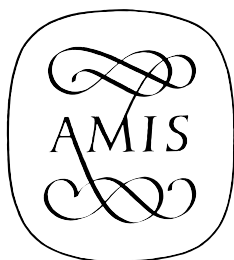


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# Amateurs, Autodidacts, and the First Decade of Classical Guitar-Making in Britain

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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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> Although the “heritage craft” of stringed-instrument making (lutherie) in the UK is currently regarded as “viable,”<sup>3</sup> during the first half of the twentieth 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 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 repertoire<sup>4</sup> and several decades of scien-

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

2. I would like to gratefully acknowledge the encouragement and advice of my colleague, Dr. Cassandre Balloso-Bardin, and thank Dr. 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/>.

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);

tific studies on the instrument's acoustic qualities,<sup>5</sup> yet studies of the craft of guitar-making are rare and in the case of twentieth-century classical guitar-making in Britain, there is a notable absence of scholarly research.<sup>6</sup> There is a body of technical literature on classical guitar making, such as that published since 1972 by the Guild of American Luthiers, much of it written by and for practitioners. But as Kevin and Moira 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.”<sup>7</sup>

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. From these sources, I try to assemble a coherent narrative of the establishment of classical guitar-making in Britain, which involved a handful of professional luthiers who, in an exploratory way, applied their knowledge of stringed instruments to produce the first “Spanish” guitars in Britain. Meanwhile, a circle of writers, also acting as editors, publishers, and entrepreneurs, successfully urged a generation of autodidacts to pursue the craft for their own use and satisfaction. Few of those professional luthiers made a lasting contribution to classical guitar-making in Britain through their instruments, but the instructional texts, written for amateur makers, established a requisite base of knowledge and skill that was later recognized and validated by educational institutions.

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,” <http://www.speech.kth.se/music/acviguit4/>; Thomas D. Rossing, *The Science of String Instruments* (New York: Springer Verlag, 2010).

6. A rough periodization of the guitar recognizes three models: the Baroque (1600–1750), marked by five double courses with moveable gut frets; the Romantic (1790–1830), marked by six single courses with fixed solid frets; and the modern classical guitar (1850–present), as discussed in this article. For a study of early nineteenth-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 a history prior to the nineteenth century, see James Tyler and Paul Sparks, *The Guitar and Its Music: From the Renaissance to the Classical Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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 this book appeared, 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).

### *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.<sup>8</sup> The small-bodied eighteenth-century instrument, popular for private concerts in wealthy homes and salons, was marginalized, excluded from the concert setting and denigrated by the contemporary music press as an amateur, domestic, and female instrument.<sup>9</sup> 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 twentieth century."<sup>10</sup> Louis Panormo (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."<sup>11</sup> From early in his career, Torres consolidated the design of the modern classical guitar.<sup>12</sup> While there is some continuity from the early-nineteenth century "romantic" or "transitional" instrument, typified by Panormo's work, to the late-nineteenth century instrument, Torres is credited with establishing what has been referred to as the "classic," "classical," "concert," "finger-style," or "Spanish" guitar,<sup>13</sup> characterized by a larger yet lightweight

8. For detailed accounts about the social status of the guitar in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Andrew Britton, "The Guitar in the Romantic Period," (PhD diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2010); and Stewart W. Button, "The Guitar in England 1800–1924," (PhD diss., University of Surrey, 1984).

9. Britton, "The Guitar in the Romantic Period," 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.'" *Banjo Mandolin Guitar*, May 1947, 143. Classic (a term used since the mid-1940s) was superseded by Classical in the 1950s and Finger-style is now used to refer to a style of steel-string guitar playing. This refinement in terminology occurred as

body, a slightly arched soundboard and back, a recognizable fan strutting pattern, a scale length of around 650 mm, 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.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

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 is underlined by the fascination, frustration, and tension apparent in their writing. It may be useful, rather than to assume the continuity of a guitar-making tradition in Britain, to think of an epistemological break occurring between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries.<sup>16</sup> As indicated above, there are reasons for this discontinuity, not least the rupture of two world wars, which redirected labor 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. From publications during that period we can see how both explicit and tacit knowledge had to be applied through experimentation,

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 five percent 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.

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 indicate the break in time (mid-19th to mid-20th century) and space (Spain and Britain) that occurred and the experimental efforts that were required to establish the knowledge and skills of classical guitar making in England.

learned by self-instruction and embodied through repeated practice of the craft.<sup>17</sup>

Significant interest in the classical guitar in Britain can be traced to Andrés 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.<sup>18</sup> 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 effect."<sup>19</sup> 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 classical guitar of the twentieth century."<sup>20</sup>

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 *Banjo Mandolin Guitar* 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 had arrived in Britain in 1920, led the formation of The Philharmonic Society of Guitarists (PSG),<sup>21</sup> which had over 100 members by 1931. The five founders aimed to bring amateurs and professional players 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.

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).

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).

A further objective was “To organize a symphony orchestra composed of 60–80 guitarists, and to arrange for the manufacture of suitable guitars.” Button 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.”<sup>22</sup> Members of the PSG initially used the *BMG* magazine to promote their activities and from 1945, the PSG published its own *Bulletin*. Between 1931 and 1939, Perott wrote a series of sixty-four 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 World War II and reformed in early 1945.<sup>23</sup>

### *The Advocates*

Perott’s series on Famous Guitarists finished a month before the outbreak of World War II. 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.<sup>24</sup> If before the war “the guitar construction business in England could not cope with the demand for good guitars,” the situation in 1945 was even worse.<sup>25</sup> For five years, the production of musical instruments in Britain had been disrupted due to conscription, restrictions on imports

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 21 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 in *BMG*: “The Revival of the Classical Guitar” by Alexis Chess (Chesnakov), a founding member of the PSG (April 1931); “Introduction to the Spanish Guitar” by Crdas [pseudonym] (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 1943); “The Spanish Guitar in England” by J. L. White (May 1943); and a letter by Perott in August 1943, where he observes “there has been a certain revival of interest in the classical guitar.”

25. Button, *Julian Bream*, 308.

and exports, and the use of workshops for war production.<sup>26</sup> 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 and Terry Usher 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 made the first scale drawing of a Torres guitar, 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, *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.<sup>27</sup>

**A. P. Sharpe.** Albert Percy Sharpe (1906–1968) worked for the Clifford Essex company in London from the 1920s<sup>28</sup> and was editor of its magazine, *BMG*, from April 1937 until November 1967.<sup>29</sup> He took over as director of Clifford Essex from 1942 after it went into liquidation, and became the owner of the company in 1957.<sup>30</sup> He was not an active musician,<sup>31</sup> but acted as a catalyst for classical guitar-making in Britain in two

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 seventy percent of the total) are available online: <https://classic-banjo.ning.com/page/bmg-magazines>. Using optical character recognition (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, 186–87 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.





