

Book V

Classical Guitar

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



In this book . . .

From its very beginning, the guitar took to classical music. Vast swaths of the various periods of classical music turn out, in fact, to be quite playable on classical guitar. After it was invented, composers began scribbling pieces exclusively for the new instrument.

A classical guitar isn't the same as a regular acoustic, and it's not played the same way. This book gives you the scoop on the world of classical guitar music, which has developed separately from Western pop music but is certainly no less accomplished, to say the least.

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Chapter 1

Introducing the Classical Guitar

In This Chapter

- ▶ Surveying the classical guitar's history in music
- ▶ Noting differences between classical guitar and other guitar types
- ▶ Holding the guitar
- ▶ Fretting and stroking the strings

The first thing you have to sort out is just what's meant by the term *classical guitar*. It can describe both a type of instrument and a style of music played on it. When referring to the instrument itself, you're talking about a guitar that has a particular design and construction, is made of certain materials, and requires playing techniques that are unique to it, as compared to other guitars. To mine the depths of all the tonal and textural richness that await you in the world of classical guitar music, you must employ specific right- and left-hand techniques, which together comprise the classical guitar *style*.

A Brief History of Classical Guitar

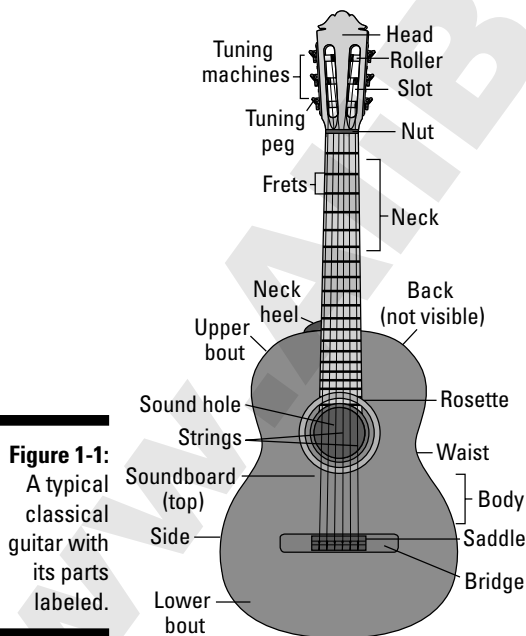
The guitar is a relatively young instrument, having evolved to its present form in the 19th century. As such, it doesn't have the rich body of music available for it that, say, the violin does, which has been around for more than 500 years. But the classical guitar has been, how shall we say, *industrious* in the way it has "borrowed" music from other instruments to claim as its own. As a result, studying classical guitar means playing a lot of music that wasn't written for the guitar, by composers who wouldn't recognize the instrument. That's just part of the adventure of being a guitarist; you have to be somewhat of a pioneer with your instrument.

Nowadays composers write for the instrument all the time, ensuring its continued place in the field of serious musical instrument study. Many guitarists, associations, and organizations commission well-known composers to write compositions for the guitar in the same way that Beethoven and Mozart were commissioned to write symphonies and sonatas.

Some well-known composers from the 20th century who've written for the guitar include Heitor Villa-Lobos, Luciano Berio, Benjamin Britten, Elliott Carter, Peter Maxwell Davies, William Walton, Alberto Ginestera, Astor Piazzolla, and Leo Brouwer. After taking a while to come into its own, the classical guitar is now a permanent member of the classical music community. Classical guitar is taught in universities and conservatories, it's a frequent program entry for concert and recital halls, and it's found readily in new recordings by major classical music record companies. As far as guitar music in general goes, however, it's definitely in the minority — with rock and pop being the major players.

How a Classical Guitar Is Different from Its Peers

They say a picture's worth a thousand words. Figure 1-1 shows a classical guitar with its main parts labeled (you see many of these parts on acoustic and electric guitars, too; flip to Chapter 1 in Book I for details).



A classical guitar is like every other guitar in overall physique. And like other types of acoustic guitars, the classical guitar produces its sound *acoustically* — that is, without electric amplification — unlike

the Stratocaster of Jimi Hendrix, which must be played through a guitar amplifier (though it's possible to amplify the classical guitar with a microphone).



Watch out when you hear the term *acoustic guitar*. A classical guitar produces its sound without amplification, so all classical guitars are in a sense acoustic guitars. But not all acoustics are classical.

Sometimes the best way to know what something is and what makes it special is to know what it isn't. Figure 1-2 shows a classical guitar and a popular traditional acoustic model.



Figure 1-2:
A classical
guitar
(left) with
an acoustic
steel-string
model.

Classical guitar

Acoustic guitar

The following list sums up some of the major differences between classical guitars and acoustic guitars:

- ✓ **A classical guitar uses nylon strings.** All other acoustics used for unplugged purposes are built for steel strings. And you can't just swap out a set of nylons in your steel-string model and start playing Bach. The parts that connect the strings to the guitar are built differently, and you'd have a tough time securing a nylon string onto a steel-string guitar. Nylon strings have a gentler sound that suits classical guitar music better than the steel variety.



Some people use the adjective *folk* to mean any unamplified guitar, so it's always a good idea to clarify whether they mean the nylon-string (classical) or steel-string variety — assuming they're aware of the difference. The guitars played by James Taylor, Paul Simon, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Dave Matthews, and Sheryl Crow are all steel-string acoustics, though some folk, pop, and jazz musicians do play their brand of music on a classical guitar, including jazz guitarist Earl Klugh and, somewhat improbably, country music legend Willie Nelson.



Though the instrument is officially known as a *classical guitar*, other nicknames have sprung up for the “instrument played by classical guitarists.” Some of these names include *nylon-string guitar*, *Spanish guitar*, *gut-string guitar*, and *flamenco guitar* (though that last appellation is sometimes used to distinguish a flamenco guitar from a classical guitar).

- ✓ **A classical guitar has only one body size.** Acoustic guitar bodies vary widely with regard to size and shape, with names like *jumbo*, *dreadnought*, *orchestra model*, and *grand auditorium* to help you keep track of them all. It's much easier with classical guitars — they're all the same size, and they all feel exactly alike when you hold them. So anything you learn on one classical guitar will transfer over to any other.
- ✓ **A classical guitar has no cutaway.** Many acoustic guitars have a scoop on the treble side of the upper bout that allows upper-fret access for the left hand. On a classical guitar, the body is symmetrical.
- ✓ **A classical guitar neck is wider than most steel-string guitar necks and joins the body at the 12th fret.** Steel-string necks are skinnier to facilitate strumming with a pick, and most modern-style steel-string necks join the body at the 14th fret. The wider frets of the classical guitar accommodate playing with the right-hand fingers, and tradition dictates the 12-fret union of neck and body (although some classical guitarists lament the more limited range of a 12-fret neck).
- ✓ **A classical guitar has no pick guard.** A pick guard helps protect the soundboard from the ravages of a pick. But because you don't play classical guitar with a pick, the pick guard is left off to expose more of the wooden surface. On flamenco guitars, though, a clear protective plate (called a *golpeador*) is added to protect the top from the percussive taps a performer is sometimes required to play as part of the style.
- ✓ **A classical guitar has no fret markers.** Acoustic guitars have inlay patterns both on the fingerboard and on the side of the neck. Sometimes these inlays can be quite elaborate, even gaudy. But classical guitars shun such showy displays and present the fingerboard in its natural, unadorned state. Occasionally, a classical guitar may have a single dot fret marker on the side of the neck.
- ✓ **A classical guitar never has the following images painted or stickered onto its surface:** skulls, lightning bolts, flames, your significant other's name, or inflammatory slogans of any kind.

Antonio Torres: Inventor of the modern classical guitar

Plucked string instruments have been around since ancient times, but the shape that all modern classical guitar makers follow was established by a *luthier* (guitar maker) named Antonio Torres (1817–1892), who lived in Spain and built guitars in the middle of the 19th century. Up until that time, a classical guitar could be found in a range of sizes, which affected the tuning and entire approach to playing the instrument. For the guitar to be accepted, it had to be standardized, and Torres did that. In fact, an 1863 Torres-made guitar is almost indistinguishable from ones built today.

One of the most important things Torres did was establish the string length at 650 millimeters,

which hasn't changed. The string length has helped to determine other things: body proportions, neck length, and the guitar's overall dimensions. Many bold makers have tried alternate shapes and materials and added strings, but no one has successfully improved on the basic design of Torres's creation.

Modern improvements have been made, of course, especially in the manufacturing process and in some of the materials (such as synthetic substitutes for the bone or ivory nut and saddle, and better alloy chemistries for the metal tuning parts). But the woods and design have remained largely unchanged since Torres codified them back in the mid-1800s.

Beyond Physique: Other Unique Attributes of Classical Guitar

The most fundamental difference is that classical guitar is acoustic and played on a nylon-string guitar — but you could say that about other styles and other performers. (Willie Nelson is just one famous example of a nonclassical nylon-string guitar player.) So you have to dig deeper into the essence of classical guitar. In the following sections, you discover some of these key differences — in terms of the approach to the instrument — between classical guitar and other acoustic guitar styles.

Form and technique

Classical guitar requires that you hold the guitar and position your hands in a certain way (as you find out later in this chapter). Using these positions makes playing pieces easier, especially when you have to play up the neck or play notes with certain right-hand strokes to achieve the full tone of classical guitar music. The most important factors are how you hold the guitar, how you place your hands in playing position, and how your right-hand fingers pluck the strings.

Holding the instrument

You can hold an acoustic guitar a number of different ways: balanced on your right leg, balanced on your left leg (either between your legs or with your left leg crossed over your right), or dangling from a strap when you're standing up. But the classical guitar is played *only in a sitting position*, supported by the *left leg* — either with the left foot elevated or with a special support device (a cushion or frame) between the inner thigh and the guitar's body.

Placing your hands in position

In other styles, you can position the right hand in several ways, and no one will correct you as long as you sound good. But in classical guitar, you must hold your right-hand fingers perpendicular to the strings, without touching any other part of the guitar (such as the top and the bridge). You must also position your left hand so the knuckles farthest from the fingertips are parallel to the strings, not sloped away from the strings at the little finger, which some styles allow. And in classical guitar, the left-hand thumb stays braced at the center of the neck or can move toward the high strings, if necessary. But it should never be seen coming up from the bass-string side of the instrument, as you see in some fingerpicking styles.

Plucking the strings

To produce sounds on the guitar, you pluck the strings with the fingers of the right hand at a position over the sound hole (actually, the ideal position is not directly over the hole, but a little closer to the bridge than the fingerboard). With the left-hand fingers, you change the pitches of the notes by pressing the strings to the fretboard — a process known as *fretting* — which shortens the strings' vibrating length at a particular fret. (Violinists and other bowed string players don't have frets, so they refer to pressing fingers to the fingerboard as *stopping* the string, a term guitarists sometimes use, too.)

Unlike other forms of guitar playing, in classical guitar, you don't use a pick. All the sounds produced by the right hand are produced by the unadorned fingers, using the tips with a combination of the fleshy pad and a bit of fingernail (rarely strumming downward, or "brushing" them). The fingernail must extend slightly over the fingertip, and the guitarist must therefore maintain longer nails on the right hand than guitarists who play with a pick, or those who choose to fingerpick with just the flesh of the fingers.



Though classical guitar is played by picking with the fingers, the term *fingerpicking* isn't used, as it sometimes is with other styles. So don't ever call a serious classical guitarist a fingerpicker.

Musical knowledge and skills

Beyond perfecting the techniques necessary to execute classical music flawlessly (or getting ever nearer to that goal), classical guitarists develop their music-reading skills to cover more repertoire. And having more and more pieces under your belt means you can perform for longer periods of time and with more variety when entertaining listeners. The best classical guitarists also are technically superior to players of lesser abilities (a quality which isn't necessarily true in, say, pop music). The following sections outline why classical guitarists focus on improving their reading, mastering repertoire, and honing their technical skills.

