



Practice Technique for a Musician



Dr. Simon Powis
Performer & Educator

Simon Powis has performed around the world on the classical guitar and has taught thousands of musicians with his online teaching resources. He strives to inspire music students and empower musical entrepreneurs for a modern life in music.

www.simonpowis.com

www.classicalguitarcorner.com

Practice Technique for a Musician

1st Edition

Practicing is an art unto itself.

This book is here to guide you, and to inspire you to hone the craft of practice. It will affect every aspect of your music making and it can make the difference between enjoyment and frustration. It is worth taking the time to study and consider, and you have already started.

Play vs. Practice

The most common trap that we all fall into is *playing* rather than practicing. As a guitarist I have no doubt that fellow guitarists share my passion, if not obsession, with the instrument. It is an amazing instrument that feels wonderful to play. But *playing* is different from *practicing*. In fact, there is a giant chasm between the two and if you are not careful playing can be harmful to your technique and repertoire.

After you finish practicing, you should feel tired, maybe even exhausted. It is not always enjoyable and can require discipline, planning and perseverance.

Playing, on the other hand, should be your chance to immerse yourself in the music and reap the benefits of concentrated practice. If you are not careful and you play through pieces over and over again, you could be reinforcing bad habits and mistakes without knowing, and habits take a terribly long time to undo.

Time management

We don't all have hours upon hours to dedicate to musical study, and to be honest a mountain of free time is not always as productive as you think. So, we all have to make the most of the time we have.

If you are taking the time to read this booklet, then you are a curious and industrious learner. Use that industry to plan your own practice times. Divide it into sections, set goals (realistic goals) and when you finish, go over what you achieved. It will feel good to list all of the achievements you made. Even ten minutes can be quite a long time when it is used well.

To help you manage your time, use a countdown timer with an alarm. Using a timer to mark segments of your practice is almost like having a teacher with you, nudging you

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

along to your next task. It can simultaneously prevent you from spending too much time on one task or wandering away from the task too early. The alarm is important, as it will mark the end of your segment. Don't use a clock on the wall, it doesn't care about you like the countdown timer does. And yes, you should practice every day.

Chunks

The countdown timer is not going to be very helpful if you set it for an hour and a half. You need to set it for smaller chunks so that you remain focused and know when to move on to new tasks. If you have never used one before to guide your practice, I suggest fifteen minute chunks of time. It is enough time to make progress with material and usually just a bit longer than we would spend on a singular task, so it forces us to forge ahead for an extra few minutes.

Over time you will find out what kinds of chunks work for you. Not all chunks are created equally either, so in your journalling you can establish varying chunk times for different tasks.

Breaking it up

If you are practicing for over an hour I recommend taking a break every 45 minutes. Any longer, and you might start getting diminishing returns. Your hard work will result in less progress and it becomes tougher to focus. A fifteen minute break every hour gives you time to stretch, rest your brain and body, and regroup for another productive session of practice.

Warming it up

You young whippersnappers may not pay too much attention to warming up, but believe me, it will become very important as time passes and it is good to start these habits young.

We are asking a lot of our hands, arms, and back when we practice, and injuries are a very real issue that we all face. To prevent RSI, carpal tunnel syndrome, focal dystonia and a slough of other horrifying medical terms, take the time to warm up each time you sit down for a practice session.

- Stretch your arms, legs, back and neck
- Practice slow scales or simple exercises
- Slow passage work, simple studies

It isn't rocket science, but it does take discipline.

Setting goals

Setting goals is a great way to make your practice session more productive and get you feeling positive about your playing.

Goals give you focus, and they provide guidance for a practice session. You need to know what you are trying to accomplish at any given part of your practice routine and by deciding upon one or several goals before you start practicing you are setting yourself up for improvement.

Its a trap!

It is tempting to begin practicing without any sense of direction or time frame. You might convince yourself that you are about to practice but in reality you are about to wander randomly between pieces that you have memorized, scores at hand, and exercises that you can recall at any given moment.

This type of practice rarely leaves us feeling good because it is random and not very productive. Have you ever finished a practice session only to think that “I really should have worked on that piece, and this technique... in fact, what did I actually achieve?” If so, then you are not alone, many of us fall into this trap.

