

REPertoire

ARTYOM DERVOED

CAPRICCIO DIABOLICO



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"MUSIC IS A NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE. TRY TO SPEAK WITH THE GUITAR."


LESSON DESCRIPTION



In this lesson on Capriccio Diabolico by Mario Tedesco, guitarist Artyom Dervoeed goes into detail about the many key interpretative and technical elements necessary to execute this piece successfully. Throughout, Artyom stresses the importance of knowing the origin, climax, and end point of phrases and the use of tempo and dynamics to bring the phrase to life.

While the video lesson contains highly valuable fingerings, Artyom shares so much wisdom about mood, tempo, and individual interpretation that fills this outline with a solid dose of inspiration. As Artyom moves through each section of the piece, he always asks how his technique can better serve the phrase. Finally, as a conclusion, Artyom enforces the importance of finding the elements that resonate for you with any style of music.

Hopefully you find this to be an engaging and insightful lesson on a highly popular piece in the guitar repertoire!





ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR



Universe Guitare (France) has famously dubbed Artyom Dervoe the “Tsar of the guitar”. This bold claim is backed by the growing international demand, an active recording career, and no less than 16 first place awards in various international competitions.

Having mastered the entire standard orchestral, chamber and solo guitar literature, he is expanding the repertoire through collaborations with leading composers, whose works he inspires, commissions and performs.

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OVERVIEW

Capriccio Diabolico by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco is a very well-known piece in the guitar repertoire, which was first written for the guitar virtuoso Andres Segovia, and dedicated to the legendary violinist Niccolo Paganini. A famous story goes that Paganini once sold his soul to the devil, the origin of the name “Diabolico” in this piece.

Several themes in this piece are also directly inspired by Paganini. The first movement of Paganini’s Grand Sonata and melody of La Campanella are both strongly evoked in different sections. While it is true that this piece is considered to be overplayed, the reality is that any person, if they do their homework, has a unique interpretation of a piece that is worth hearing by the general public.



INTRODUCTION



The introduction to the piece is marked “con impeto ma sostenuto e pomposo”, which means with a moving pulse, but grand and dignified. For the first chord, Artyom plays an apoyando in the right hand, first with the thumb, and then with the m finger. This allows him to more easily play fortissimo and accented.



Marcato means “marked”, which is accomplished by putting a space in between the notes. Artyom starts a bit rubato after the two accented chords, making a crescendo up to fortissimo. Throughout, Artyom uses a few fingerings from the Segovia edition, but a few that he’s changed. It’s often difficult to play legato over the first and second

string, so develop strength in your pinky to make it easier. Practice slowly, and in small sections. Artyom suggests practicing modifications of the rhythm of this phrase to develop strength.

A decorative red wavy line.

When the main theme of the piece begins at 'Andante Cantabile', play it very vocally. Use vibrato wherever possible, and play the first note apoyando to get a marcato articulation. Also, Artyom tries to use the second and third strings as often as possible in this melody to keep the color song-like.

Try to separate the singing melody from the accompaniment, otherwise the texture is too cluttered. Don't stop every note that rings here, especially in the melody.



PHRASING

A phrase is a complete musical thought. It's especially important to analyze the phrasing in this melody to know where to add space and where to maintain legato. The phrases in this piece are often very long, so don't cut any notes to break the phrase early.



Also note that while there may be pauses within a phrase, the meaning or intent behind the music is contained in the entire phrase. To create a feeling of continuity, use dynamics, which will also help bring the phrase to life. Artyom uses the term “microdynamics” to refer to subtle rises and falls across a phrase. If the composer writes piano, an accented note a few bars later does not necessarily have to be played forte. Simply play it a bit louder than the surrounding notes, even if it's marked sforzando.

Don't make too much out of the “piu mosso” instruction at “piu mosso e scorre”. This melody is based on the same melodic material as before. Artyom adds a bit of articulation this time to make each note a bit more separated.

FINGERINGS AND SCHERZANDO



Take extra care for the difficult left hand fingerings at “più mosso e scorrevole” and take all the time you need to practice very slowly and carefully. Observe where the climax of the phrase occurs, and let that inform your musical interpretation, as well.