Reading music

You can play many types of music without reading a single note. Certainly some of the best rock, blues, and folk players don't read music well or even at all, and it doesn't hamper their creative or technical abilities. But classical guitar relies on learning pieces, and the fastest, most efficient way to play through and memorize written music is to be able to read music well. That doesn't mean you have to sight read at a level where you can play the music perfectly and up to tempo the first time, but you should be able to read well enough to get a sense of the piece. (See Chapter 4 in Book I for a quick lesson in reading music.)

Mastering repertoire

If you play the classical guitar, you play *pieces* — classical compositions or arrangements written out from start to finish, with the exact notes you're to play indicated — and often the way to play them (with articulations, dynamics, and expression). You have to know written, composed music from start to finish, and most of the time you have to play it from memory.

Focusing on technical skill, virtuosity, and musicianship

Other styles of music may focus on the originality of the material or the inspired results of an improvisation. But in classical guitar, the primary focus is on technical mastery of the instrument. You work and work at improving your skill constantly your whole musical life, and your prowess is measured by how well you play standard pieces of repertoire. Simply put, classical guitarists are measured in the same way athletes are: The best classical guitarists are the most demonstrably technically proficient over their rivals.

One measure of technical proficiency is *virtuosity* — the ability to play extraordinarily difficult pieces with complete confidence, ease, and mastery. Along with technical prowess comes the not-so-showy quality called

musicianship, which is understanding and executing the music with great accuracy, authority, and expression. In this way, the classical guitar has a lot in common with other classical instruments.



Now, if all this sounds like a lot of rules that may somehow restrict you, take heart. The *opposite* is true. The differences between classical technique and other techniques actually enable you to play notes more comfortably, easily, and with greater speed, accuracy, control, and range of expression. It may seem like a lot of do's and don'ts at first, but just as in ballet, architecture, and other art forms, you need to master the basic skills to open up a world of possibilities. To achieve total freedom of expression in playing classical guitar music, you first need to gain total control.

Situating Yourself to Play

Your first step in getting ready to play classical guitar is to make sure you're holding the instrument correctly and with your hands in the proper position. Unlike other styles of guitar playing, where common sense and comfort are often the only guidelines, classical guitar requires you to hold and position the instrument in certain ways that allow you to play more smoothly and to master the more difficult fingerings you may encounter. But though these requirements are specific, they're not difficult or restrictive in any way.



In proper position, a classical guitar makes contact with four points on your body. This allows you to keep a firm hold on the guitar while your hands enjoy the mobility they need to play freely. The four contact points support the guitar as follows (see Figure 1-3):

1. **Resting on the left leg.** This one's easy, because gravity does all the work. Set the guitar on your raised left leg (or use a support, explained later in this chapter) and proceed to the other points from here.
2. **Braced against the right leg.** The lower side of the guitar presses against the inner thigh of the right leg. You can move your leg around a bit if you feel the corner (the spot where the back and sides meet at a 90-degree angle) digging into your thigh in an uncomfortable way.
3. **Touching the chest.** The back of the guitar, just behind the bass side of the upper bout, should lightly touch the center of your chest.
4. **Lightly touching your right arm.** Your right arm rests, but doesn't press tightly, on the side. Avoid pushing the underside of the forearm into the guitar's top because that may impede its vibration and sound.



Figure 1-3:
Holding
the guitar
according
to the four
pressure
points.

Taking your seat

Classical guitar is always played from a seated position. You never stand or kneel, or lie on your back, as some showoff rock guitarists do, and you never use a strap. In fact, a classical guitar doesn't even have strap pins.

Before you sit down just anywhere to hold the guitar, you should know that classical guitar prohibits certain types of seating arrangements. For one, you can't plop down on the living room couch or a beanbag chair. These two locations, as comfortable as they are for reading or messing around with *other* types of guitars, can't put you in the proper playing position for dealing with classical guitar technique. What you need is a sturdy, armless chair. Any kind of armless chair will do the job, including a dining room chair, a straight-back chair, a stool, or even a folding chair.



The chair you use should be relatively comfortable so you can spend long periods there without getting uncomfortable or risking strain or stiffness. If you use a normal metal folding chair, you may want to add a pad or cushion for comfort because you may be spending a good deal of time in that chair — especially if you want to get really good.

Supporting the guitar: Leg position

Another thing you have to attend to is a means to elevate your left foot off the floor about 4 to 6 inches. This is usually done with a footstool that's specially built for the classical guitarist. They're not very expensive (about \$25), and you can buy them at any music store. If you don't have a footstool yet, just use a couple of hardcover books.

So to get started, find yourself a sturdy armless chair and sit toward the edge. Sit up straight with your legs slightly apart so you can set the waist of the guitar on your left leg. Place your foot on the footstool (or whatever improvised platform you have) and look straight ahead. Your position should look similar to that shown in Figure 1-4.



Figure 1-4:
Seated in
the playing
position
with the
left leg
elevated.

An alternative to raising your leg is to use a specially made *support* or *cushion* on your left leg, which raises the guitar to the proper playing position while allowing you to keep both feet on the floor. Advocates of the support claim that it's better for your back because it doesn't require you to lift one leg in a sitting position, which causes strain. Figure 1-5 shows this alternate method,

using an adjustable support that braces against the inner thigh and cradles the guitar by means of a curved piece that matches the contour of the side of the guitar's body.

Figure 1-5:
The support raises the guitar to playing position without elevating the left foot.



Some guitarists alternate the two, which mixes it up for the body, preventing them from having to maintain one position for too long. A guitarist may, for example, practice for two hours using the support, and then practice another hour with the footstool. Or he may choose to rehearse with the support and perform with the footstool. This is the approach we like, because although the support works, we like playing in the traditional way, too.

Embracing the guitar: Arm support

Classical guitarists don't invest in all the doodads and gadgetry available for other types of guitarists, but occasionally a device or accessory comes along that becomes part of the classical guitarist's bag of tricks. In addition to the support, another common external device you find is the *arm rest*. This fits on the guitar's side, on the bass side of the lower bout, directly under where the right arm sits, as shown in Figure 1-6. The arm rest lifts the forearm off the guitar's top, allowing the top to vibrate freely. Without the arm rest, the right arm inevitably touches the top. Because the arm rest prevents direct contact between the arm and the guitar, it also serves to prevent wear to the finish. Some arm rests lift the right arm off the instrument entirely, a benefit to big and tall players because it helps them maintain good posture and prevents them from having to hunch over the instrument.

Figure 1-6:
An arm rest
lifts the right
arm off the
guitar.



Placing your hands correctly

When you're in the proper sitting position and feeling comfortable, it's time to turn your attention to your hands. For now, all you're going to do here is *place* your hands in the proper position for playing. Don't worry just yet about actually making sounds. This is simply a check to make sure that your hands fall on the guitar in a natural, comfortable, and correct way.

The right hand

Assuming you're seated with the guitar balanced on your left leg, place your right hand so it hovers above the strings over the sound hole. Actually, don't center your hand directly over the sound hole, but slightly to the right of it, toward the bridge. Figure 1-7 shows how your right hand should look.

Figure 1-7:
Placing the
right hand
over the
strings, a
little toward
the bridge.



Let your right forearm touch the edge of the guitar on the bass side of the lower bout. Your hand should be loose and relaxed with your wrist bent, or angled, in a way to cause the fingers, if you were to outstretch them, to lie perpendicular to the strings, as shown in Figure 1-8. In some situations, you may relax this “absolutely perpendicular” approach, allowing your hand to look like the position back in Figure 1-3.

Figure 1-8:
Angling
your right
hand so
the fingers
fall perpen-
dicular to
the strings.



You should be able to pivot your right elbow so your right hand pulls away from the guitar without the guitar moving or going out of balance.



Try wiggling your fingers in the air above the strings. If you feel tension in your forearm muscle, you may be pressing your arm against the guitar's top too tightly. You don't need to hold the guitar in place with your right arm, so try lightening up a bit. The right arm and hand should almost float above the guitar and strings. And no part of your right hand should rest on the top of the guitar. All of your fingers should dangle freely above the strings. Make sure your shoulders are relaxed as well.

The left hand

When your right hand is in position, turn your focus — and your head — left. With the guitar balanced on your left leg, open your left hand slightly by separating the thumb from the fingers. Then slip your left hand around the neck and place your thumb on the center of the neck's back, allowing it to rest lightly there. Position your left-hand fingertips to press down on the strings on the top of the fingerboard. Figure 1-9 shows how your left hand should look from the back.

Turning your attention to the fingerboard side of the neck, check to see that the knuckles farthest from the fingertips are more or less parallel to the strings. Figure 1-10 shows the fingers arched and ready.

Figure 1-9:

The left hand on the neck with the thumb centered on the neck's back.



Figure 1-10:

The left-hand fingers ready to press down on the strings.



A good check to see if the guitar is well-balanced is to take your left hand completely away from the guitar. The guitar shouldn't move at all because you don't use the left hand to support the neck.

Approaching the Strings with Your Hands

In classical guitar, left-hand techniques are intuitive and natural — not much different from left-hand techniques used in other types of guitar playing. In contrast, right-hand techniques are very specific and have to be learned, and they require you to not only position your hand so the fingers

strike the strings at a perpendicular angle, but also to execute the notes using specific plucking methods, or strokes, called the *free stroke* and the *rest stroke*. The following sections walk you through these left-hand and right-hand techniques.

Fretting the strings: Left-hand form

Pressing the strings to the fretboard with the left-hand fingers is known as *fretting*. To fret a string, use a left-hand finger to press the string down to the fingerboard with just enough pressure to cause the string to ring clearly (without buzzing or muffling). To fret the strings as effectively and efficiently as possible, don't place your finger squarely in the middle of the two fret wires; play a little closer to the higher fret (the one closer to the bridge). This gives you better leverage when pressing down on the string, meaning it requires less strength to produce a strong, pure sound. Pressing closer to the higher fret helps eliminate buzzing, too.

When fretting a note, approach the string from above, rather than from the side, to get the maximum downward pressure against the fretboard, and keep your fingers rounded (not flat or hyper-extended) by curling your knuckles. This best applies your finger strength to the tip and provides the most effective fretting. Curving your fingers also helps you avoid accidentally touching adjacent strings. And you may be relieved to know that the left-hand fingernails can be kept short! In fact, if you're accustomed to having long left-hand fingernails, trim them to be flush with or below the fingertips.

Figures 1-11 and 1-12 show proper left-hand fretting technique.

Figure 1-11:
The left
hand placed
correctly on
the finger-
board.



Figure 1-12:
Keep fingers
curved and
approach
the string
from above.



Preparing to pluck: Right-hand form

Though you don't have to start out with long right-hand fingernails, sooner or later you have to grow and maintain them to be able to effect the tonal variations necessary for classical guitar playing. All classical guitarists agree that combining the nail with the fleshy part of the fingertip to pluck the string is essential in deriving the full spectrum of tonal colors and achieving the wide dynamic range required for classical guitar music.

Preparing your right-hand fingernails for action

To get “good guitar nails,” let your right-hand fingernails grow so they extend about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch beyond the fingertip. This measurement is only an estimate, so just be sure you're able to get some of the nail in contact with the string when you pluck it. You may find it easier to keep your nails shorter as you're first learning to use them, allowing them to grow longer as you develop control. Many players like to have a slightly longer thumbnail for added bass note authority.

It's not enough just to have long fingernails. They also have to be properly shaped — that is, they should follow the shape of your fingertip — and you should keep them smooth and free of nicks and chips. To keep your fingernails at a consistent length and shape, care for them on a regular basis and invest in some “fingernail paraphernalia.” A two-sided diamond nail file or a multisurface emery board are good options. For more on nail care, see the nearby sidebar, “A guitarist's guide to nail filing.”

