

10 Steps to the Stage-Part II

By Corey Whitehead

The following lessons are a continuation of the first four "steps to the stage" from the article I wrote for the July/August issue. These exercises are aimed at improving facility and creating security in both hands. In order to improve facility guitarists need to focus on the problematic technical issues within the repertoire they 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.

The issues covered in the first article were 1) Scale velocity, string crossing, and synchronization. 2) Slurs in monophonic and polyphonic musical textures. 3) Right hand arpeggio patterns. 4) Right-hand arpeggios with left-hand synchronization.

The remaining exercises can be used as a warm up for a performance or rehearsal. 5) Right-hand finger independence. 6) Left-hand finger independence. 7) Vibrato 8) Relaxation 9) Visualization 10) Beginnings and endings. In this article I will only discuss right-hand finger independence.

5) Right-hand finger independence

Place the thumb on one of the bass strings, place the index finger on the third string, the middle finger on the second string and the ring finger on the first string. Make sure they are placed at the point where the nail and the flesh make contact at the same time and place on the string. The fingers on the right-hand should be stacked closely against one another so that they form a single unit that resembles a staircase ascending from the index finger up to the ring finger.

Now play only the thumb on one of the bass strings in quarter note rhythm at 60 bpm. Play the bass note while your fingers are placed in the previously described position. Do not move your fingers sympathetically. Watch the treble strings.

Are they moving at all? Play the thumb in this manner at faster and faster tempi until your thumb runs out of gas.

Next place all of the fingers on their proper strings, and play only the index finger while the middle, ring and thumb are fixed in their playing position. Use the same tempo and procedure described in the previous paragraph. Play only the index finger and do not lift or move the other fingers. Are the thumb, middle and ring fingers moving sympathetically? They should not move!

Then, place the fingers on the strings as before and play only the middle finger. Are the other fingers moving sympathetically? Don't let it happen to you!

Finally, place the fingers on the strings as before and play only the ring finger. Are the others moving sympathetically? Break the pattern of dependence! Liberate your fingers today!

If you thought that was easy, this next trick is just for you. Place all of the fingers down as before and play the thumb and index finger together. Do not move the other two.

Then, place the fingers down as before and play only the thumb and middle fingers. Do not move the other two fingers.

Next, place all the fingers down as before and play only the thumb and ring fingers. Do not move the other two fingers.

Ah, yes, you still think it is easy do you? Mmmmm? Well try placing them all down as before and play only the index and middle. Do not move the other two fingers. Then try to reset your hand to the starting position again and play only the middle and ring fingers.

Finally, the interdependency of your fingers will be quite evident when you fix the hand as before and only play the index and ring fingers as you fix the thumb and middle. Do not move your other fingers, oh, and try not to hang your tongue out of your mouth or drool on yourself.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our July performer, Adam Tully, became ill the week of his recital and had to cancel. We were most fortunate to have Corey Whitehead step in to substitute at the last minute. With about two days notice he played a fine recital for us. A truly impressive feat! In case you missed it, be sure to come to our September meeting, where he will be our featured performer, playing an all new program.

On August 25 we had an unusually large audience for Andrew Zohn's performance. In past years we have often not had performers in July or August, so it was really great to have such a turnout.

I know we have had a problem with excess noise from the air conditioning system this summer. We have several possible remedies in the works. We'll keep you informed on this. It's been great to see so many of you showing up this summer. Please keep it up and bring your friends and families.

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

Please offer your suggestions to me, as I will surely have room for improvement.

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

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