

TECHNIQUE

KUPINSKI DUO

DUO PLAYING



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*"THERE IS NO DEMOCRACY IN AN ENSEMBLE!
THERE MUST ALWAYS BE A LEADER TO MAKE
DECISIONS".*

LESSON DESCRIPTION



In this lesson, Polish guitarists Ewa Jabłczyńska and Dariusz Kupiński, together forming the Kopinski Duo, speak about and demonstrate how they practice duo playing. In particular, they focus on how to synchronize various elements while performing. With a designated leader to establish clear tempo and dynamic cues, the members of a duo can always be in time with one another.

Ewa and Dariusz even offer exercises to practice total freedom of tempo while on stage. Finally, they recommend practicing phrasing by singing lines to yourself. It's not necessary to view this lesson with a partner, since Ewa and Dariusz have both included segments in the video to practice along with them.





ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR



The Polish husband and wife duo, Ewa Jabłczyńska and Dariusz Kupiński achieved their Masters degrees in classical guitar from the Academy of Music in Katowice, Poland. As soloists, they have both won numerous awards in international competitions and prestigious awards.

Since their debut CD “Spanish Music” in 2011, they have attracted fans throughout Europe. Today, they both teach at different universities in Poland.

OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. Leader
3. Beginning a Piece
4. Practice Exercise
5. Agogic Playing
6. Rubato
7. Singing



INTRODUCTION



This lesson on duo playing features Ewa and Dariusz of the Kupinski Duo. For them, synchronization is the most challenging aspect of playing with more than one guitarist, so they'll go over how to start a piece together, play with freedom of tempo, and use rubato effectively.

LEADER



It's very important to have a clearly defined leader for each piece, so one person can clearly make decisions for the other person to see. The leader can certainly change, even between measures, but they should be able to communicate with an understood system of gestures.

BEGINNING A PIECE



There are two ways that Ewa and Dariusz will start a piece together.

Before working on a piece, decide on the character and tempo of the piece to know how to start it. This first method works very well for a rhythmic piece. Let's use "Valses poeticos" by Enrique Granados as an example.



The tempo is quite fast, and the character is quite joyful, energetic, and dignified. Since the time signature is 2/4, Dariusz will give two beats of preparation before starting.



With this method, Dariusz moves his head to two different positions to give a clear indication of where the beat is. Since they are very experienced, this is easy for them, but it's highly recommended that beginners start out with a four beat introduction to be as clear as possible.

It might take a while, but eventually you may become comfortable cueing an entrance with two beats, or one beat. The gesture you use should have an impulse that creates sharp and fast motion, and should always be well rehearsed in advance.

The second way to show the beginning of the piece works well when a piece is calm and slow. Rather than using her whole body, Ewa will focus on moving her finger to signal the moment that the music begins. She will lift her hand in a sweeping gesture, and the moment it returns to the strings, Dariusz knows to begin.



This same technique might be necessary to use anytime there's a long pause of an undefined length in a piece.

KEY TAKEAWAY

In a duo setting, there should always be an assigned leader who cues entrances with a clear gesture. Don't play on the strings, play above them.

PRACTICE EXERCISE



Here is a simple exercise to practice this skill. Decide on any note or combination of notes you want, and pick a leader to cue each note with a clear motion of their fingers. Without tempo, the goal is simply to play a note exactly together. Experiment with different strokes and types of sonorities, as well.

INTERACTIVE PRACTICE

Jump to Part 2 of the video to practice starting notes on time with a partner by following Ewa's gestures.



AGOGIC PLAYING



Playing with freedom of tempo, also called agogic playing, requires a special listening skill. Dariusz and Ewa invented an exercise called “Catch Me If You Can” to practice this skill. Dariusz will play sixteenth notes at a slow tempo, while Ewa will play quarter notes. If you're practicing with a partner, decide on a key to play in. Then Dariusz will make sudden changes to tempo, speeding up or slowing down, and Ewa will try to follow.

For a challenge, Dariusz plays triplets and eighth notes as well.

INTERACTIVE PRACTICE

Jump to Part 3 of the video to practice playing quarter notes while Dariusz plays different rhythms and changes the tempo!



RUBATO

Rubato playing is one of the more difficult things to prepare as a duo, since it must be planned, but feel spontaneous, and not be too strong. Dariusz cites an explanation once given by the pianist Daniel Barenboim, who said that “rubato means to ‘steal’ time, and since we’re ethical people, we give back whatever we steal”. From a different point of view, a three minute piece without rubato should still be a three minute piece with rubato.

For every note that you speed up, you should slow down somewhere else in the phrase, and vice versa.

There are two kinds of rubato that require different approaches. First, the accompaniment can be kept in strict time while only the melody is altered. Second, both accompaniment and melody can be changed together.

To demonstrate the first case, Dariusz and Ewa play an excerpt from “Rhapsody in Blue”. Observe how Ewa takes her melody freely, but always makes up for changes in the time so that she lands back on the downbeat for the next measure.



For the second type of rubato, demonstrated with an excerpt from Chopin’s “Mazurka”, both players must be listening to one another, and the accompaniment should follow the melody based on the other person’s body language and non-verbal signals.



SINGING

Singing is a great tool to practice creating the proper atmosphere and mood with rubato. The voice is our most primal instrument, and it allows us to focus on expression without worrying about technique on an instrument. Don't worry about having an amazing voice, but only focus on shaping the phrase and taking breaths.



In the next episode, Dariusz and Ewa will talk about using rubato on large and small scales to develop different expressive effects.

This concludes this first lesson on duo playing by the Kupinski duo! Hopefully it was a useful glimpse into the art of staying in sync while playing music with another person. You may practice with a partner or with the interactive segments of the video lesson. Good luck, and see you next time!

RESOURCES



Celil Refik Kaya's Lesson on Valses Poeticos

Go in depth with the piece that Ewa and Dariusz used at the beginning of this lesson. Celil tackles all the problem spots and demonstrates his technique note-by-note!

Marco Tamayo's Lesson On Essential Principles

Go back to the basics while preparing for a duo performance with this overview of sitting position, hand independence, sound production, and more.



NOTES



Lined area for writing notes, consisting of 17 horizontal lines.