FIGURE 1. A. P. Sharpe from *BMG*, February 1968, 149.

important ways: He employed the Clifford Essex luthier, Marco Roccia,<sup>32</sup> who constructed one of the first commercially available, British-made classical guitars. Drawing heavily on his work with Roccia, he wrote the first English-language books on the history of the Spanish guitar and classical guitar construction.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> 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 4,000 fretted-instrument records and was an advisor to the BBC when it

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.

was developing its library.<sup>35</sup> 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,<sup>36</sup> and was at the forefront of the popular development of guitar culture, in contrast to a more conservative outlook held by Wilfrid Appleby.<sup>37</sup>

**Wilfrid M. Appleby.** Appleby (1892–1987)<sup>38</sup> was a philatelist by profession, whose interest in the guitar began in 1938 when he heard a recital while on holiday in Belgium.<sup>39</sup> 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.”<sup>40</sup> In July 1945, Appleby became editor of the re-formed PSG’s new *Bulletin*<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

However, in 1951 Appleby fell out with Perott and Sharpe over what he referred to as “novelty variants” of the guitar. With missionary zeal,<sup>43</sup> Ap-

35. During a period of ill health for Sharpe, an appreciation of him 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.

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, who has researched the PSG and includes archival materials in the appendices of his book, *Boris Perott*.

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.

41. *The Bulletin of the Philharmonic Society of Guitarists* was published between 1945 and 1951. At the time of writing, twenty-two (out of a total of thirty-three) issues are available for download and search: <https://www.digitalguitararchive.com/2020/03/philharmonic-society-of-guitarists/>

42. The Cheltenham Guitar Circle was formed on 2 February 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*,



FIGURE 2. Wilfrid M. Appleby from the cover of *Guitar News*, 100, September/October 1968.

pleby 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”<sup>44</sup> while privately, Perott claimed he was “a fanatic.”<sup>45</sup> Consequently, Appleby splintered off from both the PSG and *BMG* and formed, on 17 March 1951, the International Classic Guitar Association (ICGA).<sup>46</sup> As a founding member of the ICGA, Appleby took on the role of organizer and editor of its official organ, *Guitar*

January 1945, 98. In “Be a Missionary,” an article for *BMG* in June 1944, 161, Lawrence encouraged readers to introduce people to the instrument and teach 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. [https://www.academia.edu/14252727/The\\_schism\\_between\\_Perott\\_and\\_Appleby](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.

*News*, and published its first issue in June 1951.<sup>47</sup> His writing for both *BMG* and *Guitar News* amounts to a sustained and conscious effort to create a classical guitar tradition in Britain. In “The Spanish Guitar,” his column in *BMG* between 1946 and 1951, Appleby provided a history of the classical guitar up to the present, defined its key vocabulary, discussed finding and purchasing an instrument, and 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, Appleby, as editor of *Guitar News*, encouraged and supported others to write on the topic, and his column sometimes indicates progress being made to establish a tradition of making in Britain. In October/November 1951 (issue 3), the front page carries an editorial by Appleby on “British-Made Guitars.” He begins by noting that:

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

47. Appleby’s wife, Kay, was treasurer and business editor. In the 100th issue of *Guitar News*, Wilfrid Appleby acknowledged 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*, September/October. 1968, 6. The two worked 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 wrote: “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 for download and search: <https://www.digitalguitararchive.com/2019/11/guitar-news/>

an expert as ‘an admirable effort—beautifully made, with a good tone and a fine response.’” Appleby’s editorial appeared 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.<sup>48</sup> Despite the positive reviews of Appleby and Usher, neither the Dolmetsch nor 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.** The main writer on “technical and scientific matters” for *Guitar News* was J. K. Sutcliffe, who by 1954 had made three guitars.<sup>49</sup> In his first article, August/September 1952, titled “Buying 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.

48. Arnold Dolmetsch (1858–1940) was a key figure in the Early Music movement and a 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 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 catalog, 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*, February/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*, February/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.



FIGURE 3. J. K. Sutcliffe from *Guitar News*, August/September 1956

In June/July 1953, Sutcliffe reviewed *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 Comisión 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 February/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.”<sup>50</sup> Before

50. *Guitar News*, August/September 1956, 2.

the end of the decade, Sutcliffe would write about “Origin and Choice of Wood,”<sup>51</sup> the “Variety and Choice of Materials,”<sup>52</sup> and “Sticking the Pieces Together” (covering choices of glue available, the amount of pressure required, and the correct temperature for working).<sup>53</sup> In January/February 1960, he wrote about “Guitar Repairing” referring to how “today’s well-advertised Do-It-Yourself cult” might be enticing people to take up repair work when they are not qualified to do so. Sutcliffe always warns about the challenge of the skills involved and the knowledge that is required, yet offers careful encouragement that success is within the reach of “the very patient and careful amateur.”<sup>54</sup> Sutcliffe’s articles in *Guitar News* were a body of useful technical information that supplemented, in a more discursive way, the step-by-step instructions being written at that time by Hoing, Ridge, and Sharpe.

**Terry Usher.** 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.<sup>55</sup> From 1945, he composed original pieces such as *Suite for Spanish Guitar* and *Sonata in A*, which 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 nineteenth-century instrument.<sup>56</sup> Inside is a profile of him written by his friend and former student, Jack (John) Duarte, who would also write an appreciation of Usher

51. *Guitar News*, November/December 1957, 14–16.

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

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

54. *Guitar News*, January/February 1960, 25.

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.



FIGURE 4. Terry Usher from the cover of *BMG*, October 1948.

for *BMG*, following his death in April 1969.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup>

From articles and letters over a thirty-year period, we learn that Usher was, as well as a writer, composer, and broadcaster, a prolific teacher of the guitar; in 1949, he received a grant 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.<sup>59</sup> In that article for the *Galpin Society Journal*, Usher writes about several specific instruments dating from the late eighteenth century, also including a Clifford Essex (Marco Roccia) guitar from 1953 and a Harald Petersen guitar from 1955. He provides body dimensions and a brief note on the strutting system for each instrument, referring to the “gradual evolution” of the modern concert guitar. Sections that follow discuss different parts of the instrument: for example, the woods used; the variation in scale length and neck shape; fretting, and

57. *BMG*, June 1969, 289.

58. *BMG*, July 1954, 253.

59. Terence Usher, “The Spanish Guitar in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” *Galpin Society Journal* 9 (1956): 5–36.



