Pioneering Guitar Women, An Autoethnographic Study

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

York University, Toronto, Ontario: Music

April 30, 2024

Abstract

This dissertation, *Pioneering Guitar Women, An Autoethnographic Study*, explores the significant yet often overlooked contributions of female guitarists to the evolution of guitar music. Despite the dominance of male guitar legends such as Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton, pioneering women like Memphis Minnie, Mary Osborne, and Sister Rosetta Tharpe have profoundly influenced the genre. The study aims to illuminate the stories, techniques, and legacies of these trailblazing women, addressing four central research questions: the narratives of these women guitar heroes, their success in a predominantly male culture, their impact on the world of guitar, and their influence on the career of Canadian blues guitarist, Sue Foley.

This dissertation includes a survey of artists, Memphis Minnie, Geeshie Wiley, Elvie Thomas, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Mary Osborne, Maybelle Carter, Elizabeth Cotten, Ida Presti, Lydia Mendoza, Maria Teresa Vera, and Charo. Their musical genres range from classical to flamenco, folk to jazz, showcasing diverse technical innovations and cultural impacts. My research involves not only historical and biographical analysis but also the practical application of these artists' techniques through performance, highlighting the technical demands and expressive capabilities of their music.

The structure of my dissertation includes four parts: biographies and musical techniques of each artist, the birth of musical genres, personal accounts of touring as a female musician, and the role of border radio in shaping musical culture. My autoethnographic approach intertwines my personal experiences with my research, offering a unique perspective on the legacy of female guitarists and their transformative impact on my own career and the broader musical landscape. The study concludes with reflections on the enduring influence of these pioneering women and a call to recognize and celebrate their contributions to the world of guitar music

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Pioneering Guitar Women, An Autoethnographic Study

Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page are but a few legends that come to mind with the mere mention of the electric guitar. Many people conjure up the iconic image of a virile guy under smoke and lights, shredding a solo with his instrument propped toward the sky – like a peacock with his dazzling plume. However, we rarely think of other icons like Memphis Minnie, Mary Osborne, or "the godmother of rock and roll" – Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Yet, even Chuck Berry was quoted as saying that his entire career "was just one long Rosetta Tharpe impersonation."[1]

Modern "guitar women" are now more visible and have developed status as influential players well able to compete with their male colleagues. In 2017, Guitar Player Magazine (GPM) declared that women have made a tremendous contribution to guitar culture. In recognition of this influence, GPM dedicated one of its 50th-anniversary editions to presenting an alphabetical list of the top 50 female guitar players across time and genres.[2] This list included numerous modern players, such as Bonnie Raitt, Jennifer Batten, Charo, Ani DiFranco, Sharon Isbin, June Millington, Emily Remler, and Susan Tedeschi. It also included several Canadians, such as Donna Grantis, Joni Mitchell, Liona Boyd, and myself. I was honored to be mentioned among these players, and I was gratified to know that I had interviewed and researched the music and lives of well over 80% of the women presented in the article.

The research I have done on female guitarists has mainly been driven by my own curiosity as way to understand the path that I've been on all my adult life. Through this work I

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[1] Rose, Caryn. "She Can Make That Guitar Talk." *NPR.org*. Sep, 2019. https://www.npr.org/2019/09/24/759600717/she-can-make-that-guitar-talk. Accessed 19 Jan 2023.
[2] "50 Sensational Female Guitarists," *Guitar Player Magazine.* May, 2017. https://www.guitarplayer.com/players/50-sensational-female-guitarists Jan 26, 2021. Accessed Mar 28, 2023.

have grown a deeper understanding on the scope of the life of the woman who plays guitar. The pioneers mentioned in this dissertation paved the way for all of us and defined what that path could and would look like. More importantly they left us with directions and ways to traverse it.

The following four questions lay at the center of my research and defined the focus of this dissertation:

What are the stories of these women guitar heroes?

How did they achieve such career success in this uber-masculine musical culture?

How have their stories and techniques impacted the world of guitar?

How have these female pioneers transformed the life and career of Canadian blues guitarist Sue Foley?

I entered the wild and wide world of guitar at the age of thirteen, mainly through the influence of my three older brothers and father, who all played the instrument. Although my first influences were all male, I always noticed – even as a young child – when a female guitarist entered my sights. As a young up-and-comer, I was always fascinated by the pioneering women of guitar who played and built their careers in music decades before the women's movement.

In 2015, I focused my master thesis on compositions based around the work of pioneering women guitar players.[3] For that study, I wrote essays and songs dedicated to blues artists Memphis Minnie, Tejano Legend, Lydia Mendoza, and country artist Maybelle Carter. These three artists all had a huge impact in the world of music, not to mention a lasting impact in their individual cultures. In my dissertation work, I sought to delve deeper into more styles, cultures, and genres, again focusing on the work of pioneering women guitar players. By using the term "pioneering," I seek to imply both the idea of being at the inception of a new way of

[3] Foley, Susan. *Reflections and Compositions Inspired by Three Pioneering Guitar Women*. MA Thesis, Graduate Program in Music. York University. 2015.

doing things as well as of advancing an idea and new technical developments. As a result of my personal research interests and my MA thesis topic I decided to expand upon the theme by adding more women guitarists from various musical cultures. A quick survey of the selected artists is included to introduce the dissertations "cast of characters."

In the 1930s, Ida Presti, a child prodigy and an obscure French classical guitarist, took the classical music scene in France by storm with her prowess on the instrument. Cuban troubadour Maria Teresa Vera of wrote folk songs and performed throughout Cuba with a group of itinerant musicians. Sister Rosetta Tharpe, one of the most well-known women guitar players was inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in 2018.[4] Thus, her influence as both an amazing performer and a masterful technician of the guitar was finally recognized. Elizabeth Cotten, played the instrument left-handed and upside down and wrote some of the most well-known folk songs, many of which remain standards in the folk revival of today. Mississippi blues artists Geeshie Wiley and Elvie Thomas traveled together in the 1930s and recorded several songs, only six of which are still in existence. Several of the songs they left behind have had a major impact on various performers and been covered by dozens of artists. Mary Osborne took a traditional approach to playing jazz guitar and was influenced by swing guitarist Charlie Christian. The fact that she is the first recorded female jazz guitarist is noteworthy. Her album *A Girl and Her Guitar* is a considered to be a jazz classic by many aficionados. The oddball personality in this group of selected musicians is Charo. Her significance lies in the fact that this is an autoethnographic study and Charo was the first woman guitar player I ever saw on TV! She has a unique, virtuosic technique and style that mixes classical guitar with traditional flamenco devices. Her work and her approach on the instrument are characterized by innovation.

[4] https://www.rockhall.com/sister-rosetta-tharpe

Part of this study was based around performance and presentation. To more fully grasp the nature and uniqueness of the players I chose to study and analyze each artist's unique guitar style and learn to perform their music. In addition, I researched their stories and diligently practiced their technical innovations in order to present an hour-long performance illuminating historical and pedagogical information while also revealing repertoire and performance styles. The scope of technical demands collected in a single performance – from classical guitar playing to jazz, Piedmont fingerpicking, flamenco techniques, and traditional country and blues – was ambitious but also invigorating. At my artistic core, I am a blues artist and have made it my career path since my teens. The blues proved to be the perfect jumping off point from a musical perspective and as an expressive vehicle intimately linked to the guitar itself.

My Jumping Off Point—The Blues

The blues paints its message in primary harmonic colors. The I, the IV, and the V; the tonic, the subdominant, and the dominant harmonic zones are the structural foundation of almost all Western music – classical, jazz, and popular forms. These three elemental pillars also form the foundations of the blues. The circle of fifths, which lays out the Western musical scale and approach, is a map and framework full of beauty and simplicity.[5] The blues is reflected in this framework as it leans heavily on I, IV, and V. Being a blues musician has allowed me to explore all of these other genres with a certain amount of integrity. In both the playing and the

[5] Greek scholar and philosopher Pythagoras discovered pitch frequencies and defined what an octave was; then, he created the Pythagorean Circle, which eventually became known as the Circle of Fifths.The Circle of Fifths is the very foundation of Western music theory. It is essential in writing music because its clever design is very helpful in composing and harmonizing melodies, building chords, and moving to different keys within a composition. Pilhofer, Michael, Day, Holly. "The Circle of Fifths: A Brief History." *www.dummies.com*. Feb 23, 2009. Accessed Mar 28, 2023.

performance, I felt comfortable leaning into these other genres using my experience as a blues artist as my foundation.

In most American popular folk music, everything dilutes down to the blues if one goes back far enough. Therefore, the jazz of Mary Osborne, the rhythm and blues (R&B) and gospel of Rosetta Tharpe, the country of Maybelle Career, and the fingerpicking of Elizabeth Cotten are all accessible from a blues musician's perspective. Where things get interesting is in the incorporation of Spanish, European, and North African influences in classical and flamenco playing.

In the early 2000s, I started taking flamenco guitar lessons from a local teacher in Ottawa, Canada. I recall the painstaking task of learning many of the techniques, which at the time were foreign to me. Many flamenco guitar techniques, including the piccata, tremolo, and arpeggios, originated in the classical guitar world. These techniques expand the right-hand abilities, which leads to a greater freedom of expression on the instrument. By the time I started to work on my dissertation, I had already been practicing these techniques for a few decades. Therefore, the ability to delve into the classical work of Ida Presti and the flamenco of Charo was accessible to me. I leaned on my blues guitar playing for timing, phrasing, and depth of emotion.

Because this was an autoethnographic study, I have included my own stories and musical insights in both my written work and my performance. The thread that ties me to these pioneers of guitar lie in the exploration of female expression on the instrument as well as these women's histories, musical innovations, and thirst for adventure. Exploring their approach to the instrument and learning about them have stretched me not only as a musician but also as a fan. My appreciation for their work and respect for them continue to inspire me to carry their legacies forward.

The remainder of the dissertation is structured thusly; Part One presents the biographies of each artist, the songs I chose to study, the musical approaches, and the guitar techniques applied. Parts Two, Three and Four represent distinct ethnographic events. Part Two deals with the birth of musical genres. Part Three expands on my personal accounts of being on the road and explain some of the dynamics that make the female experience of a touring musician unique. Part Four delves into the inception of border radio and how it affected musical culture around the world. My conclusion and the references close out the dissertation.

Part One

The Unique Sounds of Pioneering Guitar Women: Approaching the Songs

1.1 Memphis Minnie

Years Active 1930-1954

Biography:

Memphis Minnie (1897-1973) born Lizzie Douglas, was a prolific recording artist, singer, songwriter and lead guitarist. Her style was rooted in early country blues, but she also contributed to the urban transformation to electric Chicago blues. Minnie incorporated what would later become R&B and rock and roll into the sound and presentation of her music.

In 1910, aged 13, Minnie began hitchhiking the 17 miles from her family farm in Walls, Mississippi to Beale Street in Memphis to busk on the streets. After a few years of doing so, she spent three years with the Barnum & Bailey Circus working on her stage act. She eventually returned to Memphis and, along with her husband Kansas Joe McCoy, started her recording career. Minnie and McCoy moved to Chicago in 1930, where they recorded relentlessly until divorcing in 1934. In 1938, she married her second husband and musical partner, Ernest Lawlars, aka Little Son Joe and together they recorded to great acclaim, creating some of Minnie's most memorable songs including "Me and My Chauffeur Blues."

By 1941, Minnie was fronting a "power trio" with her forceful voice and aggressive electric guitar. This was the genesis of the modern electric Chicago blues. By this time, Minnie and Little Son Joe were well established in Chicago, performing in the many clubs in the Chicago blues scene. By all accounts, Minnie was a rock star a quarter-century before there were rock stars. Numerous reports have indicated that Minnie's club music was extremely loud and audacious. The poet Langston Hughes saw Minnie's show at the 230 Club on New Year's Eve

1942. He wrote of the intensification of her already "hard and strong voice" by amplification and described the sound of her electric guitar as "a musical version of electric welders plus a rolling mill."

Minnie had a commanding personality with a creativity that served as a profound influence on blues music. She was known to be rough and tough in bars and on the streets, quick with a knife and a pistol – and even a guitar if she needed to hit someone with it. On stage, she was known to go head-to-head with the best of her male counterparts. Big Bill Broonzy spoke of engaging with Memphis Minnie in the very first guitar cutting contest in 1933. It was held at 1:30 am on the Southside of Chicago in a large hall filled with onlookers, both black and white. The sidewalk and street outside were crowded with fans competing for scarce window views of the contest. It was judged by Sleepy John Estes, Tampa Red, and Richard M. Jones. After two songs each, Minnie won the prize of a bottle of whiskey and a bottle of gin. She also had cutting contests with others such as Jimmy Rogers and Muddy Waters and won every time.

Minnie's professional career came to a halt in 1960 when she suffered a stroke and was no longer able to play guitar. She and Lawlars moved back to Memphis, and he passed away the following year. Alone and in poor health, with limited to no financial resources, Minnie spent her final years in a nursing home in Memphis, where she died of another stroke in 1973. She is buried at the Mount Zion Memorial Cemetery in Walls, Mississippi.

The Songs:

"In My Girlish Days" (1941)

"Nothing in Rambling" (1940)

I handpicked "In My Girlish Days" and "Nothing in Rambling" as the two songs that I covered by Memphis Minnie for specific reasons. The relevant guitar techniques included

traditional blues guitar style, standard tuning, and early Chicago blues inflections and rhythmic motion and flow.

Memphis Minnie's story is mysterious, and although much has been written about her, few first-hand accounts exist of how her life unfolded. The only concise biography of Memphis Minnie is well researched and delves into her early life for a few chapters; however, it mainly focuses on the recording sessions at which she played.[6] The book includes some observations by other musicians about her rough and abrasive character,[7] but there is not much to explain how that roughness came to be.

The lyrics of the song "In my Girlish Days" speak about a girl running away from home, about a strange man being in her room, and of her parents shaming her. The song mentions catching a train and riding away. Later, she gets on a truck. The repeating line "I didn't know no better, in my girlish days" alludes to the loss of innocence and the ignorance of youth. I chose to study and perform this song because the lyrical content seems personal and compared with some of the myths and stories of Minnie's childhood, it appears to be a more accurate and essentially an autobiographical account.

