

A New Guitar Teaching Philosophy

Ice B. Risteski*

“What does it mean to teach guitar? It means to systematically instigate students to play different guitar pieces”.

Maestro Antonio Lauro

ABSTRACT

In this present work it is given an opinion for a new approach to guitar teaching philosophy in a sufficiently sophisticated way, which surpasses up to now all known looks. With a goal to shed light on this important topic, this work will introduce a new guitar teaching philosophy on the virtue of musical-aesthetical knowledge of classical guitar music. With the intention to better understand this approach, emphasis is made throughout the prism of the guitar experience and from the viewpoint of new needs of classical guitar study.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo intenta dar una opinión para hacer un nuevo acercamiento a la filosofía de la guitarra, de una manera suficientemente sofisticada, que supere todas las miradas hasta ahora conocidas. Con la idea de sacar a la luz este tema importante, el artículo introducirá una nueva filosofía de guitarra en virtud al conocimiento músico-estético de lo clásico, para estimar los valores generales de los arreglos musicales. Con la intención de entender mejor este acercamiento, el énfasis se hace a través del prisma de la experiencia de guitarra y desde el punto de vista de nuevas necesidades para la estudio de la guitarra clásica.

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INTRODUCTION

A long time ago it was known that mathematicians wanted to find close connections with music. In one opportunity Sylvester says: *mathematics is music of the mind*. This sentence does not have a metaphorical meaning to compare science and art, but its real intention is to show, how highly music is valued by mathematicians. Analogously if we continue in this way, it is more appropriate and more natural to feel *music as the holiday of the soul*. Also, Sylvester has given one more opinion: *May not music is described as the mathematics of sense, mathematics as the music of reason? The musician feels mathematics; the mathematician thinks music - music the dream, mathematics the working life*.

Great guitar music flows from the heart and the soul. It is very hard to capture that kind of emotion on a piece of paper or in a textbook. We believe that learning to play the guitar is inseparable from learning to harmonize body, mind, and spirit. There has to be a time when the teacher looks inward and finds their own voice within. The supreme challenge of playing the guitar is learning how to unlock that voice and free it for expression. Sometimes this depends upon refining the technical aspects of the guitar. Other times, managing the mental and spiritual facets of playing is more important. In either case, effective learning occurs when the student and teacher are respectful of each other's styles and ambitions. Simplicity and clarity are sometimes elusive when trying to articulate ideas, but they are noble attributes which teacher strives for in his teaching.

Keywords:

Classical guitar; Guitar teaching philosophy.

Palabras clave:

Guitarra clásica; Filosofía de enseñanza de guitarra.

* 2 Milepost Place # 606, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4H 1C7. E-mail: iceristeski@musician.org.

Playing the guitar can be a deeply-fulfilling experience as well as an equally-frustrating one. The whole process can teach us many things, not only about music, but also about life. For instance, playing the guitar teaches the values of patience, persistence, and poise, which translate effectively into other life pursuits. Learning to play the guitar also enriches our social life. By this work we wish to inspire guitar teachers to find the keys to their own self-expression. Ideally, it will result in an increase of their satisfaction with the guitar. The guitar teaching concept presented here is developed on virtue of the following three levels of guitar teaching: beginner, intermediate and advance. We believe that offered concept will be beneficial in teaching not only amateur guitarists but guitarists aspiring to have a professional career. Here, we are providing some statements that may produce some reflection and contemplation. Creative guitar teaching process is at the core of musical evolution.

Before beginning to discuss this concept, it is good to point out that here described approach represents an improved extension of the previous author's research (Risteski, 2006a) and (Risteski, 2006b), which is completely different than well-known three level concept of Manuel López Ramos used many years in his the *Estudio de Arte Guitarrístico* in Mexico City (Ford, 1999). Actually, his methodology is founded on virtue of Julio S. Sagreras' approach (Sagreras, 1986a) and (Sagreras, 1986b) and exists today in many guitar schools through the Mexico and maybe in other South American countries, which really has national meaning.

GUITAR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Guitar teaching is only one form of academic activism. This guitar teaching philosophy presented here is founded on the virtue of a guitar experience intended to build guitar development as a consequence of greater guitar knowledge and better contemporary understanding of guitar influence on music as a whole. It does not represent an old *circulus vitiosus* (magic circle), but it will design a new systematic approach to the development of basic guitar technical skills for guitar students.

The quote by *maestro* Lauro reflects here offered guitar teaching philosophy. Finding analogies, activities and guitar exercises to foster guitar playing is an enjoyment. For students to acquire musical habits of guitar playing and the necessary guitar culture, it is indispensable to give them guitar pieces whose play demands big effort. By means of small pieces, it is easy to show the students that in classical music there are many interesting pieces for guitar. This may

favourably influence their development of systematic, persistent and independent work. Played pieces often remain and are revisited many times to be played again. Sometimes, true joy is experienced during the successful playing of a more difficult classical piece.

To be a good guitar teacher means to have the highest expectation for the students. In order to reach the desired result, a teacher must show his personal beliefs within a guitar teaching philosophy, which will evolve through practice. The teaching guitar philosophy considers the teaching of guitar only as one piece of the student's education and personal development. The most important philosophical experience is the understanding that it must be effective and integrated into the daily guitar teaching. Students must have a desire to pay attention if they wish to learn guitar. We can think of two primary reasons students pay attention: they are interested in learning guitar theory as well as the practical playing of necessary guitar pieces, and they enjoy interacting with the teacher. To be satisfied with this, the students need good guitar pieces. For this purpose guitar book and some master pieces are appropriate. Students cannot learn unless they understand the learning process. That is to say, they must believe that learning classical guitar will benefit them. A successful learning guitar process consists of individual practice, one-to-one lessons, group learning, playing with CD's, rehearsing as a duo, trio or quartet, playing with a wide variety of musicians and instrumentation, communication, reading music, interpreting, writing scores, style exploration, self-discovery, theoretical naming systems, ear-training, guitar care and maintenance, performing, leading and following and improvising.

All of us have our strengths and weaknesses in all of above mentioned areas. One of the main goals of guitar teaching is to locate weaknesses, shine a light upon them, and bring them into alignment with our strengths. This can be achieved through a multitude of learning situations.

Another main purpose of guitar teaching is to encourage students to develop their own critical analysis, style and creativity. In the development of the understanding, there is also the opportunity to increase guitar skills, which are necessary to use outside the classroom. The ultimate goal is to allow students to develop an understanding of guitar concepts and have the proficiency of skills necessary to use the guitar concepts. Of course there are certain basic concepts and skills that everyone needs to have. However, even among these basic concepts, different elements will be stressed according to the student. For example, reading music and playing diatonic scales might be

stressed for a student learning classical guitar. In this way students can get into playing the guitar music they want to play as quickly as possible, while using each new selection as an etude for a new basic concept or technique. Eventually everyone will come to know the basics through exploring their own interests, and at their own pace. In this approach, abstract concepts are reinforced through playing, playing is facilitated by greater knowledge, and the fun of learning is retained. As no one has an unlimited amount of time to practice, we have found this approach to be the best for the student, as it makes the most out of any practice time. In guitar lessons, the teacher should try to maintain a balance between fun and hard work. There is a lot to learn, but there's no reason it cannot be fun too. If a student should get stuck on something between lessons, they are always welcome to contact their teacher for some extra help. We are happy to figure out any tune a student wants to learn.

