

A Royal Gift – Marie-Louise and the Guitar

by Erik Pierre Hofmann

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When, in the years 2009 to 2011, Stefan Hackl, Pascal Mougin and I composed the book *Stauffer & Co. – The Viennese Guitar of the 19th Century*,¹ we came across an article published in 1810 in the periodical *Der Sammler*.² The short yet surprisingly detailed report recounts the donation made by a local craftsman, Johann Georg Stauffer, to Marie-Louise of Austria (1791-1847) [fig. 4], on the occasion of her wedding to Napoleon I. While the French Emperor through this political marriage consolidated his position as the most powerful man of his time, the gracious young woman, who was only 18 years old at the time of the wedding, resigned herself to her fate with admirable constraint.³ The gift made by Stauffer – simply one of the most extraordinary guitars ever made – not only reveals his patriotic devotion and business acumen, but also tells a story of the guitar in its time.



FIG. 1

When our book was published, we did not know of the instrument's whereabouts. We certainly hoped that it had survived, a sleeping beauty in the repository of some French castle or museum, but failed to trace it. At that time, none of us had ever visited the Musée d'art et d'histoire de Neuchâtel in Switzerland – a remarkable institution in its own right, which also happens to host the instrument in question.⁴ Nor had we visited the temporary exhibition on Napoléon and Marie-Louise in Compiègne in 2010, where the guitar had briefly been on show. But on the occasion of a Sunday outing, my colleague Jacques Vincenti found himself facing the instrument, elegantly displayed in a glass cabinet. Of course, he immediately linked this spectacular guitar to the article reproduced in *Stauffer & Co.*

Although the account from 1810 describes instrument and case thoroughly, seeing it for real comes as a shock. At first glance, it is a typical Viennese guitar from around 1810 (coinciding with the beginning of a Golden Era for the guitar, which started in Vienna and rapidly spread all over the old continent). The overall design, as well as the extravagant applications enhancing the small bridge recall Italian guitars from the same period [fig. 5, 6 and 7]. In terms of construction, it features techniques inspired by the French School: solid inner linings on both sides (back and top), systematic insertion of all transverse bars into the linings, absence of an “Italian nail” going through the upper inside block to secure the neck, etc. – a perfect blend of two major influences,⁵ which was indeed Stauffer’s first stroke of genius.



FIG.2



FIG.3

The complexity of its decorations makes this guitar stand out against all others. In particular the (literally) thousands of minuscule mother-of-pearl lozenges covering the neck and heel are a unique feature [fig. 2] – which alone says a lot about Georg Stauffer’s ambition to mark the event and demonstrate his devotion to “King and Country”. But then the guitar displays other remarkable details: the subtle inlays adorning the head [fig. 8], jointure of the ribs [fig. 9], bridge [fig. 1] and pegs; the intricate applications on the soundboard, developing around the Imperial eagle in a unique and elaborate design [fig. 1 and 9]; the delicate floral inlays edging the soundboard etc. Stauffer also paid a lot of attention to the veneered, leather-lined and French-polished case, and, last but not least, to the label that was engraved especially for the occasion [fig. 3].⁶ A label which reads:

“Most respectfully presented to her Majesty Marie-Louise, Empress of the French and Queen of Italy, Archduchess of Austria, by George [sic] Stauffer, citizen and luthier in Vienna, in Austria, as an expression of his most profound respect.”



FIG.4

From today's perspective, the choice of a guitar as a royal gift – rather than a piano-forte or a violin, for example – may seem odd. But in 1810, virtuoso Mauro Giuliani, publisher Anton Diabelli and many other leading figures of the (pre-)romantic guitar (Simon Molitor, Louis Wolf, Leonard de Call *et al.*) had already established themselves in Vienna. More than merely acceptable, the guitar became fashionable. Also, Georg Stauffer was not just any maker, but was the driving force of a rapid evolution in instrument-making: whereas the generation of his master(s) had still been generalists, building both bowed and plucked string instruments, Stauffer, from the day he set himself up in 1800, specialised in the making of one particular instrument – which happened to be the guitar. And even if he and his son Anton later dabbled with new designs in violin- and piano-making,⁷ the guitar always remained their paramount product.

