

## A NEW FOUNDATION OF GUITAR PHILOSOPHY

### UN NUEVO ENFOQUE ACERCA DE LA FILOSOFÍA DE LA GUITARRA

**ICE B. RISTESKI**

2 Milepost Place # 606, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4H 1C7  
iceristeski@musician.org

#### ABSTRACT

Teacher-student interaction and the personality of the teacher are the most important factors in any guitar teacher's effectiveness. The quality of their relationships provides the impetus for inspiration. The best guitar teachers are able to translate good judgment, experience and wisdom into the art of playing guitar. It is their ability to understand and overcome prejudices, generate passion, and recognize potential that enables guitar teachers to encourage students to trust themselves. The focus of classical guitar pedagogy considers the need of introducing *guitar philosophy* as an educational and research subject necessary for guitar students as well as for guitar music researchers.

KEYWORDS: Guitar philosophy.

#### RESUMEN

La interacción estudiante-profesor y la personalidad del profesor son los factores más importantes para la eficacia de un profesor de guitarra. La calidad de sus interrelaciones proporciona el ímpetu para la inspiración. Los buenos profesores de guitarra son aquellos capaces de transmitir el buen juicio, la experiencia y sabiduría al arte de tocar la guitarra. Son sus habilidades para entender y sobreponerse a los prejuicios, para generar pasión y para reconocer potencialidades las que les permiten incentivar a sus alumnos a confiar en sí mismos. El enfoque de la pedagogía de guitarra clásica considera la necesidad de introducir *la filosofía de la guitarra* como una asignatura educacional y de investigación, necesaria tanto para estudiantes de guitarra como para investigadores de música de guitarra.

PALABRAS CLAVES: Filosofía de la guitarra.

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"The guitar is a miniature orchestra in itself"

L.V. BEETHOVEN

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The method of guitar teaching depends on a many factors, including course aims and content, characteristics of the students, disciplinary norms, requirements of professional groups and the teacher's conceptions

of what constitutes effective guitar teaching (Norman, 1960). Knowledge of teaching and learning styles has led to an appreciation of what constitutes the best practice in meeting individual student needs (Arends, 2004). Guitar teachers recognize, too, that learning is an interactive process, and that

guitar students need to be actively involved in tasks that are achievable, useful, relevant and challenging if they are to respond successfully to the curriculum challenges posed for them.

Knowledge of what constitutes effective guitar teaching and learning has increased significantly in recent years (Borich, 2003). For example, knowledge of the psychology of student development and learning has become more sophisticated in its ability to provide an intelligent and informed context for guitar teaching decision-making. In addition, knowledge of teaching and learning styles has led to an appreciation of what constitutes the best practice in meeting individual student needs.

Above all, however, guitar teachers have learned that effective teaching occurs when the student is placed at the focus of decisions that are made not only about the curriculum itself, but also about the *process* by which the curriculum is delivered. Within this context, there is acknowledgement of the need for positive relationships between guitar teacher and student (Ingram, 1990).

*Guitar didactic* is designed to teach or intended to convey instruction and information as well as pleasure and entertainment. Of this viewpoint, in classical guitar literature is the very important role played by the famous books of Carlevaro (2002) and Sagreras (1986), with which many of generations of guitarists around the world are educated. Guitar didactic questioning offers the teacher a way to structure the learning process. Guitar didactic questions tend to be convergent and factual. They can be effectively used to diagnose recall and comprehension skills, to draw on prior learning experiences, to determine the extent to which lesson objectives were achieved, to provide practice, and to aid retention of information or processes.

Guitar teachers should also remember, however, that didactic questions can be sim-

plistic, can encourage guessing, and can discourage insightful answers or creativity. Guitar didactic and questions are effective techniques that seek to draw the student into the lecture as a participant.

*Guitar method* is a discipline that deals with the guitar principles and techniques.

*Guitar methodology* is a set of methods, procedures and rules employed by a discipline. Elementary survey about it is given in Farstad's (1992) book. Actually, foundation of guitar methodology lies in famous guitar methods of Aguado (2004), Carcassi (1994), Carulli (1983), Giuliani (1993) and Sor (2003).

