

# Maria Camahort – Iberian Colours and beyond – a life journey exploring chamber music and Spanish roots

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Two weeks before the release of Iberian Colours (<http://mariacamahort.com/discography>), I have been asked to explain the various influences behind my work as an arranger, composer and guitarist.

Thinking it through, my work and musicianship have emerged as a natural consequence of lots of interactions with particular situations, people, and circumstances so I think the best way to explain about my work is describing my journey so far, talking about my main influences:

The first people to mention are composer Feliu Gasull (<http://www.feliugasull.com>) and classical improviser Emilio Molina (<http://emiliomolina.com/?lang=en>). I was lucky enough to study with them during my Undergraduate studies at Barcelona, as they showed me different worlds from the one centred in Classical interpretation. From them **I learnt to take the score as a starting point, but not as the final one...** and I started writing and arranging as a consequence of their lessons and their influence.

Then comes my arrival to London. Although I did apply for a Master in Performance Studies I didn't want to dedicate myself specifically to being a solo performer; this was my way of getting into one of the most prestigious conservatoires, the Guildhall School of Music. The beginning was actually not easy... the guitar is a less traditional instrument in England than in Spain, and when I started saying out loud that I wanted to be part of chamber ensembles, well, the lack of rehearsal was an issue and there were not many other options available apart from the usual guitar groups. However, after searching thoroughly, I found opportunities: as a result of my instrumental lessons with Robert Brightmore ([http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/music/staff/teaching\\_staff/department/1-department-of-strings-harp-and-guitar/47-robert-brightmore/](http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/music/staff/teaching_staff/department/1-department-of-strings-harp-and-guitar/47-robert-brightmore/)), I had the support of David Dolan ([http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/about\\_the\\_school/research/research\\_staff/department/37-research-and-knowledge-exchange-staff/423-david-dolan/](http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/about_the_school/research/research_staff/department/37-research-and-knowledge-exchange-staff/423-david-dolan/)), whose lessons were always with a varied group of instrumentalists (I was the only guitarist); I worked with Christian Burgess ([http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/about\\_the\\_school/staff/senior\\_staff/department/36-senior-staff/666-christian-burgess/](http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/about_the_school/staff/senior_staff/department/36-senior-staff/666-christian-burgess/)) in some theatre projects, and with John Parricel (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/reviews/f24h>) (jazz guitarist) I learnt a different way of thinking about my instrument. This allowed me to develop my knowledge of the instrument further, and to start collaborating and creating projects that involved several musicians (...or actors!)

Living in a different country made me look back at my origins, and I began to have a great interest for the music by Spanish composers. There is something about living abroad that makes you feel closer to your culture. Apart from classical Spanish music, I also took an interest in a particular Spanish genre of traditional songs (Coplas), thanks to violinist and singer Violeta García, and started listening thoroughly to flamenco, thanks to Pablo Domínguez.

The journey continued, and my musicianship developed as a consequence of my motivation to work in collaborative projects, and from learning from Classical repertoire (usually not guitar-related!) and traditional music. There was a point in which I was playing music originally written for guitar very rarely, apart from compositions by Feliu Gasull.

Of course, this wouldn't have been possible without all the London musicians who took interest in collaborating with me, and gave me the opportunity to create arrangements for different combinations and learn from their playing: Violeta García, Laura Ruhí (<https://lauraruhival.wordpress.com>), Sergio Serra ([https://twitter.com/sergio\\_eka](https://twitter.com/sergio_eka)) and Pablo Domínguez, the other members of the quintet, have a special mention. Through three years of rehearsals and infinity of sessions about music with Spanish roots, working with them has allowed me to develop my writing incredibly, and they have given to our project a very strong charisma and personality.

My work as an arranger and performer is just the natural consequence of this journey. Nowadays, I know I have one strong aim, which is to broaden the possibilities of the guitar in chamber music and in collaborative projects. Hopefully this is something that will become very clear when people listen to our quintet album *Iberian Colours* (<http://mariacamahort.com/discography>).

I also wanted to say that my personal motivation behind this strong artistic aim is actually very simple-hearted: I just love working with people, and creating music my way of making this possible.

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