The dedication of a guitar to the young Empress, though certainly a bold move, was also a well-reflected one. Stauffer had good reason to believe that the publicity deriving from this gift (possibly modest in the eyes of the Empress, but very expensive for him) would consolidate his reputation as the most respected guitar-maker in Vienna, not to say in Europe. As the article in *Der Sammler* also reveals, Marie-Louise was not present in person during the ceremonial presentation. It was her father, the Emperor Franz II (I), who received the instrument.

Today, the guitar itself as well as its later destination raise many questions: What use did Marie-Louise make of it? As we shall see, she seems to have started playing the guitar only five years later. Also, far from being an instrument adapted to a female constitution in scale and proportion, it is a remarkably large specimen: the vibrating string-length, one of the main parameters that can be adapted to meet the requirements of smaller hands, is 650 mm (a measure which, around 1810, is at the upper end of the range).

The body, too, is remarkably huge: it is 461 mm long, 308.5 mm wide (at the lower bout),⁸ and up to 94.5 mm deep – and thus far bigger than any standard model of the Stauffer workshop at the time. Was the instrument really meant to be played by her, or rather by a male secretary, for example to accompany her singing? And how did it come into the possession of the de Pury family, a member of whom later donated it to the Museum in Neuchâtel?

But first things first. In Marie-Louise's personal letters to her lifelong friends, the Countess of Colloredo and the Countess of Crenneville,⁹ no direct mention of Stauffer's gift can be found. Yet, these letters reveal a lot about the young woman's musical activities, and incidentally make reference to her starting to play the guitar.

As early as in March 1799, Marie-Louise mentions her piano-teacher, Leopold Kozeluch.¹⁰ This is not surprising, as in the late 18th century, mastering the piano-forte was one of the basic skills a child of high social standing was expected to acquire. Only a few years later, in June 1802, Marie-Louise writes to her friend Victoire de Crenneville, reporting on piano lessons she now gives to the latter's mother.¹¹



FIG.5

In the year of the 1809 war, while staying in Erlau under circumstances which represented a massive downgrade compared to the Hofburg in Vienna, a piano-forte was still at hand. However, Marie-Louise does not mention playing it, but rather that the chamberlains are using it as a writing table¹² (for the lack of a more appropriate piece of furniture). Later that same year, though she now seems more attracted to painting, she gives a detailed account of her musical activities:

“Please tell Kozeluch that I miss him very much; I am quite certain that thinking of me, he must imagine that I have forgotten everything I learned this past ten years, and that I do not even look at a harpsichord anymore. But he is wrong: I play for at least one hour every day, and have studied all the sonatas of the Countess Uhlefeld. [...] we play music almost every day, sometimes I accompany my Uncle François when he sings, sometimes my Uncle Rodolphe and I play on two harpsichords, or else I play four-handed with Archduke Louis. Also, I have played – with some success, I venture to say – the grand sonata by Heibelth [most certainly Daniel Gottlieb Steibelt (1765-1823)] for piano and harp.”¹³

In another letter to Victoire from the same period, she adds:

“Unfortunately, I believe that we’ll have no other music than that coming from a harpsichord; and what is worse, it is always up to me to perform.”¹⁴

And, in December 1809, to Victoire again:

“I cannot touch the harpsichord anymore, because mine is totally out of order and needs to be repaired. I believe this is a just punishment of God, because every day I tormented Edling playing *ombre adorata*, one chord with three sharps on the left, another one with five flats on the right – the resulting harmony was truly superb. I also look forward to playing the variations by Jelinek which you promised to me, even more so as they will come from you.”¹⁵

