

CLASSICAL GUITAR PEDAGOGY:
IDENTIFYING THE FUNDAMENTALS RESTATED, REVISED, AND REFINED

by

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ABSTRACT

A survey of guitar methods from Aaron Shearer's 1963 *Classical Guitar Technique* through the more recent Stanley Yates's 2016 *Classical Guitar Technique from Foundation to Virtuosity* suggests that within the last fifty years there have been so many published guitar methods that it seems as though every guitar instructor has written a method. To what extent do these various methods include the same fundamental elements? To what extent are they unique? In other words, is guitar pedagogy improving, evolving, or merely being restated in each instructor's preferred method of teaching? Through an identification and analysis of such fundamentals as nail shape, right-hand position, learning of the fretboard, and relevant exercises, all as exhibited in selected method books, I will seek to determine the extent to which classical guitar pedagogy has been restated, revised, or refashioned over roughly the last half century. One outcome of this project will be to establish a criterion of fundamentals that are necessary for teaching classical guitar.

INTRODUCTION

Why Classical Guitar?

Throughout my study of guitar, I had two teachers, each exhibiting different levels of attention toward the teaching of the technical aspects of guitar playing, both reflective of distinct pedagogical contexts. Mark Moore, my high school class guitar teacher, not knowing that I would continue my study of classical guitar at university, did not focus on constantly correcting my far-from-perfect technique even though the class met every school day. This was most likely an unfortunate yet unavoidable consequence of the classroom environment, having to teach twenty students simultaneously with the ultimate goal of preparing a successful ensemble recital. In contrast, Mark Cruz, my university applied (private lesson) professor, corrected my poor technique expediently in my weekly hour-long lesson, as I needed to quickly remedy the bad habits I had acquired in high school in order to advance further in my more advanced study of solo guitar playing. Thus, the different approaches to teaching between class guitar, directed toward ensemble repertoire, and private instruction, directed toward solo repertoire, began to intrigue me. The one-on-one lesson format, perhaps not surprisingly, proved for me to be a significantly more effective way of teaching as it provided me, the student, an opportunity to learn and be individually critiqued every week. Conversely, the classroom guitar teacher typically focuses more on ensemble works while making sure the less experienced players are well prepared for seasonal recitals.

Initially, I wanted to focus my career on teaching one-on-one lessons with young students who truly desire to dedicate themselves to the study of classical guitar; and, to

that end, I was becoming more intrigued with studying the pedagogical aspects of classical guitar. During my participation in a guitar pedagogy course, Professor Cruz asked me to research different guitar methods and determine the extent to which each method sufficiently covered the fundamentals of classical guitar or if they needed supplemental material to be an effective teaching method.¹ During these assignments, I began to wonder about the various motivations for so many guitar methods and became more and more intrigued with considering their similarities and differences. This led me to do further, independent research of popular classical guitar methods written after 1960, finding that many of the surviving methods prior to that date have already been researched and reviewed by classical guitar scholars.²

A Brief Survey of the Literature

Michael Brennan, Coordinator of Guitar Studies at Liberty University, in a 2011 issue of *Soundboard* stated that, "With all the methods available, one wonders why there needs to be yet another method book written."³ Such an apparent abundance of methods has deterred few classical guitar teachers or performers from publishing their own method. Considering the first methods for the instrument that would become the classical guitar, the first of which was written in the 16th century, it is evident that a wide abundance of

¹ The criteria used for the coursework is like that of my methodology in discussing the fundamentals of the methods I researched which is addressed below in Defining the Criteria, 8.

² See, for example, Cornelia Susanna Nielu Van Der Walt "The Relevance of the Teaching Methods of Dionisio Aguado, Fernando Sor and Andrés Segovia for Guitar Technique in the Late 20th Century," Master's diss., (University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1996) and Soner Uluocak's "A Comparison of Selected Classical Guitar Teaching Methods and a Review of Their Implications for Guitar Education," *Cukurova University Faculty of Education Journal* Vol. 41, no. 2 (2012): 43-53.

³ Michael Brennan, "Stanley Yates: *Mel Bay's Modern Classical Guitar Method, Grade One*," *Soundboard* Vol. XXXVII, no. 4, (2011): 102.

authors would write methods regardless of the existence of concurrent method.⁴ A selected review of such methods shows that they consist not of textual instruction, but rather exercises that the student must learn to progress. Consider, as an example, Gaspar Sanz's *Instrucción de música sobre la guitarra española* written in 1674.⁵ It was not until 1959 that Aaron Shearer, who according to Ricardo Cobo is the "father of American classical guitar,"⁶ revolutionized the American classical guitar education system by writing a method book that emphasizes a systematic teaching of the fundamentals via textual instruction, pictures, illustrations, and diagrams.⁷ His method, *Classic Guitar Technique*, became one of the first popular methods to approach classical guitar pedagogy in this fashion.

Unlike previous pedagogues, Shearer sought to aid the student with ample textual instruction coupled with pictures as well as to provide a guide for the student. He believed many students were looking for a proper guitar education but had to resolve to being self-taught with no formal instruction or real guidance.⁸ One of his main justifications was to "...present concisely and explicitly, authentic information on the *basic* fundamentals and application of guitar technique."⁹ Shearer's method and

⁴ According to Cornelia Susana Nielu Van Der Walt, among other scholars, the first recorded method for fretted instruments was *Libro de música de vihuela de mano, intitulado El Maestro* (1535-1536) by Luis Milán. It consists of two volumes.

⁵ Gaspar Sanz, *"Instrucción de música sobre la guitarra Española"* (Zaragoza, 1674).

⁶ Kathleen A. Bergeron, "Aaron Shearer: Father of American Classical Guitar Education; a Profile," *Classical Guitar* Vol. 36, Issue No. 394 (Summer 2019): 45.

⁷ Aaron Shearer, *Classic Guitar Technique*, 2nd Edition, Volume 1 (New York: Franco Colombo, Inc., 1963).

⁸ Bergeron, "Aaron Shearer," 42.

⁹ Aaron Shearer, *Classic Guitar Technique*, v.

approach to pedagogy would initiate what is considered formal classical guitar education within universities and primary and secondary schools today.¹⁰

By understanding the immense impact Aaron Shearer had on classical guitar education in America, it seems odd that any other pedagogue would feel the desire to write their own method lest it be deemed inferior to or a copy of the Shearer method.¹¹ Even so, hundreds of pedagogues have written and published methods since 1959.¹² While I may read Shearer's method and determine it is definitive and can stand alone as an appropriate text to teach a student, many other guitar scholars have different thoughts. Graham Wade, an internationally acclaimed writer on the classical guitar,¹³ wrote in the Summer 2019 issue of *Classical Guitar* that "over the decades I have attempted to purchase just about every guitar method and technical manual published."¹⁴ This statement astonishes me as it alludes to Graham's devotion to having a more complete understanding of classical guitar technique. Like Graham, classical guitar pedagogues should become increasingly more interested in every author's perspective. This is made evident by his closing comments in the same article, where he

¹⁰ In the Bergeron article "Aaron Shearer: Father of American Classical Guitar Education; a Profile," Gerald Klickstein wrote this in *Soundboard* magazine shortly after Shearer passed in 2008: "As you read this, guitarists on multiple continents have Aaron's books perched on their music stands. They're playing etudes from his methods, taking lessons from his protégés, and savoring recordings by his former students. His is a legacy that will renew itself for generations, whenever fingers touch nylon and guitar music takes flight." (p. 45)

¹¹ In the same Bergeron article, Ricardo Cobo says, "Aaron didn't just write about the guitar – he made it a formal discipline, backed by a lifetime of extensive research, and developed the gold standard by which players are judged today." Bergeron, "Aaron Shearer," 45.

¹² A quick Amazon search of "classical guitar method book" brings up 200 different results.

¹³ "Graham Wade," *Alma Books*, November 18, 2016, <https://almabooks.com/alma-author/graham-wade/> (accessed July 7, 2020).

¹⁴ Graham Wade, "Towards the Holy Grail: A Short History of Guitar Methods from the Renaissance to the Present," *Classical Guitar* Vol. 36, Issue No. 394 (Summer 2019), 55.

writes that “There is always more to be done, more to be learned, more to be achieved. But with so many signposts on the way, surely the route of the pilgrimage has been made easier than ever before. What we have to do is discover the golden key to progress, whatever appeals or suits us best, and persevere to the utmost of our individual abilities.”¹⁵

With such a massive catalogue of methods, a student who has a passion to learn can be as voracious when devouring instruction as he or she desires. Similarly, a classical guitar teacher has multiple options from the vast catalogue of methods from which he can teach a student.

