

# Washington Guitar Society

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## 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:



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