

The perceptions and experiences of a selected group of classical guitar learners  
and teachers in the Cape Peninsula

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A dissertation submitted in *partial fulfillment* of the requirements for the award of the degree of  
Master of Music

Faculty of Humanities

The University of Cape Town

February 2022

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## COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this dissertation from other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

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Date: 14/02/2022

# Acknowledgements

I want to thank my supervisor, Anri Herbst, for the guidance and care she has shown me throughout my degree. Her wealth of knowledge, painstaking attention to detail, and passion for her work has inspired and motivated me throughout this journey. A special mention goes to her scissors (for cutting the fluff) and unrivalled salsa dancing.

I would like to thank Pieter and Lorette van der Merwe for their financial assistance towards my studies and for their encouragement and friendship.

I also want to acknowledge James Grace for his critical insights and input during the preliminary stages of this study.

I am very grateful to Wynberg Boys' High School and Edgemoor High School for giving me the space and freedom to conduct my research. Thank you to all the teachers, Arianna, Alexandros, Megan, Michal, and Raphael, for their participation, input, and for helping facilitate the questionnaires and focus group interviews.

Thank you to Chloe, my fiancé, for her moral support, optimism, and comedic relief.

Thank you to my parents for their steadfast love and generosity.

Finally, I want to thank all the classical guitar learners that participated in this study. Their enthusiasm, effort, and keen observations have reminded me of how fortunate I am to teach what I love.

# Abstract

Despite the guitar's rich classical tradition, it is primarily viewed as a popular music instrument given its strong associations with popular culture and ubiquitous presence in many popular musics. As a result, classical guitar is often on the fringes of public knowledge and recognition. This study explores how secondary school learners perceive and understand classical guitar. Using a constructivist vision of learning, learners' experiences and perceptions were collected to inform teaching practices.

Constructivism is a theory of knowledge that has been used extensively across disciplines to study learning and education. The foundational premise of constructivism is that learners use their prior knowledge and experiences to construct new knowledge. Therefore, collecting and understanding learners' knowledge and experiences is a crucial, preliminary step in facilitating learning and may help teachers better understand their students and help plan teaching strategies that are personal and relevant.

Given the constructivist paradigm of this study, the research is primarily qualitative. Questionnaire-based surveys were given to learners and teachers. Learners also participated in a focus-group interview. Using grounded theory, data were analysed, coded, and sorted into emerging themes. The findings showed that most learners were unfamiliar with classical guitar and its repertoire prior to starting lessons. Learners' expectations were primarily based on the guitar's use in popular musics. Learners also reported that the public often equates classical guitar with popular guitar playing styles. In response to peer and/or public perception, learners frequently distinguish classical guitar from popular musics.

Using a constructivist lens to analyse the findings, this study has shown that many learners lack the foundational knowledge of classical guitar repertoire. The findings showed that introducing and discussing repertoire with learners may make learning more purposeful. Additionally, this study suggests that learners' musical experiences and preferences should be integrated into the learning process to make learning more relevant. Following the constructivist principles of 'autonomy' and learner agency, classical guitar learners should also be encouraged to make music-learning part of their everyday lives and not merely classroom activities.

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## Chapter one – Rationale and research design

### 1.1 Purpose statement

This study aims to collect the perceptions and experiences of selected secondary school classical guitar learners and teachers in the Cape Peninsula. Through questionnaires and interviews, the collected thoughts and experiences of classical guitar learners and teachers will be used to mediate classical guitar teaching and learning.

### 1.2 Introduction

The guitar is arguably one of the most popular instruments in the world today. It has inhabited almost every corner of the globe, encompassing an enormous breadth of musical cultures, styles, and traditions. In this respect, the guitar is a global phenomenon.

Guitar history simultaneously spans popular and classical styles, urban and rural techniques, contemporary and historical practices, written and unwritten traditions, and Western and non-Western cultures, revealing the contributions of both formally and *un*-formally trained players. (Coelho, 2011, 3 author's italics)

As Coelho reveals, the development and history of the guitar is by no means a linear event. To give an account of the guitar is to investigate “multiple and overlapping histories” (2011, 3). Even classical guitar, which one can safely assume was formed and shaped within the western classical tradition, has borrowed, appropriated, and inhabited a plethora of guitar cultures and music traditions worldwide, most notably the musics of Spain and South America. The classical guitar would not enjoy its reach and popularity today without these musics. The popular guitar-driven styles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - rock & roll, blues, pop, and country - have also inspired young people to take up the instrument. Whether they play blues, rock, or classical music, one would be hard-pressed to find a guitarist that has solely explored a single style or genre. As Coelho mentions, “the overwhelming profile of the modern classical guitar student at college or conservatory is one who began as a rocker” (Coelho, 2011, 10).

Given this complex mosaic of guitar cultures and musics, how do people perceive the guitar when its identity is so multifaceted? Moreover, how may these perceptions affect the teaching and learning of the instrument?

This study is concerned with *classical guitar* and the perceptions of the instrument by those studying and teaching it. The purpose of the following historical overview is not to provide a comprehensive or critical history of the classical guitar but rather to give a brief background to the classical guitar's origin, repertoire, and reception. The overview will also be referred to when investigating the respondents' knowledge and perceptions of the guitar. While the primary focus is on classical guitar, references and insight into other guitar styles and cultures will be made when necessary.

To avoid any ambiguity or confusion, the term *classical guitar* will be used when referring to the guitar in its classical application, while *the classical guitar* will be used to specify the instrument, namely the 6-string classical guitar, or Spanish guitar. The term *popular guitar* will be used in a general sense to refer to the guitar in popular music and includes the electric, steel-string acoustic, bass, and other guitars used primarily within popular musics such as folk, rock, pop, blues, and country. When appropriate, I will refer to these styles with more specificity.

### 1.3 Historical overview

The classical guitar has always been on the fringes of the western classical tradition. One could say it is a case of an outsider looking in. Its marginalisation or dismissal allows for examining the historical societies and cultures it has occupied. Because the guitar's roles and functions are so varied, guitar cultures and styles, including classical guitar, are often confused or misrepresented by the public, musicians, and even classical guitarists themselves. While this may seem odd, it is surprisingly difficult to define classical guitar. As this study deals specifically with the knowledge of classical guitar learners, the following section helps to illuminate the respondents' perceptions and ideas and discover how and why learners have come to know what they know.

*The early guitar* – the consensus is that the guitar originated in the Iberian Peninsula following an influx of various stringed instruments both from central Asia and Europe and that the guitar developed by way of natural selection, whereby an instrument would continue until the development or improvement of a superior one (Turnbull, 1974; Evans, 1979; Coelho, 2003; Tyler & Sparks, 2007; Alvez, 2015). By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a plethora of stringed, guitar-like instruments were in use all over Europe.

These early instruments – those with a neck and fingerboard - were frequently placed under the generic term *vihuela* to separate them from the instruments of the harp and lyre family. However, the early guitars were frequently lumped within these categories, and so any reference to the vihuela or guitar prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> century must be considered within the context and locality of its mention. Alvez (2015)

states, “although the term vihuela was used with the general meaning previously indicated, it was also used in Spain to refer to a specific guitar-like instrument” (p. 16). A typical vihuela comprised 12 strings in 6 courses and resembled the figure-eight shape now synonymous with the guitar. The guitars of the time were similar but strung with fewer courses - between 4 and 5. The Franciscan friar Juan Bermudo (1555) sums up the difference, “the guitar is nothing but a vihuela shorn of its sixth and first strings.” While Bermudo might oversimplify the matter, it is true that the guitars and vihuelas of the time were very similar and shared much of the same musical functions. These two instruments are regarded as the principal precursors of the 6-string classical guitar. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they had already established rich and extensive music traditions in Europe and the new world, notably in South America.

The modern classical guitar technique can be roughly traced back to the playing techniques first devised for the renaissance vihuela and the lute. At the time, vihuelas were classified according to how they were played. *Vihuela da mano* – to be played with the fingers; *vihuela de arco* – to be played with a bow; and *vihuela de peñola* – to be played with a plectrum (Alvez, 2015, 15). The vihuela da mano eventually became the preferred method of playing – the fingerstyle technique enabled the vihuelist to play multiple voices within the elaborate polyphonic music of the day. While the lute also employed a highly developed right-hand technique for accompaniment and solo playing, the vihuela became the favoured instrument in Spain and Italy, more so than the lute.

A crucial shift in playing techniques began in 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy with the development of a song style called *monody* and developments in *basso-continuo* techniques. (Alves, 2015, 34) This style was less ornate and simpler to execute than the polyphonic practices of the time, with its primary function being to accompany vocal lines. The less demanding playing style gave the Baroque guitar a broader appeal, contributing to a surge in the number of players. At the same time, the lute's popularity began to diminish, with the guitar and keyboard gradually replacing the lute's musical roles. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the lute was confined mainly to European courts as a solo and accompanying instrument. The high status afforded to it in European societies did not necessarily carry over to the ever more present guitar, and in some instances, the guitar was criticized as a low-brow instrument, suitable only for use in the streets or bars (Alvez, 2015, 60). The *rasgueado* style employed by Spanish guitarists in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century fell victim to this kind of polemic. Unlike the Italian styles, with an emphasis on melodic plucking and accompanying, Spanish guitarists used the *chitarra batente* – an instrument intended for loud and rhythmic playing. It was strung with five steel courses making it significantly louder than guitars strung with the more common gut strings (Evans, 1979). The *chitarra batente* was most likely used to

accompany popular folk music – a belief supported by the lack of documented repertoire for the instrument (Alves, 2015, 52).

While Italian monody and Spanish *rasgueado* techniques had broadened the guitar's appeal, they had also become somewhat restrictive musically - a far cry from the complex contrapuntal styles that had been dominant a few centuries earlier. In 1611, the Inquisitor Sebastian de Covarrubias wrote the following in his Castilian dictionary:

Until our time, the vihuela has been much valued and has had excellent musicians, but after guitars were invented those giving themselves to the study of the vihuela have been very few. This has been a great loss, because all kinds of music were played on it, whereas now the guitar is no more than a cowbell, so easy to play that there is no stable boy who is not a musician on the guitar. (Translation quoted in B.M.G., Sept. 1959, p. 291)

This sentiment, namely that the guitar is an easy or lesser instrument, is not particular to Covarrubias nor the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The guitar has a long history of similar polemical treatment. While Covarrubias' thoughts may not necessarily reflect the general attitude to the guitar at the time, we find his sentiments repeated in the centuries to follow. Achando (2020) comments on the perception of the guitar during this time:

Although the guitar actively participated in elite spaces in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a negative imaginary kept surrounding the instrument. Resilient links between the guitar and the popular sphere significantly informed the critiques and anxieties that loomed over the instrument (Achondo, 2020, 304).

Achando notes that guitarists attempted to combat negative associations by creating strong distinctions between themselves and popular musicians (2020, 304). They achieved this by moving away from the *rasgueado* or strumming techniques and towards a delicate plucking style of playing more suited to the musical mainstream (p. 304).

During this time, the guitar also underwent a diaspora by finding new musical homes through the Spanish and Portuguese colonisation of South America and Africa. The guitar cultures established here are rich and diverse and have contributed an extraordinary amount of repertoire and technical developments to the classical guitar, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The guitar's status in Spain underwent significant changes because of political developments at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By 1701, the king of Spain, Philip V, ushered in a new status-quo aligned with French and Italian interests (Alvez, 2015). Consequently, any forms of national expression were suppressed (p. 68). This directly affected the status of the Spanish guitar and the publication of its music. In this

environment, the guitar became an instrument of the lower class, suitable for the frivolous activities of eating, drinking, and singing in the streets. While the guitar's status would continue to fluctuate in the upper strata of European society, for better or for worse, its association amongst some as an instrument of the 'common people' remained until the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Achando, 2020, 306). Nevertheless, the guitar's popularity in Spain continued to grow, and with it, a striking sense of national identity and pride.

Francisco Goya (1746–1828), the famed Spanish painter and printmaker, frequently depicted the guitar in his art. The critic Edward Fenton writes of Goya “In every mood that he created... there is always a guitar. To have left it out would have been like leaving out the hard Spanish sunlight” (Fenton, 1952, 2).

By the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, developments in string manufacturing led to the gradual abandonment of courses in favour of single strings. A new type of metal bass string provided greater volume than the traditional gut strings, leaving little need for the extra volume provided by courses. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the use of 6 strings was relatively standardized. We see this in the changing construction of guitars. Their necks gradually became narrower, needing space for only six strings, and a fan strutting system enabled the use of higher tension strings (Alves, 2015, 73). Players of the new instrument, which we now regard as the classical guitar, had to adapt and develop playing techniques. It was during this time that the traditional classical guitar technique was established. Key figures in this development include Fernando Sor (1778–1839), Dionisio Aguado (1784–849), and Ferdinando Carulli (1770–1841) among others.

It is important to note that while the 6-string classical guitar at this time is an instrument entrenched in the western classical tradition, its use outside of it is even more widespread (Achando, 2020). The folk traditions of flamenco in Spain and the growing guitar cultures in South America also used the 6-string guitar. These are some examples of the many guitar cultures that used the same or similar instrument. Therefore the 6-string classical guitar cannot be conflated with the classical tradition that it inhabited. Rather, any understanding of classical guitar must be rooted in its unique playing techniques and repertoire, not the instrument itself. This is especially pertinent today, in a world where the guitar's role and identity are so variegated. From the 6-string guitar, there has come, as mentioned earlier, an entire world of guitars and musics, the classical guitar being but one of these. An antiquated but telling definition of the classical guitar is given by Gavall:

There are many different types of guitar, but the senior member of the family is that known as the classical or Spanish guitar. Experience shows that many people are rather hazy as to exactly what the name indicates. (Gavall, 1954, 596)

Gavall then specifies the physical dimensions and characteristics of a classical or Spanish guitar. From the perspective of someone today, the classical guitar as a “senior member of the family” is an accurate statement. From this instrument derived the modern guitars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Gavall’s second sentence reveals the ambiguity of the guitar in the public mind – a topic that is relevant to this study.

*Toward the modern guitar* – while the origin of the classical guitar technique can be traced back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it is only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the growing popularity of the 6-string guitar, that the right- and left-hand techniques used today were formalized. The key figures in this development include Fernando Sor, Dionisio Aguado, Ferdinando Carulli, Francisco Tarrega (1852–1909), Giulio Regondi (1823–1872), and Johann Kaspar Mertz (1806–1856). These composers performed throughout Europe, showcasing the guitar as a serious and virtuosic concert instrument. However, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their music had fallen into relative obscurity and did not feature much in the western classical canon, relegated mainly to a small cult following. This is largely the result of the dominant musical ideals prevalent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Erik Stenstadvold (2013) examines the prejudicial views of the guitar in the 19<sup>th</sup> century music press, firstly, through the gendering of the instrument, and secondly, its irrelevance within the framework of romantic musical idealism. Stenstadvold shows that during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the guitar became associated with the music of amateurs, and in the case of the middle and upper classes, it became an instrument for women, who were largely kept out of professional or ‘serious’ music-making (Stenstadvold, 2013). Stenstadvold cites the French historian and lawyer Philippe Macquer.

The guitar, instrument of imagination, proper for accompanying a solo voice, has become very fashionable in Paris, especially among the ladies, who are certainly not unaware that the pose in which one plays this instrument gives them the opportunity to bring the graces Nature has given them to the attention of all. (Macquer, 1773, 621)

Not only does Phillip’s statement reveal the misogynistic attitudes of the day, but also of the guitar’s status in bourgeois society. Stenstadvold also notes that the emerging musical idealism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century created a world in which “pure orchestral and chamber music” reigned supreme (p. 596). The guitar did not feature within this context of ‘absolute’ music or the quest for the sublime. Additionally, 19<sup>th</sup> century concert halls grew substantially in size, and the guitar’s lack of volume made it difficult for performers to compete with other, much louder instruments (p. 596). Achando also notes that while critics and reviewers often praised guitar performances, the guitar’s connection with popular or folk musics revealed critics’ elitist attitudes, who often portrayed the guitar as a romantic, albeit limited instrument (Achando, 2020, 307; Stenstadvold, 2013, 603).

In the mid-20th century, the guitar began to be recognised as a serious concert instrument within the western classical tradition, not merely restricted to the confines of accompaniment and amateur use. Much of this recognition is owed to the Spanish classical guitarist, Andrés Segovia (1893–1997). Michael O’Toole (2019) writes of the ‘Segovian’ narrative in which he assesses the credit and status given Segovia by players and scholars of the guitar. The gist of this narrative is that Segovia single-handedly raised the guitar’s status from its lowly and undervalued position in the western classical canon and elevated it to a solo concert instrument that could fare against the piano and violin. This narrative has been criticized by Achando (2020), who argues that the image of Segovia as the guitar’s redeemer is “indefensible.” The 20<sup>th</sup> century is full of upheavals, both culturally, musically, and technologically, directly or indirectly affecting the guitar and its reception (Achando, 2020). Nevertheless, Segovia’s prolific concertising, transcriptions, and commissions did spark a revival of the classical guitar in the public sphere. From the Segovian school, a new generation of guitarists emerged, most notably, John Williams (b.1941) and Julian Bream (1933-2020), whose impacts on classical guitar are also considerable. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, classical guitar began to be included in university music curricula, record labels produced classical guitar albums of incredible variety, and perhaps, most extraordinarily, non-guitarist composers began to write significant works for the guitar. Up until this point, all major compositions for the guitar were written by composers who played the guitar. Before, works by prominent composers in the canon had been scant and certainly did not include large-scale sonatas or concertos. By the 1970s major works for the guitar had been written by Benjamin Britten, William Walton, Malcolm Arnold, Manuel de Falla, Astor Piazzolla, Francis Poulenc, and most famously, Joaquín Rodrigo. This surge in new repertoire undoubtedly placed the guitar in a much more prominent position within the canon than ever before.

By the late 1990s, many South African schools and tertiary institutions had included classical guitar in their music programmes.<sup>1</sup> The rise of popular guitar-driven music has also had an incalculable effect on the instrument’s popularity. The guitar’s presence in popular musics has prompted those who wish to study the guitar into the methodical and established classical technique. Within the Cape Peninsula, the

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered at the South African College of Music, University of Cape Town.  
[http://www.students.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image\\_tool/images/434/study/handbooks/2022/2022\\_HUM\\_UG\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.students.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/434/study/handbooks/2022/2022_HUM_UG_Handbook.pdf)  
[http://www.students.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image\\_tool/images/434/study/handbooks/2022/2022\\_HUM\\_PG\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.students.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/434/study/handbooks/2022/2022_HUM_PG_Handbook.pdf)  
 Also see the FET CAPS syllabus:  
[https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/CD/National%20Curriculum%20Statements%20and%20Vocational/CAPS%20FET%20\\_%20MUSIC%20\\_%20GR%2010-12%20\\_%20Web\\_84B0.pdf?ver=2015-01-27-154043-920](https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/CD/National%20Curriculum%20Statements%20and%20Vocational/CAPS%20FET%20_%20MUSIC%20_%20GR%2010-12%20_%20Web_84B0.pdf?ver=2015-01-27-154043-920)

area of this study, many secondary schools offer classical guitar training. Competitions and eisteddfods have enabled a community of young guitarists to share and participate in the classical sphere, which until recently had been the domain of select solo and orchestral instruments. The guitar is fast becoming the most played classical instrument within secondary schools, although, at a tertiary level, it is in the minority. The growing popularity and acceptance of classical guitar have prompted, within this study, a deeper look at the perception and understanding of the instrument by selected learners and teachers in the Cape Peninsula.

#### **1.4 Problem statement**

The study's questions are rooted in my experiences as a classical guitarist – both as a student and teacher. Through these experiences, I have become acutely aware of the perceptions surrounding the guitar, specifically, classical guitar – the perceptions of those who play the instrument, the public, and those active in classical music. Despite classical guitar's enormous growth in popularity over the last hundred years, it seems to be on the fringes of public knowledge and recognition, overshadowed by the popular guitar. Considering this, how do classical guitar learners in the Cape Peninsula understand and perceive their instrument?

To my knowledge, there has been very little research on the perceptions and experiences of classical guitar learners, and the few related studies that I have found deal primarily with technical playing concerns. Within South Africa, very little research has been conducted on the classical guitar. Most research on the classical guitar comprises the analyses of works and musicological studies: Nock (1974), Nock (1983), Kazadjian (1992), Barber (1993), Rademeyer (1999), Kronenberg (2000), Khota (2006), Moolman (2010), Röntsh (2011), Boshoff (2013), Du Plessis (2016). A notable study on transcribing for the guitar was completed by Kirsten (2020). Kirsten investigated the process of transcribing keyboard works for guitar duets. Research on classical guitar education in South Africa is limited, and most studies deal primarily with specific technique or playing related issues: Isaacson (1990), Van der Walt (1996), Jordaan (2005), Roos (2009). Isaacson (1990) conducted a study in the Cape Peninsula and proposed *Suggestopaedia* – a method used in teaching languages and adapted by Isaacson for teaching the guitar, with an emphasis on sight-reading. Van der Walt (1996) investigated the traditional teaching methods of Dionisio Aguado, Fernando Sor, and Andres Segovia to evaluate their relevance for modern use. Abri Jordaan (2005) explored the developments in guitar notation and provided practical insights for guitarists. Finally, Roos (2009) examined the right-hand technique, its historical development, and the differences in application by contemporary guitarists.

Nina Fourie-Gouws and Avril Kinsey have conducted other notable research. Fourie-Gouws (2017) studied six guitar concerti and examined the pre-performance considerations of the concerti for performers, students, and teachers. Notably, Avril Kinsey (2009) did a comprehensive catalogue and historical survey of works for the classical guitar by South African composers. Another notable study, although not on classical guitar, includes Jonathan Crossley's (2018) research into the cyber-guitar system. Surprisingly, South African guitar cultures and musics have received even less scholarly attention than classical guitar. Only a handful of studies on South African guitar music have been completed: Davies (1993), Kruger (1994), Davies (1994), Crossley (2003), Msimango (2004), Johannes (2010), Racanelli (2016), Schofield (2021).

This study uses constructivism to view and analyse classical guitar learning at a secondary school level. While there is a vast amount of literature on constructivism in music education, there are no studies that specifically explore a constructivist approach to classical guitar learning. Many constructivist accounts of music education are non-specific or generalised, often focusing on younger learners and social activity in the learning environment.