In a letter dated only a day after the previous one, things appear to be quite different, as Marie-Louise has just received a harpsichord for Christmas:

“I finally have a better harpsichord and enjoy it very much. Please tell Kozeluch that I accompany Archduke François every day when he sings, and still play for an additional hour at home. But I paint even more, as this is my true passion.”¹⁶

All of these insights on Marie-Louise’s (not only) musical activities pre-date 1810, and thus her marriage to Napoleon I. The future Empress was undoubtedly a very intelligent young woman; still, in early 1810, she apprehended the future with youthful naivety. In a letter to Victoire from 10 January 1810, she openly revealed her troubles:

“I hear him [Kozeluch] talk of Napoleon divorcing his wife, and I suspect that he expects me to be her replacement; but in that he must be wrong, because Napoleon is too afraid of facing a refusal to even dare to propose, and he is too keen on hurting us furthermore; also, father is too kind to force me to yield in such an important matter.”¹⁷

Only two months later, on 11 March 1810, the course of history would prove her wrong. But in the early days of her marriage, her letters reveal neither hurt, nor an avowed loss of dignity. In the light of these extraordinary events, it is easy to understand the discrepancy between the expectations Georg Stauffer must have had when dedicating his masterpiece to the young Empress, and the lack of

reference to it in her letters. Naturally, her mind was elsewhere – and even more so after the birth of her first child, Franz (François Charles), on 20 March 1811. Domestic affairs demanded all her attention; music and art were pushed into the background. But four years later, in a letter to Victoire from 3 March 1815, she springs a surprise:

“It is wrong to say that I neglect music, as I play in fact quite often, and I even started playing the guitar; very badly, it is true. One more talent, you might say, but the number of those remains always the same, because each time I learn something new, I forget something old – this time, drawing is the poor victim.”¹⁸



FIG.6



FIG.7

Another source accounts for this new passion in Marie-Louise's life. In his book *Marie-Louise et la Cour d'Autriche*, Napoléon Joseph Ernest de Méneval quotes a letter of his grandfather Claude François de Méneval (1778-1850), who was her private secretary at the time, written only a few weeks before the above, on 28 January 1815:

“She [...] spends her days with her sisters, drawing or making music. It is music that occupies her most; she has had a guitar tutor for over a month now. She already accompanies herself quite well and makes daily progress, a fact to which we all bear witness every evening, after dinner.”¹⁹

So the Empress took an interest in the guitar after all. Whether or not the instrument she first played was the one Stauffer made for her, we do not know. Nor do we know for sure if her interest lasted. But we might be able to identify the mysterious guitar tutor that Méneval omits to name. At the time in question, Marie-Louise certainly could have afforded to employ the most prestigious virtuoso in town. And as a matter of fact, the first editions of two of Mauro Giuliani's compositions hint at a relationship between him and the young Empress: his *Romance* op. 27, first published in 1811, bears the programmatic subtitle *Marie Louise au Berceau de son Fils* (“Marie-Louise at her son's cradle”), while his op. 95, *Sei Ariette*, published in 1818 or early 1819,²⁰ is dedicated to the Empress.

More explicit still, is this inconspicuous announcement in the newspaper *Kaiserlich Königliche privilegierte Bothe von Tyrol* from 11 October 1819:

“Musical message. On Wednesday 13 October 1819, Mauro Giuliani, Imperial Chamber Virtuoso to her Majesty the Archduchess Marie-Louise, Duchess of Parma, on his way through to Italy, and on general demand of the local music aficionados, will give a great vocal and instrumental performance in the Casino-hall [in Innsbruck], at half past seven in the evening, and be heard on the guitar.”

