

# MODERN TIMES

## *Shifting Styles in a Century of Guitar Music*

By dr. Ari van Vliet

This article aims to reveal some developments in the guitar world and its music that were taking place within the period from the middle of the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century. This is done by way of analysis of musical works, research in sociol-cultural history and interpretation of music in the context of art and time. **Modern Times in guitar music.**

### STYLE

Apart from the description of the developments in performance practice, such as the phenomenon of the guitar and its music becoming more and more international in this period, the focus will be on the changes in music itself, starting with the style that is called Romanticism, passing by the so-called Impressionism of the National style, towards the presumed Expressionism of Modern music. This will be explained by way of guitarology: analysis, research and interpretation of works for guitar solo, originally written for the guitar (no transcriptions) that can be regarded as milestones in the history of the instrument.

The analysis and conclusions are based on works composed by Napoléon Coste (1805-1883), Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909) and Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), to the background of other composers, such as Federico Moreno-Torroba (1891-1983), Joaquin Turina (1881-1949) and Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), who will just pass in revue.

In short, this is an essay upon the understanding of the development in musical style in the guitar's concert world, answering three questions: Is there a Romantic style, is there a National style, is there a Modern style to be distinguished in guitar music? The answers can be found in the reflection upon performance practice, genre and music.

### ANALYSIS

The basics of the analysis can be made clear in an identification system of analytical items, with formal characteristics and style elements. These can be divided in common known musical features, such as form, melody,

harmony, metre, and expression. In this system the musical features are divided in 21 different musical phenomena, the aspects of music that easily emerge while reading, playing and listening to compositions.

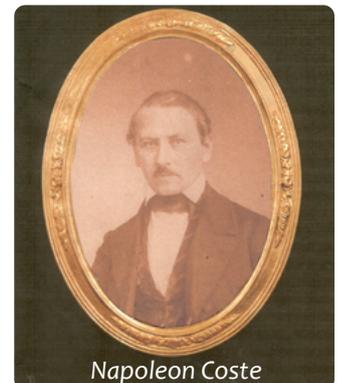
FORM	MELODY	HARMONY	METRE	EXPRESSION
1 phrase	3 figuration	7 dissonance	13 rhythm	16 dynamics
2 cadenza	4 ornament	8 modulation	14 time	17 articulation
	5 idée fixe	9 prolongation	15 tempo	18 rests
	6 chromatics	10 cadence		19 narration
		11 key		20 folklore
		12 arpeggio		21 onomatopoeia

*Analysis: musical phenomena*

To be able to distinguish the differences between, and the development of, the Romantic, National and Modern style, works by the aforesaid composers have been analysed. First the situation in Paris is taken into consideration.

### IS THERE A ROMANTIC STYLE?

The outlines of the guitar in the Romantic era will be described through life and work of Napoléon Coste (1805-1883). When he was 23 years old, Coste settled in Paris in 1828, when composers such as Chopin, Berlioz and Liszt were developing the Romantic style, which was predominant in the musical life. Coste joined the Classical guitarists Carcassi, Carulli, Aguado, and above all Sor,



*Napoleon Coste*

with whom he became befriended [Vliet, 2015, I p. 25-44]. During his career he played his own works in the so-called 'mixed concerts' for an audience of middle-class bourgeois. His compositions passed through the theme and variation genre for the freer fantasia. His 203 works he composed in a widespread range of 32 different genres, among which he shows a preference for the Étude (27), Fantaisie (25), Rondeau (16), Valse (26) and Duet (14), while making arrangements/transcriptions of 28 works by other composers [Vliet, 2015, II p. 19-30].

Among the genres Coste used, a number of 12 can be called Classical and 18 Romantic in origin. By introducing biographical elements in his music, after Berlioz, many of his compositions can be called program music. This is the case with *La Source du Lyson* opus 47. Coste composed this piece around 1874, when he already had established his style. This piece represents his memory of his travel to the Jura, where the source of the river Loue jumps away from the mountains, near his place of birth [Vliet, 2015, I p. 220-223].



But there is not a direct relation between nature and music, as he changed the title of the already composed piece afterwards. So, program music actually is just a way of fanciful interpretation, giving music its meaning. Nevertheless, several Romantic characteristics can be pointed out.