A more specific constructivist study on piano learning was conducted by Su-Young Bae (2010). Bae studied four Korean piano teachers after introducing them to constructivist teaching strategies. Teachers utilised a constructivist approach in collaboration with the researcher and evaluated their students' progress using flow indicators. During this period, teachers discovered constructivist strategies to better connect with their students. Bae showed a noticeable change in teachers as they shifted from a teacher-centered to learner-oriented approach where they would ask students more questions and listen to their opinions and insights (p 173). Teachers were also able to strengthen their students' level of engagement during lessons. While Bae's study is instrument-specific, it deals primarily with changes in teachers' teaching strategies as they began to employ a constructivist approach. This study intends to focus on the constructions and experiences of *learners* as a starting point for developing a constructivist vision in the learning environment.

A related study within a sociological framework was conducted by Emily Perkins (2018). Perkins investigated adolescent students' perceptions of their singing and general music classes. The findings highlighted the incongruence of students' and teachers' musical interests and goals and the need for a more culturally inclusive approach to music education, and not one that focused solely on a Western classical paradigm. Perkins' research exhibits many constructivist principles, most notably the need for

learners to have a sense of freedom in their own learning and to have their musical interests accepted and integrated into the learning environment.

Another notable and local study was conducted by Elizabeth Harper (2017). Harper investigated the music learning and facilitation of the Delta Langbroek band which was part of the Music van de Caab project here in the Cape Peninsula. Data were collected through observation and interviews and provided a fascinating insight into the perceptions, experiences, and modes of learning of band members aged 18-25. Her findings highlighted the relationships between formal and informal learning methods and the role of music and music learning on communities in the Cape Peninsula. While not employing a wholly constructivist framework, many constructivist principles were present within the research, including Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and other perspectives on the social nature of music learning.

Given the above outline of research completed, there is a need for further study on classical guitar learning in South Africa. So, using a constructivist vision of learning, this study will investigate learners' perceptions and experiences of classical guitar learning in an institutionalised setting.

### 1.5 Research questions

The following research questions are proposed:

1. How do learners perceive classical guitar? Given that classical guitar lies outside of mainstream musics and popular culture, learners' exposure to and understanding of classical guitar may be limited. How do learners perceive classical guitar within this context?

Sub-questions include:

- a) How do learners describe classical guitar to others?
  - b) How do learners experience the ways in which classical guitar is perceived by their peers and/or the public?
  - c) How do learners experience classical guitar repertoire?
2. How can learners' collected experiences and knowledge inform a constructivist vision of classical guitar learning in the Cape Peninsula? The foundational premise of constructivism is that learners construct knowledge by engaging with what they already know and have experienced. Collecting learners' prior knowledge and experiences becomes a crucial step in employing a constructivist vision of learning.

## 1.6 Research design, methodology, demarcation, and ethical considerations

Constructivism forms the *paradigm* of this research and informs the *theoretical framework* that will be discussed in the following section. The research uses a mixed method approach (Creswell 2014, 14) combining quantitative and qualitative methods such as questionnaire-based surveys with teachers and learners and focus group interviews with the learners.

The study was *demarcated* to include two schools in the Cape Peninsula. Classical guitar learners and teachers were selected according to a purpose-based sample. The following *criteria* were used to determine the sample:

- Inclusion of two secondary schools with substantial classical guitar departments (ten or more learners). The schools selected were Edgemoor High School and Wynberg Boys' High School. During the data collection phase, Edgemoor had 40 classical guitar learners of varied ages and levels, while Wynberg had 23 learners.
- One year of playing experience. A period for the learner to develop and construct perceptions of the instrument and its repertoire is critical.
- Age group: 13 – 19 years.
- Classically trained guitar teachers who have been teaching at a secondary school.

The study initially intended to target both low and middle to high-income schools. However, most low-income secondary schools in the Cape Peninsula do not offer classical guitar training. Those with guitar departments primarily offer learners training in popular guitar styles and techniques. For this reason, the public middle-income schools indicated above were selected. While both schools had many classical guitar learners, only a limited number met the criteria and consented to participate. Eighteen learners and five teachers form this study's population, eleven learners from Edgemoor High School and seven from Wynberg Boys'.

*Data collection* took place in two phases. Learners completed an online survey supervised by me on school property. Following the survey, learners participated in a focus-group interview where they listened to ten musical extracts and were given three questions on each extract. The participants were then invited to join a discussion led by me which I recorded and transcribed for analysis. The teacher participants were emailed a questionnaire to complete. I also had conversations with many teachers to clarify questions and follow up on their responses.

This study uses *grounded theory*, a method first proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). A grounded theory approach provides guidelines for collecting and analyzing data and subsequent theory building from the data (Charmaz, 2014, 1). Charmaz's approach to constructing grounded theory is specifically pertinent as it outlines constructivist approaches to data analysis. Grounded theory methods involve the sorting and labelling of data through qualitative coding. Codes are created by attaching descriptive labels to data segments, which summarise and distill the data's meaning. This enables the researcher to use an "analytic handle" for making comparisons between codes and grouping codes into emerging themes (Charmaz, 2014, 2). The emerging themes in this study are directly linked to the focal research questions and have been constructed from groups of related descriptive codes in the analysis phase. Data were compiled and coded using NVivo 12, a qualitative data analysis software. The advantage of grounded theory is that it provides a flexible and naturalistic approach to data collection and analysis. (Creswell, 2018) For this reason, inductive and deductive logic can be successfully and naturally adopted by the researcher. Inductive logic refers to the process described above, whereby data is collected, coded, analysed, and sorted into emerging themes that form the basis for new theory. Deductive logic, instead, uses existing theories and data to verify these theories. In the case of this study, both methods have been applied.

As this study uses human participants, *ethical protocols* were followed. Please refer to the ethics clearance letter from the University of Cape Town (see Appendix A). After permission from the school principal and music department was granted, the consent form was given to the relevant music teacher for distribution between the learners and their guardians for consideration and signed consent. There were no foreseeable reasons to withhold my personal information or research aims from any participants. The participants were given the option to remain anonymous, whereby their details would not be disclosed within the study. No participants elected to remain anonymous.

### **1.7 Theoretical framework**

Constructivism provides an apt theoretical lens to view this study's findings. As indicated in the purpose statement, this study investigates learners' experiences and knowledge of the classical guitar and its music and provides suggestions for classical guitar learning using constructivist principles.

Constructivism views learners' experiences and understandings as integral to the learning process. It is an approach to education connected to and structured around the way people learn (Wiggins, 2016, 50). The fundamental premise of constructivism is that learners construct new knowledge using their past experiences and understandings, rather than simply acquiring knowledge from a teacher or more

knowledgeable person. A crucial, preliminary goal in a constructivist learning environment is to discover what learners already know and think. Following this constructivist goal, this study will collect learners' experiences and knowledge. Using constructivism as a theoretical lens will help provide pedagogical insights into classical guitar learning. The next chapter will further explore constructivist theory and its implementation within music education.

### **1.8 Outline of chapters**

Chapter two presents the theoretical framework of this study. The core tenets of constructivism found across the literature are outlined. Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky's foundational work are presented and juxtaposed within the context of 'scaffolding.' As constructivism has gained significant attention within education, constructivist approaches within the learning environment are explored.

The third chapter presents the methods of data capturing and the construction of the questionnaires and focus-group interview. The context and reasoning for questions are given, and the research intentions expounded.

Chapter four outlines the findings from the learner survey and focus-group interviews. The knowledge and experiences of the learners are explored and viewed within a constructivist vision of learning. The chapter also explores how learners experience and engage with popular and classical guitar music.

The fifth chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire for teachers. Teachers' insights into teaching classical guitar and their perspectives on learners' experiences are given.

Chapter six includes a summary of the study and answers the focal research questions outlined in the first chapter.

## Chapter two – Constructivism

### 2.1 Overview

Constructivism as a theory of knowledge, and consequently, of learning, has its foundations in the work of John Dewey (1910), Jerome Bruner (1963), Jean Piaget (1953), and Lev Vygotsky (1978). Dewey and Bruner were forerunners of constructivism, while Piaget and Vygotsky identified themselves to be constructivists.

Dewey's creed of learning exhibits some of the principle constructivist ideas found across the literature today. Dewey indicates that education should prepare learners to become part of the community (Dewey, 1982, 541). According to Dewey, the teacher should act as facilitator, and is responsible for relating learners' life experiences to the learning process to make learning relevant for the learner (p. 541). Like Bruner, Dewey proposed that learning should be an active process, where the learner is helped to discover new and relevant ideas with the mediation of the teacher (p. 542).

Jerome Bruner (1963) also indirectly reflects the fundamental thesis of constructivism in his theory of 'discovery learning,' which holds that through acts of discovery, learners adapt or transform their prior knowledge (or understanding) in ways that build on or allow for the construction of new knowledge. Essentially, Bruner believed that the most effective way for a student to gain knowledge is to discover it for themselves. This idea opposes the behaviourist<sup>2</sup> account of learning, which sees the learner as a passive recipient of predetermined knowledge (Splitter, 2008).

While many constructivist theories have gained significant attention within the scholarly and educational communities, their premises and approaches are varied and nuanced. The implementation of constructivist theory in psychology, sociology, political sciences, social sciences, and education has yielded many different theoretical and philosophical approaches (Phillips, 1995, 5; Vianna & Stetsenko, 2006, 83). I will highlight some of the core ideas or tenets found across the literature. Note that constructivism should not be termed a practice nor a methodology, but rather a guiding principle, approach, or theory that teachers may embrace or include in their work. Shively (2015, 129) writes:

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<sup>2</sup> Behaviorists view the infant's mind as *tabula rasa* (humans are born with no innate ideas – knowledge is derived from experience or perception). Human behavior and knowledge are gradually acquired through repeated responses to environmental stimuli – also known as positive reinforcement or conditioning. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

Applying constructivist principles should lead to the development not of another rigid method of teaching, but rather of a lens through which to examine one's own classroom practice and make decisions about how learning and teaching should occur in the classroom.

Larochelle and Berdnaz (1998, 5) iterate a similar perspective, highlighting that “*epistemological constructivism* is neither a method nor a teaching model, although it may contribute to problematizing educational practices” (author's own italics).

Constructivism fundamentally purports to provide a theoretical solution to the problem of knowledge by questioning how knowledge arises in an individual's mind and where this knowledge originates. Constructivists oppose traditional epistemologies that claim human knowledge directly reflects ontological reality (or the ‘real’ world) and that language (and consequently education) objectively refers to this reality (Larochelle & Bednarz, 1998, 5). In other words, constructivists are skeptical of the belief that knowledge can be objectively acquired or discovered; instead, knowledge is created or constructed. Teaching methods based on traditional epistemologies generally view learning as the gradual assimilation of information (Hein, 1995, 2). Once a learner has absorbed enough information or data, knowledge is acquired.

Traditionally learning was viewed as a solely passive activity wherein learners were required to accept and assimilate what a more knowledgeable person tells them, a notion still prevalent in some teaching in the twenty-first century. Instead, constructivists argue that (a) individuals construct knowledge using prior understandings and experiences, and (b) individuals are active in the learning process, rather than passive recipients of knowledge that have been transmitted to them (Splitter, 2008). Webster (2011) also identifies two other core aspects of constructivism found across the literature: “Meaning is constructed with knowledge” and “learning is, in large part, a social activity” (p. 2). Fosnot (1989) summarises the essence of constructivism as follows, “[l]earning needs to be conceived of as something a learner does, not something that is done to a learner” (p. 5). This statement essentially captures what it means for the learner to be active in the learning process. The constructivist position generally maintains that teaching should be learner-oriented and not teacher-centred (Shively, 2015, 131).

Constructivists maintain that teaching should place greater emphasis on learners, and the experiences and prior knowledge they bring to the classroom (Scott, 2011; Golding, 2011; Webster, 2011; Wiggins, 2016). In terms of practical implementation, constructivism prioritises teaching for understanding, not merely for the assimilation of facts or information. Lincoln and Guba (2013) state that a learner's constructed knowledge is the end product of sense-making (p. 55).

The constructivist approach generally prioritises active learning wherein learners are encouraged to share, discuss, and investigate the problem or topic at hand, rather than simply listening to a lecture or quietly carrying out some activity given by the teacher. These approaches typically employ democratic discussion and debate, encouraging learners to share their viewpoints, experiences, and understandings. The key goal is to facilitate learners' construction of knowledge, which, as Dewey and Bruner hold, is more akin to a process of discovery for understanding than for the assimilation of data or information which may hold some practical purpose.

General constructivist principles summarised:

1. Individuals construct knowledge using prior knowledge or understanding as well as past experiences.
2. Knowledge construction is an active process. People are not empty vessels that can simply be filled with knowledge by someone else. They learn by observing the world, engaging within it, and linking new ideas or information with personal experiences and understanding.
3. Learning also occurs through social activity or engagement and not solely within the individual's mind. The social and cultural forces in people's lives also affect the way they learn.

Based on the overview outlined above, the fundamental idea of constructivism is that learners use their past experiences to make sense of new ideas. They look to link the new idea to a familiar experience, feeling, or understanding to create an accessible context for the new idea (Wiggins, 2016). Individuals can construct new knowledge within this context by engaging with what they already know. For this reason, it is essential that a constructivist education acknowledges and utilises the prior experiences and understandings of learners. Many of the foundational ideas of constructivism can be traced back to the work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. I will briefly outline their theories before delving into what a constructivist approach to teaching might entail.

## 2.2 Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky

Much of the constructivist literature is influenced by Piaget's theory of cognitive development. According to Piaget, when a learner is confronted with new ideas or information, they experience what he calls *cognitive disequilibrium* or imbalance (Piaget, 1953). Knowledge is constructed when the cognitive disequilibrium is restored. Piaget states that restoring this disequilibrium is accomplished in two ways: through assimilation and through accommodation. *Assimilation* occurs when the individual incorporates

new ideas or experiences into their existing schema,<sup>3</sup> fitting new ideas into what they already know (Piaget, 1954; Block, 1982). Assimilation can only occur when the new experience or idea is consistent with the existing schema. Assimilation causes the individual to broaden their perspectives, alter their perceptions, and combat misunderstandings. Secondly, knowledge can be constructed through accommodation. Accommodation is a far more substantial process that occurs when the new experience or idea is inconsistent with the existing schema (Acredolo, 1997). *Accommodation* requires the individual to restructure their existing schema to process and understand the new idea or experience (Piaget, 1953). In a sense, a new schema is created through the process of accommodation. Therefore, learning is linked to the learner's prior knowledge and understandings, either through the processes of assimilation or accommodation.

Vygotsky's theories have become synonymous with the term 'social constructivism', given his emphasis on the social nature of learning. Vygotsky posits that individuals are active participants in the construction of their knowledge and that learning is inextricably linked to the individual's social and cultural setting (Overall, 2007, 77). He proposed that the cognitive functions of an individual are formed by their social interactions and that learning is not merely the acquisition of new knowledge but the process by which an individual integrates their knowledge into a knowledge community. (Vygotsky, 1978; Overall, 2007). Vygotsky also emphasised the role of culture and language in forming individuals' perceptions. He argued that language helps individuals impose a culturally defined meaning onto the world and that as language is essentially social, human cognitive structures are therefore socially constructed (Goodman & Goodman, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky believed that the construction of knowledge cannot be separated from the social forces that individuals experience. He states, "[h]uman learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (Vygotsky, 1978, 88). Vygotsky's social constructivism emphasises the importance of interaction and social activity within the learning environment.

Another important contribution of Vygotsky is his 'zone of proximal development'. Vygotsky writes, "[l]earning should be matched in some manner with the child's developmental level" (Vygotsky, 1978, 85). He outlines two developmental levels that a teacher must be aware of in the learner:

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<sup>3</sup> Schema: a mental codification of experience that includes a particular organized way of perceiving cognitively and responding to a complex situation or set of stimuli. (Taken from Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

1. The actual developmental level is the phase of development that the learner has already reached. At this level, the learner can solve various problems and engage with various concepts without assistance from anyone else. They have constructed knowledge and have acquired the skills to independently deal with the subject matter at a particular level (Vygotsky, 1978, 86).
2. The potential developmental level: this is the level of development that a learner may reach in the future.

Vygotsky calls the zone between these two levels the *zone of proximal development (ZPD)*, namely, what the learner is capable of with the help of others. At this level, a teacher meets the learner to help them reach their potential developmental level. Vygotsky writes:

[t]he distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

### 2.3 Scaffolding as a part of constructivism

Scaffolding is a term or metaphor used extensively across the constructivist literature to describe the facilitation of learning. The term is often used interchangeably with Vygotsky's ZPD (Shvarts & Bakker, 2019). While the concept of scaffolding certainly draws from the work of Vygotsky, Vygotsky himself never used the term. Wood *et al.* (1976) state that scaffolding "enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts" (p. 90).

Similarly, Wiggins (2016) describes scaffolding as the "overarching descriptor of [the] teaching process" wherein teachers guide learners to engage with ideas or learning material that is beyond their realm of experience (p. 56).

By situating Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Vygotsky's ZPD within the scaffolding metaphor, an understanding of what scaffolding entails can be outlined. As I have already mentioned, Piaget used the notions of accommodation and assimilation to describe the learning process and the construction of knowledge. Piaget's theory stems from a cognitive outlook on learning and explains how learners adapt or alter their existing schema to learn new ideas. Similarly, Vygotsky envisioned the process of constructing knowledge (or restoring cognitive equilibrium) through the ZPD. The ZPD provides a useful explanation of how teachers can facilitate the processes of assimilation and accommodation described by Piaget.

A crucial aspect of scaffolding is to ensure that learners understand what they are working towards and that their activities or tasks are properly contextualized and explained. Wood *et al.* (1976) state that the learner cannot benefit from scaffolding unless “comprehension of the solution [...] precede[s] production” (p. 90). Similarly, Wiggins (2016, 54) notes that “[learners need to understand the concepts behind the activities and processes in which they engage to be able to take initiative and conceive and carry out ideas on their own.” Therefore, the activities or tasks given to learners should help them grapple with the broader ideas or skills that undergird the problem or subject, rather than solving decontextualised or separated problems (Webster, 2011, 9).

## 2.4 Social interaction in the learning environment

Once learners reach their potential developmental level, they may also work alongside less knowledgeable peers. These interactions are beneficial to both learners as more knowledgeable learners strengthen their own understanding by articulating and clarifying ideas and concepts. Vygotsky’s emphasis on the social nature of learning and the efficacy of collaborative activities between learners and teachers has been a significant focus of constructivist research. Social learning is frequently manifested through group discussions, dialogue, or debate. Lincoln and Guba (2013) have also observed that constructions are not necessarily developed in isolation. Constructions can be developed together with other learners or acquired from other learners (p. 48). Wiggins states:

Through human interaction, people share ideas and understandings such that the ‘knowledge in the room’ lives in everyone’s heads, subject to and enriched by the multiplicity of perspectives of the individuals in the group. (Wiggins, 2016, 10)

Following Vygotsky and the authors cited above, knowledge construction is affected by social forces in numerous ways. Given the understanding of social constructivism outlined, a teacher may need to be cognisant of the following ideas and principles:

1. Language is a social force. Beyond being a tool for expression, language is inextricably linked to not only how we think but how we construct knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978; Webster, 2011).
2. Social interaction in the learning environment allows learners to transform or refine their constructions by being exposed to the ideas and understandings of those around them.
3. Social interaction also enables learners to construct knowledge jointly (shared constructions).
4. At times, a teacher may need to abdicate the central, authoritative role in the classroom (Green, 2008, 31). Given that knowledge construction is both a personal and social process, a certain level of independence and responsibility must be given to learners to construct knowledge

through their own inquiry and in collaboration with others. Wiggins also notes that learners need to have a sense of personal agency. They need to be empowered to operate in accordance with their own intentions or aspirations (Wiggins, 2016, 55). This does not mean that learners must be left to their own devices or that they dictate the learning process. Instead, teachers should encourage learners to take an active role in their own learning while providing meaningful and holistic scaffolding.

5. While traditional, transmissive teaching methods are important, teachers may also need to find ways to actively engage learners in the subject material so they may feel like active participants or inquirers rather than passive listeners.
6. Learners must be given the time and space to share their own experiences and understandings. Teachers may also confront and compare learners' points of view with their own insights and the insights from other learners. Additionally, a genuine interest in a learner's experiences and ideas may encourage and motivate the learner (Hammel, 2004; Bae, 2010).

## 2.5 Making learning relevant

An essential aspect of the constructivist approach is to assess the relevance of teaching methods and learning materials. Buehrer (2000) identifies the relevance of learning as one of the fundamental aspects of constructivism. Following Buehrer, Bae (2010) lists four ways music learning should be relevant to learners. While Bae is concerned with the relevance of classical piano instruction, her insights can be used within any western classical learning setting, including classical guitar.

1. **Relevance to real-life context:** Bae indicates that traditional music instruction is performance-oriented, emphasising the learning of set repertoire. While some learners may wish to become performers, most plan to use their instrument and music to simply add to their everyday life (p. 31). Therefore, the direction of music learning should shift from a strict performance-oriented approach to an approach that is based on learners' own goals or plans. Such an approach may need to become less focused on set repertoire and instead teach general skills and techniques that learners may use in their musical journey. Learners' goals may not encompass professional performing or study at a tertiary level. Teachers need to be cognisant of learners' interests and future goals and plan music instruction accordingly.
2. **Relevance to learners' interests:** Bae notes that learners' interests need to be considered within the learning context (p. 32). Learners should be allowed to take an active role in their own learning by choosing music that is relevant to them. Bae also notes that learners are more likely to practice when interested in the repertoire (p. 32).
3. **Relevance to learners' knowledge and abilities:** Teachers need to understand the prior knowledge learners bring to the classroom and their strengths and weaknesses. Bae indicates

that teachers should be aware of learners' personalities and learning styles (p. 34). This may help teachers determine the pace of learning or the relevance of a method book.

4. Relevance to learners' present life connecting past and future: Bae indicates that if music learning is relevant to learners' lives, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated (p. 35). She suggests that teachers get to know learners through conversation to relate music learning to the learners' lives (p. 35). Bae provides examples and suggests that teachers could help learners prepare short concerts for family celebrations or encourage learners to participate in festivals, competitions, or recitals (p. 36). As stated earlier, a genuine interest in the learner and their life experiences may encourage and motivate the learner.