Motivating Research Question and Methodology

Many of these method books have been published in multiple volumes or have been revised on multiple occasions. Shearer’s method was introduced in two volumes with his first volume revised by 1963. He then went on to write three more books revolving around the guitar method in the early 1990s.¹⁶ Other pedagogues, such as Stanley Yates, have also written several methods. Yates’s *Mel Bay’s Modern Classical Guitar Method, Grade 1* (2008) contains 88 pages compared to his 2016 method, *Classical Guitar Technique from Foundation to Virtuosity Parts 1 & 2*, which holds nearly 440 pages of instruction.¹⁷ Why would Yates feel the need to write another set of methods, especially one that is five times larger than that of his previous method from eight years

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ The series of method books was entitled *Learning the Classic Guitar* and it was first published in three volumes between 1990-1991.

¹⁷ Stanley Yates, *Classical Guitar Technique from Foundation to Virtuosity Parts 1 & 2* (Tennessee, USA: Classical Guitar Study Editions, 2016).

before? To what extent is Yates' newer edition any different than his 2008 method book? In a span of eight years, the likelihood of Yates becoming more knowledgeable of classical guitar pedagogy is highly probable, so maybe Yates, among other pedagogues, adapt their previous methods to reflect new knowledge or advice that they wish to share to aspiring classical guitar learners.

As Yates's and other author's editions suggest, classical guitar pedagogues often restate, revise, and refashion popular methods to share personal advice and their preferred method of teaching. By surveying a selection of five classical guitar method books spanning from 1963 to 1998, I will show the trend that my selected authors' classical guitar methods display. The trend reflects each author's individual way of teaching the fundamentals of guitar technique. Each author presents the reader with a justification for writing the method, along with discussions on rest-stroke versus free-stroke, sitting position, music and notation, nail shape and tone discussion, and provide a brief history of the guitar while also providing helpful visual aids and descriptions among the textual instruction.

After a survey of the methods, I will analyze the data to show that each author has restated, revised, and refashioned the teaching of classical guitar technique and that no author has particularly contributed to the further development of the technique as each author just reiterates the teaching of fundamentals in their own words. Thus, as aforementioned by Graham Wade, all method books hold merit in the way that they shape the history of how the teaching of classical guitar technique has evolved since the 16th century.

THE METHODS

Selection

The five methods I chose as part of this study are significant among the greater classical guitar community and among my various teachers:¹⁸

1. Shearer (Second Edition 1963) – Aaron Shearer’s *Classic Guitar Technique* Volume 1¹⁹
2. Segovia (1977) – Vladimir Bobri *The Segovia Technique*²⁰
3. Noad (1978) – Frederick Noad *First Book for the Guitar*²¹
4. Duncan (1981) – Charles Duncan *A Modern Approach to Classical Guitar*²²
5. Parkening (Revised Edition 1999) – Christopher Parkening *The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method*²³

Defining the Criteria

I surveyed the selected methods to identify the commonalities and differences between the authors’ presentation of the guitar fundamentals in order to determine the extent to which each author restates, revises, or refashions classical guitar pedagogy. The

¹⁸ In my selection, I considered the following: availability, as many methods are no longer in print, funding, as I did not have the budget to purchase many method books, time constraints of research, recognition of author, and popularity of the method among classical guitarists. If I had more time and funding, more methods could be surveyed, and the trend found in my research could be reaffirmed or even rejected.

¹⁹ Shearer, *Classic Guitar Technique*.

²⁰ Vladimir Bobri, *The Segovia Technique* (New York: Collier Books, 1977).

²¹ Frederick Noad, *First Book for the Guitar*, Part 1 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1978).

²² Charles Duncan, *A Modern Approach to Classical Guitar*, Book 1 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation, 1981).

²³ Christopher Parkening, *The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method*, Revised Edition, Volume 1 (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1999).

following list displays, in no particular order, what I define as the fundamentals to guitar pedagogy²⁴ and serve as the criteria to which each method will be surveyed:

- Author's justification for writing the method
- Guitar anatomy with pictures or illustrations
- Rest-stroke versus free-stroke with pictures or illustrations
- Right-hand and left-hand position with pictures or illustrations
- Sitting position with pictures or illustrations
- Music and notation
- Nail shape and tone discussion
- History of the guitar
- Proper tuning mechanics and principles

My main intention with this list is to condense the topics as they are shared among all the methods, giving additional consideration toward certain disparities between the different authors as they have revised, restated, and refashioned the information in unique ways. As I present the methods, there are clear exceptions to the list in terms of remissions or additions between each method. The purpose of defining the criteria is to demonstrate the necessary elements, besides from the justification, that a beginner guitarist should learn in their first lessons. I will now present the data to

²⁴ Consistent with how I was taught during my undergraduate degree and consistent with the overall common pedagogical approach found in the selected methods, this list highlights the necessary topics that a teacher must make sure that a beginning student knows, so that the student can achieve the highest degree of success. This is not to say that anything missing from this list is not of importance or that any adherence from these topics results in the utter failure of the teacher, but rather I suggest, along with my teachers and these selected authors, that a student desiring to study classical guitar must come to a complete understanding of these topics in order to continually progress from beginning exercises and etudes to more advanced repertoire.

begin determining the extent to which these authors have revised, restated, and/or refashioned guitar pedagogy in their various method books.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The Author's Pedagogical Sequence

The following lists depict the sequence of instruction that each author presents in their respective methods. I will include relevant quotes and description to further illuminate the pedagogical details relevant to this study.

Shearer

1. Justification
 - i. Shearer presents his ideology for beginning students and his desire to teach them to release unnecessary tension and nerves while playing.
 - a. "A serious effort has been made in writing this work to present concisely and explicitly, authentic information on the *basic* fundamentals and application of guitar technique. While this book is not intended to replace the instruction that can be obtained from a good teacher, it will be of great service to both student and teacher; it presents in an orderly, progressive manner necessary basic information and exercises essential to beginning guitar instruction. The teacher, therefore, may more beneficially devote his time to detailed instruction aimed at correcting the student's individual problems."²⁵
 - b. "...the cultivation of deliberate and tranquil approach toward practice."²⁶
2. Brief history of guitar

²⁵ Shearer, *Classic Guitar Technique*, v.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, iv.

- i. Shearer covers the history of the classical guitar, the plectrum guitar, and flamenco guitar as to distinguish the three for anyone unaware of this aspect of guitar history.
- a. “The first of the two types to have made its appearance on the musical scene was the classic guitar, also known as the Spanish Guitar, concert guitar, and the finger-style guitar.”²⁷
- b. “The plectrum guitar is specifically constructed to withstand the tremendous tension of its six steel strings, which are tuned the same as those of the classic guitar.”²⁸
- c. “Only the classic type guitar is used in the performance of Flamenco music. The true Flamenco guitar, however, differs slightly from the classic guitar in its inner construction and is usually built of lighter wood.”²⁹
3. Introduction to guitar anatomy with illustration
 - i. Shearer displays an annotated illustration of the classical guitar.
 - ii. Shearer discusses what to look for when the student is purchasing his/her first guitar.
 - a. “A most important factor for the student to consider is the playing condition of the guitar he intends to use.. The few minutes required for determining the playing condition of a guitar may save the student many hours of unrewarding study and considerable expense.”³⁰
4. Discussion on tuning methods with illustration and piano diagram

²⁷ Ibid., 1.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.

²⁹ Ibid., 3.

³⁰ Ibid., 5.

- i. Shearer emphasizes the importance for a beginning student to understand the principles and practices of guitar tuning and its relation to a piano's tuning.
- a. "It is strongly recommended that the beginning student, without prior musical training, obtains the assistance of a qualified teacher or musician (not necessarily a guitarist) when attempting to tune the guitar. Much practice is required in order to tune the guitar quickly and accurately. The ear must be trained to hear the slightest difference in pitch; this can be accomplished only through patiently learning to focus concentration upon musical sounds."³¹

5. Music Notation

- i. Shearer outlines the fundamentals of how the notes on the guitar translate to musical notation along with a discussion on rhythm and time signatures.

6. Sitting Position

- i. Shearer models the proper sitting position for students along with steps to help the student achieve proper sitting position.

