

Forward

This book is intended for the beginning student with no previous guitar experience. The goal is that the student acquires basic proficiency in three distinct areas: popular, classical and ensemble playing.

Popular Style

Students will learn all the basic chords as well as a variety of extended chords, including bar chords. Chords are always learned in the context of playing popular songs, from a variety of genres, so that there is immediate and relevant application. Playing with the recordings of these songs is not only fun, but it also teaches the students how to listen to and play to a beat. Students will learn all songs by reading song charts, which contain the chords, strumming rhythms, form and other details of the song.

The class final for the rock portion of this book is to learn and perform the iconic song, *Stairway to Heaven*. It's makes for an excellent final since it includes a variety of chords and strumming patterns, some with demanding and aggressive rhythms, as well as a variety of fingerstyle patterns. Beginning in Lesson 13, students will learn this song section by section as it correlates to the objective of each lesson. By Lesson 20, students will be equipped to not only learn to play this song proficiently, but also *authentically*. That, in and of itself, is a huge trophy for any guitar player!

Guitar Ensemble

There are significant reasons and benefits to including ensemble music in a guitar curriculum. The first is that for students (or really, for any musician) to perform ensemble music with other students is a magical. More than that, in the context of music education, students learn the practical skill of preparing music for a performance. This means not only learning their own part (both reading it and technical preparation), but also in rehearsal, listening to their part in the context of the whole, considering important musical elements such as balance, tone, phrasing, dynamics, tempo fluctuations and other expressive devices. Lastly, for my program, building this fundamental skill now prepares students for the following years in my program when the guitar ensemble is an active performing ensemble.

Ensemble playing actually starts in chapter 3, when students begin learning to read music in the context of playing duets with the teacher. Like learning chords in the context learning popular songs, learning to read music in the context of playing duets not only gives students a relevant and enjoyable application to acquiring reading skills, but it also teaches students to how to listen, the most important skill in music.

Classical Guitar

By the second semester, students will have become proficient enough in music reading skills to begin learning classical guitar. Classical guitar technique is presented methodically, beginning with simple arpeggios and ending with three-part studies. All repertoire is taken from standard classical guitar literature. While developing technical skill is obviously a primary objective here, the goal is more than that. As important as it is, technique is only physical. No one, including the performer, wants to hear only fingers playing notes. From the beginning, this book emphasizes that what makes all music, but in particular, classical guitar, meaningful to both the audience and the player is when the player is able to express how they hear the music – their interpretation, framed within the perimeters of the composer's intentions. The function of technique is to give us the tools to articulate what hear. It's never only about the fingers, but about the inner ear. When students are able to play what they hear, the music becomes *far* more personal because they are expressing their thoughts and emotions through the notes.

Subsequently, the music becomes so much more meaningful to them as well as to their audience. When students internalize the music and make expression the goal, technical mastery will be automatic.

NOTE: As a supplement to this book, it is highly recommended that students and teachers utilize the eBook found on my website, www.TheGuitarClassroom.com.