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,”<sup>60</sup> and the systematic, pedagogic purpose of the article is evident to the reader. Presumably, versions of the article were rehearsed in 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’s 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, thereby “producing guitars which were particularly suitable for particular purposes” but not necessarily superior “in tone or volume to the orthodox instruments.”<sup>61</sup>

Usher’s writing in *BMG* was influenced by his growing understanding of classical guitar construction, presumably from his interaction with A. P. Sharpe and the Clifford Essex luthier, Marco Roccia, as well as collecting and studying guitars he owned and modifying them.<sup>62</sup> 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 were “of dubious quality,” there were not enough good teachers, and the instrument was difficult to play, hence “the comparatively small number of Spanish guitarist[s] in Britain.” He related 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

60. *BMG*, October 1957, 22.

61. Usher, “The Spanish Guitar,” 33.

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

are made; in fact, few good instruments are made there nowadays!<sup>63</sup>

In subsequent articles, Usher discussed 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); 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, or quarter-sawn. Usher's articles on "Spanish Guitar Technique" for *BMG* are, for the first eighteen 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 two luthiers, David Rubio and José Romanillos, on his estate in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>64</sup> In addition to "the revitalisation of village life" through craft, Bream was interested in instrument design and making, and by having "an instrument workshop on my doorstep," he would benefit from the pick of instruments, while the luthiers would have a world-famous player offering feedback on, and endorsement of, their work.<sup>65</sup> Bream's influence on the classical guitar in Britain and his close relationship with luthiers began very soon after he started playing the instrument. The efforts he and his father made to procure a "concert guitar" reveal how rare such instruments were in Britain at that time.

63. *BMG*, July 1948, 190.

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.

65. Palmer, *Julian Bream*, 56.

At age 14, Bream's first concert guitar was a Clifford Essex "Hauser" model, loaned to him in July 1947 by Terry Usher.<sup>66</sup> Bream travelled with his father, Henry, from London to Manchester to view the instrument, which, Henry wrote, 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 José Ramírez (1858–1923) in a shop in London. Bream and his father compared it to the Clifford Essex/Hauser and found the Ramírez to be a better instrument. Julian Bream used the Spanish-made instrument, soon restored by Henry, to play four pieces of Spanish music by Sor, Tarrega, and Albeniz for the Spanish section of the BBC's Overseas Service, broadcast to the Spanish public on 30 August 1947.<sup>67</sup>

**Jack Abbott Jr.** The fate of the Ramírez instrument is not clear, but it doesn't seem to have been used longer than six months, because a further attempt was made the following year to provide the teenage Julian with a satisfactory instrument. In early 1948, Henry Bream approached the luthier Jack Abbott Jr. of Abbott-Victor Music Company to make a guitar. Jack Abbott Jr. (1905–1994) was the son of the luthier John George Abbott (1877–1938); the two men worked together in London in the late 1920s and early 30s.<sup>68</sup> 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.

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.

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 onward.

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.”<sup>69</sup>

Julian Bream received the instrument and played Ernest Shand’s *Premier Concerto*, op. 48, at the Social and Athletic Club of Gays (Hampton) Ltd. in March 1948. He used it again in 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. . . .”<sup>70</sup> Despite its short life, this instrument may well have been the first British-made “concert” guitar used in a public performance.<sup>71</sup>

Of course, it is difficult to determine who produced the first “concert” classical guitar in Britain, but the maker was likely to have been an established luthier like Abbott Jr. or Roccia, who applied their existing lutherie skills and experience of repairing Spanish guitars to meet a growing demand. 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 Besson. After John Abbott’s death in 1938, Jack continued to share the Aristone name with Besson. This is noteworthy because the March/April 1949 issue of the *Bulletin of Philharmonic Guitarists*, reported that Besson was selling an “Aristone Model 4 for finger-style playing described as ‘of recognised Spanish design.’” A corresponding advertisement appeared in *BMG*, April 1949, listing the Model 4 of “Spanish design” and “handmade throughout”; it was advertised even earlier in the *Musical Express*, 22 October 1948. We might wonder whether following the experiment with Henry Bream’s guitar, Jack continued to produce a “Spanish” design, which became the “Aristone Model 4,” sold through Besson.

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

70. Button, *Julian Bream*, 103. Henry Bream also purchased a ca.1880 C. F. Martin 0-28 guitar, which Julian played between 1948 and 1952. 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: <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 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; after the war, the luthier Sydney Young (1880–1964) re-opened his workshop adjoining John Alvey Turner’s premises on New Oxford Street. Although Young was 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 is also possible that Jack Abbott produced guitars for John Alvey Turner, to be sold under their own brand, as had 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 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.<sup>72</sup> Roccia came from a family of cabinet-makers and apprenticed at Henri Selmer in Paris under the technical director, Mario Maccaferri, prior to joining Clifford Essex.<sup>73</sup> Throughout his career, Roccia repaired and made a variety of fretted instruments, although his output of finished instruments was modest. For example, between 1954 and 1967, he made twenty-four instruments of different models.<sup>74</sup> An obituary in *Guitar International* lists several famous makers’

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

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

74. Allan Brace, *BMG Newsletter*, Spring 2019, 23. Brace states that Clifford Essex “pre-war guitars numbers run to about 1,100, achieved over about fifteen years, indicating an average annual volume of seventy to seventy-five 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 two, probably almost all made by Marco, with possibly some production from apprentices at the time, including Marco’s arch irri-

instruments he had inspected and repaired, including “a few Torres.”<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> 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. Usher begins by relating that he was previously 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:

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

tant, James Burton.” *BMG Newsletter*, Spring 2020, 23.

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

76. Usher wrote about Roccia’s experiments in his article for the *Galpin Society Journal* in 1956; this was quoted by Sharpe in the foreword to his book, *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar* (London, 1957; publisher unnamed).

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.<sup>77</sup>

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".<sup>78</sup> 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.

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.<sup>79</sup> 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, the

77. Despite the hyperbole, the claims in the review were not contested by *BMG* readers, who regularly wrote to the magazine to criticize or compliment Usher and other authors. Yes, the Clifford Essex director, A. P. Sharpe, maintained editorial control over readers' letters in the "Correspondence" section of *BMG*, but he 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 produced.

78. Allan Brace, *BMG Newsletter*, Spring 2019, 22–24.

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



FIGURE 5. Harald Petersen from *BMG*, December 1969.

guitar 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.”<sup>80</sup>

**Harald Petersen.** The only independent luthier from this period who subsequently made a reputable career out of classical guitar making in Britain was Harald Petersen (1910–1969).<sup>81</sup> Born in Skjern, Denmark, he began repairing musical instruments at the age of twenty 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; he 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 Ireth-in-Furness in Lancashire in 1949, and he followed in 1950.<sup>82</sup> After a slow start in England,

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

81. On Petersen, see Kenneth Brögger, *Danish Guitars—And Their Makers* (Birkerød, Denmark: 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).

