Italian Guitar Music of the Seventeenth Century

Battuto and Pizzicato

LEX EISENHARDT

Italian Guitar Music of the Seventeenth Century

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Lex Eisenhardt

University of Rochester Press

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of the Conservatorium van Amsterdam.

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The audio examples are available online at http://lexeisenhardt.nl/audio/. All tracks are performed by the author on chitarra spagnuola (after Antonio Stradivari by Bert Kwakkel) or chitarra battente (after Giorgio Sellas by Sebastian Nuñez).

1. Giovanni Paolo Foscarini, *Il primo, secondo e terzo libro della chitarra spagnola* (ca. 1630), Capriccio sopra la ciaccona. Lex Eisenhardt (chitarra spagnuola). Etcetera Records, 2002, KTC1316. http://lexeisenhardt.nl/audio/1.
2. Domenico Obizzi, *Madrigali et arie a voce sola* (Venice, 1627), "Hor che vicin mi sento." Maria-Luz Alvarez (soprano), Lex Eisenhardt (chitarra battente). Etcetera Records, 2002, KTC1316. http://lexeisenhardt.nl/audio/2.
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6. Giovanni Paolo Foscarini, *Il primo, secondo e terzo libro della chitarra spagnola* (ca. 1630), Corrente. Lex Eisenhardt (chitarra spagnuola). Etcetera Records, 2002, KTC1316. http://lexeisenhardt.nl/audio/6.
7. Giovanni Paolo Foscarini, *Il primo, secondo e terzo libro della chitarra spagnola* (ca. 1630), Gagliarda la passionata. Lex Eisenhardt (chitarra spagnuola). Etcetera Records, 2002, KTC1316. http://lexeisenhardt.nl/audio/7.

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12 Giovanni Paolo Foscarini, *Il primo, secondo e terzo libro della chitarra spagnola* (ca. 1630), Corrente. Lex Eisenhardt (chitarra spagnuola). Etcetera Records, 2002, KTC1316. http://lexeisenhardt.nl/audio/12.

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Preface

What is your tuning? This question is asked whenever you show up with a baroque guitar. It almost seems as if there are only two major issues with regard to this instrument: what role has it played in basso continuo and the question of appropriate stringing, with or without low bass strings (*bourdons*). The impatient reader may be tempted to jump to chapter 6 immediately, to find out about my views on the latter. However, as will be argued in chapter 5 (on counterpoint), we should know more about the use of the guitar in different musical genres in order to understand the advantages of having—or not having—the bass register, provided by the bourdons, for the realization of contrapuntal textures. This issue seems particularly relevant for thoroughbass accompaniment.

My activities as a performer on the baroque guitar and my concern for its continued identity confusion have encouraged me to begin practice-based research into the Italian solo repertory and *alfabeto* song. Probably the most characteristic feature of seventeenth-century Italian guitar music is the mixing of two distinct methods of playing: chord strumming (*battuto*) and the plucked lute style (*pizzicato*). I supposed that exploring the background of this dichotomy would provide a key to understanding the development of the repertoire and how it is notated. Moreover, I hoped to learn more about the upward mobility of the popular guitar dances (or dance songs) that became part of the sphere of "high art" music. An obvious example is the chaconne, supposedly imported from the New World. It appeared in Europe around 1600, as a simple four-chord progression on the guitar that can be found in countless Italian guitar books and manuscripts. About a century later, in 1735, the chaconne formed the grand orchestral finale of Rameau's *Les Indes Galantes*—bringing back the dance, symbolically, to its assumed origins. But how, exactly, would the original dance have sounded, in the hands of a guitarist from the popular tradition? And why, for example, is there no music notation at all for the "Gittars Chacony" in the score of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*?

