

EASY

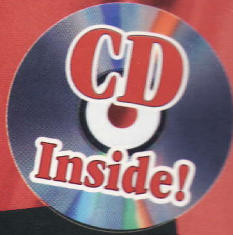
# CLASSICAL GUITAR RECITAL

*Ben Verdery*



Easy Repertoire and Performance Tips for the Beginning Player

- Includes information on how to prepare and present a recital
- Provides tips on technique, interpretation, practicing and dealing with performance anxiety
- Features new pieces by Benjamin Verdery, Anthony Newman, Frederic Hand and others, as well as important music from the standard repertoire



**BENJAMIN VERDERY**  
EDITED BY NATHANIEL GUNOD





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Track 1

There is a compact disc available for this book. It includes performances by Benjamin Verdery of all the pieces. Use it to help insure that you are interpreting the rhythms correctly and capturing the style of each work. The symbol above will be shown with each piece.

The track number below the symbol corresponds to the piece you want to hear.

Track 1 will help you tune to this CD.

Enjoy!

# FOREWORD

The goal of this book is to present pieces that can make a highly enjoyable and fulfilling recital. Students often wait to learn such virtuoso works as Tárrega's *Recuerdos*, Bach's *Lute Suites* or Villa-Lobos' *Études* before playing their first recital. Playing a short concert of easier pieces will be a great step towards becoming a better performer. Communicating a piece to your audience with musical conviction is the essential goal in performing. This piece could be a musical monument, like the J.S. Bach *Chaconne*, or a two-minute gem, like Carolan's *Blind Mary*.

One of the many aspects about the guitar that I love is its ability to unveil a world of color and character in the course of a two to three minute piece. The guitar can act like a musical chameleon, sounding appropriate in so many different musical worlds. I hope the repertoire in this book exemplifies this.

The main idea behind collecting this group of pieces was to present them with the goal of a recital. The recital may be large or small, or an extremely private one involving you and your guitar and your favorite rug! I mostly hope that some of these pieces will bring joy into your life.

At the back of the book are two different programs. These are mere suggestions and you can choose to perform them exactly as they are or modify them. You may want to delete some of my program suggestions and insert some pieces you have already learned. The pieces in this book are not ordered in terms of difficulty. Feel free to learn them in any order. This is not a method book. These pieces raise many musical and technical issues. While some questions will be answered by the *Glossary of Terms and Signs* on page 46, there is no substitute for a good teacher.

I have written a group of essays that I hope will help you. These are brief and I should point out that many whole books have been written on similar topics. I urge you to ask other performers, friends, your teacher and the local library about topics that peak your interest. You will find many people with valuable knowledge about these subjects if you take the time to ask.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the composers whose contributions made this book a joy to work on: Daniel Asia, Freddie Bryant, Frederic Hand, Alan Jaffe and Owe Walter. The following people helped me immensely with the creation of this book: Elizabeth Batiuk, Seymour Bernstein, Amanda Cook, Bryce Desner, Nat Gunod, Ricardo Iznola, Lama Lobsang Ngodup, Michael Lorimer, John McMahon, Anthony Newman, Paul O'Dette, Ric Schmidt, Keith Underwood, Libby Van Cleve, Daniel Verdery and Jerry Willard. Also, thanks to John Kiehl, Dominic Barbera, Jesse Hammer and Nino Caccavale at Soundtrack Studio.

This book is dedicated to all the students who have studied with me through the years. A special thanks goes to those who studied with me at Yale and at various classes around North America and Europe. Many of them, during their lessons, endured my singing, shaker playing, breathing devices, plastic hammers and silly dolls!

I would like to single out Joseph Schwartz, whose love of the guitar and music was a great inspiration for this book. To Joe and all my students past and present: You have all taught me many valuable lessons. May you play for all those who will listen.



# BENJAMIN VERDERY

Benjamin Verdery began playing guitar at age 9 when his parents bought him a plastic Emence guitar. Prior to receiving this coveted gift, he was a self-proclaimed genius at what is now commonly called "air guitar." He graduated from the Emence to a \$25 steel-string guitar with strings so high off the fret board that he was able to do chin-ups on them. He played such songs as *Day Tripper* and *You Really Got Me* until his fingers bled. His parents took pity on him and bought him an electric guitar. After that, he was rarely seen doing any of his household



chores as he was constantly playing—at a great volume. Louder was better. He spent the years from ages 10-18 badgering guitarists into teaching him licks. He bought many rock albums. He played in several rock bands with many musicians who are still making great music. At age 17 he heard an all-Bach harpsichord recital. This inspired him to try to play Bach on electric guitar. The results were questionable if not disastrous. He was advised to learn classical guitar. His parents bought him a recording of Julian Bream. He had never heard of Bream, but liked the fact that the last four letters of his name were the same as one of his favorite rock bands, Cream. And besides he was British, so he had to be good.

With his summer earnings, he bought himself a \$100 classical guitar whose label read "Hauser." It was indeed a quiet instrument which sounded much better when he put his ear right up against the wood and played. Not having to deal with all the mucky-muck of wires, pedals and knobs was both disturbing and liberating. In the fall of his last year of high school, he was rescued by the teaching of Phillip de Fremery. Mr. de Fremery gave Ben lengthy weekly guitar lessons in which he taught how to play the classical guitar and also how to read music. Tears were shed and music stands were kicked across the room as he banged his way through Sor's study in 3rds. Mr. de Fremery did the impossible which was to put up with Ben's antics and actually prepare him for a college audition. He passed the audition at SUNY, College at Purchase, NY playing the four pieces he had learned, despite the fact that he was so nervous they nearly took him to the nearest hospital.

Mr. Verdery heads the classical guitar program at his alma mater, SUNY, College at Purchase. Since 1985, Mr. Verdery has been the chair of the guitar department at the Yale University School of Music. He has been in great demand as an instructor, teaching classes at the Paco Peña Centro Flamenco in Córdoba, Spain, the Classical Guitar Festival of Great Britain at West Dean, England, the National Guitar Workshop in Connecticut and the Mount Holyoke Summer Guitar Seminar with Phillip de Fremery. In 1989, the National Guitar Workshop released his instructional video, *The Essentials of Classical Guitar*.

The Frederick Harris Music Company has published *The Verdery Guitar Series*, a three-volume set featuring contemporary American solo repertoire, compiled and edited by Mr. Verdery. Of the publications, *Classical Guitar Magazine* said, "consistent with every project Ben Verdery is associated with, this is an excellent collection of works, each exhibiting an individual voice and style."

His recordings include *Bach: Transcriptions for Guitar* (GRI), *The Mask* (New World Records) performing Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Romancero Gitano, Op. 152* for chorus and guitar, *John Williams Plays Vivaldi Concertos*, performing the Concerto in G Major, R.532 (Sony Classical) *Reverie: French Music for Flute and Guitar* (Sony Classical), *Some Towns and Cities* (Sony Classical) and *Ride the Wind Horse: American Guitar Music* (Sony Classical). The last two discs contain music written by him and dedicated to him as well as his highly acclaimed arrangements of two Jimi Hendrix songs. He has been a featured artist on two recent releases on the Windham Hill label. In 1998, GRI Recordings issued *The Enchanted Dawn* with flutist, Rie Schmidt.

Benjamin Verdery has performed throughout the U.S. and in many venues in various countries including: the International Guitar Festival in Havana, Cuba; Festival Internacional de Agosto, Caracas, Venezuela; Theatre Carré in Amsterdam; Chichester Cathedral, England; Bad Urach Schubert Festival in Germany; the 92nd Street Y in New York; the Metropolitan Opera in New York; and the Ambassador Theater in Los Angeles. He has recorded and performed with such diverse artists as Frederic Hand, Leo Kottke, Anthony Newman, Paco Peña, Hermann Prey and John Williams. He regularly gives flute and guitar concerts with his wife, flutist Rie Schmidt, and with his ensemble, *Ufonia*. Several composers have written music for him, including Daniel Asia, John Anthony Lennon, Ingram Marshall, Anthony Newman, Roberto Sierra, Van Stiefel and Jack Vees.

