and their previously described acrimony resulted in neither Appleby nor Sharpe acknowledging each other’s important contributions and achievements in establishing the classical guitar in Britain.¹⁰³

fortunate enough to contact Eric V. Ridge of Cheltenham. Mr Ridge was conversant with the problems of making violins and agreed to make a guitar describing each operation as he performed it and illustrating these with diagrams and photographs – he is an expert photographer. His treatise on ‘The Birth of a Guitar’ was published in *Guitar News*, repeated by request and also published in booklet form. These are all now out of print and unobtainable. Mr Ridge’s model was based largely on the Torres guitar which Theodorus Hofmeister Jnr., had so expertly measure and described in ‘The Guitar Review’. This gave tremendous stimulus to guitar-making and has undoubtedly helped to increase the supply and improve the quality of classic guitars.” *Guitar News*, Jan./Feb. 1967, 11. Although Ridge was using the Hofmeister plan, he did not follow the ‘Spanish heel’ construction method of joining the neck to the body, and like Hoing, opted to use a dovetail joint.

¹⁰² *Guitar News*, Oct./Nov. 1956, 18.

¹⁰³ In the Aug./Sept. 1954 issue, Appleby writes a short, damning review of Sharpe’s *The Story of the Spanish Guitar*, stating that “The author is editor of a fretted-instrument magazine and his name is associated with a Hawaiian guitar band.” (14)

Ridge's series of articles was re-published as a 28-page booklet, with the last eight pages being commercial advertisements and photographs of players, ending with an image of Appleby holding both a guitar from 1790 and a modern 'concert' guitar. Throughout the booklet, there is a mixture of UK and USA addresses and prices, indicative of the international focus of the ICGA which published it.

Ridge's instructions begin with a full-page photograph of 'Eric V. Ridge in his workshop', wearing a white coat, holding an assembled instrument yet to have the back fitted.

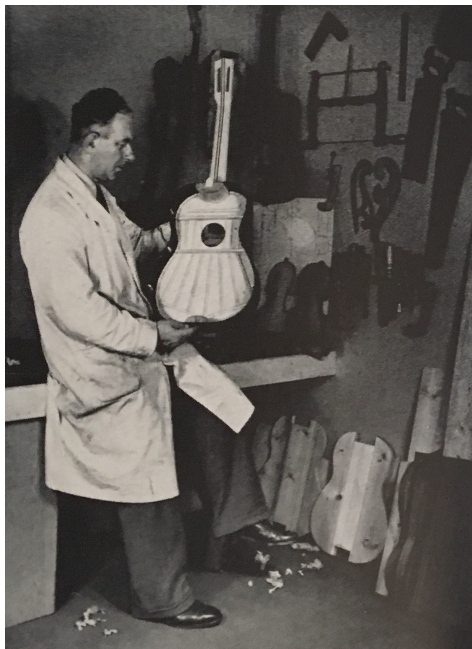


Figure 9: Eric V. Ridge in his workshop.

He establishes the series as a narrative, about how “my first guitar was born; and very hardly born, through many experiences, trials and tribulations.” There are no technical drawings but various measurements and photographs are regularly provided. The style of his text is a combination of narrative and instruction. For example, on bending the ribs:

“The ribs are bent with DRY HEAT over a blacksmith-made bending iron about 4" wide on the face; a solid block of copper holding the heat better than iron would be desirable; this was unobtainable in my case, but I found that a piece of 4" x ¾" iron bent to the shape as shown in PLATE 4 and welded to an iron rod for handling, worked quite satisfactorily at a fraction of the cost of solid copper. ... The correct amount of pressure, amount of rocking, temperature of the iron etc., can only be ascertained by experience, and I suggest that an hour or so of experimentation will be advantageous to the beginner; but once the knack has been acquired, it is surprising how simply and easily this apparently difficult operation can be accomplished.”