## 2.6 Building a foundational knowledge

A learner's constructed knowledge is not 'invented' knowledge. While learners use their existing knowledge and experiences to construct knowledge, the processes of assimilation and accommodation must be firmly rooted within the core ideas and concepts of the learning material. Following Newman *et al.* (1996), Splitter (2008) maintains that a constructivist education can only be authentic or genuine if learners' constructions are based on a foundation of prior knowledge. Therefore, learners must assimilate a great deal of knowledge that others have produced (Newman *et al.*, 1996, 282). When learners' constructions are firmly grounded in the foundational knowledge of the subject, and when they master the disciplinary tools that are used by its practitioners (the skills of writers, historians, musicians, etc.), they may become thinkers in the disciplines in question (Splitter, 2008, 140). This does not mean that learners must blindly accept what they are told (as one might find in traditional content-based pedagogy), but rather that they are taught in a way that prioritises understanding through dialogue, testing, debate, and deliberation (p. 140). By approaching learning in this way, learners are encouraged to construct knowledge through their *own inquiry* and become authentic participants in that discipline, rather than passive recipients of expert knowledge (p. 141). Again, this reflects the notion of learner agency or autonomy that should be cultivated within a constructivist learning environment.

## 2.7 Golding's continuum of teaching practices

Constructivist approaches in the classroom invariably gravitate toward group discussions and learner-driven learning. The emphasis generally lies on 'active' knowledge construction, so more traditional or purely transmissive teaching methods are less favoured as they are either too passive or too teacher centred. However, there is a danger in blindly adopting constructivist principles in the learning environment without first assessing the context of the subject at hand (Shively, 2015, 129). Some educators may also tend to embrace wholly constructivist methods and side-line traditional, transmissive

methods that may be more appropriate for the situation. Golding (2011) proposes a continuum of teaching practices that a teacher may assess and then use in the learning environment. At one end of the continuum, learners are left to investigate the topic or activity on their own (active, unstructured), while at the other end, predetermined or “ready-made” knowledge is imparted to students by the teacher (passive, structured) (2011, 469). Golding’s three levels have been summarised below.

1. Learner-directed, unstructured learning: At this level, no rules, structure, or plans guide the learning. Learners are given complete freedom to converse about the topic. They may diverge and their conversations may be entirely unproductive – at least in terms of the learning material. However, Golding states that unstructured, learner-directed brainstorming might be a useful precursory exercise for generating new ideas that learners can test later. Additionally, unstructured conversations may help uncover the constructions learners already hold (p. 472). Taking on more of a casual conversational structure than an investigative dialogical one, progress or greater understanding of the topic may not occur.
2. Community of inquiry, structured learning: This level is generally presented as the paradigmatic approach to constructivist learning. Golding describes this level as the “middle-ground between the two extremes” (p. 474). Here the teacher is present, not in an authoritative role, but rather as a mediator or guide in the learning process. Learners’ insights and understandings are collected through dialogue, discussed for meaning, tested, and debated. Learning is structured and directed – not towards a predetermined answer – but through a line of inquiry determined by the learners. Teachers intervene only to provide scaffolding and make sure the dialogue is focused and purposeful. The primary goal is to teach learners to think independently and critically and share their insights and understandings.
3. Teacher-directed learning: Here, teachers guide learners in conversation or dialogue to arrive at a predetermined answer. Teachers intervene when the line of inquiry leads elsewhere, or to guide learners to the ‘correct’ understanding. At this level, learners are not free to discuss what they would like, as teachers direct the conversation or learning.

Golding shows that a constructivist approach need not become another rigid teaching model as one finds in behaviourist or traditional empiricist accounts of learning. Rather, a diverse range of teaching methods can be applied when appropriate. For example, the teacher can communicate musical scale progressions directly, requiring little or no learner input (teacher-directed learning), whereas discussions on repertoire and style will benefit from a more open approach as found on the second level of the continuum. Additionally, teachers may use unstructured discussions with learners to simply get to know them better (2011, 482). A constructivist approach does not call for the complete abandonment of transmissive or teacher-directed learning – all teaching practices, whether transmissive (passive) or

constructivist (active), can and should be used at the teacher's discretion. Again, constructivism is neither a method nor a practice, but an approach based on epistemological arguments that should guide the entire learning process.

## 2.8 Crossing over to learners

The principal goal of the study is not to provide constructivist principles for classical guitar learning through examples of group discussion or one-on-one lessons, but rather aims to uncover the perceptions and experiences of the respondents. If one takes the foundational constructivist principle, that learners construct knowledge using prior knowledge that refers to understandings and experiences, then teachers have a responsibility to uncover what exactly learners' prior knowledge and experiences entail. As Shively states, "[l]earning begins with where our students are and how they see the world [...] We should cross over to the students to connect to them in regard to the ways they are being musical and the musics in which they are engaging" (2015, 132-133).

Similarly, Appleton and Asoko identify five characteristics teachers might show in a constructivist classroom (1996, 167). They are listed verbatim.

1. A prior awareness of the ideas which children bring to the learning situation, and/or attempts to elicit such ideas.
2. Clearly defined conceptual goals for the students and an understanding of how learners might progress toward these.
3. Use of teaching strategies which involve challenge to, or development of, the initial ideas of the learners and ways of making new ideas accessible to them.
4. Provision of opportunities for the learners to utilize new ideas in a range of contexts.
5. Provision of a classroom atmosphere which encourages children to put forward and discuss ideas.

The constructivist approach is informed entirely by recognising who our students are, what they already know, and what they have experienced. Similarly, Dewey ([1897], 1982, 542) indicates that an awareness of learners' interests is critical to facilitating learning that is suitable and relevant.

## 2.9 Summary

Obtaining learners' understandings, experiences, and perceptions are critical to the learning process: for helping teachers to provide personalised scaffolding, for addressing misconceptions or gaps in learners'

knowledge, and for setting musical goals that consider learners' past experiences, music preferences, and interests. Webster says that music learning has been dominated by directed, teacher-centered instruction that often has little or no regard for learners' constructed knowledge and experiences (Webster, 2011, 46). Informed by the constructivist approach, this study investigates the thoughts of classical guitar learners and teachers, determining the direction and focus of classical guitar education in the Cape Peninsula in selected groups.

## Chapter three – Data capturing

### 3.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter one, this study aims to capture the thoughts and experiences of selected classical guitar learners and teachers. A mixed-method combining quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell 2014, 14) was used and included questionnaires and focus group interviews. Classical guitar learners from Edgemoor High School and Wynberg Boys' High School were chosen according to the criteria outlined in Chapter one. Although these two schools had a total of 63 possible participants, only 18 met the criteria and consented to participate. The criteria outlined that these participants had to have one year playing experience and be within the age group of 13–19. Classical guitar teachers had to be classically trained and teach at secondary schools. Only five teachers were chosen due to the scope and depth of the questionnaire.

The learners' questionnaire was conducted using the online platform Typeform and the teacher's questionnaire using Google forms. Focus group interviews took place on school premises and were audio-recorded and transcribed.

This chapter briefly explains the methods of data capturing and the construction of the questionnaires and focus group interviews.

### 3.2 Student questionnaire

The online questionnaire was divided into three sections: Personal and study profile, experience and perception of the guitar, and peer and public perception.

#### 3.2.1 Personal and study profile

The constructivist approach necessitates that the teacher has a basic understanding of the learner's situation and experiences as they relate to the learning environment (Appleton & Asoko, 1996; Bae, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Questions in this section aim to establish a basic profile of the respondents – their musical background, the nature of their lessons, and their musical interests (See Appendix B). Respondents' exposure to and training in other guitar styles (non-classical repertoires and learning methods) is also explored. Given the guitar's popularity, accessibility, and affordability, it is not uncommon for many classical guitar learners to have already been trained in guitar style other than classical guitar. While the study is primarily concerned with learners' perceptions of classical guitar, their

training in other styles may also influence their experiences and perceptions. Frequently, other guitar styles are self-taught or continued casually or informally after some initial training. Given the guitar's broad application in music globally, teaching methods are incredibly varied and are frequently communicated informally, often orally (Russel & Evans, 2015). These methods have been carried over into online learning, where more learners use social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, or Tiktok to learn music (Albert, 2015; Marone & Rodriguez, 2019). It seems that although this is not specific to the guitar, the very nature and accessibility of the guitar lends itself to informal learning methods (Marone & Rodriguez, 2019). A Google search for 'learn guitar' produced 901 million search results, while 'learn piano' produced 897 million results, and 'learn violin' 130 million results. (Google, June 2021). This is an indication of the guitar's popularity and the relative ease with which basic guitar techniques can be communicated and applied.

### **3.2.2 Experience and perception of the guitar**

This section delves more deeply into the experiences and perceptions of classical guitar learners and investigates the following questions:

*How did the respondents come to start classical guitar?* It would be presumptuous to assume that each respondent began training of their own accord. The influence of parents or guardians and peers in this regard must be investigated. While it was anticipated that most respondents had a primary say in starting lessons, it cannot be assumed that the respondents were adequately informed of the nature of classical guitar and the differences in learning methods, techniques, and repertoire from popular guitar styles. At a secondary school level, most music programmes seem to favour classical guitar as it provides a systematic approach to learning that conforms with school music syllabi, structured largely around Western classical music (Green, 2017; Harper, 2017). While popular amongst students, jazz and rock training do not seem to be as common in school music programmes, as these styles are commonly practiced on electric guitars, which are significantly more expensive than their acoustic counterparts. It is also likely that many students are placed into classical guitar lessons because they already own a classical guitar, irrespective of their musical preferences or inclinations.

*What did the respondents expect before starting lessons?* What is the extent of learners' knowledge of the classical guitar before starting lessons, and how do their preconceptions or expectations match their experiences of classical guitar training? Music preference was also explored. Do guitar learners want to learn other guitar styles alongside classical guitar? The guitar is an instrument that inhabits many cultures

and many different music styles, so it is natural for learners to want to explore the guitar outside of its classical application.

### **3.2.3 Peer and public perception**

The final section of the questionnaire explores peer and public perception of the classical guitar. Namely, how learners think other people perceive classical guitar. Do the respondents feel that the public has a sufficient understanding of classical guitar? Moreover, is the public's perception of the guitar primarily based on popular playing styles and/or techniques? If this is the case, can the respondent articulate what differentiates classical guitar from other guitar styles? Do their answers contain possible misconceptions about classical guitar? Is their definition based on repertoire or technique? How effectively do they describe classical guitar to the layperson? Fundamentally, the answers should highlight the respondents' own understanding of classical guitar.

The respondents were also asked whether they think the guitar is regarded as an easy or casual instrument. The emphasis on technique, musicianship, theoretical and aural skills found in western classical teaching environments may create an image of the classical player being a more advanced or more competent musician than those versed in other styles and genres (Green, 2012). Given the guitar's prolific use in popular musics and the widespread perception of the guitar as a 'popular instrument,' perception among the public may vary. Furthermore, while it is doubtful that anybody with a rudimentary knowledge of the classical guitar and its repertoire would still regard the instrument as easy or casual, popular guitar styles and genres are not always protected from more haughty perceptions. The question should highlight learners' feelings on the matter and whether it is an issue that needs to be addressed.

In summary, the questionnaire aimed to determine the following: 1) a general profile of the secondary school classical guitar learner; 2) the respondents' learning experiences and perceptions of the guitar; 3) the feelings and ideas of the respondents in the context of the guitar's public perception.

### **3.3 Focus-group interview**

The focus group explored the themes of this study further and provided the space and time to involve participants in a crucial listening exercise. The learners' social interactions, specifically their engagement with other learners' ideas and constructions, were also observed and analysed. The listening exercise aimed to test learners' familiarity with classical guitar repertoire and elicit their opinions on the

repertoire. The exercise comprised a playlist that included standard repertoire and pieces that the respondents would likely find unfamiliar. None of the works could necessarily be described as obscure, although works by Brouwer (Rito de los Orishas) and Rodrigo (Invocacion y Danza) were included to elicit learners' perspectives on contemporary repertoire rarely explored outside of tertiary-level study.

1. Recuerdos de la Alhambra – Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909)
2. Concierto de Aranjuez: II. Adagio – Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999)
3. Koyunbaba, Op. 9: IV. Presto – Carlo Domeniconi (born 1947)
4. Sunburst – Andrew York (born 1958)
5. Asturias – Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)
6. Rito de los Orishas: II – Leo Brouwer (born 1939)
7. Suite in E Major: BWV 1006 – J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
8. Invocacion y Danza – Joaquín Rodrigo
9. Gran Sonata Eroica – Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829)
10. Tango Suite: 1. Deciso – Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992)

Link to playlist on Spotify:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0mzLxWHBhpgFOQAMkXtLkW?si=04af56dc0ef64a6f>

Following each musical extract (approximately 60–90 seconds), the 15 respondents were asked if they had heard the pieces before. They were then given two minutes to give each extract three descriptive adjectives. This exercise was designed to heighten the respondents' listening and elicit what Green calls 'purposive listening' instead of 'distracted listening' (Green, 2008, 67).

Following the listening exercise, respondents were asked three questions.

1. Which of these pieces would you choose to play for a friend or family member?
2. Have you learned anything new about classical guitar today?
3. Pretend you are a classical guitar teacher. You have a new student come to you. Describe classical guitar to them. In a few lines, try your best to describe what classical guitar is to a complete beginner.

In summary, the questionnaire and focus-group interview investigated learners' profiles, their perceptions and experiences of classical guitar, their knowledge of classical guitar repertoire and the elicited emotive responses to the listening excerpts.

### **3.4 Teacher questionnaire rationale**

Many of the same questions and themes were continued in the teachers' questionnaire. The perspectives of learners and teachers will be compared and used to construct a picture of classical guitar education in the Cape Peninsula.

#### **3.4.1 Personal and study profile**

Guitar teachers were asked a series of questions relating to their teaching, namely, their qualifications, number of students, places of work, experience, and teaching practices (the latter deals more specifically with the nature of their guitar instruction). Teachers were asked to specify which guitar styles they may teach aside from classical guitar. This will indicate the scope of their students' learning and their own training and experience in other guitar styles. While the respondents are all specialists in the classical guitar (all have degrees and/or licentiates in classical guitar performance), it is anticipated that most will be versed in one or more different style. As mentioned earlier, the process of guitar learning rarely begins and stays within the classical sphere, and many, if not most guitarists, have engaged with multiple styles, both personally and professionally.

#### **3.4.2 Perception of the guitar and pedagogical concerns**

The second part of the questionnaire includes a list of statements that teachers were asked to comment on. Statements were chosen to allow the respondents to raise related issues or concerns that might not have occurred to me, and without prompting. These statements deal primarily with anticipated learners' perceptions of the guitar and pedagogical concerns. It is important to note that these statements are not based on extant research nor represent my own opinion but were designed to elicit teachers' perspectives on various issues. That said, many of the statements do have their origin in my own experience as a classical guitar teacher and have risen in conversation with other teachers and colleagues. Those pertinent to this study have merited further investigation.

The initial statements deal with the perception of the guitar, and many mirror the questions and overarching issues that are explored in the student questionnaire and focus-group interviews. Statements were also designed to elicit teachers' thoughts on the status of classical guitarists, particularly within the western classical tradition. To some extent these questions were also formulated to be provocative. As

outlined in the historical overview in Chapter one, the classical guitar has often been sidelined or misrepresented. While the growing popularity and acceptance of the instrument in education at secondary and tertiary levels indicate that the classical guitar has established a respectable position within the canon, the question could be asked if the selected teachers have a different opinion. Statements dealing with pedagogical issues range from learners' knowledge of classical guitar repertoire, ensemble playing, and the compatibility of classical guitar training with the current school music syllabi. These answers to these statements will be used to inform potential pedagogical issues.

The final section of the questionnaire includes multiple choice and opened-ended questions that continue exploring the themes in the previous section. These questions were also designed to elicit teachers' own perspectives and understanding of classical guitar as well as their teaching philosophies and methodologies.

In summary, the questionnaire for classical guitar teachers aimed to determine:

2. Teachers' perceptions of classical guitar.
3. Teachers' pedagogical concerns.
4. Teachers' perspectives on learners' perceptions, preconceptions, and/or misconceptions.

## Chapter four – Findings of student responses

The findings of this study are outlined in two parts. Firstly, responses of a quantitative nature of the classical guitar learners are presented. Secondly, the qualitative responses are outlined and grouped as emerging themes (open-ended questions and focus group interviews).<sup>4</sup> Many of the emergent themes in this chapter are derived from codes assigned to the data during the analysis phase of the research. Using the software NVivo 12, these codes were sorted and analysed. Related codes were grouped into nodes and are finally represented here as emerging themes. The majority of these themes are present in the chapter under the section titles 4.3 onwards. Statistical data are also interwoven throughout these sections where relevant. As the research is primarily qualitative, the data and relationships between emerging themes are presented throughout the text, rather than through statistical or visual diagrams or graphs. Furthermore, because the sample size of this study is so small, descriptive presentation of the data were favoured over statistical or graphical presentation. As stated in the first chapter, the term popular guitar will be used to refer to the guitar's general use in a variety of popular, non-classical musics.

### 4.1 Profile of learners

Of the eighteen respondents in this study, only two are female. Despite intending to represent the genders equally, permission for the study was granted at one boys' school, Wynberg Boys' High School, and one co-ed school, Edgemead High School. Permission was not given for study at another all-girls school in which there was a substantial classical guitar department. It is also interesting to note that Wynberg Girls' High does not have a classical guitar department, despite being the sister school of Wynberg Boys'.

The respondents approximately represented each school grade evenly from 8–12 with four learners in each grade, except for only two learners in grade 12. Thirteen of the eighteen respondents take music as a subject as part of their school curriculum, and half of them reported playing classical guitar for more than five years. Music grade levels were varied. Exactly half of the respondents reported being between initial and grade four levels of Unisa, ABRSM or Trinity College London. Four respondents reported that they were not sure of their music grade level, and the remaining five reported being at a grade 5–8 level.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendices E and F for the questionnaire and focus group responses.

Based on this information and conversations with the teachers, most of the respondents are at an intermediate playing level (average age 15,4).

Half of the respondents are involved in a classical guitar ensemble at Edgemoor High School. Wynberg Boys' High School does not have classical guitar ensembles but does include jazz and pop ensembles in which some classical guitarists (mainly playing on electric guitars) are included.

It was important to investigate which guitar styles a respondent may have learned or experimented with outside the classical sphere. Learners bring their experiences of other guitar music to the learning environment, affecting their perceptions and understanding of classical guitar. Sixteen of the eighteen respondents reported learning another guitar style aside from classical guitar. Of these respondents, six indicated that they taught themselves these styles *and* that they also received instruction from someone else (perhaps a guitar teacher, family member, or friend), six were taught by someone else, and four were solely self-taught. Following these findings, guitar learning among the respondents occurs concurrently in a formal and informal environment. As stated in chapter three, resources for guitar instruction are plentiful, varied, and can be easily and freely accessed online. It is not known whether those who received training in another style from someone else were taught by a professional, family member, or friend. While it is not within the scope of this study to investigate the informal music learning of the respondents, their engagement with other guitar styles and genres must be recognised. The most common playing styles learned were chords (81%) and tablature (69%). Most respondents selected more than one guitar style. Other frequently selected styles or genres included fingerstyle (50%), electric guitar (50%), folk, and jazz (19%). Therefore, respondents' guitar-playing experiences are not informed solely by classical guitar repertoire and education. Parallels with these observations can be found in the respondents' music listening habits reported later.

Wynberg Boys' High School offers jazz guitar education, often alongside classical instruction. Arianna,<sup>5</sup> the guitar teacher at Wynberg, is a classically trained guitarist with years of experience in jazz performance. At Wynberg, learners interested in jazz can learn the relevant styles and techniques alongside their classical training. As far as I am aware, Wynberg Boys' High School is the only secondary school in the Cape Peninsula with fused classical and jazz guitar education. Generally, schools that offer multiple guitar styles each have a dedicated specialist for these styles. Edgemoor High school, for instance, has two classical guitar teachers, an electric guitar teacher, and a bass guitar teacher.

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<sup>5</sup> No participants elected to remain anonymous. Only the first names of the participants will be used.

Six respondents indicated that they play other instruments, two of which indicated the bass guitar, two the piano, one the electric guitar, and one indicated vocal and choir training. Surprisingly, only one respondent clearly distinguished the classical and electric guitars as separate instruments. Many of the respondents who also play the electric guitar did not indicate it as a separate instrument. After being asked if classical guitarists are viewed differently from other types of guitarists, many made the distinction between classical and popular playing techniques. One respondent's view stands out:

No. I think people think of guitar as guitar. (Questionnaire, open-ended answers)

Here the respondent infers that the public may not distinguish between different guitar styles or even instruments. The practice of guitar playing may be viewed with less nuance so that some people may have grouped electric, acoustic, and classical guitar as one ubiquitous instrument, despite each of these instruments' material differences and varied musical applications. While, in some instances, material and musical differences have become porous, given the development of hybrid guitars, virtual guitar music or the inclusion of multiple instruments or guitars in a performance setting, there still exists distinct material and musical differences which are evidenced through the enormous number of different types of guitars and guitar styles today.

In summary, the target group represents learners of varied ages, with many at a beginner or intermediate level of playing, with most at an intermediate level. Most are versed in more than one guitar style – to what degree is not entirely known. The respondents' guitar-playing experiences are informed by both popular and classical styles and techniques.

## **4.2 Factors influencing initial motivation for learning to play the guitar**

Exploring learners' initial motivation to learn the guitar is a broad and multifaceted topic. While this was not a primary area of focus, various factors influencing 'starting out' can be gleaned from several questions in this study and may prove helpful in the examination of other issues later. The following sections will investigate three factors influencing 'starting out' – 1) parental and peer influences; 2) music preferences, and 3) learners' expectations and preconceptions of classical guitar.

### **4.2.1 Parental and peer influences**

The influence of parents and peers in starting classical guitar training was explored. Nine respondents indicated that the decision to begin classical guitar was made by themselves in conjunction with their parents. Eight respondents indicated that it was solely their decision. No respondents cited any influence

of peers in this regard, nor did any indicate that their parents forced them to start lessons. One respondent indicated that he did not want to learn classical guitar and initially stopped after two years of training, eventually restarting. The respondent did not motivate his answer but said he preferred to learn the piano instead of the guitar. (See Appendix E, Question 3) This learner aside, all the respondents were willing and self-motivated to begin classical guitar lessons, with most indicating that their parents were part of the decision.