#### Audio sample 1:

*Coste - La Source du Lyson Introduction m. 1-11.*

In musical form, irregular phrases can be found, as well as *expolitio*, the immediate repeat of a musical motif, along with some *cadenzas*, short inserted phrases as musical thoughts in small notation. In melody, many figurations feature in ascending and descending passages, rocket and parachute shaped passages and *campanellas*. Surprisingly, there are just a few passages with chromatics, as most of his works have many. Most interesting in this piece is the aspect of harmony. Dissonance in diminished and augmented chords is evident, there are chromatic modulations, as well as chromatic ascending and descending prolongations on a pedal point. Interesting passing dominant series occur. Deceptive closures and *Moll-Dur* cadences are also present. With regard to the aspect of metre there are many changes in tempo. The expression aspect of the piece shows many dynamics, its narrative is evident, a *bourdon* figuration shows folklore and a *flageolet* passage shows some onomatopoeia [Vliet, 2015, I p. 324, II p. 119, 228]. In the last three bars of this fragment a characteristic double diminished seventh chord and a chromatic ascending prolongation can be found. In the table the remaining most important characteristics



can be seen. Along with the other style elements this gives just cause for the conclusion to qualify it as a Romantic piece. This can be said to the background of other analysed compositions, such as *Le Passage des Alpes*, *Fantaisie symphonique*, *25 Études de Genre*.

FORM	MELODY	HARMONY	METRE	EXPRESSION
1 phrase - expolito	3 figuration - rocket - parachute - campanella	7 dissonance - diminished - double dim. - augmented		16 dynamics - 64x in 226m
2 cadenza 3x		8 modulation - chromatic 2x	15 tempo - changes 6x	19 narration - nature
		9 prolongation - ascending - descending		20 folklore - bourdon
				21 onomatopoeia - flageolet

#### Analysis: musical phenomena Coste

The most notable characteristics of the Romantic style can be found in harmony. The first example is an elaborated tonal progression in which altered chords pass through different tonalities in a modulatory way.

#### Audio sample 2:



Coste - *Le Passage des Alpes opus 40 Rondo m. 104-105*.



Coste - *Le Passage des Alpes op. 40 Rondo*

The second example is a feature Coste often uses, a chromatic ascending and descending prolongation in which the harmony is altered and coloured, without modulation.

#### Audio sample 3:



Coste - *Auteuil opus 23 m. 92-96*.



Coste - *Souvenirs op. 23 Auteuil*

The third example is a sudden contrasting chromatic modulation from E-major to the flatted sixth degree, the relative c-minor.

#### Audio sample 4:



Coste - *Le Passage des Alpes opus 40 Rondo m. 72-74*.

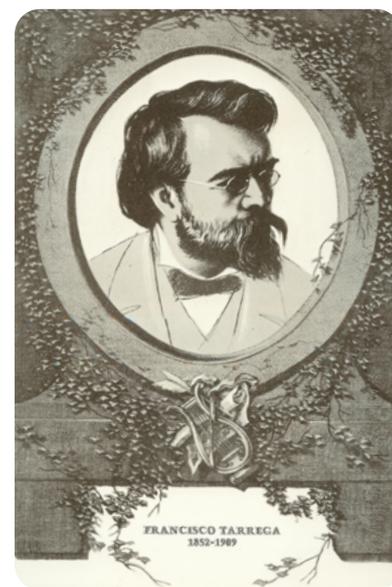


Coste - *Le Passage des Alpes op. 40 Rondo*

Coste may have been visiting the concert of Francisco Tárrega, who played in Paris on 25 May 1881 in the Odeon at the memorial festival of 200 years Calderón, where Victor Hugo was presiding, which would make a nice connection to the next musical style, Nationalism [Pujol, 1960, p. 88-89]. So now the situation in Spain is taken into consideration.

### IS THERE A NATIONAL STYLE?

In short, the outlines of the guitar in the Nationalistic or Impressionistic era through Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909) will be taken into account. After his military service Tárrega settled in Madrid in 1874, where he studied piano, solfeggios and harmony at the conservatory. At that time, musical life in Spain was dominated by the followers of the Romantic style, which had its cradle in Paris, earlier in the 19th century [Moser, 1996, p. 17]. But the national style was emerging, starting with Pedrell around 1881, ending up in the emancipation of the flamenco tradition by Falla and Lorca around 1923, the canto jondo [Grove, 1980, VI p. 371-2, XIV p. 331; Washabaugh, 1996, p. 12]. Tárrega took lessons from Damas, who worked with the Method of Cano [Moser, 1996, p. 60]. During tours



