EXERCISE SUITE FOR THE MODERN GUITARIST:

Hydrosphere, Study No. 1
Theme and Variations on Mate'ka, Study No. 2
Theme and Variations on Mate'ka, Study No. 3
Theme and Variations on Mate'ka, Study No. 4
Gratitude, Study No. 5

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The printed music in this collection preserves the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic components of East-African folk music. The notes, themselves, provide technical obstacles for the modern classical guitarist.

Enjoy reading and playing *Exercise Suite for the Modern Guitarist.*
During each new generation of guitarists, there will surface some collection of study pieces that are left behind for future students and pedagogues. I have written a series of classical guitar study pieces in hope that they will enlighten and improve the musicianship of future classical guitarists for centuries to come. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the boundaries of musical composition have been pushed to great extremes, and astute students need to understand how to handle music that has been written outside of the common-practice period (1650-1900).

While seeking modern classical guitar composers for compositional influences for my suite, the Cuban composer Leo Brouwer and the Brazilian master Heitor Villa-Lobos were the most appealing. Villa-Lobos composed a set of twelve studies that are renowned in the guitar community for demanding virtuosic ability from the performer. These pieces, for the most part, use extensive harmonic movement and maintain appealing melodies, making them not only successful studies, but give them place in the concert repertoire.

Borrowing thematic material from ancient folk music not only can relieve the composer from the stress of creating original melodic and harmonic ideas, but can aid in the preservation of music that is on the brink of extinction. Brouwer was selected as a model because of his short work entitled *Canticum*. During the second movement, entitled “Ditirambo”, there is a constant drone Eb that maintains pulse while melismatic melodic figures move frantically about. This stems from Dithyramb, is a Greek lyric composition dedicated to the goddess Dionysus, which originated as a section of music to be performed during specific rituals. This was usually performed by a choir with alternations between cantor and the group of singers. Brouwer’s pulse is kept on the sixth string, tuned to Eb.
Natalie Curtis compiled a collection of East African tribal songs in her book, *Songs and Tales from the Dark Continent*. A native Ndau tribesman, Kamba Simango, helped notate various genres of songs in this collection, one of which is *Mate'ka*, a Chindau’ song from East Africa meaning *Rain Ceremony*. ¹ This ceremonial song is one of many that were composed by the higher class members of the Ndau tribe, and it is initiated by the tribal king during periods of drought and famine. Beer is made, everyone has a role in the music making, and the dead are honored, while a particular god is worshiped in hope of receiving assistance for their escalating sorrow.

After I had written several movements based upon *Mate'ka*, the music seemed to demand a opening movement or prelude. “Study No. One, Hydrosphere” had been composed before I had done any research on the ceremonial song, but it fit perfectly! This movement symbolizes the static atmosphere before rain has fallen, challenging the player to maintain a consistent piano timbre during each slur figure. The slurs represent the invisible water molecules, creating an ambience of harmony around the melodic line. In practice and performance, the student must create independent and dynamic lines, bringing the melodic line to the surface while keeping each slur quiet.

It is important to take special notice of the slurred line in m. 13, example (A), — while not only using left hand slurs, the right hand will tap certain notes. While this technique is not currently popular in the classical guitar repertoire, it should be; the tapping gesture in the right hand gives the player opportunity to play more notes, relieve the work load of the left hand, and provides extra time to the during shifting. Following this quick tapping “lick” is the eight

¹ Curtis p. 20
measure long barre exercise section, inspired by Villa-Lobos “Study No. 1” (example B). This short section is meant to give the guitarist a respite from having to focus on each slur and allows the player to command their left hand differently. With the right hand providing a written-in flourish to force the ear to hear every note of each chord, the left hand must stay extremely relaxed in order to have endurance for the remainder of the piece.

