

GUITARRA!

The Art of the Classical Guitar

Foundation for Excellence



Ren Merry



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ren Merry began studying the classical guitar in the private studio of Richard Pick in Chicago, IL. Later he studied with Paul Henry at Roosevelt University from where he received his Master's degree in guitar performance. Following his graduation he moved back to Nagaland, India and taught choral music and classical guitar at Patkai Christian College where he established the classical guitar program and also helped form the Patkai Guitar Sinfonia comprising of fifty guitarists. The Patkai Guitar Ensemble of eight members which resulted out of this program came to the US in the Summer of 1999 for a series of concerts, and one of the members competed at the GFA International Solo Competition in Columbus, GA. Upon returning to the United States in 1997, he taught choral music and classical guitar for seven years at a private 6-12 school in Opelousas, Louisiana.

In 2005 Ren moved to Greeley, Colorado to pursue his doctoral degree in Music Education. As a graduate student at the University of Northern Colorado, he studied the classical guitar with Jonathan Leathwood. There he received his doctoral degree in Music Education in the Fall of 2010. His dissertation was on guitar teaching methodology titled: *A Paradigm for Effective Pre-College Classical Guitar Methodology: A Case Study of Two Models of Effective Instruction*. This dissertation was selected for presentation at the Guitar Foundation of America Convention's Education Lectures in 1997 and 2010. It was also selected for presentation during the 2010 at the Colorado Music Educators Association Convention in Colorado Springs. In 2010 he receive the Lifetime Achievement Award in Classical Guitar education during the Calcutta International Classical Guitar Festival and Competition held in Calcutta, India. He also received the Governor's Award in Music Education in the Spring of 2013 from the Government of Nagaland, India. Besides teaching guitar privately, Dr. Merry also teaches choral music, AP Music Theory and classical guitar classes at a 6-12 school in Greeley, Colorado.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The first section is written specifically for the teacher and more advanced players, and serves as an introduction to the classical guitar, historical perspectives on technique and the growth of the classical guitar in higher education and public schools. The next few pages introduce the student to the basic knowledge of the guitar such as name of the six strings, parts of the guitar, and sitting position. The guitar being first known as a chordal instrument, I have felt the necessity to introduce students to basic chord vocabulary, including chordal progressions in various keys. Melodic lines are provided for the teacher to support these chordal progressions and exercises upon which improvisations may be executed as needed. Students are then introduced to basic arpeggio patterns for the right hand.

The next lesson covers playing single melodic lines using “i” and “m” fingers of the right hand in alternation. Simple improvised melodic lines are introduced, including *Twinkle, Twinkle* starting on the third (G) string which is taught by listening, watching, and imitation. Once students are used to the concept of alternation and the use of *rest strokes*, reading music on the first string is introduced. This is followed by playing single melodic lines accompanied by the teacher. Various exercises are provided as they sequentially progress from the first to the sixth string. When all the six strings are covered, students are introduced to reading and playing music in two lines.

Solo literature is introduced as students gradually become acquainted with playing music in two lines. Musical pieces in different keys are then introduced beginning with the key of G using one sharp. The rest of the book consists of various solo and ensemble pieces arranged in order of difficulty. There is a section in the book that deals mainly with technical exercises, designed to strengthen the right and left hands. The knowledge of scales is an indispensable part of becoming a skilled musician. Basic scales have been included for practicing, however, students are strongly encouraged to get a copy of Andres Segovia's *Diatonic Major and Minor Scales* published by Columbia Music Co. for extensive coverage of scales.

A note about the fingerings:

There is more than one way to finger the notes with the left hand and I have left it to the discretion of the discerning teacher to give proper guidance. However, I am also convinced that in some cases certain fingerings are more logical and produce better musical results than others, and with that in mind I have exercised the liberty to give specific fingerings where applicable.

NOTE TO THE TEACHER

First of all, thank you for considering this book to be used in your private lessons as well as in the classroom. Please feel free to *ad lib* as necessary on the parts written for the teacher. I would strongly suggest focusing a considerable amount of time on good tone production, especially during the stages where the student is playing single melodic lines. Playing with nails can be kept as an option. As students gain more experience as players, they will gradually see the benefits of playing with nails.

Creating music and learning improvisational skills is an area that I strongly emphasize. This provides the opportunity for making music to be a rich and meaningful lifetime experience. I strongly encourage my advanced students to create their own musical compositions or arrange music that they like. Theoretical analysis and harmonic sensibility must be an important part of the learning process.

One piece that I have used effectively for teaching improvisation and learning “by ear” is *Malaguena*. Students like learning this piece because of its musical simplicity and aesthetic qualities. The piece is included in the book, but I have consistently taught it simply by means of hearing and imitation first. *A Minor Improv* is a fun piece where students are given the opportunity to learn improvisational skills using the A minor scale. The entire ensemble plays the theme (head) in two/three parts. In the section where the group plays soft background chords, students may venture and take up the challenge to improvise individually.

The sight-reading exercises and solo pieces cover only up to four sharps and three flats just to serve as an introduction to playing music in various keys. Please feel free to use supplementary materials as necessary.

Once again, thank you for using this book and may it come as a helpful tool in making your teaching experience richly rewarding.

Sincerely,

Ren Merry