Benjamin Verdery has had many of his own compositions performed and published in recent years. The National Guitar Workshop and Alfred published the solo works from his recording *Some Towns and Cities*. The recording includes fifteen original compositions, and won the 1992 Best Classical Guitar Recording in *Guitar Player Magazine*. John Williams recorded Mr. Verdery's duo version of *Capitola, CA* for Sony Classical. His *Scenes from Ellis Island*, for guitar orchestra, has been extensively broadcast and performed at festivals and universities in America, Canada and Europe. In 1996 he premiered his piece *Soul Force* with the New Jersey Chamber Music Society. The work, for guitar, cello, flute and African hand drum, was commissioned by the NJCMS for their annual Martin Luther King Day concert.

*Guitar Review Magazine* describes Benjamin Verdery as "an American original; an American master."

## Notes on Estudio by Francisco Tárrega

It is appropriate that the first piece in this book is by Francisco deAsis Tárrega, as many feel he was the father of modern guitar technique. He was born in Valencia, Spain in 1852 and died in Barcelona, Spain in 1909. He composed the beloved *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* and *Capriccio Arabe* among many other works. He played like Sor, without using nails, and played on a guitar made by Torres, who many feel was the father of modern guitar construction. He was one of the first to establish the playing position of putting the guitar on the left leg. This may have been due to the larger body size of the Torres guitar. Tárrega was the first to transcribe some of Isaac Albeniz pieces, and felt the works sounded better on the guitar than the piano. He also taught Miguel Llobet, María Rita Brondi and Emilio Pujol—all influential guitarists.

In this piece, the melody, mostly on the 1st string, is played with the *a* finger. Make sure it sings out clearly and sweetly. Also, notice that this piece, and a few others in the book, have been marked extensively with *phrase* marks. These long lines over the music are there to help make sense of the music—to show you where ideas begin and end. You should put in marks like this (in pencil!) where I have not.



Track 2

## ESTUDIO

Francisco Tárrega

♩ = 100 - 112

BII

BV

1. 2.



## Notes on Two Pieces by J. S. Bach

If you were on a desert island with a guitar, which composer's music would you want to have? My answer would have to be the music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). One of the reasons I decided to play classical guitar was because I heard a harpsichord recital given by the great Bach interpreter, Anthony Newman. It was an all-Bach program consisting of the *Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1*; *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*; and the *Italian Concerto*. I immediately bought one of his recordings and played air guitar to the *Italian Concerto*. Anthony Newman later became my teacher and close friend and is quoted as saying, "Bach sounds great on any instrument, even 'tuned bathtubs'!" In this sense Bach is the most universal of composers.

The following two Gavottes are from Bach's *Cello Suite #6* (BWV 1012). The entire suite can be found on my recording, *Bach: Transcriptions for Guitar* on the GRI label. These short dances are examples of Bach's ability to write a beautiful tune. The gavotte is a common Baroque dance that begins on the third beat. The accents generally fall on the first and third beats throughout the piece. It is played at a moderate tempo. The dance actually comes from the Pays de Gap in France, and the people from this region were known as Gavots. Although Bach entitles the second piece *Gavotte II*, it could be thought of as a musette because Gavottes were often paired with a musette. The musette was a French bagpipe that has a drone tone. Bach imitates this in *Gavotte II* in measures 16-23. In the first beat of measure 6, there is a tricky stretch. This fingering is important because it preserves the correct *voice leading*. Voice leading is the logical movement of voices in a *polyphonic* (multi-voiced) piece.

I always feel fortunate when I hear Bach, whether on a steel drum or harmonica; in the subways of Manhattan or on the piano played by a great artist like Dinu Lipatti. To play Bach's music is an even greater honor.

*"Your intention to publish the works of  
Sebastian Bach rejoices my heart  
which is full of admiration  
for the great art of this father of harmony."*

-Ludwig van Beethoven,  
from a letter to Franz Anton Hollmeister,  
Vienna, ca. January 15, 1801.



Johann Sebastian Bach



Track 3

# GAVOTTE I

From 'Cello Suite #6

J. S. Bach

♩ = 69

*a m a i*

*mf* *p*

5

*p* *p*

5 tot.

10

*p*

14

*i m i m i m i*

18

22

*a m*

26





## Notes on Two Pieces by John Dowland

John Dowland (1562-1626) is undeniably one of the great composers and lute performers of the Renaissance. We are fortunate to be able to play so much of his soulful music on the guitar. When putting this volume together, I simply had to include something from this legend of the lute.

I decided to call upon another legend of the lute, internationally respected lutenist Paul O'Dette, who graciously filled me in on some details about these two pieces. *My Lord Willoughby's Welcome Home* was a popular ballad tune. Lord Willoughby was an English officer who led soldiers into battle against the Spanish in the War of the Netherlands. When he came home triumphant, the ballad was written and became quite a popular tune. There is a keyboard setting by William Byrd. I must admit I chose *Mr. Dowland's Midnight* (page 10) not only for its musical beauty, but also for its extraordinary title. Apparently this was written towards the end of Dowland's life, around 1620, and one can imagine the title refers to the twilight of the great musician's life.

If you haven't yet heard Paul O'Dette play Dowland, then you are in for a great treat. He has recorded the complete works of Dowland in eight CDs on the Harmonia Mundi label.



Track 5

## MY LORD WILLOUGHBY'S WELCOME HOME

John Dowland

③=F#

$\text{♩} = 80$

BII-----

5

BII-----

9

BII-----

13

⑥



# MR. DOWLAND'S MIDNIGHT

John Dowland

③ = F#  
♩ = 92

*mp*

*p*  
*Tasto*

*BII*  
*Normal*

*p*



### **Notes on *Int å begripe* by Owe Walter**

Owe Walter (b. 1946) is a guitarist and composer. He studied the classical guitar with Gunnar Lif. He is the head professor of classical guitar at the University College of Music Ingesund and Chairman of the Swedish Guitar and Lute Society. He is the director of one of the world's oldest guitar festivals, called "Liten Gitarrakademi," which started in 1968 and has been run annually since then. Owe Walter has written solo and chamber music for the guitar that has been published in Sweden, Italy, Belgium, Holland and England, and has published a five-part guitar method which is one of the best-selling methods in Sweden. He has played throughout Sweden, Holland and Italy, recorded for the Swedish Broadcasting System, and for Swedish, Norwegian and Italian television.

#### **Owe Walter on *Int å begripe***

"The title *Int å begripe* literally means, 'not to understand.' It refers to the poem of the same name that inspired me to write the music. The meaning is: You don't have to understand, just feel.

The poem is by a well-known Swedish poet named Birger Norman, with whom I have been working a lot. It is an original composition that is meant to have the same character and feeling as the poem. The music can be played as a solo or together with a narrator. There is no existing translation of the poem and I think it is difficult to translate because it is written in a very special language—a kind of dialect, which has a very fundamental character."

*"Think of your concert as a joyous event  
where you are sharing the music  
you currently love with a group of people."*

— BENJAMIN VERDERY —

♩ = 88

Moderato



harm. XII harm. XII  
mp ④ ③ ② ① ⑤ ④ ⑥ ⑤

harm. XII harm. XII  
④ ③

harm. XII harm. XII  
⑤ ④ ⑥ ⑤

harm. XII harm. XII  
⑤ ④ ⑥ ⑤

p.

3 p.

19

22





# SARABANDE

Robert de Visée  
arr. B. Verdery

♩ = 60



Musical score for Sarabande, measures 1-14. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 60. The first system (measures 1-4) starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes a trill (*tr*) in measure 4. The second system (measures 5-8) includes a circled 4 in measure 7. The third system (measures 9-12) includes a circled 4 in measure 10. The fourth system (measures 13-14) includes trills (*tr*) in measures 13 and 14. Fingerings and other performance markings are provided throughout.

# MENUET

Robert de Visée  
arr. B. Verdery

♩ = 136



Musical score for Menuet, measures 1-12. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 136. The first system (measures 1-4) starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic and includes trills (*tr*) in measures 1, 3, and 4. The second system (measures 5-8) includes a trill (*tr*) in measure 7. The third system (measures 9-12) includes trills (*tr*) in measures 9 and 11. An asterisk (\*) is placed above measure 12. Fingerings and other performance markings are provided throughout.

