

Vangelis

Chariots Of Fire



This month **Bridget Mermikides** commemorates a struggle of Olympian proportions with a piece that's relatively easy to play but is sure to provide inspiration.



ABILITY RATING

● ● ● ● ● Easy/Moderate

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: E	✓ Simultaneous melody & bass
TEMPO: 157bpm	✓ Triplet rhythms
CD: TRACKS 17-18	✓ Pop-classical repertoire

THIS MONTH'S ARRANGEMENT is a little out of the ordinary for a number of reasons: this is the first in the series by a living composer; it was originally scored for electronic instruments; it's a bit more technically manageable than some of the previous pieces; and many of its musical elements (including the melody, harmony and structure) would place it on the far pop end of the classical spectrum.

However the classical guitar is perfectly suited to any era and type of music, and it can be inspiring for you and your audiences to

TECHNIQUE FOCUS

PLUCKING HAND FINGERNAILS

A key component to classical guitar playing is the use of plucking hand fingernails for creating a clear tone that projects well. The nails of the thumb and first three fingers (not the fourth finger) need to be a reasonable length, slightly beyond the end of the fingertips, shaped and filed. The nail shape should follow the edge of the fingertip with a slight downward slant on the left side for right-handed players. The edge of the nail needs to be smoothly filed and polished with a fine buffer or nail paper. When plucking, there should be simultaneous contact of fingertip flesh and side of the nail on the string and the nail acts as a ramp for the string to glide across - the end result being a clear bright tone!

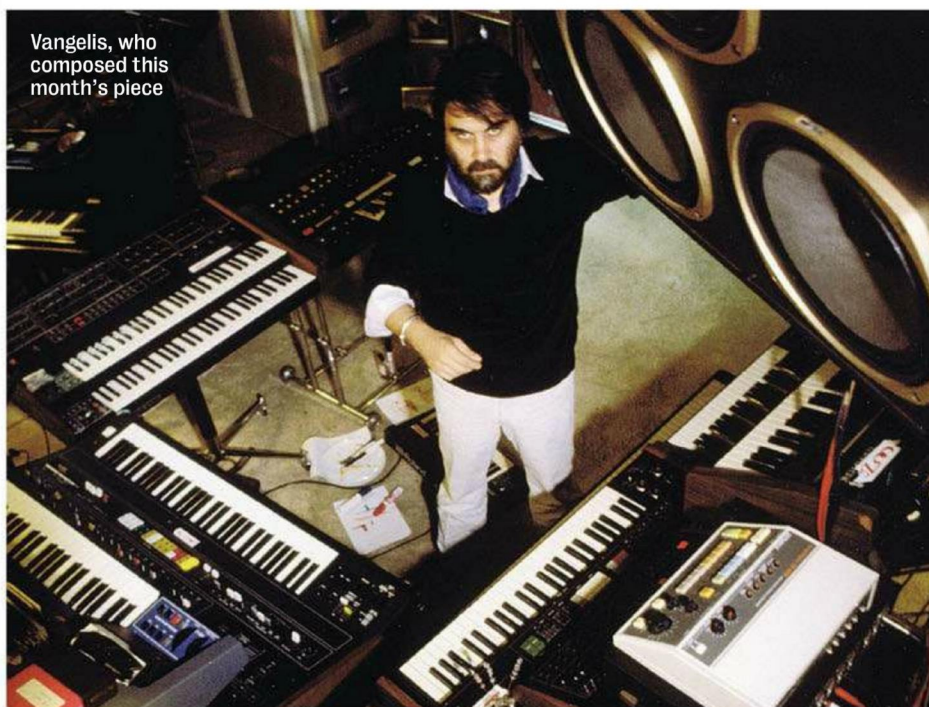
have a varied repertoire - after all as the saying goes (variously attributed to Richard Strauss, Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington) "There are only two types of music. Good and bad. I play the good kind". So let record shops worry about the various categories, while you enjoy playing a wide range of music on the guitar.

Vangelis (born in 1943) is a Greek composer whose style is a mix of various influences from the pop, rock, jazz, orchestral and ambient genres. His work has been particularly successful in film scores where his accessible and catchy melodies, stark soundscapes and mix of orchestral instruments with analog synthesisers

captured the spirit of the '80s. His musical portrayal of a dystopian sci-fi future in *Blade Runner* (1982), his epic score for *1492: Conquest Of Paradise* (1992) and the uplifting theme to *Chariots Of Fire* (1981) all brought him great popular acclaim. The latter theme, underscoring an inspiring story of two 1924

“The classical guitar is suited to any era of music, and it's inspiring for you and your audience to have a varied repertoire.”

Vangelis, who composed this month's piece



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TRACK RECORD For starters, you should check out Vangelis' *Themes* (1989), a CD that ends with the original version of *Chariots Of Fire* from the film score. It also includes many of Vangelis' other popular film related works including the seminal *Blade Runner* themes. For Vangelis' pop-rock work, try his collaborations with Yes' Jon Anderson, especially *The Friends Of Mr Cairo* (1981).




Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell race to the finishing line

Olympic athletes, earned the composer an Academy Award and is, we hope appropriately but not too cheesily, transcribed for you here.

Although the theme was originally orchestrated for piano, analogue synth pads and effected electronic kits, it can be broken down into some simple elements, an impossibly catchy melody, supported by simple triadic chords and a repeating bass-line. I've transposed the original key

of Db major up a semitone to the guitar-friendly key of D major with drop-D tuning. This allows a bass-line support to the piece and the melody to be repeated an octave higher for variation.

Although this is a little more approachable technically than many of the pieces in the series, remember there is no real limit of how well a 'simple' piece can be played. Be honest with yourself about the sound you are making

and the clarity of the melody. Do make sure that you play the rhythm correctly as there are many YouTube versions where the triplet rhythm (a vital rhythmic motif in the piece) is inaccurate, so listen to the original, and play along to my arrangement to be sure. You'll have plenty of opportunity to practise this while watching the Olympics this summer - let's just hope that the British athletes don't start running in slow motion! 

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 18

[Bars 1-11] The opening section mimics the intro synth figure with the repeated bass note (D here) and upper notes D to A. The plucking hand fingering is very specific to help execute the repeated notes while simultaneously striking the bass note D and upper notes as indicated beneath the tab. Follow this fingering

carefully for best results. At bar 8 the D arpeggio maintains the 16th-note feel and flowing movement. The melody begins on the last beat of bar 11 and is interspersed with bass notes. When bass notes D and A occur together – beat two of bar 13 for example – they should be struck together with the thumb in one pluck.

♩ = 68 D5

Drop D tuning

E
B
G
D
A
D

1

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

0 m i m i p i p i p i p i p i p i a p i p i p i p i p i p i p i p i m i m i p i p i p i p i p i

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 18

[Bar 20] At bar 20 a barre at the 2nd fret is needed on the first beat and also on beats two and three of bar 21. On the last beat of bar 27 where the melody goes up an octave, a half barre is required at the 3rd fret. The fourth finger of the

fretting hand moves up the first string to the B note taking the fretting hand to 5th position. At bar 29 a natural harmonic of D at the 12th fret is added on beat 3 and becomes a feature in the bars to come.



The score consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and chord symbols (D, G/B). Fingering numbers are written below the bass staff. Measure numbers 4, 7, 10, 13, and 17 are marked on the left side of the systems.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 18

[Bar 35] The melody at bar 35 and onwards includes some specific fretting hand fingering which should be followed exactly for the most effective technical fluency. The melody notes were performed with rest stroke where possible to

help with projection of sound. Obviously where the melody is at the top of a chord, rest stroke is not possible. A piece like this is all about smoothness of flow - we don't want to sound like we're jumping around the fretboard.

The guitar score is presented in five systems, each with a treble staff and a bass staff. Chords are indicated above the treble staff, and fretting hand fingering is shown as numbers on the bass staff. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

- System 1 (Bars 21-24):** Chords: F#m, A, D, F#m, G, D, A7sus4, D5, F#m, G, D. Fingering includes triplets and sequences like 2-3-2, 2-2-0, 0-2-0, 4-4-0, 4-0-0.
- System 2 (Bars 25-28):** Chords: F#m, A, D, F#m, G, D, A7sus4, D5, G/D 3, D, G/D 3. Fingering includes sequences like 2-3-2, 2-0-0, 0-2-0, 4-4-0, 0-0-0, 3-3-5-7, 5-7-7, 3-3-5-7.
- System 3 (Bars 29-32):** Chords: D, G/D 3, D, G/B 3, D, G/B 3, D, G/B 3. Fingering includes sequences like 5-7-7, 0-12, 5-7-7, 2-3-2, 3-3-3, 3-3-5-7, 5-7-7, 3-3-5-7, 5-7-7, 3-3-5-7.
- System 4 (Bars 33-36):** Chords: D, G/B 3, D, G/A 3, D, F#m, G, D, F#m, G, D. Fingering includes sequences like 5-7-7, 0-12, 5-7-7, 2-3-2, 3-3-3, 3-3-5-7, 10-9-7, 10-10-8, 8-7-5, 10-9-7, 10-10-8, 8-7-5, 10-9-7.
- System 5 (Bars 37-40):** Chords: F#m, A, D, F#m, G, D, G/A 3, D, F#m, G, D. Fingering includes sequences like 9-10-7, 10-9-7, 9-10-7, 5-2-3-2, 3-3-3, 10-9-7, 9-10-7, 5-10-9-7, 10-10-8, 8-7-5, 10-9-7.

CD TRACK 18

then plucked with the thumb (same hand). The second harmonic is an artificial harmonic played by fretting the 2nd fret normally then touching the fretted string directly over the 14th fret with the plucking hand's first finger (i) and then plucking the same string with the third ('a' finger). Ideally the harmonic notes should 'ping' out!

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