Journalling

To help you create goals and then reach them, I want you to start journalling. We are not talking about anything extensive here, rather a simple and direct list of activities to include in the practice session. If you like, you can write down aspirations or goals that span a larger amount of time but if you are thinking about longer term goals be sure to specify how this session will work towards those goals. At the end of each session, re-visit your list of goals and make note of what was achieved and what work will be continuing in the next session.

Use a book for this process so that you can look back on previous sessions and know where you have been putting your efforts. The beautiful benefit of journalling is a sense of accomplishment and direction that can frustratingly elude us if we practice aimlessly (without goals).

Focus

When a bodybuilder goes to the gym with the goal of building muscles she has a schedule that spans the entirety of a week. The schedule makes sure that all important muscles are worked on throughout the week and that the work is evenly spread out over time. In this

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

manner she can achieve her goal quickly and efficiently. As musicians we can work in the same manner and it is up to you whether you plan your “work out” over an hour, a day, week or even a month.

The real key is to make your schedule realistic and achievable. If you write down to practice for seven hours a day with scales, repertoire, analysis and technique in each session you will be left feeling disappointed because, as we all know, life often gets in the way of idealistic plans.

Depending on your schedule you might want to write down the amount of time that you will devote to different things. A one hour goal setting schedule might look like this:

My Goal:

To work on the Bach Allemande.

Warm up:

Stretches and slow string crossing. 5 mins

Scales and arpeggios:

Focus on E minor and G Major (appropriate for the repertoire). 15 mins

Repertoire:

Work on the Bach *Allemande* and decide on fingering for the first phrase. 30 mins

Play through the *Allemande* first phrase. 5 mins

Cool down:

Stretch and journal about progress. 5 mins

A one week repertoire schedule might look like this:

My Goal for this week: To play the first page of the Bach Allemande from beginning to end.

Monday: Allemande, first page with fingering 1hr

Tuesday: Allemande, second page with fingering 1hr

Wednesday: Allemande, focus on difficult passages and work on them individually 2hrs

Thursday: Play through Allemande beginning to end at a moderate tempo. 1hr

Friday: (can't practice, but I will analyze the score on the train in the morning)

Saturday: Perform the Allemande for Maria and record my performance. 30 mins

Sunday: Listen to the recording and work on passages that need improving. 3 hrs

Get real

The real key to this process is setting realistic goals with an achievable schedule. Then sticking to it! The results will be overwhelmingly positive and your playing will improve more than if you had spent your time randomly playing through different pieces.

If you want to play like Bream, give yourself a good solid lifetime, but if you want to

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

avoid frustration and enjoy your progress, aim to master a single scale or work on a single phrase of music in one session. If you accomplish your goals before the time is up, just set more! The positive feeling that comes from reaching a goal that you set will fuel more practice, and start a virtuous cycle of music making.

Slow practice

Musicians seem to have a fascination with playing things fast. I must admit that I too went through my phase... ok. several phases, of obsessing over speed. However, I have found in my teaching and my own studies that the best way to improve control, accuracy and even speed is to slow everything down.

Don't think, though, that this is about *attaining speed*, because it isn't. It is about comprehension. It is about understanding what is going on in the music, in your hands, and in your body.

Let's compare practice to being a passenger in the car and looking out the window. When the car is whizzing along, you will have a tough time seeing all the detail in the landscape passing by, you will simply get a general idea and overview. When that car slows down in traffic, suddenly details start appearing; plants, animals, broken glass on the side of the road, a lone coin... It is these details that will make you a better player. You will be aware of things you need to improve and you will have the chance to productively take on individual challenges.

There are three types of slowing down that I would like to talk about:

1. Slowing down the the tempo
2. Slowing down your practice
3. Slowing down your performance

Slowing down the tempo

When you slow down the tempo of a section that needs work then, and only then, can you see what isn't working and how you can fix it. Slowing down allows us to understand the very complex movements of both hands that are involved in a passage of music. Once we understand the movements we have more control of the movements. With more control comes accuracy and speed. It also aides in the speed at which we learn a piece and perhaps memorize it. Once you start slowing down the tempo of passages to work on them, you will find out that you are moving faster by going slower.

Slowing down your practice

In a similar way, slowing down your overall practice means that you work more efficiently and productively. By slowing down your practice I mean that you do not try to learn the piece in one sitting or even ten.

Take your time. Map out all of the fingering, try different fingerings, look at right hand fingering, analyze the form, the structure, the harmony, the phrasing...

