

2025
YORK
EARLY
MUSIC
FESTIVAL

Pablo Zapico
Baroque guitar

The First Spanish Guitar

National Centre for Early Music
Saturday 5 July 5.15pm

Pablo Zapico *Baroque guitar*

The First Spanish Guitar

Preludio **Ludovico Roncalli** fl. late 17th century

Pavanas por la D,
con Partidas al Aire Español **Gaspar Sanz** c.1640-1710

Passachaglia **Francesco Corbetta** c.1615-1681

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Preludio **Francesco Corbetta**

Marionas **Francisco Guerau** 1649-1722

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Grabe **Santiago de Murcia** 1673-1739

Jacaras **Gaspar Sanz**

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Prelude [5to. tuono] **Angelo Bartolotti** c.1600-after1668

Passeos por 4° Tono **Gaspar Sanz**

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Obra por 5to tono. Preludio Grabe **Archangelo Corelli** 1653-1712
arr. Santiago de Murcia

Preludio y fantasía por la O **Gaspar Sanz**

La Jotta **de Murcia**

* * * * *

Villano **Guerau**

Baylad Caracoles **de Murcia**

* * * * *

Preludio Semplice **Nicola Matteis** ?- after1713

Cumbés **de Murcia**

Canarios [por la A] **Gaspar Sanz**



To fully appreciate the rise of the Spanish guitar, it is necessary to trace its origins to the vihuela, a stringed instrument synonymous with Iberian Renaissance music. Interestingly, the term vihuela was often used interchangeably with guitar. During the sixteenth century, vihuelas of varying sizes existed, each tuned to a different pitch. The six-course vihuela was the most common, but there were also four- and five-course versions. In Spain, the four-course vihuela was known as a guitar while in Italy it was called *chitarrino*, *chitarra da sette corde* or *chitarra napolitana*. France, however, experienced a brief but intense period of publishing activity during the mid-sixteenth century which centred on the four-course vihuela, known there as *guiterre* or *guiterne*.

Around 1580, the first classification emerged of five-course instruments resembling what we now recognise as the Baroque guitar. Two surviving examples from this period – a *vihuela tiple* or five-course *guitarrilla* attributed to luthier Belchior Dias (Lisbon, 1581) and another guitar (c.1590), possibly also by Dias – bear a striking resemblance to the archetypal five-course guitar, which was widely referred to in Italy throughout the seventeenth century as *chitarra spagnuola*. The evolution of the five-course guitar was likely driven by the demands of a new musical style focused on *rasgueado* (strumming) and singing.

This style, which emphasised chords as independent sonic entities, became popular among stable boys, as noted by Sebastián de Covarrubias (Madrid, 1611). Mastery of a few simple finger positions on the fretboard enabled players to perform dances, *sones*, and accompany *tonos* and *romances*. By 1599, a new notation system emerged, employing letters, numbers, or symbols to represent chord positions. This simpler system, far easier than the complex notation used for the lute, made the guitar highly accessible and popular for entertainment. The oral transmission of the repertoire allowed amateurs to sing almost entirely from memory, without the need for notated music (which, in most cases, they would not have been able to read), relying only on the lyrics and chord positions as an *aide-mémoire*. The guitar's widespread appeal signalled the rise of urban vocal music and the internationalisation of the Spanish style in Italy and France.

Consequently, the new instrument came to be known as the Spanish guitar. The first French publication dedicated to this instrument was *Metodo mui facilisimo para aprender a tañer la guitarra a lo español* ('Very Easy Method to Learn to Play the Guitar in the Spanish Style') by Luis Briceño (Paris, 1626), a guitarist promoting the five-course guitar in the Spanish style. This book was little more than a small collection of *romances* and *letrillas* with strumming patterns. Other early guitar pieces in France include five *airs espagnols* by Étienne Moulinié (Paris, 1629) and a few manuscripts featuring strumming music. However, it was not until 1663 that

the first printed book featuring music in the mixed style appeared: *Pièces de Guitairre à battre et à pinser* ('Works for guitar to strum and pluck') by François Martin. This publication was followed by works from Antoine Carré, Rémy Médard, Henry Grenerin, Robert de Visée, François Campion and Francesco Corbetta, who published two notable collections, *La guitarre royalle*, in Paris in 1671 and 1674.