#### 4.2.2 Music preferences

A voluminous amount of scholarly attention has been given to the general music preferences of adolescents (Danesi, 1994; Selfhout *et al.*, 2007; Marc *et al.*, 2008; North & Adrian, 2008; Ginocchio, 2009; Bogt *et al.*, 2011; Shepherd & Sag, 2015). While no questions in this study explicitly deal with learners' music preferences, learners were asked how frequently they listen to classical guitar music and other guitar styles. The answers to these questions may provide insight into the music preferences of learners and their level of engagement with classical guitar music outside of the lesson environment. As mentioned earlier, the level of learners' familiarity with classical guitar repertoire may not necessarily be a strong indication of preference. However, comparing the level of engagement (listening) between classical and popular repertoires will indicate learners' knowledge and music listening habits.

The majority of respondents (13) indicated that they seldomly listen to classical guitar repertoire. When asked how frequently they listen to the repertoire, three respondents indicated 'never,' while only two indicated 'frequently.' The two respondents who frequently listen to classical guitar repertoire were both at a more advanced level of playing – music grade 5 and 8 levels respectively. They also both reported frequently listening to other guitar styles. Comparatively, listening to other guitar styles was more common among the respondents. Eleven indicated that they often listen to other guitar styles, seven chose 'seldom,' while none chose 'never.' The styles selected varied, with the majority falling under popular music (rock, pop, country, etc.); the only exception being jazz, which nine participants selected. Therefore, the level of engagement with classical guitar music among the respondents (outside of playing) is minimal, especially when compared to popular guitar styles, which the respondents listen to with much greater frequency.

The focus-group interviews also showed that most respondents are unfamiliar with standard classical guitar repertoire. The respondents were played ten musical extracts and were asked if they had previously heard the pieces. Seventy-eight percent of the tallied answers were no. On average, most

respondents were only familiar with one or two of the ten pieces. Even those respondents who have played classical guitar for more than five years rarely recognised more than four pieces. Based on these findings, it is apparent that the respondents were unfamiliar with classical guitar repertoire before starting lessons. The music listening habits of the respondents mostly feature popular guitar styles and not classical guitar repertoire. If music preference is a motivating factor in initiating classical guitar training, it is doubtful that classical guitar repertoire sparked learners' initial interest in the instrument. Based on the respondents' listening habits, it is more likely that popular guitar musics initiated their interest in the guitar. This is not to say that the respondents are not interested in classical guitar music; in fact, their perspectives on classical guitar pieces in the focus-group interviews prove otherwise, as will be explored further on.

#### **4.2.3 Expectations and preconceptions**

The respondents were asked whether they knew what classical guitar entailed before beginning lessons. Six respondents indicated no, six indicated yes, and five reported that they understood 'a little bit'. Classical guitar is one of the few guitar styles that necessitates reading music. While formal popular guitar training at a primary and secondary school level may incorporate staff notation, teaching in these styles is primarily aurally based and utilises tablature (Russel & Evans, 2015). As reading music is a fundamental part of learning classical guitar, the respondents were asked if they knew classical guitar used staff notation before starting lessons. Fifteen indicated that they were aware of it, while three indicated not. It is unclear how many learners were well informed prior to starting lessons based on this information. While it seems that at least eleven respondents reported little or no prior knowledge of classical guitar, most respondents realised they would learn to read music, perhaps because of associations with the word 'classical.' Overall, the respondents showed a rudimentary, albeit limited prior knowledge of classical guitar.

Wiggins notes that if learners cannot appropriately link new information or ideas to their own experiences and understandings, they may construct a misunderstanding (2016, 51). As learners showed a limited understanding of classical guitar prior to starting lessons, it can be said, following Wiggins, that they may not be able to relate new information (in this instance, classical guitar) to their own experiences and knowledge. This may result in the construction of misunderstandings in the early stages of classical guitar learning. To prevent potential misunderstandings, it may be beneficial for the learner to be given a basic understanding of classical guitar before starting lessons. Given the complex history of the classical

guitar, its diversity of styles and musics, misunderstandings are quite common, as seen throughout the study.

#### **4.2.4 “Starting out” – summary and insights**

Although self-motivated to begin guitar lessons, most respondents seemed to have a limited understanding of what classical guitar entailed before beginning lessons. The focus group highlighted learners’ limited knowledge of classical guitar repertoire, and most reported little to no prior knowledge or understanding of the instrument. Most respondents also indicated that they seldom listen to classical guitar music. Popular guitar styles seem to have played a more significant role in sparking the respondents’ initial desire to learn the guitar. While this was expected, it seems that the respondents lack the level of engagement and active inquiry that one might find in a constructivist learning environment.

Following the constructivist approach, learning needs to be holistic and contextual. If learners are not equipped with the foundational knowledge of the subject – for instance, a basic knowledge of classical guitar repertoire – learning may cease to be holistic and goal-driven (in the sense that learners need to know what they are working towards). It seems that most respondents’ musical understanding and experiences prior to starting classical guitar revolved mainly around popular musics. For learners to become active inquirers or participants, it is crucial that they actively listen to and engage with different repertoires and styles, especially classical guitar repertoire. As Splitter notes, learners need to be equipped with the foundational knowledge of the subject (Splitter, 2008, 140). In the case of classical guitar training, learners need to have a good grasp of the repertoire, not only so that they know what to expect, but that they might also recognise the repertoire’s diversity and set musical goals for themselves based on their preferences and background. Merely learning the pieces given to them by their teachers is not enough for learners to make sense of and contextualise the skills and techniques taught to them.

Additionally, the insight a teacher may receive from a learner who is actively exploring guitar repertoires may also prove crucial in the provision of personalised scaffolding and for setting musical goals.

According to Wiggins, learners need to have a sense of personal agency in the learning environment (Wiggins, 2016, 5). Personal agency is only possible if learners are equipped with the foundational tools and understanding of classical guitar: a basic understanding of the repertoire, the right- and left-hand technique, and theoretical skills (ability to read music, aural skills, rudimentary understanding of harmony).

### 4.3 Experiences of classical guitar

Before delving into learners' perceptions and constructions, a brief overview of their experiences of classical guitar learning will be outlined. The following sections present learners' technical playing concerns, their level of engagement in performing, and their interest in other guitar styles.

#### 4.3.1 Technical playing concerns

Respondents were asked what they find most challenging about learning the guitar. While this study is not entirely concerned with practical playing-related issues, the answers to the following questions highlight respondents' challenges and learning experiences. The responses were considerably varied, with few commonly shared issues. Respondents' difficulties ranged from sight-reading, playing in time, and finding the motivation to practice. One respondent articulated a notable point.

Researcher: What do you find most challenging about learning classical guitar?

Ethan: Changing and relearning techniques taught to me by my previous teachers

Here, Ethan is expressing a sentiment also articulated by the teacher respondents, shown in the following chapter. Ethan previously took guitar lessons at primary school. These lessons primarily revolved around learning and strumming chords. This seems to be the most common method of learning the guitar at a primary school level. However, several primary schools in the Cape Peninsula offer classical guitar and have built up a substantial body of students. Two notable schools in this regard are Edgemean Primary School and Rondebosch Boys' Preparatory school.

Nevertheless, classical guitar training is most common at a secondary school level. It seems that the techniques taught to Ethan in Primary school are incompatible with his current classical guitar training, necessitating the "changing" or "relearning" of his technique. Ethan is implying that his technique, therefore, needs to be corrected for classical guitar playing. Younger, less experienced learners expressed difficulty with slurs ("hammer-ons"), left-hand independence, and remembering notes on the fretboard, while older, more experienced learners articulated difficulties with dynamics and even nail care.

#### 4.3.2 Performance

Learners were asked how frequently they perform for their family members and peers. Ten respondents indicated that they seldom perform for their family, four indicated never, and four indicated often. Seven

respondents indicated that they seldom perform for their friends, nine indicated never, and two indicated often.

While the results are similar, it seems that the respondents are ever-so-slightly more willing to perform for their family than for their peers. The reasons for this were not investigated. However, answers may be gleaned later from learners' perspectives on the public's perception of classical guitar.

#### **4.3.3 Interest in learning other guitar styles**

Respondents were previously asked which styles they had learned besides classical guitar, with 16 of 18 learners listing a few styles (see Section 4.1). A follow-up question explored if respondents, even those who indicated that they learned other styles, would like to learn further guitar styles alongside classical guitar. The majority (13) indicated yes, and only five indicated no. The chosen styles included jazz, rock, electric guitar, bass guitar, flamenco, pop, metal, funk, blues, and fingerstyle. These styles mirror the music listening habits of the respondents and indicate their willingness to diversify their skill set. Given the scope of the guitar's use in popular musics, this is not surprising.

Given that the constructivist approach is structured chiefly around learners and their own experiences and understandings, learners' musical interests need to be acknowledged in the learning environment. Classical guitar provides learners with a technical framework that should enable them to explore many guitar styles and traditions. Additionally, there is an abundance of arrangements and transcriptions of popular music for classical guitar. As will be seen in chapter five, most teachers indicated that the classical guitar technique could be used successfully for other styles of music. As Appleton and Asoko note, learners should "utilize new ideas in a range of contexts" (1996, 167). If the learner is encouraged to apply the classical technique to a new context or new music, their technique may be reinforced within that new context. Considering the importance of relevance within constructivism, and more specifically, relevance to learners' interests (Bae, 2010), it may be helpful for teachers to incorporate or simply encourage learners to explore other guitar styles, even if only informally. Harper (2017) lists various advantages to informal music learning: it is self-directed and self-motivated, often holistic, and frequently collaborative (p. 25). Green (2006) also notes that informal learning practices offer learners autonomy from their teachers, encouraging them to learn independently. She suggests that informal music learning encourages learners to make music beyond the school or learning environment. Again, this aligns with the constructivist notion of creating a sense of personal agency or autonomy in learners. Furthermore, exploring other guitar styles, whether formally or informally, may equip learners with invaluable technical

and musical skills outside of classical guitar playing, notably, improvisation, composition, and other right- or left-hand techniques employed on electric or acoustic guitars.

#### 4.4 Learners' perceptions of classical guitar

The bulk of this study's questions and resultant findings deal with learners' perceptions of classical guitar. By designing questions that required the respondents to either describe or explain classical guitar, their own perceptions, insights, and knowledge can be uncovered. The findings from both the questionnaire and focus-group interview have been included. The following themes emerged from the respondents' various explanations and descriptions of classical guitar: 1) Expressing emotion, 2) historical tradition, 3) difficulty and complexity, and 4) technical application. These responses highlight the subjective understandings and constructions of the respondents.

##### 4.4.1 Expressing emotion

When asked to describe classical guitar to the layperson, many respondents gave answers alluding to the effect of classical guitar playing or listening. These responses essentially portrayed classical guitar as a vehicle for expressing emotion. While questions initially aimed to elicit a definition or summary of classical guitar, these responses highlight learners' perceptions of classical guitar playing and repertoire as uniquely expressive.

- Researcher: How would you explain classical guitar to someone who has never heard of it? (Appendix C, question 33)
- Sulaiman: A form of expressing emotion using a stringed instrument.
- Jake: A way of portraying feelings through music.
- Alex: It's a way to express emotion.
- Zayde: It's a way of expressing your thoughts in various ways, happy songs indicate happy moods or sad songs indicating sad moods vice versa. Playing it also helps you fall into your own space where it's just you, your guitar and what you are playing.

The answers above were given by learners in the online questionnaire and were completed independently. The answers contain a definition of classical guitar based on learners' emotional responses to either playing classical guitar or listening to it. It is noteworthy that their explanations are not centered around repertoire or technique. For them, the primary function of classical guitar is to express emotion. Responses in the focus-group interviews further address this perspective. The following

excerpts were taken from three different focus group interviews. They are all responses to the same question:

- Researcher: Pretend you are a classical guitar teacher. You have a new student come to you. Describe classical guitar to them. In a few lines, try your best to describe what classical guitar is to a complete beginner.
- John: With different pieces and different styles of emotion, you can express different emotions. (Edgemoad High School focus-group 1)
- Kyle: I think it can be both exciting and peaceful at the same time. There are different aspects of different pieces. It's not just focused on one thing... it can go wherever it wants to... like in that one piece... it was scary, and the others were happy and joyful. (Edgemoad High School, focus-group 2)

Excerpt from Wynberg Boys' High focus-group interview:

- Alex: I think guitar is a maybe a way to maybe express your emotion... so, I think it's also a good way to relieve stress – you can get your guitar out and start playing. It's also a nice way to... cause there's different types of guitars you can use. So, it's a good way to change how you play things.
- Researcher: And if you had to describe classical guitar, specifically, to a new student? How would you do that? What does classical guitar entail?
- Alex: I think it has more emotion than any other guitar. So, maybe electric guitar will be more angry, but classical guitar is mainly sad, dramatic... maybe has drama, love, or something in it.
- Tristan: I think it's a wonderful way to connect with the past - any classical music; and specifically, the guitar as an instrument that's remained popular for many years now and it's amazing to be able to experience something like that now. Also, it's really easy to convey many different types of emotions in classical guitar. It's amazing what you can do with it.

While each of the respondents had different perspectives, the theme of expressing emotion is evident again. John explains the emotional effect of classical guitar playing by alluding to the variety of pieces for the classical guitar, each imbued with different emotions. Similarly, Kyle refers specifically to pieces heard in the focus group, attaching different emotive connotations to each piece: scary, happy, and joyful. Alex describes classical guitar as a “good way to express emotion” and further alludes to the calming or soothing effect of playing by stating that it is “a good way to relieve stress.” I followed up Alex's question and attempted to elicit an explanation of classical guitar that was more in line with other responses (namely those based on repertoire or technical application). Again, Alex reiterates his point and expressly states that classical guitar has a stronger emotional effect or resonance than other guitar styles. Tristan also shared what the others had said, indicating the ease of expressing emotion with classical guitar. The answers in the focus group were given after learners were played ten musical extracts from classical guitar pieces, most of which are regarded as standard repertoire. The impact of this on the responses is evident. Many learners expressed their ideas by explicitly referring to pieces

heard in the focus group. The influence of listening to classical guitar repertoire is far-reaching and has many potential benefits for learners.

#### 4.4.2 Historical tradition

The history of the classical guitar emerges as another theme in respondents' descriptions of the instrument. While respondents may not be fully knowledgeable about this history, they do recognise, primarily through the repertoire, the classical guitar's connection with music traditions of the past. The following answers depict this perspective:

- Researcher: How would you explain classical guitar to someone who has never heard of it? (Appendix C, question 33)
- Luke: It's a genre of guitar that just like any other takes influence/pieces from an older time and is sometimes combined with modern aspects.
- Tristan: A different and more traditional way to experience one of the world's most popular instruments.
- Samuel: It's the classical approach to playing guitar.
- Zane: Classical guitar is the type of instrument you would hear in Mexican or romantic music.

These answers follow the intended descriptive explanation of classical guitar from the respondents. By referring to the tradition and history of classical guitar, the respondents distinguish it from popular or contemporary guitar styles and techniques. Luke acknowledges the classical guitar's history but does not associate it solely with classical repertoire. By referring to "modern aspects," Luke recognises contemporary influences on repertoire and technique. Luke is a grade ten student who has been playing classical guitar for two years. He indicated in the questionnaire that he had learned multiple guitar styles prior to and during his classical guitar training. This puts him in a position where he can consciously or unconsciously apply the techniques and skills taught in his classical guitar lessons to other genres and styles. Tristan acknowledges the history of the classical guitar by describing it as traditional. Similarly, Samuel describes it as a classical approach to playing. Zane's answer does not refer to the history of the classical guitar but does associate it with guitar traditions (namely, Mexican music) that have influenced the repertoire or that are encompassed within it.

Following the listening exercise in the focus group, respondents were asked if they had learned anything new about classical guitar. The following answers highlight a growing understanding of the classical guitar's history and cultural diversity.

- Researcher: Have you learned anything new about classical guitar today? (Wynberg Boys' High, focus-group interview)

- Jake: There's like a much more diverse range of pieces that you can play.
- Researcher: Was that unexpected?
- Jake: Well, it's just the realisation that there is so much more.
- Luke: I'd say, that just like any other genre, it takes a lot of influence from different countries, and you can kind of hear it... where with number 10 (Tango Suite, 1<sup>st</sup> movement – Astor Piazzolla) you can almost hear a kind of Spanish influence.
- Researcher: So, you've realised just how multicultural classical guitar can be.
- Luke: I think I've realised it before; I just never knew classical music took that much influence. Obviously, I know Jazz and everything... there's tons of different influences. I always thought classical was that kind of 'Mozart' sound. I've never really listened to classical pieces in that light.

As stated in the focus-group rationale, the musical extracts were varied and intended to show the respondents how diverse classical guitar repertoire can be, both historically and culturally. For both Jake and Luke, it seems that the exercise broadened their understanding of the classical guitar and its repertoire. Luke acknowledged that his understanding of classical music was limited and that he had associated classical music with a “Mozart' sound.” The repertoire's cultural and stylistic breadth only became apparent to the two respondents after listening to the musical extracts. It is also important to note that Luke's answer does not only pertain to the guitar. He refers generally to classical music. Based on this, his reduction of classical music to a “Mozart sound” may indicate a limited understanding of all classical repertoires, not only the guitar. Later in the interview, Luke elaborates on his point:

- Luke: I like to think of classical guitar as more of a filter than anything else. So, when I think of genres of music, it's more of an influence than anything else. 'Cause you get jazz mixed with classical and everything. Classical has certain qualities to it, like lots of tremolo picking I've heard, and very relaxing as everyone has said - that's the stereotype... but as I've realised after listening to the pieces you played, it doesn't have to be like that. It can have more of a Spanish influence than classical, but still labeled classical for whatever [reason]... I'm not really sure what makes a classical piece considered a classical piece. But then again, what makes a blue piece a blues piece? What makes a jazz piece... it's certain qualities.

For Luke, there is a discrepancy between the kind of music he associates as being 'classical' and the pieces heard in the focus group. Previously, Luke's understanding of classical guitar repertoire did not fully encompass other guitar cultures and traditions. Therefore, labelling the Spanish or South American repertoire heard in the focus group as 'classical' created confusion. While Luke's answer shows a limited understanding of music in the western classical tradition, what he does recognise is that music traditions rarely develop in isolation. For instance, Luke recognises the various influences in the development of jazz) and that the ambiguity of labels like 'classical' may hinder a learner's understanding of an instrument and its repertoire.

#### 4.4.3 Difficulty and complexity

Another type of explanation centers around classical guitar's complexity. The respondents compare the difficulty of various guitar styles and present classical guitar as a superior way to learn the instrument.

The respondents were in agreement, and the following excerpts represent the sentiments of the group:

Researcher: How would you explain classical guitar to someone who has never heard of it? (Appendix C, question 33)

Jean-Luc: It is a guitar that takes times, patience and practise to learn.

Erin: It's a difficult but really beautiful instrument to learn how to play. Be prepared to have pain in your left hand a lot.

Researcher: Pretend you are a classical guitar teacher. You have a new student come to you. Describe classical guitar to them. In a few lines, try your best to describe what classical guitar is to a complete beginner.

Jean-Luc: Classical guitar takes a lot of time and practise and determination to get it – the piece that you want to play or pieces that you can play.

Davin: I would say that classical guitar is like best foundation for any sort of guitar, because from classical you can expand to everything. Classical is the best of every world essentially. It's got a little bit of everything in it.

Erin: It's a lot of work, but it's fun! Very complex instrument.

Justin: Classical guitar is more of an advanced way of learning the guitar, but it sounds better.

A recurring theme in these answers is the level of dedication and time that the respondents feel is required to learn classical guitar properly. While this is true of any instrument, the respondents' descriptions distinguish classical guitar from other guitar styles by alluding to its difficulty. Two respondents articulated an understanding of classical guitar as a potentially superior way of learning the instrument. Davin states that classical guitar provides the "best foundation" to learn other styles. He also recognises the diversity of the repertoire when he says, "It's got a little bit of everything in it." Here, Davin implies a technical and/or theoretical hierarchy of learning in which classical guitar methods and techniques are superior.

Similarly, Justin echoes Davin's sentiment and adds that it "sounds better." When asked whether classical guitarists are perceived differently from other kinds of guitarists (Appendix C, question 7), Alex says, "Yes, I think they are the most skilled type of guitarist." Within these answers, we see that some students perceive classical guitar as a superior way of learning the guitar.

Green (2012) notes that musical ideologies have often suggested that classical music has an inherently greater value and complexity than other musics. In contrast, popular musics have often been perceived as “ephemeral, trivial, derivative, or commercial” (p. 207). Green also indicates that music education systems often perpetuate these musical ideologies (p. 208). Nevertheless, these perceptions are not the core issue. Rather, any claims of musical value should not be made at the expense of other musics (p. 207). The comparisons between classical guitar and popular guitar styles are frequent in the learners’ responses and will be investigated further in the section on public perception.

The respondents assigned value to classical guitar based on their evaluation of its complexity and the technical and musical foundation they feel it provides. Erin also describes classical guitar as a beautiful instrument and warns prospective learners of left-hand pain or discomfort. Jean-Luc is the only beginner respondent in the extracts provided above. The other respondents have all played guitar for more than five years and classical guitar for a minimum of three years. This experience is critical in evaluating classical guitar’s difficulty and the potential application of the classical technique to other guitar styles.

#### 4.4.4 Technical application

The final type of description concerns the classical guitar technique. Answers describe the contrapuntal or *punteado* (picking of the strings) style of playing or compare the classical technique to other styles of guitar playing.

- Researcher: How would you explain classical guitar to someone who has never heard of it? (Appendix C, question 33)
- Ethan: A combination of single notes put together to form symphonies and pieces.
- Justin: Classical guitar is more of plucking and it isn't chords.
- Researcher: Pretend you are a classical guitar teacher. You have a new student come to you. Describe classical guitar to them. In a few lines, try your best to describe what classical guitar is to a complete beginner.
- Jake: It's like a way of playing music through a different perspective of... Compared to... cause people are very used to like piano. It's also a very good instrument for... like it can do almost everything by itself, so you can play songs 'just guitar' whereas like other stuff [other instruments] wouldn't work that well. You can choose how you play and there's lots of different varieties. So, there's like happy pieces and sad pieces and whatever you want to play.