There are many facets to each piece yet most of us jump straight in the deep end and start playing a piece from beginning to end... at full speed. By doing this you are making the entire learning process stretch out over a much longer period of time than it needs to be.

Slowing down your performance

So, after a coffee and a good warm up you can play that overture at a blistering pace of MM. 120 all the way through with only a few slips... (congrats!)... but when the performance comes around half of the notes were missing and the other half may have been in another key... does this sound familiar?

It is all too common to hear the phrase “but I played it much better last night at home” following a less than spectacular performance. So why do we always try to play at the very extreme of our capabilities when the situation is at its toughest?

Well, the answer to that question can be left for someone else to answer but I am here to say that if you shift down a couple of gears in your performance and take things at a more manageable pace you will be a happy camper.

The positive reinforcement you feel after being on stage and feeling more in control is worth its weight in gold and the positive side effects filter through all of your playing. (can you imagine how good you would feel if you were always in control on stage!)

We naturally speed up tempi on stage and in other high stress scenarios. If you think you are taking it at your top speed you are probably taking it a few notches more thanks to all the adrenaline.

When notes are played cleanly and rhythmically on an instrument a listener perceives the music as much faster than sloppy playing taken at a faster tempo.

Practicing perfect

Practice makes perfect. So they say. But it doesn't. *Practice makes permanent.*

As a witness to in-lesson practicing by students, I can tell you that many people will stumble through an exercise quickly three or four times making multiple mistakes each time. The first time they execute the task correctly, they stop.

So what has the brain learned from this process? The brain has learned the mistakes three times and the correct version once. So you have learned the mistake.

If you want to produce a performance without mistakes you will need to be patient and mindful in the practice session. It is inevitable that when learning an exercise or passage for the first time, there will be slips and mistakes. This is ten times more likely if you rush through them. Take the time to understand what is going on in the music and in your hands, and start slow before taking off at tempo.

Once you have understood the task, then you need to repeat it correctly at tempo multiple times to solidify the music. Only then will it hold up in performance.

Recording yourself for practice

Recording yourself is one of the best ways to improve your abilities. We often have quite a different idea in our head of what our playing sounds like compared to the scathing honesty of a recording. If you record yourself and hear things that you want to improve then you have already learnt something and gained invaluable objectivity.

Many music students rely on teachers to give them advice on practice materials to develop their playing but armed with a recording device and your own common sense you will be amazed at how many things you can pick up and improve on your own.

Here is an approach for you to try:

- Record your piece and listen back to it several times with the score in-front of you. Mark on the score (you may want to make some extra copies of the score as they might get crowded) all of the things that you would like to improve. For example, you might notice that some dotted rhythms are a little sloppy and that you didn't play the dynamics/articulation that is marked in. You might even notice that you are playing some wrong notes. Use a highlighter and colored pens to mark the score.
- Then, quite simply, go over those sections that need improving. If it sounds simple, its because it is simple. But then think about what your teacher points out in your

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

lesson... *Your rhythm here is a little sloppy and you aren't playing staccato here... actually come to think of it... isn't that meant to be a G#?*

- Be sure to keep all of the recordings you make and every few weeks go over the recordings to track your progress. Consistent errors or aspects of your playing that need fixing become very apparent through this process and the realization and acknowledgement of these problems is one of the biggest steps in fixing them.

My philosophy as a teacher is to teach my students to teach themselves. Teachers are great when they inspire and guide, however, if a teacher does not have a final goal of enabling the student to progress on their own, the learning process becomes teacher dependent.

Put the instrument down and step out of the vehicle!

The process of recording yourself touches on an idea.

Practice away from the instrument.

If you are like me, you love playing the instrument, having physical contact with it is a pleasure. There are times, however, when putting the instrument down can help us practice the music.

Spending time analyzing just the score can yield surprising results. Observing expressive markings, identifying phrases, listening along with a recording (or your own recording). I could go on with more examples but the point is this: details that may have been glossed over when playing can come into clear view without the distraction of the instrument.

If you have problems finding time to practice then this kind of practice could be very useful indeed. Reading the score on a train, or listening to recordings in a car can be productive and enlightening. You can listen to other works by the same composer or in the same style or delve into a harmonic analysis of the score. All of which can be done without the instrument in hand.

So, before you pick up your instrument, answer me this:

- What key is it in?
- Does the key change?
- What is the overall form or structure (binary, ternary, sonata etc.)
- Are there repeats? Da Capo?
- What are the tempo markings?
- As a matter of fact, what about the other markings, do you know what they all mean?