\* This is an *appoggiatura*. This ornamental note is played on the beat, simultaneously with the A bass note. The tension of the resulting dissonance is relieved when you resolve the appoggiatura upward to the main note, A.





# GIGUE

Track 14

Robert de Visée  
arr. B. Verdery

♩ = 160

### *Notes on Four Pieces by Turlough Carolan*

Turlough Carolan was born in 1670 near Nobber, in the county of Meath in Ireland. His original Irish name read Toirdhealbhadh O Cearbaillan. His father was a farmer and a blacksmith. When Turlough was eighteen years old, he became totally blind from smallpox and at that time he was introduced to the harp. He married Mary Maguire, who bore him six daughters and one son. When his wife died, five years before his own death, he composed the following poem for her:

Something in ilka part 'o' thee  
To praise, to love, I find;  
But, dear as thy form to me,  
Still dearer is thy mind.

It is said that as good a harpist as he was, he was better known for his musical composition. He wrote about five hundred different pieces, many of them for patrons he was about to visit. He said of his blindness, "My eyes are transplanted to my ears."

He is undoubtedly one of Ireland's most celebrated musicians. It was quite difficult to choose which Carolan tunes to include as so many of them bring tears to my eyes and make me want to dance around the room. A *planxy* is a tune written for a patron. I often like to play *Bridget Cruise* then *Planxy Drew* (you can repeat it if you like—it's so rocking!) then back to *Bridget Cruise*. I do the same with *Blind Mary* and *Betty O'Brien*.

Carolan died at Alderford in 1738 and is buried in Kilronan. He died a celebrated composer and poet and it is our good fortune that his melodies have found their way to our hearts.

This is a verse from an elegy written by his friend, Charles McCabe.

I shall pray to Lasair, to Saint Dominic and to Patrick  
And to all of our people within the abode of the Heavenly City  
That the soul of Turlough may enjoy the reward of ease in their mansions  
And how many merry tunes did he play on the harp!

Tune your 6th string down to D and enjoy these wonderful tunes.

*"The beauty of practicing is the wonderful sense of accomplishment you get after having learned a new piece or phrase you never imagined being able to play."*

— BENJAMIN VERDERY —







Track 16

## BRIDGET CRUISE

Turlough Carolan  
arr. B. Verdery

$\text{♩} = 56$  *Andante con moto*

⑥ = D

*mp*

*“I’d like to get something together,  
like with Handel and Bach, and Muddy Waters,  
flamenco type thing (laughs).  
If I can get that sound. If I can get that sound.  
I’d be happy.”*

-JIMI HENDRIX-



### *Notes on Desert Sketch by Frederic Hand*

Frederic Hand was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1947. He attended New York's High School of Music and Art and is a graduate of the Mannes College of Music. In 1972 he received a Fulbright Scholarship to study in England with Julian Bream. His concert career, both as a soloist and with his ensemble Jazzantiqua, includes performances throughout North and South America, Europe and Scandinavia. Appearances as a guest artist include the New York Philharmonic, Mostly Mozart Orchestra, Music from Marlboro, Orchestra of Saint Luke's and the Waverly Consort. In 1986 he was appointed guitarist and lutenist with the Metropolitan Opera. He has recorded for Sony, RCA, Music Masters and the Musical Heritage Society, and has won an Emmy Award for music he composed for film and television. He is a faculty member of the Mannes College of Music.

Fred Hand was one of my former teachers and has become a close friend. One of the many joys of playing Fred's music is his unusual chord voicings, such as in measure 2. The arpeggios throughout the piece demonstrate his beautiful sense of color. It is imperative that you observe the correct fingerings or this color will be obscured. Fred has used many *indefinite ties* (notes with ties that connect to nothing) to indicate when it is particularly important that the notes should be allowed to ring through each other.

Here are some important issues for you to be aware of as you study this piece:

1. The time signature changes in measure 8. As you change from counting "4" to counting "6," the tempo does not change. Rather, the grouping of the notes into beats changes, making the beat feel slower (two beats per measure): instead of counting two eighths in each beat, count three; or, instead of counting four sixteenths per beat, count six. This section should have a gentle, rocking motion. In measure 17, the time signature returns to  $\frac{4}{4}$ .
2. In measure 17, there is a *septuplet*. Play seven notes in the time of six.

### FREDERIC HAND ON *DESERT SKETCH*

After a week of camping in the canyon lands of southern Utah, the indescribable beauty of the high desert remained clear in my mind's eye. Long after the trip, as I would recall my experiences of the vistas, wildlife and sudden and unpredictable changes in atmosphere and weather, musical impulses would arise. They were set down here in the form of a short sketch. This piece is part of a collection entitled *Desert Sketches*.

*"When you hear music,  
after it's over,  
it's gone in air.  
You can never capture it again."*

— ERIC DOLPHY —





# DESERT SKETCH

Frederic Hand

♩ = 72

Let ring

Let ring

simile

harm. XII

*mp* *mf* *mp*

*mf* *mf*

*mf*

*poco ritard*

BI

Tempo I

harm. XII

*mf*

*poco ritard*

*p* *p* *p* *p* *p*

*accelerando poco a poco* *decrescendo molto ritard* *pp*

## Notes on Three Pieces by Fernando Sor

Fernando Sor (1778-1839) came to my attention through the great Andres Segovia's editions of twenty of Sor's one hundred and twenty studies. I practiced his famous Etude in 3rds (known in the Segovia edition as *Étude #12*) until I was practically brain-dead and had driven my poor mother mad.

These three little pieces are from a collection called *Twenty-Four Small Progressive Pieces for the Guitar, Op. 44*. Sor wrote so many beautiful short pieces, it was difficult to choose. Perhaps I chose this one because it is in D Minor, the saddest of all keys, and I couldn't pass up the opportunity to emote.

Besides writing a guitar method, numerous studies, theme and variations and sonatas, Sor composed operas. At a young age, one of these made him a celebrity in Barcelona, where he was born. He also composed two ballets which were hits in Paris. There he received fame as a performer. He was also invited to perform before the court in St. Petersburg. In his later years, he became friends with the great guitarist, Dionisio Aguado, who played using his nails—as opposed to Sor, who did not. Sor was also the teacher of the famous composer and guitarist, Napoléon Coste. Sor died in Paris in 1839.

The *Marche* (page 28) is quite fun to play; however, the harmonics in measure 10 deserve attention. These can be a little tricky. Remember to keep your finger over the fret wire and remove your finger quickly from the string after you have plucked the note—as if it were hot. Pluck near the bridge rather than over the sound hole, as the notes will speak more clearly that way.



Track 20

## ANDANTE

Fernando Sor

♩ = 66

*mf*

6

12

19

24



Track 21

# CANTABILE

Fernando Sor

$\text{♩} = 63$

Musical notation for measures 1-5. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. Starts with a *p* dynamic marking. Includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and a first ending bracket.

Musical notation for measures 6-10. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. Includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and a first ending bracket.

Musical notation for measures 11-15. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. Includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and a first ending bracket.

Musical notation for measures 16-20. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. Includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and a first ending bracket.

Musical notation for measures 21-24. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. Includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and a first ending bracket. A **BII<sub>4</sub>** section marker is present above the staff.

Musical notation for measures 25-28. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. Includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and a first ending bracket.

Musical notation for measures 29-32. Treble clef, 3/4 time signature, key signature of one flat. Includes fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4) and a first ending bracket. A **BII<sub>4</sub>** section marker is present above the staff.





Track 22

# MARCHE

Fernando Sor

♩ = 126

*f*

harm. VII

harm. VII

harm. VII

harm. VII

harm. V, harm. IV-, harm. III+

harm. VII, harm. XII

harm. VII

harm. V, harm. IV-, harm. III+

harm. V

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is written for guitar in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 126. The piece begins with a forte (f) dynamic. The notation includes various guitar-specific elements: fingerings (1-4), fret numbers (0-4), and circled numbers (2, 3, 4, 5) indicating fret positions. Harmonic markings such as 'harm. VII', 'harm. V', 'harm. IV-', and 'harm. III+' are placed above the notes to indicate natural harmonics. The score is divided into systems, with measure numbers 4, 7, 11, 14, 17, and 20 clearly marked. The piece concludes with a final cadence in the 20th measure.