Only three respondents referred to the technique when asked to describe classical guitar. Both Ethan and Justin differentiate classical guitar from other styles by describing its capacity as a solo instrument, whereby the guitarist can play both melody and harmony. Justin’s answer, although less nuanced, highlights the difference between chordal playing (as heard in popular musics) and the contrapuntal,

*punteado* style of classical guitar. As we will see later, this distinction becomes a common theme in describing what classical guitar is not. Initially, Jake struggled to articulate his answer, but it became apparent that Jake recognised classical guitar as a solo instrument when he said, “you can play songs ‘just guitar.’” Again, Jake is alluding to the solo repertoire of classical guitar, whereby no accompaniment, neither melodic nor harmonic, is required by other players or instruments. Jake also recognises the diversity of the repertoire by referring to “different varieties,” “happy and sad pieces,” and “whatever you want to play.” It seems that these respondents primarily view the popular guitar within a group, band, or ensemble setting – for example, rhythmic or lead guitar in a band, often accompanying voice. Therefore, the solo repertoire of classical guitar becomes a defining and distinguishing feature of the instrument and its repertoire in their answers.

#### **4.4.5 Summary of learners’ descriptions:**

The respondents articulated their perceptions and understanding of classical guitar by describing the instrument and its repertoire. These descriptions were coded and categorised as emerging themes: Expressing emotion, historical tradition, difficulty and complexity, and technical application.

The two most common themes in the respondents’ descriptions were ‘expressing emotion’ and ‘historical tradition’. The former highlights how respondents perceive classical guitar repertoire as distinctly expressive. Respondents also indicated that the technique and repertoire allow them to express their own emotions. Seven respondents expressed this as a defining feature of classical guitar. Answers that referred to the classical guitar’s history and tradition were also frequent. These answers highlight the respondents’ clear distinctions between classical guitar and contemporary or popular guitar styles by referring to the classical guitar’s cultural and traditional influences and past. The emerging effect of listening to classical guitar repertoire is also evident within these descriptions. Many of the respondents’ ideas or conceptions of classical guitar were influenced by the listening exercise in the focus group. In many instances, the exercise prompted broader and more critical insights into classical and popular repertoires and the utility of the classical guitar technique. Although unfamiliar with most of the repertoire, the respondents responded positively and provided insights often unprompted by me. Given the classical guitar’s history and diverse cultural influences, its repertoire and playing styles are understandably difficult to summarise, especially for the younger, less experienced respondents. No respondent gave a comprehensive explanation of classical guitar which considers all the defining factors: the technique, repertoire, and history. While this was anticipated, answers dealing with one or two of these factors were articulated clearly, and the discussions in the focus group highlighted the respondents’ eagerness to broaden their understanding of the classical guitar and its repertoire. Interestingly, some

respondents expressed a perception of classical guitar as a more complex or superior way of learning the guitar. This will be further explored in the following section.

#### **4.5 Perspectives on public perception**

Moving away from the respondents' personal experiences and perceptions of the instrument, the following sections will explore the public's perception of the classical guitar. The respondents' perspectives will be given to account for public perception and potentially inform the social and cultural structures undergirding these perceptions. The term 'public' will be loosely used to describe people who have not undergone any classical guitar training, are not professional musicians, and who therefore constitute most of the population.

This section purports only to discuss what the respondents *imagine* or *experience* public perception of the guitar to be as the opinions of the public were not collected given the limited scope of this study. The paragraphs dealing with public perception of the classical guitar are therefore not empirical outcomes of this study, but rather present the *opinions* or *experiences* of the respondents. Many of these opinions and experiences were also shared by guitar teachers, as will be seen in Chapter five. Given the commonalities in opinions, a number of emergent themes and issues, although not empirically tested, merit further investigation in potential future studies.

Before delving into public perception, an account of the public's knowledge of classical guitar must be given. The respondents were asked if they felt the public had difficulty understanding what classical guitar entailed (Appendix B, question 33). Fourteen respondents indicated yes, while only four indicated no. The respondents were also asked if they felt the public perceives the guitar as an easy or casual instrument. Fifteen respondents agreed with this statement. This shows that most of our respondents feel that the public has little or no comprehensive knowledge of classical guitar, and that the public's perceptions are often unfair and/or uninformed. The motivations for these responses will be outlined in the following sections.

##### **4.5.1 Equating the popular guitar with classical guitar**

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, the term popular guitar will refer to the guitar's use in popular music. A considerable number of respondents articulated that the public often, and unconsciously, equates popular guitar styles with classical guitar. To put it another way – the public is not aware of the guitar's use in classical music, nor with the traditions that it inhabits.

- Researcher: Do you find that people have difficulty understanding what the classical guitar involves? Why do you think this is the case?
- Edward: They do not embrace it enough and hear it often.
- Tristan: People are not exposed enough to classical guitar.

A lack of exposure to classical guitar seems to be the apparent reason for the public's unawareness. The following extracts show, given this unawareness, how the public may misconstrue or equate classical guitar with popular guitar styles.

- Researcher: Do you find that people have difficulty understanding what the classical guitar involves? Why do you think this is the case?
- Zayde: It's often an oversimplification due to guitar being something people assume is just chords or to back up the singer.
- Davin: The public expects chords or flashy riffs on an electric.
- Samuel: Other people think that guitar is just about strumming chords the whole time.
- Researcher: Do you think classical guitarists are viewed differently from other types of guitarists? (i.e., electric, folk, or pop guitarists, etc.) Give reasons for your answer.
- Davin: Yes, classical guitar has its own difficulties and the people who don't know what classical guitar is, will immediately assume that we just play chords.

The extracts above show that the public's perception of the guitar is often restricted to its accompanying role within popular music. The respondents articulate this by referring to chordal playing in popular music. Zayde describes the public's perception of classical guitar as an "oversimplification" whereby the public will equate all guitar playing with the guitar's most common use today – chordal accompaniment in popular music. The respondents expressed this again when asked if they felt the guitar is perceived as an easy or casual instrument.

- Tristan: Yes. It is common for many people to casually learn some chords on the guitar and call themselves a guitarist. Any instrument, at the highest level takes extreme skill.
- John: Yes, most people have an acoustic steel string guitar lying around which they will pick up every now and then to play a few chords.

As Tristan and John indicate, chordal playing on the guitar is an accessible and relatively easily acquired skill. The ubiquity of this playing style has become synonymous with most guitar-playing. Davin states that the public "assume[s] that we just play chords." These respondents feel that the public is not aware of classical guitar repertoire's intricacy and/or complexity. This may cause some frustration amongst learners wanting to distinguish classical guitar from popular styles. As we have seen earlier, the

respondents' explanations or descriptions of classical guitar were not always comprehensive. The difficulty in explaining the instrument and style, combined with the public's unawareness, may make it difficult for a learner to articulate the nature of their playing to someone in conversation.

Some respondents did feel that classical guitar is understood and not perceived unfairly. The following extracts highlight a perception of classical guitarists as being superior musicians, or technically more proficient on the instrument.

- Researcher: Do you think classical guitarists are viewed differently from other types of guitarists? (i.e., electric, folk, or pop guitarists, etc.) Give reasons for your answer.
- Sulaiman: They are viewed differently because this form of playing is precise and is for a gentleman.
- Luke: Yes, they are generally seen as a guitarist with a lot more theory and understanding of how music works.
- Edward: Yes, they are normally viewed as the "smart" people vs rock and jazz considered "normal".
- Leneo: Yes, they're viewed in a more respectful way.

These answers show how the public may perceive a classical guitarist in relation to popular guitar playing. It is important to note that these responses are predicated on the assumption that people know classical guitar. Both Sulaiman, Edward, and Leneo feel that classical guitarists are afforded a higher status by virtue of their training. Sulaiman describes classical guitar as "precise" and assigns the word "gentlemen" to classical guitarists. Similarly, Edward states that classical guitarists are perceived as smarter by the public. While Sulaiman refers to public perception, he does not attempt to distance himself from his remark, and his motivation is stated as his own opinion. Edward, on the other hand, writes that they view (the public view) classical guitarists as "smart" and popular guitarists as "normal," indicating that he is referring to the public's perception, not necessarily his own opinion. Within these answers, we may perceive classical music as inherently more complex or valuable than popular music. Some may even highlight a perceived elitism in public opinion. Nevertheless, most of the respondents feel that the public is generally unknowledgeable about classical guitar and may, as a result, underestimate the difficulty and complexity of the repertoire. Two respondents also alluded to the classical guitar as being uncool or unfashionable:

- Researcher: Do you think classical guitarists are viewed differently from other types of guitarists? (i.e., electric, folk, or pop guitarists, etc.) Give reasons for you answer.
- Samuel: Yes, they think we are nerds.
- Tristan: Yes. Guitar is generally seen as a "cool" instrument to play, which conflicts with the common stereotype that classical music isn't cool.

Both Tristan and Samuel express a public perception of classical guitar and classical music as being unfashionable – “not cool” or nerdy. Tristan regards this perception as a stereotype, implying that classical music is or can indeed be “cool.” Samuel states that classical guitarists are viewed as nerds. He did not motivate his answer and was the only respondent to express such a polemical perception of classical guitarists. Based on the findings, most respondents do not feel that classical guitar is perceived as uncool or have not explicitly stated it as such.

In summary, most respondents feel that classical guitar is not widely understood nor recognised and that the perceptions of classical guitar in the public mind are invariably based on the guitar’s use in popular musics. Four respondents indicated that those knowledgeable about the instrument may have a more favorable perception of it and may even perceive classical guitarists as superior on some levels. Nevertheless, most respondents feel that this is not the case, and that public unawareness poses difficulties for them – namely, describing the instrument and contending with misconceptions about playing styles and repertoire.

#### **4.6 Comparison with the mainstream**

A recurring theme in the respondents’ descriptions of classical guitar is their comparisons with mainstream or popular guitar musics. The respondents constantly expressed their thoughts and ideas about classical guitar against a backdrop of universally recognised musics – namely popular or mainstream music. Their comments might be influenced by the stark differences in repertoire, learning methods, and traditions of classical and popular musics. Whether discussing their perceptions of classical guitar, or the public's perceptions, learners’ responses provide some insight into musical hegemony and the status of classical music in society. Learners often represented popular guitar styles as the norm or mainstream and juxtaposed classical guitar as the competing, unrecognised music. Within their responses, learners validated classical guitar as a unique and relevant playing style.

Achando (2020) observes that guitarists from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries sought to distance themselves from popular styles of playing. He says:

Although the guitar actively participated in elite spaces in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a negative imaginary kept surrounding the instrument. Resilient links between the guitar and the popular sphere significantly informed the critiques and anxieties that loomed over the instrument [...] Guitarists sought to defy these negative conceptualizations by creating distinctions not only between them and popular musicians but also between performers from previous generations. (Achando, 2020, 304–305).

Achando notes that the guitar's association with popular music was an impediment to its acceptance within the classical or elite sphere during this time. For guitarists to break away from the negative associations with popular music, they created distinctions between themselves and popular musicians. Achando (2020) states, "[i]n response to these critiques, guitarists sought to defend the guitar by detaching it from the strummed techniques commonly associated with popular music" (p. 304).

The respondents of this study have created similar distinctions between themselves and those who play popular guitar styles. Four potential reasons for these distinctions and comparisons could be given. Firstly, the respondents may have difficulty describing what classical guitar entails. It is understandably difficult to encapsulate the breadth of the classical guitarist's repertoire and the distinct stylistic differences in playing from other guitar styles. Additionally, the popular guitar is frequently used within a group or ensemble setting, often in an accompanying role, whereas the classical guitar is used primarily as a solo instrument. The respondents may not yet have the knowledge and experience to articulate a comprehensive understanding of classical guitar. To assist their descriptions or explanations, many respondents described what classical guitar is not – specifically, the ubiquitous strumming or accompanying guitar within popular musics.

Secondly, the respondents may want to highlight the technical and musical advantages of being a classical guitarist. The classical technique and repertoire allow learners to explore a wealth of musical styles and traditions – with music from the renaissance, baroque, classical, and romantic periods, the traditional music of Spain and South America, and a host of other music cultures. Additionally, there is a vast amount of contemporary repertoire and arrangements and transcriptions of popular music. Given the varied utility and scope of classical guitar playing, the respondents may want to distinguish classical guitar from styles that are more singular in their scope and practice.

Thirdly, by having to contend with public misconceptions about classical guitar - especially those that equate all guitar playing with popular guitar strumming or accompanying – learners have learned to make strong distinctions between classical guitar and popular styles. Many of the respondents' answers show that classical guitar is more than a mere strumming instrument.

Lastly, following Green (2012), some respondents may be influenced by a musical ideology that assigns greater musical value and complexity to classical music. Learners' perceptions and attitudes were revealed in some answers. For example, a grade 8 learner, Justin said, "[c]lassical guitar is a more advanced way of learning the guitar, but it sounds better". Even if learners do not hold that classical

music is more valuable or complex, they understand that these perceptions are often prevalent in the public mind. For instance, Edward and Leneo stated that classical guitarists are viewed differently from other types of guitarists. They felt that classical guitar is assigned greater musical value and respect than other guitar styles. Similarly, Luke indicated that classical guitarists have a greater understanding of how music works. While there is undoubtedly a strong theoretical component to classical guitar learning, it is presumptuous to assume that popular guitarists, whether they play rock, jazz, or blues, do not have a theoretical or musical framework to analyse and understand their music at a critical level.

- Edward: Yes, they [classical guitarists] are normally viewed as the "smart" people vs rock and jazz considered "normal".
- Leneo: Yes, they're viewed in a more respectful way.
- Luke: Yes, they are generally seen as a guitarist with a lot more theory and understanding of how music works.

Additionally, some of the respondents' characterisations of popular guitar styles could be viewed as unfair and uniformed because popular music styles are commonly learned outside of a formal context (Russel & Evans, 2015; Green, 2017). Popular styles and repertoire may be devalued when compared to classical styles and repertoire.

## Chapter five – Teachers’ insights

The findings from the teachers’ responses are used to strengthen the emerging themes from the learner survey and focus-group interviews and could provide pedagogical insights and recommendations for classical guitar learning at a secondary school level. Learners’ and teachers’ responses are compared where necessary. It should be noted that many of the statements and questions in the questionnaire were not based on extant research, and many were designed solely to elicit teachers’ perspectives on issues pertinent to this study. The teachers who participated in this study will not be referred to as respondents but rather as teachers to avoid confusion with the student respondents.

### 5.1 Profile of the respondents

The five teachers who participated in this study are all experienced and active classical guitar educators within the Cape Peninsula, and all have degrees and/or licentiates in music, specialising in classical guitar. Refer to appendix D for a detailed summary of teachers’ qualifications, experience, and places of work.

Four of the five teachers indicated that they teach other guitar styles aside from classical guitar, although most of their teaching is classical guitar specific. These styles include rock, jazz, electric and acoustic guitar, pop, and metal. While all teachers are classically trained, most are versed in more than one playing style as some of the learners also displayed. All teachers also indicated that the classical guitar technique could be applied to other styles and genres of music.

### 5.2 Students’ preconceptions and knowledge of classical guitar

The student survey and focus-group findings highlighted learners’ preconceptions and knowledge before beginning classical guitar training. The findings showed that most learners knew very little about the classical guitar’s tradition and repertoire and that their understanding of the guitar was largely based on its use in popular musics. The teachers’ responses confirm these findings.

- Researcher: Most beginner students have no idea that the guitar even inhabits the western classical tradition. Their perception of the instrument is solely linked to its use in popular music.
- Raphael: The statement above certainly applies to most young beginners. I have found that a very low percentage of young beginners are aware of its classical tradition. My guess is that approximately 80% of all my adult beginners are aware and this is often the motivating factor in their decision to start lessons.
- Arianna: This is true. Most students sign up for guitar based on what they’ve heard in popular music or rather what they’ve seen on television/social media (someone strumming on an electric [guitar]).

All the teachers agreed with the statement. Raphael also states that this is reversed in the case of adult students. Given that most adult learners take lessons outside of a school environment (privately), it is likely they are more deliberate in choosing the style of guitar they want to learn. In comparison all the student respondents in this study take classical guitar lessons at school. For this reason, the styles of guitar available to them are often dictated by what the school offers. At both Edgemoor High School and Wynberg Boys' High School most learners wanting to learn acoustic guitar are placed into classical guitar lessons, irrespective of their musical inclinations. Arianna suggests that many learners initially want to learn popular guitar styles. The teachers also indicated that most learners' knowledge of classical guitar repertoire is lacking, even among those playing for a while.

Researcher: Most students have a very limited knowledge of classical guitar repertoire.

Michal: True for beginners, and even intermediate students.

Raphael: Yes! Even among the partially initiated, their knowledge is limited to a select number of popular pieces. Such as: Cavatina, Recuerdos de la Alhambra, Asturias, Romance, Variation on a Theme, Concerto de Aranjuez (second movement), etc. The internet is certainly changing this perception.

Ultimately, most teachers feel that beginner and intermediate learners are generally unknowledgeable about standard repertoire. The student survey and focus group findings verify this, and even experienced, more advanced students were unfamiliar with most of the pieces in the listening exercise. As we have seen, exposure to repertoire may potentially change or elevate learners' perceptions of classical guitar. For this reason, teachers were asked if they thought repertoire studies (basic introduction to the repertoire) should be included in practical lessons. While most indicated that this was a good idea, many expressed concerns about time constraints within lessons.

Researcher: Should repertoire studies be included in practical lessons? Please clarify.

Megan: Ideally yes it should. I would love to have enough time to devote to repertoire studies in my lessons, however, very often lessons are only 30 min (except for high school subject music students), so there is usually not a lot of time for this after all the other work has been seen to. I do, however, try where I can, to include some guitar history and repertoire studies into my lessons by at least playing recordings of pieces or discussing music history, but I would love to be able to include it in a bigger way where assignments could be given etc.

Michal: Yes! Technique-specific pieces are useful to focus effort.

Raphael: The limited time allocated to practical lessons at school does not allow much time for repertoire studies. This is easier to address and should be covered with one's private students. Repertoire studies should therefore be dealt with in the GMK (General Music Knowledge) aspect of the subject.

All teachers expressed the benefits of repertoire studies. However, as Megan and Raphael indicated, a 30-minute lesson may not be long enough to address learners' technical work and pieces as well as listen to repertoire. Raphael suggests that repertoire listening should be included in learners' General Music Knowledge lessons instead. Nevertheless, not all respondents within an Arts and Culture or subject music class setting may be guitarists, and while a general overview of classical music will be beneficial, it may not specifically address the scope and variety of classical guitar music. Given these concerns, the most practical way to introduce repertoire may be outside the teaching environment. As Raphael indicated earlier, the internet provides free access to almost all repertoires. Encouraging and guiding learners to explore these may expand their knowledge of the instrument and motivate them.

### 5.3 Common misconceptions

Within the questionnaire, teachers expressed some misconceptions about classical guitar they have encountered from learners and the public. Again, misconceptions of the instrument are primarily based on confusion with popular guitar styles or when the classical guitar is equated with popular guitar playing. Three teachers indicated that classical guitar may be misconstrued as an easy instrument given misconceptions about playing styles and repertoire.

Researcher: Have you encountered any erroneous preconceptions about classical guitar? If so, what are they?

Alexandros: Mostly an arrogance that it is an easy instrument

Megan: Yes! Many times, throughout my career. It depends on person to person and their own backgrounds and understanding of music and guitar, but the most common erroneous preconceptions from the general public, is that it's easy (by this I mean they think they do not need to work that hard, until they realise that they actually do), that it's boring, that others feel strumming is all a guitar is good for, that it's mostly a male instrument. On the other hand, others don't realise that guitar can be played in a classical way. I am then happy to educate them on all of this.

Raphael: Perhaps the most common misconception is that having learnt to strum chords initially, is a good foundation for learning the classical technique. People are also often surprised by the versatility of the classical guitar when they hear it played.

Learners' perceptions of classical guitar as an easy instrument stem from an ignorance of the classical playing style and repertoire. The teachers indicated that when classical guitar is viewed as a mere strumming instrument, the resultant evaluation of its difficulty is misguided and often incorrect. Megan also indicates that the guitar may be viewed as a male instrument. The popularity of the guitar between the genders has not been investigated, and although this study sought to include more female respondents, only two learners and two teachers are female. Interestingly, the 19<sup>th</sup> century perception of the guitar as a female instrument, as highlighted by Stenstadvold (2013), seems to have dissipated.

Megan's perception that the guitar is viewed as a male instrument could be viewed by some as credible – especially considering that popular guitar styles like rock or metal have frequently been male-dominated (d'Hont, 2021). Green (2012) also notes that different musical instruments have been associated with girls or boys, respectively (p. 236). Essentially, the misconceptions of classical guitar expressed by the teachers are based mainly on the perception of the guitar as a popular music instrument.

#### 5.4 Descriptions of classical guitar

Teachers were also asked to describe classical guitar to the layperson. The responses contained different perspectives and emphasised specific criteria. However, descriptions of the technique and its utility were common in the responses. Given the length of some of the responses, they will not be included below – please refer to Appendix G, question 11.

Alexandros indicated that it is difficult to explain the solo nature of classical guitar to the layperson. Specifically, the simultaneous playing of “harmony, melody, and texture.” He describes it simply as “solo-fingerstyle.” Megan's answer was taken from a letter she gives all her beginner students. Her answer describes classical guitar in much detail. She distinguishes it from the guitar's ubiquitous accompanying role in popular music, addresses misconceptions about classical music, alludes to the diversity of the repertoire, and like Alexandros, describes the solo repertoire as self-sufficient – not needing accompaniment. Michal refers to classical guitar as having Spanish roots and describes it as “nylon acoustic.” While by no means a comprehensive answer, Michal's response is likely one that the unknowing person might connect with, given its simplicity. Arianna describes classical guitar as a solo and ensemble instrument that can inhabit many musical styles and genres. Arianna's explanation includes a description of the utility of the classical guitar technique – a topic that will be explored in the next section. Raphael likens classical guitar to the piano, referencing its capacity as a self-sufficient, solo instrument.

The teachers' references to the tradition and history of classical guitar were minimal. Comparisons with popular guitar playing styles and detailed descriptions of the solo nature of classical guitar playing formed the basis of most responses. Learners' responses to the same question were quite different. While many learners' responses mirror the teachers' descriptions, most learners described the emotional effect of classical guitar or its historical tradition. A potential reason for this could be the difficulty learners have in articulating the harmonic and melodic nature of the repertoire. In the teachers' answers, we again see

the comparison with the mainstream. The hegemony of popular music in the public mind necessitates the kind of comparative description that both learners and teachers have given.