From there on, it is only a small step to concluding that the guitar tutor mentioned by Méneval was indeed Giuliani. Interestingly, the Italian virtuoso also owned an instrument that he claimed to have briefly belonged to the Empress. The instrument, a Parisian guitar by “Pons Fils” (a brand that stands for one of the many sons of César Pons), surfaced from the storeroom of an English bank, where it had been sleeping since the death of its last known owner, Christopher de Monte, in 1816. An accompanying note from the hand of Giuliani himself says that the guitar was given to him by Marie-Louise, and that he in turn bestowed it on Mr. de Monte, “as a souvenir of his unalterable friendship”.²¹

Concerning other guitars that Marie-Louise owned, a recent publication by Annemarie Bösch-Niederer brings some surprising facts to light. In her book *Victorin Drassegg, Instrumentenbauer in Bregenz (1782–1847)* on the life of an equally gifted and unconventional instrument maker, Bösch-Niederer reveals that Drassegg dedicated two of his guitars to the Duchess of Parma.²² The receipt of these instruments – one standard six-string guitar and one *Doppelgitarre*²³ – was confirmed by Count Carl von Bombelles (1785-1856), Constable at the Court of Parma (and also Marie-Louise's third husband), on 18 September 1837. But von Bombelles' declaration also makes it clear that these instruments in question had not been ordered, but sent unsolicited. Nonetheless, and “as a sign of Her Majesty's magnanimity”, Drassegg was paid the amount of 120 florin and was thanked for the two guitars.

Considering that 22 years earlier, when Marie-Louise had confessed to playing guitar, she also admitted picking up ever new “talents” relentlessly, it seems doubtful that she was still playing the instrument in 1837. A *Doppelgitarre* acquired in Italy in 2014 by Stefan Hackl seems to fit the description of the one made for the Archduchess. Though 180 years old, the instrument is virtually new, displaying only very few playing marks.

Stauffer's 1810 guitar is in relatively good condition, too. A few repairs seem to indicate that someone used the instrument and cared for it. While the body displays one important repair of the back [fig. 6], as well as a few smaller repairs, the neck, which must have come off at some point, has been reglued. Moreover, there are two dowels through the fretboard between frets 11 and 12, which indicates that this was a more massive intervention than one might presume at first glance. And indeed, a rupture in the correct spacing of the frets (starting at fret 9) bears witness to more radical surgery: an intervention which altered the guitar's intonation and made it virtually unplayable: Whenever this repair took place, it basically put an end to the guitar's usability as a musical instrument.



FIG.8

Technical data:

Vibrating string length: 650 mm
Body length: 461 mm
Max. body width: 308.5 mm
Body depth(s): from 80 to 94.5 mm
Soundhole diameter: 82 mm
Head length, including the nut: 168 mm
Max. head width: 80 mm
Neck width at the upper nut: 44.5 mm
Neck width at the neck/body-junction: 54.5 mm
Bridge dimensions: 88 x 20 x 7 mm
String spacing at the bridge (1/6): 63 mm



FIG.9

Given that the guitar was donated to the Musée d'art et d'histoire de Neuchâtel in 1922 by Louis de Pury,²⁴ it is necessary to examine the links between this ancient, most reputable Swiss family and the entourage of Napoleon I. In point of fact, Charles Albert de Pury (1752-1833) was a member of Napoleon's army, holding the grade of *lieutenant-colonel*.²⁵ But another member of the de Pury family was much closer to Marie-Louise in particular: Marianne de Pury (1790-1860), governess to Albertine, the first child of the Duchess of Parma and Count Adam Albert de Neipperg (1775-1829).

