

Letter from the Editor

By Thomas Heck

I am honored to have been asked to serve as the inaugural General Editor of *Soundboard Scholar*, the new peer-reviewed journal of guitar studies sponsored by the Guitar Foundation of America. Those of us with academic connections in particular will appreciate the need for this kind of vetted publication.

The goal of *Soundboard Scholar* is to encourage, recognize, and publish research of the highest caliber related to the guitar. Submission guidelines are posted on the GFA website. Publication frequency is expected to be annual, with free distribution to all GFA members and online sales as well.

As the General Editor, I see my job as primarily steering a constructive course among four players:

- our prospective contributors
- the unnamed referees assigned to give submitted articles careful blind-review
- the requirements of the journal's production staff
- and most importantly, our readership

Complications always arise when English is not the mother tongue of an author. The preparation of such a submitted article for substantive (not just stylistic) peer-review can involve many hours of preliminary work on the part of the "acquisitions editor," whether myself or another colleague. (In this regard, let me thank my translator/proofreader wife, Anne Goodrich Heck, for her meticulous editorial eye.)

While the current official roster of referees is listed on the masthead, other appropriate readers (who shall remain anonymous) have already kindly agreed, when asked, to participate in the vetting process, based on their areas of expertise. We all hope that the quality of the results will be worth the collective effort and apparent to all.

What more does this journal need to fulfill our readers' desires? No doubt we should have scholarly reviews; I hope we will have them beginning with our next issue. As the first issue (2015) goes to press, it is a pleasure to welcome a new Reviews Editor and an old friend—Richard Long—to the staff of *Soundboard Scholar*. Publishers and authors are invited to send review copies of their scholarly publications related to the guitar directly to him.

As to the question of feedback (i.e. "Letters to the Editor"), we may all want to think in terms of an online forum for the sake of timeliness. Co-publishing on the GFA website could meet some other anticipated needs, as well, especially those related to space in the printed edition of *Soundboard Scholar*.

Our parent magazine, *Soundboard*, will continue, as it has in the past, to welcome review copies of a broad range of guitar-related publications. Please refer to the *Soundboard* page on the GFA website for the names and addresses of its current Review Editors.



Left: Thomas Heck, *Soundboard Scholar* General Editor.

About *Soundboard Scholar* no. 1

Let me offer some introductory comments about the articles in this inaugural issue. I have learned a great deal about the use of guitars and derivative or related instruments in outdoor settings in the earlier 19th century, thanks to my editorial interactions with Greek-born scholar Panagiotis Pouloupoulos (whom his friends simply call "Panos" for obvious reasons). In his well-illustrated article he has unearthed, among other things, a whole new (to me) meaning of the term "harp guitar." The period illustrations add much to our appreciation of the topic's cultural relevance. And of course, the guitar in a hat awaits further exploration too!

If you are like me, you probably have felt that after the thorough scholarship of Brian Jeffery on Fernando Sor's life and works, little more could be added. But such are the joys of scholarship: there is *always* more to say, and there are *always* nuances waiting to be discovered and discussed. Erik Stenstadvold has given us a perfect example of how to do this in his essay on Sor in transition in the earlier 1820s. It seems there may even have been a previously overlooked tryst between Sor and an unnamed Englishwoman of high estate—with unintended "consequences" influencing that decision. Read on!

Coming forward to the latter twentieth century: for over a decade, GFA past President John Schneider has been exploring the legacy of Harry Partch (1901-1974), an amazingly original if unconventional American composer. Guitars attracted Partch apparently because of the ease with which one could modify and reconfigure their frets for desired compositional effects. The Schneider essay is an insider's look at Partch's guitars and other microtonal instruments (and their notations) by a guitarist-scholar adventurous enough to do more than just talk the talk.

The bibliographic coda in this issue, by Ricardo Aleixo, describes a small page of manuscript music (not autograph) holding three pieces for guitar, two of them attributed to Sor. They hint at how popular Sor was in his day. Copyists and publishers would liberally reissue anything that might bear Sor's name, often with variant readings when compared to the known printed editions.

Robert Ferguson has kindly contributed, as a "Return With Us Now" historic featured facsimile, an interesting duet by Emil Heerbrugger from the 1830s: *Grand Grecian Military March*.