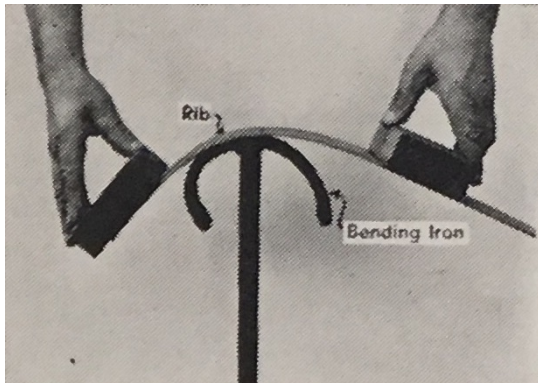


Figure 10: Eric Ridge's bending iron.

Compare this to Hoing's instructions on bending the ribs:

“A tool called a bending iron is used for bending the ribs to shape, the construction of which is shown in Fig. 4. This is composed of a copper or brass pipe about 1½ in. in diameter, heated by the most convenient means, usually gas or electricity. The lengths of ribs are wetted (one at a time), and, when the bending iron is almost hot enough to scorch the wood, the rib is placed across the pipe and light pressure applied to the rib

British musical instrument makers,” and rarely refers to his practice, but rather instructs the amateur woodworker with authority on the task at hand.

Sharpe: Make Your Own Spanish Guitar



Figure 12: “A. P. Sharpe (left) discusses a point of guitar making with Marco Roccia in the Clifford Essex workshop.” Photo from Sharpe (1957, 3)

Unlike Hoing’s and Ridge’s texts, A. P. Sharpe’s book is widely known by contemporary luthiers. It was first advertised as “in preparation” in the December 1956 issue of *BMG* and is reviewed by Peter Sensier, a well-known player, author and occasional guitar-maker, in March 1957. It sold thousands of copies and can still be found second-hand today. Sharpe was not a guitar-maker but acted as the author of what Marco Roccia, Clifford Essex’s luthier, demonstrated and explained to him, and all workshop photographs throughout are of Roccia. Sharpe begins the book by acknowledging “the debt of gratitude he owes to Marco Roccia,” writing that “...he produces the ‘concert size’ Spanish guitars which, entirely hand made by him, have been used as a basis for the compilation of this book. The methods of this craftsman luthier, too, have been used as a guide although, in some cases, they have had to be modified to meet the limitations of the amateur guitar maker.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Sharpe, *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar*, 3.

In the Foreword, Sharpe also quotes Usher's recent article for The Galpin Society, which celebrated the work of Roccia, friend to both Sharpe and Usher. The article notes how Roccia

“recommenced making guitars after the second world war by casting aside all preconceived ideas except those of body size and shape and, calling upon his experience in repairing thousands of old guitars by all the world's makers, began again on new lines... Thus although some of the instructions in this book may be found (to those acquainted with the facts) to be at variance with “usual” standards they are based on Marco Roccia's vast experience in not only repairing old instruments but on his own accumulated knowledge gained from discovering where some of these instruments “fell down” in construction over the years.”¹⁰⁶

Even in Sharpe's book, presumably with full knowledge of the Hofmeister Torres plan and Hoing articles, there is a sense of exploration and experimentation, with Sharpe wanting to both reassure the reader that the design and methods used were tried and tested, but also stood apart from tradition. Sharpe (quoting Usher) paints Roccia as an innovator, rather than a copyist and in a sense Roccia was exploring uncharted territory. Yet the design of the instrument in the book is, like Hoing's and Ridge's, a now familiar seven strut fan-braced instrument with a dovetail joint used to join the neck to the body. Notably, although the instructions at this time are for Spanish guitars in the Torres-style, none of them provide information on characteristically Spanish methods of construction, such as the ‘Spanish heel’ or use of the ‘solera’ work-board instead of molds.

¹⁰⁶ Sharpe, *ibid.*

Sharpe's text differs from Hoing's and Ridge's with the inclusion of a larger number of drawn illustrations. Ridge was a keen photographer and used this to illustrate his articles, whereas Hoing's series follows the house style of *Woodworker* magazine by providing drawings and a featured photograph in almost every article.

