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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

A PARADIGM FOR EFFECTIVE PRE-COLLEGE CLASSICAL GUITAR  
METHODOLOGY: A CASE STUDY OF TWO MODELS OF  
EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Arts

Renthungo Merry

College of Performing and Visual Arts  
School of Music

December 2010

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## ABSTRACT

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Many classical guitar teachers of the past had stated that the field of classical guitar education in general was an area that was in need of re-evaluation in terms of proper teaching methodology, especially at the beginner level. However, the last twenty years have seen the steady growth and expansion of classical guitar education. Various factors have contributed to this, including new and innovative methods of teaching, the construction of better instruments, the proliferation of new music written specifically for the classical guitar, and the growth of guitar programs in elementary and secondary levels of instruction. The purpose of this research was to investigate two models of effective instruction, identify teaching and learning strategies, and provide a descriptive analysis of the teaching methodology applied and method books used by these two programs that resulted in their effectiveness. Though both were effective models, they met different needs.

This study observed two programs, including a guitar program at a public charter school in a large city in the Southwestern United States, and one private studio in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. The researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with the instructors of these programs. Supplementary guitar programs using similar approaches were also involved in the study. Research questions focused on

instructional settings, teaching methods and method books used, solo and ensemble repertoire, teacher effectiveness and student evaluation.

Based on analysis of data, the study observed that the instructors of both models had clearly defined goals and objectives. The instructors were very specific about what they wanted to accomplish, and about what teaching methodology they wanted to apply. Both programs gave a very strong emphasis to selecting high quality musical materials that were appropriate to the age and grade level, as well as music that was compelling and challenging. Secondly, both models were strongly rooted in a specific classical guitar tradition using nylon string guitars, and both models taught similar right-hand and left-hand technique to establish firm technical foundations. The implication for guitar teachers is that having clearly defined goals and objectives and selection of high quality music materials plays a vital role in the effectiveness of a guitar program.

There were also notable differences between the two models. The first model followed a traditional method established by nineteenth-century pedagogues of the guitar, and contemporary authors like Charles Duncan, Aaron Shearer, and Frederick Noad. Sight-reading, introduced during the initial stages, was an important part of the learning process. The second model followed the Suzuki method where special emphasis was given to good tone production and learning by listening. Actual sight-reading on the guitar takes place only later. Parental involvement and the home environment also played an important part. A strong emphasis was given to starting at an early age in the second model whereas in the first model, students normally started at a later stage.

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Definition of terms, and basic playing technique related to the classical guitar.

*Tuning of the guitar:*

The classical guitar is tuned in intervals of fourths except between the third and second strings which are tuned a major third from each other. From the lowest pitch going up to the highest, the six strings are:

E - 6<sup>th</sup> string

A - 5<sup>th</sup> string

D - 4<sup>th</sup> string

G - 3<sup>rd</sup> string

B - 2<sup>nd</sup> string

E - 1<sup>st</sup> string

*Free stroke (tirando):*

Plucking a string with the right-hand fingers and moving it away from the sound hole towards the palm. Used for arpeggios and light scale passages.

*Rest stroke (apoyando):*

Plucking a string with one of the right-hand fingers and letting it rest on the next adjacent string. Used for accentuating notes and accented scale passages.

*Left-hand fingers:* 1 - index finger, 2 - middle finger, 3 - ring finger, 4 - little finger

*Rasqueado:* A technique where the right hand fingers are used to strike the strings in rapid succession of each finger.

*Right-hand fingers:*

In all classical guitar teaching, the right-hand fingers are given the following symbolic letters for identification:

p – thumb

i – index finger

m – middle finger

a – ring finger

*First position:*

The first finger of the left hand is positioned on the first fret.

*Second position:*

The first finger of the left hand is positioned on the second fret.

*Open strings:*

Plucking one of the strings or a combination of strings without the left-hand fingers pressing down on the frets.

*Pre-twinkle:*

The initial stage of learning in the Suzuki method where the student learns basic musical concepts and sitting position before learning to play *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*.

## CHAPTER I

### OVERVIEW OF STUDY

#### Introduction to the Problem

The guitar, once considered as a simple “strumming” instrument, has come to occupy an important position in the field of Western art music. Today, almost all colleges and universities with music programs offer degree-granting classical guitar programs. According to Goodhart (2004), the twentieth century saw an exponential growth in post-secondary classical guitar education. This is evident in the existence of numerous guitar programs in higher education and the inclusion of the classical guitar as part of already existing music programs in the public and private schools. Various factors have contributed to the increasing prominence of the classical guitar in the twentieth century. The first is the expansion of the concert guitar repertoire through new music written specifically for the guitar by prominent composers such as Joaquin Rodrigo, Roland Dyens, Leo Brouwer, and Joaquin Turina. Secondly, the progress made in the construction of classical guitars in terms of sound quality has played an important role in its growth. This is evident in the increase of luthiers specializing in constructing classical guitars to meet various individual needs. Thirdly, the gradual establishment and growth of classical guitar programs in schools and the establishment of private studios designed to teach young students have also contributed to its prominence. There has also been a proliferation of new method books written by various authors, some of which I will describe later. However, as recently as the late twentieth century, many classical guitar

teachers and authors of method books had consistently expressed a concern stating that the field of classical guitar education in general was an area that was in need of re-evaluation in terms of proper teaching method materials and pedagogical practices at the pre-college levels of instruction. Prominent guitar teachers of the past as well as contemporary pedagogues have identified and addressed these issues and concerns.

This lack of adequate teaching methods for the beginner was noted for decades.

Andres Segovia (1953) recognized this when he wrote:

The thoughtful musician who reviews the history of the guitar from its earliest beginnings cannot but be surprised at the lack of a practical system of studies and exercises coordinated in such a way as to permit the faithful student to progress continually from the first easy lessons to real mastery of the instrument (p. 1).

Segovia recognized the need for educational literature that was systematic and progressive, able to “guide the attentive student of the guitar from the first steps of painful apprenticeship to the heights of perfection” (p.1).

Richard Provost (1997), director of the guitar department at the Hartt School of Music, Dance and Theater in Hartford, Connecticut, made an observation stating that guitar teachers had never fully identified the components necessary for successful guitar teaching for all levels of aspiration. Provost agreed that classical guitar studies in higher education had reached new levels of technical proficiency never imagined twenty years ago, but added that we are not seeing the same growth and development at the pre-college level. Douglas Back (1995), a prominent guitar teacher who established the guitar program at the Carver Elementary Arts Magnet School in Montgomery, Alabama shared a similar concern stating that “although guitar programs have been established at conservatories and universities for several decades, it is surprising that there has been little effort toward expanding classical guitar instruction at the secondary and elementary

schools” (p. 27). Back observed that few teachers of the guitar have focused their attention on pre-college and elementary age students, which is something that teachers of other instruments have been doing for generations.

Along with the lack of proper teaching methods, there was also the absence of appropriate repertoire for the beginner. The pieces that beginning students were given to play were found as unsuitable because they were often too difficult. Wright (1996) pointed to the type of music given to young students as the primary reason for this setback:

Considering that most of the available material was not written for today’s guitar anyway (but for the lute or the 19<sup>th</sup> century guitar) and it was never intended for predominantly young children setting off on a course of graded examinations, there is absolutely no reason why it should be suitable (p.7).

The contrapuntal nature of the guitar can make even the beginner pieces technically demanding and difficult for the student to obtain satisfying musical results. Wright concurred, stating, “Even in our own century, when much new music has been written, there has until recently, been very little work done on developing a genuinely child-oriented early grade repertoire, one that takes the hand into consideration” (p. 6).

Another area not sufficiently addressed, even to this day, is the training of guitar students at the college level on how to teach effectively. One of the requirements for music education students in colleges and universities is to do a semester of student teaching and observe band, orchestra and choir programs in schools. It is also part of a requirement in a course on teaching methodology. Wagner and Strul (1979) observed that “methodology courses in music education are intended to guide prospective music teachers in the development of instructional skills, techniques, and teaching strategies” (p. 113). However, students enrolled in classical guitar studies do not have the

opportunity to undergo such preparations due partly to the absence of guitar programs in schools, and partly due to the absence of such guitar teaching methodology courses in colleges. Frank Longay (1987) stated that the training he received in college was excellent, but lamented the fact that it “never addressed the special needs of the young or very young guitarist” (p. 16). One study by Anthony Fesmire (2006) suggested that pre-service music teachers be required to take guitar method classes (p. 70).

The absence of strong foundations at the pre-college levels was a major reason why most college freshman who major in classical guitar tended to be technically as well as musically deficient compared to other freshmen instrumentalists. David Grimes, the reviews editor of the journal *Soundboard*, stated in the preface to an article by Goodhart (2003) that the past few decades have seen the acceptance of the classical guitar as an instrument for serious study in the vast majority of colleges and universities. However, he also observed that “far too many students embark on their college careers with little or no preparation at the pre-college level” (p. 10). During an interview with Jim Tosone (2000), the author of the book *Classical Guitarists: Conversations*, guitarist David Tanenbaum observed that basic skills were not up to par and that “students are applying at the conservatory level who are less musically educated than they used to be” (p. 88).

The absence of proper teaching and learning methods goes as far back as the late nineteenth century when the six-string classical guitar began to take shape. The guitar virtuosos of the past decades like Fernando Sor (1778-1839), Mauro Giuliani (1781-1829), Dionisio Aguado (1784-1849), and Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909) not only made significant contributions to the classical guitar repertoire but also wrote valuable method books for the guitar. Most of these method books continue to be

widely used by many guitar teachers, with good results. However, these works are not suitable for the beginning guitarist. Lamenting on this issue, Segovia (1953) stated:

For this lack, we could blame three great men who have revealed to us the true spirit of the guitar – Sor, Aguado, and Tárrega. But they have an excellent excuse for their neglect: they devoted their time religiously to the task of providing the guitar with the only really valuable repertoire which it can claim. This is especially true of Sor and Tárrega. Aguado did continuously interest himself in the problems of teaching, and with worthy results. Indeed, his didactic works are superior to his scant output as a composer. Although his “School of the Guitar” is a disorganized compilation of studies without progressive logic, it is useful for the student who is already advanced and who does not require elementary lessons (p. 1).

### Need for the Study

Numerous scholarly articles and books have been written about the classical guitar, most of which deal with pedagogical concerns and teaching methodologies (Provost, 1997; Berg, 2000; Wright, 1996), and historical documentation (Turnbull, 1974; Tyler, 1980; Wade, 1980; Grunfeld, 1969). However, no scholarly investigation exists on a case study of effective models of instruction at the pre-college level. This study investigated the instructional settings, methods books used, repertoire, and methods of student evaluation employed by two models of effective instruction. A research project of this nature arose from the need to investigate the organizational and teaching styles of successful guitar programs and the implications for application of its principles in the public school classroom setting.

Frank Longay (1987), director of the Longay Guitar Conservatory, lauded the “renaissance of technical proliferation” in the twentieth century, but stated that the challenge lie in the agreement of translating these new approaches to fit the needs of children (p.17). This implies implementing a systematic teaching and learning methodology necessary for establishing strong foundations at the early stages. The

expected result of this study was to include the provision of resources needed for the effective preparation of students at the pre-college level who will enter college with the hope of majoring in classical guitar and for the training of future instructors.

### Purpose of Study

One recent quantitative study conducted on school guitar programs in Colorado (Fesmire, 2006) recommended further research to look at successful guitar programs (p. 71). Such a study is necessary for investigating the curriculum designs of successful guitar programs and their application. Such a study will also be helpful in providing resources for guitar teachers in public school settings. The primary purpose of my research was to investigate two models of effective instruction, identify teaching and learning strategies, and provide a descriptive analysis of how these two programs were conducted, and also identify what teaching methods were used that have contributed to their effectiveness. I have also discussed solo and ensemble repertoire used in the two models, instructional settings, student evaluation, and other factors such as teacher effectiveness and classroom management that may have contributed to the effectiveness of the programs. In chapter V, I have included general recommendations for guitar teaching and specific recommendations further research. This study investigated the two models based on the following five questions:

### Research Questions

- Q1. What are the settings in which the students are taught?
- Q2. What are the teaching methods used by these two programs?
- Q3. How do the solo and ensemble repertoires compare between the two programs?
- Q4. How do the instructors evaluate student progress?



Q5. What other factors have contributed to the effectiveness of these two programs?

#### Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study was the method of selection of the two models. It precluded other successful classical guitar programs as this study involved only two models whose selections were determined based on my knowledge of the existence of these programs, followed by personal contacts with the directors. One of them was the guitar program at a public charter school using a conventional method. The other was a private studio using the Suzuki method. The study was also limited to the study of nylon stringed classical guitar and its role in Western art music. This study therefore did not take into consideration guitar playing techniques such as those pertaining to the acoustic steel guitar or the electric guitar used in popular music. While I acknowledge the guitar's prominent role as an instrument for accompaniment, this study focused primarily on the classical guitar as a solo instrument in the field of serious art music.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There have been numerous articles and scholarly books written about the classical guitar dealing mostly with pedagogical concerns and teaching methods, and historical documentations. In this section, I will present a review of literature on method books, historical perspectives on technique, contemporary developments, and an overview of literature on teacher effectiveness and student evaluation.

Since the nineteenth century, when the modern classical guitar began to take shape, there has been a considerable amount of literature written on playing technique and teaching methods. However, there were treatises on stringed instruments similar to the guitar even earlier. In this chapter, I will discuss the various approaches on the subject from the past to the present, including method books and teaching methodologies with the young beginner in mind. I will also discuss historical perspectives on technique, the growth and development of guitar programs in American schools, teacher effectiveness and student evaluation.

#### Method Books

The earliest method book written for a fretted instrument was by vihuelist Luis Milan titled *Libro de Musica de Vihuela de Maño Intitulado El Maestro (Book of Music for Hand-plucked Vihuela, entitled The Teacher)*. This method book was published in 1535 in Valencia at a time when the vihuela had gained popularity in Spain. According to Bellow (1970), the purpose of the book was essentially pedagogical and was meant for a

beginner who has never played. Grunfeld (1969) makes a similar observation in his book, *The Art and Times of the Guitar*. “El Maestro was not just a collection of music; it was designed as an instructional manual with graded pieces for those who wanted to master the instrument, starting with simple instructions for tuning it” (p. 81).

A more recent scholarly study on Milan’s *El Maestro* by Luis Gasser (1996) posits a pedagogical purpose to the treatise:

None of the lute editions or manuscripts previous to *El Maestro* makes a claim to pedagogy as does the title of Milan’s print. The title of the first printed Spanish tablature implies, indeed, a pedagogical purpose; *el maestro* meaning the teacher. (p. 39)

However, Gasser also is cautious to observe that the book may not have the fresh beginner on the plucked instrument in mind. He states that rapid progress is expected of the student throughout the book, but that the first piece itself is “quite difficult.”

Gaspar Sanz (1640-1710) published his instruction book titled *Instrucción de Música sobre la Guitarra Española* in 1674. This is still available in modern editions. It contains pages of pictures, illustrating how to place fingers on the fretboard. Grunfeld (1969) stated that his method of instruction “carefully illustrates and teaches its readers how to play *rasqueado* and *puntendo* in the Spanish, Italian, French and English styles” (p. 127). The method book was intended for the contemporary five-course guitar written in tablature, and contains *españolitas*, *gallardas*, *caprichos*, *gigas*, *pavanas* and *canarios*. A modern edition of the Works of Sanz is also available under the title *The Complete Guitar Works of Gaspar Sanz* (Strizich, 1999). These are transcriptions for solo guitar, some of which may be suitable for the beginning guitarist. However, in general, the compositions included in this book require some technical skill and knowledge of the guitar.

Fernando Sor (1778-1839), considered to be the greatest guitarist of the nineteenth century, also wrote a method book titled *Méthode pour la Guitare*. Commenting on this publication, Grunfeld (1969) stated that “Sor’s crowning achievement is his *Méthode pour la Guitare* of 1830, easily the most remarkable book on guitar technique ever written” (p. 182).

This book by Fernando Sor is available in modern English edition titled *Method for the Spanish Guitar* (1980) published by Da Capo Press. In this book, Sor gives a detailed explanation of the parts of the guitar, holding position, right and left hand positions, manner of plucking the strings, tone production, knowledge of the fingerboard, and pieces written for the development of specific playing technique. Despite the usefulness of this book to generations of guitarists and teachers including those of today, Sor’s method book was not intended for the young beginner. Sor himself assumed the reader to be a musician, otherwise the reader would find many things unintelligible in the explanations contained in the book.

Beginning in the late twentieth century, there has been a surge of interest in writing new method books by various guitarists and pedagogues. Some of these continue to be widely used by various individuals and guitar programs, with varying success. As more guitar teachers became aware of this acute need for re-evaluating, rethinking and improving guitar methods, numerous individuals have attempted to write new books, some with highly successful results, to introduce innovative and fresh ways of teaching at the beginner level. Andres Segovia, being aware of the need, wrote his own method booklet titled *My Book of the Guitar* (1979). A subtitle, “guidance for the beginner” appears on the top page at the beginning of the book. This book contains

miniature pieces by composers like Sor and Aguado arranged by the author in “order according to their progressive difficulties” (p. 47).

*Concert Guitar Technique* by Aaron Shearer (1959), *Solo Guitar Playing* by Frederick Noad (1968), and *The Christopher Parkening Guitar Method* by Christopher Parkening (1972), are examples of some method books that are most widely circulated today. The instructors I interviewed at the *Guitar School*, the first model of effective instruction for this study, also used them with their students either as primary books or as supplementary materials. However, the instructor at *Studio One*, the second model that I observed, stated that in the method by Noad the learning curve was “too speedy in the early stages.” In the next few paragraphs, I will present an overview of these books and point out their merits and drawbacks.

In his method book, Shearer shared similar concerns regarding the status of the guitar. According to him, authentic and explicit step-by-step information about how the guitar should be played was not obtainable. The situation, he stated, was “further complicated by lack of graded study materials to insure proper technical and musical development” (p. 4). His teaching method has provided essential insights and innovative approaches to learning the classical guitar. Shearer’s book begins by teaching the beginner how to sit in the classical guitar playing position. The author then explains how to play rest strokes and free strokes on the open six strings. Single melodic line playing is then introduced, beginning on the first string, followed by music written in two lines. Shearer published another method book in 1990 entitled *Learning the Classic Guitar*. This has a slightly different approach compared to the first method book where sight-reading begins on the first string. In the later publication, note reading

begins on the third string. Teachers who use the Suzuki method often use a similar approach of beginning on the third string. I will explain the likely reasons behind this in chapters four and five. Besides the approach take by Shearer, other teachers have also taken similar steps in writing method books.

Of these three method books, Noad's book, published in 1968, seems to be the most widely used by many teachers. In the preface, he states that his method book has been the result of "discussions and correspondence with a large number of dedicated classical guitar teachers" (p. 15). He observed that the transition from playing single lines to music in more than one part was too abrupt. This method book follows a systematic approach to learning the classical guitar that seems more logical and applicable to the young beginner. The book begins with a demonstration of sitting position and hand playing positions. Single melodic lines with accompaniment parts written for the instructor are included, followed by introduction to playing music in two lines. Both method books discussed above include a section of solo pieces toward the end of the book arranged in order of technical difficulty.

The method book by Christopher Parkening (1972) was designed to present a "logical and systematic method for gradual musical and technical development toward eventual mastery of this great and noble instrument" (p. 5). Similar to Shearer and Noad, the book begins by explaining sitting position, right and left hand technique, and tuning. Sight-reading begins on the sixth string and moves to the three treble strings. However, the progression of the lessons can be confusing to the young beginner. For example, transitioning from *Duet VIII* (p. 31), involving playing single notes, to playing

pieces that feature arpeggio passages on the following page can be confusing to the beginning student because of the addition of faster moving notes in rapid succession.

These three method books written by Shearer, Noad and Parkening are among many other books available as primary teaching materials or as supplements to other teaching methods. Other authors who have written method books include the Argentinian guitarist and composer Julio Sagreras (1879-1942), the English teacher and author Richard Wright, and the Suzuki methods books, which I will discuss in detail in chapters four and five.

#### Additional Method Books

The series of method books by Sagreras have made significant contributions to the collection of current classical guitar teaching materials. Sagreras wrote a series of method books published by Guitar Heritage entitled *Las Primeras Lecciones de Guitarra* (1994). In the opening pages of Book I, he observed that during his thirty years of teaching the guitar he continually encountered “difficulties in teaching newcomers with available guitar teaching materials whose contents and principals are deficient and too difficult for many pupils” (p. 4). Sargerass also observed the lack of available materials arranged in proper order of difficulty. Many teachers seems to have used this method book with varying degrees of success despite the seeming lack of systematic explanation as to how to proceed from one lesson to the other. The excessive fingerings may also be confusing.

In his article, *Releasing New Aims in Educational Guitar Music*, Richard Wright (1996) addressed the lack of parity between the guitar and other instruments. He lamented on the existing methods of teaching young students to play pieces that are not

suitable. He believed there was a lack of repertoire written for young beginners which “takes hand size fully into account” (p. 6). The nature of the classical guitar, at least in the past, has been such that even the easiest pieces were “too demanding for a child to achieve a musically satisfying and technically secure result” (p. 6). Wright proposed a solution to the problem by recommending single-line melodies accompanied by a teacher on a second guitar during the early stages. He posited that this would remove many of the unnecessary physical exertions, especially on the left hand. This in turn would also enable the teacher to focus more on tone, phrasing and articulation. The Suzuki method, which I will discuss in detail later, follows a similar practice where single melody lines are part of the early repertoire with strong emphasis given to good tone production.

Wright’s proposal for introducing single melodic lines at the beginning stems from the need to introduce child-oriented early grade repertoire. As a remedy to the ailing existing method books, Wright published his method book titled *First Principles*. This book begins with instructions about proper holding posture and hand positions. Sight-reading and technical studies begin on the D (fourth) string with the thumb. Traditional methods advocate playing the first string using the index and middle fingers in alternation. The logic behind this may be the importance of initially mastering the thumb movements since this is central to establishing an overall firm technique.

Following the introduction of Suzuki’s Talent Education to Americans in 1958, the topic of how to teach young children to play a musical instrument has become a pertinent issue, and has stirred up a significant amount of interest in the field of guitar pedagogy. The “mother tongue” approach of the Suzuki Method has proven to be successful, especially in training very young children. The method originally began with



Dr. Shinichi Suzuki and his violin students in Japan. The concept follows a teaching philosophy that musical concepts can be taught in the same way language is learned. Its success is heavily dependent upon the involvement of parents, listening to music and performing. Many teachers have established guitar studios based on the Suzuki method. Kossler (1987) provides specific details about how a group of teachers helped establish the Suzuki guitar method in the United States. He observed they he along with other teachers approached Dr. Suzuki and the representatives of the Suzuki Association of the Americas at the International Suzuki Conference in Chicago (May 1986) with a request for a Guitar Committee to begin work towards the publication of a Suzuki Guitar Method.

Penny Sewell (1995) has incorporated the Suzuki method into her teaching curriculum by using the Suzuki guitar books and listening tapes. She begins the first lessons by teaching the child how to hold the guitar and then proceeds to teaching basic right hand playing position. She begins with *tirando* strokes because “children find it easier to maintain a good hand position while making *tirando* strokes” (p. 1). In her teaching method, the thumb gently rests on the sixth string while *i*, *m*, and *a* fingers rest on the third, second, and first strings respectively. She refers to this as the “prepare position.” Similar to the Suzuki method, Sewell strongly advocates the need to have parents involved in the learning process. Parents attend the lessons as students, and learn basic playing skills. She observed that “little children want to copy their parents, so watching their mother or father having a lesson is very motivating for them” (p. 1).

Frank Longay (1987) observed that the issue of how to teach young children to play the guitar has not been sufficiently addressed. In his article, Longay objected to the

notion that only a few have the talent to play an instrument. He argues that every child has the potential given the right circumstances. His teaching style is firmly rooted in the Suzuki philosophy of teaching young children. He observed that, “the activities and challenges in the Suzuki format had provided a medium through which secure technique could be palatable to the young child” (p. 17).

Richard Provost (1997) observed that many students who have studied the guitar for a number of years have “no knowledge of technique or musicianship” (p. 38). One pertinent issue he pointed out was that teachers of other instruments have clearer goals, objectives and expectations while guitar teachers face the challenge to teach a variety of styles. As a solution, Provost saw the need for teachers to have a clearer understanding of what to expect from their students. He stressed the importance of communicating expectations with clarity during the first few lessons. Provost recommended three stages of learning. The traditional approach has been to divide students into beginning, intermediate, and advanced stages. Based on a paper written by one of his students studying the philosophy of education, Provost suggested a new grouping under three categories namely *fundamental*, *transitional*, and *self-actuating* to be adapted for guitar instruction. At the *fundamental* stage, he lists the following in order for a student to acquire good foundation:

1. Sitting and holding the guitar
2. Basic hand position
3. Establishing of rest stroke technique
4. Good left hand technique
5. Free strokes

6. Basic reading skills
7. Learning to listen
8. Appropriate repertoire
9. Integration and development of rhythmic skills

At the *transitional* stage, students are expected to have been taught the refinement of fundamental skills, the concept playing free strokes, the two to three-octave scale, advanced arpeggios and tremolo technique, development of speed playing and performance skills. These skills are continued and refined at the third stage titled *self-actuating*. This is the advanced stage where the teacher expects students to have acquired the necessary skills to be able to make progress on their own. These include having acquired a basic knowledge of music theory, musical interpretation and effective practice habits.

