

## CHAPTER II

### FINGER-STYLE GUITAR TABLATURE AND STANDARD NOTATION

Tablature and standard notation for the guitar share an inextricable history dating back to the vihuela, Baroque guitar, and early six-string guitar.<sup>24</sup> Up until the mid-eighteenth century, the standard way of writing music for stringed instruments was with tablature, a practical and efficient one-voice system that showed where to place the fingers and when to articulate the notes. The entry for tablature in the 1757 *Encyclopédie*, edited by Denis Diderot, stated thus: “This method, although ancient, is conserved for this instrument through the ease which it gives to the gracefulness of the hand, the arrangements of the fingers, the beauty of sound, harmony, and the facility in execution.”<sup>25</sup> The evolution of the Baroque guitar to the early six-string guitar during the mid-eighteenth century paralleled the transition from tablature to standard notation. Examples of mixed notation appeared during this transitional period that included both tablature and standard notation staves, making the transition easier for those accustomed to reading tablature. Paul Sparks points to the emerging *galant* style and the guitar’s increasing role as an accompaniment instrument for popular songs as factors in

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<sup>24</sup> For detailed discussions on the vihuela, Baroque guitar, and early six-string guitar see Harvey Turnball, *The Guitar from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974), James Tyler and Paul Sparks, *The Guitar and Its Music: From the Renaissance to the Classical Era* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), and James Tyler, *A Guide to Playing the Baroque Guitar* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Denis Diderot, ed., *Encyclopédie* (Paris: 1751-76). Quoted in James Tyler and Paul Sparks, *The Guitar and Its Music: From the Renaissance to the Classical Era* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), 200.

the shift.<sup>26</sup> During this transition to standard notation some reacted vigorously against tablature taking extreme positions and making arguments that were not necessarily accurate. Shortly after the 1757 *Encyclopédie*'s positive assessment of tablature, Giacomo Merchi vigorously rejected tablature in his *Le Guide des écoliers de guitarre, oeuvre VII*:

I believe that it is an abuse, and I shall prove it by the following reasons. Those who only know tablature cannot truly play, and accompany only by routine and without balance. Those who use tablature successfully were good musicians before they learned it, and had no need for it. These reasons have led me to suppress its use in this work. If someone objects that it is necessary to mark the [left hand] positions, I would respond that the violin, the cello, etc. never use tablature, and that the guitar has less need [to do so] than them because it has frets. As with other instruments, all that is necessary for success is the application of a good method; I have neglected nothing to render mine easy, clear and agreeable.<sup>27</sup>

The relationship between tablature and standard notation has continued to evolve and expand since Merchi's proclamation, often reflecting the music it is displaying. By the early nineteenth century the guitar repertoire of virtuoso performers and composers such as Fernando Sor (1778-1839) and Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829) was being published in standard notation. Since then, numerous innovations for notating guitar music have been introduced to accommodate the diverse array of guitar styles and techniques present today. This concise survey is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to provide a visual narrative of some of the most important historical developments and innovations in tablature and standard notation for the guitar. Beginning in 1546 with the vihuela, it highlights

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<sup>26</sup> Tyler and Sparks, 200.

<sup>27</sup> Giacomo Merchi, *Le Guide des écoliers de guitarre, oeuvre VII*, 1761, facsimile edition (Geneva: Minkoff, 1981), 4. Quoted in Tyler and Sparks, 201.

the diverse and often disparate array of notational conventions found in guitar literature. A good understanding of the evolution of printed music for the guitar will heighten our appreciation for the many innovations and experiments that have occurred throughout its extensive history.

The great popularity of the vihuela beginning in the mid-sixteenth century yielded seven printed books of music. One of the earliest was *Tres Libros de Musica en Cifras para Vihuela* by Alonso Mudarra (ca.1510-1580), published December 7, 1546 in Seville, Spain. Considered one the most important collections of music for the vihuela, it included solo fantasias, dances, and songs with vihuela accompaniment.<sup>28</sup> Figure 2.1 provides an example of how the music was notated.<sup>29</sup> Each line of tablature represents a course, which in the case of the vihuela is two strings tuned in unison.<sup>30</sup> The numbers on the tablature lines represent the frets to be fingered. The free-standing mensural notes above the tablature indicate the rhythm to be played; the time value of the note applies to all the notes articulated in the tablature until a new time value appears. Mudarra also included right-hand editing: *de dos dedos* instructs the performer to alternate the

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<sup>28</sup> Alonso Mudarra, *Tres Libros de Musica en Cifras para Vihuela* (1546), complete facsimile edition with introduction by James Tyler (Monte Carlo, Monaco: Editions Chanterelle, 1980), 3-8. It is important to note this method also included a section of music for the four-course Renaissance guitar. Additional innovations by Mudarra in *Tres Libros de Musica en Cifras para Vihuela* included a 14-line tablature system for keyboard or harp.

<sup>29</sup> James Tyler, *A Guide to Playing the Baroque Guitar* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), 8. Tyler refers to this style of tablature as Italian tablature. The top tablature line represents the lowest course and the bottom tablature line represents the highest course: “Looking at a piece notated in Italian tablature is like looking at yourself and your guitar in a mirror that’s sitting on your guitar stand; the strings appear in upside down order.” See also *Tres Libros de Musica en Cifras para Vihuela*, complete facsimile edition, 6.

<sup>30</sup> The vihuela is tuned thus: G<sub>2</sub> G<sub>2</sub> C<sub>3</sub> C<sub>3</sub> F<sub>3</sub> F<sub>3</sub> A<sub>3</sub> A<sub>3</sub> D<sub>4</sub> D<sub>4</sub> G<sub>4</sub> G<sub>4</sub>.

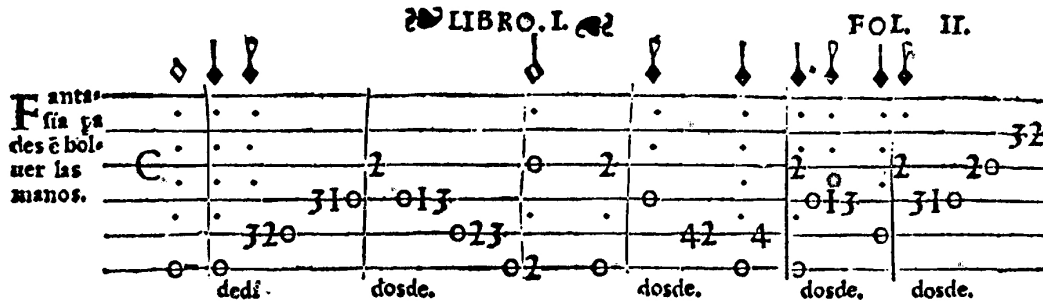


Figure 2.1. Example of vihuela tablature: “Fantasia pa(ra) desenboluer las manos,” *Tres Libros de Musica en Cifras para Vihuela*, Alonso Mudarra, 1546.

right-hand thumb and index finger, and *dedillo* indicates notes should be plucked with the index finger using alternating up and down strokes.<sup>31</sup> Also included are bar lines to delineate measures and tempo markings in the form of symbols, which were assigned to indicate slow, medium, and fast tempos.<sup>32</sup>

The first instruction method for the Spanish five-course guitar was a booklet on chord playing by Juan Carlos Amat (ca. 1572-1642) in 1596, titled *Guitara española de cinco ordenes . . . y a la fin se haze mencion tambien de la guitarra de quarto ordenes*.<sup>33</sup> His ‘Catalan *cifras*’ chord diagram system, reprinted here in Pablo Minguet y Yrol’s 1774 *Reglas y advertencias*, displays twelve major chords and twelve minor chords (fig. 2.2). Each chord was assigned a number with designations for major or minor: ‘n’ for major (*naturales*) and ‘b’ for minor (*b molados*). For example, 1,n. equals E major, 2,n. equals A major, and 3,n.

<sup>31</sup> Note the abbreviations in Figure 2.1 for the right-hand editing in the notation: *dosde* (de dos dedos) and *dedi* (dedillo).

<sup>32</sup> Tyler, *Tres Libros de Musica en Cifras para Vihuela*, 3-8.

<sup>33</sup> Tyler and Sparks, 9.