In “scherzando”, which translates to “joking”, the material is based on elements from the introduction. When appropriate, staccatos will help convey this quality very well. Play each wave of the phrase with a louder dynamic until the sudden piano, crescendo, and stringendo.

QUESTION AND ANSWER



The next section is another development of the same phrase. The first time, it’s posed as a question, and the second time it’s an answer.

“It’s like a dialogue with yourself. First, you have a doubt, and then you figure it out.”



Among the most common dangers in playing is to lose the connection between questions and answers. Keep the intention inside yourself to continue, and find the resolution to everything left unresolved. Artyom references the importance of microdynamics on every phrase to bring it to life.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Musical phrases will almost always contain both a question and an answer. Just as in life, don't lose concentration until the musical question has been answered thoroughly.

ASCENDING LINES

The following section, beginning at “Più mosso, scorrevole” can often be quite difficult. Many perform it very fast and loud, but the mood should be lyrical and nostalgic. Use the same kind of rubato from the introduction when that material returns.

Artyom uses a slightly different fingering on the ascending line to keep his hand in one position. This maintains the melodic intention to move up to the final note, A.



Again, practice the legato tones slowly, dividing it into small sections. Try different rhythms to feel more comfortable, as well. Let the dynamics carry you like a wave over the top of a phrase. Be sure to clearly separate notes labeled marcato.

Always hold yourself back from playing a melody too loud. Even when you reach the climax of the phrase over the G-Major chord, play a beautiful, full, piano.



Students often struggle with the ascending line to the high B. Play the A Major chord, and then dampen the first string once you shift to play the F-sharp on the third string. You can use the a finger on your right hand, or the first finger on your left hand.



Place a rallentando before the high B so you have time to execute the stretch.

NEW TONALITY



The material at the next “scherzando” again comes from the introduction. Artyom plays a diminuendo across the first few repeated waves. To increase the effect of the scherzando, consider playing ponticello.

Be aware of both voices, and practice them separately. Listen to how they interact while you play them together. Be sure to connect the questions to the answers.

For the scale run in the transition to Vivace, Artyom uses a fingering that differs from Segovia. Find a fingering that works for you and allows you to be musical, and reference the video lesson. Don't forget to use microdynamics to your taste.

At Vivace, play the eighth notes marcato, even the ones with a legato marking,

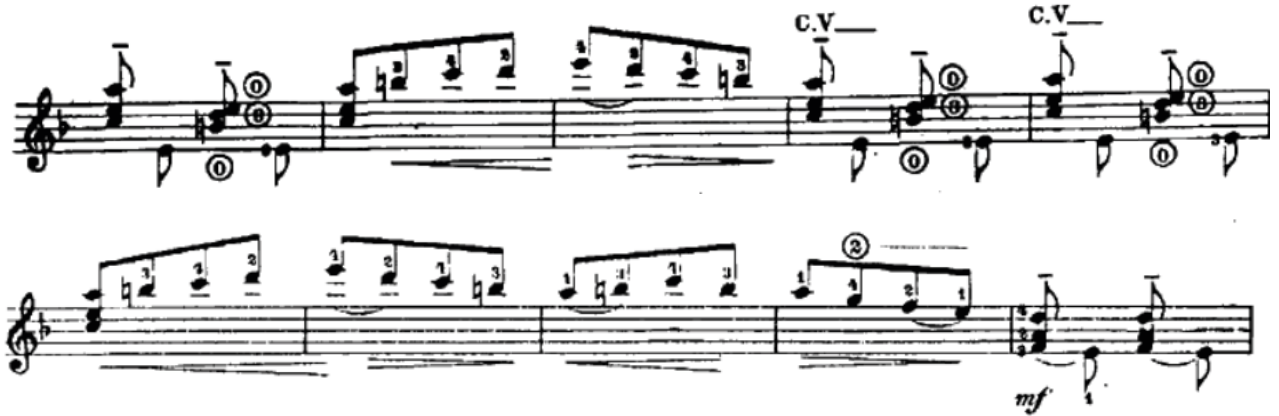


COLOR AND SHIFTING



During the ascending half-scales in A minor, experiment with switching to ponticello to get a different sound. To get a bigger sound, let each of the chords sound over one another.