I started writing this book very early in the twenty-first century. The sheer length of the process has given me the time to gather a wealth of information, by just keeping an open eye; it offered me the opportunity to discuss an array of related subjects with colleagues and students, scholars, and performers. Some of them have commented on parts of the manuscript; I wish to thank

Jacques Boogaart of the University of Amsterdam, and Thérèse de Goede and Fred Jacobs of the Conservatory of Amsterdam for their invaluable comments. I should mention the editorial committee of *The Lute* (the journal of the Lute Society), and Christopher Goodwin in particular, who, in a very early stage of my research, encouraged me to write about the subject of the stringing of the five-course guitar. Gary Boye has closely read the final manuscript, and given very detailed comments. Johan Herrenberg has transformed my cumbersome syntax into readable English, and on many occasions suggested more concise formulations, which, as far as I can judge, have greatly improved the text.

This work has been made possible with the support of the Conservatorium van Amsterdam. I am indebted to Michiel Schuijer, head of research of the Conservatory, for his tenacity and his commitment to my project. He brought my manuscript to the attention of University of Rochester Press. Ralph Locke, editor of the Eastman Studies in Music, responded the same day, encouraging me to write a book proposal. And then everything went smoothly, thanks to Sonia Kane, Julia Cook, and Ryan Peterson of the press, who helped me to prepare the book for publication. Finally, copyeditor Carrie Crompton meticulously worked through the manuscript and helped me to solve some remaining issues. Her familiarity with the subjects of early music and plucked strings made it easy to work together. Any remaining errors are entirely mine; and, unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

Amsterdam, 2015
Lex Eisenhardt

Introduction

The Guitar in Seventeenth-Century Italy

The heyday of the five-course guitar in Italy was halfway through the seventeenth century. In a brief span of time, composers such as Giovanni Paolo Foscarini, Francesco Corbetta, Giovanni Battista Granata, and Angelo Michele Bartolotti created a repertoire of considerable size that would be completely forgotten in the next century. Since then, most sources have lain unused in libraries and museums, which is why few people in our time have been in the position to form an opinion on the quality of this music.

The greatest success came in the era in which the lute, once the queen of instrumental polyphony, lost favor. Lute tablatures were no longer printed in Italy after about 1650, and only the new chitarrone, the bass instrument soon to be known by its nickname *tiorba*, could keep up with the fashion for grand operatic spectacle and the *stile rappresentativo* of celebrated singers. In the shadow of the heights of the *seconda pratica* flourished another, more modest vocal genre that gave expression to less distinguished emotions. The guitar, as an exponent of oral traditions, seemed exactly the right instrument to support songs about amorous shepherds, satyrs, and nymphs; and within a short time, singing to guitar accompaniment became immensely popular.

The rise of the *battuto*, or strummed style, was decisive in the guitar's success. It enabled anyone to master the instrument in a perfectly functional way. Long before the turn of the century, a notational system had been developed, called *cifras* in Spain and *alfabeto* in Italy (literally the ABC, representing the most elementary principles of guitar playing), in which the chords to be played are indicated in shorthand (see ex. I.1). Once alfabeto notation had taken its definitive form, it was used virtually unaltered for more than a century. According to James Tyler there are more than 250 extant Italian sources with alfabeto, which justifies the supposition that there must have been many hundreds—if not thousands—of guitar players.[1] The very first instruction book for the five-course guitar, *Guitarra Española* by Joan Carles Amat from 1596, was reprinted (with some supplements) until the second decade of the nineteenth century, and the popular collections of simple dances of Pietro Millioni were also reissued time after time.

Example I.1. Alfabeto chart, Carlo Milanuzzi (1622).

Although chords were treated differently in later times (as repeated arpeggio patterns, like in much of the classical and romantic repertoire), the strummed style of playing quickly regained lost ground in the twentieth century. The accompaniments of modern-day pop songs are often not very different from what Benedetto Sanseverino did in 1622 (see ex. I.2a). The left-hand patterns have not changed at all, apart from the fact that the guitar had five courses, instead of six single strings. The same uniform repetitive rhythms are still in use today. In this “Aria detta del gran duca” only the text is given, because the melody was well known (and most amateurs were not able to read staff notation).[2]