7. Right-Hand (RH) Technique

- i. Shearer emphasizes the importance of right-hand technique.
- a. "This section...is of extreme importance. The thumb and fingers of the right hand are responsible for sounding notes with accuracy and speed, and producing different shades of tone with varying degrees of volume."³²

³¹ Ibid., 6.

³² Ibid., 11.

- b. "The nails of the right hand should be kept short enough so that they do not strike the strings."³³
- 8. Introduction of rest-stroke (Apoyando) then free-stroke of thumb with pictures
 - i. Shearer introduces Apoyando to the beginning student.
 - a. "Correct finger action is achieved most easily by first developing [the rest-stroke]."³⁴
 - ii. Shearer introduces free-stroke of thumb.
 - a. "Stroke is made entirely from movement of thumb (mostly from joint at wrist, the first joint, with tip-segment turned comfortably back). HAND MUST BE HELD STEADY. Thumb executes FREE-STROKE, gliding freely *over* the adjacent string, *not* coming to rest against it."³⁵
- 9. Left-hand (LH) technique with pictures
 - i. Shearer introduces the actions the left-hand does in conjunction with the right-hand.
 - a. "Each finger should curve so that *only the tip* rests precisely upon the strings *just back of the fret*. Fingers must never lift far out from the fingerboard... Keep them hovering closely over strings... The thumb should remain on the neck as shown... Never should the thumb protrude over the edge of [the] fingerboard on the bass side."³⁶
- 10. Free-stroke in the Right-hand with all fingers
 - i. Shearer introduces free-stroke after providing basic melodies and exercises for the student to learn and practice with rest-stroke.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 13.

³⁵ Ibid., 16.

³⁶ Ibid., 18.

- a. "The term FREE-STROKE means that the finger, in making its stroke, does not come to rest against the next lower string but glides freely above it.

11. Nail care

- i. Shearer shares a discourse on the proper care of right-hand nails.
 - a. "The world's finest and most widely recognized classic guitarists use nails in conjunction with the fleshy part of their finger-tips to sound the strings of the guitar."³⁷
 - b. "No attempt will be made here to set down definite or precise rules regarding the shape of the nails because their characteristics vary with the individual. By studying the following figures the student will acquire some knowledge as to how different types of finger-nails are shaped; then through practice he will soon learn how to shape his own for best results."³⁸

Bobri

- 1. Justification
 - i. Bobri presents a preface from Andrés Segovia explaining his ideology for teaching guitar to beginning students.
 - a. "...in learning to play the guitar, the student must first establish the foundation of his technique. Only when his posture, his way of holding the instrument, position and action of both hands are correct will he find himself able to solve the progressive difficulties of his studies in a musically acceptable way... The study of works of Aguado,

³⁷ Ibid., 38.

³⁸ Ibid.

Sor, Giuliani, Carulli, Tárrega, and later on Villa-Lobos can be undertaken more successfully with this preliminary study.”³⁹

2. Historical outline of the guitar

i. Bobri presents an historical outline of the guitar.

a. He begins with the Hittite guitar from about 400-1350 B.C.⁴⁰, then moves to the Athenian guitar from around 400 B.C.⁴¹, then presents the reader with the vihuela from about 1500 and notes it to be “a direct predecessor of the guitar.”⁴² Following the vihuela was the advent of the Italian guitar which dates around to the late 1600s.⁴³ The Italian guitar then led to the Carulli guitar in 1810⁴⁴ and finally, informs the reader of Antonio Torres who is responsible for setting the standard of string length (650 mm) for all modern guitars.⁴⁵ Bobri then goes a step further in discussing Segovia’s preferred classical guitar. Segovia had many luthiers from whom he acquired guitars such as Manuel Ramirez and Hermann Hauser.⁴⁶

b. “The classic guitar of today as played by Andrés Segovia preserves the characteristic figure-eight shape of its predecessors, but it is somewhat larger and wider. Its wider fingerboard (a minimum of two inches at the nut) accommodates the strings without crowding or hampering the fingers in any way; there are twelve frets (or one octave) between the body of the instrument and its head, and six (sometimes seven) over the

³⁹ Bobri, *The Segovia Technique*, vii.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

soundboard... The interior construction is characterized by a fan-shaped system of bracing under the soundboard..."⁴⁷

3. Strings

- i. Bobri discusses the history of guitar strings and which type Segovia preferred most.
 - a. "When Segovia was a young boy the classic guitar was strung with three fine-quality gut strings and three silk-cored strings wound with fine silvered wire. These strings, though sweet in tone, cause the guitarist to endure great tribulations because of their unpredictability, their fragility, and their quick loss of resonance... Since 1947 Segovia has used the nylon mono-filament treble strings and the fine-wire wound nylon-cored bass strings manufactured by Albert Augustine Ltd. of New York."⁴⁸

4. *Virtuosi*

- i. Bobri discusses what is referred to as the "Golden Age of the Guitar".⁴⁹
 - a. "Spaniards Dionisio Aguado (1784-1849) and Fernando Sor (1778-1839), together with Italians Matteo Carcassi (1792-1853), Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829), and Ferdinando Carulli (1770-1841), to name only the most outstanding, contributed greatly to the evolution of guitar technique. Virtuoso performers, they brought the guitar for the first time to concert performance level. Methods of study still in use today were published and much beautiful music was composed, some of it to become part of the standard guitar repertoire."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 15.

- ii. Bobri then discusses a second wave of guitarists who sought to preserve and improve upon the *virtuosi* from the Golden Age.⁵¹
 - a. “The great Spanish master Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909) continued the work of Aguado and Sor.”⁵²
 - b. Tárrega would make important contributions to the technique of the right hand such as emphasizing the supported stroke, stressing the importance of the third finger of the right hand, writing a series of formative studies which laid the foundation for modern technique, rationalized the Spanish technique for tone production, and brought the art of transcription to an exalted level. Miguel Llobet (1878-1937) would extend the work of Tárrega further expressing the potential of the classical guitar.⁵³
- 5. Biography of Segovia
 - i. Bobri provides the reader with a history of Andrés Segovia, the most important figure of classical guitar history.
 - a. “Andrés Segovia has elevated the instrument to undreamed heights of technical mastery. His impeccable musical taste and musicianship have enabled him to produce a formidable array of transcriptions, creating a new guitar repertoire of classic and modern music.”⁵⁴
- 6. Sitting position with pictures (male and female) and illustrations
 - i. Bobri introduces Segovia’s proper sitting technique

⁵¹ Ibid., 23.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 25.

- a. “The classic playing position as prescribed by Andrés Segovia offers the most secure support for the instrument and allows complete freedom of movement for the hands in order that execution may be relaxed and yet precise and perfect.”⁵⁵
- 7. RH technique with pictures and illustrations
 - i. Bobri discusses Segovia’s approach to right hand technique.
 - a. “The classic position of the right hand, and for that matter the entire playing position, was evolved to achieve both beauty of tone and the utmost in relaxation while playing, thus enabling the performer to devote his attention entirely to the artistic aspects of his performance.”⁵⁶
- 8. *Apoyando* (rest) stroke v. *tirando* (free) stroke with pictures and illustrations
 - i. Bobri explains the differences and advantages of both the *apoyando* and *tirando* strokes.
 - a. On the *apoyando* stroke: “This stroke, which contributed to revolutionizing the technique of our time, is achieved by plucking the strings with the first, second, or third finger, which after completing the stroke is brought to rest on the next string... is used principally for scale passages, essential notes of melody, and generally for all notes *not* forming part of a chord or arpeggio.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., 33.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 39.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 43.

- b. On the *tirando* stroke: “The fingertip describes a shallow arc toward the palm of the hand, and clears the next string instead of resting on it.”⁵⁸
- 9. Nails and playing position with illustrations
 - i. Bobri explains the importance of nail care and shape.
 - a. “One cannot overemphasize the importance of properly trimmed nails in guitar playing... The secret of producing a beautiful, yet powerful tone lies in the exact manner in which the nails are used.”⁵⁹
- 10. RH Thumb technique with pictures
 - i. Bobri explains proper RH thumb technique.
 - a. “The proper use of the thumb is of paramount importance. Its misuse not only will adversely affect its own action but might considerably interfere with the free action of the fingers, or, worse, impart a rocking movement to the hand, impairing its security. The hand should at all times be as steady as possible...”⁶⁰
- 11. LH Technique with pictures and illustrations
 - i. Bobri explains the importance of LH wrist and finger placement.
 - a. “The secure manner in which the classic guitarist cradles his instrument obviates any need whatsoever for supporting the neck of the guitar with the left hand... The fingers are more or less separated, depending on the notes they must play on the fingerboard, and are supported by the counter-pressure of the thumb on the back of the neck.”⁶¹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 46-47.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 48.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁶¹ Ibid., 56.