Furthermore, I have always believed that the only way to obtain insights into Minnie's life and philosophy is to pay attention to her lyrics. All of Minnie's songs post-1940 are credited to her second husband, Ernest Lawlars, aka Little Son Joe. As it is difficult to believe that a man could write a song like "In My Girlish Days," precisely why Minnie never received writing credit remains to be discovered. At the time, composer credits were often given to non-

[6] Only one concise biography has been written about Memphis Minnie, titled *Woman With Guitar*, by Paul and Beth Garon (Da Capo Press, 1992). Over half of the book is focused around the recording sessions that Minnie and her husband participated in.
[7] Garon, p. 38.

composers as a way of distributing royalties,[8] and there is also a good chance that Minnie would have deferred to Little Son Joe, due to the norms of the era. I believe that Minnie did write many of her songs, especially the more personal ones – a notion also adhered to by her biographers, Paul and Beth Garon. Notably, blues artists[9] Brewer Phillips and Sunnyland Slim recalled Minnie writing songs well into her later years, for both herself and other artists. Memphis Minnie's lyrics to "In My Girlish Days" are as follows:

Late hours at night, trying to play my hand
Through my window, out stepped a man
I didn't know no better, oh boy, In my girlish days
My mother cried, and Papa did too
Oh my daughter, look what a shame on you
I didn't know no better, oh boy, In my girlish days
I caught a train, didn't have a dime
I had to run away from my home
I didn't know no better, oh boy, In my girlish days
I hit the highway and caught a truck
1917, when the world was tough
I didn't know no better, oh boy, In my girlish days
Now all my playmates are not surprised
I had to travel, 'fore I got wise
Now I know better, and I still got, my girlish ways

The other Memphis Minnie song that I chose is "Nothing in Rambling." It also tells the story of a woman traveling, her vulnerabilities and insights, and the joy of the adventure. Minnie undoubtedly had an adventurous spirit as she and her husbands[10] were known to be transient for much of their careers.[11] The subject matter of Memphis Minnie songs runs the gamut from

[8] Garon, p. 52.
[9] Garon, pp. 52–53.
[10] Minnie went through three marriages, although there are no discovered marriage documents to confirm them. It is speculated that her initial spouse was Casey Bill Weldon, whom she wedded in the early 1920s. In 1929, she married Kansas Joe McCoy, a skilled guitarist and mandolin player. However, they filed for divorce in 1934. In approximately 1938, Minnie encountered Ernest Lawlars (also known as Little Son Joe), a guitarist, and they quickly tied the knot. From 1939 onwards, Minnie's official records show her name as Minnie Lawlars, indicating her union with Ernest. Garon p.45.
[11] Garon, p. 73.

prostitution, gambling, poverty, men troubles and rambling to the sheer exaltation of being wild and free. She also recorded many traditional gospel songs.

From a technical standpoint on the guitar, I have remained true to Minnie and Little Son Joe's approaches in each song. The guitar parts and patterns in "Nothing in Rambling" and "In My Girlish Days" are superbly constructed, as was the case with many of Minnie's songs. In both instances, the two guitar parts played by Minnie and Little Son Joe are orchestrated, intertwining patterns that repeat with each verse. The turnarounds at the end of the verses remain the same throughout, which is obviously intentional. This is a marker of good songwriting and forethought as it makes a blues song unique.

When played in a classic 12-bar format, the blues is repetitive and can easily become mundane. Minnie had literally hundreds of straight 12-bar blues songs in her repertoire; therefore, to make them different, they needed distinguishing parts. The turnaround[12] is an effective and easy place to insert some personality to set one song apart from another. Minnie and both her husbands invested much effort into making their music stand out by using distinguishing parts, such as identifying turnarounds and guitar patterns. This demonstrates their drive and determination to succeed and to stand apart from their competitors.

Both songs that I chose to study and perform have differentiating guitar patterns, repeating concepts to establish the narrative, stories that unfold, and even punch lines at the end that resolve the stories, each with their own uplifting message. The last lines of "In My Girlish Days" profess that although this girl child went through some troubled times, she somehow kept

[12] The term "turnaround" refers to the final two bars of a blues progression. This particular musical element generates a sense of tension by transitioning to the V chord, commonly known as the "five chord." As a result, the listener experiences a strong desire to hear another chorus of the song.

herself intact and did not become a victim. She expresses no regrets for her actions; is empowered by the experiences; and has kept "her girlish ways" intact. In "Nothing in Rambling," after Minnie observes the world through her adventures, she decides to settle down in a safer existence with her husband. She speaks of those who "go to Hollywood and try to be on the scene," and how she remains satisfied staying behind, "eating her charity beans."[13]

I remained close to the original guitar parts in each song because they are well performed as well as fun to play. I was able to stretch out in "In My Girlish Days" by improvising a guitar solo, where I was able to explore by using dynamics and insert some of my own personality and style. The blues is a form which prizes individual expression, and honesty is one of the most crucial elements for keeping the integrity of the art form in one's presentation. I chose two of Minnie's songs that I could personally relate to and spoke to me on some level. Although I did not run away from home, I started my career quite young, becoming a professional musician at sixteen. As I played in bars and nightclubs throughout my teens, I'm well aware of the vulnerabilities a woman will likely feel and experience in those circumstances. In addition, I also left home when I was quite young. Alone, I traveled over 2,000 miles from Ottawa to Vancouver to start my music career. On the one hand, I remember being empowered by the fearlessness of youth, while on the other hand, I recall the feeling of being vulnerable, both physically and emotionally. Moreover, I have been a touring musician for my entire career, so the concept and a life of "rambling" is also quite familiar to me. I felt at ease with both the subject matter and the musical leanings in "In My Girlish Days" and "Nothing in Rambling."

Memphis Minnie was one of the most impactful discoveries of my music career.

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[13] Memphis Minnie. "Nothing in Ramblin." *MusicMatch.com*. Accessed Apr 3, 2023.

At barely 16 years old, I began my lifelong love affair with her music and personality as well as the mythology that shrouded her legacy. She remains my favorite artist of all time. As a young up-and-comer, I found it important to know there had been a woman playing blues guitar and writing her own songs decades before I was even born. Minnie's message was distinct because of her femaleness. The things she saw and did were different from those of many of her male counterparts, and she laid out her story truthfully based on this unique perspective.

1.2 Geeshie Wiley and Elvie Thomas

Geeshie Wiley, Years Active 1930
Elvie Thomas, Years Active 1908 - 1937

Biography:

Geeshie Wiley, an American country blues singer and guitarist, made a significant impact in the early 1930s with her recordings for Paramount Records. Despite her importance in the rural South's blues scene, little is known about her life, and no photographs of her have surfaced. It is speculated that she may have been born as Lillie Mae Boone, later known as Lillie Mae Scott. In April 1930, Wiley traveled to Grafton, Wisconsin, alongside singer and guitarist Elvie (or L. V.) Thomas to record for Paramount Records. There are only six sides in existence from their recordings together, most notably "Last Kind Words Blues" and "Motherless Child Blues."

Elvie Thomas, born L. V. Grant on August 7, 1891, passed away on May 20, 1979. She was a country blues vocalist and guitarist hailing from Houston, Texas. The moniker "Elvie" associated with Thomas, exclusively used by Paramount Records, originated from a distortion of her initials (L. V.). Her fellow musicians simply referred to her as "Slack," as mentioned in the introduction of the song, "Pick Poor Robin Clean."

Wiley and Thomas joined forces in the early 1920s. Thomas referred to her as Lillie Mae, mentioning that she bestowed the nickname "Geeshie" upon her. Some believe that Geeshie originated as Geechie, or Geetchie, and was commonly used among individuals hailing from coastal South Carolina and Georgia, often associated with the Gullah ethnic group in that area. It was also a term of endearment for a young woman from a rural background in the American South.

In March 1930, the duo traveled Wisconsin and collaborated on each other's songs. All of Thomas's and/or Wiley's known recordings were produced during these 1930 sessions for Paramount Records. Thomas also played the second guitar for Wiley's tracks "Last Kind Words Blues," "Skinny Leg Blues," and "Eagles on a Half."

Wiley's performances, particularly her rendition of "Last Kind Words Blues," have been praised for their emotional depth and remarkable expression. It is believed that only a few original copies of her records have survived. The details of Wiley's life remain uncertain, with conflicting information from various sources. Speculations range from her association with Delta blues musician Papa Charlie McCoy to her possible involvement in a medicine show in Jackson, Mississippi. While her true origins and fate remain elusive, Wiley's artistic contributions to early country blues have left an indelible mark on the genre's history.

Elvie (L.V.) Thomas was later discovered in a nursing home in Houston, Texas by music historian, Mack McCormick. Portions of their story and McCormick's interview were published in *The New York Times* in 2014.[14]

The Songs:

Last Kind Words Blues" (1930)

[14] Sullivan, John Jeremiah. "The Ballad of Geeshie and Elvie." *The New York Times*. Apr 13, 2024.

"Motherless Child Blues" (1930)

"Last Kind Words Blues" and "Motherless Child Blues" incorporate guitar textures which focus on and exploit fingerstyle, and thumb pick performance techniques.

In total, Geeshie Wiley and Elvie Thomas only recorded six songs together; yet these few songs have made a significant impact. They are considered classic country blues compositions, have been covered by many artists, and have been featured on dozens of compilation albums. Two of the six songs they recorded resonate with me deeply. The first song I covered from their limited catalog was Elvie Thomas's Motherless Child Blues," which tells the story of a woman who carries on with her life after losing her mother. She recalls the advice that her mother gave her, which she could not follow:

My mother told me just before she died,
"Oh my daughter, please don't be like me,
To fall in love with every man you see."
I could not listen to what my mother said
That's the reason why I'm standing here today […].[15]

The story unfolds as the young woman navigates her relationships with men without her mother's presence. She still feels like a child trying to find her own way in the world.

Now she's dead, she's six feet in the ground.
I'm a child and I am left around.
Remember the day, baby, you drove me from your door?
You said, "Go on, don't come here no more."[16]

In contrast to Elvie Thomas's "Motherless Child Blues," Geeshie Wiley's "Last Kind Words" also delves into the despair of death, but instead focuses on the loss of a man, which could be interpreted as either her father or lover. The stark imagery points to a soldier in World War I, to death, and to dealing with his bodily remains should he not survive.

The last kind words I heard my daddy say,

[15] Lyrics from "Motherless Child Blues" by Elvie Thomas.
[16] Lyrics to "Motherless Child Blues" by Elvie Thomas.

"If I die in some German war
Won't you send my body to my mother, Lord?
If I get killed, please don't bury my soul.
Just lay me out, let the buzzards eat me whole."[17]

Both "Last Kind Words" and "Motherless Child Blues" have a haunting feel. First, I learned how to play each piece verbatim. Then, as I grew comfortable with the original technical approaches, I modified parts to make them better suited to my style. Both songs' structures have a repetitive form with a strong rhythmic base. "Motherless Child Blues" is perhaps the more straightforward of the two. Because it has six verses and a repeating melody and guitar pattern, the way in which one delivers the song is key for ensuring that it does not lose focus.

Moreover, "Motherless Child Blues" can be challenging to perform live because it is highly repetitive and has many verses. The challenge does not necessarily lie in how dynamic one is but more in how to make each verse stand out from the previous one. A certain nuance is required to not fall into a pattern of having everything sound the same. Geeshie Wiley did this masterfully by muscling through the song at a fairly rapid pace. I attempted several approaches to "Motherless Child Blues" and found Wiley's method to be best, which involves telling the story directly with intent and trying not to dwell in too many spots, even though the subject matter is aimed at drawing listeners into the drama and emotion. Her method of a straightforward, almost deadpan delivery, combined with a fairly aggressive guitar pattern, seems to work most effectively when considered in contrast to the stark lyrical content.

By contrast, the song "Last Kind Words" has a hypnotic and eerie presence. Judging from the number of times the song has been covered by other artists,[18] it clearly causes people to

[17] Lyrics to "Last Kind Words" by Geeshie Wiley.

[18] According to Secondhandsongs.com, "Last Kind Words" has been recorded at least 15 times by artists as diverse as Robert Plant and Alison Krause, David Johansen, Mary Flower, and Rhiannon Giddens. This does not include the number of times people have performed it live. "Last Kind Words" also came to prominence when it was

obsess over it. The emotional depth in "Last Kind Words" can be felt as soon as the song begins due to the change to a minor IV chord, which contrasts sharply with the song's major key. The divergence of that movement immediately pulls the listener in. In the first verse, Geeshie Wiley speaks about losing a man, but then the lyrics change focus. In contrast to "Motherless Child Blues," which stays closer to the theme throughout, "Last Kind Words" jumps around to some seemingly unrelated concepts from death and war to longing for a lover. In my view, the factors that maintain consistency are the musical landscape and the stark minor subdominant chord, which seems to leap out unexpectedly in every verse. This minor IV chord brings the listener into the darkness. In "Last Kind Words," my approach leaned more on the musical theme than the lyrical themes.

Something I found curious about the lyrics of both songs was how they address many of the same issues and longings that one hears in blues songs by male artists. There are themes about traveling and being a rambler, loss and heartbreak, and even violence, in addition to flirtatious and sexual innuendo. I always loved the idea that women could be ramblers like their male counterparts. I also loved that these blues women were wild and roamed around freely, especially in an era decades before women's rights. It reveals an undaunting spirit, which I have been attracted to my whole life.

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featured in the 1994 documentary *Crumb*, which was based on the lives of cartoonist Robert Crumb and his two brothers.

https://secondhandsongs.com/work/16138/versions
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0109508/

1.2 Sister Rosetta Tharpe

Years Active 1938-1973

Biography:

Sister Rosetta Tharpe, (1915-1973), born Rosetta Nubin, was an American vocalist and guitarist. During the 1930s and ‘40s, she gained significant fame through her gospel recordings, which were characterized by a unique fusion of spiritual lyrics and electric guitar. She has the distinction of being the first prominent recording artist in gospel music and was one of the early pioneers to appeal to both R&B and rock and roll audiences. She earned titles such as “the original soul sister” and “the Godmother of Rock and Roll.” Her influence extended to numerous rock and roll icons, such as Little Richard, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Eric Clapton. Chuck Berry has been quoted as saying the following: “My whole career has been one long Sister Rosetta Tharpe impersonation.” Furthermore, Tharpe performed “Rock Me” at the widely disseminated “Spirituals to Swing” concert produced by John Hammond at Carnegie Hall in 1938. Reviewers have pointed to this performance as the first Gospel–R&B crossover aimed at a broad audience. In 1944, Tharpe recorded “Strange Things Happening Every Day,” which is regarded by many to be the first rock and roll record.

Particularly influential was her tour of Europe on the Blues and Gospel Train in 1964. The show stopped in Manchester, England, where she performed a concert outdoors at a train station. Because of the low temperatures, Tharpe wore a bulky overcoat for the performance, which become her most iconic photograph. This show, recorded and broadcast by Granada Television, was widely viewed. Producer Johnnie Hamp was later told by numerous musicians, including Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Jeff Beck, and Jimmy Page, how inspired they had been

after witnessing the Blues and Gospel Train, and it is regarded as hugely significant in the culture and history of the blues.

In sum, Tharpe was a monumental personality at the forefront of gospel, R&B, and rock and roll. As one of most influential musicians of the 20th century, she was inducted into the *Rock & Roll Hall of Fame* in 2018.

The Song:

"Up Above My Head" (1941)

The song "Up Above My Head" exploits guitar performance techniques that depend on: Vestopol tuning and monophonic (single-note) electric lead guitar soloing.

Sister Rosetta Tharpe's playing style was revolutionary and has inspired almost every modern guitarist in rock and blues. Tharpe played employing fast tempos and tended to focus on minor pentatonic shapes and runs. A common sound of hers was to perform multiple slides (polyphonic glissandi) up in a phrase, sliding up the neck from the first fret and ending on the shape at a higher fret. She was also famous for her sensational stage presence and live performances, where she would perform tricks (e.g., guitar windmills), duck-walk and shake, and gyrate her guitar and body to the rhythm. Many of these "tricks" were later adopted by male rock and roll artists during the 1950s and 60s (e.g., Chuck Berry and Pete Townshend of The Who).