Charles Duncan's book entitled *The Art of Classical Guitar Playing* (1980) addresses the issue of technique from a different perspective. In the preface, the author clarifies that the book is not intended to be a "method," but rather a "discourse upon those aspects of playing that lie between competence and art." He states that despite the new "prestige of the guitar, its lack of pedigree is a nagging liability" (p. vii). The author addresses in-depth issues of muscular tension, proper left-and-right hand playing positions, nail filing, playing scales, and articulation.

Addressing the issue of classical guitar playing from a pedagogical perspective, Glise (1997) published his book designed as a "handbook for teachers." Pertinent issues are included in this book including a chapter on teaching children. Glise warns about the damage that can be to a child with "impatience and poor pedagogical practices" (p. 157).

The author also discusses the physiological aspects of developing sound playing technique including finger movements, muscular functions and hand positions.

Dr. Matthew Hinsley, Executive Director of the Austin Classical Guitar Society published *Classical Guitar for Young People* in 2008. This book is a compilation of carefully sequenced musical scores beginning with pieces that are single-note melodies accompanied on a second guitar. The first piece titled “Daybreak” features the second and third open strings. On “Moonwalk,” the third piece, the A note, played by the second finger of the right hand on the second string is introduced. Music in two lines, melody and bass, is introduced gradually. The last two pieces in the book are “Sonata in A Major” by Domenico Scarlatti, and “Introduction, Theme and Variations in A Minor” by Johann Kaspar Mertz, both demanding a higher level of technical proficiency. This is not a method book, but the carefully sequenced pieces, some of which are the author’s own compositions, are designed to not only help develop technical skills but also to develop an appreciation for music making. The author states, “When students are compelled by beautiful music to learn and practice and perform, they will learn the new concepts in a given piece far more effectively than they might if they are repeating a dry exercise simply because they have been told to.” (p. 79).

#### Historical Perspectives on Technique

As early as the sixteenth century the *vihuela*, which is the ancestor of the modern guitar, was referred to as a “plucked instrument.” The nineteenth century guitarists like Fernando Sor, Mauro Giuliani and Dionysio Aguado strongly recommended the “plucked” method of playing rather than the “strummed” method, which would not allow polyphonic possibilities. However, there were differences about

technique and methods regarding how to pluck the strings with the right-hand fingers as well as how to position the entire right hand. The practice of supporting the right hand by placing the little finger on the soundboard near the bridge was practiced by some while others disagreed to the use of the little finger at all (Turnbull, 1974, p. 106). Most tutors preferred the use of the thumb and the first two fingers (*p, i, m*). Aguado was against the use of the third finger stating that it was a weak finger.

The use of free strokes (*tirando*) was a very common technique and was widely used. However, there seems to be evidence that players used the rest stroke (*apoyando*) also. In his book, Harvey Turnbull, the author of *The Guitar: from Renaissance to the Present* (1974) observed that Alfred Bennet, an instructor of the Spanish guitar, taught its use since pressing down the fingers, and not pulling them upwards, produced good tone.

To playing with or without nails has been the subject of discussion for guitarists for decades. Sor advocated plucking the strings without nails. Aguado played with nails, but he admired Sor's approach to non-nail playing method. In his method on guitar, Aguado recommends not using nails on the thumb as this helps in producing a vigorous and pleasing sound. On the other three fingers, he recommends the use of nails as this helps in producing a clear, metallic tone. He also suggests that nails enable very fast runs with clarity if used in the right way. Aguado is credited for his recommendation of the flesh and nail combination to get a well defined sound (Tosone, 2000). The debate over the use or non-use of fingernails existed even during the earlier history of plucked instruments. Miguel de Fuenllana (1500-1579), the Spanish vihuelist, said that to strike the strings with nails is imperfection. He mentions the

fingers as a living thing that alone can convey the intentions of the spirit. Thomas Mace, the English lutenist, said that the nail cannot draw as sweet a sound from a lute (or guitar) as the nibble end of the flesh can do (Grunfeld, 1969, p. 188).

Similar to Aguado's recommendation, Segovia advocated the nail and flesh combination which has been advocated by many teachers today. The standardization playing technique can be traced back to Francisco Tárrega who is also credited with establishing the *apoyando* technique, and abandoning the use of the little finger for support (Turnbull, p. 106). Tosone (2000) gives credit to Tárrega for advancing guitar technique as we know it today, "including the use of the footstool, the freeing of the little finger of the right hand from resting on the soundboard and the use of the rest-stroke to expand the guitar's tonal palette" (p. 6).

#### The Growth and Development of Guitar Programs in American Schools

Various individuals and organizations throughout the history of American public education have expressed the need to include the study of guitar in the school curriculum. A recent study by Fesmire (2006) states that the last fifty years witnessed a significant increase in interest in the guitar as a performance instrument and as a curricular option in K-12 music education. Fesmire's dissertation, while primarily focused on the schools in Colorado, also includes a review of pre-college guitar programs in the United States. The past four decades have seen a considerable amount of interest in the use of the guitar in music education as well as the growth in its popularity and the number of degree offerings in higher education. The findings of this research also include a brief report on the study of the guitar in higher education:

The first university to offer the guitar as a major instrument of study was the University of Utah in 1959. Within twelve years, eleven colleges or universities were offering bachelor's degrees, and four were offering master's degrees in guitar performance (p. 2).

This number had grown exponentially by 2004, when out of the 372 institutions offering bachelor's degree in music, 180 offered guitar instruction. Out of the 220 offering master's degrees, 63 offered guitar instruction and out of the 66 offering doctoral degrees, 20 offered guitar degrees. However, despite this encouraging growth of guitar programs in higher education, the same cannot be said about middle and high school music programs. There seems to have existed among music educators differences in opinion about the role of the guitar in school music programs. Among those who have seen the need to include the guitar in the music curriculum, there has been a lack of agreement in terms of what style to teach, and how to teach. Bartel (1990) observed that the status of the guitar as a serious instrument rose slowly following Andre Segovia's first tour of North America in 1963. Nevertheless, by 1960 the guitar was still "associated with cowboys, country singers, jazz, and above all, rock and roll" (p. 41). He observed that the guitar's association with popular culture "prolonged the guitar's exclusion from 'serious' music making" by many musicians and educators.

Grossman (1963) made a recommendation that the classical guitar "should be fully utilized in our school music programs along with the many fine orchestral and band instruments that are now being taught during the school day" (p. 142). Grossman mentions the growing popularity of the classical guitar among not only college students but among young people in general as bearing an important significance for music education. Among other things, such as the guitar's status as a solo instrument, Grossman

states the guitar's most noteworthy contribution as being an "effective, sensitive background for singing" (p. 140).

An article written by Shearer (1971) provided an analysis of the present condition of the classical guitar and its role in the twentieth century. Shearer shared a concern about the classical guitar's struggle to be accepted as a serious concert instrument:

The fact that the guitar is widely misunderstood prompts several questions: Why has the guitar been neglected for so long? Why are there so few recognized concert guitarists? Why is the instrument generally played so badly, both technically and musically, that serious doubts arise in the minds of many musicians as to its validity as a medium of high-level musical expression?

Shearer addressed the problem and offered practical suggestions:

No instrument is widely accepted seriously until master performers demonstrate to the public its inherent aesthetic values and technical possibilities, and until a logical system of instruction has been formulated to teach others to play the instrument. The latter of these is the vastly more difficult to accomplish. An extremely gifted performer or performer-composer may soar to relatively great heights in only a few years, but it takes time to do the research and empirical study necessary to formulate a useful instructional procedure that in turn helps to elevate the level of performance and provide a wider scope within which the composer may work (p. 53).

Callahan (1978) stated more specifically about the direction a successful guitar program should take. The author advocates the use of the nylon string classical guitar, playing with the fingers instead of a plectrum, and performing music from the standard classical guitar repertoire. Callahan stated that it would be logical and educationally honest to offer students instruction on basic classical technique on the guitar as we do on other instruments. Callahan addresses a concern about this lack of focus:

Curiously, a number of guitar classes begin (and end) with chord study. Playing position tends to be casual or at random, right-hand skills are not even touched upon. The student is given a plectrum to hold or is told to brush his right hand thumb across the strings. Rarely is the proper joint and knuckle position of either



hand discussed or demonstrated. There is seldom any progressive approach to acquiring proper physical control of the instrument (p. 60).

While the number of schools that offer guitar classes continues to grow steadily, the fact remains that most guitar classes at the pre-college level tend to be taught by inexperienced teachers who have no background in classical guitar technique (Callahan, 1978). Provost (1997) stated that teachers of pre-college students are not really clear regarding their expectations of students. Many pre-college teachers are dealing with students who come to the classroom with a variety of expectations about what they want to learn.

One of the findings of the research conducted by Fesmire (2006) was that the broadening of the curriculum to include popular styles has not removed classical music as an important component of guitar instruction. Despite the general decline of interest in Western classical music, many educators continue to see the value of exposing students to its repertoire. Many schools now offer guitar instruction, but many of these programs tend to be geared towards learning strumming methods, popular styles, and accompanying singing. One of the recommendations of the Tanglewood Symposium of 1967 was to include the “study of instruments other than the standard orchestral instruments, especially social instruments like the guitar” (Mark, 1996, p. 43). However, the vision and purpose for the inclusion of the guitar as proposed by the Tanglewood Symposium is unclear. It seems more likely that the expectation was to teach the guitar as an instrument for playing popular music using simple accompaniments.

### Contemporary Developments and Advocacy for Guitar in the Schools

The purpose of advocacy in music education is to “inform decision makers about the importance of music education, the effects of legislation and public policy on it, and what kind of legislation and policy are needed to improve or correct a particular situation” (Mark, 1996, p. 76). Strong advocacy for the establishment and development of guitar programs in American schools continues to be a goal that many guitar teachers are striving to achieve. Goodhart (2004) lamented that the absence of “our instrument from not only high school programs but from interaction with, and support of, other instruments and music lovers does not bode well for our future” (p. 48). Advocacy groups take up responsibilities not only for informing school administrators and policy makers but also for finding resources in applying for grants. Guitar programs, like band, orchestra and choir programs, need the support of school administrators and other influential public figures for funding. Grants make it possible for the purchase of buildings and musical equipments. One such example is the guitar program at the Carver Elementary in Montgomery, Alabama, which was developed initially with the aid of federal grant to build a school and purchase equipments (Back, 1995, p. 27).

Despite the challenges, there has been a steady growth of guitar programs during the last twenty years in schools across the country and overseas. Many factors continue to play a role in the advocacy for the growth of guitar programs at the pre-college levels. Various national and international level classical guitar competitions, festivals and conventions are held around the world annually, drawing some of the best young players to compete and participate. These events serve not only as a means of inspiring younger

players, but also serve as a powerful means of advocacy for growth through education lectures, workshops, and concert performances by well-known artists.

A number of classical guitar organizations serve as a means of promoting the growth of interest in classical guitar and the growth of guitar programs in schools. One such organization is the Guitar Foundation of America, a non-profit organization that holds an annual convention and publishes *Soundboard*, a bi-monthly journal. Its annual convention features education lectures, workshops, master classes and performances by professional artists. One of the highlights of the one-week convention is the high-level solo competition held for youth under 18 and the main International Solo Competition open to college level and above. Besides these events, the GFA features projects specifically meant for elementary age up to high school students. The 2010 convention in Austin, Texas featured one such event under the title *Youth Festival* in which middle and high school students participated in a guitar orchestra and perform in small ensembles.

The Guitar Foundation of America has also established the Pre-College Education Program with the sole purpose of supporting and strengthening the development of school classical guitar programs. David Grimes, former editor of *Soundboard*, stated in the preface to an article by Goodhart (2003) that one of the principal mandates of the Guitar Foundation of America was to “foster the study of the classic guitar in private studios and at the elementary, secondary and college levels, and to encourage the development of innovative curricula in support of these ends” (p. 10). The Education Committee, formed in 2003, has five goals under its Education Initiative (EI):

1. To promote pre-college classical guitar education in the accredited school environment. The function of such an educational program would provide

high quality instruction with the goal of preparing for the next level of formal study;

2. To identify, profile, promote, and connect existing pre-college guitar programs to build a mutually supportive network for shared teaching strategies, resources and activities;
3. To promote and assist guitar teacher training in university music programs;
4. To provide resources directly to those who teach in, or wish to teach in, such programs; and
5. To facilitate the establishment of pre-college guitar programs.

Despite the various obstacles and challenges that face the classical guitar profession, the twenty-first century continues to see significant improvements and growth. Research in the areas of teaching and learning, rethinking of guitar methodology, and innovative approaches to guitar building have been instrumental in taking the classical guitar to new heights. The number of schools and institutions that have established classical guitar programs are on the rise steadily. Florida, California, Texas, Alabama and Virginia are some of the states that have included the classical guitar as part of the school music programs. Examples of schools with successful guitar programs include, among many others, the Servite High School in Anaheim, California whose promotional flyer states that the school's classical guitar students have received "significant awards and recognitions, and numerous college scholarships." The Albuquerque Academy in Albuquerque, New Mexico offers eight guitar classes and has two full-time guitar instructors. The guitar program at the Las Vegas Academy in Nevada

is another example of a successful guitar program. Its promotional flyer states that its guitar program received the Gibson Award in 2002 as well as the *Downbeat* Magazine Award. In his article, Back (1995), states that his classical guitar program at Baldwin Junior High Arts Magnet School in Montgomery, Alabama, which serves as a feeder to the Carver Senior High School, had 250 students enrolled in the program at the time of writing the article (p. 28).

#### Related Sources on Technical Studies

Despite the lack of systematic method books in the past, a variety of resources and method books are now available for today's classical guitar teacher whose focus is on young beginners. With the proliferation of many new method books, teachers have the opportunity to consult numerous resources to develop new strategies for effective teaching. These new method books have attempted to provide the necessary skills for beginners which was noticeably lacking in previous method books.

Dr. Michael Quantz, the guitar chair at the University of Texas at Brownsville, published *Printed Resources for Basic Guitar Instruction* in 2007. This is an annotated collection of method books and solo repertoire "intended to serve the new guitar teacher as a basic reference source for materials proven useful for various instructional circumstances" (p. 1). Quantz cites "pedagogical soundness, stylistic vitality, availability, and accessibility to students for actual performance at each stage of development" as his basis for the selection (p. 1). Under the "Children and Young Adults (Ages 11 and Above)" category he lists, among others, the *Solo Guitar Playing, Book I* by Frederick Noad, the method book by Charles Duncan, and Aaron Shearer's *Learning the Classical*

*Guitar*, published in 1990. Excerpts from the annotations include the following statements about some of the methods:

Noad: Used for years in many beginning programs. Classical repertoire only, with some pedagogical gaps.

Duncan: A smoothly progressive method with thorough and quickly accessible reading exercises in higher positions.

Shearer: This is a thorough series on the basic elements of technical development on the classical guitar (p. 6).

### Defining Goals and Objectives

The guitar serves as a gateway to a world of music many would not discover otherwise (Goodhart, 2004, p. 48). However, its multifaceted nature presents problems in terms of defining student's needs and aspirations, teaching methodology and objectives. The playing technique for the guitar is as varied as the types of guitars available, as well as the style of music. The guitar poses practical challenges to the guitar teacher who must decide how and what to teach. In addition to that, the fact that inexperienced or untrained teachers are teaching guitar classes raises a concern. Callahan (1978) observed:

The discovery that the guitar is enthusiastically received by the students has resulted too often in scheduling classes without guitar specialists to serve as teachers or scheduling them before staff music teachers have the opportunity to learn the instrument properly themselves (p. 60).

In his article "Creative Teaching Techniques with Young Students," guitarist and teacher Douglas Back (1995) wrote about the guitar program at Carver Elementary Arts Magnet School in Montgomery, Alabama. The program features various ensembles, some of which include other fretted instruments like the mandolin and banjo. The

primary instrument, however, is the classical guitar. He states the importance of making the students understand what to expect and explains the purpose of the program:

All students enrolled were required to furnish their own materials: classical guitar (no electric or steel strings allowed), footstool, music, and music stand. The strict instrument and material requirements seem to me to have been one of the chief reasons the program took off and became successful. Initial establishment that it was to be a classical guitar course and not a class made up of students with a hodgepodge of assorted guitars and styles of playing, seemed to give greater credibility to the program (p. 32).

Having clearly written goals and objectives can play a vital role in effective teaching. The choice of method books, the order of curriculum content, the order of technical skills to be taught, and all the decisions involved in planning is derived from the goals and objectives (McKeachie and Svinicki, 2006). The objectives have the advantage of pointing clearly to the evidences that the goals have been accomplished (p. 11). One of the reasons for the success of any music program may have to do with the clear goals and objectives laid down by the instructors. Successful guitar programs have clear goals and specific expectations from their students. The classical guitar program at the Albuquerque Academy in New Mexico is one example. The “Course of Study Planner” that the school publishes annually is specific about what is offered. The first year class, for example, is called “Classical Guitar I” and not just “beginning guitar class.” Students are required to play on a classical guitar and are expected to play from the standard repertoire.

#### Overview of Literature on Teacher Effectiveness

This study investigated two models of effective classical guitar instruction. I observed the instructional setting, solo and ensemble repertoire, method books used and the method of student evaluation and the role these components played in the

effectiveness of the two models. However, besides these components, the role of a teacher plays a significant part in how students learn, and on the effectiveness of the program. Researchers have conducted a number of studies on teacher effectiveness in the classroom (Hamann, Lineburgh & Paul, 1998; Madsen, 2003; Madsen, Standley & Cassidy, 1989). Madsen (2003) pointed out that the multifaceted nature of effective teaching is dependent upon several teacher characteristics and behavior. Knowledge of subject matter, effective pacing, classroom management, and enthusiasm are some of the characteristics. Madsen also observed that some studies have suggested a strong correlation between teacher intensity and teacher effectiveness (p. 39). The findings of Madsen's study stated:

Adolescents, perhaps more so than adults, are concerned with the perceived classroom management skills of the teacher when rating a teacher's effectiveness, and that an interesting and enthusiastic teacher delivery style may result in relatively high effectiveness ratings from secondary students even if the content and instruction of the lesson is inaccurate (p. 46).

The high and low intensity in the delivery style of the teacher may play a notable role in the effectiveness. A high-intensity teacher is one who maintained eye contact, used expressive conducting gestures, and maintained a rapid and exciting rehearsal pace (Yarbrough & Madsen, 1998, p. 470).

Another study found that emotional expressivity, and individual's skill in non-verbal communication, emotional sensitivity, and an individual's ability to engage others in social discourse, were related to teaching effectiveness (Hamann, Lineburgh & Paul, 1998). This study suggests non-musical components that teachers need to consider for effective teaching. In other studies, researchers suggest the importance of interpersonal relationships and personality traits. Montemayor (2008) conducted an ethnographic study



of a highly successful private flute studio. The study focused on investigating the instructional settings, pedagogical techniques applied, interpersonal relationships and the personality traits of the teacher. Among others, the study revealed two factors that had contributed to the instructor's effectiveness. First, the instructor's demonstration of enthusiasm for the music, and secondly, her "expertise on flute-specific performance matters" contributed to the student's high level of success. The study also found that the instructor held fast to a system of clearly outlined expectations "that lent a sense of structure and stability to the students in the program and that also formalized their proceedings" (p. 297). Furthermore, Duke's (1999) study on teacher and student behaviors in Suzuki string lessons suggested other components to effectiveness. The study reported that excellent Suzuki teachers' instruction regarding music repertoire included a great deal of active student involvement, high proportions of teacher talking and performance demonstrations. The verbal communications were comprised of informational statements, directives, and high ratios of positive feedback (p. 305).

In another study, Colprit (2000) investigated the teaching methods applied by teachers and their correlation to effectiveness. The study reported seven factors that affect positive change. These included teacher's personality traits, musical competencies, modeling skills, classroom management and student evaluation skills. Similar to Montemayor's study (2008), it found that the personality of the teacher and his or her ability to relate to a student plays a significant role in how effective learning takes place. This study also suggests that effective teachers seem to have good classroom management skills. A systematic observation of music teachers suggested that there is a

recognizable organization in lessons and rehearsals of effective teachers (p. 207). The implication is that effective teaching involves having good organizational skills.

A study by Yarbrough and Price (1981) suggested a correlation between student attentiveness and teacher behavior. This study reported results of other studies demonstrating that attentiveness in music classes may be related to the way the teacher scheduled class activities. Active participation, keeping the students on task, and effective teacher reinforcement were some of the factors taken into consideration for student attentiveness (p. 210). Academic reinforcement, social reinforcement and a scheduled activity may affect musical learning (p. 346). Tait (1992) reported that successful teachers develop many strategies and styles in order to address the varied needs of their students. Helping students understand their musical experiences should be the primary focus and goal of music education. This experience “must have significance for a participant if it is to be educationally worthwhile” (p.525). Tait suggested that the focus of music educators must be on teaching strategies that will enhance the significance of a musical experience for each participant. An internalized and personalized musical experience will have a lasting impact, according to the study (p. 532).

A teacher’s classroom management skills play a vital role in teacher effectiveness. Haugland (2007) gave practical suggestions on classroom management and effective teaching. She posited that teaching success is determined, to a great extent, by what a teacher does in the first few minutes at the beginning of the year. The first day of school is the best opportunity to take control of a classroom. Arriving early and coming prepared is important. Greeting the students as they come in by standing in the hallway just outside the door of your classroom sends a strong signal about who is in control (p. 25).

Campbell (2008) observed that the best music classes can typically be traced back to good planning. This includes having clear understanding of what students will learn, how to present lessons, and how to evaluate student progress. Meeting classroom management expectations is a prerequisite for successful learning (p. 237).

A number of variables go into teacher effectiveness. These include important factors such as teacher intensity, interpersonal relationships, knowledge of the subject matter, classroom management, and student evaluation skills. Effective teachers also know how to internalize and personalize the musical experiences of their students. Liesveld and Miller (2005) posited that great teachers have something that less effective teachers do not have. Great teachers have an innate talent for the job (16). The authors state that effective teachers' methods and intuitions are different. They possess the skill to tap student's innate interests and needs to help them learn, which has a side effect of building caring relationships between students and teachers (p. 18).

#### Overview of Literature on Student Evaluation

Information about students' musical ability is important to music teachers because it offers objective bases for instruction, curriculum, and program changes that take into account students' individual differences. Evaluation, according to Boyle (1992) is the process of making judgments or decisions regarding the "level or quality of a musical behavior or other endeavor" (p. 247). Boyle suggested three broad functions in music evaluation. The first one is an aptitude or predictive function which is future oriented. Secondly, a diagnostic function that focuses on the student's ability at the time of testing; and thirdly, an achievement function that focuses on the demonstrated ability resulting from formal instruction. Boyle also observed that objective evaluation of musical ability

is essential to music education research as long as “definitions of musical abilities are clear and the measurement of it is reliable and valid” (p. 263). In another article, Boyle (1989) stated that with the recent educational reform movements, there has been a greater demand for accountability, particularly demands for objective evidence of student achievement (p. 23). This applies not only to math and science programs, but also for music programs where music educators must meet the challenges of providing accountability for their programs if music education is to strengthen, or even maintain, its position in the school curriculum (p. 23).

Student achievement is the focus of an article by Radocy (1989). He stated that achievement refers to specific accomplishments (p. 30). Student achievement is essential in music education, and frequent evaluation of achievement is necessary for helping students as well as for improving music programs. Radocy, however, cautioned against the danger of becoming self-serving and dictatorial. He added, “evaluators should not lose sight of the need to be humane and helpful” (p. 33). Canafax’s (2007) article on evaluating high school classroom guitar classes suggested that in order to evaluate properly a teacher must clearly define expectations, including being able to “read standard music notation, know basic forms, play accompaniments, play solos, play ensemble music, and do it using proper classical technique.” (p. 43-44).

The adoption of the National Standards for Music Education in 1994 has created the potential for influencing positively and profoundly the way music instruction is delivered to students (Duke, 1999). It has also necessitated the need for student evaluation for two reasons. It helps teachers know what and how to teach. Secondly, it is necessary for evaluating student progress, and to observe if the set goals have been

accomplished. Duke also observed that evaluation may provide a sense of direction and purpose, and a sense of priority about what students should accomplish in music (p. 11).

### Conclusion

The modern classical guitar had its beginnings in the nineteenth century. The elimination of the five-course guitar paved the way for the emergence of the six-stringed instrument. During the eighteenth century, the guitar was relatively inactive and was not known as an instrument worthy of serious concert music. It was during the nineteenth century that the guitar gradually rose to prominence. It was also during this time that the use of six strings became standardized. This was also an age of guitar virtuosos and serious composers for the guitar like Fernando Sor, Matteo Carcassi, Dionisio Aguado, and Mauro Giuliani. These men were known not only for their virtuosic playing, but also for the enormous output of musical compositions, and for their publication of method books. The way was now paved for the next generation of influential players who would continue to promote the guitar as a serious concert instrument. First, it was Francisco Tárrega, followed by Andres Segovia, who is credited for the inclusion of the classical guitar studies in higher education. These individuals made significant contributions to the growth of the guitar and its current position in serious art music. However, there has been one major setback despite this encouraging efflorescence. The method books they wrote were not intended for the early beginner, nor were they systematically approached.

Despite this setback, the last twenty years have seen the rapid growth of interest in the classical guitar. Many schools are continuing to include the study of the guitar as part of the music curriculum. This period also saw the growth of interest in teaching very young children, something pedagogues of the past have overlooked. Few teachers of the

guitar have focused their attention toward elementary and secondary school age children, which according to Back (1995) is something pedagogues of many other instruments have been doing for generations. The publication of new and innovative method books by a number of authors continues to be on the rise, some with successful results.

