

Guitar Council Dr. Kevin Vigil, Chair



Resources for the Guitar Teacher

Guitar classes and programs in school systems continue to spread across the country and in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The recent inclusion of guitar in the National Association for Music Education's (NAfME) National Honors Ensembles stands as evidence of this growth. It is clear that many school districts are able to offer high-level guitar instruction that meets the standards expected of concert band, mixed choir, symphony orchestra, concert band, and jazz ensemble. This is, however, not yet the case in many areas of the country or in most Virginia districts that offer guitar.

Many who teach guitar are not themselves guitarists. These music educators are often assigned to teach guitar without prior or with very little knowledge of the instrument. This leads to systemic inconsistencies in guitar instruction and application of curriculum. Most non-guitarist teachers strive to do their best for their students and seek help from any resource that they can find. It is the intent of this article to guide the non-guitarist or first year guitar teacher on a more successful path.

A Head Start

There are two summer programs that provide a good introduction to guitar education for the non-guitarist teacher: Teach Guitar Workshop ([http://](http://www.guitaredunet.org/)

www.guitaredunet.org/) and the National Teacher Training Summit in Austin (<https://www.austinclassicalguitar.org/guitarcurriculum-training-austin/>).

Teach Guitar Workshops were well described in a recent interview by Thomas Amoriello (Chair, NAfME Council for Guitar Education) with Virginia's own Glenn McCarthy. Here is an excerpt from the interview:

TA: What can a student expect to learn during the week of workshops?

GM: TGW promotes an inclusive approach to instruction, rather than a style-specific approach, so both finger-style and pick-style methodologies are explored. TGW I is designed to help you be successful if you have an introductory/level I guitar class. Of course, TGW will not turn you in to super guitarist, but you will have a much better understanding of pedagogy, scope, sequence, and pacing after taking the class. In addition, participants receive numerous method books and other materials to assist in setting up and running a guitar program.

For the full interview, please visit: https://nafme.org/summer-camp-teaching-guitar-workshops/?fbclid=IwAR14uxkyW38-d8yP8hkpUW5_vc6sbRJRc3qzOigJ8AxPAVpC0BhzYBGini0

The National Teacher Training Summit in Austin, Texas, is run through Austin Classical Guitar (ACG). In addition to this training, ACG offers a subscription to its online resource <https://guitarcurriculum.com/>. A free trial is offered on their website.

Online Resources

The VMEA Guitar Council site is a new resource hosted by VMEA Gui-

tar Council member Aaron Kunk. The site is new and continues to expand to meet the needs of guitar educators. The site includes current articles and news in the guitar educator community. Most recently, the site added the ability to submit guitar related phrases that teachers would like to have translated. This will assist in communication with non-English speaking students. Once the submissions have been collected and translated, the site will include a Quick Guide to Common Guitar Phrase Translations. <https://sites.google.com/view/vmeaguitar/home>

The **School Guitar Teachers Facebook** site is a very active and useful resource for all guitar teachers. There are many devoted professional guitar teachers who join in conversation with teachers of all levels and range of experience. If you are a guitar teacher who has the simplest of questions, just ask the group and you will likely get some good advice. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/220920031658606/>

The **NAfME Council for Guitar Education** has been writing its Best Practices for Guitar for many years. These best practices will be published incrementally on the NAfME website and will be fully published by the end of this academic year (2018-2019). The best practices are divided into four levels: Year One, Year Two, Year Three, and Year Four. These will serve as guidelines to standardize guitar instruction on a national level. Year One is now available at: <https://nafme.org/wp-content/files/2018/12/NAfMEGuitarCouncilYEARONEBestPractices-003.pdf>

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The **Guitar Foundation of America** has several resources on its website which include: Education Vision, GFA Certification, Teacher Resources, Student Opportunities, Professional Development, Teacher Network, Education Standards, and Becoming a Guitar Teacher. <https://www.guitarfoundation.org/page/EdHome>

Thomas Kikta and Alan Hirsh from **The Aaron Shearer Foundation** presented a wonderful lecture at the 2018 VMEA Professional Development Conference. The foundation provides some free resources and others that you must purchase. The quality of instruction and opportunities offered through the Aaron Shearer Foundation are perhaps the most thorough from any instruction method published for classical guitar. As I reflect on guitar teachers who are not themselves guitarists, I respect that they are trained musicians. What is often lacking is a strong foundation on guitar technique and literature. The Aaron Shearer Foundation and the publications they offer would be extremely beneficial to these teachers. <https://www.aaronshearerfoundation.org/site/>

Conclusion

This article has highlighted several resources for guitar teachers who are not themselves guitarists. While summer programs and online resources can be extremely helpful, it is strongly recommended that the non-guitarist teacher study privately with a professional guitarist who has a degree. This person will be better able to personalize instruction and meet your specific needs for the benefit of your students.



2019 All-Virginia Guitar Ensemble Conductors (L to R): Alan Hirsh, guest conductor; Glen McCarthy, conductor; Glenn Caluda, guest conductor; and Miroslav Loncar, guest conductor.



Glen McCarthy rehearses the All-Virginia Guitar Ensemble.



Alan Hirsh and Thomas Kitka from the Aaron Shearer Foundation.