Teaching classical guitar is a personal and professional endeavor for the transfer of knowledge. Teacher should view the classroom as a laboratory for examining and re-imagining social relations. Guitar teacher should provide not only knowledge, but also purpose, motivation, and direction with continuous evaluation and attention to the different learning requirements of different students. This statement is true, because in the opposite case the students would need only music books, not teachers.

This offered guitar teaching philosophy is based on the notion that students learn best in an active and participatory classroom. Guitar teaching effectiveness is a continuing developmental process, but for the teacher it is never a **finished product**. We believe that guitar teaching should be invigorating, for both the teacher and the student. Students should know what is expected of them from the onset of the class, whether it is assignments, classroom participation or grading policies. Guitar teaching as a way of seeing also requires seeing the guitar from many perspectives as well. It requires challenging the assumptions of how a teacher recognizes knowledge. The challenge of excellent guitar teaching is to figure out just what will **reach** and bring out the best in a given student at a given moment. The difficulty of doing this is well worth the effort. In guitar teaching, one tries to take into account each student as an individual, and the class as a group, since each gathering has its own personality. Finally, let the students know that the guitar teacher enjoys teaching, and they should feel free to talk to the teacher at any time about guitar theory, a specific guitar piece, and music in general, or about any fact of their experience.

Guitar teaching skills are the most specific category of teaching behaviors. These are used constantly as part of the total process of guitar teaching. They are necessary for procedural purposes and for structuring appropriate guitar learning experiences for students. No matter how experienced or how effective a guitar teacher may be, the development and refinement of these skills and processes is a continual challenge. A variety of guitar teaching skills and processes exist. Some are broader than others and more complex in their nature. Some factors, which may influence their selection and application, include guitar student characteristics, curriculum requirements, and teaching methods. For the purpose of illustrating guitar teaching skills, two examples follow: explaining and demonstrating, and questioning.

The guitar teacher spends much classroom time explaining or demonstrating something to the whole class, a small group, or an individual. Student resource materials typically do not provide extensive explanations of guitar concepts, and students often need a demonstration in order to understand procedures. Some explanations are given to help guitar students acquire or deepen their understanding of a concept, while others help students understand generalizations. Concerning the former, the teacher must select an appropriate guitar concept definition and appropriate examples and nonexamples. An explanation can show:

- a cause and guitar effect relationship;
- that an action is governed by a rule;
- a procedure; or,
- the intent of a guitar activity.

Much guitar student learning occurs through observing others. A guitar demonstration provides the link between *knowing about and being able to do*. Guitar research reveals that demonstrations are most effective when they are accurate, when students are able to see clearly and understand what is going on, and when brief explanations and discussion occur during the demonstration.

Among the guitar teaching skills, questioning holds a place of prominence in many classrooms. When questioning is used well:

- a high degree of guitar student participation occurs as questions are widely distributed;
- an appropriate mix of low and high level cognitive guitar questions is used;
- guitar student understanding is increased;
- guitar student thinking is stimulated, directed, and extended;

- guitar feedback and appropriate reinforcement occur;
- guitar students' critical thinking abilities are honed; and,
- guitar student creativity is fostered.

Good guitar questions should be carefully planned, clearly stated, and to the point in order to achieve specific objectives. Guitar teacher understanding of questioning technique, wait time, and levels of questions is essential. Guitar teachers should also understand that asking and responding to questions is viewed differently by different cultures. The guitar teacher must be sensitive to the cultural needs of the students and aware of the effects of his or her own cultural perspective in questioning. In addition, guitar teachers should realize that direct questioning might not be an appropriate technique for all students. The guitar teacher should begin by obtaining the attention of the students before the question is asked. The question should be addressed to the entire class before a specific guitar student is asked to respond. Calls for responses should be distributed among volunteers and non-volunteers, and the guitar teacher should encourage students to speak to the whole class when responding. However, the guitar teacher must be sensitive to each student's willingness to speak publically and never put a student on the spot.

Wait time is defined as the pause between asking the guitar question and soliciting a response. Providing additional wait time after a guitar student response also allows all students to reflect on the response prior to further discussion. Increased wait time results in longer guitar student responses, more appropriate unsolicited responses, more student questions, and increased higher order responses. It should be noted that increased wait time is beneficial for guitar students who speak. While the need for factual recall or comprehension must be recognized, guitar teachers also need to challenge students with higher level questions requiring analysis, synthesis, or evaluation. All guitar students need the opportunity to think about and respond to all levels of questions. Guitar teacher probes or requests for clarification may be required to move students to higher levels of thinking and deeper levels of understanding. Because there are so many variables for guitar teachers to consider when making decisions about teaching and learning, it is essential that they have a conceptual base for understanding core *curriculum* and a concept for understanding the levels of teaching decisions.

Once the students are listening, it is the guitar teacher's responsibility to provide a useful, under-

standable exposition of the guitar pieces. In this respect, the guitar teacher follows two guiding principles. First, the teacher uses intuition and logic to develop guitar music theory. Second, the teacher puts himself in the students' shoes in order to overcome pitfalls. A teacher should always be a student to some degree. A student can also be a teacher of certain things without even knowing it. A basic component of good guitar teaching understands the pitfalls of the subject. There is no place in the classroom for an egoistical teacher who feels the need to emphasize his own guitar mastery. Teachers should be very organized and all necessary lessons prepared and ready to be built based on the previous ones. No matter how lucid a teacher's explanation or guitar playing, some students will not understand a guitar concept on the first pass. Regardless of how experienced a teacher is maximum potential can be fulfilled only as long as one always remains open to learning new things. The true essence of creativity, which is the most vital component of any artistic endeavour, demands by its very nature that we stay sensitive and vigilant for spontaneous inspiration and new knowledge.

Guitar teaching and performance are two completely separate skills that are not always mutually inclusive. A good performer does not mean a good teacher until he has looked at how he developed his skills and learned how to teach these skills to others. Often, teachers of university students are not really clear regarding their expectations of students. Many university teachers are dealing with students of varying degrees of ability and motivation. If this were not enough, they often must teach a variety of musical styles. Guitar teachers should look on performance as a research methodology. Performance offers a community forum for thinking through complex social, historical and political issues. They use guitar productions and literature as an arena for theoretical intervention. Performance helps disrupt conventional power dynamics in the classroom and to uncover the often hidden motivations that guide our actions. Performance studies foster civic dialogue by emphasizing active participation and embodied ways of knowing, thus helping bridge the gap between thinking and doing, theory and practice, academic and activist concerns.

Effective performance of some selections requires a little bit of fingerboard gymnastics to execute passages of pieces. These advanced pieces require the performer to be musically more sensitive to the style of each piece. In certain masterpieces guitar students may find a different challenge. Some of the technical difficulties include a variety of scale passages and leaps in the left hand. Musically, these pieces provide a number of pedagogical concepts to explore. Rapidly evolving

note values will present issues with keeping a steady tempo. These pieces require a sensitive student.

How nice, then, to discover a book containing marches and opera works specifically written for guitar students, designed to elevate their musical and technical skills. It is not uncommon for classical guitar students to develop technique through repertoire study, with each composition providing the impetus for integrating a new technical component into one's physical and tonal palette. Also, the guitar book must provide students with a source of supplemental repertoire that systematically assists them in expanding their technical skills while enhancing their musical and expressive abilities. Technique essentially serves as a tool to enable the guitarist to express the emotion of the music. Certain guitar pieces can become a beneficial addition to students' repertoire study, offering a resource for developing and enhancing technique, ultimately helping them become better musicians.