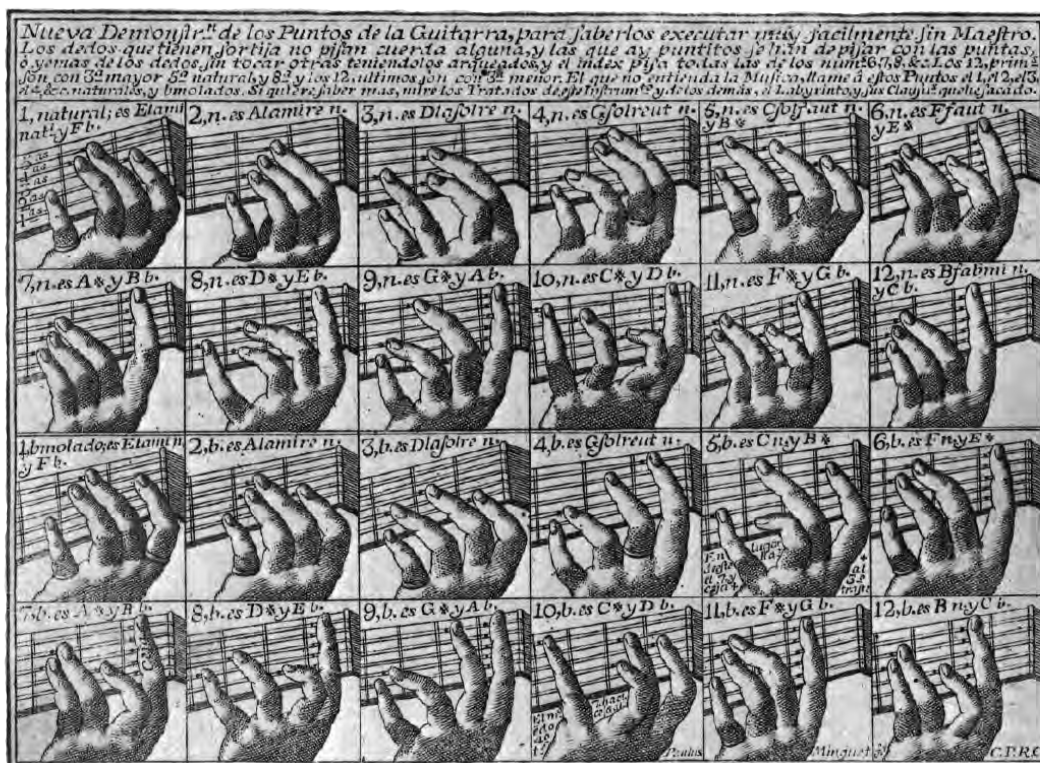


Figure 2.2. Example of ‘Catalan *cifras*’ chord diagram system: Juan Carlos Amat, reprinted in *Reglas y advertencias*, Pablo Minguet y Yrol, 1774.

equals D major. For minor, *1, b.* equals E minor, *2, b.* equals A minor, and *3, b.*

equals D minor.<sup>34</sup>

The Baroque guitar flourished in Spain, Italy, France, and England between 1600 and 1750. Tablature for the Baroque guitar shared many of the same conventions found in vihuela tablature. The five tablature lines represent the five courses. The numbers on the tablature lines represent the frets to be fingered, and the free-standing mensural notes indicate the rhythms to be played.<sup>35</sup> A new

<sup>34</sup> Tyler and Sparks, 148.

<sup>35</sup> The Baroque guitar is tuned thus: A<sub>3</sub> A<sub>3</sub> D<sub>4</sub> D<sub>4</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>; A<sub>3</sub> A<sub>3</sub> D<sub>4</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>; or A<sub>3</sub> A<sub>2</sub> D<sub>4</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>.



Figure 2.3. Example of *alfabeto* chord diagrams: *I quattro libri della chitarra spagnola*, Giovanni Paolo Foscari, ca. 1632.

innovation to emerge during the seventeenth century was the *alfabeto* system, a chord system which assigned a letter of the alphabet to a specific chord. Diagrams displaying the chords and their assigned letter were often placed at the beginning of music books. This example from ca. 1632 shows how Giovanni Paolo Foscari (fl. 1620-49) graphically displayed his *alfabeto* chord diagrams (fig. 2.3). In Foscari's chord system, for example, the letter A corresponds to a G major chord, the letter B to a C major chord, and the letter C to a D major chord. Left-hand fingerings are indicated with dots next to the fret number: one dot refers to the index finger, two dots to the middle finger, three dots to the ring finger, and four dots to the little finger.

Mixed tablature is a combination of *alfabeto* and conventional tablature. It shows *alfabeto* letters, rhythmic strumming, and tablature all integrated in the same staff. The *alfabeto* letters are placed within the tablature staff. Rhythmic strumming is represented by short vertical lines in the notation which show the direction of the strum: the vertical line pointing up from the bottom line indicates a strum up and the vertical line pointing down from the bottom line indicates a



Figure 2.4. Example of mixed tablature for the Baroque guitar: “Gagliarda,” *Li cinque libri della chitarra alla spagnola*, Giovanni Paolo Foscari, ca.1629.

strum down (fig. 2.4).<sup>36</sup> Mixed tablature “enabled composers to notate in one tablature system every technique and musical nuance that could be expressed in either Italian lute tablature or *alfabeto* notation independently, including fully melodic single-line passages, rhythmic strumming, high-position chords, slurs and trills, and so on.”<sup>37</sup> Mixed tablature reached its ultimate extravagance in the hands of Giovanni Paolo Foscari.

The transition from tablature to standard notation occurred during the mid-to late-eighteenth century. Examples exist of instruction methods that included both tablature and standard notation, which were likely published to help students more easily make the transition between these two forms of notation. Such an example is the *Méthode de Guittarre par musique et tablature*, published in 1773 by Jean-Antoine Bailleux.<sup>38</sup> This method was intended for the five-course

<sup>36</sup> James Tyler, *The Early Guitar: A History and Handbook* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 68.

<sup>37</sup> Tyler and Sparks, 63.

<sup>38</sup> Antoine Bailleux, *Méthode de Guittare par musique et tablature* (Paris: L’éditeur, 1773; facsimile reproduction, Geneva: Minkoff, 1980).



Figure 2.5. Example of corresponding tablature and standard notation for the Baroque guitar: “Folies d’Espagne,” Antoine Bailieux, l’éditeur, *Méthode de guitare par musique et tablature*, 1773.

Baroque guitar and is one of the earliest examples of corresponding tablature and standard notation staves.<sup>39</sup> The tablature was notated in the French style using letters rather than numbers to indicate which frets to press.<sup>40</sup> For example, *a* indicates the open string, *b* the first fret, and *c* the second fret.<sup>41</sup> The correspondence between the tablature and standard notation is illustrated in this excerpt from *Méthode de Guittarre par musique et tablature* (fig. 2.5). The standard notation follows the emerging convention of notating guitar music on a single treble clef staff displaced up by one octave.

The supersession of tablature by standard notation coincided with the emergence of the early six-string guitar. It was also during this transition the standard tuning for the six-string guitar was established: E<sub>2</sub> A<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>. Standard notation for guitar, which was adopted directly from violin notation, was placed in the treble clef on a single staff, sounding an octave lower than written.

<sup>39</sup> The Baroque guitar in this method was tuned thus: A<sub>3</sub> A<sub>2</sub> D<sub>4</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>.

<sup>40</sup> Tyler, *A Guide to Playing the Baroque Guitar*, 11. Tyler explains French tablature here: “The top line of the five-line staff represents the first course and the bottom line represents the fifth—the reverse of Italian tablature; the letters sit above the relevant line or, occasionally, bisect the line.”

<sup>41</sup> Tyler, *The Early Guitar: A History and Handbook*, 65-6.



Figure 2.6. Example of primitive standard notation: “Thema,” Ferdinando Carulli, *Variations pour la Guitarre*, ca.1807.

