THE EARLY GUITAR IN THE NEW WORLD: Its Route from Seville to Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, and Cubagua (1497–1550)

By Richard T. Pinnell

The Guitar in the Third Voyage of Columbus

The third voyage of Christopher Columbus (1498) was of paramount importance in the history of the guitar. That journey was not only the first of the Columbian voyages to reach South America along the Venezuelan coastline; it was also the first that explicitly included musical instruments and trained musicians. The latter were part of a select list of passengers who were to establish the fullness of the European lifestyle in Santo Domingo, the new capital on the island of Hispaniola.

"Their Catholic Majesties"(*Los Reyes Católicos*), so designated by Pope Alexander VI upon their defeat of the Moors, had already been quite disappointed with the lack of stability and growth in the grim encampments established by Columbus, so this time they proposed a unique list of professions and skills among the passengers to ensure the success of their next venture. In order to address social, physical, and scientific needs along with their political and military strategies, Ferdinand and Isabella sought the inclusion of a wide range of experts in differing fields and vocations. They aimed to ensure that future settlements would not only be defensible but also civilized. Among the admiral's handpicked passengers were artisans, craftsmen, health professionals, and finally the musicians, intended to improve the morale of the settlers.

This remarkable emphasis on music must have resulted from the foresight of Queen Isabella. She was not only educated herself; she had also seen to the musical instruction of her children. The most musical among her own descendants was the *infante* Don Juan. Doña Juana, whose consort Philip would introduce Habsburg rule over Spain, was a lifelong guitarist (Pinnell 1998). So, on 15 June 1497, Their Catholic Majesties read a proclamation to Columbus and gave him a copy for the preparation of his third voyage:

> [From:] The King and Queen.
> [To:] Don Christopher Columbus, our admiral of the high seas, viceroy and governor of the mainland and the islands of the Indies….
>
> It appears to us (with the help of Our Lord God) that there are things that ought to be provided and sent to the Indies for the government and maintenance of the people who are there now and who must go there later. The provisions to be sent in accordance with Divine Will and our own are the following:
>
> First of all, the provisions that we recommend for this first voyage shall include people who have to go and to stay in the said Indies, consisting of three hundred thirty [330] persons according to the classification and quality of their services….
>
> The aforementioned 330 persons ought to be selected by you, our above-named admiral…and ought to be subdivided in this manner: 40 shield bearers, 100 foot-soldiers, 30 sailors, 30 cabin boys, 20 gold-panners, 50 laborers and gardeners, 20 officials (one of each specialty), and 30 women….
>
> At the same time, a physician, a pharmacist, a botanist, and some instruments and women musicians [*músicas*] must go for the pastime of the people who have to be there…
>
> Made at the town of Medina del Campo on 15 June 1497 A.D. [signed]—I THE KING.—I THE QUEEN (Fernández de Navarrete 1859:II 227–30; see also the first edition, 1825:II 203–06).

Unfortunately, we know little about these intrepid women travelers except that the Admiral himself knew all 30 of them and that he solicited their participation in the voyage. At least some of the women who joined the expedition must have been married. Owing to the dangers of that era, women could not travel in Europe, let alone to the brave New World, without an escort. There is evidence of their marital status and even the offspring of their marriages in a document signed by King Ferdinand. After evaluating the results of the settlement's first generation, Ferdinand remarked on the dubious benefits of having brought women from Europe, precisely the 30 women who traveled to Santo Domingo, on the vessel under the command of Captain Antonio de Torres:

> Apparently, some women and children, the first European women and children to reach the New World since the days of the Northmen, had been brought by Torres in his fleet; for [king] Ferdinand says that after the conquest of the island the white population numbered 630, "the major part sick, and many of them women and children" (Morison 1942:490).

Despite their hardships, the women of the voyages proved to be indispensable: they gave life to the European population of the settlement. These valiant women and their husbands were the earliest European couples to arrive in the New World.

The 30 women that Columbus chose for the third voyage sailed with captain Antonio de Torres in three ships that headed west on 21 June 1498, directly for the Spanish fortress (Varela & León 2003:239). However, by design, Columbus had six ships in his fleet. He was holding three caravels and certain of his men in reserve for a heroic new challenge. These brave souls, his most experienced sailors and his most hardened warriors, were destined to fulfill the admiral's aspirations by navigating a more southerly route into uncharted waters in search of *tierra firme* (*sic*), the term Columbus used in his logbook for the ostensible southern landmass (Jane 1988:6). By the time of his arrival at Venezuela's Caribbean shore on 12 August 1498, the 30 female passengers in the fleet had already arrived at Hispaniola.

Figure 1: Musical and Learned Women, book frontispiece (woodcut), Francisco Guerrero, *Sacrae Cantiones* (Seville, 1555).

Who were the musicians among these women? We may safely assume that they had already established reputations for their musical skills; they were probably drawn from among the quasi-professional performers Columbus had known in the elite *tertulias* of Seville. The urban *tertulias* were the elegant, salon-like social gatherings in which women's music flourished during and after the *Siglo de Oro* [Golden Age]. Women convened such gatherings, as they did in the French salons, to discuss news and personal or literary matters; however, music was ordinarily their pretense for gathering in private homes. By meeting privately, women could exhibit their art as well as themselves to best advantage.

The musical participants on such occasions were considered dilettantes and not professional musicians because they were not paid in cash for their services. There were of course plenty of other rewards for their efforts: gifts, benefits, social opportunities, and a captive audience that interested them far more than money. *En route* during their travels, they undoubtedly launched into their specific mission and entertained the passengers and crewmen, particularly during the boring routines of the voyage, such as the doldrums, when progress ceased due to the lack of wind. On the joyous day of the fleet's arrival in July 1498, Santo Domingo would have provided not only the port of arrival of the three supply ships, but also the social milieu and the audience to celebrate the women musicians and their instruments.

Brief snippets of their music are depicted in the plate below **Figure 1**, which served as the frontispiece of Francisco Guerrero's *Sacred Songs* (Seville, 1555), his earliest publication. Its illustrations suggest how some Golden Age women were both learned and musical. The musical woman at the left is reading her music and playing it on her *guitarra* of four courses (or pairs of strings). Without singing, she appears to be playing some of the notes contained in her songbook. No tablature (the instrumental notation of the day) is visible, but rather the composer's staff notation. It implies that she is realizing with her outstretched fingers some of the separate voices of Guerrero's sacred polyphonic songs. Moreover, the learned woman at the right appears to be practicing her geometry while taking a break from reading her songbook now on the floor.