In this study, I have investigated two successful pre-college guitar programs, and, have conducted a comparative analysis on their instructional settings, teaching methods, repertoire of music and student evaluation. I will discuss factors that have contributed to their effectiveness.

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this research is to identify and address pertinent issues relating to classical guitar teaching methods and pedagogical practices at the beginner and pre-college levels. There has been significant progress made during the last twenty years, with the establishment of guitar programs in public schools, the publication of various books with new and innovative ways of teaching, and private studios designed for teaching very young children. However, despite the progress, the need to make further advancements and the need to make improvements in classical guitar teaching methodology continue to be a pertinent issue. For this study, I selected two models of effective instruction. I selected these two guitar programs based on their level of excellence and proficiency in terms of technical skills and musicianship. The curricula were strongly rooted in the classical guitar tradition including the use of exclusively nylon classical guitars, sitting in the classical guitar position, and playing from the standard solo and ensemble repertoire. I defined effectiveness based on the level of student achievement and progress in terms of technical proficiency, the level of musical understanding and the performance of music from the standard repertoire at a reasonably high level. I had initial contacts with the instructors of the two models prior to selecting them for this study. These included attending workshops and having conversations with the instructors of the two programs.

My observations in the two models included classical guitar students of varying ages from three to seventeen. The settings were a class of about fifteen to twenty-five students in a public school guitar classroom, and individual lessons given to very young children at private studios. I observed similarities and differences in teaching and learning methods for comparative analysis. I also conducted supplementary observations on another private studio, including an on-site interview with the director. For authenticating my findings, I contacted two other teachers by e-mail with whom I conducted brief interviews. I will describe the nature of these observations and interviews in detail later. In this chapter, I will discuss the process involved in selecting the two models and the supplementary observation site. I will also discuss the method of collecting data, describe the types of observations and interviews, and provide a description of the two models.

#### Process of Selecting the Two Models

My introduction to the first model, which, for identification purposes, I will refer to as the *Guitar School* at a private charter academy, had been by way of meeting one of the faculty members at the 2007 Guitar Foundation of America Convention. I had given an education lecture on pre-college classical guitar methodology at the convention, and the founder and former director of the guitar program at the academy was in attendance. After the lecture, I had the opportunity to meet with him. It was during the course of our conversation that I came to find out about the academy and the flourishing guitar program there. He had brought with him a copy of a recent concert program featuring the academy's guitar orchestra and their Honor Guitar Quartet. Through reading the program notes and my conversation with him, I got the impression that this was a model of



excellence, and thereafter I began looking at the possibility of visiting the academy for further observation and interviews.

For the second model, I observed a private studio, which I will label as *Studio One* for identification purposes. There have been a number of studies conducted on public school music programs, but the private studio has received little attention (Montemayor, 2008, p. 286). The individual attention given to students through private instruction provides unique opportunities not possible in the school classroom setting. This was a private guitar studio using a specific method based on the Suzuki Talent Education philosophy. I was aware of the significant differences between the instructional settings of the two models, which I took into consideration in my investigation.

Prior to observing the second model, in preparation for my study, I had attended a lecture given by a prominent Suzuki guitar conservatory director during one of the annual Guitar Foundation of America conventions. Here I observed the performance of the conservatory's guitar ensemble consisting of very young children, ages ranging from five to ten. I noticed that these children were playing pieces that were technically advanced and were playing with remarkably good tone. After making inquiries from other guitar teachers about finding a similar studio that also had a successful program, I was directed to observe one particular studio in a nearby city suburb. This led me to *Studio One*, located in the suburbs of a large city in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States.

#### Supplemental Models

Two other guitar programs were involved in this study. I conducted these supplementary observations and interviews for the purpose of comparing and

authenticating my findings with the two models. On the first supplementary model, I conducted a series of email interviews. I made no observations on the program. On the second supplementary model, I made two observations along with an interview. I also conducted follow-up interviews by email. The first was *Guitar Academy*, a successful guitar program at an arts magnet school in the Southeast region of the United States. I came to know about the existence of this program through articles the director had written. Established in 1985, this guitar program follows the traditional method using books by Charles Duncan, Frederick Noad and the graded Royal Conservatory books. All beginning students were required to play in the classical position using classical technique. The students were also involved in one or two of their various ensembles including the Fretted Orchestra. Data were collected by e-mail exchanges. Additional information about *Guitar Academy* was obtained by articles written specifically about the program.

I also conducted supplemental observations on one other private guitar studio in another mid-sized city in the Rocky Mountain region that used the Suzuki method. For identification purposes, I will label this as *Studio Two*. I came to know about this program through other teachers in the area who had given me recommendations to consider inclusion in my study. The director of this program teaches college students at a local university using a traditional method. He also teaches very young children using the Suzuki method. I also conducted a brief interview with the director of this program. Interview questions included topics on instructional settings, method books, solo and ensemble repertoire, and student evaluation.

### Methods of Collecting Data

For this study, I collected data in three stages including observations of the two models, and interviews with the instructors. At the first stage, I conducted on-site observation of students and teachers in their classrooms and private studios. The second stage was in-depth interviews with instructors of these programs. The third stage included the follow-up interviews with the directors of the two models by e-mail. For the supplementary models, I followed the same procedure of observations and interviews. However, for one of the supplementary models, namely the *Guitar Academy*, the only source of collecting data were through e-mail interviews, articles and documents pertinent to the study.

I followed guidelines provided by the Institutional Review Board for ethical principles in human subjects research during the course of the study. I also obtained proper written permission from the Office of Sponsored Program at the University of Northern Colorado. I conducted interviews only on consenting adults. Observations were unobtrusive in nature. There were no interactions with the students verbally, by way of interviews, e-mails or telephone contacts. For the sake of privacy, I used pseudonyms instead of actual names. In each class that I observed, the instructor introduced me and briefly informed the class about my purpose for observing the class. During the observations, the only materials used for collecting data were a pen, a notebook, and a voice recorder for the interview. In my observations and interviews, pertinent issues related to instructional settings, teaching methods, selection of music played, and student evaluation were the primary factors taken into consideration. I used the following five guiding questions for my study.

### Research Questions

- Q1. What are the settings in which the students are taught?
- Q2. What are the teaching methods used by these two guitar programs?
- Q3. How do the solo and ensemble repertoires compare between the two programs?
- Q4. How do the instructors evaluate student progress?
- Q5. What other factors have contributed to the effectiveness of these two programs?

After careful considerations given to the purpose of the study and the goals I wanted to accomplish, I chose a qualitative case study approach. Merriam (1998) defined a case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 27). A case study implies focus on a specific phenomenon with boundaries or a “fenced in” approach (Merriam, p. 27). Descriptive analysis based on observations and in-depth interviews were the main sources of gathering data. I observed participants in natural settings in order to witness the lived experiences of people (Bowen, 2005; Creswell, 2007). I observed students in their classrooms as the instructors taught them as part of their daily schedule. This kind of study implies an *emic*, or an insider’s perspective, calling for a direct concern with the experience as it is practiced or lived (Merriam, p. 7). To the best of my knowledge, the instructors of the two models did not make any special arrangements to accommodate my purpose of visit, and the classes and lessons were conducted following a normal schedule.

Following qualitative approaches, I will present my findings and analyze them involving thick and rich descriptions using words, rather than numbers (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative investigation in research studies is useful when textual descriptions becomes

more effective than numerical score analysis (p. 8). One way of providing rich textual descriptions is by making observations, and describing them in detail, following a structure that is coherent and logical. In-depth observations can be a means of providing a deeper understanding of what really transpires in a normal setting. On-site observations are also helpful for the purpose of authenticating and reaffirming the information gathered through the interviews. Citing the importance of observations for data collection, Merriam (1998) states:

...observations take place in the natural field setting instead of a location designated for the purpose of interviewing; second, observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview (p. 94).

Taped interviews were the second method used for collecting data. A well-planned, in-depth interview can capture the participant's views, voice, and struggles.

Bresler and Stake (2006) stated:

Interviews are conducted not as surveys of how people feel but primarily to obtain observations that the researcher is unable to make directly, secondarily to capture multiple realities or perceptions on any given situation, and, finally, to assist in interpreting what is happening (p. 295).

Interviews provide opportunities for clarification and summarization. Unlike in a questionnaire, an interview gives the researcher the opportunity to clarify what the respondent said through follow-up questions (Phelps, Ferrara & Goolsby, 1993, p. 153). The interview questions I asked followed a script that I had prepared pertaining to teaching methods, solo and ensemble repertoire, student evaluation and classroom management (See Appendix A). These recorded interviews were then transcribed and relevant portions were presented in the results.

The types of questions asked were primarily either hypothetical or were ideal. Hypothetical questions ask respondents to speculate as to what something might be like or what someone might do in a particular situation (Merriam, 1998, p. 77). In this case, I asked the directors about what the first day of class looks like for a beginner. Ideal position questions are effective in that they elicit both information and opinion, and reveal the positive and negative aspects of a program. One such question, for example, was centered on evaluating teaching methods. I asked the directors of the two models, “What are some areas in guitar education that you see as needing re-evaluation or improvement?”

Pooled judgment (triangulation) was used to establish the validity of my interpretations. Triangulation is the method of using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). In this particular study, this included the feedback of other classical guitar teachers in similar successful programs, published documents such as articles from music journals and research documents. While these were not directly involved in the study of the two models, they represented the methods used and were necessary for providing a “holistic understanding” (Merriam, 1998) of the two models. They were also useful for authenticating and validating my findings.

### Types of Observations and Interviews

The primary observations I conducted for this study were of two types. The first was the observation of actual instructional settings, including guitar classes with ten to twenty students at one time as well as individual private lessons given to very young children. The second type was an observation of performances by guitar ensembles made

up of young students at special events, two of which were during an educational lecture of the Suzuki method. I also observed recorded video performances of the advanced guitar ensemble at the Guitar School. Following the observations, I conducted interviews with the instructors of the two programs. Two interviews were with the instructors at the *Guitar School* using a traditional method of instruction. One was with the director of *Studio One* using the Suzuki method. I also conducted interviews with the directors of the two supplementary models. With the director of the *Guitar Academy* I conducted the interview by e-mail. With the director *Studio Two* I conducted the interview following one of my personal observation of his a private studio.

### Two Models of Effective Instruction

#### *First Model: A Traditional Method*

The first site for observation was *Guitar School*, a classical guitar program at a private academy in a large city in the Southwestern United States. This program used a traditional method of teaching classical guitar. I define “traditional method” as a guitar playing style and technique established by past pedagogues of the guitar like Francisco Tárrega and Andres Segovia. Sight-reading is an important part of the early stages of learning how to play. The starting age is normally around ten or older. The academy was a college preparatory school, grades sixth through twelve, with about one thousand students enrolled. There were approximately one hundred and forty three students enrolled in the guitar program. These guitarists consisted of students ranging from ages twelve to eighteen. The classes that I observed were structured in order of academic grade levels and technical proficiency. However, there were some “remedial classes” for upper-class students who may have missed one or two of the courses at the lower level. I

collected data by on-site observation of classroom procedures at various levels, observation of classroom instructions at various levels, and by conducting in-depth interviews with the two instructors of the program. I observed the classroom activities from two perspectives: First, I observed the teaching styles of the instructors, their approach to classroom management, and the methods and books used for teaching technical and musical skills. Secondly, observations were made on the students' responses to the teacher's method of instruction, the application of technical and musical skills as taught, solo and ensemble repertoire, and classroom participation. I set aside two full days to conduct the study at *Guitar School*. I observed numerous classroom activities taught by three teachers following which I conducted in-depth interviews with the two instructors. Within a span of twelve months, I conducted numerous follow-up interviews by e-mail.

The other means of collecting data for the project in this academy were through in-depth interviews conducted with the director of the guitar program. Prior to the on-site observation and interview, a series of conversations by e-mails were exchanged regarding the purpose of my research, methods to be used for collecting data, and the proposed dates for the visit. The interview took place in the director's office following an observation of two of the guitar classes. I began by asking questions about the background of the director, such as how he got interested in the guitar as a young person, what method books his first teacher used, what his educational background was, and how many years of teaching experience he had. Further questions also dealt with matters relating to methods used for beginners in the program, the history of the school's guitar program and the choice of method books used by the program, classroom management,



ensemble participation, repertoire, and student evaluation. I also conducted an interview with the second instructor of the program.

*Second Model: Private Studio Using the Suzuki Method*

The Suzuki method is a teaching philosophy developed by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki in 1945 while searching for a way to help post-World War II Japanese children develop to their full potential in a nation devastated by the war (Mark, 1996, p. 147). Popularly known as “Talent Education,” students begin learning to play an instrument at a very young age. Suzuki teachers give a very strong emphasis on parental involvement, a positive learning environment, playing with a good tone, and active listening. The Suzuki method espouses the belief that all children can learn to play a musical instrument in the same way that they learn to speak their mother tongue. Originally applied to young violin students, the method has spread worldwide and it has been adapted for other instruments including the classical guitar. In the United States, Frank Longay is recognized as the primary teacher for doing the pioneering work in adapting the Suzuki method to guitar instruction (Kossler, 1987). Over the past 20 years, Longay and other teachers who have studied the Suzuki method have given much time and energy to the formation of a method that is reaching out to so many children worldwide.

The private studio I observed, *Studio One*, had been using the Suzuki method for the last twelve years. Similar to a previous research conducted on a highly successful private flute studio by Montemayor (2008), this study also examines, among other things, instructional settings and pedagogical practices. Three different observations were conducted followed by an in-depth interview with the director of the studio. Prior to the three observations, I had attended a Suzuki guitar summit organized by the director. Here

I made my initial first-hand experience of watching numerous group lessons, ensemble activities, a faculty recital, and solo and group performances. My first observation was a series of individual lessons given at the director's private studio, which was set up in the basement of his home. After an interval of eight months, I returned to the studio to conduct my second observation. Here, I observed some new students as well as some students that I had observed earlier. The third observation consisted of group lessons given at the director's private studio. Private lesson observations usually included four to five students per evening, with each lesson lasting about thirty minutes. Numerous follow-up questions were conducted by e-mail within a span of eight months.

There were two phases involved in my study of *Studio One*. The first phase was observing the students in their individual lessons which were given in the home of the instructor. Students were taught in a room specially designed for private instruction. I observed the student's basic playing positions, sitting posture, right hand and left hand coordination, repertoire, musical tone, right-hand and left-hand playing positions, and classroom participation. Observations were also made on the teaching style of the instructor, his communication skills, and the variety of methods applied to each student. Following the philosophy of the Suzuki method, parents sit in with their child during lessons and participate in the learning process by observing, taking notes, and sometimes playing along with the child. I also observed the role of the accompanying parents and their involvement in the lesson.

The second phase included the in-depth interview conducted with the instructor. Interview questions were based on teaching methodology, solo and ensemble repertoire and student evaluation. Questions were also asked about the nature and principles of the

Suzuki method, and how it differed from other methods, and the choice of solo and ensemble repertoire.

### Comparing the Two Models

The last part of the study was to compare and contrast the two models in terms of teaching methods, student evaluation, and solo and ensemble repertoire used by the students. The Suzuki method applies mostly to very young children in general, while the traditional method begins at a later stage. I was aware of such discrepancies in the course of my study. I will also explore the possible correlation between the starting age of the two models and technical proficiency in later years. During the study, I also took into consideration questions of parity in solo and ensemble repertoire between the two programs. As I will elaborate later, the solo repertoire in the Suzuki method begins with single melodic lines carefully selected by an international panel of experts. The teacher supplies the accompaniment on a second guitar. In the traditional method, the first solo pieces are actual music in two or three lines. The concept of sight-reading also differs between the two models with one model giving primary focus to tone and learning by listening, while the other model incorporates sight-reading beginning at the early stages.

In the Suzuki method, parental supervision and involvement plays a significant role. However, the possibility of changes in parental involvement as the child develops is very likely. In the traditional method, parental involvement is optional and is dependent upon the home environment. The instructional setting also differs between the two models. I will discuss these in detail in chapters four and five.

Based on my study, I will present a comparative analysis of the two models and discuss their similarities and differences. I will also discuss possible factors that have

contributed to the success and effectiveness of the two models. I will present findings based on these two case studies and will make a comparative analysis of how their programs are implemented, their teaching methodologies, and the implications for guitar teachers, and make recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Many classical guitar teachers of the past had voiced a concern about the lack of proper teaching methods especially at the pre-college level. However, there have been significant improvements already made, especially during the last twenty years. The purpose of this study was to investigate the teaching methodology of two effective models of pre-college classical guitar instruction, identify teaching and learning strategies, and provide a descriptive analysis of how these two programs were conducted, including what teaching methodologies were used that resulted in their effectiveness. Onsite observations and in-depth interviews were the two primary sources of data. Supplementary observations of similar programs and interviews with the directors provided additional data. In *Guitar School*, the first model, two full days of observations were conducted followed by in-depth interviews with two of the guitar faculty members. Extensive follow-up interviews were conducted by e-mail over a period of twelve months. In *Studio One*, the second model, four different observations were conducted within a period of eight months, including an in-depth interview with the director of the studio. As a supplementary source, I observed another successful private studio located in a mid-sized city in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States, followed by an interview with the director of the program.

I focused my research questions on instructional settings, teaching methods, solo and ensemble repertoire, teacher effectiveness and student evaluation.

In this chapter, I will report the results from analysis of data collected by way of observations and interviews. The first part will be to describe, in depth, the results from observation of classrooms and private methods of instruction in the two programs. Secondly, relevant portions of interview transcriptions with teachers of the two programs will be presented and analyzed. Thirdly, a comparative analysis will be made of the two programs. Description of the results will be guided by the research questions as stated above. In chapter five, I will discuss the factors that may have contributed to the effectiveness of these two models, suggest recommendations, and provide implications for further research.

Both programs were strongly rooted in the classical guitar tradition, using nylon string, sitting in the classical position, reading music, playing pieces from the standard solo repertoire, and participating in ensemble playing. The approach to teaching and learning was what differentiated the two models.

The first program I observed was a guitar program where a traditional method was used. Here, I define a traditional method as one where students normally begin by using books that focus on reading music. In this method, depending on the particular teaching philosophy of the teacher, the average age of a beginning student can vary from ten years to adulthood. A teacher may use an assortment of multiple method books, use his or her own method, or follow one particular method book. Instruction can take place either in the classroom, or by way of individual lessons. The instructional setting in the first model was a classroom of guitar students ranging from ten to twenty per class,

grouped in order of technical proficiency and grade levels. The second model of effective instruction chosen for the project was a private studio that uses the Suzuki method. In this method, the average age for beginning classical guitar studies is three. The youngest student in my observation was a two-and-a-half year old girl. The home environment and daily listening to recorded music plays a substantial role in the learning process. Lessons in this studio were given individually once a week, with a parent observing and actively participating in the lesson. Group lessons were also given once a week.

#### Model #1

##### *Guitar School*

*Introduction.* *Guitar School* is classical guitar program at a college preparatory private academy in a large city in the southwestern United States with a population of about half a million. The school campus is spread over a large area which houses the various departments in separate buildings, including the performing arts center with its own state-of-the-art performance hall. The academy is a sixth-through twelfth-grade school with about one thousand students enrolled. At the time of observation, there were one hundred and forty three students enrolled in the guitar program.

Established in 1971, the program is currently offering nine guitar classes organized in order of technical proficiency and grade levels. In 1992, there were two guitar classes only. The founder of the guitar program, who had left to teach at a local university, returned and established three levels of classes at the high school level. Eventually, with the hiring of a full-time guitar teacher, the program was able to offer a guitar class for the sixth-grade students, and the interest for guitar learning continued to develop. According to the director, there were a couple of very fine guitarists at that time

who may have served as a model to the other students, inspiring them to study classical guitar.

More guitar classes were added as the school enrollment increased and interest in learning the guitar grew. The present curriculum has been in place since 1999. The program has two full-time guitar instructors, plus the orchestra director who teaches one of the beginner guitar classes.

The students at this academy have consistently participated in guitar festivals, as well as in regional and international level competitions. They have received honors and accolades in various festivals and concerts where they have performed. Some of the events where they have performed and received honors include national guitar festivals held in Chicago and a guitar festival in Brownsville, Texas. In 1999, the Guitar Foundation of America selected a quintet from the academy to be the only high school ensemble to perform in San Antonio, Texas, at a nationwide symposium on guitars in the schools. Their performance at that event included a guitar ensemble arrangement of the Overture from Mozart's *Le Nozze de Figaro*.

The active musical life on campus attested to the fact that there was a strong support for the arts from the administration as well as from parents. Classical guitar concerts on campus have featured internationally known artists such as Ana Vidovic, Antigoni Goni, Randall Avers and Lorenzo Micheli.

*Introduction to the faculty of the guitar program.* I had met the current director of the program as a fellow committee member of the educational branch of a prominent guitar organization. During the interview, he provided a brief background about how he started on the guitar as a teenager, the method books he had used, and the influence of his



teachers. He holds a master's degree in classical guitar from a prominent university in the southwestern United States, and has been teaching at the academy since 1997. Besides teaching the advanced guitar classes and the Academy Honor Guitar Quartet, he also teaches Advanced Placement Music Theory.

The assistant instructor also holds a master's degree in classical guitar. He has won numerous competitions, including a guitar concerto competition in which he performed *Concierto de Aranjuez* by Joaquín Rodrigo. He has been teaching guitar at the academy since 2002. The two instructors are actively involved as a guitar duo, and both have released solo CD recordings.

*Background and instructional setting.* In this section, I will introduce the classes I observed, and provide a brief overview and description of each in order. The purpose of this section is to provide a brief background to the classes I observed, the instructional settings under which the students learned, and the age and level of their technical skills. Later, I will provide a detailed description of the teaching methods used, solo and ensemble repertoire, and the methods applied for student evaluation in each of the classes.

*Classes I observed.* The first class I observed was the Advanced Guitar Ensemble, made up of juniors and seniors who have been in the guitar program for about five to six years. This class meets for forty-five minutes each day and was taught by the director of the guitar program. At around 8:55 a.m. of the first day of my observations, students walked in one by one and began to sit on their assigned chairs with guitars held in classical position. This seating position, which became standard since the time of Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909), calls for sitting on a chair slightly towards the edge, the

left foot resting on an adjustable footstool, and the guitar sitting comfortably between the two legs with the lower curve of the guitar resting on the elevated left thigh. There were about ten boys and five girls in the ensemble. After everyone sat down, one of the students played the first E string, and everyone followed. The same process of tuning was repeated for all the six strings. Following a brief time of warm-up exercises, the ensemble began working on the assigned pieces.

Next, the Guitar II class, comprised of eighth-to tenth-grade students, walked in and got ready to begin class. There were about twenty students in this class made up of mostly boys and a few girls and was taught by the assistant guitar instructor. At the bell, the teacher walked into the classroom with guitar in hand and asked the students to play warm-up exercises. The instructor asked the class to play each string up and down the fret-board in an alternating combination of the first and middle right-hand fingers employing rest strokes. The class also used other technical exercises as part of the daily warm-up exercises. Following this, the class began working on the assigned ensemble pieces.

The next class I observed was the Guitar IV class. This was a smaller class made up of mostly sophomores and juniors. The director of the program taught this class. After lunch break, at 1:40 p.m., I sat and watched the Guitar III class of about ten students. This is the second section of the two Guitar III classes taught by the assistant instructor, and as such, similar teaching materials were used.

Day 2 of observations in this academy began at 8:00 a.m. The first class I observed was Guitar I taught by the orchestra teacher. As observed in the other classes, this class of about fifteen students also walked in, took their guitars out, sat down in

classical guitar position, and got ready for class to begin. There were twelve boys and three girls in the class. The instructor greeted the students as they walked in, helping one of the students tune his guitar. This particular day was set aside for individual testing and evaluation. The students used the first five minutes of class time to warm up and to prepare their assigned solo piece for individual evaluation. The teacher had chosen *Waltz and Three Variations* by Ferdinando Carulli (1770-1841) as the solo piece. The class tuned up as the teacher called out the names of all the six strings one by one, and the students tuned to one another. After all guitars were tuned, the instructor asked the students to play a G major scale descending in first position (G note on the first string, 3<sup>rd</sup> fret), down to the G note, 3<sup>rd</sup> fret, sixth string, covering two octaves.

At 9:00 a.m., students from Guitar V class walked in, got their guitars out and sat down ready to play. These students were mostly juniors and seniors who had been in the guitar program for five to six years. Similar to the first advanced class that I observed on the first day, this class was also working on the same piece, which was a guitar ensemble arrangement of *Hungarian Dance No. 5* by Johannes Brahms (1883-1998). The technical proficiency and musical comprehension of this class appeared to be higher in terms of sound quality, dynamic contrasts, and expressiveness.

*Classroom management.* One important characteristic I consistently observed in all the classes was the orderliness and discipline of the students. The students all walked in to the classrooms, took out the guitars from the cases and were immediately seated, ready to begin working. There were no students who were disruptive or not on task. I got the impression that the teachers strongly emphasized firm classroom discipline and structure. The teachers kept the students on task in all the classes that I observed, and

there was a sense of a systematic flow in the presentation of study materials. Despite the occasional noise from students tuning up, there was a strong sense of purpose, focus and direction. This may be a strong factor as to why the students were enthusiastic about playing, and were less inclined to create disciplinary problems. I asked one of the teachers about how they managed classroom discipline, and what they do when students do not follow classroom regulations. The director of the program stated that they work towards creating a situation where kids are actually enthusiastic about making music. He stated the need to give the students music that is compelling, rich and fun.