82. This is according to Kenneth Brögger, who received correspondence from Peters-



Petersen began making guitars for Len Williams's 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 one by Ignacio Fleta in 1956.<sup>83</sup>

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. Petersen focused on making a living from classical guitar making in Britain even before Clifford Essex produced their concert model in 1951. It 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's 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,"<sup>84</sup> but this overlooks the significant groundwork that people like Perott, Appleby, and Usher had been doing for several years. It was Williams's innovative teaching method of small-group tuition, accommodating more 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

en'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."

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.



FIGURE 6. Hector Quine. Source unknown.

Guitar Centre became a key outlet for independent luthiers like Petersen to sell their instruments and led to other Spanish Guitar Centres being established around the country.

**Hector Quine.** Not all serious guitar-makers aspired 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; he 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* (January/February 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 Quine 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 eighteen instruments, eventually stopping production because of other responsibilities.<sup>85</sup>

Quine’s obituaries<sup>86</sup> state that Julian Bream played Quine’s second instrument at his Wigmore Hall debut in 1951, but this is not correct.<sup>87</sup> In the *Guitar News* article, Quine wrote that Bream played the second instrument at a later Wigmore Hall recital in September 1954. He also stated that his first guitar took him fourteen months to build, while 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.” Bream would use guitar no. 3 to record for Westminster in 1955,<sup>88</sup> which appears to be the earliest recording of a classical guitar by a British maker.

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,” [https://www.ram.ac.uk/public/uploads/documents/2b153f\\_professor-hector-william-quine.pdf](https://www.ram.ac.uk/public/uploads/documents/2b153f_professor-hector-william-quine.pdf).

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

87. In fact, Bream played a ca.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.

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.

### *The Texts*

**Hofmeester: “Torres: The Creator of the Modern Guitar.”**<sup>89</sup> As we have seen from the efforts of Jack Abbott, Marco Rocchia, 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 Jr. (1897–1955)<sup>90</sup> has been recognized as “a landmark in guitar construction of the Torres school. For the first time, guitar makers, professional and amateur alike, were provided an insight into the work of Torres and more importantly, given dimensions to draw upon in making a guitar.”<sup>91</sup> In the catalog section of his 1987 book, Romanillos would raise doubts about the accuracy of the drawing and the authenticity of this Torres guitar, now catalogued as FE26. But Hofmeester’s drawing of 1953, published in the 1954 issue of *Guitar Review* magazine, offered aspiring guitar makers the first opportunity to accurately construct a classical guitar in the Torres style. Although published in the USA, *Guitar Review* was international in its outlook and had subscribers in Britain. Among its editors and authors were Terry Usher, Jack Duarte, and Wilfrid Appleby.<sup>92</sup>

The level of detail in Hofmeester’s plan had not previously been widely available. We have seen that six years earlier, Henry Bream approached Jack Abbott Jr. with an ultimately flawed design based on his observations of available instruments, while Quine’s first effort was “unorthodox.” In the absence of good instruments to study and accumulated experiential knowledge, Hofmeester’s drawing provided the amateur maker with a reliable plan.<sup>93</sup>

89. *Guitar Review*, 16 (1954): 15–18.

90. Hofmeester is also spelled Hofmeister in the same *Guitar Review* article and both spellings are used elsewhere, too. Genealogical records show that Hofmeester Jr. travelled with his mother and siblings from Holland to the USA in 1910. His father, Theodorus Marinus Hofmeester (1865–1955), was a violinist and clarinetist, who played in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (1909–1911). Hofmeester Jr. 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).

92. A decade later, an entire issue of *Guitar Review* was devoted to “Guitar Construction from A to Z” (no. 28, 1965).

93. Although it is no longer in circulation, I have been shown an enlarged and modified version of the Hofmeester plan sold by a luthier supplier, Sydney Evans Ltd. (UK), proba-

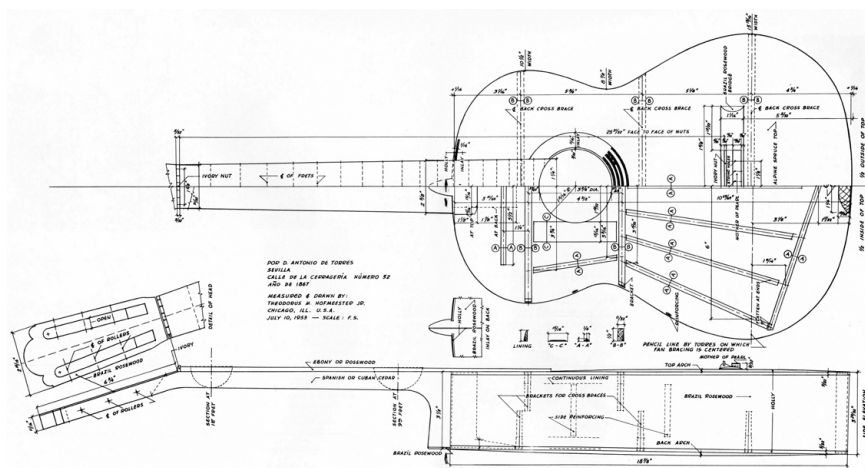


FIGURE 7. Torres FE26 plan by Hofmeester, *Guitar Review*, 16 (1954)

Subsequent instructions would draw from three more sources of knowledge about classical guitar construction. Clifford A. Hoing, an experienced violin maker, 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. A. P. Sharpe documented and systematized 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. Prior to, and parallel with, these do-it-yourself instructions was the more discursive writing of Sutcliffe, Usher, and others who took an interest in the material culture of classical guitars.<sup>94</sup>

One aspect of the material cultural context in which all this activity was taking place was the growing popularity of Do-It-Yourself culture (DIY) in post-war Britain. The destruction of World War II led to a shortage of housing and labor in Britain, and until 1951 the only furniture available was through the government's Utility Scheme. The consequence was "an

bly dating from the 1960s.

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," *Galpin Society Journal* 54 (2001): 219–32.

unprecedented level of self-help and resourcefulness.”<sup>95</sup> As home ownership was being encouraged by banks and building societies, new owners were faced with furnishing and managing repairs on their homes, rather than asking a landlord. Amid a shortage of tradesmen to carry out repairs, people were encouraged by magazines and television to take up DIY. It is no coincidence that at the same time Hoing, Ridge, and Sharpe were writing instructions for classical guitar making, *Practical Householder* magazine was launched. Its editor claimed that a DIY movement “has reached such proportions today that it can only be dealt with satisfactorily by a journal entirely devoted to it.”<sup>96</sup> 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.”<sup>97</sup>

*Woodworker*, a British 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.

**Hoing: “Making A Guitar.”** Clifford A. Hoing (1903–1989), “one of the most respected”<sup>98</sup> British makers of violins and violas, wrote the first step-by-step instructions in the English language for making a classical guitar.<sup>99</sup> In his review of Irving Sloan’s *Classic Guitar Construction* in January/February 1967, Appleby recounts that *Guitar News* (presumably Appleby) contacted Hoing in 1954 and “gave him what information we

95. Andrew Jackson, “*Understanding the Experience of the Amateur Maker*” (PhD diss., University of Brighton, 2011), 23, <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.