Students should learn from as many sources as they can, whether it's multiple teachers, books, or any other methods. Every good guitar spring or some masterpieces are devoted both to teachers and students. The good guitar collection should be a treasure of the best classical masterpieces from genres including solo, orchestra, opera, voice and chamber works. The pieces included should be appropriate for settings ranging from weddings to the concert level, and ranging from simple to complex. With straightforward, rhythmic and harmonic schemes, these types of pieces likely will have an immediate appeal for students.

Each piece must be attractively presented and well edited. Titles must be followed by the name of composer and fingering must be included for all pieces, but dynamics and tempo markings may be omitted with the intention that students choose their own according to their own feeling of the music.

The pieces themselves must be thoughtfully chosen on virtue of both physical and musical challenges. They represent a wide variety of musical styles and techniques and they must be arranged in approximate levels of difficulty. Almost all the pieces must be familiar to most teachers, but almost everyone must be sure to find a few new pieces to add to their teaching repertoire. The concise transcription of classical pieces delights every guitarist. Students may return to these sources again and again to sharpen their *technical mastery*.

Also, by a book with some famous symphonic selections (Waldron, 1995), classical guitar students easily will be engaged by the reflective and introspective

character of these works. These pieces abound with teaching potential, both musical and technical. They feature many technical challenges found in the classical masterworks. These pieces could be well suited to developing or showcasing a diverse and rich tonal palate. Essential to these pieces is an understanding of balancing a melody, finding nuance and direction in melodic lines. The pieces also are ideal for developing interpretive insights in students and teaching them how to communicate through their playing. A guitar teacher views the students grading as a dynamic part of the learning process. The teacher spends a great amount of time grading exams, papers and homework assignments. Students' evaluations to learning about the effectiveness of teaching are key, which must be viewed as a dynamic process.

Assessment is also an important result of a guitar teaching philosophy. It is absolutely necessary that the method of assessment be reflective of the philosophy and goals of the guitar teacher. The main goal of the assessment is to promote understanding, not to compare students. For that reason, a variety of assessment techniques are preferred, allowing students every opportunity to demonstrate their understanding. We think that labelling somebody as a good guitar teacher might imply that he knows everything about the classical guitar. We feel that while a teacher does possess a certain degree of proficiency with the guitar, he is humbled so much by the process that he is reluctant to claim any sort of mastery over it. There are many things that teachers do not know about the *art of guitar playing* and we think that most of them only teach what they know from their experiences. Everybody in life has something to offer and teach to others. Actually this teaching philosophy is founded on the virtue of a guitar teaching concept, which roughly will be developed in the next section.

GUITAR TEACHING CONCEPT

Now we shall speak about what there is a guitar teaching concept, but not in Quine's sense of the word, just only of guitar practical view point (Quine, 1971). The best guitar teaching for which we seek is a vision of an exemplary teaching approach of a responsible guitar teacher. The vision is the driving force that makes us all believe the best in the worth working for.

The way of guitar teaching depends on a multitude of factors, including course aims and content, the characteristics of the students, disciplinary norms, and the requirements of professional groups and teacher's conceptions of what constitutes effective

tive guitar teaching. Guitar teaching should aim at producing conceptual change and intellectual development in students and one of its purposes is to provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to function capably as adults. With the world changing rapidly, the abilities acquired in guitar schools today need to be reassessed, as to the ways in which students are expected to learn. And when the content of the *curriculum* changes, ways in which the *curriculum* is delivered must change correspondingly.

Knowledge of what constitutes effective guitar teaching and learning has increased significantly in recent years. For example, knowledge of the psychology of student development and learning has become more sophisticated in its ability to provide an intelligent and informed context for guitar teaching decision-making. In addition, knowledge of teaching and learning styles has led to an appreciation of what constitutes the best practice in meeting individual student needs. Guitar teachers recognize, too, that learning is an interactive process, and that guitar students need to be actively involved in tasks that are achievable, useful, relevant and challenging if they are to respond successfully to the *curriculum* challenges posed for them.

Above all, however, guitar teachers have learned that effective teaching occurs when the student is placed at the focus of decisions that are made not only about the *curriculum* itself, but also about the *process* by which the *curriculum* is delivered. Within this context, there is acknowledgement of the need for positive relationships between guitar teacher and student.

There are many bases upon which this work has been developed. These include the following considerations that:

- effective guitar teaching can be defined and described;
- guitar teaching is an art as well as a science;
- guitar teachers should see themselves as teaching decision-makers; and,
- guitar teachers should view students as autonomous students.

Each of the above considerations underscores the importance of guitar teaching decision-making, particularly considering the challenges associated with the delivery of the components of the core *curriculum*.

Guitar *curriculum* should find integration in the classroom through teaching. It is only after the guitar teacher has worked through a *curriculum* with the students for whom it has been designed that the curriculum can be said to have been truly implemented. In this sense, the

guitar teacher is the facilitator through which the elements of guitar *curriculum* find expression.

Guitar teaching practice, then, can be improved through professional development programs that encourage guitar teachers to be reflective practitioners.

In the professional literature (Bruner, 1966) and (Gage, 1978) are given the terms *teaching* and *instruction* almost synonymously. For purposes of this concept, *guitar teaching* is used as the broader, more encompassing term. This follows statement that guitar teaching is an intellectual activity on the part of one person intended to facilitate learning on the part of another.

For the purposes of this work, *guitar teaching* refers to those *curriculum*-related, professionally-informed decisions that guitar teachers purposefully enact to enhance learning opportunities for students. *Guitar effective teaching* is interactive and designed to accommodate guitar student learning needs and styles through a variety of teaching practices.

Guitar effective teaching is guided by general pedagogical approaches and specific teaching practices. The approaches and guitar teaching practices espoused in this work are based upon the following beliefs about what constitutes effective instruction.

Professional guitar teaching practice is not constrained by a belief that there is one best way. Guitar teachers should be invited to extend their range of guitar teaching approaches in a secure, risk-taking environment.

Guitar effective teaching occurs when the guitar teacher links sound *curriculum* development and excellent teaching practice in a successful learning experience. Reciprocal, positive relationships between guitar teacher and student are also necessary for teaching to be truly effective. This means the student must be viewed as an active participant in the teaching-learning process.

Guitar teaching judgment must be encouraged and nurtured in classroom professionals so that they acquire the flexibility needed to adapt guitar teaching practice to meet a wide variety of student needs.

When making guitar teaching decisions, guitar teachers should consider the content, perspectives, and processes specified in the *curriculum* for a *required area of study* or a *locally determined option*, and the appropriate *common essential guitar learnings*. Guitar teachers also need to make decisions regarding adaptation of teaching to meet individual student learning needs.

Ever changing variables affect guitar teaching decision-making. Guitar teachers are encouraged to extend their range of teaching approaches based on a foundation of research, a wide range of practical and theoretical knowledge, and a regard for students as active participants in the learning process.

Guitar effective teaching results from a blend of the art and the science of teaching. The science of teaching, which has predominated in the past, needs to achieve a balance with the artistry involved in the successful guitar teaching act.

Guitar teachers begin the teaching cycle by assessing individual student learning needs, interests, and strengths through observation and consultation with the student. They then determine the guitar teaching approaches required, deliver guitar teaching in a manner appropriate to the students' learning abilities and styles, and evaluate student growth and understanding. The cycle concludes with guitar teacher self-reflection and further guitar teacher-student consultation.

