

THE STORY OF MY FIRST GUITAR

By Liona Boyd

The summer holidays had come to an end. The next day we would leave my grandparent's home in Spain, and jump on the rickety-rackety train to the French border, catch the night train to Paris and then the ferry back across the Channel to England.

Our bags were packed, but I heard my mother pestering my father about a classical guitar she had spotted that afternoon in a shop window as we strolled for the first time through the back streets of Bilbao and up the Gran Via. "What does Mummy want a guitar for?" my six-year old mind wondered.

"Oh, lets buy it! It's so cheap and it would look lovely on the sideboard" she pleaded.

"Too late, darling. The shop is closed and it's impossible for me to carry a guitar along with these over-packed cases" my father stated matter-of-factly.

Next morning as we prepared for our departure my persistent mother was still trying to persuade my father to buy the guitar. Finally he capitulated and together they dashed around the winding streets in search of the music shop. My mother returned breathless but triumphant! My father stuffed the delicate instrument with its canvas cover into his rucksack so he could carry it to England on his back.

The guitar was an attractive addition to our sparsely furnished living room and a constant reminder of our holiday in Spain. Occasionally, while my baby brother slept, my mother placed it on her lap to pluck a single tune she had taught herself. Its simple notes delighted my six-year old sensibilities as I listened with fascination to the familiar melody.

A year later when my family emigrated to Canada, the guitar was once again shoved into the old rucksack. It found a place on a ledge over a heating vent in our new Toronto home until one night a shattering noise woke us as the bridge and taut strings had flown off, cracking the guitar's wooden body. The hot, dry air had almost proven fatal for the guitar. Fortunately my art teacher, my father, was able to use his skills to glue the guitar together and repair the damage.

After three years we packed up our belongings again and headed back to England. This time the guitar seemed too cumbersome so my mother was reluctantly persuaded to give it to a friend who owned a summer camp in northern Ontario. Sadly, she let it go after being reassured that it would have a new life; strumming would be the accompaniment to children's songs around the campfire.

Unexpectedly after a year we returned again to Canada and who should show up to welcome us back but the friend with guitar in hand. "Here, you must have your guitar back" she insisted, thrusting it into my mother's hands against her protests. Back it went to resume its decorative role in our new living room.

"Liona, what would you like for Christmas?" my parents asked me a year later. At a loss for a reply, my eyes alighted on the guitar and with little thought I responded, "I guess you could give me that old guitar and some lessons so I can learn to play it." Thus the die was cast. My long love affair with the guitar was about to begin. Call it what you will - fate, destiny, chance or fortune, but that patient instrument was waiting for me, biding its time until I was ready. It had entered my life because of a last minute whim and survived ocean crossings, the dryness of the Canadian winters and the silence of the years. It had been abandoned, given away and tossed from hand to hand around a campfire. But amazingly the little guitar returned to inspire me to start on my life's calling, fulfill my destiny as a performing artist and composer, and share my music with the world.