

How and Why Did Banjo and Mandolin Jeopardize the Guitar's Future?

Works for the classical guitar by North American composers, regardless of time period, are underrepresented in the instrument's canonical repertory, as their minor presence in indexes, catalogs, and publications related to guitar music demonstrates. The historiography indicates the nineteenth-century profound delineation of the guitar's history in the United States; therefore that legacy must be understood to enhance the future of the instrument.

The almost ubiquitous lack of knowledge about the early North American guitar's history led to the misconception that the instrument had no past in the country. Most guitarists, composers, and even some scholars are generally uninformed about the rich European-connected nineteenth-century guitar's culture; they usually consider that classical guitar's history in the United States begun with the 1928's arrival of Andrés Segovia, the most important twentieth-century guitarist.

This misunderstanding is probably inherited from the secondary role of the guitar in the Banjo, Mandolin, and Guitar (BMG) movement (1882-1933). Despite the existence, in the nineteenth century, of indigenous virtuosi and pedagogues who attended the growing market for methods, instruments, and concerts, a North American school of playing did not become delineated enough to prevent negative alien influences on the instrument. BMG undermined the guitar's development, ultimately holding the North American's guitar community belated and unprepared to Segovia's repertoire and technique, according to Jeffrey Noonan, who comprehensively researched BMG periodicals.¹ Furthermore, the

¹ Jeffrey Noonan, *The guitar in American Banjo, Mandolin and Guitar Periodicals, 1882-1933* (Madison: A-R Editions, 2009).

guitar community has been uninformed about nineteenth century because of the persistent lack of available consistent bibliography—jeopardizing the instrument in the United States, as Peter Danner indicated.²

A focused historiography addressing the BMG movement and its implications to the instrument leads to three main points: in the first half of the nineteenth century, there was a strong North American guitar culture connected to Europe; despite this strong culture, the guitar was undermined by the BMG movement; this heritage may be one of the origins of the underrepresentation of North American guitar music in the instrument's canonical repertory.

² Peter Danner, "Some Notes on a Forgotten Repertoire," *Creative Guitar International* 4, no.1 (Fall 1976).