In his dissertation “The Birth of the Classic Guitar and Its Cultivation in Vienna, Reflected in the Career and Compositions of Mauro Giuliani (d. 1829),” Thomas Heck charts the evolution of standard notation through three phases: primitive standard notation, intermediate standard notation, and advanced standard notation. Each were categorized by their varying degrees of accuracy for portraying how the music actually sounded. Primitive standard notation for the guitar looked similar to violin notation from which it was adopted. This notation’s main deficiency, however, was that it did not present the harmony and melody as separate voices. All note stems pointed in the same direction therefore showing no clear differentiation between the melody and accompaniment.<sup>42</sup> One-voice notation indicates when a note starts but not necessarily when it ends. It is similar to tablature in this regard because of its general disregard of note durations. Ferdinando Carulli’s *Variations pour la Guitarre* (ca.1807) is an example of primitive standard notation for the guitar (fig. 2.6). The evolution from primitive

<sup>42</sup> Thomas F. Heck, *Mauro Giuliani: Virtuoso Guitarist and Composer* (Columbus, OH: Editions Orphée, 1995), 143.

standard notation to intermediate was expressed by the increased level of detail and accuracy for showing the guitar's capabilities as a polyphonic instrument.

Heck comments:

The guitar in reality had the depth and dimension of a polyphonic instrument from the beginning, being the rightful inheritor of the techniques, resources, and notation of the lute. Lute tablature had never revealed to the eye the 'depth' of musical texture which it contained, and still there is polyphony. When the guitar took on the notation of the violin, the *de facto* existence of two or more parts in the music was likewise not made to stand out visually, at first.<sup>43</sup>

Examples of intermediate standard notation can be found in the printed music of guitarist and composer Mauro Giuliani. Different voices are clearly distinguished by the direction of the note stems: those that point up show the upper voices and those that point down show the lower voices. An additional feature in intermediate standard notation was the use of rests to more clearly indicate note durations, shown here in figure 2.7.



Figure 2.7. Example of intermediate standard notation: "Tema," Mauro Giuliani, *Otto Variazioni per la chitarra sola*, Op. 6, ca.1810.

During the early nineteenth century guitarist and composer Fernando Sor was involved in the development of standard notation for the guitar, even

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas F. Heck, "The Birth of the Classic Guitar and Its Cultivation in Vienna, Reflected in the Career and Compositions of Mauro Giuliani (d. 1829)" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1970), 155.



Figure 2.8a. Example of guitar notation in two staves at actual pitch: *Fantaisie pour la Guitare*, Op. 7, Fernando Sor, 1st ed., 1814.



Figure 2.8b. Example of standard guitar notation: *Fantaisie pour la Guitare*, Op. 7, Fernando Sor, 2nd ed., ca.1817-22.

experimenting with guitar music notated in two staves. Sor's *Fantaisie pour la Guitare*, Op. 7 was first published in 1814 by Ignaz Pleyel. In this first edition the music was written in two staves: bass clef for the lower voices and G clef or C clef for the upper voices. The music was also written at pitch rather than being displaced by an octave to fit on the treble clef staff. Its appearance is closer to that of piano notation rather than guitar notation and Brian Jeffrey speculates that Sor's approach was inspired by conversations with Pleyel, who was a skilled pianist.<sup>44</sup> This notation, however, likely proved impractical and was quickly replaced in subsequent editions with standard guitar notation a few years after its first publication. In the second edition, published ca.1817-1822, Op. 7 appeared in what we now think of as conventional standard notation for the guitar. Figure 2.8a

<sup>44</sup> Fernando Sor, *Fernando Sor: The Complete Works for Guitar in Facsimiles of the Original Editions Volume 1 Guitar solos: Opus numbers 1-9*, edited with notes and commentaries by Brian Jeffrey (London: Tecla Editions, 1982), 2.

shows Op. 7 notated in two staves (1814) and figure 2.8b shows the same work notated in a single treble clef staff (ca. 1817-1822).

Advanced standard notation began appearing later in the century in the music of composers such as Napoléon Coste (1805-1883). This notation attempted to display with even greater accuracy the durations of notes and separate voices. In this example, the music is notated in three voices. The two upper melodic lines are clearly differentiated by the direction of their stems, and great care is taken to show exactly how long the notes in the lower voice ring. Three-voice notation for the guitar likely proved impracticable but should be noted as one of the important experiments in guitar notation.



Figure 2.9. Example of advanced standard notation: “Tarantelle,” Napoléon Coste, *Vingt-cinq Études de genre pour guitare*, Op. 38, ca. 1873.

The guitar flourished in America during the nineteenth century. The influence of European guitar traditions, the advent of mass-produced guitars, and a burgeoning music publishing industry all contributed to its popularity. In his book *The Guitar in America: Victorian Era to Jazz Age*, Jeffrey Noonan states:

By 1880, the scene had been set for the guitar to play a new role in America’s musical culture. It retained a cachet of European cultivation derived from its association with Old World nobility, yet served to accompany informal music-making across America. While it could be easily taught by rote and its tunes passed along orally, most of the guitar’s repertoire continued to be transmitted in formal, standardized notation. Recognized as a less expensive stand-in for the piano, the guitar offered



lower-middle-class Americans access to the uplifting influence of music's meliorating powers.<sup>45</sup>

The Board of Music Trade of the United States of America's *Complete Catalogue of Sheet Music and Musical Works, 1870*, a compilation of the 20 leading music publishers, included entries for 2,310 songs with guitar accompaniment, 703 guitar solos, ten guitar duets, nine guitar and piano duets, 20 guitar and violin or flute duets, and 34 instruction methods for the guitar.<sup>46</sup> From this one source, we can see the extent of the influence and popularity of the guitar in America.

Popular American compositions, including marches, quicksteps, fandangos, waltzes, and galops, appeared alongside the classical compositions of European composers such as Fernando Sor, Matteo Carcassi, Mauro Giuliani, and Dionisio Aguado.<sup>47</sup> Repertoire and instruction methods were written in standard notation and performers were expected to read music. The growing popularity of the guitar in America was reflected in the number of guitar methods published, which often imitated European methods by composers such as Fernando Sor and Matteo Carcassi. Early examples of American methods include J. Siegling's *Complete Instructor for the Spanish and English Guitar, Harp, Lute, and Lyre* (1820) and Otto Torp's *New and Improved Method for the Spanish Guitar* (1828, 1834). The

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<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey J. Noonan, *The Guitar in America: Victorian Era to Jazz Age* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 19.

<sup>46</sup> Board of Music Trade of the United States of America, *Complete Catalogue of Sheet Music and Musical Works, 1870*, unabridged reprint of first edition published in 1871 (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 260-9, 568. The inclusion of *Carcassi's Method for Guitar* and *Carulli's Method for Guitar* reflects the European pedagogical influence.

<sup>47</sup> The 1894 *Royal Collection of Instrumental Guitar Music* included titles such as "Opera March," "Hunters' Quickstep," "Spanish Fandango," "Gipsy Waltz," and "Blue Eyes Galop." See Figure 2.12 for Henry Worrall's arrangement of "Spanish Fandango."

EXERCISE 1, for the thumb and first and second fingers of the right hand on the first three strings.



Whenever a note in guitar music has a double stem, it implies that it is a bass note, and ought to be struck with the thumb of the right hand. And when any of the stopped notes in a passage are longer in their duration than others, the fingers of the left hand must be kept down the full time ;—otherwise, the notes would be shortened, and the effect of the passage destroyed.

Figure 2.10. Example of right-hand arpeggio exercise in early American guitar method: *The Elements of Guitar-Playing*, James Ballard, 1838, p.15.

most important, however, were James Ballard's *The Elements of Guitar-Playing* (1838) and *The Guitar Preceptor* (1838), which borrowed heavily from Fernando Sor's 1830 *Méthode pour la Guitare*.<sup>48</sup> Not only was the music notated in standard notation rather than tablature, it also reflected the emerging quality and attention to detail found in its European counterparts. Figure 2.10 shows an example of a right-hand arpeggio exercise in *The Elements of Guitar-Playing* with specific instructions for the right and left hands.<sup>49</sup> The right-hand thumb articulates the bass notes, which are indicated by their double stems and half-note durations. The right-hand index and middle fingers pluck the second and first strings respectively. The left-hand fingers are instructed to remain down so that each note rings for its indicated duration.

