

SFCM GUITAR DEPARTMENT MANUAL

2026-2027

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Guitar Department. The purpose of this manual is to describe all functions of the department and its student requirements. The manual was written by the chair, David Tanenbaum, in consultation with faculty members Marc Teicholz, Meng Su and Early Music professor Richard Savino. It is intended for potential students and as a guide for incoming and current guitar students.

MISSION STATEMENT

The San Francisco Conservatory of Music Guitar Department seeks to create a vibrant, supportive environment to help prepare talented classical guitar students for their musical careers.

PHILOSOPHY

For students to become excellent guitarists as well as interesting, expressive artists who can function successfully in the professional world, we feel they must be given as broad a range of skills as possible. Most successful professional guitarists live a varied musical life. Besides performing, many guitarists help to create new repertoire by working with composers and arranging music originally written for other instruments. Some even compose themselves. Many also play early music on original instruments. Most guitarists are involved in some kind of ensemble work. Almost all professional classical guitarists teach and engage in other academic work that requires strong writing and oral skills. Some business acumen is necessary, and performing confidence is essential.

The Guitar Department curriculum is structured to directly reflect that reality. A cycle of classes encompassing Transcription and Arrangement, Technique/Sight Reading, Pedagogy, and Basso Continuo for Guitar is specifically designed to broaden your range of skills. Our Ensemble program is rigorous, and playing chamber music is also welcomed on juries and recitals. Guitar students accompanying singers in a full recital every fall, and the Historical Performance Emphasis trains a select group of four students in early music instrumental skills.

Besides ensemble class, there are many opportunities to play with other instrumentalists. Increasingly, our guitar students are working with student composers to

create new pieces, or writing pieces themselves. Furthermore, because stylistic breadth is an essential ingredient in professional guitar life, the first two juries require a performance of at least one piece in all five historical styles-Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Modern. As you progress you can narrow your focus, so that the 2nd graduate jury has no stylistic restrictions and can be a specialization in one area.

DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES

In sum, we have drawn up the following Departmental Objectives:

- To help guitar students acquire the technical skills necessary to expertly handle our five hundred years of music.
- To help students become comfortable performing as both soloists and chamber musicians.
- To create stylistically informed interpreters.
- To create a structure wherein students can grow and excel in the areas of our repertoire where their passions lie.
- To help students create their own repertoire, through transcriptions and working with composers.
- To gain knowledge and experience in the art of teaching through discussion, observation, performance in master classes and a Pedagogy class.

GENERAL INFORMATION

DEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Each semester begins with a department meeting. During the year I communicate to the department through frequent memos and call meetings whenever they are needed. I also organize, with the T.A., all department recitals and other departmental activities. Issues can be brought to me at any time, and you should always feel welcome to consult with any of the guitar teachers.

ASSISTANTS

The department has a graduate Teaching Assistantship. This Assistant mostly helps with logistics, but there is occasional teaching involved as well. Applications for the T.A. position are accepted each spring for the following year. Because the T.A is in charge of lending and caring for the extensive instrument collection that lives in room 535 -which is separate from the Harris Guitar Collection- that student needs to be well known to the department. Therefore the T.A. is always a student who has already been at the school for at least a year. This year Junhao Ma will be the T.A., and he can be reached at junhao.ma@sfc.edu.

Our alum Mario To (mto@sfcmm.edu) is also on the SFCM staff to assist the department in our recruiting and social media presence. Please keep Mario informed about your activities and any new videos you make.

PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES

DEPARTMENT RECITALS

There are six Guitar Department Recitals (GDRs) this year, and we encouraged you to perform in them frequently. Repertoire for the GDRs must be approved by your teacher, and the program must be submitted to me or the T.A. one week before the recital. Please dress respectfully for Department Recitals and guitar master classes: no jeans or sneakers.

Since each ensemble must perform at least once per semester, priority is given to ensembles in scheduling the final GDR of each semester. On October 25 we will have our annual collaboration with the Voice Department, resulting in a full program of songs accompanied by guitar.

RESIDENCIES

This academic year David Russell will return to our residency program from March 22-April 2. During the residency each student will get a private lesson with David Russell in addition to your regular lesson, and there will be many other activities as well. The April 1 GDR is scheduled as culmination of the residency.

STUDENT CONCERTOS

The Guitar Department holds a competition every other year and the winner is soloist with the SFCM Orchestra during the following year. Students should choose a concerto that has a piano reduction. Most major concertos are acceptable for this competition, but you should check with me if there is any question. The concerto competition will not occur during this academic year.