Marie-Louise and her second husband had three more children, of which only one – Wilhelm Albrecht – survived infancy. Interestingly, in 1834, Marianne de Pury married Daniel-Philippe Zode (1794-1845), a fellow countryman from Switzerland, who had been hired as a private tutor for Wilhelm Albrecht. On leaving the service of the Duchess of Parma, either Marianne or Daniel-Philippe could have been the recipient of the Stauffer guitar. Some of Marie-Louise's letters indicate that she was very fond of her daughter's governess, to whom she bequeathed a precious bracelet.²⁶ And the Museum's donation receipt from 1922 details several objects "from the collection of Philippe Zode, private secretary of Marie-Louise".²⁷

After the death of her husband in 1845, Marianne de Pury sold the house her husband owned in Neuchâtel²⁸ to a relative of hers, Louis-Ferdinand de Pury (1815-1897).²⁹ Some of the household effects – possibly including the Stauffer guitar – could have remained in the house, and thus in the possession of the de Pury family. As far as could be ascertained, Marianne de Pury and her husband had no descendants, a fact which would support this theory. Of course, Marianne could also have given or sold the guitar to a family member at another time, though it certainly remained precious to her, as a reminder of both her royal employer and her late husband.

Today, Georg Stauffer's wonderful guitar bears testimony to a popularity of the instrument that stretched far beyond social borders and musical prejudices. It is indeed a royal gift to posterity.