## Notes on Capriccio by Mauro Giuliani

The great Italian virtuoso guitarist, Mauro Giuliani, was born in Bisceglie, Italy in 1781 and died in Naples, Italy in 1829. He led quite a colorful and difficult life that is beautifully documented in Thomas Heck's book, *Mauro Giuliani: Virtuoso Guitarist and Composer*.

He was a prominent figure in the musical world of Vienna from the years 1809-1819, and was heard in concert by Beethoven. He studied cello and guitar in his youth and played the cello in the premiere of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7*. It is also highly probable that he knew Franz Schubert.

The majority of Giuliani's output as a composer consists of solo music for guitar that includes studies, theme and variations, potpourris and sonatas. Many contemporary virtuoso guitarists, including Pepe Romero and Scott Tennant, have heralded his 120 right-hand studies (Scott includes them in his popular technique handbook, *Pumping Nylon*, also published by the National Guitar Workshop and Alfred). Many of his larger scale works such as the *Grand Overture* and *The Rossiniane* have become staples in the guitar repertoire. His *Concerto in A Major, Op. 30* is widely performed as well as his *Sonata* for flute or violin and guitar, Op. 85.

One aspect I love about *Capriccio* is its unmistakable flair, which was called to my attention in the marvelous *Classical Guitar Tutor* by John Mills. It is a gem, remarkable for its imitative writing between the top and bass voices, an example of which can be found immediately in the first measure. These melodic fragments are to be played with the thumb and present a challenge to the performer in terms of hopping from the 5th to the 2nd strings with the *p*. I enjoy playing the D<sup>♯</sup> in the first beat of measure 29 with my thumb, but you might prefer using your *i* finger as indicated. In measure 12, on the second beat, I substitute my 2nd finger in place of my 1st to keep the bass note B sustaining. This is to free my first finger to play F on the third 16th of the second beat. If this is too difficult you can simply use your 2nd finger on the B.

Be careful not to over-play the open string G's in measures 7-10 as it might obscure the upper line. Observe the ritard in measure 21. You might want to make a slight accelerando from measures 32-33.

Hearing Giuliani play had to be a thrill. Remember you are playing a piece by one of the great virtuosos in guitar history.

*"I express myself best in my solos."*

-NIGEL TUFNEL-

GUITARIST OF *SPINAL TAP*



18

21

*poco rit.* **a tempo**

24

27

29

31



## Notes on Actions by Benjamin Verdery

When I was a student I had the good fortune of studying with Leo Brouwer in two different master classes in Arles, France. His teaching and playing had a major impact on me. I was particularly drawn to his piece *La Espiral Eterna* because it allowed the performer more freedom than many other pieces I was playing at the time. It is in this spirit that I composed *Actions*.

*Actions* is the literal translation for the word "karma." It gives you the opportunity to create your own piece using fifteen different musical fragments I have written. You can repeat each fragment or rearrange them if you wish. You can choose any tempo or dynamic you like for these fragments. You can even rearrange some of the notes. For example, in the second fragment, you could make the last two notes of each beat E-F instead of F-E. You can create a group of short pieces using one, two or three of the fragments, or create one large-scale piece using several of them. If you familiarize yourself with the fragments, you can improvise a piece on the spot. You can renotate it into your own piece or even create your own type of notation that would make it easier for you to use the material. For the recording, I played *Actions* in three short movements.

I hope *Actions* will inspire you to be creative and think about the choices we make as interpreters and composers.

"When one is relating to a particular activity or a practice it may seem daunting at the initial stage, but through constant familiarity and through reinforcing one's determination, it is possible to make it easier. It is not that the practice itself has become easier, but rather that one's attitude and one's own mental state have become closer to it. *That is why the appearance of the phenomenon has changed.*"

-H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama



Track 24

## ACTIONS

Benjamin Verdery

1. Play at any tempo or dynamic you wish. You can also reverse the order of or repeat and/or delete any note or chord you wish.

*Sua* -----

2. Repeat as many times as desired, changing tone color (playing *tasto* or *ponticello*— see page 47) and dynamics as you like at any tempo.

3. Play at any tempo with any dynamic. The lines represent *glisses* (see page 46).

4. Play at any tempo with any dynamic as many times as you like, in any order. Notice the "Bartok Pizzicato" indications  $\text{♩}$ . Pull the string away from the neck with your right hand and let it snap back.

5. Use any part of this fragment.

8. Play at any tempo with any dynamic. You can reverse the entire passage if you wish.

9. Play this either in its entirety, as a whole, or break this into two fragments.

10. Play this either in its entirety, as a whole, or break this into two fragments (each measure could be a fragment).

11. Play as many times as necessary at any tempo or dynamic.

12. Play as many times as you like at any tempo.

\* Displace the string to pull it sharp by pulling it down toward the floor or pushing it up toward the ceiling.

13. Either play in its entirety or use each chord separately as a fragment. You can reverse the order. Play any dynamic you wish.



14. Play these notes at any tempo in any order.



15. Strum in any rhythm in any way with any dynamic at any tempo.



## Notes on Rag #2 by Allan Jaffe

Allan Jaffe (b. 1950) arrived at composition through his experience as a jazz guitarist and improviser. He has toured the United States and Europe playing as a sideman with such musicians as Oliver Lake, Julius Hemphill, Maceo Parker, James Brown, Anthony Davis, Ray Anderson, Bobby Privite and Tim Berne. His quintet, *Slickaphonics*, has achieved a large following in Europe. With them, as well as the other musicians mentioned above, Allan has recorded on major labels and has appeared at major festivals, as well as televised performances in Europe and the U.S.

In the last ten years Allan has worked with librettist, Deborah Atherton, to create two full-scale theatrical works. The first is a musical, *Carmilla*, based on the short story by J.S. LeFanu. More recently, he has written full-length chamber pieces for various ensembles, often including his first love, the guitar.

*Rag #2* is part of a collection of rags.

Notice the gliss in the last measure. Immediately after playing the G with your 3rd finger, slide up the 6th string until your 1st finger is in position for the 12th fret harmonics that follow.

## ALLAN JAFFE ON RAG #2

"Rags have always held a special place for me in my compositional work. These were pieces with which I often created moments of relaxation, when I was just sitting back and playing the guitar for fun. The rocking bass-line and the straight-ahead melodies and harmonies have always had a soothing effect on me. Although they were initially inspired by the 'Delta blues' style of Mississippi John Hurt, I call them 'rags' because, eventually, they developed into more sophisticated pieces with moving bass-lines and a more varied structure, both harmonically and form-wise. To me, the term 'rag' implies a balance of simplicity and complexity. Thus, the performer should never lose sight of their initial intuitive feel; these pieces should seem effortless and natural in performance. Rhythmically, the eighth notes should (unless otherwise indicated) be swung in a jazz style (with the first note held longer than the second)."

Above all, as Scott Joplin once said,

*"Do not play this piece fast.  
It is never right to play ragtime fast."*





# RAG #2

Track 25

Allan Jaffe

Swing 8ths

♩ = 138

The musical score is written for guitar in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as 'Swing 8ths' with a metronome marking of 138. The score consists of eight staves of music, each with a measure number (1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25) at the beginning. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and triplets. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 above or below notes. Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte), *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), and *subito mp* (suddenly mezzo-piano). There are three first endings, labeled '1.', '2.', and 'BIII'. The score concludes with a final cadence.



## Notes on Niggun by Daniel Asia

Daniel Asia (b. 1953) is currently Professor of Composition and head of the composition department at the University of Arizona. From 1991-1994, he was the Meet the Composer/Composer in Residence with the Phoenix Symphony. He is the recipient of most of the competitive grants and fellowships in music, including the United Kingdom Fulbright Arts Award, a Gaugenheim Fellowship, four NEA Composer Grants, a DAAD Fellowship, and ASCAP, BMI and Freidheim prizes. Many orchestras, ensembles, foundations and soloists have commissioned him, including: the Milwaukee, Phoenix, and New Jersey Symphonies, among others; Dorian Wind Quintet; Domus; Meadowmount Trio; Musical Elements; and the Koussevitsky and Fromm Foundations. He has written extensively for guitar, including the solo works, *Your Cry Will Be A Whisper* and *Guitar Set*; and ensemble works, *Sacred Songs* and *Embers* for flute and guitar. *Niggun* is from a group of short pieces entitled, *Songs of Transcendence*.