12. Barré technique with pictures

- i. Bobri explains the importance of the barré technique.
 - a. “The barré is a technique of depressing simultaneously all six strings of the guitar with the left hand first finger. Usually it is indicated by a symbol C (Spanish *ceja*) and a Roman numeral to indicate the fret: as C VII. If fewer than six strings are to be depressed, the *half barré* is used, and the symbol is 1/2 C... plus the Roman numeral fret indication. The thumb is never used in barring the bass strings.”⁶²

13. Pizzicato stroke with pictures

- i. Bobri explains the importance of the pizzicato stroke.
 - a. “To obtain this sound effect, similar to the muffled and short-sounding plucked notes obtained on the bowed instruments, the outer edge of the right hand is placed *lightly* over the bridge, covering also part of the strings immediately adjacent to the bridge bone.”⁶³

14. Natural/Artificial Harmonics with pictures

- i. Bobri explains the importance of natural and artificial harmonics.
 - a. “The harmonics, or bell tones, are produced by lightly and momentarily touching the string *directly over a fret* with the left hand finger, without pressing it to the fingerboard, and plucking with the right hand fingers at the same time.”⁶⁴

⁶² Ibid., 63.

⁶³ Ibid., 70.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 72.

- b. “To augment the limited range of the natural harmonics, another technique, *octave harmonics*, sometimes called *right hand harmonics*, can be used. This offers a much greater coverage of chromatic compass, and, while the sonority of the harmonics is somewhat less, there is an advantage of greater uniformity of tone and truer pitch.”⁶⁵

Noad

1. Justification

- i. Noad presents his readers, the student or teacher, with some advice before taking a deeper look at his method.
 - a. “This book is a practical manual; so as information is given, there is an action required to reinforce memory... If you possibly can, go to a teacher... The main purpose is enjoyment. With the right start you can look forward to many years of pleasure and satisfaction.”⁶⁶

2. Brief description of classical guitar

- i. Noad gives a definitive explanation of the classical guitar.
 - a. “This book is about the nylon-strung guitar of the type shown in the illustration. It is known variously as the classical (or classic) guitar, the concert guitar, or the finger-style guitar to distinguish it from other types with steel strings which are sometimes amplified electrically.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ibid., 73.

⁶⁶ Noad, *First Book for the Guitar*, v.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 1.

3. Guitar anatomy with illustrations
 - i. Noad introduces the basic anatomy of the guitar.
 - a. “For future reference it is important to know the correct name for the various parts of the guitar. Of particular importance is the numbering of the strings.”⁶⁸
4. Music notation
 - i. Noad explains musical notation for the beginning student.
 - a. “The purpose is to give you an overall picture and a general section for reference; however, each item is introduced and practiced in the lessons which follow so as to build up the real familiarity that comes with use.”⁶⁹
5. Discussion on tuning methods with illustrations and piano diagram
 - i. Noad discusses the proper tuning methods for the guitar and the relation of the guitar’s tuning to the piano.
 - a. “...the easiest way to tune in the early stages is to align the strings with the same notes on a piano.”⁷⁰
6. Sitting position with illustrations
 - i. Noad presents an illustration depicting proper sitting position for the student to mirror.
 - a. “Study the diagram, and try to take a position as close to is as possible.”⁷¹
7. RH technique with illustrations

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁷¹ Ibid., 6.

i. Noad exemplifies what the right hand should look like in the same illustration as the sitting position.

a. “Now look at the right hand in the diagram. Notice that the knuckles are aligned with the strings. If you can remember this one point, you will be well on the way to establishing a good right hand position.”⁷²

8. Rest-stroke, tone quality, shape of nails with illustrations

i. Noad introduces rest-stroke along with a discussion on tone quality and proper nail shape.

a. “Anyone can play a *loud* note, but the object is to make a beautiful one.”⁷³

9. LH Technique with illustrations

i. Noad describes the appropriate left-hand positioning.

a. “The overall position of the left hand and wrist is of great importance. A good position ensures maximum reach, a minimum of excessive movement, and general stability.”⁷⁴

10. Free-stroke

i. Noad discusses proper free-stroke technique.

a. “For the sake of completeness we will consider briefly the other principal right hand movement known as the FREE STROKE.”⁷⁵

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 12.

Duncan

1. Justification

- i. Duncan states his advice and forethoughts to the potential student or teacher who utilize his method.
 - a. "Learning to play classical guitar will give you a lifetime of musical enjoyment."⁷⁶

2. Guitar anatomy with pictures

- i. Duncan presents an annotated picture depicting the different parts of the classical guitar.

3. Sitting position with pictures

- i. Duncan demonstrates proper sitting technique via textual instruction and pictures of himself.
 - a. "Sit down and position the guitar as you see below. Keep the following points in mind:
 - 1. Guitar rests on left leg.
 - 2. Left hand is not used to support the instrument, only to play it.
 - 3. Left leg points straight forward..."⁷⁷
 - 4. Discussion on tuning methods with illustrations and piano diagram
- i. Duncan presents a discussion on proper tuning technique for the beginning student.

⁷⁶ Duncan, *A Modern Approach to Classical Guitar*, 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

- a. "When you are tuning your guitar, you will adjust the pitch (highness or lowness) of each string by turning the corresponding tuning key. Tightening a string raises the pitch; loosening a string lowers the pitch... You can tune to a piano or organ keyboard, a guitar pitchpipe or one of the new electronic tuners."⁷⁸
5. RH Technique with pictures
 - i. Duncan explains proper right hand technique to the beginning student.
 - a. "Place your right hand loosely over the strings. Check your arm position. Make sure the **forearm**, rather than the upper arm, is resting on the guitar. Now make a fist and lay it on the strings as shown in the illustration below... Now, push up like a spider with your fingers so they uncurl."⁷⁹
6. Rest-stroke with illustrations
 - i. Duncan discusses proper rest-stroke technique for the beginning student.
 - a. "The first basic stroke you will learn is called the **rest-stroke**. This stroke can be played with the thumb or with the index and middle fingers... It may seem strange at first to play in this way, since most people think of an upward plucking action as the natural way to play. Plucking will come later."⁸⁰
7. RH Fingernails with pictures
 - i. Duncan explains the initial steps of fingernail care to the beginning student.
 - a. "In more advanced playing, the fingernails of the right hand are used. For now, it is not necessary for you to attempt to play with fingernails; however, it would be a good idea

⁷⁸ Ibid., 6-7.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 9 and 11.

to begin taking care of your nails at this point, so that when the time comes, they will be ready. Don't clip them, and above all, don't bite them."⁸¹

8. Music Notation

- i. Duncan teaches the beginning student the basics of music notation.
 - a. "Music is written in **notes** on a **staff**. The staff has five lines and four spaces between the lines. Where a note is written on the staff determines its **pitch** (highness or lowness)."⁸²

9. Free-stroke thumb with illustrations

- i. Duncan introduces the free-stroke thumb to the beginning student.
 - a. "Before you combine the thumb and fingers in one piece, practice a new thumb motion called the **free stroke**. The free stroke uses the same movement as the rest stroke except that the thumb does not come to rest against the next string."⁸³

10. LH Technique with pictures

- i. Duncan introduces proper left hand placement to the beginning student.
 - a. "Basically, the fingers and thumb of the left hand oppose each other like the jaws of a vise (or pliers). To get a quick idea of just how, pick up a small book... Now, do the same thing on the guitar."⁸⁴

Parkening

1. Justification

⁸¹ Ibid., 11.

⁸² Ibid., 12.

⁸³ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 21.