Author	Year	Pages ¹⁰⁷	Words	Drawings	Photographs
Hoing	1955	16 (12)	13,800	15	4
Ridge	1956 – 7	28 (17)	8,000	0	13
Sharpe	1957	32 (26)	12,000	36	6

Sharpe's Introduction to his book offers us some insight into the activities of amateur makers at that time. He claims that,

“Literally thousands of people, from all walks of life, have taken up the Spanish guitar during the past few years and hundreds of wood-working enthusiasts have attempted (and continue to attempt) to “make a guitar.” Making a guitar is even a part of the curriculum in many Secondary schools! Although there have been dozens of books published (over the years) on how to make violins, never, to my knowledge, has a book hitherto been published giving complete and detailed instructions on how to make a guitar.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ In parentheses are the actual pages relating to instruction, excluding foreword, advertisements, etc.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. I have been unable to find out more about the teaching of guitar making in Secondary schools at that time but Sharpe's remark should be read in the context of the Tripartite system of education introduced immediately after World War II in England, Wales and N. Ireland, which divided secondary schools into a tiered system of ‘grammar’ (i.e. academic), ‘technical’ (i.e. applied arts and science), and ‘secondary modern’ schools. Technical schools were never widespread because they were expensive, and secondary modern schools catered for the vast majority of children. The new system opened up the possibility for more progressive

Of course, he was right to declare that his was the first book, although at 32 pages it amounts to little more instruction than Hoing's series of articles two years earlier. The greater number of illustrations is useful in understanding how to make jigs and achieve the correct design of each component, but the text does not advance in terms of depth of explanation or pedagogical style on that which had been published before. For example, on bending the ribs, compare Hoing and Ridge above with an excerpt from Sharpe's instructions:

“One side of the guitar is first soaked in water for 10 or 15 minutes and when the bending iron is hot enough to almost scorch a piece of wood placed against it, the side (with the position of the waist having been marked) is pressed against the tube and gentle pressure applied on each side. The dampness of the wood and the heat coming from the bending iron will cause the wood to bend and the extent of the curve can be regulated to conform to the shape of the mould. ... Whilst bending the sides, great care should be taken not to scorch the wood. If the bending iron is too hot it will leave scorch marks on the sides being bent and whilst that is not too important when bending the sides for the upper and lower bouts of the guitar, scorching of the wood when bending for the waist will be difficult to remove.”¹⁰⁹

pedagogies in secondary school education, such as John Dewey's 'learning by doing' and schools were free to determine their curriculum. No doubt some woodworking teachers in secondary modern schools were also guitar enthusiasts. As for guitar playing, in *BMG*, July 1961, Peter Sensier writes about how the Education Committee had “recently appointed a classical guitar teacher for a number of schools under its domain. This is, in fact, a milestone as far as the guitar in Britain is concerned because it is the first time a fully-fledged salaried teacher of the guitar has been appointed in this way.”

¹⁰⁹ Sharpe, *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar*, 9.