Francisco Tárrega

he met other guitarists, such as Arcas in Alicante in 1879 and Bosch in Paris in 1881 [Moser, 1996, p. 17, 18]. At this time he was already composing works like *Gran Jota* [i.e. *Fantasia Española*], which is a variation form, and transcribing works, probably from Rubinstein and Thalberg [Moser, 1996, p. 17, 61]. He was giving concerts in the form of 'mixed recitals', with original works and transcriptions, initially from contemporary composers, such as Verdi and Albéniz, later also from 'old' composers, such as Mozart and Schubert [Pujol, 1960, p. 108, 133; Moser, 1996, p. 71, 134]. His public mostly consisted of upper-class nobility and middle-class invites [Pujol, 1960, p. 106, 132, 169; Moser, 1996, p. 70, 123, 134].

His 98 original works he composed in a limited number of 17 genres, among which his preference for Classical genres is visible, as he composed *Etudes* (32), *Preludes* (18) and *Valses* (6). But in genres like *Jota* (2), *Malagueña* (1) and *Tango* (1) his introduction of traditional Spanish genres can be noticed, as is the reiteration of the *Theme-and-Variation* genre, which was discarded by the Romanticists. Among the genres Tárrega used, a number of 8 can be called Classical, 5 Romantic and only 3 National in origin. With regard to genres he did not compose in a very innovative way. The best example of his preference for the Spanish National style emerges from his 120 transcriptions, out of which 21 pieces from Albéniz and Malats became most famous. Nevertheless, the remaining 100 arrangements / transcriptions are compositions in the Classical style. [Pujol, 1960, p. 259-266; Moser, 1996, p. 446-473] Most of his duets (20) are arrangements of traditional Spanish music, mostly *Zarzuelas* [Pujol, 1960, p. 265].

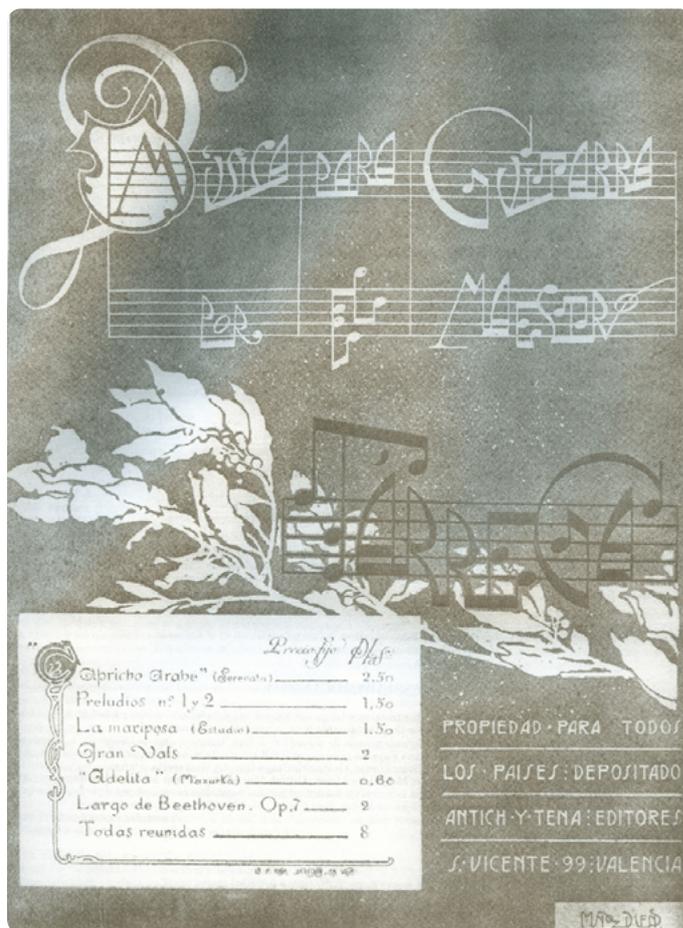
In order to clarify the differences between the Romantic style and the National style, I have compared the analysis of Coste's *La Source du Lyson* (1874) with the analysis of Tárrega's *Capricho Árabe* (1888).