Tharpe, like Memphis Minnie, is one of the early artists who chose to incorporate electric guitar into her shows. In her early days, she was known to play a National Steel resonator guitar, which she must have chosen due to the volume required to be heard above other instruments in the band. She also favored a Gibson Les Paul, one of the first electric solid body guitars available on the market. Eventually, Tharpe became famous for playing a white Gibson Les Paul SG with humbucker pickups. She was one of the first to effectively use an overdriven sound by turning

her small tube amp up as much as possible. She did not use guitar pedals and ran her guitar directly into the amplifier. Tharpe's playing style was all about power, charisma, and confidence, and the tone was often very much in her fingers.[19]

Tharpe often played in Vestopol tuning, which is an open chord – usually a D chord tuned from the lower string to the top: D-A-D-F#-A-D. She often lowered the strings even more to accommodate lower keys. On the solo in "Up Above My Head," she is tuned in Vestopol tuning to Db; therefore, the strings are tuned in sequence: Db-Ab-Db-F-Ab-Db. To achieve an authentic Sister Rosetta Tharpe feel and apply her unique chord voicing and phrases, one must apply this special tuning.[20]

Moreover, Tharpe used a thumbpick, which was typical of many early blues guitarists. Thumbpicks are generally thicker than flat picks and remain attached to the thumb instead of being held between the fingers, which allows more mobility with the right hand. Using a thumbpick also allows the player to play with an open right hand and apply finger picking techniques when required. In "Up Above My Head," Tharpe uses a thumbpick but holds it tight like a flat pick and plays her guitar solos with much force and authority. She applies a fast staccato attack from her right hand with a flurry of notes and phrases. In several instances, she slides up from the lower frets to the higher frets in one beat to accent her solo and create excitement.

"Up Above My Head" features a 16-bar progression that appears to follow a classic blues pattern. It begins on the tonic in Db for four bars, then moves to the IV chord for four bars, and then to the V chord; however, an added four bars of turnaround appear at the end. Breaking away

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[19] *Sister Rosetta Tharpe Gear Guide, Playing Habits & Technique – Sound Like Sister Rosetta Tharpe*. Uploaded by PMTVUK. Oct 27, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsJctAQCWTk. Accessed Apr 19, 2023.

[20] *Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Db Vestopol Tuning (open Db) Lesson*. Uploaded by KateLewisOnline. Dec 18, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZiSdgluuRE&t=47s. Accessed Apr 19, 2023.

from the strict 12-bar blues pattern creates a more classic early R&B and gospel feel. The song has a brisk tempo at approximately 190 bpm, and Tharpe plays her single-note solos along with the rhythm, often accenting the down beats. She also applies double stops and fast arpeggios in her guitar techniques.

Notably, Tharpe played with tremendous force, energy, and confidence. Her technical virtuosity on the guitar was only matched by her outstanding abilities as a vocalist – a relatively rare phenomenon. A challenge that I encountered when covering Sister Rosetta Tharpe songs lay in her vocals being so strong and her having such an impressive range and depth of emotion. I have always been more than a little intimidated when attempting to sing and play Tharpe songs. On a personal level, I find it difficult to express anything close to her emotional range as a vocalist. Furthermore, as I am not a gospel artist, singing about Jesus and God does not feel natural to me. Tharpe emerged from the black Pentecostal tradition, which is a far cry from my Canadian Irish Catholic upbringing. There is a large divide in the expression of faith between these two religions. Catholics are generally withdrawn and adhere to a quieter doctrine and rituals, whereas the "Pentecostals share an emphasis on supernatural experience and personal holiness. Pentecostalism also emphasizes speaking in tongues and supernatural healing."[21] Therefore, instead of performing Tharpe's songs verbatim, I chose to focus on her approach to playing the guitar solo in the song "Up Above My Head."

[21] Schmalzbauer, John. "The Pentecostal Tradition." Missouri State Edu. https://www.missouristate.edu/Reformations/Pentecostal.htm. Accessed Apr 11, 2023.

1.4 Mary Osborne

Years Active 1938-1991

Biography:

Mary Osborne, (1921-1992), was an American jazz guitarist and guitar maker. From a young age, she displayed her musical talent and gained recognition through a radio program in her hometown of Minot, North Dakota. In the 1940s, while in New York City, she collaborated with renowned jazz artists, including Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, Art Tatum, Coleman Hawkins, and Thelonious Monk. In 1968, after relocating to California with her husband, she co-founded the Osborne Guitar Company.

Osborne was born into a musically inclined family in North Dakota, where her mother played the guitar and her father, a violin maker, hosted local musicians in his barbershop. Her interest in music emerged at an early age, and she explored various instruments such as the piano, ukulele, violin, and banjo. At the age of 9, she picked up the guitar, and at 10 she began playing the banjo in her father's ragtime band. As a young musician, she also had her own radio program and formed a trio to perform in Bismarck, North Dakota. During this time, her music mainly encompassed "hillbilly" or country genres, with the guitar serving as an accompaniment to her vocals.

In 1938, at the age of 17, Osborne encountered Charlie Christian, an electric guitarist, at a club in Bismarck, North Dakota. Inspired by Christian's playing, she joined him on stage, engaged in conversations about his equipment, and promptly transitioned to becoming an electric guitarist herself. She later joined the all-female Winifred McDonnell Trio, which toured extensively across the Dakotas and Minnesota, eventually taking her to Philadelphia and New York City. In New York, Osborne fully immersed herself in the jazz scene, performing in house

bands, collaborating with renowned musicians, and effortlessly transitioning from swing to bebop.

During the 1940s and ‘50s, Osborne stood out as the sole prominent female electric guitarist in the jazz scene. While all-female swing jazz bands existed during this period, including six in which Osborne herself played, the prevalence of gender discrimination limited opportunities for women in the field. Nonetheless, Osborne defied expectations by performing with and recording alongside predominantly male bands, thus carving a unique place for herself. Notably, she headlined a performance in Philadelphia with Dizzy Gillespie, Art Tatum, Coleman Hawkins, and Thelonious Monk, receiving acclaim from both critics and audiences.

In 1968, Osborne made a significant career shift by leaving behind her successful tenure in New York City and settling in Bakersfield, California, where she resided until her passing. It was there that she co-founded the Osborne Guitar Company, focusing on producing high-quality electric guitars, amplifiers, and fuzz boxes. She continued to perform sporadically at various jazz festivals and clubs until 1991. Osborne passed away in March 1992, from chronic leukemia.

The Songs:

“I Love Paris” (1959)

“Mary’s Goodbye Blues” (1959)

Guitar techniques applied: Classic jazz guitar, standard tuning, electric guitar playing

“I Love Paris,” is the opening song of Mary Osborne’s album *A Girl and Her Guitar*. Osborne’s rendition of the Cole Porter classic is played at a quick pace (approx. 220 bpm) in a traditional swing style. Osborne recorded the song in a quartet featuring Tommy Flanagan on piano, Tommy Potter on bass, Jo Jones on drums, and herself on guitar. I was struck by Osborne’s arrangement of “I Love Paris” as it opens with a short, attention-grabbing intro, which

features guitar and drums in a call and response. After the intro, Osborne plays the head of the song, sticking to the original melody with little variation, an approach I noticed that she employs on many of the songs on *A Girl and Her Guitar*. Based on modern jazz standards, this might seem like a safe approach; however, I found it refreshing to be able to hear the song's melody without over-embellishment. After Osborne establishes the tune, she eases into a guitar solo that feels easy and unaffected. Her solos also refer back to the song's original melody, but as she plays she expands and explores while maintaining ties to the song's theme. This approach to playing jazz is highly appealing to me as I am not a trained jazz musician and can often feel myself getting lost listening to some of the genre. It is satisfying to be able to decipher the original theme laid out by the composer while a soloist expands. While such a safe approach can often yield jazz music that feels devoid of spirit, Osborne demonstrates her personality and creativity within this traditional framework.

After Osborne plays her first solo, she turns it over to jazz piano legend Tommy Flanagan, who rips through his own solo, raising the level of intensity and expanding on the concepts that she has established. After Flanagan is done, there is a modulation up a half step, from the key of Am to Bbm, and Osborne takes another round of solos that play off Flanagan's performance. This creates excitement as the energy continues to rise. After her last solo, she returns to the head of the song but this time plays it an octave higher, which continues to raise the energy level. The entire performance – a perfect introduction to both the album and her guitar style – is over in less than 3 minutes and there are no dull moments.

"I Love Paris" is easily accessible and, as a blues guitar player, I felt that I was able to get a decent grasp of it. I decided to learn Osborne's guitar solos verbatim, even though she likely would have improvised her parts as most jazz solos are improvised after the main melody (or

head) of the song is introduced. Furthermore, I adapted her song to solo guitar, lowering the key so that I could sing it in my vocal range. I have also added Osborne's arrangement of "I Love Paris" to my trio's repertoire, which includes bass and drums. Thus, I can expand on the guitar solos because I have adequate backup from the band, which allows me to not have to worry about keeping the rhythm and bass parts moving along all by myself.

The second song that I chose to study is an original composition by Osborne called "Mary's Goodbye Blues." As I am a trained blues guitarist, this was more in my wheelhouse, and therefore, I felt a natural level of comfort. The other reason for choosing "Mary's Goodbye Blues" is because it was an original composition, and one that sounds akin to an impromptu jam that may have occurred in the studio. I can imagine the band warming up together and things unfolding spontaneously, as the whole approach feels relaxed and loose. Not much information exists on how the sessions for *A Girl and Her Guitar* unfolded, but one can assume that – like most jazz albums of the day – the band played live in the studio. They would have run over the main arrangements together and recorded it while the song was fresh, with the musicians responding to each other in real time.

Osborne was a swing / jazz guitarist in the style of Charlie Christian. She first saw Christian in her hometown of Minot, North Dakota when she was 17. Christian acted as a mentor, let Osborne sit in, and gave her some tips. In an interview, Osborne stated the following: "I was young, dumb and eager to learn. Charlie had me sit in. He sat on the stand with me, and while I'd take a chorus he'd be saying, 'now don't rush... watch your time... that's it,

baby... you're making it now'. I was excited that he even bothered to listen. He inspired me and I tried to imitate him."[22]

Christian was one of the first stars of the electric guitar. He rose to fame after being asked to join the Benny Goodman Orchestra in 1939 at the age of 23. Christian innovated the electric guitar by improvising his solos much like a horn player would,[23] expanding the harmonic concepts from early swing jazz to bebop. Until that time, the guitar in jazz had mainly been used as a rhythm instrument. Christian became famous on the jazz circuit as a masterful and creative soloist who could play dozens of improvised choruses without hesitation.[24] Osborne recalled hearing Christian play gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt's solo on "St. Louis Blues" note for note, but he then followed it with his own ideas. "I remember some of the figures Charlie played in his solos," she said. "They were exactly the same things that Benny [Goodman] recorded later, such as Flying Home, Gone With What Wind, and all the others."[25]

Upon examining Christian's solos, one starts to notice the same moves and the same devices cropping up repeatedly. It seems that he saw the guitar fretboard in terms of chord shapes, related arpeggios, and color tones. His playing featured repeated patterns, which he used the majority of the time.

Frequently, Christian would solo out of a simple barre chord formation. Often in jazz of his era, the sixth chord was used as the one rather than just a major triad. This is also prominent in Osborne's version of "I Love Paris," where she works off both minor sixth and major sixth

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[22] Johnson, David. *Mary Osborne: Queen Of The Jazz Guitar.* Night Lights Classic Jazz. Indiana Public Media. Jul 13, 2021. https://indianapublicmedia.org/nightlights/mary-osborne-queen-jazz-guitar.php. Accessed Mar 16, 2023.

[23] Goins, Wayne; McKinney, Craig, pp. 369, 373–374.

[24] Liner notes. Christian, Charlie. Solo Flight: The Genius of Charlie Christian. Columbia. 1973.

[25] Albertson, Chris. "Charlie Christian. Hall of Fame Essay." *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.* https://www.rock hall.com/inductees/charlie-christian. Accessed Apr 6, 2023.

arpeggio patterns. Christian used hammer-on techniques that added a bluesy flavor to his jazz playing as well as incorporated neighboring tones below and above the notes in the chord arpeggios to embellish his solos. One can map out some other important notes in and around those major and minor sixth chord shapes, arpeggios, and color tones.

For example, Christian would often hammer on the flat third to the major this to embellish a phrase. In addition, he used a classic C chord formation as a jumping off point for his solos. He also used dominant guitar licks and patterns that were designed to work over dominant seventh, ninth, and thirteenth chords. Often, he would opt for a bluesy flavor with these dominant style patterns. Another chord shape that he liked to work out was a classic D seventh chord shape, where he would work off the seventh chord arpeggio.

Another common theme in the jazz guitar soloing innovated by Christian was patterns revolving around a II–V–I progression. This is probably the most common chord progression in jazz. A clear example of this approach is found in Christian's solo on the song "Rose Room."

To approach soloing on guitar over the II–V–I progression, one could apply either a dominant II or a II minor chord as both are common in jazz progressions. Often, when Christian hit the V chord, he also applied the flat seventh, the ninth, and the eleventh chord tones to add tension. All of these approaches can be found on Osborne's version of "I Love Paris," which demonstrates her adherence to Christian's method of playing jazz guitar.[26]

[26]" The Charlie Christian Guitar Style | Jazz Guitar Lesson." Anyone Can Play Guitar. Sep 7, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1idSbzk198. Accessed Apr 7, 2023.

1.5 Maybelle Carter

Years Active 1927-1978

Biography:

"Mother" Maybelle Carter (1909-1978), born in Nickelsville, Virginia, to Margaret Elizabeth (nee Kilgore) and Hugh Jackson Addington, is considered the matriarch of country music. Carter was an integral member of the original Carter Family group from the late 1920s until the early 1940s The group featured Maybelle on guitar and her cousin Sara Carter on vocals. Sara's husband, A.P., who also happened to be Maybelle's brother-in-law, also sang and wrote many of their songs. Maybelle married Ezra Carter on March 13, 1926, and they later had three daughters: Helen, June, and Anita.

Originally referred to as hillbilly music due to its association with rural people, country music gained prominence in the 1930s, which is often considered its golden age. The Carter Family were at the inception of recorded country music and helped create a signature sound that resonated with millions of fans worldwide, due to their exposure on radio. Carter Family songs have had a profound impact on numerous singers and songwriters. "Little Darling Pal o' Mine" left such an impression on folk singer Woody Guthrie that he used the melody for his timeless classic "This Land is Your Land." The melody of another Carter Family song, "Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes," has also been adopted in several popular country songs.

Maybelle Carter contributed to the distinctive sound of the group with her innovative guitar playing style. Her technique involved using her thumb to play the melody on the bass strings and her index finger to enhance the rhythm, a technique that came to be commonly referred to as the Carter scratch. This approach played a pivotal role in shifting the guitar's role from a rhythm instrument to a lead instrument.

During the early 1950s, Carter earned widespread respect in the Grand Ole Opry community and became a prominent figure in country music circles, affectionately known as "Mother Maybelle," despite only being in her forties at the time. From the 1940s to the 1960s, she and her daughters toured as "The Carter Sisters and Mother Maybelle." Following the death of A. P. Carter in 1960, the group resurrected the name "The Carter Family." They frequently performed alongside Johnny Cash, who became Carter's son-in-law in 1968, when Cash married June Carter. Cash has claimed that no other artist he had seen or heard had influenced him more than she did.[27] The group also appeared regularly on Cash's network variety show from 1969 to 1971. Maybelle briefly reunited with former Carter Family member Sara during the folk music revival of the 1960s, with Sara Carter taking the lead vocals and Maybelle Carter providing harmonies.

Maybelle Carter recorded several solo albums during the 1960s and '70s, some of which achieved success on the Billboard's Country Chart. A notable collaboration was her participation in the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's 1972 album *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*. After experiencing declining health for a few years, Carter passed away in 1978. She was laid to rest beside her husband Ezra at Hendersonville Memory Gardens in Hendersonville, Tennessee. Two of their daughters, Helen and Anita, are buried nearby.

