

Evolution of the Guitar



Early Lutes and Harps c. 4500-1900 B.C.



Post-Neolithic Harp
circa 4500-3500 B.C.



Mesopotamian Lute
circa 4500-3100 B.C.



Sumerian Lute
circa 3500-3000 B.C.



Hebrew Kinnor (Gen 4:21)
circa 3000 – 2000 B.C.



Sumerian Harp
circa 2800 B.C.



Mesopotamian Harp
circa 1900 B.C.

Lyres, Harps and Lutes c. 2500-1400 B.C.



Egyptian Lyres, Harps, and Lutes
circa 2500-1000 B.C.



Greek Lyre
circa 2000 - 1400 B.C.

Harps and Lutes c. 400 B.C. - 900 A.D.



Greek Kithara
circa 400 – 300 B.C.



Chinese Ruan
Han Dynasty
circa 200 B.C.



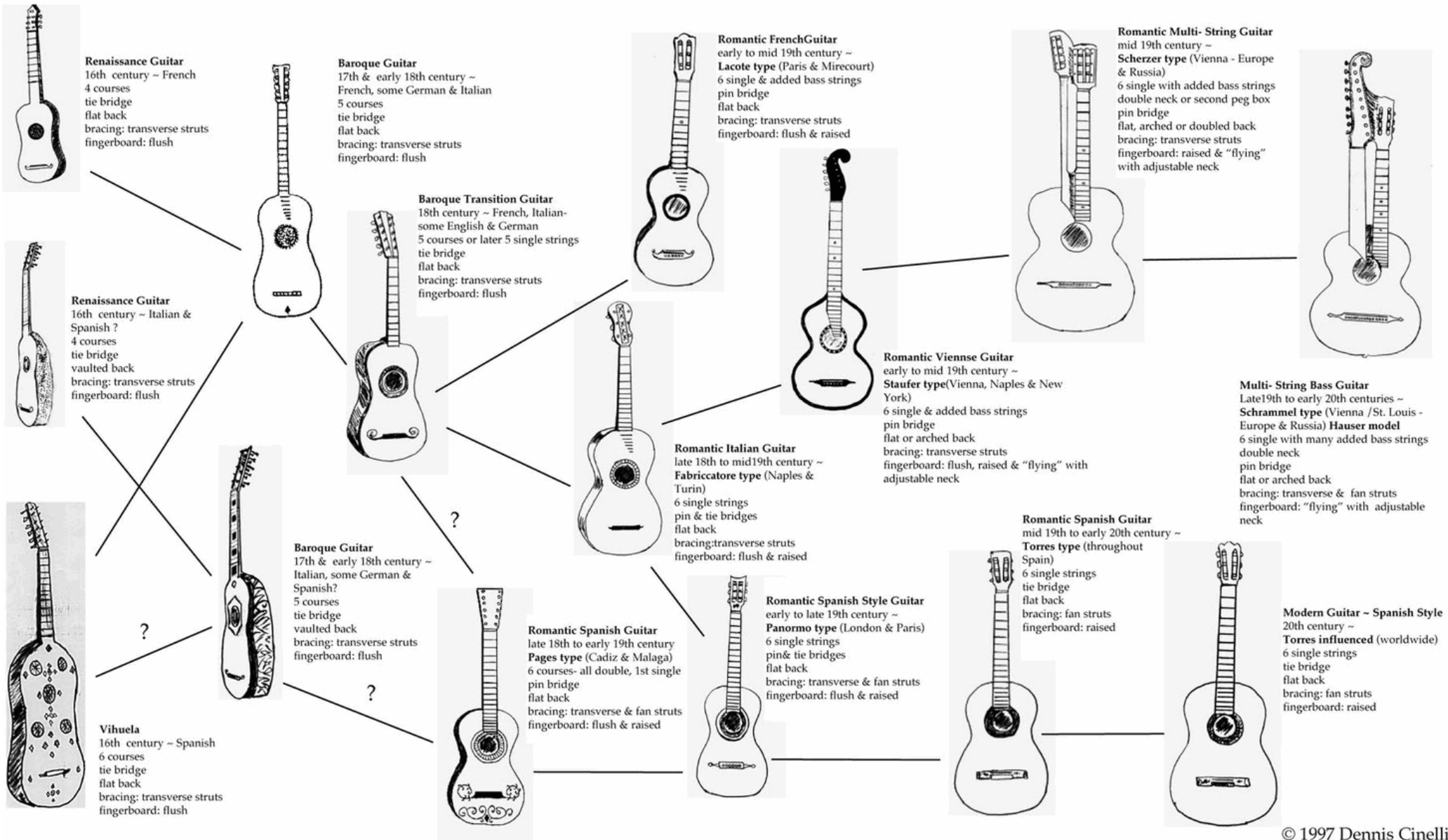
Roman Era Cithara
circa 100-200 A.D.



Chinese Pipa
Tang Dynasty
circa 600-900 A.D.