#### Audio sample 5:



*Tárrega - Capricho Árabe m. 1-12.*

The form of the piece is episodic, subsequent parts of different mood are now put together without interval to a one piece composition. Just a few inserted two-bar-phrases as joint-motifs break through periodicity. Figurations, however, are quite elaborated with chromatics



and embellishments (24 in 73 bars). Dissonance is limited to passing dominants or ninth chords, modulation only to the parallel and the relative. A flatted-II degree refers to

phrygian mode, an example of the Spanish cadence, the only interesting cadence, apart from a remarkable #2. Some rocket and parachute figurations add to the modest virtuosity of the piece. Many prescriptions for dynamics occur. The most remarkable melody is the distinctive opening motif, also functioning as an idée fixe, returning several times, which gives the music its Moorish folklore atmosphere. The composition was called *Capricho morisco* in an earlier stage [Moser, 1996, p. 19].

FORM	MELODY	HARMONY	METRE	EXPRESSION
1 phrase - expolito	3 figuration - rocket - parachute			16 dynamics - 24x in 73m
	4 ornament - appoggiature - double turn - spark	8 modulation - traditional		
	5 idée fixe 4x		15 tempo - changes 6x	
	6 chromatics	10 cadence - passing dom. - 6/9 chord - #2 dominant - b2 degree		
				20 folklore - motif

#### Analysis: musical phenomena Tárrega

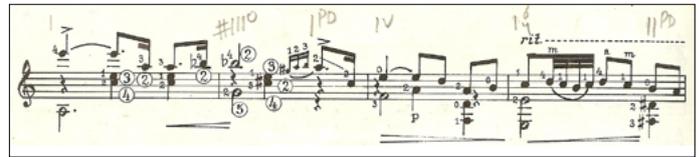
The Nationalistic characteristics do not differ much from the Romantic features. The form of the piece still is episodic, subsequent parts of different mood are now put together without interval to a one piece composition. As most of the formal characteristics also occur in Romantic music, the difference in style does not emerge from the number of style elements, but from the quality of their character. The conclusion of the analysis would be the same in comparison with Tárrega's other analysed compositions, such as *Danza Mora* and *Marieta*, taking Romantic melody in moderate harmony in favour of dissonance and modulation, apart from *Preludio 2*, which is merely a study in chromatic modulation. These characteristics of the National style can be found in harmony.

The first example is a moderate tonal shift, taken from Tárrega's *Marieta*, where the harmonic motion goes through an inversion of a diminished third degree and passing dominants towards a 6/4 inversion of the first degree.

#### Audio sample 6:



*Tárrega - Marieta m. 4-7.*



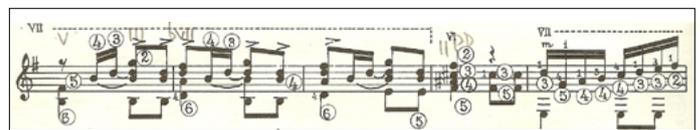
*Tárrega - Marieta*

The second example is taken from Tárrega's *Danza Mora* that shows a modal folklore influence by its flatted seventh degree.

#### Audio sample 7:



*Tárrega - Danza Mora m. 23-27.*



*Tárrega - Danza Mora*

Unlike Coste, who resided in Paris for most of his life, Tárrega was a travelling virtuoso, who gave concerts in Spain, Italy, Algeria, France. But also Coste's contemporaries Huerta, Zani de Ferranti and Legnani did this, so, this aspect of performance practice is not a new phenomenon. Nevertheless, the horizon is widening. And playing recitals with mixed programs is new to the guitar world. The presumed 'school of Tárrega' was of great influence for the performance practice of the next generation by way of his pupils and followers, with Llobet (1878-1938), Fortea (1882-1953) and Pujol (1886-1980) [Hofmeester, 1946, p. 4; Ophee, 2016, p. 26-38]. Tárrega's biographers Emilio Pujol [1960] and Wolf Moser [1996] do not tell when he played *Capricho Árabe* for the first time. But Segovia (1893- 1987) did play the piece on the occasion of his first concert, in Granada in 1909, which brings us to the next discussion of the development in musical style, the introduction of Modernism. [López Poveda, 2009, p. 65]. It seems appropriate now to take a look at the works of several composers surrounding Segovia. The horizon will now be broadened to Europe to see what's going on.

