

Ludwig van Beethoven

Moonlight Sonata



Bridget Mermikides has a wonderful piece for you to learn this month. It's the Moonlight Sonata by one of the most influential composers of all time - Ludwig van Beethoven, transposed from piano to guitar...

ABILITY RATING



Moderate/Advanced

| INFO | WILL IMPROVE YOUR |
|------------------------|--|
| KEY: A minor | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classical technique |
| TEMPO: 70 bpm | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classical repertoire |
| CD: TRACK 10-11 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arpeggio playing |

THE CLASSICAL PIECE this month is one of Ludwig van Beethoven's most well known piano solos, recognised by almost everyone whether they know what it's called or not - the moody and evocative Moonlight Sonata. The piece was originally called Quasi Una Fantasia, meaning 'almost a fantasy' and the title Moonlight Sonata came after Beethoven's death when music critic and poet Ludwig Rellstab compared it to moonlight shining on Lake Lucerne.

The usual format for a Sonata is three movements, the tempos of which are normally fast, slow, fast. But this piece breaks that mould with a slow and extremely melancholy first movement. Tragically, Beethoven lost his hearing towards the end of his life and the Moonlight Sonata was written in the early stages of his deafness. The piece was dedicated

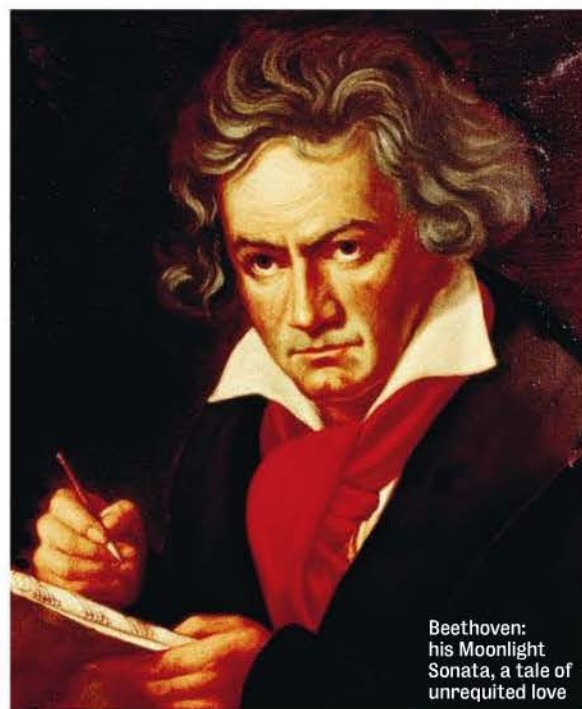
“Piano music arranged for solo guitar is compromised by the fact that we cannot play as many notes simultaneously”

to Beethoven's pupil, 17-year-old Countess Giulietta Guicciardi to whom the composer had proposed a marriage. The marriage - to this obviously much older man - was forbidden by the parents of the Countess and the tragic quality in the piece has made a strong impression on many listeners. Indeed, John Lennon is said to have loosely based his brilliant song Because from The Beatles' Abbey Road album on it, in order to capture this same sad and melancholy mood.

The French romantic composer Hector Berlioz is quoted to have said "It is one of those poems that human language does not know how to qualify". Beethoven himself, however, became exasperated by the popularity of the piece saying, "Surely I've written better things!"

Piano music arranged for solo guitar is always compromised by the fact that we cannot play as many notes simultaneously as a pianist can. So some editing is necessary to make it physically playable, while striving to maintain the harmony, voicing and spirit of the piece.

Also, in order to play this piece on guitar it has been transposed from the original key of C# minor to the far more guitar-friendly A minor. This makes it easier to play, and actually makes it sound better on the guitar, as it uses the natural resonance of the instrument in that register - and of course some open strings - to good effect. Purists might balk at such




Beethoven: his Moonlight Sonata, a tale of unrequited love

BRIDGEMAN/REXUS

downright blasphemy, but we'll risk their wrath this time in the knowledge that Ludwig himself would have probably loved the idea.

If you enjoy playing this piece try arranging other famous classical tunes by Bach, Mozart and Schubert for the guitar. It's most educational, a really worthwhile challenge and also a lot of fun. And of course you can also transpose pieces to more familiar keys should the opportunity present itself.

Anyway I'm sure we'll be returning to this idea in the months to come so, as always, your suggestions are most welcome. 



TRACK RECORD: There's a great album of Beethoven's best-known sonatas out on Decca. Entitled Beethoven's Favourite Piano Sonatas it has all three movements of the Moonlight, as well as Pastorale, Tempest, Appassionata, Waldstein, Rondo, Les Adieux and more. It's a great place to start if you want to try your own transpositions of piano music for guitar.