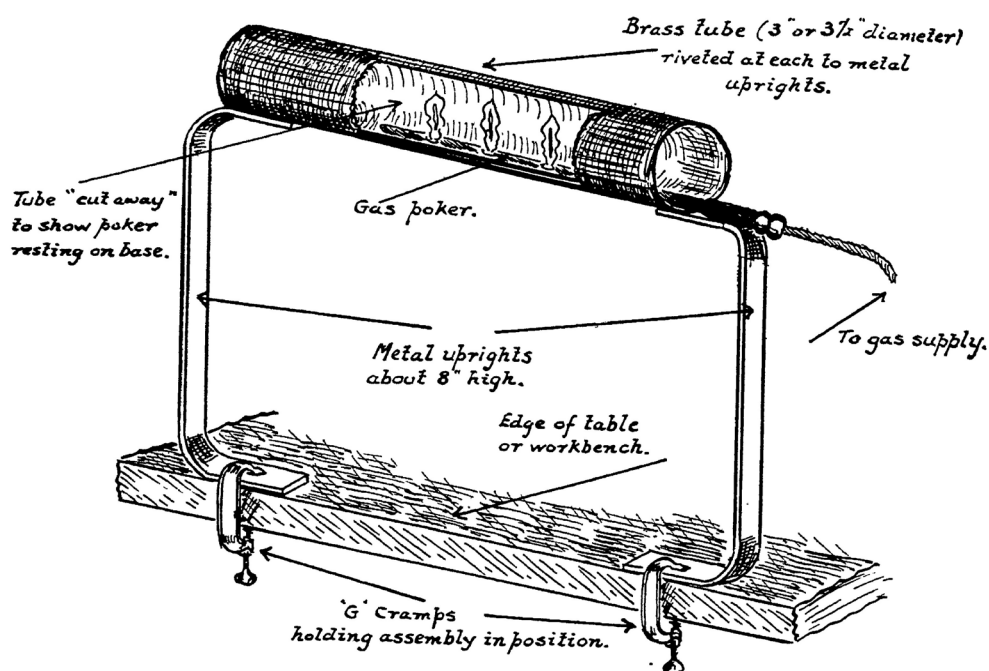


Figure 13: Marco Roccia's bending iron.

Compared to more recent books, each of the three texts is notable for their brevity of instruction.¹¹⁰ Paper rationing during the war had ended in 1953, well before each of the texts were published and Sharpe was not writing under the constraints of a monthly magazine like *Hoing*, nor with the tiny budget of an amateur association like *Guitar News*. Yet, we should not assume that all instructional texts available to luthiers at that time were characteristically brief. Sharpe would have been aware of Herron-Allen's book, *Violin – Making as It Was and Is*.¹¹¹ Published in 1884 and in print for over 100 years, it is 400 pages long, includes over 200 illustrations, and first appeared serialised in *Amateur Work Illustrated* (1882 – 4). Heron-Allen aimed to “initiate [the reader in] the fascinating mysteries of the Science and Art of

¹¹⁰ For example, Sloan (1966), describes the same process of bending the ribs in 889 words, and Courtnall (1994) uses 899 words compared to Hoing (231 words), Ridge (203 words) and Sharpe (316 words). Irving Sloan, *Classic Guitar Construction* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1966); Roy Courtnall, *Making Master Guitars* (London: Robert Hale, 1994).

¹¹¹ Edward Herron-Allen, *Violin-Making as It Was and Is*. Philadelphia, PA.: J. W. Pepper & Son, 1884.

Violin-making” and claimed that with his book, “for the first time the History, Theory, and Practice of Violin-making have been combined in a single volume.”¹¹²

Why is Sharpe’s book so different to Heron-Allen’s, when both aimed to instruct amateurs on the making of their respective instruments? The maturity and popularity of the violin compared to the guitar may be one reason. Heron-Allen claims that books before his were written by amateurs who have little or no experience of violin-making, yet he too was an amateur who gleaned much of the practical information in the book from making two instruments under the guidance of Georges Chanot, a luthier who worked near to Heron-Allen’s law firm in Soho.¹¹³ By contrast, Sharpe had little to improve on, with only Hoing and possibly Ridge’s recent writing on guitar construction to compare to. Sharpe had also written a book about the history of the Spanish guitar just three years earlier and was the editor of *BMG*, where he had long supported the writing of people like Appleby and Usher to lay the groundwork for his book. Within the context of everything else Sharpe had published, *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar* was simply another addition to the discussion that guitar enthusiasts were having among themselves.

A further consideration is the type of readers both Heron-Allen and Sharpe were anticipating. Although both books were explicitly aimed at ‘amateurs’, the status of the amateur in Victorian England was different from that of the amateur after WWII.

¹¹² Herron-Allen, 1884, ix-x.

¹¹³ Harvey, Brian W. “Allen, Edward-Heron,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed August 25, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/53069>.