The Songs:

"Wildwood Flower" (1928)

"Lonesome Homesick Blues" (1941)

Guitar techniques applied: Carter scratch, flatpicking, open E chord

[27] *Mother Maybelle's Carter Scratch Documentary.* Uploaded by Tony Lupo. Apr 20, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=6yrAMCZYS5I. Accessed Dec 16, 2022.

Maybelle Carter's guitar work was strong and steady, providing the musical foundation for Sarah's vocals and A. P.'s songs to be expressed. On listening to the original Carter Family recordings, one can hear how solid a rhythm guitar player Maybelle was, and how straightforward she was with her melodic lead work. According to Carter's oldest daughter Helen, Mother Maybelle had three basic guitar styles – namely the Carter scratch, her blues style, and her flatpicking style. She also had Spanish and Mexican influence in her playing from her time working across the Mexican border at XERA radio. Of all these approaches, she is best known for the Carter scratch. Each of the styles is respectively described in the following subsections.

1.5.1 The Carter Scratch

This signature approach to guitar that Maybelle Carter invented has had a long-standing influence on both country and folk musicians. Of all the guitar styles that I studied for this dissertation, I found the Carter scratch – to be the most challenging. To play it accurately, one must keep a rock steady rhythm while strumming the lead guitar parts in between beats. As many of the original Carter Family songs are played at a brisk pace, I practiced the method with a metronome to keep my time solid. With the Carter scratch technique, lead phrases are played on the lower strings of the guitar, which can feel counterintuitive as the usual method in guitar playing is to play lead phrases on the higher strings. To play the Carter scratch, one must also multitask to get all of the parts working together and sounding musical. It is akin to rubbing one's head and patting one's belly simultaneously. One plays the melody on the bass strings by fingering partial chords, while the middle and index fingers scratch out a rhythm in between. Furthermore, Carter used a plastic thumbpick on her thumb and two metal fingerpicks on her middle and index fingers, which allowed her to create a sufficient volume to be heard alongside

the vocals. One of the most famous songs in which Carter applied the Carter scratch is "Wildwood Flower."

1.5.2 Blues Guitar Influence

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Carter regularly traveled approximately 16 miles from her home to Kingsport, Tennessee, to visit Leslie Riddle, an African American blues musician. She loved the way Riddle played his guitar and he taught her how to play his blues style. In that unique style, she played the melody with her fingers on the top strings, as in the Carter Family song "Cannonball Blues."[28] Carter also applied slide guitar in open tunings, which she doubtlessly also learned from Riddle's blues techniques.

1.5.3 Flatpicking Technique

Occasionally, Carter also used a flatpick, such as in the songs "My Dixie Darlin" and "Coal Miner's Blues."[29] She had a closed hand for this technique, which facilitated holding the flatpick. She would brush each string individually and strum the flatpick between her melody lines. Carter also used the flatpick on the song "Lonesome Homesick Blues,"[30] which I decided to perform as part of this study.

I found it to be a challenging piece to learn as it is played at a quick pace (approx. 185 bpm) and Carter's guitar parts are meticulously interwoven. "Lonesome Homesick Blues" took me a while to figure out, and I tried several approaches before concluding that Carter must have been in an open chord tuning to pull off the melody and rhythm in the way she did. Open chord tunings were commonly used in blues guitar at the time, so one might assume that Carter learned this from Riddle.

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[28] *Mother Maybelle's Carter Scratch Documentary.* Uploaded by Tony Lupo. Apr 20 2019. https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=6yrAMCZYS5I. Accessed Dec 16, 2022.

[29] The Carter Family, "My Dixie Darling / Coal Miner's Blues." Decca. 1947.

[30] The Carter Family. "Lonesome Homesick Blues." Bluebird. 1943.

Noteworthily, I gave up trying to play the song using the Carter scratch after some time when I saw a documentary about the technique, in which Carter's daughter Anita explains her mother's flatpicking technique. This information completely changed my mind about how to approach the song as well as caused me to gain even more respect for Carter as a guitarist. She obviously worked hard on her craft, practiced many approaches to playing the guitar, and evolved over time. She was a curious, creative and dedicated musician.

After struggling with "Lonesome Homesick Blues" for months, I finally determined that I should play it using an open E chord, which has the guitar strings tuned from low to high: E-B-E-G#-B-E. Then, when I applied the flatpicking technique, the song and guitar parts started to make sense. I enjoyed the process of figuring this out as well as playing this song. It continues to be a challenge to get Carter's exact phrasing right and play it in the same time signature as her, which serves to demonstrate her dexterity and skill on the instrument. Another unique aspect of "Lonesome Homesick Blues" is that Carter wrote as well as sang the song, as often the writing of Carter Family songs was credited to A.P. Carter, while in the early days Sarah Carter took credit for most of the vocals.

When I approach playing Maybelle Carter's style in Carter Family songs, being cognizant of being a one-man band that must accommodate dancers has helped me keep my rhythm solid. Back when the Carter Family started out in the 1920s, one can imagine they would have played at local dances and parties in neighboring towns and communities. Their playing would need to be steady with good time, and it would also need to swing to the rhythm.

1.5.4 Mexican Influence

According to Carter's daughter Helen, her first and earliest memories were of playing on XERA Radio in Del Rio, Texas. She described being woken up at 4 AM and driven across the

Mexican border from Texas to sing on XERA. XERA radio had two 5,000 W transmitters, which could be heard across North America. The Carter Family had a live early morning show 5 days a week. Helen described sleeping in her mother's guitar case until she was woken up to sing harmony parts with her sisters. Helen also recalled her mother taking her down to Mexico many times to hear traditional Mexican music, which she loved. Helen claimed that Maybelle Carter played the music for the song "You are my Flower" in a Mexican style, which came from her love of traditional Spanish music.[31] Another example of the Carter Family applying a Mexican influence is found in the song "Don Juan."[32]

Later, Carter demonstrated resilience as well as her dedication to her craft when the original Carter Family broke up. Instead of quitting music, as Sarah and A. P. did, she reinvented the Carter Family by folding in her three daughters and teaching them to sing and play various instruments. The sound of the Carter Family evolved and they stayed relevant during the 1950s and '60s. Through the changes to the group and to country music, Carter always stayed true to her original approaches on guitar.

Even though there were years when she worked less and her career waned, she always seemed to stay relevant. A prime example of this occurred in the 1960s, when the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band asked Carter to join their album of traditional songs titled *Will The Circle Be Unbroken*.[33] She continued to enjoy a fruitful career long after they pulled her from obscurity and back into the public eye.

Upon watching old videos of Carter, one can observe the other musicians respond to her quiet authoritativeness and confidence. She was influential with country artists, such as Hank

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[31] *Mother Maybelle's Carter Scratch Documentary.* Uploaded by Tony Lupo. Apr 20, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=6yrAMCZYS5I. Accessed Dec 16, 2022.

[32]" Don Juan." The Carter Sisters – Maybelle, Anita, June & Helen. Bear Family Records. 1981.

[33] Nitty Gritty Dirt Band. *Will the Circle Be Unbroken*. United Artists. 1972.

Williams, Johnny Cash, and Chet Atkins. Her famous 1928 Gibson L5 guitar, which she played her entire career, is on display at The Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville. George Gruhn of Nashville's Gruhn Guitars considers it the "most important single guitar in the entire history of country music."[34]

1.6 Elizabeth Cotten

Years Active 1956 -1985

Biography:

Elizabeth "Libba" Cotten, (1893-1987) was an American folk and blues musician. She was known for her unique style of guitar playing, as she was a self-taught, left-handed guitarist who played a right-handed guitar upside down. This distinctive technique involved her using her fingers for the bass lines and her thumb for the melody, which became known as "Cotten picking." In recognition of her influential contribution to music, she was inducted into *The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame* as an early influence in 2022.

Cotten was born into a musical family near Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She was the youngest of five children and gave herself the nickname "Lil' Sis" on her first day of school. At a young age, she demonstrated a talent for playing songs and by the age of nine, she had to leave school to work as a domestic worker. At twelve, she saved up enough money with the help of her mother to buy her first guitar, a Sears and Roebuck instrument. Despite being self-taught, Cotten became proficient in playing the guitar, specializing in rags and dance tunes.

During her early teens, she began writing her own songs, including "Freight Train," which became one of her most recognized compositions. Inspired by the sound of a nearby train,

[34] "Maybelle Carter's 1928 L-5." *GruhnGuitars.com* Accessed Mar 7, 2023. https://guitars.com/archived-inventory/maybelleL5/AR3719.html

the song gained popularity, especially with the 1956 recording by Chas McDevitt and Nancy Whiskey in the UK, which had a significant influence on the rise of skiffle music.

After marrying Frank Cotten in 1910 and having a daughter named Lillie, Cotten put aside her guitar to focus on her family and church. It was not until her 60s that she returned to playing the guitar and started performing publicly and recording again. Her rediscovery came when she worked as a housekeeper for the folk-singing Seeger family. Her encounter with Peggy Seeger, the child she helped reunite with her mother, led to her employment by Ruth Crawford Seeger and Charles Seeger to care for their children. The Seeger family affectionately called her "Libba," a nickname she embraced. During her time with the Seegers, Cotten remembered her guitar playing from decades earlier and relearned to play the instrument almost from scratch.

In terms of her guitar style, Cotten initially began writing music while experimenting with her older brother's banjo. Being left-handed, she played the banjo in a reversed position. When she transitioned to the guitar, she developed a unique style due to the different string arrangement. On a five-string banjo, the uppermost string is not a bass string but rather a short, high-pitched string that ends at the fifth fret. Consequently, she had to adapt her playing style.

During the latter half of the 1950s, Mike Seeger started recording Cotten's songs in her house using a bedroom reel-to-reel setup. These recordings eventually formed the album titled *Folksongs and Instrumentals with Guitar*, which was later released by Folkways Records.

Following the release of her first album, Cotten began performing concerts alongside Mike Seeger. In the early 1960s, Cotten had the opportunity to play concerts with renowned figures in the emerging folk revival, including Mississippi John Hurt, John Lee Hooker, and Muddy Waters.

In 1967, she released an album titled *Shake Sugaree*, which was a collaborative effort with her grandchildren. The record took its name from one of her songs and featured the vocals of her 12-year-old great-grandchild, Brenda Joyce Evans, who later became a singer for the Undisputed Truth.

She continued to tour and release records well into her 80s. In 1984, she received a Grammy Award for Best Ethnic or Traditional Recording for her album *Elizabeth Cotten Live*, released by Arhoolie Records. Cotten passed away in June 1987 at the age of 94 in Syracuse, New York.

The Songs:

"Freight Train" (1958)

"Oh Babe It Ain't No Lie" (1967)

Guitar technique applied: Piedmont fingerpicking

Elizabeth Cotten's style, Piedmont fingerpicking, is a fun and satisfying way to play a guitar. The style encompasses rhythm and melody played in tandem, with an oscillating bass pattern played on the low strings and the song's melody picked on the high strings. Piedmont fingerpicking sounds pleasant, with many of the melodic parts played in major keys. Cotten's original song "Freight Train" is one of the most well-known and copied songs in folk music. It is a catchy tune with simple lyrics and a repeating melody. To guitarists, it is an enjoyable song to get under one's belt. When played accurately, it always sounds good and most people are impressed. While it seems light and easy, it is actually fairly complex, which makes mastering it that much more rewarding.

Cotten was an accomplished guitar player with an unorthodox style. Her method of playing upside down and left-handed makes it almost impossible to copy accurately. Piedmont

guitar is a style of guitar playing that was handed down through generations of families, with some of the melodies and songs dating back to the pre-Civil War era. It seems to have been developed by copying popular piano parlor music and adapting it to the guitar. There are many well-known legends and masters of the Piedmont style of guitar and, over time, it has been interwoven with other genres, such as the blues. Cotten was one of the most well-known and respected artists in Piedmont guitar.

I started learning to fingerpick when I was in my teens, and I still remember the laborious steps I took to repeatedly slow the technique down. It took years to get to a place where I felt comfortable. As with the Carter scratch, the player is a one-man band, covering the rhythm, bass, and leads all at once. Notably, independence has always been important to me. My siblings and I were forced to be independent as kids, as our parents were busy so not always around. Therefore, from a young age, I learned how to do things by myself, whether it was cooking for myself, getting ready for school, or dealing with homework. I remember being alone a lot but also being comfortable alone, which may be one reason why this approach to guitar playing resonates with my personality.

I've always found it intriguing that Cotten was discovered and enjoyed a fruitful career after she was well into her 50s. She was discovered by the Seeger family who had, by chance, hired her as their housekeeper.[35] One day when she started playing her guitar, the family realized they had a great musician in their midst. The Seegers brought Cotten to notoriety, and she enjoyed a robust career well into her 80s. Her later albums, where her voice is fragile and broken

[35] A lifelong housekeeper, Cotten watched Pete's young stepbrothers when his mother went out – see Elizabeth Cotten – Pete Seeger's 'Almost' Nanny
https://geezermusicclub.com/2015/04/27/elizabeth-cotten-pete-seegers-almost-nanny/

and her playing is slightly weaker, are perhaps the most charming of all her recordings. There is strength in her vulnerability and a directness to her message.

What has always resonated with me about Cotten's story is how she was discovered in her later years and how she impacted younger musicians and fans during the folk revival of the 1960s. The melding of the older generation with the younger seekers is not as commonly seen today. Instead of people embracing their age, they commonly try to cover it up and look and act like they are still young. In the 1960s, one could not hide one's age, so there was no running away from it. Cotten shared her experience and wisdom honestly and proudly through her musical expression. She gave the younger generation of fans who embraced her a peek into the past, pointing toward a hopeful future.

1.7 Ida Presti

Years Active 1932 -1967

Biography:

Ida Presti, (1924 -1967), originally named Yvette Montagnon, was born in Suresnes, a suburb of Paris, France, to a French father and a Sicilian mother. Her father, Claude Montagnon believed that the name "Ida Presti" sounded better than her given name. The surname "Presti" was derived from her mother's name, Olga-Gracia Lo Presti. She also received instruction in harmony and music theory from guitarist and luthier Mario Maccaferri. Presti made her public debut at the age of eight and gave her first full-length concert at the Salle Pleyel in Paris when she was ten, on April 28, 1935. Recognized for her extraordinary talent by her teachers and peers, she recorded for the French division of the HMV record label in 1937. Before the age of twelve, she performed at Pasdeloup concerts and the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire for two consecutive years. At fourteen, she appeared as a guitar player in a supporting role in the

1938 film *La Petite Chose*, and at the age of sixteen, she played Paganini's guitar during a commemorative event for the centennial of his death in 1940.

Presti's solo career saw significant achievements. On September 16, 1948, she gave the French premiere of Joaquin Rodrigo's "Concierto de Aranjuez," a piece that Rodrigo composed in 1939. Presti's performance of the masterpiece was broadcast on the radio from Paris and several other continental stations. Her first recital in London was on December 1, 1951 and was praised by *The Times* for her remarkable dexterity in her right hand as well as her lively temperament. The following year, after another recital, *The Times* commented on her prestidigitation, which left a lasting impression, and highlighted her exceptional musicianship.

Following her second marriage to guitarist, Alexandre Lagoya, Presti ceased performing as a solo artist and established the duo Presti–Lagoya, focusing on compositions for two guitars. Together, they formed one of the most accomplished classical guitar duos in history, delivering over two thousand concerts.

