

Carcassi Opus 60 No.10



Bridget Mermikides continues her classical guitar series with a look at a piece by Italian guitarist and composer Matteo Carcassi...



US virtuoso David Tanenbaum has recorded several Carcassi works

ABILITY RATING



Moderate

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: D	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hammer-ons and pull-offs
TEMPO: 155bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Finger strength & technique
CD: TRACKS 55-59	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Position shifting

WELCOME TO THE third in our series of intermediate lessons exploring the music and technique of the classical guitar. These lessons present pieces and studies by the classical guitar masters of the 18th and 19th centuries and demonstrate useful and common techniques of the style.

This month I'll introduce you to the Italian guitarist and composer Matteo Carcassi, who achieved fame in his lifetime both as a performer and a teacher. His Complete Method For Guitar remains valuable, relevant and widely used today.


His most famous works are his 25 Studies, Opus 60. These pieces combine important technical skills with stunning romantic music. They are perfect for building technique and manageable repertoire, and are used by countless classical guitar teachers and students around the world. Acquiring your own copy is highly recommended; there is simply not a bad work in the book!

The piece in this month's lesson is Number 10 from these 25 studies and it focuses on fretting hand slurs with particular attention to the fourth finger. A lot of players in the early stages of learning the guitar experience a feeling of weakness in the fretting hand's fourth finger and will even avoid using it in favour of the third finger wherever possible. But the fourth finger should not be neglected and this piece is very useful for addressing the issue.

This month's builder exercises are designed as preparation for the Carcassi study but more importantly to help achieve perfect hammer-ons and pull-offs.

Before launching into Exercise 1 we need to examine the basic fretting hand function and check that it is working economically and efficiently. Begin by placing the first and second fingers on the first two notes: 7th and 8th frets, first and second strings. The hand should feel comfortable and stable, fingers curling all together towards the fretboard. Next, place the fourth finger down at the 9th fret (C# on the first string) so the first, second and fourth fingers are now all pressing down simultaneously. From this point keep your first and second fingers pressing down on the strings and slowly lift the fourth finger on and off the fretboard without making a sound. Do not move or rotate the arm, wrist or hand and do not straighten the fourth finger when it is off the string, simply lift it on and off the string keeping its curled shape constantly intact. The movement comes from the knuckle joint of the fourth finger and there should be absolutely no tension at all.

Next, increase the speed of the finger movement in its direction towards the fretboard so it gently taps down on the string and creates a sound. Don't use too much exertion, as this action should not tire the fretting hand or arm. The quality of the movement will determine the quality of the sound produced. Repeat this process for each of the bars containing slurs (hammer-ons) until a good level of comfort and a competent hammer-on is achieved. You will then be ready to execute the exercise. Start slowly at first, and work up to tempo gradually.

For Exercise 2, as with Exercise 1, begin by placing the first, second and fourth fingers on the strings simultaneously. This time we are preparing for a pull-off so it is the first finger we need to think about initially. Make sure the first finger is holding the string down firmly and then 'pluck' the string with the fourth finger at a right angle to it. The pull-off should not be tense or forced but should have the quality of a satisfying 'bite' when executed well. Try all the pull-offs individually, perfecting this technique, before playing the exercise. 

“A lot of players in the early stages of learning the guitar experience a feeling of weakness in the fretting hand's fourth finger”



TRACK RECORD Award winning David Tanenbaum is chair of the guitar department at San Francisco Conservatory and has been artist in residence at the Manhattan Music School. Along with many recordings featuring modern classical guitar repertoire he has also produced a range of albums in the more traditional style. His Estudios - Carcassi, Sor & Brouwer comes highly recommended.

EXERCISE 1 HAMMER-ONS

CD TRACK 56

Hammer-ons require a little less work to physically execute than pull-offs so practise this first before moving on to Exercise 2.

Hold down fingers 1 & 2 throughout both bars

Hold down fingers 1 & 3 throughout both bars

Hold down fingers 1 & 3 throughout both bars

Hold down fingers 1 & 2 throughout both bars

EXERCISE 2 PULL-OFFS

CD TRACK 57

Watch you don't bend any strings sharp when you execute these pull-offs: it will demonstrate too much energy being used with the wrong fingers.

Hold down fingers as in Ex 1

EXERCISE 3 BOTH TOGETHER

CD TRACK 58

This is a combination of the hammer-on and pull-off techniques we've just looked at and is similar to the way they occur in the upcoming Carcassi study.

Take your time over these exercises, because once they are mastered you will be ready to tackle the piece.

Hold down fingers as in Ex 1 & 2

LESSON: CLASSICAL

FULL PIECE CARCASSI OPUS 60 NO 10

CD TRACK 59

Fretting hand fingering has been suggested throughout and you'll find it mainly favours the fretting hand's fourth finger for slurring: hammer-ons and pull-offs. Although there are places where the third finger could be used (for instance in bar 9), the fourth finger is recommended, since much of the

purpose behind this piece is to strengthen and improve your fourth finger technique. Also, because the fourth finger angle is more perpendicular to the fretboard than that of the third finger, it creates a crisper pull-off once it has gained sufficient strength to perform it correctly.

♩ = 155

D **G/D** **Em/D**

1, 17

A7/D **D**

5, 21

E7 **A**

9, 25

Bm/D **E7** **A**

13, 29

A7 **D/A**

33, 57

FULL PIECE CARCASSI OPUS 60 NO 10 ...CONTINUED
CD TRACK 59

[Bars 14 and 15, previous page] It is a common and important technique for the picking hand thumb to damp unwanted ringing bass notes. At the very end of bar 14 the picking hand thumb should very quickly mute (using the pad of the thumb) the open fourth string before playing the open A in bar 15. Immediately after playing this A, the thumb should bounce back and mute

the low E it just played (end of bar 14). Although this may seem fussy, it is an essential element in creating clear sounding harmony. Without this damping the three bass strings will all be ringing together in bar 15, obscuring the harmonic progression. Once the ear becomes trained in these details, it is difficult to ignore them and damping unwanted notes becomes a must!

Em/A A7

37, 61

D Em/D

41, 65

A7/D D

45, 69

D7 G

49, 73

D/A A7 D

53, 77