FIG.10

1. Erik Pierre Hofmann, Pascal Mougin and Stefan Hackl, *Stauffer & Co. – The Viennese Guitar of the 19th Century*, Germolles-sur Grosne: Les Éditions des Robins, 2012.
2. Cf. Hofmann, Mougin and Hackl, *Stauffer & Co.*, pp. 41, 306.
3. Cf. *Correspondance de Marie Louise 1799-1847 ; Lettres intimes et inédites à la Comtesse de Colloredo et à Mlle de Poutet, depuis 1810 Comtesse de Crenneville*, Vienna: Carl Gerold, 1887, pp. 81–82, 146–147.
4. Inv. n° AA 3847.
5. Cf. Hofmann, Mougin and Hackl, *Stauffer & Co.*, pp. 36–39, 114–124.
6. A complete chart of all standard Stauffer labels (i.e. those printed in series to identify their guitars) is displayed in *Stauffer & Co.*, p. 93. The label inside Marie-Louise's guitar is an exception, as it is a one-off and identifies one particular instrument not as a commercial product, but as a donation. It reads: "Très respectueusement présentée a sa Majesté Marie-Louise, Impératrice des Français et Reine d'Italie, Archiduchesse d'Autriche par George Stauffer bourgeois et luthier à Vienne en Autriche comme un hommage de son plus profond respect."
7. See Hofmann, Mougin and Hackl, *Stauffer & Co.*, pp. 58–61, 66–69.
8. The other body widths are: 240 mm (upper bout) and 176 mm (waist).
9. The Countess Colloredo, born Marie-Victoire Folliot de Crenneville, had been Marie-Louise's tutor and was the mother of Victoire, Marie-Louise's closest friend and recipient of all the letters listed below.
10. *Correspondance de Marie Louise 1799-1847* (...), p. 9, letter from 2 March 1799.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 33, letter from 14 June 1802.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 97, letter from 8 July 1809.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 124–125, letter from 24 October 1809: "Je vous prie de dire de ma part a Kozeluch qu'il me manque bien, mais que je suis persuadée qu'en pensant à nous, il se figure que j'ai oublié tout ce que j'ai appris pendant 10 ans et que je ne regarde même pas le clavecin. Mais il se trompe: car je joue tous les jours 1 heure et même plus, et j'ai étudié toutes les sonates de la Comtesse Uhlefeld. [...] nous avons presque journellement musique, quelquefois j'accompagne l'Oncle François qui chante, d'autres fois nous jouons a 2 clavecins, l'Oncle Rodolphe et moi, ou je joue à 4 mains avec l'Archiduc Louis, et j'ai joué, je me hazarde de le dire, avec succès, la grande sonate de Heibelth, pour le piano et la harpe."
14. *Ibid.*, p. 129, letter from 18 September 1809: "Je crois que nous n'aurons pas d'autre musique que le clavecin, ou malheureusement le tour de jouer tombe toujours sur moi."
15. *Ibid.*, p. 132, letter from 23 December 1809: "Je ne peux plus toucher du clavecin car le mien est entierement gâté et doit être réparé, je crois que c'est une juste punition de Dieu, car tous ces jours-ci j'ai tourmenté Edling en lui jouant ombra adorata en prenant l'accord de 3 Kreuzeln de la main gauche et 5 b de la droite, il est vrai que l'harmonie étoit superbe. Je me réjouis de jouer les variations de Jelinek, que vous me promettez, d'autant plus qu'elles me viennent de vous."
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 136–137, letter from 24 December 1809: "Enfin j'ai un meilleur clavecin et j'en profite beaucoup, je vous prie de le dire a Kozeluch, j'accompagne journellement l'Archiduc François quand il chante et outre cela je joue encore un heure chez moi, mais je peins encore plus long tems ayant une vraie passion."
17. *Ibid.*, p. 141, letter from 10 January 1810: "Je le vois parler sur la separation de Napoléon avec son épouse, je crois même entendre qu'il me nomme pour celle qui la remplacera, mais dans cela il se trompe, car Napoléon a trop peur d'un refus et trop envie de nous faire encore du mal pour me faire pareille demande, et Papa est trop bon pour me contraindre sur un point d'une telle importance."
18. *Ibid.*, p. 177, letter from 3 March 1815: "On a bien tort de vous dire que je néglige la musique, j'en fais encore souvent, je commence même a jouer de la guitare, il est vrai très mal: vous allez dire, encore un nouveau talent, mais le nombre est toujours le même, car a mesure que je veux en apprendre un nouveau, j'en oublie un ancien, et cette fois-ci c'est le dessein qui est la malheureuse victime."
19. Baron de Méneval, *Marie-Louise et la Cour d'Autriche entre les deux abdications (1814-1815)*, Paris: Émile-Paul Éditeur, 1909, pp. 239–240: "Elle [...] passe toutes ses journées avec ses soeurs à dessiner ou à faire de la musique. C'est la musique qui l'occupe le plus; depuis plus d'un mois elle a un maître de guitare. Elle s'accompagne déjà très bien, et nous fait juges tous les soirs, après diner, de ses progrès."
20. For the complete titles and dating of op. 27 and 95, cf. Thomas Heck, *Mauro Giuliani, Virtuoso Guitarist and Composer*, Columbus, OH: Editions Orphée, 1995, pp. 198, 208.
21. Cf. Paul Pleijsier, *Found: A Giuliani Guitar kept in London Bank since 1816*, *Soundboard*, vol. XXVIII, fall/winter 2001/2002, pp. 7–16.
22. Annemarie Bösch-Niederer (Ed.), *Victorin Drassegg, Instrumentenbauer in Bregenz (1782–1847), with contributions by Stefan Hackl, Christoph Jäggin and Lorenz Mühlemann*, Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 2016, pp. 36–38.
23. Cf. Hofmann, Mougin and Hackl, *Stauffer & Co.*, p. 40.
24. Donation receipt from 18 April 1922 (archives of the Musée d'art et d'histoire de Neuchâtel).
25. Cf. Jean-Paul Bertaud, *Quand les enfants parlaient de gloire – L'armée au coeur de la France de Napoléon*, Paris: Flammarion, 2006. Bertaud also names Abraham de Pury in the same context, which could be a mistake.
26. Various authors, *Maria Luigia e Napoleone testimonianze – Museo Glauco Lombardi*, Milano: Touring Editore Srl, 2003, p. 56.
27. Various authors, *1810 – La politique de l'amour – Napoléon 1er et Marie-Louise à Compiègne*, Paris: Éditions de la réunion des musées nationaux, 2010, pp. 81, 193.
28. Various authors, *Musée neuchâtelois*, Neuchâtel: Société d'histoire et d'archéologie du canton de Neuchâtel, 1950, vol. 37–39, p. 168.
29. Anecdorally, Louis-Ferdinand Pury named his daughter, who was born the very same year that he bought a house from Marie-Louise's former employee, "Marie-Louise-Charlotte".