At 'Tempo Primo', two measures of the introduction material returns and is developed again. After only two measures, the music returns to four bars of Vivace. As this rotation continues, make a difference between these two characters. You can play Tempo Primo forte and Vivace, mezzo-forte with ponticello.



Leaping up to the high A can be very difficult at a Vivace tempo. Isolate the shift itself, and practice playing the chord and the note over and over, very slowly. Place an accent on each of the top notes in the arpeggio that follows.

Even though 'Quasi Minueto' is marked in the following section, Artyom doesn't see an immediate connection to the minuet. Play very lyrically, and at a soft dynamic level. Experiment with using different parts of the thumb to get different colors from the lower notes.

ARTICULATION

In the next part, the melodic line is in the bass voice. When labeled, play marcato, but still very gentle, and in between piano and mezzo-piano. Practice each voice on its own to develop a feel for where the phrases begin and end, and always keep the balance between each of the voices in the texture. Don't forget to consider the use of vibrato as an expressive device.

Artyom plays the accompaniment at "Dolce e languido" in a way that imitates the pizzicato of a string section in a symphony. Reference Tedesco's First Symphony to hear some of the influences for this section.

HARMONIC



A common problem with the harmonic in the second measure is a lack of legato. While it is a difficult harmonic to play, be very gentle with your fingers and don't be afraid to slow down in tempo a bit. At the same time, don't break the continuity of the sound. Experiment with changing the fingering if something else makes legato easier for you. In the low arpeggio that follows, Artyom plays the B on the third string so that it doesn't interfere with the harmonic on the second string.



Let the strings keep ringing as much as possible. This includes the harmonic and the arpeggio immediately after it. Crescendo during the accompaniment to create a rise into the melody.

The phrase here begins in the first measure of dolce and doesn't end until the first note of "a capriccio"! Aim towards longer phrases rather than shorter ones, as this will help you to better convey the intent of the music.



CONTRAST



While the structure of this section is made up of repeated rhythmic elements, try to bring a different character to each one somehow. Use tempo to vary the interpretation when appropriate as well, either by speeding up or slowing down briefly.

At "Un poco più mosso", make the contrast between the last section really clear! While the music does take a radically different character, one with much more staccato and a faster tempo, try to keep a connection to the previous section when you transition. This is achieved by playing without a break in the sound, and with a clear picture in your mind of what you want. Tedesco wrote "Di nuovo andantino grazioso" to be played staccato, but Artyom finds it very romantic to keep the notes long here. Of course, it's up to individual taste, but it's useful to have options to consider.

Keep the connection still as you move again into “Dolce e languido”. Again, use variations in dynamics and tempo to ensure that repeated sections don’t sound too similar.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Keep phrases long, and use dynamics, tempo, and articulation to both create expression and vary sections that repeat.



TEMPO AND BREATH



At Morendo, move a bit more in tempo and practice both of the voices independently. Be sure to crescendo as the line ascends. Play the tremolo section piano and espressivo. Make sure you don’t play this like a tremolo study, but move with the phrase. Breath as you play to keep the feeling of rise and fall in both dynamics and tempo.



In the measure interlude between the tremolos, Tedesco hints at Paganini's Grand Sonata, telling that something new is coming. Once you transition into "dolce e scorrevole", make the section as big as possible. This means you should not begin very loud, so that you have room to grow.

Keep the tempo here the same as Paganini's Grand Sonata- while the two melodies are in different tonalities, the mood and basic elements are very similar. When the music is loud, play accents with the thumb to make them more pronounced.



To execute the fast double staccatos in the $\frac{3}{4}$ measures, turn your right hand so your fingers are pointing more downward and leaning back. Decrescendo when the line goes down, and crescendo when the line goes up.