Prototypes of Guitars in the Americas

At the time when guitars began arriving in New World ports, descriptions of those instruments were scarce or lacking entirely. In order to discover what America's earliest guitars were like, we must first consult descriptions of the prototypes: the string instruments at their source—in peninsular Spain, and specifically in Andalusia.

Guitarras and *vihuelas* were of primary importance in the *Declaration of Musical Instruments* that Fray Juan Bermudo published in 1555. By then many guitar types had evolved and were in circulation on the peninsula, and he described them at some length. They were played by all ranks of society and among many musicians, both young and old, ranging from self-taught beginners to literate *aficionados* and extensively trained *virtuosi*. The diversity of players and instruments available at the time is reflected

GUITARS IN BERMUDO'S *DECLARACIÓN DE INSTRUMENTOS MUSICALES* (Osuna, 1555)
(references given in the book's *folios* are abbreviated *f.*, which have recto and verso sides)

name of the instrument	*stringing; tuning intervals between courses*	*use in varying musical styles*	*audiences, venues*
guitarra (f.28v)	4 courses, 4-3-4	popular music	entertainment, dancing.
guitarra (f.28v)	4 courses, 5-3-4	strummed music ("old *romances*")	entertainment, serenading, esp. of the older generation.
vihuela (f.28r)	6 courses, 4-4-3-4-4	plucked art songs; mass, motet, *chanson*	recitals of literate musicians; contemplation or worship.

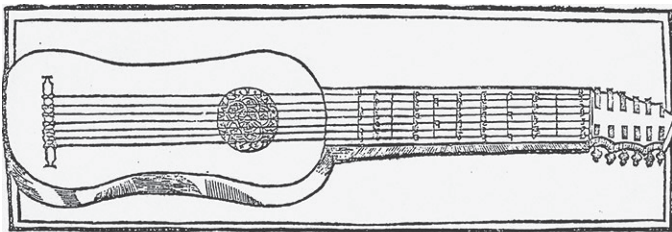

Figure 2: *Vihuela of Seven Courses*, from the section on playing the vihuela; Juan Bermudo, *Declaración de instrumentos musicales* (Osuna, 1555), fol. cx.

in Juan Bermudo's treatise, which emphasized the guitar types that were the most popular, as implied in the space he allotted to them.

Like the guitars of today, *guitarras* and *vihuelas* of that era were used for various purposes by musicians from all levels of society. In general, the ubiquitous *guitarra* was less expensive than the *vihuela*, its larger cousin, and so was played most often by the lower and middle ranks of society. But the *vihuela* was an instrument of prestige. In fact, all sixteenth-century queens of Spain played it: "The *vihuela* is the favorite instrument of our queens" (Anglés 1965:I 57; Pinnell 1998).

Both the *guitarra* and the *vihuela* had double-stringing in courses (paired strings of cured lamb intestine), tuned in unisons or sometimes in octaves except for the first course, which was considered sufficient with only a single string, as on the frontispiece of Guerrero's first book. The doubling of the other courses was intended to increase the instrument's overall volume and resonance.

The frets were made of the same gut material and tied on the necks of the *guitarra* and *vihuela* in carefully measured divisions based on equal temperament. This practice kept them reasonably in tune some two centuries before Bach's *Well Tempered Clavier*. As one recent scholar observed, "The mathematical division of the musical scale in order to fret *vihuelas* with equal temperament was already indicated by Juan Bermudo in 1555" (Romanillos 1987:117).

Thanks to Bermudo, we may derive the tuning of these instruments precisely as he did, by using the intervals of a scale (as shown in the accompanying table). Just as in today's guitar tunings, most of the tunings he specified contained perfect fourths surrounding a major third in the middle. The only exception was the tuning of the strummed guitar used for old *romances*.

Thus, Bermudo aimed at a comprehensive description of the instruments then in use, whose names derived from the terms *guitarra* and *vihuela*. His descriptions are clear; he understood that both instruments belonged to the same family. He noted their differences as well as their similarities:

> *No es otra cosa la guitarra sino una vihuela quitada la sexta y la prima*. [The guitarra is nothing other than a *vihuela* without the sixth and the first courses] (Bermudo 1555:28v.)

More guitar types emerged in differing sizes, with either diminutive or augmentative names to suit, such as *guitarilla*, *guitarrita*, and *vihuela grande*; or with descriptive adjectives in reference to their string setup. In his *Orphenica lyra* (Seville, 1554), Miguel de Fuenllana wrote primarily for the six-course *vihuela*, but he included tablatures for a five-course *vihuela* and a four-course *guitarra* (starting on folio 158).

Guitar Types in the Early Conquests of Hispaniola, Mexico, and the Antilles

Although the instruments that came with the third Columbian voyage remained unspecified, they must have included the popular *guitarra* and the prestigious *vihuela*. The women musicians who brought them to the fortress of Santo Domingo left a legacy of performance. Immediately after their arrival we begin to see the evidence of *vihuelas* in

the Hispanic conquest. The documented proof of guitar-like instruments in the Americas begins with the chronicle of Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas:

VIHUELAS IN THE CONQUEST OF HISPANIOLA (1503–1509)

date, instrument	*place*	*reference*
1503 vihuela	Xaraguá, Hispaniola	Bart. de Las Casas, 1530:II, Ch. 18, p. 28
1509 vihuela	Xaraguá, Hispaniola	Bart. de Las Casas, 1530:II, Ch. 52, p.116

Sadly, at this point in the Hispanic military campaigns, we begin to read of the cruelty inflicted upon the indigenous tribes. Cavalrymen and foot soldiers now initiated the bitter process of securing the rest of the island of Hispaniola by force. Their military objective was the conquest of Xaraguá, the chiefdom or tribal territory (now spelled Jaraguá) located along the southern coast of modern-day Haiti. Yet even during this conflict the officers broke out their *vihuelas* on two documented occasions—periods of relative calm.