In much the same way that jazz evolved from blues, guitar music in the seventeenth century developed an increasingly complex musical language that preserved the idiosyncrasy of battuto. Around 1630 Giovanni Paolo Foscarini started mixing battuto chords into lute-style (pizzicato) textures. An imaginative solo repertoire of toccatas, preludes, and dances arose, with all kinds of surprising idiomatic effects and capricious harmonic turns. Occasionally, the melodies are rather inchoate, more melodic scraps than anything definite. After the deaths of Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583–1643) and Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger (ca. 1580–1651) only a few works were published for other solo instruments, such as harpsichord or lute. In contrast, between 1630 and 1660 more than twenty-five guitar books with music in the new battuto-pizzicato style were printed in Italy. It was the time when Bartolotti published his little masterpieces for the guitar—the perfectly crafted polyphonic gigues and the fantastic preludes from the *Secondo libro* (ca. 1655)—in which instrumental technique is pushed to its utmost limits.[3]

In Italy, the economic downturn and the reascendency of the Catholic Church worsened prospects for instrumentalists and a secular genre like opera. Many Italian musicians moved to Paris, the new epicenter of the arts, to shelter under the wings of the powerful Cardinal Mazarin. From the end of

Example I.2. (a) Benedetto Sanseverino (1622), "Aria del Gran Duca." (b) For the most part, no more than four chords of the alfabeto are used: A (G major), B (C major), C (D major), and D (A minor).

(a)

Aria Detta del Gran Duca Sopra l'A.

(b)

the 1640s, Foscarini, Corbetta and, somewhat later, Bartolotti too, tried their fortunes there. The great success of the guitar in France, however, came only after 1670, and Foscarini and Bartolotti probably had to provide for themselves as theorbists. Then, in the space of no more than fifteen years (1671–86), eight books with guitar music were published.[4]

In Spain there was a true revival of instrumental music inspired by folklore, with the appearance of works by Gaspar Sanz (1674), Lucas Ruiz de Ribayaz (1677), and Francisco Guerau (1694). In Italy, the fiery love for the guitar was reduced to a simmer in the last decades of the century, with publications by local (Bolognese) figures such as Francesco Coriandoli (1670), Francesco Asioli (1674 and 1676), and finally Lodovico Roncalli (Bergamo, 1692). By 1700 the popularity of the guitar had passed its peak. The fact that two of the great monarchs of Europe, Louis XIV and Charles II, had a special liking for the instrument in their younger days could not prevent the guitar from losing ground. By the end of the century, the general public had turned its attention to newer instrumental genres. It was the time of virtuosic music for the violin by Archangelo Corelli and the mature works of the French harpsichord school of the Couperins and d'Anglebert.

In the first decades of the eighteenth century, there were some manuscripts that looked back to the Golden Age of the five-course guitar. Around 1730, Jean-Baptiste de Castillion collected works in mixed battuto-pizzicato style by seventeenth-century composers such as Francesco Corbetta, Robert de Visée, Gaspar Sanz (whom he called Gaspar Sanchez), Lelio Colista, and Nicolas Derosier. In *Passacalles y obras* by Santiago de Murcia, another manuscript from about the same date, we find compositions by Corbetta, Visée, and François Campion, next to works (notably the *passacalles*) that were probably written

by de Murcia himself. Halfway through the eighteenth century, a transition to melodic playing on the five-course guitar emerged in the works of composers such as Giacomo Merchi (ca. 1730–after 1798). The battuto-pizzicato style was abandoned, and tablature was gradually replaced by staff notation. At about the same time, the instrument regained a role accompanying light songs (such as *vaudevilles* or *brunettes*) in galant style, with arpeggiated—rather than battuto—chords.

Renewed Interest

At present, solo works for five-course guitar from Italy are seldom performed. Countless arias with alfabeto are waiting to be rediscovered. There are various reasons why performers are still hesitant: unfamiliarity with certain aspects of performance and notation plays a role, coupled with uncertainty about what tuning was used. The most salient feature of this repertoire probably is the abundant use of strummed chords. To reach a historically informed reconstruction, it is necessary to understand how these were performed. The present appreciation of seventeenth-century guitar music is probably influenced quite heavily by the image of amateurism evoked by the strummed style. One could unjustly assume that this is no more than folkloric music, after all. An uncontrolled strumming of chords could seriously hinder a well-founded assessment of the battuto-pizzicato repertoire.