Presti passed away on April 24, 1967 at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, New York, at the age of 42. This unfortunate event occurred during a concert tour in the United States. Prior to her death, Presti had been experiencing a cough accompanied by blood for a few days and had sought medical attention at a hospital in St. Louis. Despite being advised to remain there, Presti and Legoya chose to fly to Rochester, New York, where their next concert was scheduled. Upon arrival at the airport, Presti was immediately taken to the hospital, where doctors struggled unsuccessfully to manage the bleeding caused by a tumor in her lung. The massive internal hemorrhage ultimately resulted in Presti's untimely demise.

The Songs:

"Romance in Am" (1938)

Guitar techniques applied: Classical guitar, finger style, piccata, tremolo,

One of the most intriguing women I researched for this study was French classical guitarist, Ida Presti. Presti, nicknamed "Ida Prestissimo" by Andrés Segovia, was born in France in 1924. I tracked down the only biography of Presti, which was written by her family and translated into English by Alice Artzt, a student of Presti and Alexandre Legoya who knew them intimately. After reading Presti's story, I immediately became captivated by her. She had been a child prodigy. Her father, who was infatuated with Segovia, introduced her to the classical guitar. When Presti was a baby, her father was so determined that she would play guitar that he stretched her little fingers while she slept. She was raised like a captive – albeit a willing one – totally ignorant of any life other than one in which she studied guitar. She did not attend school, but was rather told to practice the guitar for hours each day.[36]

Alice Artzt, who studied guitar under Presti, and her husband, Alexandre Lagoya, traveled with the duo[37] when they performed in the United States and acted as their interpreter. Artzt traveled to France to study with the pair, and she remained close to Presti until Presti's untimely death in 1967. Artztz possesses unique insights into who Presti was both as a performer and a person. Artztz has confessed in many interviews about Presti's outstanding technical abilities on the guitar.

The guitar is often thought to be more easily manipulated in the hands of men, who generally have more strength, and female players are often thought to have a harder time with the

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[36] Wade, Graham. "It's in the Family: For Ida Presti and Paco de Lucía, Parental Pressure Was Extreme but Effective." *Classicalguitarmagazine.com.* https://classicalguitarmagazine.com/its-in-the-family-for-ida-presti-and-paco-de-lucia-parental-pressure-was-extreme-but-effective/. Accessed May 23, 2023.

[37] Foley, Sue. "She Could Do Anything at Any Speed": Classical Guitarist Alice Artzt Recalls the Unearthly Talent That Was Ida Presti." *GuitarPlayer.com*. Jan 6, 2023. https://www.guitarplayer.com/players/she-could-do-anything-at-any-speed-classical-guitarist-alice-artzt-recalls-the-unearthly-talent-that-was-ida-presti Accessed Jun 8, 2023.

physical challenges of the instrument. Learning about Presti led me to realize that this is not true. Presti's physical capabilities and technical mastery prove that there is no link between gender and ability where the guitar is concerned.

Presti was raised in a world sheltered from many influences. She lived and breathed guitar, through the tutoring of her father. He taught her to believe that she could become an amazing instrumentalist. Like Presti, I was introduced to the guitar by my father; therefore, the story of Presti's bond with her father resonates with me. My father was the first guitarist I ever saw, and he was the reason I played. His influence on me was profound. Like Presti, who lost her father to an early death, I too lost my father when my parents split up and our family became fragmented. Playing the guitar became a way to stay connected to him. When I read about Presti losing her father at such a young age, I understood why she remained so dedicated to the instrument. The guitar defined who she was, and continuing to play was a way to honor her father and his legacy.

As a tribute to Presti, I decided to tackle "Romance in Am" by Nicolas Paganini, which she recorded when she was teenager. Presti was a ferocious guitar player and I was humbled by this undertaking. Furthermore, I was struck by her dexterity, depth of feeling, and ability to make the guitar tones round, smooth, and warm, sometimes while playing at breathtaking speeds. For interest's sake, I listened to several recordings of "Romance in Am" to get an idea of how other guitarists have approached the song. Ultimately, I liked Presti's version the most, and I purposefully emulated much of her method of using single-note phrases where other guitarists had played arpeggios or chordal phrases. I also copied the way she moved through each section, hoping to capture some of her inventiveness and unique personality. She recorded this piece as a young woman, but her maturity and depth can be felt in the patient way she draws out the notes

and her ability to maneuver through the sections with emotional depth. I labored over Presti's "Romance in Am," slowing it down to get the phrasing right, and it took me months to move it up to 80% of the speed Presti played at. As I was unable to match her speed in the fast sections, I accepted my own level and sought my own expression.

Presti remains one of my favorite subjects in this study. She was a masterful musician who has somehow remained obscure. I felt a kinship with her as well as a responsibility to share her story with others, thereby preserving her legacy as one of the greatest guitarists in the history of the instrument.

1.8 Lydia Mendoza

Years Active 1928-1991

Biography:

Lydia Mendoza, (1916 - 2007) was a renowned Mexican-American guitarist and singer, known for her contributions to Tejano and traditional Mexican-American music. Regarded as "the Mother of Tejano Music" by historian Michael Joseph Corcoran, she played a significant role in shaping this unique Texan music genre, blending traditional Mexican, Spanish, German, and Czech musical influences. Throughout her six-decade career, Mendoza performed live and recorded for various record labels. She left a legacy with approximately 200 Spanish-language songs featured on at least 50 LP record albums. In 1977, she was invited to perform at the inauguration of President Jimmy Carter, as part of the inaugural folk dance and concert. One of her most well-known songs was "Mal Hombre" (Bad Man), which she first heard as a child.

Mendoza was born in Houston, Texas, to a Mexican musical family originally from San Luis Potosí. The family had fled Mexico during the Mexican Revolution and returned for a brief period before immigrating to Texas when Lydia was four years old. Despite living most of her

life in the United States, primarily in Texas, she exclusively spoke Spanish. Due to their frequent moves in search of work, her family entertained fellow migrant workers wherever they went.

Mendoza acquired several nicknames, including *La Alondra de la Frontera* (The Meadowlark of the Border). In their early years of performing, the Mendoza family, known as *La Familia Mendoza*, would hitchhike across south Texas, sharing their music with farm laborers. After responding to an advertisement in a Spanish-language newspaper, they had their first recording sessions with Okeh Records. Lydia, only twelve at the time, provided vocals and played the mandolin for the recordings. They soon caught the attention of Manuel J. Cortez, a radio personality in San Antonio, leading to a recording contract with RCA Victor's subsidiary Bluebird Records. During World War II and the subsequent years, Mendoza and her sisters Juanita and Marie performed as *Las Hermanas Mendoza* (the Mendoza sisters). Although Lydia emerged as the group's headliner, her family continued to accompany her on tours. Her performances spanned the United States, Canada, and Latin America, drawing audiences as large as 20,000.

Mendoza received numerous accolades for her contributions to the performing arts. She was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts and was inducted into the Tejano Music Hall of Fame in 1984 as well as the Conjunto Music Hall of Fame in 1991. In 1985, she was honored with an induction into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame for her notable achievements. First Lady Hillary Clinton and President Bill Clinton presented her with the National Medal of Arts in 1999, and in 2003, she received the Texas Cultural Trust's Texas Medal of Arts. Not only was she a talented musician but she also designed and sewed her own stage costumes and taught at California State University, Fresno.

Mendoza married twice and had three daughters. Despite retiring from performing twice, she could not resist the stage and continued singing. Her career eventually came to an end after she suffered a stroke in her 60s. She passed away in San Antonio, Texas in 2007, at the age of 91.

The Song:

"Mal Hombre" (1934)

In 1934, at the age of eighteen, Lydia Mendoza recorded "Mal Hombre" for the independent label, Bluebird Records. Mendoza had first heard the song a few years earlier at an outdoor music show with her family. She had the memory and wherewithal to write the lyrics on a chewing-gum wrapper. "Mal Hombre" was the first of her solo recordings, and it later became her theme song. It is a mournful ballad about young girl who gets used and betrayed by a coldhearted man. On most tracks, Mendoza sings sweetly to the sole accompaniment of her own 12-string guitar.[38]

As "Mal Hombre" was recorded solo, with just voice and guitar, it was relatively easy to decipher Mendoza's guitar playing approach. She played a 12-string guitar tuned down a full step to low D, creating a stark contrast between the low notes on the guitar and her high-pitched voice.

As Spanish is not my mother tongue, singing an entire song in Spanish felt forced and inauthentic to me. I was not able to fully express the story and the emotion required to get the lyrics across; therefore, I chose to rewrite two of the three verses in English. The verses I wrote, though not exact translations of the originals, follow the same basic story line. It was necessary to waver from the direct translation to make the verses rhyme. I also added a guitar solo in lieu of

[38] Bradtke, Elaine. Reviews. Sing Out! DownHomeMusicStore.com https://www.downhomemusic.com/product/lydia-mendoza-mal-hombre/ Accessed Mar 9, 2023.

a second verse, which allowed me to continue the narrative through an instrumental expression. I managed to learn the chorus in Spanish and felt at ease when singing it, so I kept the Spanish chorus intact. This created a tie to the original composition and also allowed for my own expression.

"Mal Hombre" (With Literal English Translation)

Mal Hombre	Bad Man (or Evil Man)
Era yo una chiquilla todavía	I was still a young girl
cuando tú casualmente me encontraste	when by chance you found me
y a merced a tus artes de mundano	and thanks to your worldly charm
de mi honra el perfuma me llevaste.	you crushed the flower of my innocence.
Luego hiciste conmigo lo que todos	Later you treated me like all men
los que son como tú con las mujeres,	who are like you, treat women,
por lo tanto no extrañes que yo ahora	so don't be surprised that now
en tu cara te diga lo que eres.	I tell you to your face what you are.
CHORUS	CHORUS
Mal hombre,	Bad man,
tan ruin es tu alma que no tiene nombre.	Your soul is so wicked it has no name.
Eres un canalla. Eres un malvado.	You are a pig. You are evil.
Eres un mal hombre.	You are a bad man.
A mi triste destino abandonada	To my sad fate abandoned,
entable fiera lucha con la vida,	engaged in a fierce struggle with life,
ella recia y cruel me torturaba	suffering the depths of cruelty,
y más débil al fin cai vencida.	I was weak and finally defeated.
Tú supiste a tiempo mi derrota,	With time, you learned of my downfall,
mi espantoso calvario conociste.	how my life became a road to hell.
Te dijeron algunos:	Some told you:
"Ve a salvarle."	"Go save her."
Y probando quien eres,	And proving who you are,
te reíste.	you just laughed.
CHORUS	CHORUS
Poco tiempo después en el arroyo,	A short time later in the gutter,
entre sombras mi vida defendía.	I defended my life in the shadowy world.
Una noche con otra	One night with another woman
tú pasaste,	you passed by me,
que al mirarme sentí que te decía:	and upon seeing my expression, she said:
"Quién es esa mujer?"	"Who is that woman?"
"Tú la conoces?"	"Do you know her?"
"Ya la veres", respondiste,	"Soon you will see," you replied
"una cualquiera."	"she's a nobody."
al oír de tus labios el ultraje	At hearing from your lips the abuse,

demostrabas también,
lo que tú eras.
CHORUS

you were showing again,
what you were.
CHORUS

Mal Hombre (Literal Translation Compared With My Rewritten Verses)

Bad Man (or Evil Man)
I was still a young girl
when by chance you found me
and thanks to your worldly charm,
you crushed the flower of my innocence.
Later you treated me like all men
who are like you, treat women
so don't be surprised that now
I tell you to your face what you are
CHORUS
Bad man,
Your soul is so wicked it has no name
You are a pig, You are evil
You are a bad man
To my sad fate abandoned,
engaged in a fierce struggle with life,
suffering the depths of cruelty,
I was weak and finally defeated
With time, you learned of my downfall.
how my life became a road to hell.
Some told you:
"Go save her."
And proving who you are,
you just laughed.
CHORUS
A short time later in the gutter,
I defended my life in the shadowy world
One night with another woman.
you passed by me,
and upon seeing my expression, she said:
"Who is that woman?"
"Do you know her?"
"Soon you will see," you replied.
"She's a nobody."
Hearing from your lips the abuse,
you were showing again,
What you were.
CHORUS

Mal Hombre
I was a young girl in the city
I'd just left my home
You found me so fair and pretty
You found me all on my own
You lured me to your chamber
With more than a little insistence
I was aware of the danger
I went in with no resistance
CHORUS
Mal hombre,
Tan ruin es tu alma que no tiene nombre
Eres un canalla, eres un malvado
Eres un, mal hombre
(Guitar solo / Instrumental break)

CHORUS
Through the dark, narrow streets,
I wandered
Too proud to call out your name
My love and my money
I'd squandered
I hung my head down in shame
Then, one day I saw you
And I reached out my hand,
In defeat
You said to the new girl beside you:
"I don't know her,
She's nothing to me."
CHORUS

I approached “Mal Hombre” from two perspectives as I worked to meld the singing and guitar parts. Mendoza sings in a high pitch range that contrasts with her low-tuned guitar. This contrast marks the unique quality of her musical style. As I felt this was an essential aspect that needed to be captured, I worked up a version of the song where I played on a 12-string guitar tuned down a full step to low D and sang it with my new words and arrangement in the same register as Mendoza. This approach made me feel like I had achieved one thing, namely executing the song while sounding close to the original. I did however find it a stretch to sing in her range as it pushed to the top of my vocal range, which started to feel forced and, at times, inauthentic. This led me to search for a way to make “Mal Hombre” ring truer to me.

Thus, I started to lower the key so I could sing it in my range. However, this posed a problem on my twelve-string guitar, as I detuned to adapt to the lower keys, the strings became looser and started to lose their tension. This created a problem for playing, especially as I was trying to play a tight tango rhythm. I also started to feel that singing so high would imply the voice of a young girl, and being where I am in my life, I did not feel comfortable with this. Feeling that it was inhibiting my ability to interpret the story, I changed my approach once more.

I chose to lower the key to Gm and sing in a low-pitched range that matched the guitar. While I had to sacrifice the contrast of a low guitar with a high voice, I started to feel like the song was gaining a new perspective. By singing in a low range, I began to feel like I was changing the perspective of the main character in the song from a young girl to a mature woman looking back at the past and recounting the story from distant memories. I felt that this provided an entirely new insight to the narrative. In the end, I felt comfortable playing the song from both perspectives – the young girl and the older woman – but I was very happy with the idea of using

different ways to approach making a song one's own. I was satisfied that I was able to gain a natural level of comfort with how Mendoza sang and played "Mal Hombre," but I also felt satisfied that I had explored my own perspective from many different angles, adapting it to who I am today. The one aspect I did not alter was the habanera/tango rhythm, which ties the song to its Spanish roots.

1.9 Maria Teresa Vera

Years Active 1911-1962

Biography:

María Teresa Vera, (1895 – 1965) was a prominent Cuban singer, guitarist, and composer who played a significant role in the Cuban trova movement. Her musical journey began in 1911 as a singer when she performed Manuel Corona's criolla Mercedes in a theater. She received her initial guitar lessons from José Díaz, a cigar-roller. Corona further mentored her, teaching her various guitar techniques and sharing his own compositions.

From 1916 to 1924, Vera collaborated with Rafael Zequeira as a duo, producing over 100 recordings in New York, although most of them have been lost. Subsequently, she crossed paths with Carlos Godinez, a composer, who further enhanced her guitar skills. Their friendship endured until Godinez's death in 1950.

In 1925, Vera founded the *Sexteto Occidente*, which comprised Miguel García as the lead vocalist, clavé, and director; Ignacio Piñeiro on double bass; Julio Torres Biart on tres; Manuel Reinoso on bongo; and Francisco Sánchez on maracas. This group consisted of exceptionally talented musicians who went on to achieve remarkable success.

