



# GUITAR

## Classical Guitar in the High School: A look at literature and texts

by Grant Wilcox

I approach the learning of reading classical guitar to that of learning a language. Sounds and habits that create good sounds come first. The hardest step in learning classical guitar at first for the new music student is that of reading standard notation. I teach classical guitar in my high school in a group setting that is run on an individualized basis. This process enables the student to create good sounds as they learn about music at a speed and level that will fit their ability. My choice of first method book has that thinking behind it. The book I use is the Aaron Shearer *Classical Guitar Volume I* for my Acoustic Guitar I class and *Volume II* for my second semester Acoustic Guitar II.

Some university guitar teachers think that the Shearer method has too much repetition of content and too many of his own pieces in them. I like the pieces he has composed for the guitar in sequence as the guitarist grows. His method starts introducing all six strings at once and all of the notes in what we string teachers would call first position. The method is set up in sections or chapters. The beginning of volume I, in a minor, works well for the average “kid” to start reading without being over-whelmed by the many rules of the language of reading music. Many of the first pieces are written as duets so when they are played together, the students who are ahead have the challenge of the second part to read. We start on page 15. As for the repetition: if the class is run on an individualized basis the more motivated or advanced kid will zip right on. The up side for the new student of music is that the repetition will be very helpful for those who might struggle with notation and many new students will struggle. Acoustic Guitar II is a second semester where learning is less individualized and the study of literature and playing together is emphasized.

In my Acoustic Guitar Ensemble Class we play part music

having 2-3 on a part. We add parts to standard classical guitar pieces and study improvisation. My students and I arrange new music for our ensemble and study standard orchestra pieces. In our November concert of this year we performed a masterwork with other parts added and played an arrangement by Levenson for four guitars of the *Allegretto from Symphony # 7* by Beethoven. The Acoustic Guitar Ensemble plays between orchestras at all of our BHS Orchestra concerts. We have performed the music of Bach, Telemann, Vivaldi, Sor and Tarrega

I like to use the Segovia *Major and Minor Scales* studies and the *Andres Segovia Studies for the Guitar* by Fernando Sor. These will keep your most advance students very busy for a very long time.

Frederick Noad has a three-method sequence that is very good. I like this better for private students. Frederick Noad also has transcribed collections of Renaissance, Baroque and Classical Period music for the classical guitar. Plus there are many other books of collections just like in piano; check with your local music store and they will be happy to look up these titles. Michael Lorimer has transcriptions of all of the Bach sonatas; just as in orchestra playing these pieces will last more than a lifetime.

*Grant Wilcox teaches orchestral music at Brainerd High School. This past year he offered: an early bird String Quartet class, Chamber Orchestra, three sections of Classical Guitar I, one section of Classical Guitar II, one section of Classical Guitar Ensemble, First Orchestra and Sinfonia Orchestra. His guitar ensemble performed between orchestras at each of his orchestra concerts. In 2007 The Brainerd Chamber Orchestra performed at the MMEA State Conference and at the ASTA National Conference in Detroit MI. †*