Making a beautiful sound: The nail-flesh tone

Anyone who studies the classical guitar spends long hours perfecting the development of the *nail-flesh tone* because it's such an inherent part of classical guitar technique and tone. Being able to combine the nail with the

flesh (as shown in Figure 1-13) by angling the finger so more tip and less nail catches the string, in combinations that provide near-infinite degrees of tonal shading, is what makes the guitarist's palette of right-hand sounds so rich.



Figure 1-13:
How to
pluck to
achieve the
classical
nail-flesh
tone.

A guitarist's guide to nail filing

After your nails are long enough to give you some raw material to work with, follow these steps to shape and finish them so they can enhance your classical guitar tone (and they'll look nice too):

1. **Use the coarse surface of the file or emery board to get the nails into a basic rounded shape.** If you're using a multisurface emery board, start with the roughest-feeling grit. File down excess length and then shape the nail's edge to follow the contour of the fingertip in a symmetrical oval. Some classical guitarists recommend only filing in one direction to avoid tearing a nail. Check your progress frequently by holding your outstretched fingers in front of you, parallel to the wall, with your fingertips at eye level. Don't worry — no one's watching.
2. **Drag the file between the nail and the fingertip to round out any rough surface on the underside of the nail.**
3. **When the shape is curved and even, switch to a finer grit to smooth out any rough edges left by the coarser surface.** Eliminating snags or rough spots will make your sound smoother as well as prevent snagging on clothing and other fabrics, which can cause the nail to tear.
4. **When you've filed the nails smooth, try using fine grit sandpaper (600 or finer) or the emery board's finishing surface to make the nails even smoother, giving them an almost polished feel that protects them for longer periods between maintenance.**

Stroking the strings: Basic right-hand technique

In a *free stroke*, you pluck the string in an upward motion, leaving the finger “free,” or dangling in the air, above the strings and poised to strike again.

The *rest stroke* is what classical guitar players use to produce strong, expressive, and powerful notes — more powerful than those that can be obtained by the free stroke. The “rest” part refers to the finger coming to a stop, or rest, on the next string in the direction of the stroke. Rest strokes are played with the fingers more often than the thumb and enable you to give notes more power and volume than a free stroke. But rest strokes are less nimble than free strokes, so you use them on notes that don’t move quickly.

Many guitarists who first encounter free strokes and rest strokes often wonder when to use one or the other. See Table 1-1 for a handy list of which situation falls to the free stroke and which setting is a candidate for the rest stroke.

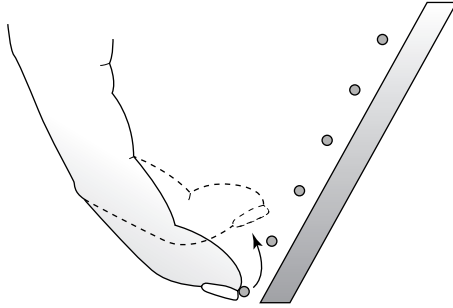
Table 1-1 Free Stroke versus Rest Stroke	
<i>Use the Free Stroke when You Play</i>	<i>Use the Rest Stroke when You Play</i>
Arpeggios	Slower, more expressive melodies
Chords	Scales, scale sequences, and single-note passages
Light-sounding melodies, or filler notes between melody and bass parts	Loud notes, or notes requiring maximum performer volume or feeling of intensity
Passages where the rest stroke can’t be applied because of tempo considerations, string conflicts, or awkwardness and impracticalities in the right-hand fingering	Passages that must be drawn out from their surroundings (either other notes from the guitar or in an ensemble setting), assuming no conflict with other strings

The free stroke

Playing the free stroke doesn’t involve any specific trick or technique. It’s a very natural way to play the guitar, and the way all styles of fingerpicking are performed. In fact, if you think about it too much, you may cause it to sound overly deliberate. Just pluck the string and do it several times to ensure an easy, natural approach.

To play a free stroke, place the index finger of your right hand on the 1st string. With a brisk motion, bending from the finger knuckle, pluck the string by drawing the finger toward the palm and slightly upward (being careful not to strike the 2nd string) so your finger ends up above the strings dangling freely, as shown in Figure 1-14.

Figure 1-14:
Play a free
stroke by
plucking the
1st string
and leaving
your finger
above the
strings.

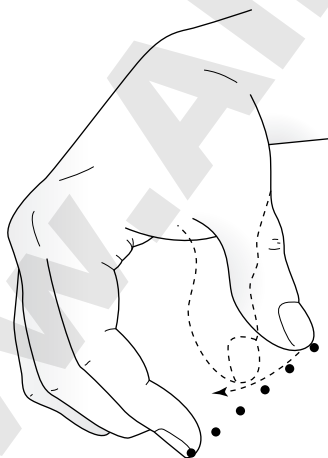


Repeat until you can play several plucks in a row smoothly. After you're comfortable playing free strokes with your index finger, play free strokes several times in a row using your middle finger. Then with your ring finger.

You almost never use the little finger of the right hand in classical guitar, so next try playing free strokes combining the three fingers. For example, play index, middle, index, middle; then index, middle, ring, index, middle, ring; then middle, ring, middle, ring; and finally, index, ring, index, ring.

Playing a free stroke with the thumb is just like playing a free stroke with the fingers, except you move in the opposite direction. Place it on the 6th string (nearest the ceiling). Then push through the string, plucking it, and bring your thumb slightly upward toward your palm so you don't strike the 5th string. Your thumb should end up above the strings, as shown in Figure 1-15.

Figure 1-15:
The motion
of the free
stroke
played by
the thumb.



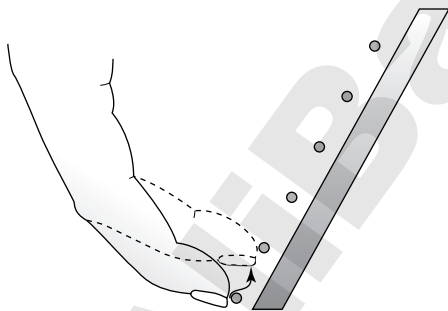
The rest stroke

A rest stroke always means coming to rest on the next adjacent string in the direction of the stroke. For the fingers, this means the next lower string in pitch (or next higher-numbered string). For example, if you play a rest stroke on the 2nd string, your finger rests on the 3rd string. Rest strokes must have a “place to park” after the string is played. Sometimes this creates a problem if the string underneath has to be played by the thumb or another finger, or if that string must be allowed to ring out from being previously plucked. In those cases, you must use a free stroke.

To play a rest stroke, plant your right-hand index finger on the 1st string. Then, in one motion, draw it back, plucking the string and following all the way through until your finger is stopped by the 2nd string. Be sure you don’t play through the 2nd string; if you do, you’re plucking too hard. It may help to think of drawing or pulling the finger downward into the guitar, rather than away from the guitar, as you do in a free stroke. Figure 1-16 shows the motion of the rest stroke.

Figure 1-16:

Playing a rest stroke on the 1st string and then stopping and resting on the 2nd string.



Because the rest stroke has a “landing string,” it’s a little more limited in its use than a free stroke is. For example, you can’t use the rest stroke for arpeggios. But for bringing out a solo melody, nothing beats the expressive power of a rest stroke.



Playing rest strokes with the thumb is rare, though you sometimes play them this way to bring out a solo bass line or low-note melody. The principles for playing a rest stroke with the thumb are the same as with the fingers, except that your thumb moves in the opposite direction (toward the floor instead of the ceiling). To play a rest stroke with the thumb, plant your thumb on the 6th string. Then push your thumb so it plucks the 6th string and follows through to the 5th string, where it stops.

The birth of modern stroking technique

Because they imbue classical guitar music with its unique flavor, the rest stroke and nail sound may seem like they've always been around, preordained or something. But the rest stroke is only a recent practice and one largely promoted by the mentor of classical guitar great Andrés Segovia, Francisco Tárrega (1852–1909).

The rest stroke gave guitarists a much more powerful way to extract notes from the guitar than the free stroke could muster. And while Segovia adopted, embraced, and perfected Tárrega's rest stroke, he differed with him regarding the use of right-hand fingernails.

Tárrega and many others of the time were strongly opposed to using the nails. Emilio Pujol,

a famous guitarist, composer, and Tárrega champion, thought the sound was "conical, pungent, and nasal," whereas the flesh-only sound "possesses an intrinsic beauty . . . as might be the notes of an ideally expressive and responsive harp."

But Segovia persevered and ultimately won out. It's a good thing, too, because without the use of the nail, the guitarist can't produce a sharp, percussive attack. And when playing the wide range of classical guitar music, guitarists need to be able to play bright, crisp sounds as well as soft, mellow ones.

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Chapter 2

Playing Easy Pieces in Open Position

In This Chapter

- ▶ Exploring counterpoint
- ▶ Mastering melody and accompaniment
- ▶ Practicing pieces in different textures

In this chapter the fun begins because you get to play honest-to-goodness classical guitar pieces. The pieces presented here are all rather easy to play. Where they differ is in texture.

What do we mean when we say the pieces are easy to play? First, they make use of lots of open strings — and as any guitarist knows, an open string is easier to play than a fretted one. Next, they contain no notes played above the 5th fret. Even though fretting a note at the 6th fret is technically no more difficult than playing a note at the 4th fret, people learning to read music on the guitar customarily begin with the lower frets and find playing music in low positions the easiest. Open strings and low positions naturally go together because scales and chords played in low positions often include open strings in their very makeup. (The higher you go on the neck, the less likely you are to encounter those easy-to-play open strings.)

And what do we mean when we say that the pieces differ in texture? Look at it this way: Lemon sorbet and rice pudding are both desserts, but one is light and smooth while the other is thick and chunky — that is, they have different textures. Musical compositions have texture, too. Some sound light and airy (a flute duet, for example), and others sound heavy and dense (a funeral march played by full orchestra, for instance). Texture can also refer to how the notes of a composition relate to each other. For example, are they played one at a time or all together? Do they work with each other or against each other? And how densely layered is the piece? Is it written for two instruments or 50? The classical guitar is such a versatile instrument that it can create myriad textures all by itself. In this chapter you discover two main classical guitar textures: first counterpoint, and then melody and accompaniment.

Coordinating Contrapuntal Music: Layered Melodies

Sometimes composers create music by combining individual melodies that are independent of each other yet sound good together. Music containing independent melodies is known as *counterpoint* — or, to use the adjective, *contrapuntal* music. Often (but not always), a contrapuntal piece includes nothing but those melodies; that is, no instrument plays any actual chords. If a chord does occur, it's because the various melodies happen to meet at a certain point and coincidentally (perhaps accidentally) produce one, not because the composer decided to put a chord there.

The simplest contrapuntal music is music that has two parts. That is, it contains just two melodies, usually a high one (often called the *treble*, or *treble part*) and a low one, which can sometimes be thought of as a bass line. J. S. Bach's two-part inventions (which he wrote for the keyboard) are well-known examples of two-part counterpoint. But how can you tell whether the low melody part is a true bass line or simply a low melody line? One answer is that it makes no difference what you prefer to call it. But perhaps a better answer is that it depends on how the low part sounds. For example, a low part made up of long, sustained notes, or of many repeated notes, can be considered a bass line, whereas a low part that moves a lot, as a melody does, can be thought of as part of the contrapuntal fabric (that is, as one of the independent melodies).



In classical guitar music, the low part (whether you choose to call it a bass line or a low melody) is always played by the thumb and the high part(s) by the fingers. By the way, in contrapuntal guitar compositions you rarely see more than two melodies combined, because playing more than two independent parts on the guitar is technically quite difficult. However, the upper melody can often be thickened with double-stops (two notes played simultaneously).



Another term for counterpoint is *polyphony*, which comes from the Greek and literally means “many voices.” So, contrapuntal music (music containing a number of independent melodies) can also be referred to as *polyphonic* music.