In 1935, she joined forces with Lorenzo Hierrezuelo as a duet, a partnership that would continue for 27 years. During this period, Hierrezuelo simultaneously collaborated with Company Segundo (Francisco Repilado) in the duo *Los Compadres*.

Among Vera's notable compositions are the habanera "Veinte Años," which has been performed by numerous Cuban artists, and became widely recognized after it was a featured song in the 1999 documentary, *Buena Vista Social Club*.[39] In 1945, she signed a contract with Circuito CMQ for the radio program *Cosas de Ayer*. In the 1950s, she appeared on the TV show *El Casino de la Alegría*. She received public tributes upon her retirement in 1962.

María Teresa Vera left a lasting impact on Cuban music, with her influential contributions and enduring compositions, particularly the classic habanera "Veinte Años," which remains significant in both traditional and contemporary Cuban music. She passed away in Havana in 1965 at the age of 70.

The Song:

"Veinte Años" (1956)

Style of Music: Trova, Habanera, Tango rhythm

"Veinte Años" is a tango and an clear example of a *habanera* rhythm. It requires fingerstyle, flat picking and arpeggios. The habanera is the Spanish and Spanish-American version of the *contradanse*, which was an internationally popular style of music and dance dating back to the 18th century. It was derived from the English country dance and adopted at the court of France. In Cuba during the 19th century, it became an important genre, the first written music to be rhythmically based on an African rhythm pattern, and the first Cuban dance to gain

[39] Wenders, Wem. *Buena Vista Social Club.* Arte Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematográficos Kintop Pictures Road Movies Filmproduktion Wim Wenders Stiftung. 1999.

international popularity. In 1875 Bizet wrote his opera *Carmen* which contained the famous "Habanera" aria for mezzo soprano.

The habanera rhythm's time signature is accented upbeat in the middle of a bar in 4/4 time (e.g., 3 + 3- 2 = 8 eighth notes), which lends syncopated power to the habanera rhythm. Syncopated cross-rhythms called the *tresillo* and the *cinquillo*, basic rhythmic cells in Afro-Latin and African music, began to differentiate the Cuban dance from its European form. This pattern is heard throughout Africa, and in many diaspora musics, and is known as the congo, tango-congo, and tango.

1.9.1 Trova

Trova, a Cuban musical style, has been defined as poetry with music, with intelligent lyrics that generally tell stories of protest, love, politics, or social issues. Trova was created by itinerant musicians known as trovadores who traveled around Cuba, earning their living by singing and playing the guitar.

The origins of trova date back to the troubadours of France in the 11th century. Initially, troubadours sang their poems inside the court, celebrating competitions or musical tournaments, but later they were itinerant musicians called minstrels. Minstrels interpreted their poems with a musical accompaniment, using instruments such as the medieval violin or lute. The themes spoke mainly of love, nature, religion, chivalry, politics, and war, as well as funerals.

The trova we know today is inspired by the traditions and customs of Cuba's indigenous roots and stories about past struggles, but also about victories in the present, always in search of freedom. The evolution toward contemporary trova began in Cuba under protest themes, but over time it transformed until it reached the style known today. Trova was created through intercultural change, first adopting musical characteristics from Spain, such as flamenco and the Spanish guitar, and then mixing in African drums and the rhumba. What began mainly as a

romantic expression became a need for social expression for achieving progress and raising the voice of the people, thus inspiring many people to unite and protest against oppression.

Trova strikes me as what American popular music calls singer/songwriter, which is basically storytelling through folk music. The way I have used the trova influence in this dissertation would be in my re-writing the lyrics of Lydia Mendoza's "Mal Hombre." "Mal Hombre" also incorporates a tango rhythm. Therefore, I have bound together my examination of both the trova and the tango/habanera rhythms with the works of Lydia Mendoza and Maria Teresa Vera.

1.10 Charo

Years Active 1963 - Present

Biography:

María Rosario Pilar Martínez Molina Baeza, also known as Charo, is a Spanish-American entertainer who has achieved success as an actress, singer, comedian, and flamenco guitarist. Charo started playing the guitar at a young age and received training from the renowned Andrés Segovia. In 1966, she married Xavier Cugat, a 65-year-old bandleader, and relocated to the United States with him. During the late 1960s and '70s, Charo became a familiar face on American television, frequently appearing as a guest star on popular shows such as *Laugh-In*, *Fantasy Island*, *The Love Boat*, and *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*. She is known for her lively and energetic personality, undefined age, strong Spanish accent, and catchphrase "cuchi-cuchi."

Throughout her five-decade career, Charo has showcased her musical talents in various styles. She released a series of disco recordings in the 1970s under Salsoul Records, most notably *Dance a Little Bit Closer* (1977). Her flamenco album *Guitar Passion* (1994) earned her

the Female Pop Album of the Year Award at the Billboard International Latin Music Conference and was recognized as the Best Female Latin Pop Album by Billboard.

Charo was born in the city of Murcia, Spain. However, the exact year of her birth has been a topic of controversy. According to her Spanish passport and birth certificate, as well as her American naturalization papers, she was born on March 13, 1941. However, she later claimed to have been born in 1947 and then changed it to 1949. In a court hearing in 1977, she stated that her true birthdate was January 15, 1951, contradicting the earlier documents. Various newspaper articles around the time of her wedding to Cugat stated her age as 17 or 18, while some referred to her as a 20-year-old marrying a 60-year-old. In 1977, a judge in Las Vegas officially recognized her birth year as 1951. Charo has never provided a clear explanation for the discrepancy.

In the 2000s, Charo was recognized as the Best Flamenco Guitarist in *Guitar Player Magazine's* reader poll on two occasions. Charo is a virtuoso of picados and rasguedos — roughly translated: runs and strums. Her approach to guitar is unique because of the mix of classical techniques with flamenco flourishes. Charo continues to be very active in her career, keeping up a rigorous touring schedule of performances and public appearances.

The Song:

"La Malagueña" (2005)

La Malagueña" is the selected repertoire representing the unique guitar techniques and virtuosity demonstrated by Charo who was an established master of rasgueado, picado, and other various gestures and techniques common in the classical and flamenco guitar tradition.

"La Malagueña" is a song by famed Cuban composer/pianist Ernesto Lecuona. It was originally the sixth movement of Lecuona's *Suite Andalucía* (1933), to which he added Spanish

lyrics. Malagueñas are flamenco dance styles from Málaga on the southeast coast of Spain. Although originally composed for piano, “La Malagueña” has become a mainstay in both flamenco and classical guitarist repertoires. Flamenco guitarist Sabicas adapted the song for guitar, and it was included on his 1957 album *Sabicas Vol. 2*. This recording was influential in the piece becoming a guitar standard, and it has since been recorded by hundreds of guitar players worldwide.

Charo’s version of “La Malagueña” is unique due to the combination of her adherence to the original structure and melody written by Lecuona with her level of comfort in improvising and expanding on it. La “Malagueña” is generally played centered on a key often described as the E Phrygian mode. Charo’s version begins in this mode but ends in A minor or A Aeolian. (E Phrygian can be considered Hypo-Aeolian.) She morphs the song from its original form into something that is completely her own, which seems to be musically based on various flamenco forms and chord progressions. She applies several advanced right-hand guitar techniques, including piccata, arpeggios, triplets, and rasgueado. She often plays her single-note, improvised phrases, running down the Phrygian scale, at a rapid pace. In these instances, she demonstrates her clean skill as a guitar player. She makes “La Malagueña” her own by introducing a key change and improvising in many sections. This demonstrates not only her heritage and training as a classical guitar player, who reads notations and follows the queue of the composer, but also her gypsy, flamenco roots where the instrument is used for the expression of emotion and improvisation.

Charo began playing guitar at the age of nine and trained under the famed Andrés Segovia. In an article in the *Los Angeles Times*, James Reed wrote the following: “Though Segovia’s classical influence is often proffered to explain her skill, Charo has a highly original

style that weds intimate, lyrical classical melodies with the rhythmic flourishes of the flamenco tradition and spikes it all with a pop sensibility."[40]

"She is a great guitar player," said Kim Perlak, the chair of the guitar department at the Berklee College of Music. Citing her command of techniques like classical tremolo and flamenco scales, Perlak continued: "You have to practice that all the time to get to be that fluent, especially if you want it to be intuitive the way she does it." Beyond Charo's technical skill, her performances convey a personal strength and a boundary-smashing courage that distinguish her – she is that rare musician who is capable of transporting classical guitar to even the most low-culture contexts, such as the middle of a casino floor. "I'm not sure I know of anyone else who's done that," Perlak said. "It's just genius."[41]

Much of Charo's fame has been won for her image as the sex-kitten comedian and entertainer who coined the phrase "cuchi-cuchi." Thus, her skills as a guitarist have often been overlooked. While learning Charo's version of "La Malagueña," I discovered how proficient a guitarist she truly is. I went to work learning the song, copying her unique arrangement, improvised guitar parts, and phrasing almost verbatim. The first thing I encountered was the speed of her improvised runs up and down the Phrygian scale.[42] I had to slow those parts down to 50% to learn them. I also had to try to match her phrasing. Both the speed and phrasing posed challenges for me. After laboring through this piece, I found her speed and proficiency as a

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[40] Reed, James. "Laugh All You Want, But Charo Slays at Flamenco." *LA Times.* Aug 26, 2017. https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/music/la-et-ms-charo-hollywood-bowl-20170826-story.html. Accessed Mar 8, 2023.

[41] Hess, Amanda. "The Brilliance of Charo." *The New York Times*. Mar 30, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/30/arts/music/charo.html

[42] In music, the Phrygian dominant scale is the fifth mode of the harmonic minor scale, with the fifth being the dominant one. When related to the scale degrees of the major scale, it reads as follows: 1 – ♭2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – ♭6 – ♭7 – 1. This scale occurs in Indian, Middle Eastern, Eastern European, Central Asian, and flamenco music. It is sometimes called the Spanish Phrygian scale, Spanish gypsy scale, or Phrygian major scale, and it is common in flamenco music. Jarrett, p. 61.

guitarist are impressive. Charo has obviously invested much effort and practice into becoming an excellent guitarist. I chose not to try to copy her speed on the improvised parts, but rather to be inspired by her example to find my own place of comfort and style for playing them.

In addition, something felt foreign to me about the phrasing of Charo's improvised runs and the comfort level she displays in navigating around the scales and runs, which sound distinctly Spanish and "flamenco" to my 'blues tinged' ear. While I was working on copying her verbatim, I kept getting hung up on trying to match her perfectly – but there is just too much personality and unique style there. Her unique character shines through in such a natural way that I decided to back off and attempt to find my own method and voice. Therefore, I sacrificed a verbatim approach to her "La Malagueña," preferring instead to essentially learn what she was doing from a technical perspective, matching her where I can, while in other parts that are simply too fast, I chose to perform my best interpretation, to channel her essences while getting as close to her feel and approach as I was able to. Attempting to match another player's improvised phrasing is not only difficult but it can also feel highly inauthentic. However, since I am a blues musician who is used to improvising, I generally feel comfortable finding my own interpretation with a piece of music. Thus, attempting to clone to Charo's approach by negotiating the divide that exists between our personalities and cultural differences, I confirmed that my own personal style was the best way to pay homage to her style while also being true to my own.

To expand on the technical themes discussed in the first part of this dissertation, it's noteworthy to mention how several of these guitar playing women made an historical impact in the development of their musical genres.

Part Two

Roles of Pioneering Guitar Women and the Birth of Musical Genres

Many of the women featured in this dissertation had monumental impacts in their respective musical genres. This chapter seeks to delve into some historic musical events and pay homage to the female guitarists who helped define the music of their cultures. In this part we take a brief look at the contributions of Maria Teresa Vera and the trova movement, Maybelle Carter and The Carter Family's place at the Big Bang of Country Music, Sister Rosetta Tharpe's influence in rock and roll and modern gospel, Lydia Mendoza's role in traditional Tejano music, and Memphis Minnie's evolution from Mississippi country blues to traditional Chicago blues.

2.1 Maria Theresa Vera and the Trova Movement

In the early 20th century, Maria Teresa Vera was at the forefront of the Cuban trova movement, and she played a pivotal role in the creation and popularization of trova music. She began her career as a singer and guitarist and eventually became one of the most influential figures in Cuban music history.

Vera formed a duo with Lorenzo Hierrezuelo, and together they revolutionized the trova genre. They introduced a new style of guitar playing that incorporated intricate fingerpicking techniques and harmonies, elevating the overall musicality of trova. Vera and Hierrezuelo's partnership allowed for a seamless blend of their distinct voices and harmonies, which became the hallmark of their performances.

Vera's songs address themes such as love, heartbreak, poverty, and the struggles of the working class. She was known for her ability to convey profound emotions through her lyrics, reflecting the realities of everyday life in Cuba. As Vera gained popularity throughout the country, her influence began to extend beyond Cuba's national borders. She embarked on

numerous international tours, spreading the beauty and depth of trova music to diverse audiences. Vera's performances resonated with listeners, showcased the universal appeal of the genre, and established her as a renowned ambassador of Cuban music. Vera's impacts on trova music and Cuban culture as a whole are immeasurable. She inspired countless artists, both in Cuba and abroad, to explore the genre and incorporate its elements into their own musical endeavors.

A great example of the reach of Maria Teresa Vera's far reaching influence would be in the Ry Cooder album and documentary, *Buena Vista Social Club*,[43] where Cooder traveled to Cuba to record with many legendary Cuban musicians. Vera's "Veinte Años" was one of the standout tracks from the recording and subsequent live performances.

2.2 The Carter Family and the Bristol Sessions

In 1927, the Carter Family was given a remarkable opportunity that would shape the course of country music history. Talent scout Ralph Peer, representing the Victor Talking Machine Company, embarked on a two-month journey across the southern United States, seeking out talented artists to record. One of his destinations was Bristol, Tennessee. During this trip, Peer discovered the Carter Family and recognized their immense potential.

The Bristol Sessions marked a turning point in the history of American popular music. During Peer's short stay, he recorded an impressive 76 songs by 19 performing groups, spanning various genres including blues, ragtime, gospel, ballads, topical songs, and string bands. These recording sessions captured the essence of the music that had been passed down through generations in the rural South.

[43] Ry Cooder's album *Buena Vista Social Club* was released on Nonesuch Records in 1997 to great critical acclaim. The documentary of the same name followed in 1999. Cooder brought the Cuban musicians to America for a concert in New York City that was featured in the film. They went on after that concert to tour throughout North America. Many believe that this project and Cooder helped bring Cuban music back to worldwide attention

Among the artists recorded during the Bristol Sessions was the legendary Jimmie Rodgers, also known as The Yodeling Brakeman. His recordings during the Bristol Sessions, such as “Blue Yodel” and “T for Texas,” introduced a new style and energy to the genre. The recordings made in Bristol became enormously popular and garnered widespread attention. They showcased the richness and diversity of American folk music and its regional variations. Their success led to the recognition of Bristol as the “birthplace of country music” and the event itself as the “Big Bang of Country Music.”

The Carter Family’s contributions during the Bristol Sessions were instrumental in shaping the future of country music. Mother Maybelle Carter’s innovative guitar style, along with Sara and A. P. Carter’s heartfelt vocals, captivated listeners and set a new standard for the genre.