Amateurs and autodidacticism

In his aforementioned study of DIY, Jackson discusses how the meaning of the term ‘amateur’ has changed. Derived from the Latin, *amator* (‘lover’), the word originally described someone who was “a connoisseur, or someone who is enthusiastically involved in an activity, and acquired knowledge and expertise for the love of it.”¹¹⁴ In his critique of craft, Adamson has similarly argued that “At one time...amateur craft was a mostly private affair-the exclusive domain of the wealthy, and more particularly, of aristocratic women, who spent their time in “accomplishments” such as quillwork, embroidery, and decorative painting. The attraction of these activities was their purposelessness.”¹¹⁵ Adamson associates the growth of hobby crafts with capitalism’s need to displace unused time into harmless (rather than politically revolutionary) leisure activities. Along the same lines, Knott (2015) argues that the activities of amateurs were historically a symbolic expression of having spare time and money. However, this had changed by the mid-nineteenth century as the middle-class increasingly thought of virtuous activities as those which were productive. It seems that a whimsical pursuit of leisure among the middle classes was being replaced by an ethic of productive labour.

These arguments are compelling when viewed historically and across a range of social activities, yet there is nothing in the three classical guitar making texts discussed above to suggest that amateur lutherie was attractive because of its purposelessness or that it was simply a benign way of filling time that would otherwise be used for political agitation. The overriding sense I have from the pages of *BMG* and *Guitar News* is that these amateurs

¹¹⁴ Jackson (2011), 106.

¹¹⁵ Glenn Adamson, *Thinking Through Craft*. (Oxford: Berg, 2007): 140.

remained intrinsically motivated by a love of the music, a fascination with the cultural history of the instrument, and a desire to gather, organize and create knowledge that could underpin the learning of new skills in musical instrument playing and making which would satisfy an aesthetic need and perhaps, among a minority of people, a career of some kind. Professional luthiers were (and are) respected for their experience, knowledge and skills yet they could not satisfy the material needs and intellectual curiosity of a growing number of enthusiasts who, for a decade at least, literally took things into their own hands.

Knott has noted that as amateurs increasingly took their leisure activity seriously seeking greater knowledge, accumulating sufficient resources and free-time to invest in their hobbies, they were thought to threaten the livelihoods of professional makers, who began to use the term ‘amateur’ pejoratively “to denote a lack of commitment, poor skill and ineptitude rather than doing something for its own sake... the amateur was reduced to a dabbler, or feminized through an association with domestic handicraft that has proved pervasive. This division continues to live with us today.”¹¹⁶ Yet as Knott argues, the rhetorical opposition between professional and amateur must be questioned. Indeed, these distinctions between dabblers and professionals, leisure and labour, do not accurately characterize the craft of guitar making in Britain in the 1950s or thereafter and none of the texts under discussion in this article uses the term ‘amateur’ disparagingly because the authors understood themselves as amateurs writing for other amateurs.¹¹⁷ As Huber has argued, “completely in keeping with its amateur legacy in

¹¹⁶ Stephen Knott, *Amateur Craft : History and Theory*. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015): xiv.

¹¹⁷ An extended and contemporary defence of ‘The indispensable amateur’ by Jacques Barzun was published in *Guitar Review* (No. 18, 1955). He concludes his essay by claiming “We may complain and cavil at the anarchy which is the amateur’s natural element, but in soberness we must agree that if the amateur did not exist it would be necessary to invent him.”

performance, the guitar has proven to be without prejudice of any kind against amateur makers.”¹¹⁸ Market conditions for the classical guitar necessitate that many luthiers remain ‘amateurs’ in the sense that they cannot make the majority of their income from the craft. They may appear to be dabbling but, like many craftspeople, they have to supplement their income from lutherie with other work. This was the case in 1950 when there were just a few people in Britain successfully making classical guitars and remains the case today, even as the number of players and luthiers have increased.¹¹⁹

What best characterizes the emergence of classical guitar-making in Britain are the qualities of what Stebbin’s has defined as ‘serious leisure’.¹²⁰ From the magazines and texts surveyed, we find that this period is made up of people who, despite a lack of resources, *persevered* and it led to some turning their endeavors into *careers* or occupying almost as much time and attention as a career would do. They invested significant personal *effort* based on *especially acquired knowledge, training, and skills*; they gained a number of *durable benefits* such as a means of self-expression and a sense of accomplishment; they participated within a subculture they helped create which had a *unique ethos*, and they *identified* strongly with their pursuits. Stebbins’ ‘serious leisure’ framework is useful because it overcomes the misleading economic distinction between professionals (Sharpe, Roccia, Abbott, Petersen, Hoing) and amateurs (Usher, Sutcliffe, Appleby, Ridge, Hofmeester, Quine), recognising that

¹¹⁸ John Huber, *The Development of the Modern Guitar*. (Westport: The Bold Strummer, 1994): 69.