Italy, however, played a more pivotal role from the outset. The presence of Spanish guitarists in southern Italy encouraged the adoption and consolidation of the *rasgueado* style, which quickly became a preferred accompaniment for *villanelle*, a testament to the influence of Italy's thriving publishing industry. Around 1629, the dotted style was introduced which, in combination with the *rasgueado*, gave rise to the mixed style practised by Francesco Corbetta, Giovanni Battista Granata, Angelo Michele Bartolotti, Domenico Pellegrini, Lelio Colista, Francesco Ascoli and Ludovico Roncalli, some of whom are featured in this programme. Undoubtedly, the *chitarra spagnuola* owes much to Italy for the adoption of this style, the creation of its repertoire, and the emergence of the first figures who significantly contributed to its diffusion.

Among these early international guitar stars, **Francesco Corbetta** is certainly a key figure. Five of his books are preserved, printed between 1639 and 1674 in various locations, including Bologna, Milan, Brussels, and Paris, as well as four others that have been lost. These include *Guitarra española y sus diferencias de sonos* ('Spanish Guitar and its Different Sounds'), supposedly printed in Spain between 1643 and 1648, and 'Easie Lessons on the Guittar for Young Practitioners' (London, c.1670). Furthermore, his music appears in numerous manuscripts that are based on the known printed works. Cited by Gaspar Sanz as 'the best of all', Corbetta was perhaps the most important guitarist of his time, responsible for revealing the musical potential of the guitar and spreading its captivating sound. His role was akin to that of Andrés Segovia or Paco de Lucía in the twentieth century. His music was well-known in Spain, evidenced by its presence in manuscripts alongside works by other Italian guitarists such as Lelio Colista and Domenico Pellegrini. These works were often performed in alternation with compositions by local Spanish composers, as shown in this programme.

In Spain, the guitar was a fixture in every social gathering, whether at court or in more popular settings. It was played by blind musicians in public squares, by court musicians, comedy players, dance masters and ordinary amateurs. Though, according to Quevedo and other writers, the *punteado* style coexisted with the *rasgueado* from the early part of the century, the first publication dedicated to

the guitar in Spain during this period, *Guitarra española* by Joan Carlos Amat, focuses on the *rasgueado* style. First printed in 1596, this treatise saw successive reprints until the dawn of the eighteenth century. However, the earliest preserved printed editions and dated manuscripts of guitar music are late and few in number compared to those from Italy.

Gaspar Sanz travelled through Italy, where he must have encountered the music of Italian guitarists and may even have received lessons from the famed Lelio Colista. Some musical elements in Sanz's work reflect this Italian influence. Sanz's *Instrucción*, published in three volumes, combines theoretical topics with an extensive repertoire of varying difficulty levels, ranging from simple strumming to extensive series of passacaglias that sometimes include modulating passages or steps. This makes it one of the most comprehensive guitar publications of the period. Proof of its importance and widespread influence is the presence of copied or paraphrased pieces in Spanish guitar manuscripts of the time.

Francisco Guerau, cantor of the Royal Chapel in Madrid (several vocal works attributed to him are preserved), and master of the choirboys, published his *Poema harmónico, compuesto de varias cifras, por el temple de la guitarra española* ('Harmonic Poem, Composed of Several Figures, for the Tuning of the Spanish Guitar') in 1694. Unlike Sanz, this collection focuses on the Spanish guitar, featuring an exclusively Iberian repertoire of *pasacalles* and *sones*, avoiding some of the technical innovations developed in Italy and incorporated by Sanz, such as *campanelas*, and instead making extensive use of ligatures. While the dense texture of some of Guerau's pieces, particularly the *pasacalles*, can make his music challenging, it remains deeply beautiful.