### DANIEL ASIA ON NIGGUN

"A niggun is a simple melody from the Hassidic culture. Sometimes it uses words, but more often than not, it starts with words and then leaves them behind, as the wordless singing of the congregation takes flight. Repetition of the melody encourages a meditational state, moments of communal and personal transcendence. The words of this niggun are, 'Bless us all alike, our Father, with the light of your countenance.'"



Track 26

## NIGGUN

Daniel Asia

♩ = 72 - 84

*p*

BVII

BII

*mf*





See the "How to Learn a Piece of Music" article on page 48 for notes about this piece.



Track 27

## LAGRIMA

Francisco Tárrega

*Andante*

♩ = 58

*p* *p* *p* *mp*

IX VII

*mf* *mp*

(subito *p* on repeat)

BII *Fine* *tasto* *p* BII

*vib.* *a* *m* *mp* BVII

*mf* *mp*

(subito *p* on repeat)

*p*

D.C. al Fine

## Notes on Taireva (page 42)

Taireva means “we used to say.” It is a traditional African spiritual *mbira* (thumb piano) song from Zimbabwe. I heard it on a CD of the great Zimbabwe singer Thomas Mapfumo. In the arrangement, I did not try to recreate the *mbira* but rather the beautiful, hypnotic quality of the music.

Notice the *two-measure repeats* that appear between measures 5 and 36. Each measure is repeated, but so is every group of two measures. For example, repeat measure 5, repeat measure 6, then play measure 5 twice more and measure 6 twice more. Continue in the same manner with measures 9 and 10, and so on.

I find playing this piece both soothing and uplifting. This is due to the simplicity of the harmonic progression and the rhythmic propulsion. If you like, the dotted-eighth/sixteenth-note rhythms can be played loosely, like a quarter-eighth triplet.

One cannot underestimate the importance of rhythmic solidity. I once brought the great tabla virtuoso Samir Chatterjee (who can be heard on the Schmidt/Verdery Duo’s recording *Enchanted Dawn*) to teach a master class on rhythm for my students at Yale. He accompanied the guitarists in a variety of pieces, filling in all the rests and off beats. This made it impossible for the students to rush and they played beautifully in rhythm. Afterwards, I described the class to Seymour Bernstein, who said the following:

“Anticipation is the worst enemy of the performing musician. In other words, anticipating the next note robs the present note of its value; therefore, always be sure to fill out the rhythmic values to overflowing.”

*“.... Once I sat upon a promontory  
and heard a mermaid on a dolphin’s back  
uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath  
that the rude sea grew civil at her song  
and certain stars shot madly from their spheres  
to hear the sea maid’s music.”*

*Oberon to Puck in A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE —

Track 28 TAIREVA

Traditional  
arr. B. Verdery

2 4 2 1 2 4 4 1 2 4 4 1 3  
p ② ③

*pp*

1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 4 4 4 3 4 4 4 4 2\*  
p ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫ ⑬ ⑭ ⑮ ⑯ ⑰ ⑱ ⑲ ⑳ ㉑  
harm. XII harm. VII (\*with repeats)

4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 2  
mp p ④ ⑤

2 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 2  
mp p ③ ②

3 4 0 2 3 0 4 1 2 3 0 4 1 2 3 0 4 2  
mf p

3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 2  
mf p

25 *i a m*

*f* (first time)  
*ff* (second time)

29

33 *m i*

*Rallantando on repeat*

37

*mp* (first time)  
*p* (second time)

41 *Slower* *harm. XII*

*Let ring*

*pp*

44

*molto rit.*



## Notes on Baiao para Ben by Freddie Bryant

Freddie Bryant (b. 1964) is a guitarist and composer living in New York City. He works in many diverse styles of music. He has worked with the African singer, Salif Keita, the Klezmer clarinetist, Giora Feidman and the jazz trumpeter, Tom Harrell among others. He has released two CDs featuring original Brazilian jazz, *Brazilian Rosewood* and *Boogaloo Brasileiro*.

### FREDDIE BRYANT ON *BAIAO PARA BEN*

"The following piece is inspired by the Brazilian rhythm, *baiao*. One of the main aspects of this style is the two dotted quarters and one quarter note rhythm (3 + 3 + 2). Later in the piece, there is a hint at another Brazilian rhythm called the *birimbau*, which is also the name for a percussion instrument. These rhythms 'groove.' Have fun with dynamics, but keep the groove!"

## BAIAO PARA BEN

Track 29

Freddie Bryant

$\text{♩} = 92$

*mf*  $\text{crescendo}$  Play 3 times.

*p* *mf* *To Coda* \*

\*These are *indefinite ties*. Let the notes ring freely.

BII



## APPENDIX

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND SIGNS

This list will help you to interpret the various markings in the music.

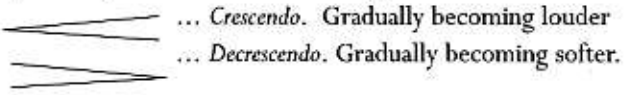
- 1, 2, 3, 4 ..... Left hand fingers, numbered from index (1) to pinky (4).
- p, i, m, a* ..... Right hand fingers: *p* = thumb, *i* = index, *m* = middle, *a* = ring finger.
- ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ..... The six strings of the guitar, numbered from low E ⑥ to high E ①.
- IV, V, VII, etc. .... Roman numerals. Used to indicate frets. Here is a quick review of these symbols:  
 I=1, II=2, III=3, IV=4, V=5, VI=6, VII=7, VIII=8, IX=9, X=10, XI=11 and XII=12.  
 IV- means just below the 4th fret. III+ means just above the 3rd fret.
- BII<sub>4</sub> ..... The B indicates a barre. The Roman numeral indicates the fret to be barred, and the small number indicates the amount of strings to be barred. So, this symbol indicates to barre four strings at the second fret.
- 1, -2, -3, -4 ..... A dash in front of a fingering indicates a *guide finger shift*. A *shift* is a movement from one position to another. A *guide finger* is a finger that can be used just before and just after a shift. For instance, if the 4th finger has been used to play G on the 1st string, 3rd fret, and then moves to play A on the 1st string, 5th fret, it will be marked -4.
- Ⓞ = D ..... Tune the 6th string down to D.
- Ⓞ ..... Coda sign. Marks the ending section of a piece.
- § ..... *Segno*. When playing a D. S. al Fine form, go back to this sign and play to the end.
- ♩ = 60 ..... Tempo marking. In this case, the metronome should be set to 60. Each click represents a quarter note.
- ˆ ..... *Accent*. Emphasize.
- stacc. ..... *Staccato*. Short. Detached.
- ten. ..... *Tenuto*. To hold a note for its full value.
- ♯ ..... "Bartok Pizzicato." Snap the string against the fingerboard for a percussive effect.
- gliss. ..... *Gliss* line. Slide from one note to another.
- arpegg. ..... Arpeggiate (slowly "roll") the chord with thumb and/or fingers.
- 8<sup>va</sup> ..... Sounds an octave higher than written.
- ♯ = ♯ ..... The sixteenths in the new section have the same value as those in the previous section.
- 2 ..... Two-measure repeat. Repeat the previous two measures (in the case of *Taireva* on pages 42 and 43, all the repeats are repeated, as well.)
- a tempo* ..... Return to the original *tempo* or speed.
- Accelerando* ..... Becoming gradually faster.
- Allegro* ..... Lively, cheerful, fast.
- Andante* ..... A moderate, walking tempo.
- Andantino* ..... Slightly faster than *andante*.
- con moto* ..... With motion.
- cresc.* ..... *Crescendo*. Gradually becoming louder.
- decresc.* ..... *Decrescendo*. Gradually becoming softer.
- dim.* ..... *Diminuendo*. Gradually becoming softer.
- dolce* ..... Sweetly
- D. C. al Coda* ..... *Da Capo al Coda*. Go back to the beginning of the piece and play to the coda indication, then skip down to the *Coda*.
- D. C. al Fine* ..... *Da Capo al Fine*. Go to the beginning and play until the *Fine*.
- D. S. al Fine* ..... *Dal Segno al Fine*. Go back to the sign § and play until the *Fine*.
- Fine* ..... The end.
- harm.* ..... Harmonic. Usually combined with diamond shaped notes (◊◆). Lightly touch the string with the left hand directly above the indicated fret, pluck and immediately remove the left-hand finger.
- Lenso* ..... Slow.
- Loco* ..... Play as written. Usually follows an 8<sup>va</sup> marking.