In the first instance, in 1503, a lighter moment of the conflict, Las Casas relates the amusing story of how, among the Commander's 370 soldiers, there was a horseman—a musical officer "who made his mare dance, maneuver around, or jump to the tune of his *vihuela*!" In addition to the levity of this scene, there is also historical significance as to the time and place of the occurrence. It happened only five years after the women musicians selected by their admiral introduced their guitars and music to the Americas upon their arrival at Santo Domingo. Xaraguá was on the same island, near their performance venue: it was the adjoining native land west of Santo Domingo.

In the second case, in 1509, Las Casas describes one of his favorite associates, another of the Commander's equestrian officers. Diego de Nicuesa earned the respect of the chronicler as well as the other officers and soldiers, for he was eminently successful in all his undertakings, including performing on the prestigious instrument that was the mark of a gentleman:

> The following happened later in this year of 1509: There was a man hereabouts on the island…whom we have remembered many times called Diego de Nicuesa, who came with the Commanding General; (Nicuesa was) a most agreeable person, courtly, and entertaining, which is to say he was a great player of the *vihuela*.

The equestrian officer and Nicuesa would have been acquainted with the women musicians after their arrival in Santo Domingo; they were the unavoidable main attractions of their social milieu. Before their own performances on Xaraguá, the officers had already seen the women, undoubtedly socialized with them before or after their concerts, and had delighted in their music. Perhaps in imitation of their female musical colleagues, the officers continued to use the *vihuela* to provide entertainment for officers, troops, and other acquaintances on the island of Hispaniola. Their skill as vihuelists stands as their claim to fame in the early chronicle of the conquest.

As the conquest expanded into Mexico and the Antilles, there were more frequent references to the *vihuela*. In the chronicle of Bernal Díaz del Castillo, who marched on Mexico with the army of Hernán Cortés, the *vihuela* appears in 1524 and afterwards at banquets, festival days, and in some of the elite *tertulias* of the city (Pinnell 1993:176f). The *vihuela* also accompanied Spanish troops to the greater and lesser Antilles islands, as documented in the chronicles of Antonio Herrera and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (Zavadivker 1982 and Corona Alcalde 1993). Before long the guitar would spread to various Caribbean ports in ships of the Columbian Exchange. The Exchange was of course the trade route between Seville and Spain's Caribbean ports-of-call.

The Columbian Exchange: The Guitar's Arrival in Puerto Rico

Following the route of Columbus, a group of merchant ships began making the transatlantic passage. Their ongoing project became known as the *Carrera de Indias* and later the Columbian Exchange. Whatever it was called, it was a virtual bridge across the Atlantic for commerce, communication, and culture. Customs officers at ports-of-call were empowered to tax imports and exports.

Soon after 1500, guitars began arriving via the Columbian Exchange. Some were prized personal possessions, but most of them were instruments for resale. Puerto Rico may have been the first of these stops, where many guitars (inexpensive models of the *vihuela* and the *guitarra*) arrived. We would not have known about these instruments except for the fact they were carefully appraised and documented at Spanish customs offices as imports, for tax purposes. While customs officers assessed their value, not much else is known about them except for a few brief descriptions.

In 1512 the Columbian Exchange began delivering the earliest imported guitars on record to Puerto Rico. The table (page 8) lists the 18 documented *vihuelas* and a *guitarra* delivered between 1512 and '13, and in 1516. Both the crewmen and passengers brought their own instruments, either for personal use or for resale, but there were also merchants traveling with a number of cheap instruments for liquidation. For instance, Alonso de Buenaño, an officer of the caravel *Santiago*, owned a *vihuela* that he probably kept in the ship's cabin. It was either for his own solace or for the entertainment of his crew and passengers.

GUITARS ARRIVING IN THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE AT PUERTO RICO (Tanodi 2010)

19 Sept. 1512, Alonso de Buenaño, boatswain of the caravel Santiago, brings a small *vihuela* valued at 1p.2t. [p. = peso(s), t. = tomín(es)]
25 Dec. 1512, on behalf of Bishop Alonso Manso (who has a certificate of exemption from paying import duty), a certain Quintana brings a *vihuela*.
26 Feb. 1513, merchant Luis de Santisteban brings a *vihuela*, 2p.4t.
13 May 1513, Fernán Muñiz de Godoy brings a *vihuela* at 1p.
18 Nov. 1513, merchant Gonzalo de Cea brings 3 *vihuelas* at 5p.6t.
[1514–1515: accounts are lost]
14 Jun. 1516, Bartolomé Ponce brings an old *vihuela* valued at 2t.
28 Jun. 1516, merchant Alonso Hernández unloads 6 small *vihuelas* at 5t. ea.=3p.6t.
11 Dec. 1516, Juan Martín, a passenger counts among his personal belongings a *guitarra* valued at 3t.
21 Dec. 1516, Antonio Sánchez and Gonzalo Lorenzo bring 4 small *vihuelas* at 3t. each [= 1p.4t. total].

The reason for documenting the instruments, even those not for sale, is that they were all subject to an import duty of 7.5 percent. In order to calculate the duty, customs officials took care to assess the value of imports in either *pesos* or *tomines*. In Imperial Spain, Old World and New, the peso was equated with a weight of silver, and it was subdivided into eight *reales*. The same applied to the imported guitars in Puerto Rico, except that the eighth-part subdivision was called a *tomín* (pl. *tomines*). Compared to other imports, the guitars were modestly priced. A frilled dress shirt was worth 5t.; a barrel of 1,000 cured sardines or a velvet *sombrero* was worth a peso in 1516.

The *vihuela* arriving on Christmas Day of 1512 was exceptional, being documented as the first religious instrument to arrive in the New World. It was addressed to the Bishop of Puerto Rico, who would use it for his own prayer services and/or delegate its use to the *maestro de capilla*, a *cantor*, or an instrumentalist for the purpose of accompanying the singing of his choirboys and congregation. Across the Americas, *vihuelas* and even lowly *guitarras* were used in churches well before the more expensive, complicated, and temperamental harps and keyboard instruments that were eventually shipped from Europe. Whether in the cathedrals, modest chapels, or outlying religious retreats and hermitages, these guitar types accompanied masses, motets, litanies, canticles, spiritual songs, and hymns, enabling the *cantor* or an accompanist to keep the voices in tune and together, to coordinate their

Figure 3: from Angel with Vihuela Baja or Vihuela Grande, by Juan de Juanes (1523–1579), detail from a fresco, Convento de Santa Clara, Gandía (Valencia, Spain, public domain)

breathing and phrasing, and to help them respect the modes of Gregorian chant (Pinnell 1993:221–42).

