

Washington Guitar Society

No. 51

July/August 2000

10 Steps to the Stage-Part I

By Corey Whitehead

The summer is a time when we should be improving our facility and expanding our repertoire.

In order to improve our facility guitarists need to focus on the problematic technical issues within the repertoire we have programmed for the next recital, concert, or recording. Brief periods of intense concentration on specific issues will reduce the probability for error in performance under the most adverse circumstances.

In order for guitarists to expand their repertoire in an effective and timely manner it is imperative to become a fluent sight-reader. Sight-reading practice should be prefaced with some practical methodology for reading music on the guitar that categorizes and illustrates melodic and harmonic fretboard visualization techniques. I will introduce some of these techniques in a later article

Intensive periods of reading melodic and rhythmic patterns, accompanied by like periods of reading unfamiliar monophonic, polyphonic and homophonic passages in various positions, should be a part of the daily practice routine. This routine will be addressed in another article.

In this article I will only discuss technical obstacles to accurate sight-reading and facile musicality.

Find your ten most problematic technical issues and create three exercises regarding each problem using examples from your repertoire. Perform each one in an extremely focused manner with a timer set to go off after three-minutes, this should take you a little more than 90 minutes to polish your technique.

1) Scale velocity, string crossing, and synchronization.

Velocity- right hand velocity can be practiced on a single string. Regardless of the right hand presentation, nail shape, nail type, attack angle, or stroke; all guitarists can be assured that lighting fast preparation of each successive finger on the string will produce results at slow tempi. In the same amount of time it takes you to snap your fingers, you should be ready and waiting with the next finger on the string. This produces a staccato effect. Start at 60 beats per minute and choose a rhythm from a scale in a piece you are working on, such as Villa-Lobos *Etude* #7. Take the pick-up notes and the first measure of the piece for example:



Practice this example for three minutes. Increase the tempo on the metronome one notch each day.

String-crossing- practice the right hand string-crossings from the first measure of the same etude in the same manner described above.



Synchronization: Play the scale as it is written without regard for tempo. Prepare the left hand finger and right hand fingers simultaneously in succession in the same amount of time it takes to snap your fingers. Then practice the scale in the manner prescribed in ex. 1 and 2 starting at 40 beats per minute:



continued on page 3.....

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We have been very fortunate to have a steady supply of fine performers every month for some time now. If you have not been coming to meetings lately, I hope you will soon. These have been really well attended programs and they are free. Open stage has also been varied and fun, but we still have room for plenty more of you. I hope to see you soon.

John Rodgers

WGS/ WCM MEETINGS

The Washington Guitar Society (WGS) has meetings one Friday of every month. Specific dates and performers are listed in the calendar of events. Meetings with a featured performer begin with an open stage from 7:30-8:30 pm and continue with the performance at 8 pm. The meetings are free and open to the public. A hat will be passed for voluntary contributions to the artist. For information call John Rodgers at (202) 686-1020.

WGS OPEN STAGE

The Washington Guitar Society hosts an open stage before each of its meetings. This is a great time to try pieces out for a very interested audience. It's not a competition, just plain fun. The open stages start at 7:30 followed by the featured performer at 8pm. The next open stage is set for Friday, July 21st. It will take place at the Chevy Chase Community Center, 5601 Connecticut Ave., NW. It's just south of Chevy Chase Circle at the corner of Connecticut Ave. and McKinley St., across the street from the Avalon movie theater. There is plenty of free parking.

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FROM THE EDITOR

I am humbled by the task of publishing and editing this fine newsletter to the high standards placed before me by Kevin Vigil. Please offer your suggestions to me, as I will surely have room for improvement.

I am new to the D.C. area and look forward to meeting you, as I am very active performing and teaching in the metro area. I am teaching privately at Paco de Malaga's Guitar Gallery on Connecticut St. N.W. in D.C. as well as working on my Doctoral Lecture-Recital Document on the *Sonata para Guitarra* (1933) by Antonio José (1902-1936).

Anyone who is interested in contributing articles or ideas for the publication of this newsletter feel free to contact me at: coreywhitehead@va.freei.net. Compositions and arrangements of music are welcome.

Corey Whitehead
Professor of Guitar
Duke Ellington School of the Arts
3500 R St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007
Home phone (703) 979-6322



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Baltimore, Md 21227
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10 Steps continued.....

2) Slurs in monophonic and polyphonic musical textures.