#### IS THERE A MODERN STYLE?

In a short sketch of the outlines of the guitar in the Modern era will be drawn, through the performing artist Andrés

Segovia (1893-1987). His first public concert in Granada in 1909, at the age of only 16 years, took place in the Centro Artístico, for an upper-class audience. He played a program of transcriptions of Malats, Chopin, Bach, Albéniz, and original works by Sor, by himself and by Tárrega, among which Capricho Árabe [López Poveda, 2009, I p. 63-65, II



*Andrés Segovia*

p. 1046]. Then he toured through Spain first, giving concerts with Coste's Études in his program in Barcelona, 1916, and Falla's Homenaje in Madrid, 1922 [López Poveda, 2009, I p. 65, 117, II p. 1046-7]. From these concert-programs already the new performing practice style of the 'eclectic recital' is emerging, in which soloists play their own works, transcriptions of 'old' and contemporary works, and compositions originally written for the guitar by non-guitarists. Segovia's last concert was in 1987 in Miami at the age of 94. There he played transcriptions again, by Frescobaldi, Bach, Haydn and Tchaikovski, original pieces by Sor and Tárrega, and Modern compositions by Turina and Ponce, another fine example of the eclectic recital. [López Poveda, 2009, I p. 848]. The horizon of the guitar now reaches throughout the world.

It is an understatement to say that Segovia had a great influence upon the guitar's performance practice. In giving as many as 5.402 concerts between 1909 and 1987, throughout the world in 723 cities, he made this eclectic recital the standard for Modern guitarists [López Poveda, 2009, II p. 1058-9]. With regard to the genres used by modern composers, in this essay only the ones for guitar solo ever played by Segovia are taken into account. These are compositions by Villa Lobos, Falla, Turina, Tansman, Moreno Torroba, Rodrigo, Castelnuovo Tedesco and Ponce. This list shows that the genres in their 132 works from Segovia's repertoire took genres from the Classical style, from the Romantic style and from the National style [López

Poveda, 2009, II p. 1074-5, 1077, 1083-4, 1086-7, 1093, 1094-5]. No new modern genres were added. Eclecticism, however is not only expressed in recital programs, but also in music itself. An analysis of Falla's Homenaje will show in which way the musical phenomena of the modern style are expressed in music.

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946) once said that the guitar promised to be of great importance to the future of Modern music, because of its tuning in fourths and a third, intervals becoming more and more the foundation of Modern harmony, resulting in the escape from tonal gravity. This is expressed indeed in the only piece Falla wrote for solo guitar, which he dedicated to the memory of Claude Debussy, who died in 1918.



*Manuel de Falla*

**Audio sample 8:**  
*Falla - Homenaje*



Manuel de Falla - Homenaje

Perhaps there are some impressionism influences to be found. The first remarkable modern characteristic is the way this neo-folklore genre Habanera, with its droning rhythm, is shaped into a form of very irregular phrases of 3, 5 and 6 measures, which are even shortened in the reprise, that give this piece its restless mood, ending in two 4-bar phrases of resignation. The rhythmic drone-motif that might even be called an *idée fixe*, is giving a mourning scent to the music by its  $b^{\flat}VI$  harmonic effect. It is often interrupted by figurations of dissonant parachute and rocket-figures. The few ornaments are just indications for arpeggio, of which the piece is full.

The shifting tonality of a-minor/major is caused by the often returning chromatics  $\#c$  and  $b^{\flat}b$ , giving it a phrygian d-minor atmosphere. Dissonance in harmony is mainly produced by the chords that exist of perfect fourths and diminished fourths, wherein also the melody contrasts to the harmony in major and minor seconds. Modulation is effected by transposition of the chordal structure, altered in diminished fourths and by inversions of the same. The

passage in d, m. 37, in an hemitonic pentatonic scale where the third is missing and the drone is transferred into a fifth, leads to a passage in G, followed by F that later is augmented, after which the initial rhythm is resumed. Here the flatted fifth is outstanding in its presence.

The Piu calmo segment at the end consists of a shifting dominant7 chord on sequential pitches, resulting in a 'chordal melody', where the harmonic structure isn't changed in favour of the tonal harmony. The rhythmic shift is the constant motion of the habanera, dotted-8th-16th figures, 8ths-figures and 8ths-triplets, constantly changing, except for the d-bourdon passage. Along with the many prescriptions of tempo, articulation and dynamics, this composition shows many characteristics that are the essence of Modernism in music.

It really is a masterpiece in a nutshell, expressing Falla's opinion upon Modern music: "Our music must be based on the natural music of our people. In our dance and our rhythm we possess the strongest of traditions that no one can obliterate" [Machlis, 1979, p.307].