Playing two melodies in sync rhythmically

The easiest way to start playing counterpoint is with music that contains only two lines (melodies) that happen to be in the same rhythm. Now, you can understandably argue that because they're in the same rhythm, the melodies aren't truly independent of each other — and you'd be right. But for now, concentrate on how your fingers and thumb work together to play two melodies without having to worry about executing independent rhythms. The exercise that follows gives your thumb and fingers a workout without taxing your rhythmic sense.

In Figure 2-1, a two-part arrangement of the famous Christmas carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” play all the low notes with your thumb and use any comfortable combination of *i* and *m* for the top *voice* (also called part, or melody).



In classical guitar notation, *p* = thumb, *i* = index, *m* = middle, *a* = ring finger, and *c* = little finger. And because the thumb and one of the fingers sometimes must play on adjacent strings (making a rest stroke impossible), use all free strokes on this one (see Chapter 1 in Book V for more on free strokes).



Pay special attention to places where the thumb and finger play on adjacent strings. That's where the free stroke follow-through may cause your thumb and finger to bump into each other. But if you watch your right-hand position (that is, if you keep your right hand perpendicular to the strings), your thumb should extend well to the left of your fingers, and bumping shouldn't be a problem.

Track 80, 0:00

Figure 2-1:
“O Little
Town of
Bethlehem”
played with
thumb and
fingers
together.

Opposing forces: Separating the thumb and fingers rhythmically

Music whose parts are all played in the same rhythm can become boring fast. In this section, your thumb and fingers play melodies that are truly independent; that is, they're independent in rhythm as well as in pitch.

The tricky part of playing two independent melodies is that you have to keep track of two rhythms at the same time, which, until you get used to it, is sort of like rubbing your stomach and patting your head. Just make sure to count the required number of beats in each measure properly. For example, in 3/4 time, even though you see what may look like six beats (three in the upper part and three in the lower), count the beats simultaneously for a total of three, not six.

Figure 2-2 comes from a *minuet* (a ballroom dance) by an unknown composer of the late 17th century. This arrangement (adaptation for guitar) is especially easy to play because of the numerous open strings in the bass part. Play this exercise using free strokes and with any comfortable combination of right-hand fingers.

Thickening the upper part by adding double-stops

The exercise in the previous section is pretty, but it doesn't sound especially full because it consists of only two single-note parts. In this section, you thicken the texture by adding some *double-stops* (two notes played together) to the upper part. Actually, if you play a double-stop in the upper part along with a bass note, you're playing three notes at once — a chord! And chords help classical guitar pieces sound full. Playing three notes at once isn't especially difficult. Just make sure to keep your right hand relaxed and your fingers nicely aligned. Depending on the strings involved, you can play the top notes of the chords with *i-m*, *m-a*, or *i-a*.

Figure 2-3 comes from a *gavotte* (a French dance popular in the 18th century) composed by German-born composer and organist George Frederick Handel (1685–1759), who, along with J. S. Bach, was the giant of music's Baroque era. This piece is good for practice because it offers a little of everything: single notes, double-stops (pinches), and three-note chords, with a variety of string combinations on those chords (that is, sometimes the strings that make up a chord are adjacent or close together; other times they're far apart).

[illegible]

5

1 0 3 1 0 2 1 2 0 3 2 0 2 3 0 2 0

Track 80, 0:43

musical score for "The Rose Tree" in G major, 4/4 time. The score includes a treble clef, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a five-line staff with notes and rests. The bass line is written on a four-line staff with notes and rests. The lyrics "The Rose Tree" are written below the bass line. The score is divided into three measures by vertical bar lines. The first measure contains the notes G4, A4, B4, and A4. The second measure contains the notes G4, F#4, E4, and D4. The third measure contains the notes C#4, B3, A3, and G3. The bass line consists of a single note G3 in the first measure, followed by a whole rest in the second and third measures.

Melody and Accompaniment: Using All of Your Fingers

The contrapuntal pieces discussed in this section have *two* melodies. But don't most musical compositions, you might point out, have just one melody? They do, and in this section you play pieces in which a single melody predominates. What makes this style — which we call *melody and accompaniment* — tricky is that while the melody is nothing but single notes, the accompaniment can take any form at all: full chords, double-stops, or anything that the composer (or an arranger) dreams up. Here you need to contend with, among other things, *four-note* chords and conflicting rhythms.



The technical term for music with one main melody (and accompaniment) — especially when the melody and accompaniment are in the same rhythm — is *homophony*, which comes from the Greek and literally means “same sound.” So music in melody and accompaniment style can also be referred to as *homophonic* music.

Matching rhythm between accompaniment and melody

The simplest way to play melody and accompaniment style is to play the accompaniment in the same rhythm as the melody — an approach known as *block chord* style, or *block* style. It's simple because it allows you to concentrate on playing chords without concerning yourself with conflicting rhythms, which may exist between the melody and accompaniment.



When playing block style, even though you're playing nothing but chords, bring out the top note of each chord so the listener hears those top notes as the melody. You can't use rest strokes to bring out the top notes, however, because the lower adjacent string is also being played and needs to ring out. So accentuate the top notes simply by plucking them slightly louder than the other notes of the chord.

Figure 2-4, an arrangement of the famous Christmas carol “O Christmas Tree,” combines the melody and accompaniment in a series of simple three-note chords. For the right hand, play all free strokes and use *p-i-m*, *p-m-a*, or *p-i-a*, depending on the strings involved and what feels comfortable to you.



Normally in printed classical guitar music, notes taken by the thumb are written with their stems pointing down from the note head (and this arrangement could have been notated that way). However, because the thumb and fingers

play in the same rhythm, indicating separate voices (with up and down stems) is unnecessary. Nevertheless, make sure to play the bottom note of each three-note chord with your thumb.

Track 80, 0:59

T	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	3	1	0
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	3	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	2	3

Figure 2-4: 6
“O Christmas Tree”
played in
three-note
block chord
style.

1	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	3	1	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	2	3

Getting creative with the flow: Two parts, two rhythms

Now we break away from block style to examine melody and accompaniment the way it most often appears — with the rhythm of the accompaniment *not* paralleling that of the melody. In other words, the accompaniment has its own rhythm. But whereas in counterpoint a melody is supported by another melody, in melody and accompaniment style the melody is supported by, well, an accompaniment — and by that we mean an accompaniment that’s mainly chordal in nature. So in this section you play music that contains melody and chords, but because their rhythms are different, the music seems to flow along nicely.



In melody and accompaniment playing (whether block style or normal, “flowing” style), bring out the top notes so a listener will discern them as a melody.

Figure 2-5 comes from an *andante* (a piece played at a moderately slow tempo) by Spanish guitar composer and virtuoso Fernando Sor (1778–1839). Although the melody and accompaniment are in different rhythms, they’re rather simple, so you shouldn’t have difficulty combining them.

Track 80, 1:18

Figure 2-5:
“Andante
in E Minor”
played in
flowing
melody and
accompani-
ment style.

Playing Easy Pieces in Different Textural Styles

The four pieces in this section — in different styles and by a variety of composers — sound like what they are: real guitar performance pieces. These are pieces that you can play for your friends (or your parents or your date, as the case may be) and duly impress them with your talent and skill. Here’s some useful information about the pieces to help you:

- ✓ **“Minuet in G”:** This minuet by German composer and organist J. S. Bach (1685–1750) wasn’t originally written for guitar but, because of its beauty and simplicity, is performed by guitarists with great frequency. The piece is quite famous, too. As explained by the character Mr. Holland in the 1995 film *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, it was used as the basis for the 1965 pop hit “A Lover’s Concerto” by the Toys.

Notice that when one voice is rhythmically active (playing eighth notes), the other is relatively inactive (playing longer notes), and that the active part sometimes switches from voice to voice. This type of interplay (with fast notes against slow ones and with the active rhythm moving from voice to voice) is typical of Bach’s music and of contrapuntal music

in general. And that's a good thing, not only because it makes the music interesting, but also because on the guitar it's easier to play one actively moving voice than two. If you focus on the rhythm of the active part, the rhythm of the other part seems to automatically take care of itself.

- ✓ **“Air in A Minor”:** *Air* is another word for melody or song, and this one was written by the preeminent English Baroque composer Henry Purcell (1659–1695). The arrangement offers single notes, pinches, and chords — and a nice variety of string combinations on those chords.

Note that in measure 9, beat 3, the upper voice moves so low that it actually converges with the bass. Although that note has stems pointing both up and down, implying that it can be taken by either the thumb or a finger, you'll find it easier to take with the thumb. Also notice that in bars 3 and 4 the fingering is tricky because the first finger must suddenly jump from the 2nd string down to the 6th and then up to the 3rd. You may find it helpful to isolate those two measures for special practice.

- ✓ **“America (My Country 'Tis of Thee)”:** This arrangement uses many four-note chords in block style. The melody is taken from the British national anthem “God Save the King,” whose composer is unknown. When playing four-note chords, keep your hand in a steady but relaxed position and let all the motion come only from the thumb and fingers. But the arrangement also contains three-note chords and pinches — and a couple of single notes to boot. In other words, a little of everything, so it's a good piece for practice. As always, use the thumb for all notes with stems down. For notes with stems up, use whichever fingers feel most natural (but with four-note chords always finger *p-i-m-a*).

- ✓ **“Andante in G”:** This andante was composed by Fernando Sor, and it offers some nice interplay between melody and accompaniment. Pay special attention to the rests; that is, don't let a note before a rest continue to ring into the beat the rest falls on. If that note happens to be fretted (measure 5, beat 3, for example), simply release the left-hand finger pressure to stop the note from sounding. But if the string is open (measure 13, beat 3, for instance), you need to lightly touch it with a finger (of whichever hand feels more natural) to stop it from sounding. As you become proficient, your hands will automatically stop strings from sounding when necessary without you having to think about it.

As usual, take advantage of all guide finger opportunities, as in measures 7, 9, 10, 15, and 16. Measures 15 and 16, in fact, are a guide finger extravaganza. You use two guide fingers at the same time (fingers 1 and 2), making it a “double guide finger,” and those fingers guide your hand down the neck twice in a row (from 3rd position to 2nd, then from 2nd position to 1st), making it a “double double guide finger.”

Minuet in G

Moderately

5

9

13



America (My Country 'Tis of Thee)

Moderately

am i

mf *p*

T 1 1 3 0 1 3 0 0 1

A 0 2 2 0 6 6 1 2 3

B 3 2 0 1 2 3 0 3

4

0 3 1 3 1 0 1 3 3

1 2 2 2 0 2 0 2 2

2 0 1 3 3 5

8

3 1 0 1 1 1 1 0 3

1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

2 0 3

11

0 1 0 0 1 3 5 1 0 3 1

1 2 0 3 1 0 0 0 0 0 0

0 3 2 3 0 0 2 3 0 3 3

3 3 3 3

Andante in G

Moderately slow

mf *p*

T **A** **B**

6

10

14

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Chapter 3

Combining Arpeggios and Melody

In This Chapter

- ▶ Combining arpeggios with a melody in the bass
- ▶ Combining arpeggios with a melody in the treble
- ▶ Combining arpeggios with a melody that alternates between treble and bass

perhaps nothing is more satisfying to a classical guitarist than a composition that deftly combines *arpeggios* (notes of a chord played separately) and melodies. And the reason is simple: To a listener, the piece sounds intricate and advanced (sometimes even virtuosic), yet typically, it's not very difficult to play. So, with such pieces, you can amaze your friends without actually being a Segovia.

In this chapter, you discover how melody and arpeggios work together quite simply to create beautiful pieces, and you learn how to play them with ease.



In classical guitar notation, *p* = thumb, *i* = index, *m* = middle, *a* = ring finger, and *c* = little finger.