- Moderato* ..... In a moderate tempo.
- molto* ..... Very.
- morendo* ..... Dying away.
- mosso* ..... Moved, Agitated.
- pizz.* ..... *Pizzicato*. Imitate the plucked string of a bowed instrument such as the 'cello by muting the strings with the flesh of the right hand.
- poco* ..... A little.
- ponticello* ..... Play by the bridge for a brighter sound (color).
- rall.* ..... *Rallentando*. Becoming gradually slower.
- rit.* ..... *Ritardando*. Becoming gradually slower.
- ritenuto* ..... Immediately becoming held back or slower.
- simile* ..... When this word appears after a pattern has been established (fingerings, dynamics, etc.), it means to continue in that manner.
- sub.* ..... *Subito*. Suddenly.
- Tam.* ..... Tambour. "Drum" on the strings with the flesh of your fingers or thumb.
- Tasto* ..... Play over the fingerboard or soundhole for a darker sound (color).
- Tranquillo* ..... Tranquil, calm, quiet.
- vib.* ..... *Vibrato*. A rapid fluctuation of pitch created by rocking the left hand back and forth.

### DYNAMIC SIGNS

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- p* ..... *Piano*. Soft.
- pp* ..... *Pianissimo*. Very soft.
- mp* ..... *Mezzo piano*. Moderately soft.
- f* ..... *Forte*. Loud.
- ff* ..... *Fortissimo*. Very loud.
- mf* ..... *Mezzo forte*. Moderately loud.
- fp* ..... *Forte piano*. Strike a loud note and suddenly become soft.
- sfz* ..... *Sforzando*. A sudden strong accent.



*You cannot fail  
because you will always learn something  
when you perform.*

**-BENJAMIN VERDERY-**

## HOW TO LEARN A PIECE OF MUSIC

Learning a piece of music is, in some ways, analogous to starting a relationship. The more care you take in knowing a person, the better you will understand them and perhaps yourself. The more care you take in learning a piece from the very beginning, the better your performances of that work will be.

Allow me to describe a scenario. Your teacher assigns you a piece, *Lagrima* (page 40) for example. You go home and work on two or three measures with haphazard fingerings, take a break and then repeat the same measures. The next day, you repeat the same measures again. By now you have almost memorized them, possibly with wrong fingerings. Then you move ahead to the next two measures. You may have "learned" the whole piece by your next lesson, but probably not. You play for your teacher the measures you know well. You go home and continue the process, never really knowing how the piece ends until you get there. You might have heard your teacher play it, but it is still very new to you. Each measure is uncharted waters. By the time you reach the end, you can play the first few measures in your sleep because you have repeated them so many times, but the end feels very new. Who knows how long it took, but it was a journey and you had very little idea of where you were going or how to get there except to plop your bottom down and dig in.

Sound familiar? If so, you are not alone. This is the way I learned music until I began studying with Seymour Bernstein, a pianist, who still coaches me often. Let me suggest a different approach based on many things I have learned from him.

I assume that either your teacher played the piece for you, or else you heard it played live or on a recording and that you really love the piece. I don't recommend learning music that you don't love. There is enough music out there for everyone to enjoy. This is not analogous to eating your broccoli. You can get the required number of musical nutrients from many different pieces!

The more familiar you are with a piece before you actually start learning it with the fingerings, the easier and more quickly you will learn it. So, begin by simply looking at the piece without the guitar. See what catches your eye, meter, key signature, dynamics, tricky rhythms, ritards and accelerandi, etc. Then, say the rhythm of the melody or the general rhythm of the piece to yourself, using any syllables you want. Remember how important rhythm is. A work like the opening movement of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* would sound quite different if the rhythm of the famous motive were changed.

Now play just the melody line alone as slowly as is necessary. Let us return to *Lagrima* on page 40. Play the melody (stems up) of the first section slowly, using any fingering you like so that you become so familiar with the melody that you can actually sing it. It might be very helpful to do this with your teacher, in case there is any confusion as to what the melody actually is.

Continue this same procedure for the second half of the piece. As you do so, consider that the melody will be divided up into phrases. These phrases have beginnings and endings, and we must make decisions as to where they are. This is not something that requires a degree in musical analysis, but rather something you and your teacher can discuss and have a great deal of fun with. Some musicians have broken their instruments over their best friends' heads (or at least—momentarily considered it) in dispute over where phrases start and end!

After you can play and sing the melody, play the bass (the lowest part—stems down) separately. Feel free to use any fingering you want. At this stage you are just trying to get to know the work from the outer parts. You are trying to "hear" the piece, to get it in your ear and your soul.

One of the reasons many of us are drawn to classical guitar is because it is a *polyphonic* instrument. It can play two or more voices at once. Sometimes we feel like a "one-man band." However, we have to really know the bass player's part in order for the singer to sing well.



Many great musicians possess extraordinary aural memory. It was said that at the age of 16, Mozart heard a choral work by Gregorio Allegri, entitled *Miserere*, and later wrote down the nine voices from memory. There are musicians who can hear a phrase and play it back exactly on their instruments. You may try this out with a tune you know well, like Happy Birthday. You might find it is not so easy! Developing this skill would, of course, help you memorize. You might start by singing phrases of certain pieces, particularly simpler tunes like Carolan's *Bridget Cruise* (page 22) and playing them back on the guitar immediately. This will confirm your knowledge of the tune and understanding of how the melody lays on the fret board. After all, the ear is the mainstay of your memory.

Another technique for improving your memory is to imagine a phrase in your mind, visualizing your left hand. Take the opening phrase of *Desert Sketch*. Play it, stop, and imagine the next phrase. Play it, and continue like this day by day until you can play through the piece. Ultimately, we always want to know what the next phrase is—and it may be that we will know it through a combination of different capacities such as muscle memory (automatic pilot), visualizing our left hands, aurally and photographically.

One final test for your memory is to tape the piece you feel you have memorized. Play it back with the score in front of you and be your own teacher. Listen a few times for different aspects of the piece each time, such as tempo, dynamics, ritards and general musical flow. If there are trouble spots, isolate them and practice them separately employing some of the techniques discussed in the *Some Practice Ideas* article beginning on page 50, especially numbers 1-5 and 14-16. I particularly recommend being able to play any piece you want to perform extremely slowly—with dynamics—all the way through. If you review the trouble spots often enough, I am sure you will overcome them.

We do these many exercises because we need a memory safety net in performance. Often, our automatic pilot memory is not enough to get us through certain performance situations. Knowing we have done some of this work will also calm us psychologically.

Many guitarists learn to work rapidly and rarely look at the score. They claim they know their music from memory but if you asked them to write out the first three measures of their piece, they would be at a loss for information, especially regarding meter and dynamics. Always practice your pieces with the music. Always refer back to it; it is a reservoir of inspiration and information.

Clara Schuman was reportedly one of the first performers to play from memory. Later, Liszt made it one of his many claims to fame. Some of my favorite performers use music while performing. If you decide to use music, make sure it does not block the guitar and sound hole. Make sure you practice your concert using the music. When there are passages where it is necessary to look at the fretboard, practice looking away and returning to a specific point in the music. Highlight that point with a bright color. For example, in measure 18 of *Desert Sketches*, you may want to look at the fretboard for the E harmonic. Highlight the beginning of measure 19 in orange so your eye will immediately go there. Be sure to practice this so that it will be something you do automatically in concert.