<sup>48</sup> James Ballard, *The Elements of Guitar-Playing* (New York: Geid and Walker, 1838), and James Ballard, *The Guitar Preceptor* (New York: Geib and Walker, 1838). The original copy of *The Elements of Guitar-Playing* referenced for this study is located at the Library of Congress (M125.B). It is important to note the author was not able to definitively establish which edition this original copy is. The title page provides only the year 1838.

<sup>49</sup> Ballard, *The Elements of Guitar-Playing*, 15.



Figure 2.11. Example of arrangement in open G tuning written in standard notation: “Fandango,” *The Guitar Preceptor*, James Ballard, 1838, mm. 1-5.

One of the most important developments in guitar notation appeared in the *The Guitar Preceptor*, which was the inclusion of a song titled “Fandango” in open G tuning (D<sub>2</sub> G<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> D<sub>4</sub>). The music written for this composition is in standard notation but the notes are adjusted so that the performer may read and play the music as if the guitar were in standard tuning. The music states thus: “The Fandango is written as if the Guitar were tuned in the usual manner.”<sup>50</sup> This is the earliest known publication of this very popular and ubiquitous song better known as the “Spanish Fandango.”<sup>51</sup> It is also important to point out this arrangement is written in three voices, which consist of an alternating bass line, melody line, and an inner harmony (fig. 2.11). This example, therefore, could be considered advanced standard notation, which predates the Napoléon Coste example by over thirty years (see fig. 2.9).

Numerous examples of alternate tunings can be found throughout nineteenth-century guitar literature. Paul Sparks cites Henri Montan Berton’s

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<sup>50</sup> James Ballard, *The Guitar Preceptor*, 16. It is important to point out this same arrangement of “Fandango” was also included in *The Elements of Guitar-Playing*.

<sup>51</sup> For a detailed history of “Spanish Fandango” see Stephen Wade, *The Beautiful Music All Around Us* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 212-17. Incidentally, the *Complete Catalogue of Sheet Music and Musical Works, 1870* included four entries for “Spanish Fandango.”

*Ronde provencale* in 1803 as one of the earliest examples of a composition using an alternate tuning, where the sixth string E<sub>2</sub> is tuned down to C<sub>2</sub>.<sup>52</sup> Examples of compositions using alternate tunings can be found in American guitar methods, journals, and music folios. Justin Holland provided three examples in his 1874 *Comprehensive Method for the Guitar*: D<sub>2</sub> A<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>; F<sub>2</sub> A<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>; and E<sub>2</sub> G<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>. He explained:

Various modifications in the tuning of the guitar have been introduced by different writers and performers, principally in the bass strings, in order to obtain important bass notes on an open string, and at a lower pitch than otherwise could be done. Writers of the highest repute, Sor, Fossa, Ferranti, Carcassi and others have resorted to this expedient.<sup>53</sup>

Numerous examples of the sixth string being tuned up to G<sub>2</sub> can be found in music published in the *S.S. Stewart Banjo and Guitar Journal*. Repertoire by arranger and composer Henry Worrall began appearing as early as 1853. Worrall's guitar method, *The Eclectic Guitar Instructor*, was first published in 1856 and included his composition "Sebastopol," which was in open D tuning (D<sub>2</sub> A<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> F<sub>3</sub> A<sub>3</sub> D<sub>4</sub>). The introduction states: "This popular piece is intended as an imitation of military music. The harmonics in single notes imitate the bugle. The harmonics in chords imitate a full military band at a distance."<sup>54</sup> Worrall's innovative

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<sup>52</sup> Tyler and Sparks, 248.

<sup>53</sup> Justin Holland, *Comprehensive Method for the Guitar* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1903 and 1908), 103.

<sup>54</sup> Henry Worrall, *The Eclectic Guitar Instructor* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1884), 50. The title page of Worrall's method states: "*The Eclectic Guitar Instructor*: containing elements of music, a series of exercises and examples together with a variety of waltzes, dances, marches, pleasing airs, and a copious selection of vocal songs and duetts (*sic*), designed for seminaries, high schools and private classes."

approaches to the guitar influenced generations of guitar players well into the twentieth century:

While Henry Worrall was not the only parlor guitarist to influence southern rural musicians in the early twentieth century, he was arguably the most influential. His importance derives largely from the simple and popular character of his compositions and arrangements, and his near exclusive use of open tunings. Worrall favored tuning the guitar to an open chord, such as D<sub>2</sub> A<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> F<sub>3</sub> A<sub>3</sub> D<sub>4</sub> (D Major) and D<sub>2</sub> G<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> D<sub>4</sub> (G Major), rather than the accepted standard tuning E<sub>2</sub> A<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>, already in common use. Among blues guitarists of the 1920s, the titles of Worrall's most popular tunes became synonymous with favored open tunings, "Vastopol" (Sebastopol) for D Major and "Spanish" (Spanish Fandango) for G Major.<sup>55</sup>

British finger-style guitarist John Renbourn has speculated that compositions like Henry Worrall's "Sebastopol" and "Spanish Fandango" helped lay the foundation for early finger-style guitar and blues guitar styles that emerged in rural America:

What probably happened was this: When guitars began to be mass produced and widely distributed by mail order in the 1890s, they came complete with little tutor books. The most common ones were by a man called Septimus Winner,<sup>56</sup> who almost invariably included versions of "Sebastopol" and "Spanish Fandango." These fairly simple pieces then would have been the starting point for thousands of rural players around the turn of the century. . . . If you can imagine a field hand sitting down after work and trying to fit an arhoolie [field song] across the basic chords of "Spanish Fandango," then you would be close to the moment of transformation, in my opinion. In early recorded blues—i.e., Charley Patton and his school—the harmonic language (right down to specific chord shapes but with bluesy modifications usually of one finger only) is straight from parlor music. The same is true for early blues in open D compared to "Sebastopol."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Kansas Historical Society, "Henry Worrall Collection, 1853-1902," Library Collection no. 23 <http://www.kshs.org/p/henry-worrall-collection/14139> (accessed June 4, 2012).

<sup>56</sup> *Winner's Instruction Book for the Guitar* and *Winner's Primary School for Guitar* were both sold in the 1894 Sears, Roebuck and Co. mail order catalog.

<sup>57</sup> Jas Obrecht, "Blues Origins: 'Spanish Fandango' and 'Sebastopol'," *Pure Guitar* No. 2 <http://pureguitar.com/features/2013/02/19/blues-origins-spanish-fandango-and-sebastopol-2/> (accessed February 20, 2013).

The broad dissemination of printed music for these songs and their popularity turned them into templates for an emerging class of itinerate musicians, who embraced both the alternate tunings and harmonic progressions. One of the most striking features of these compositions, however, was that they were notated in standard notation, with the notes adjusted so the music could be read as if it were in standard tuning. Henry Worrall's arrangement of "Spanish Fandango" in open G tuning instructs the performer to finger the music as if it were tuned "in the ordinary manner"; the music is read and played as if the guitar was in standard tuning (figure 2.12).<sup>58</sup> This notational method—which we first encountered with the arrangement of "Fandango" in James Ballard's *The Guitar Preceptor* (1838)—was part of the balance, a clever expedient, which enabled people who already knew how to read standard notation to immediately start playing the music. Tablature ultimately proved to be better, making it easier to notate and read music in alternate tunings.

Examples of tablature for the guitar began to re-emerge in journals such as the *S.S. Stewart Banjo and Guitar Journal* by at least 1885. These examples catered to amateur musicians who had little musical background and could not read music. The "Short-hand Guitar Method" was marketed "To those who desire to learn a few easy tunes and accompaniments without study." It is important to point out this example is in standard tuning and represents a very simple style of

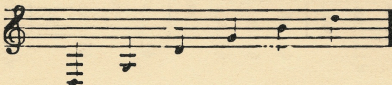
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<sup>58</sup> "Spanish Fandango," arr. by Henry Worrall, *Royal Collection of Instrumental Guitar Music* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1894), 23. Original copyrights for "Spanish Fandango" and "Sebastopol" were registered by Henry Worrall on June 29, 1860. See Wade, 216.





# SPANISH FANDANGO.

Arranged by HENRY WORRALL.

Guitar thus:  and finger as if tuned in the ordinary manner.

*Andante.*

*Introduction.*  *rall*

*Allegro.* *FANDANGO.*  *9th.* *7th.* *5th.* *5th Barre* *7th Bar:* *4th Bar* *5th Bar* *7th Bar*

\* 570-2.