The religious purpose of Bishop Alonso Manso's instrument is crystal clear: it was tax-exempt, for it was unlawful to tax the clergy or the Church for any of their objects, property, or programs. He had the seal of approval granting the exemption. The Bishop's *vihuela* was thus unprecedented, arguably the first European instrument ever used in the New World's Catholic liturgy.

But the quantity of cheap *vihuelas* and *guitarras* in shipments of the Exchange would have shocked Fray Juan Bermudo, who in 1555 took great pains to contrast the splendid, refined *vihuela* with the plain, plebeian *guitarra*. The ambiguity surrounding the instruments' names had already appeared in the *vihuela* collection of Fuenllana (1554:IV), when he was speaking of the smaller instrument:

Vihuela de quatro órdenes,	Vihuela of four courses
que dizen guitarra	that they call the guitar

Moreover, Bermudo's high and low distinctions between the instruments and their class associations did not carry over into the imperial customs offices at ports of the New World.

It appears that the *guitarras* and *vihuelas* imported to the Caribbean were cheap and accessible to all the early settlers, but good-quality Spanish gut strings were not—at least initially. Harvested and processed lamb tripe was at first an expensive luxury. In preparation, the strings had to be subdivided into strips for a wide range of specific pitches then twisted and placed on drying racks; after drying they

were burnished (polished to remove loose fibers). At first the colonists paid dearly for the fragile catguts: 5t. per set (half the price of some guitars!). After a few years and the establishment of local manufacture, prices gradually dropped to an average of 2t. per set (Pinnell 1993:175). Just as some immigrants acquired multiple instruments for resale, others did brisk business importing sets of strings, surely intended for resale or hoarding. For instance, in 1513 Juan Vizcaíno, a seasoned officer of the Puerto Rican convoys, brought along 18 sets of gut strings on one trip to Puerto Rico—maybe his final crossing. His hoard of strings was either for resale to the highest bidder, or for his retirement—perhaps in some comfortable Caribbean villa, where he could imagine living in the lap of luxury with plenty of time to practice his *vihuela* and to sponsor lively musical entertainment and action-packed *tertulias*!

Cubagua: Its Pearls, Its Academy, and Its Vihuelas

After the initial shipments of *vihuelas* had arrived in Puerto Rico, the first European musical instruments on record began to reach another Caribbean port by the same route and service: the port of Cubagua, Venezuela. Cubagua was the earliest Hispanic town of the republic, but it was just a small island. For half a century it would remain the prosperous port and lively settlement established across the strait from the mainland port and encampment of Cumaná.

Cubagua, near the Caribbean islands of Margarita and Coche, is a tiny island about 80 km. (50 mi.) north of the port of Cumaná, Venezuela. Cubagua is so small that it does not even appear on generic maps: it measures 9 x 4 Kms. (6 x 2 mi.). The largest island of the group is Margarita, a source of oyster pearls. Margarita hovers over the north shore of the other two, as if protecting them from the vengeance of Caribbean hurricanes.

Thanks to Columbus's pioneering landfall at *Paria*, the South American shoreline along the Caribbean, and his discovery of some supposed pearl fisheries managed by the Indians, Spanish and Hispanic activity on Cubagua flourished. Around 1512 Spaniards, with their families and enslaved Indians, first discovered and harvested the oyster pearls. They were initially led in the general direction of the source by Columbus' instructions. The Indians of Paria had informed him that the pearls were available north of the native port that became Cumaná. This led Spanish explorers to interview a range of Indian informants. With their new intelligence, they located Cubagua's underwater trove of pearl beds.

Cubagua soon became the epicenter of the pearl fishing enterprise—the earliest of Imperial Spain's great exploitations of American bounty. Spaniards made their way there in droves during the sixteenth century to oversee the gathering of pearls and to prepare their shipment back to Seville. They established Cubagua not only as the first port of Venezuela's Columbian Exchange but also as the guitar's first toehold in South America. Of all the instruments of Iberia arriving in Venezuela, the *vihuela* was predictably first and foremost.

After locating the oyster beds, the Spaniards took over the native operation so as to exploit the profits. After the initial discovery of pearls around 1500, pearl fishing became the principal source of New World treasure for several decades. The notorious silver mines in Mexico and Potosí and the processing of silver ore into ingots for shipment back to Seville were still decades away. With the exploitation of the pearl industry, Cubagua soon became a prosperous boomtown. Spaniards supplied the increasing numbers of Indian workers with the tools they needed (Eugenio 1993:23). Indigenous divers required reliable equipment and gear; laborers along the Island's shoreline needed knives, tables, and pole buildings for the extraction of the pearls, and warehouses to store the oysters for local food and the pearls prior to shipment. For transport, the Spaniards replaced the large native canoes with their own seagoing vessels for travel first across the Caribbean and then the Atlantic. Trusted officials prepared the pearls for shipping, which required not only supervision by administrators and local police to ensure that none were lost in transit, but also scrutiny by a host of clerks and accountants to count them and keep the books.

Once in Seville, the pearls commanded extraordinary prices valued in the currency of the *maravedí* (m.). The irregular *topos* averaged 2,000 *m.*, common pearls were worth 5,000 *m.*, and the superior *Ave Marías* brought 10,000 *m.* on the jeweler's market (Otte 1977:82). In the currency of the day, jewelers counted 34 *maravedís* to one peso of silver, which meant that one common pearl valued at 5,000 *m.* would have bought 74 *vihuelas* (valued at 2 pesos each) in Puerto Rico!

Despite the fame and fortune of the pearling industry, it lasted for only half a century. The enterprise began in c.1510, but by 1550 it was already in decline as pearls became scarce. In the middle decades of the period, the fisheries reached their maximum harvest, which boosted the prosperity of Imperial Spain. The decade of 1520–1530 marked the greatest profits for the court (Otte 1977:29). Spain's insatiable appetite soon exhausted the patrimony of the pearl beds. For project administrators, there was no choice but to discontinue the enterprise. Abandoning the project, they turned their attention to other activities, like mining precious metals or livestock ranching.