Another obstacle is the unusual notation. Two different systems are merged in the so-called mixed tablature: the chord alphabet for strummed harmonies and the Italian tablature (with numbers) for plucked sections. Alfabeto primarily provides information for the left hand, making clear which chord patterns are to be played at a given moment; however, it often tells you nothing about the actions of the right hand—for instance, whether to play strokes or arpeggios. In tablature (which predominated from c. 1630 onward), there is more information for the right hand, but what was *not* written becomes a source of confusion: notes to be played on open strings were often not indicated, to save labor and engraving costs. What we find on paper can often be understood only with the guitar in hand; the use of a variety of tunings, together with the sometimes cryptic notation of battuto chords, makes it almost impossible to form a proper idea of the music from the scores alone.

There were, in Italy, two different ways to string the guitar: one with bass strings (bourdons) on the fourth and fifth courses, and one without. We have to assume that there was a connection between the use of the instrument and its tuning. The stylistic development of the compositions cannot be treated as a separate issue, because the presence or absence of bass strings has far-reaching consequences; along with the manner of playing (battuto or pizzicato), it is decisive for the rendition of the counterpoint.

If we wish the baroque guitar to earn a position in the ranks of instruments with a solo repertoire appreciated by a broader public, a larger proportion of the repertoire must be played. The music from Italy in particular deserves more attention, if only for the sheer quantity of the compositions. Performance is indispensable for getting an idea of the quality of each individual work. Only on the basis of the audible results can we gain a better understanding of the musical language of the seventeenth-century guitarists, and only thus may we discover the true gems of the repertoire. It is the aim of this book to contribute to the understanding of how the use of battuto and pizzicato affected the development, performance, and notation of seventeenth-century guitar music.

The first part of this book will shed light on the historical background of the guitar. The social position of the instrument can be pictured from sources such as the treatises of Vincenzo Giustiniani (1629) and Pierre Trichet (1640) and reports of the performances of famous singers and players. The diary of Samuel Pepys and the highly informative and diverting letters of Constantijn Huygens help illustrate the mixed reception of the guitar in educated circles. In the middle section we will take a closer look at the role of the instrument in accompanying the voice, as well as the development of the style of the Italian solo repertoire. The final section will review the theoretical issues of the tuning and basso continuo and trace the clues that can lead to a better understanding of a peculiar, idiosyncratic harmonic idiom, made even more obscure by a sometimes inaccurate notation. This section considers contemporary observations on repertoire, tuning, and performance from prefaces to seventeenth-century guitar books and other relevant sources.

Recent publications on the five-course guitar very often make reference to *The Early Guitar* (1980) by James Tyler. A second monumental handbook by the same author, *The Guitar and Its Music*, was published in 2002. Tyler has treated the history of the instrument in a thorough and comprehensive manner, with a wealth of details. This book, however, aims to follow the more modest path of just one idea: the birth of the battuto-pizzicato repertoire, seen from the perspective of emancipation from the boundaries of the strummed style. Battuto has been a decisive factor since its earliest days. For a long time, the instrument's main function was to accompany lighter vocal genres and dance, as well as theatrical performances of the commedia dell'arte and opera. This had a great influence on the style of playing and the tuning and on how chord inversions and voice leading were treated.

Various aspects of the repertoire have been researched since the 1970s, and this book owes much to the work of a number of writers. Richard Hudson studied the diffusion of forms that have their origins in guitar music—such as the chaconne, sarabande, and passacaglia—in the repertoire of the guitar and other instruments.[5] To understand the enormous popularity of the guitar, it is important to realize how easy it is to play these dances. Their accessibility can be compared to that of certain styles of modern pop or dance music. Richard

d'Arcambal Jensen (1980) has described the guitar technique and performance practice of the battuto repertoire in the first half of the seventeenth century. We will explore in more depth the shaping of the accompaniment in battuto, with regard to the position of the bass, and the permanence of battuto as a determining structural principle in the later developments, which set the guitar apart from the lute.