Guitar teaching practice can be improved through sustained and systematic attention to professional development. Guitar teachers can improve their own teaching practices by participating in professional development programs or working with peers and supervisors. These programs must include elements of the individual reflection that this work encourages.

Guitar teachers need to achieve balance between the two. How often have guitar teachers lamented that what worked well with one class met with abject failure with another? How is it that an approach to guitar teaching, which bores one student, lifts another to the heights of inspiration? These questions are difficult to address because they transcend the matter of *guitar teaching technique* and dwell more in the realm of what constitutes the *art* of effective teaching. Although the art of guitar teaching is much more elusive than the science of guitar teaching, there are some elements guitar teachers can capture and describe. Guitar teachers can discuss these elements and explore them in the daily act of guitar teaching. Through such discussion and introspection, enhanced guitar teaching occurs.

Guitar effective teaching merges the art and the science of guitar teaching as a compact amalgam. Unfortunately, some guitar teachers often respond to the mystery that is associated with this art by becoming overly defensive and by keeping their thoughts about their own teaching to themselves. The complexity associated with good guitar teaching results in little open discussion. Good guitar teachers dwell in the mystery of good guitar teaching until it dwells in them. As they

explore it alone or with others together, the insight and energy of mystery begins to inform and animate their guitar work. They discover and develop methods of guitar teaching that emerge from their own integrity.

Several decades of research and writing spent in this field, researchers have recognized both the art and the science of teaching. Guitar teaching we may represent as an applied science. However, not all researchers stress the science of teaching to the same level. For instance, some research states that efforts to develop a prescriptive science of teaching do not hold promise. They also argue that no science of teaching could be so prescriptive as to make teaching routine, and that the dynamics of the classroom, setting require that the teacher read subtle nuances and respond creatively to them.

Of interest is to mention the idea, which presents that there is a scientific basis for the art of teaching. Given view of teaching is that it is a useful or practical art, which must be recognized as a process that calls for intuition, creativity, improvisation and expressiveness. There also is provided opinion that in teaching, where the artistic elements are unquestionable, a scientific base can also be developed. As a consequence of it, it is very easy to conclude that guitar teaching is also science.

We may distinguish several areas where the artistry in guitar teaching is apparent:

- Communication - the ability of the guitar teacher to initiate and sustain a multitude of personal interactions with students;
- perception - the ability of the guitar teacher to pick up on such things as student attitudes, motives, and beliefs, and to adapt a lesson appropriately;
- cooperation - the ability of the guitar teacher to negotiate a collaborative and open relationship with students; and,
- appreciation - the ability of the guitar teacher to feel an intrinsic sense of self-worth from doing a difficult job well.

Guitar teachers should see themselves as teaching decision-makers. They must have a sound knowledge base of guitar teaching, a repertoire of guitar teaching practices, and the abilities of reflection and problem-solving.

Research in the areas of guitar teacher effectiveness and school effectiveness has resulted in a useful information base for educators. While research may provide the guidelines, research is also replete with information regarding the other aspects of guitar teaching, namely

the guitar student and the teaching task. The following summarizes some of the important characteristics and attributes that guitar research and experience indicate ought to exist for optimal learning to occur.

Guitar teachers should:

- be caring and positive;
- be prepared in their subject content and guitar teaching practice;
- have high expectations for their students;
- be aware of and sensitive to the relationships among teacher, student, and task; and,
- provide consistent and constructive feedback to guitar students.

Students should:

- be interested in learning about the topic at hand;
- see the relevance of the topic at hand;
- feel secure about themselves and within the school environment;
- be involved in decisions regarding their own learning;
- be motivated; and,
- see the relationship between the guitar teaching approach and the learning experience.

The guitar teaching task should:

- be specific and of a size that is manageable;
- be achievable given the ability and interest of the guitar student;
- actively involve the guitar student; and,
- be challenging and relevant to the guitar student.

Learning styles and guitar teaching styles are topics that have been the focus of extensive research, and have direct applicability to teaching approaches. Defined simply, learning style is a specific or unique way a student learns. The particular learning style actually is an indicator of how a guitar student prefers to learn, rather than of how well or how much the guitar student learns. Because of the range of learning styles in the average class, a guitar teaching method that is effective for some students may be ineffective for others. Guitar teachers can foster greater student academic achievement and decrease discipline problems when the selection of guitar teaching methods recognizes learning style variance.

Despite such research findings, guitar teachers tend to teach the way they were taught or according to their own preferences for learning. Most guitar teachers agree that they should become more familiar with reaming styles and that they could do more to match

teaching with reaming. Teachers should purposely master and use a variety of teaching approaches. Teachers need not always accommodate student preferences. Students should experience a variety of styles.

Guitar teachers, then, need to recognize the interaction among teaching styles, teaching strategies, and reaming styles. They must view themselves as guitar teaching decision-makers and partners, along with their students, in the teaching-reaming experience.

Guitar students should be viewed as autonomous students who can become aware of their own learning needs and their own ability to meet them. A fundamental refrain that echoes throughout this work is that guitar education should develop autonomous reamers. Learning how to learn guitar has never been as important as it is for guitar students today. Simple statistics indicate that those soon to assume a place in the work force will need to retrain several times throughout their lifetimes. It is important to note that not all post-graduation reaming needs to be guitar job oriented. The ability to learn independently will aid students in all aspects of their lives beyond formal schooling.

In becoming autonomous guitar students, there are several continua of developmental growth along which students may progress:

- from dependent to independent;
- from knowledge and comprehension to synthesis and evaluation;
- from preoperational to formal reasoning; and,
- from a closed guitar learning climate to one that is open.

There are, of course, a variety of ways guitar teachers can help students become autonomous students. The *common guitar essential learnings* and *independent learning* in particular, aim to encourage autonomous learning and decision-making. Guitar learning with a wide variety of print, non-print, and human resources encourages the development of research skills and independent learning skills.

Guitar teachers can encourage autonomous learning, first by recognizing the importance of viewing students as self-directed learners, and second by the selection of appropriate student-centered teaching approaches. The selection of these approaches should be made in consultation with individual guitar students, so that they become aware of their own learning needs and ability to meet them. Guitar teacher should also establish a classroom climate in which students feel comfortable making their own decisions and reflecting on the consequences.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHING CONCEPT

The guitar teaching concept presented in this section is founded on virtue of the following three levels of guitar teaching: *i)* beginner, *ii)* intermediate and *iii)* advance.

i) The objective of the guitar beginner level is to establish a strong musical and technical foundation for future learning. Within this level, there are six categories that need to be considered: 1° *technique*, 2° *rhythm*, 3° *practicing*, 4° *theory*, 5° *interpretation*, 6° *performance*.

While the role of the guitar teacher is always important, this level requires the most from the teacher. Since it can be assumed that the guitar student has little knowledge of music, it is important that the teacher have a clear well-developed methodology designed to present and develop appropriate material in the previously mentioned categories. The role of the guitar student at this level is to practice daily and follow the teacher's instructions (Duarte, 1975).

In this level, the statements should be clear and direct. It is important in this level to avoid statements that force the guitar student to make choices before he is ready to evaluate the options. Giving the guitar student too many choices usually confuses the student. Yes, there is variation in hand position between guitar students; yes, there are variations in how the guitar is held; but at this level, the student does not need to know this and also does not possess sufficient knowledge or experience to know what to do with this information. It is the teacher's responsibility to teach the most appropriate technique to the individual guitar student, and not to allow the student to decide.