*Guitar pedagogy* is the art and science of guitar teaching. Glise (1997) is the author of the first published book on guitar pedagogy in English speaking area. Sometimes, guitar pedagogy is also referred as the correct use of teaching strategies. In correlation with those teaching strategies the teacher's own philosophical beliefs of teaching are harbored and governed by the pupil's background knowledge and experiences, personal situations and environment as well as learning goals set by both the student and the teacher (Provost, 1997). The best guitar teaching for which we seek is a vision of an exemplary teaching approach of a responsible guitar teacher. The vision is the driving force that makes us all believes the best is worth working for. The success of classical guitar pedagogy lies in its conventional wisdom, which teaches guitarists how to teach.

The fact is true, that real approach of guitar pedagogy is to teach only *how*, while the other approach which treats the concept *why* is a purely philosophical approach, and in that case a considered concept belonging to the *guitar philosophy*, which is a completely different science with a completely different object of research. Simply speaking the question *why* has a philosophical disposition and always executes *problematization* of the

known concepts. Actually, what we would like to say here is that *guitar philosophy* exists in refined guitar music circles, but only as a lonely unwritten particularism of some parts of guitar music, but in no one case as profiled science. Of course, we think *guitar philosophy* is not a sterile aesthetic product derived from some hodge-podge *general music philosophy*: just the opposite, like a *guitar philosophy* as a practice and knowledge of guitarists for guitarists. Actually, it is the music among the strings. Do not forget the fact that *guitar philosophy* is not the consequence of *general music philosophy*, but it is a subset of graceful guitar music that expresses only its grandly ripeness in more abstract ways. In other words, it means that from the general, it does not always follow the particular. Because guitar music is an entity different from other kinds of music, naturally it entails that its philosophy must be different from *general music philosophy*. The structure of guitar music, as shows its genesis, is not the same as the structure of other kinds of music. Unique similarity of guitar music with other music is only transcribed music and in that particular case holds general philosophy of music, if the music is considered by an aesthetical listener throughout the prism of its beauty, but the picture about it, from the point of view of a performer, is completely different because the stress is on absorbing the capacity power of guitar music and technique.

Our purpose in this article is to review briefly what we take to be the most prominent aspects of *guitar philosophy* according to our experience and after that they are considered from a pragmatic perspective of their suitability for the present and future practice of guitar music.

Before beginning to discuss our concept of *guitar philosophy*, we want to point out that this represents only one of many approaches to the *guitar philosophy*.

## 2. REFINING OF GUITAR PHILOSOPHY

Practice shows there are many shortcomings in the professional education when *guitar philosophy* is concerned. These shortcomings are manifested in ignorance of the possible gaps concerning the genesis and evolution of the guitar concepts and theories as well as in the ignorance of the philosophical, more precisely, gnoseological and methodological problems implied by these. In certain ways all this must reflect negatively on guitar music at any level, and also it will reflect negatively on the quality on guitar knowledge. Moreover, the above mentioned shortcomings in guitar education must have negative consequences in the way of presentation of guitar music as a school subject when its influence is concerned, more precisely, the influence of its *philosophy* on formation scientific music outlook. In order to radically change this situation in the sense of eliminating the mentioned defects, we come to the conclusion that knowledge of *guitar philosophy* is needed.

At the university level in the programs of guitar music, insufficient attention is paid to the question of *guitar philosophy*, in the sense of general methodology and gnoseology, concerning the epistemology of guitar music, particularly when the genesis and evolution of guitar methods and ideas are concerned. Is this so in the world in general? Yes! There are neither journals nor various editions in which these problems are systematically treated.