Grasping the Combination in Context

Combining a melody with an arpeggio is often a matter of simply playing the notes you're already fingering (rather than having to play additional notes) — the melody's notes are usually contained within the arpeggio itself. Also, when you play an arpeggio, all or many of the chord's notes are either open strings or are already held down (as a chord) by your left hand. Your right-hand fingers, too, are already in position — each resting in preparedness against its respective string. In other words, your hands hardly move for the duration of each arpeggio.

How, you may wonder, can you simultaneously play notes with various values (that is, quarter notes, whole notes, eighth notes, and so on) and keep them from sounding like a blur of overlapping pitches while also letting them all ring out as long as possible in each measure? The answer is that you actually play the notes at different levels of loudness — or, perhaps, different levels of emphasis. You do that by giving more *oomph* to some notes than to others.

The human touch (your touch, as determined by your understanding of the notes' roles and interactions) imparts the proper textural feel to the listener — and that's what makes playing such pieces so exciting. If you give the right amount of emphasis to the respective notes (even merely psychologically), the effect comes across to the listener, who hears the music not as just a blur of overlapping pitches but as a melody, an accompaniment, and a bass line. The technique for doing that varies, depending on whether you play the melody with your thumb or fingers.



When playing arpeggios, hold down your left-hand fingers as a chord whenever possible and for as long as possible. And keep the motion of your right hand to a minimum by resting your fingers ahead of time against the strings they need to play in each arpeggio. For example, before playing an A minor arpeggio (as in measure 1 in Figure 3-1), your thumb should be resting against the 5th string, your index finger against the 3rd string, and your middle finger against the 2nd string. While playing each arpeggio, your right hand itself doesn't move; only your fingers and thumb move as they strike their respective strings.

In the sections that follow, the exercises allow you to combine arpeggios with melodies in the bass (played by the thumb) and the treble (played by the fingers), and we explore ways to draw the melody out of the background and into the limelight, where it belongs.

Going Downtown: Melody in the Bass

The melody of a classical guitar piece, though usually played by the fingers on the high strings (in the treble), is sometimes played by the thumb on the low strings (in the bass). This concept applies to the piano, too, by the way. The right hand plays the melody of most pieces, though for a different effect, the melody can be placed in the left hand.

You may find it easier to combine arpeggios with a melody played by your thumb than by your fingers. For one thing, your thumb usually plays *on* the beat (rather than between the beats, as the fingers do). For another, you have no decisions to make about *which* finger plays the melody; that is, your thumb, acting alone, plays nothing but the melody notes while your fingers play nothing but the accompaniment (the higher notes of each arpeggio).

Don't worry about having to hunt down the melody in a piece. The melody usually reveals itself soon enough when you start to play, just in the way the composer or arranger wrote the notes. Sometimes the written music itself even offers clues, such as giving the melody its own stem direction. When you can hear where the melody falls, you can work to bring it out further, using slightly stronger strokes on the melody notes themselves. Or, if there's no melody at all (which sometimes happens in short passages between melodic phrases), you hear that, too, and give no emphasis to any particular notes.

Playing a melody within arpeggios in the bass

How do you bring out the notes when the melody is in the bass line? Just play them a little louder (striking them a little harder) than the other notes, and make sure the other notes are consistent with each other in loudness.

Figure 3-1 is an exercise that offers you an opportunity to practice the basic technique of combining arpeggios with a bass melody without having to worry about any of the complicated rhythms or unusual left-hand fingerings that real-life pieces may contain.

Track 83

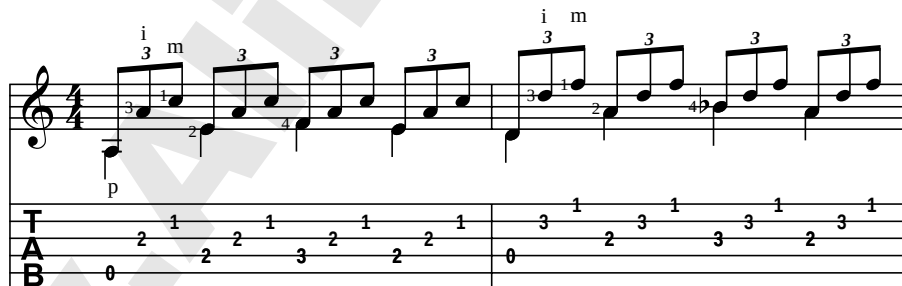
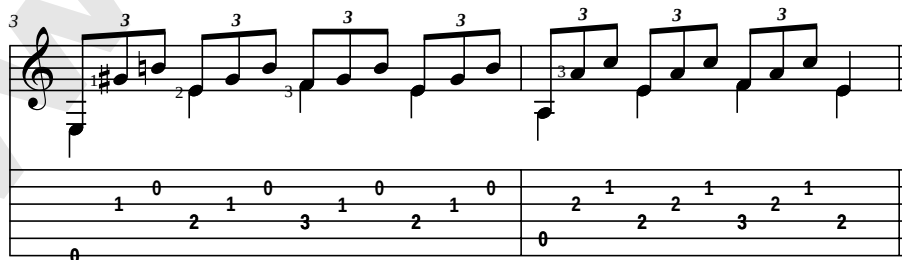


Figure 3-1:
An arpeggio
exercise
with a melody
in the
bass line.



Note that the first note of each triplet group has a downward stem (in addition to an upward stem). Those downward stems tell you not only to play those notes with your thumb but also to play them as quarter notes — in other words, to let them ring throughout the beat.

One of the rules of arpeggio playing is that all the notes of an arpeggio should ring out rather than be stopped short — so all of those bass notes sound as quarter notes anyway. So, in reality, those downward stems on the first note of each triplet group tell you not only to play them with the thumb and to let them ring out, but also to bring out those thumb notes so a listener will hear them as an independent melody.

Measure 2 presents an interesting right-hand fingering dilemma. Normal, or typical, right-hand position has the index finger assigned to the 3rd string, the middle finger to the 2nd, and the ring finger to the 1st. Also, you generally try not to move the right hand itself, if at all possible. For those reasons, you'd expect to use fingers *m* and *a* to play the top two notes of the D minor arpeggio.

But another rule of arpeggio playing says you should use the strongest fingers whenever possible — and the combination of *i* and *m* is stronger than that of *m* and *a*. So, according to that rule, you should use *i* and *m* for the top two strings even though you have to move your right hand across the neck a bit. Hence the dilemma.



When you have a situation in which those right-hand fingering rules conflict, the “strong fingers” rule takes precedence over the “minimize motion” rule, and thus we indicate in measure 2 that you play the top two notes of the D minor arpeggio with *i* and *m*.

Figure 3-1 presents no technical difficulties, but for best results, follow the left-hand fingering carefully and keep the rhythm as steady and even as possible.

Practicing making a bass melody stand out

Figure 3-2 is taken from a study by early 19th-century Spanish guitar virtuoso Dionisio Aguado. It features a single right-hand pattern throughout (*p-i-m-i*) and a uniform rhythm. That's what makes it easy to play. But at the same time, the study is somewhat challenging for a few reasons.

- ✓ First, the notes are 16th notes, which means they move along rather briskly. So start out by practicing slowly and then gradually increase the tempo.

- ✓ Second, the bass notes — because they're all chord tones that occur at the beginning of each four-note group — have a tendency to sound like nothing more than simply the first note of each arpeggio. So it's your job to make them especially melodic; that is, bring them out forcefully — but smoothly and sweetly — so a listener hears a “tune” in the bass.
- ✓ Finally, you play some of the notes on strings you may not expect. Check out measure 2, beat 4, for example, where, in order to preserve the right-hand pattern (and flow), you play the C on the 3rd string, and the repeated Es alternate between the 2nd and 1st strings.

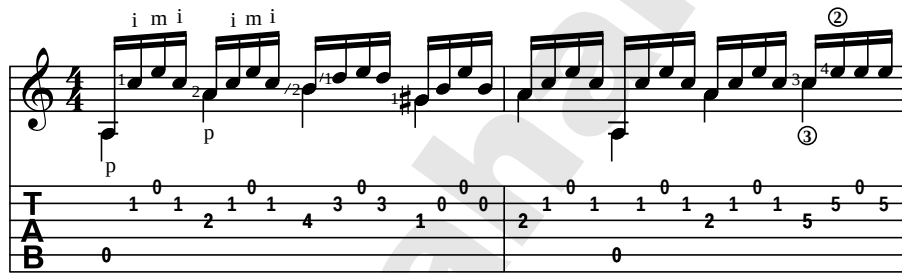
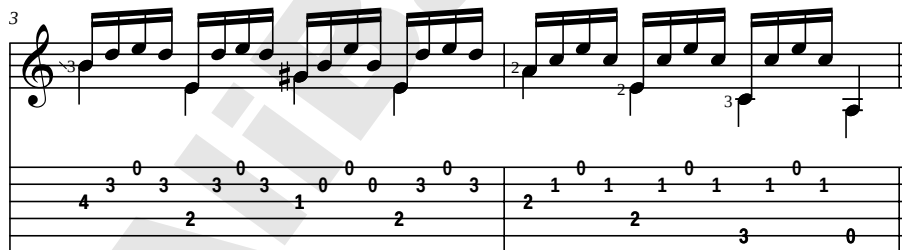


Figure 3-2:
Study in A
Minor with
the melody
in the bass.



For ease of playing, pay special attention to the left-hand fingering (and especially to the guide finger indications). And for an effective performance, keep the rhythm as even as possible.

Moving Uptown: Melody in the Treble

We start with melodies in the bass because, as we explain earlier, they're a bit easier to combine with arpeggios than are melodies in the treble. Alas, arpeggio pieces with melodies in the treble are actually more common than those with melodies in the bass. In this section, we look at the technique you use to play such pieces.

Playing arpeggios with the melody in the treble rather than the bass can be a bit trickier for a few reasons:

- ✓ **Question of fingering:** Technically, any given melody note can be taken with any available finger — *i*, *m*, or *a* — and it's often up to you to decide which to use.
- ✓ **Use of the ring finger:** Because the *i* and *m* fingers usually play accompaniment notes on the inner strings, the *a* finger takes many melody notes. The problem is that the melody notes must be emphasized, but the ring finger is the weakest.
- ✓ **Question of right-hand technique:** As explained in the sections that follow, you have more than one way to bring out a treble melody from an arpeggio, and it's up to you to decide which technique to use.
- ✓ **Use of rest strokes:** Whereas you play arpeggios with a melody in the bass with free strokes only, you generally combine rest strokes and free strokes when you play arpeggios with a melody in the treble.
- ✓ **Complexity of notation:** Standard music notation for arpeggio pieces with a melody in the treble often requires the indication of three separate parts, or *voices* — one each for the melody, the accompaniment (usually filler notes on the inner strings), and the bass. Normally, stem directions tell you which notes belong to which part (for example, notes with stems up are melody and notes with stems down are bass). Depending on the musical context (or sometimes simply on the amount of available space), the accompaniment notes may be stemmed either down (sometimes making them hard to distinguish from bass notes) or up (sometimes hard to distinguish from melody notes). Sometimes, at the whim of a composer or arranger, the melody and accompaniment notes are combined into a single voice (as a continuous flow of upstemmed eighth notes, for example), and it's up to you, using your ear, to discover the real melody.



Although the aforementioned potential complications may cause you concern, most arpeggiated pieces — even those with the melody in the treble — aren't difficult to play. That's because, as stated, in such pieces, the left-hand generally holds down a chord, and the melody notes themselves are often contained within that chord.

To bring out the melody in the treble, you have to make it either louder than, or different in tone from, the other notes. You can do this simply by

- ✓ Making the melody notes sound stronger than the others by playing them with rest strokes (and the accompaniment notes with free strokes — see Chapter 1 in Book V for more on rest and free strokes). You can also try the techniques in the following bullets, but this technique — the use of rest strokes for melody notes — is generally used by classical guitarists, and it's the one you should strive to perfect.

