

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. Additionally, students will learn all songs by reading song charts, which contain the chords, strumming rhythms, form and other details of the song. Thus, beginning with Lesson 1, students will begin to develop music-reading proficiency.

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. Please note that learning the whole song may not be practical in your classroom setting. However, it is suggested that students learn at least the introduction (rehearsal letters A and B on page 106).

Guitar Ensemble

There are significant reasons and benefits to including ensemble music in a guitar curriculum. First of all, performing music with other students is a magical experience. Secondly, it brings immediate application to the music-reading process. Thirdly, students learn the practical skill of preparing music for a performance. This means not only learning their own part (the notes and rhythms and technical preparation), but also in the in the context of the whole, students learn how to perform their part so that within the ensemble, there is balance (volume), blend (tone) and continuity in phrasing, dynamics, tempo fluctuations and other expressive devices. Lastly, for my program, learning these skills prepares students for the following years in my program when they will perform in my guitar ensemble.

Ensemble-playing skill begins 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 an important objective here, the goal is more than that. As important as technique, it is only the physical component of music-making. But music is more than fingers playing notes. What makes music meaningful to both the audience and the player is *how* those notes are played – the expression and emotion within those notes. The function of technique is to give us the physical tools to articulate what we hear in our inner ear. When students are able express what they both understand and feel inside the music, the music becomes *far* more meaningful and personal to them, and subsequently, to their audience.

NOTE: It is highly recommended that teachers utilize the eBook found on TheGuitarClassroom.com.