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.

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.

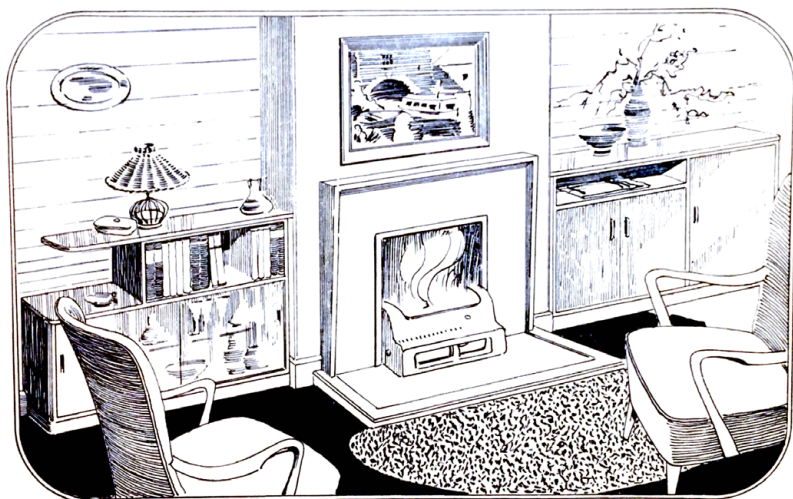
# WOODWORKER



VOL. LIX. No. 734.

JANUARY  
1955

ONE SHILLING



## THE NEW ELIZABETHAN FIREPLACE Bookcase and Cupboard

— Features this month —

WINDOW SEAT : WORKBOX : FISHING TACKLE—FLOATS  
 “HOW I DO IT” : MAKING A GUITAR : VENEERING  
 INSTALLING MACHINES : Measured Drawing—CORNER CABINET

FIGURE 8. *Woodworker*, January 1955, including “Making a Guitar.”

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

Hoing (like 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. In the first article, focusing on the back and ribs, Hoing states 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 mold 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.

The series continues along similar lines: Hoing’s instruction, though brief, is direct and methodical, occasionally referring to his personal preference for doing a task, while acknowledging other methods. Hoing recognizes that readers are able to make up their mind and use their judgement. He cautions 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.”<sup>100</sup> With this comment, Hoing establishes lutherie in a hierarchy

100. *Woodworker*, March 1955, 59.



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 first and foremost a luthier, not an author. By codifying the first set of instructions, he did for the classical guitar what no one else in Britain had done.

**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.<sup>101</sup> In “The Birth of a Guitar,” Ridge writes:

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.<sup>102</sup>

The original series of articles ran over six issues of *Guitar News*, from October/November 1956 to September/October 1957, coinciding with A.

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.” Ridge, “The Birth of a Guitar,” *Guitar News*, October/November 1956, 6. Appleby's review of Irving Sloan's *Classic Guitar Construction* offers further detail: “In 1956, we were 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 Jr. 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*, January/February. 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*, October/November 1956, 18.



FIGURE 9. Eric V. Ridge in his workshop.

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 the previously described acrimony resulted in neither Appleby nor Sharpe acknowledging each other's important contributions and achievements in establishing the classical guitar in Britain.<sup>103</sup>

Ridge's series of articles was re-published as a twenty-eight-page booklet, the last eight pages being commercial advertisements and photographs of players. The booklet ended with an image of Appleby holding both a guitar from 1790 and a modern "concert" guitar. Throughout, 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.

