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## Mark Phillips

*Director of Music, Cherry Lane Music*

## Jon Chappell

*Award-winning guitarist and author*





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*Classical  
Guitar*  
FOR  
DUMMIES®

by Mark Phillips and Jon Chappell



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During the 1970s and early '80s, Phillips was Director of Music at Warner Bros. Publications, where he arranged the classical guitar folios *Bach for Guitar*, *Handel for Guitar*, *Mozart for Guitar*, and *Beethoven for Guitar*. Since the mid-'80s he has served as Director of Music and Director of Publications at Cherry Lane Music, where he has arranged numerous classical guitar book/CD packages, including *50 Baroque Solos for Classical Guitar*, *50 Renaissance Solos for Classical Guitar*, *J. S. Bach: 50 Solos for Classical Guitar*, and *30 Easy Spanish Guitar Solos*.

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Chappell is the author or coauthor of four other books in the *For Dummies* series — *Guitar For Dummies*, *Blues Guitar For Dummies*, *Rock Guitar For Dummies*, and *Guitar Exercises For Dummies* — and has also written several books on guitars and recording, including *The Recording Guitarist: A Guide for Home and Studio* (Hal Leonard); *Build Your Own PC Recording Studio* (McGraw-Hill); and *Digital Home Recording* (Backbeat Books). He has published pieces on music instruction and music technology in *Guitar Player*, *Rolling Stone*, *Keyboard*, *Men's Health*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *PC Magazine*, *Macworld*, and many other publications.

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## *Dedication*

**Mark Phillips:** For my wife, Debbie, and my children, Tara, Jake, and Rachel.

**Jon Chappell:** For my wife, Mary, and my children, Jen, Kate, Lauren, and Ryan.

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# Introduction

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**I**f you're captivated by the sound of the classical guitar, you're in good company. No less than Ludwig van Beethoven approvingly called the guitar a "miniature orchestra in itself"! We don't think we can improve on that (not that we'd try to compete with Beethoven!), but we do understand his enthusiasm. The classical guitar has the amazing ability to produce expressive melodies, complex chords, flowing arpeggios, and multiple, independent parts simultaneously — all with just six strings. It offers an incredible range of tonal possibilities as well, and it's able to create a broad range of colors and textures, from driving percussive rhythms to sweetly lyrical melodies — and everything in between.

As modern players, we can appreciate that we're playing classical music on the most popular and the coolest musical instrument in the world — the guitar. What could be a better way to have the best of both worlds than to take up the classical guitar? We have access to the music of history's greatest composers — the minuets of Mozart, the bourrées of Bach, and the sonatas of Beethoven. With a classical guitar, we can delight listeners with the subtle intricacies of the Baroque era or inspire their passion with stirring pieces from the Romantic period. And we also get to do this while playing the guitar. How cool is that?

Make no mistake, though, there's a lot more to classical guitar than just being cool. Like any other serious art form, classical guitar requires work. But that doesn't mean you can't have fun while developing the discipline and mastering the skills necessary to play classical guitar. Unlike the world of popular music, the best players in classical music — technically and musically — rise to the top. Our aim is to get you started on the right path so that every minute you devote to practicing and playing takes you closer to your goal of being the best classical guitarist you can be.

## *About This Book*

In *Classical Guitar For Dummies*, we give you everything you need to play melodies, arpeggios, scales, and full-length pieces in the classical style. We present the material in a way that respects the classical tradition yet makes it fun and easy to learn. Here are just some of the methods we use to get our points across:

- ✔ **Step-by-step instructions:** We guide you through the techniques, exercises, and pieces using plain and helpful language, so that you know exactly what to do to successfully play every exercise and piece that appears in the book.
- ✔ **Music notation:** We present all the written musical figures in the traditional five-line staff with a treble clef, with notes indicating the pitches and rhythms. In addition, we also supply a tab staff (appearing directly below the music staff) that shows the strings and fret numbers. You can use either system, or even use them in combination, because they convey essentially the same information — just presented in a different way. In some figures we show a neck diagram, which is yet another way to see the guitar represented graphically and which serves to illustrate fingering positions. And have no fear — we show you how to interpret standard music notation in Chapter 3.
- ✔ **Audio CD:** The CD that comes with this book contains over 140 recorded performances of the exercises and pieces from the book. A written figure that has an accompanying recording on the CD is labeled with the appropriate track number. You can listen to the CD on your computer or CD player, or download the tracks to your portable audio or mp3 player, so that you always have the recorded music to inspire you wherever you go.