1° Technique. The guitar student in this level needs to acquire good foundation in the following areas: sitting and holding the guitar, basic hand position, establishment of rest stroke technique, good left hand technique, free strokes (arpeggios and chords, *p i m*, *p i m a*, *p m i*, *p a m i*), basic reading skills (first position), learning to listen to himself, appropriate repertoire, beginning with single-line melody and progressing to simple music written in two parts or simple bass chord pieces, and integration and development of rhythmic skills. This material is covered to varying degrees in all guitar beginning methods (Aguado, 2004).

Sitting and holding the guitar is an acquired skill. The guitar teacher needs to correct and reinforce constantly the principles of basic sitting position. No easy task, particularly when working with teenage students, but a good sitting position is the foundation of a good technique.

The basic hand position, as with the sitting position, takes time to develop. It is important to remember that guitar method books are designed for the average student. Some students take longer to develop a hand position than others. It is important not to push the student's repertoire development at the expense of establishing a good hand position (Pujol, 1986).

The guitar should be of fairly large size, strings adjusted close to fingerboard, evenly balanced as to treble and bass and responsive to the lightest touch of the fingers. The playing position assumed by all the prominent artists is to sit on a chair of medium height, placing the left foot on a footstool six to seven inches in height, and resting the guitar on left thigh in almost vertical position, with the neck of the instrument slanting slightly upwards. Now hold the neck in the crotch between the thumb and first finger of the left hand near first fret. The thumb should press against the neck on the side of the E bass string, and not project over and above the finger board. Place the right forearm lightly on top of the widest part of the guitar and let the hand hang in a relaxed position over the strings, the thumb near the center of the sound hole, with the first joint turned to the left. The right wrist should be slightly curved upwards and in this position place the thumb on the A string. Bend the fingers until they touch the treble strings, first for G, second for B and third for E. Hold the wrist well up, thereby keeping the fingers almost at a right angle with the strings.

Developing good alternation between the index and middle fingers is often one of the most neglected aspects of beginning classical guitar study. It is important that the guitar teacher provide the necessary fingering information to develop this technique. For some guitar students, developing good finger alternation may be as simple as the teacher pointing out the odd repeated finger. For others, it may be necessary that all right-hand fingers be written in the music. As difficult as this may be for some students, it is far easier to teach it correctly at this level than to address this problem in the more advanced levels. If one believes that good finger alternation is a necessity for future growth and musical development, then it must be learned at this level.

When speaking of right hand technique on previous occasions, we have repeatedly stressed the necessity of using the third finger as much as possible, in order to give it strength and flexibility equal to that of the first and second finger. We all know that when playing a series of four or five note chords the top note of each chord should be heard distinctly, since

in most cases it is the melody note and must not be overshadowed by the other notes of the chord. But the arrangement of strings on the guitar causes this note invariably to be played by the third finger of the right hand, which with most players is the weakest. To overcome this handicap, it is absolutely necessary to find some means of strengthening this finger.

In fact, guitarists of the classic period employed the third finger only when absolutely necessary. It is in the music of J. K. Mertz that we find it used more extensively, and still more in the compositions of the modern writers for guitar. But, after all, it is a simple matter of using certain studies and changing the fingering to suit our purpose.

Listening to oneself is one of the more difficult tasks to teach. We believe that it is never too early to teach a guitar student to listen and constructively critique their work. One way is to record the student playing a piece that he plays well. Have the student listen to the recording and point out what he is doing well. Ask them how they practiced to play at such a level. Starting by critiquing good performances develops confidence and knowledge for the guitar student. This knowledge will enable them to identify problem areas in pieces more easily. Another way is to provide the student with a recording of the piece they are learning. A recording containing the piece played at several tempos allows the student to practice with the recording and, while playing, listen to how they sound.

Remember, even the best method is not perfect. Some guitar students will need supplementary material, others will not. The pace at which a student progresses at this level is not always an indication of talent or ability but more of motivation and maturation.

2° Rhythm. Rhythm combined with pitch provides melody. Pitch without rhythm will not create a good melody. Guitar beginning students are busy learning a number of skills. As they strive to master sitting, hand position, note reading, and fingering, it is not unusual for them to forget about rhythm. Since much of the playing they do at this level is solo, it is also easy for the teacher to overlook minor rhythmic inaccuracies when many other aspects of the student's playing may be excellent. Remember that this is the beginner level, and the importance of good rhythmic training is part of the playing foundation.

How rhythm is taught in the public school music programs? Students are taught to count the rhythms out loud and the guitar teacher either counts along or taps out the beat while the student plays. While there

is often resistance to counting out loud by guitar students, weekly reminders by the teacher, as well as the teacher counting along during the lesson, will quickly reinforce the importance of this skill. Another way is to make duet playing a part of each lesson. As soon as the guitar student has developed the necessary skills to play simple pieces without stumbling, duets can be introduced. Through duet playing the guitar student will quickly experience the importance of rhythm in music.

3° Practice. Long time ago Krick said: *Practice makes perfect*, it is an old saying, but when we speak of it in connection with the study of the guitar we should add, *if done with intelligence and if based on tried and correct methods* (Krick, 1941). It is universally conceded that many hours are wasted daily through mechanical repetition of exercises that could be mastered in a fraction of the time spent, if the student would use his head as much as he does his hands. By this we do not mean that repetition of certain exercises is not necessary, but before beginning to play look over the exercise carefully and try to find out just what you intend to accomplish by mastering it. In the beginner level the practice is basic. Since all the pieces or studies are short, repetition of the piece becomes the basis for practice (Carlevaro, 2002).

For example you may have realized that the third finger of the right hand is weak and needs strengthening. So for this purpose select the third and fourth etudes of the Carcassi, *Op. 60*, (Carcassi, 1994). Both etudes are in arpeggio form, and most of the high notes in each measure are to be played with the third finger of the right hand. Play them over slowly at first until the correct right hand fingering is established and the left hand moves smoothly from one chord to another, while at the same time placing some emphasis on the notes played with third finger. You should always be sure to concentrate on what you are striving for, and it will not be long before you begin to feel gratified with the results of these efforts.

Now we admit that every pupil is anxious to play pieces at the earliest possible moment, but to do the job well a certain amount of technical drill is indispensable, and even advanced students should allot about one third of their practice period to technical exercises and etudes (Carlevaro, 1994).

The left hand fingers must always be trained to drop onto the frets in the proper manner; a thorough knowledge of the entire finger board must be acquired gradually; and nothing is better for this purpose than the playing of scales. Passages of scales in thirds, sixths, octaves and tenths are apt to occur in almost

every guitar composition, and to be prepared for them the student should pay particular attention to this phase of technique.

The playing of chords requires a great deal of thought and study, and both hands must be watched carefully in order to produce a round full tone. The greatest difficulty in the beginning is to bring out clearly every note of the chord. It often happens that a finger of the left hand resting on a certain string will accidentally touch the one next to it and thereby muffle the tone of that string as the strings on the guitar are close together.

To correct this fault a guitar student should be forever on the alert, listen attentively for every note of the chord and see to it that the offending finger is placed in its proper position. One of the best exercises for the playing of the chords is to practice them first in the form of arpeggios - that is to play consecutively the group of notes of which the chord consists.