At “con fuoco”, don’t wait too long to play the high A on the upbeat, or the tempo will drag. Watch the video lesson for the fingerings Artyom uses in the third and fourth measures of this section.

SHIFTING

A difficult part for many is the jump in the fourth measure of “con fuoco”. Try to maintain legato when switching strings. Artyom recommends using the first finger as a guide finger to slide the hand down the string.



Even if you aren't having any big issues, you'd likely benefit from practicing short exercises based on this shift. Play only the first note from each position, and shift slowly from one to the other. Alternatively, you can pick one of the two positions and repeat that block of notes over and over. Practice these same exercises anytime this basic pattern shows up in this section.

Just as before, be careful not to sit any of the low bass notes too strongly or too long, or the high note that appears on the next weak beat may come in out of time. Practice these large jumps in isolation until you can execute the shift without looking at the fretboard.

CLIMAX

The climax of the piece begins at "A tempo grandioso", and it contains a combination of elements from the introduction and the main theme. Tedesco often combines different elements from his piece for the endings. Experiment with using different colors for each of the elements. This should be the loudest section of the whole piece.

The image displays a musical score for guitar, consisting of two staves. The first staff begins with the tempo marking *lento* and the dynamic *ff*. It features a series of chords and single notes, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff continues the piece, marked *A tempo Grandioso*, and includes various musical notations such as triplets, sixteenth notes, and slurs. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 in circles. The score is written in a style typical of classical guitar notation, with a focus on technical precision and dynamic contrast.

Play ponticello on the staccato notes. Let the lyrical portion of the melody ring out as much as possible, especially the long G.

A typical mistake in the climax is to rush the sixteenths notes that repeat material from the introduction. Try to play them in rhythm, with very little rubato, but lots of dynamic expression. Artyom plays the theme apoyando when it appears again.

ENDING

At Sostenuto, all of the octaves should have accents, with both apoyando and ponticello in the right hand.

Use the whole weight of right arm to get more sound, especially when fortissimo is written.



Take your time with the fermata- it provides a lot of mystery and tension. Tedesco wrote forte after this, but Artyom prefers to jump down to piano and crescendo to create more drama.

It's entirely up to you how to play the Vivace dynamically- it should be staccato, but it can be piano or forte, depending on your taste.

Artyom decided to cut the low D in the bass so that the focus is on the moving voices. Start the first eighth note louder than the following ones, and, the second time, start even louder still.



INDIVIDUAL INTERPRETATION

This concludes the basic analysis of the piece. Let's take a bit of time to review the things that Artyom has discussed so far and elaborate on some important points.

First, be aware of the structure and substructure of the piece. This includes phrasing- where you start, where you go, and what is the end of the road. Usually the start and end points are obvious. The climax is where the meaning of the piece is most clear. Always save your fortissimo for this point.



Think about the complete picture of the piece whenever you are playing. If you pause too much in the music or fail to connect parts to one another, it may start to appear to a listener that the piece is falling apart. Always think of what is about to come before it comes.

A common mistake for this theme, for example, is to play in a gypsy style- rubato and fragmented. Playing out of the written rhythm may be a nice device at times, and it shouldn't be that you always play exactly in rhythm, but have an understanding of how much is too much. Find a happy medium that is proper for the style of the piece.

Finding a middle ground is dependent on the development of your own taste and an understanding of the epoch the composer lived. Knowing that Tedesco was a very Romantic composer stylistically will inform your interpretation.

More important than playing a certain style perfectly is finding yourself in the style. Certain elements may resonate with you more than others, so experiment with developing the ones that do, and that will start to feed your unique voice.

We hope that this analysis and discussion will help you with your practicing! Good luck!



RESOURCES



Artyom Dervloed's 30-Day Technique Course

Want more from Artyom? Check out his comprehensive 30-day technique program covering all the essentials- with handy PDF supplements and guides to keep you on track.

Thomas Viloteau's Lesson On Tremolo

If you're looking to go deeper into tremolo after practicing this Tedesco piece, Thomas Viloteau's got you covered with his thorough walkthrough on how to develop tremolo mastery.



NOTES

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