One of the reasons children memorize so easily is because their minds are clear. When you sit down to the work of memorizing a piece, take a few minutes to clear your mind so you can concentrate fully. Do some stretching exercises and take a few deep breaths to get some oxygen in your brain, and then embark upon your trip down memory lane. Remember not to forget what you forgot when you were trying to remember!

## PREPARING A RECITAL

“But it sounded great when I played last night in my room at home!”

Who among us has not announced this kind of unpleasant surprise to our teachers? The fact is that we do sound like gods and goddesses at home and we should be very grateful for those few joyous moments. When you feel good about a run-through played at home, try not to discount it. After you have basked in your glory and decided that you are one of the great musical geniuses of our age, analyze why the performance did go well and take note of these observations. Believe it or not, it is possible to play beautifully in front of an audience and *you* can do it!

Start by thinking of your concert as a joyous event where you are sharing the music you currently love with a group of people. Those people are coming to hear you because they want to; they want to hear the beautiful sound of the guitar and they want to hear you playing it. How bad can that be? This is not a test. It is a unique, precious moment. So often musical performances are viewed as tests—a chance to show off your skills—but we know music is an art form, and each person will bring to it something unique. You cannot fail, because you will always learn something when you perform. Consider yourself fortunate: there are very few things as exhilarating as performing. It is a heroic and marvelous event for an audience to experience. Everyone benefits who wishes to view it in this light.

At this point, I am assuming that you have learned a program from this book and have agreed to play it for a group of people—perhaps in your friend’s living room. Some of the greatest music making has happened in living rooms. Schubert held regular concerts in his living room where many of Vienna’s most celebrated musicians played and listened, possibly even Mauro Giuliani!

I recommend scheduling your concert at least one month in advance. I would hope that you would have learned your music thoroughly before setting up the concert. One thing I can tell you from experience is that cramming music the way you may have crammed for a spelling test doesn’t work. It didn’t work for me in spelling, and it really doesn’t work for music.

Practicing your performance is as important as learning your program. Therefore, when you have learned all the pieces you want to play, you must do your first run-through at home. Begin with the first piece and continue through till the end of the program with an intermission, but without stopping the chosen program. It is critical to play *without stopping*, no matter how many mistakes you think you have made. You are training yourself to move forward, as you will have to do before your audience. This will also train you to begin to realize that your mistakes are not as important as you think. The emotional mood and character of what you are playing—the “big picture”—is still the most important aspect of the piece.

When you have gone from the beginning to the end of your program, take a break and write down your thoughts about your performance. You can keep a journal of all your performances and have categories such as:

- a) **Emotional aspect of the piece:** Did you capture the right mood of the work?
- b) **Dynamics:** Did you really play the forté, piano and crescendo passages?
- c) **Memory:** If you had memory lapses, where were they?
- d) **Phrasing:** Did you feel you made beautiful shapes with the phrases?
- e) **Concentration:** Was your mind wandering constantly or were you able to focus on what you were doing?
- f) **Physical feeling:** Were you comfortable? Did your muscles tighten before certain passages? Were you breathing regularly? Were you breathing at all? Did you forget to use enough deodorant and start to get a little smelly by the last piece?
- g) **Equipment/Physical surrounding:** Was the footstool too high? Chair too low? If you used music, was the music too high or low? Were your socks too bright? Believe it or not, the most peculiar things can distract us.

This process will help you learn as much as possible about how to play well.

As the date of the performance approaches, make sure to take the time to visit the place where you are performing. Ask for a room away from the audience where you can calmly collect your thoughts and warm-up before the performance. See if you can determine what the lighting will be like. I would highly recommend playing your whole concert or at least portions of it in the scheduled concert room to check acoustics. Is there a dog pound next door, or upstairs neighbors with two children who wrestle a lot? Is it overheated or chilly? Change your strings a few days before the concert so they are well broken in but still fresh. You will have enough surprises in your performance as it is, and you don't need any extras. Take care of as many variables as you can prior to the concert.

Everyone has a different routine they like to follow the day of a concert. Often, life can get in the way and we can't follow that routine—which is another reason to prepare so much. Enjoy your day. Don't over exert yourself. Eat foods you like and minimize the coffee to one cup instead of five. Stay calm and peaceful, remembering that you are going to expend quite a lot of energy in your performance. Review your music slowly and without panic. Remember that you have done the best you could to prepare.

Thousands have done what you are about to do and lived to tell about it. We are happy they did. No one on the planet can play this program the way you can and the way you will. It will be a magical experience for all.

*“Music is your own experience,  
your thoughts, your wisdom.  
If you don't live it,  
it won't come out of your horn.  
They teach you there's a boundary line  
to music but, man,  
there's no boundary line to art.”*

**-CHARLIE PARKER-**

Review your diet. Certain foods, like caffeine, may affect you adversely when your adrenaline is pumping. I often like to eat a banana or two, and I love to drink quite a lot of water before I perform, making sure the bathroom is close by! Dehydration is a drag.

Finally, you might want to strum your guitar gently without testing or challenging yourself. You can practice the opening bars of the piece, but I wouldn't recommend going over the hardest spot right before the recital. If it doesn't go well, it will make you more nervous. I often improvise little melodies right before I go on. It keeps me in touch with the instrument, and I find it calming. Think how lucky we are as guitarists to be able to hold our instruments before we perform. I often think how difficult it would be to be a pianist, harpist or percussionist!

I have found the most success in confronting the nerves head on and saying, "Come on in! Bring your whole family—cousins, uncles, there is room for everyone in my nerves hotel!" Once you really accept the fact that you are nervous, it will start to go away.

A sense of humor is always helpful. After all, you are the creator of your own nerves. It is great to blame the circumstances, or another person, but really—you have created the situation. So, lighten up and don't take yourself so seriously. Bach doesn't want you to be tortured. Despite our occasionally feeling to the contrary, composers don't write music so performers can suffer!

### NERVOUSNESS DURING PERFORMANCE

I once played a piece called *Notes on a Southern Sky* by Robert Beaser. I must have played it for him four or five times privately; just the composer and me in the room. Each time I began this difficult piece, I would start to totally "freak" two or three minutes into it, and play about as badly as anyone could. Finally, I said, "Bob, you make me nuts!" To which he replied, "Ben, I am just sitting here. I don't know what else I can do to hear you." I felt ridiculous until I realized how much I was blaming him for my nerves, letting the image of the composer completely intimidate me. In the end, I laughed at the whole situation and went on to enjoy playing the piece.

Sometimes we can fixate on something or someone during a performance. In my New York debut concert, I was playing Bach's *Cello Suite #6*. Somewhere early on in the performance, I began thinking about a friend, Eliot Fisk, who was at the concert. I was wondering if he would like what I was doing, thinking, "Oh, that ornament was nice, he'll love that. What about this tempo, that would kill him!" Well, this went on and on until the end of the piece which lasts about 20 minutes. After the concert, at a party, Eliot came up to me and exclaimed, "Ben, I loved what I heard. It was great. I'm so sorry I missed the Bach." Needless to say, I learned a lot from that experience.

My students often ask me about the imaginary, critical voices. Ah, the voices! I was talking to Leo Kottke about voices, and he exclaimed, "It's bad enough when two voices are saying, 'Wow, this is really bad,' but when the third voice kicks in and says 'You guys can't do anything, let me take over!' then you really have to worry."

Like the nerves before you play, let the voices come. If you fight them, you create chaos, which will prevent your mind from returning to the music. Just let the thoughts come but try not to follow them, creating a running commentary like a sports event. One of my dear friends, Cotter Smith, who is a marvelous actor, once told me, "You're not the critic." I always remember that. Let the voices come without resistance and see if they can't lead back to the music.

Another playground for the voices is anticipation of a difficult passage. "Uh-oh, here comes the sixteenth notes. My God, here they come! Can you do it? Help! May day! May day! We're going down fast!" This is a most common response to difficult passages. Once again, it stems from your initial view of the passage.

