

# **Selected Method Books Summary**

## **Solo Guitar Playing Vol. 1, Frederick Noad, Schirmer, 1971, 1999**

One of the most popular method books in use today. Recently updated and made even more pertinent this method has many pluses such as: 1) Very good pictures and diagrams of the hands, sitting and posture, 2) Self tests on theory and guitar symbols and terms, 3) Interesting, musical and progressive exercises that teach the first position notes as well as upper positions. 4) Enough written explanation that is not too wordy or overwhelming. The format Noad uses is to introduce an idea, give exercises to support it and then present pieces with study notes to learn. The pieces Noad introduces are not as well graded as his exercises but in the 1994 edition this has improved. Noad's upper position exercises are over fingered and in Vol. 1 he doesn't present history or theory as much as in his second volume. This method is especially good for the more talented or gifted student.

## **Beginning to Learn Guitar, Frederick Noad, Schirmer, 1980's**

Much better paced for beginners than the popular "Solo Guitar Playing." Easier to handle for beginners because the material is more systematic, learnable quickly and it is much easier to finish this book in 6 months. Noad starts out with simple familiar melodies and makes a smooth transition to easy works by Carulli and Carcassi. Student advances in a steady manner. More theory and chord work with a more varied and historical repertoire for beginners would make this text an ideal method. Volume One of this method only teaches the first position.

## **Classic Guitar Technique (Vol. 1), Aaron Shearer, Franco Colombo, 1959**

Originally one of the most popular method books in modern times. Shearer very methodically introduces the strings one at a time and then right away music in two parts. For the purpose of developing fingers and thumb opposition and coordinating music in two parts this method is excellent. Most of the exercises are open strings in the bass with an upper melody that moves in contrast. Until the excellent choice of pieces and studies from the Classical period are encountered at the back of the book, most of the early pieces are composed by Aaron Shearer. This makes for a method of similar sounding works that are in need of musical imagination. Many of the comments on technique are out dated in the 1959 edition but the second edition written 30 years later addressed those issues and making the 2nd edition much more up to date and relevant.

## **Learning the Classic Guitar, Aaron Shearer (pt. 1 -3), Mel Bay Publications, 1990**

Introduces student to the Shearer technique in volume one with numerous writings and pictures explaining every aspect of playing. In Vol. 2 ( reading music), he starts with the 3rd and 4th strings open and combines solfege with note reading. Shearer has the

student start with the thumb alone playing open strings. Note reading exercises are written as duets. Shearer later introduces two part music with open strings as bass notes. Some very good arpeggio studies in the back of the book. Most of the music is composed by Shearer himself or Peabody Conservatory graduate Alan Hirsh.

### **A Modern Approach to Classical Guitar, Charles Duncan, Hal Leonard, 1981**

Volumes (1-3). In volume one the 60 page method culminates with playing two notes together with fingers and thumb. The first part of the method teaches the basic strokes, teaches note reading along with a few written exercises to support the theory explanation. Large print would make this method useful for a younger student. Multi-volume approach would inspire certain students whose incentive is to work through a book. Many familiar folk melodies in monophonic texture. Many of those melodies could be harmonized by chords and strumming or arpeggiating could be introduced along with them.

## **Historical Methods**

### **New Guitar method, Dionisio Aguado, Tecla Editions, 1843**

The most detailed and thorough of the early guitar methods. A complete study of guitar technique with many musical examples, pieces and etudes to guide the player through the development of playing. This method is still relevant today because many of the essentials of guitar technique are already in Aguado's method. Written explanations with accompanying musical examples provide explanation to such topics as Aguado's tripod and the position of the guitar and the player, string intonation is covered, how the left hand contributes to producing full and rounded tones, holding note of one part while the notes of the other move, legato, vibrato, apoyando, damping, stabilizing the left and right hand, balance, expression and "how to give feeling to the music," plus many of his etudes and pieces with exercises on intervals, scales, arpeggios and chords. All fingering, phrasing, dynamics, metronome markings and other indications are Aguado's own.

### **Method for the Spanish Guitar, Ferdinando Sor, Da Capo Press, 1850**

Sor's method is mostly written explanation. It starts with the instruments wood, action, and guitar builders of the time. Further information on positioning, the instrument according to Sor must be supported by a table top. Sor talks about comparing the French and Italian ways of constructing a guitar. A discussion of the fingers of the left and right hand tell of the advantage in extending the fingers as opposed to curving them when playing. Timber is introduced as well as fingering in regard to melody. Note duration's is also discussed as well as his idea of the limited use of the "a" finger. Very short and very few exercises in the back of the book which deal with chords, arpeggios and the complete notes on each string covering all the positions. Method ends with ensemble music for strings with voice with guitar.

### **Carcassi Classical Guitar Method, ca. 1890**

The method consists of three parts, the first, beginning with an introductory chapter on the rudiments of music, explains proper position of holding the instrument, gives clear instructions in fingering for left and right hand, presents scales, chords, preludes and simple pieces all arranged progressively and by key. The second part gives examples of special effects—slurred notes, *legato*, *staccato*, trills, *vibrato*, grace notes, harmonics—followed by practical studies in the 4th, 5th, 7th, 9th position and scales in thirds, sixths, octaves and tenths, again linking positions by key. The third part is a collection of 50 short pieces progressing in different grades of difficulty. These 50 studies further improve execution, musicality and upper position familiarity for the student. This method was later supplemented by a volume of "Twenty-five Melodic and Progressive Etudes, Op. 60" which have become standard etudes for the guitar.

### **Metodo per Chitarra Op. 1, Mauro Giuliani, Berben, ca. 1810**

More like a collection of studies and exercises than a method. Giuliani includes his 120 arpeggios in all combinations as well as his 16 exercises for the left hand with broken intervals in sixths, octaves, tenths and thirds. The third section of his method contains short etudes emphasizing such things as holding basses for their full value, dampening and muting strings, hammers and pull offs, guide fingers, Appoggiatura, ornaments and glissandos. The method concludes with twelve progressive lessons in the back of the book. All the exercises and studies are written by Mauro Giuliani and he introduces them with two or three sentences of pertinent guidance on what to learn from the exercise or how to better deliver the notes.

### **Complete Method, Fernando Carulli, Ricordi publications, 1819**

Starts with a scale covering the complete notes of the first position followed by a chromatic scale in the first position and then continues with exercises that start with bass notes first. The method is short on written explanation and introduces the bar chords very early. Extremely good exercises for arpeggio and first position scale development. All of the compositions are written by Carulli and contain many of his well know works. Chapters on slurs, ornaments and an especially good coverage of intervals, and upper positions are also introduced. 20 duets written by Carulli are found at the back of the method.