Questions of a philosophical nature, generally methodological and gnoseological, concerning epistemological knowledge of guitar music, are for instance the following: What is nature of the concepts and theories studied in guitar music? To what extent are they freely manmade, and to what extent are they imposed from outside, and how are their particularities realized? What is the rea-

son of their realizing power when they are used as tools of research? How can it be explained that the more abstract the guitar notions and theories are the more realizing power they have as instruments, which we use in the research of the guitar phenomena around us? What kind of wisdom is *guitar philosophy*? The premise of Iznaola's (1997) book is that *guitar technique is made up of a limited number of procedures with an unlimited number of applications*. Behind this statement hides the following philosophical question: If the guitar music is unlimited, why not consider it in Hilbert space? Now, of interest is to mention the newest modern music approach by Brediceanu (2002) where are considered some continuous topological transformations and generative mechanisms in  $\mathfrak{R}^3$  for sound forms endowed with affine structure, as well as behaviour of sound forms under the action of homology transformation. According to O'Connell (1986), from object-oriented analysis, which uses geometrical objects and grouped music by topological figures, as suggest Bennighof (1987), Cohn (1991) and Roeder (1987) arise as a natural consequence to the question: What are the relations of guitar music and topology? Up to now, all the above-mentioned questions are not considered in literature (Bowman, 1998), (Elliott, 1995) and (Kivy, 2002), which explores the general questions of music philosophy, as well as alternative approaches considered in (Alperson, 1991), (Panaiotidi, 2002) and (Regelski, 1996) to the philosophy of music education and its relation to musical pedagogy.

Or, for instance, for the methodology of guitar music the *dialectical synthesis* of the disparate concepts is particularly characteristic, which is based on the *dialectical* relativity of the concepts *single* and *general*. What is *single* with respect to something can be at the same time *general* with respect to something else, and *vice versa*.

In relation to the oppositions that are

expressed in guitar music such as: concrete - abstract, qualitative - quantitative, deterministic - nondeterministic, analysis - synthesis and others, for them the methodological and, in general, gnoseological tests and arguments are of interest. Those are considered to expound, on the one hand, the particular *dialectical* situations as general methodological and philosophical situations in the edifications of the corresponding notions and statements, and on the other hand, to elucidate the *dialectical* way of their evolution, with respect to the dialectical identity of the opposition as a law of realization and constant mental confrontation of opposites as an evolution. By means of a scientifically correct and in a methodological and pedagogical aspect skillful introduction into the education in guitar music of the above mentioned dialectical situations, that are constantly followed by the generalizations of the old and the introduction of the new concepts, the students without special prescriptions and dogmatic patterns, by the *nature of the entities* itself, without a special permeation through education, by dialectics can be introduced to a *dialectical* way of thinking and quite naturally, vividly and concretely, during their education in guitar music they can learn *philosophically*, more precisely, dialectically to think and reason, in order to comprehend more profoundly and thoroughly the significance of guitar music as a theory and practice for understanding and changing the music world.

Globally speaking, in guitar music by means of *abstraction* a *practical* situation is idealized, is transformed into a *theoretical* situation and in this way its *musical model* is obtained. Here some sort of a transformation of the music reality into a music model is accomplished. Also, the theory of the model as an independent music object is elaborated in order to be applied in the study of music reality. In this way some sort of an inverse transformation is accomplished,

namely the transformation of the music model into a music reality.

Thus the following question arises: How is the transformation of the music reality into the model and *vice versa* accomplished? In the development of guitar music and other arts, which constantly apply it in a new aspect, with a new force and with new perspectives for solutions, the question arises about the relation between the music model and music reality, about the artistic theory and music reality. To the relation subject - object and theory - experiment, in the framework of the collective practice of mankind, one of the fundamental questions is set: Where does *philosophical* thought supplement and elucidate guitar activity and where does it give meaning to it more clearly and profoundly, in one word, where does it become its indispensable complement? The guitar concepts show perhaps in the clearest way how the aspects of objective music reality, once realized, are transformed into principles and modalities of theoretical and *philosophical* thought, which then are appropriately and creatively, seemingly just *a priori*, used in the further and deeper investigation of this music reality, confirming the indispensable role of abstraction in revealing the truth about this music reality. Here guitar music meets and intertwines with the general question of *consciousness* theory and philosophy in general, that is why *dialectics*, as a method and theory of consciousness, due to its scope and scientific groundedness, enables better than all the other theories of consciousness the obtaining in an appropriate way of the answers of the gnoseological and methodological questions implied by the relations music model - music reality and *vice versa*.