“Study No. Two” is the first movement of the suite to be based on the African rain song, Mate’ka. Mate’ka, starts with a dance-rhythm that Simango notated as a consistent rhythm as illustrated below in example (C). This drum motive becomes a theme, permeating every movement from “Study No. Two” until the end of “Study No. Five”. Through the second study, guitarists face technical obstacles such as arpeggiation and the playing of blocked chords that will lead them to more proper technique, as illustrated in example (D). This movement is dedicated to Hu Bin (Bolton Guitar Studies DMA Candidate, The University of Arizona — Fred Fox School of Music). Hu Bin was the first classical guitar teaching assistant assigned to me at The University of Arizona

Continuing with the Mate’ka theme, “Study No. Three” follows the same format as the prior study (theme followed by variations). This movement was written as a dedication to my colleague, Angel Duran (Undergraduate Student — Bolton Guitar Studies). Before sitting down to write the piece, I met with Mr. Duran to discuss which techniques he hoped to develop while learning the new composition. At his request, I designed the variations to develop the guitarist’s ability to produce beautiful tone through single-line melodies, complex rhythms as seen in example (E), and melodic scaler runs as seen in example (F).
The fourth movement of my work is the most interesting in it’s thematic material. Simango notated the first three systems of Mate'ka’s second section as fluctuating in tempo between $\text{♩} = 96$ and $\text{♩} = 92$, as seen in example (G). For the sake of an enjoyable performance, I have altered the theme to move back and forth between $\text{♩} = 96$ and $\text{♩} = 84$, allowing the listener to easily notice the change in tempo. Once the variations begin, I make use of tempo change rather radically.

During my planning period for writing this movement, I conferred another colleague to whom I would dedicate this movement, Misael Barraza Diaz (DMA Candidate — Bolton Guitar Studies) to discuss what he thought his ideal study piece would include. His request was for a study piece that focused more on musicality rather than on the ability to play a large quantity of notes rapidly (as individual works by Heitor Villa-Lobos or Leo Brouwer typically provides.) Consequently, the variations deal with small melodic figures that fit well in the hand, and the performer’s primary concern will be to accommodate the changing pace throughout piece which ends with a dramatic ritardando, slowing down to $\text{♩} = 52$ as seen in example (H).

The finale, “Gratitude,” symbolizes the rain that will come after movements two, three and four have been played. This movement is dedicated to Grant Miller (DMA Candidate — Bolton Guitar Studies). His wish was for a new study piece which focused on AMI scales in the right hand. A separate section challenges the performer to maintain a moving a melodic line on top of blocked chords. Similar to the first movement, “Hydrosphere,” “Gratitude” is through-composed for the most part. The dance theme of Mate’ka returns in this piece and is used as the foundation for the blocked chord section, as seen in example (I).
A new notational technique, when writing for scalar motion, is to alternate the stems of 16th notes (as seen in Example J) to express speeding up or slowing down. Leo Brouwer has written motivic ideas that inspired this concept and are found in the chaotic piece, “Canticum.” One of his lines is provided in example (K). I hope to see more classical guitar music written using this concept to give every sixteenth note the personality that it deserves.

This collection of music is intended to provide opportunity for the classical guitar student to develop musicality alongside technical ability. I hope to attract the attention of students, teachers, and ethnomusicologists with this work and to inspire an innovative mentality when it comes to the interpretation and composition of music during the twenty-first century. My intent also is that Exercise Suite No. One For the Modern Guitarist will be a source of energy and inspiration for composers to turn to the folk music of Africa as a basis for classical music composition in the 21st century.
Example A:

Example B:

Example C:

Example D:
Example E:

Example F:

Example G:

Example H:
Bibliography:

1. Natalie Curtis, Music From the Dark Continent
   (New York/Boston: Shirmer, 1919)


Hydrosphere
Theme and Variations on Mate'ka

accel.

Var. 2 \( j = 80 \)

Percussion on Body

Spirito

Var. 3 \( j = 60 \)

\[ \sum \]

\[ \text{a tempo} \]
Theme and Variations on Mate'ka
Study No. 3

Dedicated to Angel Duran

G.L. Spiers

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Var. 3

Theme and Variations on Mate'ka

Var. 3
Theme and Variations on Mate'ka

Study No. 4

G.L. Spiers

Dedicated to Misael Barraza-Diaz

1 = Eb
6 = Eb

"Theme:"  \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash q = 96 \ q = 84}} \)

Guitar

"Var. 1"  \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash q = 96 \ q = 84}} \)

Gtr.

"Var. 2"  \( \text{\texttt{\textbackslash \textbackslash q = 84}} \)

Gtr.

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Theme and Variations on Mate'ka

Var. 3

Repeat as desired.

Var. 4

Percussion on Body
V. Gratitude

Rain

G.L. Spiers

Dedicated to Grant Miller

\[ 6 = D \]

Harmonics

\[ \text{accel.} \]

\[ \text{Dedicated to Grant Miller} \]

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V. Gratitude

17

20

23

25

28

35
V. Gratitude