

Third Floor - Full of Facts

Derek Hasted's Guitar Ensemble School

www.derek-hasted.co.uk

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Lesson 1

The Joy of Guitar Ensembles - or "Who Got It Wrong *This Time*?"

In this lesson, we'll see why Ensemble Guitar playing is so enjoyable

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This lesson © Derek Hasted 1998 - please enjoy!

Why read this?

Why read it? Well, I took the trouble to write it, though I gather that's not a compelling justification for wasting your time as well as mine. I hope you'll read it because you want to try to form a Classical Guitar Ensemble and you don't know where to start.

If you *do* know where to start, then I hope you find reassurance, support and a kindred spirit here.

I've written this for the less experienced - this page has no pretences towards helping John Williams and Julian Bream get back together....

I'm told I'm really positive as a teacher. Well, I can tell you one thing. These articles are going to do something for you. And I can spell out right now just what. They're going to

- Fire you with enthusiasm for Ensemble Guitar, give you dozens of hints and tips, show you how to play well, lift you and guide you.

Or

- Cure your insomnia

It may be touch and go...

But there is a lot here. And if I make you smile on the way, well that's a bonus. After all, a smile is the one gift you can give that's handed right back to you when it's appreciated.

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Why write this?

Well, we've established that you don't have to read this just because I wrote it.

So let's now discover why I wrote it!

I'm a Guitar Teacher. For my sins, I've introduced literally hundreds of people to Ensemble playing - one of my special interests is Ensemble Guitar for less experienced players.

I've seen the joy and the smiles when it all goes well.

I've also seen (or should I say heard) many of the pitfalls which can turn players right off the whole idea!

You see, you can buy any number of books of solo music, and any number of books to tell you how to play solo Guitar. You can buy a large number of books of Ensemble music if you know where to look, but you won't find many tips on how to *play* Ensembles. I hope to change that. I hope you will if you carry on reading!

If my article encourages just a hundred more Guitarists to try Ensemble Guitar, then I'm pleased I can show a hundred more people some of the enjoyment that I and my many pupils have experienced.

It's with that enjoyment in mind that I've written these Lessons.

I've chosen a set of Contents which I hope will interest you if you are starting out, for it's in the early stages that most mistakes get made and most despondency sets in. I hope I can help.

I mean I hope I can help you, not that I hope I can help the despondency set in...

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Pay Attention!

Let's start the Lesson then.

Welcome. My name is Derek Hasted, and I'll be your teacher for these Lessons. I'm assuming that you have a modest skill with Guitar but that you find doing it on your own a rather insular experience. I will show you how much more fun it is if you do it with friends. As it were.

I'll give you an insight into the joys of Ensemble Playing, and I'll show you some hints and tips on how to begin to plan, rehearse and perform.

The sky's the limit. Which means that before we begin, I have an important Safety Announcement...

- Should an emergency arise, there are exits at the foot of each page.
- Detailed instructions for playing Ensembles will be found on the music stand immediately in front of you.
- During playing an Ensemble piece, if the music should start to descend and begin to spin out of control, tuck your head between your knees and wait for the music to hit the ground.
- As we shall be travelling over the middle C, apparatus will be found under your seat, next to your left foot. Fit the safety apparatus, which will rise to a height of about six inches.

As Captain of the lessons, I wish you a pleasant journey in the world of Guitar Ensembles.

OK. Sit tight. No answering back. Here we go!

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Relax!

- If you're new to Guitar Ensemble, I hope you'll find these Lessons go some way towards reassuring and inspiring you. Trust me - Guitar Ensembles are a LOT of fun!
- If you're a Guitar Teacher putting together an Ensemble Group, I hope much the same, come to think of it! Teachers : My Lessons are in a form suitable for you to hand out to your students (the quirkiest jokes have been taken out!) Please share my Lessons freely with your pupils, but credit me as its author and copyright holder. I hope you'll use my Lessons as a teaching resource to supplement your own ideas for coaching your Ensemble groups.

Guitar *should* be fun - it *should* be light-hearted. It *should* be satisfying. It *will* be if you tap into the hints and tips as well as the humour - there are some serious points in here, and I hope you will take time to seek them out.