Illustrations

1. Guitar by Johann Georg Stauffer, made in Vienna in 1810 and dedicated to “her Majesty Marie-Louise”. This picture shows the guitar with its original case, which was made to measure and perfectly matches the description made of it in *Der Sammler*. The ribbon came with the guitar when it was donated to the Museum in Neuchâtel and is likely to go back to Philippe Zode (Photo: Stefano Iori © Musée d’art et d’histoire de Neuchâtel).
2. Detailed view of the bridge. All six bridge pins appear to be original, which is quite rare in a guitar of that age. While most inlays are made of mother of pearl, the fine decorative lines and the saddle are made of metal, probably nickel silver (Photo: Erik Pierre Hofmann).
3. Detailed view of the jointure between the head and the neck. Besides the stunning effect of the pearl and ebony lozenges covering the neck, attention is drawn to the fact that the V-joint securing neck and head is covered by a veneer applied to the back of the head. This is a feature that can be seen in some Romantic Era guitars by makers like Pierre René Lacote, but it is most unusual in a Stauffer guitar. Stauffer must have considered it more elegant and less risky to put a clear end to the area covered in thousands of minuscule parts. The fine execution of the sculpture of the sides of the head blending into the neck is typical of Stauffer (Photo: Erik Pierre Hofmann).
4. The label. While the instrument itself is a homage to Marie-Louise, the use of the French language for the lettering could be seen as an act of deference to the French victor. (Photo: Pascal Mougin).
5. Portrait of Marie-Louise, engraved by Hofbauer and Stöber and published by Verlag des Bibliographischen Institutes zu Hildburghausen (c.1830). It is based on a sketch “drawn from life”, as the original caption points out. The youthfulness captured in this portrait, as well as the insignia Marie-Louise is wearing, suggest that it represents her in the year of her wedding. Indeed, the insignia very much resembles the “Etoile de la Légion d’honneur”, ordered by Napoléon in 1810 in view of his marriage to the young arch-duchess (Private collection of the author).
6. View of the front (Photo: Stefano Liori, Erik Pierre Hofmann © Musée d’art et d’histoire de Neuchâtel, Les Éditions des Robins).
7. View of the back (Photo: Stefano Liori, Erik Pierre Hofmann © Musée d’art et d’histoire de Neuchâtel, Les Éditions des Robins).
8. View of the bass side (Photo: Stefano Liori, Erik Pierre Hofmann © Musée d’art et d’histoire de Neuchâtel, Les Éditions des Robins).
9. Front view of the head. As with the bridge, most inlays are made of mother of pearl, and the fine decorative lines of metal (Photo: Erik Pierre Hofmann).
10. Detailed view of the bottom. A wonderful lozenge inlay masks the jointure of the ribs and the original end-button. And an interesting technical detail is noteworthy, too: the intricate inlay around the soundboard does not join the ribs, and a thin layer of soundboard wood remains apparent between both. This was a usual construction method in previous centuries, but was highly unusual in a “modern” guitar like this one by Stauffer. Considering the large width of the inlaid area, this technique was probably favoured to secure a more solid contact between the soundboard, ribs and inner linings (Photo: Erik Pierre Hofmann).

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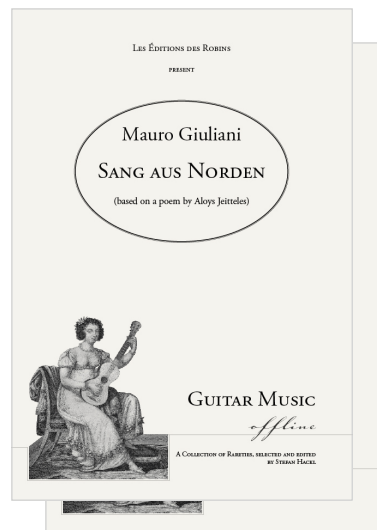
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