Students were constantly on task during my observations. They were either working on sections directed by the instructor, or were focused on the specific assigned pieces. Even during times when the instructor was working by sections, the rest of the students followed what was happening by either listening or following the music. More on-task behavior occurred during performance time than during non-performance time (Yarbrough & Price, 1981). There were very few unscheduled times that would allow the students to be idle. The organization of the classroom and the reinforcing of active participation kept the students on task. There was a sense of structure and organization in the use of instructional time.

The quality of music that instructors expose their students to may also play a vital role in maintaining effective classroom discipline. One study (Yarbrough, 1975) investigated the magnitude of conductor behavior. The study reported the findings of previous research that among music performing groups the teacher was not the source of reinforcement that maintains appropriate behavior. The report suggested that music itself functions as the reinforcement which helps maintains attending behavior (p. 327). During

my observations, I noticed that the selection of music was not only technically challenging, but had such musical qualities that engaged the students. For instance, the *Hungarian Dance No. 5* by Brahms is a technically challenging work. However, it also contains many points of musical interests, such as clear melodic lines, rhythmic variations, and harmonic richness. These musical qualities and the excitement of playing the piece may have kept the students on task.

Maintaining classroom discipline, observed Miranda (2010), is a skill that is most often learned from experience. Among others, Miranda states that having a clear vision of what goals a teacher wants to accomplish, and knowing how to accomplish those set goals, is essential for working towards establishing classroom discipline. Energy and fortitude along with a healthy sense of humor may also be necessary. Effective communication of classroom expectations at the beginning of school is another essential factor to be considered. Back (1995), in writing about teaching students in the classroom setting, advocates using motivational techniques to maintain strong classroom discipline. For example, he has created a “Guitar Hall of Fame” to award and recognize students who successfully finish a guitar course. A class that is motivated to play and participate in a musical program that is invigorating, enjoyable, yet challenging will have fewer disciplinary problems. In almost all of my observations, the students were focused on their music, and the instructors consistently exhibited a sense of purpose and direction to what they wanted to accomplish as a classical guitar program.

*Method books and technical aspects.* Study methods used by this program included books by contemporary authors like Aaron Shearer, Frederick Noad, and Julio Sagreras. Like many teachers who continue to use older method books, this program also

used method books by authors from the nineteenth century like Matteo Carcassi, Fernando Sor, and Mauro Giuliani. The instructors used these books according to the grade levels and technical proficiency levels. Solo repertoire studied by the students included, among others, the *Douze Etudes* and *Cinq Preludes* by Brazilian composer Villa-Lobos, the solo works by Francisco Tárrega, and Renaissance transcriptions of music by Luis de Narvaez and Luis Milán. Study pieces included works by Fernando Sor, Matteo Carcassi and Mauro Giuliani. The repertoire also included new music by contemporary guitarists and composers from diverse musical cultures such as the Cuban composer and guitarist Leo Brouwer, the French guitarist and composer Roland Dyens, and the Argentinian composer Astor Piazzolla. The instructors used these works discreetly according to the level of technical skills and individual needs.

When I asked about method books that he has used effectively in the classrooms, the director of the program mentioned two. One of them was the method book by Julio Sagreras titled, *Las Primeras Lecciones de Guitarra* (1994). His recommendation was supported by his statement that it was “excellent first and foremost because of the quality of the repertoire.” The pieces, he added, have beautiful melodic and harmonic qualities to them that can be hard to find in other beginning methods. Another reason he was attracted to this method book was that it does an excellent job of reinforcing free strokes at an early stage of technical development. However, the fact that the author tends to overly finger the book can be problematic. He stated that students tend to follow the finger numberings rather than the actual notes.

In the course of discussing method books, the director stated that the guiding principle in his program was that he gives students music that is good, rich, and

compelling. He also stated with concern that students in music schools today are faced with music that is so “banal that young people are rightly disinterested.”

The second method book that the director highly recommended was the one by Aaron Shearer titled *Concert Guitar Technique*, published in 1959. The author introduces the book by commenting upon the lack, at that time, of a systematic approach to guitar methods, and a lack of graded study materials to insure proper technical and musical development. Shearer cites this as one of primary the reasons why there are so very few high-level classical guitarists. On the subject of sight-reading, the instructor stated that the Shearer book does a better and more thorough job than the one by Sagreras. Besides these two method books mentioned, the tendency has been to “mix and match, supplement, do our own arrangements, or construct our own exercises.”

For the sake of comparing the information I had received from the director, I approached the assistant instructor about the method books he uses. His first preference was for the first volume of the Sagreras method along with the first volume of the Aaron Shearer method. Another book that he had successfully used with the students was Frederick Noad’s *Solo Guitar Playing* (1968), and also Noad’s *First Book of the Guitar*. In the method books by Noad, a guitar part is provided for the teacher for accompanying the student playing the single-line melodic exercises. Reading music in two lines is introduced later. The book also contains carefully selected solo pieces that are musically rich and technically appropriate.

*Supplemental inquiries on method books.* I approached the director of another successful guitar program in an arts magnet school in a large city in the Southeastern United States with questions on method books. He stated his preference for three. The

first was *A Modern Approach to Classical Guitar* by Charles Duncan. The second and third were Noad's *First Book of the Guitar*, and the method book by Aaron Shearer. His comment on the Shearer book was that he had "never liked the pieces in that book." Out of curiosity, I went back to an earlier statement made by the director of the academy I was observing. He had made a similar comment about the Shearer method book, specifically as it relates to musical merits. He stated that, "the main critique of the Shearer method is that the music itself is not as rich and is a little banal. This can create a problem for trying to create a more dynamic and energetic approach to classical guitar."

*Structure of the classes for technical studies.* Technical studies in the *Guitar School* were structured in such a way as to allow a systematic, sequential progression from beginner to advanced stages. There were nine sections of guitar classes as follows, with their course descriptions in brief, as described in the school's catalog:

Beginning guitar: 6<sup>th</sup> grade

Sitting positions, basic sight-reading, basic left-and right-hand playing positions, basic solo repertoire and ensemble playing.

Intermediate guitar: 7<sup>th</sup> grade

Sitting positions, basic sight-reading, basic left-and right-hand playing positions, basic solo repertoire and ensemble playing.

Classical Guitar I: 8<sup>th</sup> grade and above

Music reading, chording, tabulature and finger-picking. Students play classical, flamenco, folk and popular styles.

Classical Guitar II: 8<sup>th</sup> grade and above



Continue studies in technique and reading with focus on and reading in the upper positions on the fret-board. Harmonic studies including diatonic functions extended chords, and chords substitution. Repertoire will be selected from classical, flamenco, jazz, popular, rock and folk idioms. Students will be expected to perform in at least four concerts during the year, to practice at least three hours a week outside of class, and to provide and maintain their own guitars.

Classical Guitar III: 9<sup>th</sup> grade and above (two sections).

This class is for the advanced student guitarist. Studies in *Guitar III* will include music by Tárrega, Sor, Albéniz, Bach, Barrios, Sanz and others.

Advanced Classical Guitar Ensemble I: Full-year elective open to students in grades 10-12.

Course is designed for the technically advanced guitar student who is ready to pursue the study of the more technically difficult classical guitar repertoire in an ensemble setting. A high level of proficiency is demanded by the music played, and there is a special focus on ensemble and rehearsal techniques. Students continue to refine playing skills, both as individuals and as members of an ensemble.

Advanced Classical Guitar Ensemble II: Full year elective open to students in grades 10-12.

The class is designed for the technically advanced student who is ready to pursue the study of the most technically advanced classical guitar

repertoire. Students continue to refine both as individuals and as members of an ensemble.

*First lessons taught.* One of the concerns related to the classical guitar has been the issue of the methods that instructors use for teaching at the early stages. The first few days or weeks of instruction are important for laying strong foundations. I asked the director about what the first day of class looks like, and basic technique covered in the first day of class. The first day, according to the director, usually requires some discussion about what kind of guitar beginners should have as well as establishing good sitting posture and hand positions. There seemed to be a unanimous agreement about teaching right-hand technique first before teaching left-hand technique. However, there were some differences in opinion about how to employ the right-hand fingers. One of the instructors sees the need to teach free strokes in the beginning. He begins by teaching arpeggios using free strokes, and playing these over some easy chords. As an example, he mentioned playing the G major chord with the third right finger holding the G on the first string. The orchestra teacher, who teaches some of the beginner's classes, begins with rest strokes. Referring to this approach, the instructor explained its application this way: "If you teach rest stroke first, what you usually end up teaching is the concept of alternation, and start doing alternating exercises on the open strings, including string crossings before you add the left hand." This method of producing sound, using rest strokes, is advocated by authors like Noad and Suzuki method teachers. Penny Sewell (1995) prefers to teach free strokes first. She supports her preference on grounds of establishing good playing position. "I teach *tirando* strokes first before *apoyando* because

the children find it easier to maintain a good hand position while making *tirando* strokes” (p. 1).

At the *Guitar School*, the instructors give a considerable amount of attention to the right hand during the first several weeks. This includes teaching them where the thumb (p) should be resting, the arched position of the hand, and tone production. Once the students understand these concepts thoroughly, only then the teacher introduces them to the left hand. Aaron Shearer’s method book begins with the right hand, using rest strokes and playing only the open strings, and later introducing single melodic lines on the first and second strings, accompanied by the teacher. Only later, the instructors introduce music in two lines.

Regarding the procedures for what to teach on the first day of class, the assistant instructor also follows a similar approach to the director of the program. The very first thing he teaches is maintaining a good posture. From that point, he introduces very simple right-hand patterns, using only free strokes at the beginning to help establish good hand position. The instructor then demonstrates the positioning of the thumb and the fingers in order to establish an accurate proportion between the fingers and the curvature of the hand for good alignment.

*Issues of using nails.* The use or non-use of nails has been a subject of debate between guitarists from the time of Sor, who played without nails. In the same manner, Tárrega advocate playing without nails. Segovia advocated the combination of the flesh tip with the nail. The general consensus among guitar teachers and professional players of today is that the use of nails is necessary for producing wider tonal variations and dynamic contrasts. Guitar teachers know that the quality of tone depends on how the right

hand fingers pluck the strings. Even to this day, some teachers advocate playing without nails, especially at the beginning stages. One of the instructors at the *Guitar School* specifically avoids asking the young guitar players to use nails. He supported his position by saying that it is just too complex to get good sound from nails. He also observed that for young children it is almost impossible to maintain it well. Beginning young players will generally produce beautiful tone during the first two or three weeks by using the finger tip, and it is much better for them to experience that success right away.

Frequently, as students move up to what he considered as third or fourth level, students will start asking about nails, and as they start initiating that on their own, then he would start having conversations about how to take care of nails, how to strike the string, and so on. Answers as to when students can start growing nails was dependent on the readiness of individual students. “Sometimes, even by the first year, there will be some kids who will understand that you can play with nails, and they want to,” he explained.

“Sometimes earlier on, they will play with nails, and I do not worry about it if some people play with nails and some do not. Even at the advanced level, it is still essentially optional.”

*Ensemble repertoire.* One of the primary concerns of the guitar faculty at the *Guitar School* has been the lack of quality in music literature that is available to the students. In selecting music, the instructors gave careful attention to the kind of musical and artistic qualities that would encourage the students to develop a deep love for music as well as help develop good playing technique. Selection of music played in the ensembles as well as solo literature ranged from the Renaissance period by composers such as Luis Milán to music by composers who used twentieth century and popular

idioms such as Heitor Villa- Lobos, Leo Brouwer, Astor Piazzolla and Roland Dyens.

The following musical examples are a few among many others and are intended to show the importance given to the variety and quality of music given to students.

A few months prior to my visit to the academy, the guitar ensemble of sixteen advanced guitar students had put on a performance of “Ballo con la Luna Zingaresca” (Dance with the Gypsy Moon), a modified version of Tchaikovsky's “The Nutcracker Suite,” arranged by David Adele for a guitar ensemble. On the morning of my visit, I had the opportunity to sit down and watch a professionally recorded version of the ballet as performed by the academy’s guitar ensemble and theater students. The guitar ensemble was positioned towards the rear of the stage while the dancers and actors performed towards the front of the stage. There were some changes made to the score. The reason was explained by the director: “I ultimately changed many things to suit the nature of the libretto and some sounds that I preferred.” The genesis for this production stemmed from a desire to “have our guitarists perform music in a radically different context.” The musical score for this work is technically demanding in the sense that there are fast scale-like passages, notes that are written to be played on the upper registers of the guitar fretboard, and rhythmic complexities. However, as I observed the performance on the video recording, the players seemed technically skilled to execute it well. Later, during an e-mail conversation commenting on the performance, the director stated, “I think our students achieved this admirably and it was one of the most important experiences I have had as an educator and as a guitarist.” This initial introduction to the high-level musical culture of the academy set the tone for what I was to observe during my visit.

One of the concert program notes from a few years ago indicated that the academy's guitar orchestra and Academy Honor Quartet had performed at the All-State Concert. Their program featured the following works:

Russian Dance from <i>Petrushka</i>	Igor Stravinsky (arr. Truitt)
Letter from Home	Pat Metheny
Baiao de Gude	Paulo Bellinati
Pajaro Campaña	Traditional Paraguayan (arr. Truitt)

The repertoire that the students played during my observations comprised of mostly selections from the Western classical music repertoire. However, there were also selections from the music of composers like Roland Dyens whose writing has influences derived for popular and jazz idioms.

One of the classes that I observed on the first day of my visit to the academy was the Advanced Guitar Ensemble. The ensemble was working on "Hungarian Dance No. 5," by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), originally written in F# minor for four-hand piano. This transcription for a guitar ensemble by David Adele is arranged in the key of D minor. After the ensemble played the first 10-20 measures several times, the director made constant reminders about tempo and time signature changes as they were marked in the score. There are scale-like patterns that require rapid execution. There are also notes that require playing above the twelfth fret calling for a high level of technical proficiency. The ensemble repeated sections of the work several times as the instructor pointed out passages that needed appropriate interpretations especially in tempo variations as called for by the score. Despite the technical and musical challenges of this piece, I observed that the students in this class were capable of producing satisfying results. The quality

and caliber of their playing attested to this fact. This class is open to students who have advanced to the highest technical levels and consists of juniors and seniors.

My next observation of an ensemble class was Guitar II taught by the assistant instructor. This class was working the first movement Allegro, from “Eine Kleine Nachtmusik” by W.A. Mozart (1756-1791). This was an arrangement for four guitars by Mellin Willis. The piece calls for execution of sixteenth notes in rapid succession and chromatic changes, especially in the development section. There are also passages in the work that are contrapuntal in form requiring rhythmic sensitivity. There were about twenty guitarists in this class consisting of eighth-to tenth-grade students. Listening to the group play the ensemble piece, I noticed that there were a few spots in the score that needed more work, but overall, this ensemble was playing the piece with rhythmic accuracy and musical sensitivity.

The next class observed was the Guitar IV class, taught by the director of the program. There were seven students in this class made up of mostly juniors and seniors. Musical selections for this class included “Dansk Pop-Pourri” by the French guitarist and composer Roland Dyens. The music of Dyens is characterized by the presence of improvisatory elements, popular and jazz inflections, and coloristic writings idiomatic to the classical guitar. This particular piece calls for percussive effects produced by slaps and syncopated rhythm akin to jazz music. The class worked on different sections of the score as the instructor directed them by calling out measure numbers. Among other things, I observed that the students in this class had better-sounding guitars compared to the students in Guitar II, and were technically more proficient. One method that the

instructor of the class used to work on the most difficult sections of the score was to focus on those passages and play them repeatedly.

In the Guitar III class, there were ten students, taught by the assistant instructor. Repertoire for this class included Roland Dyens “Tango en Skai,” originally a solo work for classical guitar. This class was working on an arrangement for a guitar ensemble. This arrangement is also available in many formats, including an arrangement for two guitars and a cello. The work is technically demanding in terms of quick movements up and down the fret-board, scale-like passages and multi-voice writing. The piece has become very popular among classical guitarists as a solo work for guitar. Besides this, the class was working on other pieces, including “Hamsa” by the same composer.

Through my observation of these classes working on ensemble pieces, I noticed a number of important features that characterized them. Among these was the fact that the ensemble repertoire was not only technically challenging, but was musically interesting and rich. There exists in the classical guitar repertoire a considerable amount of music that is a bad transcription of music written for other instruments. The most effective musical selections seem to be the ones written by guitarists who also were composers. A good example includes the repertoire that has come from guitarist/composers like Fernando Sor, Mauro Giuliani, Francisco Tárrega, Roland Dyens, and Leo Brouwer to name a few. The works of these composers are consistently featured in today’s recital programs. At the *Guitar School*, a number of the selections that the students were working on included the works of these individuals. The quality of the repertoire may explain why the students were actively engaged in the music and there was a sense of enthusiasm as well as seriousness.



Many guitar ensembles are now incorporating the use of guitars that are specially constructed with a full ensemble sound in mind. Some of these include the alto guitar to play higher notes, the requinto guitars and the contra basses to supplement the bass notes. The instructors at the academy have tried these combinations and they continue to use them occasionally. However, the director cautioned about the negative side of using these guitars. The playing technique of the students who were playing those instruments started changing. This was because the contra bass guitars require more finger flexibility requiring longer stretches and changes in holding positions. Prolonged usage may hinder playing technique on regular guitars.

My observation of these details about the ensemble repertoire reveals three things. The first is that the strong foundations that the instructors have laid at the initial stages may be one important factor for their high level of technical proficiency. Secondly, despite the fact that these students were starting at a fairly later stage, with proper guidance it is possible, as I observed, to produce students with high level of playing skills. Suzuki students begin at a very early age and there are definite advantages to that, as I will discuss later. Thirdly, sight-reading was an important part of all the ensemble activities and was effectively incorporated with other aspects of musical skills such as tone production.

*Solo repertoire.* In this section, I will discuss some of the solo repertoire, the pedagogical approaches, and its relevance to teaching technical skills. In the beginners class taught by the orchestra teacher, the solo piece that each student was assigned to work on was “Waltz and Three Variations” by Ferdinando Carulli (1770-1841). This study piece is in 6/8 and focuses on arpeggios and chord studies. The theme is in the key

of C Major, with bass notes on the first beat played on the fourth, fifth and sixth strings, each bass note followed by simple two-note chords in a waltz-like movement. The second variation is in the same format with the notes now being played in sixteenth notes, arpeggio style. The second and third variations are similar to the second variation, only this time with a different arpeggio pattern. The benefits of incorporating a piece like this at the beginners' level are many. Describing the usefulness of the study pieces by Carulli, Shearer (1959) observed that "proper study of these works will be most beneficial in developing the student musically as well as technically" (p. 60). Shearer also gives practical suggestion on how the student should learn this particular piece. He recommends that, "the student must first study each section slowly and thoroughly with careful attention given to fingering" (p. 61). My observation of the students playing this piece suggests that the instructor was following these principles of proper arpeggio technique and proper fingering.

One of the solo pieces given to the students of Guitar II was "Study No. 5 in B minor" by Fernando Sor. The challenges this piece brings as a solo work includes barring the frets with the first finger of the left hand, and separating the melodic line with the bass and middle voice. Instructional time was structured in such a way as to allow time for those developing technical skills to play solo pieces as well as ensemble works.

Observing the level of technical and musical proficiency between the beginners' class and the advanced class revealed a sense of logical continuity and sequential growth. Strong technical foundations established at the early stages was instrumental for the high level of proficiency at the upper levels. Students work on simple and shorter pieces at the beginning levels. As they progress, the instructors introduce them to more challenging

pieces. The director's preference for the Sagreras book was because of the pieces which are rarely more than 8 to 10 measures long, making it appropriate to the young players. In one of the practice rooms, one of the visiting alumni was working on "Sonatina in A Major" by F. Moreno Torroba (1891-1982). This is a solo work in three movements, and the music requires a high level of technical proficiency to play. Observing his impeccable playing made me conclude that his strong playing skills must have had its beginnings in a class similar to the one taught by the orchestra teacher, a testament to the effectiveness of the program and the methods that were being used.

The success and failure of a music program is dependent upon many variables. The quality of the musical repertoire given to students is an important component that an effective teacher takes into consideration. During my observations, the director of the program consistently pointed out that they took special care in selecting music that was appropriate for specific levels, as well as music that was marked by artistic quality.

*Student evaluation.* The interviews with the two instructors and my observation of classroom activities revealed two methods employed for student evaluation. One of them is testing students individually. At this academy, certain days are set aside for individual testing. Students are asked to play assigned pieces, scales, and arpeggios individually. Recording devices are also used to record students playing passages of music from ensemble works, or from assigned solo works. These are later listened to for evaluation and grading. The second means of evaluating student progress is by grading them on their preparedness for class, concentration while they are in class, and focus on the rehearsal process. One of the instructors also stressed that more attention is given to creating a circumstance where students are actually enthusiastic about the musical aspect of the

program, rather than being motivated by testings. “Technique serves the music,” as the instructor put it. By this, he was implying that testings may cause students to become focused on technique rather than the musicality of a piece.

For one of the beginners guitar classes, the teacher had chosen *Waltz and Three Variations* by Ferdinando Carulli as the solo piece for individual testing.

Prior to beginning the individual tests, the instructor advised them to play at a tempo that was comfortable to that specific player. Proper sitting postures were re-emphasized, and the tests began. One by one, each student took turns playing the piece and the performances were recorded on an electronic device.

The assistant instructor grades students individually as they work through music. The class combines solo playing with ensemble playing, and the solo portions are used for testing. For example, if the class is working on a piece by Carulli as the solo work, that piece may be used by the teacher for testing. There are certain exceptions as explained by the instructor. “If there are issues that I feel like a student needs some extra motivation to play an ensemble part better, I will test them on that occasionally.” Students will either play the selection in front of the class one at a time, or sometimes they are taken out of class and the instructor will have them play individually. A grading criterion set by the instructor is then applied.

Evaluation is essential for measuring student progress, and for making necessary adjustments to the teaching process. In this academy, the instructors evaluate student progress in more than one way. Sometimes a teacher may evaluate a student from what he observes through the daily interactions. Another teacher may set aside a specific day for individual testing as in the case of one of the classes that I observed where the

instructor had set that day aside for individual testing. According to the director of the program, students are also evaluated based on their preparedness for class and concentration while they are in class as well as their focus during the rehearsal process. However, the instructors give primary focus to the musical content. If students are given high quality music and are taught to engage in it, the need to evaluate becomes a secondary issue.

### *Concluding remarks*

The *Guitar School* at the academy was a model of effective instruction not only because of the rigor of the teaching schedule, but because of a number of other factors on which I will elaborate. First, the quality of music selected as study pieces, solo concert pieces, or ensemble pieces was commendable. The director consistently pointed out the need to avoid music that is banal, and instead, sought to provide scores that had high musical merits. The study of technique was seen not as a goal, but as a means of achieving good musical results. Stating what he had observed in other programs, the director pointed out that there are many highly trained guitar players who almost always lack musical vibrancy. These students may have good technique but they tend to play stiffly, without expression. Secondly, there was a sense of focus and direction regarding the purpose of the program, and what it wanted to accomplish. It was a classical guitar program, requiring students to learn classical guitar technique and to play classical nylon string guitars. On being asked about the challenges to teach pop and rock guitar technique, the director stated his clear sense of purpose saying that the class is actually called “beginning classical guitar,” not “beginning guitar.” When students encounter music that is of high quality, they are less inclined to want to play other styles that do not

fit into the purpose of the program. Lastly, strong foundations laid at the beginning stages may have helped form habits that would eventually contribute to developing strong playing technique. Proper sitting posture, right hand fingers alternation, good hand positions, and playing with good tone were strongly emphasized.

## Model #2

### *Studio One: The Suzuki Method*

*Introduction.* In this section, I will be introducing *Studio One*, and I will provide a brief discussion of the Suzuki method, its philosophy, and its history. I will also provide the background of the director, and the instructional setting of the program. An important feature I would like to point out in the Suzuki method is the consistency and uniformity in the lessons from studio to studio. For example, the progression of technical development between students of *Studio One* and *Studio Two* were identical. However, there were differences in the application of concepts between the two instructors.

The second model I observed was *Studio One*, a private guitar studio in the suburbs of a large city in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. Following the Suzuki method, this studio was designed to teach very young children. Strongly rooted in the “Talent Education” philosophy of the Suzuki method, every child is seen as having the potential to develop superior musical abilities by learning musical skills just the same way that a child learns his or her native tongue. Emphasis is given to the home environment, seen as a conducive, natural setting for effective learning. Following the “mother tongue” approach to learning, beginning Suzuki guitar students are taught to play simple tunes such as “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” by rote. The child accomplishes this by repeated listening of assigned recorded simple melodies and playing them on the

instrument. Following the teaching philosophy of Suzuki, the teacher introduces sight-reading only at a later stage.

One important feature consistently found in the learning philosophy of the Suzuki method has been that the goal is not to produce professional musicians, but to enrich the experience of life through music. The essence of the Suzuki method is its teaching that the study of music can be an end in itself (Kossler, 1987, p. 15). With this in mind, a strong emphasis is given to good tone production and playing musically. It is common for a student studying under the Suzuki method to spend two or three months on one simple piece of music. This is because the goal is not how fast a student can learn but how well and how musically the child will play.