Although **Santiago de Murcia** employed stylistic features similar to those of Gaspar Sanz, he also embraced French music, arranging sonatas by Arcangelo Corelli and thus aligning himself with the pan-European trends of the early eighteenth century. This is reflected in his only published book, *Resumen de acompañar* ('Brief Accompaniment') (1714), and in three handwritten manuscripts, preserved outside of Spain. The first of these is currently held in the British Library, though it was acquired in Mexico, where what researchers consider the second part of the book was also found.

The third manuscript, discovered in Santiago de Chile in 2003 by Alejandro Vera, has the same structure as the previous one. In his research, he documented the hardships the guitarist faced, particularly in the later years of his life, despite being a guitar teacher to Queen Maria Luisa of Savoy during the Bourbon court's brief stay in Madrid between 1704 and 1706, during the War of

Succession. Although he never travelled to America, Murcia's music crossed the Atlantic at least twice. This collection of music synthesises and encapsulates, with both elegance and depth, the rich tradition of Spanish guitar music that evolved over a century and a half.

The Spanish guitar, whether the five-course guitar or the Baroque vihuela, continues to exert its influence, enchanting audiences across generations. A spell that endures, reverberating into the present, echoed in the harmonious works of this concert programme, which showcases the splendour of the Baroque guitar played by its most renowned masters.

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Translated by Tridiom, Madrid

Pablo Zapico

Born in Langreo, Asturias, Pablo Zapico studied historically informed performance, completing his advanced studies in 2006 at the Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya in Barcelona with Xavier Díaz-Latorre, and in 2012 he obtained a master's degree in Musicology from the University of Barcelona. Together with his brothers Aarón Zapico and Daniel Zapico, he is co-founder of the prestigious Baroque group Forma Antiqua. Independently, he maintains a busy career as a soloist and collaborator with significant European groups and orchestras: Ensemble Artaserse, La Ritirata, Cappella Mediterranea, Harmonie Universelle, Accademia del Piacere or Concerto 1700, among others; and under the direction of Benjamin Bayl, Attilio Cremonesi, William Christie, Philippe Jaroussky, Leonardo García Alarcón, Andrea Marcon, Enrico Onofri, Christina Pluhar, Federico Maria Sardelli or Aarón Zapico.

He has participated in the major festivals on the Iberian Peninsula and has toured internationally in the United Kingdom, Portugal, France, Italy, Germany, Holland, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Republic of Serbia, Greece, Turkey, China, Japan, Singapore, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Uruguay, Chile, Bogotá, Panama, Mexico and Australia.

Pablo Zapico has recorded more than forty albums for labels such as Arsis, Vanitas, Alpha and the prestigious Munich label Winter & Winter. He has also made live recordings for Radio France Musique, BBC Radio 3, RTVE and Catalunya Música. Together with his brothers Aaron and Daniel, he was nominated three times for the prestigious ICMA (International Classical Music Awards) in 2010, 2011 and 2013 for his albums *Amore x Amore*, *Concerto Zapico* and *Opera Zapico* in the category of best instrumental Baroque CD. In 2018 he

received the awards for Best Record Production from GEMA for *Crudo Amor* and Best Classical Music Album at the MIN Awards for *Concerto Zapico Vol. 2*.

He combines his career as a performer with teaching, being a professor at the Conservatori Superior de Música de les Illes Balears and giving masterclasses. He regularly contributes to the magazines of the Sociedad de la Vihuela and the Lute Society of America. He is working on the publication of his book 'Complete Basso Continuo Method', an intensive course that he teaches online for more than 900 students and teachers from all over the world.

Pablo Zapico has been awarded the distinction of Asturian of the Month by the newspaper *La Nueva España*, the award for Group of the Year 2010 by the Television of the Principality of Asturias, the Music Awards in Asturias 2012, the Serondaya Award 2012 for Cultural Innovation, the Best Baroque Music Group 2018 award from GEMA and the Gold Medal of the European Forum Cum Laude 2019. In June 2021 he was awarded the prestigious Beca Leonardo for researchers and creators from the BBVA Foundation for the 'Recording of unpublished tonadillas from 'La Caramba' with Forma Antiqva.

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