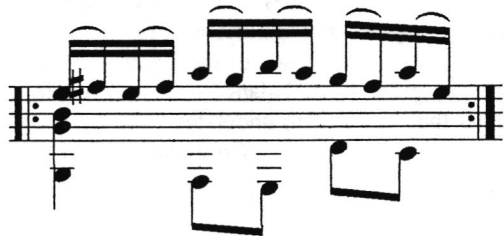
If slurs are performed in a single line or part, the performer is able to make more use of arm weight to execute ascending and descending slurs. This puts less stress on the smaller muscles and tendons to execute the entire motion. Rather try to support the pulling or hammering motion of the fingers with weight from the left arm. Relaxing the shoulder and arm completely creates the weight, that can assist a more rigid curved finger in producing a greater volume of sound. Measures 13-14 of *Etude #3* by Villa-Lobos can be used as a hammer-on exercise.



Measures 3-4 of *Etude #3* consists mostly of pull-offs can be used as a single line pull-off exercise because the accompaniment is on open strings and does not require fixation of the arm.



Measures 9-10 are an example of a combination of fixed fingers in the lower voice and slurs in the upper voice. The hammer-ons in beat one are most audible if you don't attack the e2 too forcefully and the f#2 is struck very quickly with the 2nd finger pulling the 1st finger along sympathetically. On beat two the 4th finger is pulling off of the a2 in an awkward presentation to the fingerboard. Keeping the 4th finger rigid and slightly turning the wrist outward here produces a solid slur. The remaining slurs in that example are similar.



Practice each of these examples as exercises with the timer set for three minutes. Perform these very slowly at first. These are only examples for illustration of point that one should look closely at their repertoire for technical challenges that if rehearsed properly, will improve their facility and execution of their repertoire.

3) Right-Hand Arpeggio Patterns

Taking for example a commonly used pattern of right hand fingers *mipi* or *amim* on three adjacent strings, (E,B,G,B) and replacing the combinations with *ampi* greatly increase your ability to control the rhythm and increase the speed comfortably off the dial on your metronome. The following example is a simplification of the first half of measure 13 of *Elegy* by Johann Kaspar Mertz. Prepare each successive finger as quickly as you can to develop a more secure right hand.



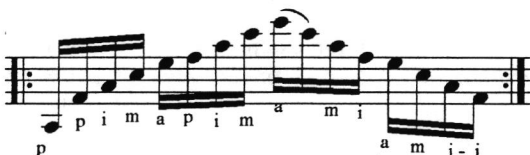
Playing an ascending *pima* arpeggio on strings 4 through 1 with a fully prepared hand on all four strings enables the most efficient motion of the fingers into the palm. Starting from a position that resembles a closely stacked staircase ascending from *i* to *m* to *a* can increase your security in the right hand. This is a simplified passage from the *Elegy* by J.K. Mertz.



Sextuplets performed *pimami* are best executed with a combination of full preparation ascending and individual consecutive preparation descending. This example is from *Etude #11* by Villa-Lobos.



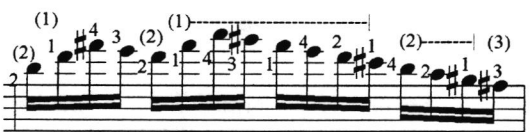
The previous arpeggio examples did not require you to play two or more notes on a string. Nor did they require slurs or shifts. Only a simple left-hand presentation change was required in the first of the Mertz examples. In addition to these possibilities we must also be prepared to play stepwise passages within the course of an arpeggio section. These are measures 50-51 of *Etude #2* by Villa-Lobos.



The next example requires you to hammer-on to a string without striking it with the right hand on beat four. It also contains a shift using the 2nd finger as a guide on the second string. This is the first measure of *Etude #2* Villa-Lobos.



Musical score for "The Rose Tree" in G major, 2/4 time. The score is for a single melodic line. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody starts on a whole note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a half note B4. The lyrics "The Rose Tree" are written below the notes. The score continues with a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics "The Rose Tree" are repeated. The score ends with a double bar line.



Steps five through ten will be included in a later issue of this newsletter. Please feel free to use musical examples from your own repertoire to create your practice routine. This also serves as a warm-up routine that solidifies the performance of this repertoire. I use a different warm up routine for each program I perform; each is specific to the technical problems in that program. See if some of this works for you, please send me your feedback at coreywhitehead@va.freei.net

Adam Tully July 21, 8:00pm Chevy Chase Community Center, 5601 Connecticut Ave., NW. It's just south of Chevy Chase Circle at the corner of Connecticut Ave. and McKinley St., across the street from the Avalon movie theater. There is plenty of free parking.

Andrew Zohn August 25, 8:00pm Chevy Chase Community Center, 5601 Connecticut Ave., NW. It's just south of Chevy Chase Circle at the corner of Connecticut Ave. and McKinley St., across the street from the Avalon movie theater. There is plenty of free parking.