The Columbian Exchange between Seville and Cubagua was the vector that delivered the first shipment of musical instruments to South America, specifically to Cubagua, in 1529. That shipment consisted of 15 cheap *vihuelas* (Calzavara 1987:9). It would be reasonable to assume that local merchants imported these instruments purely on speculation, for quick resale, as they did in Puerto Rico; but such was evidently not the case. Even as contraband, they would not have been worth as much as a single common pearl. Rather, the *vihuelas* would have appeared in response to popular demand.

They arrived during the decade of the 1520s, when pearl production was at its peak and Cubagua's city had become diversely populated. For their entertainment, one can imagine the townspeople gathering around an occasional bullfight, a horse race, or to play cards and other games. But the literate elites would have had other agendas. For instance, they formed a literary society in the Renaissance manner. Such European societies at the time were gatherings to discuss news and literary topics drawn from their reading activities, to hear concerts, and to rhyme their correspondence.

Renaissance societies for men were called *academies*, but among women they were called *ridotti* in Italy and *salons* in France. During the *Siglo de Oro* there were parallel institutions, and Spanish women called their gatherings *tertulias*. The literate elites of Cubagua clearly were keeping up with fashion. There were about a dozen or more learned gentlemen attending meetings, deciding which topics to study and discuss in furtherance of their learning and literary interests. In support of their humanist agenda, they ordered their favorite books from Seville, as amply documented in the shipping records of the Columbian Exchange.

The *Cubagüense* intellectuals had contacts in Seville, to whom they would write and place orders for their favorite books and other necessities. The exchange also carried some of their correspondence: orders were placed and books arrived in multiple copies. In this way the academy founders could establish coordinated curricula of study for their members, including a schedule of meetings for the discussion of their humanistic and philosophical readings. Fortunately, even their book titles were recorded in the Exchange, revealing their favorite authors and the subjects of their discussions. Books for the comportment and courtly protocol of gentlemen were especially valued in these shipments, inasmuch as manuscript copies of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano (The Courtier)* were already in circulation throughout Europe by 1518. Its first edition would be printed in Venice in 1528.

The book titles arriving in Cubagua also reveal that society members were multilingual, with French and Italian being perhaps their preferred alternative languages. Sadly, however, in the extant records of the *Cubagüense* academy there is scarcely a mention of music performances. If any singers were featured in their meetings, they would probably have been performing unaccompanied songs. This instrumental shortcoming was soon to be remedied, however. The *literati* of Cubagua, thanks evidently to some well-placed musical orders with their relatives and associates back in Seville, acquired in due course some fifteen *vihuelas*.

For instance, one of the intellectuals in Cubagua was an Italian from Siena named Marcelo Pechi. His brother Scipión Pechi was one of the merchants in Seville who made the purchases and ordered the delivery of the *vihuelas*:

> The cultured men also dedicated themselves to intellectual activities. Some men of Cubagua had seen the world, such as Miguel de Castellanos, the founder of another dynasty in Cubagua, and Cabo de la Vela, who began his career of public service in Castile and Flanders, and Alonso Pérez de Aguilera, "knight of the reign of Toledo," who served in the wars of Italy and Germany, taking part in the sieges of Florence, Sienna, and Milan, who witnessed the coronation of (Emperor) Charles V, and the defense of Vienna against the Turks. Some spoke French such as the Doctor of Medicine Juan Martínez…. There were also literate Basques like Miguel de Gaviria, who practiced the Basque mother tongue and Castilian. Likewise, the few foreigners in Cubagua would have been cultured, as well, such as the Siennese merchants… especially Marcelo Pechi and Sigismundo Benasay. In later years (Marcelo) Pechi would take on important duties at Cubagua, Margarita, and Cabo de la Vela.
>
> Among these gentle and cultured men of the town we find readers of Lucio Apuleyo (3 copies), [. . . and of] books like those of (the Greek fabulist) Aesop and (the Florentine novelist, Giovanni) Boccaccio, which were imported along with the *Enchiridion* [of Epictetus], the *Morals on the Book of Job* by St. Gregory (2 copies), the *Life of Christ* ("Vita Christi" in Latin), [. . .] sent by the Siennese merchants in Seville: Juan Antonio Piccolomini and Scipión Pechi, brother of Marcelo, in 1529. The men of Sienna also sent fifteen (15) *vihuelas* to Cubagua. (Otte 1977:389–90)

Happily, the fifteen *vihuelas* arrived safely in Cubagua. No doubt they were soon put to good use celebrating Spanish Golden Age music in the colony: the solo repertoire of the *vihuela*, chamber music for the *vihuela* ensemble (instrumental renditions of polyphonic *villancicos*, *chansons* and sacred music), and the accompaniment of art songs. The *vihuelas* would serve as well to accompany church services and of course all the popular songs and dances of the day. As one would expect, the departure and arrival

protocols of the *vihuelas* through the customs offices were well-documented.

On 20 April 1529, prior to their departure, Juan Zoldo, *maestre* of the galleon San Andrés, listed them in Seville as part of his cargo: it contained no fewer than fifteen (15) *vihuelas* valued at a *peso* and two *tomines* apiece. In June 1529, on the unspecified day of their arrival in Cubagua, customs officials at the port intercepted the *vihuelas* for the usual assessment and taxation. Local officials merely confirmed the previous estimate made in Seville (Otte 1977:492) before delivering the prepaid order to academy members. Importantly, the assessed value of the *vihuelas* arriving in Cubagua was consistent with the median price of the cheap *vihuelas* that had arrived in Puerto Rico during the previous decade.

This remarkable shipment of *vihuelas* sent from Seville to Cubagua carried more musical instruments than any previous shipment to Puerto Rico! Their high demand explains why this shipment was the largest yet documented in the Columbian Exchange. Having been ordered by the literate class that included military officers, political leaders, a medical doctor, humanists, and other social elites, these instruments would have stirred considerable interest upon their arrival.

The best-known member of the academy at Cubagua, Juan de Castellanos, went on to become a chronicler of the conquest. Like Bernal Díaz, the chronicler of the settlement of Mexico, Castellanos arrived in Cubagua as a soldier. And like Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, he became a priest; however, the literary skills that Castellanos acquired in the academy shaped his history of the settlement of South America, as it developed further on the island of Margarita and eventually in the territory of modern-day Colombia, where he ended his career.