The guitar has been employed as an instrument of accompaniment in different ways. Initially there were only alfabeto chord symbols, included with a great many songs. Despite the simplicity of this notation, it is not always entirely clear how justice can be done to the style of the early baroque. Today we often hear a form of battuto executed as a percussive strumming, with right-hand patterns that seem to come from folk-rock or flamenco. It seems as if the prominent battuto element obscures our view of how things were four hundred years ago. Besides, many aspects of music changed considerably as time went on, and it certainly makes sense to distinguish between the styles of accompaniment of different periods, since figured-bass realizations in treatises from the second half of the seventeenth century bear a strong resemblance to the mature battuto-pizzicato style of the contemporaneous solo repertoire.

Nina Treadwell (1995) mapped out the role of the instrument in the accompaniment of solo arias at that time.[6] She concluded that the guitar was frequently used on its own, without another instrument to provide a true bass. But it was used mostly for the lighter, strophic, dance-like songs; more dramatic arias were usually accompanied by either the chitarrone or the harpsichord.

Robert Strizich (1981) discussed the use of the guitar as a basso continuo instrument at a time when this was still unexplored territory.[7] He was one of the first to point out the problem of the position of the bass in relation to chord strumming. He also drew attention to harmonic conflicts caused by the use of alfabeto chords, specifically in the works of Hieronymus Kapsberger. Recent research by Alexander Dean (2009) shows that there were different strategies in different genres for finding appropriate chords to a song. The guitar was used in traditional dance songs from the late sixteenth century with standard harmonic progessions, but there are also collections of three-voice (polyphonic) *villanelle* like Kapsberger's, where an accompaniment with simple alfabeto chords is often problematic. And finally there are the later collections of solo songs, from the 1620s and '30s, in which the harmonic language became more robust, and alfabeto settled into a more comfortable place.[8]

The social (and even political) backgrounds of the song repertoire with alfabeto are reviewed in a dissertation by Cory Michael Gavito (2006).[9] Gavito makes it clear that singing to a guitar happened on a large scale, and was fashionable among all levels of society. This way of music making was accessible to almost everyone, and the guitar was seen as a perfectly natural and authentic vehicle of expression; however, the way it was used in this repertoire is in conflict with contemporary theoretical premises of counterpoint and mode.

The fact that the bass (as an integral part of the composition) is in many cases completely neglected is often seen as proof of a trivial musical practice. Gavito argues that the reach of this repertoire—both geographically and socially—must not be underestimated, notwithstanding the theoretical objections one could have to editions where the bass line is left out, considering the broad involvement with this movement in even the most educated circles. Obviously, it was perfectly possible for them to relish the most refined musical utterances, such as opera and polyphonic madrigals, and at the same time idealize the intuitive approach of the music of shepherds and artisans living in an unspoiled, Arcadian world.

Differing opinions have been put forward in books and journals on the subject of the stringing of the five-course guitar. More specifically, the presence of bourdons on the fourth and the fifth courses has been subject to dispute, from the moment Sylvia Murphy's groundbreaking article "The Tuning of the Five-Course Guitar" appeared in the in *The Galpin Society Journal* (1970).[10] Many arguments have been presented, and widely divergent conclusions reached. We will look into this important issue, and follow the line of thought of some of the contributors.