- ✓ Striking the melody notes harder than the others, as you do when you bring out a bass melody with the thumb.
- ✓ Making the melody notes brighter sounding than the others by using more nail when you strike them — that is, if you play with a combination of flesh and nail, use more nail than flesh on the melody notes, and more flesh than nail on the accompaniment notes. (See Chapter 1 in Book V for details on the nail-flesh tone.)

Playing a treble melody within arpeggios

Figure 3-3 is an exercise that allows you to combine a treble melody with a series of arpeggios. Note that you play the melody in quarter notes (indicated by upward quarter-note stems), that the bass notes are whole notes (and thus must ring throughout each measure), and that the accompaniment notes are eighth-note triplets, which, though they are written as short notes, should also ring out (according to the general rules of arpeggio playing).

Track 84

Figure 3-3:
An arpeggio
exercise
with a
melody in
the treble.

Practice Figure 3-3 using rest strokes on all the melody notes. Start out playing slowly (but evenly), and then gradually increase your speed. Follow the left-hand fingerings to ensure that you can hold down each chord with your left hand for as long as possible. If necessary, listen to the CD to hear how the piece works rhythmically and how the separate voices interact.

Practicing making a treble melody stand out

Figure 3-4 comes from a study by late 19th-century Spanish guitar virtuoso Francisco Tárrega. It employs a consistent right-hand pattern throughout: *p-i-m, a-m-i, a-m-i, a-m-i*. Play all the melody notes as rest strokes with the ring finger.

Figure 3-4:
Study in C
with the
melody in
the treble.

Note that the bass notes sustain throughout each arpeggio, but in measure 3, fingering requirements force you to stop the bass from ringing one beat early (because the finger that plays the bass note, the first finger, is suddenly needed on the 1st string to play the last melody note of the measure).

Mixing Up Your Melodic Moves: The Thumb and Fingers Take Turns

Not all arpeggiated passages are as straightforward as those you encounter earlier in this chapter — where the melody occurs consistently in either the treble or bass part. In some cases the melody moves back and forth between the treble and bass, and in others the treble and bass parts contain melodic

motion simultaneously. Fortunately, the playing of such pieces requires no new techniques, but it does require a heightened awareness (on your part) of where the melody is and how to bring it out.

Playing a shifting treble-and-bass melody within arpeggios

In Figure 3-5, from measure to measure, the melody alternates between the treble and bass. In the odd-numbered measures, which have the melody in the treble, bring out the melody (the upstemmed notes) with rest strokes. For the even-numbered measures, which have the melody in the bass, bring out the melody (the downstemmed notes) by giving the first note of each triplet a little more *oomph* than the other notes.

Track 85

Figure 3-5:
An arpeggio
exercise
with the
melody
alternating
between the
treble and
the bass.



Note that the melody note that occurs on the third beat of each measure is a *dissonance* (that is, it's not a member of the chord being arpeggiated), but that it passes smoothly from one chord tone to another. For example, in measure 1, in which an E minor chord (made up of the notes E, G, and B) is arpeggiated, the F# on beat 3 functions as a *passing tone* (a dissonance that, in stepwise motion, passes between, and thus fills the gap between, two chord tones — in this case, G and E). Also note, as a point of interest, that each bass melody is a repetition, but two octaves lower, of the treble melody that precedes it. Repetition imparts structural unity and thus a sense of balance to a composition.

Practicing making a shifting melody stand out

Figure 3-6 is an excerpt from a waltz from the guitar method of early 19th-century Italian guitar composer and virtuoso Ferdinando Carulli. A glance at the music reveals that the melody begins in the bass (measures 1 and 2) and moves to the treble (measures 3 through 5).

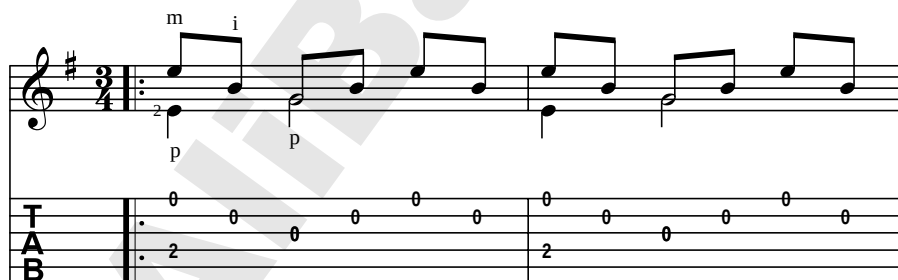
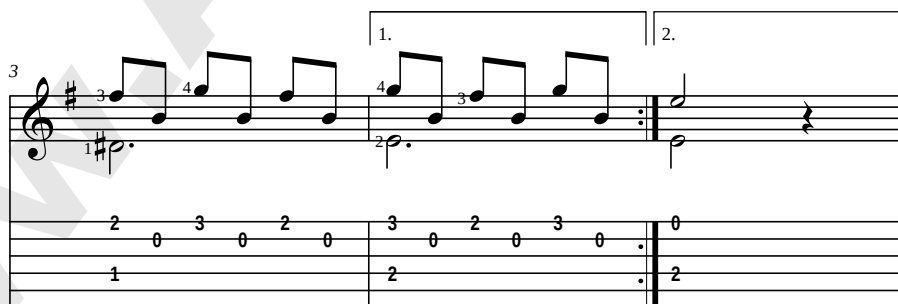


Figure 3-6: “Waltz in E Minor” with the melody alternating between the bass and treble.



In measures 3 and 4, note that in the written notation, for the sake of simplicity, the composer combined the melody (the upstemmed notes on the beats: F $\sharp$ -G-F $\sharp$, G-F $\sharp$ -G) and the accompaniment notes (the open B's) into a single voice. What you need to realize is that although the melody notes are written as eighths, they are to be rendered in performance as quarters.



In Figure 3-5 you play a dissonance known as a *passing tone*. “Waltz in E Minor” presents another type of dissonance: the *neighboring tone*. A *neighboring tone* is a non-chord tone that, in stepwise motion, follows a chord tone and then returns to it (with the word “neighboring” obviously coming from the idea that, being just one step away from the chord tone, the dissonant note is like the chord tone’s next-door neighbor). For example, in measure 3 you arpeggiate a B chord (B-D $\sharp$ -F $\sharp$), and the G on beat 2 follows and then returns to the chord tone F $\sharp$. Because G is above F $\sharp$ in the scale, it’s called, specifically, an *upper neighbor*. In the following measure you arpeggiate an E minor chord (E-G-B), and the F $\sharp$ on beat 2 (following and then returning to G) is a *lower neighbor*.

Playing Pieces that Combine Arpeggios and Melodies

Unlike simple arpeggio-and-melody practice exercises, which generally feature easy left-hand fingerings or consistent right-hand patterns, real-life pieces often contain complications in the form of some not-so-easy fingerings and not-so-consistent patterns. In this section we offer, for your practice and enjoyment, pieces by classical guitar masters that combine arpeggios with melodies — one with the melody in the bass, one with the melody in the treble, and one with a melody that moves between the treble and bass.

Here’s some information to help you with the pieces:

- ✓ **“Ländler in D”:** A *ländler* is an Austrian folk dance in 3/4 time (or a musical piece to accompany such a dance), and this one was composed by 19th-century Hungarian guitar virtuoso Johann Kaspar Mertz.

Play notes with stems both up and down (generally on beats 1 and 3 in the first section and on each beat in the second) with the thumb, and bring them out as a melody (and remember to hold down all the notes of each measure as a chord whenever possible).



In measures 13 through 20, you play only a single note after each bass note, so the patterns aren't true arpeggios. That is, an arpeggio is a "broken chord," and a chord, by definition, contains three or more notes. However, in that section, if you think of each beat as a two-note "chord," you can see that you're still playing in arpeggio style (meaning that the thumb and fingers alternate).

In two-note arpeggio figures (as in measures 13 through 20), your thumb, of course, plays all the bass notes. You play the treble notes, if they change pitch from beat to beat, by alternating between *i* and *m*. But if the pitch of the treble notes remains constant, as in this instance, you usually play the notes with just one finger — either *i* or *m* (depending on which strings your thumb plays and how close they are to the treble string in question). Try measures 13 through 20 first using *i* for all the open E's and then using *m*, and see which fingering you prefer.

- ✓ **"Romanza":** This is one of the all-time most famous classical guitar pieces; virtually every classical guitarist encounters it and plays it at some time or another. It's known by several titles, including "Romanza," "Romance," "Spanish Romance," and "Romance d'Amour." In most collections that include it, the composer is said to be anonymous, which may lead you to believe that the piece was written hundreds of years ago. Actually, the piece isn't nearly that old, and the identity of the composer isn't so much unknown as it is in doubt or in dispute; a number of composers have claimed authorship of this piece.

As indicated, play all the melody notes with the *a* (ring) finger, and bring them out by emphasizing, or accenting, them slightly. Even though *a* may be the weakest finger, it's charged with the important work of carrying the melody here.

What makes this piece relatively easy is the great number of open strings (as is typically the case with pieces in the key of E minor). What makes it difficult (besides the many barre chords) are the left-hand stretches in measures 10, 27, and 28. Isolate those measures and practice them separately, if necessary. And what makes the piece interesting (besides its inherent beauty) is the shift from the minor to the major key in the second section (at measure 17), and then the return to the minor key after measure 32. The major section is more difficult than the minor because it has fewer open strings, so you may need to practice that section a bit more.

- ✓ **"Andante in C":** Just as Carulli did with "Waltz in E Minor" in Figure 3-6, so too did early 19th-century Italian guitar virtuoso Matteo Carcassi combine the melody and accompaniment notes into a single part. But whereas in the Carulli piece it's obvious which notes are melody and which are accompaniment, this piece has a certain amount of ambiguity. Sometimes, as in the first two full measures, it's easy to discern the melody: it's made up of the notes that occur at beats 1, 2, and 4 (and

which should be rendered in performance as a quarter note, a half note, and a quarter). But in the next measure, is the A on beat 4 melody or accompaniment? And in the measure after, are the final three notes (G, F, and D) melody or accompaniment? Only Carcassi could answer definitively, but because you can't ask him, it's up to you, the performer, to answer such questions by bringing out (or not bringing out) those ambiguous notes accordingly.

If you look at the piece's second section (measures 10 through 17), you see that the upper voice contains a melody (albeit intermingled with accompaniment notes in the same voice) and that the bass part also moves melodically. This really gives you an opportunity to practice your melody/arpeggio chops (or to display them, as the case may be). All at once you have to decide which of the upstemmed notes you consider the real melody notes, to bring out those notes from the notes that function merely as accompaniment, and to also bring out the separate melody that occurs in the bass!

Because Carcassi's notation leaves some unanswered questions, you may wonder why he didn't employ three separate voices in his notation — one for the upper melody, one for the filler (accompaniment) notes, and one for the bass line. He could have, and some pieces are so notated. However, the risk is that the notation is so complicated that it's counterproductive. That's why Carcassi chose to notate the piece as he did. But that doesn't mean a different composer may have notated it as three separate voices.





Ländler in D

Moderately slow

Sheet music for *Ländler in D*, Moderately slow, in 3/4 time. The piece is written for guitar, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (D major). The notation includes a melody line and a guitar tablature line. The piece is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano). The first system shows measures 1-3, the second system shows measures 4-6, the third system shows measures 7-9, and the fourth system shows measures 10-12. The piece concludes with a *Fine* marking and a final chord (C VII-7).

Measure numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Dynamic markings: *mf*, *p*.

Tempo: Moderately slow.

Key signature: D major (two sharps).

Time signature: 3/4.

Final chord: C VII-7.