*Guitar philosophy* is a very complicated science and full of contradictory ideas. *Guitar philosophy* does the problematization of guitar music, *i.e.*, it brings the latter into question. Thus *guitar philosophy* is a critical survey of guitar music, a survey that requires

distance and abandonment of musical thinking. Hence this must be distinguished from the uncritical penetration, in the framework of the musical thinking in which guitar music is developed.

However, this approach can be misinterpreted by quasiphilosophers believing that their vision of an artist who cannot understand the essence of art is confirmed once more, *i.e.*, their vision of a guitarist who cannot understand the essence of guitar music. Namely, an artist would be one who cannot leave art and understand it philosophically clearly. But such a view is not maintained here. As we know, most artists do not leave art, and we also know that most philosophers do not penetrate into art, so they *a priori* cannot leave it. Quasiphilosophers forget that something can be walked out of only if it has been walked into beforehand. It is an artist who leaves art or philosopher who penetrates into art maintaining a philosophical distance from it that can have a relevant philosophical outlook upon art. Thus pure artists are not relevant for our question; neither have the so-called pure philosophers anything to say about it.

The problematization of guitar music for which we speak here is a problematization of guitar music as the art, or more precisely, as a paradigmatic example of an art. According to this paradigmatic example of an art the following two directions are possible:

1. Guitar music is a paradigmatic example of positive art and thus it becomes a field on which any epistemology can be tested.
2. Guitar music is a paradigmatic example of an art whose positiveness must be justified by a universal epistemology. Here the positiveness itself is questioned.

In the first approach the epistemology passes or fails in dependence on whether the positiveness of guitar music, *i.e.*, the positiveness of musical science can be explained

or not. In the second approach it is guitar music that passes or fails in dependence on whether it can be epistemologically justified.

The first approach is characteristic for the philosophers who think about guitar music, while the second approach is characteristic for the guitarists who think philosophically.

The first approach is the *old* meaning of the philosophical attitude towards the positive guitar music, while the second approach is the *new* meaning of the philosophical attitude towards the positiveness of guitar music.

The exposition up to here implies a question: What is musically brought into question in the *old philosophy* of guitar music? Certainly not its positiveness. Whatever could contradict this positiveness, it is already doubtful due to this contradiction. Briefly, the positiveness of guitar music in the old philosophy of guitar music is not questioned. What is brought into question here is its atonality.

The *new philosophy* of guitar music brings into question the positiveness of abstract guitar music. Solving this problem does not touch at all the question of atonality. Its problem is to explain the positiveness of pure guitar music, that is, positiveness that in the old philosophy of guitar music is self-evident. The new philosophy of guitar music is so preoccupied with this problem, that it does not consider the fundamental problem of the old philosophy, that is, *the possibility of atonality of guitar music*. Sometimes the old and new guitar philosophies are thought to be in some conflict. In fact, these put into the focus of their interests two different but equally essential problems.

Where does the positiveness of pure guitar music lie? On what is it grounded and on what is it based? What is the subject of guitar music? Does guitar music describe the entities and what is the mode of existence of these entities? What is spoken about in guitar music? When one speaks of the most

fundamental, *i.e.*, of the first subject of guitar music, then our comprehension encounters a lot of troubles. We will try to explain where these unknowns come from, and also the uncertainty characteristic for the encounters with these questions.

Above Beethoven's quotation contains four great distinctions.