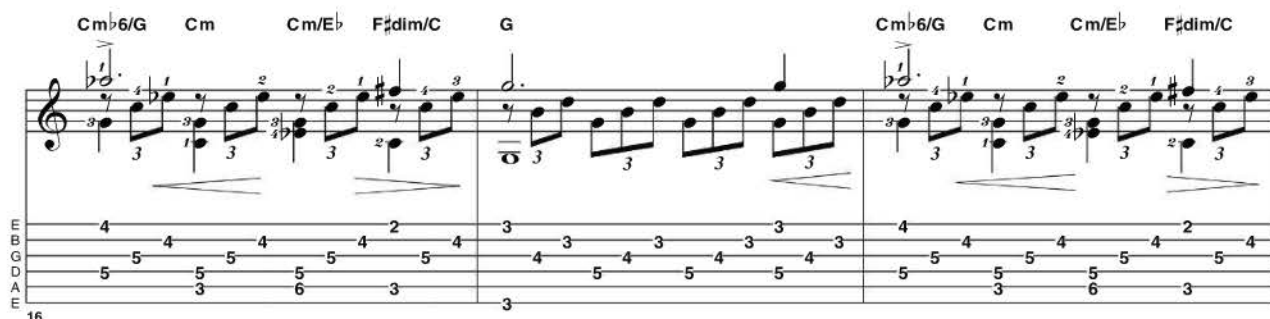
PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 11

[Bars 16-24] This is tricky and the fretting hand feels a little squashed at the beginning of the bar. Also the melody note is unfortunately lost on beat 2 in order to accommodate the accompaniment, but the fingering indicated here is a

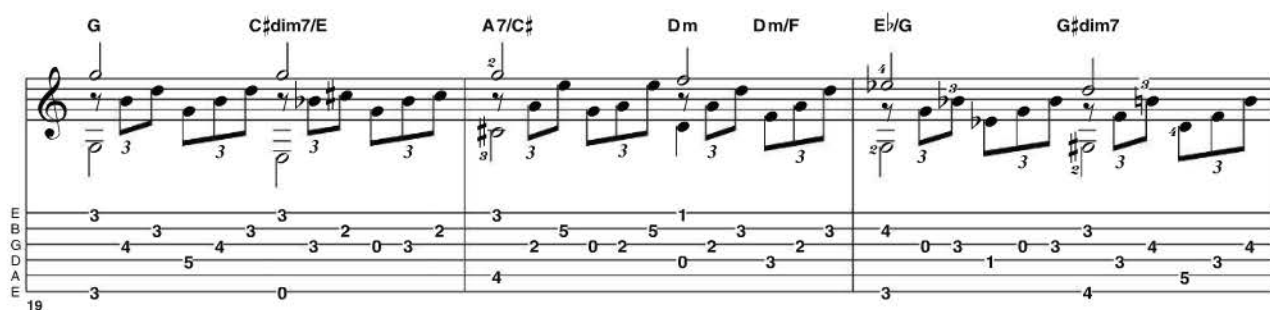
good solution for keeping the triplets fluent. A barre should be placed on the last 16th note of bar 24 to keep the melody connected.