If you think in terms of hard and easy instead of musical feeling, you will be recreating more of an athletic accomplishment than an artistic statement. You must practice the passage with a real idea of dynamics, with accents or with a specific tone color and emotion. Each time you become aware of being distracted in any way during a performance, think about dynamics. What dynamic should I be playing? This is a sure way to bring you back to the music immediately. When the passage arrives, you are going to be thinking about these things and not how hard it is.

I would also recommend taking a deep breath every phrase or two, so you have the proper amount of air that will help your fingers move. Many students have told me that they literally don't breathe before they play a difficult passage, and then they wonder why it is so difficult. If you are not giving your body ample oxygen, your motor skills will definitely be affected. Oxygen is carried to all cells of the body via red blood cells, including those in the tips of your fingers. I have often used breath-building devices with students to demonstrate the magic of oxygen.

As you anticipate passages, make sure that you are not locking your upper body in any one position. Often I see students create a kind of "nail down the hatches" type of posture before a difficult passage. They put their neck forward, lock their shoulders and generally freeze their upper bodies. This kind of tight posture will negatively affect your fingers and your sound.

As you do run-throughs—both alone and for your teacher—observe where you are locking your body and when you are not breathing. Mark the spots in your score and put in breath marks where you will inhale, trying to feel the air in your upper body. Try also to straighten your back. As you play a demanding passage, allow your upper body to "back off" the instrument and let your fingers play the passage. Raise your neck up a little, unlocking it from the frozen angle it was most likely at, focusing on the neck of the guitar. You may find that your hands shake; this may be due to your muscles tightening. You might be bearing down too much with your right arm on the side of the guitar.

Our adrenaline and the presence of others makes us focus four times more in performance than in our practice rooms. That is why every detail of our playing seems magnified. We notice the most minute details because the situation is heightening our awareness. In this sense, we see the formality of a performance. We need to recreate that formality in our practice room run-throughs.

Once before a concert, a friend reminded me of how extraordinary it was to do what I was about to do. She said that I was the only one on the planet who was going to play this group of pieces for this particular group of people. She continued to advise how I had my own story to tell with the music and, not only did I deserve to tell it but, it was worth telling. It seemed so silly and simple but I took it to heart and it helped me play better.

Try to remember that you can never fail; performing is one of the most life-affirming things you can do. If you choose to, you will learn an enormous amount from each performance. As I mentioned before, keep notes. Write down your thoughts before and after the concert. These will help you learn not just about performing but about yourself and your nervousness. Music can be a wonderful journey of self-discovery. What better way to learn about ourselves than through music.



## PRAISE

As I mentioned in the "Nerves" article, many of us want to be loved when we perform. It is natural to want your audience to love your concert. I never met a performer who said, "Wow, I really hope they hate my playing and come to mention it, hate me! Yeah, that would be ideal!"

Love of praise after a concert reminds me of one of my favorite jokes tailored for guitarists. A guitarist is backstage talking to someone after his concert exclaiming, "I played like a god. My vibrato in the final note of the *Visée Sarabande* made me weep. The entire concert was a transcendent, cathartic experience for all that had the rare fortune to hear it. But enough about me, what did *you* think of my playing?"

Ultimately, praise is not the reason we give a concert. If someone loves your concert and showers you with compliments, this can be wonderful. Be careful however, not to get upset if certain people that you know and respect don't offer any favorable remarks. I have a dear friend who is unable to express himself after I play and I have taken it very personally, only to have the same person write me a letter saying how moved he was by the concert.

When we think we have done well, we expect the audience to feel the same way. I have come off stage and seen my wife and looked at her with an expression that said, "Where is the golden chair and servants to take me out of this place that I have just blessed with my playing?" Not getting the proper response, I then say confidently, "Well? I mean, amazing—right?" She then says, "It was okay. You have played better." Other times I will come off stage, white and panic-stricken, thinking I must change professions. Call it a living nightmare, perhaps, but not a recital! She has said, "That was one of your best performances." I have learned I am not the best judge of my work and, like many others, am much too unrealistic and tough on myself.

"Thank you" is an appropriate response to anyone who praises your recital. Early in my concertizing, I played a Bach suite and a woman came up and said how much she loved the suite, to which I replied, "It was terrible, I made so many mistakes." As soon as I uttered the words, I realized what a horrible thing I had done. My egotistical remark had taken any joy the woman had experienced from the performance away from her, and I succeeded in making her feel uneducated and ill at ease for saying that she liked it. I implied that, as the performer, I would certainly know more than she did about it.

You may find that the piece you worked the hardest on, the one that best exemplifies your musical and technical achievement, is the one no one mentions in his or her comments. Instead, they all mention the piece that came the most naturally to you. It was something you felt was easy for you. It seems unfair that no one mentioned the one you killed yourself over. Well, sometimes people can sense that you want to be praised for that so they intentionally don't mention it. Maybe it is not even conscious on their part. It is also possible that your performance was more about showing off than it was about expressing a real musical feeling. The audience senses that and was more responsive to the pieces you were more deeply involved in.

People can be insensitive about their remarks but this is usually out of ignorance. Although to us live performing is a common reality, to some in your audience it is completely foreign. Some of your loved ones will make extremely irritating comments after a concert, or even during a concert! Once I was playing for a group of people with an elderly woman in the front row. I was playing the Villa-Lobos Prelude #2, which has in the middle section a passage in which the left hand fingers a fixed chord which moves up and down the neck. Because of this, it is extremely difficult to avoid “squeaks,” which we all know and accept as part of some quirky guitar chords. She said in quite a loud voice to her friend next to her, “What’s that squeaking noise?” I was horrified and, for the rest of the concert, I couldn’t focus on anything else but the sounds of each “squeak.” They were turned up to “11!” It was silly to be too upset with the woman because she didn’t know what the sound was.

My father, who was one of my biggest fans and was always supportive, once heard me play early on in my career and said, “What’s that sound you sometimes make?” I replied in a defensive manner, “What sound? What are you talking about?” This was an informal living room concert for my parents and their friends—always the most difficult kind of performance for me. He asked me to play again and he would show me, so I did, and he stopped me when I “buzzed” a note (Moi?). Ah, yes—the famous, buzzing sound. Well, he had never really heard it before and needed to be told: yes, that is an undesirable sound that we mortals sometimes make. He wasn’t trying to be mean but it bothered me and I took it far too personally.

When you are done, try to remember that you are still keyed up from your performance and you may be a little on the sensitive side. Also, some people don’t know how to express themselves well and their remarks can seem hostile when they are not intended to be. Try not to take remarks personally and remember how lucky you are to be playing the guitar in front of an audience.

*I never met a performer who said,  
“Wow, I really hope they hate my playing  
and come to mention it, hate me!  
Yeah, that would be ideal!”*

**-BENJAMIN VERDERY-**

# RECITAL PROGRAM #1

*featuring*

[Your Name Here]

- I Blind Mary ..... Turlough Carolan  
Betty O'Brien
- II Tibetan Prayer Song ..... Traditional  
arr. Benjamin Verdery
- III Gavotte I ..... Johann Sebastian Bach  
Gavotte II
- IV Andante ..... Fernando Sor  
Cantabile  
Marche

## Intermission

- V Mr. Dowland's Midnight ..... John Dowland  
My Lord Willoughby's Welcome Home
  - VI Desert Sketch ..... Frederic Hand
  - VII Taireva ..... Traditional African  
arr. Benjamin Verdery
  - VIII Baiao para Ben ..... Freddie Bryant
- Suggested Encore:  
Estudio ..... Francisco Tárrega

# RECITAL PROGRAM #2

*featuring*

[Your Name Here]

- I Int à begripc ..... Owe Walter
- II Prélude ..... Robert de Visée  
 Allemande ..... arr. Benjamin Verdery  
 Courante  
 Sarabande  
 Minuet  
 Gigue
- III Capriccio ..... Mauro Giuliani

Intermission

- IV Bridget Cruise ..... Turlough Carolan  
 Planxty Drew
- V Actions ..... Benjamin Verdery
- VI Lagrima ..... Francisco Tárrega
- VII Niggun ..... Daniel Asia
- VIII Rag #2 ..... Allan Jaffe

Suggested Encore:

- Baiao para Ben ..... Freddie Bryant