Castellanos's chronicle, composed entirely in four-line verses, described music's function on the island of Margarita and elaborated on its context (see below, *Elegies*, 1589:952).

Pearl Fishery Profits and the Vihuela's Prestige

For half a century the profits of Cubagua's industry enriched Seville and its imperial financial institutions, particularly those of the court. At that time, the grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella, Charles I, rose to power. He was crowned King of Spain in 1516, but soon, as a Habsburg prince, he ascended even higher. In 1519 he was crowned Emperor Charles V of Austria, Germany, Poland, Hungary,

A Description of the Vihuela's Music on the Island of Margarita
by Juan de Castellanos

No hallaban lugar cosas molestas, Ni do pesares hagan sus empleos, Todos son regocijos, bailes, fiestas Costosos y riquísimos arreos: Cuantas cosas desean están prestas Para satisfacerles sus deseos, Los amenos lugares frecuentando E unos á los otros festejando.…	There was no place for a bothersome crowd, Nor did sadness invade their employments; Rejoicing & dancing, their parties were loud, Costly were their accoutrements: For they were provided all they wanted To satisfy all their desiring; All the pleasant places they vaunted And one to another, delighting.…
Allí también dulcísimo contento De voces concertadas en su punto, Cuyos conceptos lleva manso viento A los prontos oídos por trasunto: Corre mano veloz el instrumento Con un ingenioso contrapunto, Enterneciéndose los corazones Con nuevos villancicos y canciones.	There was sweet happiness in their ease, Singing concerted voices in polyphony That they performed softly as a breeze To the ready ears of the company: Their quick hand traverses the instrument With an ingenious counterpoint, Leaving every heart content, With new carols and songs.

Italy, Flanders, and Imperial Spain, which included Spain's vast New World possessions. His reign coincided with the most profitable years of the pearl industry.

The Emperor had an enduring interest in the *vihuela*. He and his sisters learned to read music and play the lute and *vihuela* as part of their education in Flanders (Straeten 1888:VII 202), and naturally they carried their instruments as young sovereigns to their royal stations. Charles continued this interest as a pastime when he lived in Spain. One of Spain's published *vihuela* composers, Luys de Narváez, a musician of the royal chapel, wrote for him the most famous composition of the entire *vihuela* repertoire: an arrangement of Josquin des Prez's sad *chanson* entitled *Mille regretz*, which the vihuelist duly entitled "La Canción del Emperador" [The Emperor's Song].

When Charles arrived at an appropriate age, in 1526, he married a dynastic relative, princess Isabel of Portugal (1503–1539). Like her husband, she had been trained as a vihuelist during the years of a princess's customary humanist education. Her brother João III, the next king of Portugal, was a great patron of noteworthy humanistic and artistic ventures, including the publication of Luys Milán's *El maestro* (Valencia, 1536), the first of the century's seven *vihuela* books to be published.

Isabel made a glamorous empress, as revealed in her elegant portrait by Titian (Fig. 4). The work depicts her at about the time of her marriage, even though Titian painted it as a posthumous memorial for her husband in 1548, a decade after her death:

> In 1526 the emperor married Isabel of Portugal. The empress had her own household in Spain, organized in the Spanish manner, with her own *maestro*, singers, and the organist Antonio de Cabezón. Charles was a cultivated music lover, as well (Robledo 2001:X 640).

During her tenure in Spain, she assumed the role of regent during her husband's absences, while still remaining a musician at heart. Isabel owned several *vihuelas* for her practice and performances, as well as to loan to the musicians of her retinue for their courtly appearances. By 1539 she had employed Pedro de Santa Cruz, a vihuelist, who served as a performer in her personal chambers as well as her musical tutor.

Pedro de Santa Cruz supervised various acquisitions to obtain quality Spanish-made instruments for the empress, as documented in the General Archive of Simancas. One of her purchases was for three *vihuelas* delivered in a single, lined case. Although her *vihuelas* came in different sizes, they were all constructed alike and arrived encased as a matched set, like the quartet of Stradivarius string instruments presently at the Royal Palace of Madrid.

Figure 4: *Empress Isabel of Portugal*, Queen-Consort of Habsburg Emperor Charles V, posthumous portrait by Titian in 1548 (oil on canvas, Museo del Prado, Madrid)

Isabel's *vihuelas* were no doubt used in performances of chamber music and to lend their voices to transcriptions of polyphonic religious and secular music, such as the spiritual songs of maestro Francisco Guerrero and *Mille regretz* of Josquin—which at the time were considered the height of artistry. (The archival citation appears in Straeten 1888:VII 249):

> (1) A large *vihuela* with a string set is charged to the above-named Pedro de Santa Cruz, valued at three ducats according to the inventory…along with the certificate for three *vihuelas* and case.
> (2) Another *vihuela*, medium sized, with two string sets, valued at five ducats.…
> (3) Yet another *vihuela*, smaller than the above-named, valued at three and a half ducats...on one certificate, a case that held the aforementioned *vihuelas* valued at a ducat and a half; all were delivered to Jorge de Lima and Juan de Vasurto together with the three certificates…for shipment] (Arch. G. Simancas, *Contaduría mayor*, 1ª epoch, l. 464, pp. 384-85, "in the data of Pedro de Santa Cruz, etc., of the year 1539").

With due regard for the *vihuela* practices of all the other queens and courts (see Pinnell 1998), the involvement of the emperor and empress in this type of courtly musical life attests to the high artistry and prestige associated with the *vihuela* and its repertoire. Charles V became the richest, most powerful man in sixteenth-century Europe, and Empress Isabel its most visible woman. With their examples alone, we have ascertained that the *vihuela* arrived in the New World with incomparable prestige. The *vihuela* came to the Americas "with strings attached." It was destined to become the most highly esteemed musical instrument in the New World.

Conclusions

After the first exploratory voyage of Columbus, in 1492, the Spanish *conquistadores* realized that a New World lay before them waiting to be conquered. Seasoned soldiers,

they had already defeated the Moors at Granada, and liberated Andalusia, the southernmost region of the Iberian Peninsula. Soon Columbus planted the cross—the mark of ownership—on all his discoveries in the New World, claiming them for Spain and for Christianity. During his third voyage he carried his political and religious agenda to the northern tip of South America— the last of the North, Central, and South American continents that he visited. Spanish military expansionism was well under way.