- i. Parkening shares his reasons for writing and having his method book published.
 - a. “There had been, he [James Sherry] said, few new methods published in this century and none by a concert classical guitarist. It would fill a genuine longstanding need.”⁸⁵
 - b. “This book is designed to present you with a logical and systematic method for gradual and technical development toward the eventual mastery of this great and noble instrument.”⁸⁶
2. Guitar anatomy with pictures
 - i. Parkening presents an annotated picture of the guitar along with brief descriptions of the various parts and their functions.
3. Sitting position with pictures (male and female posture)
 - i. Parkening teaches the beginning student proper sitting position. He includes both pictures of himself and pictures of how female students should sit to play.
4. Discussion on tuning methods with piano diagram and guitar illustrations
 - i. Parkening discusses the importance of proper tuning knowledge and technique for guitar as related to the piano.
 - a. “It is important that the strings of the guitar be tuned in correct relation to one another or, in other words, the guitar must be tuned to itself (called *relative tuning*).”⁸⁷
5. RH Technique with pictures and right hand illustration

⁸⁵ Parkening, *The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method*, 4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

- i. Parkening presents the beginning student with proper RH technique using pictures of himself and of Segovia.
- a. “The right hand is placed toward the lower end of the sound hole... There are exceptions to the general rule of right hand placement. Movement of the right hand toward the bridge produces a thinner, more brittle tone which is sometimes desirable.”⁸⁸
6. Rest-stroke (*apoyando*) and Free-stroke (*tirando*) with pictures and illustrations
- i. Parkening presents the beginning student with proper rest-stroke and free-stroke technique.
- a. “When the right-hand fingers or thumb strike a string and are brought to rest against the adjacent string, it is called the rest stroke.”⁸⁹
- b. “When the right-hand fingers or thumb strike a string and are lifted slightly to avoid hitting the adjacent string, it is called a free stroke.”⁹⁰
7. Music Notation
- i. Parkening presents the beginning student with the fundamentals of music notation.
8. Discussion on practicing
- i. Parkening shares with the beginning student his advice on correct practicing methods and habits.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 14 and 15.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 16.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 17.

- a. "Correct practicing is the most important habit to develop in becoming a fine guitarist. Without correct practice it is impossible to play the guitar well... This practice should be away from distractions, in order to afford maximum concentration."⁹¹
9. LH Technique with pictures and illustrations
 - i. Parkening presents proper left hand technique to the beginning student.
 - a. "The string should be met by the tip of the finger in most cases, and the nails of the left hand must be cut short enough to allow the fingertips to be in a perpendicular position to the fingerboard when depressing the strings. The thumb applies counter-pressure from behind the neck."⁹²
 10. Fingernail and tone production with pictures and illustrations
 - i. Parkening shares proper fingernail care along with the importance of good tone.
 - a. "I recommend that, at this point, the serious classical guitar student begin to use the nails of the right hand in conjunction with the fleshy part of the fingertips when sounding the strings."⁹³
 - b. "Producing a good sound or tone is achieved by a combination of both nail and flesh."⁹⁴

⁹¹ Ibid., 20.

⁹² Ibid., 27.

⁹³ Ibid., 48.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 49.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The Concise Data

The following chart displays the topics covered (or not) in each method:

	Shearer	Bobri	Noad	Duncan	Parkening
Author's justification for writing the method	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Guitar anatomy with pictures or illustrations	✓		✓	✓	✓
Rest-stroke versus free-stroke with pictures or illustrations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Right-hand and left-hand position with pictures or illustrations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sitting position with pictures or illustrations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Music and notation	✓		✓	✓	✓
Nail shape and tone discussion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
History of the guitar	✓	✓			✓
Proper tuning mechanics and principles	✓		✓	✓	✓

Of the nine fundamentals defined, five are discussed by each considered author.

Aside from the justification section, the fundamentals discussed in each method consists of the topics focused on the student obtaining the correct sitting position, hand

positions, discussions of the different strokes, and a discussion on tone and the fingernails. Thus, these four topics must be of utmost importance to these pedagogues and points to the importance of these topics to pedagogues outside of this research. The four remaining topics are covered by all the authors except for one and in one case, two. The following analysis will look at the presented data, or topics, beginning with the authors' differing justifications, to discuss the extent to which these authors restate, revise, or refashion guitar pedagogy.

Restate, Revise, Refashion

I will discuss the differences between each author's approach to the topics in this order:

- Justification
- Sitting position with pictures or illustrations
- Right-hand and left-hand position with pictures or illustrations
- Rest-stroke versus free-stroke with pictures or illustrations
- Nail shape and tone discussion
- Guitar anatomy with pictures or illustrations
- Proper tuning mechanics and principles
- Music and notation
- History of the guitar

Justification

Shearer, Bobri, Noad, Duncan, and Parkening state five distinct justifications for writing a guitar method as each had, to an extent, a main purpose they wished to share.

Shearer, Bobri, Noad, and Parkening stated the need for a more practical approach to developing a strong and applicable understanding of the fundamentals. But within that shared desire, the four differ. Shearer explains that he desires for students to approach guitar playing and practice in a more relaxed manner because of the strong underlying foundation of strong fundamentals. Bobri, expressed by Segovia in his preface, desires that students master the fundamentals in order to advance to exercises and larger guitar repertoire. Noad expresses his desire is that students understand the fundamentals so that they may enjoy guitar playing. Parkening expresses that there was a lack of methods written by successful concert guitars and that he was inspired to fill that void. And then Duncan, not explicitly stating the need for a practical or systematic approach to guitar pedagogy, states that he writes his method to help students achieve a lifetime of musical enjoyment. The differences of justification do not have an impact on the content of the method or signify a stark deviation from the integrity of traditional guitar technique, but rather the differences point to the idea that each method holds merit as part of the history of guitar pedagogy and alludes to the idea that the methods are shaped by the author's unique and individual perspective.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ It is interesting to note that these justifications do hold merit while simultaneously allowing the authors to simply restate, revise, and refashion the teaching of the fundamentals of guitar pedagogy. None of the

Sitting position with pictures or illustrations

The sitting position taught by the five authors achieves the greatest support for the guitar and allows for a large range of motion for both the right and left hand. Bobri writes that, “The classic playing position as practiced by Andrés Segovia offers the most secure support for the instrument and allows complete freedom of movement for the hands in order that execution may be relaxed and yet precise and perfect.”⁹⁶ Each author presents pictures or illustrations depicting a man in proper sitting position.⁹⁷ The pictures and illustrations are coupled with textual instruction explaining how to achieve the proper sitting position. Each authors advice for sitting position is shared in this list:

- Sit on the front of a chair without arms.
- Make sure to sit up straight with relaxed shoulders. If there is any tension, there will be unnecessary and detrimental pain that will hinder the student from achieving proper sitting position while also compromising every other facet of his playing.
- Place a footstool about six inches in front of the left chair leg angled about 30° outward.
- Adjust the footstool to a height that allows your left leg to support the guitar’s upper bout on the middle of the chest. This is achieved with the combined support from the right leg, chest, and right arm. If proper position is achieved, the tuning pegs on the head of the guitar will be at eye level and the guitar will be held firmly and securely.

authors in this survey necessarily changed anything about the guitar fundamentals; they just found new and effective ways to present the material. As Shearer and Parkening state, they present a concise, practical, and methodological approach to learning the classical guitar as opposed to leave the student stranded with only exercises and pieces with no instruction as earlier methods did.

⁹⁶ Vladimir Bobri, *The Segovia Technique*, 33.

⁹⁷ Parkening and Bobri include sitting position for women.

- Tuck the right leg in closer to the chair while having it remain flat on the ground.

This is the proper sitting position that needs to be achieved before right- and left-hand positions are introduced.⁹⁸ If done correctly, the guitar is impervious to any movement of the student's hands or head if a better view of the fretboard is needed. Each author emphasizes the importance of sitting position and it is the first step mentioned in the researched methods, aside from tuning, guitar anatomy, or in some cases, guitar history, before any further guitar technique or fundamentals are taught. As it remains consistent with Segovia's sitting position, as made evident in Bobri's quote, the sitting position shared in the methods preserve the integrity of the traditional sitting position. The only difference is in the amount of instruction and detail each author takes describing the sitting position.⁹⁹ Thus, the lack of variance of sitting position suggests that there is only one acceptable sitting position that varies only by the height of the player.¹⁰⁰

Right-hand and left-hand position with pictures or illustrations

Like proper sitting position, proper right-hand and left-hand technique are paramount to achieve successful tone and ease of movement while also avoiding unnecessary

⁹⁸ My initial lessons with Mark Cruz and my later studying of guitar pedagogy follow this approach while requiring mastery of the position before being introduced to right-hand position. The left-hand is introduced much later.

