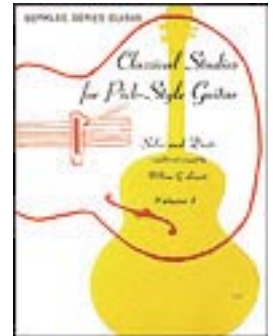


FENDER PLAYERS CLUB PICK CONTROL

Based on a lesson from:
Classical Studies for Pick Style Guitar
by William Leavitt
Berklee Press



#HL 50449440. Book \$9.95 (US)

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AUDIO CLIP 

(Maid with the Flaxen Hair)

PICK CONTROL THROUGH CLASSICAL LITERATURE

by Charles H. Chapman

Against popular opinion, searing single note lines are not the hallmark of having great pick technique. To play effectively with a pick you must have control and synchronization between both right and left hands and be able to mute inside strings. To keep the consistent sound of the pick throughout the entire chord is a craft that few guitarists are able to commit to. Pick and fingers is a legitimate technique, but many use it as a short cut and sacrifice their sound for the easy way out.

Two of my favorite guitarists used classical literature, played with a pick, as cornerstones of their teaching. The first was Johnny Smith whose main influences were Django Reinhardt and Andres Segovia — as is very evident in his incredibly precise chord voicings and machine-gun like 16th note solo phrasing. The second was Bill Leavitt and although he was not the virtuosic guitarist Johnny was, he had a precision and sensitivity on the instrument that any guitarist would be envious of.

Both these guitarists impressed on their students the validity of studying classical literature — even if they were never going to perform it. Similarly many of the better guitarists today have developed their technique in this same manner.

Johnny went on to become one of the greatest jazz guitarists in the annals of guitar history. During a recent conversation with Johnny he stated, "I always had great admiration for orchestral instruments and tried to adapt their technique to the guitar. I would often practice from clarinet, flute and violin books." Johnny is now living in Colorado and occasionally is sighted at guitar shows and events where he prefers to be in the background.

Even though burnin' pick chops are impressive, and at times necessary, it's control and coordination that often separates the good from the great guitarists.

Bill Leavitt became Chair of the Guitar Department at Berklee College of Music, Boston, MA, in 1966. During his tenure as Guitar Chair he wrote 12 texts and set up a department that now has 54 guitar instructors and over 11,000 guitar majors. Bill died an untimely death in 1991 at the age of 64.

A good example to develop your pick technique is Bill Leavitt's arrangement of Bach's **Sarabande** taken from Bach's **Violin Sonata in Bm**. This arrangement can be found in its entirety in Bill Leavitt's book: *Classical Studies For Pick Style Guitar*, Berklee Press Publications. Also, Al Dimeola recorded this arrangement on his first solo album *Land Of The Midnight Sun* (Columbia CK 34074). Below is the first eight measures from this piece. Fight the temptation of using your fingers to execute this. Instead be conscious of only playing the strings indicated and muting the others.

Bach: Sarabande from Violin Sonata in Bm

copyist C. Chapman

T	7	8	7	5	7	5	7	6	4	5	7	6	7	8	9	8	10	9	7
A	7	7	6	5	7	0	5	7	6	5	7	6	7	7	8	9	8	10	9
B	4	7	7	7	0	7	0	6	5	7	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	9	7
	7	7	7	7	0	7	0	6	5	7	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	9	7

	9	7	5	4	5	6	7	5	7	6	9	7	6	0	7	6	7	6	0
	9	7	5	4	5	6	7	5	7	6	9	7	6	0	7	6	7	6	0
	10	9	7	7	7	0	6	5	7	6	9	7	6	0	7	6	7	6	0
	10	9	7	7	7	0	6	5	7	6	9	7	6	0	7	6	7	6	0

Maid With The Flaxen Hair by Claude Debussy is a classical piece that I often use in my teaching. The version I adhere to is a masterful arrangement by Bill Leavitt that was assigned to me when I studied with him in the late 1960s (The complete arrangement is below).

It is actually taken from the Johnny Smith arrangement he recorded on the historic *Man With The Blue Guitar* album (Roost 2248). Bill Leavitt revised it for standard tuning (Johnny used low D) and simplified a number of sections.

Note measure two on the off beat of three looks very similar to a C7 shape. The sustaining notes on measure three, beat one, look suspiciously like a G7 shape, but "it ain't so". You must curve your first finger (often referred to as a curved bar technique) to successfully accomplish this minor feat of finger gymnastics.