Copyright MDCCLX, by A. C. & J. L. PETERS.

Copyright MDCCLXXXVIII, by H. WORRALL.

Figure 2.12. Example of arrangement in open G tuning written in standard notation: "Spanish Fandango," arr. by Henry Worrall, *Royal Collection of Instrumental Guitar Music*, 1894.

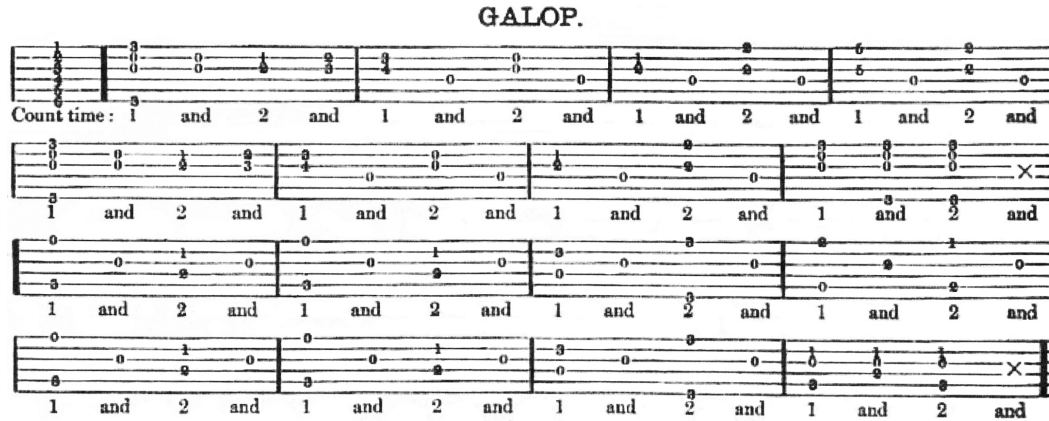


Figure 2.13. Example of early guitar tablature in nineteenth-century America: “Short-hand Guitar Method,” *S.S. Stewart’s Guitar and Banjo Journal*, 1885.

tablature (fig. 2.13).<sup>59</sup> The use of tablature—along with alternate tunings and steel strings—coincided with the expanding role of the guitar in a burgeoning American vernacular music; the guitar was expanding beyond its role as a parlor instrument. The use of tablature often elicited strong rebukes which were aggressively expressed in letters such as this to the *S.S. Stewart Banjo and Guitar Journal* in 1897:

The publishers [of a recent simplified method] are making a strong appeal to favor, and I have no doubt, will do considerable toward elevating the instrument on the downward journey, especially among the class of plunkers whose ideal *guitarist* is a negro armed with a steel string jangle-trap, tuned more or less Spanish, and which he manipulates with the second finger of his left hand, and a mandolin pick. I have three reasons for writing this: First, I am disgusted; Second, I love the guitar; Third, I despise *fakirs* (*sic*).<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> “Short-hand Guitar Method,” in *S.S. Stewart’s Banjo and Guitar Journal* 3, no. 3 (April/May 1885), 6.

<sup>60</sup> *S.S. Stewart’s Banjo and Guitar Journal* 14, no. 1 (April/May 1897): 30. Quoted in Noonan, 52.



The guitar's evolving role in America was reflected in the repertoire played and the performance techniques used. The popularity of ragtime in the late 1890s and early 1900s, and the influence of string bands continued to shape these new, emerging guitar traditions. But it would take years before this music would begin appearing in printed form.

The rising popularity of Hawaiian music in America in the early 1900s marked a significant point in the historical evolution of notation for the guitar. Hawaiian musicians had been touring in America since at least 1901, but it was the 1912 Broadway show *Birds of Paradise* and the 1915 Panama Pacific World Exposition three years later in San Francisco that gave Hawaiian music its broadest exposure in America. This led to an unprecedented demand for Hawaiian music recordings, sheet music, and instruction methods for the Hawaiian lap-style guitar. The introduction to the 1916 lap-style guitar method *The Peterson System of Playing the Guitar with Steel in the Hawaiian Manner* stated thus:

The music produced by the Hawaiian style of playing "Guitar with Steel" is so weirdly beautiful, so hauntingly fascinating that one has only to hear it once to understand its sudden leap into popularity. This popularity was partly brought about by their recent introduction at the Panama Pacific International Exposition (1915) where they were so delightfully played by the many Hawaiian Orchestra's, charming several millions of people with fascinating music which they had never heard before.<sup>61</sup>

The instruction methods that first began to appear were written in standard notation and shortly thereafter in both standard notation and tablature, as is the

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<sup>61</sup> N.B. Bailey, *The Peterson System of Playing the Guitar with Steel in the Hawaiian Manner* (San Francisco: Sherman, Clay & Co., 1916), 6. Incidentally, *The Hawaiian Steel Guitar and Its Great Hawaiian Musicians* lists this title as the first published instruction method for Hawaiian lap-style guitar. It is important to note, however, methods such as the *Kamiki Hawaiian Guitar Method* (1915), which only included standard notation, were published prior to 1916.



Figure 2.14. Example of tablature and standard notation for Hawaiian lap-style guitar: “Spanish Fandango,” arr. by J. Kalani Peterson, *The Peterson System of Playing the Guitar with Steel in the Hawaiian Manner*, 1916.

case with the Peterson method. The tuning commonly used for Hawaiian lap-style guitar is open A (E<sub>2</sub> A<sub>2</sub> E<sub>3</sub> A<sub>3</sub> C<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>), which is analogous to open G tuning (D<sub>2</sub> G<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> D<sub>4</sub>) but sounding a whole step higher. One of the songs included in the Peterson method was the “Spanish Fandango,” arranged by J. Kalani Peterson (fig. 2.14). It is important to note the striking similarities between this 1916 arrangement for Hawaiian lap-style guitar and the arrangement that appeared in James Ballard’s *The Guitar Preceptor* 78 years earlier (see fig. 2.11). Both arrangements are written in three-voice standard notation. In the 1916 arrangement, however, the standard notation shows the actual pitches being sounded. This is likely because of the corresponding tablature staff, which explicitly shows which notes to play and where to play them. Additional lap-style guitar notation examples include arrangements of popular Hawaiian tunes arranged for lap-style guitar such as “Aloha Oe: Farewell to Thee.” Including corresponding standard notation and tablature staves, many of these examples reveal an impressive level of detail and editorial information. Bob Kaai’s 1940 solo guitar arrangement of “Aloha Oe: Farewell to Thee” included right-hand

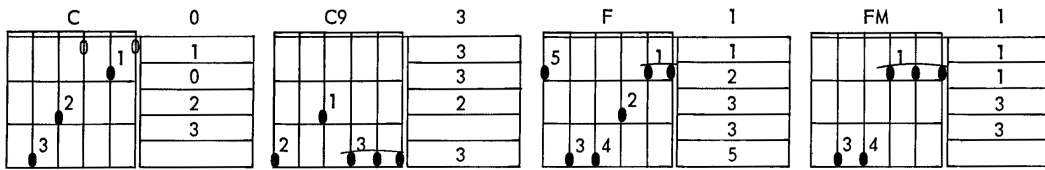


Figure 2.15. Example of tablature and standard notation for Hawaiian lap-style guitar with editing: “Aloha Oe: Farewell to Thee,” Queen Lydia Lili’uokalani, arr. by Bob Kaai, 1940.

editing and chord names. It is important to note the right-hand editing found in this arrangement uses the same system found in many European and American guitar methods and repertoire from the previous century. The right-hand thumb is represented by  $\times$ , the index finger by  $\bullet$ , and the middle finger by  $\bullet\bullet$  (fig. 2.15).

A new, contemporary view of finger-style guitar began to emerge during the mid-twentieth century, one that embodied the vibrant voice of American vernacular music traditions such as ragtime, country blues, and American popular song. A new generation of artists began synthesizing and distilling this music on the guitar, and in doing so introduced new, innovative techniques. A new chapter in the evolution of finger-style guitar was beginning. Not surprisingly, the popularity of this music soon led to the first finger-style guitar methods being published. Perhaps one of the best examples was the *Chet Atkins' Guitar Method in Diagrams and Notes*, published in 1954. This method was thoughtfully laid out to provide people without classical tutelage a resource for learning how to play this hugely popular guitar style. It included both arrangements and original compositions by Chet Atkins. The layout was unique in that it provided chord

a. “When You and I Were Young Maggie,” chord diagrams.



b. “When You and I Were Young Maggie,” tablature, mm.1-4.