The impact of the Bristol Sessions reverberated beyond the initial recordings, with the artists and styles documented in Bristol serving as inspiration for future generations of musicians. The sessions helped to define the foundations of country music, shaping its sound, themes, and cultural significance.

2.3 Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Rock and Roll

Sister Rosetta Tharpe played an instrumental role in the birth of rock and roll. Her unique style, blending gospel, blues, and traditional spirituals, paved the way for future rock musicians and left an indelible mark on the music industry. Tharpe developed a style that merged these genres, showcasing her remarkable talent and innovation.

In the 1930s and ‘40s, Tharpe’s music challenged traditional boundaries by blending sacred and secular themes. Her gospel-infused lyrics, soulful vocals, and electrifying guitar skills captivated audiences, transcending religious and racial barriers. Tharpe’s ability to combine

spiritual fervor with the driving energy of blues and swing laid the foundation for the emergence of rock and roll. The merging of gospel gestures and styles with secular motifs and concepts remains an essential quality of much popular music through the last half of the twentieth century. Artist who represent this "merging" include Aretha Franklin, Sam Cooke, Tina Turner, Otis Redding, Phoebe Snow, Ray Charles, Al Green, Dixie Hummingbirds, among many others.

Sister Rosetta Tharpe's impact on early rock musicians cannot be overstated. Her innovative guitar techniques, such as bending strings, using distortion, and playing with a rhythmic drive, greatly influenced future guitar legends like Chuck Berry and Keith Richards[44]. Tharpe's distinctive sound and stage presence set the stage for the electrifying performances that became a hallmark of rock and roll. She was known for her dynamic stage presence, showcasing her incredible guitar skills and impassioned vocals. Tharpe's concerts were groundbreaking, merging the spiritual intensity of gospel music with the energy and excitement of rock and roll.

As an African American woman, Tharpe faced numerous challenges and discrimination in a segregated society, yet her undeniable talent and success challenged racial barriers in the music industry. Tharpe's popularity among diverse audiences demonstrated that music could transcend racial boundaries, inspiring future generations of artists to challenge societal norms and fight for equality. Moreover, Tharpe's influence extends far beyond her own era. Her musical innovations, electrifying performances, and boundary-breaking achievements have inspired countless artists, both within and beyond the realm of rock and roll. Her pioneering spirit paved the way for future female guitarists, such as Joan Jett and Bonnie Raitt, who broke through gender stereotypes in the male-dominated rock genre.

[44] Ilett, Daniel. "Keith Richards and Eric Clapton Worshipped her solos, and Elvis idolized her sound: how Sister Rosetta Tharpe became an electric guitar trailblazer." *Guitarist*. Future Publishing. Jun 29, 2023.

2.4 Lydia Mendoza and Tejano Music

In the 1930s, Lydia Mendoza gained popularity as a solo artist, touring extensively and recording numerous albums. Her expressive vocals, accompanied by her distinctive fingerpicking guitar style, captured the hearts of audiences across Texas and beyond. Mendoza's music resonated with both Mexican and Texan communities, transcending cultural boundaries and fostering a sense of unity through her powerful performances.

Mendoza's music was a fusion of traditional Mexican folk and popular American styles. She skillfully incorporated elements of country, blues, and pop into her repertoire, creating a unique Tex-Mex sound. By blending these genres, Mendoza not only represented her cultural heritage but also introduced a new musical identity that reflected the multicultural essence of Texas.

As a female musician in a predominantly male-dominated industry, Mendoza broke down barriers and paved the way for future generations of women in Texan music. Her success and artistic prowess challenged gender stereotypes, proving that women could make significant contributions to the music scene as performers, songwriters, and influential voices. Furthermore, Mendoza's impact on Texan music culture was profound. Her music captured the essence of the Texan experience, expressing the struggles, joys, and aspirations of the diverse communities in the region.

Additionally, Mendoza's influence can be seen in the work of numerous Texan musicians who followed in her footsteps. Her pioneering role in merging diverse musical styles, as well as her ability to connect with audiences on an emotional level, left an indelible mark on the Texan music landscape. Artists such as Selena, Flaco Jiménez, and Los Lobos have acknowledged Mendoza's impact on their own careers and continued to carry her legacy forward.

2.5 Memphis Minnie and Modern Chicago Blues

From her early days as a Mississippi-based musician to her migration to the vibrant blues scene of Chicago, Memphis Minnie's impact on the creation and evolution of blues music is profound. Her blues journey began in Mississippi. Growing up in a musical environment, she was exposed to the rich traditions of blues, gospel, and folk music. Inspired by the sounds around her, Minnie picked up a guitar at a young age and started to develop her own unique style.

Minnie's talent quickly gained her recognition, and she began performing in local juke joints and gatherings across Mississippi. Her strong voice, coupled with her intricate guitar playing, captivated audiences and showcased her immense skill. During this period, she immersed herself in the rich Delta blues tradition, drawing inspiration from legends such as Charley Patton and Robert Johnson as well as early blues singers like Ma Rainey.

As her reputation was growing, Minnie migrated to Chicago in the early 1920s, which marked a turning point in her career. Chicago, with its thriving blues scene and burgeoning recording industry, offered new opportunities for artists seeking wider recognition. Minnie, along with her musical partner and husband Kansas Joe McCoy, embarked on this journey, seeking to make their mark in the bustling city.

In Chicago, Memphis Minnie's musical prowess continued to flourish. She signed with Columbia Records and began recording her own compositions, which showcased her versatility as a songwriter and performer. With songs like "Bumble Bee" and "Me and My Chauffeur Blues," Minnie's powerful vocals and intricate guitar work resonated with audiences, earning her acclaim and recognition within the blues community.

One of Minnie's notable contributions to the evolution of blues music was her ability to adapt and embrace new musical styles. In the 1930s, as the popularity of acoustic country blues

waned, she seamlessly transitioned to electric blues, incorporating amplified instruments and a more urban sound. This evolution reflected the changing times and allowed Minnie to connect with a broader audience.

Moreover, Minnie's migration to Chicago provided her with an opportunity to collaborate with other talented musicians. She frequently performed with renowned artists such as Big Bill Broonzy, Little Walter, and Muddy Waters, further expanding her musical horizons and influencing the blues scene in Chicago. These collaborations not only enriched her own music but also contributed to the cross-pollination of ideas and styles within the blues community.

From her early days as a Mississippi-based musician to her migration to Chicago, she not only showcased her exceptional skills as a guitarist and vocalist but also played a pivotal role in shaping the blues. Her ability to adapt to changing musical trends, her collaborations with other influential artists, and her unwavering determination made her a true icon of the blues.

It is interesting to note that the distinct musical impacts these players had on their genres and cultures had little to do with their gender. The fact that they were able to have the vision and the drive to push themselves into new musical landscapes and that they were fortunate to be "at the right place at the right time," transcends any issues of being anything but talented and lucky musicians. One this that did set them apart from their male counterparts was how they moved around and traveled to bring music to their communities. That will be discussed in Part 3.

Part Three

The Opportunities and Travails of the Traveling Guitar Woman

"I ain't goin' down the big road by myself…
If I can't carry you baby, I'll carry somebody else."[45]

One distinct thing that sets apart woman musicians from men is their ability to easily manage to tour. This is something I've both wondered about and lived through as a professional guitarist. This section examines some of the ways these guitar players moved about from show to show and how they stayed safe on the road. To round out the auto-ethnographic side of the study I've included a personal essay on what life on the road has been like for me as I've made my living 'on the road' since I was barely out of my teens.

In the 1940s and '50s, the music industry was a tough place for black women musicians, especially those touring with big bands. Sister Rosetta Tharpe experienced both triumphs and tribulations as she broke down barriers in the music industry. During that time, racial segregation was a harsh reality, and black women musicians faced numerous obstacles while on the road. Segregated venues, limited accommodations, and discriminatory treatment were just a few of the challenges they encountered. Tharpe often found herself facing the indignities of segregated facilities, with restricted access to hotels, restaurants, and public spaces. To navigate these obstacles, she, like many other black musicians, relied on the "chitlin' circuit," a network of venues and accommodations owned by African Americans. The "chitlin' circuit" played a significant role in facilitating her travels.

To travel, Tharpe primarily used buses in the early years of her career. Due to racial segregation enforced by Jim Crow laws, African Americans had limited access to public

[45] Delaney, Mattie. "Down The Big Road Blues." Vocalion. 1930.

transportation. This meant separate waiting areas and facilities, and black artists like Tharpe had to rely on services tailored specifically for their community.

Trains were another mode of transportation that Tharpe used. Although racial segregation also persisted on trains, some provided segregated compartments or designated cars for African American passengers. While far from ideal, these segregated accommodations allowed Tharpe and other black musicians to undertake long-distance journeys.

The challenges Tharpe faced during her travels were manifold. Segregated bus terminals and train stations meant that she had to contend with separate waiting areas and facilities. Transportation services for African Americans were often subpar, with older buses and less frequent train schedules. Accommodations along the route were also segregated, providing limited options for black travelers. Tharpe's partnership with pianist Marie Knight doubtlessly provided her with a sense of comfort. Together, they embarked on numerous tours, performing in a wide range of venues, from churches and community centers to nightclubs and concert halls. They mainly traveled without anyone else, so they relied heavily on African American religious communities, which played a crucial role in their travels by providing accommodation, meals, and emotional support, among other resources, in an otherwise hostile environment.

Viable information about the travels of blues artists Geeshie Wiley and Elvie Thomas, who made their mark in the early 20th century, is scarce. During the 1920s and '30s, Wiley and Thomas likely traveled throughout the American South, performing at juke joints, street corners, and local gatherings. They were said to have migrated through Mississippi and into Texas together, traveling as a twosome. Trains were often the preferred mode of transportation for itinerant blues musicians, offering a relatively affordable and efficient means of covering long distances. They would have boarded freight or passenger trains, carrying their instruments and

minimal belongings. They likely also relied on other modes of transportation, such as buses, hitchhiking, and even walking depending on the circumstances.

Lydia Mendoza, along with her family, traveled extensively throughout Texas and other parts of the United States. The family's musical odyssey began when Mendoza's parents, Francisco and Leonor, recognized their children's extraordinary musical abilities. They formed a family band called Cuarteto Carta Blanca, with Mendoza and her three sisters. The family's mode of transportation was a modest vehicle that served as their home away from home. Packed with instruments, clothes, and personal belongings, the family traveled from town to town, performing in dance halls, at festivals, and for private parties. Their music was a fusion of traditional Mexican folk tunes and popular American melodies, characterized by Mendoza's soulful vocals and the skilled accompaniment of her siblings. However, Mendoza's family journey was not without challenges. They encountered discrimination and hardships as they navigated a society divided by racial and cultural barriers. They mainly stayed within their cultural boundaries, performing for and staying with other Mexican-American immigrants.

Memphis Minnie's life revolved around music and travel. Along with her husband and musical partner Joe McCoy, and later her second husband Ernest Lawlars, she traversed the American South, migrating back and forth to Chicago. The couple's nomadic lifestyle saw them traveling from town to town, performing at juke joints, dance halls, and street corners. They often hitchhiked or took the train to reach their destinations, carrying their guitars and a small suitcase filled with essentials. Their travels took them through the Mississippi Delta, Memphis, Chicago, and beyond.

Their mode of transportation depended on the circumstances. Sometimes they managed to secure rides from friendly strangers or fellow musicians, while at other times they relied on public

transportation. Their life on the road was not luxurious, often marked by cramped quarters and limited resources. The couple's travels served as a vital source of inspiration for Memphis Minnie's music. She drew from her experiences and observations, chronicling the struggles and joys of the people she encountered along the way.

3.1 My Life on the Road: Sue Foley

Being on the road is often a fantasy for many people – and I was no exception. Even before I embarked on my first tour, the idea of escaping, going on adventures, playing nightly shows, hanging out with friends, feeling untouchable and always on the move, and exploring new cities and countries captivated me. I could not wait to hit the road and experience the thrill of touring.

When I was 19, my band and I embarked on our inaugural four-month tour, crossing Canada from coast to coast. It was an incredible, exhilarating adventure. As I progressed into my twenties and signed a record deal, my life became centered around touring, and I rarely had a permanent residence. Playing guitar and traveling from town to town became my sole focus.

The road teaches you countless lessons. For me, the most significant one was learning how to let go. When a musician leaves their home for a tour, they are essentially leaving behind everything. In those early days, I did not have many possessions – I sometimes even lacked door keys – but I did not mind. Relationships came and went, and when it was time to move on, the road was always there, offering a fresh start. Even today, I avoid accumulating too many possessions, opting for portable items like stylish clothes and a reliable guitar.

While some may perceive being a traveling musician as glamorous, the reality is far from it. For the brief moments spent on stage, dressed up and playing one's instrument under bright lights, there are countless hours dedicated to far less exciting tasks. Days and nights can stretch

on endlessly. If you are touring in a van and managing your own gear without roadies or assistance, it becomes exhausting. Coupled with the physicality of performing, this takes a toll on body and mind. A month-long tour of consecutive one-night shows can either make you stronger or cause you to crumble. In my younger years as an artist, I experienced both extremes. While the years on the road made me a better musician, I also faced physical and mental breakdowns. I did not realize then that there were limits to what my body and mind could handle, and it took me years to find the inner strength to push back when agents and record companies demanded more than I could give. I often burned out on tour, returning home as a mere shell of myself, requiring days or even weeks to recover. Although parts of it were fun and adventurous, it was ultimately the excesses that took their toll.

A typical day on tour for a band begins in the morning. We rise, grab some food and coffee, and then proceed to transport all our belongings from the hotel room to the vehicle. For me, this usually involves carrying multiple guitars, a suitcase, and any other essentials. Maneuvering through hotel hallways with such heavy gear can be challenging. Then, we embark on the journey, either driving or flying to our next destination. The duration varies, but on average, travel days last about six to seven hours. Upon arriving at the new venue, we unload our equipment, set up, conduct a sound check, and attempt to find a moment for a meal and some personal grooming. Eventually, it's time for the show. While the schedule for these events can vary, there is barely enough time to squeeze in dinner before hitting the stage. Performances can last anywhere from one to four hours depending on the number of sets. After the show, it is essential to meet fans and friends, handle business matters with venue managers, and then tear down and load up again. By the time we reach our hotel room, if we are fortunate enough to have secured one, we are usually utterly exhausted.

Such a schedule often leaves little time for rest and relaxation. Fatigue is a common issue before a performance, and it can make one question whether they have the strength to make it through the show. To cope with the exhaustion, some musicians meditate or engage in practices to center themselves and get into the right mindset for the performance. It is important to put on a "game face" and give your best on stage, even when you feel physically and mentally drained. The desire exists to tap into the raw power of inspiration and deliver an energetic and exciting performance that resonates with the audience. If that connection does not happen for some reason, it can lead to feelings of frustration and uncertainty.

Overall, the life of a touring musician involves a continuous cycle of travel, setup, performance, tear down, and adaptation. The physical and mental demands, coupled with the pressure to deliver memorable performances, can be challenging. However, it is also a rewarding experience, providing opportunities to connect with audiences, create memorable music moments, and fulfill one's passion for performing. Engaging in this kind of touring is most suitable in one's youth, when one seeks to establish oneself and one's body can handle such strain. Considering the demands of a typical day on tour, it is no surprise that musicians rely on alcohol and other substances. These demands, which persist for weeks or even months, can wear down even the most resilient individuals. Furthermore, considering that musicians are artists, who often possess heightened sensitivity, it only exacerbates the situation. Countless casualties have been claimed by the road – a treacherous terrain that demands unwavering resilience. Stories abound of both renowned and unknown musicians who have succumbed to the rigors of this lifestyle. This is understandable when you consider the arduous conditions that touring musicians work under, where depression and mental illness run rampant.