*A Brief background on Talent Education.* Shinichi Suzuki, founder of the Suzuki method, believed that the mother tongue method of education “not only develops skills to a high level but actually increases the ability or potential of a child” (Barrett, 1995, p. 53). Kossler (1987) observed that the Suzuki method “embraces a philosophy that puts primary importance on the development of the whole child, seeking to help unfold the student’s natural potential to learn and become a good and happy person” (p. 14). The health, emotional and physical well being of a child comes before musical accomplishments. The American String Teachers Association introduced Talent Education to Americans in 1958. After viewing a film of about seven hundred and fifty Japanese children playing the Concerto for Two Violins by J.S. Bach, the organization sent a representative to Japan to study the method. It originally started as a violin method, but eventually came to include the flute, viola, cello, piano, and harp. The guitar method was approved in May of 1986, and is licensed by the International Suzuki Association.

Their mission statement as it appears in the Suzuki website reads: “To develop a globally recognized approach to the guitar by adhering to the basic tenants and vision of Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, so that children, families and teachers everywhere benefit and in so doing, realize a better world.”

Following a carefully selected sequence of simple tunes, students begin learning their first pieces by ear. Technically demanding pieces are then added as the child progresses. There are nine books in the Suzuki method. Volume I introduces the student to simple melodic lines like “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” In Volume II only, students are exposed to playing music in two lines. By the time students reaches Volume IX, they are playing technically complex pieces from the standard repertoire such as Francisco Tárrega’s “Recuerdos Alhambra,” and “Variations on a Theme of Mozart” by Fernando Sor.

My initial introduction to the Suzuki method took place at an education lecture presented by a prominent Suzuki instructor at a Guitar Foundation of America Convention a few years ago. As part of the lecture on the Suzuki method, this instructor had brought his guitar ensemble made up of very young children. One of the pieces this ensemble of five-to ten-year-old students played was a movement from Antonio Vivaldi’s “Guitar Concerto in D Major.” Originally, this was a work for lute, two violins and basso continuo. The level of technical proficiency and musical depth exhibited during this performance was high in terms of tone production and expression.

*My Introduction to Studio One.* Following this introduction to the Suzuki method, I attended a Suzuki Guitar Summit held in a large city in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. This workshop was organized by the director of *Studio One*, a private



studio designed to teach very young children. The workshop lasted for two days with each day beginning at 9:00 a.m. and finishing around 3:00 p.m. Each student attending participated in a master class, a group class, a theory/reading class, and an ensemble/orchestra class. The summit ended with a faculty recital, and a celebration recital featuring all the students playing solo and ensemble. After having observed this presentation, I approached the director to discuss the possibility of visiting his studio for more observations. With his consent, *Studio One* became my second model of effective instruction.

*Introduction to the instructor.* *Studio One* was operated by a parent whose interest in the Suzuki guitar method and whose decision to become a Suzuki guitar teacher began under an unusual circumstance. While working as a successful tax consultant, he took up the guitar and studied under a Suzuki teacher. At one point, he wished that his daughter, at that time five years old, would also take up the guitar. One day he asked his teacher, who happened to be well-known as a Suzuki teacher, what age would be a good time for his daughter to start learning the guitar. The instructor asked the age of his daughter to which he replied, “five.” He then said, “Well, if your daughter is five, she is only two years late.” He then enrolled his daughter as a student and watched her musical skills develop over the years. He was drawn immediately not only to the guitar, but also to the Suzuki method of teaching and learning. Eventually, he left his profession as a tax consultant, sold his business, and studied seriously with a prominent guitar teacher. With a plan to teach little children, he took the Suzuki teacher training through Volume VII, as well as the Suzuki Teacher Practicum. The website of the Suzuki Association of the Americas describes the practicum as a short-term unit developed to enhance the short-

term workshop training. The emphasis of the practicum is on honing the art of teaching. Topics include communication skills, teaching strategies, diagnostics and observation.

*Background and introduction to Studio One.* For the past twelve years or more, the director of this guitar program has been using the Suzuki method and has been teaching children ranging from ages three to seventeen. Prior to signing up their children for lessons, interested parents are asked to observe a few lessons. The teacher then meets with interested parents to discuss the Suzuki method and lesson plans. After being enrolled in the program, students meet for individual lessons once a week for thirty minutes. Students also meet for group lessons on Saturdays. Here they play for each other and also practice sight-reading as a group. Following the Suzuki procedure of learning, the director of this program makes it mandatory for parents to observe the lessons, take notes, and be actively involved in training their children at home.

Parental involvement plays a vital role in the developmental process and technical progress. Often the parents themselves learn to play the guitar as a way of creating a congenial atmosphere for learning in the home situation. The logic behind this belief is that children are very motivated by watching their parents involved in the learning process (Sewell, 1995). The director also meets with the parents once every three months for a session called “home coaching.” During these meetings, the director encourages the parents to discuss how their children are doing at home, and to share their comments and concerns about the program. The director may also give suggestions about what the parents should be doing and may re-establish the importance of parental involvement in the home.

*First observation of Studio One.* I traveled to *Studio One* in September of 2009 to observe the first series of individual lessons given by the instructor. After a brief introduction and instruction, I was led down to a well-furnished basement specially designed for teaching private lessons. The room was spacious enough to hold eight to twelve students. There was a large dry- erase board where the instructor would write down announcements and other necessary information for parents to see as they came in. The shelves were stocked with stuffed animals and other objects used by the instructor to make illustrations and to communicate musical ideas.

*The instructional setting.* In this section I will introduce a few of the individual lessons observed and provide a brief description of each in order. The purpose of this is to highlight the instructional setting, and the manner in which the instructor applied the Suzuki method. I will then give a detailed description of the teaching methods used, solo and ensemble repertoire, and methods applied for student evaluation.

Prior to each lesson, the instructor gave me a brief background about the student, which served as a useful preparatory tool. On my first observation, I sat on a chair a few feet away from the instructor and waited for the first lesson to begin. A little before 4:00 p.m., Darrin (a pseudonym) walked in with his mother for his lesson. He was eight years old and had been studying with this instructor for one-and-a-half years. Prior to getting started, the instructor asked Darrin, “What have we been working on?” Darrin replied, “Perpetual Motion.” This is a short melody in the key of G major, which all Suzuki beginning students learn by listening. Darrin played it, accompanied by the instructor. As is expected of all Suzuki students, the teacher applauded Darrin’s performance when he

was done. The student then stood and took a bow, a practice observed within the Suzuki learning system, to establish respect and loyalty.

Darrin then played “Twinkle, Twinkle” followed by another round of applause. The instructor would then point out passages from the piece for corrections. One teaching method used by the instructor was to give visual illustrations to teach musical ideas. Occasionally the instructor would place stuffed animals on top of the student’s head and asked the student to balance it. The purpose of this was to teach good posture. During the entire lesson, a considerable amount of communication took place between the teacher and the parent about what the child needed to be working on at home, including correcting technical errors in playing. Darrin’s mother took notes as the instructor taught.

Steve, aged seven, walked in with his father at 5:00 p.m. for his lesson. This student had been studying with the instructor for the past two years. The instructor began by asking the student about what he had been working on. Steve replied by stating that he had been working on the piece by Bach. He then took out some scores for reading. The instructor then took time to explain repeat signs and dynamic markings on the score. Steve then got ready to play “Chanson Russe” by Rene Dupéré. The student played the single melodic line accompanied by the instructor. As Steve played, his eyes were constantly on the music, not the guitar, and he played the piece with a noticeably beautiful tone. The audience, made up of his father and instructor, applauded as he finished playing. The instructor then took time to explain note values by visual representations using pictures of pizza slices.

Josh, aged six, walked in with his father for lessons. Both father and son brought their own guitars. This student had been studying according to the Suzuki method for

one-and-a-half years. At the time of observation, he was working on Volume I. The father sat with a guitar in classical position next to his child. Josh looked at his father, and tried to copy him. The instructor began the lesson by explaining the various left hand positions on the fret-board. Josh played *Halloween Twinkle* in second position as the instructor re-emphasized the student's sitting position. The instructor then said, "You are going to play *Perpetual Motion*." There was a change of plan as the instructor suggested another song with the aim of correcting error in fingering. The "dragon finger" tends to cause tension, which the instructor pointed out. The tendency to "drag" the right-hand finger 'a' down to the next string after playing the adjacent string without alternating is a common technical error faced by all beginning guitarists. The instructor then told the student not to drag. "It is like working on a treadmill," said Josh. The instructor then stated the importance of alternating the two right-hand fingers without dragging them. Josh then played "Mason." He played it without any mistakes. Towards the end of lesson time, the instructor told Josh to practice "Mason" every day for a week. Before a student receives the next set of new pieces, the instructor asks the students to review and repeat the assigned pieces. Repeated practice of former pieces, observed Kataoka (1985) is the basis for success in the Suzuki method. Specific practice habits are also encouraged. Students are given specific instructions on how to practice, instead of randomly playing the pieces. The home practice sheets that are handed out explain what students need to be working on.

Since the Suzuki method is designed to address the needs of very young children, I was expecting to observe some students that were aged five or younger. Mandy, who is four years old, walked in for her lessons with her mother holding a small guitar case. One

of the things that I observed as the student prepared to begin her lessons was the quality of instrument she was about to play. Mandy was holding a guitar that was unusually small in size, yet seemed to have the qualities of excellent craftsmanship. As the lesson was underway, I also noticed that despite the size of the guitar, the quality of the sound was remarkable. Later, upon inquiring from the instructor, I was informed that these guitars are made overseas, and are specially designed for young classical guitar students.

Mandy's introduction to the guitar in general and the Suzuki method in particular was a result of hearing another student of her age play at a recital. The prior year, during one of the annual recitals given by this instructor, an ensemble of young players had performed. As the ensemble played, Mandy pointed out one of the players and told her mother that she wanted to play the guitar. After one year of begging her mother to get her a guitar and a teacher, Mandy finally enrolled to study at this studio. Only in her third month of learning the guitar, she was already playing with her right hand fingers on the third G and second B open strings. The focus of her lesson that day was on alternating the first two fingers.

*Method books and technical aspects.* In this section, I will discuss the method books used by the director of *Studio One*, and will also discuss the technical aspects of learning to play. I will also discuss the methods used during the early stages of development, principles of finger alternation, sight-reading, and the principle of good tone production.

*First principles.* Suzuki teachers give importance to teaching very young children. The youngest student I observed was a two-and-half-year-old child whose first lessons included learning proper sitting position and singing nursery rhymes to develop rhythmic

skills. One of the primary learning stages incorporated in the Suzuki method is the “Pre-twinkle stage.” Following this only, students learn to play by rote “Twinkle, twinkle little star.” Writing about violin students Merrill & Brandt (1980) states that “during this period children learn each fundamental skill of violin playing separately” (p. 8). These separate skills include proper posture, hand positions, bow movements, fingering and bow grip. The same principles apply to the guitar students including proper sitting posture, hand positions and fingering.

The first two to three months of lessons are vital for establishing firm playing technique and musical skills. Kataoka (1985) warns against traditional common sense, which insists that it is all right if students do poorly at first. He insists that Dr. Suzuki himself considered the beginning stage the most important. If a wrong thing is repeated at the beginning, the ability to do the wrong thing (i.e., the ability to do poorly) develops. In this studio, I observed that similar special care was given to the early stages. Someone as young as four-year-old Mandy has a cutout piece of a shower curtain on which a spot is marked to indicate where the legs of the stool should be placed. In front of it, a drawing of a foot shows where the footstool should go. The picture of a cockroach on the footstool indicates on which spot the foot should rest. The child was instructed to stomp the cockroach with the right foot as a way of establishing proper right foot position. Then the instructor taught the student how to name the fingers by letters and numbers, as well as naming the parts of the guitar. Basic rhythmic concepts were taught next by clapping. The first one or two lessons were taught without a guitar. In this studio, only by the third lesson does the child begin working with an actual guitar.

The first few pages of the Suzuki method, Volume I, explain the learning philosophy upon which this method is grounded. Under the “Four Essential Points for Teachers and Parents,” instructions are given about listening to reference recordings every day at home to develop musical sensitivity. Rapid progress depends on this listening activity. Secondly, the importance of good tone production is stressed. Thirdly, students are to maintain correct posture and proper hand positioning. The fourth and last point states that parents and teachers should strive to motivate the child so he will enjoy practicing correctly at home (p. 4).

It is within these parameters that the instructor of *Studio One* was seeking to teach musical concepts, expression and tonal sensitivity. During the lessons I observed that the instructor taught the students with detailed attention about the importance of creating beautiful music. The students were taught how to pluck the strings in such a way as to obtain a rich, full sounding tone. For this reason, the lessons are not rushed so that the child can have enough time to focus on learning how to pluck the string the right way. The analogy of learning the mother tongue is applicable to the Suzuki learning philosophy. Language learning is most effective when taught the natural way, including repetition and constant exposure. Barrett (1995) observed that Dr. Suzuki himself believed that the mother tongue method of education not only develops skills to a high level but “actually increases the ability or potential of a child” (p. 53). This is another indication that the Suzuki method espouses a goal that is more than musical. The primary goal is the overall well-being and development of a child’s potential. Kossler (1987) agrees that the Suzuki method “embraces a philosophy that puts primary importance on the development of the whole child, seeking to help unfold the student’s natural potential



to learn and become a happy person” (p. 14). In the next few paragraphs, I will describe the manner and procedures by which the instructor sought to teach the Suzuki method.

*Laying strong foundations.* I observed two-and-a-half year old Victoria during one of her early lessons. For a student as young as Victoria, technique consisted of learning to sit in classical guitar position and maintaining good hand positions. Both instructors of the two Suzuki studios were consistently in agreement about teaching good posture and correct hand positions at the early stages. Both instructors saw this as necessary for laying strong foundations in order to develop effective playing technique at a later stage. Four-year-old Mandy, who had begun studying the guitar three months ago, was doing something slightly more advanced than Victoria. She was, by now, actually playing the strings using her right- hand fingers in alternation as opposed to Victoria, who was simply learning to hold the guitar properly. The instructor used the illustration of a “moonwalk” to stress the concept of alternation the first two fingers of the right hand. The child imagines the first two fingers as the feet of an astronaut taking a walk on the moon’s surface. In order to teach the student how to maintain relaxed fingers while plucking the strings, the instructor used the example of a spaghetti straw. Cooked spaghetti straw is flexible, while an uncooked one will snap easily. With this illustration, the instructor was telling Mandy to pluck the strings in a relaxed manner.

These initial developmental stages are vital for establishing basic important skills. It involves conditioning the child’s learning skills. Barrett (1995) calls conditioning the “simplest form of animal and human learning” (p. 59). It is the process of preparing the child to respond naturally to musical skills achieving high results. It also provides the basic motivation for achievement.

*The principle of alternation.* In the Suzuki method, the first exercise in Volume I is titled “Exercises for Changing Strings.” The emphasis here is on alternating the first two fingers, the ‘i’ and ‘m’ fingers of the right hand, with precision and accuracy.

In all the lessons I observed, the importance of finger alternation was continually emphasized, particularly during the first lessons. The primary reason for alternating the first two fingers is to avoid fatigue. If this technique is not strongly emphasized at the beginning stages, it becomes harder at a later stage, even if the student may make progress in other areas. The Suzuki method, as well as method books by authors like Noad and Shearer, teach the concept of finger alternation by playing on the open first three strings. The manner in which this is taught differs between the Suzuki and the conventional methods. Suzuki method books begin on the third string, going up to the first string. Noad and Shearer begin on the first string going down to the third string. In the Suzuki method, the first piece taught is “Twinkle”, using sixteenth notes instead of slow moving quarter notes. According to one of the Suzuki instructors, it is much easier to teach the concept of alternation playing at a faster pace on the same note, rather than playing slower notes.

*Sequential learning.* Technical skills are taught in such a way as to facilitate sequential progress and development. Barrett (1995) observed that Dr. Suzuki had developed a fine sequential curriculum, which is “another cornerstone of the success of the Suzuki method” (p. 85). A similar learning program was espoused by the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project in 1965 under the name “spiral curriculum.” Mark (1996) describes the “spiral curriculum” as a sequence of concepts in the curriculum, each of which is presented several times at various stages of more refined

level (p. 153). The pieces in the Suzuki books are laid out in order of technical difficulties, appropriate to the child. The earlier pieces learned continue to be a part of the repertoire. For example, even after advancing to “Waltz” by B. Calatayud found in Volume II, a student will also be playing “Go Tell Aunt Rhody” from Volume I as part of his repertoire. Barrett (1995) adds, “In addition to this incremental development of the new skills with each new pieces in the curriculum, Dr. Suzuki at lessons often use old pieces to teach a new skill” (p. 86). In addition to the sequential arrangement of these individual pieces, the progression of the nine Suzuki books is also systematic. Based on my observations of *Studio One* and *Studio Two*, there was a clear and logical flow of lesson plans all the way from a student as young as Victoria to thirteen-year-old Dustin. In the next section, I will describe the observations of some of the students and illustrate the method of instruction followed by the instructor.

In *Studio Two*, which I will introduce later, Victoria was the youngest student that I observed. At age two-and-a-half, she was in her “pre-twinkle” stage. She held a small guitar and sat according to the instructions given by her teacher. Following the practice of the Suzuki method, the instructor, Victoria and her mother bowed to each other as the lesson got under way. At this stage, the instructor was focusing on the student’s playing posture, hand positions, and fingerings. Her mother sat next to her with a regular sized guitar and participated in the lesson. Halfway into the lesson, Victoria got up from her chair and sat on her mother’s lap as the instructor led in some games to teach rhythmic skills. Towards the end of lesson time, the instructor told the mother to have Victoria listen to the recordings repeatedly. Suzuki (1982) himself clearly stated the importance of listening repeatedly to the prescribed recordings as a way of building ability because,

“children indiscriminately imbibe repeated outside stimuli” (p. 42). Mark (1996) also observed that “students continue to play music they learned earlier as they progress to more advanced music” (p. 150). The simplest music remains in the repertory even after students have mastered the most difficult repertoire.

Two Pieces that appear towards the end of Volume I are “Tanz”, by Führman, and “Tanz”, by J. C. Bach. These pieces are both in the key of D major and require playing in the second position. Seven-years-old Steve, a second year student was working these two pieces. Randy, who is also seven years old, was working on two pieces in the first position. “Lightly Row” and “Go Tell Aunt Rhody” are both in the key of G major. Both begin on the second string. Regardless of the fact that both Steve and Randy were seven years old, Steve was playing literature that was slightly more advanced. This difference in the level of technical skills suggested that the instructor was teaching according to each individual need and progress.

Eight months following my first observation of Darrin and Josh, I was back at the studio to observe them again. Both had made progress technically as evidenced by the fact that by now, they were playing “Are you Sleeping, Brother John.” Technically speaking, this piece requires a higher level of proficiency. First, the right hand fingers now have to play lower notes not only in pitch, but also in finger position. Secondly, since it involves playing in the second position, there are more notes to be played, and there is more involvement of left hand fingers. As students progress to the next sequential level, the pieces become more challenging in terms of technical demands and musical depth. When I first observed thirteen-year-old Dustin, he was already working on “Waltz,” by B. Calatayud, from Volume III. This piece involves separating the bass,

harmony and the melodic line. By the time students reach Volume III, they are already working on similar pieces with two or three lines.

*Sight-reading.* There is a common misconception about Suzuki students and their sight-reading skills. One criticism is that students are not good sight-readers. The general assumption is that they do not do well in ensemble situations. This may have stemmed from the fact that the Suzuki method lays a very strong emphasis on learning by listening and playing by memory. Barrett (1995) posits that “one of the most common-sense reasons for not teaching reading while playing is that it mitigates against proper position” (p. 77). However, my observations of *Studio One* revealed that the concept of reading music is an important part of the process, which is introduced even before the student actually picks up the guitar. In all the individual and group lessons I observed, the instructor often incorporated sight-reading into the lesson plan, especially in group lessons and ensemble participation. This was true especially with the older students. In the Suzuki method, actual reading of music is not encouraged during the early stages. The concept of making good music, producing good tone and the joy of being musically involved is always kept as the primary focus.

As I watched these students in *Studio One*, the topic of sight-reading was covered as needed during individual lessons as well as during group lessons and ensemble playing. In some cases, the entire lesson time was used to work on tone, posture and correcting technical errors. This was especially so with the younger students. The older students were sight-reading music more regularly.

For the second half of his lesson time, Steve had his music in front of him. As he played, the instructor used illustrations of pizza slices to explain note values. Another

student, Josh, was asked to bring out his book on sight-reading and was instructed to review one piece titled “Dottie.” The instructor asked the student to speak the note names following which he played them on the guitar. The instructor made corrections as Josh continued. Addressing the parent, the instructor added, “He can read as long as someone is pointing out the notes with a pencil. We need to work on the visual.” By making that statement, he was implying that the student needed to work on improving his sight-reading skills. My observation of students at *Studio One* refuted the false assumption that students do not learn how to read. While the fact remains that sight-reading is postponed to a later time, as seen appropriate by the instructor, students are taught how to read as they grow older.

*Principles of good tone production.* The concept of “tonalization,” producing a “beautiful tone,” is strongly stressed in the Suzuki method. In Volume I, before beginning to play pieces in a new position, a short exercise titled “tonalization” is given with the goal of acquainting the student with the new notes and how to play them with good tone. Both instructors of the two studios I observed taught their students how to pluck the strings in order to produce the desired tone. As a warm-up exercise, one of the students, Randy, played “Twinkle, Twinkle.” On hearing a slight buzzing sound, the instructor asked, “bell tone or buzz tone?” Randy, without any hesitation replied, “bell tone.” Accompanied by the instructor, the student played the same piece. The melodic passage was played with tonal variations by changing finger positions. The instructor then positioned Randy’s right hand to get what he called a “bigger and better sound.” “How do you get a good, bigger sound?” asked the instructor. “Press down harder,” replied Randy,

who then played “Twinkle, Twinkle.” As the instructor listened, he said, “Dig in! Keep digging in.” The result was a louder, projected sound.

The same principle of getting “bigger and better sound” was covered during Darrin’s lesson. Looking at Darrin, the instructor asked how to make the guitar sound louder. “By sinking deeper into the hole,” Darrin replied. “Yes, dig in.” said the instructor. Darrin then played the same piece with a slight change in right-hand finger position and stronger push on the strings. The result was a sound quality that was, as the instructor described, “bigger and better.” Next, Darrin played “Song of the Wind,” and as the lesson continued, the instructor turned to the mother and said, “Let’s make digging in our theme for the week.” By this, the implication was that a deep, thicker tone is produced when the fingers are first planted, pushed inwards towards the sound hole and plucked. A string vibrating vertically towards the sound-hole produces a louder, thicker tone than a string that vibrates parallel to the sound hole.

*Solo and ensemble repertoire.* The first set of solo pieces that Suzuki students play are single melodic lines accompanied by the instructor. In the conventional method, students normally play single lines as exercises primarily to prepare them for playing music in two or three lines at a later stage. They are called exercises, whereas in the Suzuki method, they are actual melodies with proper names. In recent times, various teachers have expressed the need to introduce single-line melodies, especially at the beginner levels. This idea would bring the classical guitar at par with other instruments like the flute and violin whose repertoire consists of single lines accompanied on a second instrument. Various teachers, including those from Europe, have expressed the need to revise early repertoire. The proposal for a solution has been to include single-line

melodies accompanied by a second guitar (Wright, 1996, p. 3). The European Guitar

Teachers Association's Grade Examinations Working Party Report (May 1992), stated:

To achieve both a more measured approach to initial technical development, and for the sake of parity, earlier access to the examinations ladder, we would like to see a predominantly melodic, single line approach in the chosen pieces... it is invaluable for developing the basic technical co-ordination and quality of tone on which equally basic musical concepts such as rhythm, phrasing, legato, and a sense of line depend. (p. 3).

One of the first pieces Suzuki students of all instruments learn, including guitar students, is "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." This is a short melody in the key of G major, which students learn by listening. The student plays the single melody line and the teacher accompanies following a written-out part. There are five variations to the theme on the same key and same melody, but with varied rhythm. The original theme, in quarter and half notes, appear after the fifth variation. The melody in this piece begins on the third string.

The idea of starting on the third string seems to be an integral part of the Suzuki learning process. Teachers who follow conventional method books normally teach first-year students by beginning to read the notes on the first E string. Another piece for the early beginner in the Suzuki method is "Perpetual Motion," which also begins on the third string. Similar to these two tunes, most of the melody lines in Book I begin either on the third or second string. From a technical point of view, this seems advisable. With the thumb resting on the sixth or fifth string, which most classical guitar teachers recommend, the first and second fingers fall naturally on the third string, while playing the first string may result in a wider, uncomfortable stretch. Secondly, the tone produced



on the third string tends to be rich and deep, compared to the thinner, high E note on the first string.

Curious to know if there was a musical/technical reason for this, I approached two of the instructors taking part in my study project. I also contacted another instructor who has a successful private studio in the East coast, but was not a participant in my study. This instructor replied that “the Suzuki method is really not about the book. It is much broader.” Young students, according to this instructor, “learn by ear so a pedagogical structure which supports ease in learning music reading (such as starting only on the first string) is not important.” The instructor of *Studio One* observed that many other methods start on the first string, teaching open E first, then F and then G. However in this approach, when the first finger plays the first string on the first fret the tendency is for the palm to lay almost perpendicular to the neck. Conversely, having the first fretted note to be on the third fret on the second string, using the third finger aligns the hand parallel to the neck in a more natural way.