Chords: Cm^b6/G, Cm, Cm/E^b, F[#]dim/C, G



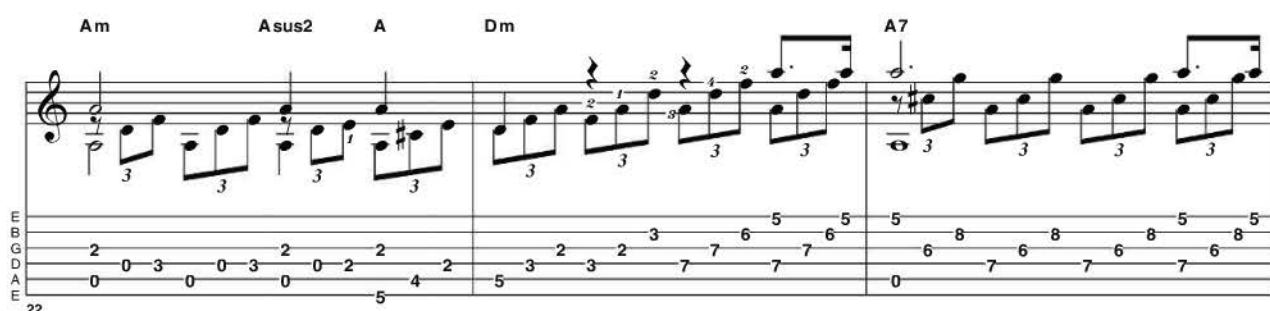
16

Chords: G, C[#]dim7/E, A7/C[#], Dm, Dm/F, E^b/G, G[#]dim7



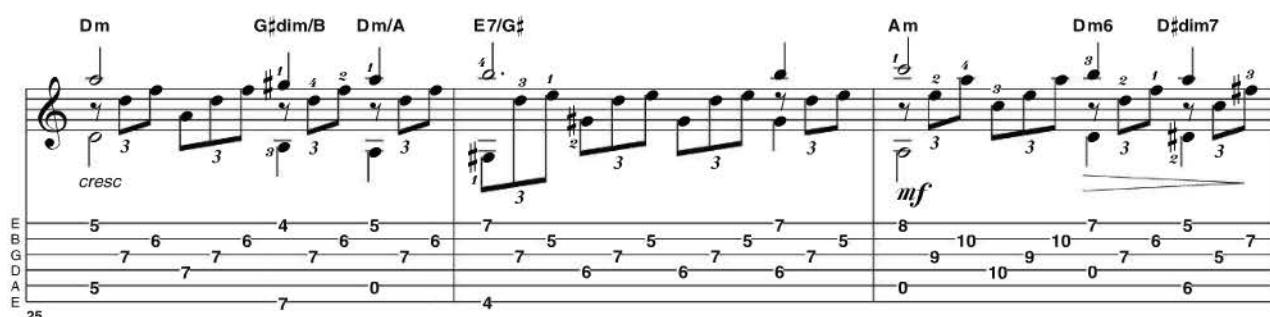
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Chords: Am, Asus2, A, Dm, A7



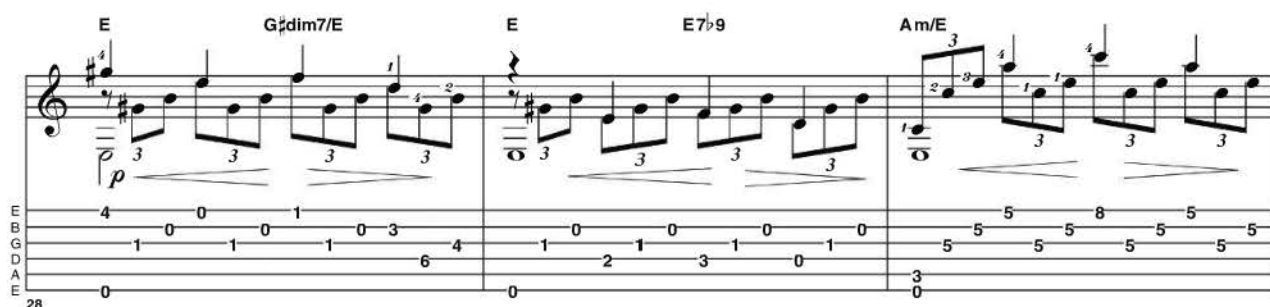
22

Chords: Dm, G[#]dim/B, Dm/A, E7/G[#], Am, Dm6, D[#]dim7



25

Chords: E, G[#]dim7/E, E, E7^b9, Am/E



28

CD TRACK 11

[Bars 31-42] A half barre should be used on beat 3 of bar 33 and the following 3 bars are a good training for diminished 7th arpeggios and this part is easiest when committed to memory.

That way it's possible to see what you're doing! The main theme begins again in bar 42.

The score is divided into measures 31-33, 34-36, 37-39, 40-42, and 43. The right hand part is written in treble clef, and the left hand part is written in bass clef. The score includes various chord diagrams and fingering instructions.

Measures 31-33: Chords: Am/E, G#dim7/E, Am/E. Dynamics: *mf*. Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43.

Measures 34-36: Chords: F#dim7/E, G#dim7/E, G#dim7/E. Dynamics: *poco cresc*, *mf*. Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43.

Measures 37-39: Chords: Dm/A, G#dim7, Dm/A, G#dim7, Bb, Dm/A. Dynamics: *dim*, *p*, *mf*. Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43.

Measures 40-42: Chords: E7b9, F, F/A, Bm7b5, E, E7, Am. Dynamics: *pp*. Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43.