103. In the August/September, 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" (p. 14).

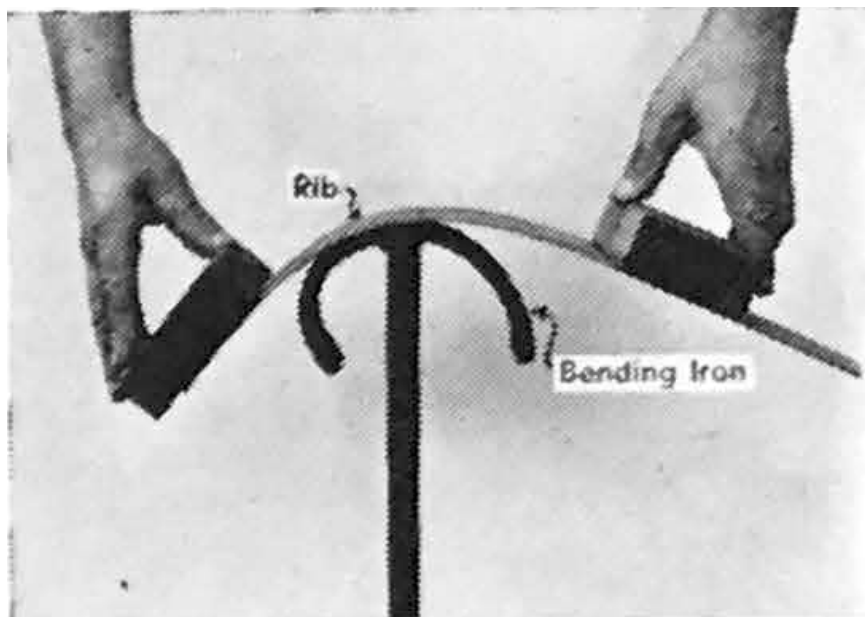


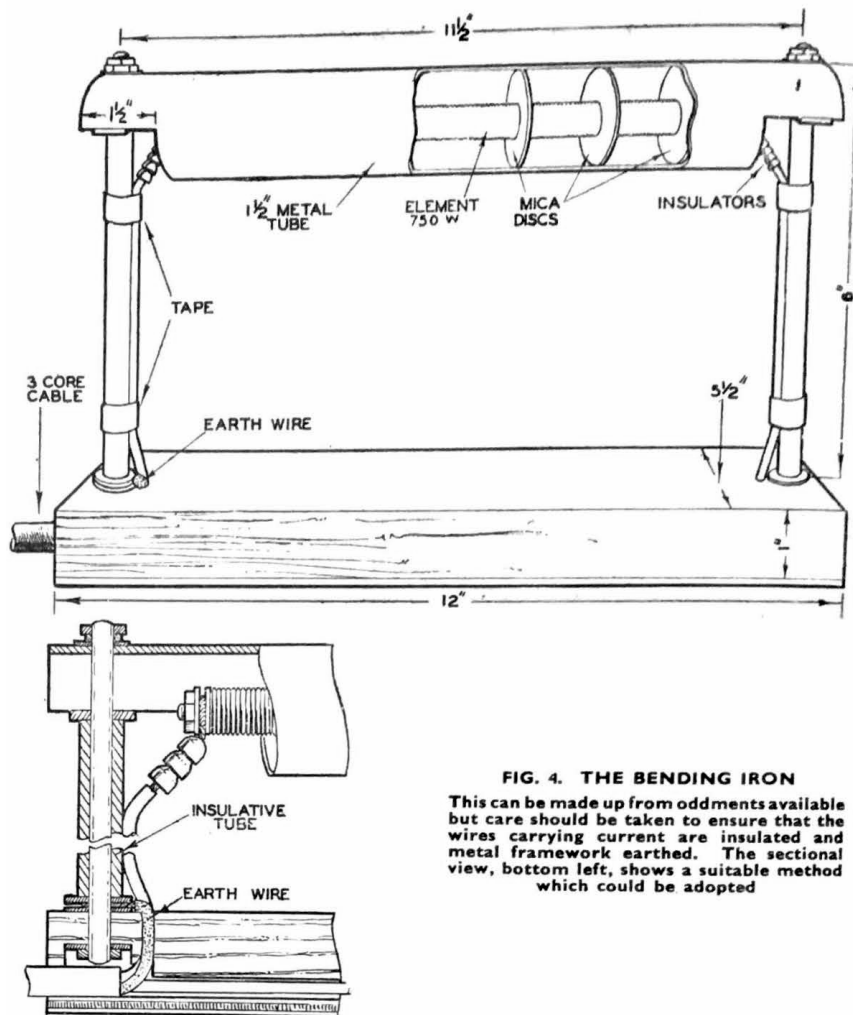
FIGURE 10. Eric Ridge's bending iron.

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 3/4” 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.

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 con-



**FIG. 4. THE BENDING IRON**

This can be made up from oddments available but care should be taken to ensure that the wires carrying current are insulated and metal framework earthed. The sectional view, bottom left, shows a suitable method which could be adopted

FIGURE 11. Clifford Hoing's bending iron.

struction of which is shown in fig. 4. This is composed of a copper or brass pipe about 1 1/2 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 on either side. The heat will cause the wood to bend and the extent of the curve must be regulated to



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)

make it conform to the shape required. . . .<sup>104</sup>

Both methods of bending the wood are essentially the same. The bending iron Ridge uses is more rudimentary, while Hoing’s iron is more like those in use today. Whereas Ridge recommends experimentation, Hoing offers a way to check the accuracy of the work and how to remedy errors. The clearest difference between the two texts is the identification of the author with his anticipated readership. Ridge establishes himself as an amateur, albeit with some prior experience with violins. He is a pioneer, exploring classical guitar construction with and for his fellow readers, many of them members of the ICGA. He makes regular reference to his exploratory practice and reasoning. Hoing, however, is introduced by the magazine editor as “one of the foremost British musical instrument makers,” and rarely refers to his practice, but rather instructs the amateur woodworker with authority on the task at hand.

104. Hoing, *Woodworker*, January 1955, 20.

**Sharpe: “Make Your Own Spanish Guitar.”** 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 was 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 conveyed in writing what Marco Roccia, Clifford Essex’s luthier, demonstrated and explained to him; all workshop photographs throughout are of Roccia. Sharpe begins 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 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.<sup>105</sup>

In the foreword, Sharpe also quotes Usher’s recent article for the *Galpin Society Journal*, which celebrated the work of Roccia, friend to both Sharpe and Usher. The article noted 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.<sup>106</sup>

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; Sharpe reassures 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 in the book is,

105. Sharpe, *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar*, 1957, 3.

106. Sharpe, *ibid.*

like Hoing's and Ridge's, a now-familiar seven-strut, fan-braced instrument with a dovetail joint connecting neck and body. Notably, although the instructions in these three texts are for Spanish guitars in the Torres style, none of them provides information on characteristically Spanish methods of construction, such as the "Spanish heel" or use of the "solera" work-board instead of molds.

Sharpe's text differs from Hoing's and Ridge's in 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 <sup>107</sup>	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.<sup>108</sup>

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

108. Sharpe, *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar*, 4. 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 Northern 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 most children. The new system opened the way for more progressive 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 wrote about how the Education Committee had "recently appointed a classical guitar teacher

Sharpe was right to declare that his was the first book on the topic, although at thirty-two pages it contains 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 depth of explanation or pedagogical style, on earlier writings. For example, on bending the ribs, compare Hoing and Ridge (quoted 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.<sup>109</sup>

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*. Compared to more recent books, each of the three texts is notable for its brevity of instruction.<sup>110</sup> Yet not all instructional texts available to luthiers at that time were similarly brief. Sharpe would have been aware of Herron-Allen's book, *Violin-Making: As It Was and Is*.<sup>111</sup> Published in 1884 and remaining in print for over 100 years, it is 400 pages long, including over 200 illustrations; the text first appeared

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.

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.: J. W. Pepper & Son, 1884).



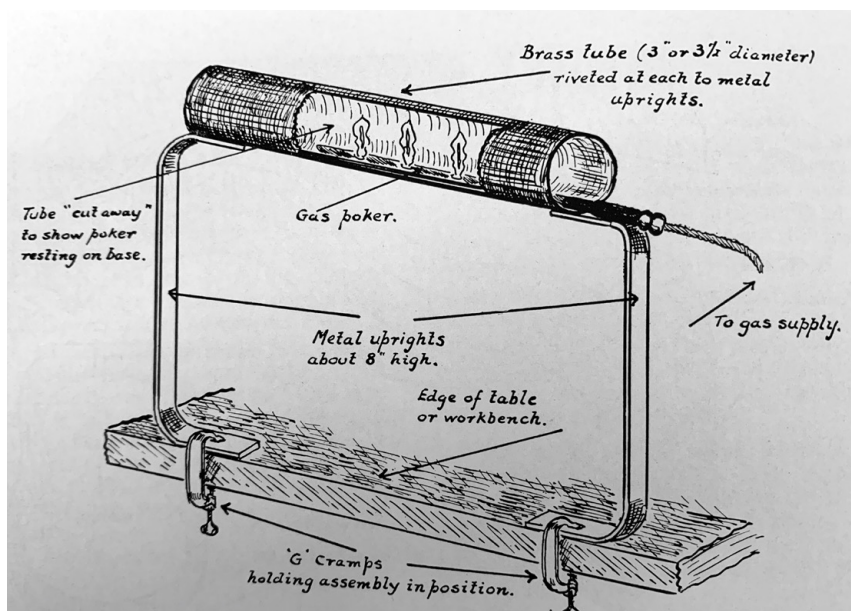


FIGURE 13. Marco Roccia's bending iron.

serially in *Amateur Work Illustrated* (1882–84). Heron-Allen aimed to “initiate [the reader in] the fascinating mysteries of the Science and Art of 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.”<sup>112</sup>

Why is Sharpe's book so different from 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 claimed that books before his were written by amateurs with little or no experience of violinmaking. 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 Chantot, a luthier who worked near Heron-Allen's law firm in Soho.<sup>113</sup> By contrast, Sharpe had little to improve on, only Hoing and possibly Ridge's recent writing. 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

112. Herron-Allen, 1884, ix-x.

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

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 types of readers Heron-Allen and Sharpe were addressing: Both books were explicitly aimed at amateurs, yet those in Victorian England occupied a different socio-economic position than the amateur after World War II.