4° Theory. Theory is another often overlooked part of beginner teaching. The pieces are short, not particularly complicated technically or musically - why does the student need to know theory? We feel that what we teach in the beginner level lays the foundation for what is to come. The sooner the student sees the relationship between music and theory, the better he will play. The guitar teacher would introduce theory when the student begins to feel comfortable with the basic technical skills. Once the guitar student feels comfortable with the instrument, it is easy to introduce basic scale construction. This does not have to be a high level theory course, but a simple discussion of scale construction and how scales are used in melodies. If the material taught is functional and frequently reinforced, the guitar student will feel as comfortable with the theory as with the playing (Christiansen, 2005).

It is also not too early to begin to get the guitar student to sing. Singing the melodies that they are playing on guitar will begin to develop their ear and more importantly begin to train them to hear how they want a piece to sound (Bosman, 1991).

5° Interpretation. The beginner level is also an excellent place to begin to discuss interpretation. The music is simple in nature, with clearly defined phrases and sections. When guitar students begin to think musically at this level, we think that their playing improves dramatically. Since the phrase is one of the foundations of music, it should be taught in the beginner level. It is also easy to teach simple $\alpha\beta$ and $\alpha\beta\alpha$ forms since they are used for most of the music played in this level.

6° Performance. It is never too early to learn to perform. Guitar teachers often think that a student must be playing for several years before performance should be considered. Since performance is as much a skill as note reading, it is important to develop it at the same pace and time as the other basic skills are being developed. In developing this skill, we must remember that performance in the beginner level must provide positive reinforcement for the student. The guitar student must always be well prepared to perform. He should possess the necessary technical control to execute the pieces with few errors. Initial performances should be informal, either for several other students or parents and friends of the student. The pieces should be short - one to three minutes in length; and the student needs to feel completely confident with what he will perform (Carlevaro, 1988).

The performance should be discussed at the lesson immediately following the performance. It is important that both the positive and negative aspects be discussed. Discussing only one aspect of a performance presents a distorted picture to the guitar student. Also, discuss how to use what the student has learned through performance to improve the playing. Performing is a skill that takes time to acquire and will have its ups and downs. A well-prepared student can have a poor performance, but it is the teacher's responsibility to put the performance in the proper perspective.

ii) In the intermediate level, the guitar student develops the skills that will allow him to reach full musical potential. In this level, the guitar students begin to assume a greater role in learning and more responsibility for their own growth. The guitar teacher needs to provide a supportive environment that will allow growth to occur. This involves gradually giving the guitar student greater responsibility for growth and learning in areas where the student is equipped to take responsibility. Are all guitar students willing and able to take on this greater role? Of course not! Some are willing to assume more responsibility immediately, others need more time and nurturing and some will never take complete responsibility. The guitar teacher can only guide and assist the student in assuming a greater role in the learning process. One way of getting guitar students more involved is by using different teaching vocabulary. In the beginner level, the vocabulary consisted of clear directions with little flexibility. In the intermediate level, flexibility becomes the norm. It recognizes the need to encourage the guitar student, with guidance, to find the best approach to reach their goals. This can best be done by using awareness language. Instead of telling the guitar student what is wrong with their right hand, ask

them to focus on the right hand. If they are repeating right-hand fingers, ask them to focus on the alternation of *i* and *m*. This approach begins to develop a greater awareness of what they do when they practice and play. The increased awareness will make it easier for them to predict the results of their practice. Another effective technique is to ask questions. Instead of telling the guitar student that there is no mood in their playing, ask them what mood they are trying to create. As with awareness language, this technique allows the student to learn not only what they need to do but more importantly what happens if they do not do it. During this advance level, the role of the student in the learning process becomes increasingly important. For the serious guitar student, the ten per cent level of responsibility in the beginner level will grow to be ninety per cent by the end of the intermediate level. The less talented or motivated guitar student may not reach this level, but any increase in student responsibility will only serve to further their development.

The guitar teacher's role also changes during the intermediate level. During this level, the student develops and expands their technical, musical, and performance skills. It is important to remember that guitar teachers teach well what they do well. While we all have our own strengths and weaknesses, it is important to work on our weaknesses so we do not pass them on to our students. This is particularly important because while some of the teaching materials used in this level have text, many provide little or no guidance to the guitar teacher. It becomes increasingly important for the teacher of the intermediate and advanced student to be constantly growing as a guitarist, musician, and teacher. Being well read, attending symposia, workshops, and master classes are just some of the ways to continue to grow.

The objectives for the intermediate level continue to be centered on the same six areas that we previously discussed. Now, however, we will be refining the skills and broadening the knowledge learned in the beginner level.

1° *Technique*. While it would be nice to think that the guitar student has mastered all of the elements taught in the beginner level, anyone with teaching experience knows that nothing could be farther from the truth (Prat, 1986).

The beginner level provides the basic foundation for further growth. For this growth to occur, the foundation must be constantly reinforced and never ignored or taken for granted. Somebody may have an intellectual understanding of the importance of alternating

fingers by the end of the intermediate level but will need continual reinforcement of this technique to fully use it during the intermediate level. The following is a list of needs which should be refined and taught during the intermediate level: refinement of fundamental skills, introduction of free-stroke scales (depending on the student's abilities, this may have been introduced in the beginner level), learn two and three-octave major and minor scales, work on scale studies, development of *i m, i a, m a, a m i*, and *i m a* combinations in major and minor scales, both free and rest stroke, development of tone, development of accuracy, development of speed, advanced arpeggios and tremolo, development of harmonic, pizzicato, and rasgueado techniques, learn the entire fingerboard, continue development of critical listening, appropriate repertoire to reinforce technical and musical development, and development of performance skills, *i.e.* memorization, programme planning, etc. (Aguado, 1981).

A clean cut performance of a musical composition by an artist is always hailed with delight by an appreciative audience and should be the goal of every serious minded student of the guitar. The first requisite of a public performer is a flawless technique; and this can result only from many hours of careful conscientious preparation, beginning with the practice of scales in all major and minor keys. This scale practice is necessary to train the ear to hear every sound produced on the instrument and to develop gradually a facility of execution by training the fingers of both hands properly to perform their task.

For the guitar student this is of special importance, as it is more difficult to develop an even scale; due to the difference in the thickness of strings and the material of which they are made. The lowest, or the sixth string, is made of metal, as well as also the fifth and the fourth string. The sixth, being heavier than the others, requires more pressure of the left hand fingers and more power from the fingers of the right hand; passing on to the fifth string requires just a little less pressure, and this pressure of both hands should be lessened somewhat in passing over the higher strings. When playing a descending scale beginning on the first string, the action of the fingers is necessarily reversed, the second string requiring a little more pressure than the first. This increase in pressure should be employed in the same ratio because the lower strings are relatively heavier and offer more resistance.

One must keep in mind, however, that this difference in pressure is very slight, and a great deal of experimenting and practice are required until the action of the fingers becomes automatic; we must also

remember that a fairly firm pressure of the left hand fingers on all strings is necessary to obtain a clear ringing tone. The first, second and third strings, are made of nylon. The tone color of the sounds produced on these strings is somewhat different from those on the three silk wound strings; and it is up to the student to try to cut down this difference to a minimum, especially when passing from the D, or fourth string, to the G, or third string all of which again requires careful practice.