Fine

(continued)

(continued)

Book V

Classical
Guitar

13

0 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

2 2 1 2 3 0 2 3 0

0

16

2 0 0 0 0 2 2 2 1 4 2

0 2 0 0 0 2 1 4 2

0

D.C. al Fine

19

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

0 4 2 4 2 0

0

TRACK 86

Romanza

Moderately

4 *a* *mf* *p* *m* *i*

7 0 0 0 0 0 7 0 0 0 0 0 3 0 0 0 0 0

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

4 1 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4

0 0 3 0 7 0 12 0 12 12 0 12 0 10 8 0 0

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

7 4 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

8 5 7 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 7 8 5 5 7 7 8

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

10 4 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

11 7 8 7 7 7 7 7 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

7 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

(continued)

25

4 3 2 4 1 2 3 3

12 9 12 9 12 9 12 9 11 9 10 9 9 9 5 9 5 9 5 6 6 0

30 *D.C. al Fine*

4 4 2 5 4 2 4 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 2 1 1 0 1 2 4 0

Andante in C

Moderately slow, in 2

The musical score for "Andante in C" is presented in four systems. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a melody and a bass clef staff with guitar accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is "Moderately slow, in 2".

System 1 (Measures 1-4): The melody begins with a half note G4 (fingered 'i'), followed by a quarter rest, then a half note A4 (fingered 'a'), and a half note G4 (fingered 'i'). The guitar accompaniment starts with a half note G2 (fingered '3'), followed by a half note F#2 (fingered 'p'), and then a half note G2 (fingered '3').

System 2 (Measures 5-8): The melody continues with a half note F#4 (fingered 'i'), a half note E4 (fingered 'm'), and a half note D4 (fingered 'i'). The guitar accompaniment features a half note F#2 (fingered 'p'), a half note E2 (fingered 'p'), and a half note D2 (fingered 'p').

System 3 (Measures 9-11): The melody concludes with a half note C#4 (fingered '3'), a half note B4 (fingered '4'), and a half note A4 (fingered '4'). The guitar accompaniment ends with a half note C#2 (fingered '3'), a half note B2 (fingered '3'), and a half note A2 (fingered '3').

The piece ends with a "Fine" marking at the end of measure 11.

(continued)

(continued)

14

0 3 2 3 2 4 2 1 2 1 0 0 0 3 0 0 0

3 3

D.S. al Fine

16

1 0 2 0 3 0 0 0 1 0 0 2 0 1 2 3 4

2 0 0 0 4 0 0 0 0 0 2 0 0 0 0 0

Chapter 4

Classical Guitar Genres: The Renaissance to the 20th Century

In This Chapter

- ▶ Acquainting yourself with the musical styles of the Renaissance and Baroque eras
- ▶ Getting hooked on the Classical era
- ▶ Growing more passionate: The Romantic era
- ▶ Creating a new musical language: The Modern era

Music historians like to divide music into well-defined periods, or eras. Music from before around 1450 — the *Middle Ages*, or *medieval period* — was mainly sung in church, and today it sounds so primitive that it's hardly ever played on guitar. The next period, from about 1450 to around 1600, is known as the *Renaissance era*, and the following period, from around 1600 to 1750, is the *Baroque era* — and the music of those eras does still sound good on guitar.

The Baroque era was rather complex. Bach's counterpoint was sometimes intricate to the extreme, as were many of the instrumental ornaments (trills, turns, and so on) that were written into the music and improvised by the era's virtuoso performers. After the death of Bach (1750), as a reaction against the showy aspect of Baroque (which means "ornate") music, composers began to write pieces that were more formal, sedate, elegant, and graceful. Enter the *Classical era* (1750–1820).

Toward the end of the Classical era, composers started to feel restrained by that formality and began to use a musical vocabulary that better expressed their innermost feelings, yearnings, and desires. This led to music's *Romantic era* (1820–1900). By the end of the 1800s, every aspect of traditional harmony, melody, and rhythm had been explored and employed, and composers began to experiment with new kinds of scales, chords, and rhythms. The result was the *Modern era* (after 1900), whose music sounds nothing like anything that had gone before it. In this chapter we take a look at what typifies these genres of music.

The Renaissance

Because the Renaissance directly followed the Middle Ages, composers of the late 1400s and 1500s were influenced by the earlier era's music — namely, vocal music performed in church. To show respect for God, such music contained nothing ugly or jarring. So Renaissance melodies, like the tunes of the earlier period, tend to be simple (containing more stepwise motion than wide leaps), and the harmonies tend to be mostly pure and simple (three-note major and minor chords). Renaissance composers also wrote instrumental and secular (nonreligious) music, and there they pushed some limits.

Renaissance music differs from music of other eras in the scales, instruments, and textures it uses. Our modern ears are used to hearing songs and classical pieces in major and minor keys (keys based on major and minor scales), but in the Renaissance era, the system of major and minor keys had not yet been developed. Instead, music was based on special scales called *modes*, which is why Renaissance pieces sound somewhat strange and exotic to us.



If you play only the white notes of a piano keyboard step by step, from C to C, you get a major scale, and if you play from A to A you get a minor scale. But if you play only white keys from any of the other five white keys (for example, from D to D or from F to F), you get a unique-sounding scale — a mode — that's neither major nor minor. During the Renaissance, composers wrote pieces based on those unique scales as well as on major and minor scales, but to a Renaissance composer, the major and minor scales were nothing special; they were simply two of the seven possible modes.

Today we're used to hearing music played on instruments like the piano, guitar, and violin, but those weren't fully developed during the Renaissance. Instead, music was played on instruments like the harpsichord, lute (a predecessor of the guitar with a rounded back), recorder, and viol — an early cello-like instrument with frets.

Two types of Renaissance music often played on classical guitar are arrangements of traditional 16th-century melodies and arrangements of pieces originally written for the lute. The sections that follow cover both of these.

Traditional 16th-century melodies by anonymous composers

The Renaissance — the time of Christopher Columbus, Leonardo da Vinci, and William Shakespeare — happened so long ago that the authorship of many of that era's musical works is unknown. In such cases, the composer is considered anonymous, or the piece in question is said to be traditional. Some anonymous melodies from that era are well-known today because

musicians throughout the ages have continued to arrange and perform them. Such songs include “Greensleeves” (also known as “What Child Is This?”), “Scarborough Fair,” “Coventry Carol,” and “The Three Ravens.”

“Greensleeves” has been recorded by countless modern artists, from the Chipmunks to Elvis Presley. But Figure 4-1 shows how a Renaissance musician — Francis Cutting (c. 1550–1596) — arranged the song for lute (here adapted for guitar). The melody and chords may sound a little different from how you’re used to hearing them, but that’s understandable when you consider that this arrangement was written more than 400 years ago.

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The musical score for "Greensleeves" is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The first system begins with a melodic line and a bass line. The second system continues the melody and bass line. The third system concludes the piece with a final chord. The guitar tablature is written below the staff, indicating fret numbers and string numbers. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

Figure 4-1:
“Green-
sleeves”
arranged
by Francis
Cutting.



The song sounds like it’s in the key of A minor, but the F# in measure 6 tells you that the piece is actually based on one of the Renaissance modes (in this case the so-called *Dorian* mode, which sounds minor-ish but whose 6th degree is a half step higher than that of a normal minor scale). Also note the

sudden change in harmony to A major (as opposed to A minor) in the final measure. Such sudden shifts between major and minor harmonies are typical in Renaissance music.

John Dowland and other great lutenists

During the Renaissance, lute composer/performers (called *lutenists*) flourished in England, France, and Italy, but the English lutenists — including Thomas Campion, Francis Cutting, and Philip Rosseter — are best known today. The most famous of all is Englishman John Dowland (1563–1626), who in his later years served as court lutenist for King James I.

Dowland is known for both his solo lute pieces and his *lute songs*, which consist of a vocal part, a poem set to music and sung, and a lute accompaniment. But the accompaniment was generally of such intricacy that the lute part was more or less equal to the vocal part (rather than subordinate to it), and a lute song was really more like a duet (between voice and lute) than a simple melody and accompaniment.

In writing a lute song, a composer tried to reflect in his music the mood or emotion of the poem (lyric) being sung. Because many of the poems Dowland set to music concern grief and sorrow (“Flow My Tears” and “In Darkness Let Me Dwell,” for example), he has a reputation for being melancholy. In fact, Figure 4-2 is an excerpt from a solo lute piece he titled “Melancholy Galliard.” (A *galliard* is a dance in 3/4 time — or music written for such a dance — popular in Europe in the 1600s.)



As a compositional device, Dowland here employs *suspension*, in which a consonant tone becomes dissonant when the chord behind it changes (see beat 2 of measures 2, 4, and 8). Also note that Dowland — and Renaissance composers in general — gives an important role to the inner voice — in this case, the one featuring the aforementioned suspensions. In music of most other eras the melody and bass predominate, with the inner voices relegated to second-class status.

A bit about the lute

During the Renaissance, the most popular instrument was the lute. It resembles a modern classical guitar in that it has a body and a neck with frets, strings, and tuning pegs — but it differs from a guitar in a number of ways:

✓ The lute has a rounded back rather than a flat one. To get an idea of what a lute's body

looks like, think of half a watermelon that's been cut lengthwise.

✓ The lute's neck is shorter than a classical guitar's, and the lute's body typically meets the fretboard at the 9th fret (rather than at the 12th fret, as on a modern guitar).

✓ The neck is also wider because the lute typically has more strings than a guitar. A lute can have more than six strings (seven, eight, or more), and most of the strings — all but the highest one or two — are actually sets of *double* strings that are plucked together as if single, as on a modern 12-string guitar. A single high string or a set of double strings — whether tuned in unison, as with the middle strings, or tuned in octaves, as with the low strings — is called a *course*, so you may hear of a 6-course lute or an 8-course lute (rather than a 6- or 8-string lute).

✓ A lute is typically tuned a little differently from a guitar. In a 6-course lute (a common

configuration), the 3rd course, which corresponds to the open G string on a guitar, is tuned a major 3rd above the 4th course (the guitar's open D string), rather than a perfect 4th above it, as on a guitar. That's why music originally written for lute must be adapted (rearranged or refingered) for the guitar (unless the modern guitarist tunes his 3rd [G] string down a half step to F#).

✓ The lute's *headstock* (the part with the tuning pegs) is angled back from the neck perpendicularly rather than being in line with the neck, as on a modern guitar.

The musical score for "Melancholy Galliard" by John Dowland is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The music is written for guitar, with fingering indicated by numbers 1-3 on the right hand and letters T, A, B on the left hand. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte). The first system ends with a repeat sign. The second system begins with a measure marked '4' and a 'CIII' (Cello III) marking. The third system begins with a measure marked '7' and a 'CIII' marking, and ends with a measure marked 'ΦII' (Phi II).

Figure 4-2:
"Melancholy
Galliard"
by John
Dowland.

Going for Baroque

If you ask a casual music listener what his favorite kind of classical music is, he's likely to answer Baroque. And that's not surprising, because Baroque music — exemplified by such composers as Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, Scarlatti, and Telemann — has quite a bit in common with modern-day popular music. For one thing, Baroque music, like popular music, is based on major and minor keys and the chord progressions derived from those keys. For another, Baroque pieces often feature one instrument playing melody, another playing chords, and another playing a bass line — not unlike today's pop group with a singer, guitarist, and bassist. Also like today's pop music, Baroque music is known for its regular, steady rhythm.

But Baroque music is different from today's popular music in many ways, too, and not just because it sounds like, well, classical music. Baroque music often employs *imitative counterpoint*, in which a melody played in one voice is repeated a few beats later (usually from a different starting pitch) in another voice. Also, whereas popular music employs simple song structures that are usually made up of two or three short sections that sometimes repeat, Baroque music uses all sorts of complex, extended forms, such as concertos, suites, operas, and cantatas. And whereas today's popular music can be played by amateurs and professionals alike, much Baroque music was written for virtuoso performers who often added their own highly complex ornamentation as they played.

Two composers who brought Baroque music to its peak are Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) and George Frideric Handel (1685–1759). The following sections explore the classical guitar music based on their compositions.

