

The First Steps

Giannini
7-String Guitar



If the reader decides to go for this adventure and acquire a seven-string guitar, we recommend Brazilian ones such as the ones made by Giannini company. One can also buy an old or new Russian guitar on ebay, or even convert an inexpensive 6-string Yamaha whose fingerboard is wide enough. Just make sure that your choice of instrument is closer to a classical guitar than to the “acoustic” one. Its neck should meet the body at the 12th fret, and the fingerboard should be of sufficient width. The material of strings should be nylon.

For those who will work through this book armed with a “normal” six-string instrument, any classical or parlor guitar will be suitable.

We expect that the readers of this book are not complete novices in classical guitar playing. If they are totally new to guitar, they will find materials

elsewhere on guitarist’s sitting position, positions of the hands, shape of the nails, and the sound production. This allows us to focus specifically on the Russian-Gypsy style here.

As far for the sitting position, there is no standard way. The Russian-Romany guitarists often accompany singers while standing, supporting the guitar with a strap, but do sit down for a challenging instrumental solo. To provide such a universality is a good idea— however, a strap is not necessary for those who are not planning to perform standing.

As for the sound production, this is what the reader should know:

1. *The basic technique for the Russian-Gypsy guitar is free stroke (tirando). Similarly to the early-19th-century Russian guitar style, the Russian-Gypsy repertoire also features rapid passages combining harp-effects with the left-hand legato. However, in addition to this unique “legato feel,” the Russian-Gypsy style features a different sound production with a stronger, crisper articulation. Such staccato sound is essential for accompanying dancers. The rest stroke (apoyando), so permanent in flamenco, is used in Russian-Gypsy style in moderation.*

2. *The main characteristic of the Russian-Gypsy sound production is its more explosive, active attack if compared to the sound of a classical guitarist. In order to be heard over a choir and/or to accompany dances, the Romany guitarists developed a more aggressive attack. To produce such a sound on a single string, the player should allow the string to slip deeper between the nail and the fingertip, and be more robust with the pluck.*

3. *If the more active, explosive sound production lays the foundation for this style, there are certain genres that require an exaggerated “singing” sound, cantabile. In playing such notes, the stroke should be less aggressive and perhaps closer to that in classical guitar playing, while the left hand should help with a very active vibrato.*