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

- Here is a big one, where are the phrases?
- What style of music is this?
- When did the composer live?
- Was this even written for your instrument? If not, do yourself a huge favor and go and listen to the original. Even better, get the original score.

Now, you have started thinking about the music and perhaps some musical ideas have started bubbling in your head. Now you can get your instrument. That is going to be the tool that helps you realize your ideas.

Your own personal tool box

We develop our technique so that we can communicate music.

Technique is not an end in itself, but rather a set of tools that enable us to make music. It is easy to lose sight of this fact, and there is a comfort in just studying technique. It is akin to sport or exercise and it can be easily labeled, segmented and squared away.

Repertoire is much more of a living breathing thing. Pieces stay with us for many years and sometimes feel like old friends.

I believe it is important to be clear about this distinction as it will help add clarity of intention to your practice.

The weakest link

If there is a problem with a passage, it usually is not with the passage itself. It is with a very specific point in that passage. Perhaps a shift, transition, or rhythm. Whatever it is, you need to identify it, and work very specifically on that particular problem.

If your weak link exists because of a general technical deficiency, take the technique out of context and work on it in isolation. If we stay in the repertoire and hammer away at the problem relentlessly we risk developing a technical exercise within a piece of music. Additionally, by isolating the technique and working on the general issue, you are investing time that will affect all of your repertoire, not just the passage at hand.

Creating an exercise from a passage can be fun. You need to be a little creative and sometimes think outside of the box. What is the underlying problem and what exercise will help develop your technique to deal with the problem?

As an example, we could say that the dotted rhythms in a passage are sloppy. They sound more like triplets. By practicing a two octave scale and arpeggio all with the same dotted

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

rhythm, you will reinforce the rhythm in a wide variety of positions and be focused specifically on the issue.

If a slur is weak, you could develop a slur exercise across multiple strings that directly addresses the pair of fingers that is suffering the issue.

If there is a difficult shift, perhaps organize a series of shifts and analyze what your body is doing in the process. Perhaps you are tensing up in your back, perhaps you could use a smoother motion? These details are hard to focus on when playing repertoire.

The thought that it takes to create an exercise excites me as a teacher. You can't be passive in this process, you can't rely on a book to tell you what to do.

This is a good habit to develop.

Scales

Scales are probably the first thing that comes to mind when we think of practice and technical development. They provide the most efficient synthesis of technique of any given technical work. Synchronization between both hands, sequencing, shifting, and speed are all part of scale work. They can also open up your knowledge of the instrument by finding a variety of ways to explore key centers and familiarize yourself with the location of notes.

The big mistake

Scales are fantastic. They combine many elements of the left and right hand techniques and we can add infinite variations to cater scale practice to our specific needs. There is, however, one giant pitfall.

Don't fall victim to mindless practice of scales that go up and down without any thought or purpose. Use them as tools to hone in on technical or musical issues. Be very specific as to why you are practicing a scale. Speed, sound, accuracy, articulation, dynamics etc. these are all techniques that can be worked on with scales.

Why do we practice scales ?

Scales are tools. They are simple frameworks that we can use to hone in on specific technical elements. Once those elements have been worked on in isolation they can be incorporated into music making, which is the ultimate goal of any technical work.

Without a specific focus to practicing a scale then the time is wasted without any goals being reached.

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

One goal with a scale might be to practice *crescendo* and *diminuendo* another could be to practice *staccato* articulations yet another is a variety of rhythms. As you may start to realize, the variety of ways to use a scale is almost as diverse as your imagination. A more complete list of scale suggestions is written below and I encourage you to come up with your own uses for scale practice.

Having written a scale book for classical guitar, I can also tell you that a thorough investigation of scales opens up a variety of ways to think about your instrument. Many stringed instruments have more than one place to play the same pitch, and scales can offer a structured exploration of the fingerboard landscape.

Here are some goal suggestions to apply to your scales:

Dynamics

- Crescendo
- Diminuendo
- Terraced Dynamics - pp,p,mp,mf,f,ff

Rhythms

- Dotted Rhythms
- Triplets with duplets
- Groupings of 5,6,7

Tempo

- Accelerando
- Rallentando
- Lento, Andante, Allegretto, Allegro, Presto etc.

