



Book Review

Guitar Skills for Music Therapists and Music Educators

Peter Meyer, Jessica De Villers & Erin Ebnet

Reviewed by Bob Heath

Guitar Skills for Music Therapists and Music Educators

Peter Meyer, Jessica De Villers & Erin Ebnet

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Writing a review of *Guitar Skills for Music Therapists and Music Educators* presents me with an immediate dilemma. It is not really a book about applying guitar skills specifically to music therapy or music education at all, but it is an excellent guitar manual for anyone wishing to learn how to play and to develop their skills. The book is accompanied by an excellent DVD which further supports its strength as a comprehensive tutorial.

The first chapters lead the reader from the very basics of understanding how the instrument works, the layout of the finger board, notation and tablature, through to the construction of chords, some nice ideas on simple embellishments and strumming and muting techniques. The lessons and exercises are laid out well and easy to read and the DVD presentations to accompany these chapters are well paced, practical and easy to follow.

Chapters three and four continue in this well-presented style with good examples of fingerpicking and flatpicking approaches. Again, the DVD examples help the reader to work through the exercises with useful tips on how to overcome early difficulties.

Chapters five and six continue in the same vein, introducing the reader to more tricky skills such as barre chords and power chords. As with the previous chapters they are well presented and easy to understand. Chapter seven introduces the reader to a range of standard blues formats, always an essential part of any self-respecting guitarist's repertoire and finishes with an introduction to approaches to playing lead guitar solos with some useful insights into using the pentatonic scale.

It is in chapter eight that the writers begin to make a more direct link with music therapy by

discussing modes and laying out some ground rules for improvisation. They also introduce the reader to open tunings, concentrating on open D and G, using a slide and exploring some classic genres with examples from legends such as Elmore James and Muddy Waters. The chapter closes with some nice examples of opening the instrument up a little more by using both hands, percussion and hammer on techniques. Again, the layout is good, the examples are easy to follow and the DVD presentation is clear and helpful.

The following two chapters concentrate on developing playing skills with a focus on jazz and funk techniques. It is nice here to see the introduction of electric guitar in the DVD and, I know I am repeating myself, the whole thing is presented in an easy to follow format. The final chapter on maintenance is a helpful guide to taking care of the instrument and changing strings.

So there it is in a nutshell, a well-prepared and presented guitar manual that I would recommend to anyone wanting to learn how to play the guitar and develop an early repertoire. As a tutorial it really is great.

Now back to my dilemma: I can't help wondering why the authors called it a book for music therapists and educators when it is really a book for anyone who wants to learn how to play. The *Music Therapy Techniques* chapter hints at improvisation and does introduce the reader to open tunings but does not really do much to help develop the reader's understanding of the more explicit application of these approaches in music therapy. I would have expected to see a far wider exploration of open tunings, (DADGAD is such a useful tuning in therapy sessions) and the possibilities they offer to both clients and therapists. I would also have liked to have seen a much more in-depth examination of simple one-chord shape approaches that can enable music therapists to take the focus off their fingers and apply all their attention to their clients. A wider discussion of genres, not only on how to play them but why they are important in therapy could have helped to embed the book within a much more therapeutic context. Some simple tips on using the guitar to help music therapy clients begin writing songs would have been great too.

Guitar Skills for Music Therapists and Music Educators is not a book about how to apply guitar skills as a music therapist or an educator. It is however, an excellent guitar manual and anyone wishing to learn how to play and develop their skills should invest in a copy; it's great.

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