Now let us take up the playing of the scale in G major which requires the use of all six strings of the guitar, keeping in mind that our first object is to develop a beautiful round tone and the next to obtain facility of execution and speed; let us also remember what has been said regarding the pressure of left hand fingers. Play slowly, counting two for each note; begin by striking the G on the third fret of the low E string with the first finger of the right hand, then A open with the second finger, and keep on alternating the first and second fingers until you arrive at G on the first string. Now play the same scale descending in a similar manner, always listening carefully to every sound produced and continue with this ascending and descending scale until the ear is able to detect a gradual improvement in tone quality.

2° *Rhythm*. The rhythm skills introduced in the beginner level must now be reinforced and refined. It is easy, when teaching students at this level, to overlook rhythmic development. Serious guitar students are playing solo pieces at a good level, with the few rhythmic errors easily correctable. Anyone teaching at the university level will agree that rhythmic skills are the least developed skill in the entering university guitar student. This student is often rhythmically not equipped to function in an ensemble setting. In order to better prepare the intermediate student, we need to place rhythmic development on the same level as technical and repertoire development. This is as important for the adult recreational player as for the prospective university student. Much enjoyment and learning occurs when a guitar student can interact with other players of their and other instruments. Students at this level should be developing skills in reading all rhythms, including triplets. In addition, they should be learning to play pieces written in compound and changing meters. Musically this can be done best by playing duos, trios, and chamber music (Benedict, 1985).

3° *Practicing*. In the intermediate level, practicing needs to become more focused, efficient and creative. The pieces intermediate guitar students play is longer and contain more than one or two technical problems found in the music of the beginner level. As the pieces

increase in length, they also increase in musical and technical complexity. Guitar students in this level need to learn to identify problems, drill difficult areas immediately, acquire a broader knowledge of music, and develop strong memorization skills, to mention just a few of the areas. The guitar teacher needs to encourage the student to develop a strong foundation in these and other areas (Bogdanović, 1990).

4° *Theory*. As we all know, theory is that subject that guitar students either love or hate. As guitar teachers, the easy route would be to assign responsibility for learning theory to the student and theory teacher. Unfortunately, the quality of our playing is related to our knowledge and understanding of music theory. How much theory is teacher responsible to impart to the students? The answer is not always easy but the following examples might help clarify the problem (Harz, 2001).

5° *Interpretation* is the highest level of technical consciousness. Interpretation demands the knowing of musical, anatomical and physical properties to determine the very best way to present a piece of music. Most authors advocate the use of musical analysis in determining which techniques will have the most meaningful effect on the music.

Teaching of interpretation must be considered equal to the teaching of technique and repertoire for a guitar student to successfully complete the intermediate level. If we look at other instrumentalists, we always find that the self-actuating student not only can learn and play pieces well on his own but also possesses sufficient knowledge of music to play more than the notes. If guitar students are to reach this level, they must be taught the same interpretative skills as other instrumentalists.

6° *Performance*. If you believe that performance is a skill that can be developed, then the intermediate level is the most important time in the development of this skill. During the beginner level, performance development essentially focused on building the student's confidence. For confidence to continue to grow, the student and guitar teacher must work to integrate into the student's performance the practice, memorization, and interpretative skills being developed during the intermediate level. Many of the performance problems encountered by students in this level are the result of the lack or poor integration of these previously mentioned skills.

Another set of problems that occurs during this level is the emergence of the student's musical personality. The emergence and development of this per-

sonality is extremely important if the student is to continue to grow. This personality development may cause the guitar student to try to achieve more than is realistically possible for their level. It may also cause the guitar student to *play safe* and only concentrate on hitting the notes rather than making music. In either situation, the student's self-confidence begins to suffer. Questions arise concerning their reasons for studying an instrument, whether music is a viable career option, or whether they will ever be able to perform a piece to their satisfaction. The guitar teacher must assist the student in working through these issues if their musical personality is to emerge. One of the best ways we have found is to share your personal experiences related to these subjects. Another way is to encourage guitar students to audit area masterclasses. These classes often have a question-and-answer period where the guitar student can not only ask questions, but more importantly, hear that other players have similar issues.

The teacher's role is also to continue selecting the performance venues for the student. As the guitar student progresses through this level and gains confidence and experience, he will gradually be able to take on a greater role in selecting their performance venue. Entering the intermediate level, performances may be focused only on formal student recitals performed by students at the same level of development.

Like the confidence and integration of related skills develop, the guitar student may be ready to perform in programs with more advanced intermediate players. Ultimately, as the student's skills and confidence continue to develop, he may choose to perform for musical clubs, music societies, (e.g. guitar societies, etc), restaurants or full-length solo recitals. As much as possible, the progress must be gradual, with as few negative performance experiences as possible.

As a part of developing a student's performance skill, it is necessary for a guitar teacher to focus on helping the student: to apply the practice and interpretative skills being taught to performance, to identify and correct weaknesses found in his performance, to identify and develop his strengths, to develop a positive attitude towards performance, and share their love of music with the audience.

Guitar students who have successfully learned the suggested material for the intermediate level will find themselves ready to assume an independent musical role, and, more importantly, have the confidence and skills necessary to enjoy a musical life either as a serious amateur or professional.

iii) This is the level where body, mind, and spirit begin to fuse together. Many of you reading this work may think that the advanced level is reserved only for those students aspiring to professional careers in music. While currently the majority of guitarists in this level are aspiring or professional guitarists, this need not be the case. The advanced level is reserved for players who can musically and technically function at a reasonably high level without the need of weekly lessons. There are a number of highly qualified amateurs playing other instruments who function independently in various musical groups. If someone has been seriously studying an instrument for more than three years, he would be able to function independently at that level. It does not mean that he can play more challenging pieces or develop new or more advanced techniques on his own (even though some can), but he can learn new music and perform at his current level, independent of a guitar teacher. A professional or aspiring professional, on the other hand, should be able to solve his technical problems and grow to their full musical potential. If they can do this, then what is the role of the guitar teacher at this level? Before answering this question, let us look at the difference between an advanced amateur and professional. The advanced amateur, for a variety of reasons, reached a point in the intermediate level where he stopped studying. He either continues to play or returns to playing the guitar at another time in his life. If he chooses to return to the study of the guitar, he usually returns at the level he left, intermediate; but, depending on his talent, independent work, and previous training, he may return as an advanced student. The advanced student possesses the skills and knowledge to do it alone. Let's look at what a teacher would do for such a guitar student.

The role of the guitar teacher for the aspiring or professional guitarist is that of a coach. A master's student in performance is expected to bring in a higher level of completed independent work than an undergraduate. The guitar teacher discusses issues that the student may have overlooked or shares their experiences concerning repertoire, performance, or music with the student. While the same six areas of teaching previously discussed still exist, the guitar teacher helps the student find the solution to problems they may encounter during or on the road to a professional career. What are some of the ways a teacher would help an advanced student?

Technique. The guitar teacher, in this advance level, would help the student regain their previous skills.

Rhythm & Theory. We would like to think that a guitar student in this level would not have any rhythm problems and would possess the necessary theory

skills needed to interpret the music he is playing. There are, however, musical genres that a performer might not have sufficient experience with, and that could present problems. Rhythmic modulation and modern notation are two areas that come to mind. Rhythmic modulations that occur in the chamber works of some contemporary composers may not have been studied or understood. There are techniques and approaches that can be taught to make it easier to deal with these and similar issues.

Practicing, as well as the other skills used in performing, is constantly evolving. There is more of a dialogue between guitar teacher and student and a sharing of ideas than an imparting of facts or procedures.