Finally, we will touch on the distinctly national developments. Nowadays Spanish composers such as Sanz and Murcia get much more attention than the Italians. This is probably because of the accessibility of their music. Spanish works are predominantly in *punteado* (pizzicato). The music, accurately notated in tablature, leaves the performer in no doubt as to its execution, in contrast to the mixed tablature of the Italian battuto-pizzicato style. The difference between Italy on the one hand and Spain and France on the other is that in the former there was a great flowering of alfabeto. A considerable number of books with dances were published there, first in alfabeto and later in the mixed style. In Spain, very little music was published during the seventeenth century; in France the rise did not occur before 1670. For this reason, the maturation of the typical battuto-pizzicato style took place almost exclusively in Italy. In France, the influence of the Italian virtuosi—and of Francesco Corbetta in particular—was so pervasive that we can safely say that Robert de Visée could not possibly have written his well-known suites had he not known Corbetta's work.

Iconography, an Aural Tradition Portrayed

The guitar has always been a rewarding subject for the visual arts, and we can learn much from the ways in which it has been depicted. Examining the iconography of the guitar in the seventeenth century, a comparison with the lute is unavoidable. One important difference is that the five-course guitar does not turn up before 1600, by which time the lute already had a respectable history as an attribute of angels and gods in biblical and mythological scenes. We hardly

ever encounter guitars, other than the noble vihuela in Spain, in such contexts. In Italy the rise of the guitar can be followed step by step, beginning with drawings and engravings of characters from the commedia dell'arte. There are the amusing pictures by Jacques Callot from Nancy, who published his *Balli di Sfessania* circa 1621 in Florence, and Carnival scenes by Sebastian Vrancx.[11] Engraved portraits of well-known guitarists (Foscarini, Pesori, Bartolotti, Corbetta, and Granata) were included in their books of guitar music. Only few Italian guitar paintings from the beginning of the century have been preserved, such as *The Concert* (Bologna, c. 1615) by Leonello Spada.[12] The fact that the guitar was rarely depicted in early-seventeenth-century paintings, in spite of its great popularity, probably confirms the lesser status of the instrument; unlike the lute, the guitar was seldom to be seen in the hands of aristocrats or members of the higher classes. This would change over the years.

Several different schools of painters from the Low Countries played an important role in the iconography of the guitar. First, there were those artists who traveled to Rome in the 1620s to study the Italian style, like Theodoor Rombouts from Antwerp (fig. I.1) and Gerrit van Honthorst from Utrecht. Under the influence of Caravaggio's *chiaroscuro*, they started to paint Italianate scenes in which the newly fashionable Spanish guitar makes an occasional appearance. Later, from the 1640s onward, depictions of everyday folk with guitars—peasants and shepherds playing in public houses or in the open air—experienced a surge in demand. These imaginary rustic scenes were painted frequently by Antwerp masters like David Teniers III, Joos van Craesbeeck, and David Rijckaert. Only in the second half of the seventeenth century did Flemish artists create the genre of portraits of "dames de qualité" playing the guitar. An early example of the instrument in the company of wealthy citizens is the *Family Group by a Fountain* by the Flemish master Gonzales Coques, from about 1655, in which the elegant daughter of the house is playing the guitar.[13] Group portraits by Coques and others show that the guitar became increasingly accepted in higher circles, as well. The difficult question is what music all these peasants, shepherds and young ladies played, since musical sources from the Low Countries are very rare. Only Corbetta's book of 1648—in Italian mixed tablature dedicated to Archduke Leopold Wilhelm of Austria—was published in Brussels. The dedicatee was the governor of the Spanish Netherlands from 1646 to 1656; as an important patron of the arts, he assembled a great collection of Dutch and Italian paintings.

During the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic, a few portraits of ladies (mostly young) with guitars were produced by Johannes Vermeer and Caspar Netscher. Only one Dutch manuscript with guitar music, belonging to Isabel van Langhenhove, has been preserved.[14] Around 1690, Nicolas Derosier published one of his books in Amsterdam. Besides the guitar, the small wire-strung four-course cittern was much in use for accompaniment. A considerable number of paintings from the middle part of the century, by Pieter de