Tone Control

- Ponticello
- Tasto

Extended Techniques

- Pizzicato
- Harmonics
- Slurs

Articulations

- Staccato
- Legato
- Tenuto
- Sforzando

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

- Accents (place accents on different notes)

Right Hand Fingering (guitar)

- im, mi, ia, ai, ma, am, ami, mia, ima, pima, amip, pi, ip etc.

Left Hand Fingering

- Shifts and finger independence

Choosing repertoire

It is important to carefully consider, which works you choose to study because more often than not, they stay with us throughout our entire lives. Our repertoire can shape us and even define what type of musician we are. It has been said that “pieces choose us” and at times it does feel that way because we skim over so many pieces, and whilst some stick others fade away. I tend to believe that choosing repertoire is a conscious decision and a very important one. The following points are not meant to be a definitive guide as many of them are contradictory to one-another, rather, they are intended to help you think about what you should include in your repertoire and why.

Love what you play

There is no getting around this one. Pieces that you choose to learn will stay around for many years and it is important to love each one. Sometimes we get forced to learn certain repertoire by teachers, for events, or just because we feel obliged to do so. However, if you don't have a real appreciation for a piece then the many hours you dedicate to learning will feel very long and frustrating. The audience too will recognize when there is a lack of commitment to a piece from the performer making the process arduous for everyone involved.

A piece may not resonate with you immediately, and sometimes it is wise to allow time to guide our choices. Our feelings can follow a common path of initial infatuation - loss of interest - a re-gaining of appreciation through understanding (analysis and familiarity) and finally, a strong personal bond with a piece.

Simply put, it is a relationship.

Repertoire that will educate you

If you already have a couple of works under your fingers by the masters maybe its time to diversify your repertoire. Its often tempting to stick closely to the same genres and composers that you already know as the familiarity of them makes us feel comfortable and speeds up the learning process of new works.

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

Try taking on new works from a style you have never worked on before or by a composer you have never heard of. In doing this you will broaden your musical horizon and gain a deeper understanding of the musical language which is common to all music from Bach to Britten to Babbitt.

You may find that you will be pleasantly surprised with your new venture into the unknown and once foreign composers may become a new favorite. By diversifying your repertoire you will learn a lot about music in general and your musical abilities will grow as you tackle new challenges in rhythm, harmony, structure and phrasing. After all, variety is the spice of life.

Popular repertoire

Certain pieces strike a chord with humanity. They are the pieces that inspire us to start studying music in the first place and they are the pieces that everyone has heard before, even if they don't know the name.

As a musician, you might be a little stand-offish from these evergreens of the repertoire, but I can guarantee you there will be many occasions when they will be requested. People love these pieces and they will often provide an opening to introduce lesser known works into a performance setting.

Just because they have been played and heard a million times, doesn't mean they have lost any of their glory. In fact, it just shows how glorious they are.

Repertoire that you play well

All too often musicians, and artists in all fields for that matter, focus on negative aspects of their playing and holes in their repertoire. This is well and good to keep progressing but keep in mind that we all have our strengths too. If you have a flair for nineteenth century music or a passion for Argentine tango then exploit it! The confidence and positive reinforcement that comes from playing music that you love, and playing it well will permeate the whole of your performance and the audience will love you for it.

New repertoire

Performing new or rare repertoire has pros and cons, however, I believe that if new works are performed with care and selectivity it can be a huge asset to your repertoire. If you go to any large music festival over the summer you may attend up to ten or twelve concerts (sometimes more) and after a while the concerts, performers and pieces all start to blend in to one another. The same repertoire is often recycled again and again in classical

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

concerts and when a new work is performed it is guaranteed to stand out.

As a musician you can carve out a niche for yourself with new repertoire, you could be a champion of a certain composer or of new works from your country. You will, however, need to use good judgment in selecting your works because with the huge array of new compositions to choose from there are as many duds as there are gems. The standard repertoire benefits from the thousands of musicians who have tried and tested the older repertoire leaving the true masterworks to endure the test of time.

Repertoire that will help you

There are certain situations that need certain pieces. Auditions, competitions and even public events or concerts often require specific works or composers. For this reason it is a great idea to learn a range of pieces that are very useful for these situations. For example, in an audition there are often required pieces. A piece by Bach, a Classical and Romantic piece, a tonal and non tonal twentieth century work for example. Even if Bach is not your favorite composer perhaps it would be worth your while learning a suite or a sonata that can be used in a wide range of scenarios. When it comes to performing for non-musician audiences it is great to have some works written by “big name” composers that are more familiar to the wider population.