### 5.5 Utility of classical guitar

Given learners' interest and experience with popular guitar styles, the teachers were asked if the classical technique could be used effectively for other styles of guitar playing. All teachers indicated that the technique could be applied successfully across genres.

- Alexandros: Yes, but it has specific applications. Harmonically complex styles can benefit from classical technique; rhythmic and melodic styles tend to benefit from plectrum techniques
- Megan: Yes, I am a firm believer in this. Classical foundations are the strongest because they give you a good grip on the intricacies of music playing, reading and general understanding. Of course, each genre has its own challenges or musical aspects, but I feel if a person has classical foundations, it is much easier and quicker for them to play pieces of other genres and to get a good understanding of them, than it is for guitarists of other genres to do so.
- Raphael: I would often tell students who favor playing the electric lead guitar, that some of the world's finest electric guitarists, were classically trained. Rather than using just one plectrum, the classically trained guitarist has the luxury of using 4 picking fingers or plectrums. They are often surprised by the variety of effects possible because of this. The guitarist involved with Jazz or Rock ensembles are often not required to fulfill the job of the bassist or rhythm guitarist. My answer therefore is most definitely but one seldom sees this. Once again, our technique allows us to associate with smaller groups to achieve the same end.

Alexandros' response highlights the advantages of the classical and plectrum-based techniques, respectively. He states that the classical technique should be used for "harmonically complex styles." He does not specify which styles of music he regards as harmonically complex. Nevertheless, one can assume that these styles are primarily contrapuntal or chordal. Given that many plectrum-based techniques (such as the lead guitar in a rock group or jazz solos) are primarily melodic, Alexandros suggests that the classical technique might not be as well suited to these styles. The other respondents did not express Alexandros's hesitancy and instead indicated that the classical technique could be used both harmonically and melodically. Megan indicates that while another style or genre of guitar music cannot necessarily be learned automatically, the technical and theoretical foundation acquired through classical guitar training may make it easier for one to explore these styles. Conversely, it may be more difficult for jazz or other popular guitarists to learn how to play classically. Raphael compares the right-hand technique of plectrum playing with the classical guitarist's 'fingerstyle' technique, indicating that the classical technique enables one to play both melody and harmony, whereas plectrum playing affords the guitarist only one or the other. While Raphael's understanding of plectrum playing may be somewhat limited, his advocacy of the utility of the classical technique is grounded in his 35 years of teaching

experience. He mentions that while stylistic crossovers are possible, they rarely occur. Given the popularity of popular guitar styles among learners and considering both teachers' and learners' advocacy for the utility of the technique across music styles, this study suggests that learners' musical interests should be integrated into their classical guitar training.

## 5.6 The status of classical guitar

Various questions were designed to elicit perspectives on the status of the classical guitar, specifically within the western classical tradition. As briefly traced in the historical overview, it is evident that the classical guitar has often been sidelined, disregarded, or undervalued. Despite its popularity and acceptance in western classical institutions today, the following questions investigated teachers' perspectives on the status of classical guitar and whether the polemical attitudes mentioned persist.

Researcher: Classical guitarists are marginalised within the classical music community.

Alexandros: Yes, strongly.

Megan: At times, yes, I think it can feel like this. Classical guitarists always seem to be on the outskirts of the classical music community. Classical guitar is usually perceived as a predominantly solo instrument and sometimes one may feel like orchestral musicians do not see classical guitarists as part of the "club". But I think that when guitarists start to interact with chamber musicians, they become aware of the potential of the guitar. I suppose one can argue that guitar concertos etc. are not performed as much compared to others (sometimes due to funding etc.) but I also think that in a general day to day sense of the classical community, guitarists are able to break out of these preconceptions by building stronger interpersonal working relationships with other musicians. I feel like the marginalisation was felt a lot more in college, it also depends how you react to these things.

Michal: That has not been my experience, but it is probably true to some degree.

Raphael: I don't agree, that would imply that there is an ongoing bias. I prefer to think that musicians are generally aware of our lack of volume. Introducing any electronic amplification seems to diminish the purity of sound generated by the standard acoustic ensemble instruments.

Arianna: Yes! Guitars are seen as very soft, solo instruments. Most times, one has to force their way in and make sure they're seen and heard and have a place in the classical world.

Four of the five teachers agreed with the statement to varying degrees. The reasons given were varied, but again highlight a general unawareness of the instrument and its repertoire by the public and even classical instrumentalists. Megan indicates that the classical guitar is primarily regarded as a solo instrument, and as a result, may be sidelined by orchestral or chamber musicians. Both Megan and Arianna indicate that classical guitarists should be more proactive in working with other instrumentalists and promoting the classical guitar to alleviate or rectify the marginalisation or alienation they may have experienced. Megan expresses that she felt this alienation most acutely in college. She implies that orchestral instrumentalists did not see classical guitarists as part of their "club" but did not indicate

whether these sentiments carried over to other non-orchestral instruments such as the piano, organ, or electric guitar. While Raphael disagreed with the statement, both he and Arianna indicated that the softness of the classical guitar might make it more difficult to engage with other instrumentalists. Raphael does not see amplification as a viable solution either. He states that it “[diminishes] the purity of sound produced by the standard acoustic ensemble instruments.” Arianna does not offer any practical solution to guitarists other than “forcing their way in.” The teachers expressed the need for classical guitarists to contend with limited perceptions of the instrument (for example, not recognising the guitar as an ensemble or chamber instrument). They suggested that classical guitarists should actively engage with other instrumentalists so that the guitar can be seen, heard, and valued. Again, the teachers’ responses highlight a perceived ignorance of the classical guitar by the public and even classical musicians. Both Megan and Arianna feel that the onus is on guitarists to contend with these perceptions and showcase the guitar's ability in a classical setting.

Later in the questionnaire, teachers were asked a similar question explicitly dealing with the status of the classical guitar.

- Researcher: Does the guitar lack the prestige and/or respect of other western classical instruments?
- Alexandros: Yes, in my experience many wannabe/chip-on-shoulders musicians find a need to express why it does not have the expressive or range capabilities of their instruments.
- Megan: I think it can at times feel like guitar is less respected, but it also depends on the circles/communities that you are in. I think we as classical guitar teachers, are doing our best to change these misconceptions.
- Michal: Likely yes. Probably related to the instrument being largely ignored by well-known composers of the past.
- Raphael: It might have in former years. Today the number of masterful classical guitarists is plentiful and on the increase. Thanks once again to the internet, we are developing a newfound respect and following. Previously it might have been the case but since the internet and in particular YouTube, we are experiencing a surge of interest and dare I say newfound respect.
- Arianna: Definitely. It is underrated. It’s not an orchestral instrument and it’s not as loud as the piano so it tends to fall into the background.

Again, four of the five teachers agreed with the statement to varying degrees. While it is unlikely that there is an ongoing or systemic bias against the guitar within classical music circles, the following factors (as articulated in the responses) may have contributed to the feelings of alienation or marginalisation expressed by some of the teachers: a) the relative quietness of the classical guitar, b) other classical instrumentalists’ limited knowledge of the guitar’s role and use in an ensemble or chamber setting, c) the guitar’s absence or minor role in established and recognised western classical canons.

The teachers' experiences of alienation or marginalisation may have developed at school, college, university, or professionally in the work environment. Some teachers have expressed the importance of promoting the guitar and its repertoire and making a concerted effort to work with other instrumentalists to rectify the guitar's historically undervalued role within the western classical tradition. Most notably, some of the teachers' perspectives on these issues highlight another crucial observation – that even those most likely to be knowledgeable about the classical guitar (music students at a tertiary level of study or professional classical musicians) may not fully understand the historical tradition, function, versatility, and value of the instrument. The degree to which this is prevalent has not been investigated, and as only three of the five teachers expressed strong feelings of alienation or marginalisation within the classical music community, it cannot be described as systemic or pervasive. Nevertheless, classical guitarists may feel alienation or marginalisation to varying degrees – stemming mainly from other musicians' unfamiliarity with the classical guitar and its repertoire.

To summarise, the perspectives of teachers brought attention to the following issues:

- a) Most beginner learners have little awareness of the classical guitar, its tradition, and its repertoire.
- b) Teachers' descriptions and explanations of classical guitar highlight a recurring theme within this study – the comparison with the mainstream, wherein classical guitar is compared with popular guitar styles.
- c) Repertoire studies are important for helping learners better understand classical guitar.
- d) Learners' misconceptions about classical guitar stem largely from the guitar's role in popular musics.
- e) The classical technique can be applied to other guitar styles.
- f) The alienation or marginalisation of classical guitarists within the classical music world may occur to varying degrees.

## Chapter six – Summary, conclusions, and recommendations

### 6.1 Summary and conclusions

As there has been little research on classical guitar education in South Africa, this study aimed to contribute pedagogical insights into classical guitar training by asking the following research questions:

1. How do learners perceive classical guitar? Given that classical guitar lies outside of mainstream musics and popular culture, learners' exposure to and understanding of classical guitar may be limited. How do learners perceive classical guitar within this context?

Sub-questions include:

- a) How do learners describe classical guitar to others?
  - b) How do learners experience the ways in which classical guitar is perceived by their peers and/or the public?
  - c) How do learners experience classical guitar repertoire?
2. How can learners' collected experiences and knowledge inform a constructivist vision of classical guitar learning in the Cape Peninsula? The foundational premise of constructivism is that learners construct knowledge by engaging with what they already know and have experienced. Collecting learners' prior knowledge and experiences becomes a crucial step in employing a constructivist vision of learning.

The methodology used to capture data for answering these questions combined quantitative and qualitative components. The data collection process included an online survey given to 18 classical guitar learners and focus-group interviews with the learners. Learners were selected from two schools in the Cape Peninsula, Edgemoor High School and Wynberg Boys' High School. Additionally, five classical guitar teachers were given a questionnaire to complete. The principle goal of the data collection phase was to uncover the experiences and perceptions of secondary school classical guitar learners and teachers. The collected and transcribed data were sorted and analysed using the data analysis software NVivo 12. Using NVivo, codes were assigned to the data, and were finally sorted into container nodes which formed the basis for the emergent themes present in the research. Constructivism formed the lens to interpret the findings. This theory has been used extensively to study learning and education. The fundamental idea of constructivism is that learners' use their prior knowledge and experiences to construct new knowledge and develop new skills. Therefore, acquiring learners' experiences and prior

knowledge is crucial in the constructivist teaching process. Teachers can use learners' experiences and constructions to provide a better understanding of their students and facilitate learning through personal and relevant scaffolding.

## **6.2 Learners' perceptions of classical guitar**

Historically, the guitar has often been marginalised and sidelined within the western classical tradition, sometimes because of its associations with popular music. In the mid-20th century, classical guitarists and composers began to establish a respectable position within the canon. During this time, the guitar's use in popular musics also rocketed (see Chapter one). Given the strong historical associations of the guitar with popular culture and music, this study aimed to explore how learners perceived classical guitar. Their perceptions and experiences have been collected to employ a constructivist vision of learning.

### **6.2.1 Learners' descriptions of classical guitar**

Learners' descriptions of classical guitar were collected from several questions within this study. Four emerging themes have been identified:

1. **Expressing emotion:** Many respondents described classical guitar by referring to the emotional effect or resonance of classical guitar playing. In many instances, classical guitar was portrayed as a uniquely expressive instrument. Respondents also indicated that classical guitar allows them to express their own emotions. This was the most common type of answer in the respondents' descriptions.
2. **Historical tradition:** The second most common type of description included references to the history and tradition of classical guitar. The respondents recognised that classical guitar has a very old tradition. They frequently referred to this tradition to distinguish it from popular and contemporary guitar styles.
3. **Difficulty and complexity:** Some of the respondents' descriptions of classical guitar were based on its perceived difficulty and/or complexity. These responses portrayed classical guitar as a more difficult or more advanced way of learning the guitar. Many of these answers likely developed in response to a common public perception of the guitar as an easy instrument.
4. **Technical application:** The final type of description included details of the classical guitar technique. These answers describe the solo nature of classical guitar repertoire, whereby the guitarist plays both melody and harmony. Within these answers, it is evident that the respondents feel the guitar is often mistakenly perceived as a mere accompanying instrument

within popular musics. By describing the technique, the respondents distinguished classical guitar from some popular playing styles.

### **6.2.2 Learners' experiences of their peers' and/or the publics' perceptions of classical guitar**

Given that classical guitar lies outside of mainstream popular musics, it was anticipated that most learners would feel the public has little or no knowledge of classical guitar. Both learners and teachers verified this. Many respondents also expressed that the public's perception of classical guitar is often uninformed and unfair. The respondents indicated that the public often equates classical guitar with popular styles of guitar playing – more specifically, rhythmic chordal accompaniment – often referred to by the respondents as “playing chords,” “strumming,” or “strumming chords.” It seems that the ubiquity of this style of playing has led to fixed preconceptions about what a guitarist does. Many respondents also felt that the guitar is unfairly perceived as an easy instrument because of these preconceptions.

Because the respondents indicated that classical guitar is perceived in this way, their descriptions and answers revealed a recurring theme – their comparisons with the mainstream. The respondents constantly compared classical guitar with popular styles of guitar playing to highlight the differences in playing styles and repertoire. Some of the respondents even distanced themselves from popular styles of playing that they felt were perceived as easier or less valuable. The respondents used comparisons with popular or mainstream guitar styles to:

1. Describe classical guitar by stating what it is not – namely, an instrument used merely to accompany popular songs.
2. Highlight the technical and musical advantages of being a classical guitarist.
3. Address misconceptions about classical guitar.
4. Portray classical guitar as more complex and/or more valuable.

### **6.2.3 Learners' experiences of classical guitar repertoire**

This study has shown that most learners begin classical guitar training with little or no prior knowledge. For many learners, classical guitar may initially be wholly removed or unrelated to their own lives and musical interests. In the focus group, learners were played ten musical extracts of mostly standard repertoire. The majority of learners reported that they were unfamiliar with most of the pieces played. Additionally, most learners indicated that they rarely listen to classical guitar music. Learners listen to popular guitar styles much more frequently. These findings show that many learners may be completely

unfamiliar with classical guitar repertoire. Nevertheless, after listening to the 10 excerpts, many of the respondents' answers, descriptions, and ideas indicate that they find classical guitar repertoire relevant and meaningful. The respondents' descriptions of classical guitar are evidence of this. Many respondents described classical guitar as a uniquely expressive instrument and indicated that it helps them express their own emotions. Additionally, other answers highlighted the advantages of classical guitar playing and the utility of the technique. The discussions from the focus-group interview also show how respondents' perceptions of classical guitar changed or broadened after listening to the repertoire, with many expressing surprise at the diversity of the repertoire.

### **6.3 Lessons from a constructivist approach to classical guitar learning**

The findings showed that most learners knew very little about classical guitar before starting lessons. Their expectations were primarily based on the guitar's use in popular musics. Teachers verified this and indicated that very few learners were aware of the guitar's classical tradition. Most learners decide to learn guitar based on what they have heard in popular musics. For many beginner learners, their initial experience of classical guitar may take them entirely by surprise.

Constructivism posits that learners use their own experiences and understandings to find meaning in what is being taught (Boghossian, 2006a, 714). How do beginner learners with no prior experience or understanding of classical guitar perceive and find meaning in classical guitar music? To understand the nature of musical meaning, Green (2006) describes two aspects of music that exist in a dialectical relationship – 'inherent' meaning and 'delineated' meaning. Inherent meaning refers to the physical and sonic properties of the music itself – the sounds and silences that are organised in relation to each other. Delineated meaning refers to the extra-musical associations that the music carries – the music's social, historical, cultural, or religious contexts or connotations. Green states that music will always carry a delineated meaning, even if the listener is unaware of it.

All music must carry some delineated meaning arising not only from its original context of production, but also from its contexts of distribution and reception. No music can ever be perceived as music in a social vacuum. Even music that is regarded as being autonomous nonetheless carries the notion of its own autonomy as one of its prime delineations. (Green, 2006, 102)

Positive reactions to inherent meanings generally occur when there is an understanding of the music or its musical syntax. However, when people have a negative reaction to inherent meanings, they are generally unfamiliar with the music and its genre or style, finding it confusing or even dull. Similarly, there are both positive and negative reactions to delineated meanings. A positive reaction arises when the

delineated meaning corresponds with the individual's own experiences or when recognising issues that they can connect with (Green, 2005, p. 103). A negative reaction occurs when an individual cannot find any extramusical relation to the music or feel that the music does not belong to them.

Musical 'celebration' ensues when individuals have positive reactions to both the inherent and delineated meanings. Conversely, if the responses to inherent and delineated meanings are altogether negative, individuals may experience what Green calls ambiguity (p.104).

This study has shown that many learners may enter into classical guitar learning with feelings of ambiguity. Learners may lack the musical syntax or knowledge of classical guitar repertoire, and they may find that classical guitar bears little relation to their own lives, musical interests, or experiences. Many learners may break away from their ambiguous feelings over time, and some may become immediately excited by the potential of classical guitar. However, teachers cannot count on this. Additionally, passive, teacher-centered instruction leaves little room for learners to critically engage with the music's inherent and delineated meanings. If learners are simply told what to do; if teachers ignore learners' experiences, interests, or goals, it is unlikely that their ambiguity will transform into musical celebration. This study shows that if learners are given autonomy – if they are encouraged to actively participate in their own learning and critically engage with classical guitar music – musical celebration is more likely to occur. Constructivism prioritises active learning that is learner-centered and not teacher-directed. Based on the findings, three key areas in which constructivism can inform classical guitar education at a secondary school level emerged:

1. Building foundational skills and knowledge.
2. Making learning relevant.
3. Encouraging informal learning and learning outside of the lesson.

### **6.3.1 Building foundational skills and knowledge**

This study has shown that many learners lack the preliminary musical knowledge of classical guitar, and more specifically, classical guitar repertoire. Splitter (2008) states that learners need to be equipped with the foundational knowledge of the subject, which in the case of classical guitar learning includes: theoretical skills (ability to read music, understand basic harmony, and aural skills), technical skills (right- and left-hand technique), and musical knowledge (knowledge of basic repertoire and musical style).

The findings indicate that most learners do not listen to classical guitar music outside of the lesson environment. The listening exercise in the focus group and teachers' insights further confirms this finding. Learners need to be encouraged to actively explore classical guitar repertoire. As Boghossian notes, "Student exploration is encouraged in order to seek knowledge" (2006, 722). Learners with little or no knowledge of standard repertoire may not understand what they are working towards or what might interest them. By exposing learners to the repertoire and discussing it with them, learners' perceptions or attitudes toward classical guitar music may change. For example, after listening to several pieces in the focus group, Luke, a grade 10 student, expressed surprise at the diverse cultural and musical influences within classical guitar music. Before the exercise, Luke's understanding of classical music was based on what he called a 'Mozart' sound. Through the listening exercise and the resultant discussions, Luke's conception of classical music broadened as he began to understand that classical music encompasses many cultural and musical traditions.

Teachers need to talk about the history of classical guitar, listen to and discuss repertoire with their learners, and challenge misconceptions learners may have about classical guitar. It is also important to note that classical guitar music does not exist in a vacuum. As such, a comprehensive understanding of classical guitar repertoire must consider the classical canon as a whole. For instance, much of the classical guitarist's repertoire was originally written for other instruments. Isaac Albeniz's *Suite Espanola* for the piano or the entirety of J. S. Bach's repertoire for the lute and violin, subsequently transcribed for the guitar in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are just two examples. Additionally, much of the guitar repertoire that came out of Spain and South America grew out of nationalistic movements that affected entire musical traditions and not only that of the guitar. It is recommended then, that the musical and cultural influences of the repertoire be explored. Foundational knowledge, therefore, should not be limited solely to the study of guitar music, but should include an investigation of whole canons or musical traditions wherein they are relevant.

Equipped with the foundational skills and knowledge of classical guitar, learners may become active agents in their own learning. Additionally, the knowledge and skills imparted to learners contribute to building musical independence or autonomy – this is the key goal of scaffolding. If one of the foundational skills of classical guitar (theoretical skills, technical skills, and musical knowledge) is lacking, learners' progress towards musical autonomy will be hindered.

Teachers, therefore, need to address learners' lack of musical knowledge regarding the repertoire. The teachers within this study all indicated that introducing repertoire studies into classical guitar learning

was a good idea. However, many teachers expressed concerns about time constraints within lessons. This problem can be circumvented if learners are encouraged to explore the repertoire outside the lesson environment. Teachers could potentially create playlists on music-listening platforms like Spotify, YouTube, or Apple Music for their learners. Over a period, it is likely that learners will eventually familiarise themselves with the inherent meanings of the music – the style and musical syntax of the repertoire. Teachers should also discuss the repertoire with learners – exploring the delineated meanings and discussing learners' perceptions of the music. One of the key tenets of constructivism is that learners work in a way that fosters thinking. This is best accomplished when learners work with foundational ideas or primary concepts (Shively, 2015, 129). Knowledge of classical guitar repertoire should form the foundation for learners' training.

### **6.3.2 Making learning relevant**

Constructivists hold that learning should be relevant to the learner. Teachers cannot assume that learners begin classical guitar lessons because they want to become classical guitarists. Firstly, learners may have no prior knowledge of classical guitar, and secondly, their initial motivation for starting lessons may have nothing to do with classical guitar music whatsoever. To make learning relevant, teachers need to find out what motivated learners to start lessons, and what their musical experiences and interests entail. After this information been elicited, teachers can begin to assess the direction and focus of classical guitar training. This approach is opposed to the teacher-centered instruction that is often prevalent in classical music training. Instead, teachers should act as coaches or partners in the learning process. Teachers' own goals or plans should not be imposed on learners but instead discussed and decided on in collaboration with learners. Cooperative learning between the teacher and learner is only possible if learners are equipped with the foundational knowledge of classical guitar (specifically, a knowledge of the repertoire). An in-depth exploration of the classical guitar, its tradition, and the repertoire is necessary for learners to assess what is interesting or relevant to them.

Most of the learners within this study expressed positive attitudes towards classical guitar and understood that the techniques learned could be applied broadly. Given the wealth and diversity of the repertoire, it is likely that many beginner learners may find classical guitar repertoire relevant and engaging. However, making learning relevant for the learner is not understood as pandering to learners' demands. Teachers need to make sure that learners are equipped with a strong, foundational technique and the knowledge relevant to classical guitar learning. Additionally, learning, especially within the school environment, often needs to conform to curricula and the assessment expectations of the school's

music department. While teachers and learners may not have complete freedom within the learning environment, collaborative discussion, joint planning or goal setting, and negotiation between learners and teachers is a step towards making learning relevant and meaningful.