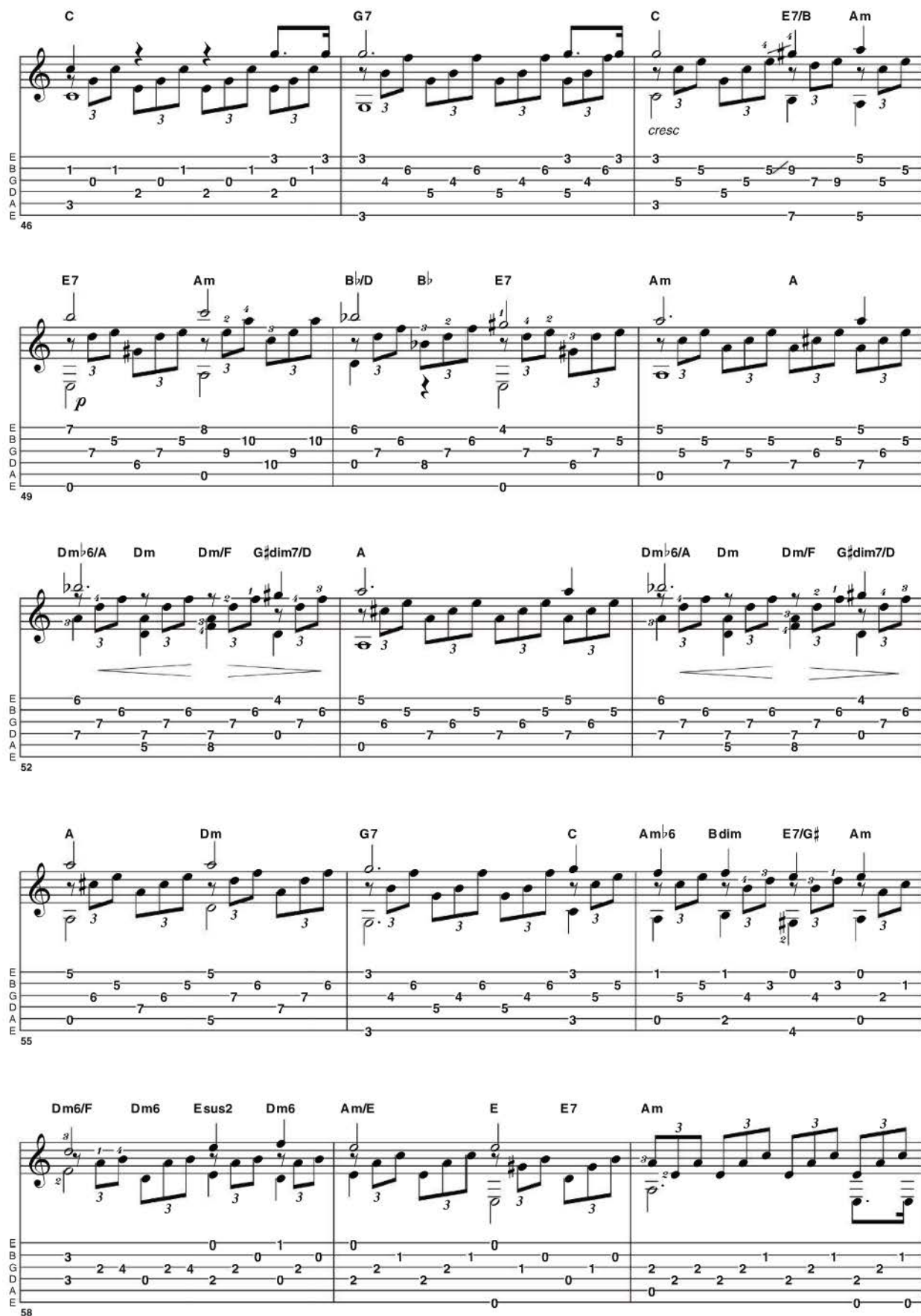
Measure 43: Chords: E7/G#, Am, Dm, C/G, G, G7. Dynamics: *pp*. Fingering: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 11

[Bars 52-57] In bar 52 we have the awkward fretting hand issue again where the fingers feel squashed in too close together. With perseverance it does work! At bar

57 we get this lovely descending sequence and if possible try to allow the upper melody notes to sustain over each triplet figure.



46

49

52

55

58

CD TRACK 11

[Bars 60 to end] From bars 60 to 65 there is a dotted eighth note plus sixteenth note playing beneath the eighth note triplets. This is not too difficult and just

requires a bit of precision with the thumb. The piece eventually dies away softly in a minor arpeggios and the final A minor chords.

Sheet music for guitar, showing measures 61 to 67. The music is in A minor, featuring eighth note triplets and a dotted eighth note plus sixteenth note pattern. Chords indicated include E7, Am/E, G#dim7/E, Am/E, and Am. The bass line includes fingerings and fret numbers (e.g., 0, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 8, 10, 9, 7, 6, 4, 3, 1, 3, 2, 0).

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