

# George Arvola

I was born in Vaasa, Finland in 1948. The family emigrated to Canada in 1956 and Sudbury, Ontario became our home. My dad went to work as a carpenter in Elliot Lake which was just being developed at that time. We were Canadianized quickly and became Canadian citizens immediately after completing our first five years of Canadian residency. I completed my grade school and first year of high-school in Sudbury. Due to working circumstances, the family moved to Toronto in the early 60's and I completed my formal education there. It was in the first year in Toronto that I became keenly interested in music so at the age of 16, I purchased my first guitar and taught myself to play by ear. Shortly after beginning this learning process, I realized that there was a wealth of information to be had if I knew how to read music so I embarked on that project. It did not seem to be that big a deal because it was evident that music was mostly an arithmetical puzzle. A friend of mine who was also dabbling in music was not very adept at playing by ear so I began writing the music that I was learning so he could join in. The consequence of this was that I was learning to read, write and "speak" music all at the same time. Only in my grade twelve year of high school did I begin lessons in classical guitar. I studied for that one year with John Liberatore and practiced enough to get to a very proficient level by the end of that one year,

At that time, I decided that more formal schooling was not going to make me into a musician. Other influences in my life brought me to Kitchener, Ontario and within a year, I got into the music teaching business at a local music store. In these early years, I attended as many concerts by world famous people, as I could afford. I came to the conclusion that although I was a pretty good player, there were others who were a lot better. That did not deter me but just gave me a reality check.

In the process of teaching, I found that I enjoyed the teaching just as much as the performing. Working in a music store put me in contact with many musicians and I soon began playing professionally in a variety of groups both large and small. Somewhere along the line I realized that there was probably more work for a good bassist as compared to guitarists. It did not take me long to begin freelancing as a bass player. The basic technique seemed nearly obvious.

All along the line I had been continuing my musical studies but just on a self taught basis until in 1976, I found a guitar teacher named Tony Bradan in Toronto. He had been suggested to me by a friend who was studying jazz style guitar with Mr. Bradan. I had developed an interest in jazz and decided to look up Tony. By this time I had already been teaching for quite a number of years and also had plenty of playing experience. Within the first few lessons, I realized how great a teacher Mr. Bradan really was and I continued my once a week trip to Toronto until Tony retired and moved to the west coast in around 1980. We had become very good friends as well as student and mentor. I visited Mr. Bradan on many occasions when I was out west also visiting my parents who had moved there in the early 70's.

The lessons with Tony Bradan reorganized my way of thinking about music in general. Theoretical logic and such, I garnished from some great books and in particular the Modern Harmonic Technique by Gordon Delamont. Interestingly, I found out later that Gordon Delamont and Tony Bradan were good friends. Today, both of these Canadian greats are missed by many as they have passed away some years ago.

Over the years I have performed in and led a number of groups from small stage bands to jazz trios. I continue to teach both guitar and bass technique in my private studio in Kitchener and also on a part time basis at another private music school operated by a close friend. Retirement is not something that I am thinking of although I mostly only play at events where I can choose the material to be performed. Slightly older age has made me a bit choosy in the song department. Thankfully, there is still some good music out there although it seems that we have to weed through a lot more of it to find the really good stuff.

George Arvola

Visit my website: [GeorgeArvola.com](http://GeorgeArvola.com)