### *Amateurs and Autodidacticism*

In his study of DIY, Jackson discussed how the meaning of the term “amateur” has changed. Derived from the Latin, *amator* (lover), the word originally described “a connoisseur, or someone who is enthusiastically involved in an activity, and acquired knowledge and expertise for the love of it.”<sup>114</sup> 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.”<sup>115</sup> 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 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 labor.

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 simply a benign way of filling time that would otherwise be used for political agitation. The overriding

114. Jackson, “Understanding the Experience of the Amateur Maker,” 106.

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

sense I have from the pages of *BMG* and *Guitar News* is that these amateurs 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. This knowledge 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 learners, 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.”<sup>116</sup> Yet as Knott argues, the rhetorical opposition between professional and amateur must be questioned. Indeed, these distinctions between dabblers and professionals, leisure and labor, do not accurately characterize the craft of guitar making in Britain in the 1950s or thereafter; none of the texts under discussion uses the term amateur disparagingly, because the authors understood themselves as amateurs writing for other amateurs.<sup>117</sup> Huber has observed: “completely in keeping with its amateur legacy in performance, the guitar has proven to be without prejudice of any kind against amateur makers.”<sup>118</sup> 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 must

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

117. An extended and contemporary defense 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.”

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

supplement their income from lutherie with other work. This was true in 1950 when just a few people in Britain successfully made classical guitars and remains true today, even as players and luthiers have increased in number.<sup>119</sup>

What best characterizes the emergence of classical guitar-making in Britain are the qualities of what Robert Stebbins has defined as “serious leisure.”<sup>120</sup> From the magazines and texts surveyed, we find people who, despite a lack of resources, *persevered*, turning their endeavors into *careers* or devoting almost as much time and attention as to a *career* (italics here mark traits of serious leisure, as identified by Stebbins). They invested significant personal *effort* based on *specially 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’s “serious leisure” framework is useful because it overcomes the misleading economic distinction between professionals (Sharpe, Rocca, Abbott, Petersen, Hoing) and amateurs (Usher, Sutcliffe, Appleby, Ridge, Hofmeester, Quine); the framework recognizes that within public-facing activities such as the arts and entertainment, professionals and amateurs coalesce, with some economically dependent on their endeavors and others not.<sup>121</sup> 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.<sup>122</sup> A necessary

119. In 2018, I surveyed all known classical guitar-makers in the UK (numbering 103) and found that fifty-six percent consider it their main occupation.

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

121. Much more could be said to show the usefulness and relevance of Stebbins’ work on “serious leisure” to analyze the development of guitar culture (including both players and 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, “Amateur & Professional”, 42. There, the (anonymous) 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 amateurs, through repeated practice and challenging themselves, can achieve the presentation of the professional.

122. Unlike in the USA, where the Guild of American Luthiers and Association of Stringed Instrument Artisans have thousands of members who communicate through

part of this pursuit (and a feature of Stebbins's framework) was self-directed learning or autodidacticism.

An autodidact is "someone who has acquired high levels of expertise, usually in a particular field, through self-education"; "largely self-driven," the autodidact pursues a "highly accelerated learning process."<sup>123</sup> Autodidacticism is, then, an attribute of the amateur, whose object of love includes learning. Specially acquired knowledge underpins many of the durable benefits of serious leisure: self-actualization, 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. In contrast to self-directed learning, autodidacticism historically 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."<sup>124</sup> Pierre Bourdieu categorises the self-learning that takes place outside of the formal educational system as "legitimate" or "illegitimate" types, referring to whether the "extra-curricular culture" (i.e., autodidacticism) is attributable to the individual's existing academic qualifications or not.<sup>125</sup> Just as amateurs are pejoratively referred to as dabblers, knowledge gained outside recognized institutions of education is deemed illegitimate in terms of its cultural value, and carries no guarantee of quality in the recognized hierarchy of accreditation. In the absence of older legitimating institutions, the self-organization of membership associations like the PSG and the ICGA fostered the self-improvement of members and,

their respective journals and symposia, nothing comparable exists for luthiers in Britain. In 2013, the European Guitar Builders (EGB) association was formed and there are some British luthiers among their approximately 230 members. In my interviews with classical guitar makers, several regretted that there was not such an organization 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.

124. Richard Edwards, "Amateurism and Autodidacticism: A Modest Proposal?," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 36, no. 6 (2015): 876–77.

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

over time, established a recognized body of knowledge, created by and for members. The most long-standing of legitimating institutions was *BMG*, which examined learners and awarded its diploma; its contributors, like Usher, wrote educational and instructional articles.<sup>126</sup> The self-education within the subculture of guitar enthusiasts at this time parallels other social groups who sought self-improvement outside of, yet imitating, the formal education system. The subculture offered 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. Within this context, autodidacts combined their resources, developed international networks 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* (1955) and Sharpe’s book (1957) saw a “guitar boom” in Britain. In September 1956, Peter Sensier began his Guitar Topics column in *BMG* by declaring:

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. . . .<sup>127</sup>

Remarking on an annual guitar festival in June 1957, Sensier lamented the “small display of Spanish guitars”:

This was perhaps unavoidable in view of the difficulties of importing Span-

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.

127. *BMG*, September 1956, 301.

ish-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.<sup>128</sup>

In November 1957, Sensier complained that over 20,000 “Make Your Own Guitar” kits had 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.<sup>129</sup> 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 8,000 copies and *Make your Own Spanish Guitar* (1957) had sold over 7,000 copies.<sup>130</sup> 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.<sup>131</sup> Rubio quickly fashioned himself as the

128. *BMG*, June 1957, 229.

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 visited him in New York and stated 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” (p. 236).

archetypal English luthier, initially working on Julian Bream's estate. From March 1968, he established his own workshop, where he employed Paul Fischer, who had trained with the harpsichord maker Robert Goble.<sup>132</sup> Goble had spent much of the 1920s and 30s training and working alongside Arnold 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.<sup>133</sup>

The gradual institutional legitimization of the classical guitar and the knowledge and skills developed by autodidacts after the war were celebrated in the pages of *BMG*. Terry Usher "makes fretted instrument history," the headline ran, with his appointment in 1954 as guitar tutor at the Royal Manchester College of Music.<sup>134</sup> Four years later, Hector Quine began teaching guitar at Trinity College of Music; Quine became the first professor of guitar and head of the new Guitar Department at the Royal Academy of Music in 1959. It was a further thirteen years before classical guitar-making in Britain would gain a similar legitimacy: in September 1972, the first full-time course in fretted instrument making was opened at the London College of Furniture, a pathway on the three-year, full-time Higher National Certificate course in Musical Instrument Technology. In 2016, after 100 years of musical instrument-making education and a long series of mergers and name changes, London Metropolitan University stopped recruiting students to its Musical Instruments degree course.<sup>135</sup> Fortunately, well-established courses in guitar-making and repair continue today, run by Newark College and Glasgow Clyde

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* 45 (2019): 262–84.