FORM	MELODY	HARMONY	METRE	EXPRESSION
1 phrase - shortened - lengthened	3 figuration - rocket - parachute	7 dissonance - alt. fourths - fourths - fifths - flatted 2 & 5	13 rhythm - dot 8ths - triplets	16 dynamics - 17x in 70m
		8 modulation - alteration - inversion		17 articulation - 92x in 70m
	5 <i>idée fixe</i> 4x - flatted sixth		15 tempo - changes 14x	
				20 folklore - habanera - bourdon
		12 arpeggio - ornament - cont. motion		

Analysis: musical phenomena Falla

From this analysis, conclusions can be drawn that have had consequences for other Modern composers. Among these characteristics, the new approach towards harmony, in shifting chordal melody and altered chord structures based on the guitar's tuning, had far reaching consequences in composition, opening up almost infinite possibilities in techniques.

Its formal characteristics and style elements are distinguishable in the works of Modern composers, who do

not necessarily also had to be guitar players anymore. Here the compositions Nocturno by Moreno Torroba, Sevillana by Turina and Chôros by Villa Lobos are concerned.

The most striking characteristics of the Modern Style can be found in harmony.

The first example is taken from Turina's Sevillana, where a series of chords with unmodified intervallic design influences the tonal structure. This can be called a 'chordal melody'.

#### Audio sample 9:

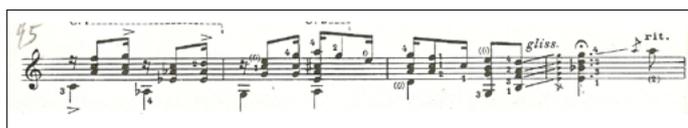
*Turina - Sevillana m. 129-131.*



The second example is taken from Villa Lobos's Chôros, where in its syncopated rhythm sudden harmonic contrasts emerge, from F/C through chromatic lowered A-flat, to C/G to A-major, d-minor7, E/G, B-minor7 flattened 5, ending in E-minor7 flattened 5.

#### Audio sample 10:

*Villa Lobos - Chôros m. 45-48.*



The third example is taken from Moreno Torroba's Nocturno, the passage where a whole-tone-scale is contrasting to a pedal point on the dominant, creating free fluent tonality.

#### Audio sample 11:

*Moreno Torroba - Nocturno m. 116-124.*



The fourth example can be found in Rodrigo's Zarabanda Lejana, with a series of ostensible tonal chords Imaj7/5#5-17/9- IV6- IVb6- bVI6- Imaj7- IV6 etc. where the dissonants remain unresolved and of equal intensity for a long period, also giving the tonality some fluency.

#### Audio sample 12:

*Rodrigo - Zarabanda Lejana m. 9-13.*



These features seem to be applied musical theory, but they are nevertheless of great importance to the understanding of the music.

With regard to the composers position to the guitar, modern composers escaped from Berlioz' statement: "One cannot, I repeat, without playing, write multi-voiced pieces for guitar that are full of melodic lines, in which all of the instrument's possibilities can emerge"

[Berlioz, 1843, p. 86].

## PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Coste can be defined as a composer and a guitarist, performing in mixed concerts. Tárrega is a guitarist, a composer and an arranger, performing in mixed recitals. Andrés Segovia is a performing artist, playing transcriptions and original compositions for guitar by non-guitarists, expressing the shifting relationship between composition and performance practice. He performed in eclectic recitals.

## GENRES

The composer Coste used 12 genres from the Classical style, and introduced 18 Romantic ones. The composer Tárrega in the National style used 8 Classical genres, as well as 5 Romantic genres, just adding 3 National genres to his repertoire. Modernists didn't introduce any new Modern genre, they just re-invented 'old' genres into their Neo-formal styles. So, the musical meaning cannot be recognized in the genres, but in the way they treated the music itself.

## STYLES

The most striking characteristic change in musical style is to be found in harmony. The change in Romanticism consists in elaborated tonal progression, prolongation



and modulation. The change in Nationalism is effected in moderate shift of tonal chords with folklore modal influences. The change in Modernism is expressed in chordal melody, contrasts and freedom of tonal restrictions in dissonance.

## FINALE

The essence of the reflections upon the subject 'Modern Times' in guitar music has now been revealed by way of analysis, research and interpretation. Above all, interpretation is the most important. This was already put into words by Wallace Stevens in 1936 in his poem *The Man With The Blue Guitar* [Hockney/Wallace, 1977, p. 6]:

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***They said, 'You have a blue guitar,  
You do not play things as they are.'  
The man replied, 'Things as they are  
Are changed upon the blue guitar.'***

**Wallace Stevens**

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