¹¹⁹ In 2018, I surveyed all known classical guitar-makers in the UK (n=103) and found that 56% consider it their main occupation.

¹²⁰ Robert A. Stebbins, *Amateurs, Professionals and Serious Leisure*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992): 6 – 8; Robert A. Stebbins, *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007): 11 – 13.

within public-facing activities such as the arts and entertainment, professionals and amateurs coalesce, with some who become economically dependent on their endeavours and others who are not.¹²¹ Unlike the earlier Panormo family of luthiers in London or the tradition of family workshops in Spain, guitar makers in post-war Britain lacked familial connections or guild-like associations and learned their craft through the pursuit of serious leisure.¹²² A necessary part of this pursuit (and a feature of Stebbins' framework) was self-directed learning or autodidacticism.

An autodidact (literally, 'self-taught') is "someone who has acquired high levels of expertise, usually in a particular field, through self-education"; they are "largely self-driven", and pursue a "highly accelerated learning process."¹²³ Autodidacticism is then, an attribute of the amateur who does things for the love of it and part of what they love is specifically the activity of learning 'specially acquired knowledge', which underpins many of the 'durable

¹²¹ Much more could be said to show the usefulness and relevance of Stebbins' work on 'serious leisure' to analyse the development of guitar culture (both players, luthiers) in Britain, but it deserves much more space than I have here. An early example where guitar enthusiasts reflected on their status as amateurs can be found in *BMG*, November 1949. There, the author rejects the criticism of amateurs being 'dabblers' and argues that often the only difference between amateur and professional guitar players is the way they present themselves to the public and that the amateur can achieve the presentation of the professional through repeated practice and challenging themselves.

¹²² Unlike in the USA, where the Guild of American Luthiers and Association of Stringed Instrument Artisans have thousands of members who communicate through their respective journals and symposia, nothing exists for luthiers in Britain. In 2013, the European Guitar Builders (EGB) association was formed and there are some British luthiers among their approx. 230 members. In my interviews with classical guitar makers, a number of them regretted that there was not such an organisation in the UK.

¹²³ Pamela Fisher and Roy Fisher, "The 'Autodidact', the Pursuit of Subversive Knowledge and the Politics of Change," *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education* 28, no. 4 (2007): 516.

benefits' of serious leisure: self-actualisation; feelings of accomplishment; enhancement of self-image; social interaction and belongingness to a subculture of people who share a 'unique ethos' – benefits which may not be available through the formal institutions of work or education.

'Autodidacticism' is a term rarely used in educational research today, although 'self-directed learning' is widely advocated as a progressive pedagogical approach in formal education where the teacher acts as a facilitator of learning. What distinguishes the relatively small amount of literature on autodidacticism from the well-developed literature on self-directed learning is that historically autodidacticism has referred to people who have taught themselves "in contexts where the institutionalised provision of education is not well developed or is seen to offer only limited opportunities. In a sense then, autodidacticism might be said to be a response to that lack of provision and opportunity."¹²⁴ Bourdieu categorises the self-learning that takes place outside of the formal educational system as 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' types of autodidacticism, referring to whether the "extra-curricular culture" (i.e. autodidacticism) is attributable to the individual's existing academic qualifications or not.¹²⁵ Thus, in a similar way to how amateurs are pejoratively referred to as 'dabblers', knowledge gained outside the recognised institutions of education is deemed illegitimate in terms of its cultural value and carries no 'guarantee' of quality in the recognised hierarchy of accreditation. In the absence of an existing legitimating institution, the self-organisation of membership associations like the PSG and the ICGA can be understood as working towards the self-improvement of their members and, over time, established a recognised body of knowledge created by and for their

¹²⁴ Richard Edwards, "Amateurism and autodidacticism: a modest proposal?" *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 36, no. 6 (2015): 876 – 7.