Interpretation. As with practicing, a student's interpretation is constantly evolving. The guitar teacher of this level must have experienced this type of growth and evolution in their own playing and teaching to be of help to a student. This growth would encompass not only interpretative issues, but also technical issues that allow a particular musical expression to take form.

Performance. These issues generally focus on programming, career development, or anxiety. Again, the most helpful guitar teachers are ones that are active in the field and have experienced and worked through these issues. No, you do not have to suffer from performance anxiety to be able to help a guitar student; but how knowledgeable will you be about the subject if you've never had to work through issues concerning performance?

DISCUSSION

A guitar teacher should find ways to relate to each student as an individual. While there are basic fundamentals and techniques that are relevant to all guitar music and students, it is important to integrate these elements into lesson plans that take advantage of each student's unique set of preferences and abilities. The process of teaching can actually be a teacher itself! Experience is the best way to learn something. Relating to students is a delicate blend of assessing their needs and knowing how to respond. A teacher strives to fulfill the students' educational needs, but a teacher also treats the students as interesting individuals and worthy people. Through a teacher's respect for them and their abilities, students sense that the teacher truly cares what they learn.

A professional relationship between the teacher-students is a very important factor for the guitar teaching process. Very often students ask about par-

ticularly different appearances in their music environments or mass mediums. Our opinion is that teachers should be providing descriptive advanced answers on the questions without qualitative estimations. Actually, teachers should avoid direct answers without progressive influence to the students. Sometimes students are passive on some topics of guitar theory and they ask about emphasis of these topics. There are basic principles of music that apply to all instruments and not just the guitar. A good working knowledge of musical theory is beneficial to all musicians. We still think it is very important to tie in any theory to a practical working relationship with the guitar when possible. There are some aspects of theory that are esoteric in nature and do not seem to apply to the art of playing the guitar in an obvious sense.

Live discussion will open the question about reading the music in order to be a successful guitarist. In fact, many students are surprised that some guitarists in the commercial sphere do not know how to read music, but they play guitar professionally. This kind of question in classical guitar is surpassed. It only holds for the notable guitarists in popular music and other genres. However, we will emphatically say that reading music is a big benefit to every guitarist. If a guitarist wishes to do session work, or play in situations where charts are required, then reading music is an important skill. Reading music does open up a vast world of music to us, and it is an obligation for every educated guitarist. The learning process never ends for novice or advanced players. Even experienced guitarists choose to take lessons from time to time to inspire their development. We advocate learning from a wide variety of sources.

Teaching pieces from classic guitar composers as well as guitar transcribed pieces of so-called *nonguitar* composers should be enjoyment for teacher. Every piece has specific characteristics and earns something new. We think that playing classical guitar opens up creative possibilities for any guitarist.

Guitar music industry personnel and society in general have a need to categorize guitar music and place everything in inflexible little file folders. We understand that teachers need a point of reference for what they are trying to find, but we do not sit down and try to consciously say that we are baroque guitarists or a romantic guitarists or any of that. However, it is a fair question for prospective students to ask because we probably would not be the ideal teachers for aspiring classical guitarists.

The quality of the guitar is very important, but it is not necessary to have the most expensive gui-

tar to become a good guitarist. Many legendary artists have learned and created their music with cheap or sub-standard instruments. It is still advisable to purchase guitar according to your personal budget, though higher-quality guitar will usually provide more reliability and gratification for the guitarist. The most vital characteristics to look for when purchasing a guitar is whether the guitar will stay in tune, and if the neck and weight of the instrument is comfortable to play for extended periods of time. If parents are buying a guitar for their child, it is good to tell them that they do not want to invest a lot of money in the guitar only to have the student lose interest, leaving an expensive instrument in their possession. On the other hand, if a cheaper poor-quality guitar is bought, it will not play easily or stay in tune, thus making it harder for the student to enjoy working with it. First time buyers should strike a compromise between quality and price to ensure the best possible results. It might be better to buy a respected brand name guitar because it could be easier to sell in the event that the student decides not to continue playing at some point.

On becoming a good guitar student, it is different for every student and depends upon the student's attitude, level of dedication, and aptitude. We live in a society that demands instant gratification. Playing the guitar well requires a commitment of practice and passion. Some guitar students seem to have a *natural talent* for the guitar and progress at a faster rate than others. Regardless of aptitude, all good students realize that it takes time to develop competency with the guitar. It is not an easy endeavour and it requires the student to put in hours of work with patience and focus. We are often seduced by the glamorous image that popular guitarists seem to have, or by the inspirational sounds we might hear from a favourite local player. Good guitar students make things look easy, when, in fact, playing the guitar is a demanding physical and mental activity. Proficiency can definitely be achieved with a love for the guitar and good work habits. As far as lessons are concerned, a good working relationship is a two-way street. The guitar student must not only put in the effort, but the teacher must do his best to impart his knowledge and encouragement upon the prospective guitarist.

CONCLUSION

As a classical guitar advocate, our main purpose is always to be on the lookout for new ways to enhance guitar teaching and motivate students. To summarize, being a good guitar teacher is a confluence of several different things. Most importantly, one must have

mastery over a given subject. If one does not have facility with the guitar pieces, one cannot help another to learn it because there would be limitations in how that piece could be presented. Second in importance, one must know guitar-teaching techniques that act as the communication device between student and teacher. Finally, one must know how to relate.

Teachers could assign some good guitar book as a supplement to a student's standard guitar *curriculum*, or pieces could be selected to fill out the gap in the guitar literature, or as an independent approach for the student who has already attained basic necessary guitar skills. In other words, good guitar books provide a possibility for the above important guitar teaching goals to be realized in an easier way, and guitar teachers may choose guitar pieces freely according to their teaching syllabus.

Recommended teaching style is a work in progress, and probably always will be if a teacher hopes to retain a beginner's mindset. It is essential for both student and teacher to strike a healthy balance between acquiring theoretical knowledge and throwing all of the rules out the window. While it is very important to learn new concepts, theories and techniques in guitar playing, over-analysis of things can lead to an excessively rigid and mechanical approach to making guitar music.

A successful guitar teacher

- shares unselfish knowledge openly with anyone who seeks it,
- encourages each and every student to find their own unique voice and calling with the guitar,
- has a positive force of inspiration for his students through a relationship of mutual respect and genuine care for their progress. We wish to foster and contribute to a teachers' sense of enthusiasm and passion for playing guitar,
- conducts oneself in a professional manner (*i.e.* being timely, encouraging, courteous, responsible, and using common sense),
- is a source of information for his students. If the teacher does not know the answer to something, then he should want to either find it for them and himself, or direct the student to someone else who can.
- is not satisfied with less than his best. He is committed to finding out what his best can be. He accepts his limitations and works to reduce them year after year.
- is patient and persistent in his search for excellence. Progress is slow and only achieved through persistence. He has faith in his goals and cannot be swayed. It is a recognized fact that it takes ten years

to make a musician and a lifetime to keep him there. Even this is a modest estimate.

- is committed to artistic expression as the goal of performance. Mastery of guitar technique is essential, because it frees the teacher.
- rejoices in the technical and artistic triumphs of other colleagues. He supports his colleagues on their hard-won victories. He learns from their work.
- remains open to other points of view. He considers all possible musical interpretations, matters of fingering and posture, etc. He always seeks constructive criticism.

In the end, a teacher wishes to say that guitar-teaching philosophy is not a magic formula. It is only an individual approach in the transfer of knowledge from teacher to students.

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