⁹⁹ The list I compiled represents Shearer, Bobri, and Parkening in length and detail. Noad's is less detailed but more similar than Duncan's presentation. However, if the student sought to use these methods in conjunction with a teacher, the teacher would have far more input than is found in these methods alone.

¹⁰⁰ There are many devices on the market today, such as the ErgoPlay, that support the guitar for the performer allowing the performer to sit flat-footed.

tension or pesky pain from incorrect positions. Shearer says “This section of ‘Classic Guitar Technique’ is of extreme importance. The thumb and fingers of the right hand are responsible for sounding notes with accuracy and speed, and producing different shades of tone with varying degrees of volume,”¹⁰¹ concerning the right hand while Noad writes that, “The overall position of the left hand and wrist is of great importance. A good position ensures maximum reach, a minimum of excessive movement, and general stability,”¹⁰² about the left hand. Thus, the authors once again emphasize the importance of right- and left-hand placement. In each method, the right-hand is discussed first and the left-hand is mentioned after learning rest-stroke.

Right-hand

The authors split between two different schools of thought for right-hand technique. Shearer, Bobri, and Parkening¹⁰³ advocate for the bent wrist approach while Noad and Duncan present a straight wrist.¹⁰⁴ The authors advocating for the bent wrist approach to right-hand technique explain the advantages in this way: “The classic position [bent wrist] of the right hand, and for that matter the entire playing position, was evolved to achieve both beauty of tone and the utmost in relaxation while playing, thus enabling the performer to devote his attention entirely to the artistic aspects of his

¹⁰¹ Aaron Shearer, *Classic Guitar Technique*, 11.

¹⁰² Frederick Noad, *First Book for the Guitar*, 10.

¹⁰³ Interestingly, Parkening does not specifically explain in his text that the student should have the bent wrist, or right hands perpendicular to the strings, but his illustrations and pictures all contain players with bent wrists.

¹⁰⁴ Mark Cruz taught me that the straight wrist approach is the tradition of today and that the bent wrist has gone out of style for modern pedagogues. From my understanding, the bent wrist activates unnecessary tension in the right hand that can lead to muscle pain and disadvantaged playing.

performance.”¹⁰⁵ The authors in this study advocating for the straight wrist approach make no defense for the advantages of straight wrist.¹⁰⁶ This becomes the first aspect that is contrary among the authors. Thus, the evidence points toward the different schools phasing in and out of popularity with the straight wrist approach being more widely taught today. However, aside from the wrist being bent or straight, the authors agree on the rest of right-hand technique. The placement of the right hand is presented in this way by Shearer:

1. Place right forearm on the top front edge of guitar, forearm horizontal to floor, so that hand falls just back of sound hole.
2. Wrist is relaxed in as comfortable a sidewise curve as the conformation of wrist will permit. (The curve for some, such as Noad and Duncan, is negligible as they advocate straight wrists.)
3. Wrist is quite flat or never more than slight arched in accordance with individual tendencies or characteristics...
4. Tip of thumb is relaxed and either resting on a string for hand support or hanging downward in a normal position not touching the strings, whichever seems more comfortable.
5. Keep shoulders relaxed, and generally on a horizontal plane. Guard against the tendency of right shoulder to drop, causing arm to cross the edge of guitar too far back of the

¹⁰⁵ Vladimir Bobri, *The Segovia Technique*, 39.

¹⁰⁶ In Aaron Shearer's later published series of methods, *Learning the Classic Guitar*, Shearer gives a defense for the straight wrist approach.

bridge. In actual performance, left shoulder is usually slightly lower than the right, to facilitate reaching high positions.¹⁰⁷

After right hand placement, the authors then explain how the right-hand fingers need to be spaced just enough that when performing a rest- or free-stroke, the fingers have a clear path for a full follow through to achieve the most proper and powerful sound. The fingers should also be placed where the flesh of the fingers meet the nail. Aside from the differences regarding bent wrist or straight wrists, the authors agree and present right-hand placement similarly for their readers.¹⁰⁸

Left-hand

The left hand's function is "the depression of the strings to the fingerboard," as Bobri states.¹⁰⁹ Proper left-hand technique, like proper-right hand technique, is paramount and is similarly explained by all the authors:

- The knuckles of the left hand should be parallel to the fingerboard.
- The left-thumb is generally placed midway on the back of the neck in line with the index and middle fingers. The student should be careful that the thumb does not protrude above the fingerboard or neck. Otherwise, you may find that the rest of the hand is, in many cases, out of position.

¹⁰⁷ Aaron Shearer, *Classic Guitar Technique*, 12.

¹⁰⁸ The authors all advocate for the right hand to be placed right behind the sound hole for beginning students but also inform the reader that the right hand can be shifted to produce different tones that may be useful when learning larger repertoire.

¹⁰⁹ Vladimir Bobri, *The Segovia Technique*, 56.

- The string should be met by the tip of the finger in most cases, and the nails of the left hand must be cut short enough to allow the fingertips to be in a perpendicular position to the fingerboard when depressing the strings. The thumb applies counter-pressure from behind the neck.
- All fingers should form an arch, with the knuckles parallel to the fingerboard. The movement of the finger should begin from the knuckle.
- When depressing the string, press it firmly, just behind the fret wire to produce a good, clear tone. For economy of movement and security, never lift a finger unnecessarily after it has played a note. When the fingers are not depressing a string, keep them hovering comfortably close to the strings and ready to play.¹¹⁰

Between the authors there is no variance in left-hand technique. The only difference is the depth and detail by which each author discusses left-hand technique. For instance, the list I quoted was Parkening's straight forward guide. In contrast, Bobri covers that information while also going further into detail discussing common errors the beginning student must be aware of so as to avoid unnecessary tension and pain that is detrimental to the student's overall technique and ability to play. The other three authors share even less details than Parkening but stress the importance of mastering the left-hand technique. However, Bobri's devotion to detail and absolute mastery of the fundamentals as taught by Segovia is expected therefore it is not surprising that he includes far more details and textual instruction than any other author. Considering

¹¹⁰ Christopher Parkening, *The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method*, 26-27.

illustrations and pictures, the authors all provide illustrations or pictures of proper left-hand position for the student to mimic. These pictures are once again coupled with textual instruction.

Rest-stroke versus free-stroke with pictures or illustrations

In contrast to the varying justifications among the five authors, the various approaches to teaching students rest-stroke and free-stroke arguably have a greater influence on the integrity of the method. If the student cannot successfully master rest-stroke and free-stroke, as with the previous topics, the student's development will be stunted thus hindering further learning of larger repertoire, while also being unable to properly master the basic exercises and etudes that help form the proper fundamentals of guitar technique. The following explores the extent to which the authors present rest- and free-stroke traditionally and similarly or completely different and novel.

Rest-stroke

To compare the authors' approach to rest-stroke (apoyando), I compared the different presentations of pictures and illustrations, metaphors or similes, and textual descriptions to determine the extent to which the authors differ or are similar in content. Each author presents the rest-stroke as a precedent for the free-stroke. Parkening and Bobri both introduce rest-stroke and free-stroke in succession whereas Shearer, Noad, and Duncan introduce free-stroke at a later point in the beginning students' lessons. The introduction of rest-stroke before free-stroke suggests that rest-

stroke has a greater fundamental purpose for the beginning student. As I understand from my own studies, mastering the rest stroke allows for the player to produce a strong and beautiful sounding note while instilling good follow-through technique for the right-hand fingers that is absolutely necessary for a successful free-stroke. Thus, mastery of rest-stroke can be considered a steppingstone to mastery of free-stroke. As stated by Borbi, “the *apoyando* stroke is used principally for scale passages, essential notes of melody, and generally for all notes not forming part of a chord or arpeggio.”¹¹¹ As each author was to some extent inspired by Segovia, his view is consistently shared among the researched methods. The pictures and illustrations between all the method books are all relatively similar pictures and illustrations.¹¹² Each author uses an illustration¹¹³ of a right-hand in proper position meeting the strings at the appropriate angle, along with the correct direction the finger should move when the string is activated including the proper follow through, for the beginning student to copy when learning rest-stroke which is then coupled with textual instruction explaining the processes within the illustrations. This provides evidence that these authors, among ones outside of the researched authors, have not introduced any new information or new technique regarding rest-stroke. Rather, the traditional and accepted technique has either been repackaged for certain audiences or retold with the author’s personal insights.

¹¹¹ Vladimir Bobri, *The Segovia Technique*, 43.

