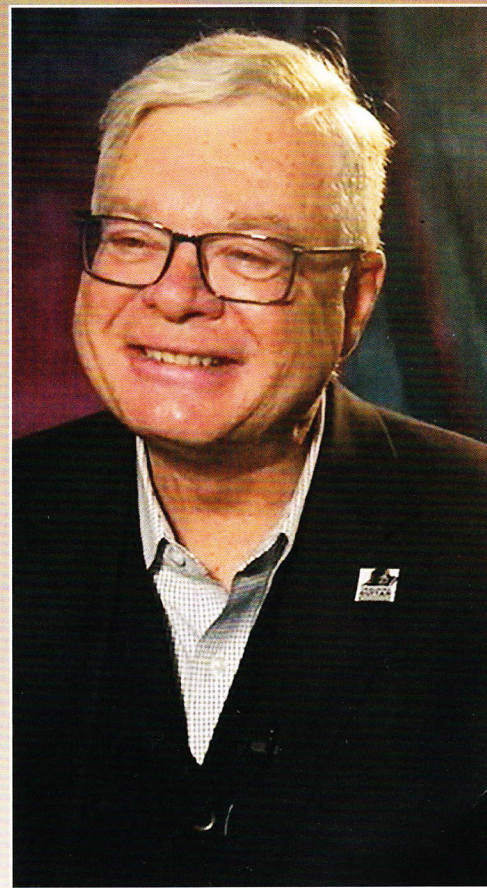


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FRANK KOONCE

By Chuck Hulihan

Few figures in the classical guitar world have given as much of themselves to the instrument as performer, educator, scholar, author, and producer Frank Koonce. The Guitar Foundation of America honors a career of extraordinary breadth and lasting impact with his induction into the GFA Hall of Fame—a recognition earned over a long and productive life with the guitar, and one that resonates across generations of guitarists who have been shaped, directly or indirectly, by his work.

Frank Koonce earned his degrees from the North Carolina School of the Arts and Southern Methodist University, graduating from the latter summa cum laude, where he studied first with Jesús Silva and then with Robert Guthrie. In 1974–75, Koonce was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship, taking him to Italy where he studied with Sergio Notaro and Alirio Díaz. That period abroad deepened his connection to the European classical tradition and to the historical roots of the guitar—a pursuit he would spend decades bringing to life for players and audiences around the world.

In 1978, Frank Koonce joined the faculty at Arizona State University, where he would go on to direct the guitar program for an extraordinary four decades, retiring in 2018. During that tenure, he shaped countless students who have gone on to lead inspired lives and distinguished careers. His program was a space for serious musical thinking and development, historical awareness and artistic integrity, professional and personal growth, and above all, a love of music and a sense of community. His work at ASU reflected a deeply held conviction: that a guitarist's education must be grounded in the full sweep of the instrument's history. He brought that conviction to every lesson, every master class, and every public presentation.

Frank Koonce's contributions as a scholar and editor have shaped a generation of guitarists in pursuit of historically informed, idiomatic editions. His monumental and authoritative *Solo Lute Works of Johann Sebastian Bach*, published by Kjos Music, remains one of the most trusted and carefully prepared editions in the guitarist's library. It reflects years of meticulous research and a deep understanding of how to translate historically complex music into musically faithful guitar notation.

His collaborations with Mel Bay Publications and Productions d'Oz are highlighted in The Frank Koonce Series, collections of anthologies and individual scores that have become indispensable to guitarists, particularly those



exploring early music. These include *The Baroque Guitar in Spain and the New World*, featuring carefully prepared performance editions of music by Gaspar Sanz and Santiago de Murcia, and *The Renaissance Vihuela and Guitar in Sixteenth-Century Spain*, which brings the rich repertoire of the vihuela within reach of modern classical guitarists. His work with the music of J.S. Bach continues with recent releases of the *Cello Suites*, and *Violin Sonatas & Partitas*. These publications bridge the gap between academic musicology and practical performance. His editions are at once both rigorous and playable.

FRANK KOONCE (cont.)

