

The Viennese Zither



The **Zither** is a **string instrument** with 38 to 42 chords. The **fingerboard** is stringed with 5 chords and is split chromatically, just like a guitar. The **remaining chords vibrate freely** and produce the harmonics in the bass and in the chords. The modern Zither established itself at the beginning of the **19th Century**. Older Zither-type instruments may still be found. For example, in the area of the Alps the most common forerunner of the Zither are the „**Scheitholz**“, the „**Raffele**“ and the „**Kratzzither**“.

In the middle of the 19th Century the Zither gained popularity throughout Europe and the Viennese Zither-virtuoso **Johann Petzmayer** contributed greatly to introducing the instrument to the aristocracy. **Duke Maximilian in Bayern** took Zither lessons from Petzmayer and appointed him „Chambervirtuoso.“ Also his daughter, who became later Empress Elisabeth of Austria, „Sisi“, knew the instrument. **Hans Lanner**, the Zither player from Reichenau/Rax became „Chamberzitherplayer“ under **Emperor Karl and Empress Zita**.

The **Zither** soon gained vast popularity and a variety of compositions were published. **Carl Umlauf**, the **founder of the Viennese style of stringing** the instrument, gave many recitals at the Wiener Musikverein, **Johann Dubez** performed for the harem of the Sultan in Istanbul and **Franz Wagner** was publisher of a famous Viennese Zither publication. **Johann Strauss** composed a Solo-part for the Viennese Zither in the introduction of his famous waltz „**Fairy tales of Vienna Woods**“.

In **1949 Anton Karas**, composed, played and recorded the soundtrack for the world-famous film „**The third man**“ and so the Zither won international popularity, not to say **immortal fame** until today.

Nowadays the **Viennese Zither** is taught and played in the Eastern parts of Austria and has established itself within **various musical genres**: classic, popular, jazz and contemporary music. The **Zither** can be played together with the Violin, the Guitar, the Recorder or to accompany singers. We find the Viennese Zither in various settings, from the private celebration to the major concert hall.

Cornelia Mayer, one of **Austria's best-known zitherplayers**, has an intimate association with **Viennese music**. She played with the Nürnberger Symphony Orchestra, for the Anglo-Austrian Society and Schubert Society UK, for Musikverein Wien. Nowadays she performs regularly at **The third Man Museum** and the **Heurigen Friseurmueller** in Vienna. CD recordings for Extraplatte, Speedy Music and Emi. She published **books on Anton Karas, Hans Lanner** and various music books for teaching the zither. She offers **zither lessons via skype** to interested students of all ages.

She was jointly responsible for establishing the **Viennese Zither in the UNESCO Convention** for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Austria and in April 2019 she has been awarded with the title „**Professorin**“ for her work on the zither.

For further information please look at: <http://www.zitherinthecity.com>