Enduring long drives in close quarters with a group of individuals can exact a profound psychological toll. Throughout the day, one is confined to a small space with the same people, constantly striving to conjure up new topics of conversation. There are times when solitude or moments of silence become an unattainable luxury. Ideally, everyone will get along and genuinely enjoy each other's company, for the band becomes both one's lifeline and family. Love and respect are imperative, as life could swiftly become a living hell otherwise. Secrets are shared, along with inside jokes that only one's bandmates understand. At times, you divulge the deepest thoughts that you can no longer keep to yourself. It can feel like a pressure cooker, pushing individuals to their breaking points. The psychological dynamics that unfold over the course of days and weeks on tour are difficult to capture in words. The band will develop a shared tunnel vision, fostered by the intimate proximity within the vehicle and the energy and spirit shared onstage each night. Its members become more intimately acquainted than with their friends or spouses, even surpassing the bond within their own biological family.

Having grown up with older brothers, I am comfortable around men. I can understand them almost better than I can understand groups of women. Being the youngest girl in a family of five children also made me acutely aware of my size and vulnerability. Having older brothers made me feel protected, as I recognized their physical superiority. While they could intimidate me, the knowledge that they would also defend me if I ever faced a threat instilled confidence and a sense of security in me from a young age.

I have always regarded my fellow bandmates as my older brothers, although unlike brothers, they have never physically harmed me. Being on the road with a group of guys requires a certain tolerance for teasing and joking around, especially if you are the band leader. One requires a thick skin. However, beyond the usual banter, my bandmates have always had my

back during our travels. This was particularly crucial because being a woman on tour made me vulnerable. In my early years, we performed at numerous rough bars. I was petite and appeared younger than my age, and these bars were predominantly filled with men who would gaze at me while I was on stage. As a relatively unknown artist at the time, the audience did not know what to expect from me; they simply saw a young girl up there, which I was acutely aware of. My bandmates not only served as my colleagues but also my protectors. Interestingly, due to my aggressive guitar-playing style, I rarely encountered trouble from men at shows. This remains mostly true to this day. There is something about watching a woman play guitar with such intensity that can intimidate even the toughest of men. Thus, I generally fared well and never faced physical threats. However, had any situation come close to becoming a physical threat, I knew that my bandmates would be there to support me. This sense of family within the band is crucial for feeling secure on the road as a woman.

By the age of 26, I had toured extensively throughout the United States, performing in various venues that ranged from clubs and roadhouses to theaters and festivals. I had the privilege of touring with renowned blues artists such as Buddy Guy, Koko Taylor, Johnny Winter, George Thorogood, and almost every blues band from Chicago. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to open for legends like John Lee Hooker, Little Milton, and BB King, while also sharing the stage with countless blues acts at Antone's Nightclub in Austin, including Albert Collins, Earl King, Jimmy Rogers, James Cotton, Pinetop Perkins, Snooky Pryor, Hubert Sumlin, Angela Strehli, Kim Wilson, and many more. I fully immersed myself in the blues, observing every musician and absorbing as much knowledge as possible. It was an extraordinary journey and felt like heaven. The magical musical moments I witnessed and participated in meant everything to me. I would not trade those days for anything.

However, the reality of life on the road is not always what people imagine. When those legendary blues artists were thriving and on tour, it was pure magic. We were young, in our twenties, and able to embrace a transient and adventurous lifestyle. However, after 6 years of relentless touring, I started to feel weary. The physical demands of carrying heavy equipment, sleeping in unfamiliar places, indulging in excessive drinking and smoking, and feeling the strain of broken relationships all took a toll on me. Although I loved what I was doing, I was beginning to feel worn out. As I observed many of the older artists on the circuit, I could see how the years had affected their spirit. It seemed that if I continued on the road, it would be more of the same. Thus, I desired other aspects to enrich my life.

A unique phenomenon that transformed the way music was experienced and shared in America was border radio. The creation of border radio represents an ethnographic event that had a massive influence on music and culture. It's interesting to note that two of the subjects in this dissertation played a significant role in the development of border radio.

Part Four

Border Radio, Guitar Women, and the Broad Diffusion of Music as a Cultural Phenomenon

The aim of this section on border radio is to include a specific ethnographic event that transformed how music was experienced and shared, and to highlight the subjects herein who played pivotal roles in the creation of this phenomenon. The themes discussed in this part include; how border radio was invented, its makeup and the sheer power it exuded, its worldwide influence that spanned decades, and how both Maybelle Carter and Lydia Mendoza came to notoriety by being some of its first musical stars.

4.1 The Queens of Border Radio

Two of the subjects in this study were regarded as the Queens of Border Radio, namely Maybelle Carter and Lydia Mendoza. An analysis of their experiences on border radio provides an excellent basis for a broader examination of the cultural implications of the "border blasters." I begin with a brief explanation, to which the following song lyrics are relevant:

"Heard It on the X" by ZZ Top

Do you remember back in 1966?
Country Jesus, hillbilly blues where I got my licks
From coast to coast and line to line, in every county there
Talkin' 'bout that outlaw X, he's cuttin' through the air
Anywhere, y'all, Everywhere, y'all
I heard it, I heard it
I heard it on The X
Alright
We can all thank Doctor B; he stepped across the line
With lots of watts, he took control the first one of its kind
So listen to your radio most each and every night
'Cause if you don't, I'm sure you won't get to feelin' right
Anywhere, y'all, Everywhere, y'all
I heard it, I heard it
I heard it on The X.[46]

[46] ZZ Top – "Heard It On The X." *ZZ Top Fandango*. London Records. 1975.

Together, the members of ZZ Top – Billy Gibbons, Dusty Hill, and Frank Beard – wrote the song "Heard It on the X" and included it on their 1975 album *Fandango*. Thirty years later, Los Super Seven, a "super group" of widely popular musicians – Cesar Rosas, David Hidalgo, Delbert McClinton, Flaco Jimenez, Freddy Fender, Joe Ely, Rick Trevino, Rodney Crowell, and Ruben Ramos – covered it. In between, in 1982, Dave Alvin, with the Blasters, released the song "Border Radio." These songs received broad airplay, with each remaining on radio playlists for weeks. However, despite all of this exposure, few fans were aware of what the songs meant, perhaps unsurprisingly.

"The X" refers to border radio, and more specifically the border blasters, which were high-powered radio stations in Mexico along the US–Mexican border that began in 1930. "The X" was the nickname given to the border blasters to reflect their broadcast location in Mexico, as all Mexican station call letters begin with X (C in Canada; W in the Eastern US; K in the Western US).

The border blasters were quite powerful, up to a million watts for XERF, compared with 50 watts for a modest station and up to 50K watts for the most powerful U.S. stations. They were so powerful that, according to reports, they could be played without a radio, but rather using dental work, bed springs, or barbed wire. June Carter Cash, who performed as a child with the Carter Family on XERA, said that the family's music could be heard on any barbed wire fence in Texas.[47] Moreover, if you took a raw light bulb out of the control room under the transmission tower, the bulb would light up on its own. The border blasters could be heard in South America, New Zealand, Japan, Russia, Europe, and throughout North America. They could also be heard at sea. The designer of a border radio transmitter became the radio officer on a U.S. battleship

[47] Fowler, Gene. "Border Radio. Booming and bombastic, broadcasts from Mexican soil turned American culture on its ear." *Texascooppower.com*. March 2016. https://texascooppower.com/border-radio/. Accessed July 2, 2023.

during World War II. He received and played border radio to the sailors through the ship's communications system. Also during WWII, future Country Music Hall of Fame member Hank Thompson, who grew up in Waco, Texas listening to Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family on border radio, tuned into these powerful stations on a submarine in the Pacific to introduce his fellow sailors to hillbilly music.

The border blasters diffused musical culture in many ways. The most obvious influence was that they brought music to many people who otherwise would have had none. In the early 1930s, 50% of urban residents owned a radio compared with only 25% of the rural population. The use of radios was limited in many parts of the country because there were no radio stations that reached much of the Great Dark Area of the Great Plains or the Rocky Mountains. Rural residents required a radio station, a radio, and electricity. Often, without electricity, the radio station and radio were irrelevant. Notably, the Depression Era work program to extend rural electrification contributed significantly to radio ownership.

For many more people, the border blasters provided musical choices they had never heard before. For example, many people in the US had never heard country music, but they came to like it through border radio. Also included in the mix were other genres of music that were unknown to much of the rural population before the border blasters, such as blues, R&B, swing jazz, and Spanish-language music.

Economically, the border blasters propped up musicians and recording companies looking to sell records or songbooks. For example, the Carter Family as well as many of country music's luminaries, such as Hank Williams, Johnny Horton, Hank Snow, Webb Pierce, Johnny Cash, and Jim Reeves, made pilgrimages to the border blasters so that they could deliver country music to people in the country. The Carter Family even moved to Del Rio, Texas to play across

the river on XERF. Some have indicated that these high powered broadcasts strengthened and saved country music.

Furthermore, both Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings said that they grew up listening to the Carter Family on border broadcasts. Hank Thompson said that while he was growing up in Waco in the 1930s, border radio stations were the only stations where you could hear country and western music "most all of the time."

4.2 Significance of Radio and Border Radio as Cultural Phenomena

Radio fostered a real-time national conversation during the challenging times of the Depression and World War II. It became the single greatest force – before television and the Internet – in developing a mass culture of sports, entertainment, music, news, and advertising. Delivering the wider world with a greater immediacy and intimacy than ever before, radio joined listeners of every age, race, and class – in every corner of the country – around their wireless boxes. Author and essayist E.B. White, writing in 1933, called the radio an almost "godlike presence" in his rural community.[48]

Among the great communications developments of the 20th century, the significance of radio was unprecedented. Border radio was a significant extension to this major communications technology, widely increasing its usage and, as such, increasing the cultural implications of the new technology.

One of the most influential acts associated with border radio was the Carter Family, who played a vital role in popularizing country music and establishing its foundations. The Carter Family's music was often featured on border radio stations such as XERA and XERF, both of

[48] Evans, Farrel. "8 Moments When Radio Helped Bring Americans Together. Fireside Chats. The 'Fight of the Century'. A live report from Pearl Harbor. These are just a few of the historic radio broadcasts that seemed to have the whole nation listening." *History.com*. https://www.history.com/news/most-famous-historic-radio-broadcasts. Accessed July 2, 2023.

which had an enormous reach and broadcast their music to a diverse audience, including rural communities, migrant workers, and Mexican listeners.

Border radio stations broadcast diverse music genres, including country, blues, and early rock and roll, and they were instrumental in bridging cultural divides and exposing audiences to various musical styles. Exposure on border radio stations helped the Carter Family to gain widespread recognition and popularity, particularly among rural communities and migrant workers. The accessibility of border radio made it possible for their music to be heard in remote areas where other forms of entertainment were scarce. This exposure contributed to the enduring legacy of the Carter Family and their significant impact on country music.

Lydia Mendoza gained widespread popularity through her appearances on border radio stations during the 1930s and '40s. Her contributions to border radio played a crucial role in introducing traditional Mexican music to a wider audience. Mendoza's appearances on both XERA and XERF helped to popularize traditional Mexican music, particularly the regional style known as *corrido*, to a broader audience.[49]

Mendoza's distinctive voice, combined with her passionate delivery and heartfelt lyrics, resonated with listeners on both sides of the border. Her performances on border radio helped her to gain a significant following, and she became widely regarded as the "First Queen of Tejano Music." Mendoza's contributions to border radio not only helped to popularize traditional Mexican music but also paved the way for future generations of Mexican-American musicians.

Maybelle Carter's guitar styles included a Mexican and Spanish influence that, no doubt from her time living in South Texas and broadcasting from XERA I often wonder if she had

[49] Peña, Manuel. *The Mexican American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict.* University of Texas Press. 2014.

come across Lydia Mendoza. It's curious to note that both artists were working at the same radio stations during the same era.

Conclusion

When I was growing up and learning the guitar it was mainly male players that I was studying and emulating. Firstly, it was my father and my older brothers, and then when I became aware of popular music, it was the male guitar gods of the 1970's. My yearning to be a player like them came from the same place that theirs did, from a need to express myself through the most widely accessible instrument available, the guitar. When I started playing at 13, I knew I was different, and I wasn't bothered by that in the least. Having grown up around so many males and being a bit of a tomboy myself, I was comfortable in that world. Later, as I started to play out professionally that difference began to feel more significant, mainly to others. People would remark on it. "You play good for a girl," or "you play like a guy." What hadn't mattered to me in the least, my gender, was now turning into a 'thing.' Looking around at the scene back then, I began to understand that I was unique and that percentagewise, there were far fewer guitar women out there compared to guitar men. In my estimation, maybe 5-10% female players compared to 90-95% males.

Being unique meant that I stood out and I know for a fact that I got a lot of attention and publicity because of it. I was also able to capitalize on being unique which helped further my career in a very competitive landscape. That uniqueness proved to be a double-edged sword as the awareness of personal and professional isolation set in. What made me different also set me apart when I wanted to blend in and just be a player or be one of the boys. Isolation eventually turned into loneliness. Loneliness turned into longing, and it was that *longing* that made seek out other women in my field. The first and the most impactful female player for me was Memphis Minnie because she was a blues guitarist. Finding Memphis Minnie at sixteen was life altering.

Minnie's path became my path as I tried to walk musically, and at times philosophically, in her footsteps.

When I began to delve into my earliest memories, I realized I had been keeping track of female players the whole time. That's why Charo was also so important to me. She's the first woman I saw playing the guitar, and though she did not come from the world of 1970's rock and roll, her artistry and depth that shone through when she played the guitar enamored me. She is the reason I love and I play Spanish guitar.

As I became a professional touring musician, I continued to mentally log all the other female guitarists I would come across. In 2001, I started interviewing many of them, and in an eight-year span, I conducted over 100 interviews with many of the top players on the scene, from multiple Grammy Award winning slide guitarist, Bonnie Raitt, to world renowned classical musician, Sharon Isbin. Those collected interviews are being formed into my first book entitled *Guitar Woman*.

That process of interviewing and the research I did propelled me into academia as a mature student on the wrong side of forty. I wanted to delve deeper into the pioneering females who paved the way for all of us so my MA thesis included compositions based around the life and work of Maybelle Carter, Lydia Mendoza and Memphis Minnie. This doctoral dissertation further expands upon my initial steps and incorporates even more women who were active in their careers form the 1930's-1960's and who made significant contributions in music and culture.

To circle back to the questions I posed in my introduction: What are the stories of these women guitar heroes? How did they achieve such career success in this uber-masculine musical

culture? How have their stories and techniques impacted the world of guitar? I feel as if I have answered each of these succinctly, and that I have added in a few extra details for interest's sake. *Lastly, how have these female pioneers of guitar transformed the life and career of Canadian blues guitarist Sue Foley?*

There's something empowering that transformed in me when I started to research these female pioneers of guitar. Knowing that they had persevered through decades of challenges and trials so that my trials were lessened has taught me humility. More so, having a clear understanding of their accomplishments and what they were able to achieve makes me want to reach higher in my own career. These are women who had undaunting spirits and courage to undertake a path that had not been taken. They had no role models so they created that in themselves for the next generations. They blazed through with courage and talent, creating a path that other female players could follow and could take pride in. Their stories are all our stories and they have helped make me, blues guitarist, Sue Foley, who I am today.

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