¹¹² There is a degree of variance as some authors advocate for a straight right wrist whereas other authors advocate a bent right wrist.

¹¹³ Bobri and Parkening use pictures of their own hand to present proper hand position for rest-stroke.

Free-stroke

In contrast to the rest-stroke, free-stroke (*tirando*) is mentioned second in all the methods and is reserved for playing chords and arpeggios.¹¹⁴ Parkening informs his readers that, “The rest stroke is used for scale passages or notes of emphasis, as it is louder than free stroke. Otherwise, the free stroke is more often used.”¹¹⁵ This sentiment is also shared by the other authors.¹¹⁶ Shearer writes that, “Free-stroke with the fingers must generally be employed in playing arpeggios to permit tones of adjacent strings to be sustained.”¹¹⁷ Bobri similarly states that, “This stroke [*tirando*] is used in playing chords, fast arpeggios, and in all instances when the neighboring strings should vibrate simultaneously.”¹¹⁸ With no surprise, Noad posits that, “The free stroke becomes important in the performance of chords and arpeggios, which are considered in detail after sufficient note have been learned. For now, the stroke may be practiced experimentally to distinguish it clearly from the rest stroke.”^{119 120}

Like the teaching of rest-stroke, the authors utilize illustrations¹²¹ to present proper right-hand position meeting the strings, along with the appropriate directions for the fingers to travel when the strings are activated to achieve the proper follow

¹¹⁴ Parkening and Bobri mention the free-stroke immediately after the introduction of rest-stroke.

¹¹⁵ Christopher Parkening, *The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method*, 17.

¹¹⁶ In the Duncan method, he does not actually cover free-stroke of the right hand in the method I have as he saves that topic for his second book of the series. However, he does cover the thumb and the free-stroke.

¹¹⁷ Aaron Shearer, *Classic Guitar Technique*, 30.

¹¹⁸ Vladimir Bobri, *The Segovia Technique*, 47.

¹¹⁹ Frederick Noad, *First Book for the Guitar*, 12.

¹²⁰ Noad’s approach differs from that which Mark Cruz taught me in my first lessons. Cruz emphasized free-stroke before rest-stroke while reserving rest-stroke for certain notes that needed flair.

¹²¹ Again, Parkening and Bobri utilizes pictures in addition to illustrations.

through, for the student to copy when learning free-stroke.¹²² Again, there is ample evidence that these authors restated, revised, and refashioned the teaching of rest-stroke and free-stroke with concise and practical textual information as opposed to providing any new additions to the traditional guitar pedagogy. Similarly to the topics discussed above, the differences between the authors is simply in approach as opposed to content and final result.

Nail shape and tone discussion

Nail care represents the final fundamental topic included by all five authors. Duncan explains right-hand nails in this way: “In more advanced playing, the fingernails of the right hand are used. For now, it is not necessary for you to attempt to play with fingernails; however, it would be a good idea to begin taking care of your nails at this point, so that when the time comes, they will be ready.”¹²³ Shearer shares a similar view but considers the importance of nails as he writes that, “Much pleasure may be obtained from playing the instrument well without nails. However, the serious and aspiring student of the classic guitar must consider use of the nails absolutely necessary. Without them there exists a lack of brilliance in execution and volume; and most important, the tonal resources of the guitar, to a great extent, remain dormant.”¹²⁴ Bobri writes that, “One cannot overemphasize the importance of properly trimmed nails

¹²² The approach to free-stroke, especially that of Parkening, is very similar to what Mark Cruz taught me in my first lessons.

¹²³ Charles Duncan, *A Modern Approach to Classical Guitar*, 11.

¹²⁴ Aaron Shearer, *The Classic Guitar*, 38.

in guitar playing.”¹²⁵ Thus, the authors vary to the extent that they stress the importance of nail shaping and care but they agree that the nails are absolutely vital for the technical advancement and the achievement of beautiful tone for the beginning student.

Each author agrees that the best tone results from the student mastering the ability to consistently activate the string at the point where the nail meets the flesh of the finger. Parkening includes the most detailed guide for basic nail care, while admitting that the result is based on the individual’s nails, in his method:

1. “Use a fine file to round the nails, leaving approximately 1/16” to 1/8” beyond the flesh of the fingertip. *Follow the contour of your fingertip.* Check for length by holding the fingers perpendicular to the floor at eye level.
2. Place the file at a slight angle and flat underneath the nail edge, and again shape the nail edge to form an even, flat surface. This corrects any unevenness around the outer edge of the nail.
3. Check the shape of the nail by playing a string. With the finger relaxed, the correctly shaped nail should glide freely across the string. If there is a feeling of hooking or catching during the stroke, the nail has not been properly filed.
4. Use *very fine* sandpaper for polishing the fingernail edges... This step corrects the raspy sound caused by the rough edge after filing.

¹²⁵ Vladimir Bobri, *The Segovia Technique*, 48.

5. Now, listen to the tone as you strike the string. If it is harsh or unpleasant to the ear, repolish the fingernail edges with the finishing paper until the sound is clear and beautiful. A sound with a slight scrape or raspiness should be avoided. Listen to the recordings of Andrés Segovia for an example of beautiful tone production and control.”¹²⁶

Once again, each author emphasizes the importance of nail care, shaping, and placement (simply proper right-hand position with nails) to varying degrees, but nonetheless present the topic and express proper nail care to beginning students. The similarity between these five topics among the authors in this study provide ample evidence that these topics are fundamental for the beginning student while also showing that the integrity of these topics cannot be altered by different authors.

Guitar Anatomy with Pictures and Illustrations

Only four of the five authors include a detailed diagram of a classical guitar, Bobri being the exception.¹²⁷ The four authors that included this topic share the annotated diagram directly after their justification, or brief history of the classical guitar in Shearer’s method. The four authors annotated diagrams includes, to some extent or different phrasing, all the following pieces:

¹²⁶ Christopher Parkening, *The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method*, 48. While Segovia had amazing control, I, based on the recorded pieces I have heard, do not believe his tone is the standard for modern classical guitar.

¹²⁷ As mentioned in Presentation of Data, Bobri’s method is solely for the beginning student to learn the fundamentals.

- Head
- Tuning Keys
- Nut
- Frets
- Fingerboard
- Neck
- 6th string
- 1st string
- Sound hole
- Rosette
- Body of the instrument
- Soundboard
- Bridge¹²⁸

There is little to no variance between the author's presentation of the parts of a guitar. The placement of the annotated diagrams at the beginning of the methods does suggest that the authors emphasize the importance of the beginning student knowing what the different parts of the guitar are named. Nevertheless, no author presents this information uniquely as the parts of the guitar are not debated.¹²⁹

Proper Tuning Mechanics and Principles

¹²⁸ Charles Duncan, *A Modern Approach to Classical Guitar*, 4.

¹²⁹ There is slight variance such as tuning "key" versus "peg" or "bridgebone" versus "saddle."

Once again, we see that Bobri is the one author who excludes proper tuning mechanics and principles in his method book.¹³⁰ The other four authors present the tuning techniques in very similar ways. Each author includes a diagram of the piano along with an enlarged fretboard diagram to show the similarities of tuning between the two instruments. This portion is also where the authors first introduce the beginning student to the open string notes, and while Parkening, Duncan, and Shearer include the relative tuning notes, Noad does not. Parkening and Duncan introduce alternative techniques from tuning to a piano or relative tuning, which each author discusses, and include tuning forks, battery-operated tuners, or pitch pipes. Relative tuning is explained essentially in this way in each method:

1. Play the 6th string with a left hand finger behind the fifth fret. The note should be the same as the 5th string played open (i.e. with no left hand finger on it). If it is not the same, adjust the 5th string (*not* the 6th).
2. Now play the 5th string at the 5th fret. It should be the same as the 4th string open. If not, adjust the 4th string.
3. Follow the same steps, playing the 4th string at the 5th fret to obtain the sound for the 3rd string open. Adjust the 3rd string if necessary.
4. Now there is a slight change in procedure. The 3rd string must be played at the 4th fret (not the 5th) to give the same sound as the 2nd string. Adjust the 2nd string if necessary.

¹³⁰ It is odd to me that he excludes teaching the beginning student how to tune a guitar as learning all the fundamentals but not being able to play in tune does not seem logical.