Even if you already play the guitar, you'll find this book valuable. You find here a focused approach on learning classical guitar the *right* way — the way it's played in music schools, universities, and on recordings and concert stages the world over. This book covers how to hold the guitar in the proper position, how to strike and fret the strings according to the rules of classical guitar technique, and how to perform the rich body of repertoire that awaits classical guitarists of all levels and experience.

## Conventions Used in This Book

We take care to introduce concepts and define terms so that you don't have to wonder what we're talking about if we, for example, use the word *staccato* (which tells you to play notes short and detached, by the way). But we observe certain conventions that we may not explain every time, so following is a list of concepts and terms that we use often throughout the book.

- ✔ **Up and down, high and low:** When we speak of *up* and *down* on the guitar — whether we're referring to the strings, neck positions, or pitch in general — up means higher in pitch and down means lower in pitch. So the higher strings are the skinny, high-pitched ones — even though they're closer to the floor as you hold the guitar in the playing position.

*Going up the neck* means heading for the higher-numbered frets (toward the bridge), even though they're slightly closer to the floor than the lower-numbered frets, which are closer to the headstock. Don't be confused by this seeming contradiction of musical direction and physical positioning; knowing which way is up becomes second nature when you begin playing.

✓ **Right hand and left hand:** We say *right hand* to mean the hand that plucks the strings and *left hand* to mean the hand that frets the notes on the neck. Left-handed players sometimes flip the guitar so that the right hand becomes the fretting hand, and some method books avoid any ambiguity by using the terms *picking hand* and *fretting hand*. But we find that a little clunky, so we observe the more traditional use of right hand and left hand. If you're a southpaw who flips, take note!

✓ **Letters and numbers:** In addition to the standard music symbols that appear on the five-line staff, we often use letters and numbers to show you specific ways to use your fingers to play the notes. The letters *p*, *i*, *m*, and *a* indicate the right-hand thumb and index, middle, and ring fingers. (The letters stand for the Spanish words for these fingers.) For left-hand fingers, we use small numbers placed just to the left of the note heads: 1 = index, 2 = middle, 3 = ring, and 4 = little. In many cases we provide fingerings because it's the *only* way to play the passage, so try our way first before searching for an alternative.

## What You're Not to Read

If you're the type who wants to start playing immediately, this section is for you, because we tell you what you can avoid reading — or at least what you don't have to read right away. For example, feel free to skip over any paragraph flagged with a *Technical Stuff* icon. Although this text offers in-depth information about the topic at hand, it isn't required reading and won't affect your ability to understand the concept fully or to play the music correctly. Similarly, sidebars — those gray boxes filled with text — are entertaining (we think) and offer something extra, but they don't contain vital information you're likely to miss.

If you're *really* itching to play some music and want to just play through the written examples in the book, you can do that, too, and we won't be offended. If you decide to follow that course, we recommend that you at least read the paragraph immediately preceding the example — the one that references the figure number within the text. By reading the paragraph that introduces the figure, you won't miss any instructions that directly pertain to the written exercise or piece.

## *Foolish Assumptions*

We don't assume that you already know how to read music, nor do we assume that you even play the guitar at all. To make the notation a little easier to grasp, we include a tablature staff under every standard music notation staff in the exercises and pieces that appear in this book. Traditional classical music doesn't include tablature, so you're actually getting something extra here in *Classical Guitar For Dummies*. You can use the tab to check the fret and string location of any note or as another way to help figure out the music in case your music reading isn't very strong. We also don't assume that you're a virtuoso, and so we've taken steps to make sure that all the exercises and pieces are easily playable by guitarists that range from beginning to intermediate level.