¹²⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge, 2010.

members. The most long-standing of these legitimating institutions was *BMG*, which examined and awarded its Diploma and whose contributors, like Usher, wrote educational and instructional articles.¹²⁶ In this way, the process of self-education taking place within the subculture of guitar enthusiasts at this time may be likened to other social groups who sought self-improvement outside of, yet imitating, the formal education system, offering the possibility of formal membership, use of a lending library, a directory of guitar tutors available across the country, an examination system with designated examiners and, in the example of guitar-making, various attempts to codify the knowledge into a ‘how-to’ course of study for the amateur luthier.

Conclusion

As we have seen, there was a lack of provision and opportunity for classical guitar players in Britain during the 1930s and 40s. It was this context in which autodidacts combined their resources; developed international networks through the creation of guitar societies and performance circuits; contributed to (and in some cases created) a small number of magazines and bulletins to communicate with and learn from each other, and codified their accumulated knowledge on guitar technique and guitar making. This was occurring in a broader social context that was rapidly changing, too. The period between Hoing’s series in *Woodworker* and Sharpe book (1955 – 57) saw a ‘guitar boom’ in Britain. In September 1956, Peter Sensier began his Guitar Topics column in *BMG* by advising new guitar-makers. It begins:

¹²⁶ Among the many recipients over the years, Wilfrid Appleby is listed as having gained a *BMG* Diploma Grade A for Guitar in November 1942 and a Grade B in Spanish Guitar in August 1943.

“If the letters I receive are anything to go by, guitar-making will soon rival guitar playing as a hobby. Almost every week I hear from or meet a student guitarist who has decided to make his own guitar...”¹²⁷

Remarking on an annual guitar festival in June 1957, Sensier laments the “small display of Spanish guitars” he goes on to say,

“This was perhaps unavoidable in view of the difficulties of importing Spanish-style guitars, coupled with the fact that few British firms produce Spanish guitars. Even so, there were noticeable absentees. This seems to me to be a great pity in view of the continued growth of popularity of the traditional Spanish guitar – in spite of skiffle, Rock 'n' Roll and Calypso fads. Perhaps next year the Festival authorities might organise a display of British-built Spanish guitars – extra to the displays organised by musical instrument firms. My idea is that any British guitar maker should be allowed to send one guitar for display in a section of the Trade Show set aside for this purpose. When I say any British make, I mean just that – professional, semi-professional or amateur. Apart from the well-known luthiers there is a growing number of part-time and amateur guitar makers whose instruments, if displayed, would cause considerable interest to both the lay and guitar-playing public. This need not be in any sense a competitive affair – at least, not for the time being – but it might well be developed on such lines at some future date.”¹²⁸

¹²⁷ *BMG*, September 1956, 301.

¹²⁸ *BMG*, June 1957, 229.

In November 1957, Sensier complained that over 20,000 ‘Make Your Own Guitar’ kits have been sold, having been designed “by someone who could only have given a guitar a most cursory glance.” He blames this ‘atrociousness’ on “the guitar boom,” combined with the “‘do it yourself’ craze.”¹²⁹ It is clear that the publication of Sharpe’s book was not only the culmination of the Clifford Essex Company’s decade long experimentation with and advocacy of the Spanish guitar, but commercially timely, too. By 1964, *The Story of the Spanish Guitar* (1954) had sold over 8000 copies and *Make your Own Spanish Guitar* (1957) had sold over 7,000 copies.¹³⁰ Sharpe’s manual on guitar-making was not surpassed until a decade after it was first published, by which time the number of articles on guitar-making in *BMG* and *Guitar News* had declined, the basic knowledge had been consolidated, and a new period of classical guitar-making in Britain was beginning.