Nicki Lehrer Sept. 3, 6:00-6:30pm The Kennedy Center Millennium Stage. Free. Nicki is also performing at the Renaissance festival outside of Annapolis Md. on August the 26th and 27th

Christopher Dunn Sept.3, 6:00-7:00pm
The Kennedy Center Millennium Stage,
Free.

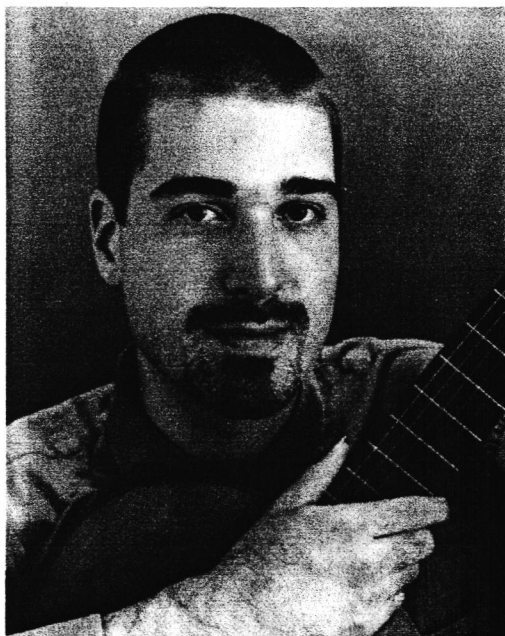
If you would like your next performance listed,
please email info to
coreywhitehead@va.freei.net

On June 23rd Piotr Zielinski gave a musically spirited and well-executed recital for the WGS that included Bach's *Chaconne from BWV 1004*, Barrios' *La Catedral*, Britten's *Nocturnal Op. 70*, and Ginastera's *Sonata Op. 70*.

His performance of the Bach *Chaconne* exhibited great tone, balance and phrased in a manner that was easy to understand and enjoy.

Corey Whitehead

Adam Tully to perform for WGS on July 21st



Adam Tully is a multi-talented guitarist who has been playing classical, Latin American, and Spanish music for most of his young career. Born in New York and raised in Washington, D.C., he studied classical guitar with John Rodgers and flamenco with Paco de Malaga in High School.

He then enrolled in the Oberlin Conservatory in 1994 and spent six months in 1995 studying tango in Buenos Aires, Argentina with Anibal Arias. The following year he worked in San Francisco, California with the Argentinean group *La Huella*, and other Latin American projects.

Adam has also spent time in Cuba and Mexico collecting and playing traditional songs. He is currently studying classical and flamenco guitar with Dennis Koster at the American Institute of guitar and teaching Latin American Music at the same institute. Adam recently completed a Bachelor's Degree at New York University and plays with the groups *Los Jardineros* and *Los Inolvidables*. He recorded his first CD of classical, flamenco, and Latin American music in 1999.

Andrew Zohn to perform for WGS on August 25th

Guitarist, composer/arranger Andrew Zohn has distinguished himself as one of the foremost young musicians in America. He has been hailed as "One of the finest guitarists of his generation." -Anthony Morris, host of the nationally syndicated radio program, *Guitar Alive*. *Soundboard Magazine* has described him as possessing "excellent musicality and awareness of style." *Classical Guitar Magazine* has described his arrangements as "charming and entirely convincing. More of the same please!" He has won top prizes in five national and international competitions including the 1997 Stotsenberg International Solo Competition, the 1992 and 1993 Guitar Foundation of America International Competition, the 1992 Music Teachers' National Collegiate Artist Competition, and the 1992 Kingsville Young Artist international Competition. Dr. Zohn has been the recipient of numerous grants and scholarships for his academic work.

In addition to concertizing throughout North America and in Europe as a soloist, Andrew Zohn has been active as a chamber musician and orchestral soloist. He has been a featured artist with The New World Symphony, the North Carolina School of the Arts Symphony, The University of Texas Symphony, and the Richardson Symphony in Dallas.

Andrew Zohn holds a doctorate of music degree from Florida State University where he served as a teaching assistant, a master of music from the University of Texas, and a bachelor's degree from the North Carolina School of the Arts. He has been a faculty member of Birmingham Southern College, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and the Seminari di Primavera Corso Internazionale in Imperia, Italy. Currently, he resides in Georgia, where he serves on the faculty of Columbus State University. He began composing for the guitar in 1998. Original compositions by Andrew Zohn are published through Les Productions D'Oz, Canada, and his transcriptions for guitar are available through Tuscany Publications.

