

## INTRODUCTION by Tony Bradan

Based on the experience and hindsight of nearly one half of a 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 would not 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 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/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 they 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 "friendly", YOU are the teacher. 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 listen and follow the prescribed advice as presented.

Your instrument, in our case the guitar, need not necessarily be expensive but should be of sufficient quality that allows the manufacturer or builder enough time to put the frets in properly, so that the instrument will play in tune and that the playing pressures are soft enough to not require that you have fingers of steel and find it necessary to wrestle with the instrument while trying to play it. The sound should be at least, pleasant.

Physically, your arms should be on the long rather than the short side, your palms wide rather than narrow, your fingers long and tapered rather than short and stubby, your hands strong rather than weak. It is doubtful that you will meet one guitarist in a thousand 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 any and all branches of human endeavour. If you are the recipient of a 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.

All students should concern themselves with the learning of the craft of music, especially those that may have mistaken a love of music for talent. One of the main purposes of study is to try to equalize the efforts of the less talented student who, through a rigorous study of the musical crafts, may equal or even better the less interested but talented student. The real talent who has learned the musical crafts is indeed a winner. While we normal types may even equal their expertise in the crafts, it is unlikely that we will ever match the musicality of their talent. The musical skills of a real talent are not to be regarded with envy but rather with a sense of wonder and enjoyment.

There seems to be two schools of thought regarding the art of playing. One school of thought has a high regard for those players who can read the notes on a sheet of paper and at sight, turn them into a personal musical statement. The other school idolizes the improvisational techniques of their heroes. The good readers are not always adept at improvisation and the great improvisors do seem to have some trouble at reading notes. The happy hunting ground in between these two basic styles is reached by relatively few players.

The rhythm guitar also has a place in this scenario and in its place, plays a very important function.

The crafts of music are not just rules, laws and devices that one learns and then in a jig-saw puzzle manner, applies to any prevailing song. These rules, laws and devices must be mentally ingested and used to help us on our way to the discovery of our own musical identity. The eventual result of this search will reveal two probable choices. You can dissolve into the mainstream or you can be individual. To be individual you must be different. To be different you must constantly search for your own personal musical thoughts. The students who follow the crowd may always remain on of the crowd. Those students who have the fortitude to constantly seek their own musical identity may well find themselves in places where none have been before.

Creative individuality is not without its own difficulties. Even those with the inclination to belittle your efforts will say, upon realization that you were right, that it was obvious all the time.

The preceding lines have been prompted by the queries of many students and teachers who felt unsure of the direction indicated by the new approach of the "Learning Process for Playing the Guitar."