In 1967, David Rubio returned to England, already known to readers of *BMG*, first as a flamenco player in London who emigrated to Spain, then as a luthier in New York.¹³¹ Rubio quickly fashioned himself as the archetypal English luthier, initially working on Julian Bream’s estate and from March 1968, he established his own workshop where he employed Paul Fischer, who had trained with the harpsichord maker, Robert Goble.¹³² Goble had spent

¹²⁹ *BMG*, November 1957, 28.

¹³⁰ Jefferey Pocock, *BMG*, October 1964, 6.

¹³¹ Rubio’s departure to Spain was announced in *BMG*, March 1961 and his return was announced in *BMG*, January 1968. In April 1965, Ivor Mairants visits him in New York and states that “I was very impressed with a guitar he had just completed and we will soon be proud to add a first-class British luthier to the list of top guitar makers.” (236)

¹³² See Paul Fischer and David Nickson, *Let The Wood Speak!* CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018 and James Westbrook, “The English Gentleman Luthier, David Rubio: An Identity Born in the USA,” *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* XLV (2019): 262-284.

much of the 1920s and 30s, training and working alongside Dolmetsch, thus providing Rubio's workshop, through Fischer, with a direct link to William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. In February 1970, the Spaniard, José Romanillos, also set up a workshop on Julian Bream's estate, joining a handful of luthiers in England at that time making a living from classical guitars.¹³³

The gradual institutional legitimisation of the classical guitar and the knowledge and skills created by early autodidacts during the first decade after the war, was celebrated in the pages of *BMG* when Terry Usher "makes fretted instrument history" with his appointment in 1954 as Guitar Tutor at the Royal Manchester College of Music.¹³⁴ Four years later, Hector Quine began teaching guitar at Trinity College of Music and became the first Professor of Guitar and the Head of the new Guitar Department at the Royal Academy of Music in 1959. It was a further 13 years before classical guitar-making would gain a similar legitimacy when in September 1972, the first full-time course in fretted instrument making was opened at the London College of Furniture as a pathway on the three-year full-time HNC course in Musical Instrument Technology. In 2016, after 100 years of musical instrument making education, London Metropolitan University stopped recruiting students to its Musical Instruments degree course.¹³⁵ Fortunately, well-established courses in guitar-making and repair continue

¹³³ A Rubio guitar is advertised by the Spanish Guitar Centre in June 1968, priced £280, more expensive than all but one well-known Spanish maker. In January 1969, a Rubio is advertised for £275 alongside a Petersen for £250.

¹³⁴ A. P. Sharpe, *BMG*, May 1954, 189.

¹³⁵ The Northern Polytechnic Institute, London, housed the Music Trades School from 1916, and transferred its Musical Technology courses to the Technical College for the Furnishing Trades in 1958. The Technical College for the Furnishing Trades (previously named the Shoreditch Technical Institute (1899 – 1951)) became the

to be run by Newark College and Glasgow Clyde College.¹³⁶ Although amateurs and autodidactism would continue to play a very significant role in British classical guitar-making, the tradition that was constructed and codified in the early 1950s had developed into an accredited curriculum by the start of the 1970s. The professionalisation of the craft had begun.

London College of Furniture in 1964. The London College of Furniture merged with London Guildhall Polytechnic in 1990, which became a university in 1992 and merged with the University of North London in 2002 to become London Metropolitan University.

¹³⁶ To understand the social and political context of technical and vocational education leading up to the early 1970s, see A. J. Peters, *British Further Education. A Critical Textbook*. Pergamon Press: Oxford, 1967. More specifically, see Christopher Monk, “The London College of Furniture,” *Early Music* 2, no. 2 (April 1974): 97 – 99; “Shoreditch Technical Institute - London College of Furniture (1899 – 1964; 1964 – 1990)” accessed September 3, 2019 <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb1432-sti/lcf>; *London College of Furniture Higher Diploma In Musical Instrument Technology*, Inner London Education Authority, February 1977, available in the London Metropolitan University archive, accessed April 7, 2019. Lewis Jones has produced a very useful chronology, which is also available from the London Metropolitan University archive, *The Teaching of Musical Technology at the Northern Polytechnic – And Beyond*.