Hooch, Gabriel Metsu, Cesar van Everdingen, and Johannes Vermeer, represent wealthy young women with this small instrument. In higher circles, there was a lively interest in the cittern, which was used in chordal song accompaniment and was strummed like the guitar (sometimes with a quill). The cittern is also often depicted in the hands of peasants, or hanging on the walls of public houses and brothels. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, there were printed collections of songs with accompaniment for cittern, now considered lost. The only book to have been preserved is the *Nederlandtsche gedenck-clanck* from 1626 by Adriaen Valerius.[15] The absence of later sources is an indication of its waning popularity. It is not entirely clear if the guitar ousted the cittern in the Netherlands, as it seems to have replaced both the lute and the cittern in England. John Playford complained about this state of affairs in the preface to his *Musick's Delight on the Cittern* (1666). Only in France did the lute manage to keep a firm position during the whole of the seventeenth century, with an extensive solo repertoire of very high quality.

In Italy the lute gradually became less common as an instrument of popular music. During the sixteenth century, there were lutes in many commedia dell'arte scenes, but after 1600 we consistently see guitars in pictures of Scapino, Buffetto, and Scaramouche. In this genre, the guitar took over completely from the lute. In a more serious context, however, the lute is frequently seen accompanying singers, or as part of an instrumental ensemble. Many people also sang to the guitar, as the open mouths and the music books show, but only very seldom is the guitar depicted being played with other instruments, as it is in a company of *putti* around the portrait of Francesco Corbetta that appears in his book of 1648. This supernatural gathering is an idealized one, and it is doubtful if such a representation conformed in any way to performance practice in the real world. In paintings with a romanticized pastoral subject matter, a genre which was very much in demand, the guitar is sometimes shown in duet with a duct flute.[16] It is quite likely that the performers in these paintings were understood to be playing the popular dance standards of the time, possibly of Italian or Spanish provenance, with the guitar providing the battuto chords.

There are remarkably few images in which the guitar and the lute are actually played at the same time. In some scenes (by Theodoor Rombouts and Evaristo Baschenis, for instance), the lute symbolically lies face down on the table while the guitar is being played. Iconography suggests that the two instruments did not have a repertoire in common. It is often assumed that there were continuo groups consisting of guitars and chitarrones or theorbos, but there is little to support this with evidence from the visual arts. *The Music Lesson* by Theodoor Rombouts (fig. I.1) is particularly intriguing in this respect, because at the time this painting was created, guitarists did not play from tablature, just as lutenists did not play from alfabeto. Yet most of the alfabeto (battuto) solo repertoire consists of popular dances that had been the backbone of the lute

Figure I.1. Theodoor Rombouts (1597–1637), *The Music Lesson.* Perhaps the players are having a discussion about battuto and pizzicato. Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen. © bpk, Berlin.

repertoire of the last part of the sixteenth century. Rombouts's picture shows how players of the two instruments, the ancient lute and the new guitar, may have communicated, with a music book on the table as central subject. But, given that the tunings of the two instruments are different, if the music were notated in lute tablature, it would be difficult for the guitarist to decipher.

On a symbolic level, the lute often represented harmony (musical harmony, interpersonal harmony, but also the *harmonia mundi* or the music of the spheres),[17] whereas the guitar suggested frivolity, amusement, or worldly pleasures. Later, though, the guitar became an emblem of amateur artistry in the domestic sphere, portrayed in the hands of virtuous young ladies in paintings from the Netherlands, France, and England. By around 1700 the guitar had taken the place of the "old-fashioned" lute. Both are intimate solo instruments, in contrast to the more detached harpsichord. Stringed and wind instruments presume ensemble playing and a more extrovert performance, which drastically disrupt the tranquillity of the representation in portraits. Now that we have seen a first glimpse of the guitar (see also figs. 2.1, 2.2, and 6.2a), in the next chapters we will turn our attention to the guitarist and his musical world.