3. G7	3. C 0.	C	3 C9	1 F	1 F
0 -	1 - 1 3.	1. - 3. -	1. - -	1 1.	
0 -	0 - 0	0 - 3 -	2 - -	2. 2.	
3 3	2 2 2 2.	2 2 2 2	3 3 3	3 3.	
2 X	3. X	3. X X	3 X 3. X	3 3.	
3.	3.	3.	1.	1.	

c. “When You and I Were Young Maggie,” standard notation, mm.1-4.



Figure 2.16. Example of early finger-style guitar method with chord diagrams, tablature, and standard notation: “When You and I Were Young Maggie,” J.A. Butterfield, arr. by Chet Atkins, *Chet Atkins’ Guitar Method in Diagrams and Notes*, 1954.

diagrams, tablature, and standard notation for each song. The chords were presented in two formats. The first chord diagram showed which frets to finger and which left-hand fingers to use; the second simply showed the fret numbers to be fingered. The first chord diagram represented the guitar neck vertically and the second horizontally. A notable feature of the tablature was how it explicitly instructed the left hand to finger the entire chord, rather than just the notes that are being plucked, which are indicated by a dot placed to the right of the note. A strum down with the thumbpick on the right-hand thumb—referred to as a

‘stroke’—is indicated with an ‘x’ beneath the lowest note of the chord (often on beats two and four). Additional notes struck during the strum down are indicated with a dash symbol above each tablature line, which appears as such: — . The method also provided technical instructions showing how to mute the bass notes, which was one of the distinctive features of Atkins’ sound:

To get the effect that you hear when you listen to Chet Atkins play these tunes, you must keep the inside edge of your hand slightly touching the strings that you play your bass and stroke on. This gives the strings a muffled or choked effect.<sup>62</sup>

Figure 2.16 provides an excerpt from Atkins’ arrangement of J.A. Butterfield’s “When You and I Were Young Maggie,” which shows the three methods for displaying information: chord diagrams, tablature, and standard notation.

The rediscovery of an entire generation of country blues artists such as Blind Blake, Mississippi John Hurt, Rev. Gary Davis, and Leadbelly, all of whom had virtually disappeared earlier in the century, inspired a new generation of guitar players in the 1950s and 60s to learn and document the repertoire performed by these artists’. The struggles of notating these early vernacular guitar traditions is clearly illustrated in the notational examples from this period. Music was transmitted aurally and visually between musicians, but rarely notated on the printed page. Compositions would often evolve dramatically over time which resulted in songs being performed differently from performance to performance, and by many different musicians. Some of the music is preserved on 78 RPM

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<sup>62</sup> Chet Atkins, *Chet Atkins’ Guitar Method in Diagrams and Notes* (Nashville, TN: Acuff-Rose Publications, 1954), 4.

recordings but there is little visual documentation of *how* the music was played nor the techniques used. It was during this period that finger-style guitar instruction books attempting to document and teach the music of these artists began to be published. Highlighting the challenges of notating these oral traditions, the printed music often provided an approximation of the song and varying degrees of editorial information—what Charles Seeger would define as prescriptive notation. In *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book* from 1964, Hally Wood, who had been hired to transcribe the music, voiced her thoughts on notating vernacular music traditions:

Many who buy [this] book will not be able to read music (a difficulty with putting together any book of folk music). And there's no reason they should. Learning from listening is unquestionably the best way, the only way that suits this kind of music. You're setting the notes down for a record of what happened, a record that can be studied, preserved, and so on—a necessary and useful companion to the recordings of the actual sounds. I keep thinking of this as I transcribe: if you could do it, it would be good to have a legend across each page reading: "Listen to the record if you want to learn the song."<sup>63</sup>

One of the earliest examples of a finger-style guitar instruction method focusing on a specific artist was *The Folksinger's Guide to the 12-String Guitar As Played by Leadbelly*, published in 1965 and advertised as the first instruction method for the 12-string guitar.<sup>64</sup> Authored by Julius Lester and Pete Seeger, it included musical examples notated in tablature from specific songs by Huddie Ledbetter.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> John Cohen, Mike Seeger, and Hally Wood, *The New Lost City Ramblers Song Book* (New York: Oak Publications, 1964), 6.

<sup>64</sup> Julius Lester and Pete Seeger, *The Folksinger's Guide to the 12-String Guitar As Played by Leadbelly* (New York: Oak Publications, 1965).

<sup>65</sup> It should be noted that Huddie Ledbetter was better known as Leadbelly.

Now, there's something else important to note here. He lifts up the fingers of his left hand, dampening the strings, lifting them up all the way off the string, on the second beat of every measure, like this:

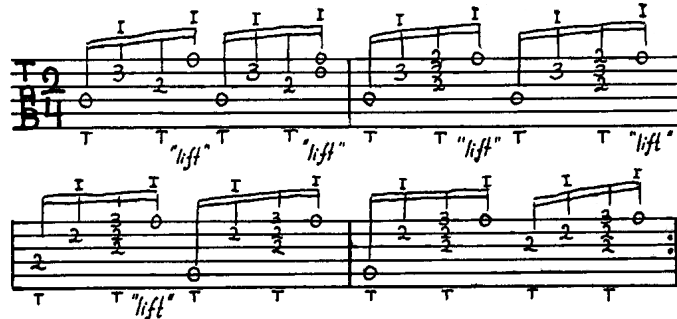


Figure 2.17. Example of early finger-style guitar tablature: “Green Corn,” Huddie Ledbetter, *The Folksinger’s Guide to the 12-String Guitar As Played by Leadbelly*, 1965.

Detailed instructions explained the integral workings of Leadbelly’s guitar style such as walking bass lines, accompaniment parts, and techniques such as the left-hand “lift.” This illustrates how a specific technique for getting the music to sound right was explained and notated (fig. 2.17). Notice that the word “lift” is literally written at the point where the left hand lifts. Another noteworthy feature of this tablature is the inclusion of rhythmic stems above the tablature, a practice not often seen in the majority of published finger-style guitar repertoire.

Pete Seeger’s guitar instrumental “Living in the Country” was included in the 1966 song collection *Finger-Picking Styles for Guitar*.<sup>66</sup> Though not integrated, standard notation and tablature were both included. The standard

<sup>66</sup> Happy Traum, *Finger-Picking Styles for Guitar* (New York: Oak Publications, 1966), 54-5. Pete Seeger’s “Living in the Country” had a profound impact on Leo Kottke’s guitar playing. It is important to note, however, that Kottke did not learn it from the printed music but by ear from Pete Seeger’s 1962 live recording *The Bitter and the Sweet*. Kottke recorded his own arrangements of “Living in the Country” in 1968 on *12 String Blues/Live at the Scholar*, 1970 on *Circle ‘Round the Sun*, 1973 on *My Feet Are Smiling*, and 2005 as a duet with Mike Gordon on *Sixty Six Steps*.

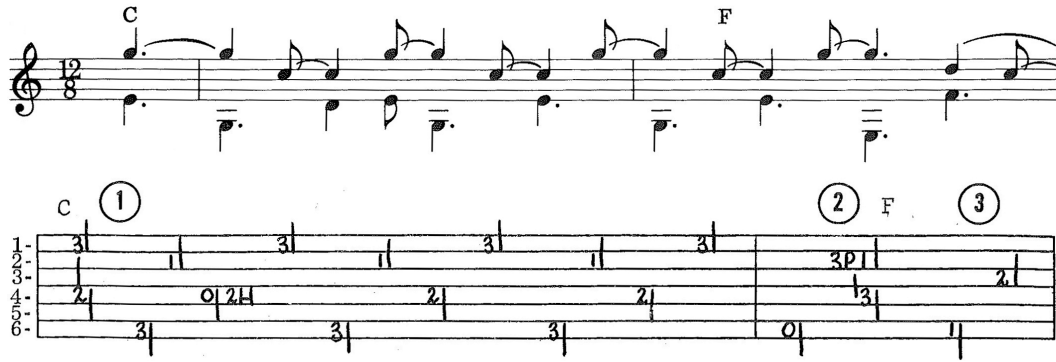


Figure 2.18. Example of early finger-style guitar standard notation and tablature: “Living in the Country,” Pete Seeger, *Finger-Picking Styles for Guitar*, 1966, mm. 1-7 in the standard notation and mm. 1-6 in the tablature.

notation was in one voice and did not distinguish between the melody or bass notes. It could, therefore, be considered primitive standard notation. Editing in the tablature did provide right-hand fingerings: *T* for thumb, *I* for index finger, *M* for middle finger, and *R* for ring finger (fig. 2.18). Like figure 2.17, it is worth noting the tablature does include rhythmic stems.