### **6.3.3 Encouraging informal learning and learning outside of the lesson**

As indicated, building a foundational knowledge of the repertoire may be best accomplished outside of the learning environment. Learning should be integrated into learners' lives and not merely confined to the classroom. Most of the respondents in this study expressed a desire to learn guitar styles outside of classical guitar learning. Incorporating learners' musical interests, even if they are unrelated, may contribute to a more holistic or more rounded musical education.

All the classical guitar teachers in this study are familiar with or are even practitioners of multiple styles of guitar playing. While some may have learned these styles formally, most learned them informally, often on their own. All teachers also indicated that the classical guitar technique could be used for other guitar styles. If possible, it may be beneficial for teachers to incorporate one or more styles of guitar playing in their lessons. This may strengthen learners' interest and engagement and equip them with a diverse set of musical skills and knowledge. Teachers and learners may need to consider how incorporating other guitar styles can be facilitated given the limited time available in the school timetable and curricula assessment criteria. Learners can also be encouraged to learn other guitar styles informally. Informal music learning has been shown to have many potential benefits for learners (Green, 2017).

- Musical enculturation – Learners' exploration of other music styles, especially those they are interested in, may lead to musical enculturation. Musical enculturation refers to the gradual assimilation of a music culture or tradition (Green, 2017; Harper 2017).
- Developing aural skills – Within informal music learning, there is often a shift from reading music to listening and copying. Historically, this has been the primary learning method for almost all folk and traditional musics (Green, 2017, 187). Listening and copying music will likely develop critical listening and aural skills (Giddings, 2019).
- Self-teaching – Informal, self-taught learning can build a sense of musical autonomy and independence in learners.
- Composition and improvisation – Learners may engage in skills often neglected within formal classical education such as composing music and improvising - often in the context of 'jamming' (Green, 2017; Giddings, 2019).

Learning other guitar styles may also provide learners with valuable and useful technical skills. Right- and left-hand techniques that are used in electric and acoustic guitar genres may not only build on learners' existing technique but enable them to accomplish effects or techniques on the guitar they might not have learned otherwise. Historically, classical guitar music has always borrowed and appropriated techniques from other guitar styles and traditions, such as flamenco, jazz, and even rock.

Beginner learners may also have been trained in other guitar styles before starting classical guitar. Rather than ignoring or discarding what they have learned, teachers can encourage learners to explore other styles and incorporate classical guitar techniques and repertoire into their playing. There is an emphasis on holistic learning within constructivism. Music learning does not only take place within the classroom. Learners should be encouraged to make music learning part of their everyday lives. For this to happen, learning should move beyond the formal classroom setting.

#### **6.4 Limitations of the study**

As this study used a small sample size of classical guitar learners, eighteen learners and five teachers, the findings may not be representative of classical guitar education in the Cape Peninsula. While the scope of this study is limited, using a smaller group of learners did enable an in-depth exploration of the selected learners' perceptions and learning experiences. However, the findings are not conclusive and cannot be used to make generalisations about classical guitar learners or classical guitar education in the Cape Peninsula. Instead, the findings are theoretical in nature, and aim to provide general guidelines for classical guitar learning within a constructivist paradigm.

#### **6.5 Recommendations for future research**

Collecting learners' perceptions and experiences are only starting points in envisioning a constructivist approach within music education. There is a need for further study on how guitar teachers can practically adopt constructivist approaches in their teaching and how a constructivist approach may affect classical guitar learners' progress and musical development over time. For instance, how may incorporating repertoire studies in classical guitar lessons affect learners' motivation and engagement?

This study also suggests that teachers incorporate learners' musical interests into classical guitar education, even if they are unrelated to classical guitar. This suggestion is based on the notions of making learning relevant to the learner and making learners' musical training holistic and personal. The inclusion of learners' music preferences into formal classical guitar education is a potential area of

investigation. How may including non-classical repertoires and playing styles be facilitated by the teacher? And how may this affect learners' technical and musical development and interest in the guitar?

Additionally, further research and a more substantial sample size are needed to conclusively determine whether the experiences and perceptions of this study's participants are also prevalent among other classical guitar learners in South Africa.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Ethics clearance letter



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16 October 2020

**REFERENCE NUMBER: 011/2020**

Dear Mr Comminos

**Project title for MMus:** The reception of the classical guitar by a selected group of teachers and students in the Cape Peninsula

Thank you for your ethics application dated 15 October 2020. It is my pleasure to inform you that the above-mentioned study has been formally approved.

The completed forms should be submitted to Sheila Taylor for record keeping.

**Approval is granted for 2 years.**

Please submit a brief progress report if the study continues beyond the approval time frame.

The on-going ethical conduct remains the responsibility of the principal investigator (the supervisor)

Please quote the reference number in all your ethics related correspondences.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Rebekka Sandmeier

Director: South African College of Music

## Appendix B – Learner questionnaire (unfilled)

Please provide the following information.

1. Name
2. School
3. Birth Date
4. Gender
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Non-binary
5. School Grade
6. Music Grade (Trinity, UNISA, ABRSM)
  - a. Initial
  - b. Grade 1
  - c. Grade 2
  - d. Grade 3
  - e. Grade 4
  - f. Grade 5
  - g. Grade 6
  - h. Grade 7
  - i. Grade 8
  - j. Tertiary level
  - k. I'm not sure
7. How long have you been playing classical guitar?
  - a. 1 year
  - b. 2 years
  - c. 3 years
  - d. 4 years
  - e. 5 or more years
8. Are your lessons '1 on 1' or in a group?
  - a. 1 on 1
  - b. In a group
9. How long are your lessons?
  - a. 20-25 minutes
  - b. 30-40 minutes
  - c. 45-60 minutes
10. Do you have guitar ensemble lessons?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
11. Have you learned any other style of guitar playing aside from classical guitar? *For example, chords, tablature (tabs), charts, improvisation (Jazz), rock (playing with a pick), fingerstyle, etc.*
  - a. Yes (I taught myself)
  - b. Yes (someone else taught me)
  - c. Yes (by myself and someone else)
  - d. No
12. Please specify what styles of guitar you have learned, apart from 'Classical Guitar'. You may tick more than one box.

- a. Chords
  - b. Tablature (tabs)
  - c. Jazz (charts, improvisation, etc.)
  - d. Fingerstyle
  - e. Folk
  - f. Plectrum playing (rock, pop, etc.)
  - g. Electric guitar
  - h. Flamenco
  - i. Other
13. How regularly do you listen to classical guitar music?
- a. Often
  - b. Seldom
  - c. Never
14. Do you listen to other styles of guitar music? If so, how regularly? *For example, pop, rock, jazz, blues, folk, latin, flamenco, etc.*
- a. Often
  - b. Seldom
  - c. Never
15. Please specify which styles of guitar music you listen to. *Choose as many as you like.*
- a. Pop
  - b. Rock
  - c. Heavy metal
  - d. Folk
  - e. Country
  - f. Jazz
  - g. Blues
  - h. Latin/South American
  - i. Flamenco
  - j. Fusion
  - k. Fingerstyle
  - l. Other
16. Do you play any other instruments?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
17. Specify the instrument.
18. Do you take music as a subject?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. I intend to take music as a subject once I reach grade 10
19. Who decided you would learn classical guitar? *Choose as many as you like.*
- a. Me
  - b. My parents/guardians
  - c. Peers
  - d. Other
20. Were you aware of what classical guitar entailed before starting lessons?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. A little bit
21. What do you find most challenging about learning classical guitar?

22. Were you aware that you would have to learn to read music?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
23. Is there any style of guitar music that you would like to learn alongside classical guitar?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
24. Please specify what style of guitar you would like to learn.
25. Would you have preferred to learn another instrument instead of the guitar?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
26. Please specify which instrument.
27. Do you practise with a footstool or adjustable support?
  - a. Footstool
  - b. Adjustable support
  - c. I practise with neither a footstool nor an adjustable support.
28. Have you experienced any of the following from playing?
  - a. Strain/discomfort in the left-hand
  - b. Strain/discomfort in the right-hand
  - c. Back pain or discomfort
  - d. Numbness in legs
  - e. Strain/discomfort in wrists
  - f. Strain/discomfort in fingers
29. How often do you play guitar for your family?
30. How often do you play guitar for your friends?
31. Do you find that people have difficulty understanding what the classical guitar involves?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
32. Why do you think this is the case?
33. How would you explain classical guitar to someone who has never heard of it?
34. Do you think classical guitarists are viewed differently from other types of guitarists (i.e., electric, folk, or pop guitarists, etc.)? Give reasons for your answer.
35. Do you think the guitar is commonly seen as an 'easy' or 'casual' instrument to learn? Give reasons for your answer.
36. Do you intend to study music at a tertiary level (University, College, etc.)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Maybe
37. Would you be prepared to be contacted by me in connection with this study? If so, please provide your contact details (email address).

## Appendix C – Teacher questionnaire (unfilled)

### Please provide the following information:

1. Date of birth
2. Name
3. Qualifications
4. How long have you been playing classical guitar?
5. How long have you been teaching classical guitar?
6. Where do you currently teach guitar?
7. How many students do you currently teach?
8. Do you teach any other styles of guitar other than classical guitar?

### Please comment on the following statements:

*The following statements are not necessarily based on established truths nor statistical facts nor represent the opinion of the researcher, instead the questionnaire aims to elicit the respondent's views on the statements.*

9. The guitar is often seen as an easy or casual instrument.
10. Most students have a very limited knowledge of classical guitar repertoire.
11. Classical guitarists are marginalised within the classical music community.
12. Classical guitar is well suited to school-music curricula as it provides a methodical graded, structure to learning.
13. Classical guitarists and teachers are too focused on solo repertoire.

### Please answer the following questions:

14. Have you encountered any erroneous preconceptions about the classical guitar? If so, what are they?
15. Does the guitar lack the prestige and/or respect of other western classical instruments?
16. How frequently do you encounter students who would rather learn techniques geared toward popular music?
  - a. Often
  - b. Seldom
  - c. Never
17. What strategies do you use to increase a student's interest in classical guitar playing techniques and repertoire?
18. Do you call yourself a classical guitarist or merely a guitarist? Please clarify.
19. How would you describe classical guitar to the layperson?
20. Many beginner classical guitar students have already undergone some form of guitar training. Have you found that some of these students inherit technical and/or musical problems prior to starting classical guitar training? If so, what are they?
21. Should repertoire studies be included in practical lessons?
22. Can the classical technique be used effectively for other guitar styles? For example – jazz, fingerstyle, rock, etc. Please clarify.
23. Please briefly outline your teaching philosophy and methodology.

## Appendix D – Teacher profiles

1. Qualifications	Alexandros: BMus Western Classical Composition & Classical Guitar Performance. Megan: BMus Ed (UCT), ATCL Michal: BMus, MMus, BA (Hons) Raphael: TLD; LTCL Arianna: BMus – Performance
2. How long have you been playing classical guitar?	Alexandros: 13 Years Megan: Playing guitar since I was 9, classical since age of 14, so classical guitar for +/- 17 years Michal: 35 years Raphael: 45 years Arianna: 16 years
3. How long have you been teaching classical guitar?	Alexandros: 4 years Megan: 11 years Michal: 25 years Raphael: 35 years Arianna: 7 years
4. Where do you currently teach guitar?	Alexandros: Micklefield Girls Prep School & Privately Megan: Edgemead High School, Edgemead Primary School and privately Michal: Hugo Lambrechts Music Centre, St Joseph's College, The German School Cape Town Raphael: Edgemead High School, The Settlers' High School, West Coast Music Academy, privately Arianna: Wynberg Boys' Junior & High School. Oakhurst Girls' Primary. St Joseph's Marist College. St George's Grammar School and Privately
5. How many students do you currently teach?	Alexandros: 15 Megan: 36 Michal: 18 Raphael: 30 Arianna: 65
6. Do you teach any other styles of guitar other than classical guitar?	Alexandros: Contemporary (Rock, Blues, Jazz, Metal, Pop, etc.) Megan: Contemporary (Rock, Blues, Jazz, Metal, Pop, etc.) Michal: No. Raphael: Mainly classical with the occasional popular music style. Arianna: Yes - All styles. Jazz, pop & Rock etc.

## Appendix E – Learners' written responses

Question	Answers
1. Specify the instrument	Luke: Harmonica, Ukulele, Bass Tristan: Double bass, bass guitar Zayde: Piano Emily: Electric guitar Samuel: Choir, voice Erin: Piano
2. What do you find most challenging about learning classical guitar?	Sulaimen: Finding time to practice. Luke: Techniques. Jake: That when I don't practice and don't have time to practice it is very hard to improve. Alex: The different volumes you have to use when playing. Edward: Hammer ons. Tristan: Reading music. Zayde: Getting from certain chords/frets to others in the designated time. Emily: The learning of the left-hand fingering so that the piece can flow. Davin: Having to play slow and progress consistently. Samuel: Keeping in time. Zane: starting off. Kyle: Remembering where sharps and flats have to be played on the threat board. Leneo: The practicing. Ethan: changing and relearning techniques taught to me by previous teachers. Jean-Luc: It isn't challenging, it's just been difficult due to some family issues. John: Nail care and good technique Erin: Fingering sometimes Justin: The fast note changes
3. Please specify what style of guitar you would like to learn.	Sulaiman: Bass guitar Luke: Jazz, blues, rock, metal, funk Jake: Rock Alex: Jazz Edward: Flamenco Tristan: Jazz Zayde: Electric guitar Emily: Pop music Davin: Slap bass Samuel: Electric/fingerstyle Kyle: Electric John: Flamenco Erin: Pop, rock <i>13/18 (72%) respondents expressed interest in learning a different style of guitar alongside classical guitar.</i> <i>Jazz x3</i> <i>Rock x3</i> <i>Electric guitar x3</i> <i>Bass x2</i> <i>Flamenco x2</i> <i>Pop x2</i> <i>Metal/funk/blues/fingerstyle x1</i>

4. Would you have preferred to learn another instrument instead of the guitar? Specify the instrument:	Kyle – Yes, Piano.
5. Do you find that people have difficulty understanding what the classical guitar involves? Why do you think this is the case?	<p>Sulaiman: They think it is as easy as strumming the strings.          Jake: They don't listen to it much.          Edward: They Do not embrace it enough and hear it often.          Tristan: People are not exposed enough to classical guitar.          Zayde: It's often an oversimplification due to guitar being something people assume is just chords or to back up the singer.          Emily: People think that playing the guitar is easy and that you can't really make mistakes playing the guitar, but it can be challenging and mistakes can be made.          Davin: The public expects chords or flashy riffs on an electric.          Samuel: Other people think that guitar is just about strumming chords the whole time.          Kyle: They have a fix mindset on what classical guitar is.          Leneo: They think they know everything about it but they really don't.          Ethan: They do not possess rudimentary understanding of the instrument or just music in general.          Jean-Luc: They don't understand that it takes time, practise and patience to play the classical guitar.          John: They don't understand how much practice and time goes into perfecting pieces with proper technique.          Erin: I don't know.</p>
6. How would you explain classical guitar to someone who has never heard of it?	<p>Sulaiman: A form of expressing emotion using a stringed instrument.          Luke: It's a genre of guitar that just like any other takes influence/pieces from an older time and is sometimes combined with modern aspects.          Jake: A way of portraying feelings through music.          Alex: It is a way to express emotion          Edward: Relaxing and vibrant as well as pleasant to the ears.          Tristan: A different and more traditional way to experience one of the world's most popular instruments.          Zayde: It's a way of expressing your thoughts in various ways, happy songs indicate happy moods or sad songs indicating sad moods vicer versa. Playing it also helps you fall into your own space where it's just you, your guitar and what you are playing.          Emily: I don't know.          Davin: It is a calm, satisfying experience for the player and the audience and it's a good hobby.          Samuel: It's the classical approach to playing guitar.          Zane: Classical guitar is the type of instrument you would hear in mexican or romantic music.          Kyle: I would have difficulty explaining it to them.          Leneo: I'm not sure how to.          Ethan: A combination of single notes put together to form symphonies and pieces.          Jean-Luc: It is a guitar that takes time, patience and practise to learn.          John: It is one of the most difficult styles of guitar to play when you get to the more complex pieces. Good technique, posture and understanding of a piece go a very long way.          Erin: Its difficult but a really beautiful instrument to learn how to play. Be prepared to have pain in your left hand a lot.</p>

<p>7. Do you think classical guitarists are viewed differently from other types of guitarists? (i.e., electric, folk, or pop guitarists, etc.) Give reasons for you answer.</p>	<p>Justin: Classical guitar is more of plucking and it isn't chords.</p> <p>Sulaiman: They are viewed differently because this form of playing is precise and is for a gentleman.</p> <p>Luke: Yes, they are generally seen as a guitarist with a lot more theory and understanding of how music works.</p> <p>Jake: No. I think people think of guitar as guitar.</p> <p>Alex: Yes, I think they are the most skilled type of guitarist.</p> <p>Edward: Yes, they are normally viewed as the "smart" people vs rock and jazz considered "normal".</p> <p>Tristan: Yes. Guitar is generally seen as a "cool" instrument to play, which conflicts with the common stereotype that classical music isn't cool.</p> <p>Zayde: Probably seen to be better at fingerstyle since electric uses a pick.</p> <p>Emily: No, classical guitar is just as important and challenging in its own way as other types of guitarists.</p> <p>Davin: Yes, classical guitar has its own difficulties and the people who don't know what classical guitar is, will immediately assume that we just play chords.</p> <p>Samuel: Yes, they think we are nerds.</p> <p>Zane: Yes, each different type of guitarist has experienced a different way of learning that is different to others.</p> <p>Kyle: Yes, because they have classical before there instrument.</p> <p>Leneo: Yes, they're viewed in a more respectful way.</p> <p>Ethan: It may be for the reason that it does not sound as modern as other styles and is perceived as more complicated.</p> <p>Jean-Luc: Yes, they have more of a calm vibe to them than other guitarists.</p> <p>John: yes, classical guitar playing is very strict in following the score compared to jazz which can draw out or shorten in areas.</p> <p>Erin: A little bit.</p> <p>Justin: No.</p>
<p>8. Do you think the guitar is commonly seen as an 'easy' or 'casual' instrument to learn? Give reasons for your answer.</p>	<p>Sulaiman: Easy if you put in lots of effort and apply yourself and practice a lot.</p> <p>Luke: Yes, people see/hear how common it is in music and assume that its easy to pick up as so many people play guitar.</p> <p>Jake: Yes. You can have fun and play songs with little skill.</p> <p>Alex: Easy because when guitarist play they make it look easy.</p> <p>Edward: I do not see it as that but people that do not play it do.</p> <p>Tristan: Yes. It is common for many people to casually learn some chords on the guitar and call themself a guitarist. Any instrument, at the highest level takes extreme skill.</p> <p>Zayde: No because it takes practice to your two hands to do different things at the same time.</p> <p>Emily: I don't know.</p> <p>Davin: Easy, everyone can play it.</p> <p>Samuel: Yes, so many people play the guitar.</p> <p>Zane: Casual, the classical guitar isn't necessarily the easiest instrument to play. It requires lots of practice and hard work.</p> <p>Kyle: Yes I do, because a lot of pop stars in today's era now how to play the guitar and is where their music careers began with.</p> <p>Leneo: Yes, people think it's easy because it looks easy.</p> <p>Ethan: Yes, the most common answer would be yes but it depends on the style in question.</p>

	<p>Jean-Luc: No, people think its easy but when they first give it a try then they complain and say its a waste of time, but once you start practicing it calms your mind and body.</p> <p>John: Yes, most people have an acoustic steel string guitar lying around which they will pick up every now and then to play a few chords.</p> <p>Erin: Sometimes, I think people underestimate how complex the guitar is due to how many notes there are to remember and where they are on the guitar etc.</p> <p>Justin: People stereotype that guitar is easy until they actually do it. It's difficult as well that piano is difficult.</p> <p>15/18 respondents agreed with the statement.</p>
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## Appendix F – Learners’ responses in focus-group interviews

## Wynberg Boys’ focus-group interview

Questions	Answers
Which of these pieces would you choose to play for a friend or family member?	<p>Respondents: Number 5 (Asturias) x3; Number 9 (Gran Sonata) x2; Number 10 (Tango Suite 1st Mov.) x1</p> <p>Edward: Number 5</p> <p>Jake: Number 9</p> <p>Alex: Number 10.</p> <p>Luke: Number 9</p> <p>Zayde: Number 5</p> <p>Tristan: Number 5.</p>
Have you learned anything new about classical guitar today?	<p>Jake: There’s like a much more diverse range of pieces that you can play.</p> <p>Researcher: Was that unexpected?</p> <p>Jake: Well, it’s just the realisation that there is so much more.</p> <p>Luke: I’d say, that just like any other genre, it takes a lot of influence from different countries and you can kind of hear it - where with number 10 you can almost hear a kind of Spanish influence.</p> <p>Researcher: So, you’ve realised just how multicultural classical guitar can be.</p> <p>Luke: I think I’ve realized it before, I just never knew classical music took that much influence. Obviously, I know Jazz and everything - there’s tons of different influences... I always thought classical was that kind of ‘Mozart’ sound. I’ve never really listened to classical pieces in that light.</p>

