

TECHNIQUE

# MONTENEGRIN GUITAR DUO

## ON TRANSCRIBING AND ARRANGING



WATCH THE LESSON  
AT [TONEBASE.CO](https://tonebase.co)




*"THE END GOAL IS TO SOUND LIKE ONE INSTRUMENT WITH YOUR PARTNER."*

## LESSON DESCRIPTION



Goran Krivokapić and Danijel Cerović, together forming the Montenegrin Guitar Duo, discuss their strategy for transcribing and arranging music for the guitar. Using a short Gavotte by Bach as an example, Goran and Danijel break down their entire process, from conceptualizing to performing an arrangement. They share how they sidestep the limitations of the guitar by carefully selecting a new key for the piece and re-tuning strings when appropriate. Then, they discuss how to voice ornaments and difficult trills, as well as which musical manuscript to reference for the best interpretation. Once this preparation is done, Goran and Danijel run through the most difficult areas of practice and performance. This includes synchronization, using recordings as a practice tool, addressing fingerings based on rhythm, and note lengths and articulations. Finally, each of them perform their part of the piece so that you can practice along with them at both a fast and slow tempo. We hope this lesson is a valuable resource for you as you dive into the rich tradition of transcribing and arranging for guitar duos!





## ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

The Montenegrin Guitar Duo is frequently invited to eminent international venues around the world. They are engaged to give recitals, deliver lectures and master classes and to adjudicate important competitions. In 2016 they were invited to participate in the Guitar Foundation of America Convention.

Their historically informed performances of their own arrangements for two guitars of J. S. Bach's English Suites have received particular praise from the critics. Their two principal aims are to broaden the guitar repertoire and to further integrate the guitar into chamber music.

## OUTLINE

1. Overview
2. Transcription
3. Ornaments
4. Manuscript
5. Synchronization
6. Phrasing

# OVERVIEW



For this lesson, Goran Krivokapić and Danijel Cerović of the Montenegrin Guitar Duo will be speaking about the development of their duo playing style and how they approach arranging and performing a piece for piano.

Eleven years before this video, the pair started out by transcribing piano music that was too difficult for a single guitar. The first piece they ever performed was *Prelude* from Bach's Second English Suite. They went on to arrange and perform all six of these difficult suites! For this lesson, Goran and Danijel break down the Gavotte from Bach's 3rd English Suite. While this piece is simple and not overly long, it still provides a fun challenge for a guitar duo.

# TRANSCRIPTION



In three of the six suites, they also decided to alter the tuning of their guitars to allow them to play in a wider register- a challenging feat in itself. Luckily, for this Gavotte, only one string has to be changed; the sixth string has to be lowered one step to D.

“Learning different tunings is like learning different instruments!”



However, while transcribing these pieces, it's also essential to find the right key for the pieces to be performed in. Goran explains the process for choosing the key to play Gavotte. While it sounds simple, it's quite an effort to find a range that doesn't require displacing the melody by an octave too frequently.

Ideally, notes should only be moved in octaves in the case of a few bass lines and melody notes, so long as no voices cross one another. They also utilized lots of open strings to get a full sound.

## **KEY TAKEAWAY**

Arranging piano music for the guitar requires careful consideration of key. Re-tuning a guitar allows any key to suddenly sound very sonorous. Still, some notes will have to be displaced by an octave to accommodate wide ranges.



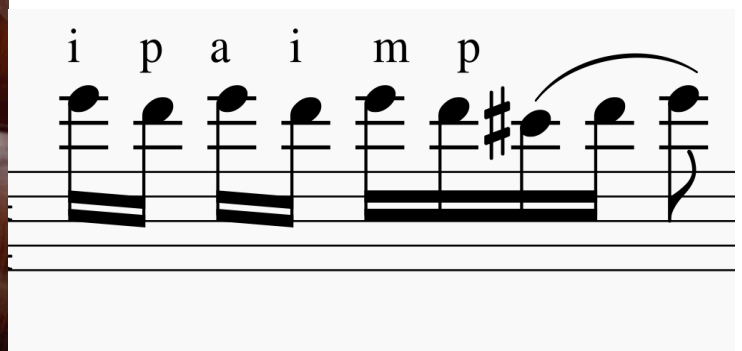


# ORNAMENTS

There are a few ornaments in this Gavotte, and they should be played as closely to the written style as possible. Very often, two strings or four fingers may be needed to execute an ornament alone! They may use any combination of cross-string trills and slurs. To accommodate this, the person playing the ornament will temporarily give the other voices to the other player.