Back to Bach

Bach's music is known for its almost paradoxical combination of intricate structure and strong passion. In a way, it sounds as though it was put together mathematically, and in another way, it sounds as though it came purely intuitively, or from the heart. One of Bach's most famous pieces, popularly titled “Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring,” comes from one of his many church *cantatas* (pieces for vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra that form part of a church service). The piece's beauty and elegance has made it a popular wedding processional, even though that wasn't what Bach intended when he wrote it, and it's performed routinely by classical guitarists.

Figure 4-3 is an excerpt from “Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring,” and you can hear that the music is both logical and beautiful at the same time. It's in a style known as *strict counterpoint*, which means that each note of one voice is played against a strictly set number of notes in another voice — in this case, each bass note has exactly three treble notes.

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Book V

Classical
Guitar

The musical score for "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" by J. S. Bach, arranged for guitar. It consists of three systems of music. Each system includes a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The first system has a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The second system has a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The third system has a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The bass staff is a six-string guitar fretboard with fret numbers (0-4) and fingerings (1-3) indicated. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings (p, f).

Figure 4-3:
"Jesu, Joy
of Man's
Desiring" by
J. S. Bach.



Although today Bach is the most famous Baroque composer (and among the most famous composers of all time), during his lifetime in his native Germany he was celebrated as a virtuoso organist rather than as a composer because his original works were considered too complex. The simpler pieces of fellow German composer Georg Philipp Telemann were held in higher regard. In fact, it wasn't until 79 years after his death — when 20-year-old German composer Felix Mendelssohn produced and conducted a performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* in Berlin — that Bach's music began to receive the acclaim it deserved.

Getting a handle on Handel

Along with J. S. Bach, G. F. Handel was the other giant of the Baroque era. Handel is well-known for two of his orchestral suites, *Water Music* and *Royal Fireworks*, but he's probably best known for his large-scale work for orchestra, chorus, and soloists that's now performed every Christmas — the

Messiah (even though he originally wrote it to celebrate Easter). And the most famous section of the *Messiah* is the one that audiences customarily stand up for, the “Hallelujah Chorus.” (Legend has it that at the first performance of the *Messiah*, England’s King George II was so roused by the music that he suddenly rose to his feet — and when the king rose, everyone in his presence was required to rise. Since then, audiences have always stood for that section of the performance.)

Figure 4-4 is an excerpt from Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus,” arranged for guitar (resist the urge to stand). The piece starts with some simple major chords played in a strong, distinctive rhythm, but a suspension in measure 4 changes the mood with a bit of tension.



In this excerpt Handel uses a common compositional device known as *modulation*, in which a piece begins in one key but changes to a different key. In this case the passage begins in E major (measures 1 through 4) but ends in B major (measures 5 through 8).

Figure 4-4: “Hallelujah Chorus” by G. F. Handel.

The Classical Era: Mozart's Muse

Immersing yourself in music of the Classical era is a bit like accompanying your aunt to a formal tea party. Everything is proper and elegant and dainty — and everyone is on his or her best behavior. To put it another way, strict rules are followed.

The two most prominent composers of the Classical era were both Austrian: Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809), who wrote more than 100 symphonies and established the symphony as a musical form, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), with Mozart ultimately becoming the true giant of the era.

What set Mozart apart from many other composers was his ability to write a great melody — a pretty tune. Some composers concentrate on rhythm, harmony, or texture; others create melody by taking short fragments and piecing them together. But nothing lends appeal to a composition as much as a good melody. And Mozart was particularly aware of this. In fact, he once explained, “Melody is the essence of music. A good melody writer is like a fine race-horse, but a counterpoint writer is like a horse that carries the mail.”

Because Mozart's melodies are so tuneful, his music can be a delight to play on classical guitar. Figure 4-5 is an arrangement of an excerpt from an *aria* (song) from Mozart's 1787 opera *Don Giovanni*. As you play it (or listen to it on the accompanying CD), you hear that the melody is simple, playful, and quite childlike. Mozart's playfulness is another quality that sets him apart from other Classical-era composers.



Note that Mozart puts the chords on the off beats rather than on the beats, giving the song a secondary accent (or a kind of backbeat, not unlike that found in today's pop music). Also note that the piece consists of two four-bar phrases. The three double-stops that connect those phrases (at the end of measure 4) aren't part of the aria's vocal melody, and you should play them very smoothly. In contrast, you should play the two notes that finish the second phrase (also not part of the vocal melody) very short (as indicated by the *staccato* dots).



A secondary accent is different from syncopation. A *secondary accent* is a normal, natural part of a meter. For example, in 2/2 time, beat 1 gets the primary accent, and beat 2 gets a secondary accent; that is normal and expected. In *syncopation*, notes are accented in unexpected places — places that conflict with or go against a given meter.

Figure 4-5:
Aria
from *Don*
Giovanni by
Mozart.

Beethoven, the Classical Hopeless Romantic

Starting in the early 1800s, certain composers who'd previously written in a Classical style began to make their music more emotional and colorful. This began a transition from the formality of the Classical era to the passion and intensity of the Romantic era. One such composer was Austrian Franz Schubert, who wrote more than 600 songs for voice and piano. But by far the most important of these transition-era composers was Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) of Germany.

Beethoven was a pretty emotional guy — so emotional, in fact, that he had to invent a whole new style of music to express his feelings. And for that he's generally credited with initiating music's Romantic era.

At the beginning of his career, Beethoven wrote in a style similar to that of Haydn and Mozart, but by his 30s he was breaking free of his predecessors. He expanded the traditional harmonic, rhythmic, and textural vocabulary by lengthening musical forms (adding extra movements, or sections, to pieces), and by adding more instruments to his orchestral scores, such as brass and percussion.

Figure 4-6 is an arrangement of an excerpt from the second movement of Beethoven's "Piano Sonata No. 8" (the "Pathétique Sonata"), written in 1798. Though the first movement is fiery and emotional, the second movement, often played by guitarists, is in a straightforward Classical style. The piece features a pretty melody supported by arpeggios, so make sure to bring out the top line and to allow the arpeggios to ring out as long as possible.



Note that although the harmony consists of simple major, minor, and 7th chords, notes other than the chords' roots often serve as the bass notes. For example, in measure 2, the first chord, C major, has an E (rather than a C) in the bass, and the second chord, G7, has a B (rather than a G) in the bass. A chord that has a tone other than the root (namely, the 3rd, 5th, or 7th) as the bass note is said to be in *inversion*. Composers use inversions to add harmonic interest to their compositions — as Beethoven does here.

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The musical score for Figure 4-6 is presented in three systems, each with a treble clef staff and a corresponding guitar tablature. The first system (measures 1-3) features a melody with fingerings 'a', 'i', 'm', 'i' and a 'p' (piano) dynamic. The second system (measures 4-6) includes a 'CIII' (crescendo) marking. The third system (measures 7-9) continues the melody and arpeggios. The tablature uses numbers 0-10 to indicate fret positions and includes various fingerings and techniques like slurs and ties.

Figure 4-6:
"Pathétique
Sonata" by
Beethoven.

Another Romantic: Brahms

As the 1800s proceeded, composers of concert music strayed farther and farther from the formal, controlled style of the Classical era. Partly, they were influenced by the new musical style of Beethoven. But they were also influenced by music that was being composed for the opera, where stories of myth and legend required bold new sounds. And they were influenced, too, by traditional tunes from their native countries (as were, for example, Hungarian Franz Liszt and Polish-born Frederic Chopin). And, like Beethoven, Romantic-era composers felt a need to express their inner feelings.

Many composers of the Romantic era are well-known today — including the aforementioned Schubert, Liszt, and Chopin, as well as Germany's Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Schumann, and Richard Wagner; France's Hector Berlioz; and Russia's Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky. But perhaps the most famous of all is Germany's Johannes Brahms (1833–1897).

Though Brahms used the complex musical vocabulary of the Romantic era, he differed from many of his contemporaries in that he wrote *absolute* music (music that exists for its own sake, as pure music) rather than *program* music (music that's meant to tell a story, evoke a mood, depict a scene, and so on).

Next to Brahms' famous "Lullaby," his rhythmically intense "Hungarian Dance No. 5" (composed in 1868 for piano duet as part of a set of 21 Hungarian dances) is probably his best-known work. Though you may not know it by name, you're sure to recognize it when you hear it, because it's been used in countless movies and cartoons.

Figure 4-7 is an arrangement of an excerpt from "Hungarian Dance No. 5." The colorful *dissonance* (lack of harmony) in measure 3 (a G# melody note against a D minor chord) is a Romantic-era harmonic touch; in earlier eras, such a dissonance would have been immediately resolved to a *consonance* (that is, the unharmonious tone would have been moved up or down to a tone that did blend with the background chord).

Figure 4-7:
"Hungarian
Dance
No. 5" by
Brahms.

Debussy: Music Becomes Modern

Music at the end of the 1800s was very different from, and more complex than, music at the beginning of the century — harmonically, rhythmically, and texturally. Beginning around 1900, some composers who were influenced by innovative ideas in poetry and painting — specifically, so-called *symbolist* ideas, in which reality is rejected and symbols (indirect suggestions) are used to express ideas — threw out the old rules of music and began expressing themselves using a whole new musical language. At first listeners were shocked by what they heard, but eventually, they began to find some of the work quite expressive and beautiful.

The most famous of the symbolist-influenced composers, Claude Debussy (1862–1918), developed a new musical language at the end of the Romantic era to express his ideas. His style of music, like the style of such painters as Claude Monet and Pierre Auguste Renoir, is known as *impressionism*. Impressionistic works, whether of painting or music, are meant to evoke indistinct sensory impressions rather than convey realism. As Debussy himself explained: “Every sound perceived by the acute ear in the rhythm of the world about us can be represented musically. Some people wish above all to conform to the rules; I wish only to render what I can hear.”

Debussy liked to stir his listeners’ imaginations by painting a mood or suggesting beautiful images of nature. He did this by employing unusual scales (the whole tone scale, for example, in which all tones are separated by a whole step), unusual chords (extended chords of the 9th, 11th, and 13th, for example), parallel intervals (such as parallel 4ths or 5ths, which earlier composers eschewed), nebulous rhythms (in which it’s sometimes not clear what the basic pulse is or how it’s subdivided), and ambiguous tonalities (where you can’t tell what key, if any, a piece is in).

Although he was a contemporary of other late-Romantic/early-Modern composers such as Ravel (with whom he is often compared), Debussy’s music was truly revolutionary in that it sounded nothing like anything heard before. It was his rejection of the traditional approach to harmony, his complete departure from the aesthetic of his forebears, and his forward-looking approach that challenged the very idea of tonality itself that paved the way for 20th-century composers such as Bartók and Stravinsky and the modern era of classical music.

Because of their often complex harmonies, many of Debussy’s compositions are difficult to play on guitar; however, a few, notably his most famous work, “Clair de Lune,” have found their way into the classical guitar repertoire. Figures 4-8 and 4-9 show short passages from two other Debussy works (originally for piano) that guitarists sometimes play.

In the first passage, from “The Little Shepherd” (a section of 1908’s *Children’s Corner Suite*), note how dissonant chords exist in their own right, with no need for resolution, and the lack of a tonal center (Figure 4-8).

The second passage is from Debussy’s 1910 prelude “The Girl with the Flaxen Hair” (Figure 4-9). Note how in the first two measures he uses the interval of a *tritone* (an interval three whole steps in distance, as C to F $\sharp$ or D to G $\sharp$) to obscure the key center but how in the last three measures he changes the mood by firmly establishing the key of D (the original piano version is in G $\flat$).

Figure 4-8: "The Little Shepherd" by Debussy. Musical score and guitar tablature.

Figure 4-8:
"The Little
Shepherd"
by Debussy.

Figure 4-9: "The Girl with the Flaxen Hair" by Debussy. Musical score and guitar tablature.

Figure 4-9:
"The Girl
with the
Flaxen Hair"
by Debussy.

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