<p>Interviewer: Pretend you are a classical guitar teacher. You've got a new student coming to you. Describe classical guitar to them. In a few lines, try your best to describe what classical guitar is to a complete beginner.</p>	<p>Jake: It's like a way of playing music through a different perspective of... Compared to... cause people are very used to like piano. It's also a very good instrument for - like it can do almost everything by itself, so you can play songs 'just guitar' whereas like other stuff wouldn't work that well. You can choose how you play and there's lots of different varieties. So there's like happy pieces and sad pieces and whatever you want to play.</p> <p>Alex: I think guitar is a way to maybe express your emotion, so I think it's also a good way to relieve stress - you can just get your guitar out and start playing. It's also a nice way to... cause there's different types of guitars you can use. So it's a good way to change how you play things.</p> <p>Researcher: And if you had to describe classical guitar, specifically, to a new student, how would you do that? What does classical guitar entail?</p> <p>Alex: I think it has more emotion than any other guitar. So, maybe electric guitar will be more angry, but classical guitar is mainly sad, dramatic... maybe has drama, love or something in it</p> <p>Edward: I think it's a very old type of music compared to like new electric guitars and synthesizers and things like that. And it's very cultural - in a sense where you can play like folk music and other types of variations, and it's also very calming. Like with different instruments, you have to... 'Just guitar' is very much more calming. its connection to folk musics, and its</p> <p>Tristan: I think it's a wonderful way to connect with the past - any classical music; and specifically, the guitar as an instrument that's remained popular for many years now and it's amazing to be able to experience something like that now, it's really easy to convey many different types of emotions in classical guitar. It's amazing what you can do with it.</p> <p>Zayde: Similar to what Alex said, it can also like paint a picture of how you feel. If you play something that has a build-up that could be something to do with a detective or like a chase-scene.</p> <p>Luke: I like to think of classical guitar as more of a filter than anything else. So, when I think of genres of music, it's more of an influence than anything else - cause you get Jazz mixed with classical and everything. Classical has certain qualities to it, like lots of tremolo picking I've heard, and very relaxing as everyone has said - that's the stereotype, but as I've realised after listening to the pieces you played, it doesn't have to be like that. It can have more of a Spanish influence than classical, but still labeled classical for whatever... I'm not really sure what makes a classical piece considered a classical piece. But then again, what makes a blue piece a blues piece? What makes a Jazz piece... it's certain qualities.</p>
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## Edgemoor High School focus-group interview

Question	Answers (Group 1)
Which of these pieces would you choose to play for a friend or family member?	<p>John: Asturias</p> <p>Erin: Piece 1 (Recuerdos)</p> <p>Jean-Luc: Piece 8 (Invocacion y Danza)</p> <p>Interviewer to Jean-Luc: Interesting. Why that one?</p> <p>Jean-Luc: It gave me that sense of thrill and intensity. And it also kind of reminded me of one of those scary scenes in a movie.</p> <p>Justin: I would also choose piece 8.</p>
Have you learned anything new about classical guitar today?	No responses.
Have any of these pieces changed the way you view the classical guitar?	Respondents: No.
Interviewer: Pretend you are a classical guitar teacher. You've got a new student coming to you. Describe classical guitar to them. In a few lines, try your best to describe what classical guitar is to a complete beginner.	<p>John: With different pieces and different styles of emotion you can express different emotions.</p> <p>Jean-Luc: Classical guitar takes a lot of time and practise and determination to get it - the piece that you want to play or pieces that you can play.</p> <p>Erin: It's a lot of work, but it's fun! Very complex instrument.</p> <p>Justin: Classical guitar is more of an advanced way of learning the guitar, but it sounds better.</p>

Question	Answers (Group 2)
Which of these pieces would you choose to play for a friend or family member?	<p>Number 10</p> <p>Samuel: Number 5</p> <p>Number 4, number 2, number 1</p> <p>Kyle: Number 10</p>
Have you learned anything new about classical guitar today?	No responses
Have you thought about the classical guitar in a different light?	Emily: Well, I know more now about how people see music.
All the pieces I've played are basically considered 'standard classical guitar repertoire'. Were there any pieces that surprised you? Pieces that you didn't expect.	<p>Samuel, Kyle, and Davin: Number 8.</p> <p>Samuel: It was a bit creepy.</p>
Have any of these pieces changed the way you view the classical guitar?	No responses.
Pretend you are a classical guitar teacher. You've got a new student coming to you. Describe classical guitar to them. In a few lines, try your best to describe what classical guitar is to a complete beginner.	<p>Samuel: It's when you play guitar, but it's got a classical feel to it. It's not like rock music or fingerstyle. It's softer, more elegant.</p> <p>Kyle: I think it can be both exciting and peaceful at the same time. There's different aspects of different pieces. It's not just focused on one thing... it can go wherever it wants to - like in that one piece - it was scary, and the others were happy or joyful.</p> <p>Davin: I would say that classical guitar is like best foundation for any sort of guitar, because from classical you can expand to everything. Classical is the best of every world essentially. It's got a little bit of everything in it.</p> <p>Zane: It sounds a bit weird, but I explain it as a mystery box of music. You can do almost anything... well you can play almost any type of music with it, and everybody has their own feelings of each different piece of music as you can hear, so yeah it all just depends on the type of music you like.</p> <p>Ethan: It's not what you think at all. If you've got a perception of it, that perception's wrong.</p> <p>[Respondents laugh in agreement] It's like black and white, but both at the same time, because you can get two pieces that are completely different and you can also get two pieces that are so similar.</p>

	<p>Emily: I agree with what everyone else has said.</p> <p>Leneo: I would say it's very creative. You can do whatever you want with it... it's varied... and it will still sound dope.</p>
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## Appendix G – Teachers' responses

Questions/Statements	Answers
<p>1. Most beginner students have no idea that the guitar even inhabits the western classical tradition. Their perception of the instrument is solely linked to its use in popular musics.</p>	<p>Alexandros: Primarily unless they are aware of a folk/flamenco usage .</p> <p>Megan: Yes, many beginner guitarists are not aware of what the guitar is actually capable of not only in terms of the genres it is popularly used in, but also the technicalities of the instrument itself. There seems to be a very narrow perception of guitar from the general public until it is explained in lessons just how much history the guitar has and what all it can do.</p> <p>Michal: I'd mostly agree with this.</p> <p>Raphael: The statement above certainly applies to most young beginners. I have found that a very low percentage of young beginners are aware of its classical tradition. My guess is that approximately 80% of all my adult beginners are aware and this is often the motivating factor in their decision to start lessons.</p> <p>Arianna: This is true. Most students sign up for guitar based on what they've heard in popular music or rather what they've seen on television/social media (someone strumming on an electric).</p>
<p>2. The guitar is often seen as an easy or casual instrument.</p>	<p>Alexandros: Yes, undeservedly</p> <p>Megan: To the general public yes, but I think once students really get into it, they start to realise that it is not.</p> <p>Michal: Not sure if that is true, and if so, this perception probably soon changes!</p> <p>Raphael: Because of misconception above, the young beginner invariably regards the guitar as being an easy instrument to play.</p> <p>Arianna: Definitely seen as an easy/casual instruments - which leads to students wanting immediate results not understanding the difficulty and intricacies.</p>
<p>3. Most students have a very limited knowledge of classical guitar repertoire.</p>	<p>Megan: At first, yes but I think as they advance more in their learning, their knowledge of classical guitar repertoire increases as they become exposed to more pieces.</p> <p>Michal: True for beginners, and even intermediate students.</p> <p>Raphael: Yes! Even among the partially initiated, their knowledge is limited to a select number of popular pieces. Such as: Cavatina, Recuerdos de la Alhambra, Asturias, Romance, Variation on a Theme, Concerto de Aranjuez (second movement), etc. The internet is certainly changing this perception.</p> <p>Arianna: Unless the student has grown up around classical music and been exposed to guitar rep, the student usually has very little or no knowledge.</p>

<p>4. Classical guitarists are marginalised within the classical music community.</p>	<p>Alexandros: Yes, strongly</p> <p>Megan: At times, yes I think it can feel like this. Classical guitarists always seem to be on the outskirts of the classical music community. Classical guitar is usually perceived as a predominantly solo instrument and sometimes one may feel like orchestral musicians do not see classical guitarists as part of the "club" :-). But I think that when guitarists start to interact with chamber musicians, they become aware of the potential of the guitar. I suppose one can argue that guitar concertos etc. are not performed as much compared to others (sometimes due to funding etc.) but I also think that in a general day to day sense of the classical community, guitarists are able to break out of these preconceptions by building stronger interpersonal working relationships with other musicians. I feel like the marginalisation was felt a lot more in college, it also depends how you react to these things.</p> <p>Michal: That has not been my experience, but it is probably true to some degree.</p> <p>Raphael: I don't agree, that would imply that there is an ongoing bias. I prefer to think that musicians are generally aware of our lack of volume. Introducing any electronic amplification seems to diminish the purity of sound generated by the standard acoustic ensemble instruments.</p> <p>Arianna: YES! Guitars are seen as very soft, solo instruments. Most times, one has to force their way in and make sure they're seen and heard and have a place in the classical world.</p>
<p>5. Classical guitar is well suited to school-music curricula as it provides a methodical, graded structure to learning.</p>	<p>Alexandros: Yes, particularly since it is both relatively inexpensive and accessible compared to other instruments.</p> <p>Megan: Definitely. I think there is a good methodical way of learning the guitar that schools should be educated on. Guitar can be graded like any other classical instrument. Sadly, there are many "casual guitar teachers" out there who profess to teach guitar, but are not educated in correct classical guitar techniques and methods and therefore are not able to fully educate guitar students on all the intricacies of our instrument in a methodical way, which ends up hurting the perception of classical guitar. Ensemble should however, form part of this learning as well.</p> <p>Michal: Yes, agreed.</p> <p>Raphael: Classical music study in general is well suited to the school curricula. Any methodical and contemplative process is an excellent tool to developing critical and analytical skills in our students.</p> <p>Arianna: 100%. It is also an affordable instrument due to its high demand.</p>
<p>6. Classical guitarists and teachers are too focused on solo repertoire.</p>	<p>Alexandros: Strongly agree</p>

	<p>Megan: Yes, I think this is a valid point, however, I do not think they should be less focused on solo repertoire, but rather expose students to ensemble playing in addition to it. I am a firm believer that there should be a balance to solo and ensemble playing in the education of classical guitarists. Yes, the guitar is generally perceived as a solo instrument and most repertoire falls into the solo bracket, however, students need to be exposed to ensemble playing, not only for the beautiful repertoire that there is, but also due to the fact that it allows them to explore the wonderful act of making music together with others and by this, allows them to better themselves as musicians in a holistic sense.</p> <p>Michal: I agree.</p> <p>Raphael: I agree. But we are held ransom by our lack of volume. It might also be the reason that so many classical guitarists are not willing to perform in public. Being restricted to practicing privately away from “prying” ears does come with a price. Often therefore, the guitarist does not develop the necessary performance skills. Another aspect is that the classical guitar is a complete music instrument. We are able to execute the bass, rhythm and melody simultaneously. The addition of any additional accompaniment invariably does not enhance the piece unless of course the music has been scored for ensemble.</p> <p>Arianna: Not always. I think it’s more that the environments in which we work, don’t always allow for collaboration. I most certainly force it where I can - it’s important!</p>
<p>7. Have you encountered any erroneous preconceptions about the classical guitar? If so, what are they?</p>	<p>Alexandros: Mostly an arrogance that it is an easy instrument  Megan: YES! Many times throughout my career. It depends from person to person and their own backgrounds and understanding of music and guitar, but the most common erroneous preconceptions from the general public, is that it's easy (by this I mean they think they do not need to work that hard, until they realise that they actually do), that it's boring, that others feel strumming is all a guitar is good for, that it's mostly a male instrument. On the other hand, others don't realise that guitar can be played in a classical way. I am then happy to educate them on all of this :-)</p> <p>Michal: That guitarists play in orchestras. Ha.</p> <p>Raphael: Perhaps the most common misconception is that having learnt to strum chords initially, is a good foundation for learning the classical technique. People are also often surprised by the versatility of the classical guitar when they hear it played.</p> <p>Arianna: Yes, that it doesn’t exist - there’s no such thing as classical guitar.</p>
<p>8. Does the guitar lack the prestige and/or respect of other western classical instruments?</p>	<p>Alexandros: Yes, in my experience many wannabe / chip-on-shoulders musicians find a need to express why it does not have the expressive or range capabilities of their instruments</p>

	<p>Megan: I think it can at times feel like guitar is less respected, but it also depends on the circles / communities that you are in. I think we as classical guitar teachers, are doing our best to change these misconceptions.</p> <p>Michal: Likely yes. Probably related to the instrument being largely ignored but well-known composers of the past.</p> <p>Raphael: It might have in former years. Today the number of masterful classical guitarists is plentiful and on the increase. Thanks once again to the internet, we are developing a new found respect and following. Previously it might have been the case but since the internet and in particular YouTube, we are experiencing a surge of interest and dare I say new found respect.</p> <p>Arianna: Definitely. It is underrated. It's not an orchestral instrument and it's not as loud as the piano so it tends to fall into the background.</p>
<p>9. What strategies do you use to increase a student's interest in classical guitar playing techniques and repertoire?</p>	<p>Alexandros: If specifically a dislike towards classical guitar then there are two options A) question their love for music generally B) Slowly weening in classical guitar repertoire after teaching primarily contemporary music may teach an appreciation</p> <p>Megan: I try to balance my repertoire selection, by including popular pieces here and there but I use them in a way to teach technique / new notes and chords / theory, never just as fillers. I usually find classical arrangements of popular pieces. I also play for them and show them videos now and again of other classical guitar performers.</p> <p>Michal: I don't. I let people follow their interests wherever that takes them.</p> <p>Raphael: I think that it is important from the outset, for teachers to have a repertoire which is made up of several genres. Once the student understands the variety of ways that the classical technique can be used, they invariably opt to learn the technique.</p> <p>Arianna: I demonstrate how the technique can help across all styles of playing and I demonstrate repertoire that is initially aimed at their taste in music and the slowly branch out.</p>
<p>10. Do you call yourself a classical guitarist or merely a guitarist? Please clarify.</p>	<p>Alexandros: Classical Guitarist. Part of the stigma I believe is to accommodate the bias of "guitar" in the classical world. I find I am proficient in both but there is a mutually exclusive association where classical guitarists are more "learned" than guitarists. So it usually makes for a label of versatility ironically.</p> <p>Megan: Classical Guitarist - I call myself this due to the foundations, training and level of education I have received. I think the term classical guitarist is more encompassing of the knowledge we have and gives a certain level of respect which separates us from the "casual" guitarist on the street.</p> <p>Michal: Classical guitarist. The rep and training are specific.</p> <p>Raphael: A classical guitarist. The connotation is one of precise and considered use of the instrument. The term guitarist is too general.</p>

	<p>Given that people are generally unaware of the classical guitar's musical possibilities, the term classical guitarist gives them reason to ask, "What does a classical guitarist do differently.</p> <p>Arianna: I don't think I've ever been just a classical guitarist. I think I'd rather call myself a classically trained guitarist.</p>
<p>11. How would you describe classical guitar to the layperson?</p>	<p>Alexandros: As "Solo Fingerstyle" as it is hard to convey to someone that most non-classical guitar styles do not deal with Harmony, Melody and Texture simultaneously.</p> <p>Megan: These are a few paragraphs I wrote in a document I give the parents of my students entitled: A Parent's Guide to Classical Guitar Lessons wherein I outline what classical guitar is and what they can expect from lessons:</p> <p>"When one speaks of classical guitar it could be referring to an actual type of guitar (with nylon strings), a technique of playing (which we will discuss in later paragraphs) or the actual music that is being played on the instrument. We will be concerned with all three.</p> <p>The phrase "classical guitar" can conjure up images of a student playing the beautiful music of Bach or by another composer synonymous with classical music, however, being a classical guitarist does not mean that this is all that one would be playing.</p> <p>If someone strums a guitar around a campfire, most often, if you take away the person singing over their strumming you will not always be able to pick up what song they are playing. Strumming is only one small part of technique that can be expressed on the guitar.</p> <p>With a good knowledge of classical guitar technique, one is able to play music that incorporates many aspects of a musical piece or song. It can be likened to incorporating all parts of a song on one instrument.</p> <p>With classical guitar, one combines the melody, the bass line, middle voices and rhythmical aspects of a musical piece or song which would all be played by different instruments, into being played on one instrument. This would be like having the singer, lead guitarist, bass guitarist and other musicians in a band being rolled into one.</p> <p>How the classical guitarist does this, is by using different fingerpicking techniques rather than just strumming the strings.</p> <p>Classical guitar lessons are like classical piano or violin lessons – they teach the student to read and understand music notation (not just tabs or chord symbols as some other styles of guitar tuition rely on) and this allows the student to gain a broader, richer and holistic understanding of music and of the guitar itself. After all, classical guitar is where all other playing styles stem from. The guitar is a very versatile instrument and a good understanding of classical guitar technique opens up a more diverse world that the guitarist can eventually access by applying what they have been taught to other styles."</p> <p>Michal: Spanish roots. Nylon string accoustic.</p> <p>Raphael: Spanish roots. Nylon string accoustic.</p>

	<p>Arianna: That's a tough question. A solo and ensemble instrument that is able to fit into many musical style categories. It is versatile in the sense that you actually don't need anyone to accompany you and yet you can be accompanied and can accompany others.</p>
<p>12. Many beginner classical guitar students have already undergone some form of guitar training. Have you found that some of these students inherit technical and/or musical problems prior to starting classical guitar training? If so, what are they?</p>	<p>Alexandros: Poor technique, posture and placement.  Megan: Yes definitely. Most often finger alternation and right hand/left hand positioning. The left hand thumb usually rests far too high on the fretboard. The right hand wrist very often collapses onto the wood of the guitar. They also struggle with finger alternation so you need to work at this in lessons.</p> <p>Michal: No right hand awareness. Little sitting position consideration. No reading skills.</p> <p>Raphael: Absolutely. The main problems are not using the classical sitting position. This impacts on every aspect of the technique. The thumb and fingers of both hands are rendered ineffective and claw like.</p> <p>Arianna: Absolutely. The main problems are not using the classical sitting position. This impacts on every aspect of the technique. The thumb and fingers of both hands are rendered ineffective and claw like.</p>
<p>13. Should repertoire studies be included in practical lessons? Please clarify.</p>	<p>Alexandros: Not at a young age, rather from a high-school level  Megan: Ideally yes it should. I would love to have enough time to devote to repertoire studies in my lessons, however, very often lessons are only 30 min (except for high school subject music students), so there is usually not a lot of time for this after all the other work has been seen to. I do, however, try where I can, to include some guitar history and repertoire studies into my lessons by at least playing recordings of pieces or discussing music history, but I would love to be able to include it in a bigger way where assignments could be given etc.</p> <p>Michal: Yes! Technique-specific pieces are useful to focus effort.</p> <p>Raphael: The limited time allocated to practical lessons at school does not allow much time for repertoire studies. This is easier to address and should be covered with ones private students. Repertoire studies should therefore be dealt with in the GMK aspect of the subject.</p> <p>Arianna: Definitely. It broadens a students views on the instrument and the music. Enriches the students learning experience. If you understand an era of music or a style of composition/composer or a style of a work, you unlock another level to the piece of music - Interpretation or historical performances can take place from this knowledge or being able to convey the message of the piece or your understanding of it convincingly.</p>
<p>14. Can the classical technique be used effectively for other guitar styles? For example - jazz,</p>	<p>Alexandros: Yes but it has specific applications. Harmonically complex styles can benefit from classical technique; rhythmic and melodic styles tend to benefit from plectrum techniques</p>

<p>fingerstyle, rock, etc. Please clarify.</p>	<p>Megan: Yes, I am a firm believer in this. Classical foundations are the strongest because they give you a good grip on the intricacies of music playing, reading and general understanding. Of course, each genre has its own challenges or musical aspects, but I feel if a person has classical foundations, it is much easier and quicker for them to play pieces of other genres and to get a good understanding of them, than it is for guitarists of other genres to do so.</p> <p>Michal: Absolutely.</p> <p>Raphael: I would often tell students who favor playing the electric lead guitar, that some of the world's finest electric guitarists, were classically trained. Rather than using just one plectrum, the classically trained guitarist has the luxury of using 4 picking fingers or plectrums. They are often surprised by the variety of effects possible because of this. The guitarist involved with Jazz or Rock ensembles are often not required to fulfill the job of the bassist or rhythm guitarist. My answer therefore is most definitely but one seldom sees this. Once again our technique allows us to associate with smaller groups to achieve the same end.</p> <p>Arianna: For sure. Classical technique requires a lot of strength, speed, precision. We use all out fingers on both hands which doesn't always happen in other styles.</p>
<p>15. Please briefly outline your teaching philosophy and methodology.</p>	<p>Alexandros: Beginners go through the "Enjoy Playing Guitar by Debbie Cracknell" method book whilst learning preliminary technique. During this time I ensure students are actively hearing the music they are playing, not just developing muscle-memory. I have them sing melody lines and clap rhythms to develop their listening skills. I try to focus on a pool of pieces per grade and allow students to select the based on a pre-determined style/technique requirement so that they are excited to play their "chosen" pieces (Both in accordance to grades and free-choice). A large portion of teaching is dedicated to proficient practice; I have students learn to practise small pieces of music at a time and to join them together "chunking" so that they do not become overwhelmed by too much, as a result they usually tend to go above and beyond their required practicing. This is all used as a method for not just developing guitar technique, but a love and awareness for music generally which I believe is most important.</p> <p>Megan: Again, this is my teaching philosophy that I send to the parents of my students.          "I am passionate about teaching students the guitar in a way that implements correct and good habits from the beginning, whilst still being engaging and fun. Although I am classically trained I include acoustic guitar technique and other styles in my teaching, but I always approach my guitar teaching from a classical point of view. The classical guitar is what all other playing styles stem from. It is very important in any instrumental teaching to start with good foundations and I believe, as many do, that classical foundations are the strongest in music education. Once a person has a good understanding of their instrument and music in general in a classical sense, they are able to</p>

	<p>play other styles just as well when they put their mind to it. The same cannot always be said from the other perspective. Being taught the guitar with a classical technique, does not limit one to playing classical pieces, on the contrary, it unlocks the potential the guitar has to offer in many genres. It allows one to have a greater understanding of how to use one's fingers more effectively as well as how to understand the complex language of music in a more holistic way."</p> <p>In terms of my methodology, I use a combination of beginner material and books, concentrating on music reading and getting a good grasp on technique. I use the Trinity scales books for technical work. Once the student reaches a grade 1 level they move onto the Trinity syllabus books, but I supplement this with other repertoire and popular arrangements. I also make sure to add ensemble playing into my methodology.</p> <p>Michal: Person-focused. The challenges may not be musical, but human and socio-environmental. I try to address the student as a human system. The approach I use will be determined by who the person is and how they present and with what. There is no formulaic approach for everyone. My psychology training is helpful in this regard.</p> <p>Raphael: I assume that all my students, even those who are less motivated to learn, might at some point develop a love for the instrument and decide to pursue a career in classical music. My approach therefore is to insist on developing sound technique and a sight reading ability to match their developing technical ability. During my years of teaching, I have encountered many students who insisted on making their own decisions about the lesson content at the expense of progressive development. Should they later decide on more serious study, they discover that so much time had been wasted and that their technique is wanting.</p>
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