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## Tony Bradan's Comments

Based on the experience and hindsight of nearly one half century, it seems to me that the problem of learning music is, that our approach needs revision and clarification.

If we wish to speak Spanish, we could rush out and buy a Spanish Book and start to read it. Oh yes, we would soon make the Spanish sounds, but it is extremely doubtful that we would understand their meaning. Do we not do the same in music? We buy an instrument of our choice, take it home and immediately start to play it. Soon we have engaged the services and expertise of a total stranger. (a surrogate teacher.) This person is expected to show us how to play this instrument and will immediately set about doing so....but wait! A surrogate teacher can only show you how he or she plays, not how YOU play! Remember, YOU don't know how to play, so how can a stranger tell YOU how? Very simply, by not trying to show you how to play, but rather to present the material they use in playing, so that YOU can teach yourself how to play, by using the necessary material in a manner compatible with your thinking and artistic temperament. Yes, my friend, YOU are the teacher. YOU are the only one who can teach yourself how to play. Your surrogate teacher can only present the proper material and keep you on track, thereby preventing you from erroneous sidetracking, because you think that the learning is not going in the direction that you deem to be proper. Your surrogate teacher has the expertise. It would be prudent to follow the prescribed advice as presented.

Physically, your arms should be on the long, rather than the short side. Your palms should be wide, rather than narrow. Your fingers should be long and tapered rather than short and stubby. Your hands should be strong, rather than weak. It is doubtful that you will meet, one in a thousand guitar players, who can meet these requirements. So, not having been born with the natural equipment for playing the guitar, most of us must put in innumerable hours of practice and work to try to shore up any, or all of the perceived shortcomings mentioned above.

Then there is TALENT, a gift allegedly received through the genes of our parents, their parents or their parent's parents, or a gift from the almighty. There are multi-talented people, but the norm seems to be a single or double talent covering all branches of human endeavour. If you are the recipient of musical talent, be thankful for it, but remember that any free, unsolicited, unearned, unrequested gift, does not entitle you to feel superior to your fellow students. You are not necessarily smarter, just luckier.

Surrogate teachers would do well to rid themselves of the idea that there is only one way to teach. Each student will and should present, a separate challenge. It is the function of the teacher to produce the simple, knowledgeable language, necessary to explain the learning procedure. These "magic words" are not easy to come by, and may well tax, to the limit, the creative powers of the surrogate teacher. It is my opinion that this manner of teaching is beneficial to the teacher as well as the student. Realizing that in effect they are their own real teacher, and therefore masters of their own destiny, helps create a much greater interest in the learning process. The resulting interchange between student and teacher will turn music lessons into what they should be.....a mutual pleasure for student and teacher. Students should complete on-going work, with the best results being obtained by diligently working through each book in proper rotation. The skipping of books to arrive more quickly at the "good stuff" is not recommended and will most assuredly lead to complete confusion.

It is suggested that the often practiced learning by repetition or memorization, be replaced by scientific endeavour. (a thought process) This will allow each student to work out their musical thoughts in a time frame necessary to fulfill their satisfaction. What really matters is not "slow" or "fast", but learning." Practicing countless hours every day, may very well help a student arrive at a tolerable "craft of playing" plateau, but it seems that unless the talent for music is innately part of your being, you may end up, a brilliant craftsman, but not necessarily a brilliant musician. However, many students, during and after the learning of the craft, are pleasantly surprised and rewarded, by finding a talent that heretofore had remained unexposed. Any normally intelligent student may learn the craft and hopefully, expose a satisfactory talent.