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



College.<sup>136</sup> 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 professionalization of the craft had begun.

## APPENDIX

### Timeline of Classical Guitar-Making in Britain (1926–1957)

*BMG*: *Banjo Mandolin Guitar* magazine

PSG: Philharmonic Society of Guitarists

#### *Establishing Interest in the Instrument*

December 1926. Andrés Segovia plays his first concert in the UK at the Aeolian Hall.

February 1929. Boris Perott and four other founding members establish the PSG. By 1931, it has over 100 members.

December 1931–1939 *BMG*. Perott writes a series of articles on famous guitarists from around the world.

April 1931 *BMG*. Interest in the classical guitar is growing, according to

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* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 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>; and *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 useful chronology, *The Teaching of Musical Technology at the Northern Polytechnic—And Beyond*, available from the London Metropolitan University archive.

Alexis Chess, writing about “The Revival of the Classical Guitar,” after the Spanish pattern.

July 1944 *BMG*. An amateur woodworker in Australia, Robert Stook, writes a lengthy front-page article titled “La Morena.” He describes the challenges of making a Spanish guitar.

July 1945. Wilfrid M. Appleby becomes editor of the new *Bulletin* of the PSG.

January 1946 *BMG*. Appleby starts “The Spanish Guitar” column. Mentions Terry Usher, Julian Bream, a new home for the PSG (Westminster) and Usher setting up a PSG branch in Manchester.

April 1946 *BMG*. Usher begins a series of articles that continue until February 1947, called “The Guitar Analysed.” Refers to “the revival of the guitar in this country.”

### ***Experiments in Classical Guitar-Making in Britain***

April 1947 *BMG*. Appleby: “Supplies of wood and other materials for guitar-making are difficult to obtain, but I see no reason why good guitars should not be made in England. I would like to suggest that those intending to make guitars should examine and study some of the best Spanish and South American guitars before fixing on their designs.”

March 1948. Bream plays Ernest Shand’s Concerto at the Social and Athletic Club of Gays (Hampton) Ltd using a prototype guitar constructed by the Abbott-Victor Music Company, designed by Henry Bream. This is the earliest evidence of the production of a “concert” classical guitar in Britain and public performance.

July 1948 *BMG*. Usher starts a new column on “Spanish Guitar Technique” in collaboration with Maurice Ashurst (ends May 1951). Discusses instrument features and build regularly.

June 1949 *BMG*. Usher offers to give lectures on “the construction of the

guitar” to the Manchester Guitar Circle.

1950. Harald Petersen moves to England to make and sell classical guitars.

1951. Hector Quine begins making his first guitar. Bream plays Quine’s second instrument at the Wigmore Hall in September 1954.

1951. Peter Sensier starts repairing and building guitars in 1951, according to an interview in *Guitar* (April 1973). He took his first guitar to Len Williams at the newly opened Spanish Guitar Centre (1952).

June/July 1951. *Guitar News* is launched. Appleby sets out to define what the Classic Guitar Association is for, and to answer the question. “Why classic?” Offers definition and explanation, compared to “classical,” and refers to the “legitimate” or “real” guitar.

August 1951 *BMG*. Usher reviews the new Clifford Essex (Marco Roccia) Concert Guitar (purchased in November 1950). “The first true concert guitar to be produced in this country . . . a landmark in the history of the guitar in Britain.”

October/November 1951. *Guitar News* begins with article, “British-Made Guitars” and laments failures of past fifty years, whereas progress in making has been made in Spain, Italy, Germany, etc. Article focuses on Arnold Dolmetsch (*d* 1940) and his workshop, which had begun to make “modern concert guitars.”

1952. The Spanish Guitar Centre (Len Williams) opens in the early months of 1952. Imports cheap Spanish guitars from Italy for students. Sells Petersen instruments from 1955.

August/September 1952 *Guitar News*. “Buying one is easier!” by J. K. Sutcliffe discusses “the troubles of the amateur guitar-maker today.”

February 1953 *BMG*. Usher is experimenting with guitar construction: “I have experimented by removing some of the fan-struts of one of these guitars and have been able to add the lower partials to its tone, thus making the whole instrument deeper, thicker and more responsive in tone pro-

duction.”

April/May 1953 *Guitar News*. “Guitar Building by Amateurs” article describes efforts by Russell and Kenworthy (Sydney, Australia) to build their own guitars in 1950: “unorthodox in construction.” At this time, no clear methodology for making a guitar. Lack of woods, jigs, and plans.

### ***DIY Instructions for Classical Guitar-making***

1954. *Guitar Review* publishes a scale-drawing of Torres guitar (FE 26) by Theodorus M. Hoffmeester Jr.

January–June 1955 *Woodworker*. Articles by Clifford Hoing on “Making a Classic Guitar” are published. Republished in the 1955 Annual, and again as a series in 1965.

August/September and October/November 1955 *Guitar News*. Technical article “On Guitar Standards and Quality” by J. A. Burtnieks (USA). Good evidence of documenting and passing on of traditional knowledge. Makes reference to Quine and Ricardo Munoz’s book *Technologia de la Guitarra Argentina* (1952).

December/January 1956 *Guitar News*. Profile of USA luthier Manuel Velazquez. Quine writes an article on “Frets and figures,” discussing a system of fretting, citing the *Woodworker* article.

February/March 1956 *Guitar News*. Articles on guitar construction by Sutcliffe. Continues in August/September 1956. Concludes April/May 1957.

June 1956. *Galpin Society Journal* publishes Usher’s “The Spanish Guitar in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” the first organological article on the Spanish guitar in English. Refers to Clifford Essex (Marco Roccia) and Harald Petersen guitars.

October/November 1956–September/October 1957 *Guitar News*. Eric V. Ridge’s series on “The Birth of a Guitar,” documenting his journey in guitar building.

February 1957. A. P. Sharpe's *Making Your Own Spanish Guitar*, based on the work of the luthier Marco Roccia, is published and advertised on the back cover of *BMG*.

June 1957 *BMG*. Advertisement claiming over 1,000 copies of *Make Your Own Spanish Guitar* have already been sold.

November 1957 *BMG*. Sensier writes that "The much publicised "Guitar Boom" shows no immediate signs of dying down." Also refers to the "Do It Yourself" craze."