MASTER CLASSES

There are several master classes each year. Master class participation is limited to collegiate Conservatory students. If more than four students want to play in a master class, we will hold auditions, giving priority to those students who are closer to graduating. That priority, combined with the audition and the need to balance repertoire for the class all factor in the master class programming. Students are permitted to audition for two master classes a year. We guarantee every guitar major a chance to play in one master class during their time here.

A little history: The Conservatory has had nearly every major guitarist teach here over the years, including a rare three day class with Julian Bream in 1981. The first ever guitar master class in our Oak street building was a five hour event held by John Williams, on October 20, 2006.

This year we will have master classes with David Russell and other visiting guitarists.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Bay Area is arguably the most active classical guitar area in the U.S. The local Omni series is the oldest classical guitar series in the U.S., and San Francisco Performances as well as Concerts in America will be holding guitar series this year. There are guitar societies in San Francisco and the South Bay, the South Bay Guitar Society hosts a series, there is the Peninsula Guitar Series and there are many smaller events throughout the Bay Area. I will keep you informed about the rich variety of performances and competitions taking place, and I will arrange discount tickets for you whenever I can.

EQUIPMENT

The Conservatory owns many standard classical guitars, steel string guitars, electric guitars, an acoustic/electric bass, a bass amp and three classical guitars with pickups that are perfect for gigs. The collection includes guitars by Smallman, rune, Pepe Romero Jr., Stephan Connor, Glen Canin, Erez Perelman, Randy Angella, Otto Volwinkel, José Oribé and four guitars by José Rubio. We also own AER and Trace Elliott acoustic amps and the following early instruments: a seven course lute, two vihuelas, a terz guitar, two Baroque guitars, two Romantic era guitars and two theorbos.

All of the modern instruments are kept in the guitar room (535) and are managed by the T.A. The early instruments are kept in early music lockers, and they are shared by the HPE students. Conservatory students are welcome to use all of the instruments and amps, but they are responsible for care of the instruments when they are using them. Damage to the guitars must be repaired at the expense of the student responsible.

The Harris Guitar Collection, a remarkable collection of historic guitars, is housed at the school. Included are a Le Côte, a Torres, a Hauser I, Fleta I and many more. Students will have limited access to these guitars. You can read about the collection here:

<https://sfcm.edu/harris-foundation/harris-guitar-collection>

MAJOR STUDY AND REQUIREMENTS

PRIVATE LESSONS

We make every effort for you to work with the teacher you choose, including rearranging

class staffing to accommodate teacher loads. In this way, your first choices are usually met. You receive a 50 minute lesson each week of the school year. It is not the teacher's responsibility to make up any lessons you miss unless you provide at least 24 hours notice, have a valid medical reason or an extraordinary circumstance. Otherwise we are committed to making sure that you get all of your lessons. We permit one studio switch per semester: in other words, if you and a guitar student in a different studio agree, you can take one lesson with each other's teacher.

When faculty members go on tour, arrangements will be made between you and your teacher to either make the lessons up later or to use a substitute. Each of us is responsible for dealing with our own touring schedule, and will tell students about tours as far in advance as possible.

Any change of major teacher has to occur in consultation with the Chair, the Dean and both faculty members, and will not be done during a semester except in extraordinary circumstances.

The three main teachers are Meng Su, Marc Teicholz and myself.

DEGREE RECITALS

Candidates for the Bachelor's degree must perform a senior recital of 50 minutes of music, while candidates for the Master's degree must perform two graduate recitals of 50 minutes of music, including a major concerto. Here are some other guidelines:

- A limited amount of chamber music can be included in degree recitals with the approval of the major teacher.
- At least two thirds of the recital must be memorized.
- The recital should contain music learned during the academic year in which it is played; at the discretion of the major teacher some older repertoire can be brought back, but recitals and juries cannot include music previously performed on another jury or recital, or repertoire used for credit in the Guitar Ensemble class.
- The recital performance is factored into the studio grade during the semester in which they take place, and degree recitals are independently graded pass/fail by the major teacher.
- It is the student's responsibility to arrange and publicize the recital.
- The recital must be scheduled when the major teacher can attend.

JURIES

Undergraduate students are required to perform a jury at the end of each year of study. Graduate students must complete two juries at the end of each year of study. The juries are heard by the guitar department faculty. Any part of the jury that is failed must be performed again by the end of the following semester. Failing the same jury twice results in dismissal from the school. Here are some particulars about the jury process:

~You may begin the jury with a piece of your choosing, but then the faculty will select the remaining material. The major teacher will defer this selection to the other faculty.