1. It is rejected vanity by common sense. It is about which common sense is in conflict with what the usual common sense does not do. One of the main services that guitar music has done to mankind is that it *put common sense* where it belongs, on the highest shelf next to the dusty tin box with the label *thrown out nonsense*.
2. Beethoven's determination fixes an entirely abstract character of guitar music.
3. It gives the possibility to realize in just a few words one of the basic thoughts of guitar music since the classical period, *i.e.*, entire guitar music and the ripen music disciplines should be reduced to a postulation form, so that guitarists, philosophers, scientists and people with normal common sense could see precisely that which each one of them thinks when he speaks about it.
4. Beethoven's determination of guitar music sends a loud farewell to the shattered tradition, which still respects the composers of dictionaries according to whom *guitar music* is an art, entertainment, or other human activity, which involves structured and audible sound. These subjects comprise a great part of the matter to which guitar music was applied. But these are in no case higher guitar music as it is not the paints in the master's tubes that the master paints the masterpiece. These are for guitar music what linseed oil and blue paint are for the painter's skill.

As it is completely true what the above aphorism said, there is another side of the

story, which distinguishes guitar music from the unclear way of reasoning of some philosophers and people who occupy themselves with speculative sciences.

The evolution of a too abstract view of guitar music was slow and in its ripen form it represents a characteristic product of music activity in 20th century. Not all guitarists agreed with the determinations of that type. Many of these gave priority to something more concrete. Only a small part of them accepted the dogma that the skill in manipulation with guitar music is sufficient for the creation or understanding of music.

First of all, modern critical development taught the greatest part of the guitarists to be extremely mistrustful with respect to the music, which is self-evident. According to this, each guitarist can be misled if he accepts that the complicated chains of the strict guitar reasoning are easy, or that they can be avoided from the very beginning. If guitar music is actually an art about the self-evident music, then the guitarists would be a fantastic mob of fools who spoil tons of high-quality papers proving that fact. Guitar music and according to this *guitar philosophy* as well, are abstract and difficult, and each assertion that these are simple is true only in a strictly professional sense. The premises guitar music comes from are simple and everything else is not. By this is shown that guitar music is not a consequence of other music, and according to it *guitar philosophy* is not part of philosophy, just part of guitar music.

Each of the attempts to define guitar music contributes to the elucidation of particular details of the picture. These attempts, as well as the others that were not mentioned here, show the hopelessness of the attempt to paint the bright sunrise in one colour. The attempt to condense the free spirit of modern guitar music within a few inches in some dictionary is in vain, as well as the endeavour to compress into a small phial a cloud

full of electricity, which constantly tends to expansion.

Also, is not the less essential question: What is transfer of knowledge in guitar music on the relation teacher-student?

### 3. CONCLUSION

All these are philosophical problems since they refer to very general and fundamental questions about the meaning of guitar music, reality and knowledge. The hard-working guitarists who make effort to expand their subject usually devote just a little attention to such problems. Someone could say *let this do credit to guitarists since the above mentioned problems are just mixed pseudoproblems, such a type of philosophical speculation about guitar music is meaningless*. By the way, this remark is too rough. Perhaps most of the difficulties experienced by philosophers in the consideration of guitar music arise from the misunderstanding of this or that kind of problem, yet the questions mentioned represent serious intellectual problems because the misunderstandings they arise from are significant and convincing but not ridiculous and easy to eliminate. These problems deserve to be tested and solved but not easily rejected. Who cuts the Gordian knot instead of untying it, is sure that this knot bothers him a long time.

The above arguments on *guitar philosophy*, though fragmentary and too general, in my opinion illustrate sufficiently the importance of *guitar philosophy* as a subject in the education of guitarists as well as the importance of research activity in general. The instruction in this subject will give the possibilities to avoid these shortcomings in the professional education of guitarists, which arise from the ignorance of the genesis and evolution of guitar ideas and methods, and also of the ignorance of the philosophical problems of guitar music. It will deepen and

enrich guitar education in a scientific and pedagogical aspect when speaking of the *guitar philosophy* as a science. We must underline that its education will influence positively the guitar education in general. Yet it would be an exaggeration to say that *guitar philosophy* is born. The baby is on the way but is not born yet.

Also we believe that this article, as a pioneer job will present additional impulse for the researchers to develop much faster this wonderful discipline of guitar music, which really live only in heads of some fines guitarists. *Guitar philosophy* is a big wisdom accumulated long time ago in certain guitarists, and it must look daily to the light as soon as possible.

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