For the sake of validating my views, and to confirm what I had observed, I approached the instructor at *Studio Two* regarding the matter. He replied by stating that, “There are many, many steps before a student plays “Twinkle,” so, by the time they actually play “Twinkle” it does not matter on what string they are beginning on.” This approach was more in line with what I had heard from the first instructor. However, he also mentioned some reasons as to why melodies beginning on the third string may be beneficial for musical and technical reasons. In agreement with the second instructor, he observed that when the first left hand note is actually on the second string, third fret D, it results in a more relaxed and secure left hand. Also by starting on G, the thumb rests

naturally on the sixth string, making it more conducive to create a relaxing right hand. Starting on an inner string, he added, may also prevent overextension of the right-hand fingers.

Most of the students I observed in *Studio One* were working out of either Volumes I or II, and almost every student played one or two variations of “Twinkle,” followed by “Perpetual Motion,” “Go Tell Aunt Rhody,” and “Lightly Row.” Besides these pieces from the Suzuki method books, the two instructors also used pieces and materials from outside sources as supplements. As I mentioned earlier, the pieces in the Suzuki method were selected by a panel of experts who took the age and level of the child into consideration as well as the musical aspects of the pieces. The success of the Suzuki repertoire for early beginners is evident in its worldwide usage and its effectiveness as demonstrated by teachers of the method. There are pieces in the Suzuki method which are taken from the traditional repertoire by composers such as Fernando Sor, Matteo Carcassi and Mauro Giuliani. From the wealth of music that these composers have written, the Suzuki method includes carefully chosen pieces that focus on developing specific technical skills as well as works that have musical merits. For example, the Andantino by Ferdinando Carulli, no. 6 in Volume III, features passages that are useful for developing arpeggio technique. Similarly, “Siciliana” by Mateo Carcassi is an effective piece for playing music in two lines and for independence of the thumb and the fingers of the right hand.

*Music in two or more parts.* The second-to-last piece in Volume I, “With Steady Hands,” by Frank Longay, introduces students to music in two parts (melody and bass). This piece, played in second position, is in the key of A Major, and is useful for teaching

finger and thumb independence, and separating the melody and bass. The piece also teaches how to play notes in the second position using held notes rather than open strings.

As students make technical progress, they are introduced to more advanced pieces. Volume II contains ten pieces that are all in two lines except “Waltz” by B. Calatayud, which is in three parts. Thirteen-year-old Dustin (from *Studio Two*) was working on this piece when I first observed him. The melody is played with the “a” finger of the right hand, the inner harmony of two voices with the “i” and “m” fingers, and the bass with “p.” One of the playing techniques involved in this piece is playing “rest stroke” with the “a” finger in order to accentuate the melody line, and to play free strokes with the other two fingers and the thumb. Dustin played it very well, receiving only a slight correction from his instructor on how to play the last three notes. The score calls for playing harmonics on these three notes by gently touching the indicated notes with one of the left-hand fingers and plucking the strings.

Besides “Waltz,” Dustin was also working on a few other pieces from Volume II and III. These included “Andantino” by Matteo Carcassi from Volume II, and a more challenging piece titled “Packington’s Pound” (anonymous) from Volume III. To prepare this piece, Dustin first played only the melody line as the instructor played the bass part. Then it was reversed as Dustin played the bass and the instructor played the melody. Following this exercise, Dustin played the piece by himself. The student was instructed to look at the music only when it was absolutely necessary, and to rely more on what he was hearing. This was another instance of the Suzuki method where students are encouraged to develop strong listening skills.

*Group lessons.* Most students studying under the Suzuki method are required to participate in ensemble performances. Group lessons are a part of the Suzuki method through which students also get an opportunity for ensemble participation. These group events provide a means of motivation to the students. In *First class tips for Suzuki parents* by Einfeldt (2001), one parent observed that “group lessons keeps my child motivated more than any other thing.” (p. 39). There is a variety of ways that such ensembles are coordinated in *Studio One*. Early ensemble pieces are played in unison, while playing in multiple parts is introduced later. The need to possess good sight-reading skills is also strongly emphasized in ensemble playing. One of the primary reasons for group lessons and ensemble participation is to develop sight-reading skills. However, during recitals and concerts, the students played all the ensemble and solo pieces by memory.

Two of the group lessons I observed were in *Studio One*. The first group consisted of five students ranging in ages from eight to twelve. These students were working on selections from Volume I and II. The students, all seated in a semi-circle, played the melody lines as the teacher accompanied on another guitar. The instructor addressed various issues such as sitting postures, dynamics and tone production. During the course of the lesson, the instructor handed out new ensemble pieces written in multiple parts. The parents also sat in to observe and participate in the group lesson. As usual, the instructor introduced me to the group and explained the reason for my being there. As lesson time began, the instructor announced that everybody should have the piece titled “Fanfare.” All the students were seated in classical guitar position and were prepared to

play. The instructor continued, “You being my advanced group, we will work a little to memorize the fret-board.” By making this statement, he was referring to sight-reading.

My observation covered a number of areas. First, as I had consistently noticed during the last three observations, the sound quality of this group’s playing was commendable as it was uniformly deep and warm. This provided evidence to the fact that Suzuki teachers give primary focus to good tone production. The instructor in this studio similarly taught the students how to produce good tone. As the group finished playing “Twinkle,” the parents applauded, and the students stood and took a bow. Secondly, parental involvement was evident in the fact that they were observing the lesson and were taking notes. Finally, the ensembles were playing in unison instead of each student playing a different part. This seems to be common at least in this studio in some of the group lessons. “Let’s do the Minuet” said the instructor as the group prepared to play their second piece in unison. The student and the instructor then bowed to each other. The next piece the group played was the “French Folk Song.”

Solo and ensemble recitals take place at least three or four times per year. During my time of observation, one of the students was getting ready for his solo recital. The instructor announced this upcoming recital. Dan, one of the students, had finished Book I and would be giving a solo recital sometime during the summer. These graduation recitals normally take place in the student’s home and the rest of the students are invited to attend.

Students were continually encouraged to play with musical sensitivity. As the lesson continued, the instructor pointed out the importance of playing expressively. The students prepared to play “French Folk Song” as the instructor asked them what they

needed to be aware of in this particular piece. All the students raised their hands as one of them called out, “dynamics.” Then the group played the piece at least two times focusing on dynamics. The next piece the instructor asked the group to play was written in two parts. All five students were asked to play through both the parts. After the instructor explained the term “ponticello,” the group played the assigned piece, this time focusing on producing the desired tonal quality. One of them was playing a measure behind, which was corrected. The group was then given a new piece titled, “Alpine Waltz,” to work on. This piece being in the key of G major, the instructor explained the new note F#, and where to find it on the fretboard. After a brief introduction to the new piece, which is in four parts, the group was asked to take it home and to prepare it for the next lesson. The group then played a piece by Bach, which was followed by an applause and a bow. “Sounds like one big guitar,” remarked the instructor in appreciation as the day’s group class came to an end.

The second group consisted of three students who were working on selections from Volume III. These were not ensemble pieces with parts assigned to each student. The students were actually playing the same solo pieces as a group in the same fashion as the group that had met earlier. One such piece was “Allegro in A major” from Volume II. The students played the melody while the instructor played the bass line. Following that, the role was reversed as the students played the bass line and the instructor played the melody line. However, after playing a few of these solo pieces, it was time to play ensemble pieces. “Let’s get out the ensemble stuff,” said the instructor as the students took out the assigned score. The first piece was titled “Gelobt Sei Gott” by M. Vulpius (1560-1616), and was in three parts. The music had a chorale-like harmony, and was

slightly contrapuntal. The group played through the piece and moved on to “Rondeau” by Henry Purcell (1659-1695), and “Allemande,” both arranged for four guitars. The second piece, “Allemande,” was a brand new piece played together for the first time as a group. The lesson finished with “Greensleeves,” played in unison.

The group lessons that meet once a week are important for various reasons. First, they encourage group participation and teamwork. Students are put in a situation where they are compelled to listen to each other and work on musical devices such as tone, harmony and dynamic expressions. Secondly, the inclusion of students with varying levels of technical proficiency results in the younger or less experienced players learning by watching the more experienced players. The instructor of *Studio One* intentionally puts students from different levels together with the purpose of allowing the younger ones to watch and learn from the older students. Thirdly, being a part of a group motivates students to practice and be prepared. Montemayor (2008) observed that the “motivation to practice and perform at a high level comes in large part from social influences” (p. 291). Students want to feel important and accepted through achievement and in doing something well. Finally, group lessons also help develop sight-reading skills.

*Student evaluation.* In the Suzuki method, the evaluation of student progress may vary from teacher to teacher. The weekly learning process revolves around a tight schedule, so the need for individual evaluation at the end of a session may be deemed unnecessary by some teachers. The daily home assignments done under the guidance of the parents, group lessons, and private lessons all contribute towards a rigorous learning routine. Thoroughness in what a student learns takes prominence over how much material

is covered. With this in mind, a student may spend two weeks or more mastering a simple piece before going on to the next one. For one of the directors, the Suzuki philosophy is not about “how fast a student learns, but how well.” In *Studio One*, students are given a weekly lesson sheet on which they are to record what was done during the week. As an example, I have provided a copy of a weekly lesson sheet in Appendix B. Students earn points for completing lessons under categories such as “technical” and “musical.” The sheet has a systematically arranged order of lesson plans as a guide for daily practice. It begins with review of lessons from the week before, the week’s lessons, pieces to be polished, a new piece to work on, theory, and reading. This instructor also expressed that he does not use “timed bench marks.” Students work through the pieces in the books based on individual needs and thoroughness in the knowledge of the piece they are currently working on.

#### *Second Observation of Studio One*

In this section, I will discuss my second observation of *Studio One*, the idea of “home coaching,” and the individual students observed. The second observation took place about eight months following the first visit. The lapse of time between the two observations served as a way of seeing the progress made by some of the students I had observed earlier. Prior to observing the first lesson, the instructor sat down with me for thirty minutes and explained the afternoon’s schedule. The instructor then talked about a program called “home coaching” for the parents, which takes place once every three months.



### *Home Coaching*

In the Suzuki method, parental involvement plays a vital role. This accomplished by assisting the child at home through a program called “home coaching.” All parents are required to serve as “home coaches,” and a meeting with the director of the program is scheduled once every quarter. During these sessions, the instructor covers basic topics such as how to tune the guitar and how to put new strings on. The instructor also leads in the discussion of developing music reading skills, and he also asks for feedback from parents about the progress of the student. The home coaching session is also a time for parents to express their thoughts about how the instructor is doing, to give suggestions, and to express challenges they face as parents in their child’s music learning process.

Following my brief visit with the instructor, one of the parents, Tammie, walked in to make up a “home coaching” session she had missed the previous Saturday. This gave me the opportunity to get a brief understanding of what a home coaching session might look like. The conversation between the instructor and the parent covered various pertinent issues related to the parental role within the home environment. As a way of covering what this parent had missed, the instructor explained a number of issues.

### *Students in My Second Observation*

This being my second visit to the studio, I was anticipating the possibility of observing some of the students for the second time. The first student I observed was seven-year-old Randy who walked in with his mother for his lessons. This was my first observation of this student. The instructor took the small-sized guitar from the student and helped tune it, following which the day’s lesson began. The mother was asked if she remembered to bring the worksheet for the week. On checking it, the instructor noticed

that Randy had practiced four days that week. The instructor gave positive comments to the student for improvements made in sitting posture and tone. As I watched, Randy acknowledged the comments with a smile of confidence. One of the pieces Randy played that evening was “Lightly Row.” The piece was played with confidence and clarity. An applause followed. The instructor then asked the mother not to have the student play the theme of “Twinkle, Twinkle,” but two of the variations only. The day’s lesson finished with Randy playing another tune from Volume I titled “Go Tell Aunt Rhody.”

At 4:00 p.m., Darrin walked in for his lesson. This was my second observation of Darrin’s private lesson. Based on my first observation of Darrin, I noticed that he had made some progress. By now he was playing “Are you Sleeping, Brother John,” and the “French Folk Song.” These two songs are both in the key of D Major, and are played in the second position, requiring a wider stretch of the right-hand fingers, and playing the lower strings. Another student I observed for the second time was Josh, who came accompanied by his father as the observing parent. It was Josh’s mother, Tammie, who had just met with the instructor earlier that evening for a home coaching session. This observation was significant in my study as parental involvement may often mean both parents. As one parent observed in *First class tips for Suzuki parents* by Einfeldt (2001), “The most important ingredient for success is the parent’s willingness to devote regular time to work closely with the child and the teacher. This requires a commitment from the entire family and may mean rearranging some family priorities in order to receive the full benefits of participation in a Suzuki program” (p. 5).

### *Motivational Activities*

Motivation plays a significant role in student achievement in all areas of study. McKeachie & Svinicki (2006) states that few topics concern teachers at all levels as much as the motivation of students. He adds that students are “obviously motivated by more than academic achievement” (p. 141). Social goals are important considerations. Students who are motivated to learn choose tasks that enhance their learning, work hard at those tasks, and persist in the face of difficulty in order to attain their goals. There are various events that the director of *Studio One* organizes throughout the year with the intention of encouraging musical participation and progress. These events are not officially a part of the Suzuki method, but every instructor has the freedom to add or incorporate creative means of encouraging their students. One of them is the “Guitar Olympics.” Once in every two years, the director of this program organizes this event where students play in a musical event that is set up like a competition. The only difference between this and a real competition is that here every child “wins” in at least one of the categories. Some of these many include playing a piece by memory, sight-reading, or rhythmic games. The instructor stated that the students, especially the younger ones, get very excited about this event. Borrowing on sports-related analogies, this event provides a great way to promote a studio-wide competition.

This is something that is practiced by other teachers as well. Back (1995) uses a similar approach where he requires his students to enter in at least in two events. One of the benefits of such activities is that “it also offers the potential to branch out and include the students of other area guitar teachers as well” (p. 30). These musical events include an activity called the “Solo Selection Event.” Here a student plays a solo piece and is

given a score based on the level of difficulty and accuracy of performance. Another event is the “Two Octave Scale Event,” where students play a two-octave scale with accuracy of finger alternation. In the “Speed Demon Event,” students play a given single line piece (like “The Irish Washer Woman”) and compete for the fastest time. Motivation seemed to be the primary reason for these musical activities, at least for Back (1995), who states that these are fun activities organized with the purpose of motivating students to work on the various technical skills needed to play the guitar well.

### *Supplementary Observation*

One of the advantages of the Suzuki program is the consistency and uniformity of instructional methods and materials used worldwide. A student studying in the United States could move to Argentina or France, find a Suzuki teacher, and continue studying without any interruption. The specific directions and the sequential progression of study materials allow this to happen. However, this does not imply that factors such as culture, personality of the instructor, and teaching styles do not matter. Despite the fact that the teaching materials and instructions are uniform, the interpretation and application of these may vary from teacher to teacher. Barrett (1995) observed that the curriculum is not a mechanical, rote, unchanging sort of thing. Dr. Suzuki himself encourages teachers to use their own “creativity and ingenuity to provide a successful interaction between the student and the curriculum” (p. 90).

Needing to compare my observations with another private studio that also used the Suzuki method, I traveled to another location for observing a guitar program. There I also conducted an interview with the director. This was a private studio in a small city in the Rocky Mountains region of the United States, which I will refer to as *Studio Two*. The

director of this program started as an instructor of older students using a conventional method. However, seeing the need to teach younger children, he explored the Suzuki method and eventually attended numerous training workshops to be trained as a Suzuki instructor. He currently teaches older students at a local university, as well as very young children in his private studio using the Suzuki method. One of his students who had been studying with him for the last eleven years is now majoring in classical guitar at a nearby university.

The studio is located at the local civic center and is spacious and well lit, with pictures and paintings of guitars hanging from the walls. In the middle of the room was a carpet upon which were three chairs, one for the parent, one for the student, and the third for the instructor. There was a music stand for the student in front of one of the chairs.

Thirteen-year-old Dustin, the student I had introduced in page 109, was working on Volume II. He walked in at 3:30 p.m. for his weekly individual lessons, his mother accompanying him. He played “Waltz” by B. Calatayud, a piece that requires a high level of technical proficiency. The separation of the melody, inner voices, and the clear bass line that the piece requires was well played. The student then played “Allegro” by Shinichi Suzuki, a melody in two lines in the key of A Major. After playing, both student and teacher bowed to each other. This shows the consistency between Suzuki teachers and their strong belief in the teaching philosophy of the Suzuki method which includes teaching children the importance of loyalty and respect.

Victoria, whom I had introduced earlier, was only two-and-a-half-years old when I first observed her. Both mother and child walked in that day for lessons holding a guitar each of their own. Victoria had brought her special-ordered guitar that was the size of a

small violin, and her mother had her own adult-sized guitar. At the beginning of lesson time, there was not much playing of the actual guitar, but a lot of visual games and illustrations to convey proper sitting posture and right-hand positions. The instructor at one point put a stuffed green frog toy on top of Victoria's head as she sat heads up in classical guitar playing position. The mother and the instructor then started counting out loud starting at one and going up to ten. The idea was to see how long Victoria could sit in that posture without letting the green frog fall. Next, the student sat in her mother's lap as games were played to teach rhythmic concepts. These, I was told were what is commonly known as "pre-twinkle sessions." The next five to six minutes were used to teach the mother a few basic playing techniques. She played "Rigadoon" from Volume 1. Towards the end of the lesson, the instructor reminded the parent to have Victoria listen to the recordings.

The last child that I observed at this studio was six-year-old Aaron. After he and the teacher bowed to each other, the lesson began with the student playing "Allegretto" by Mauro Giuliani, from Volume I. Aaron played it perfectly. As I looked at the mother, she was focused on the lesson and was taking notes as she observed.

As I observed, there were many similarities between the instructor of *Studio One* and this studio. Both instructors used repeated words of praise and positive commendations. All lessons began with a bow and after the students played the assigned piece, the instructor and the parents clapped in approval. In both studios, the parents were active observers, and either played with the child or they were engaged in taking down notes on paper.

### *Concluding Remarks*

The Suzuki method has had a far-reaching impact on modern methodology, which is reflected in an observation made by Quantz (2007):

Method books for young children frequently offer a mix of several approaches in the light of the extraordinary success of the Suzuki school of teaching, the infusion of Orff/Kodaly methods in the U.S. schools, and the obvious benefits of notational literacy (p. 1).

Modeled after normal language development, a child is first exposed to sounds by listening, through which a musical language is created. In the same way that a child learns to speak by listening and reading later, in the Suzuki method, a child plays by what he or she hears rather than by reading. Kossler (1987) explains this important concept:

From the moment of birth, a child is surrounded by the sounds of his language. A child's wonderful capacity to learn through imitation is one of the 'survival skills' bestowed on him by nature, and the utterance of his first word is met with endless praise from those around him. Just as the child is not asked to read before he can speak, music reading is postponed until the student has become established in the technical fundamentals of the instrument (p. 15).

Another important component of the Suzuki method is that the sole purpose of the training is not to produce orchestra musicians but to improve the quality of life through exposure to good music (Mark, 1996, p. 151). This belief was shared by other Suzuki instructors including the director of *Studio One* who affirmed that many students in the Suzuki method become professional musicians, but that is not the primary purpose. It is more about raising kids with a noble heart.

### Comparing and Contrasting the Two Models

In this chapter, I have discussed in detail the teaching methods and method books used by the two models. Despite the fact that both models were designed to train students how to play the classical guitar, there were some important differences. In Table 1, I offer

a comparative analysis of the two models based on my observations of the instructional settings, the kind of methods used in teaching technical skills, solo and ensemble repertoire, and student evaluation.

Table 1

*Comparative Analysis of Two Models of Pre-College Classical Guitar Instruction*

<b>Model #1: Guitar School</b>	<b>Model #2: Studio One</b>
<i>Instructional Setting</i>	
Strongly rooted in a specific tradition of the classical guitar.	Strongly rooted in a specific tradition of the classical guitar.
Part of a public school program	Privately owned studio
Instructions took place in a classroom setting with ten to twenty students per class.	Instructions took place in the form of individual lessons.
Students met for four days a week.	Students met once a week
Lesson time was forty-five minutes per class.	Lesson time was thirty minutes per lesson.
Students do not meet on weekends.	Students met for group lessons on Saturdays.
Parental involvement in the learning process is optional.	Parental involvement is crucial to the learning process.
Starting age of students was around twelve.	High emphasis given to starting lessons at a very young age.
Oldest students observed were high school seniors.	Youngest student observed was two years and six months. Oldest student observed was thirteen years.



Table 1 (*continued*)

Model #1: Guitar School	Model #2: Studio One
<i>Methods Applied</i>	
Method books used include Shearer, Noad and Sagreras.	Method of teaching firmly rooted on the Suzuki Volume I through IX, along with other supplemental materials.
First day of class focused on establishing proper sitting position and right hand finger technique. Preference of teaching 'rest' and 'free' strokes dependent on teacher.	First day of class focused on establishing proper sitting position and right hand finger technique. Rest stroke emphasized at the beginning.
Alternation of right hand fingers in playing single lines strongly stressed.	Alternation of right hand fingers in playing single lines strongly stressed
First set of actual exercises begin on the first E string.	First set of pieces begin on the third G string.
The use of nails on the right hand is optional.	The use of nails on the right hand is optional.
Supplemental study pieces include works by Sor, Giuliani, Carcassi, and Carulli, among others.	Supplemental study pieces include works by Sor, Giuliani, Carcassi, and Carulli, among others.
Learning to sight-read begins during the first few classes, and becomes an integral part of developing technique.	Actual sight-reading with the instrument is postponed until later. Strong emphasis on tone, and musicality.

Table 1 (*continued*)

Model #1: Guitar School	Model #2: Studio One
<i>Solo and Ensemble Repertoire</i>	
First solo piece is dependent on teacher. Usually music in two lines.	First solo piece in Volume I is “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” First solo pieces are single melodic lines.
Solo literature includes, among others, works by Carcassi, Giuliani, Sor, and Sagreras.	Solo literature includes, among others, works by Carcassi, Giuliani, Sor, Longay, Suzuki, Sagreras, and Paganini.
Advanced literature includes, but not limited to, Villa-Lobos, Tárrega, Narvaez, Sor, Brouwer, Dyens, and Piazzolla.	Advanced literature includes, but not limited to, Francisco Tárrega’s “Recuerdos Alhambra,” “Asturias” by Isaac Albéniz, and Fernando Sor’s “Variations on a Theme of Mozart.”
<i>Student Evaluation</i>	
Each class works on solo, as well as ensemble pieces. The solo pieces are used as materials for individual testing. Students played the piece in their seats as the instructor recorded it, and as the rest of the class listened.	Varies from teacher to teacher, but in <i>Studio One</i> , the rigor of home coaching, group lessons, and the weekly individual lessons provide a continual means of evaluation.
Year-round participation in classroom activities.	Completion of weekly lesson sheets on which they record what was done during the week.

## CHAPTER V

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to draw conclusions based on my observations and interpretations, and to make necessary recommendations for guitar instructors and for further research. The guiding questions for my observations were in regards to instructional settings, methods used, solo and ensemble repertoire, and student evaluation. The first was the guitar program at a public charter school using a traditional approach. The second was a private studio using the Suzuki method. In this chapter, I will discuss the similarities and the differences between the two models and the factors that have contributed to their effectiveness. It is important to recognize that the traditional method and the Suzuki method can both be very effective, but meet different needs. The public school setting is unlikely to meet the need of a very young aspiring classical guitar student, whereas the Suzuki method of teaching is most effective in this regard. I found that the traditional approach was more adaptable to a public school setting, as well as private instruction. Strong parental involvement, which is also a fundamental part in the Suzuki method of teaching, would not find as strong a support in the public school setting. To say that one method is more effective than the other is to do a disservice to both methods as they meet different needs. If a student is able to take private instruction through Suzuki, they are likely to flourish. If a student can only take guitar instruction through the public school, the traditional approach is quite effective.

## Similarities Between the Two Models

### *Playing Position*

Based on my analysis of data, and through comparing the two programs, I observed that there were more similarities between the two models than there were differences. Both models were strongly rooted in a specific classical guitar tradition, using nylon string guitars, sitting with the left foot elevated on a footstool, and with the lower arch of the guitar placed on top of the left leg. These specifics are necessary in differentiating the approach that various instructors take in teaching how to play the nylon stringed classical guitar. In Volume I of the Suzuki method, a photo illustration depicts the desired playing position. It also explains specifically in words about how the student should sit with the guitar:

The establishment of an attentive but relaxed body position is extremely important. A comfortable but firm chair should be used. The student's particular body dimensions will determine the proper height of the footstool and chair. The student should sit on the edge of the chair with the left foot elevated and the right foot placed securely on the floor. The left, lower leg should remain vertical. The shoulders should remain down and relaxed with the torso straight and balanced but not rigid. The waist of the guitar rests on the left leg with the right arm draped gently at the lower bout (p. 6).

Based on my interviews transcripts, the instructors at the *Guitar School* also held the same view about how to hold the guitar. Similar to the Suzuki instructors, the students were taught how to hold the guitar and how to sit, and were told the reason why the left leg needed to be raised. The method book by Noad, which was one of the method books used, explains proper sitting and playing position as well.

Shearer, in his book *Concert Guitar Technique* (1959), makes a clear distinction between the “concert guitar” and the “plectrum guitar.” He expresses his views about the

vast differences between the two types as well as the difference in playing technique between the two by stating that the plectrum guitar has its own merits and purpose. However, he also states, “There can be no question regarding the superiority of the concert instrument as a solo instrument, performing fine, highly expressive music” (p. 5). Even in the area of playing the nylon-stringed classical guitar, which Shearer refers to as the “concert guitar,” there are a variety of ways and approaches about how to play. Some instructors teach their students to support the guitar with a strap, while others allow the guitar sit on the right foot.