~Juries may include some chamber music at the discretion of the major teacher, but this must not duplicate any work being done in the Guitar Ensemble class or another chamber music class in the school. Ensemble music can only take up more than one third of the jury with the approval of the entire guitar faculty.

~All ensemble players and accompanists must be present at the jury.

~At least two-thirds of juries must be performed from memory. This applies to all guitar students at all levels. Any exception to this rule must be approved by the entire guitar faculty.

~Each jury must consist of entirely new jury repertoire.

~Pieces are generally performed without repeats in juries, but you can count repeats in the timing of your pieces.

~Juries can include repertoire performed on a previous Evaluation.

~Please note that you will get copies of the faculty comments on your jury, but these are internal Conservatory documents and not quotes to be posted on social media or resums.

PROGRAM NOTES

Program notes of at least two pages must be handed in to the major teacher before each degree recital and jury. This requirement helps develop your writing skills, makes sure that you are well informed about the music you are playing, and prepares you for the real-life task of submitting program notes to presenters. The notes should be colorful, interesting, informative and well-written. Every piece that you are playing must be addressed in the notes. Your teacher will ask for revisions until the notes meet these criteria, and you will not pass the jury or degree recital until this requirement is met. Any teacher may be consulted when you are researching program notes. You should send one electronic copy to your major teacher and one to the chair.

EVALUATIONS

At the end of the semester in which they are not doing a jury (usually the fall semester) undergraduates are required to perform an Evaluation for the guitar faculty. This requirement serves to provide a progress report on your work, and the results will be factored into the semester's grade. You will receive written comments from each member of the faculty.

-Freshmen and sophomores play for five minutes and, juniors and seniors for ten minutes.

-The Evaluation repertoire, which will be selected with your major teacher, must be solo and cannot duplicate that of any previous jury, but there are no other specific requirements.

-Evaluations must be performed from memory, except for certain contemporary scores that are approved by the major teacher.

-No program notes are required for Evaluations.

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

Since it is impossible, especially with the guitar, to completely codify different levels, the

repertoire suggestions are only guidelines that are intended to give a general sense of repertoire level for each year. The periods are defined as follows:

Renaissance: 1500-1600, including Elizabethan England

Baroque: 1600-1750, including Scarlatti

Classical: 1750-1840, including Sor, Carcassi, Giuliani

Romantic: 1840-1950, including Mertz, Regondi and the Segovia repertoire.

Contemporary: 1920-present, excluding the above

UNDERGRADUATE AUDITION

Applicants are urged to audition live at the Conservatory or at the Conservatory out-of-town auditions. If you live outside Northern California you may submit an unedited video or audio tape in lieu of a personal audition. Applicants must play one work from memory in each of the following categories, totaling 15 minutes:

~ A transcription of a work written before 1750.

~ A Classical or Romantic work (including the Segovia repertoire) written for guitar

~ A 20th century work written for guitar.

UNDERGRADUATE JURIES

FRESHMAN: Music from all five periods, totaling 20 minutes. The jury itself is 15 minutes long. Students in the Certificate program will follow these Freshman guidelines for their jury.

SOPHOMORE: Music from all five periods, totaling 30 minutes, for a 15 minute jury.

Repertoire Suggestions

JUNIOR: Music from at least three periods, totaling 40 minutes, for a 30 minute jury.

SENIOR: Music from at least three periods, totaling 50 minutes, for a 30 minute jury. Also, a recital containing at least 50 minutes of music, which may include some chamber music at the discretion of the major teacher.

GRADUATE AUDITION:

Applicants from the United States must audition live at the Conservatory or at the Conservatory out-of-town auditions. If you live outside North America you may submit an unedited video or audio tape in lieu of a personal audition. Applicants must play one work from memory in each of the following categories, totaling 15 minutes:

1. A transcription of a work written before 1750.
 2. A Classical or Romantic work (including the Segovia repertoire) written for guitar
 3. A 20th century work written for guitar.
- The repertoire guidelines for graduate auditions are identical to those at the senior level.

GRADUATE JURIES

1ST YEAR GRADUATE: Music from at least three periods, totaling one hour, for a 30 minute jury. Also, a solo recital containing at least one hour of music is required. Students in the Advanced Certificate program will follow these 1st year guidelines for their jury and recital.