Many of these early finger-style guitar collections were difficult to read and were criticized for their lack of accuracy and information, as Ken Perlman pointed out in the introduction to his book *Fingerstyle Guitar*, published in 1980: “The first real fingerpicking books appeared in the late 1960s. Written by such players as Happy Traum, Stefan Grossman, and Jerry Silverman, these books were usually collections of guitar arrangements that included little or no instruction or playing directions. These arrangements were often written out in





eccentric tablature systems that were hard to understand even if you were familiar with how the tune should sound.”<sup>67</sup> Perlman would likely have included this musical example of Rev. Gary Davis’ song “Cocaine Blues” in his assessment (fig. 2.19). What makes this particular example so fascinating is how little information is provided, especially in the tablature, for how incredibly complicated the song actually is.

There are examples, however, that represent important steps forward in the evolution of printed music for finger-style guitar—methods that provide notation that is readable with clear instructions to the student. *The Art of Ragtime Guitar* (1974) is a collection of original pieces by guitarist and composer Richard Saslow. The instructions, analysis, and editing are detailed and comprehensive, which is in stark contrast to the nearly unreadable tablature in figure 2.19. The forward to the method states:

This book is the first to present the interested student/guitarist with an organized approach to the ragtime style and to attempt a codification of

<sup>67</sup>Ken Perlman, *Fingerstyle Guitar* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 3.

The image shows a musical score for a guitar piece. At the top, there are two chord diagrams. The first is a C major chord, labeled 'I', with fingerings 3 2 1 4. The second is an Ab7 chord, labeled 'IV', with fingerings 1 2 4 3. Below these is a musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The staff contains two measures of music. Below the staff is a guitar tablature. The first measure of the tablature has fret numbers 3, 2, 1, 4, with a '3m' (mute) and '0m' (mute) indicated. The second measure has fret numbers 4, 5, 4, 4, with a '4i' (bend) indicated. The score is divided into two measures, labeled 1 and 2.

Figure 2.20. Example of finger-style guitar method from 1974: “Boogaloo Down La Rue,” Richard Saslow, *The Art of Ragtime Guitar*, 1974, mm. 1-2.

the style’s many techniques. Thus, in the *Index of Ragtime Guitar Techniques*, such newly coined words and phrases as “Overfretting” and “Guide Strings,” are attempts to describe and explain guitar techniques never before treated in print.<sup>68</sup>

While this musical example does share some of the same characteristics of previous examples, such as the layout of the tablature and standard notation, it is important to note the level of editorial detail in the tablature, including chord diagrams and right- and left-hand fingerings (fig. 2.20). In this method, however, rhythmic stems were not provided in the tablature.

Also of historical significance is the book *The Best of John Fahey* (1959-1977), which includes arrangements and original compositions by John Fahey. Published in 1978, it represents one of the first collections of solo finger-style guitar repertoire composed or arranged specifically for the steel-string acoustic guitar. The introduction states:

<sup>68</sup> Richard Saslow, *The Art of Ragtime Guitar* (Berkeley: Green Note Music Publications, 1974), 5.



Figure 2.21. Example of finger-style guitar notation from 1978: “Last Steam Engine Train,” arr. by John Fahey, *The Best of John Fahey (1959-1977)*, 1978, mm. 1-2.

In this striking book you’ll find over 120 pages of exact, note-for-note transcriptions, with tablature, of every song that appears on John’s Takoma Records album, *The Best of Fahey (1959-1977)*. You’ll also learn the tunings most favored by this reigning monarch of ‘American primitive’ guitar. But that’s not all you’ll find. John has embroidered this book with his thoughts on guitaring and with his tales of Blind Joe Death (John’s alter-ego) and the other surreal characters from his bizarre, yet refreshing, imagination. With photos, discography, and a brief account of John’s musical life—all you need to play and experience the best of John Fahey.<sup>69</sup>

While much of the commentary by Fahey is informative and entertaining, it provides little information as to how the music is actually played. The typesetting style, which includes both standard notation and tablature, is readable but does not provide any editorial information. For example, there are no right- or left-hand fingerings indicated in the music. Nor is there any discussion of Fahey’s guitar technique and his use of a thumbpick and fingerpicks. Fahey is rather explicit in deemphasizing technique and dismissive of learning the music from the printed

<sup>69</sup> John Fahey, *The Best of John Fahey (1959-1977)* (New York: Guitar Player Books, 1978), 178.

page. In keeping with this philosophy, it's important to point out Leo Kottke learned "Last Steam Engine Train" directly from Fahey, not from the printed page (fig. 2.21).

This concise survey of guitar notation and tablature reveals a diverse and often disparate mix of notational conventions and varying degrees of editorial information. Most importantly, perhaps, it highlights the fact that guitar notation is often not up to the task of notating the nuances and subtleties in this complex music. Unfortunately, current finger-style guitar notation suffers even more so today from a general lack of consistency, accuracy, and readability. In recent years, the market has been flooded with finger-style guitar methods and music folios; many of these publications continue to reinforce and perpetuate the persistently low and disparate standards often applied to finger-style guitar notation. This is a disservice to the composer and the student committed to learning the music, who is often left on their own to sort through the chaos. Andrew Larder, a leading authority on the music of Leo Kottke, articulated this point beautifully in a recent interview: "Transcribing and teaching a piece of music incorrectly is the same as promoting fiction as fact in a history book."<sup>70</sup>

### The Music of Leo Kottke

When *20th Century Masters of Finger-Style Guitar* was published in 1982 it established a new standard for accuracy and thoroughness in finger-style guitar

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<sup>70</sup> Andrew Larder, interview by author, November 11, 2013.

transcription, notation, and research. The level of detail and clarity was unparalleled and it remains a milestone in music publishing. It recognized finger-style guitar as a legitimate art form with a diverse technique and vast history rooted in the American experience. It also recognized the importance of documenting and preserving the music through high-quality and accurate transcriptions. The goals in the introduction were stated thus:

- 1) To define this style of guitar playing through its history and technique in order to gain for it recognition as an important style in itself.
- 2) To transcribe this music, thereby making it accessible to all guitarists.
- 3) To restore the quality and accuracy to published music of this style that befits the artists represented in this book and the people reading it.<sup>71</sup>

Along with works by Norman Blake, John Fahey, Joseph Spence, Ry Cooder, and Peter Lang, it also featured the first two published transcriptions of Leo Kottke repertoire, transcribed and edited by John Stropes: “Easter and The Sargasso Sea” and “The Prodigal Grave” (fig. 2.22). In addition, it provided one of the earliest informed discussions on the history and technique of finger-style guitar. This included artist biographies and historical information about the each song. The study notes and editing in the transcriptions provided exact fingerings and explanations of the techniques unique to each artist. The student was given all the necessary resources to perform the music as the composer intended.

The collaboration between John Stropes and Leo Kottke that began after the release of *20th Century Masters of Finger-Style Guitar* led to the publication of *Leo Kottke: Eight Songs* (1986), which was a collection of eight compositions

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<sup>71</sup> Stropes and Lang, 6.