## *How This Book Is Organized*

We divide this book into logical sections, called *parts*, and within each of these larger sections are chapters that help organize your approach to learning different aspects and techniques of the classical guitar. Learning a musical instrument is a fairly progressive endeavor, so the earlier chapters are easier than the later ones. Also, music, like math (don't worry, no math is involved!), tends to be cumulative, which means that techniques you learn in one chapter are often assumed in later chapters. So we normally recommend that you start at the beginning, read toward the middle, and then finish at the end. We know, we know — it's a radical concept!

Having said that — and this being a *For Dummies* book — you're welcome to flip the book open to *any* page and jump in. That is, just start playing the exercises and pieces and see how you do. But if you do that, or otherwise tackle the book out of sequence (without starting at page 1 and reading straight through, the way you would a novel), we suggest you at least start at the beginning of a chapter. That way you know what to expect, because we always state in the chapter's introduction what we're going to cover.

### *Part I: Getting to Know the Classical Guitar*

This is the section where you get acquainted with the classical guitar. We take you through the proper way to sit and hold the guitar, how to tune it, and what to do with your right and left hands. We also introduce the notation

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systems that we use throughout the book, presenting and explaining the symbols of music notation — including the five-line staff and treble clef and how to read pitch and rhythm. But we include something extra that most classical methods don't: *tablature*. Tab (as it's known) is used extensively in popular music for guitar, and we think it's helpful to have here too, as an additional way to help you get your fingers playing the notes on the page.

## ***Part II: Starting to Play: The Basics***

This is where you actually get to make some music with the guitar! We start by having you play melodies on individual strings. Then we move to arpeggios, where you roll your right-hand fingers through the strings. Scales are an important tool to get your fingers in shape, and we introduce them here. Finally, you get to use your newly acquired skills to play through some easy pieces.

## ***Part III: Improving Your Technique***

This is the part where you get to dig down and absorb the special techniques that make your playing more expressive. First up are left-hand fingering techniques, including barres, slurs, and trills. Then you turn to tone production techniques, including harmonics and an essential technique for playing much Spanish-based music: right-hand tremolo. Part III is also where you venture to the higher frets, playing scales both across the neck and up and down the neck. With your technique tool kit now complete, you can perform pieces that contain barres, slurs, and passages in the higher positions.

## ***Part IV: Mastering Classical Guitar Repertoire***

After you master right- and left-hand techniques and get some scales and exercises under your belt (or fingers, as the case may be), it's time to experience the rich history of classical music through the great compositions of the masters. The chapters in Part IV deal with the major guitar composers and the five major periods, or eras, in classical music: Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Modern. This is where you get to play a complete piece by Bach and to sample the great melodies of composers such as Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Debussy, all arranged artfully (if we do say so ourselves) for the classical guitar.

## *Part V: The Part of Tens*

The Part of Tens is a veritable Dummies institution — top-ten-style lists that organize information in a fun and memorable way. We put together two lists that we think help round out your classical guitar education. The first is our choice of ten essential great guitarists (though there are so many more than ten) you should know and listen to, with our recommendation of one of their recorded works. Our second Part of Tens lists the ten most important things you can do to make shopping for a classical guitar stress-free, rewarding, and fun!

## *Part VI: Appendixes*

You don't need to read the appendixes to play the guitar or understand the material, but they do provide some useful information. Appendix A gives some tips on caring for and maintaining your guitar and also provides a tutorial on changing strings, complete with step-by-step photos to help you along and to make sure you don't get tied up in knots (though some simple knot-tying is required!). Appendix B contains instructions on how to use the CD and includes the CD track list, which lists all the recorded audio examples on the CD and their corresponding music figures in the text. The track list is essential for browsing the CD, which we encourage you to do!

## *Icons Used in This Book*



We use this icon to signal an opportunity to skip ahead and play a complete piece in the style of the exercise or excerpt we just presented.



This one indicates important information that you want to keep in the front of your mind, as that info has a way of coming up again and again.



This icon tags information that's not absolutely necessary to perform the task at hand but that digs down below the surface to offer greater understanding on a particular subject or point.



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