

Learning How to Learn

The Aaron Shearer Method

“Playing a musical instrument such as the classical guitar is one of the most remarkable of human achievements. The sustained concentration and skillful movements required to play proficiently are probably unsurpassed by any other human endeavor.”

I. Overview

A. Aaron Shearer

1. *See article
2. My experience

B. Introduction

1. New approaches to the guitar
 - a) “Avoid confusion and error!”
 - b) Detailed, gradual approach is “essential”
 - (1) But with young children, more “doing” is necessary
 - c) Classical vs. classic guitar
 - (1) Classic: of recognized value; servings a standard of excellence; traditional, enduring”
 - d) The 5 major areas
 - (1) Technique
 - (2) Reading
 - (3) Memorizing
 - (4) Interpretation
 - (5) Performance
2. “Using these books”
 - a) These books are designed to help you at whatever your level of accomplishment..even if you already play, you should still start at the

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beginning of this book, where you'll find important basic information. Proceed carefully and you'll begin to discover and progressively solve the problems which have held you back — this is the most effective way to fill the gaps in your training. (Control vs. Movement “what seems intuitive turns out to be wrong” or injurious

- b) Adhere to the following concepts
 - (1) How and what instead of length of time
 - (a) You are developing habits through movement.
 - (b) Harmful vs. beneficial movement. Clear goals to know exactly how to proceed
 - (2) Start with the easiest skills
 - (a) Thumb stroke instead of alternation to aid in stability and allows student access to G major triad on open strings
 - (3) Approach challenging skills gradually
 - (a) Avoid frustration and error leading to quitting
 - (b) No persistent pushing through confusion and acquire bad habits

II. Part 1: Technique

A. Approach

1. Focus

a) Technical development

- (1) Accuracy
- (2) Strength
- (3) Speed
- (4) Endurance

b) Effective study

- 2. Diagrams, instructions (tying, tuning, instrument quality choosing a teacher)
- 3. Main goal: to share with others “music is for sharing”

"Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, but sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know, that we are here for the sake of others — above all for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, but also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are attached by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the efforts of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received."

Albert Einstein

Of course, you also want to play for personal enjoyment. But consider the following: Imagine that you're given the finest guitar, a complete music library, and all the time you wish for practice. However, there's one stipulation: you must always play alone in a soundproof room. If no one would ever hear you, how long would you continue to play the guitar?

4. Essentials for performance

a) Security

(1) Accuracy

(a) Everything is intentional, then bolstered through organic performance

(2) Continuity

(a) In playing and movement

(b) No hesitation

(3) Confidence (easier said than done but also takes practice)

(a) Emotional/Intellectual outlook

i) Think rationally, if it worked in practice it can work in performance

5. Aim directed movement (ADM): a positive way to avoid confusion and error
— knowing where and how to move *before* moving by using your “mind’s eye” a.k.a. visualization
 - a) Preparation
 - (1) Visualization
 - (2) Singing the notes
 - (3) Practicing hands separately
 - b) Application
 - (1) Avoid...
 - (2) Start with the right habits — efficiency
 6. Sustaining concentration
 - a) Enemies of concentration
 - (1) Confusion
 - (2) Anxiety
 - (3) Boredom
 - (4) Discomfort
- B. Muscle function
1. Flexion
 2. Extension
 3. Muscular alignment
 4. Midrange function of joints
 5. Uniform direction of joint movement
 6. Follow-through
- C. Positioning the guitar
1. General overview
 2. Recognize excess tension

D. Tone Production

1. Develop an optimum basic tone
2. Quality and power depend on two things
 - a) Tone perception
 - b) Nail condition and use
 - c) Touch and movement

III. Part Two: Reading and Memorizing Music

A. Now combined with book 1

B. Contents

1. Developing the ability to sight read and memorize music
2. Elements of music
3. "The Process"
 - a) SO many steps
 - b) Solfegging

C. Overview of the steps

1. RH thumb stroke open strings
2. Left hand introduction
3. Right hand finger training - inactive fingers
4. Rest stroke
 - a) Then combines them?
5. Free stroke
 - a) See Table of Contents for order
 - b) String Crossing (playing on a single string too)
 - c) Scales
 - d) Sweeps
 - e) etc.

D. Let's hear a demonstration and some rep!

IV. Pros & Cons

A. Cons

1. A finger over-extension
2. Solfegging doesn't work for some people especially since guitar is not solely a monophonic instrument
3. Very tedious at first
4. SO. MUCH. READING.
5. Some of the music is very boring especially in the beginning

B. Pros

1. Helps develop a full, beautiful tone overall
2. Prevents injury
3. Builds focus and confidence
4. A good approach to teaching beginners
5. Some really nice pieces
6. Develops a good ear

V. Q&A

Slides

1. Overview
2. Book 1: Technique
3. Book 2: Reading and Memorizing Music
4. Pros & Cons
5. Q&A