# PRODIGAL GRAVE

Open D tuning (one half-step low), D<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> d<sup>b</sup> f a<sup>b</sup> d<sup>b</sup>  
♩ = 192

Leo Kottke  
Transcribed by John Stropes

83

© 1970 Symposium Music

Figure 2.22. Earliest published transcription of Leo Kottke composition: “Prodigal Son,” Leo Kottke, *20th Century Masters of Finger-Style Guitar*, 1982, mm. 1-23.

meticulously transcribed and edited by Stropes.<sup>72</sup> This collaboration introduced a new model for transcribing and typesetting finger-style guitar repertoire, one that directly involved the artist. Video footage of Kottke playing and discussing the compositions was integral to the transcription process. For the first time, the idiomatic features of his right- and left-hand technique could be explained and notated with an unprecedented level of clarity. Like *20th Century Masters of Finger-Style Guitar* before it, this groundbreaking book established new precedents and introduced a new model for codifying the subtleties and nuances in Kottke's music. At an event celebrating the book's release John Stropes stated:

The fact that people can't play Leo's music right now indicates they simply haven't been able to figure it out. It's very complex music. You can spend weeks at your record player at half speed and still not understand how it's done, so this [book] represents a major breakthrough and the editing makes it possible to use this material in studio teaching very effectively. And it also makes it an important source of repertoire for people playing other styles of guitar. It has applications both in teaching and performance. . . . The comparison I would make is to Villa Lobos' preludes and etudes.<sup>73</sup>

Since the release of *Leo Kottke: Eight Songs*, Stropes has continued working closely with Kottke and has, as of this writing, published 29 additional transcriptions of Leo Kottke compositions.<sup>74</sup>

Perhaps the most egregious examples of printed Leo Kottke repertoire have appeared in the numerous guitar magazines currently available. In

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<sup>72</sup> John Stropes, *Leo Kottke: Eight Songs* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1986).

<sup>73</sup> John Stropes, book release event for *Leo Kottke: Eight Songs*, Hal Leonard Music Publishing, Milwaukee, WI, November 14, 1986, digitized cassette tape.

<sup>74</sup> See [www.stropes.com](http://www.stropes.com) for a complete list of Leo Kottke compositions published by Stropes Editions.

Open-G Tuning: D G D G B D

♩ = 150

Chords: C D Em D/A Em C D

Figure 2.23. “Cherry Hill,” Leo Kottke, *Acoustic Guitar*, 2006, mm. 1-4.

all fairness, the goal of these publications is to sell magazines, not publish a score that accurately represents the music; providing a readable transcription with the necessary editorial information to play the composition as the composer intended is secondary. This musical excerpt from 2006 provides an example of how finger-style guitar repertoire frequently appears in these publications (fig. 2.23). While the accompanying interview to this transcription does provide valuable insight into the idiomatic features of Kottke’s playing, none of this is reflected in the transcription itself.<sup>75</sup> There are no right- or left-hand fingerings indicated, nor are there rhythmic stems included in the tablature. One might assume this basic information would automatically be included in all tablature but a cursory glance at the majority of current finger-style guitar notation shows otherwise.

Two books of Leo Kottke compositions have been published by Mark Hanson: *The Music of Leo Kottke* (1991) and *Leo Kottke Transcribed* (1993). Shortcomings in these books are highlighted by a general lack of clarity and understanding of Kottke’s technique and music. In this excerpt from “Little Beaver” in *The Music of Leo Kottke*, the most critical errors are the incorrect left-

<sup>75</sup> Teja Gerken, “Fingerstyle Drive,” *Acoustic Guitar* 16, no. 9 (March 2006): 52-60.



♩ = 220    Tuning: D A d g b e'

Figure 2.24a. “Little Beaver,” *The Music of Leo Kottke*, Mark Hanson, 1991, mm. 1-4.

D<sub>2</sub> A<sub>2</sub> D<sub>3</sub> G<sub>3</sub> B<sub>3</sub> E<sub>4</sub>

♩ = 92

Figure 2.24b. “Little Beaver,” Stropes Editions, 2010, mm. 1-3.

and right-hand fingerings, which are fundamental to understanding Kottke’s technique (fig. 2.24a). Technical suggestions included at the beginning of the transcription do provide some general information: “Leo’s right thumb is very busy in this piece. It does a lot of muting of the bass strings in addition to its picking. . . . Finger most of the *D*-chords in this piece with an index-finger barre over the four treble strings.”<sup>76</sup> One technical suggestion provided, however, is incorrect: “For sake of ease, consider damping the four treble strings in measure 1

<sup>76</sup> Hanson, *The Music of Leo Kottke*, 36.

by placing your right-hand fingers on the strings. Then they are ready to pick the last three eighth notes of the measure.”<sup>77</sup> This particular musical effect is produced by the left hand, not the right hand.<sup>78</sup> Additional errors include incorrect right-hand fingerings, the most glaring of which first appears in measure 1 (fig. 2.24a). The editing here instructs the right-hand thumb to play the note on the *and* of the third beat. This note is, in fact, played with the right-hand index finger. The fundamental issue here is incorrect information being presented as fact.

Figure 2.24b provides an excerpt from “Little Beaver” transcribed, edited, and typeset by John Stropes and Andrew Larder, and published by Stropes Editions.<sup>79</sup> This example was developed directly from video of Kottke performing the composition. It is important to point out the meticulous integration of right- and left-hand editing in the tablature, which reflects a deep understanding of the music. This includes correct right- and left-hand fingerings, right-hand string-stopping, and left-hand duration editing; the idiomatic features of Kottke’s technique are clearly notated. For example, it shows how the percussive, rhythmic effect in the opening figure is achieved by the placement and release of the left hand on the D major chord, and the use of specific right-hand fingerings and string-stopping. Figure 2.4b demonstrates the current level of work being done by John Stropes and Andrew Lardner to document the music of Leo Kottke. The musical examples developed by the author for this study follow their model.

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<sup>77</sup> Hanson, *The Music of Leo Kottke*, 36.

<sup>78</sup> See m. 1, downbeat of beat three in Figures 2.24a and 2.24b.

<sup>79</sup> Leo Kottke, “Little Beaver,” transcribed and edited by John Stropes and Andrew Lardner (Racine, WI: Stropes Editions, 2010).

## Conclusion

Many finger-style guitar composers did not write their music out.

Although much of it is preserved on audio or video recordings, many of the techniques required to play the music still have not been adequately codified and preserved. The transition of oral traditions to written ones frequently reveals the limitations of displaying highly complex information on the printed page. Traditional notation systems are often imposed upon these unwritten forms, forcing the music into standardized conventions and frameworks, failing to realize that new techniques require new notational methods. In his book *The Ethnomusicologist*, Mantle Hood stated, “Changes in a given music notation are not brought about so much by cultivation—that is, a conscious striving to improve the system for the sake of the system—as by change and innovation in the tradition of music making. In other words, a system of notation develops in direct response to the developments of musical expression.”<sup>80</sup> The goals of the transcriptions and musical examples developed for this thesis are multidimensional: document and preserve the music, better understand and therefore integrate the techniques required to play the music, chart and document the history and evolution of the composition, and create a printed score from which the music can be performed as the composer intended.

The music of Leo Kottke continues to require and inspire new innovative notational methods. The transcription and typesetting of Kottke’s music has both

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<sup>80</sup> Mantle Hood, *The Ethnomusicologist* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1971), 63.

musicological and pedagogical applications. It is an historical account of how he performed a specific composition, as well as how it evolved over time. The transcription can communicate the idiomatic features of the music, finding a balance between the complexity of the printed music while maintaining its readability. The beauty of the music should not be diminished by how it is represented on the printed page. Understanding and notating the complexity and nuance found in this repertoire requires an extraordinary attention to detail; it should express the composer's intent. The process of learning the music from the printed page should be inspiring, not discouraging. These transcriptions are historical documents; they are roadmaps for learning and understanding the music, and they are also works of art. The transcription should be given the same care and attention the composer gave the composition. Edward Tufte comments in the introduction to his book *Envisioning Information*, "The world is complex, dynamic, multidimensional; the paper is static, flat. How are we to represent the rich visual world of experience and measurement on mere flatland? To envision information—and what bright and splendid visions can result—is to work at the intersection of image, word, number, art."<sup>81</sup> The transcription and typesetting methodologies presented in this study seek to expand this relationship between the music and the printed page. They strive to find the perfect balance between images, words, numbers, and art to authentically represent the music on the flat plane.

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<sup>81</sup> Edward R. Tufte, *Envisioning Information* (Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 1990), 9.

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