Frank's editorial skills also found a platform in an extensive series of articles issued first in *American String Teacher*, organ of the American String Teachers Association, and then in *Soundboard*. In spring 1988 he began a two-year tenure as editor of the Guitar Forum in *American String Teacher*. Joining the Guitar Foundation of America in early 1980, he was elected to the GFA Board of Directors in the spring of 1988, at which time he also took over as editor of *Soundboard's* Pedagogy Forum. He served on the GFA Board for a quarter century and as *Soundboard* pedagogy editor through 2012.

Throughout his career, Koonce has maintained an active performing life alongside his scholarly and pedagogical work. He has given recitals across England, Spain, Austria, the Czech Republic, Korea, Taiwan, China, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Mexico, Macedonia, and throughout the United States—a testament to the universality of the music he champions and the esteem in which he is held by the international guitar community.

Among his most celebrated accomplishments is the world-premiere recording in English of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Platero and I* for narrator and guitar. He subsequently recorded the work in the original Spanish, and the project culminated in a DVD animated video produced in Spain. Bringing Castelnuovo-Tedesco's expressive song cycle to new audiences in two languages, and in animated form, exemplifies his gift for making music feel both historically grounded and vividly alive.

He has been featured in a live concert video alongside renowned Russian composer and guitarist Nikita Koshkin, and recorded *A Southwest Christmas* with the Phoenix Bach Choir. As a founding partner of Soundset Recordings, he has produced and coproduced numerous classical recordings and continues to champion the classical guitar and enrich

the profession. See the List of Works below for details on Frank's editing, writing, and recording.

What distinguishes Frank Koonce is not any single achievement but the consistency and integrity with which he has pursued every dimension of his life with the guitar. He has performed on stages across the world, taught generations of guitarists, produced scholarship that has genuinely advanced the field, and created editions that will serve players long into the future. He has made difficult music accessible without diminishing it. He has honored the past while keeping it vital. And through forty years of teaching at Arizona State University, he quietly ensured that the classical guitar tradition will be carried forward with care and devotion by those he inspired.

The Guitar Foundation of America Hall of Fame exists to recognize those whose contributions have permanently enriched the art form we love. Frank Koonce has done exactly that, and the guitar world is immeasurably richer for his life's work.

Frank Koonce List of Works (compiled by R. Ferguson)

Editions (solo guitar unless otherwise specified)

J.S. Bach. *Cello Suites* 1, 2, 3. Second edition. Productions d'OZ, 2020.

J.S. Bach. *Cello Suites* 4, 5, 6. Coedited with Heather DeRome. Productions d'OZ, 2020.

J.S. Bach. *Sonatas & Partitas*. Coedited with Heather DeRome. Productions d'OZ, 2019.

Søren Hyldgaard. *Cantilenae*. For gtr & chbr orch. Productions d'OZ, 2013.

Olga Amelkina-Vera. *Prelude and Bagatelle*. For 2 gtrs. Productions d'Oz, 2011.

Olga Amelkina-Vera. *Ex Tenebris*. Productions d'OZ, 2010.

J.S. Bach. *Cello Suite No. 1*. Productions d'OZ, 2010.

Carlos José Castro. *Concertino del Mago*. For gtr & trbn. Productions d'OZ, 2010.

Mussorgsky/Rimsky-Korsakov. *Night on Bald Mountain*. Arr. for 4 gtrs by Brendan Lake. Productions d'Oz, 2010.

Carlos José Castro. *Concierto del Sol*. For gtr & orch. Productions d'OZ, 2009.

Carlos José Castro. *Sonata de la luna*. Productions d'OZ, 2009.

Bryan Johanson. *La Folia Folio*. Productions d'OZ, 2008.

David Mallamud. *Spatula*. Productions d'OZ, 2008.

Denis Mortagne. *Jeff Buckley Requiem*. Productions d'OZ, 2008.

Renaissance Vihuela & Guitar in Sixteenth-Century Spain. Mel Bay, 2008.

Baroque Guitar in Spain and the New World. Mel Bay, 2006.