The Guitar Family Tree ~ 16th through 20th Centuries



RENAISSANCE TO RODRIGO...AND BEYOND

Through the years:
how the Baroque
guitar grew up

1 By Belchior Diaz, 1581,
now owned by the
Royal College of Music

2 A modern recreation
of a Renaissance vihuela
(Donald Warnock, 1964)

3 A five-course Stradivari
held at the Ashmolean

4 An 1830 guitar
by famed luthier
Louis Panormo

5 A Torres
'Second Epoch' from
1888: recognisably
today's instrument

6 Many top players
prefer Greg Smallman's
innovative bracing and
super-thin soundboard



1931



The Rickenbacker "Frying Pan"

This electric Hawaiian guitar, which became known as the "Frying Pan" or "pancake" was the first truly "electric" guitar - a guitar with a solid body and no soundbox.

1935



Rickenbacker "Electro String"

This electric guitar was called the Bakelite Spanish Guitar. Bakelite is an early form of plastic used to make records, billard balls, and telephone receivers in the early 1900's.

Electro String was the original company that created the guitar. Electro String later changed its name to Rickenbacker.

1941



Les Paul "Log"

The Les Paul Log was created by Les Paul after persuading Epiphone to let him use their workshop on Sundays. A Gibson pickup was mounted onto a 4" x 4" block of solid maple wood with the strings, to avoid the feedback problems that acoustic/electric guitars had at the time. To make the guitar look like a normal guitar, he cut an Epiphone f-hole guitar in half glued the pieces to each side.

1947



Bigsby-Travis Guitar

Paul Bigsby built this electric guitar in consultation with the guitarist Merle Travis. It shares some design features with the broadcaster, developed at around the same time. Bigsby and Travis worked on their guitar in California, not from from Fender's center of operation. There has been some controversy about who was looking on whose shoulder during the design of these guitars.

1948

Fender Broadcaster

Once Leo Fender had parted ways with his partner "Doc" Kauffman, he set out to create a guitar that concentrated on utility and practicality, and less on design aesthetics. He wanted to create a regular guitar that had the clear sound similar to the sound coming from the electric hawaiian guitars, but without feedback problems. The result was the Fender Broadcaster.



1952

Gibson Les Paul

After successfully experimenting with his "log" guitar, Les Paul took his ideas to Gibson. They turned him down calling the guitar "the broomstick with a pickup on it". In 1950 though, Gibson came back to him and signed him and his design.

While at Gibson, Les Paul went through 50 to 60 prototype guitars before he felt happy with his final design.



1954

Fender Stratocaster

The Fender Stratocaster had 3 features that made it a revolutionary guitar in 1954. First, it had a double cutaway neck with beveled edges. Second, it had the Fender engineered "tremolo" unit built into the floating bridge. Third, it was the 1st solid body guitar to be fitted with 3 pickups. A 3-way selector switch on the guitar allowed the guitarist to select a pickup. This was later changed to a 5-way switch, as guitarists began to see they could get unique sounds by having the switch set in between the 3 positions.



1979

Van Halen "Frankenstrat"

Eddie Van Halen's "Frankenstrat" guitar marked the beginning of guitars made for the hyperfast, technical playing. Van Halen pioneered employing higher output pickups, state of the art floating tremolo units, and sleeker, more profiled necks and bodies to play faster on. Virtually every major manufacturer raced to come out with models all based on Eddie's original guitar as well as giving rise to many newer companies such as Charvel, ESP and Ibanez.



1982

Jackson Randy Rhodes

The Jackson Randy Rhodes guitar represents design and technology changes that were happening with guitars in the 1980s. Randy Rhodes wanted to design a guitar that resembled a shark's fin. Having less wood on the side of the guitar with the treble strings allowed those strings to give a better treble response.



1994

Ibanez 7-String Guitar

The 7-string solid body guitar was originally developed in the early 90s by Steve Vai with Ibanez guitars. The instrument didn't come into prominence until 1994 when Korn featured Ibanez Universe guitars on their debut album. Drawn to the massive low end produced by the 7th string (typically a low A), many bands and manufacturers jumped on the seven string bandwagon. Today the 7-string still rumbles and shreds on with artists like Muse, Dream Theater, and Suicide Silence.



Guitar Types



Classical,
Nylon String,
Acoustic



Fender Stratocaster
Solid Body, Electric,
Double Cutaway



Gibson Les Paul
Solid Body, Electric,
Single Cutaway



Gibson ES335
Semi-Hollow, Electric,
Double Cutaway



Gibson L5
Archtop, Electric,
Venetian Cutaway



Martin D18
Flattop Steel String,
Acoustic



Gibson ES175
Archtop, Electric,
Florentine Cutaway

Guitar Types Continued



12 string,
Steel string flattop,
Acoustic



7 string
Solid Body, Electric



Double neck
Solid Body, Electric



Dobro or Resonator,
Acoustic



Travel Guitar



Flamenco Guitar



Synth/MIDI Guitar