2ND YEAR GRADUATE: One hour of music for a 30 minute jury and a full recital. There are no repertoire periods required and you are encouraged to focus on a specific area of interest, which may include chamber music. At some point, graduate students must perform a major concerto on a jury and on one of the graduate recitals, a department recital, or some other venue.

PROFESSIONAL STUDIES CERTIFICATE (PSC) IN INSTRUMENTAL PERFORMANCE

You must have at least a Bachelor's degree to apply for this certificate. Here is information about the PSC:

<https://sfcm.edu/professional-studies-certificate-guitar>

PSC students must complete a 50 minute jury and recital with professional level repertoire, but no specific stylistic requirements.

HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE EMPHASIS

Historical Performance Emphasis in Plucked Strings: Vihuela, Lute, Theorbo, and Baroque Guitar

GENERAL INFORMATION

This program, directed by Richard Savino, is limited to 4 students. On the Undergraduate level, the HPE applies only to Junior and Senior years, except with permission of Richard Savino and

David Tanenbaum.

AUDITION AND REQUISITE INFORMATION

Admission requirements: previous experience on the early instrument or with early music on its modern counterpart and permission from the instructor and department chair.

Pre-requisite: Basso Continuo for Guitarists or demonstrated proficiency performing Basso Continuo from a figured bass.

Audition repertoire on classical guitar or period instrument equivalent (15 minutes total; choose 3 of the 4 categories). Repertoire to be approved in advance by Richard Savino.

16th/17th century fantasia or dance selection
17th century toccata, unmeasured prelude or suite excerpt
18th century movement by Bach, Weiss or a contemporary
Early 19th century Sonata movement or Variation piece

Note: Students at all levels must complete a Continuo class before enrolling in Baroque Ensemble

CLASSES

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Conservatory Guitar Department offers six ongoing guitar classes or class cycles. The staffing of classes can vary and the classes themselves change somewhat with different instructors. Teachers will provide a class syllabus and written notice of the class requirements on the first day of class. Occasionally classes are canceled due to small enrollment. Attendance is expected, and unexcused absences will affect your grade.

GUITAR PERFORMANCE

This is an ongoing class that meets for 50 minutes a week. It provides students with an opportunity to perform frequently, but also focuses on aspects of performance such as stage basics, programming and speaking to audiences.

GUITAR ENSEMBLE

This class meets for two hours a week. During the first week of the class small ensembles are organized from within the class. The ensemble stays together for the semester and is coached throughout the semester. Each ensemble must perform for at least 5 minutes in the class and on a

department recital or other in-school performance venue. These small ensembles provide an opportunity to play with other instrumentalists, who are encouraged to join and receive credit for Guitar Ensemble class.

The Ensemble Class time is spent rehearsing large ensemble pieces, coaching small ensembles, and doing sight-reading exercises. You can get chamber music experience outside of the Guitar Department by auditioning for the Chamber Music program, New Music Ensemble or the Baroque Ensemble.

HISTORY AND LITERATURE CYCLE

This is a two-year class cycle that examines the guitar repertoire in depth. Each period is covered for an entire semester except for the Classic and Romantic periods, which are taught together in one semester. In each class you will write papers, play music of the period, and acquire special skills.

In the Renaissance class you will learn French and Italian tablature reading as well as basic lute technique, and play period music on the lute. In the Baroque class you will extend your tablature skills and learn continuo. In Classic/Romantic Lit. the techniques and instruments of Sor and his contemporaries are experienced, while in the 20th Century Literature class you will experience the extraordinary growth and reach of the guitar from Segovia's work until the present day.

GUITAR PEDAGOGY

This one semester class, which occurs every fall semester, is alternately taught by David Tanenbaum and Marc Teicholz. Undergraduate guitar students are required to take two semesters of the class, one taught by each professor. Graduate students are required to take one semester of Guitar Pedagogy. Guitar Pedagogy will be taught by Marc Teicholz in fall 2026.

ELECTIVE CYCLE

This two-year cycle has the following classes as components.

Transcription/Arrangement-one semester. David Tanenbaum will teach this class in Fall 2026. **Basso Continuo for Guitar** - one semester (Not occurring in the 26-27 school year) **Technique and Sight Reading for Guitar** - one semester. Marc Teicholz will teach this class in Spring 2027.

HISTORICAL PLUCKED STRINGS

This class consists of Richard Savino teaching lessons to the four HPE students on their various instruments. Students will work on solo repertoire as well as their continuo projects.