For a basic cross string trill, they like to use *a i m p*. For longer ornaments, like the one over the E in measure nine, the same four fingers can rest in the middle of the guitar: *ip aimp* and then two slurs (notated below.) If you need an alternate combination, Danjiel suggests trying *amip* for a four-note ornament.



# MANUSCRIPT



The duo will always try to refer to an autographed manuscript of Bach's whenever possible. They will look carefully to see where any dynamics and articulations are written. Any markings from the composer are extremely valuable when making a transcription. However, a score alone will never contain all the necessary interpretation to play a piece in a stylistically accurate way. In addition, they recommend reading about important aspects of the music, either from original texts (primary sources) or modern interpretations (secondary sources).



# SYNCHRONIZATION



While beginning to work on any duo piece with a partner, strive to ensure that you and your partner are going after the same interpretation. Agree on a tempo, articulation, dynamics, and fingerings for related passages. If both players aren't observing these details in the same manner, the piece sounds out-of-sync. Unless you want to make the music sound different on purpose, think through every element with your partner.

The guitar is a very unforgivable beast! If two players don't start exactly together, the rhythm will be unclear. Danjiel and Goran spend a lot of time working on how to start phrases together. Most of the time, one of them cues a full beat before they start. The downbeat of four is signalled with a downward nod, and the upbeat is an upward nod.



The duo will also spend a lot of time recording themselves playing. If they are having trouble playing in time or in sync one another, an audio recording will reveal who is at fault. While they have both been wrong countless times, they have simultaneously gained tremendous value from diligent use of audio recording.

Physical distance is no barrier for Danjiel and Goran's practice routine! While they live in two separate countries, they share recordings of themselves individually each day. This helps them develop a common understanding of all the expressive elements before they meet in person, so they are ready to focus on making music together.





# RHYTHM AND FINGERINGS



This Gavotte has, embedded within it, a recurring pulsating rhythm. Its' dance-like qualities are best conveyed with clear articulation.



The rhythm dictates the placement of accents in the line, as well where slurs go, which define the preferred fingerings. More rhythmic lines are generally played with shorter articulation, and melodic lines are longer with legato.

Goran will avoid playing open strings on notes that are meant to be short. Open strings are much harder to stop, and this distracts from the direction of the line. This rule will dictate the fingerings he ultimately decides on.



In the first four measures, it's very important to put accents in the right places. Since this phrase repeats, Goran and Danijel will alternate where on the strings they play it, to get different colors. The first time they play ponticello, and the second time they play higher up, over the sound hole.



They will never play ponticello so extreme that it sounds metallic, but only so that the color somewhat resembles a harpsichord. Goran prefers to use the open string for the D that is sustained underneath the moving line in the very beginning. This way, it sounds more sonorous and lasts longer. In fact, it's very possible that Bach wrote this note to deliberately recreate the sound of bagpipes.

In the B section, the Gavotte rhythm is replaced by hemiolas, where the phrase consists of two groups of three quarter notes. This phrase also appears in measure eleven.

# PHRASING



5  
Gtr. 1  
Gtr. 2  
3 4

Each of the three phrases of the B section can be divided into smaller sections, where a main phrase is followed by an answer. Or, the phrase can be divided into two small sub-phrases and one large one. Experiment on your own with where to divide the phrases, using Goran's playing as a reference.

The rhythm in the second voice is simpler than the first voice—mostly quarter notes, but this moves the pulse forward of both voices. The second voice should follow the dynamics of the first. Additionally, the stops at the end of the piece should be as precise as possible between the two players.

Danijel often avoids open strings while playing the second voice, since they tend to produce accents that should not be there. As mentioned before, open strings also are not ideal for playing short notes.

## KEY TAKEAWAY

Often, fingerings are derived from the written rhythm; rhythm creates accents, which create slurs, which dictate when open strings are used.

## INTERACTIVE PRACTICE

Jump to Part 7 of the video to practice playing each voice separately with the Danijel and Goran! Refer to Part 8 if you want to practice slowly.



We hope this lesson was a beneficial resource for you to practice playing duo! Carefully observe Goran and Danijel's suggestions, and good luck with your practicing!





# RESOURCES



## Lesson On Duo Playing by Kupinski Duo

For an additional take on duo playing, look no further than Ewa and Dariusz, the Polish Kupinski Duo! Watch as they walk you through their practice routine and offer practice exercises for rubato and starting together.



## Lesson On Color by Rovshan Mamadkuliev

Go deeper into all the possible colors you can achieve with the unique qualities of the guitar! Check out this insightful lesson with Rovshan Mamedkuliev next!