Nikita Koshkin. *Classic Koshkin: A Collection of Guitar Solos*. Mel Bay, 2003.



J.S. Bach. *Solo Lute Works*. Second edition. Kjos, 1989.

Recordings

Platero & I – An Andalusian Elegy. Frank Koonce, gtr; Don Doyle, narrator in English. Soundset DCD1002.

A Southwest Christmas. Frank Koonce, gtr; Phoenix Bach Choir, Jon Washburn, cond.; Robert Tree Cody, Native American flute. Soundset SR1005.

The Well-Tempered Koshkin. Nikita Koshkin, gtr; with Frank Koonce & Judicaël Perroy, gtrs. Soundset SR1015.

Platero y yo – Elegía Andaluza. Frank Koonce, gtr; Nelson Brenes, narrator in Spanish. Soundset SR1026.

Platero y yo – Elegía Andaluza (DVD). Frank Koonce, gtr; Nelson Brenes, Marisol Membrillo, Don Doyle, Carmen Garcia Lorca, narrators. Soundset DVD101.

Nikita Koshkin: Guitarist & Composer in Concert, Featuring Frank Koonce (Mel Bay 99231DVD)

Articles

"Right Hand Positioning in Modern Pedagogy: A Comparison of Selected Methods," *Soundboard* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1986)

"Guitar Chamber Music: Review of a Decade," with Matanya Ophee, *American String Teacher* 38, no. 2 (May 1988)

"Developing Velocity: A Systematic Approach," *Soundboard* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1988)

"Guitar and Strings – A Family Reunion," with Wayne Dooley, *American String Teacher* 38, no. 4 (Nov 1988)

"Some Thoughts on Planting (Both Pro and Con)," *Soundboard* 15, no. 3 (Fall 1988)

"Guitar Notation: Towards Developing a Manual of Style," *Soundboard* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1988–89)

"Guitar Notation: Towards Developing a Manual of Style," *American String Teacher* 39, no. 1 (Feb 1989)

"Guitar Notation: The GFA Manual of Style, a Progress Report," *Soundboard* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1989)

"Aspects of Baroque Performance with Emphasis on the Lute Works of J.S. Bach, Part I: Ornamentation," *American String Teacher* 39, no. 3 (Aug 1989)

"An Interview with Kazuhito Yamashita," *Soundboard* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1989)

"Aspects of Baroque Performance with Emphasis on the Lute Works of J.S. Bach, Part II: Rhythmic Flexibility," with Richard Troeger, *American String Teacher* 39, no. 4 (Nov 1989)

"Notation Update" *Soundboard* 16, no. 3 (Fall 1989)

"Notation and Editorial Style," *Soundboard* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1989–90)

"Aspects of Baroque Performance with Emphasis on the Lute Works of J.S. Bach, Part III: Style," with Richard Troeger, *American String Teacher* 40, no. 1 (Feb 1990)

"ASTA Guitar Syllabus," with Anne Waller & Mark Maxwell, *American String Teacher* 40, no. 2 (May 1990)

"Guitar Notation: Questionnaire Addendum," *Soundboard* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1990)

"Left-Hand Movement: A Bag Full of Tricks, Part I," *Soundboard* 18, no. 3 (Fall 1991)

"Left-Hand Movement: A Bag full of Tricks, Part II," *Soundboard* 19, no.2 (Summer 1992)

"The European Guitar Teachers Association," *Soundboard* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1993)

"Left-Hand Movement: A Bag Full of Tricks, Part III," *Soundboard* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1993)

"Reading And Transcribing Tablature, Part I," *Soundboard* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1995)

"Reading And Transcribing Tablature, Part II," *Soundboard* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1995)

Guitar Forum, American String Teachers Association, 1996 (anthology of Guitar Forum columns from *AST*, including three by F. Koonce, listed above)

"Aleksey Vianna, Interviewed by Frank Koonce," *Soundboard* 29, no. 3 (Winter 2003)

"Rhythm vs. Meter," *Soundboard* 32, no. 3–4 (2006)



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