In his method book, *The Bases of Classic Guitar Technique*, John Duarte (1975) addresses the importance of forming good playing posture. He states that there are many ways of holding the guitar, but “among first-class players, this is on the whole the most consistent single aspect of technique. Good playing is founded on a correct posture” (p. 9). Quine (1990) observed that a correct posture and grip of the guitar are the essential foundations for a dependable and coordinated technique (p. 11). In the two models that I observed, this aspect of proper body alignment and hand position was strongly emphasized, especially at the beginner level. Proper sitting position for the classical guitar, as exemplified by Andres Segovia, involves the instrument being supported at four points, namely the right thigh, the left thigh, the underside of the right arm, and the chest (Bobri, 1972).

### *Plucking Technique*

Another area where the instructors of both models shared similar views was on right hand technique. The instructors of both models strongly emphasized the importance of right-hand finger alternation, playing rest and free strokes, and good tone production.

These were the basic yet crucial aspects taught to the students of both models for establishing foundations for effective guitar playing. Similar to the pictorial illustration of the desired sitting position found in Volume I of the Suzuki method, there is also an illustration provided of the plucking action for the right hand. Instructions are very specific about the right hand position in the Suzuki method. In Volume I, the author states that “the hand should remain a natural extension of the right arm. It should have a roundness (fingers curved) with the thumb slightly forward of the fingers” (p. 7). In terms of producing the desired sound, the Suzuki method gives high preference to rest strokes. This is especially true for playing single melodic lines. In the traditional method, the choice between rest and free strokes seems largely dependent upon the teacher. This is in contrast to the approach that some instructors take in teaching students to play with a plectrum.

#### *Study Pieces and Solo Repertoire*

In terms of repertoire, both models had students playing from a wide range of musical selections, including solo literature and ensemble works from the standard repertoire as well as music written by twentieth century composers. Despite the fact that there were specific requirements and expectations in terms of uniformity in teaching playing technique, in the area of musical selections there was flexibility to a certain degree dependent on the instructor’s recommendations. In both models, music from the Western classical repertoire included, among others, works by J.S. Bach, Fernando Sor, Mauro Giuliani, Mateo Carcassi, Fernando Carulli, Francisco Tárrega, and Isaac Albéniz.

The nine Suzuki books, however, do not include twentieth century repertoire. A strong emphasis is given to familiar folk melodies, music from the Baroque and Classical

period, and a few from the Romantic period. However, in practice, students studying under the Suzuki method do play musical selections outside the repertoire found in the nine volumes. Landers (1980) observed that while no modern pieces are included, after mastering all the pieces in the nine books, an instructor may give the student the freedom by encouraging “the student to balance his studies with music from various periods” (p. 128) . According to the instructor of *Studio Two*, most Suzuki teachers supplement the core repertoire with music by composers like Leo Brouwer and Andrew York.

The instructors of both models were careful about not giving music to students that was simply a technical display of notes. Attention was given to melodic, harmonic and dynamic qualities. Study pieces for developing specific technical skills included, among others, works by Carcassi, Giuliani and Sor. These works – either the solo pieces or the study pieces – have become the cornerstones upon which foundations of the modern classical guitar has been established.

The proficiency of playing technique observed in the students of these two models attests to the effectiveness of the methods used and the way the instructors have implemented them. Students from the first model, and from studios that use the Suzuki method, have participated in major competitions, studied classical guitar in college, and have pursued careers as professional musicians, teachers and performers.

#### Differences Between the Two Models

The differences between the two models were primarily in the type of teaching methodologies used, method books used, student evaluation, instructional settings and starting age of students. The instructional setting in the first model was a public classroom with ten to twenty-five students per class which met four to five days a week

for about forty-five minutes each day. In the second model, lessons were taught to individual students once a week followed by group lessons once a week. A strong emphasis was given to the home environment. Parents took active part in the child's progress by monitoring their practice times at home. Student evaluation was more clearly defined in the first model whereas in the second model, progress was evaluated taking a different approach. According to the instructor of the second model, lessons were not about how fast a student learned, but how well they learned. In the following section I will discuss some of the areas where the difference between the two is more visible and apparent.

### *First Lessons*

The teaching philosophy of the first model was rooted in the methods established by pedagogues like Aaron Shearer, Julio Sagreras, and Frederick Noad. Learning to play actual notes on the instrument normally begins on the first E string, using either rest or free strokes, alternating the “i” and “m” fingers of the right hand. Single notes are introduced first, covering all the notes in the first position, where the first finger of the left hand presses down on the first fret, and the third finger plays notes on the third fret. Starting to read on the first string has its advantages. First of all, it gives a sense of logical progression to begin on the first string and proceed down to the sixth. Secondly, it is easier to read music beginning on the first string, written on the first space on the staff. Music in two lines is eventually introduced once the student has mastered playing single notes. The first actual solo pieces are usually music in two lines, that is, melody and bass. For example, in the Shearer's method, the first solo piece is entitled “Prelude No.1,” and



is in two lines. In the book by Noad, the first two actual solo pieces are “Spanish Study” and “Malagueña,” both in two lines.

In the Suzuki method, especially as I observed in *Studio One* and *Studio Two*, learning to play actual notes on the guitar normally begins not on the first string, as in the case of the methods used by the first model, but on the third G string. There is an advantage for beginning to play on the third string. The natural alignment of the left hand fingers with the fret-board helps establish good playing position. With the right thumb resting on the fifth or sixth string, the right hand fingers also fall more naturally on the third string, without having to stretch uncomfortably to play the first string. This is advisable, especially when teaching very young children. Other pedagogues of the guitar have followed similar approaches, including Shearer in his later method book (1990), where he begins reading on the third string. The difference between the two is that in the Shearer book, students are actually reading notes on the third string, whereas in the Suzuki method, students are playing by rote beginning on the third string.

### *First Pieces*

The first actual solo pieces in the Suzuki method are single line melodies with specific titles, with an accompaniment part written for the instructor. The first twelve pieces consists of simple folk song arrangements such as “Lightly Row,” and “Go Tell Aunt Rhody.” According to the pieces laid out in the nine books, the first piece in two lines is piece No.13 titled “With Steady Hands.” The students learn these pieces by listening and copying them on the guitar. The nine books come with CD recordings of the pieces which the students are instructed to listen to at home. Sight-reading is postponed

until a later time. One of the reasons for this is so that the students can focus on good tone production.

In the first model, the first lessons are sight-reading exercises on the individual strings. These single-line studies are called “exercises.” The students gradually learn to read music in two lines following which they learn to play actual pieces with specific titles. The first pieces are normally studies and etudes by composers including, among others, Sor, Giuliani, Carcassi, and Aguado.

### *Starting Age*

Age plays an important role in how effectively children learn. The remark made by a Suzuki instructor in Chapter four – that a student who wanted to start guitar at age five was already two years late – reveals one of the tenets of the Suzuki philosophy: A child learns most effectively when taught at a very young age. The teaching philosophy of *Studio One*, the second model, was firmly rooted in the Suzuki method, where the recommended starting age is three. Just as it is most effective and advantageous for a child to learn a language at a very young age, Suzuki teachers also believe that starting music lessons at a very young age has similar benefits. Similar to how a child learns a language by listening to sounds at a very young age, a child can acquire similar skills by listening to musical sounds. This can be most effective at a very young age.

The starting age in the first model was twelve. While some critics may see this late start as disadvantageous, in many ways it provides unique opportunities for effective instruction. First, students at this age are able to take personal responsibilities, and are able to make informed decisions under proper guidance from their instructors, without parental supervision. Secondly, at this stage in their growth, middle school students

exhibit a lot of enthusiasm and energy, which, if directed carefully and thoughtfully, can have profound results in terms of developing musical skills. Technical skills and musical perception at this age can be effectively taught and implemented under proper supervision.

### *Listening*

One of the first things the child does at age three is listening to the assigned recordings at home and learning it by rote. The pieces are played during meals, at bedtime, or while the child plays, and repeated listening is strongly encouraged. Listening, according to Suzuki, should begin at birth (Landers, 1980). The home, where music is a natural part of the child's environment, should be saturated with music, preferably selections from the Baroque period. The reason for this specific choice is that music from this period is harmonically and rhythmically simple, and is accessible to the child. This emphasis on listening is unique to the Suzuki method and is not an important feature in the traditional methods. The importance of listening was stressed by the instructor of *Studio One* in this way during the interview:

When the kid is in the room, the CD is on. They are not actively listening to it necessarily. It is just like language. They learn language by hearing it and imitating it. So we have to remind the mother to play the CD constantly, and when it is time for a child to learn how to play "Perpetual Motion," they do not need to learn the song. They already know the song and it is in here (pointing to the head). All they have to do is find the notes on the guitar.

### Factors That Have Contributed to the Programs' Effectiveness

In this section, I will discuss several factors that have contributed to the effectiveness of the two programs based on my observations and interpretations. I will first address matters related to their goals and objectives, and then will discuss the choice

of musical selections in both programs. While it is evident that learning technical skills and musical concepts are the immediate precursors for effectiveness, there are other factors involved in supporting the overall success of any music program.

### *Defining Goals and Objectives*

Both programs that I observed, as well as the supplementary model, had clearly defined goals and objectives. In the school catalog, the mission statement of *Guitar School* states: “We believe that children’s lives change when their natural passion for learning is nurtured and transformed into habits of life-long learning and reflection.” This desire to nurture a “natural passion for learning” is achieved by guiding the students towards the goals as laid out in the curriculum. Among the primary academic goals, the school’s catalog includes “encouraging sound scholarship, independent thinking, and discriminating thinking.” Supporting such desired outcomes, the objectives of the music program state, “studies in the performing arts are designed to help students acquire fundamental knowledge and conceptual understanding in dance, drama, and music.” The desired result is the application of this skill and knowledge in performance of high quality repertoire.

The goals and objectives of the program at *Guitar School* were specific in what they wanted to accomplish. It was a classical guitar program focused on playing and performing standard classical guitar literature. This expectation was confirmed as I witnessed the level of technical proficiency and the discriminating choice of repertoire that called for specific playing technique, high quality music literature and appropriate musical styles.

During my interviews, the issue of teaching technique for playing rock music and popular styles was discussed. Despite the pressure to teach other styles, the instructor of the first model consistently stated the program's resolve not to relent, but to stay focused on their goals and objectives. Students were expected to provide nylon string classical guitars, not steel string guitars. The instructor of *Studio One*, the second model, stated by saying that the issue of students wanting to learn rock and pop guitar arises when the starting age is around ten or older. When that happens, the instructor normally refers the students to another teacher. However, according to the instructor of *Studio One* when a student starts at age three, they will "play whatever you give them," because at that age, they are just "thrilled to be playing an instrument."

Because of the multifaceted nature of the instrument, most guitar teachers tend to either be confused about how and what to teach, or end up teaching an assortment of styles without any sense of purpose or direction. One of the instructors referred to such an approach to teaching as a "methodless method." Callahan (1978) shared this dilemma, stating:

When a public school student signs up for study on the violin, trumpet, piano, or any other instrument, he is taught basic technique, not "pop" violin, "western" trumpet, or "folk" piano. When he signs up for study on the guitar, what is he taught? (p. 60)

Both instructors made it clear to me that they had no objections to their students playing other styles of music outside of school, but they were consistently clear about what they wanted to accomplish as a classical guitar program.

### *The Repertoire*

The selection of music materials can be a major determinant in the effectiveness of any music program. Both models made a highly conscientious effort to provide music that was not only appropriate to the age and grade level, but that was also compelling and challenging. One teacher of the Suzuki method warned against using “manufactured etudes” – music that was uninteresting, predictable, and lacking in depth. During the interview, the director of *Guitar School* also warned against music that had no artistic merit. He lamented the fact that “beginning students routinely are faced with music that is so banal that young people are rightly disinterested.” He strongly stressed the need to give music that was “good, rich, exciting and beautiful.”

The pieces in the nine Suzuki books have been carefully selected by a committee made up of guitar teachers from all over the world. Volume I introduces students to the early pieces which are single melodic lines. Volume II contains music in two lines. Volumes III and IV contains well-known pieces such as “Greensleeves,” in A minor, and other smaller works by Giuliani, Sor, Carcassi and Longay. Most of these are contained in one or two pages written mostly in two voices, with a few in three voices, in the keys of C, G, D and A Major. The technical level gets gradually higher as students progress into the next five books. By the time a student reaches Volumes VII, VIII and IX, they are working on the “Concerto for Mandolin and Strings” by Antonio Vivaldi, Francisco Tárrega’s “Recuerdos Alhambra” and “Capricio Arabe,” Asturias by Isaac Albéniz, and Fernando Sor’s “Variations on a Theme of Mozart.” These are pieces that require a high level of technical proficiency and a certain depth of musical perception. Some of these pieces have become an integral part of the standard repertoire in recitals and concerts

given not only by students in higher education, but also by professional artists. While the pieces in the nine books contain very carefully selected pieces, arranged in order of technical difficulty and musical depth, students are not limited to these pieces. Instructors of the Suzuki method use supplementary materials as needed.

### *Teacher Effectiveness*

The role that a teacher plays has a significant impact on the effectiveness of how a student learns. There have been a number of research studies done on teacher effectiveness e.g., (Colprit, 2000; Montemayor, 2008; Yarbrough, 1975). Colprit observed that several factors effect positive change in student learning. These include teacher personality traits, musical competencies, modeling skills, classroom management, and student evaluation. Effective teachers also tend to have a recognizable organization in lesson and rehearsals (p. 207). Tait (1992) observed that according to earlier research, the most frequently identified characteristics of effective teachers were a sense of humor, qualities of enthusiasm and caring, and a sense of fairness (p. 525). One outstanding feature I observed consistently in both models was the caring atmosphere provided by the instructors. This, however, did not undermine their firmness in maintaining classroom discipline and decorum during instructional times. In the private studios, the instructors were consistent in creating a congenial atmosphere suitable for effective learning. They made the students to feel relaxed and confident about their abilities, and the students responded with a sense of willingness to learn.

An effective teacher uses lessons outside of the textbooks for communicating musical concepts. In *Studio One*, the instructor frequently used visual objects such as stuffed animals to creatively illustrate musical ideas. In one instance, this instructor

taught the importance of a good sitting posture by placing a stuffed animal on top the head of one of the students. The idea was to keep the object in place without letting it fall. The instructor also rolled a dice to determine as to how many time a student should repeat a particularly challenging passage in the music. Similarly, the instructor of *Studio Two* used visual objects to convey musical ideas. In one of the lessons, he used little plastic animal-shaped objects that were placed on top of the student's head to teach balancing. In *Guitar School*, the students were older, and the learning environment was different. For this reason, the teaching plan used by the teachers differed. Students came in to the classroom with a sense of preparedness and focus. In all the classrooms, the teachers had a very strong control of the students, not by shouting or rigidity of discipline, but by the firm classroom expectations laid down at the beginning of the course, and by an enthusiasm to play music. The quality of music that was given to the students also played a very important role. The director confirmed this through my interview by stating that he frequently emphasized the need to give students music that was "compelling, rich and fun."

The ability of a teacher to create an atmosphere of effective learning and maintaining a high level of student attention has been a major concern for educators. Numerous studies show the importance of teacher intensity and the role it plays in teacher effectiveness (Cassidy, Madsen, & Standley, 1989). A strong correlation seems to exist between teacher intensity and strong enthusiasm. The instructors that I observed were highly enthusiastic about their profession, and taught with a sense of passion and intensity, both as classroom teachers and individual instructors. However, the same study also suggests that teacher intensity must go hand in with effective classroom



management. Cassidy, Madsen, and Standley (1989) stated that “people who are perceived as having high intensity are enthusiastic as well as effective in managing the class” (p. 92). In the classrooms that I observed, the students maintained a sense of respect towards the instructors and exhibited an eagerness to learn. The instructors were enthusiastic about teaching and demonstrated a sense of seriousness and enthusiasm for playing the guitar. The fact that the instructors actively involved in the musical life of the community as performers attested to this.

### *Classroom Management*

The students that I observed in the classroom settings were constantly kept on task through active participation which may have been a major factor that contributed to the effectiveness of the program. The structure of classroom instruction allowed no time for the students to be idle or to be disruptive. Once the students walked into the classroom, they got the guitars out and seated themselves immediately to begin playing. Previous studies (Yarbrough & Madsen, 1998) have shown that a high-magnitude teacher is engaged in active participation such as rapid and exciting rehearsal pacing, effective use of speech and good eye contact (p. 470). In the classes that I observed, the instructors exhibited a sense of purpose and direction through the way they related to the students. This sense of purpose and seriousness was a contributing factor to the effectiveness of the guitar programs in both models. However, along with this was the concomitant factor of giving high quality musical literature to the students.

### *College Preparation*

The motivation and impetus to achieve is sometimes be triggered by career goals and objectives. The academy under which *Guitar School* was established is a college

preparatory school and students are exposed to a rigorous academic curriculum. Based on my observation of the students in the classrooms in this academy there seemed to be general understanding of what they want to accomplish, as well what the teachers expected of them. During my interview, the director of the guitar program mentioned the students' willingness to be musically literate, to know how to read, and to want to play high-level repertoire. There was a sense of seriousness, focus and commitment to achievement. Students studying at the academy are instructed in such a way as to lay strong technical foundations at the beginner level so that those who wish to continue guitar studies in college are well prepared.

### *Practice*

In the *Guitar School*, students are strongly encouraged to practice outside of classroom instruction as part of their grade. However, having said that, the director also added that their classes are structured in such a way that practicing outside of class becomes optional. The classes meet for forty-five minutes, four days a week. With the rigor and discipline of class time practicing and playing, students are given sufficient time for acquiring good technique. A number of these students study privately with local guitar teachers, and as such, they spend additional hours in practice. Students in the second model meet once a week for thirty minutes. They also meet as a group once a week. Besides these meetings, students are required to practice at home consistently.

### Summary of Factors

Various factors have contributed to the effectiveness of these two models. These include the instructor's enthusiasm and passion for their instrument, their ability to relate well with their students, their ability for effective classroom management, and their

choice of musical materials. Another factor that has contributed to the effectiveness of these two programs lies in the specific goals and objectives written in their curriculum. The instructor of *Studio One*, for example clearly states that he “designs his studio around the Suzuki method.” In the *Guitar School*, the curriculum states that the classes are “classical guitar classes.”

#### Technical Development and Quality of Instruments

In my observation of students at the two models, I had consistently noticed that having a good musical instrument is important for developing musical skills. An instrument with good tone and playability inspires creativity and musical sensitivity. One thing that I had noticed at the academy was the sound quality of the guitars in both solo and ensemble settings. The director stressed that having a better guitar does not always necessarily make one sound good, but having a better instrument does tend to inspire a little more, and it does tend to help accomplish things a little bit more easily. For example, he stated that it is easier to play a wide range of dynamics on a well-constructed guitar than on an ordinary guitar.

#### Disadvantages of the Two Models

##### *Cultural Implications in the Suzuki Method*

One of the criticisms leveled against the Suzuki method is that its principles cannot be effectively implemented within the Western cultural context. There are some who say that ethnic differences between the East and the West make adoption of these ideas difficult in the United States (Landers, 1980). The issue of submission to authority, respect for elders, and diverse activities available in the West makes serious work and

efficient progress harder. There is also the issue of the home environment. Many American families have a work schedule in which both parents are working, which makes it hard to find time to commit to the intense involvement that Suzuki requires. However, Landers (1980) posits that the differences are not so great as to make Suzuki education ineffective in the United States (p. 131).

### *Parental Involvement*

Parental involvement in the education of a child can have a significant impact. One research study stated that parental involvement was related to overall performance, affective, and cognitive musical outcomes (Zdzinski, 1996, p. 34). Contrary to these concerns and criticisms, during my observations, I found that parents who had their children enrolled in the Suzuki method were seriously committed to the program and were actively involved. Many of these parents have seen the effectiveness of the Suzuki method within the Western context and show strong support for the program. Amidst the difficulties and the practical obstacles in parental involvement, the length of time that these students study under one Suzuki teacher also attests to its effectiveness in the United States.

The establishment of numerous Suzuki studios and guitar schools is another evidence for its effectiveness. When Talent Education was introduced in America in 1958, most Americans did not recognize the feasibility of intense instruction for pre-school children (Mark, 1996, p. 151). However, the concept quickly developed and it was adjusted to suit American conditions while its integrity in content matters was preserved. Despite the many obstacles and criticisms, the efflorescence of private Talent Education institutions all over the world is a strong evidence of its effectiveness.

With the growth and spread of the Talent Education movement in the United States, public school systems have also begun to offer Suzuki instruction (Mark, 1996, p. 151). However, such an implementation in a public school setting raises questions about its effectiveness since parental involvement is likely to be curtailed and individual attention to each student may not be feasible.

### *Instructional Settings*

In the teaching method used by the first model, one of the disadvantages may be related to the instructional setting. Students are taught in groups of ten to twenty and giving attention to individual students can become a challenge. In some cases, the issue of maintaining classroom discipline and orderliness may become a factor in how effectively students learn. Secondly, since parental involvement is optional, and since students are on their own once they leave campus, continuity, practice, and desire to make progress become matters of priorities and individual decisions. However, as was the case with the structure of the program in the first model, if students are constantly exposed to learning music that has high artistic qualities, they will develop a love for it and will want to practice even outside of school, especially with the added impetus from parents.

### *Music Lessons and Language Learning*

Suzuki students learn their first pieces by active listening, and by transferring what they hear by memory onto the guitar. This learning concept is central to the Suzuki method. The analogy is drawn from how children learn to speak. They do not learn by reading first, rather, they learn to speak fluently simply by being a part of an environment that speaks the language. The phrase Shinichi Suzuki used as an example was, “All

Japanese children speak Japanese.” Conversely, all children brought up in a strong musical environment will naturally acquire strong musical skills. For this reason, creating a congenial home environment where music making is a natural part of family activities plays a vital role. Just as little children are able to hear, memorize, and articulate linguistic concepts, they can do the same with musical sounds. Memorization is seen as an important tool in the learning process. In his book *Nurtured by Love*, Suzuki (1983) states that the ability to memorize is one of the most vital skills and must be deeply inculcated (p. 92). In concerts and recitals, all Suzuki guitar students that I observed played their pieces by memory, both in solo and ensemble situations.

### *Teaching Philosophy*

In the process of my observations and interviews, instructors of the Suzuki method consistently pointed out that the goal of Suzuki was not to produce professional musicians. Its primary goal was, according to one Suzuki instructor, to “elevate the character and the spirit of children through great art.” During the process of writing my dissertation, I had sent relevant portions of this study to participants in order to provide a background to the purpose of my research. One of the concerns I addressed was about the lack of preparation and technical deficiency among classical guitar students at the college levels. On being asked if this was an important concern, one prominent instructor of the Suzuki method replied:

If I had one criticism, it would be that your thesis represents one of the very problems that holds the guitar back in the world of art and education, that is, that the underlying goal of pre-college training is to better prepare individuals to enter a college pre-professional degree program.

This instructor insisted that, “with this objective in mind, a teacher will never be truly successful.” His view is shared equally by many Suzuki teachers who insist that the main purpose of the method is to produce “beautiful, gentle human beings” (Barrett, p.105). This, however, does not mean that the method discourages excellence. On the contrary, Barrett observed that, “it is the hallmark of Dr. Suzuki’s method that every child can be educated to a very high level of achievement” (p. 62). A number of Suzuki-trained players consistently participate in high-level national and international levels of solo competitions. Some of the students from the two Suzuki studios I had observed had gone on to college to major in the classical guitar. Suzuki guitar students also consistently participate at the International Solo competitions organized by the Guitar Foundation of America.

Talent Education, a philosophy of the Suzuki method, is concerned with the development of the full human potential (Landers, 1980). Music is seen as a powerful way of achieving that potential. This teaching philosophy is based on the belief that the process of learning and making music results in a happier and more fulfilling life. It also advocates growth for each individual at his own rate and strongly encourages a deep love and appreciation of the arts, not just temporarily, but for life. For this reason, the Suzuki method stresses the importance of good tone production. Repetition is one of the ways that students master technique. Students are always encouraged to go back to past lessons as they pick up newer pieces.

The implication for public school music educators is to foster a deep love and appreciation for music, and to enable students to experience the joy of music making. This can be done as teachers themselves become models of excellent musicians, trained

to impart technical skills effectively with the sole purpose leading students to experience great art.

### *Issues of Reading Music*

Guitarists in general and classical guitarists in particular are often criticized for their poor sight-reading skills. Deriving practices from popular music, guitarists tend to play by what they hear, rather than by what they see. A perennial joke is circulated among guitarists which states that the way to stop a guitarist from playing is to put a music score in front of the player. There are two reasons why guitarists do not read well. Reading guitar music in one clef is difficult due to the instrument's wide range and polyphonic possibilities. Secondly, the need to play identical notes on different strings may also be confusing. In the standard tuning, the six strings are all tuned in intervals of fourths, except between the third and the second string. These two strings are separated by an interval of a major third. The first open string is the first string E. On the staff, this note is found on the first space from top. The confusion arises because this same note on the first space of the treble clef can also be found in at least three other positions. Playing single melodic lines does not create much confusion or difficulty, but when playing contrapuntal lines, or harmonic passages, it can be confusing as to what string combinations to play, and accuracy becomes a matter of practice and mental focus. Secondly, the lack of formalized music training and the unavailability of methodical sight-reading materials at the elementary levels have contributed to this setback, and guitarists, especially those who start at a later stage, will inevitably have a harder time learning to read.