Chapter One

The Rise of the Five-Course Guitar in Spain and Italy, 1580–1630

The Emergence of the Rasgueado Style

Before 1600, the guitar was not always used for strumming. When Juan Bermudo published his *Declaración de instrumentos musicales* in 1555, there were two different tunings of the four-course guitar: the old (*temple viejo*) and the new (*temple nuevo*) tuning.[1] According to Bermudo, the old tuning was adequate for "romances viejos" and "musica golpeada"—simple homophonic music. The fourth course was tuned a fifth below the third, instead of the usual fourth, and was probably used to produce the continuous fifth of a bourdon or drone, but there are no examples left of such a repertoire for the four-course guitar.[2] The new tuning, in which the first four courses were tuned like those of the later five-course guitar, was used in complex polyphonic *fantasías* by Alonso Mudarra and Miguel de Fuenllana; the change of the tuning of the fourth course may have prompted them to compose for the guitar. At about the same time in France, several composers began to write for the instrument. Bermudo described the various tunings of the vihuela and also that of the five-course guitar (with the intervals fourth–fourth–major third–fourth).[3] A tuning with the same intervallic structure was used in Fuenllana's *Orphenica lyra* (1554), in music for the *vihuela de cinco ordenes*, a five-course vihuela. According to Bermudo, however, there was not much difference between the two instruments, apart from the size and (presumably) the pitch at which they were tuned.

Early in the sixteenth century, a tendency developed toward a more homophonic style of writing, in genres like *chanson* and *romance*, which were very popular in Spain. This is reflected in the vihuela works (in dances and homorhythmic song accompaniments) of composers such as Luis Milan and Esteban Daza. A gradual move away from polyphony toward a more vertical, harmonic style becomes apparent.[4]

At some point in the second half of the sixteenth century (or perhaps even earlier), guitarists from Spain began to accompany vocal music, making use of the *rasgueado* (battuto) technique. In the performance of music from an oral tradition especially, there is a need for an effective style of accompaniment that can be realized without too much consideration of theoretical principles. In his *Arte poetica en romance castellano* (Alcala de Henares, 1580) Sanchez de Lima observes: "Everything that is usually sung and played nowadays is in the strummed fashion and nothing is sung or played with understanding."[5] By this time, evidently, there had been a great increase in the use of rasgueado.

The new rasgueado style was marked by a careless approach to chord inversion and voice leading, as illustrated by the following anecdote from Joan Carles y Amat's *Guitarra española*:

> I would like to tell you what happened to me with some Guitarists, who pretended to be the best of Spain. They spoke freely (there were four of them) and they knew very well that I had this method of playing the guitar with every song. One night we met and one of them said with due respect: "My friend, we have heard that you know a wonderful art with which you can quickly arrange any song on the guitar." (And they did that to make fun of me, as they confessed afterwards.) "My friends and I, we beg you to show us how you do that, as we wish to use your method ourselves. If you can do that, we will be satisfied and very happy and we will be pleased to follow your example." I could read them like a book, smelling several rats, but without showing my suspicions I replied: "Gentlemen, the way I do this is of little importance and showing it to you is as a grain of mustard next to a great mountainside. May you stay with your riches and I in my misery." Not satisfied with my answer, they asked me again and I said that it was not worthwhile showing them. Finally they said: "My friend, this system that you use, maybe it can be used for three voices, but we are sure that for more voices it is false and impossible. Only to take the opportunity of finding that out we have come here." Without showing any embarrassment, I answered: "Gentlemen, the truth is that my method only consists of a very small table that I invented (although some have copied it) and with it you can arrange not only three, but four, five, six or as many parts for the guitar as you wish. And to show you that what I say is true, let us go wherever you wish to try it out, so that you will see." They were contented, thinking that it was a good occasion to make fun of me. We went to the place of one of them, who was a student of the Arts, and they gave me some pages with music of Prenestina [Palestrina] for five voices. I added ciphers to all the pieces and they handed me a guitar and each began to sing his part, together with the instrument and they saw that what I promised was true: they admired greatly what I had done, looking at each other with satisfaction. Thanks to our attempt, made easy by the table, we succeeded in what many had considered to be impossible.[6]

Obviously, the guitar was used here as the lute was in Italy, for accompaniment in a variety of vocal genres. Although lutenists sometimes wrote polyphonic