As a by-product, so was Spain's cultural and musical expansionism. As we have seen, at least through the first half-century of settlement, no Western instruments besides *guitarras* and *vihuelas* were documented in either the transatlantic voyages or the mercantile exchange that followed, the sole exception being a lone tambourine mentioned in 1516.

These were not only the first Western instruments introduced into the New World; they were also the first string instruments the natives of Amerindia had ever seen or heard. Thus, at first by default then later by choice, the guitar became the national instrument of Hispanic America and even Brazil.

The instruments that came to the New World corresponded to those identified by Juan Bermudo in his *Declaración* of 1555. He left us with a comprehensive description of the instruments of the guitar family then in use in peninsular Spain, noting their differences as well as their similarities. As stated, instruments of the guitar family were the first and earliest Western instruments in Latin America. And they evolved, as one might expect, into a bewildering assortment of names and types as they made their way throughout the settlements of the New World.

Among the guitars of Venezuela alone we find the *cuatro* (sometimes called the *vihuela*), *cinco*, and *seis*, named for their number of strings or courses, as well as the *requinto*, *tiple*, and *guitarra grande*. The spread of the guitar accelerated with the Colombian Exchange, but these instruments remained primarily imports from Old Spain until local craftsmen began to copy them—sometimes faithfully, often with variations—as the guitar family completed its diffusion into all of westernized Latin America.

Even some Native American populations, such as the Warao tribe in the Orinoco delta, took up the guitar (Olsen 1996:111ff). Thus, throughout its five-century trajectory in South America, in particular, the guitar served as a link, indeed a heartfelt liaison, between two cultures in conflict. It became a kind of neutral ground in the clash between European and Indigenous American values. As a national instrument, it was far more ubiquitous and enduring in Latin America than anywhere else in the world.

Thus, the modest voice of the guitar became pervasive. In its various sizes and types, it appealed to all strata of society, male and female, indentured and free. It won over vast populations by invitation rather than obligation. Its nonviolent victory was one of love and good will, as noted in the poem (below) that Leoncio Martínez wrote to honor Agustín Barrios Mangoré, which is included in his *Autograph Book* (pp. 80–81). The title mentions the *joropo*, the national dance of Venezuela (referenced in line 30), and the *chipola*, its fast finale. Even so, it is the story of the guitar itself, narrated in the first person, giving all the contexts of human experience that the guitar embodies as a national instrument:

La Musa del Joropo	*The Muse of the Joropo*
Soy el alma de mi tierra, sufro y canto con los míos, tengo amantes murmurios y tengo gritos de guerra. Toda mi pasión se encierra en serle a mi pueblo fiel, pues vivo y triunfo con él y en mi cantar se destaca la risa de la maraca y del arpa el cascabel.	I am the soul of my loam, I suffer and sing with my own: I watch over murmuring lovers And herald battle disasters. I dutifully center my passion On serving my people, my nation For I live their triumph alone; Even my songs are flown To the maraca's titter And the harp's bell tone.
En nuestros valles fecundos, terminada la faena, cuando la lumbre serena	In our fertile valley home, After the harvest is done When the serene moonlight

baña de ensueños los mundos
por los barrancos profundos
corre un divino temblor,
con los ecos del dolor
en que un alma se desgarra:
es la voz de mi guitarra
que va gimiendo de amor.

En los llanos sin confín
que bravo sol tuesta en oro,
donde el mugido del toro
es ronco y recio clarín,
llega la tarde a su fin,
occidente se arrebola
y, por la llanura sola
gime la guitarra mía,
¡Que dulce melancolía
la que tiene la chipola!

Y cuando rompe la quilla
la inmensidad de las aguas
y se alejan las piraguas
por un mar de doble orilla,
la luna en el cielo brilla,
las ondas se hacen más bellas,
yo desato mis querellas
y tanta ternura pongo
que a escuchar la voz del bongo
se aproximan las estrellas.

Yo canto y sufro de amor,
de ternura, de esperanza,
tengo el temple de una lanza
y el trino de un ruiseñor.
Ostento timbres de honor
que enaltecieron mi predio,
pues, en glorioso intermedio,
después de segar mil lauros,
fue el cantar de los centauros
de Las Queseras del Medio.

Yo soy a todas distinta;
mi mano, temblando, amarra
al cuello de mi guitarra
tres cintas en una cinta.
La una en oro se pinta,
la otra, azul, reverbera
y es de sangre la tercera
pues la tiñó su heroísmo;
tres cintas que son lo mismo:
¡las tres forman mi bandera!

Bathes in dreams every site
Across the awesome bluff,
The rumble of an earthquake
Echoes suffering's shake
Whenever a soul is set free:
My guitar's voice begins its plea,
Languishing with tales of love.

On the never-ending plain
Toasted gold in the harsh sun's rays
Where the bull goes out and brays
His blaring, blustery blast
After evening's light is past;
When the west is a crimson tide
Over the lonely prairie grass,
My guitar begins its pitiful bawl:
What sweet melancholy, it cries,
Is the chipola's lively ball!

And when the keel beam breaks
In the immense waters' plight,
And all the canoes take flight
Over the sea of double banks,
The moon brightens heaven's thanks
And gives the waves more allure,
As my complaints begin to cure.
So now as my tender heart aches,
I sense the bongo's clamor
As all the stars get closer.

By singing and suffering I cope
With love's tenderness, of hope:
Brandishing the lance I tell the tale,
The shrill trill of the nightingale.
To prove the honor of my fate
I can flaunt my grand estate,
For in a glorious intermission,
Harvesting laurels of manumission,
The centaurs left a chant of courage
Now sung by milkmaids of the village.

If to others I'm middle-of-the-road,
My hand, shaking, takes hold
Of my guitar neck's crest
With three ribbons blessed.
The first is painted gold
The second is blue and bold
And the third is of blood,
Stained where heroes stood;
Three ribbons in harmony,
Hence my flag, my loyalty!

—*Leoncio Martínez*, Caracas, 1932

In summary: the early guitar supplied the harmony for all musical occasions in the New World, whether in Christian worship or in popular song and dance. It was heard both in solos and in the accompanied vocal art-music described by Castellanos. It was integral to the music heard at the academy of Cubagua and at the uppity *tertulias* on the island of Margarita.