5. Finally, play the 2nd string at the 5th fret to obtain the sound for the 1st string.¹³¹

The authors agree on proper tuning technique and approach the fundamentals in similar ways. The only variance exists from the authors sharing “special tips” such as fixing the high-pitched tuning of a string by pulling up gently on the string with the right hand.¹³² Thus, there is evidence that the authors maintain the integrity of the traditional guitar tuning techniques.¹³³

Music and Notation

Once again, we find that Bobri includes no introduction into basic music introduction in his presentations of guitar fundamentals to the beginning student. Thus, the four other authors include brief discourses covering music notation akin to what all beginning students acquiring formal training acquire. The skills are known, at least by my university, as “basic musicianship.”¹³⁴ Basic musicianship, as each author presents, includes an introduction of the musical staff, ledger lines, the musical alphabet, the treble clef, the values of notes and rests, discussion of measures and bars, rhythm, time signatures, double bars, repeat signs, and where the musical alphabet belongs on the staff. The authors usually couple the introduction of the staff with teaching the beginning student where the open string musical notation equivalent is located on the staff. The authors later begin to teach the student to correctly read notes and properly

¹³¹ Frederick Noad, *First Book for the Guitar*, 5.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Of course, we now know that electronic tuners are the standard for many young learners today, as myself. It is similar to young people only using Google Maps instead of knowing how to read a real paper map.

¹³⁴ I was use this term interchangeably with “music and notation.”

interpret them on the instrument, but I limited my research to the basic introduction of basic musicianship which every author excluding Bobri does. Thus, there is evidence to suggest that basic musicianship is an essential aspect for the beginning student to master as he learns the fundamentals of guitar. There is no variance in presentation of basic musicianship aside from the differing orders that the authors present something like the repeat sign before the music alphabet.

History of the Guitar

Shearer, Bobri, and Parkening are the only three authors to provide any history of the classical guitar. Shearer briefly describes the three types of guitar: The Classic Guitar, The Plectrum Guitar, and The Flamenco Guitar.¹³⁵ Shearer describes the historical upbringing of the guitar with miniscule detail as compared to Bobri's comprehensive history of the guitar and its ancestors. Bobri's historical outline of the guitar, minus the details, is this:

- Hittite guitar, 1400-1350 B.C.E.
- Athenian guitar, 400 B.C.E.
- Vihuela, 1500 A.D.¹³⁶
- Italian guitar, late 17th century
- Carulli guitar, 1810
- The Antonio Torres¹³⁷ guitar, 1863

¹³⁵ Aaron Shearer, *Classic Guitar Technique*, 1-3.

¹³⁶ The vihuela is the direct predecessor of the guitar.

¹³⁷ He established the standard dimensions of the classical guitar.

- Today's Concert Guitar, the 20th century
- Followed by the *virtuosi*¹³⁸

Thus, Bobri gives the beginning student a more detailed history than Shearer and Parkening. Parkening's method includes guitar history but it is in the appendix on page 98. His history of the guitar is most definitely more detailed than Shearer's and outshines Bobri's historical preface. Parkening's historical outline looks like this:

- Stringed instruments dating back to the creation of man
- The guitar as we know today was developed in Western Europe
- Direct ancestors include the chetarah of the Assyrians, the kinnura of the Hebrews, the qitra of the Chaldeans, the sitar of India, the ki-tar of Egypt, the kithara of the Greeks, and the oud of Persia which was carried by the conquering Moors into southern Spain in 711 A.D.
- Gypsies from 12th century Persia and returning Crusaders from the Holy Lands brought the early versions of the lute and guitar to Western Europe which inherently led to the eventual evolution to the guitar
- Introduction of the Renaissance and Baroque guitars and eventual evolution to the Spanish guitar, followed by prominent pedagogues and artists of the respective musical eras such as:
 - Alonso Mudarra (1510-1580), Renaissance era, Spanish, vihuela
 - Miguel Fuenllana (1500-1579), Renaissance era, Spanish, vihuela

¹³⁸ Vladimir Bobri, *The Segovia Technique*, 3-13.

- Five-course guitar (17th century), Baroque era
- Six-course guitar (18th century), Classical era
- Fernando Sor (1778-1839), Classical/Romantic era, Spanish, six-string guitar
- Dioniso Aguado (1784-1849), Classical/Romantic era, Spanish, six-string guitar
- Ferdinand Carulli, (1792-1853), Classical/Romantic era, Italian, six-string guitar
- Matteo Carcassi (1770-1841), Classical/Romantic era, Italian, six-string guitar
- Mauro Giuliani (1781-1828), Classical/Romantic era, Italian, six-string guitar
- Introduction of Antonio Torres (1817-1892)
- Introduction of Francisco Tárrega (1854-1909), who is credited for establishing the technique that is the foundation of modern guitar playing
- Introduction of Andrés Segovia (1893-1987), who learns Tárrega's technique and who is responsible for the revitalization of guitar, implementation of it into universities worldwide, and made it respected among the orchestral instruments
- Mention of influential 20th century composers that Segovia commissioned or inspired from Rodrigo, Torroba, Turina, Ponce, Roussel, Tansman, Mompou, Duarte, Villa-Lobos, and Castelnuovo-Tedesco¹³⁹

The variance in degrees of detail between the three authors that do include guitar history, suggest that guitar history is not essential for the beginning student to know. Nevertheless, the history of the guitar is easily accessible via encyclopedias¹⁴⁰ and any fascinated student would undoubtedly pursue knowledge concerning the history of

¹³⁹ Christopher Parkening, *The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method*, 98-99.

¹⁴⁰ Of course, the serious student of the history should consult additional sources as well.

the classical guitar. Thus, the methods in this study do not suggest that there is evidence that classical guitar history is a fundamental to learning guitar technique.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ I would like to reiterate that any good student should be curious or learn the history of their instrument if they intend to pursue learning the instrument.

CONCLUSION

Implications for the Student and Pedagogue

Through an extensive analysis of the five methods in this study, the results suggest that there is evidence that the most important topics of guitar technique and fundamentals virtually remain indistinguishable between the selected methods. The inclusion of a justification marks the only non-guitar technique-related aspect that is shared in any of the methods. Thus, these guitar-related topics remain important and essential in each method:

- Sitting position with pictures or illustrations
- Right-hand and left-hand position with pictures or illustrations
- Rest-stroke versus free-stroke with pictures or illustrations
- Nail shape and tone discussion

These four topics appear in every method, while keeping the integrity of their tradition intact. This suggests that the authors are not providing any new information but simply restate, revise, and refashion the traditional guitar fundamentals while presenting the information in a unique way that suits each author's best attempt to explain these topics in the way that helped them learn or the way they understand students to best understand these fundamentals to guitar playing. This is evident in the way that every author, aside from Bobri, presents the entirety of the guitar fundamentals in a series or collection of volumes or completely rewrites their method at

a later date.¹⁴² This, as an earlier quote from Graham Wade stated, reinforces the idea that, “There is always more to be done, more to be learned, more to be achieved. But with so many signposts on the way, surely the route of the pilgrimage has been made easier than ever before. What we have to do is discover the golden key to progress, whatever appeals or suits us best, and persevere to the utmost of our individual abilities.”¹⁴³

Another implication that my research suggests is that authors, in some cases, who are successors to those such as Shearer, Bobri, Parkening, Noad, and Duncan, develop on the ways the earlier authors presented their methods and try to adapt those techniques in a more comprehensive way or in a way that appeals to different audiences. For example, Matt Hinsley, the Executive Director of Austin Classical Guitar, has developed and adapted the traditional classical guitar technique to be understood by young children.¹⁴⁴

Further Implications

My research of the five authors and their methods raises many questions. Do other methods also follow the criteria that I determined and observed in the methods? Do all methods merely restate, revise, and refashion the fundamentals of guitar technique? To

¹⁴² This is the same reference to Aaron Shearer’s new methods from 1980-1982.

¹⁴³ Graham Wade, “Towards the Holy Grail: A Short History of Guitar Methods from the Renaissance to the Present,” *Classical Guitar*, (Summer 2019): 55.

¹⁴⁴ It seems to be children that are at least middle school age or younger. The method I refer to is *Classical Guitar for Young People* (Austin, Texas: Envision Arts LLC, 2008).

what extent are other methods written between 1960-1999 different than my sample size? To what extent do methods written between 2000 and 2020 similar to the methods I research and the others from between 1960-1999? If I were to hazard an educated guess, I would say that there is a highly likely possibility that the methods I did not research, would be similar to the ones I researched. Thus, further research is necessary and, for this author, may be done at a later date.

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