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MACROCOSMOS

GUITAR

Teaching
and
Learning
Guitar

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Book 1 Overview

The aim of book 1 is to advance the educational skills of the naive music teacher. It also functions as the educational directive for the information contained in the other eight books of the *Macrocosmos for Guitar*.

For the guitarist who would like to teach others how to play but as yet have not acquired formal training in the education of playing the instrument, this book has advice for you. For musicians who would like to improve their reading skills or learn more on improvisation, this book will hold your attention. For guitarists who are considering to start a cottage industry in teaching guitar, the suggestion is to read this brief overview of its contents.

- 1 How to learn*
- 2 How to teach*
- 3 Fundamentals of music*
- 4 Ten stratagems for guitar tuition*
- 5 Four education models*
- 6 Improvisation and design*
- 7 Spontaneity and emotional thinking*
- 8 Shopping for creativity*

We hear music before we are born and we like it because it makes us feel. Feeling gives us knowledge about emotional experiences. All humans respond to music intuitively, however, at some point many of us find the need to express our experience of feelings by playing a musical instrument. This book helps refine those processes by providing a comprehensive approach for teaching and learning both plectrum and finger style guitar.

Just because a musician communicates well when playing the guitar does not imply they also communicate well as an educator. Each skill base is quite different. A credible education is a reliable way to lift ones standards.

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Teaching guitar. Sequence of information. Theory & technical development. Reading notation. Three observations. One to one education. Learning guitar. Mistakes. Fulfilling an education profile. The chromatic scale. The timing of tone and tacit. Techniques for guitarists. Concept verses technique. Musicality - Kinetics-Theory. To a certain extent we are our practice routines. Melody & left hand. Harmonic progressions & the left hand. Plectrum and right hand fingers.

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Improvisation

The question arises, when do we not improvise? For those who have not given this question consideration they may find the answer surprising. The proposition being that we are always improvising and in this regard it becomes a matter of degrees as to what extent are we doing it. Perhaps only when we are sleeping, but then is a dream an improvisation.

It is the intention in the next three chapters to probe into the reasons and methodologies of this innate human behaviour. It takes many forms, from the involuntary and uninhibited, where the creator leaps to the edge of their abilities to challenge themselves. To a more consider approach that might be defined as, less is more, where the lines of the preconceived and spontaneous are blurred i.e. comprovisation.

The first investigations, *'Concept and Design'* looks at procedures for creating unrehearsed music. There are of course unlimited ways of practicing and/or making music this way and a number of methods are suggested. *'Spontaneity and Emotional Thinking'* is the second inquiry and explains the psychological and philosophical behaviours that might ignite or influence these phenomena. The third method *'Shopping for Creativity'* is in the form of abbreviated statements that initiates or triggers pathways that foster the development of ideas. This format equates with the notion of incubation and invention.

These chapters investigate intuitive and informed reactions to circumstance both abstracted and obvious. That being said let me also disclose a wonderfully brief paragraph in a booklet found in a church loft written by T.C.Whitmer in 1934 under the heading of *'General Basic Pinciples'*. One presumes its purpose was to give direction to first time players of the church's organ when improvising the accompaniment to the gospel songs being sung by the congregation.

"Don't look forward to a finished and complete entity. The idea must always be kept in a state of flux. An error may only be an unintentional rightness. Polishing is not at all the important thing; instead strive for a rough go-ahead energy. Do not be afraid of being wrong; just be afraid of being uninteresting".

Evolution is efficient growth, this suggests that exact repetition or the rapid advancement of a motif is contradictory to these ideals. What holds our interest is the development of an idea rather than the idea it self. We may well ask, what tune did the Pied Piper play ?

3 Music Performance Anxiety Stratagem - MPA

If a musician's intrinsic sense of self is measured by their musical identity, then when a performance is not up to expectation they not only fail as musicians they also fail as people. Being unable to separate themselves from their music will sadly make any inconsistency a measure of their own value.

Musicians express emotions and when they have so much of the self at stake it invariably exposes their psychological vulnerabilities and these unrealistic emotional pressures manifest as MPA. The self criticism that accompanies these episodes varies from mild forms of tremor to a disorder of the self where a lack of self worth appears life threatening.

By degrees this condition will affect nearly all performing musicians at some stage in their creative life. Strangely, many will regard high levels of arousal as a natural state when performing but some regard it as a weakness and keep silent about it for fear of contagion. Some will simply deny it exists, or at best do very little about trying to understand the cause of it.

Recently neuroscience has aimed to relate neural mechanisms to mental functions and cognitive psychology has come to formulate specificity towards music performance disorders and found treatments that have proven to be beneficial.

The causes of MPA are varied yet the common symptom is some form of detachment either from the true self or from an important person IP, at an early age. Here are a few causes that bring about MPA.

- 1 Emotionally unavailable &/or unresponsive IP*
- 2 Striving to connect with IP*
- 3 To triumph over competitive IP*
- 4 To pursue career in defiance of disapproving IP*
- 5 Playing well to appease IP resulting in the loss of the self*
- 6 IP's own needs cannot accept the child's own authenticity*
- 7 Unconscious fantasies of grandeur*
- 8 Genetically based vulnerability*
- 9 Repeated social defeat*
- 10 The fear of being detached from the herd*

Musicality - Kinetics - Theory

These three categories are distinguished as: The techniques of musicality; emotion, the techniques of physically playing the instrument; kinetics, and mentality; knowing theoretically what you are playing. To diagnose inefficient procedures isolates areas of contention and nurtures effective technical solutions to particular problems that arise when playing guitar.

The musicality category provides a psychological overview of the music. It includes dynamics where the subtle or not so subtle variations of volume are manipulated. Textural variances are exploited by colouring a phrase, either by playing near the bridge where the sound is bright or for a warm and full tone by sounding the notes close to the fret board. Intonation is the use of vibratos or bends giving a vocal quality to the production of music.

Technical knots can be transferred into exercises by being thematic with the problem. Solutions to inadequacies should always provide various perspectives. We can also enhance dexterity in the pursuit of fluidity by listening to our bodies and learning to remain relaxed particularly at points of physical intricacy. For instance, when some fingers move and others remain stationary on the fretboard i.e. oblique motion, here isometrics may well be the cure, for they nurture the all important aspect of finger independence, Stratagem 2.

The mentality of knowing ones theory. The aim here is to have the facility to theoretically organize the asymmetrical design of the fret board. Initially we need to quickly turn numbers into letters and visa-versa i.e. the 3rd of C is E and then to understand the value of their musical relationship. To accomplish this we need to study the *chromatic matrix* presented in *stratagem No 7*, and to transfer it onto the fret board. In practice this discipline requires us not to play a note without naming its relationship within its sonic environment.

Finding the right exercise to quickly solve a problem is critical and this takes experience. However it must be assumed that technical knowledge no matter what category it comes under is always in a state of flux. Nothing is ever permanent, our tastes change along with our physicality and therefore there is always need for adjustment, hopefully all of our playing life.

The intention of this book is not to itemise, identify, or scrutinise technical procedures, but is designed to be inclusive about teaching and learning guitar rather than being exclusively technical. In saying this the pursuit of technical development is so fundamental to good musicianship that it deserves and requires its own comprehensive methodology: *Book 8*.