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How do *you* learn?

I've turned my house upside down looking for the quote from the Chinese elder that I need now.

When I find it, I'll post it here. In the meantime I'll feel embarrassed that my filing system is no better than it was a year ago....

The quote concerns hearing, seeing, doing and understanding. And I wish I had the exact words. They are magical.

No matter... In the greater scheme of things, there is no worse way to learn Ensemble Guitar than to read about it.

I wish I could talk to you. You could ask questions.

I wish I could show you. You could see and hear what I mean.

I wish you could show me. You could show you understood.

And then, we would both learn.

Instead, I have to ask you to read the words I've written - to try to understand them. Please, browse at leisure. It is harder to understand the written word than most people would admit!

Life is hectic.

Time is short.

But please, consider that it might, it just might, be worth spending half as long as I spent writing this, working out what I mean.

Don't rush these pages - they might just be an oasis of calm and common sense in an increasingly frantic world.

Consider something.

- Two hundred years ago, travelling one hundred miles took days.
- Two hundred years ago, there were no fridges.
- No phones.
- No cameras.
- No cars.
- No lights.
- No cookers.
- No TV.
- No video.
- No web pages!

Every one of these activities is easy now.

But guitar.... is it any easier to learn now than two hundred years ago? Is the music from 200 years ago easier to play now? No!

Don't rush - you have a lifetime you can spend with your with Guitar. Speed of learning isn't important. Understanding it all is what matters.

There is more on this site than you might realise.

Print off the free music here, and though it might seem simple, go through the rehearsal, further into this site. For this is your chance to do, to understand. And to discover that there is much which can be brought to bear fruit, no matter what music one plays.

However you learn - by sight, by sound or by touch, I would like it so much if there was something on my site for *you*.

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Why play Ensembles?

Why? Because good music and good friends are an irresistible combination.

It was Paul Hindemith who said "People who make music together cannot be enemies, at least while the music lasts"

Why? Because after a while, having guitarist friends round to play solos for (or perhaps 'at') each other, tends to pall.

Ensembles keep all the players busy all the time!

Still not convinced? Then read on.

Because it's sheer delight to...

- Be part of a rich and extended sound you couldn't achieve on your own.
- Hear a rich, tasto, vibrato, bass under a tune which is darting effortlessly.
- Hear the middle line of a three part harmony sing out effortlessly between the other lines of your favourite music.
- Be surrounded by music to your left and your right with a dynamic range so much bigger than one guitar.

Still not convinced? Then read on further.

Because we have an opportunity that the rest of the music world doesn't...

- Suppose you played Piano. You'd never experience the fun of four of you sitting in one room all playing together.
- Suppose you played Double Bass. Even getting out to visit friends at all with it is a real pain!
- Suppose you played French Horn. All you'd ever play is the Horn part.
- We're lucky. We can play Solo, we can get together, we're mobile, we can swap parts.

Take this opportunity!

Mind you, if you're the kind of person who holds down a demanding job and at the end of a long tiring day walks the dog, runs for five miles, does two hours of scales and arpeggios, writes three chapters of a novel, decorates the spare room and wants to be the best Guitarist within jogging distance of your home, you might find that other guitarists aren't that keen to join you...

You see, Guitar Ensemble is, to pursue an analogy, very much a team game. Except that there aren't any opponents.

A Guitar Ensemble is very much a sharing and co-operative group, and it works best when all the players share a common reason for being there - for enjoying their shared efforts - for co-operating, not competing.

If there's one phrase that sticks in my mind more than any other from the number of Ensemble Groups that I've helped my pupils

establish, over the years, it's *Mutual Encouragement* and if you are reading these Lessons because you want to learn, then I can assure you that a group which thrives on mutual encouragement is going to learn, to learn well and to learn fast.

If Guitar is your hobby, I suspect that's because you find it fun. If you don't, I really can't understand what you're doing it for! If you find this introductory lesson rather more uplifting and positive than you were expecting, then you're lucky. You see, you are going to find Guitar Ensembles rather more enjoyable and satisfying than you were expecting too...



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