In Latin America, unlike anywhere else in the world, the guitar and its derivatives have come to acquire, with the passing centuries, enormous cultural and musical significance. More than any language or religion, the cross or the rosary, the guitar has taken on a life of its own at the very heart of Hispanic culture. The time to assess its colossal impact in the New World and beyond, beginning with Christopher Columbus' third voyage, is long overdue.

Figure 5: *The Venezuelan cuatro* by "Leo" (sketch accompanying the poem by Leoncio Martínez entitled "The Muse of the Joropo"), *Agustín Barrios Mangoré's Autograph Book* (1939:80)

References
in Chronological Order

Castiglione, Baldasarre.
1518 *Il libro del cortigiano* [book of gentlemen, dedicated to Elisabetta Gonzaga Duchess of Urbino]. Though circulated in 1518, it was published in 1528, and later translated and published throughout Europe.

Las Casas, Bartolomé de.
c.1530 *Historia de las Indias*. Biblioteca Mexicana. México, D.F.: Edit. Nacional, 1951.

Milán, Luys.
1536 *Libro de música de vihuela de mano intitulado: El maestro* (Valencia, 1536). R. ed. Charles Jacobs. University Park, PA:

Fuenllana, Miguel de.
1554 *Libro de música para vihuela intitulado Orphénica lyra* (Sevilla, 1554). R. ed. Charles Jacobs. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.

Bermudo, Juan.
1555 *Declaración de instrumentos musicales*. Osuna [near Seville], 1555. Facs. ed. M. Santiago Kastner. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1957.

Castellanos, Juan de.
1589 *Elegías de varones ilustres de Indias*, ed. Buenaventura Carlos Aribau, 2ª ed. Madrid: M. Rivadeneyra, 1857.

Ferández de Navarrete, Martín, ed.
1859 *Colección de los viajes y descubrimientos que hicieron por mar los españoles, desde fines del siglo XV…*Tomo II, primera edición. Madrid: Imprenta Nacional, 1825. Segunda edición. Madrid Imprenta Nacional. Disponible en línea, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (hdl.handle.net/10347/13898).

Straeten, Edmond van der.
1888 *La Musique aux Pays-Bas avant le XIXe siècle: Documents inédits et annotés…*8 vols. Brussels: G.A. Van Trigt, C. Muquardt, 1867–1888.

Barrios Mangoré, Agustín.
1939 "Autograph Book," manuscript record of dedications to Agustín Barrios Mangoré (1932–1939), presently in the David Guzmán Museum, El Salvador.

Morison, Samuel Eliot.
1942 *Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus*, 2 vols. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

Anglés, Higinio.
1965 *La Música en la Corte de Carlos V, con la transcripción del "Libro de cifra nueva para tecla, harpa y vihuela" de Luis Venegas de Henestrosa…*Vol. I. Monumentos de la Música Española No. 2. Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas.

Otte, Enrique.
1977 *Las perlas del Caribe: Nueva Cádiz de Cubagua*. Caracas: Fund. John Boulton.

Zavadivker, Ricardo.
1982 "La guitarra y la vihuela en Hispanoamérica," *Revista INIDEF* V, 44–49.

Corona Alcalde, Antonio.
1984 "The Viola da Mano and the Vihuela, Evidence and Suggestions about Their Construction," *The Lute* XXIV, 3-32.

THE EARLY GUITAR IN THE NEW WORLD: (cont.)

Pinnell, Richard T.
1984 "The Guitarist-Singer of Pre-1900 Gaucho Literature," *Revista de Música Latinoamericana* V, 243–62.

Calzavara, Alberto, et al.
1987 *Historia de la música en Venezuela: Período hispánico con referencias al teatro y la danza*. Caracas: Fundación Pampero.

Romanillos, José L.
1987 *Antonio de Torres, Guitar Maker: His Life and Work*. Shaftesbury, Dorset, UK.

Jane, Cecil, trans. & ed.
1988 *The Four Voyages of Columbus: A History in Eight Documents, Including Five by Christopher Columbus, in the Original Spanish with English Translations*, in two volumes bound as one. New York: Dover.

Clark, Walter Aaron.
1993 "Luys de Narváez and the Intabulation Tradition of Josquin's *Mille regretz*." *Journal of the Lute Society of America* 26–27 (1993-94): 17–52; reprinted, *Treasures of the Golden Age: Essays on Music of the Iberian and Latin American Renaissance in Honor of Robert M. Stevenson*. Ed. Walter Aaron Clark and Michael O'Connor, 265–95. New York: Pendragon Press, 2012.

Corona Alcalde.
1993 "La vihuela, el laúd, y la guitarra en el Nuevo Mundo," *Revista de Musicología* XVI, 4–16.

Eugenio, María Angeles.
1993 "Una empresa de perlas…en el Caribe," Actas XI, Jornadas de Andalucía y América [Universidad Internacional de Andalucía], 9–37.

Pinnell, Richard with Ricardo Zavadivker.
1993 *The Rioplatense Guitar: The Early Guitar in Argentina and Uruguay*. Westport, CT: The Bold Strummer.

Olsen, Dale A.
1996 *Music of the Warao of Venezuela: Song People of the Rain Forest*. Gainesville, et al.: University Press of Florida.

Pinnell, Richard T.
1998 "Women and the Guitar in Spain's Upper Classes," *Anuario Muscial* LIII, 165–89.

Varela Marcos, Jesús & Monserrat León Guerrero.
2003 *El itinerario de Cristóbal Colón (1415–1506)*. Valladolid: Diputación de Valladolid, et al.

Tanodi, Aurelio.
2010 *Documentos de la Real Hacienda de Puerto Rico*, Vol. I (1510–1519). Buenos Aires: Editorial Nova & Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1971. Segunda ed., San Juan, PR: Academia Puertorriqueña de la Historia, 2010.

"The GFA has long been the most comprehensive US-based source for information on the guitar community's news, its teaching institutions, recordings, scholars, as well as its brightest talents. I cannot imagine either an aficionado or aspiring guitarist being fully informed without the aid of GFA membership."

–Jason Vieaux

JOIN GFA TODAY!
GUITARFOUNDATION.ORG