Memorizing music

These days it is more common than not to see a classical musician perform from memory. It has become almost par for the course to have an entire recital memorized and performed without mistakes (if our job wasn't already hard enough!). Before going on to talk about methods of memorization I would like you to first give some thought to why we perform from memory?

Why memorize?

Memorizing music definitely has its advantages. Often musicians feel more “free” and able to express themselves when the music has been memorized and the score is absent from the stage. It also may come across to some people as an impressive feat of virtuosity having memorized the thousands of notes that are played in a concert. The 19th century idea of the music virtuoso first brought around this idea and it has endured to our time.

These advantages do have their worth but personally I think the advantages of having a score during performance outweigh those of memorization. Having the score during performance does not mean you have to have your eyes glued to the page for the entire time, in fact you may not even use it for large portions of a piece. Psychologically, however, having the score provides a great sense of safety and therefore reduces the

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

stress of performance which can adversely affect music making.

The four memories

Normally we only use one or two types of memory in a piece and in doing so we are not preparing as thoroughly as we could for the memory slip that's around the corner and trust me, it is around the corner. Let me be clear, a memory slip is not what you think it is. It is not that you have forgotten something or you don't know it rather it is an interruption in the stream of consciousness, a distraction, a break of concentration. These things happen to everyone all the time. So the process of memorizing a piece of music is not so much stopping the breaks of concentration it is building a support network of memories to catch you when you fall.

The more types of memory that you employ, the better. It is equivalent to looking at a 3D object from different perspectives. From different angles you will have a fuller understanding of what the object is and also a more comprehensive memory of it.

Kinesthetic

Kinesthetic memory is more commonly referred to as "muscle memory". It is by far the most common kind of memory that we employ whilst playing an instrument. The best way of describing it is the feeling of being on auto pilot. We use this for many actions we do every day: opening doors, turning on a tap, walking, riding a bike etc. This type of memory is built up through repetition and is probably the most common type of memory simply because its the easiest.

If you learn a piece by repeating passages over and over you are walking a very fine line. The big problem with this memory is that if your steam of consciousness is broken during a performance and you actually have to think about what your hands are doing you get completely lost. This is the all too common "memory slip" and it happens to the best of us.

Your concentration can be broken by a myriad of distractions in a concert. Coughing, traffic noise, even your own thoughts and fears running around in your head can cause the most ardent memorizer to have a "slip". The best way to protect yourself from these inevitable moments is to incorporate the following types of memory.

Aural

Aural memory ("aural" from auditory not "oral" from mouth) is your memory of how a piece sounds. The usability of this memory depends on how well you have trained your aural skills. If you can hear and recognize complex harmonic relationships and intervallic

Practice Technique for a Musician by Dr. Simon Powis

relationships then this type of memory can greatly aid your overall memory. Aural memory can be developed through solfege, critical listening to works (i.e. listening to a work with the score several times) and transcribing music by ear. Aural skill is not an innate skill that everyone has but it can be obtained by anyone who puts in the effort. It requires many dedicated hours but its rewards are great.

Visual

The visual memory of the score and where the notation is placed can obviously be a huge aid in performance and if you are fortunate enough to have a photographic memory, then, I'm jealous.

For the rest of us the process of visualization can be of great value. Visualization is thinking of an action in your mind's eye. For many of us it is easy to visualize walking down a street or answering a phone, however, to visualize the performance of an entire work is quite a skill and it can be a wonderful tool for working on pieces away from the instrument. This technique can be developed by anyone and combined with a strong kinesthetic memory it will give your performance a strong foundation.

Analytic

Knowledge of the score includes knowing the harmony, form, stylistic features, phenomena markings (articulation, dynamics etc.) and any other important characteristics. It is quite obvious that a thorough knowledge of what is going on in the music will aid your memory. For instance knowing that a cadence in C minor is approaching will tell you what notes will be involved. At best this will trigger your memory for what's written and at worst you can fake the notes by playing the right harmony. I have done this more times than I care to remember and nobody even notices!

Be inspired

I hope I have lit a fire in your musical heart.
The world needs your music, so let's get to work.

Simon Powis

May 20, 2015
New York, NY

simonpowis@gmail.com
simonpowis.com
classicalguitarcorner.com