

The McDonald Approach to Guitar Instruction

Deep Background

I use an eclectic approach to guitar instruction, which is loosely organized on the principals of the Ruggiero Emilia region of Italy, known for its insightful contributions to early childhood learning. This eclecticism will include ideas and materials from several “schools” of guitar instruction, including Tarrega, Pujol, Shearer, Berg, Glise, Carlevaro, Segovia, and the wealth of new materials now available from lesser-known pedagogues recently available on the world wide web.

The Role of the Music as the Second Instructor

After an eight-week introduction to note reading, rhythm, and the fundamentals of posture and hand position, the student will begin playing “real” music as well as etudes. We will use this music to identify further areas of study, depending on the needs and the background of the student.

I will approach the music from several viewpoints in order to develop a criteria based aesthetic from which the student can evaluate his/her performance and begin to judge the quality of the music. These viewpoints will include the listener, player, teacher, and composer.

Long-term Projects

Samples of long-term projects include “right hand arpeggios (finger-picking)”, “sight-reading”, or “barre-chords”. Music is often chosen to demonstrate graded achievement in a particular skill. Again, skill acquisition will be approached from as many viewpoints as needed.

The Guitar Teacher as Co-Learner

It is incumbent upon the teacher to observe the student and find common ground upon which the student and instructor have shared experience. Using painting, football, literature, etc. to provide analogous understanding is crucial. As a result, the teacher needs to observe the student, discover the real needs of the student, whether the student realizes them or not, and design an individualized curriculum that will be successful for that student. No “guitar school” will fit everyone.

Documentation

Each student will be encouraged to keep a “play-book”, which is a collection of finished pieces that demonstrate and remind the student of their successes. Also included will be any exercises, repertoire work-up records, and other materials. Beginning in the Fall of 2006, the student will be regularly recorded on digital video.

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