

Guitar

Guitar Academy Book 1

Richard Corr

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www.guitaracademy.co.uk

Richard Corr's *Guitar Academy Book 1* is every bit as comprehensive and useful as it purports to be. The introductory notes outline with articulate clarity the difference between Corr's own book and others on the market. Supported by published aims of the Federation of Music Services, proposing a more 'holistic approach to teaching and learning', and by other luminaries including John Williams, Corr has endeavoured to integrate aspects of a guitarist's education often divided between the different styles of guitar playing. His book includes the most significant elements of the classical and popular traditions ranging from classical technique to strummed song accompaniments, ensemble pieces, ear training and improvisation. Harking back to my own earliest years of guitar tuition, I realise now how truly valuable such an integrated approach would have been. While it seems only logical to develop beginner guitarists' ears and rhythmic senses at the same time as building their ability to play the guitar itself, this is often overlooked.

Corr suggests the nylon strung classical guitar as the most appropriate instrument for beginners as it is in some ways the easiest to play, though while Corr does mention five other types of guitar in his introduction, this book won't really suit students only interested in thrash metal. It's really aimed at guitarists predominantly interested in classical or finger-style playing.

Fundamentally the book consists of three parts: 1) Classical Guitar tutor, 2) Ensemble supplement – including improvisation, 3) Song/Chord tutor. The various elements of classical guitar technique are elucidated with admirable clarity and simplicity, as are the basic principles of reading music and finding notes on the guitar. The CD that comes with the book has examples of all the exercises, many of which have accompaniments for teachers. Cleverly, the teacher and pupil parts have been recorded on separate stereo channels so each part can be isolated by using the balance

control. So, the student playing along to the CD at home can listen to the teacher's accompaniment without having to battle with the recorded student part. The ensemble portion of the book also includes opportunities for improvisation (with backing tracks on the CD) with suggested modes including Pentatonic, Ionian and Blues, and has exercises to encourage playing well-known tunes by ear. The Song/Chord tutor uses a range of well-known and popular tunes to introduce basic chords and strumming patterns. Pull-out flash cards for testing note recognition along with some advice about internet resources for budding guitarists complete a rigorously researched and road-tested resource.

As of the end of August 2006 the existing *Guitar Academy Book 1* will be joined by two smaller editions, being essentially the original book revised and divided into two, in order to be more digestible for school age students, with the prospect of advancement to Book 2 providing added motivation. All of the material outlined above will remain in the split version but will include revisions such as a greater emphasis on developing the right hand, particularly free stroke technique, which is introduced and developed in the new Book 2. There are also various new solo and ensemble pieces, with even more emphasis on improvisation and ear training, and as with the existing publication each of the new books comes with a CD. Also in the pipeline is a multi-volume method of four books due for release during 2007.

The currently available book is beautifully presented throughout and is written in a relaxed and engaging style. It is simple yet comprehensive and seems to me to be the best beginners tutor book I have come across. Keep an eye on www.guitaracademy.co.uk for information about the developing product.