One controversy surrounding students of Talent Education is the fact that they do not join school orchestras (Mark, 1996). Brathwaite (1988) also observed:

Public school orchestra directors have observed that Suzuki students are a mixed blessing to their programs: They play well but are sometimes deficient in their reading, and often do not fit in with other members of orchestra. (p. 42)

Advocates of the method point out that training orchestra musicians is not their purpose. Reading music with the guitar is postponed until later under the Suzuki method. This reveals one very strong musical philosophy held by Suzuki teachers: At the early stage it is vitally important that musical concepts such as tone production, and learning by listening, take precedence over sight-reading. The child learns the language of music before he learns to read it. Listening makes the child become aware of good tone quality, sensitive musical phrasing, and fine rhythmic execution (Landers, 1980). The result of such an activity results in knowing the music intellectually and musically. Landers cautions against early reading. "If the reading is begun too soon, a good foundation may never be built, or it may topple if it is not yet well established" (p. 142).

Such statements, however, do not negate the fact that students studying under the Suzuki method do learn to read. My observations revealed a different side to the general criticism about poor sight-reading skills among Suzuki students. According to the instructor of *Studio One*, "reading with the instrument is postponed until proper sitting posture is etched in granite or, with very young students, until reading language is age appropriate." He also stated that most students begin working on reading skills away from the instrument beginning at the earlier stages. These preparatory sight-reading exercises include identifying letter names and clapping rhythm. The instructor of *Studio One* also affirmed that if his fifth year students were compared to traditionally trained

students at the same point in their learning curve, his students would prove to be at the same level of reading music.

In the traditional method, where students were taught in groups of ten to twenty, playing ensemble music is one of the main activities. This requires students to be actively involved in learning to read music also, and this year-round activity naturally cultivates a strong sight-reading basis. Mark (1996) observed that it is easier for students to learn to read in ensemble situations because printed music helps keep the group together (p. 150). By the time they complete three to four years of study, these students are equipped with the technical and sight-reading skills to perform high-quality repertoire. According to the director of the first model sight-reading is also a skill that is “approached organically through the process of introducing new music for performance.” The main advantage of a strong emphasis on sight-reading at the beginner level is that it teaches students to play effectively as an ensemble, especially playing in multiple parts. Once beginning students acquire a certain level of sight-reading skills, students can focus on the concept of tone, teamwork, and musicianship. Students are placed in a situation where they can now hear and critique each other in terms of pitch and rhythmic accuracy, tonal and dynamic contrasts, and harmony.

In the experience of teaching my own students, I have also observed that learning to sight-read well first improves efficiency: students learn new pieces not only faster, but more accurately as well. Reliance on the auditory faculty alone may not produce accuracy in deciphering actual pitch relationships and harmonic structures. When sight-reading is introduced at the beginning, students are engaged in learning concepts of tone production and visual reading at the same time. This synthesis of the auditory and visual senses in

learning may produce effective musical results. The effective teacher will have the ability to discern what method or combination of methods work best for his or her students.

Sometimes it may be in the best interest of the students to work by listening without any sight-reading. Other times it may be more helpful to incorporate strong reading activities.

### General Recommendations

Based on this study, my recommendations include the development of an elementary-stage teaching method book and a graded anthology suitable for group instruction, synthesizing principles from these two models, effective planning strategies, effective student evaluation, and developing effective advocacy programs.

### *Method Books*

While there are many guitarists and authors who have published numerous method books, there is a need to produce a scholastic guitar method book that is the result of a concerted effort involving a panel of experienced teachers. Keeping the school setting in mind, guitarists and educators need to establish a body of experts who will be responsible for implementing a series of method books and a graded anthology suitable for the public school classrooms. Music educators have done this in the past. Shortly after the Yale Seminar in 1963, Gideon Waldrop, the Dean of the Julliard School of Music, established The Juilliard Repertory Project for the purpose of developing a large body of authentic and meaningful music materials intended to “augment and enrich the repertory available to teachers of music in the early grades” (Mark, 1996, p. 38). It would be advisable to establish a similar project for guitar students consisting of research consultants, education specialists and prominent guitarists and teachers.

### Synthesizing Principles From the Two Models

In both models, I observed certain practices that were outstanding. I observed some learning activities in the *Guitar School* that were important components of the daily schedule. First, the instructors gave a strong emphasis to sight-reading beginning from the first few weeks of guitar class. This practice is highly recommendable if teachers also give importance to good tone production. Secondly, teaching in a classroom setting provides students the opportunities to learn from each other through interaction with one another. Playing in an ensemble also encourages teamwork. As discussed in chapter four, the social aspect of wanting to have a sense of belonging and a need to be recognized plays an important role in how students learn.

The principle of good tone production was strongly emphasized at *Studio One* and *Studio Two*. One outstanding feature that I consistently observed during their solo and ensemble concerts was the quality of musical expression and their refined tone. Classroom guitar teachers will need to establish certain teaching strategies whereby strong emphasis is given to good tone production. Secondly, creating a congenial home environment for music making should be strongly encouraged as was seen in the students of the second model.

### Planning Strategies

The effectiveness of any music program is largely dependent on the planning and structuring of its goals and objectives. I recommend that an instructor who wishes to begin a guitar program in the school setting have clearly defined long-term plans and establish a clear vision of goals and objectives. Haughland (2007) states that setting up a

plan includes the routines, procedures, and everything else one must have to figure out before actually teaching. Montemayor's study (2008) of a private flute studio reported four factors that contributed to the instructor's success, including her "holding fast to a system of clearly outlined expectations that lent a sense of structure and stability to the students in the program" (p. 297).

### Student Evaluation

Careful planning of student evaluation is necessary for developing effectiveness in a music program. Evaluation is defined as a judgment of the worth of an experience, idea, procedure, or product. It can be done spontaneously and informally, but it is better when it is planned and purposeful (Colwell, 1970). Evaluation can be done throughout the year, or can be done sporadically as the need arises. In the first model, the instructor evaluated students in more than one way, including listening to the students play individually on a given piece, and during the process of classroom rehearsals. In the private studios, students were evaluated not based on how fast a student progresses, but on the quality of tone production and how musically they can play a given piece. Only then, can a student move on to the next piece.

### Advocacy of Guitar Programs in Public Schools

Greg Goodhart (2004), who heads a very successful high school classical guitar program on the West Coast, mentions in his article on the pre-college guitar program that a guitar class serves as a "gateway to a world of music many would not discover otherwise" (p. 48). He also stated that the popular appeal of the guitar can serve as a bridge for students to experience art music. Every effort must be made to support the

introduction and establishment of classical guitar programs in the public and private schools. This calls for forming strong advocacy groups with a vision and goal to convince school administrators and board members about the need to include the guitar. Some teachers and school principals may be concerned that a rigorous “classical” program will not attract the numbers needed to have a vital program. Goodhart (2003) states that “instead of pandering to the lowest common denominator, we can represent our art properly, show the beauty and fascinating aspects of it, and expect students to rise to that level, instead of the other way around” (p. 10).

#### Popular Music in the Curriculum

One of the recommendations of the Tanglewood Symposium was to include the study of social instruments like the guitar (Mark, 1996, p. 43). While it is not clear about what kind of playing style and type of music was to be taught, the symposium also emphasized the need to teach “higher-quality music.” A survey conducted by Fesmire (2006) of schools in Colorado that teach guitar, reported that rock/popular music was indicated by the greatest number of teachers (71.43%) as forming a stylistic foundation for their guitar courses. Folk music was second with 64.29%, and classical music with 53.57%. This survey might suggest that music educators are giving way to what students want rather than introducing them to music that they will not find outside the school. The inclusion of pop/rock music in the school’s music curriculum has been met with mixed responses. Mark (1996) observed that many did not accept rock and roll by stating that, “it has had no place in the schools” (p. 185). Because students are constantly exposed to popular music at home as well as in the marketplace, the school guitar program must have something of high artistic value to give to students.

One of the instructors that I interviewed stated that he does not teach pop music. He cautioned that many teachers erroneously think that teaching rock and roll will connect them with students. He sees this as a huge mistake. He also made a remark stating that if we only give them pop tunes, we are telling them in an “unspoken lesson” that they are not capable of playing anything that is more complex.

### Developing Well-rounded Musicianship

From personal observations of my own students over the past twenty years, I have noticed that guitarists are “chord-oriented” players. This can be a wonderful asset for understanding harmonic structures and theoretical understanding of the guitar’s fret-board. Teaching basic chord structures and chord progressions at the beginning can be an effective way of laying foundations for developing basic musical understanding. Students with a good knowledge of chord structures also tend to have a better knowledge of the fret-board. This is also an effective teaching tool for developing improvisational skills and audio learning. One practice that classroom teachers can learn for the Suzuki method is the strong emphasis on playing by listening. In teaching students, both in classroom situations as well as in giving individual lessons, I have found that teaching certain pieces simply by listening and familiarity to the piece has been very effective. A good example is “Malaguena,” a short piece featuring arpeggio patterns as well as single melodic lines and rasqueado style strumming patterns.

Developing a well-rounded musical understanding should be one of the goals of guitar teachers. An effective lesson plan will include teaching students how to improvise, how to play a piece of music play by listening, how to learn music by reading well, how

to compose, and how to be effective ensemble players. Reimer (2004) suggests three basic goals for effective teaching. These include the need to immerse all students into the musical experiences each role distinctively makes available and to develop intelligence and creativity entailed in each of the musical by “involving students in the intricacies of mind, body and feeling each role requires” (p. 35). Advocacy for a guitar program must include mentioning the uniqueness of the classical guitar as a solo instrument as well as its place in a guitar ensemble. Its association with popular music has been an attraction to young people, and can serve as a means of introducing students to the rich heritage of art music. The harmonic and melodic possibilities of the guitar, its affordability, and its popular appeal can make it to be an instrument that can be enjoyed for a lifetime.

Lastly, students majoring in classical guitar in college should be required to take pedagogy courses especially designed to teach younger students. This will prepare them to acquire the skills they need to teach pre-college students effectively.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Provost’s (1997) article on classical guitar teaching titled “Rethinking Guitar Pedagogy” served as a strong reminder that past guitar teaching methods were in need of restructuring and reevaluation. There have been, in addition to the setbacks expressed by Provost, a number of teachers who have voiced similar concerns, most of which addressed the lack of a systematic method of teaching the classical guitar. Despite the surge of interest in the field of classical guitar, especially the past twenty years, and the growth of guitar programs in elementary and high school music programs, some still see the need to make improvements. On being asked about the need for re-evaluating guitar methods at the beginner level of instruction, one instructor replied that there was a need



“in every area imaginable.” Similarly, in reply to the same question, the instructor at the *Guitar Academy* stated. “I can do no better than to quote Aaron Shearer, who told me in a conversation long ago, ‘there is so much work to be done.’”

Reflecting on these statements and based on my personal observations, my recommendations for further research will fall under two categories. First, I recommend a research related to a survey and in-depth interviews with successful pre-college guitar teachers and their programs in various states and regions of the United States. Fesmire (2006) recommended that further research be undertaken to look at successful guitar programs. A study of this magnitude would also investigate how these programs are conducted, their effectiveness, and teaching strategies. Fesmire suggested a qualitative style of study in order to “draw a holistic picture of one or more programs” (p. 71).

Secondly, I recommend a survey of pre-college classical guitar programs focused on the student’s perspectives and conducting interviews with them. Since parental involvement plays a vital role in the Suzuki method, such a study could also include getting parental perspectives. Major organizations similar to the Guitar Foundation of America could be involved in this monumental project.

#### Strengthening Advocacy

In order to see growth, the need to strengthen advocacy for establishing classical guitar programs in public schools is also a pertinent issue. Grimes, (Goodhart, 2003) states that one of the principal mandates of the Guitar Foundation of America is “to foster the study of the classic guitar in private studios and at the elementary, secondary and college levels, and to encourage the development of curricula in support of these ends” (p. 10). The need to implement an advocacy program that will convince administrators

and school superintendents about including the classical guitar as an instrument that is appealing to the students, and one that will enrich the musical and cultural life of the school and community is a pertinent issue.

More than ever before, the classical guitar world has witnessed an increase in the number of luthiers during the past twenty years. The construction of better sounding guitars has opened doors for both students and professionals to experience the art of music making at a higher level of expressiveness. With this development also comes the need to compose new music. There has been a paradigm shift in the direction of composing contemporary works for guitar. Contemporary composers of the guitar are writing music that calls for percussive effects, wider dynamic contrasts, and tonal contrasts. Because of their expressive qualities, some players have often favored the newer guitars, especially in playing the new repertoire. These developments have played a significant role in the growth and popularity of the guitar in recent times.

### Components of Effective Teaching and Learning

In this section, I will discuss factors that contribute to effectiveness in teaching and learning. Often there are non-musical components that make up for effectiveness in teaching music. A good performer or someone with strong technical skills is not necessarily an effective teacher. Provost (1997) observed that teaching and performance are two separate skills that do not always relate each other. While there are many skilled performers, there are many who lack the skills to be effective teachers. An effective teacher is one who knows how to impart knowledge in a way that the student will understand. McKeachie & Svinicki (2006) posits that the important factor is what the student learns in the process. Teacher effectiveness depends not only on what the teacher

does, but also on what the student does. A skillful teacher must also be a skilled musician who has the innate ability to relate effectively to students.

As I have discussed earlier, clear goals and objectives, as well as proper teaching methods, play vital roles in the teaching and learning process. However, successful teaching and learning also have non-musical components and variables that need to be taken into serious consideration. As I had mentioned earlier, teacher intensity plays a very important role in effective music teaching. This includes enthusiasm for the subject matter and energy in delivering the subject matter. Some researchers have identified other personal qualities as well. In a study on effective teaching, Schmidt (1998) observed that the notion of what makes a good teacher has intrigued teachers and learners throughout history. While some believe that teaching is a gift that cannot be learned, others have continued to seek ways to better prepare teachers with the hope of improving the overall quality of education for all students. Music educators have looked at personality traits, such as love of music and love of people (p. 19).

Music has to do with human relationships in many respects. These dynamics are the components that make music making a rich and rewarding experience. Christopher Small (1998) stated that the fundamental nature and meaning of music lies not in objects, not in musical works at all, but in action, in what people do. He comments further by stating that “the act of musicking establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships, and it is in those relationships that the meaning of the act lies” (p. 13). For Small, the focus becomes not the music but on people that make the music happen. The implication for music educators is that it is important that a teacher relate well to a student, show interest in the student’s progress, and maintain healthy two-way

communication, while at the same time discerning the components that make up for great art. If human beings become the sole focus, the quality of our art will invariably deteriorate. If music alone becomes the primary focus of our endeavors, our experience will be void of depth and meaning. It is our vision for great art and a love for sharing that with people that enriches the overall teaching and learning experience.

Many variables go into effective teaching and learning. There are non-musical components that play an important factor. Montemayor (2006) suggests “simultaneous access to a network of interpersonal and leadership skills” for effective teaching (p. 1). Clear goals and objectives, mastery of technique, musical sensitivity, teacher enthusiasm, a positive attitude, teaching skills, proper methodology, parental involvement, a passionate love for music making, and love and respect for students all go into building teacher effectiveness. Teachers are bound to encounter students from various backgrounds with diverse needs and learning abilities. Students often do not learn the way teachers think they learn. Getting to know students at a deeper level through thoughtful interactions will help a teacher find ways to teach effectively.

Different students learn musical concepts differently. Berg (2000) suggests asking if a student is a verbal, aural, visual or kinesthetic learner. Some learn best by hearing while others may prefer detailed explanation. Berg observed that, “dominance in one area has little to do with their level of musical talent, only the way in which they learn best” (p. 44). It takes a discerning and a sensitive teacher to impart knowledge effectively to a student by recognizing and accommodating the specific needs of the student(s) concerned.

## Conclusion

Prominent pedagogues of the guitar have raised concerns about teaching methods at the elementary levels, as well as about the quality of music available to students. The director at the *Guitar School* expressed his concern by stating that guitar players do not encounter enough vibrant and vigorous music. He suggested that students need to be given music that students will find challenging as well as music that is motivating, and to teach them to play it in a way where the “beauty and the complexity of the music is the thing that compels the student to want to have good technique.” He also observed that too much emphasis is given to technique and not enough on musicality. Technique, he stated, should serve the music, not the other way around. The instructor of *Studio One* stated that he would like to see something that ties more closely with the Suzuki method and literature. He also voiced a need for something that is “more systematic in methodology for dovetailing the reading with the playing.”

The plight expressed by Read (2000) comes to mind. “Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the classical guitar literature has been rife with publications that call themselves methods. Yet we guitarists have not had the privilege of seeing one which is truly methodical” (p. 21). Read recommends the possibility of using these available materials in a methodical way. As classical teachers continue to work towards a more cohesive and systematic approach to teaching and learning, effectiveness may result from simply taking available materials and reworking them in a systematic manner, or writing new materials based on rigorous study and planning.

Finally, teachers need to consider the fact that there are, as I have mentioned, many variables that go into effectiveness in teaching. In the process of looking for the

right method books that meet the needs already expressed, and in looking for a repertoire that has marks of musical and technical excellence, teachers of the classical guitar must also look beyond these qualities. An effective teacher will encourage diligence and hard work. In the classroom setting, an effective teacher will maintain firmness and discipline. However, a good teacher will enforce discipline in a manner that conveys a caring and positive attitude. A teacher must also expect and encourage the pursuit of excellence. It will take more than the ability to play an instrument well to be effective as a teacher. It will also mean having a love for music, love for people, and skills for effective communication.

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APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW SCRIPT

## INTERVIEW SCRIPT

1. Can you give me a brief background about yourself? How did you get interested on the guitar?
2. How old were you when you had your first lessons?
3. What methods did your teachers use as far as you remember?
4. Many guitar teachers seem to agree that entering college freshmen who major in classical guitar are not adequately prepared. Why is this so? Is this a genuine concern?
5. What are some method books you would highly recommend for beginning students?
6. What does the first day of class for a beginner look like? Can you give me a brief scenario?
7. Can you give me a brief background of the guitar program?
8. What kind of performance opportunities are the students given?
9. As a classical guitar teacher what are some areas in guitar education that you see as needing re-evaluation or improvement?
10. (Studio One only) Can you give me a scenario about what happens when a child comes for his/her first lesson?
11. (Studio One only) How young are your youngest students?
12. (Studio One only) Do you begin sight-reading immediately?
13. (Studio One only) How important is the home environment in the Suzuki method?



14. (Studio One only) Suzuki method is classically focused. How do you deal with students who want to learn pop/rock music?
15. Your program is strongly focused on classical music and its playing technique. Do you face the challenge to teach pop/rock music? How do you deal with students who want to play other styles?
16. How do you evaluate individual student progress?
17. How do you structure classroom discipline?
18. (Guitar School only) How is the support of the arts in the academy?
19. (Guitar School only) Your ensembles have a rich sound. What factors contribute to that?
20. Can you briefly narrate about what happens to your students when they finish their course?

## APPENDIX B

## WEEKLY LESSON SHEET FOR STUDIO ONE

## Twinklers & Book 1 Weekly Lesson Sheet

**Lesson Assignments** \_\_\_\_/ \_\_\_\_ : **Student name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Last week's Review Piece** \_\_\_\_\_

**Practice Point(s)**

Technical \_\_\_\_\_

Musical \_\_\_\_\_

Suggested Approach \_\_\_\_\_

**This week's Review Piece** \_\_\_\_\_

**Practice Point(s)**

Technical \_\_\_\_\_

Musical \_\_\_\_\_

Suggested Approach \_\_\_\_\_

**Polish Piece** \_\_\_\_\_

**Practice Point(s)**

Technical \_\_\_\_\_

Musical \_\_\_\_\_

Suggested Approach \_\_\_\_\_

**New Piece** \_\_\_\_\_

**Practice Point(s)**

Technical \_\_\_\_\_

Musical \_\_\_\_\_

Suggested Approach \_\_\_\_\_

**Theory/ Reading** \_\_\_\_\_

**Practice Point(s)**

**Activity Tracking...**

**Listening** – Students listen to entire Book 1 CD \_\_\_\_\_ times this week (Goal=7+).

**Practice** – Student practiced \_\_\_\_\_ days this week (Goal – 5+).

**Reading – Reading was covered in \_\_\_\_\_practice times. (Goal = Same # as Practice)**

**Repertoire –**

**Student played newest piece \_\_\_\_\_ times this week (Goal = 10 +).**

**Student played polish piece \_\_\_\_\_ times this week (Goal = 10+).**

**Student played 5 most recent review pieces \_\_\_\_\_ times this week (Goal = 5+).**

**Student played older review pieces \_\_\_\_\_ times this week (Goal = 3+)**

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTATION

**University of Northern Colorado  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

**Application for Exemption from IRB Review Guidelines**

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Provide the application narrative description sections I – IV in the order given below. Use as many pages as necessary; however, strive to be concise and to avoid unnecessary jargon. Attach documentation as required in Section V.

**SECTION I – Statement of problem/Research Questions**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM**

Title of Dissertation:

Merry, Renthungo. *A Paradigm for Effective Pre-College Classical Guitar Methodology: A Case Study of Two Models of Effective Instruction*. Doctor of Arts in Music Education dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2010.

Many classical guitar teachers of the past had stated that the field of classical guitar education in general was an area that was in need of re-evaluation in terms of proper teaching methodology, especially at the beginner level. However, the last twenty years have seen the steady growth and expansion of classical guitar education. Various factors have contributed to this, including new and innovative methods of teaching, the construction of better instruments, the proliferation of new music written specifically for the classical guitar, and the growth of guitar programs in elementary and secondary levels of instruction. The purpose of this research was to investigate two models of effective instruction, identify teaching and learning strategies, and provide a descriptive analysis of the teaching methodology applied and method books used by these two programs that resulted in their effectiveness.

This study observed two programs, including a guitar program at a public charter school in a large city in the Southwestern United States, and one private studio in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. The researcher also conducted in-depth interviews with the instructors of these programs. Supplementary guitar programs using similar approaches were also involved in the study. Research questions focused on instructional settings, teaching methods and method books used, solo and ensemble repertoire, teacher effectiveness and student evaluation.

## **Research Questions**

What are the settings in which the students are taught?  
 What are the teaching methods used by these two programs?  
 How do the solo and ensemble repertoires compare between the two programs?  
 How do the instructors evaluate student progress?  
 What other factors have contributed to the effectiveness of these two programs?

## **Section II – Procedure**

The purpose of this study is to conduct a study of the teaching methodology used by effective classical guitar programs, and to report a findings of how these programs differ from each other and the common traits shared by them. As a classical guitar teacher, I have consistently noticed the absence of a well-regulated teaching methodology especially at the pre-college level of instruction. My research will involve observing two models of effective instruction, a classical guitar program following the traditional method and the Suzuki method.

The first part of this study will involve observing the classical guitar students in a classroom setting. I will observe their playing positions, repertoire, technical proficiency, musicianship, solo playing and ensemble participation. The second part will be an in-depth interview with the director following the observations. Brief follow-up interviews by e-mail will be conducted. The interview will be centered around teaching methodology, solo and ensemble repertoire, student evaluation and methods applied for developing technical proficiency and musicianship.

## **Section III – Disposition of data**

Data will be collected by observations or interviews. These will be kept strictly confidential and will not be made available to the public. A voice recorder will be used to collect data for the interviews. A pen and paper will be used for writing down details of various observations. Name of the school and participants will be kept confidential unless it is written in agreement that I, the researcher has the school's permission to use real names. There will be no interviews done with any of the students. I foresee no risk to any of the participants or the students being observed other than that normally encountered during a classroom observation or an interview.

## **Section IV – Justification for Exemption**

Request for exemption: This study qualifies for exemption because the participants are adults. Data will be collected in a normal educational setting such as observation of classrooms and personal interviews with consenting teachers. The data are not sensitive in nature and would not place the participants at risk.

**Section V – Documentation**

Informed consent document attached.

Interview questions attached



APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

# Informed consent form for participating in research

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

My name is Ren Merry and I am a doctoral student in Music Education at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, CO. I am conducting a research project titled, *A Paradigm for Developing Effective Pre-college Classical Guitar Methodology: A Case Study of Two Models of Effective Instruction*. I would like to ask your permission for observing your guitar program and to conduct a personal interview session with you. The purpose of this study is to conduct a study of the teaching methodology used by effective classical guitar programs, and to report a findings of how these programs differ from each other and the common traits shared by them. As a classical guitar teacher, I have consistently noticed the absence of a well-regulated teaching methodology especially at the pre-college level of instruction. My research will involve observing two models of effective instruction, one of which will be your program.

The first part of this study will involve observing your classical guitar students in a private lesson setting. I will observe their playing positions, repertoire, technical proficiency, musicianship, solo playing and ensemble participation. The second part will be an in-depth interview with you following the observations or prior to that. Follow-up interviews by Email may be possible. Interview questions will be on teaching methodology, solo and ensemble repertoire, student evaluation and methods applied for developing technical proficiency and musicianship.

Data collected either by observation or interviews will be kept strictly confidential and will not be made available to the public. Actual name of the studio and participants will be kept strictly confidential. A voice recorder will be used for the interviews. There will be no interviews done with any of your students. I foresee no risk to you or your students other than that normally encountered during a lesson observation or an interview.

Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study or withdraw any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, CO 80639. 970-351-1907

Thank you for assisting me with my research

Full written name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_